

MNR Backing Discredited

A report by the US State Department which accuses the rebel Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) of murdering thousands of civilians has enraged the rebels' conservative American supporters, for freedom against communism, similar to the contras in Nicaragua.

But, so far, such is the damning evidence in the report that it has drawn only silence from two Republican senators, Mr. Bob Dole and Mr. Jesse Helms, linked to the rebels' cause.

According to the State Department's Bureau of Refugees' report, as many as 100,000 people have died at the hands of the rebel MNR. The evidence was assembled from three months of interviews with relief workers and 200 Mozambican refugees, after a three-fold increase in refugees was noted in 1987.

A senior associate at the liberal Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Ms Pauline Baker, believes the report "discredits the whole notion of backing 'freedom fighters' without taking into account regional realities. It shows you just can't jump into bed with every anti-Communist."

Conservatives criticise the Government for issuing the report in March, a week before a UN-sponsored conference in Maputo aimed at raising aid for Mozambique.

In his address, the Deputy Assistant of State for African Affairs, Mr. Roy Stacy, accused the MNR of "one of the most brutal holocausts against ordinary human beings since World War Two." Next day, the United States and other donors pledged \$-270m in emergency aid. "Timing that report to come out when it did meant that instead of conservatives trying to block hundreds of millions of dollars, we would have to justify our MNR support," says Mr. William Pascoe, of the Heritage Foundation, which labels the Frelimo government in Maputo as a tool of the Kremlin. (GD 3:5)

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