

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS AN ALIENATED BORDERLAND: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE MOZAMBIKAN WAR, 1975-1992

This chapter presents the reader with a macro-context of the Mozambican war. This analysis suggests that the border became an alienated, no-man's land during the war and that all social and cultural ties along the border were broken as cross-border contact became impossible. In the next chapter I illustrate how a micro-analysis of the war gives lie to this perception. Whereas a more traditional interpretation of the war creates a picture of a barren no-man's land, an 'on the ground' study of local actors and events illustrates that the border became a vibrant landscape traversed by refugees, weapons smugglers and militant political groups during the war.

Borderland milieus are determined by two factors: the relations between the centres of power of two neighbouring states and the multitude of relations between people living within the borderlandscape. In this chapter I examine the first factor. I argue that the militant stance taken by the governments of South Africa and Mozambique toward one another after 1975 changed the borderland milieu from *interdependent* to *alienated* (Martinez 1998:6). This had a detrimental effect on the free movement of local people across the international border and so increased disunity within the borderlandscape.

FRELIMO (*Frente da Libertação de Moçambique*), the party who took control of Mozambique after independence in 1975, openly contested South Africa's Apartheid policy and provided operative bases for South African liberation movements. Angered by this, South Africa followed Rhodesia in supporting an

insurgency movement – the MNR (Mozambique National Resistance) – that unleashed a brutal war in Mozambique. Strong restrictions were placed on the free movement of people and goods across the border between South Africa and Mozambique and contact along the borderline was discouraged. This complicated social and cultural contact and exchange across the borderline and so fostered disunion.

Furthermore, the Mozambican war led to the displacement of millions of people, many of whom settled across the border in South Africa. Once settled in South Africa, these refugees adopted the local language and customs - by this time strongly under Zulu ethnic and political influence - to protect them from prosecution and repatriation by the South African Police and Defence Force. In the 1980s the Mozambican side of the borderland became almost completely de-populated as a result of the fighting there. When the war ended, demobilised soldiers, displaced refugees, immigrants from neighbouring countries and returning refugees inhabited the northern side of the borderlandscape. These people spoke languages and practised customs foreign to the area and infinitely different from the people south of the border. In this way, the war has created cultural diversity in the borderland.

In this chapter I examine the macro context of the Mozambican war. The war in Mozambique was more than just a civil war (see Fauvet 1984; Cammack 1988; Morgan 1990:605-507). Its roots lay in the colonial legacy of Mozambique and the war itself was part of a global and regional war fought between the forces of communism and capitalism and between white supremacy and black liberation. Although the war was fought in Mozambique, it was sustained by forces outside Mozambique, most notably, the South African government (Chingono 1996:55). In order to understand the war and the manner in which it was experienced in the

borderland, it is necessary to analyse the macro-context of the war, specifically the relations between the governments of South Africa and Mozambique. As Englund (2002:3) notes, any ‘account of the war that leaves out the history of colonialism in Mozambique, and the waging of Cold War world-wide, must face the charge of distortion.’ The decisions taken by the governments of South Africa and Mozambique had an immense influence on the situation at their territorial periphery or borderlands. This chapter thus provides the necessary context for understanding chapter four that deals with the manner in which the Mozambican war was experienced in the borderlandscape.

‘External aggression, internal discontent’

I borrowed the title from Englund (2002:3) who sums up the two main arguments on the origins of the Mozambican war as follows: ‘the fundamental dividing line is the question of whether this was a civil war or a national tragedy created by external aggression.’ I argue here, along with recent studies (Geffray 1990; Englund 2002:3; Vines 1991:93; and Nordstrom 1997:47-67) that the war was both a result of external aggression and internal discontent. Geffray (1990) shows that, although RENAMO (*Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana*)¹ started as an instrument of the Rhodesian and South African governments (external aggression) it grew from strength to strength because of ‘internal discontent’ against the policies of the FRELIMO government.

Mozambican independence in 1975 came as a great shock to the white minority governments of Rhodesia and South Africa. Previously southern Africa had formed a bloc of white-ruled settler states, closely, although informally, allied to the

¹ Also known by its English acronym MNR, which stands for Mozambique National Resistance.

United States. The political and security situation in southern Africa had now changed dramatically. It became apparent that military strength and cooperation by the white controlled regimes alone could no longer maintain regional stability (Hanlon 1984:10; Barber & Barrat 1990:179). The collapse of Portuguese colonial rule brought Marxist regimes to Angola and Mozambique and direct Cuban and Soviet intervention in support of the MPLA (*Movimento para a Libertação de Angola*). This encouraged President Machel of Mozambique to support black majority rule in South Africa and Rhodesia. The African National Congress (ANC) was allowed to operate in Mozambique and FRELIMO lent active support to Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) forces (Newitt 2002:208).

In 1974 the Rhodesian government established RENAMO to prevent the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) from establishing bases in Mozambique (Huffman 1992:1). RENAMO was consciously modelled on the *flechas* (arrows), recruited by the Portuguese in Angola during the 1960s (Flower 1987:300-301). RENAMO brought together dissidents who fled Mozambique after independence and sought refuge in Rhodesia. By training and supporting RENAMO, the Rhodesian government could do battle with ZANLA in a covert way and also create pockets of instability in Mozambique. Initially RENAMO was based entirely in Rhodesia and comprised of no more than five hundred men (Barber & Barrat 1990:270).²

² Initially RENAMO was not seen as having any role independent of Rhodesia and was not considered to represent any serious threat to the Mozambican regime. The majority of RENAMO's leadership and recruits came from the Ndaou group of Shona speakers who lived along the borders of Rhodesia. The Ndaou had a long history of guerrilla-style resistance against Afro-Portuguese warlords, Ndebele and Gaza impis, Rhodesian settlers and Portuguese colonial authorities. Of particular relevance are the nineteenth century wars of the Ndaou against the Gaza. The Ndaou's opposition to the 'southerners' (Machel himself originating from Gaza) evoked memories of resistance to Mzila and Gungunhana a hundred years earlier. However, RENAMO's campaign should not be seen as primarily an ethnic conflict. From the outset it was a movement raised and largely directed by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (Newitt 2002:209-210; Wilson 1992:542).

In the new political climate after 1974 all ties³ between South Africa and Mozambique were in danger of breaking. Despite its fears of what was happening in Mozambique, the South African government's initial position towards the new government in Mozambique was generally positive. President John Voster made it clear that he wished the new government to succeed and that South Africa wanted to maintain economic and social ties with Mozambique. There was however, from the outset, a different viewpoint in the South African government. A group in the government led by P.W. Botha and the military establishment advocated a less cooperative approach. This group highlighted the dangers of having 'terrorists' in government in a country bordering South Africa. They wanted to use military and economic strength to stop FRELIMO from consolidating their power. Barber and Barrat (1990:181) cite reports that South African forces were mobilised on the Mozambican border to support the coup of the Free Mozambique Movement⁴ without the knowledge of President Voster. This was only prevented after Voster learnt of these plans. Initially thus, South Africa maintained a policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of Mozambique and stopped attempts at recruiting mercenaries to oppose the FRELIMO government among the Portuguese residents of South Africa (Barber & Barrat 1990:181).

FRELIMO, for its part, declared Mozambique a Marxist-Leninist state and adopted 'non-alignment' as the basis of its foreign policy. In 1977 the Soviet President visited Maputo and a declaration of friendship was signed between the two

³ These ties included investments of South African businessmen in Mozambique and contract workers from Mozambique working on South African mines, who numbered 120 000 by 1974, as well as exports of South African goods at Lourenco Marques and Beira, the Cabora Bassa hydroelectric dam on the Zambezi River, the viability of which was based on South Africa's promise to purchase all the power generated in the initial phases (Barber & Barrat 1990:179).

⁴ The Movement for a Free Mozambique was a white dominated group who attempted a coup in Lourenco Marques in 1975. The coup was crushed, which led to the large-scale exodus of some 200, 000 people of Portuguese extraction from Mozambique (Barber & Barrat 1990:179).

countries. These declarations alienated Mozambique from its immediate neighbours. This was aggravated by FRELIMO's firm declarations of support for majority rule in South Africa, Rhodesia and Namibia (Newitt 2002:206).

However, Mozambique's relationship with South Africa remained ambiguous. Although the Mozambican government supported the ANC, it decided to renew labour agreements with South Africa, encouraged the use of the port at Maputo, and even asked for South African help to operate it. Furthermore, in March 1977 Mozambique started to sell power from Cabora Bassa to South Africa. Despite its opposition of South Africa's race policy, FRELIMO did not implement sanctions against South Africa. Then Foreign Minister, Joaquim Chissanao, argued 'we have to be realistic and realise that we cannot do it ourselves' (Barber & Barrat 1990:215-216 and Isaacman & Isaacman 1983:174).

However, the scale of economic interaction between South Africa and Mozambique did decline. This was partly a conscious decision by the Mozambican government, but also stemmed from the crises posed by RENAMO inside the country (Barber & Barrat 1990:215-216). South African mining companies also changed their labour recruiting policies and made more use of domestic labour. No new contracts were signed with Mozambicans and the numbers of Mozambican mine workers declined rapidly from around 120, 000 in 1975 to only 40, 000 in 1978 (Newitt 2002:205). This meant a great reduction in state revenue for the Mozambican government as well as a loss of income for worker families (Newitt 2002:205). FRELIMO's policies drastically affected the tourist industry. From 1974 to 1977 South African road traffic through Maputo decreased by forty per cent (Barber & Barrat 1990:215-216). After large numbers of Portuguese fled Mozambique, Maputo ceased to be a holiday playground for wealthy South Africans. This was exacerbated

by the closing down of Maputo's sex industry. FRELIMO saw the large sex industry of the capital as one of the worst aspects of colonial corruption. The Mozambican government rounded-up large numbers of sex workers for re-education, closed down bars and stopped the free operation of the sex trade. This closing also adversely affected tourism (Newitt 2002:205).

The demon gains strength: RENAMO and the destabilisation of Mozambique

The election of P.W. Botha as Prime Minister of South Africa in 1978 marked a significant break in South Africa's foreign policy in southern Africa. Botha had been Minister of Defence since 1966 and his experience in that portfolio had the greatest influence on his leadership, particularly in the conduct of foreign policy (Barber & Barrat 1990:247-248).

Botha's view of security as the critical consideration in domestic and foreign policies was expressed in his concept of a total national strategy. This new strategy was a response to what was perceived as a 'total onslaught' on South Africa as a strategic ally of the Western World by communist-inspired forces orchestrated from Moscow. The aim of the total onslaught was 'the overthrow of the present constitutional order and its replacement by a subject communist orientated black government' (Barber & Barrat 1981:254). Since a direct military offensive would be too expensive, Moscow aimed to use indirect methods like propaganda and boycotts amongst the 'non-white' population of South Africa. Accordingly, the ANC, the South African Communist Party and the Pan-Africanist Congress were major drivers in the total onslaught and they were assisted by the neighbouring black states, especially those with Marxist governments, like Mozambique. The head of the South African Defence Force, General Constand Viljoen, identified Mozambique as a

stronghold of communism from where liberation movements could move against Rhodesia and South Africa (Barber & Barrat 1990:254).

Certain trends in post-independence Mozambique had caused concern to Pretoria. Barber and Barrat (1990:270) identify these as ‘the close links with the USSR and the Eastern bloc; attempts at socialist modernisation⁵; support given to Rhodesian insurgents; provocative anti-apartheid rhetoric; and particularly the use after 1976-7 of Mozambique as a corridor for ANC infiltration.’

South Africa abandoned the principles of non-intervention in its dealings with Angola and Mozambique. In Mozambique South Africa supported a rebellion against a regime it recognised as legitimate. South African involvement escalated dramatically after the collapse of Smith’s Rhodesian government (Hanlon 1984:221-228). RENAMO’s main base now moved across the Limpopo River to South Africa. This transfer also included the staff and equipment of RENAMO’s radio station and propaganda tool, ‘*Voz da Africa Livre*’, (The Voice of Free Africa) which claimed to be inside Mozambique, but had in fact been operated by the Central Intelligence Organisation from inside Rhodesia (Barber & Barrat 1990:271; Chingono 1996:31).

The South African Defence Force moved for a larger and more effective deployment of RENAMO. It trained RENAMO recruits and delivered arms, ammunition and logistical supplies into Mozambique. The South African Defence Force also issued orders to RENAMO commanders and enabled the RENAMO radio

⁵ According to West (2001:119-121), FRELIMO aimed to dramatically transform Mozambican society and the operation of power within it. This required, the ‘liberation of constituent communities and their members – in short, the decolonisation of individual minds and the creation of what FRELIMO referred to as the “new man”.’ Shortly after independence FRELIMO started to implement Marxist-Leninist principles in Mozambique. All schools, clinics, hospitals, colleges, legal practises, funeral parlours, all land, most privately owned businesses and other property were nationalised (Stiff 1999:155). FRELIMO planned to do away with traditional chiefs, replacing them with Party Secretaries. Hand-in-hand with this went a forced collectivisation programme and huge state farms based on the Soviet pattern, which greatly disrupted traditional systems of land tenure (Newitt 1995:571).

station to continue its broadcasts from inside South Africa (Barber & Barrat 1990:271). RENAMO also opened offices in Germany, Britain, the United States and Portugal to represent its interests and tried to align itself with other non-communist movements, like the Contras of Nicaragua (Newitt 2002:211).

Due to South African support and deteriorating economic conditions in Mozambique, RENAMO became a real threat to the FRELIMO government.⁶ RENAMO attacks on the infrastructure and rural areas led to further impoverishment and disaffection with the government. Alfonso Dhlakama, the leader of RENAMO predicted the fall of FRELIMO by 1985 and promised that food shortages would then end because of supplies from South Africa (Barber & Barrat 1990:271).

In supporting RENAMO the main aim of South Africa was seemingly not to destabilise Mozambique, since this would have led to security problems on South Africa's borders much greater than the existence of a communist neighbour. Rather, South Africa wanted to change Maputo's policy towards the ANC. In 1980 Botha sent a diplomatic note to President Machel that warned of counter-action if FRELIMO persisted to support the ANC (Chingono 1996:31). Hereafter, South Africa launched direct attacks on ANC bases inside Mozambique. In 1981 South African troops raided ANC houses in the Matola suburb of Maputo and, in 1983 South Africa launched several air strikes at ANC targets on the outskirts of Maputo (Prinsloo 1997:144). The South African Defence Force claimed that forty-one ANC members and seventeen FRELIMO soldiers died in the attacks. This was followed by a

⁶ McGregor (1998:42) has shown that there was indeed strong resistance to the state's policy of creating communal villages and farms. Similarly, Geffray's (1990) main argument in his famous thesis on the war in Mozambique is that, together with FRELIMO's refusal to recognise traditional authority, its villagisation programme was the main reason why the government lost popular support and effectively handed RENAMO 'the critical mass of rural constituents required to transform itself from an instrument of external aggression into an autonomous, self-reproducing social organism (Dinerman 1994:572). The villagisation programme and failure to recognise the authority of the chiefs may not have been the reasons why RENAMO initially opposed FRELIMO, but as the war gained momentum RENAMO used these factors as a way to garner support for its struggle (Newitt 1995:571).

commando raid on ANC offices in Maputo in October (Barber & Barat 1990:292-293; Stiff 1999:397-405).

The Ingwavuma Land Deal: a South African attempt to create a buffer state with Mozambique

Probably the best example of how the relations between the governments of Mozambique and South Africa between 1975 and 1992 influenced the borderland milieu was the failed Ingwavuma Land Deal of the early 1980s. According to this plan South Africa wanted to cede the Ingwavuma magisterial district in northern KwaZulu to Swaziland. That is, the entire area stretching along the Mozambique border with KwaZulu from the Swaziland border to the Indian Ocean. A strip some eighty kilometres long and fifty kilometres wide (see Map 3). This would decrease the length of the Mozambique/ South Africa border and also the ANC's ability to use Mozambique as a corridor for infiltrating South Africa. The plan, known as the Ingwavuma Land Deal, also included ceding the Bantustan ('homeland') of KaNgwane to Swaziland. The move would have increased Swaziland's population and landmass considerably and would have provided it with an access to the sea. South Africa would not only have had a buffer state, which opposed the ANC, but also would have denationalised a large percentage of its black population. South Africa tried to persuade the Swazi government to ally itself more closely with South Africa. This led to the signing of a non-aggression pact in February 1982 and thereafter, to a major clampdown on the ANC inside Swaziland (Omer-Cooper 1994:269).

The South African government pushed hard to implement the Ingwavuma Land Deal. To justify incorporating the inhabitants of Ingwavuma into Swaziland, the government sought to prove that the Thonga were ethnically closer to the Swazi than the Zulu. A 'Committee of Experts' was set up under the chairmanship of F.R. Tomlinson (1982) to present evidence on the ethnic and historical linkages of the inhabitants of Ingwavuma. The report, as well as an article by a prominent ethnologist at the University of Pretoria, J.J. Van Wyk (1983:58-62), found that the inhabitants of Ingwavuma living west of the Pongola River had ethnic and historic linkages with the Swazi and should rather be placed in the Swazi 'nation-state' than in KwaZulu. The people living east of the Pongola River were dissimilar from both the Swazi and the Zulu. However, Van Wyk (1983:62) argued that they would be happy to be placed with the Swazi. Despite all these efforts at 'ethnic-engineering', successful legal action by the KaNgwane and KwaZulu legislative assemblies blocked the implementation of the Ingwavuma Land Deal, thereby stopping the South African government's plans to create a buffer state between South Africa and Mozambique.

The government's plan of social engineering in Ingwavuma led to an outburst of Zulu jingoism and to mass recruitment into Inkatha, the Zulu 'cultural' organisation. Zulu became the only language of the public sector and the only medium of education in the schools in the area. Chief Mzimba Tembe, who actively supported the Land Deal, was thereafter forced to openly acknowledge subservience of his people to the Zulu and to deny a Thonga identity in favour of a Zulu identity. In this manner the Mozambican war and the South African government's efforts to create a buffer state with Mozambique led to further cultural diversity in the borderland. The Thonga people in the southern part of the borderland increasingly

identified with the rest of KwaZulu, rather than with speakers of the same language north of the border.

Failed attempt to kill the demon: the Nkomati Accord and its aftermath

On 16 March 1984 the governments of South Africa and Mozambique signed a joint security pact. Presidents Botha and Machel met in an open train on the Mozambique/South Africa border near Komatipoort. According to the Nkomati Accord the two governments undertook to 'respect each other's sovereignty and independence, and in fulfilment of this fundamental obligation, to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the other' (Prinsloo 1997:145). They specifically agreed:

not [to] allow their respective territories, territorial waters or airspace to be used as a base, thoroughfare, or in any other way by another state, government, foreign military forces, organisations or individuals which plan or prepare to commit acts of violence, terrorism and aggression against the territorial integrity or political independence of the other, or may threaten the security of its inhabitants (Nkomati Accord, 1984:2, cited in Prinsloo 1997:145).

One of the first practical outcomes of the Nkomati Accords was the signing in May 1984 of a trilateral agreement between South Africa, Mozambique and Portugal regarding the Cabora Bassa Electricity Scheme (Prinsloo 1997:145).

After the signing of the Nkomati Accord, South Africa moved to end the war in Mozambique. In October Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, announced that the Mozambican government and RENAMO agreed to a South African sponsored cease-fire proposal. The plan called for RENAMO to recognise President Samora Machel's regime. Also, South Africa offered troops to monitor the cease-fire and provide technical help for the war- and drought-ravaged Mozambique.

Despite these undertakings, South Africa continued its covert support for RENAMO. With South African support RENAMO launched offensives from Malawi

against the provinces of Tete, Zambezia and Sofala in 1986 (Englund 2002:10). It was also certain that, despite efforts from South Africa, RENAMO was not likely to disband. Evo Fernandes, leader of RENAMO's delegation to the cease-fire talks, declared that his organisation 'will not accept the presence of South African troops on Mozambican territory.' As for the Machel government, he added, 'the war continues, and we may have to escalate our actions' (*Time*, 15 October 1984).

Despite the Nkomati Accord, relations between South Africa and Mozambique deteriorated. FRELIMO alleged that the South African Defence Force and private South African sources continued to support RENAMO. The government of South Africa rejected these allegations. Furthermore, the border area was declared as restricted airspace to prevent private interests from aiding RENAMO. An investigation was also launched to reveal possible RENAMO sympathisers in the South African Defence Force. Despite these pronouncements, evidence suggests continued clandestine South African support for RENAMO.⁷ Although FRELIMO did not renounce the Nkomati Accords after this, relations with Pretoria were damaged and the joint security committee, whose task it was to monitor violations of the Accord, was suspended (Barber & Barrat 1990:316-317).

In 1986 tensions between Pretoria and Maputo appeared to ease and Foreign Minister Pik Botha even paid a visit to Maputo. Tensions dramatically resurfaced on 19 October 1986 when Samora Michel died in an air crash a few hundred meters inside South African airspace. The government of Mozambique blamed South Africa, alleging that the South African security forces caused the crash by luring the aircraft off its course by a decoy radio beacon. A South African investigation committee

⁷ The most incriminating of these were the so-called Vaz Diaries or Gorongoza documents seized at a RENAMO base in Gorongoza. The documents revealed several flights undertaken by the South African military to transport supplies and weapons to RENAMO as well as details of three clandestine visits by Vice-Minister Louis Nel to RENAMO bases in Mozambique (Prinsloo 1997:301).

found that the Soviet crew of the aircraft did not follow the correct procedures. Neither Mozambique nor the Soviet Union accepted the findings and suspicions of the South African government's involvement persisted. Despite the deterioration of the relationship between the South African and Mozambican governments, labour, transport, trade and energy links between the two countries continued. The contradictory relationship between Pretoria and Maputo is evident in the fact that in May 1986 South Africa granted a R3 million loan to Mozambique for the upgrade of Maputo harbour, while in June General Malan called the Mozambican government 'Marxist lackeys' (Barber & Barrat 1990:317).

Conditions in Mozambique continued to deteriorate. The mid-1980s saw an increase in hostilities between FRELIMO and RENAMO and the continuation of internal and external displacements in Mozambique. As the after-effects of Machel's death receded, working relations between South Africa and Mozambique improved. Despite mutual suspicion, both Botha and the new Mozambican president, Joaquim Chissano reaffirmed their commitment to the Nkomati Accord. A joint security committee was resuscitated and agreement was reached on the financing of the Cabora Bassa dam (Barber & Barrat 1990:335).

The death of the demon: RENAMO and FRELIMO sign the Rome Peace Treaty

By the late 1980s FRELIMO had ceased to function as a government outside of the capital of Maputo. Still it refused to talk to RENAMO, unwilling to confer on RENAMO the status of legitimate opponent. RENAMO, for its part, also did not want to talk to FRELIMO, whom it did not recognise as a legitimate government (Newitt 2002:220). However, with the collapse of communism throughout Eastern Europe the ideological differences between FRELIMO and RENAMO diminished.

Still, the battle continued. Soldiers on both sides feared losing their guns. For some, they were the ‘implements for enforcing local protection rackets; for others, the only means of getting food.’ Fearing that their movement's bloody reputation would not help them win elections, RENAMO's leaders preferred to prolong the war and entrench their own positions (*Economist* 15 August 1992).

FRELIMO started to dismantle the structures of the one-party Marxist state thereby nullifying RENAMO's claim that it fought for democracy and capitalism. Furthermore, the new South African president, F.W. de Klerk reined in the South African military. In 1990 Namibia became independent and peace talks in Angola led to the withdrawal of Cuban troops. The end of the Cold War in southern Africa coupled with a devastating drought in Mozambique in 1990 finally forced FRELIMO and RENAMO to the negotiating table (Newitt 2002:220).

At this stage FRELIMO approached the Vatican and the Italian government to help in the peace process.⁸ With the Italian lay brotherhood of Sant'Egidio acting as brokers, a General Peace Agreement was eventually in Rome during October 1992, and general elections were scheduled for 1994 (Newitt 2002:221).

The effects of the ten-year war in Mozambique were catastrophic. The war cost over a million lives (Nordstrom 1995:39-41). The destruction of social and economic infrastructures caused immense devastation and human suffering. But the cost in human suffering was caused by more than destruction of property. Murder, rape, and mutilation were perpetrated on a mass scale. Homes were plundered, land and crops were burnt, and livestock were butchered. The terror that was instilled in ordinary people and the wholesale destruction of homes and land disrupted the

⁸ Attempts at mediations between FRELIMO and RENAMO started from 1984 shortly after the signing of the Nkomati Accord. By 1988 pressure from the USA, Kenya and Zimbabwe, who wanted to curtail its military involvement in Mozambique, led to a meeting in Nairobi where both sides put forth proposals. Talks planned for Blantyre, however, failed due to the absence of Alfonso Dlakhama, leader of RENAMO (Newitt 2002:221).

functioning of families and entire communities (see Magaia 1988, Wilson 1992, and Nordstrom 1995 and 1997). The landscape was extremely bleak. A quarter of Mozambique's fifteen million people were made refugees,⁹ most major roads and railways were destroyed. Living standards plummeted. In 1992 the World Bank listed Mozambique as the poorest country in the world, with a per capita income of \$79 a year, while the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 *Human Development Report* ranked it at 159 out of 173 countries in quality-of-life indicators (Wurst 1994:1).

Within days of the signing of the Rome Peace Treaty the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) began to oversee the peace-process. This included the incorporation of FRELIMO and RENAMO soldiers into civilian life, the restructuring and preparation of government for general democratic elections and the repatriation of millions of Mozambican refugees. Sadako Ogata, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees at the time, called the plan to return the 1.7 million Mozambicans who had fled the country during the civil war the biggest U.N. operation ever in Africa. The three-year, US\$ 203 million programme planned to draw refugees from the six countries neighbouring Mozambique.¹⁰ By early July 1993 a total of 800, 000 had already returned, with an estimated 600, 000 expected by the end of the year. On top of these there were the spontaneous returnees who came back without any assistance shortly after the signing of the peace accords (Wurst 1994:1).

⁹ Of the approximately 1.7 million displaced Mozambicans who sought refuge in neighbouring countries during the War, an estimated 250 000 had settled in South Africa, mostly in 'camps' in rural areas along the northeast border with Mozambique (Rodgers 2002:1).

¹⁰ Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Africa.

Conclusion

International relations between the governments of South Africa and Mozambique between 1975 and 1992 had a dramatic effect on the milieu along the territorial boundary between the two countries. South Africa increased its military presence along the Mozambican border and even attempted to create a buffer state between itself and Mozambique. In this climate contact along the borderline was highly regulated and even discouraged. However, it is not only the relationship between the governments of neighbouring countries that determine the borderlandscape milieu. The inhabitants of the borderlandscape play an active role in defining this transitional environment, oftentimes in defiance of the wishes of their respective governments. This chapter presented the reader with a macro-context of the Mozambican war. In the following chapter I present more detail on how the war actually played out in the southern Mozambique/ South Africa borderlandscape. This micro-context is often neglected and local people's actions are regularly seen as mere reactions to 'bigger' historical events. The next chapter shows how local people shaped their own histories against the background sketched in this chapter.