

## Maputo Radio on Pik Botha's "False" Statements to Machel Inquiry

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Text of commentary (ME/8478/B/2):

South African Foreign Minister Roelof Botha has very little for which to thank his government colleagues. They have repeatedly thrown him into the deep end to defend lost causes. The case of the Mozambican presidential aircraft crash is only one example among many.

Speaking in court in Johannesburg last Monday, Botha said that he had initially spoken about the crash because South Africa had been accused of causing President Samora Machel's death. At the time, Botha made statements that have since been proven wrong. In other words, Roelof Botha began a disinformation campaign under the cover of counter-propaganda. In court, he was asked whether he had meant that two crew members were under the influence of alcohol when he said that there was alcohol in their blood. Botha said that he had not tried to create that impression, although just before that he had admitted that he had begun an action of counter-propaganda.

It is therefore difficult to believe that Botha did not try to create this impression for that as well as another reason: immediately after his statement on the presence of alcohol in the blood of two of the crew members, South African and Western media carried Botha's words. Portugal's 'O Seculo' newspaper, for instance, carried the following headlines: Too much alcohol and too little fuel. More respectable media, such as the BBC, carried the same suggestions, which Botha now says he did not intend. For example, in its assessment of 1986, BBC television said that Roelof Botha had stated that the crew had been drinking. Botha would be believed today if, at the time, in view of what the media had begun to spread, he had publicly explained that his statement had not been intended to give the impression that the crew was under the influence of alcohol.

A number of leaders accused South Africa of causing the Mbuzini tragedy. President Kenneth Kaunda put it this way: It was a case in which South Africa stood guilty until proven otherwise. This was not really strange, at the time. Just a few days earlier, General Malan had made serious threats against President Samora Machel's life. The South African authorities had also launched an unprecedented campaign to convince the South African and Western public that the Mozambican government was about to fall. In other words, Mozambique and the frontline, as well as any country that is attentive to developments in southern Africa, could legitimately and logically expect some very serious action from South Africa against Samora Machel and Mozambique.

As a country directly involved in the matter, Mozambique hid its suspicions, although they were deep and legitimate. Only Information Minister Teodato Hunguana's statement suggested these suspicions. When he was asked whether the Mozambican government had considered the possibility of South Africa's criminal involvement, he said that that possibility had in no way been discarded. Minister Teodato Hunguana did not

surprised that Botha had admitted that he had lied. He also spoke of increased co-operation between Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, as well as the activities of the MNR and UNITA on behalf of South Africa.

On relations between Mozambique and Malawi, President Kaunda noted that Machel said that Banda could not be allowed to continue with what he was doing. He adds: "As I have said before, the moment I heard that, I knew that something was cooking, because I was there, I was in the chair when the late Machel was addressing a press conference in Maputo on 12th September. He said in an answer to a pressman [words indistinct] who said what will he do if that is true. So, Comrade Machel in a jocular mood said - I remember distinctly - we will invite the Soviet Union [words indistinct] and we all laughed, thinking it was joke. President Kaunda continued: "The BBC reported this as a serious statement. I knew we were in trouble. I knew the [words indistinct]. It was a joke. I was there, in the chair."