

Mozambique Attacks Western Attitude Towards MNR "Terrorists"

Maputo in English for southern Africa 1100 gmt 15 May 86

Text of commentary:

The terrorist nature of activity by the South African-sponsored MNR bandits in Mozambique is clear to the Mozambican public. It is also clear to any outsider who cares to examine the evidence. Surprisingly, however, the problem of terrorism in Mozambique is receiving scant attention in the current international outcry against terrorist activities. In this respect, a new film made by a Swedish team may help to increase international public awareness of the problem. The film, which has already been shown on Swedish television, is due to be released in English under the title "killing a dream". The film contains stark images of mutilated villagers, wrecked schools and clinics, and places the blame squarely on South Africa. This is an admirable attempt to acquaint people of the West with the ugly face of terrorism in Mozambique.

Unfortunately, however, this film is an exception in Western media coverage of this country. The tendency is to justify terrorism in Mozambique by giving it another name. Western radio stations, for example, rarely use the word terrorism in reference to MNR activity in Mozambique. When a bomb explodes in a West Berlin discotheque, it is immediately identified as a terrorist bomb, but when a bomb explodes outside a Maputo apartment building it is presumed to have been planted by people described as guerrillas or rebels or dissidents or, blindest of all, the government's political opponents.

It is not only the Western media which is absorbed in this attempt to camouflage terrorism. The terrorists also obtain a veneer of respectability from those governments which allow MNR representatives to operate openly. In the Portuguese capital last month, for example, the MNR announced publicly that it was responsible for a car bomb

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explosion in Maputo which injured 50 people. That was an act of terrorism by any rational person's definition, but the man who claimed responsibility on behalf of the South African-sponsored MNR is still walking around Lisbon in complete freedom. This complacent attitude towards terrorism in Mozambique is not exclusive to Portugal. Some other Western countries share this reluctance to call terrorism in Mozambique by its real name. For this reason, the new Swedish television documentary is a welcome development. If it is given the wide distribution it deserves in the West, it will make an important contribution toward the enlightenment of public opinion on a matter of real international importance.

[Note: AFP in a dispatch in French datelined Paris, 15th May said: (Excerpt) "Rebels of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) fighting the leftist government in Maputo have rejected suggestions of talks with President Samora Machel who has 'lost his power', a senior MNR official said here Thursday [15th May]. Evo Fernandes, MNR secretary general, said the only meeting his movement would consider to end the fighting . . . would be with senior Mozambique military leaders who had 'clean hands'. He told AFP the rebels had not met with representatives of Mr Machel's Frelimo party. But the guerrilla leader said he had held talks last February in Lisbon with a senior Mozambique military leader, Gen Bonifacio Gruveta, on the conditions required for opening such discussions. Mr Fernandes said his organisation received no assistance from foreign sources, denying Mozambican charges that the guerrillas continued to be funded by South Africa. . . He also said that the United States, at South Africa's urging, had asked the Portuguese government to act as an intermediary between Maputo and the Rebels. . ."]