

WHEN Premier Thatcher met Malawi's ageing life-president, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, last week, little was likely to disrupt the smooth exchange of pleasantries.

But one subject at least should have given them a tinge of disquiet, and that is Malawi's involvement with the destabilising of its neighbour Mozambique. Three of Mozambique's northern provinces directly adjoin Malawi, and all have suffered from the incursions of the anti-Frelimo MNR gangs which appear to enjoy safe haven in Malawi with free movement in and out.

During a recent visit to Mozambique I was able to see for myself the grave consequences of Malawi's "blind eye" policy in relation to the MNR. At the headquarters of Sena Sugar Estates, at Luabo on the northern banks of the mighty Zambezi river, I saw the damaged turbine and cane-crushing unit put out of action by a larger-than-usual MNR attack last September.

## Hit-and-run

The factory, heart of a huge enterprise formerly owned by Tate and Lyle, but nationalised by Mozambique in 1977, is also having to repair a number of old barges in order to move sugar down the river to Chinde, for trans-shipment to the port of Beira.

This more expensive route will have to be used as long as the railway line from Marromeu (on the south bank of the Zambezi) to Beira is under threat of attack by the MNR.

The Marromeu link is an extension of the main Beira-Malawi railway line. This, like Malawi's other east-coast route, to the Mozambican port of Nacala, has been virtually closed down by the hit-and-run raids of the MNR.

So land-locked Malawi has to route its imports and exports through Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa, at several times the cost. Why, then, does President Banda's government not expel the MNR from its territory, doing itself as well as Mozambique a favour?

The answer may be something to do with the fact that it is South Africa which helped to build President Banda's new capital city of Lilongwe in the '70s, and which has had more than a hand (together with the Israelis) in the training of his police force and army.

In short, Malawi's chief ally in southern Africa, the Pretoria regime, is also the ultimate arbiter of the MNR. This

# Battered, besieged but fighting back

Mozambique is pulling itself back together after a bleak year, reports ALAN BROOKS, director of the country's London information centre.



Mozambique's President Machel (right) welcomes South African anti-apartheid clergyman Allan Boesak to Maputo.

counter-revolutionary terrorist outfit, originally set up by Ian Smith's intelligence services in league with Portuguese fascist businessmen and former PIDE (secret police) agents, is still wreaking havoc a year after Mozambique signed a non-aggression treaty with South Africa on the banks of the Nkomati river.

In Maputo for the first anniversary of the Nkomati Accord, I was told: "We're not celebrating — there's nothing to celebrate." South African Foreign Minister Botha's numerous announcements of "discoveries" and "investigations" around the time were greeted with total disbelief in Maputo, where electricity cuts caused by MNR sabotage teams coming across from the north-eastern Transvaal have become part of the way of life.

If the Nkomati Accord has failed in its central purpose of bringing peace to Mozambique, it has nevertheless put South Africa on the defensive diplomatically. It has also helped to move the major Western governments (which encouraged Mozambique to go into something like the Nkomati Accord) from a position where they gave tacit endorsement to Pretoria's bellicose policies in the early 1980s, to their present position where they accept that Mozambique is the innocent victim of destabilisation by its neighbour, and have increased their material aid accordingly.

They have also offered diplomatic assistance to secure the implementation of the Nkomati Accord, as Mrs. Thatcher did when she met President Samora Machel at the recent Chernenko funeral.

Unfortunately for Mozambique, Mrs. Thatcher limits her concern for peace in the region to routine private diplomatic exchanges with South Africa and Portugal, which is another country that aids and abets the MNR while maintaining a veneer of friendly relations with Mozambique.

## Anniversary

She has resolutely refused to countenance disinvestment or other forms of sanctions against South Africa — the only pressure which would trouble the Botha regime.

Even the abundant evidence of continuing South African support to the MNR has not moved the British government to public criticism of Pretoria's failure to fulfil the Nkomati Accord.

Fortunately for the Mozambican people, who this year cele-

brate 10 years of independence, the Frelimo Party government is not lying back waiting for diplomacy to solve their problems. Diplomacy is important, especially for a poor country with Socialist aspirations and a dangerous fascist neighbour. But it is not more important than the efforts of the people themselves to fight back.

In a recent statement, the Council of Ministers put this fight into perspective:

"Today the main instrument of imperialism and racism are the armed bandits (i.e. of the MNR), criminals paid by their former colonial capitalist bosses. Thus the fight that we are waging for the annihilation of the armed bandits is a continuation of the people's armed struggle for national liberation and the struggle that we always fought for freedom and independence, progress and peace.

"In this fight, defence and the economy constitute an indivisible entity. To fight the armed bandits, to guarantee the security of economic units, is to contribute to the increase of production. To increase production is to contribute to the strengthening of the strategic rearguard of our fight."

Among the measures announced were the stepping up of training for the people's militias, whose deployment in defence of enterprises and communities both involves the people directly in the solution of the problem, and releases the army to pursue the MNR gangs and to attack their bush camps.

Training the people and giving them arms is a measure of the confidence that exists between the government and the people.

That this has withstood the battering of the severe economic crisis, South African destabilisation, and the traumas of drought, floods and (in parts of the centre and south) mass starvation, is eloquent testimony to the depths of the socio-political transformation carried out under Frelimo's leadership.

## Determination

But there is no room for complacency. The same Council of Ministers statement drew attention to "a reduction in the Frelimo revolutionary practice of permanent contact between soundings between people and leaders, a reduction in collective work . . . an isolation of state leaders from the grassroots, the non-functioning of collective management, the making of decisions which are far from reality and have no practical effect," etc.

Still in the same self-critical vein, the Council of Ministers agreed to take measures "to combat with severity the irresponsibility, passivity, disorganisation, theft, sabotage, corruption and black-marketeering in the state body and social and economic units. In this context, the Council of Ministers had decided to combine the centralisation of management with broad and decentralised responsibility for implementation."

The same spirit of frank determination came through in the words of President Machel when he said: "Last year we went right down, both nationally and internationally. This year we are climbing back up again."

This pulled together — crisply and incisively — the host of impressions I'd gathered in the course of an 18-day visit. As Frelimo never tires of saying: **A LUTA CONTINUA** — the struggle continues.