

Eras Journal - David Robinson

Abstract of "Renamo, Malawi and the struggle to succeed Banda: Assessing theories of Malawian intervention in the Mozambican Civil War"

Following its independence in 1975, the former Portuguese colony of Mozambique suffered a devastating civil war until the early 1990s. This war, between the ruling *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo) and the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo), was the context within which issues of underdevelopment and political divisions unfolded.

It is well-documented that throughout the Civil War the Renamo rebels, who were primarily a proxy army for the Apartheid regime in South Africa, used the territory of neighbouring Malawi to supply their forces in northern Mozambique and to seek refuge from the operations of the Mozambican armed forces (FPLM). It is extremely unlikely that this could have occurred without the cooperation, or at least acquiescence, of Malawian authorities.

This article surveys the history of post-independence relations between Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa, in order to examine a number of theories explaining Malawian support for Renamo. Four main theories are critically assessed and it is argued that the best explanation of Malawi's relationship with Renamo is that connections were fostered between the paramilitary Malawi Young Pioneers (MYPs), the Malawian Police Force and Renamo, under the direction of the governor of Malawi's Central Bank, John Tembo. Tembo sought to succeed Banda and become President of Malawi, but faced challenges from various competitors.

By aiding Renamo with training and use of Malawian territory, and forging a bond with their South African and American backers, Tembo hoped that Renamo could be called upon as a third force to support him during any struggle over succession in Malawi.