

B. AFRICA

Mozambique: Commentary on South Africa's "Destabilisation" Operations

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Excerpts from commentary:

In May 1970, the Portuguese colonial army began its largest ever operation in Mozambique. A total of 50,000 soldiers, including special units, attacked Frelimo, mainly in Cabo Delgado province which borders Tanzania. The operation was codenamed Gordian Knot. Looking back to that period, there is a crucial point that we should take into account: Another operation had been mounted a little more than a year earlier. On 3rd February 1969, Eduardo Mondlane, founder and chairman of Frelimo, was killed in Dar es Salaam by a parcel bomb sent by agents of colonialism. . .

Today, Mozambicans look at South African Defence Minister Gen Magnus Malan as the South African Kaulza de Arriaga [former C-in-C of the Portuguese forces in Mozambique] and ask themselves: Is Malan preparing his Gordian Knot against Mozambique? There are disturbing indications that Mozambique may experience a Malan's Gordian Knot. President Samora Machel died on 19th October. While the world was still shocked by reports of his death, South African information organs close to the Pieter Botha government were already launching a fully-fledged campaign on the hypothetical power struggle within the Frelimo leadership, trying to make a reality of the Pretoria authorities' desire.

The replacement of Samora Machel by Joaquim Chissano took place shortly after the funeral ceremony of the ill-fated President and the Frelimo party Central Committee elected Chissano by acclamation. This fact will certainly worry the war-mongering apartheid faction. . .

One can deduce that Pretoria's police is twofold. On the one hand, it seeks to keep Malawi as its bridgehead in the heart of southern Africa. The bandits are still coming from Malawi and go back there when they need to retreat. On the other hand, Pretoria is trying to create bandit bases in Mozambique's central and northern areas, with a network stretching to the sea to guarantee a supply route to its bandit army. Should Malan be unable to do this, he will resort to a Gordian Knot operation by launching a large-scale attack by his armed forces against southern Mozambique, to which a number of contingents from Malawi in northern Mozambique will be added.

Casa Banana, the main armed bandit base in Gorongosa district, was captured by joint Mozambique-Zimbabwe forces in 1985. Malawi, which had previously been used as a launching pad for bandit attacks against Mozambique, emerged as a second Casa Banana. For Pretoria, a third Casa Banana is still in the planning stage. A cordon sanitaire of bases and camps in the entire central-north area of Mozambique is being established along the Zambezi river.

As with Kaulza De Arriaga's Gordian Knot, Malan has already launched preliminary operations. South African special forces normally used in rapid intervention operations have been deployed along the South African border with Mozambique's Maputo and Gaza provinces. Should these forces be used against southern Mozambique in the next few weeks, one is led to believe that Pretoria's tactic is to prevent the Mozambique and Zimbabwe armed forces from concentrating on their operations in Sofala, Tete and Zambezia and thus strengthening the bandit positions in those areas. Thereafter Pretoria will be able to wash its hands of Malawi.

Another important aspect is the threats Malan has made since Machel's death, some of which are directed at Zambia and Zimbabwe. These are threats that match perfectly with generalised destabilisation as foreseen by Malan as a prelude to his Gordian

Knot operation. It is important to note two things in this regard: On the one hand, it has become publicly known that South Africa is training Zambian armed bandits in Namibia for subsequent infiltration into Zambia from UNITA bases in Angola; on the other hand, unconfirmed reports speak of 5,000 Zimbabwean dissidents in the northern Transvaal ready to enter Zimbabwe. This would be a way of diverting Zimbabwean troops from the operational area in Mozambique. Therefore, this is a South African Gordian Knot. Although aimed directly at Mozambique, such an operation would include combined operations against various southern African countries. . .

Malan's campaign has backfired in two ways. The unity of the frontline states around Mozambique is more vigorous than ever before, while there are a number of countries willing to come to the aid of the frontline states should this be necessary. Samora Machel's death seems to have eliminated a number of political obstacles in the region. It was not a Mozambican delegation that went to Moscow after Machel's funeral, but a Zimbabwean delegation led by Zimbabwe's Deputy Prime Minister Simon Muzenda. There is a major strategic reason for a shift in alliances, in that the future of the entire southern Africa region is at stake in Mozambique. Accordingly no frontline state will object to military support due to the source's ideological colours.

It seems that there are two ways of facing Malan's preparations. One is the unity of the frontline states' armies, supported by forces outside this region, possibly the USSR and India. The other is for the West, particularly the United States, to decide once and for all to put an end to Malan's warmongering adventures by unequivocally threatening the South African government and launching a military blockade against South Africa. One thing is certain: Machel's death was not Pretoria's final goal. It was actually a crucial element in a wider plan of destabilisation of the region in order to facilitate its political disaggregation. Once this is achieved the region could be ready for Malan to enter with his army as if it were a pacifying force.

In previous reports we said that the political power base of Malan and the other South African military chiefs is the destabilisation of the countries in the region. Without their command over bandit armies, those generals would lose their political power in Pretoria. Politically, they would be unemployed. In their view it is, therefore, necessary to keep a cordon of permanent destabilisation within and without South Africa where the future army of armed bandits, consisting of vigilantes, brutal police units and Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha military units, is already being established. In order to maintain this destabilisation, Malan and his colleagues need to eliminate all leaders that represent stability. In view of this plan of destabilisation and the fact that Samora Machel is dead, it is logical for the world to ask: What will happen to Nelson Mandela?