

Machel puts UK in picture about MNR

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From BRIAN MOYO
in London

THE activities of the South African-sponsored MNR bandits in Mozambique have become one of the strongest focal points of political events in Southern Africa, and as such, the daily horrors perpetrated by the bandits are hitting world headlines frequently.

But when Cde Graca Machel, the widow of Mozambique's first president, Samora, addressed a meeting in London recently and catalogued the deeds of the Mozambique National Resistance bandits, you could have been excused to think that this was the first time that the audience had heard about the MNR's programme of wanton destabilisation.

You could have heard a feather settle on the floor as silence descended on the packed hall, with only Cde Machel's imploring voice breaking the uneasy silence. Now and then a man or woman in the audience shook their heads in disbelief as they took in the implications for Mozambique of the MNR's destabilisation activities.

"About 400 000 people have died since the MNR began its activities. A third of the country's population are being prevented from working on the land and producing food. About 1 500 co-ops have been destroyed and this has aggravated

hunger in the country," she told the crowd.

In education, 5 800 primary schools have been destroyed and half-a-million pupils abducted. In health, 400 hospitals have been closed and two million people have been deprived of health care and 20 per cent of the country's ambulances have been destroyed.

The list of atrocities was endless, and enhanced by Cde Machel's eloquence in English, which came somewhat as a surprise to the audience, the gruesome details of MNR's attacks on helpless villagers became uncommonly fearsome.

Cde Machel didn't beat about the bush in naming the paymasters of the MNR bandits. "South Africa is behind the MNR because it wants to maintain a stranglehold on Southern Africa. It is for the same reason that its forces are occupying Angola."

One man, who perhaps for want of enlightenment or driven by a strong desire to demonstrate his ignorance about the political situation in Southern Africa,

challenged Cde Machel to explain why her government had signed the Nkomati agreement when it knew the Botha regime was doing to destabilise its neighbours.

Although Cde Machel's speech was on "The effect of South Africa's destabilisation and aggression on Mozambican women and children", it was clear that she had come prepared to answer any questions relating to the Southern African region.

The audience applauded her apparent grasp of the situation in the region and when she finally bowed out and received a thunderous applause, it was no more than she deserved.

"We need your support in the West to improve our health programmes, education and agriculture so that we may rebuild our country and put it back on its feet," she had said earlier on in her speech.

But as the audience walked out after her appealing and imploring speech of over one hour, one wondered whether by some miracle, there would be a change in the attitude of the West towards South Africa. Still, no one could say she did not deliver the message

minerals," said Cde Machel. And because of the minerals in South Africa and other African states in the region, the West was prepared to turn a blind eye to what the Botha regime was doing to destabilise its neighbours.

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