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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
9 March 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Insurgency in Malawi

1. The 12 February raid on Fort Johnston, a district headquarters within 100 miles of the Malawi capital, apparently marked the start of a terrorist campaign by the former cabinet ministers determined to overthrow Prime Minister Banda. This dramatic show of force has improved their prospects for receiving assistance from foreign African nationalists who share their resentment of Banda's collaboration with the Portuguese in neighboring Mozambique. Although a popular uprising does not appear imminent, guerrilla operations, sustained with minimal foreign aid, could in the long run tip the balance against Banda.

2. Banda is currently in a strong position. He is, however, faced with the difficulty of trying to ride two horses at once. Because of Malawi's exposed geographical position vis-a-vis Mozambique and the fact that Malawi's only transport route to the sea runs through Portuguese territory, Banda has felt forced to maintain cordial and friendly relations with the Portuguese. On the other hand, he is acutely aware of African nationalist pressures, and on the surface at least he is trying not to be put in the position of opposing the advance of African liberation. He is likewise aware of the threat to himself posed by armed Mozambique "freedom fighters" who sometimes transit Malawi territory. If pressures from the various anti-Portuguese elements become too strong, Banda may well renounce collaboration with the Portuguese.

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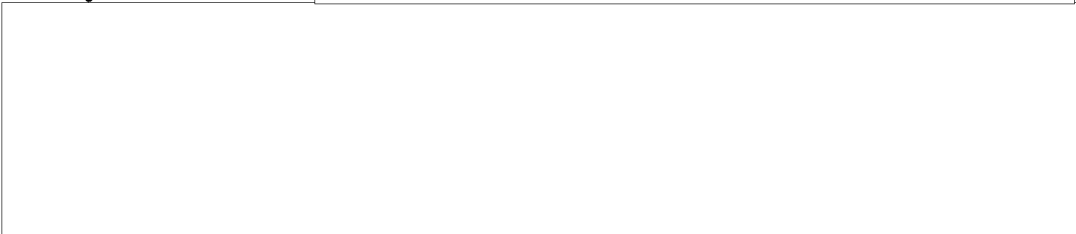
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3. The present guerrilla movement in Malawi arose from a political stalemate that has prevailed since last September, when the six most capable members of Prime Minister Banda's cabinet broke with him--a heavy blow for a talent-starved government barely two months after it had achieved nominal independence from Britain. Initially the breach was essentially a personality clash without clear-cut issues; the dissident ministers challenged Banda's blatantly autocratic conduct. In September, they barnstormed around Malawi, stressing Banda's refusal to replace British civil servants with Africans. Then all except former education minister Henry Masauko Chipembere assembled in Dar es Salaam where they began soliciting support from foreign African nationalists and calling attention to Banda's manifest policy of collaboration with the Portuguese authorities in Mozambique. The dissidents at first professed readiness to compromise with Banda, but by December Chipembere circulated a manifesto in Malawi asserting that he and his former colleagues were organizing a liberation movement with unspecified foreign support. Remaining in Malawi, Chipembere eluded intensive police searches and apparently organized a resistance movement in the Fort Johnston district, his home constituency.

4.  Chipembere is the leader of the guerrilla band, some 240 strong, which attacked the district headquarters. During the night of 12 February they struck two police stations and a post office, cut communications, seized 85 weapons and several vehicles, and successfully withdrew. 

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5. When government troops reached Fort Johnston the morning after the attack they found the raiders had disappeared. However, an all-out drive to capture Chipembere's followers has so far yielded only limited results. Many suspects have been rounded up in the



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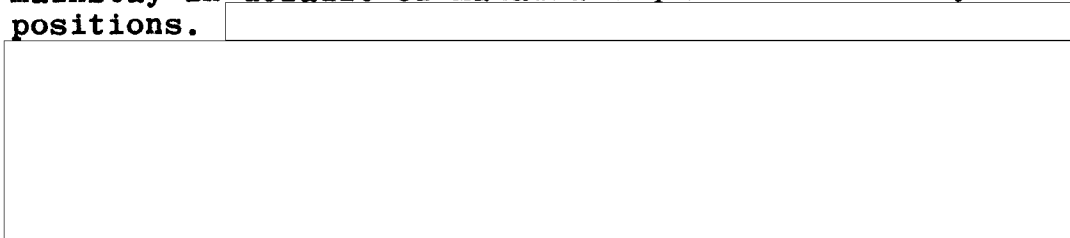
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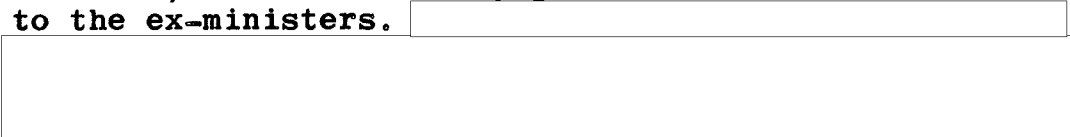
Fort Johnston area, but no more than a fourth of the guerrilla band had been captured or killed by 3 March. The majority are dispersed in extremely rugged terrain, where individuals or small groups can survive indefinitely with minimal help from the populace. Several hit-and-run attacks since 12 February have been attributed to the rebels, including the killing of a village headman near Fort Johnston and a strike at a police outpost within 10 miles of Zomba.

6. Rumors of an imminent attack on Zomba continue to gain wide credence, and the rebels apparently hope that a continuation of minor strikes and grand threats will tip the psychological balance against Banda. However, a widespread popular uprising does not appear imminent. Banda retains firm control of the Malawi Congress Party--the only political party in the country --while Chipembere and his colleagues apparently have not gained mass support outside the Fort Johnston district and Zomba itself, where many civil servants have become disaffected at Banda's increasingly arbitrary rule. The Malawi Army of four infantry companies and the 2,800-man police force are officered mostly by British expatriates, who are still Banda's mainstay in default of Malawians qualified for key positions.



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7. Apart from the elimination of Banda, the dissidents' objectives are unknown, and the extent and origin of their foreign support are not clearly established. Banda's charges that several of the ex-ministers have accepted bribes from Communist China are unsubstantiated. Tanzania's President Nyerere professes a policy of nonintervention, and has ostensibly banned political action by the refugees from Malawi, but Oscar Kambona, the radical Tanzanian foreign minister, has occasionally given favorable publicity to the ex-ministers.



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In any case, it is clear from the precise organization and execution of the Fort Johnston raid that the guerrillas have received foreign paramilitary training.

8. Aside from Chipembere's movement, the most immediate external threat to Banda's regime is posed by the Tanzania-based Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), whose guerrilla fighters occasionally take refuge in Malawi. FRELIMO also apparently maintains a regular smuggling channel through Malawi into central Mozambique. In January the Malawi police arrested ten FRELIMO agents who were carrying arms, ammunition, radios, and Portuguese uniforms.



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Continuation of FRELIMO arms smuggling nevertheless leaves an effective channel which could be used for arming Banda's enemies within Malawi. Unless Banda completely reverses his pro-Portuguese policy, the Mozambique freedom fighters and their Tanzanian supporters still have an overriding motive for giving covert assistance to the anti-Banda movement. (Map)



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