

Shadowy freedom fighters

Marxist Mozambique, the former ex-Portuguese colony on the east coast of southern Africa, is under siege. Hardly a day passes without attacks against bridges, power lines, road traffic and government installations.

The besieger of Mozambique's Marxist government is the shadowy guerrilla army known as MNR (Mozambique National Resistance or RENAMO in Portuguese). Just who exactly is behind MNR is one of Africa's deepest and most intriguing mysteries.

MNR was created by white Rhodesia's military early in the 1970s as a counter to black guerrillas operating out of Mozambique. Anti-communist Mozambiquans, former Portuguese settlers and many mulattos flocked to MNR's standard.

After Rhodesia fell, South Africa adopted MNR and turned it against ANC guerrillas raiding from Mozambique. So successful were MNR raids against the Marxist regime that in 1984 Mozambique made a deal with South Africa. Mozambique agreed to expel all ANC guerrillas in exchange for cessation of support by South Africa for MNR.

In spite of this pact, MNR attacks against Mozambique's Marxists not only continued but intensified. MNR units even penetrated to the very suburbs of the capital, Maputo. Raids on roads and economic targets have cost impoverished Mozambique tens of millions of dollars in damages that it could ill afford.

Last year came the embarrassing revelation that South Africa's defence forces had, in fact, been continuing discreet aid to MNR — perhaps without the knowledge of their political masters in Pretoria. After a loud uproar, such aid has apparently ceased.

Yet MNR is keeping the military initiative. In the past year, over 300 major attacks were staged by MNR. Its forces are now said to control at least half of Mozambique. As MNR's military power surges, everyone is asking who is supporting this group about which so little is known.

Where does MNR get its finances, arms, munitions and direction?

Some reports point to three Portuguese millionaires, formerly residents of Mozambique. When the Marxist regime came to power they and many thousands of Portuguese fled. These men are now said to reside in Brazil from where they finance and direct MNR operations.

On a less melodramatic note, RENAMO is also said to be receiving strong financial and military support from Saudi Arabia and other Arabs of the Gulf. The conservative oil Arabs, dismayed by Washington's inaction in southern Africa and deeply alarmed by growing communist influence there, are acting on their own.

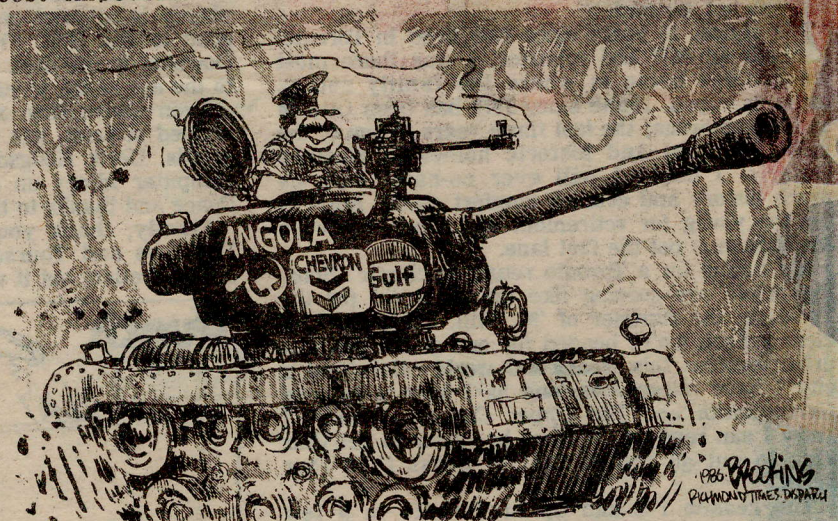
Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are known to be aiding Jonas Savimbi's UNITA guerrilla army against the Marxist regime of Angola and to be helping Somalia against Marxist Ethiopia.

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Other conservative African nations, like Egypt, Morocco and Zaire, may also be aiding MNR. The U.S. is definitely not, though many American conservatives are now pressing for military aid to MNR as a means of overthrowing Mozambique's Marxist regime.

Since so little is known about MNR it is difficult to tell if it is a legitimate movement or merely a very successful collection of bandits. Even sources in South Africa are vague. MNR, confined to the interior of Mozambique, and surrounded by Marxist allies of Mozambique in Zimbabwe and Tanzania, is almost isolated from the outside world — even the *Toronto Sun* has not yet gotten to its mobile headquarters! In addition, 20,000 troops from Zimbabwe — a big recipient of Canadian aid — are fighting with the Mozambiquan army against MNR.



Off Mozambique's coast, six Soviet submarines are said to be permanently on station to prevent shipments of arms from reaching MNR forces. Some arms are coming to MNR overland through Malawi and across South Africa's Kruger National Park on the Mozambique border. Which leads one to strongly suspect that South Africa may still be lending considerable covert aid to MNR in spite of its denials.

Pro-communist insurgencies command great media attention and adulation; anti-communist revolts do not. TV crews, busy covering racial unrest in South Africa, are not about to trek into Mozambique's hotelless, tse-tse-fly-ridden interior. Still, we should watch for any news out of the Mozambiquan bush. MNR — and its fellow anti-communists of UNITA in Angola — are all that now blocks Moscow's total control of southern Africa from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean.