

Exclusive Report From Mozambique:

A High Price On Development

A journalist who recently visited Mozambique filed this report on the problems and prospects of that key black African nation's development goals.

Two striking yet contradictory facts immediately impress the visitor to Mozambique.

First, this large, sparsely populated country of about 10 million people represents one of the most promising potentials for economic development in Africa, if not the entire so-called Third World. Its fertile river valleys, such as the Limpopo and the Zambeze, are perfectly suited for large-scale irrigated and mechanized agriculture. These same rivers could provide the electric

and from Maputo to the South African Transvaal. In fact, through treaty arrangements, the former Central African Federation (now Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, and Rhodesia) was prevented from seeking alternative ports.

Thus, by 1965, two-thirds of the total tonnage handled in Beira, Mozambique's largest port, and a fifth of the tonnage passing through Maputo were from Southern Rhodesia alone. So interconnected were these economies

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power for industrial processing of barely tapped reserves of iron, coal, and bauxite. Its port infrastructure is among the most developed on the continent. It is not difficult to see that this potential, once integrated with the vast mineral resources of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Angola, would represent an important basis for the industrialization of all of southern Africa.

Yet, the Mozambican economy is among the most troubled in the world, due to the simple fact that not since the isolation of Cuba has a nation struggled for development under such aversive conditions.

Independence and Interdependence

Development would never have been easy for a sovereign Mozambique, even if it were not under siege. Undoing 500 years of colonial pillage at the hands of Portugal and its British banking patrons, Mozambicans emphasize, is an awesome task in itself. Colonialism's legacy is a population that is 90 percent illiterate. The very structure of the economy is designed to move the largest amount of loot out of the country as fast as possible; the only domestically oriented activity was geared to servicing the expatriate community that administered the colony. The population at large was without even the minimum in the way of roads, hospitals, and adequate food.

By the 20th century, Portugal was completely indebted to the City of London, and so Mozambique's primary role became that of servicing the important British colonies that surrounded the Portuguese colony on all sides. Large modern railroads were constructed from the port of Beira to Salisbury for transport of Rhodesian chrome,

Cuba And Mozambique Collaborate

Mozambique's potential as a mediator of economic development for all of southern Africa was emphasized during Mozambican President Samora Machel's recent visit to Cuba. In a speech Oct. 12 welcoming Machel, Cuban President Fidel Castro cited Mozambique's vast mineral, agricultural, and hydroelectric resources as the basis for such regional progress, referring to the African nation as a future breadbasket for the entire continent. Not only does Mozambique possess more than 50 million hectares of arable land, said Castro, but its huge rivers represent enough hydro-electric capability to supply internal needs as well as much of the energy requirements of neighboring countries. There are rivers in Mozambique, the Cuban president noted, that equal the flow of all of Cuba's rivers combined.

However, the new African nation must "start from zero," Castro said, due to the backwardness and lack of skills of the population resulting from Portuguese colonialism.

Machel, acknowledging Castro's remarks, stated that the colonial regime "organized misery, sowed illiteracy, and maintained the population in maximum backwardness" as a deliberate policy of subjugation.

To reverse this labor power problem of Mozambique, Cuba has received more than 1,000 Mozambican students this year in technical and general education programs, and pledges to double this figure next year. Four schools have been built especially for Mozambicans in Cuba, while the Cuban government has sent more than 400 technical advisors and personnel to Mozambique.