

RENAMO'S US FRIENDS

A number of right wing groups in the US are trying to show RENAMO as a misunderstood and gallant resistance movement fighting a battle against Communism and totalitarian rule. Here Chris Simpson throws the spotlight onto the extreme organisations of the US far right.

The Heritage Foundation "National Security Record," June 1986:

"Of all the insurgencies against pro-Soviet regimes anywhere in the world, RENAMO's is closest to victory. It would be a logical next step for the administration, in making the Reagan Doctrine a reality, to change its policy toward Mozambique and bring it in line with US policy toward other Marxist-Leninist governments that are being challenged by their own people."

WHILE the Iranian arms fiasco and the subsequent furore over illegal US funding of the Contras in Nicaragua may signal a tempering of the Reagan Doctrine, American Conservatives have been working hard to present the RENAMO (MNR) guerrillas in Mozambique as a genuine popular resistance movement which has been shunned by the Reagan administration just when it is on the verge of an historic victory over the Brezhnev Doctrine.

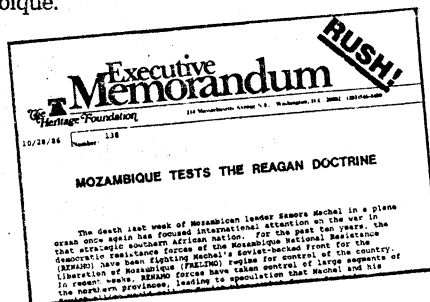
Created by the White Rhodesian security forces as a tool of destabilisation in Mozambique in the mid-1970s, and sponsored by South Africa since 1980, RENAMO's credentials as a movement of bona fide freedom fighters are not established easily. Given also that RENAMO has been waging a well-documented campaign of thuggish banditry inside Mozambique, a campaign which has involved attacks on health centres, kidnappings, sabotage and general terrorization of the civilian population, the American Right might be thought well-advised to leave it alone.

The successful marketing of Jonas Savimbi in Washington earlier this year indicates that there are many in the United States only too anxious to give arms, money and adulation to South Africa's proxy forces, even while public opposition to apartheid is increasing all the time.

While RENAMO does not as yet have the money and resources that is put at the disposal of UNITA, they share many of Savimbi's principal backers. Support comes primarily from those Conservative pressure groups which operate outside the political mainstream, but which are known to have friends and allies both in Congress and amongst the more hawkish elements in the Reagan administration. Other groups

include The Heritage Foundation and The Conservative Caucus, both more than sympathetic to Pretoria, both stridently anti-communist and both with a permanent axe to grind where the State Department is concerned.

Instrumental in bringing RENAMO representatives over to Washington was Howard Phillips, National Director of The Conservative Caucus, who has long been calling for the head of Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. A man who has picnicked with Savimbi in the bush, Phillips sees Crocker as lukewarm in his response to the demands of the Reagan Doctrine and guilty of conducting a 'pro-Soviet' African policy in his attempts to promote improved US-Mozambique relations and to secure American economic assistance for Mozambique.



The Heritage Foundation is similarly outraged at State Department perfidy, claiming that all American attempts to 'wear' Mozambique from the Soviet Union will result only in Washington being hoodwinked by an opportunist Maputo regime anxious to get what it can from the West while remaining in cahoots with Moscow.

Both Conservative Caucus and Heritage Foundation propaganda machines have

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been churning out reams of material on RENAMO's behalf. An initial focus for supporters of RENAMO in Washington was the visit of the late Samora Machel to the White House in September 1985.

Professing himself flummoxed by Reagan's hospitality to a known Marxist, Howard Phillips helped to set up an 'Ad Hoc Committee to protest the Machel visit.' A rally and press conference were held on RENAMO's behalf, and a platform was provided for the movement's external representative, Artur da Fonseca. RENAMO's cause was given a further boost by legislation proposed in Congress by Senator Malcolm Wallop (Republican-Wyoming) and Representative Dan Burton (Republican-Indiana) also a member of the Sub-committee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Although Burton and Wallop's package of \$5 million in direct assistance to "the non-communist resistance in Mozambique" met with little support, it became clear that there was a small coterie of Congressmen prepared to take more than a casual interest in RENAMO.

This group includes Jack Kemp, Robert Dornan, Paul Trible and Jesse Helms. Dan Burton capitalised swiftly on Machel's death in October with a press release calling for American recognition of RENAMO: "It is time that the State Department took its head out of the sand and realized that RENAMO presents an opportunity for a new, truly nationalist, pro-Western government in Mozambique."

Right wing publications, such as the Moonie-owned *Washington Times*, have been active on RENAMO's behalf.

HANDS ACROSS AFRICA



Samora Machel, Communist Dictator of Mozambique, and **Pieter W. Botha**, State President of South Africa, join forces against Mozambican freedom fighters.

APARTHEID AND COMMUNISM UNITE TO CRUSH FREEDOM IN MOZAMBIQUE

A curious poster claiming Machel and Botha united to crush freedom fighters in Mozambique!

Anti-FRELIMO propaganda, which often includes allegations of inordinate totalitarian malpractice, referred to Machel as a "tin pot dictator" and to Mozambique as a "basket-case nation", is coupled with euphoric accounts of fresh RENAMO victories. The *Washington Times* would seem to be culled these largely from the shoddy press releases put out by the "Mozambique Information Office" (MIO), RENAMO's key propaganda outlet.

The propaganda produces stories like: "With the death of Mozambique's President Samora Machel, the world has lost a prime example of Third World tyranny. There were worse ones, but not many, despite what you may have been led to suppose."
(*Washington Times* editorial, October 21, 1986)

"The people of Mozambique, a country in southeastern Africa which fits into the plans of many anti-apartheid activists as a potential target for increased IIS development aid, are suffering under a brutal Marxist dictatorship fighting for its life against the most successful anti-communist resistance movement in Africa."

(Peter LaBarbera, *The Washington Inquirer*, October 17, 1986)



A common myth is that RENAMO controls eighty per cent of Mozambique. Some of this hype is clearly designed to frighten off American companies anxious to get involved in the Beira Corridor, a project aimed at reducing the dependence of Mozambique and Zimbabwe on South Africa. RENAMO sabotage is threatened and the project has been rubbished by Heritage Foundation Policy analyst William Pascoe III as being "nothing more than a thinly disguised bailout of governments with policies inimical to US interests in the region."

But a concerted campaign of misinformation can achieve only so much. RENAMO's crude bid to increase its public profile in the wake of Machel's death, holding a press conference in Washington to coincide with the funeral of Maputo, is unlikely to increase their support beyond its existing circle. Public relations have never been RENAMO's forte and the same kind of infighting which has characterised the

movement's bloody progress in Mozambique is now dogging RENAMO's Washington operations. With far right organizations fighting it out for places on the RENAMO bandwagon, and the big bucks starting to roll in, the jockeying for position amongst would-be RENAMO "spokesmen" has started in earnest.

The fact that The Heritage Foundation has fallen over itself in lavishing hospitality and material resources on the current MIO team of Tom Schaar and Professor Luis Serapiao, while the more off-beat Conservative Action Foundation has been busy plugging the claims of New York-based Artur Vilunkulu with both sides claiming the authorisation of RENAMO 'President' Afonso Dhlakama, indicates that RENAMO will have its work cut out in achieving the status of UNITA in

Washington. These personnel problems, along with the lack of a Savimbi-like figurehead to foist upon a gullible Washington audience, the absence of any political programme beyond a thoroughly threadbare manifesto, and a history fraught with inconsistencies, are not the stuff of heroes.

Certainly RENAMO will get no joy knocking on the door of the State Department, regardless of the claims made on its behalf. "We're not interested in doing business with a bunch of defrocked characters from the sewers," was the reaction of one Senior Policy Advisor when quizzed about RENAMO being added to the list of favoured combatants covered by the Reagan Doctrine.

RENAMO remains just a little beyond the pale.