

## **Malawi Again Denies Aiding MNR Rebels**

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Text of dispatch datelined Blantyre, 17th October:

The Malawi government has once again denied allegations and accusations made against it by certain quarters, through the media, that it was using its territory as bases for MNR [Mozambique National Resistance] bandits against the Mozambican government. The full text of the denial reads:

"On Thursday 11th September 1986 this country was honoured by a one-day visit of three distinguished visitors, the Presidents of Zambia and Mozambique and the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe. During the visit, the leaders held discussions with President Banda on the economic problems facing the southern region in general, and the SADCC countries in particular, and on ways of strengthening regional and bilateral co-operation within the framework of SADCC in order to deal meaningfully with the existing transport and economic problems.

The problem of MNR bandits in Mozambique, which is making difficult the use of the railway routes from Malawi to the Mozambican ports of Beira and Nacala, was discussed during the talks. The talks were frank, serious and positive. It was indeed only proper and fitting for leaders who have undertaken to consult each other regularly on bilateral and international problems to meet for such talks.

However, following these talks in Blantyre, Malawi has over the past weeks been at the centre of attention in the foreign press. This is because the country's policies, which are often misunderstood, have once again been misinterpreted. Specifically, Malawi's policies of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries and of contact and dialogue have been deliberately misrepresented. Arising from this distorted interpretation, unfounded allegations and accusations that Malawi supports MNR bandits and is a South African pawn in the destabilisation of southern Africa have been made against the Malawi government.

It is not Malawi's practice to answer or respond to unfounded allegations and accusations. Malawi does not believe that the best course of settling disputes of whatever nature is through the mass media. Malawi believes that disputes, differences, misunderstandings and problems can be sorted out around the table. This is the root and essence of Malawi's policy of contact and dialogue.

It is in pursuit of this policy that Malawi has signed general co-operation agreements with her neighbours: Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In these agreements Malawi and her neighbours have undertaken to consult each other regularly on bilateral and international problems of a political, socio-economic, technical, scientific and cultural nature, including problems related to co-operation and good neighbourliness.

To facilitate the operation of the general co-operation agreements, Malawi and her neighbours have established permanent joint commissions of co-operation. In the case of Malawi-Mozambique co-operation, a special joint security commission has also been established. These commissions, instead of the mass media, must be made use of in discussing issues between our countries.

On the question of MNR bandits in Mozambique the Malawi government position has never changed. The government of Malawi is not aware of any incidents which involved MNR bandits carrying out acts of war or sabotage from Malawi into Mozambique. And, as a matter of policy and practice, Malawi does not allow any type of action which might endanger the peace, security and stability of her neighbours, nor the use of her territory as a base to any organisation or group to launch violent acts, terrorism or aggression against her neighbours.

The recent flight of Mozambique soldiers into Malawi is enough evidence that MNR bandits who displaced these soldiers after reported heavy clashes do not, in fact, operate from Malawi. There can, therefore, be no question of Malawi expelling MNR bandits (as some papers, such as the 'Herald' of Zimbabwe, are saying) because they have no bases in, and do not operate from Malawi.

It is most unfortunate that Malawi's policy of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries is deliberately being misinterpreted and taken as ambivalence and complicity. Malawi respects the integrity of other sovereign states. In this connection, it is worth noting that like in other sovereign and independent countries, the Malawi government's first and foremost priority is to look after the welfare of its people and not to meddle in the internal affairs of other sovereign states.

It must be emphasised that as a landlocked country, Malawi has nothing whatsoever to gain from the MNR banditry activities in Mozambique. If anything at all, these activities pose as much a problem for Malawi as they are a problem for Mozambique. Indeed, MNR banditry has adversely affected the transport and therefore economic situation of the country, thus making the government's task of looking after the welfare of its people even more difficult.

As the Malawi Minister of Finance said in his 1986-87 budget statement, banditry activities in Mozambique which had resulted in the continued disruption of the Nacala and Beira railway links have adversely affected the economy and seriously constrained Malawi's economic growth. Malawi therefore welcomed the initiative taken by the three leaders of Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to discuss with the Life President ways and means of meaningfully strengthening co-operation in dealing with existing transport, security and economic problems.

In particular, Malawi welcomes the move to establish a special Malawi-Mozambique joint security commission to deal with their problems. However, for the body to function effectively, there is need for commitment by both parties as has been demonstrated by the establishment of the special joint security commission. In this regard, the Malawi government had, so far this month, handed back to the Mozambique government some 1,500 soldiers who fled into Malawi after some fighting against the MNR bandits recently. These soldiers were handed back at Mwanza-Zobue border post. The regional army commander of Zobue in Mozambique received the soldiers on behalf of his government.

As the Malawi leader said on 13th September, it is in the best interest of not only Malawi and Mozambique to find a solution to the problems of banditry activities in Mozambique, but the survival of SADCC as well as the whole southern Africa region."

[Note: Reporting the meeting in Victoria Falls on 15th October between President Kaunda of Zambia and Prime Minister Mugabe of Zimbabwe (ME/8392/ii),

SAPA (in English 0839 gmt 16 Oct 86) also said: (Excerpts). . . An article in the semi-official Harare daily newspaper, the 'Herald', nevertheless accused President Banda of backing the rebels in pursuit of grandiose dreams of a "greater Malawi" embracing much of northern Mozambique, including the Indian Ocean port of Nacala. . . The 'Herald', which is controlled by the parastatal Mass Media Trust, broke new ground by giving publicity today to a previously unpublicised exiled opposition group, the Socialist League of Malawi, which called on Malawians to rise and overthrow Dr Banda's rule. It accused Life President Banda of exploiting his membership of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference in order to extend South African influence. The Socialist League, which is banned in Dr Banda's one-party state, held a meeting in Nakonde, Zambia, over the weekend and called for the establishment of an egalitarian system in Malawi, at present one of the few African states firmly committed to capitalism. According to another report, Malawi is still pursuing Dr Banda's dreams of acquiring large areas of Mozambique, including its own sea port. The article reflects the growing hostility to the ageing Malawian leader in the state-controlled news media here [Harare], raking over past claims that he failed to support the war against Portuguese rule and fostered dissident groups in the hope of territorial gains.]