

Chissano emerges as calm broker

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MAPUTO, Mozambique — The government of Joaquim Chissano in Mozambique, one of the major black African states to move from colonialism to Marxism, has emerged as an apostle of moderation and a potential broker in the conflicts of southern Africa.

President Chissano's trip late last week to Kenya for talks with Pres-

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ident Daniel Arap Moi, while focusing on bilateral relations between the two Indian Ocean nations, also was related to current peace initiatives for Angola and independence for Namibia, according to southern Africa analysts.

Sources in South Africa point out that Mr. Moi was one of the African leaders approached by Zairean head of state Mobutu Sese Seko with the aim of pushing Angola into a national reconciliation agreement with the U.S.-supported UNITA rebels.

Mozambique is one of the so-called "front-line states" in the thick of black Africa's struggle against white-ruled South Africa, and Mr. Chissano's recent meeting with South Africa's President Pieter W. Botha puts him in a position to carry out a mediating role with those states.

Unconfirmed reports from Lisbon said earlier this month (October) that Mozambican Minister of Cooperation Jacinto Veloso has made several secret trips to Pretoria, South Africa, and Luanda, the Angola capital, as part of the current peace efforts.

Last year an exchange of prisoners between South Africa and Angola took place at the Maputo airport, and Mr. Chissano's government is known to have played an important role in arranging the exchange.

Mr. Chissano's mediating role fits well into the image he is cultivating for his country and for his ruling party, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo). Sources in Maputo say that at next year's Frelimo congress all references to Marxist-Leninist ideology, adopted shortly after independence in 1975, will be dropped.

Supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Mr. Chissano has launched an economic recovery program that has resulted in goods reappearing in the shops, the lifting of price controls on many commodities, the introduction of fees for health services and a rise

in house rents. In Mozambique houses are the property of the state.

But while the recovery program has brought goods to the shelves and, as a Maputo resident says, "a sense that at least we are going somewhere," there are rumblings of discontent.

Earlier this year, several delegates to a Frelimo conference called to prepare for next year's congress heard how the average citizen was unable to cope with inflation resulting from price decontrol and a massive devaluation of the national currency, the metical. Since the recovery program was introduced in January last year, the value of the metical has fallen from 40 to the U.S. dollar to about 550.

In March, the monthly minimum wage of a state worker was fixed at about \$25. An industrial worker's minimum salary was even less.

Diplomats have praised Mr. Chissano's government for carrying on with the program despite the difficulties, and the government has made it clear more increases will be introduced.

Prime Minister Mario Machungo told the People's Assembly in August, for example, that the government would have to increase charges for various social services because the health and education sectors were facing serious financial losses.

In efforts to widen the "thaw" with the West, the Frelimo government has also for the first time allowed the International Red Cross and Amnesty International to visit the country.

Mr. Chissano's government still maintains the friendship treaty with the Soviet Union signed by his predecessor in the 1970s. A few weeks ago, however, an American warship docked in Maputo harbor, the first such port call since independence in 1975. Mr. Chissano made a point of visiting the ship.

Since coming to power in November 1986, after the death in a plane crash of his predecessor, Samora Machel, Mr. Chissano also has tried to reorganize his army and lessen its dependence on Zimbabwean and Tanzanian military support to combat the insurgency of the Mozambique National Resistance movement — known by its Portuguese acronym Renamo.

Officially there have been no changes in Frelimo's Politburo, but its titular No. 2 man, hard-liner Marcelino dos Santos, is believed to have lost all power. He was given the ceremonial post of president of the People's Assembly.