

## MOZAMBIQUE TESTS THE REAGAN DOCTRINE

The death last week of Mozambican leader Samora Machel in a plane crash once again has focused international attention on the war in that strategic southern African nation. For the past ten years, the democratic resistance forces of the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) have been fighting Machel's Soviet-backed Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) regime for control of the country. In recent weeks, RENAMO forces have taken control of large segments of the northern provinces, leading to speculation that Machel and his Soviet allies would call on Soviet bloc combat forces for help.

The sudden death of Machel and the resulting political uncertainty within Mozambique thus offer an opportunity and a threat: the opportunity for national reconciliation between the warring factions, leading to a coalition government and the withdrawal of all foreign forces; and the threat of further Soviet penetration of southern Africa, with Soviet bloc combat forces emplaced for the first time on the borders of the Republic of South Africa itself. The outcome will in large measure depend upon the immediate response of the West, particularly the United States, where it will test the Reagan Administration's promise to help freedom fighters.

The current situation began developing in early September, when Machel and his Defense Minister visited northern provinces of Mozambique with three Soviet and two Cuban military advisers to see what could be done to blunt RENAMO's increasing gains. Apparently following Soviet advice, Machel arranged a meeting with President Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, a nation that borders Mozambique on the north, which the insurgents had been using as a sanctuary. Joining Machel at this meeting were Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda and Zimbabwean Prime Minister Robert Mugabe. Both nations depend upon Mozambique for access to the sea for their imports and exports. Together they pressured Banda to cut off his support for the guerrillas and turn the rebels over to the Mozambican army. Machel even threatened to station his Soviet-made missiles on the Malawi border if Banda refused.

Banda told RENAMO leaders they would have to leave Malawian territory. The rebels began streaming back into Mozambique by the thousands, and within a matter of days, they had captured several strategic towns in northern Mozambique. For the first time, Machel publicly admitted that his regime had lost control of portions of Mozambique. His strategy had backfired.

Machel, meanwhile, faced a threat from the south as well. On October 6, a land mine exploded in South Africa, close to the Mozambique border, wounding six South African soldiers. General Magnus Malan, the South African Defense Minister, blamed the terrorists of the African National Congress (ANC) for the explosion, and charged that they had infiltrated South Africa from Mozambique. He threatened retaliatory action against Machel's regime if the ANC were allowed to continue operations from Mozambican territory. The South African government also announced that henceforth no Mozambicans would be recruited to work in South Africa and that the 61,000 Mozambicans currently working there would have to leave when their work permits expired. These developments, in the eyes of most observers, meant that Machel regime's days were numbered--even before the plane crash that killed him.

The introduction now of Cuban or other Soviet bloc combat forces into Mozambique would exacerbate an already unstable situation and most likely force an invasion by South African units. This could trigger a generalized regional war, with disastrous consequences for the people of southern Africa.

Clearly, a military solution is beyond the reach of what remains of the FRELIMO regime. Without direct combat support from the Soviet bloc, the regime will be forced to negotiate with the rebels. To encourage this, President Reagan must put Fidel Castro on notice: under no circumstances will the U.S. allow Cuban combat forces to be deployed to Mozambique. Nor should the U.S. tolerate Ethiopian or other Soviet bloc forces. Further, the U.S. should immediately cut off all assistance to the FRELIMO regime (which totaled \$39 million in 1985), and ask the British to do the same. Reagan should call for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Mozambique (roughly 2,500 Soviet bloc military and security advisers and 10,000 to 13,000 Zimbabwean and Tanzanian troops) and insist upon negotiations between FRELIMO and RENAMO aimed at holding new elections. If the FRELIMO regime ignores Reagan's overtures, he should consider, under the terms of Reagan Doctrine aid to freedom fighters, providing direct military assistance to the insurgents.

Only immediate and decisive U.S. action can prevent Soviet bloc combat forces from being rushed to Mozambique. These forces would ensure a bloody southern African regional war and the possible extension, via Cuban proxies, of the Soviet empire. Ronald Reagan has vowed to halt that empire. Mozambique will be testing him.

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