

MARCH, 1972 #13

Information is ammunition for your struggle. A fighter without ammunition is not a fighter. And for you, a fighter without information cannot speak.

Samora M. Machel, President of FRELIMO to CFM delegation, Dar es Salaam, 8/71.

TETE: NOW THE MAIN FRONT

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Intensified activities by FRELIMO guerrillas in Tete province of Mozambique during the past year, and especially since August, 1971, have caused increasing difficulties to the Portuguese effort to complete the Cabora Bassa hydroelectric scheme along the Zambezi River. If completed, Cabora Bassa would be the largest dam and hydroelectric project in Africa, and would furnish most of its power to South Africa. The dam, if completed, would also provide irrigation for hundreds of thousands of acres of land, and the Portuguese have announced their intention to settle 1,000,000 whites in the Cabora Bassa area. Cabora Bassa is a palpable symbol of continued white rule in Mozambique and Southern Africa. Accordingly, FRELIMO, at its second party congress in 1968, vowed to prevent the dam from ever being completed.

While heretofore the Mozambique liberation struggle has been concentrated in Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces in the north of Mozambique, FRELIMO first engaged in military activities in Tete province, where the dam is being built, as early as 1964-65. These efforts were abandoned, however, due to difficulties, and FRELIMO militants went underground to concentrate on political work in the area. In March 1968, FRELIMO announced the reopening of the Tete front. By December 1969, two months after the contract for construction of the dam had been awarded to ZAMCO, a consortium of South African, French, Swiss, German, and Portuguese companies, guerrillas were reported by the Portuguese to be "intimidating" the population. By April 1970, FRELIMO was said to be conducting hit and run actions in the area. FRELIMO's own communique in September, 1970 stated that military operations had been expanded to affect all of Tete province north of the Zambezi; south of the river FRELIMO was still conducting no military actions but only political work.

FRELIMO's first military crossing of the Zambezi took place late in 1970. FRELIMO's own reports list ambushes in the Mague, Chicoa and Chioco areas south of the river beginning December 21, 1970. By January 1971 the Portuguese admitted that FRELIMO had penetrated to the south of the river.

The crossing of the Zambezi was an event of outstanding importance in the Mozambican struggle. The Zambezi had been a kind of Maginot line for the Portuguese, who had regarded it as a natural barrier and had developed their strategy around it as their last major defense bulwark. Mozambique Revolution for January-April 1971 stated that several times the Portuguese had drawn lines, hoping at worst to contain the revolution to the north; each time these hopes had proved futile. The Zambezi, lined with fortifications, had been considered the last and most unassailable line of defense. Mozambique south of the Zambezi is more developed and more densely populated; FRELIMO feels the struggle can now spread more rapidly throughout the country and that the greater degree of industrial development in the south will make the population there eager to join the revolution. A FRELIMO communique of June 5, 1971 referred to important battles south of the Zambezi and to large areas of Tete province north of the river under FRELIMO control putting Cabora Bassa under direct threat.

During the early part of 1971, the Portuguese seemed to be expecting attempts to attack the dam itself. General Kaulza de Arriaga, the Portuguese commander-in-chief in Mozambique, pledged to defend the dam "whatever the cost," and claimed that FRELIMO saboteurs had tried to reach the dam during 1970, but had been killed or captured, or had retreated.

The dam site is, however, an extremely difficult target for a guerrilla attack. The country around Cabora Bassa is open, providing less cover than that in northern



credit: Guerrillo

Mozambique. Further, the Portuguese have established a triple line of defense extending to a radius of 14 kilometers from the dam site. A constant air watch is kept over the area. Access routes are under military guard. Traffic from the town of Tete (capital of the province) to the dam site proceeds in military convoys. Security at the dam site is strict, construction workers and their families being required to carry passes; there is a 7 P.M. curfew. Thus, while FRELIMO has succeeded in mining and ambush operations as close as about twelve miles from the site, and may have attempted to infiltrate the dam area, no known direct strike has yet been made at the dam.

But as Samora Machel stated in an interview published in the Paris journal Africasia in August 1971, Cabora Bassa itself as an object is secondary to gaining control of Tete province and all of Mozambique. The Portuguese have devoted much of their force to the dam area; but while they have anticipated that FRELIMO would occupy itself trying to reach the dam, the guerrillas have been taking action elsewhere.

Since last spring such actions have included harassing supply and communications links to the dam site by mining and ambushes, causing many troops to be tied down escorting convoys of material or doing mine sweeping in advance of convoys. Because of the necessity of sweeping a road shortly before any convoy passes over, convoys must proceed slowly a short distance behind the mine sweeping crew, and are held down to speeds as low as about three miles per hour.

On April 9, 1971 guerrillas ambushed a convoy of civilian cars with a military escort only about 12 miles from the site. A truck was blown up, killing a soldier inside, and a car was captured, containing high precision instruments and eight files of documents for construction of the dam.

The Portuguese responded by tightening security around the construction camp. But within a month a shop on the same road, which housed and supplied Portuguese soldiers, was destroyed, and two days after that a Portuguese convoy was ambushed near the dam site and a Portuguese civilian captured. A mining incident on the same road was said to involve a mine ten times as powerful as any previously used by liberation movements against the Portuguese.

On April 24, 1971, FRELIMO guerrillas attacked the post of Mukumbura on the Rhodesian border in Tete province south of the Zambezi. Rhodesian soldiers across the border, hearing the firing, came over to assist the Portuguese. Their vehicle hit a mine, and three were killed. In reprisal, the Portuguese, embarrassed by this disclosure of the assistance being rendered to them by the Ian Smith regime, unleashed a reign of terror in the area, torturing and massacring unarmed villagers. Additional Rhodesian soldiers, however, have subsequently been killed in Tete province. South Africa was also reported to have two battalions stationed in Tete, officially described as "police" but believed to be soldiers.

On July 6 a bus carrying soldiers and civilian workers on its way from the dam site to the town of Tete was ambushed and set ablaze by bazookas, killing many passengers and causing others to flee. Two days later two Portuguese helicopters flying over the zone of this ambush were fired on from the ground, one bursting into flames and forced to crash land several miles away.

During the same period, FRELIMO maintained pressure on some of the more remote Portuguese military posts and camps south of the Zambezi, destroying or damaging several, causing others to be abandoned, and generally bringing about a withdrawal of Portuguese troops from these areas. Withdrawing these troops may have been an acknowledgement of their uselessness: they were completely encircled by FRELIMO and were unable to take offensive action; supplies had to be flown in at great expense; and the surrounded camps were good targets for the constant guerrilla attacks. FRELIMO also announced that between May 6 and July 21 a "protective village" (strategic hamlet) had been abandoned, six major ambushes and eleven sabotage operations took place, 82 Portuguese troops were killed, and fifteen military vehicles and one tractor destroyed.

The Portuguese responded by increasing the number of troops in Tete province to 20,000. FRELIMO simply increased its own activity, reporting for the period July to September 34 major ambushes throughout the province, resulting in 130 Portuguese soldiers killed and 30 vehicles destroyed, as well as 71 sabotage operations killing over 200 Portuguese soldiers and blowing up 57 vehicles. Reports published in Rhodesia stated that between August 20 and September 3 alone, 22 Portuguese soldiers were killed. FRELIMO also began to report the sinking of Portuguese patrol boats on the Zambezi; attacks during July through September destroyed seven boats and killed at least 35 Portuguese troops manning them. FRELIMO also announced that on September 17 it shot down one of two aircraft which had been bombing villages, killing its four man crew. Two submachine guns were salvaged, as well as aircraft parts for identification.

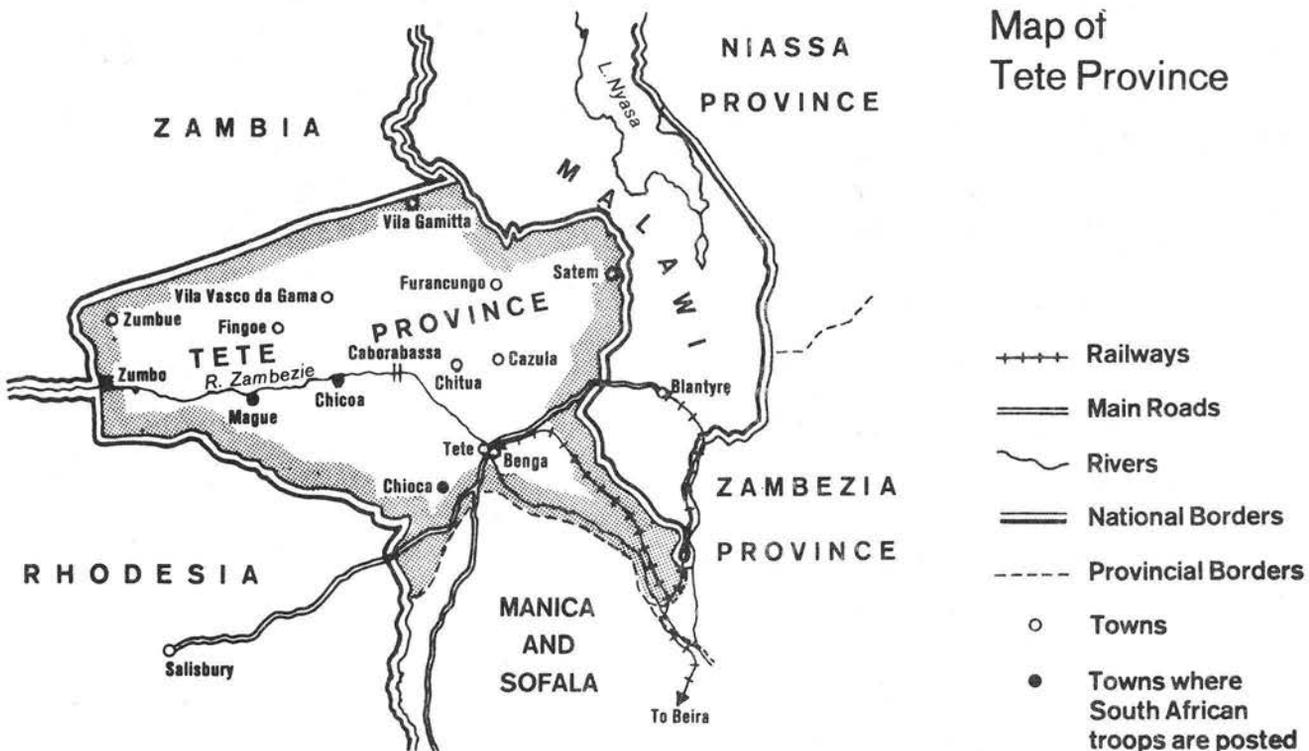
Late September and October marked a steep increase in FRELIMO's activity in Tete. Mining incidents and ambushes were becoming so frequent that reports published in Rhodesia and elsewhere stated that the provincial capitol was isolated except by air, roads in all directions around the town being unsafe. FRELIMO actions were now affecting international traffic on the main road between Rhodesia and Malawi, which passes across Tete province. The Rhodesian government advised its citizens not to use the road, and the Portuguese went so far as to require all traffic on major highways in the province to move in convoys. The Portuguese also announced a further 50% increase in the number of troops in the province.

On October 22, the Portuguese command in a communique admitted for the first time that FRELIMO was operating successfully in the Tete district and had apparently succeeded in contacting the local population. While claiming that the situation had never given rise to "serious concern", the Portuguese further admitted that there was "some anxiety" because of the proximity of Cabora Bassa, the rich farming area of the Zambezi basin, and the promising mining concessions in the area.

On October 31, in a speech, General Kaulza de Arriaga, while stating that the war was "already won" in southern Niassa province and was being won in the north of Mozambique, admitted that in Tete the Portuguese forces were "behind schedule." Some of the events that took place between this speech and the end of the year can be outlined. Continued minings and ambushes occurred on the Rhodesia-Malawi international road and elsewhere. During November and December FRELIMO guerrillas blew up several trains and 400 meters of railway track. In mid-December a tractor-trailer, carrying passengers, hit a land mine on a bush track, and 15 died. The Guardian in London reported on December 17 that despite Kaulza de Arriaga's assurances that there was no cause for alarm, the situation was worsening, and that guerrillas were reported to have directly machine-gunned guarded motor convoys.

A FRELIMO communique covering the period simply cited the Portuguese reports of incidents, commenting, "The enemy have been unable to conceal our operations, because they take place in or near urban areas and are therefore immediately known by the whole population in the area."

Effects of FRELIMO's increasing activity in Tete are shown by certain events of the past year. In June 1971 the civil and military administration of Tete province was unified under a military governor, a step unprecedented in Mozambique. The Portuguese have further been attempting to move some 83,000 African residents of the Zambezi area into aldeamentos, or "protective villages," similar to the U.S.- sponsored strategic hamlets which failed in Vietnam. This program has apparently met with considerable resistance. Fearing sabotage by workers at the dam, the Portuguese have carried out extensive background and credential checks on over 1,000 European workers and their families. The number of Portuguese military sectors in Tete province has been increased from one to three. Extensive efforts are being made to pave all the main roads, making mining more difficult but not impossible, as FRELIMO has equipment which removes a square of pavement from the road allowing insertion of a mine into the softer roadbed below, and then replaces the square of pavement. Air cover for troops has been reinforced. On October 14, the Governor General of Mozambique, Eduardo Arrantes de Oliveira, resigned for what were described as reasons of health, though observers noted that it came when FRELIMO was putting increased pressure on the Portuguese, particularly in the Cabora Bassa area. Frequent consultations have been held with South African military officials. In late



October a South African mineral exploration firm announced that it had withdrawn its prospectors from some areas in Tete because the Portuguese were unable to guarantee their safety. A Rhodesian newspaper reported in January 1972 that FRELIMO penetration in Tete was widespread and deep, up to 400 kilometers. FRELIMO claims that the construction work on the dam is several months behind schedule.

Little has been reported about any specific Portuguese military actions. On May 4, 1971, a "great offensive" supposedly began, on which Kaulza de Arriaga had staked his prestige. The newspapers reveal nothing of the outcome of this offensive, except that FRELIMO activities have continued to increase. In July leaflets were dropped along the Zambezi warning the people on pain of death not to try to cross the river or go around with "baddits." On December 23, 1971, and January 18, 1972, Portuguese reported smashing a total of three FRELIMO camps.

There has, in any event, been widespread terrorization of the African population by the Portuguese. In November and December at least 5,000 refugees crossed into Malawi, with stories of Portuguese attacks and of such atrocities as forcing mothers to place their babies in mtondos, the mortars used for grinding grain, and then to pound them to death with pestles. The Portuguese Embassy in Malawi has in effect admitted that such stories might be true. Over 2,000 additional refugees have been driven so far as to cross into Rhodesia, though many of these have been sent back by Rhodesian authorities.

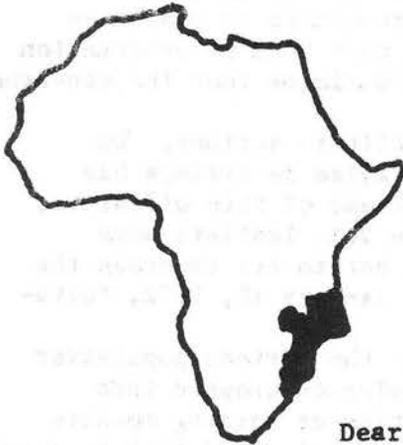
FRELIMO's activities have continued on into 1972. On February 9 FRELIMO carried out its largest single sabotage operation yet in its campaign to stop Cabora Bassa. A truck loaded with several tons of high explosives was blown up, killing five soldiers and four civilians, and injuring five more. The Portuguese in their communique disclosing the action admitted that it had been carried out "with the complicity of some members of the population." The incident took place on the road from Tete to the construction site, but the exact location was not disclosed, suggesting that it may have been very close to the dam site, which Lisbon insists is militarily impregnable. In the New York Times of February 11, Marvin Howe states that the Portuguese are troubled by the recent upsurge in FRELIMO activity, and points out that the admission of complicity by a part of the population is a serious one for the Portuguese who claim to be trying to win the people over. Attacks on several road convoys have been recently reported, and on March 4 a Rhodesian bus with no passengers was blown up on the road between Tete and the Rhodesian border, killing the driver and the conductor.

In February an AFP dispatch reported that General Deslandes, Portugal's No. 2 military commander was on an inspection tour of Tete province, and was to review the situation with Kaulza de Arriaga, who might be asked to extend his tour of duty to carry out his pledge of total victory over FRELIMO. The dispatch indicated that FRELIMO pressure in Tete was causing great concern to the colonial authorities, and that sources indicated large scale Portuguese military operations were in the offing.

In sum, FRELIMO has caused serious disruption of the Cabora Bassa project. Rather than attack the heavily protected dam directly, it has followed a more classic guerrilla strategy of isolating it. Complete cutting of the road and rail lines to the site would make completion of the dam virtually impossible, unless the Portuguese should resort to flying in cement and other supplies, of which there is already some indication.

Even if the project is completed, its Achilles heel will be the power line running some 875 miles to a substation near Pretoria. Some 600 miles of this line will run across Mozambique bush country, and while a special security program, including aircraft patrol, is planned, it is hard to envisage any program that could prevent frequent sabotage along so long a line passing through such remote country.

committee for a FREE MOZAMBIQUE



616 WEST 116TH STREET #1A
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10027

Dear Friends of Mozambique,

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(partial list)

This past month has been a busy one for CFM. Last week we sent to FRELIMO nearly a ton of clothing which was collected from New York CFM members and from other groups, especially students at Lincoln University, responding to Bob Van Lierop's speaking tour. Our original purpose in collecting the clothes was to learn the procedures involved in getting clothes to Mozambique so that we could pass on this information to other groups, so write to us if you are interested in having this information. The amount of clothing we raised in a short time far exceeded our expectations.

We want to remind you that Bob Van Lierop and Bob Fletcher, two Afro-American photojournalists who recently spent six weeks in liberated Mozambique, are available for speaking engagements for a small honorarium. They're really inspiring and their slides are beautiful; we highly recommend them. The tape of the CFM radio interview with them, part of which was printed in the last "News and Notes" is also available, so let us know if you would like to use it.

Other activities: CFM members participated in a national conference of churchmen, Black scholars, and other groups supporting liberation movements in southern Africa in Washington, D.C. Also, together with some Columbia University groups, CFM participated in demonstrations protesting university and American corporate involvement in Namibia and commemorating the Sharpville Massacre.

We have acquired Margaret Dickenson's excellent new 30 minute color film, "Behind the Lines" which shows the Mozambican struggle against Portuguese colonial rule and the development of the new society in liberated Mozambique (rental fee - \$25).

This month's "News and Notes" is devoted to an account of FRELIMO's activities in Tete Province.

VENCEREMOS!

Committee for a Free Mozambique