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THE WHITE HOUSE'S CONFUSING SIGNALS ON MOZAMBIQUE

INTRODUCTION

This week's visit of Mozambican ruler Samora Machel, a pro-Soviet Marxist, to the White House symbolizes the Reagan Administration's pursuit of a highly questionable policy. The policy is a high-stakes gamble with thus far little evidence of success, and it is inconsistent with the Administration's self-proclaimed doctrine supporting anti-Marxist insurgencies.

The State Department and the White House seem to be hoping to "wean away" Machel from his close ties to the Soviet bloc and his disastrous Marxist economic policies. But there is as yet no sign of fundamental change, or indeed any change beyond that which a desperate leader might make to hang on to power. While Machel has observed the requirement of the so-called Nkomati Accord between South Africa and Mozambique by ending his aid to the radical African National Congress in South Africa, the Accord has not led to any fundamental shift in Mozambique's foreign or domestic policies.

As important, the State Department request for military aid to Machel is not only wrong on its merits, it raises questions about the overall coherence of U.S. foreign policy. Both the President and the Secretary of State have proclaimed the so-called "Reagan Doctrine" of U.S. sympathy and support for anti-Marxist insurgencies. Yet the Administration is seeking to prop up Marxist Mozambique with its dismal human rights record at a time when it is being threatened by a militarily effective insurgency.

The possibility of fundamental change in any nation can never be totally excluded. President Anwar Sadat, after all, expelled the Soviets from Egypt. But as yet there is no indication that Machel's actions are anything more than a pause and a holding action, while retaining close ties to Moscow. Despite State Department enthusiasm, there is nothing new about Marxist regimes taking Western economic assistance. But they use it to reinforce

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their own control, not to make fundamental changes. Given these realities, Samora Machel should be received with formal correctness, and his statements and actions carefully scrutinized, but no assistance should be offered.

THE NKOMATI PACT AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Nkomati pact, signed by Mozambican President Somora Machel and South African President P. W. Botha on March 15, 1984, pledged both sides to prevent "armed bands" from organizing within their respective territories. South Africa promised to cut off RENAMO, the Mozambique National Resistance rebels, who have made crippling strikes against a variety of economic targets in their country. Mozambique, which borders South Africa, pledged itself to remove the African National Congress (ANC) guerrillas from its territory and has done so.

South Africa remains very supportive of the Nkomati Pact and views it as a way to stabilize the teetering government of a strategic neighbor: 17 percent of all South African foreign trade passes through Mozambique's capital, Maputo, and 12 percent of its total electricity is provided by Mozambique's Cabora Bassa hydroelectric plant. For South Africa, the stability of Mozambique has been more important than its ideology. For Mozambique, Nkomati was a way to lessen RENAMO guerrilla activity against the Machel government's already shattered economy.

The U.S. State Department, which played a very modest role in brokering it, has gambled on Nkomati, seeing it as the cornerstone of a new twist to southern Africa policy designed to dismantle Soviet influence in the Marxist states ringing South Africa. Meanwhile, critics have disparaged Nkomati as incomprehensible assistance for a despotic, failing Marxist regime.

Now, more than a year after Nkomati, anti-government guerrilla activity has increased in Mozambique. The situation for the regime of Samora Machel is deteriorating. Foreign debt has ballooned to unmanageable levels, the local currency is worthless, a savage drought has claimed 100,000 lives and reduced agricultural production to a trickle, and the black market has surpassed its state-sanctioned counterpart. And Mozambique has turned to Zimbabwe's Marxist regime for military assistance to put down the rebels. The treaty has had little impact on Mozambique.

RENAMO: THE ANTI-MACHEL INSURGENCY

Mozambique became independent in 1975 after 500 years of Portuguese colonial rule. Portugal's 1974 leftist coup and a ten-year armed struggle by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) against the colonial government brought in Samora Machel's Marxist reign of terror. Thousands of Portuguese settlers fled across the border into South Africa with most heading for Portugal. FRELIMO's leader Samora Machel, became President of Mozambique and methodically began turning his country into a

Marxist dictatorship. He purged FRELIMO of anti-Marxist elements, imposed communist doctrine, herded thousands into reeducation camps and other prisons, and nationalized industry and agriculture. Machel renamed Maputo streets for Lenin, Marx, Fidel Castro, and Ho Chi Minh. He also fomented revolution in the region. Example: He allowed Robert Mugabe's ZANU party to establish bases inside Mozambique, from which armed units would raid what then was Rhodesia.

RENAMO, formerly MNR, the Mozambique National Resistance, was stitched together primarily by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization in cooperation with some Portuguese and anti-Marxist former FRELIMO members. The CIO wanted a counterweight to Machel's support of Rhodesia's ZANU terrorist activities. Yet, some top RENAMO leaders, such as Alfonso Dhlakama, are ex-FRELIMO members. RENAMO's origin as a mere countermeasure to ZANU often prompts Western leaders, including those in the State Department, to dismiss it as a band of armed disrupters inherently incapable of governing Mozambique.¹ There is some truth to this assessment, but that fact argues for more and better training.

South Africa's military, known as the South African Defense Force (SADF), along with a substantial number of former Portuguese Mozambique settlers, helped RENAMO relocate its base of operations and provided funding after Mugabe gained power and Rhodesia became Zimbabwe. RENAMO's station, Radio Free Africa, was moved inside South Africa, and rebel training took place on "farms" a few miles outside Pretoria.² The SADF used RENAMO as a counterweight to Mozambique's support of ANC territories using Maputo as a safe haven. The SADF supplemented this thinly veiled covert activity with overt strikes against ANC strongholds inside Mozambique, often in immediate response to ANC terrorism in Pretoria. South African planes bombed suspected ANC hideouts near Maputo in May 1983.

RENAMO flourished under South African tutelage. The rebel force, the majority of which is located inside Mozambique, has grown to an estimated 20,000 members. Although Mozambique's economic problems are fundamentally caused by its Marxist collectivization and nationalization policies, RENAMO's campaign makes the problems worse.

By attacking carefully selected economic targets, RENAMO has denied the Machel government leading foreign exchange sources and undermined foreign investor confidence. These targets include railroad links with Zimbabwe, Malawi, and South Africa; the Beira-Maputo coastal highway; the Beira-Zimbabwe oil pipeline; and agricultural sites. RENAMO attacks reduced tea exports in Eastern Zambezia province by 50 percent in 1984. RENAMO has

¹ "Look, RENAMO doesn't have the same legitimacy" as other popular anti-Marxist liberation fronts in Africa, says a State Department spokesman. Interview, March 6, 1985.

² The Economist, July 16, 1983.

wreaked similar havoc in Mozambique's other main agricultural provinces, Cabo Delgado and Nampula. Total 1985 agricultural production is down 50 percent, due to the reluctance of commercial farmers to plant in the face of growing insurgency.³

The State Department, in its annual evaluation of the Mozambican economy, concludes: "The insurgents have had a severe negative impact on the country's economic development....Insurgent activities have created a climate of insecurity which, in some cases, has blocked internationally-sponsored development projects."⁴

A bleak economic outlook confronts Mozambique. Of its 12.9 million inhabitants, 85 percent are subsistence farmers. Food production has plunged 80 percent since 1980. Last year the southern region's cereal crop was only 10 percent of the normal level. Per capita Gross National Product dropped 14.1 percent between 1980 and 1982 (the last year for which figures are available), reaching a level equivalent to \$159 per person. Foreign Western debt exceeds \$2 billion; debt owed the Eastern bloc states could be three times as much. According to the State Department, "...three years of drought, an armed insurgency...as well as a shortage of skilled workers and questionable policies have disrupted the economic development."⁵ While the drought has ended, the New York Times reported Mozambique "is confronted with a paralysis caused by the spreading rebellion."⁶

The local currency, the metical, has collapsed. Many Maputo merchants will accept payment only in dollars or South African rands.⁷ Official exchange rates are meaningless. In late 1984, a dollar officially was worth 44 meticals but could buy 1,400 on the black market. In a futile attempt to curb the black market, the Machel government temporarily instituted public floggings, prison sentences, and executions for "economic crimes."⁸ Mozambique rescheduled \$300 million worth of its Western debt in 1984. Unable to muster adequate foreign exchange, the government cannot import machinery, spare parts, or raw materials necessary for the most basic production.

THE SOVIET BLOC AND MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique has many characteristics of a Soviet client state. Despite State Department hopes and Machel's interest in a Western economic bailout, there has been no significant move away from the Soviet bloc. Mozambique relies, for example, on a large number of Soviet and Soviet bloc personnel. Earlier this year, some 20,000 Soviet bloc personnel provided defense, internal

³ The New York Times, July 9, 1985.

⁴ Foreign Economic Trends--Mozambique, U.S. Department of State, July 1984.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The New York Times, July 9, 1985

⁷ The New York Times, December 3, 1984.

⁸ The Economist, op. cit.

security, information management, and engineering services. This included several thousand Cubans, as well as East Germans, Soviets, Zimbabweans, and North Korean "military specialists."

The chief of Mozambique's air force, Major General Hama Thai, is North Vietnamese. Mozambican air force planes, some 35 MiG-17s and 50 MiG-21s, are flown by East Germans, although East Germans also established the state secret police, SNASP, which runs Mozambique's prisons and reeducation camps, home to an estimated 300,000 captives. There is no free press; the East Germans run AIM, the state information service. East Germany provides technical assistance at the Maatice coal mine, which has an estimated 400 million metric ton reserve. Approximately 12,000 Mozambican children work in forced labor factories in East Germany. President Machel has signed a 25-year friendship and cooperation treaty with East Germany that includes provisions for military defense.

Machel also has signed treaties with the USSR. A "friendship" agreement with Moscow pledges Mozambique to deny harbor to Western ships. A "fishing" treaty with the Soviets will provide facilities at Nacala, which could endanger free passage through the Mozambique channel on the Cape oil route. Unable to develop its own oil and natural gas reserves, Mozambique relies on Libya, Algeria, and the Soviet Union for petroleum. The USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia have been granted oil and mineral exploration and development rights in southern Mozambican provinces. Mozambique is also a signatory of an omnibus trade, aid, technological, and economic agreement with the Soviets.

Regular Mozambican military forces, estimated at 25,000 troops, rely almost exclusively on Soviet hardware, which includes 85 tanks, 300 armored personnel carriers, 200 armored cars, 128 artillery pieces, 14 patrol boats, 6 transport planes, and 4 Mi-8 helicopters. Much of this Soviet weaponry, however, is inoperable due to age, poor maintenance, or destruction by RENAMO.

Facing east toward the Indian Ocean and west toward Zimbabwe and South Africa, Mozambique is crucial to Soviet power projection in the region. The Soviets, in 1981, installed a dry dock at Maputo that regularly services ships from the Indian Ocean Soviet fleet. Three weeks after a 1981 SADF raid on ANC hideouts inside Mozambique, three Soviet warships arrived in Maputo harbor for a visit. The Soviet ambassador threatened to unleash them to protect Mozambique. This may have been no bluff. Soviet warships off Ethiopia's coast bombarded the cities of Massava and Assab.⁹

Despite these close ties, there are limits to Moscow's interest in Mozambique. Perhaps because of economic overextension elsewhere, the Kremlin refused Machel's bid to join the Soviet bloc economic organization, COMECON. Zimbabwean troops have guarded the Beira-Umtali oil pipeline and now have launched a

⁹ The Christian Science Monitor, January 30, 1978.

major offensive against the rebels. Zimbabwe President Mugabe has pledged to deploy 30,000 troops, 75 percent of Zimbabwe's 41,000-man standing army, inside Mozambique by year's end.¹⁰ This would be a radical departure from Zimbabwe's previous military role, which was limited to providing 3,000 troops to guard the strategic Mutare (Zimbabwe)-Beira (Mozambique) railroad and oil and gas pipeline. Machel requested the assistance at a June 12, 1985, security conference with Mugabe and Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere.¹¹ Last month, Zimbabwe moved helicopter troop transports and gunships into the region.

THE U.S. AND MOZAMBIQUE

According to the New York Times reports of last December, the American Embassy in Maputo regards President Samora M. Machel, an avowed Marxist-Leninist whose country's voting record at the United Nations is, from the American point of view, one of the worst, as a pragmatic leader with great charisma. "Relations with the United States are termed excellent as a result of 'maturing' on both sides." What accounts for this improving diplomatic climate, explains the Times, is "Mozambique's readiness to accept American aid in its time of despair."¹²

Mozambican ambassador to the U.S., Valeriano Ferrao, characterizes current relations between his country and the U.S. as "the best ever."¹³ Frank Wisner, State Department Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa Affairs, expresses optimism and accomplishment. "The President [Reagan] is very pleased with the progress we've made [in Mozambique]."¹⁴

The "progress" of which Wisner speaks is the perception inside the State Department that Mozambique is being weaned away from Moscow. Wisner and his boss, Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker, expended considerable energy persuading Mozambique and South Africa to sign the Nkomati accord. "The Administration views Nkomati as the cornerstone to diplomatic success in southern Africa," says Wisner. "The Soviets are very unhappy with Mozambique for signing Nkomati. They predicted Machel would fail and Mozambique would pay a high price."

U.S.-Mozambique relations were not always so cordial. U.S. economic aid was temporarily withdrawn in early 1981, after Mozambique expelled four U.S. embassy personnel on spying charges. President Jimmy Carter assailed the Machel regime's widespread human rights violations.

¹⁰ The Christian Science Monitor, August 26, 1985, p. 12.

¹¹ The Washington Post, June 13, 1985.

¹² The New York Times, December 3, 1984.

¹³ Interview, March 6, 1985.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The human rights violations continue today. Since 1975, an estimated 75,000 persons have perished in Mozambican prisons and "reeducation camps." At the "Moz-D" prison in Cabo Delgado province, the skulls and bones of thousands "lie bleaching in the sun."¹⁵ Travel within the country is restricted. Arbitrary arrests and detentions of up to 180 days without charges occur frequently. Prisoners can be given open-ended sentences. In 1983, thousands of Mozambicans were forcibly relocated from urban areas to the drought-ravaged countryside. Religious persecution is commonplace.¹⁶

Toward the end of 1983, Washington-Maputo relations improved. Discontented with the level of Soviet economic assistance and hard pressed by a lack of foreign exchange, three years of devastating drought, and stepped-up RENAMO attacks, Machel turned to the West. The State Department saw this as an opportunity to "break the back" of Soviet-sponsored hostilities throughout the area. To achieve this, the U.S. has sought to stop the violence that creates Soviet arms clients and establish a dialogue with the Marxist Machel regime. A small but symbolic carrot of economic and food aid amounting to \$16.1 million was offered Maputo. The U.S. promised to sponsor Mozambique for membership in the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the so-called Paris Club, a prerequisite for renegotiating Western debt.

Mozambique was approved for IMF membership in 1984 and subsequently received a \$45 million World Bank loan. Mozambique was also the largest recipient of U.S. emergency food aid in 1984, some 350,000 metric tons. State Department officials have defended their backing of Machel's Marxist regime by insisting that: "Mozambique isn't Nicaragua."¹⁷

The U.S. plans to increase economic and food aid to Mozambique (see table). Some U.S. officials apparently view Machel as a black African version of Anwar Sadat. Says a State Department official of U.S. aid to Mozambique: "That's a hell of a lot cheaper than it cost us in Egypt." Says Wisner, "Look, Mozambique applied for COMECON membership in 1980¹⁸....Now, they are about to join the IMF and the World Bank. That's quite a shift."¹⁹ A State Department proposal planned to ship Machel nonlethal military equipment: communications gear, uniform accessories, and, perhaps, a few trucks. This was blocked in Congress as inappropriate through FY 1986.

¹⁵ The Washington Times, February 5, 1985.

¹⁶ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, U.S. Department of State, February 1985.

¹⁷ Interview with State Department Official.

¹⁸ Membership proposal denied, April 1981.

¹⁹ Interview, March 6, 1985.

U.S. Aid to Mozambique

| <u>Year</u> | <u>1984 (actual)</u> | <u>1985 (estimated)</u> | <u>1986 (proposed)</u> |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <u>Program</u> | | | |
| Development Assistance | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Economic Support Fund | 7 | 11 | 15 |
| PL 480 Title I | 0 | 17 | 10 |
| PL 480 II | 8.103 | 23.2 | 0 |
| Military Assistance | 0 | 1.0 | 3.0 |
| Military Training | 0 | .15 | .15 |
| Total | 16.103 | 54.35 | 30.15 |

Source: U.S. Department of State. All figures in \$ millions.

PRECARIOUS FUTURE FOR NKOMATI

Although deprived of official South African government support by the Nkomati treaty, RENAMO rebel activity has increased. Earlier this year, the Christian Science Monitor reported that "the rebels of the RENAMO movement have achieved remarkable advances since the signing [of Nkomati]." ²⁰ New RENAMO support is believed to come from Malawi, the Comoro Islands, private citizens in Portugal and South Africa. When Nkomati was signed, RENAMO operated in nine of Mozambique's ten provinces; now they are active in all ten. They have surrounded Maputo and frequently cut off electricity to the capital city. Planes approaching and departing the airport must make steep turns and run without lights for fear of attack.

Last July, a despondent Machel conceded, "We are living in a war situation." Regular Mozambican army troops seem unwilling to pursue the rebels. ²¹ As a result of the violence, thousands of Mozambicans have fled to neighboring Zimbabwe.

The economy slides further, and Machel, fond of his gold-braided marshal's uniform and purple Rolls-Royce, faces an uncertain future. His government remains unable to quell RENAMO assaults, and he has been forced to seek outside military interdiction, primarily from Zimbabwe, a move that could forfeit U.S. aid and invite South African invasion. A leading South African official has said: "Our neighbors know if they introduce surrogate forces into the region we will go in and get them out." However, a South African spokesman said his government does not regard the

²⁰ The Christian Science Monitor, February 5, 1985.

²¹ The New York Times, July 1, 1985.

current presence of Zimbabwean troops inside Mozambique as a threat to South Africa's security.²² Conversely, Machel could solicit South African military assistance, a move that would reignite the Nkomati controversy in Pretoria and put the South African SADF in the awkward mission of neutralizing a guerrilla force it helped nurture.

Machel must make a move soon. Rumors of a coup have circulated widely, and "within the (ruling) Frelimo Party itself, the pro-Soviet faction remains strong."²³

CONCLUSION

Given the battlefield successes of the RENAMO insurgency against Samora Machel's Marxist regime and Mozambique's precarious political and economic condition, it is puzzling that the Reagan Administration feels that it serves U.S. interests for the White House to receive Machel with the pomp of a visiting dignitary at this time. Nor is it at all apparent that the U.S., which has very strong leverage considering Machel's serious problems, is insisting on anything in return for tossing Machel this symbolic lifeline.

For Machel's visit to serve any useful purpose, the U.S. must make clear that U.S. sympathies are with those struggling to move Mozambique away from its embrace of the Soviet bloc and its Marxist ideology. The U.S. should state that it has no intention of seeking to rescue Machel from the problems that his own policies have created unless there were to be an absolutely clear-cut, irreversible break with the Soviet bloc as, for example, when Egypt's Sadat expelled Soviet bloc personnel. Internationally observed free elections would also be required. In sum, Machel must be told that he cannot have the best of both worlds--receiving U.S. aid that merely enables him to maintain his tight dictatorial grip and de facto alliance with Moscow. If such changes do not occur, Machel should be advised that the U.S. will reassess its own policies and review the question of moral, political, or other support for the RENAMO forces.

U.S. policy thus far has been based primarily upon unsupported optimism about changes in the views and policies of Samora Machel. If nothing else, Machel's forthcoming visit will serve to illustrate whether these hopes have any basis in reality. Should Machel prove unwilling to move away from the Soviet bloc, reassessment of U.S. policy would be urgently needed.

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²² Interview, September 12, 1985.

²³ The Christian Science Monitor, August 6, 1985.