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FROM: AmConsul LOURENÇO MARQUES  
DATE: January 15, 1975  
SUBJECT: Year-End Mood in Mozambique

Introduction and Summary

As 1974 ended, the mood in Mozambique seemed to be one of general unease and uncertainty about the future. Events in 1974 were traumatic for many people, both whites and blacks, raised many false hopes, and destroyed some myths. Among the disillusioned were: the white Portuguese who had counted on Mozambique remaining Portuguese and had therefore invested everything on that assumption; the whites and blacks who had opposed the old regime and expected somewhat naively that a Western-type democracy would develop in independent Mozambique; the blacks who viewed Frelimo's advent as initiating a period in which they could expect the same standard of living as the whites and at the same time do less work; and those who really believed that the Portuguese, regardless of their tyrannical political system, had been successful in creating a harmonious multi-racial society in Mozambique. Mozambicans worry about the problems Mozambique currently faces, many of which seem to be interrelated and lack simple solutions. Among them are: economic 'malaise'; the exodus of white technicians and professionals (doctors, professors, lawyers, etc); unemployment; security; civil liberties; racial tensions; and the political consolidation of Frelimo.

1. Economic Malaise

As the leaders of the Mozambique Transitional Government repeatedly indicate, they inherited an economy which, though fundamentally viable, faced serious problems, some of which...
can be directly blamed on poorly conceived policies of the Portuguese Government. Nonetheless, political and economic uncertainties regarding the future of an independent Mozambique under a Frelimo Government have aggravated the situation. Despite frequent pronouncements that white Portuguese who wish to contribute their honest labor are welcome to stay and help develop Mozambique, these statements are usually vague and counterbalanced by caveats that the Government will always "end exploitation of man by man"—a caveat suggesting socialization may be widespread and reach even the small businessman. Furthermore, while Prime Minister Chissano has been relatively moderate and pragmatic in his public statements, Frelimo President Samora Machel's speeches made outside Mozambique, but carried in the local press, make him sound like a hard-line Marxist who will be totally ruthless carrying out his promise of a social revolution in Mozambique. Since most people know Machel is the Frelimo leader with whom they will have to contend after independence (some are persuaded that he has too many enemies that he will be assassinated almost immediately), they lack confidence that Mozambique holds a future for them.

In the meantime, Mozambique's economic situation as described in Lourenço Marques' A-181 of November 20, 1974, remains essentially unchanged. Manifestations of economic decline are becoming increasingly visible. In the cities, food shortages, especially of staples such as bread, rice, and potatoes, are distressing the average Mozambican; buses are packed to capacity because fewer are running, either because of shortage of parts or mechanics; stores and businesses are closing down completely for holidays because, with the permanent departure of a significant percentage of their technical staff, they cannot operate without the full participation of their current skeleton staffs; storekeepers, with the prospect in mind that they may have to leave suddenly, are keeping stocks of domestically-produced products down to a minimum; machines in factories are lying idle for lack of spare parts or raw materials; and it is difficult to buy soft drinks (extract has to be imported). In the countryside, one can find abandoned farms and rural stores; diminished planting by white farmers (cotton will be particularly hard hit); and distressing reports of hunger all over the country but of famine proportions in the districts of Beira and Vila Pery.

II. Exodus

The white exodus is the main pervading manifestation of the current malaise in Mozambique and in turn is a major adverse factor in the economic quagmire in which Mozambique finds itself. In the urban centers, and specifically Lourenço
Marques, Beira, Nampula, and Tete, the extent of the exodus is becoming increasingly evident, with more and more houses sporting white pieces of paper on windows--the local method of indicating whether a house or apartment is for rent. Tempo of December 15 points out the social waste of having these residences empty while much of the population lives in miserable circumstances and recommends that the Government intervene to set rents at levels accessible to lower classes--a law which most people believe will be passed. In Nampula, the exodus has been even more pronounced because of the departure of the Portuguese military who constituted a significant percentage of the city's population and blacks have already moved into former white areas. The integration of formerly racially segregated neighborhoods may in turn stir up further racial tensions. With the exception of Vila Pery where sources report the white population is relatively calm, indications are that northern Mozambique cities may end up being almost entirely black.

In rural areas, the exodus of whites has seriously affected both production and marketing of Mozambique's principal cash crops. Most of them are either leaving Mozambique altogether or moving to major urban centers. In some instances, the peasants have occupied and are now farming abandoned farms. In some areas, the machinery left behind has been taken over by local government agricultural services. According to Noticias of December 11, 1974, these "lands, tractors, and agricultural implements will continue to be the property of the individuals who abandoned them" and, although nothing is specifically said, the implication is that they might be able to obtain some compensation.

III. Unemployment and Labor Problems

The continuing downturn in Mozambique's economy is swelling ranks of unemployed, particularly in major urban centers such as Lourenço Marques and Beira. According to news reports, there are approximately 35,000 registered unemployed with the Government Employment Service (SEM) in Lourenço Marques and another 12,000 in Beira--which is believed to greatly underestimate the magnitude of the problem because many unemployed do not bother to register with the SEM and anyone who has been on the rolls over two months is automatically taken off the register. The Government appears to be confronting the problem of unemployment and strikes or slowdowns in various ways:

(a) Intervening actively in labor disputes. According to reports, Fretilino has frequently sided with management, berating the workers for being egotistical and for threatening the economic viability of firms;
(b) Ordering the management to keep factories open. In one recent instance, the manager of a match factory was arrested for "economic sabotage" in trying to close down his factory unless the Government authorized higher prices;

(c) Preventing management from dismissing workers because of business slowdown. A recent news article praises the success of the Institute of Labor in preventing the dismissal of laborers from some factories;

(d) Rounding up "marginals" and unemployed. The Government has been periodically rounding up individuals in urban centers all over Mozambique and sending those without a useful occupation to agricultural labor camps in the country or, some of the younger, healthier specimens, to Frelimo military training camps.

IV. Security

After the fact, the general consensus in Lourenço Marques was that the Government could have prevented the October 21 disturbances if it had taken forceful security measures. Since then, the High Commissioner and Prime Minister have repeatedly assured the people that the Government will prevent the repetition of similar incidents. Among the preventive measures taken by Frelimo and Portuguese authorities were: political indoctrination in the suburbs urging racial harmony; severe punishment without trial by Frelimo soldiers (e.g., common thieves shot summarily); periodic round-ups and arrest of individuals without identification or employment (latter sent to Frelimo training or agricultural labor camps); and arrest or interrogation of individuals suspected of "opposing the decolonization process," a crime so loosely defined that virtually anyone can be charged. Many of these "decolonization" arrests have been primarily under the direction of the Portuguese High Commissioner, at least in Lourenço Marques. As a result of these measures, jails in Lourenço Marques are full and, since those suspected of opposing the decolonization process have no right to habeas corpus, many are being held without being formally charged. Some were involved in the Mozambique Free Movement (M'N), a political group which launched an abortive attempt to prevent the Lusaka Accord from being implemented; members of black anti-Frelimo political parties (PCN, CNAM, MUNIEMO, etc.); or criminals or thieves, but a number appear to have respectable backgrounds and "people know they are innocent." Many have been released fairly quickly or deported, but others are being held indefinitely.

These security measures are being enforced by both Portuguese and Frelimo security forces. Since the Portuguese military
forces are steadily withdrawing and will all be gone by June 25, there is some concern regarding Frelimo's ability to maintain security after independence day. While Frelimo is engaged in a crash training program of its Frelimo troops to replace the Portuguese, it is expected to have only 20,000 troops by independence day, many of whom are very young (presumably easier to indoctrinate)...not much for a country the size of Mozambique. Since Frelimo is the only organized group with arms and most of the political opposition is either in exile or in jail, few believe that a Frelimo government can be overthrown. Nonetheless, whites fear that any attempt by whites (the ever present spectre of mad mercenaries) or even blacks could provoke a general wave of violence which Frelimo forces would find it difficult to contain. As in the case of October 21, many whites fear that any eruption of violence could be used as an excuse by the blacks to launch into racially motivated attacks. This fear does not appear unbounded in view of the high degree of racial tension reported by visitors to northern Mozambique (manifestations include: anti-white slogans on walls, curfew against whites going into certain areas at night, and humiliating experiences reported by whites) and calls into question the myth of the Portuguese genius for creating a multi-racial society.

While some people believe the Government's security measures are justified and perhaps do not go far enough, others are persuaded that Mozambicans are experiencing the first taste of the kind of authoritarian, repressive police state Frelimo will ultimately install in Mozambique. As a result, many early Frelimo supporters among Mozambican Portuguese feel betrayed and some are joining the ranks of those leaving Mozambique.

V. Political Consolidation of Frelimo

After the Frelimo-dominated Government assumed power, many people expressed concern at the relatively small political base of Frelimo support. From the very beginning, the Frelimo leadership gave political mobilization high priority. Armando Quebuza, Minister of Internal Administration and Political Commissar of Frelimo, led the way, traveling extensively throughout Mozambique and meeting directly with the people in urban and rural areas to urge them to organize politically. Even Prime Minister Chissano has devoted a considerable amount of his scarce time to travel throughout Mozambique and participating in political encounters.

From all reports, Frelimo has been very successful in extending its party network throughout the country. Newspapers
carry daily reports of Frelimo meetings organized either by "grupos dinamizadores" (stimulative groups) or "comites do bairro" (neighborhood committees) or "comites do trabalho" (committees at work establishments). At times the primary purpose of these meetings is to "politizar" or "conscientizar" (Frelimo terms "or indoctrinate) people regarding Frelimo's policies and goals and to gain new active cadres for Frelimo. At these political meetings, the principal subject of discussion is frequently Frelimo's slogan: "Unity, Work, and Vigilance." Frelimo spokesmen reiterate over and over again that Frelimo wants: the unity of all the peoples of Mozambique, regardless of color, tribe, or origin; people to work harder than ever to develop Mozambique; and people to be vigilant and report in formation on reactionaries who are trying to undermine the decolonization process. On other occasions, the meetings are designed to air and propose solutions to problems within the scope of the particular committee in question. People are urged to speak up, participate, and engage in constructive criticism.

As these committees proliferate through neighborhoods and work establishments, they are becoming increasingly effective channels for implementing Frelimo policy at the grass-roots, winning over new Frelimo supporters, and for obtaining information on peoples' needs, problems, and opposition. Experience in tackling matters of community interest is also giving the committees a sense of authority. In the neighborhoods, they have already started literacy and adult education classes and urged employers to allow their employees to attend. In the work establishments, the committees have all but replaced the role of unions. According to one source who is a manager in a factory, he cannot bring matters directly to the attention of Frelimo's leadership but must channel them through his factory committee.

Although Frelimo appears to be building an administratively effective Marxist-style party organization with authority over-lapping that of the government, it is too early to tell whether Frelimo's policies are gaining or losing popularity. Many claim to support Frelimo because of fear or because it is the only accepted political party at present. Although there is already some grumbling among black laborers that conditions under the Portuguese "fascists" were better, Frelimo for the time being is able to make a good case that it inherited many of Mozambique's current economic problems from the colonialist regime. In the future, Mozambicans may redirect blame toward Frelimo itself.

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