

Meanwhile . . . in Mozambique

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Mozambique in 1982 was the prize exhibit of Pretoria's destabilisation lobby. Covert operations by South Africa's department of military intelligence (DMI) had joined a lethally incompetent Marxist government to render it virtually no threat to South African security. Raids by the South African defence force (SADF) were hitting the Mozambican capital, Maputo. Oil storage tanks at Beira blew up. Trains were derailed and pylons brought crashing down. A resistance group, the MNR, was financed, trained, armed, transported and (mostly) supplied by the South Africans. The justification for such hostility towards a neighbour was little more than "hot pursuit" of a handful of

African National Congress guerrillas, operating out of Maputo.

To Mr Crocker, exploring the marginally more glamorous terrain of Angola, South Africa's destabilisation of Mozambique was a regrettable sideshow. Yet as with its economic assault on Zimbabwe in 1982, it was adventurism which Mr Crocker had to confront if his diplomacy was to carry credibility with the black states of Africa. Constructive engagement, he never stopped saying, was about regional security as a whole. So in he plunged.

Throughout 1982-83, the state security council in Pretoria was divided about Mozambique as it was divided about Mr



How long will Machel's smile last?

Crocker's Angolan negotiations. It was clear that South Africa possessed the means to topple the Frelimo regime of President Samora Machel virtually overnight. Up to 90% of the country was either in the hands of MNR (better known as Renamo) guerrillas, or of Frelimo commanders with scant respect for the Maputo authorities. The drought was causing widespread distress, with troops on both sides often reduced to marauding banditry. Maputo was just an enticing couple of hours' drive down the road from the South African border.

To the DMI and other elements within the army, South Africa's interest lay (and still lies) in simply waiting for Renamo to build up some leadership and political cohesion before laying claim to government. This could be a long job. Renamo is one of the world's least convincing resistance movements. It is an amalgam of Portuguese expatriates and businessmen, disgruntled Frelimo turncoats, dissident tribesmen, mercenaries and arms salesmen. Apart from a shadowy figure somewhere in the bush named Alfonso Dhlakama, whom few observers seem to have met, Renamo is short on leadership. Its soldiers, undisciplined and often brutal, roam free with little strategic command.

Since the murder of its secretary general, Orlando Cristina, on an SADF "farm" near Pretoria in 1983, the nearest Renamo has come to a public face is its current spokesman, the youthful and immaculate Mr Evo Fernandes, based in Portugal. Like other Renamo officials, Mr Fernandes was (and may still be) an employee of a Spanish tycoon, Mr Manuel Bulhosa, one-time Mozambican businessman and refinery owner, now resident in Brazil. Mr Bulhosa has a strong emotional interest in regaining his properties in Mozambique and is known to use his considerable resources in Portugal to support the revanchist cause.

To Generals van der Westhuizen and Malan, the political immaturity of Renamo mattered less than its ability to destabilise the Frelimo government. Others on the state security council (SSC), including Mr Pik Botha, doubted Renamo's capacity to run anything more than a Mercedes and a few atrocities. To them, Mr Fernandes and his Portuguese backers were adventurers riding on the back of Mozambique's anarchy. Lines of authority between Mr Fernandes and the guerrillas seemed tenuous, if not nonexistent. Mr Botha felt South Africa should back the Frelimo government and bring it under South African suzerainty, on the Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland model. Once again, the SSC was split.

To the Americans, Mr Botha was right and had to be supported. The declared

purpose of Pretoria's aggression against Mozambique was to eliminate bases for alleged ANC raids into South Africa. Persuade President Machel to remove these bases, so Mr Crocker argued, and South Africa should cease its backing for Renamo.

As President Machel's hold on his country degenerated during 1983, debates within the SSC became increasingly fierce. Mr Botha complained that the South African military intelligence was a far trickier negotiating opponent than the Frelimo Marxists. Mr Crocker's team became ever more intimately involved in these arguments. By one account, South Africa's final decision to go for a deal with President Machel was clinched only when the Americans persuaded the chief

nurtured surrogate, Renamo, was being emasculated by Mr Pik Botha and his American friends.

Nkomati was initially seen as a triumph both for South African diplomacy and for constructive engagement. It heralded peace for a war-ravaged country on the basis of regional good neighbourliness. It came immediately after the Lusaka accord on Angola/Namibia and was undoubtedly Mr Crocker's finest hour. Yet Nkomati was little more than a gun held at President Machel's head: get rid of the ANC or else. Rather than charting a new course in regional security, it merely recognised the existing instability. Before 1984 was out, its good intentions had evaporated and President Machel was threatening to take South Africa to the



P. W. Botha and Machel taste the fruits of destabilisation

of police, General Johan Coetzee, that an ANC departure from Maputo would stick. Such a significant defection to the cause of a settlement finally converted a sceptical Mr P. W. Botha to try it.

The culmination of this effort was the Nkomati accord of March 16, 1984. In a bizarre *coup de theatre*, the South African and Mozambican leaders met on the banks of the Nkomati river, trumpets playing and cameras whirring, to sign a mutual non-aggression pact. The accord excluded from their respective territories "centres or depots containing armaments of whatever nature" which might be used by any organisation directed at the other side. The accord was tough for President Machel. The ANC is custodian of African nationalism's oldest and most noble crusade. It was tough too for Pretoria's generals. The previous month they had seen Unita shut out of the Lusaka accord in Angola. Now another expensively-

international court for breaching it.

Certainly, the ANC shut up shop in Maputo and has not been seen there since. No South African has suggested otherwise. For his part, Mr P. W. Botha issued instructions for an end to all aid to Renamo. Aware of the labyrinth of covert arms conduits to the guerrillas, he summoned the chief of the defence staff, General Constand Viljoen, and made him personally responsible for seeing that they ceased. Despite a flood of accusations from the Mozambicans that DMI's old habits were dying hard, Renamo payments offices have since been shut, arms shipments stopped and SADF officers threatened with courts martial if the prime minister's order was disobeyed.

More significant, Pretoria turned from destabiliser to peacemaker. On October 3, 1984, a ceasefire declaration was announced between Renamo's Mr Fernandes and the Mozambican minister, Mr

Jacinto Veloso. It was presided over, as ever, by the assiduous Mr Pik Botha. It acknowledged Mr Machel as president of Mozambique. It said that all armed activity should stop and that South Africa should "consider playing a role" in implementing the agreement. No signatures were attached to the declaration and those who attended the final ceremony in Pretoria found it a gloomy, unconvincing event.

Since then, all efforts to end the civil war have failed. Meetings of a joint Frelimo/Renamo commission have been held to discuss a possible amnesty for Renamo guerrillas and even a rudimentary measure of local autonomy for areas in their control. Most have foundered on Renamo's belief in its eventual victory. At one session, Mr Fernandes seemed close to a ceasefire agreement when a flurry of telephone calls summoned him back to Lisbon. He subsequently submitted what Mr Botha called "wholly unreasonable" demands of the Mozambicans—virtually Mr Machel's capitulation.

Into the vacuum

It is doubtful if Renamo's negotiators could possibly deliver a ceasefire. Half its units are operating beyond command or control. SADF radio equipment originally supplied to Renamo was doctored to ensure that regional commanders could communicate only with the Transvaal, not with each other. After Nkomati, this communication conduit ceased, with disastrous results for Renamo liaison. In addition, the SADF had already flown in two years' worth of military supplies—in retrospect, a strange act of self-sabotage. In the bush terrain of Mozambique, guerrillas can keep going on limited resources. Frelimo units avoid contact, and often abandon supplies when attacked.

Incidents occur daily, including regular attacks on Maputo's power and water supplies. Like Luanda, it is a city under siege from its hinterland, rationed, curfewed, black marketed and miserable. Ten miles from its centre is a no-go area. Last month, international aid workers were recalled to urban centres for their own safety. Rumours of leftist coups against President Machel are rife. South Africa is believed to have offered him an extraordinary guarantee of personal protection against threats from left or right.

South Africa clearly misjudged Renamo at the time of Nkomati, just as the Americans misjudged Unita in Angola. It assumed its surrogate would "wither on the vine" when deprived of its prime backer. It now realises Renamo has more loyal friends than the SADF. Not only Brazilians and Portuguese, but Americans, Bavarians, Moroccans, Saudis and Zaireans are all friends of Renamo. South

African intelligence suspects arms are now passing down the ancient Arab trade route from Oman (with its British arms connection) through Somalia and Zanzibar to the Mozambique coast. Supply flights are believed to come in from the Comoros Islands. There are Renamo havens in Malawi.

Mr Pik Botha and the defence chief, General Viljoen, have responded vigorously to constant Mozambican accusations of South African aid to Renamo. Mr Botha is believed to have offered to lend Maputo surveillance equipment and teams to trace the source of alleged supply flights. In December, he flew secretly to Malawi, Somalia and the Comoros to impress on their governments South Africa's determination that Renamo should receive no more supplies. Desperate to protect Nkomati, President P. W. Botha in January ordered a police investigation of Renamo support in South Africa, especially within the 700,000-strong Portuguese immigrant community. This followed the murder of two British "tourists" in Mozambique in January and the rumoured escape of their killers into South Africa. The investigation is being conducted by General Coetzee's security police rather than the DMI, Renamo's former backers. South Africa's sudden conversion to regional stabiliser produces hollow laughs in many parts of Africa, but appears for the moment to be genuine.

Both South Africa and America are now engaged in one of Africa's most ironic rescues: to prop up a Marxist president whom, until recently, they would gladly have seen fall. President Reagan has asked congress for \$1m in "non-lethal military aid" for Maputo. South Africa has offered food and transport assistance for the drought in Tete province, now threatening more than 100,000 people with death this year. It has offered help with teaching and health projects. It has undertaken the management of Maputo harbour. It is repairing power pylons to Cabora Bassa dam, regularly sabotaged by Renamo. It even offered "volunteer" troops to protect the repair gangs, though this proved (as yet) more than President Machel could stomach. Mozambique is none the less an enticing target for mercenary recruiters.

In February, 1985, Mr Crocker flew to Cape Town with one message for the South Africans: help President Machel more or face the consequences. The risk of a leftist coup with Russian surrogate intervention is at present not great. Renamo is equally reluctant to seize power before it is ready—whatever that might mean. Yet mounting anarchy might create a vacuum into which Renamo and its backers might be drawn. With Frelimo returning to the bush, Pretoria would find

it politically hard to resist calls, including from its Portuguese electorate, to help its old friends. South Africa may have a horror of a "Mozambican Vietnam". But the more reason, said Mr Crocker, for South Africa to help Mr Machel stave off Renamo.

Mr Crocker received a flea in his ear. Was a Reagan administration really calling on apartheid South Africa to prop up a Marxist neighbour? And what with? The help Mozambique needs is simple: soldiers and weapons to re-establish security at least round key economic installations. Although Mr Pik Botha did hint that guards for certain tasks might be recruited privately, it is politically unthinkable for South Africa to send regular troops in to support Frelimo. Was Mr Crocker proposing to pay: to make the SADF his Cubans? The corridors of Cape Town's parliament were aghast at the irony of it all.

What, then, of the great unmentionable in American-South African relations, arms? Mozambique is desperately short of helicopter gunships and transports, essential for effective counter-insurgency operations. Why should South Africa risk her precious helicopters when the west embargoes all replacements? Is it conceivable that Mr Crocker might risk left-wing wrath to relax the embargo, since the purpose is to help a black leftist government survive: only to incur right-wing wrath for the same reason? Nowhere more than in Mozambique is the ideological confusion of modern Africa so glaring.

Reduced to pleading

As in Angola, so in Mozambique, policy is totally at the mercy of events on the ground. In both, tottering governments have been all but confined to their capitals by guerrillas controlling the bush. In both, a sort of stalemate has been reached which will be resolved only by decisions of the region's two militarily active powers, Russia and South Africa. Impotent America is reduced to pleading with Mr Botha and his colleagues to get on parade first, to turn from destabiliser to restabiliser. Yet such is international politics that Mr Reagan must deny Pretoria the means to do the job effectively: military re-equipment, particularly of its increasingly obsolescent air power.

Mr Crocker's supporters protest that he has achieved all that could be expected of him. The Lusaka and Nkomati accords were directed at educating South Africa to its new regional responsibility. In some measure they have done that. They were certainly virtuoso diplomatic performances. But after five years, the Republicans, like the Democrats, have Namibia still a South African colony, Mozambique

and Angola still riven by civil war and the Cubans still an evident presence. For all his own caveats, Mr Crocker was induced by the pressures of Washington politics to oversell his control over events. Time and again, his bluff has been called. His

optimism has rung ever less true. Who knows if the crude Realpolitik of southern Africa might not have resolved some of this mess, had America not chosen to raise expectations but simply stayed away?
