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Caught between the guerrilla and the colonial state: Refugee life in Northern Mozambique during the Independence War (1964–1974)

Introduction

This chapter looks at the war experiences of people in Northern Mozambique during the Mozambican War of Independence (1964–1974). As a Portuguese colony, Mozambique was among the last colonies in Africa to be decolonized. While the French and British empires had begun to dissolve, the Salazar dictatorship made no move to leave Africa, but rather began to further expand control over its colonies. This prompted nationalists in the colonies of Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique to take up arms to fight for independence. In the case of Mozambique, the dominant movement was FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, Mozambique Liberation Front), which had set up its headquarters in neighboring Tanganyika.

The Mozambican War of Independence was in many ways a typical guerrilla war. The Portuguese forces responded to FRELIMO's Maoist-inspired insurgency with an extensive resettlement program aimed at preventing contacts between the nationalists and the population on whose support FRELIMO depended. The outbreak of the war left non-combatants with basically three "options," all of which required people to migrate and change their previous way of life: people could 1) "accept" their resettlement to one of the Portuguese strategic villages (the *aldeamentos*), 2) flee abroad, or 3) move to remote and sparsely populated woodlands of the region, where FRELIMO had set up its bases and which the movement began to call its "liberated zones."

The focus of my chapter lies on the experiences of the people that "chose" this third option. These people faced constant persecution by Portuguese forces who sought to force them into the *aldeamentos*, using a scorched earth policy. By analyzing people's experiences of this persecution, my chapter attempts to contribute to our understanding of processes of persecution by focusing on the perspective of the persecuted. In addition, it seeks to expand our knowledge of the

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history FRELIMO's "liberated zones." Those zones played a crucial role in FRELIMO's propaganda and nation-building project, but have received little serious attention from scholars so far. Much of what we know about them is "clouded in official myth"¹ and still strongly influenced by FRELIMO's "liberation narrative."²

In what follows, I will first present the research background and my sources, give an overview of the Mozambican War of Independence, and then analyze the war experiences of the people in those so-called "liberated zones."

Background of the present research

This chapter grew out of my PhD research, in which I examined the history of a village on the eastern shore of Lake Malawi from the time of the village's formation in the 19th century to the present. The period of the Mozambican War of Independence was part of the analysis in my thesis, but my focus was on those people who had been resettled, as the majority of the village's population ended up in one of the Portuguese strategic villages. In this chapter, I will focus on the experiences of the people living outside these villages. The geographical focus of my chapter is on the province³ of Niassa (see Map 1).

As far as sources are concerned, this is challenging terrain since the people at the heart of this analysis generally left no written records. Interviews are a possible way to fill this gap. I have used them extensively for my research.⁴ However, the use of oral history is hampered by two important limitations. First, and specific

1 Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence* (London: Hurst, 1997), 31.

2 In some ways, the nationalist perspective has recently even been reinforced by books published in Mozambique: Joel das Neves Tembe, ed., *História da Luta de Libertação Nacional*, vol. 1 (Maputo: Ministério dos Combatentes, 2014); David F. Ndegue, *A Luta de Libertação na Frente do Niassa*, vol. 1 (Maputo: JV, 2009). But at the same time, the studies of Jonna Katto and Liazzat Bonate on female combatants of FRELIMO and that of Sayaka Funada-Classen on the district of Maúá have offered more critical perspectives. See Jonna Katto, *Women's Lived Landscapes of War and Liberation in Mozambique: Bodily Memory and the Gendered Aesthetics of Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2019); Liazzat Bonate, "Muslim Memories of the Liberation War in Cabo Delgado," *Kronos* 39, 1 (2013): 230–256; Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Origins of War in Mozambique: A History of Unity and Division*, trans. Masako Osada (Somerset West: African Minds, 2013).

3 Note that I am using the post-colonial terminology for administrative units.

4 My own interviews are identified by PA for "Personal Archives." Apart from my own interviews, I have used interviews from two other collections, namely the one of *Museu Local de Metangula* (MLM) and of the *Secção Oral* of the *Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique* (AHM).



Map 1: Mozambique at the time of the Independence War, source: NordNordWest, CC BY-SA 3.0.

to this analysis, my fieldwork did not focus on the experiences of those people in or near FRELIMO bases. Rather, I captured the experiences of these people as a by-product of my research. Secondly, the reach of oral history is limited by the large temporal difference between the moment of the experience and the moment of the “retelling” of that experience. In the case of the Mozambican War of Independence, we are confronted with the problem that the “memories” are not only filtered through more than 35 years of life experience, but they are also influenced

by the experience of another much deadlier war – the Mozambican Civil War – and the politics of memory of an (at least formerly) authoritarian government that has always made great efforts to influence the reading and interpretation of the war’s events.⁵

I have worked extensively in the archives of the colonial state and of its military and intelligence services. The colonial documentation on the war is nowadays “entirely” accessible for consultation.⁶ The situation is different in the case of the archives of the Mozambican nationalists. While FRELIMO has recently begun to adopt a more liberal policy regarding access to its party archives, I have not yet been able to benefit from this change. The future will tell in what way this documentation will improve our knowledge of the social history of the war and the history of those areas that were “controlled” by the nationalists. Recent publications of scholars who have been able to access this data suggest that they were able to consult mostly propagandistic sources.⁷

Although the available sources hardly allow for a “thick description” of people’s lives during the war, they do allow for the identification of certain general patterns of their experiences.

The course of the war in a nutshell

FRELIMO was founded in Dar es Salaam in 1962 and began its armed struggle against the colonial state from its headquarters in Tanganyika (renamed Tanzania in the same year) in 1964. Initially, FRELIMO was able to make significant advances in the areas bordering Tanzania, namely in the provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa. In the first phase of the war, FRELIMO was very successful

⁵ On this point, see: João Paulo Borges Coelho, “Politics and Contemporary History in Mozambique: A Set of Epistemological Notes,” *Kronos* 39, 1 (2013): 10–19.

⁶ In this chapter I have used documents from the following colonial archives: *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo* (ANTT), Lisbon; *Arquivo da Defesa Nacional* (ADN), Paço de Arcos; *Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique* (AHM), Maputo; *Arquivo Histórico Diplomático* (AHD), Lisbon; *Arquivo Histórico da Marinha* (AHMar), Lisbon; *Arquivo Histórico Militar* (AHMil), Lisbon; *Arquivo Permanente do Gabinete do Governador de Niassa* (APGGN), Lichinga; *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* (AHU), Lisbon. Additional sources come from the archives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (AUNHCR) in Geneva and the archives of the Catholic missionary society *Instituto Missões Consolata* (AIMC).

⁷ See for example Jonna Katto, “Landscapes of Belonging: Female Ex-Combatants Remembering the Liberation Struggle in Urban Maputo,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, 3 (2014): 539–557.

in garnering the support of the population in the form of recruits, food, and information. In large parts of Cabo Delgado and Niassa, the Portuguese authorities lost control of the population, which sought refuge in the sparsely populated woodlands of the region where FRELIMO had established its bases.

As a consequence of FRELIMO's successes, the Portuguese military launched *the* paradigmatic counterinsurgency approach of the time, which combined the resettlement of rural residents with a promise to promote their lives economically and socially.⁸ As part of this resettlement program, nearly one million people were relocated or “regrouped” into *aldeamentos*.⁹ The politico-military success of the Portuguese counterinsurgency approach is highly contested in the literature, although in reality few empirically grounded studies have been conducted.¹⁰ My own research suggests that the Portuguese forces were initially fairly effective in containing the insurgency in the northern parts of Cabo Delgado and Niassa, and, as we will see in the next section, also in recovering portions of the population that had sided with FRELIMO at the beginning of the war. Internal documents of the Portuguese military and intelligence services suggest that the situation toward the end of the war was still favorable to their “cause” in Niassa but was deteriorating in Cabo Delgado and especially in Tete, where FRELIMO had successfully established a new front in 1971.¹¹

8 For the paradigmatic nature of this approach, see Moritz Feichtinger, “‘A Great Reformatory’: Social Planning and Strategic Resettlement in Late Colonial Kenya and Algeria, 1952–63,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, 1 (2017): 5; Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chap. 5.

9 For a reliable number of the inhabitants of the *aldeamentos* in August 1973, see Amélia Neves de Souto, *Caetano e o Ocaso do “Império”: Administração e Guerra Colonial em Moçambique durante o Marcelismo (1968–1974)* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2007), 231.

10 Studies on the Portuguese counter-insurgency approach include: Andreas Stucki, “Frequent Deaths: The Colonial Development of Concentration Camps Reconsidered, 1868–1974,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, 3 (2018): 305–326; Brendan F. Jundanian, “Resettlement Programs: Counterinsurgency in Mozambique,” *Comparative Politics* 6, 4 (1974): 519–540; Thomas H. Henriksen, *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Mozambique’s War of Independence, 1964–1974* (Westport: Greenwood, 1983); João Paulo Borges Coelho, “Protected Villages and Communal Villages in the Mozambican Province of Tete (1968–1982): A History of State Resettlement Policies, Development and War” (PhD thesis, University of Bradford, 1993); John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961–1974* (Westport: Greenwood, 1997).

11 For examples, see: ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 18, f. 331–342: DGS SUBVC, “Relatório de Situação do Dist do Niassa: Período de 30ABR a 15MAI73” (Vila Cabral, May 19, 1973); ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 17, fls. 32–49: DGS/SUBT, “Relatório de Situação N.º. 8/73: Período de 16 a 30ABR73” (Tete, May 3, 1973); ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, Cx. 33 (NT 8966), f. 209–243: Delegação de DGS em Lourenço Marques, “Situação Actual em Moçambique, Março de 1974,” Secreto (Lourenço Marques, March 4, 1974).

For most of its duration, the war was largely confined to remote and very sparsely populated areas of the colony.¹² Accounts that claim that FRELIMO was able to oust the colonial state from these areas usually ignore the fact that the state's presence in these areas had always been very weak, if not non-existent.¹³ The colonial presence in these areas was in fact in many cases not weakened but strengthened as a result of the outbreak of the war. It was not until the establishment of the Tete front that FRELIMO was able to move into economically important areas of Mozambique.

While the war in Mozambique – along with the simultaneous wars in Angola and Guinea-Bissau – had a profound impact on political developments in Portugal, it must be underlined that the war was ultimately decided not militarily but politically, when the Carnation Revolution in Portugal paved the way for Mozambican Independence under the leadership of FRELIMO.

Analysis of people's experiences in the “liberated zones” of Niassa

My analysis of the war-time experiences of the population living in the so-called “liberated zones” of Niassa results in the following six main observations (discussed in more detail below):

1. Most people did not live outside the control of Portuguese forces for very long. In Niassa, the number of civilians living in FRELIMO's “liberated zones” was in fact tiny at the end of the war. Most of the people who had initially moved into the woodlands fled either abroad or to the Portuguese-controlled *aldeamentos*.
2. Hunger was the main reason for the rapid abandonment of the “liberated zones.” Procuring food was the principal preoccupation of the people during their stay in the woodlands. People's difficulties in organizing food were exacerbated by the deliberate scorched earth policy of the Portuguese military, which aimed at destroying every means of subsistence outside the areas controlled by the colonial state.

¹² Before the war, Niassa province had a population density of about three inhabitants per km².

¹³ For such misleading portrayals, see Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence*, 22; Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution* (Boulder: Westview, 1983), 86.

3. The constant persecution by the Portuguese forces meant that life outside of the control of the Portuguese forces was very unstable. Constant migration was the consequence. This left little room for the alleged “revolutionary” reorganization of society in FRELIMO’s “liberated zones.”
4. Many of the persecuted were not captured by the persecutors but presented themselves to the Portuguese authorities.
5. Direct killings and direct physical violence by Portuguese forces were not as present as one might assume. Rather, Portuguese forces started to avoid such violence in the course of the war.
6. The persecution by Portuguese forces did not create a stronger bond between the people living under FRELIMO. On the contrary, it contributed to the spread of discord among them.

1 A short-term experience for the majority

Most people did not live outside the control of Portuguese forces within Niassa for long. In fact, the number of people living in FRELIMO’s “liberated zones” of Niassa at the end of the war was tiny. Propagandistic maps of FRELIMO’s “liberated zones” usually suggest a gradual growth of the territory of these zones.¹⁴ These maps not only ignore the relative unimportance of territorial control in this war, but also hide the more dynamic nature of the number of people living in and next to FRELIMO bases during the war. Indeed, a closer look at population statistics and movements reveals that the number of people living in areas outside the control of Portuguese forces peaked shortly after the outbreak of the war, but then declined abruptly.

At least in the case of Niassa, living in areas outside the direct control of Portuguese forces was a short-term experience for most people, considering the overall duration of the war. This can be illustrated by the developments in the district of Lago, one of the areas most affected by the war. Here, most people left their villages in mid-1965 to live near FRELIMO bases in what had been sparsely populated woodlands. The desertion of the former villages was so complete that a Portuguese intelligence report from October 1965 noted that “almost the entire population has fled into the bush and is explicitly helping the terrorists.”¹⁵ However, by November, just before the rainy season began, many of the refugees

¹⁴ For an example, see Funada-Classen, *The Origins of War in Mozambique*, 33.

¹⁵ All translations are mine. ADN, FO/F002/SC002/38: Anexo “C” (Contra-Infamação) ao PER-INTREP N°. 94 (Lourenço Marques: QG/RMM/2a REP, October 4, 1965), 2.

had already again returned to the Portuguese sphere of control, and others had fled abroad, to Tanzania or Malawi.¹⁶ More did so in the months and years to come. In 1971, the number of those people living inside the district but outside the control of Portuguese forces was most probably already less than five percent of the district's pre-war population. Just under 50 percent of the district's pre-war population lived in *aldeamentos*, while the majority of the rest was in exile either in Malawi or Tanzania.¹⁷

As for the province of Niassa as a whole, the clear majority of the population – more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total – continued to live or returned to live in areas controlled by the Portuguese forces. Of those who remained outside the Portuguese control until the end of the war, the majority fled abroad. A Portuguese secret police report from 1971 estimated the provincial population outside Portuguese control to be 40,000 outside the colony and 10,000 inside.¹⁸ In 1972, an internal report of PIDE/DGS estimated the number of non-combatants living under the control of FRELIMO inside Niassa even lower, at a mere 2,900. The same report gave the number of FRELIMO combatants in Niassa at 920. This compares to a population of 291,935 living under the control of Portuguese forces.¹⁹

16 ADN, FO/F002/SC002/57: PERINTREP N°. 01 (Nampula: COMZIN/2a REP, November 22, 1965), 14; ADN, FO/F002/SC002/57: PERINTREP N°. 03 (Nampula: COMZIN/2a REP, December 6, 1965), 18–19; Luís S. de Baêna, Fuzileiros. Factos e Feitos na Guerra de África. 1961/1974, vol. 4: Crónica dos Feitos de Moçambique (Lisboa: INAPA, 2006), 41; AHMar, Colorado, Pasta 032/MO: Sérgio Zilhão, “Análise dos Acontecimentos do Niassa,” Confidencial (Metangula, February 10, 1966).

17 For the numbers of those under Portuguese control throughout the war, see: AHM, GGM XX, Cx. 2097: Nuno Egídio, “O Niassa: Relatório Anual de 1970” (Vila Cabral, February 28, 1971), 192; AHM, ISANI, Cx. 99: Mário Freiria, “Relatório da Inspeção Ordinária a Circunscrição do Lago 1971” (Vila Cabral, July 4, 1971), 3; APGGN, 1A: Mapa do Movimento da População da Circunscrição do Lago, Dezembro 1973 (Augusto Cardoso, January 12, 1974); APGGN, 1A: Mapa do Movimento da População da Circunscrição do Lago, Julho 1974 (Augusto Cardoso, August 9, 1974); AHU, Biblioteca, L9560: José Guardado Moreira, “Governo do Distrito do Niassa: Relatório do ano de 1972” (Vila Cabral, May 31, 1973), 158. For the situation in the areas outside the control of Portuguese forces, see: AHMil, FO/63/13/950/17: José Azevedo, “Relatório Especial de Informações 01/71” (Metangula: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906, July 9, 1971).

18 ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), DSI, NT: 7950, pt. 9, fls. 1–16: Relatório de Situação: Distrito de Niassa, 1971, 13.

19 ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 6, fls. 18–33: Relatório Periódico de Informações – Grupo II: Niassa (Lourenço Marques, February 28, 1972), 9–10. See as well: ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, Cx. 33 (NT 8966), f. 209–243: Delegação de DGS em Lourenço Marques, “Situação Actual em Moçambique, Março de 1974,” Secreto (Lourenço Marques, March 4, 1974); AHMil, FO/63/7/938/3: J. F. Gravito, “Estudo da Situação N° 01 DO SECTOR „A“ DA R.M.M.” (Vila Cabral, 1969), 83.

Similar dynamics and patterns can be observed elsewhere. In Cabo Delgado, for example, the official population shortly before the war was 617,514. Two years after the beginning of the war, only 452,194 remained under Portuguese control, a loss of almost 27 percent of the population.²⁰ By 1972, however, Cabo Delgado's population under Portuguese control had grown again to 560,000 according to a PIDE/DGS report.²¹

Certainly, these figures should be taken with caution, especially when it comes to the population outside the control of Portuguese forces.²² Still, there is no doubt that they reflect the general tendency correctly. In my eyes, there is no convincing basis for the claim that internal documents of the Portuguese military and security apparatus systematically misrepresented the realities on the ground in one direction. Furthermore, these figures also fit the statistics of Niassa's post-colonial authorities, who reported the number of post-war returnees from Tanzania and Malawi at 50,000 in 1976.²³ And last but not least, they perfectly reflect the absence of people in those so-called "liberated zones" after the war. As different accounts suggest, those who lived there after the war were mostly post-war returnees from Tanzania.²⁴

20 AHD, MU/GM/GNP/RNP/0230/04537: Boletim de Difusão de Informações N.º [??]12/66, Confidencial (SCCIM, June 14, 1966).

21 ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 6, fls. 4–17: Relatório Periódico de Informações – Grupo I: Cabo Delgado (Lourenço Marques, February 28, 1972), 5.

22 For example, the 1972 report certainly underestimated the number of those living abroad, estimating them at a mere 13,500. See: ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 6, fls. 18–33: Relatório Periódico de Informações – Grupo II: Niassa (Lourenço Marques, February 28, 1972), 10.

23 APGGN, 1A: Relatório Político-Militar da Provincia do Niassa (Lichinga, March 24, 1976), 5. According to another report, there were even more than 67,000 returnees. This higher number might point to the inaccuracy of Portuguese pre-war census data or population growth. See: AUNHCR, Box 1083, ARC-2/A48, 11/2/61-610.GEN.MOZ[b], f. 177: Sérgio Vieira de Mello, "Memorandum 460/MOZ/77: Report on Mission to the Provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado from 4 to 13 July 1977" (Maputo, July 14, 1977), 15.

24 APGGN, 1A: Estudo e Projecto de Quatro Aldeias Comunais no Niassa: Msauíze, Mataca, M'kalapa e Chissindo, 1976, 82–83; AUNHCR, Box 1124, ARC-2/A48, 11/2/61-610.TAN.MOZ[b]: H. Idoyaga, "Memorandum HCR/MOZ/313/75: Excerpts Concerning Returned Mozambican Refugees from Speeches by Mozambican Minister of Interior, Mr. A. Guebuza" (Geneva, November 20, 1975); AUNHCR, Box 1083, ARC-2/A48, 11/2/61-610.GEN.MOZ[b], f. 177: Sérgio Vieira de Mello, "Memorandum 460/MOZ/77: Report on Mission to the Provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado from 4 to 13 July 1977" (Maputo, July 14, 1977), 7–8. See as well: AHM, Secção Oral, Transcrito NI 10: Germano Ntaula and Aly Saidy, N.º 162–163, Entrevista com o responsável da comissão de aldeias comunais (Mavago, Niassa), interview by José Negrão, 1980.

2 Procuring food for survival as principal preoccupation

In Niassa, the main reason people left the forest areas relatively quickly was their difficulty in obtaining food for their survival. In almost all accounts of life outside the control of Portuguese forces, lack of food figures most prominently.²⁵ Food-wise, most people of the region relied on subsistence production. At the beginning of the war, many of the refugees kept returning to their villages to collect food from their fields. They usually did this at night to avoid detection by Portuguese forces.²⁶ People lived relatively well as long as they had access to their old fields or the old fields of others. The fact that many returned to the Portuguese sphere of influence just before the rainy season began is a clear indication of their need to replant their fields. Those who tried to stay longer in the woodlands were sooner or later confronted with hunger. Or, as one interviewee put it:

At first, we ate what we had left, what we had grown in our fields [. . .] When we saw that this food was getting used up, that's when the hunger started to hurt.²⁷

Many of those who lived longer outside the control of Portuguese forces told how they had to eat *mipama* (tubers of a bitter kind of wild yam) for survival.²⁸ Some also recounted how they stole food from fields of others who lived under

25 PA, I051: interview with P0481 (♀, 1942) (Nkholongue, August 26, 2013), min 00:26:06-00:38:27; PA, I150: interview with P1483 (♀, 1950), P1481 (♂, 1954) (Lussefa, June 15, 2016), min 00:14:30-00:20:33; PA, I100: interview with P0025 (♀, 1948) (Nkholongue, February 22, 2016), min 00:01:21-00:01:48; PA, I043: interview with P1148 (♂, 1960) (Malango, August 17, 2013), min 00:03:12-00:08:26; PA, I054: interview with P0554 (♀, 1949) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:08:44-00:09:09; PA, I055: interview with P0639 (♀, ~1952) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:04:38-00:08:12; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, fls. 39–40: PIDE Subdelegação VC, “Auto de Perguntas: Anafi Bonomar” (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, fls. 41–43: PIDE Subdelegação VC, “Auto de Perguntas: Saide Adamo” (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); AHM, Secção Oral, Transcrito NI 10: Germano Ntaula and Aly Saidy, N.º 162–163, Entrevista com o responsável da comissão de aldeias comunais (Mavago, Niassa), interview by José Negrão, 1980, 6–7; AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: João Manuel et Al. (Vila Cabral, December 11, 1973).

26 PA, I055: interview with P0639 (♀, ~1952) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:07:07-00:08:12; PA, I062: interview with P0713 (♂, 1944) (Nkholongue, August 30, 2013), min 00:19:56-00:22:24; PA, I085: interview with P0147 (♀, ~1928) (Nkholongue, September 9, 2013), min 00:05:35-00:09:46; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, f. 39–40: PIDE Subdelegação VC, “Auto de Perguntas: Anafi Bonomar” (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966).

27 PA, I150: interview with P1483 (♀, 1950), P1481 (♂, 1954) (Lussefa, June 15, 2016), min 00:15:19-00:16:27.

28 PA, I055: interview with P0639 (♀, ~1952) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:07:07-00:08:12; PA, I157: interview with P1455 (♂, 1952) (Tulo, June 18, 2016), min 00:21:55-00:22:25; PA, I051: interview with P0481 (♀, 1942) (Nkholongue, August 26, 2013), min 00:32:24-00:34:42; PA, I150: inter-

the control of the Portuguese forces.²⁹ According to a female FRELIMO veteran interviewed by Jonna Katto, there were times when people “only drank a type of tea made with leaves from the bush, just to fill their stomachs with something.”³⁰

Attempts to open new fields in the forests were often thwarted by the Portuguese forces, who began to systematically destroy any means of subsistence that they found in areas outside the *aldeamentos*. Foodstuffs were either destroyed or taken to the *aldeamentos*, plants were either harvested or uprooted, and huts were burned down. In this way, the Portuguese forces wanted to “create insecurity among the refugee population by gradually depriving them of their means of living,” as the operational instructions of the military battalion BCaç 1891 stated.³¹ Internal manuals of the Portuguese military described how different types of crops could be effectively destroyed,³² and the enumeration of the quantity of food and extent of fields destroyed became an important part of most reports of military operations.³³

Portuguese persecution complicated not only food production and collection, but also food preparation. The *mipama* tubers, for example, required a long cooking time. But accounts from people who lived next to FRELIMO bases show that people were often able to make fires only at night or in the very early morning

view with P1483 (♀, 1950), P1481 (♂, 1954) (Lussefa, June 15, 2016), min 00:15:19-00:16:27. See as well: Tembe, *História da Luta de Libertação Nacional*, 529.

29 PA, I095: interview with P1453 (♂, ~1947), P1506 (♀, ~1950) (Malango, January 28, 2016), min 00:50:09-00:50:47; PA, I100: interview with P0025 (♀, 1948) (Nkholongue, February 22, 2016), min 00:01:21-00:01:48. See as well: AHMil, DIV/2/7/55/4: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906. *História de Unidade*, n.d., II-26; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 10, f. 671: DGS/SUBVC, “Relatório N.º 2782/72/DI/2/SC: FRELIMO/Roubo de Produtos Alimentares,” August 23, 1972.

30 Jonna Katto, “*Grandma Was a Guerrilla Fighter*”: *Life Memories of the Women Who Fought for Mozambique’s Independence in Northern Niassa* (Tallinna: Tallinna Raamatutrukikoda, 2018), 222.

31 AHMil, DIV/2/7/79/1: Batalhão de Caçadores 1891. *História de Unidade* (Vila Junqueiro, August 8, 1968), II-85.

32 AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 058/MO: Relatório de Comissão DFE N. 8. Anexo Foxtrot: Processos de Actuação na Contra-Guerrilha do Niassa, n.d., 5.

33 For examples, see: AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-A/MO: Comando do DFE 5, “Relatório de Missão de Intervenção do DFE5 N.º 47: ‘Operação Refractário,’” Confidencial (Augusto Cardoso, October 21, 1967); AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303/MO: José Teixeira, “Relatório de Operações N.º 32 (Operação ‘Chavedouro’), de 210650 a 211700 Novembro de 1966” (Metangula: DFE 5, n.d.); AHMar, Coloredo 309-A/MO: Relatório de Missão de Intervenção N.º 13 (Operação ‘Pancada’) (Cobué: DFE 5, August 10, 1969); AHMar, Coloredo 315/MO: Relatório de Missão de Intervenção: Operação “Valentina 2” (Cobué: DFE 9, March 24, 1972).

hours to avoid detection by Portuguese forces.³⁴ The lack of food, coupled with lack of clothes and proper shelter, also led to a high incidence of disease.³⁵

3 Forced to be always on the move

Another important element found in many accounts of people who lived in “liberated zones” is that of mobility. During their stay in those zones, most people were forced to constantly move on to new locations. Many of these relocations were made on the orders of FRELIMO fighters because they feared an attack by Portuguese forces. Relocations were for example often carried out after a Portuguese aircraft had flown over a camp. Other relocations were necessary when Portuguese ground troops were approaching.³⁶

Examples of this degree of mobility can be found among the testimonies of people who fled from the district capital of Metangula in August 1965 and returned there again before the rainy season. Thus, a 32-year-old man stated that his group (including his wife and three children) had stayed at the first location for only 14 days. They had built temporary houses and a certain kind of ditches in order to hide from Portuguese aircraft. Nevertheless, they were ordered by FRELIMO soldiers to leave the place after a Portuguese aircraft had flown over it. They remained at their new location for about a month, when an attack by Portuguese soldiers forced them to move on again. This time the group was split up and dif-

34 PA, I049: interview with P0267 (♀, 1949) (Nkholongue, August 23, 2013), min 00:12:06-00:15:55; PA, I054: interview with P0554 (♀, 1949) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2013), min 00:09:03-00:11:47.

35 For the numerous cases of sick people, see for example: AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Window Amade (Vila Cabral, October 25, 1973), 2; AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Paulo Tarua (Vila Cabral, October 11, 1973); AHMar, Colorado, Pasta 303-B/MO: DFE 5, “Ficha de Interrogatório de Pessoal Capturado ou Apresentado: Lufame Saide,” September 5, 1967. For the lack of clothing, see for example: AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.º 2, p.º 142: Comandante Fernando Augusto Lopes, “Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.º 20/68 (BArt N.º 2838)” (Metangula, January 15, 1969); AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.º 2, p.º 142: Comandante Henriques Manuel Viegas da Silva, “Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.º 06/68 (CArt N.º 2326)” (Maniamba, June 19, 1968).

36 PA, I049: interview with P0267 (♀, 1949) (Nkholongue, August 23, 2013), min 00:22:00-00:29:42; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, f. 41–43: PIDE Subdelegação VC, “Auto de Perguntas: Saide Adamo” (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, f. 39–40: PIDE Subdelegação VC, “Auto de Perguntas: Anafi Bonomar” (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); AHMar, Colorado, Pasta 303-B/MO: DFE 5, “Ficha de Interrogatório de Pessoal Capturado ou Apresentado: Jaime Saide,” October 21, 1967; Ndegue, *A Luta de Libertação na Frente do Niassa*, 1:108.

ferent people went to different locations. The informant stayed for about another month at a new location when another attack by Portuguese forces forced him again to relocate. He stayed at this fourth location for about 14 days before deciding to flee back to the Portuguese sphere of influence.³⁷

While other FRELIMO bases certainly promised a bit more permanence, at least in Niassa few seem to have survived for very long,³⁸ and most were what an Italian missionary described as “mobile bases which are constantly being destroyed.”³⁹ The constant forced relocation of FRELIMO bases in Niassa is also confirmed by Portuguese intelligence reports, which often speak of the *last* location of a FRELIMO base and at times even explicitly indicate the last date of its destruction.⁴⁰ To avoid detection by Portuguese forces, it also happened that FRELIMO soldiers prohibited people from building proper shelters, especially during the dry season.⁴¹

4 Returnees, not captives

In Niassa, the majority of people seem to have come to the *aldeamentos* of their ‘own’ accord, not because they were captured by Portuguese troops. This also means that there were fewer “direct” encounters between the persecutors and the persecuted than one might expect. In many cases, people were able to escape before Portuguese forces reached them. The Portuguese forces were aware that their mere presence in the region of a FRELIMO base could be beneficial to their objectives. The instructions of “Operation Gáveas,”⁴² for example, stated that if it were not possible to kill or arrest enemies and capture fugitives, the troops should concentrate on making their presence felt in the region, forcing

37 ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, fls. 39–40: PIDE Subdelegação VC, “Auto de Perguntas: Anafi Bonomar” (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966).

38 See as well the testimonies of female FRELIMO veterans interviewed by Jonna Katto: Katto, “Grandma Was a Guerrilla Fighter,” 27–28, 39, 45, 50–51, 57, 62, 73, 78, 99, 153, 158, 179, 191.

39 AIMC, VIII-7, 4, N. 23: Relazione della Delegazione del Niassa (Torino, May 10, 1969), 12.

40 For examples see: ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 6, fls. 18–33: Relatório Periódico de Informações – Grupo II: Niassa (Lourenço Marques, February 28, 1972); AHMil, FO/63/13/950/17: José Azevedo, “Anexo D (Conjunto de Fichas de Bases IN) ao Relatório Especial de Informações 01/71” (Metangula: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906, July 9, 1971).

41 AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: João Manuel et Al. (Vila Cabral, December 11, 1973), 2–3; AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Suena Mitrula (Vila Cabral, July 16, 1973).

42 That is, “Operation Topsails.”

the enemy to leave and creating disorientation and insecurity among the population, which would provoke them to discredit the promises of the “enemy.”⁴³

The numerical importance of this “indirect” way of bringing people back into the Portuguese sphere of control can also be demonstrated by statistics. Table 1 shows the number of people “recuperated” and “lost” by Portuguese forces in the year 1971 in the different military regions of Mozambique. As is visible, the vast majority of the people “recuperated” in Niassa (Sectors A and E) was not captured, but returned to the Portuguese sphere of control of their ‘own’ volition.

Table 1: Population movements in Mozambique from the perspective of Portuguese forces in 1971. Source: AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 060/MO.

	“Recuperated”		“Lost”		Balance
	Returnees	Captives	Escapes	Abductions	
Sector A (Niassa Ocidental)	1,089	77	42	145	+979
Sector E (Niassa Oriental)	557	0	3	24	+530
Sector B (Cabo Delgado)	183	220	158	180	+65
Sector F (Tete)	2,905	2,093	3,597	186	+1,215
Sector D (Moçambique)	1,390	0	0	7	+1,383

5 The relative absence of direct killings and direct physical violence

Given the Portuguese destruction policy and Portugal’s reputation as an extremely brutal colonial power, it may come as a surprise that descriptions of direct killings and direct physical violence were rare in the oral accounts of the war presented to me. Various interviewees even explicitly emphasized the non-violence of Portuguese forces in this respect. One interviewee plainly stated that the “[colonial] government did not allow a soldier kill people in the bush. It did not allow it.”⁴⁴

⁴³ AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-A/MO: José Teixeira, “Ordem de Operações N° 2: Operação Gáveas” (Augusto Cardoso: DFE 5, September 21, 1967), 3. See as well: AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 045/MO: Comando Naval de Moçambique, “IOMOC 16: Instruções Operacionais para Protecção, Recuperação e Internamento de Populações,” Confidencial (Lourenço Marques, October 28, 1965), A6–7.

⁴⁴ PA, I115: interview with P0160 (♂, 1952) (Metangula, April 18, 2016), min 00:39:12-00:39:52. For other similar accounts see: PA, I115: interview with P0160 (♂, 1952) (Metangula, April 18, 2016), min 01:03:06-01:04:23; MLM, 028: interview with A. A., Portuguese translation of the Chinyanja

While this might seem surprising at first glance, it fits perfectly with the approach that the colonial government began to adopt after the outbreak of the war. Internal reports and guidelines show that the Portuguese military operating in Niassa was well aware that the repressive actions of their troops after the initial appearance of FRELIMO had contributed to pushing people to flee into the forests and to side with FRELIMO.⁴⁵ They also reveal that they later strove to implement much of the psychological priorities of counterinsurgency warfare formulated in theory and propaganda. Killings were to be prevented, torture of prisoners was judged to be counter-productive.⁴⁶ Along the shores of Lake Malawi, even the firing of shots was to be limited. When people were running away from Portuguese troops, it was considered preferable for psychological reasons “to let them escape rather than shoot.”⁴⁷ Portuguese military commanders repeatedly praised the discipline of their troops in this regard and positively highlighted operations in which the Portuguese had fired not a single shot despite being attacked by FRELIMO.⁴⁸ As an incentive to prevent killings, the Portuguese military began to pay fixed bonuses to its troops for every armed guerrilla brought into the *aldeia*-

transcript (M'chepe, June 28, 2007); Funada-Classen, *The Origins of War in Mozambique*, 322–23; MLM, 005: interview with J. M. B., transcript Chinyanja (Messumba, June 19, 2007), 3.

45 AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 058/MO: Relatório de Comissão DFE N. 8. Anexo Hotel: Política Operacional, n.d., 6; AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 045/MO: Comando Naval de Moçambique, “IOMOC 16: Instruções Operacionais para Protecção, Recuperação e Internamento de Populações,” Confidencial (Lourenço Marques, October 28, 1965), p. A-2.

46 AHMar, Coloredo 309/MO: António Tierno Bagulho, “Comando Naval de Moçambique ao Comando da Defesa Marítima dos Portos do Lago e ao Comando da Defesa Marítima do Porto de Porto Amélia” (Nampula, July 16, 1969), 2; AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 058/MO: Relatório de Comissão DFE N. 8. Anexo Hotel: Política Operacional, n.d., 9–10. See as well: AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-A/MO: Comando do DFE 5, “Relatório de Missão de Intervenção do DFE5 N.º 47: ‘Operação Refractário,’” Confidencial (Augusto Cardoso, October 21, 1967), 4.

47 AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.º 2, p.º 142: Comandante Fernando Augusto Lopes, “Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.º 20/68 (BArt N.º 2838)” (Metangula, January 15, 1969).

48 AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.º 2, p.º 142: Comandante Fernando Augusto Lopes, “Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.º 17/68 (CArt N.º 2325)” (Metangula, November 21, 1968); AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 123, n.º 2: Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.º 21 (CCaç 1794) (Macalogue, March 26, 1968); AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.º 2, p.º 142: Comandante Int.º Martinho de Carvalho Leal, “Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.º 9 (CArt N.º 2324)” (Metangula, December 16, 1968); AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.º 2, p.º 142: Comandante Fernando Augusto Lopes, “Comentário ao Relatório de Acção N.º 15/68 (BArt N.º 2838)” (Metangula, November 19, 1968), 68.

mentos alive.⁴⁹ According to my interviewees, this bonus was also paid for the capture of unarmed individuals.⁵⁰

This observation does not mean that killings and torture stopped occurring altogether. But the documents show that Portuguese forces did indeed strive to use violence in a more targeted manner and to refrain from certain “proceedings” called “inhumane” in one report.⁵¹ This change in policy can be even found in the reports of the PIDE/DGS, Portugal’s notorious secret police.⁵² In 1969, for example, a PIDE/DGS officer from Niassa called for the replacement of a local administrator because of his mistreatment and torture of people returning from “liberated zones,” which, according to the officer, was “an inconvenient and inopportune procedure in light of the policy we are all engaged in.”⁵³ A similar observation can be made in the case of the massacre of Wiriyaumu of December 1972, certainly the most infamous act of mass-violence committed by Portuguese forces during the war.⁵⁴ For, PIDE/DGS criticized the conduct of Operation “Marosca,” the operation that led to the massacre, immediately after the operation and thus long before it became public knowledge in mid-1973. The respective report explicitly

49 Official directives from the Portuguese Ministry of Defense for the payment of this bonus were only issued in July 1972, but the bonus had been introduced and paid earlier, probably beginning in early 1971. See: AHMil, FO/63/21/961/2, doc. 26: Nota N.º 287/70: Prémios Por Material Capturado e Aumento Do Prémio Por Captura Ou Apreensão de Minas, October 19, 1970; AHMil, FO/63/21/961/3, doc. 35: Informação N.º 193/H: Prémios de Actividade Operacional Das NF, May 22, 1972; Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África (CECA), Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro I (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 2012), 120, 197. For the discussion around the introduction of this bonus, see as well: AHMil, FO/63/21/961/2: COM SEC “A” ao CEM/QG/AV (3a.REP): Prémios por material capturado (N.º 2856/c-70, P.º 505.01.05), December 21, 1970.

50 PA, I117: interview with P1458 (♂, ~1945) (Micundi, April 20, 2016), min 01:09:05-01:10:45; PA, I115: interview with P0160 (♂, 1952) (Metangula, April 18, 2016), min 00:39:12-00:43:01; PA, I119: interview with P0855 (♂, 1954) (Malango, April 21, 2016), min 00:35:00-00:36:12.

51 AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 058/MO: Relatório de Comissão DFE N. 8. Anexo Hotel: Política Operacional, n.d., 5.

52 The acronym PIDE stands for *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado* (International and State Defense Police). It was transformed into the *Direcção-Geral de Segurança* (DGS, Directorate-General of Security) in 1969.

53 APGGN, to Administrador da Circunscrição de Sanga, N.º 140/SEC/GAB, April 15, 1969. For other examples, see: ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 29, fls. 18–24: DGS Moçambique, “Informação N.º 1/73/DI/IS” (Lourenço Marques, June 1, 1973), 7; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 30, f. 285–289: DGS Moçambique, “Informação N.º 2/74/DI/IS: Acontecimentos da Beira” (Lourenço Marques, January 26, 1974); ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 29, fls. 32–38: DGS Moçambique, “Análise da Situação Geral CDelgado,” January 16, 1974, 6–7.

54 Wiriyaumu is in Tete.

complained about the massacre (it was referred to as such in the report) of about 100 civilians in Wiryamu (“Wiliamo” in the report).⁵⁵

Both testimonies from interviews and archival material show that the Portuguese forces generally became eager to gain the trust of the local population.⁵⁶ Behavior that was not conducive to this goal should be prevented. Thus, for example, a Portuguese settler was arrested in Maúa in September 1969 for mistreating several “Africans” and creating insecurity among the population with “nefarious political reflexes.” The Governor of Niassa asked PIDE/DGS to arrange for his departure from the province, as his residence in Niassa was considered extremely inconvenient.⁵⁷ Similarly, in 1968, the deputy administrator of Sanga district was removed because of his “inability [to relate] with the local indigenous population.” The Portuguese governor considered him incapable of performing his duties because of his constant drunkenness, “especially in a province affected by the insurgency, where all our efforts are directed at gaining the trust of the population.”⁵⁸

It has to be emphasized that this change of policy was not owed to a sudden appearance of general Portuguese goodheartedness, but to the logic of safeguarding the existence of the colonial state. Thus, the Portuguese individuals just mentioned were obviously not held legally accountable for their misdeeds, but were merely removed from the ‘hot zone’ of the war. The logic behind this strategy also appears in a report in which the PIDE/DGS office in Beira complained in November 1973 that a Portuguese medical brigade had carried anti-cholera vaccinations into areas where people were not yet living in *aldeamentos*. It stated:

With vaccinations in areas not controlled by our troops, we vaccinate people [while] not discriminating whether they are on our side or on the side of the enemy, which is very humanitarian but maybe not the best way to contribute to the surrender [(*apresentação*)] of the people and their withdrawal from the control of the enemy.⁵⁹

55 ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cxa.13, fls. 128–151: DGS/SUBT, “Relatório de Situação N.º 24/72: Período de 16 a 31 DEZ 72” (Tete, January 2, 1973), 1–2.

56 AHMil, DIV/2/7/55/4: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906. História de Unidade, n.d., II–97; AHM, Secção Oral, Transcrito NI 11: Assumane Ntaúla and Chimanje Amido, N.º 119–125, Entrevista de Grupo em Nkalapa (Mavago, Niassa), interview by Gerhard Liesegang, Teresa Oliveira, and Mucojuane Mainga Vicente, July 13, 1981; John Paul, *Mozambique: Memoirs of a Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 190–191; Andreas Zeman, *The Winds of History: Life in a Corner of Rural Africa Since the 19th Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, forthcoming 2023), chap. 7.

57 APGGN, QJ: Carta N.º 283 C/GAB: Nuno de Melo Egídio (Governador do Niassa) ao Chefe da Subdelegação da Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado Vila Cabral (Vila Cabral, September 15, 1969).

58 APGGN, QJ: Carta N.º 268 C/GAB: Nuno de Melo Egídio (Governador do Niassa) ao Director Provincial dos Serviços de Administração Civil (Vila Cabral, September 2, 1969).

59 ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 28, f. 677–679: DGS SUBR, “Relatório N.º 6107/73/DI/2/SC: Vacinação C/Cólera,” November 27, 1973.

6 The myth of unity

Previous research has often highlighted that Portuguese forces exploited ethnic, regionalist and religious tensions within FRELIMO to their advantage.⁶⁰ While the exploitation of such tensions – whether real or imagined – certainly played some part in the Portuguese propaganda, it needs to be emphasized that the actual operations by Portuguese forces on the ground first and foremost aimed at producing (economic) tensions over basic necessities among those controlled by FRELIMO.

Previous literature on the war has largely ignored or underestimated the fact that the difficult living conditions led to significant conflict among the population that “lived” under FRELIMO. On the contrary, many researchers have even suggested or claimed that the “shared suffering” fostered an even stronger bond between the people.⁶¹ Such an interpretation also forms part of FRELIMO’s officially sanctioned narrative of the “liberation war.”⁶² While it is reasonable to assume that the bond between those who stayed in the same boat until the end of the war became stronger, such a perspective completely ignores the fact that the number of those who did so was small and that, at least in the case of Niassa, most people abandoned FRELIMO precisely because they were suffering from hunger. The situation was further complicated by the fact that FRELIMO’s soldiers relied on food contributions from the population.⁶³

Both testimonies from captives and returnees and accounts from interviewees leave little doubt that hunger and other deprivations led to discontent among those living in areas under FRELIMO’s influence.⁶⁴ According to a Portuguese mil-

60 Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence*, 27; Edward A. Alpers, “Ethnicity, Politics, and History in Mozambique,” *Africa Today* 21, 4 (1974): 39–52; Jundanian, “Resettlement Programs.”

61 For examples, see: Barry Munslow, *Mozambique: The Revolution and Its Origins* (London: Longman, 1983), 94; Bertil Egerö, *Mozambique, a Dream Undone: The Political Economy of Democracy, 1975–84* (Uppsala: Nordiska afrikainstitutet, 1990), 21. This also sometimes claimed by FRELIMO veterans. See Katto, “Grandma Was a Guerrilla Fighter,” 222. See as well: Patrick Chabal, “Lusophone Africa in Historical and Comparative Perspective,” in *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, by Patrick Chabal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 20–22.

62 Bonate, “Muslim Memories of the Liberation War in Cabo Delgado,” 234.

63 AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Camula Mula Saide e João Saide (Vila Cabral, December 11, 1973), 2.

64 ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), proc. 4276, NT 7336, pt. 1, fls. 44–47: PIDE Subdelegação VC, “Auto de Perguntas: Momade Lezuani” (Vila Cabral, January 28, 1966); AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 303-B/MO: DFE 5, “Ficha de Interrogatório de Pessoal Capturado ou Apresentado: Lufame Saide,” September 5, 1967.

itary report from 1970, these problems resulted in ever-deeper rifts between the “refugees” and the nationalist fighters.⁶⁵ Returnees spoke of a “climate of intrigue and mistrust.”⁶⁶ But the conflicts affected not only the relationship between fighters and non-combatants but also relations between the fighters themselves. Indeed, FRELIMO suffered greatly from numerous desertions in Niassa.⁶⁷ Most of my interviewees who had joined FRELIMO as fighters left the movement relatively early in the course of the war.⁶⁸

It has been argued that the Portuguese policy of resettlement and scorched earth backfired on the colonial state.⁶⁹ My findings from Niassa do not support such an argument. Rather, they show that the Portuguese forces were fairly successful in spreading discord among the people living under the control of FRELIMO. The fact that many of those who moved into the *aldeamentos* began to support the military efforts of the colonial state as guides, militias and soldiers further contributed to growing animosities between the people.⁷⁰ The extent of the discord is also evident from the resentment FRELIMO officials expressed after the war towards both war-time deserters and civilians who had fled abroad. Deserters, for example, were sent in large numbers to re-education camps,⁷¹ and returnees from abroad were reminded of their “vices,” as shown in this excerpt recorded by an UNHCR official from a speech delivered to returnees from Tanzania in Chissindo in the second half of October 1975 by Armando Guebuza, then Mozambique’s minister of the interior:

65 AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 149/MO: Mário Tello Polléri, “Relatório de Acção Psicológica N.º 4/70” (Nampula, February 22, 1971), 20.

66 AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: António Bonomar Namaumbo (Vila Cabral, November 13, 1973). See as well: AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Relatório de Interrogatório de Pessoal Capturado N.º 05/73 (Olivença, June 1, 1973), 73.

67 See as well: Tembe, *História da Luta de Libertação Nacional*, 530–531; João Facitela Pelembe, *Lutei pela Pátria: Memórias de um Combatente da Luta pela Libertação Nacional* (Maputo, 2012), 85–86.

68 PA, I056: interview with P1102 (♂, 1932) (Malango, August 28, 2013), min 00:40:40-00:47:20; PA, I038: interview with P1439 (♂, ~1940) (Malango, August 15, 2013), min 00:21:09-00:25:08; PA, I158: interview with P0764 (♂, 1962) (Nkhologue, June 20, 2016), min 00:07:05-00:08:21, 00:37:52-00:38:23; PA, I065: interview with P0583 (♂, 1972) (Nkhologue, September 1, 2013), min 00:04:12-00:06:47.

69 Jundanian, “Resettlement Programs,” 540.

70 PA, I115: interview with P0160 (♂, 1952) (Metangula, April 18, 2016), min 00:19:28-00:20:25, 00:29:41-00:35:24; PA, I117: interview with P1458 (♂, ~1945) (Micundi, April 20, 2016), min 01:08:04-01:13:57; PA, I119: interview with P0855 (♂, 1954) (Malango, April 21, 2016); PA, I105: interview with P0242 (♂, 1945) (Malango, April 4, 2016).

71 For the files of these numerous deserters, see: APGGN, 1A: Fichas dos Desertores: Inquérito Tipo B (Desertores), n.d.

At this meeting, there are only a few of those who participated in the war from the first day until today. [. . .] there are others who, when the war began, did not put up with the hunger, did not put up with the bombings, and then they left. [. . .] I think that all of you who did not participate in the war should applaud the population and the soldiers who participated. [. . .] You gave us extra work. [. . .] you did nothing. Therefore, now that you have come here, abandon your vices. [. . .] you, who were there in the refugee camps spent most of your time drinking, like in Mukuro; is that true or not? I know it, I passed by there and all I saw you doing was dancing.⁷²

While FRELIMO had employed coercive mechanisms from the very beginning of the war,⁷³ I have little doubt that most people had initially supported the movement willingly. There is little doubt, however, that, at least in Niassa, the “glamour of ‘freedom’ as personified by FRELIMO [was quickly] wearing off” after the outbreak of the war.⁷⁴ Portuguese military reports suggest that FRELIMO’s strategy of getting people on its side became more violent and repressive as the war progressed.⁷⁵ Many people found themselves increasingly caught between the guerrilla movement and the colonial state. One woman, captured by Portuguese troops in 1967, reported that the population “did not know where to go any more, being afraid of mines [. . .], the troops and the terrorists.”⁷⁶

Reports of the Portuguese military and accounts of refugees indicate that FRELIMO exercised significant physical and psychological control over the population living outside the areas controlled by the Portuguese forces, and that the level of this control increased as the war progressed. While there is evidence from the early years of the war of refugees attempting to survive largely independent

⁷² AUNHCR, Box 1124, ARC-2/A48, 11/2/61-610.TAN.MOZ[b]: H. Idoyaga, “Memorandum HCR/MOZ/313/75: Excerpts Concerning Returned Mozambican Refugees from Speeches by Mozambican Minister of Interior, Mr. A. Guebuza” (Geneva, November 20, 1975).

⁷³ This included, for example, the killing of people who were considered Portuguese loyalists. For examples, see: Ndegue, *A Luta de Libertação na Frente do Niassa*, 194; Paul, *Memoirs of a Revolution*, 115; Joan Antcliff, *Living in the Spirit* (Herefordshire: Orphans, 2004), 115; APGGN, António Gonçalves Marques, “Situação Política da Área do Lago, e Evolução dos Acontecimentos a partir do Dia Um do Janeiro de 1965 até à Presente Data” (Augusto Cardoso, October 23, 1965), 2; MLM, 003: interview with A. S., transcript Chinyanja (Micuiu, June 18, 2007), 8.

⁷⁴ These are the words of the Anglican missionary Joan Antcliff after a visit to the region in 1970. She had lived in Lago district from 1951 to 1965. See: Joan Antcliff, “In No Strange Land,” *Lebombo Leaves* 61, 2 (1970): 35.

⁷⁵ See especially: AHMar, Colorado, Pasta 047/MO: Kaúlza Arriaga, “Relatório de Acção Psicológica N.º 3/70” (Nampula, November 25, 1970), 8–9.

⁷⁶ AHMil, DIV/2/7, C. 126, n.º 16: Relatório de Acção N.º 8/67 (CCaç 1558/BCaç 1891), May 3, 1967, 2. See as well: AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Maria David António (Vila Cabral, June 25, 1973).

of FRELIMO fighters,⁷⁷ there is no such evidence for the later years. Accounts of returnees clearly suggest that most of those who hesitated to flee abroad or return to the Portuguese sphere of influence did so because they were under intense pressure from FRELIMO, which, among other things, continued to successfully exploit people's fear of Portuguese forces.⁷⁸ A Portuguese military report from 1971 reflected this perspective by stating that "the majority of the population under the enemy's control was tired [of the war] but did not present themselves because of the control and constant psychological action the enemy exercised over them."⁷⁹

Conclusion and outlook

For this chapter, I have analyzed the war-time experiences of people living in areas outside of the direct control of Portuguese forces in Niassa during the Mozambican War of Independence. My analysis has been somewhat limited as a result of the sources at my disposal. There is no doubt that more fieldwork and archival research with a specific focus on these areas would be necessary to provide a richer picture of people's lives under FRELIMO during the war. Nevertheless, I believe that the six observations presented in this chapter can help future research in asking the right questions.

As for the specific case of Mozambique, my findings challenge many of the previous narratives about these areas. This is especially true of the idea of the gradual growth of the "liberated zones" and the alleged growth of unity among people as a result of the shared suffering. My findings also allow for more light to be shed on FRELIMO's internal conflicts, which are well known at the level of its top cadres (the most prominent cases being the splits with Lazaro Nkavandame and Uria Simango),⁸⁰ but much less so at the level of its (foot) soldiers and supporters. However, to get a more complete picture of life in FRELIMO's "liberated

⁷⁷ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 133, n.º 2, p.º 142: Comandante João Batista Chambel, "Relatório de Acção N.º 06/68 (CArt N.º 2326)" (Maniamba, June 18, 1968).

⁷⁸ AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: João Manuel et Al. (Vila Cabral, December 11, 1973); AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Suena Mitrula (Vila Cabral, July 16, 1973); AHMil, FO/63/12/947/9: Ficha de Interrogatório de Apresentados e Capturados: Maria Adão (Vila Cabral, June 25, 1973).

⁷⁹ AHMil, FO/63/13/950/17: José Azevedo, "Relatório Especial de Informações 01/71" (Metangula: Batalhão de Caçadores 2906, July 9, 1971), 26.

⁸⁰ For analyses of these conflicts see for example: Georgi Derluguian, "The Social Origins of Good and Bad Governance: Re-Interpreting the 1968 Schism in Frelimo," in *Sure Road? National-*

zones,” it would certainly be necessary to extend the research to other provinces such as Tete and Cabo Delgado, where FRELIMO was obviously more successful in fending off Portuguese persecution. And even in the case of Niassa, it would be essential to know more about the few who stayed with FRELIMO until the end of the war. But this would also include the question of whether these were in fact mostly the same people for the entire duration of the war, or whether FRELIMO in fact sustained itself in large part by constantly recruiting new people from areas that were (still) controlled by Portuguese forces.

As for the social history of persecution in general, two specific insights of my analysis seem noteworthy to me. First, this chapter has highlighted the vital importance for the persecuted to obtain food, pointing to the need to consider how much the search for food can affect social relations during times of persecutions. In this context, the chapter has demonstrated how a lack of food can create disunity among the persecuted. At first glance, this observation might seem to contrast somewhat the arguments of some other contributions in this volume, which have instead emphasized instances of sharing and solidarity.⁸¹ However, taken together, these contributions illustrate the relevance of considering processes of social inclusion and exclusion under conditions of severe material suffering.

Second, this chapter has indicated that the perception of the persecuted as to who was the main persecutor could change over time. It has argued that many initially tried to escape Portuguese persecution, but felt increasingly pressured by FRELIMO or other fellow refugees as the war progressed. This points to the general need to consider the dynamics of the categories of persecutor and persecuted within war-time contexts.

However, reflections on the generalization of the case analyzed here are insufficient without highlighting its particularities. An important difference between my case and other types of persecution discussed in this book is that, in the case of Niassa, persecution was not linked to extermination but to a strong belief in “social engineering.” The sources clearly show that the Portuguese strategy was based on the premise that people could be made to change their allegiance quickly. The general goal of the Portuguese forces was precisely not to expel or exterminate the persecuted, but to keep them in the country and even to win their “hearts and minds,” even if this move to convince the local population was certainly not owed to some sudden drive to realize the older and indeed empty

isms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, ed. Eric Morier-Genoud (Leiden/Boston, 2012), 79–102.

⁸¹ See for example the contributions by Tim Cole and Masha Cerovic.

propaganda of luso-tropical racial harmony, but rather was made for reasons of state in order to safeguard the existence of the colonial state,⁸² which marked an important ideological foundation for the Salazarist regime in Portugal.

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⁸² In this regard, see as well Frederick Cooper's argument on the late colonial reforms in French West Africa: Frederick Cooper, "Routes Out of Empire," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37, 2 (2017): 408.

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