

Volume 3 1992

A team of three Frontline missionaries have just returned from a two and a half month - five nation - field outreach which included 14 000km of driving over some of the worst roads in Central Africa. Their truck suffered 18 flat tyres, and two members of the team came down with malaria, during this epic journey. Some days involved walking 30km, or more, in the blazing heat of the Zambezi valley, in order to deliver Bibles and Gospel booklets to Mozambique and Zambian tribesman in remote areas.

Our team discovered numerous incidents of continuing persecution and atrocities in Northern Mozambique. They ministered to survivors of villages where Russian helicopters had rocketed, bombed and destroyed their homes and churches. Many Christians testified of their churches being burnt down, Bibles destroyed and pastors being tied up and shot by communist soldiers - even in recent months. The amount of widows and orphans in the average congregation was staggering.

Our team also recounted the heart rending scenes of emaciated dying mothers trying to feed their malnourished babies. Of starving children with bloated stomachs and stick like arms. Of crop failures next to flowing rivers (the local tribesman had never considered irrigation). Refugees are still fleeing Mozambique by the hundreds - every day. It was an emotional experience and a privilege for our missionaries to give some food to the starving and to present Bibles to those who have never owned one, or to those whose Bibles had been confiscated and destroyed. This is what they report:

Despite the numerous reports of peace which have been published about Mozambique we found that there is still a lot of fighting between Frelimo (the socialist government forces) and Renamo (the anti-communist resistance movement). The war is particularly affecting the rural areas in the northern provinces of Zambezia and Tete.

Many pastors reported that the churches in their villages are caught in the crossfire between

Frelimo and Renamo - and that they still cannot meet openly. What has often happened is that Renamo soldiers have come and worshipped in churches. Then Frelimo has come and accused the people of "collaborating with Renamo". Many Christians have been arrested, tortured and even killed in this way.

Both Frelimo soldiers and Renamo rebels have forced local tribesman to act as porters, or couriers, carrying heavy loads for the soldiers for long distances. Some reported being forced to walk up to 80km with heavy equipment but without even being given food or water. Many have collapsed and some have died on these forced marches.

Brother Fredrick was forced to be a porter for Renamo in April 1992. For a week he staggered under the load until his legs were severely swollen. Yet after this ordeal he still walked for another day in order to attend the church service and meetings which we held near his village. His joy was evident and his faith was strong.

In Mchinga, Pastor William saw his wife and several of his congregation shot by Frelimo soldiers in November 1990. The communists accused them of making Renamo "strong with the Gospel" so they destroyed his church.

In June 1991, Russian helicopters flew over Renamo controlled villages in Zambezia province and shot up many villages. Several churches were burned up in those attacks.

In January 1992, Frelimo forces attacked many villages between Villa Nova and the Lulwe Mountains, burning down villages and churches wherever they went. Many were shot, but most of the people fled to Malawi where they are now refugees.

In February 1992, Frelimo soldiers with Russian helicopters, attacked during a church service of pastor Domingo. They shot about 25 members of his congregation, including some women and children.

Pastor Wizimani was first arrested for preaching the Gospel in 1985. His church was destroyed and he was tied up and beaten. Two of his deacons were killed in front of the church. On the 6th

June 1986, a hundred members of his congregation were meeting for worship when the communists attacked their church with Soviet helicopters. Twenty Christians were killed in that raid. The survivors then fled, walking for 3 weeks to reach Malawi.

Pastor Benjamin testified that his congregation of 170 members, in Mutarara, was attacked by Frelimo in January 1987. The communists burned all their Bibles, hymnbooks and other possessions. They stripped, tied up and tortured all 5 of the church leaders. Later Benjamin escaped and was on the run from Frelimo for 6 months before he was reunited with his family in a refugee camp in Malawi. He attempted to return to his village in March 1992 but the fighting was too severe. His congregation used to have one Bible but even that had been destroyed.

Pastor John was arrested by Frelimo for leading church services. Before his own eyes he saw fellow pastors killed, and even his own son drowned. In 1991 his parents were killed by Frelimo. All he possessed was a "faith Bible" - those Scriptures that he could recollect from memory.

Pastor Arnesto's church was burnt down in 1983. Since then his congregation met secretly under trees. In 1987 he was arrested by Frelimo for baptising new converts. Yet 150 members of his congregation still gather for worship. However, they had no Bible until we came.

Other pastors related similar heart-rending testimonies. It was a privilege for our team to present each of these pastors with Bibles, Gospel booklets and tracts in their own languages. To as many as we could we also gave clothes and food. As we spent time with them, we were impressed with their zeal and dedication in spite of all they had suffered.

Our church services often lasted for four, five, even six hours. The times of praying late into the night with them were precious hours. Their eagerness to learn was also most encouraging. Many of these pastors walked long distances for several days to attend our Discipleship Training Seminars. For almost all of these pastors the only theological or Bible training they had ever received was from our seminars.

One of the Mozambique church leaders, who hosted a pastors seminar which our field team conducted, told us that the only training his 60 pastors had ever received had been from Frontline missionaries - especially George. He also reported that since George began, eighteen months ago, to conduct Discipleship Seminars for his pastors, elders and deacons - the

denomination had grown over 50%. He pleaded for more literature, Bible teaching and food. "Frontline Fellowship is the only mission that has helped our 60 congregations - we need you."

All in all we conducted 7 Discipleship Training Seminars for Mozambique, Malawian and Zambian pastors, deacons and evangelists. We also conducted 28 church services and 5 prison services.

"Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured ... and pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith."
2 Thess 3:1-2