

The evil of MNR bandits

THE American magazine, Newsweek, this week devotes considerable space to a lengthy article on the MNR by one of its own correspondents. It terms the conflict as the most brutal one in Africa and details the atrocities committed by the bandits against innocent povo.

Newsweek is a typical American publication, conservative and subtly partisan but one which publicly claims to tread only the middle path and presenting facts as they are.

There are a number of "facts" that we, with our first-hand knowledge of Mozambique, would heatedly dispute in that article. But its general conclusion that the MNR, not Frelimo soldiers, have been responsible for mass suffering in Mozambique is undisputable.

It is also true, as the magazine summarises, that the MNR throughout Mozambique "are an alien and unpopular force". Their leader, Alfonso Dhlakama, the magazine indicts, has only the vaguest political manifesto. It adds: "His rule (instead) has been distinguished only by its brutality and terror."

Even Mozambique's bosom friends would not have put it clearer. For as we have emphasised in this newspaper over and over before, terrorism and nothing else seems to be the name of the game the MNR plays best.

The Zimbabweans living in the border areas have recently also been subjected to MNR terrorism. Elderly people and children have been mercilessly butchered and women kidnapped. This is typical of the MNR. That is the true picture of South Africa's "anti-communist fighters" that people in this region have been trying to show most of the Western world but in vain.

The British have come out clearly in support of the Frelimo government. The American government is hesitant. Mr Reagan has to watch his step against the Reaganites who now believe Reagan has gone soft on communists.

Perhaps now that the influential American media has decided to tell the story the Reagan Administration will finally stand up to the likes of Jesse Helms and throw its lot in with Mrs Margaret Thatcher who, for once, has not wavered on a fundamental African issue.