

April 15 1987

MOZAMBIQUE

Tanzania and Malawi Join War

Mozambique's President Joaquim Chissano, confirmed on March 5th, that Tanzanian troops had arrived in his country to help him in his civil war against the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR/Renamo) rebels. He gave the news during a visit to Zimbabwe (p. 8421B).

Sources within Mozambique said that in the previous two weeks, hundreds of Tanzanian soldiers had been flying in to the coastal town of Quelimane, about 800 miles north-east of Maputo, Mozambique's capital (see map).

The country later found a more unlikely ally in its 11-year war against the guerrillas.

Neighbouring Malawi, until recently an important base for the rebels, decided in early March, to join Tanzania and Zimbabwe in deploying troops against the MNR.

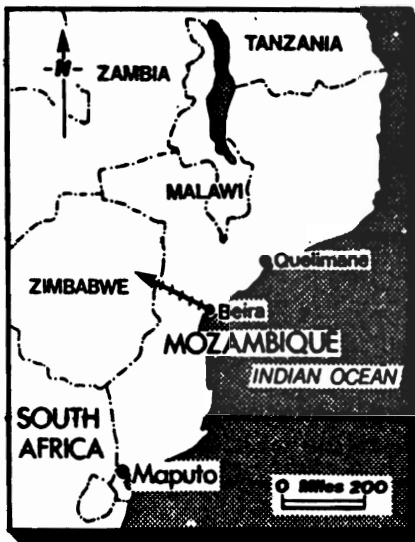
According to intelligence sources in the Malawian capital, Lilongwe, Malawi was to despatch a contingent of 300 soldiers from its minuscule army of 5,000 into Mozambique during the first week of April.

Malawi's decision was not entirely voluntary. Towards the end of last year, the leaders of Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe travelled to Lilongwe and told President Hastings Kamuzu Banda that he would have to cut his country's support for the MNR.

Mozambique threatened to train surface-to-surface missiles against what it alleged were MNR bases in southern Malawi.

The three frontline States also threatened to blockade Malawi and possibly pursue guerrillas into the country.

Observers say Banda got the message and quickly canvassed the creation of a joint Malawi-Mozambican commission. Significantly, Banda appointed John Tembo, widely regarded as his chosen successor, to head the Malawian side. At the commission's last meeting in December, sources say, Tembo agreed to establish a Malawian military pres-



(D. Tel 6/3)

ence in Mozambique (p. 8326A).

It was a radical departure from the past, but one which has been welcomed—although with some scepticism—in Lusaka, Maputo and Harare. Malawi remains the only black African country to maintain full diplomatic relations with South Africa, and most analysts in the region believe that the MNR exploited this relationship to set up bases in Malawi.

The Malawi soldiers are being deployed to guard the strategic railway line from the Mozambican port of Nacala on the Indian Ocean to Malawi. Nacala handled most of landlocked Malawi's exports and imports until 1984 when MNR sabotage closed the railway line.

Since then, Malawi's imports and exports have been carried by hundreds of lorries through the Mozambican north-western province of Tete and Zimbabwe to South African ports, running the gauntlet of MNR ambushes and landmines. (D. Tel 6/3, Obs 22/3)

Blow to South Africa

The *Indian Ocean Newsletter* commented that "Malawi, South Africa's only public friend on the African continent, has given Pretoria a slap in the face by sending troops to support the Frontline states in their war against the MNR rebels in Mozambique. The aid is token, as Malawi's army is only 5,000 strong, but it signals a realisation by

President Kamuzu Banda that his country's future lies in cultivating stronger ties with its neighbours and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) rather than with South Africa, in spite of aid from Pretoria," and the *Observer* (UK) pointed out that "President Hastings Banda of Malawi has decided he can no longer afford the political embarrassment of hosting the guerrillas."

On March 25th, the MNR guerrillas warned Malawi that it would "pay a high price" if it enters the regional war in Mozambique to protect its access to Indian Ocean ports.

"We warn (Malawian) President (Hastings) Banda not to involve himself in the fire and dangerous game" along with other Southern African front-line states supporting Marxist-ruled Mozambique, MNR chief Afonso Dhlakama said in a statement.

The Lisbon-based rebel spokesman Paulo Oliveira, who released the statement, said Malawi began providing "military escorts" for its trains across Mozambique's northern Nacala railway line in the previous two weeks.

He warned "foreign technicians" repairing the frequently attacked 440-mile line to abandon the area or "face the consequences of the war."

Several score Canadian and Western European technicians, largely French and Portuguese, are involved in recouping the railroad in a \$40m programme backed, among others, by the European Community.

The MNR guerrillas "will once and for all destroy" the railroad and hinterland Malawi "will pay a high price" if it does not stop committing troops to the 10-year conflict, Mr. Dhlakama's statement said.

(ION 14/3, Obs 8/3, EGG 27/3)

MNR Shake-up

The right-wing rebels have demoted one of their founder members and expelled a former spokesman in a shake-up of their Lisbon office, a rebel official said at the beginning of March.

MNR spokesman, Paulo Oliveira said founder-member Evo Fernandes had been removed from the MNR's ruling National Council and Jorge Correia, a former Lisbon spokesman, had been expelled from the organisation.

(DN 2/3)