

RENAMO AID DIVIDES RIGHT

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—The current congressional debate over U.S. aid to Southern Africa is developing into a forum for the far right to assail the Congress and even the Reagan administration on their failure to "roll back" communism in the region—particularly in Mozambique.

The conservative movement has been complaining over the last six-and-a-half years that the South African-backed rebels in Mozambique, known as the Mozambican National Resistance (MNR or Renamo), have been unfairly excluded from the Reagan Doctrine. Gordon Jones, vice president for government and academic relations at the Heritage Foundation, predicted last fall that soon there would be "a real push in the conservative community in Washington to move aid for Renamo as we did for Unita [the South African-backed rebel movement in Angola]."

The State Department, on the other hand, has argued with growing forcefulness recently that the U.S. should provide development and humanitarian assistance to the majority-ruled nations of Southern Africa, excluding Angola but including Mozambique. Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker and his deputy, Roy Stacey, have both defended the Maputo government against attacks from conservative forces in the U.S.

In response to questioning from Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.) before the Africa Subcommittee in the House on March 4, Crocker said, "We do not consider the government of Mozambique to be, in the sense you use that term, a Communist government. The government of Mozambique has been working systematically in the past four or five years to move away from its previously close embrace with Moscow."

Secretary Crocker has also voiced skepticism about Renamo. He told the House subcommittee, "we don't have any contact with Renamo. They were started by Ian Smith [former white minority leader in Rhodesia] and now they are supported by South Africa. We do not think they stand for any sort of Mozambican nationalism."

A POOR CLIMATE

Many members of the "conservative community" are willing to concede that, given the current administration line on Mozambique, and the Iran-contra scandal, the climate is not ideal for garnering support for another low-intensity conflict. An aide to Rep. Burton put it frankly: "We do not expect much help from them [the administration]; there are not a lot of ideologues left there."

Dr. Bonner Cohen, research director for the Conservative Action Foundation, also acknowledges that this session of Congress will not authorize aid for the MNR. "Renamo is now about where Unita was in 1984," Cohen said. "But within the next couple of years we are confident that Congress will extend support to Renamo as well."

Cohen intends to orchestrate a campaign to "help Renamo bring their story here." He claims that when the U.S. people and Congress learned of Unita through Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi's U.S. trip last year, U.S. aid for the insurgency was guaranteed. Cohen warns that the MNR with the help of the U.S. conservative movement will be "making dramatic changes to inform the world of their cause."

The far right is meanwhile mobilizing to derail any U.S. foreign aid that might benefit Mozambique in its struggle for economic growth and stability. The strategy, to be carried out by conservative lobbies and their congressional allies, is to manipulate foreign assistance and attempt to impose a stringent set of preconditions on any aid recipients.

In the Senate, Sens. William Roth (R-Del.) and Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), will introduce legislation to delete the pending request for funds to the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (Sadcc)—an association of nine majority-ruled Southern African states. Sadcc was formed to help its member states build toward economic independence from apartheid South Africa.

In the House, Rep. Burton, one of Renamo's strongest supporters on Capitol Hill, will introduce an identical bill. If it is defeated, he will put forth an amendment enumerating a set of prerequisites that any Sadcc country will have to meet before receiving a U.S. dollar.

Among Burton's preconditions are demands that the recipient country have formal military facility agreements with the U.S., and a top rating in voting with Washington in the UN. In regard to pending legislation requesting emergency humanitarian assistance to Mozambique, Burton is asking that the aid be administered in coordination with Renamo as well as the Mozambican government and that international relief organizations be encouraged to work with the rebels.

Most congressional observers agree that such amendments in their present form will probably be defeated. However, there is the possibility of a compromise being struck in an effort to placate the right wing.

RENAMO WORKING HARD

Renamo's supporters are also extending their efforts beyond Congress. Conservative activists hope to force not only the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) but also private relief organizations to work with Renamo and to, in turn, pressure the Mozambican government to negotiate with the rebel forces.

The MNR—which has destroyed much of Mozambique's economic infrastructure while waging a terror campaign against the civilian population—is represented in Washington by the Mozambique Information Office, housed in a suite donated by Free The Eagle (a far-right lobby) in the Heritage Foundation building. The office is run by an American, Tom Schaaf, who says the main emphasis of his work is to insure that Renamo has some say over the distribution of incoming aid.

"The MNR has offered to take food and relief organizations into their territory before the aid is distributed," says Schaaf. "We are also visiting congressional offices to generate interest in such a fact-finding trip, which could include representatives from the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency."

Schaaf indicated that there were at least two humanitarian organizations operating in Mozambique who were working with Renamo. He would not reveal their names on the grounds that they were apprehensive about possible intimidation on the part of the Mozambique government.

World Vision—one of two relief organizations presently receiving U.S. AID money to operate in Mozambique—says that Schaaf arrived at their office uninvited and tried to persuade them to meet with Renamo representatives in Mozambique. Schaaf offered an elaborate plan of nocturnal travel in a dugout canoe to secret meeting points, but World Vision was not interested.

(Opponents of the MNR view such efforts as bitterly ironic; Renamo's ravaging of the Mozambican countryside has led to a situation where nearly 4 million Mozambicans out of a population of 14 million face starvation.)

The Reagan administration estimates that some 2.2 million people live in areas controlled by the MNR but does not feel confident that dealing with Renamo is a feasible option. AID Director M. Peter McPherson said upon announcing the Reagan administration's \$50 million food aid proposal for Mozambique last month, "Renamo is decentralized and isn't an easy structure to deal with." A State Department source told the Guardian, "Our position would be that contact with Renamo would not be a constructive way to get food to the people who need it."

But Schaaf claims he has other takers and the fear among legitimate relief organizations is that some less reputable groups may collaborate with the MNR. This would not be unprecedented; so-called "humanitarian" organizations such as Friends of Democracy and the Nicaragua Development Council have been linked to the U.S.-backed contras in Nicaragua.

Possibly of even greater concern to the far right than the humanitarian assistance being discussed by Congress is longer-term development aid, which would be allocated to Sadcc. The House Africa Subcommittee has already authorized \$50 million annually for Sadcc over the next five years, specifying that at least 50% of those funds be used for developing transportation links between the independent states of the region. Given its vital ports on the Indian Ocean, Mozambique would be one of the main beneficiaries of such an allocation.

RIGHT-WING FEARS SADCC

If the rail line running from Harare, Zimbabwe, to Mozambique's Beira port was repaired and adequately protected, experts predict that, in addition to the incalculable regional benefits, Mozambique could easily triple its foreign currency earnings within a year. Such an injection into Mozambique's troubled economy would obviously affect the civil war as well as the government's ability to address its people's social needs.

The success of Sadcc projects would also represent a critical setback for the apartheid government in Pretoria whose efforts to maintain white domination throughout Southern Africa are dependent upon the economic dependence of the surrounding majority-ruled states. For both reasons, the conservative movement in this country is anxious to prevent U.S. support for Sadcc.

Bonner Cohen intends to make this issue a priority for his Conservative Action Foundation—the coalition of right-wing lobbies with whom he works. "We intend to educate enough people about this utterly futile effort to wean the Mozambique government away from Moscow by buying them off with American taxpayers' money for Sadcc," said Cohen.

Ultimately, however, the far right's chances for success with the Congress over this issue will hinge more on spending constraints in the era of Gramm-Rudman budget cuts than on any perceived logic of Cohen's ideological contentions. A staffperson for Sen. Roth indicated their economic argument against the Sadcc request. "We will point out," says Roth's aide, "that the development projects, which some in the Congress intend to fund, will only be destroyed by Renamo forces in Mozambique and Unita forces in Angola; it's nonsensical."

Whether or not conservatives succeed in preventing U.S. assistance from getting to Southern Africa this year, it is evident that many of them see this foreign aid debate as merely a phase within an extended campaign to win support for the antigovernment insurgency in Mozambique. "We are only beginning to have an impact," claims Schaaf. "We are building our credibility and, with that, broader grassroots support for Renamo."