

# South Africa: New Aggression

When William Khanyile was a young man he joined the African National Congress of South Africa as an organizer of Black unions. For these two crimes he served eight long years on Robben Island and suffered years of exile. His last post was in Mozambique, where as National Executive of the South African Congress of Trade Unions he witnessed the growing strength and militancy of the South African working class with pride and excitement. But he would not live to see their final victory.

Khanyile and ten other members of the ANC died in a hail of rockets and machine gun fire on January 30 when South African commandos in armored cars drove forty miles into neighboring Mozambique to the industrial suburb of Matola, near Maputo. There they destroyed three residences housing exiled members of the ANC. A Portuguese national also died during the attack, as did two of the South African commandos who were killed during an exchange with defending Mozambican soldiers.

The ANC later announced that in addition to the eleven men killed, three men had been captured by the raiders and taken back to South Africa.

The South African police have confirmed they captured three men who they named as Lati Rantshekang, David Ntobela and Uujani Mauusa. The ANC has expressed concern that the prisoners would be tortured and killed by their captors.

General Constand Viljoen, commander of the South African Defense Force, defended the action on security grounds, asserting that recent ANC military activities, including the devastating Sasol raids last summer and the Soekmekaar and Silverton attacks were planned in the ANC houses. Matola, he declared, was "the springboard for terrorism."

## Raid Claims Challenged

But some observers question why South Africa would wait so long after the Sasol and Silverton attacks to retaliate for them. Rather, they argue, the Matola attack seems designed to strengthen Prime Minister P.W. Botha's hand in the recently announced upcoming national election, and to signal Washington that Pretoria is only too willing to fall in line behind Reagan's cold war foreign policy. The attack on Matola came only two days after Secretary of State Alexander Haig announced a new "get tough" policy against what he termed "rampant international terrorism."

Oliver Tambo, the President of the ANC



The aftermath of aggression. An ANC member lies slain in the rubble of his Matola home.

denied Viljoen's claim that his organization has bases inside Mozambique. "It is common knowledge that our guerrillas train in various parts of the world and then move into South Africa and train others there," he said. "But there is no staging center in Mozambique."

Reiterating that the shelled houses were just residences, Tambo went on, "If possessing guns is sufficient to turn a house into a military base, we want to know, because most whites in South Africa keep guns in their homes."

Mozambique accused South Africa of trying to export its "explosive" internal situation to bordering states. FRELIMO further charged that "the barbaric act by the South African racist regime is an integral part of a concerted plan to weaken, terrorize and destabilize neighboring countries." The statement went on to affirm Mozambique's "solidarity and full support of the people of South Africa under the leadership of the African National Congress ... and of the persons who, because of racial and

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## South African Raid

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apartheid policies of the regime in Pretoria, leave South Africa and seek refuge in Mozambique."

### **Pattern of Aggression**

The ease with which a South African armored column was able to penetrate Mozambican territory and withdraw relatively unhindered also raised questions about the effectiveness and loyalty of the Mozambican army (FPLM) command. Incredibly, news of the incursion failed to reach army headquarters until hours after the raiders returned to South Africa.

At a rally on February 15, Mozambican President Samora Machel put eight FPLM officers on public display, declaring that they would soon go before a military tribunal for their complicity in the January 30 raid. Along with Lieutenant Colonel Jossias Dlacama, the head of the army's armored car division, the commander and deputy commander of Matola's guard force and five captains will be put on trial on the charges of treason and spying. Machel also announced that South African troops had invaded Pafuri, a small settlement where the Mozambican border meets South Africa

and Zimbabwe. He reported that FPLM units drove off the attackers after inflicting heavy casualties.

The Mozambican president also warned that South African aggression was being escalated from more than a dozen new air and army bases now being established in northern Transvaal province.

Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert Mugabe also strongly condemned South Africa's "unprovoked naked act of aggression" against Mozambique" and fitted the raid into a larger strategy of regional destabilization.

In his strongest attack on South Africa to date, Mugabe denounced the "murders committed by the bandits of the apartheid regime," and cited a litany of South African aggressions against the front line states. He included South Africa's support for anti-government MNR guerrillas in Mozambique; "the recent sabotage acts in our barracks by former Selous Scouts elements"; the promotion of the recent attempted coup d'etat in Zambia; the unprovoked attacks in Kazangula in Botswana; and the continuing incursions into Angola by South African troops.

South African agents are also suspected of involvement in the bombing of a lawyer in Lesotho known to be close to ANC members living in that country.

Significantly, the Matola raid is the first time South Africa has openly attacked a neighboring country in force, in response to guerrilla activity within its own borders. It is not likely to be the last. **C.M.**