



Vultures Over Manica

Pretoria prepares to undermine Harare.



Mugabe: assisting Mozambique

Mozambique subverters have extended their destabilising errands into neighbouring Zimbabwe. The Pretoria-backed Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) claimed at the end of May to have attacked five military targets and established 'operational bases' inside Zimbabwe.

A spokesman for the MNR in Lisbon disclosed that they had raided Rusape, Sungwesi and Inyazura in eastern Zimbabwe and Rusambo and Rusinga in northern Zimbabwe along the border with Mozambique.

A Zimbabwe government spokesman dismissed the charge as "a pack of lies" and unfounded. "There was nothing of that nature. No towns or barracks of ours were hit," an official told *Africa Events*.

It was the first that the MNR has made such a claim. When Prime Minister Robert Mugabe committed troops to assist the beleaguered Frelimo two years ago, the saboteurs threatened to "attach targets" inside Zimbabwe. First Zimbabwean soldiers were deployed to protect the Beira Corridor, but as the war intensified Zimbabwe was forced to send more troops to Mozambique.

More than 10,000 Zimbabweans are engaged in an offensive against the bandits in Tete Sofala and Zambezia provinces. An MNR communique said the attack was the beginning of "puni-

tive military operation" aimed "to punish Zimbabwe for its direct military assistance" to Maputo.

The purpose of the alleged attacks could be purely psychological probably meant to signal a planned South African-led onslaught against Zimbabwe.

Several days before the reported raids, the Zimbabwean Security Minister, Emmerson Munangagwa said that they had information that Pretoria was planning a cross border military operation against Zimbabwe. However, the minister did not elaborate.

Since the collapse of the unity talks between the ruling ZANU party and Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU, armed attacks against white farmers in the Zimbabwe countryside have increased considerably. Pro-ZAPU dissidents were accused of previous killings. Although the government has not blamed these on dissidents, it is feared that the new attacks could be the work of elements sponsored by the Botha regime.

If South Africa decides to undermine the Mugabe government, it has a ready made outfit in the MNR. The MNR was set up by Ian Smith's Security Organisation, the CIO; and from 1974 to 1979, the tiny and largely directionless bandit group was under the CIO Chief, Ken Flowers, and the boss of the notorious Selous Scouts, Ron Reid Daly. In its early days, the

MNR was fronted, in name at least, by a group of Portuguese spies from the Lisbon Intelligence Organisation, PIDE. Orlando Cristina and Jorge Jardim were nominally in charge, and Zeca Caliate led the so-called 'military wing', around 150 strong, whose main job was to gather information about ZANLA's bases in Mozambique.

By 1979, the MNR was reporting to the CIO's office in Mutare, the capital of Manicaland province, on the border with Mozambique. They had two bases, one at Nyanga, fifty miles to the north, and another at Chisumbanje, in the remote far south-east corner of Manicaland, close to where the borders of Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa meet.

By then, too, it was becoming difficult to say that the MNR was made simply of Portuguese and Rhodesian stooges. The bandits were in effect led by a former Frelimo soldier, Andre Matsingaissa. They were growing in numbers, and many of the new recruits were Shona-speakers from Sofala province in Mozambique or from Zimbabwe's Manicaland.

With substantial areas of Manicaland under the control of Mugabe's ZANLA forces, and with the Lancaster House talks looming, the MNR was largely abandoned by Smith. Matsingaissa was killed in October 1979 when Frelimo recaptured the bandits strong-hold of Gorongosa. The MNR were very nearly destroyed in June 1980, weeks after Zimbabwe's independence, in a battle at Sitatonja mountain near the Zimbabwe border.

It was after June 1980 that the MNR, almost completely smashed by Frelimo, were taken over by Pretoria's Defence Ministry. Orlando Cristina, and another man, Afonso Dhlakama, who is now MNR's President, emerged in the Transvaal at the end of 1980, at a small camp near Zoabostad. With Botha's assistance, the MNR got a new lease of life, and re-opened the war against the Mozambican government.

Within four years they was able to carry out extensive deadly and destructive operations against the Machel regime. It was the MNR's devastating attacks that forced the Frelimo government to sign the ill-fated Nkomati accord in 1984. It is possible that the MNR has maintained its links with southern Manicaland and could revive them in an attempt to destabilise Zimbabwe. ●