

The 23rd March Attack on Oil Depots Near Beira

(a) Maputo home service in Portuguese (i) 1900 gmt 23 Mar 79 (ii) 1030 gmt 24 Mar 79 and (iii) 1700 gmt 24 Mar 79

Text of communique issued on 23rd March by the General Staff of the People's Forces for the Liberation of Mozambique:

In another act of aggression by imperialism against the People's Republic of Mozambique, the enemy attacked oil depots at Munhava, just outside the city of Beira, Sofala Province, early this morning. In the action the enemy succeeded in setting fire to the oil depots. Work is still underway to contain the fierce blaze. The oil contained in the depots was destined for Malawi and was in transit through our country. The damage caused by this action is estimated at about 100,000 contos.

In another act of aggression, co-ordinated with the first, the enemy cut the electricity supply line to the city of Beira. Thanks to the speedy response of the competent organs, the supply of electricity to the city was re-established at about 0900 [local] hours.

These acts of enemy aggression are part of their vain attempt to destroy our national independence and our revolutionary gains. The enemy is trying to intimidate us into reducing our support to the struggle for the liberation of the Zimbabwean people.

The People's Forces for the Liberation of Mozambique, the armed wing of the people, led by the Frelimo party, reaffirm their firm resolve to put an end to all enemy actions, in whatever form they take, and punish the aggressors severely.

23rd March 1979.

(ii) Text of report of Robert Mugabe's statement:

In an interview with 'Tempo' magazine this morning [24th March], the co-leader of the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, condemned the attack perpetrated yesterday by Rhodesian enemy agents against oil depots situated just outside the city of Beira. The co-leader of the Patriotic Front added that the attack was aimed at destabilizing the People's Republic of Mozambique so that it would subsequently reduce its support for the liberation struggle of the Zimbabwe people. Robert Mugabe also condemned the racist regime of South Africa and Western powers for giving aid to the illegal Rhodesian regime.

(iii) Text of report:

Information reaching our editorial newsdesk a few moments ago indicates that the blaze at the Munhava oil depots in Beira was brought under control early this afternoon [24th March]. Today's Beira 'Noticias' says that the sabotage action co-ordinated against the oil tanks and the electricity supply lines was carried out by terrorist forces in the service of Ian Smith's illegal racist regime.

Taking part in the fight to control the fire were Party, Government, defence and security cadres, working with firemen, workers and miners, as well as members of the public who rushed to the scene of the blaze. An enquiry fully to assess the damage caused by the sabotage is underway.

(b) Salisbury home service in English 0400 gmt 24 Mar 79

Excerpts from report:

The Government in Mozambique reports that fuel depots in Beira have been attacked and fuel worth millions of dollars has been destroyed... When asked to comment on the report, an official in the Rhodesian security force headquarters said: It is news to us.