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MOZAMBIQUE WITHOUT MACHEL: THE CRISIS

FACING THE FRONTLINE STATES.

From: COLIN LEGUM.

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The real question facing Mozambique after the death of its martyred leader of independence, Samora Machel, is not who will succeed him, but who will save the country from disintegrating into chaos and so increasing the already acute problems facing the African Frontline States.

The reality is that there is no Mozambican leader or group, capable, as yet, of commanding the authority and possessing the charisma of Machel -- and the country has no time to allow for a strong new leader to evolve, as happened in Angola, where Eduardo dos Santos gradually established his authority after the death of its first president, Dr. Agostinho Neto.

Even before Machel's death, Mozambique was on the verge of disaster, unable on its own to cope with the spreading insurrection of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) and the increasing pressures coming from South Africa. Its acute security situation was worsened by near-impossible economic problems stemming from the general state of insecurity, years of crippling drought and mistaken governmental policies.

The stark situation facing Mozambique was well understood by Samora Machel and his Frontline colleagues in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana and Angola. They have been engaged since June 1985 in discussions about the practical

aspects of raising an external military force to come to Mozambique's assistance. After his last ill-fated journey to Lusaka, Machel was returning home with a radical new plan to confront the situation at home. Its details will only be revealed later.

The question of providing Mozambique with external military support is now the top priority on the agenda of the Frontline leaders who fear that their ability to reduce their dependence on South Africa and to engage in sanctions against it will be totally undermined unless the MNR, now suspected of again being backed by powerful elements in the South African army, is defeated.

Zimbabwe's Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, has been arguing strenuously for the past 15 months in favour of raising a Pan-African army built around a core of troops provided by the Frontline States and backed by other extra-continental powers.

Although Mugabe committed between 4,000-8,000 of Zimbabwe's army to help Mozambique in the middle of last year, he has so far failed to win support for his proposals from other Frontline States.

Angola has no troops to spare because of its own security problems. Zambia's difficult economic situation has made it difficult for President Kaunda to risk the cost of maintaining a part of his army in Mozambique. Tanzania, while willing to send some troops, is acutely conscious of the burden it will place on its fragile economy, remembering the huge cost of despatching its army into Uganda to help overthrow Idi Amin. Botswana's small army is fully stretched in protecting its own borders.

All the Frontline leaders are opposed to risking internationalizing the region's conflicts further by seeking support from any of the major powers. While they are ready to consider accepting Cuban support, their inhibition on this score is that such a move would alienate the Reagan Administration.

The idea that has been taking shape in the minds of the Frontline leaders is that Nigeria and India should be asked to provide the nucleus for an army capable of holding back the MNR and deterring South Africa from taking advantage of the vacuum caused by Machel's death to help establish a more compliant government in Maputo.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has already been sounded out on the possibility of Indian army support, particularly in the field of logistics. The Nigerians, too, have been approached to discuss the possibility of playing a leading role in creating a Pan-African force. General Obasanjo, a former Nigerian Head of State and co-chairman of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, is seen as a key figure in these negotiations.

Other countries who have been considered as likely to contribute to a Pan-African force are Ethiopia, Kenya and, possibly, Algeria and Egypt. There is a strong reluctance to seek help from either Libya or Iran, both of which have already volunteered to send military forces if asked to do so.

The pressing problem is time. The Frontline leaders believe the next few months could be decisive; yet it is difficult to see how a large force can be mobilized and put into the field in such a short time.

Just how much time is available depends largely on whether the hawks in Pretoria can persuade President Botha to exploit the opportunity that

now exists to help the MNR to strengthen its hold in the country. It is an open secret that President Botha's colleagues have been divided ever since the signing of the flawed Nkomati Accord of April 1984 over the question of support for the MNR. Influential army leaders have never disguised their dislike for the Accord, and some have bucked the official line by keeping up their support for the MNR. But political leaders, like the Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, are known to have been strongly opposed to such a policy.

The key figure in deciding which way Pretoria will move is the Defence Minister, Gen. Magnus Malan. For the last month he has been advocating a tough response to what he claims is the return of ANC cadres to Mozambique despite the prohibition of their presence provided for under the Nkomati Accord.

Among the casualties in the air crashⁱⁿ which Samora Machel died was Fernando Hawallo, one of Mozambique's most brilliant young leaders. Though still only in his early 30's, he played a prominent role as Machel's special aide on African affairs. A man of strongly independent views, he demonstrated his lack of confidence in the way the army was conducting the war against the MNR by taking two years leave of absence to train in guerrilla tactics in North Korea; but on his return home Machel refused to allow him to join the army because of his reliance on Hawallo for advice on African affairs.

Fernando Hawallo was educated at the remarkable multi-racial^{Waterford} school established by Michael Stern in Swaziland. He had been picked out as a high-flier by a prominent Portuguese architect in Mozambique who was an ardent opponent of the Salazar regime. After Waterford, Hawallo completed his studies at York University, England. His death has robbed Mozambique of one of its most important young leaders.

Another casualty was Aquino de Braganza, the head of the African Institute at Maputo University, who was seriously wounded in the letter-bomb attack that killed Ruth First. By origin a Portuguese Goan, Aquino was one of the founders of the anti-Portuguese liberation movement. Despite his radical politics, he studied African problems with academic objectivity and a sense of realism which often put him on the side of moderates in the counsels of Machel. Though well past his prime, his ripe experience and cool judgment will be missed in Mozambique.

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