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Conservatives Adopt Mozambique Cause

[AN] WASHINGTON—American conservatives, who earlier this year won approval of U.S. military assistance for UNITA in Angola, are now mobilizing to gain backing for the South African-backed rebel movement which is waging a guerrilla war against the government of Mozambique.

That group is the Mozambican Resistance Movement, known as the MNR or RENAMO.

"I think there will be a real push in the conservative community in Washington to move aid to RENAMO as we did for UNITA," says Gordon Jones, vice president for government and academic relations at the influential Heritage Foundation. Since Mozambique, like Angola, has a Marxist government, Jones and other RENAMO advocates see support for RENAMO as an way to undercut Soviet influence in southern Africa.

Those efforts are hampered, however, by disagreements over who speaks for the movement,

and specifically who is the legitimate RENAMO representative in the U.S..

Two offices have been set up in Washington to disseminate materials, and three exiled Mozambicans residing in the U.S. claim to be official spokesmen for the organization.

The two U.S. groups in the forefront of the dispute—Free the Eagle and the Conservative Action Foundation (CAF)—each accuse the other of deception and infiltration by communist agents.

"We are making fools of ourselves here," concedes Dr. Bonner Cohen, who is directing a new office in the Conservative Action Foundation that has begun distributing press releases on RENAMO letterhead. "With RENAMO getting close to victory," he argues, "we need to be focused on getting them support."

RENAMO releases are also being distributed by the Mozambique Information Office, headed by Thomas W. Schaff, Jr., which was established in August in space provided by Free the Eagle, a conservative lobby group with domestic economic issues as its main focus. The office is shared with the American Angolan Public Affairs Council and the American Afghan Educational Fund.

Schaff, who is from Fairfax, Virginia, says he served from 1977 until recently as an agricultural missionary in Zimbabwe—known as Rhodesia prior to its independence in 1980—where he met Mozambicans discontented with the government of President Samora Machel. He says he also met Afonso Dhlakama, the RENAMO president, who asked him to champion the movement's cause in Washington.

At a press conference in August, Schaff introduced Luis B. Serapiao, an associate professor of African studies at Howard University in Washington, D.C., as the official RENAMO representative, registered with the Foreign Agents Office at the Department of Justice. Boaventuro Lemane, who has been a registered RENAMO representative in the U.S. since 1983, says he is "cooperating" with Serapiao.

On the other side is Arthur Vilankulu, who has the Conservative Action Foundation's support. He was a member of the Mozambique Liberation Front, FRELIMO—which is now the country's ruling party—during the independence campaign in the 1960s. He then joined the main anti-FRELIMO movement just before independence in the 1970s, and emerged as secretary for external affairs of RENAMO in the early 1980s. Both Serapiao and Lemane charge that Vilankulu was expelled from RENAMO in November of 1983.

All three Mozambican principals along with the various conservative groups initially cooperated as interest in Mozambique began to build earlier this year. But at a strategy session for

conservative activists on Capitol Hill on July 31, Vilankulu was denounced as a FRELIMO agent by Schaff and another Free the Eagle official.

Those charges outraged Conservative Action Foundation Chairman David Finzer, who says Vilankulu has the trust of key members of the World Anti-Communist League, including the organization's outgoing president, Gen. John Singlaub.

Finzer says it is Schaff and Serapiao who must be viewed with deep suspicion. "These people are trying to wreck RENAMO," he charges. "Schaff emerged suddenly on the Washington scene with an improbable story about weekend excursions into Mozambique, and Serapiao who had been here for years, has a brother who was trained in Cuba," Finzer says. "It looks like we're up against the East German security service."

Both sides have exchanged charges on the letters page of *The Washington Times* since an article about the dispute appeared in the paper in August.

Finzer's organization attracted attention in the midst of heavy pro-UNITA campaigning by conservatives in February, when four of its young activists handcuffed themselves to the staircase in the offices of Gray and Company to protest the public relations firm's contract to represent the government of Angola. Gray gave up its Angola account the following month, and Finzer hints that similar efforts could push RENAMO and the Mozambique issue onto center stage.

Schaff's office has already targeted American companies operating in Mozambique as well as several which are considering involvement in an international effort known as the Beira Corridor Project that would expand road, rail, and oil pipeline links between landlocked Zimbabwe and the Mozambican port of Beira. In July, a number of potential American participants in the project gathered in Washington for a briefing by a presidential aide from Mozambique and a former Zimbabwe cabinet minister. Free the Eagle's Schaff showed up to warn that RENAMO would destroy whatever was built.

"Mozambique is in a state of war and collaboration with the communist regime is an act of war," said a memo distributed to participants on Schaff's Mozambique Information Office stationery.

Conservatives from various quarters reacted quickly when news reports last month said that an aid package under consideration by the Reagan administration might include funds for the Beira Corridor Project. Senators William V. Roth, Jr. (R-DE) and Mitch McConnell (R-KY) told President Reagan in a personal letter that they would oppose any assistance program containing funds

for Mozambique, Angola, or Zimbabwe.

The Heritage Foundation's Jones says U.S. funding for the project would be a grave mistake, "a rat hole" for American taxpayers and "a boon to the Marxists in Mozambique and Zimbabwe

and for American banking and industrial giants" who take part. He sharply admonishes the State Department for maintaining links to the Machel government when "RENAMO offers a very real alternative to the development of a Marxist-Leninist state in Mozambique."

Many conservatives were dismayed when President Reagan hosted Machel at the White House during the Mozambican leader's official visit to Washington a year ago.

Although relations with Mozambique were rocky in the early years of the Reagan administration, they improved as Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker and his deputy, Frank Wisner, sought to negotiate a reduction in southern African tensions. In 1984, Machel agreed to a mutual non-aggression pact with Pretoria, the Nkomati Accord, in which both governments pledged to stop support for guerrillas opposing the other. By most accounts, Mozambique kept its side of the bargain by limiting the presence of the African National Congress (which is outlawed in South Africa) to a political representation, but assistance to RENAMO continued to flow from the south.

Last August, Mozambican troops overrunning RENAMO headquarters at Gorongosa discovered diaries of an assistant to RENAMO leader Diakhama which described continued high-level contacts with the South African military and with the deputy foreign and information minister, Louis Nel (see AN, Nov. 4, 1985).

This year, according to U.S. and African intel-



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ligence sources, South African planes have been spotted on at least four or five occasions making deliveries to RENAMO outposts in the interior. But most of the supply lines have reportedly been shifted to Malawi, Mozambique's neighbor to the northwest, the only African government that has full diplomatic relations with Pretoria.

Machel visited Malawi last month, accompanied by Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda and Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, to warn Malawi President Hastings Banda that the frontline states plan reprisals if RENAMO continues to operate from Malawian territory. A high-level Malawian delegation paid a return visit to Mozambique where an agreement was announced on the establishment of a joint security commission.

Zimbabwe has approximately 12,000 troops in Mozambique—half of them deployed in the war zones at any one time, and Machel's government is receiving assistance from a number of other governments, including both East and West European powers.

Although RENAMO continues to pose a serious military threat to the government, most experts believe the movement enjoys little popular support. But unless the rebels' activities can be

curtailed, the government will find its own position more and more tenuous.

RENAMO's Serapiao argues that FRELIMO has alienated almost all sections of the population—peasants, the military, black intelligentsia, white settlers, and the religious community—through its policies and actions. "RENAMO is picking up support among Mozambicans here in the U.S. and inside the country," he says.

Allen Isaacman, a professor of history at the University of Minnesota and a Mozambique specialist who supports FRELIMO, says the government continues to have the allegiance of most of its people. And militarily, he contends, Mozambican troops—with "absolutely critical support" from Zimbabwean forces—continue to fight and to make gains in some areas, while sustaining losses in others.

But he concedes there are serious problems. "FRELIMO has lost a lot of capital," he says. "If it can't protect peasants and supply them with consumer goods, why should they support FRELIMO?"

With Mozambique's difficulties continuing, American conservatives—who regard Machel as a Soviet ally—see a new chance to hand Moscow a setback. A Heritage Foundation report entitled "The Resistance Can Win in Mozambique," concludes: "The United States has a rare opportunity to strike a blow against the Brezhnev doctrine (once a communist state, always a communist state) by helping the Mozambican patriots."

RENAMO supporters rate its chances for success as first among anti-communist movements around the world.

Not all conservatives have jumped on the RENAMO bandwagon, however. "Many hardcore backers of UNITA are not supporting the MNR," says one Senate Republican aide. "For one thing, no one is sure just *who* is RENAMO—they have had lots of splits and they don't have a Savimbi that can carry their cause to the world," he said referring to UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, who made a high-profile visit to Washington early this year to drum up American backing.

Conservatives are nevertheless getting more and more interested in Mozambique, says Heritage African analyst William Pascoe. "It's not so much

a call for Mozambicans studying abroad to return to Africa for a period on completion of their degree. Mondlane wanted the students to "participate directly in the tasks of national liberation," which some of them resented.

Vilankulu went to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to work for the FRELIMO radio service. Serapiao stayed in the U.S. and supported UNEMO's published attack on Mondlane.

In 1968, Vilankulu returned to the U.S., and during the leadership struggle that followed the assassination of Mondlane the following year, he left the movement. By the early 1970s, he was registered at the Justice Department as a representative of the anti-FRELIMO group COREMO and was publishing a periodic COREMO newsletter in New York.

After the Portuguese coup in 1974, Vilankulu returned to Mozambique during the period preceding independence in September of 1975. He then came back to New York and, in the early 1980s, emerged as secretary for external affairs.

Serapiao was named RENAMO representative in July, just before a new split developed in the movement. Evo Fernandes was ousted as secretary general in a move that apparently reflects continuing conflict over the influence of wealthy Portuguese backers in RENAMO's activities.

Serapiao claims that RENAMO is firmly in the control of black Mozambicans, in contrast to FRELIMO. "You will find that since independence over half the ministerial positions in the government have been held by non-blacks," he says. This, along with FRELIMO's policies and brutality, has alienated many Mozambicans, he contends.

But FRELIMO's biggest shortcoming, Serapiao argues, is that it has not met popular expectations. "During the struggle, FRELIMO raised the hope of a new social structure, but it has not delivered one." ■

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