



Mozambique Pique

by Andrew Roberts

“**S**evered heads on shop shelves after Renamo massacres a thousand,” read a headline in the *Independent* last summer. When the story was checked, the real figure turned out to be less than fifty. Renamo is the acronym of the anti-Marxist insurgents in southern Africa’s longest running civil war. Since 1977 they have been dedicated to overthrowing Mozambique’s Frelimo government. The long jungle struggle is still able to produce some gruesome stories, not to mention a few remarkable characters.

Manuel Antonio is a 32-year-old mystic who traces his descent from Christ, sleeps in cemeteries, and claims to have returned to life after dying of measles. Two years ago, he told his Naparama followers that a vaccination he had concocted would make them immune to bullets. Armed only with spears and bows and arrows, they attacked the Renamo guerrillas and through sheer fanaticism and force of numbers won a couple of early victories. It did not take long before the villagers saw through Antonio’s claim that the vaccination worked only for those who had abstained from sex the night before. He is thought to be in hiding.

Whether or not Renamo is winning the land war—it claims to control 85 percent of the country—it has definitely lost the propaganda battle. (Of course, propaganda campaigns in the region leave something to be desired: some years ago, the South African Informa-

tion Bureau issued a video announcing that then South African president P.W. Botha “likes small children, furry animals, and nice, hot custard.”) Despite its long struggle against a corrupt former Soviet puppet regime, Renamo has somehow never managed to attain the level of cachet among the right enjoyed by the contras, Unita, and the mujahedeen in the 1980s. No one knows much about the Renamo leader, Alfonso Dlakama, but all you hear is bad. Even Erich Honecker enjoys greater international acclaim.

United in their condemnation of Dlakama are the British Foreign Office, Mr. Pik Botha, Tanzania, Robert Mugabe, the Commonwealth, Malawi, and the U.S. State Department. The only people with a good word for him are the Marquis of Salisbury and Auberon Waugh. With enemies and friends like that, Dlakama was someone I had to meet, and I did during his visit to Portugal last November. Frelimo has made several attempts on Dlakama’s life since he started coming to Europe; it recently shot down a plane they believed he was on. “Actually, the nearest I came to death that trip,” he told me after I had been frisked and admitted to his room on the twelfth floor of the Altis Hotel in Lisbon, “was when I was being driven across Rome by an Italian taxi driver.”

He was in a jovial mood, having just heard of the fall of Zambia’s Kenneth Kaunda. “It shows democracy may be on the way in southern Africa,” he smiled, “if such an astute politician as Kaunda can lose an election. Ever since I went into opposition in 1977, African friends have

asked me why I want a multi-party state in Mozambique. ‘That’s just for the white man,’ they said. Now it’s beginning to look as if they could be proved wrong.”

Dlakama is 39, good-looking, and drives a motorbike around his headquarters in the bush. He is a devout Catholic and speaks twelve of the Mozambiquan dialects. It is not easy, when speaking to this personable fellow, to remember that he is regarded by those few people who have heard of him as Africa’s Ceausescu.

The civil war has cost around a hundred thousand lives and left nearly a million homeless. “We’re no angels,” admits Renamo’s Adelino Pires, a white former big-game hunter whose farm was confiscated by Frelimo. “But for every tale of an atrocity on our side there is another of one committed by Frelimo or Zimbabwean troops.” Lord Michael Cecil, who spent ten weeks in the bush with Renamo in 1988, found the guerrillas “well-disciplined, if ill-equipped. They clearly had a degree of popular support.” According to Cecil, “Vicious, murderous acts of banditry are often the work of unpaid, unfed Frelimo soldiers trying to scratch themselves a living.”

In order to keep open Zimbabwe’s only connection with the Indian Ocean, Robert Mugabe has stationed 15,000 troops in Mozambique. These, along with Frelimo soldiers, receive training from British army “advisers.” “There are quite a number of British soldiers operating in Mozambique,” said Dlakama, seemingly more in sorrow than in anger, “and of course they are in danger. It’s a war. They are targets. We know where

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they are in Nacala, Chimoio, and Maputo."

Just why the British government is providing military support for a non-Commonwealth African state where no vital British interests are at stake has never been adequately explained. The United States also gives Mozambique millions of dollars a year in development aid. Dlakama, whose long-professed pro-Western, anti-Marxist stance dovetails well with an admiration for Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, is understandably nonplussed. "Why should America, which defended the same principles of justice and human rights in Grenada and Kuwait that we are fighting for in Mozambique, support Frelimo?" he asks.

Having seen what collectivism and state farming have done to his country, Dlakama has been in regular contact with several Western free market academics. Extraordinarily for an African leader, he also accepts economist Peter Bauer's theories about the debilitating effects international aid has on its recipients. Should he come to power in Maputo—his forces operate regularly in its suburbs—he says he would refuse all aid except for training and teaching programs.

Now that peace has come to Namibia and Angola and Cuban troops have been removed, Dlakama believes American policy-makers have lost what interest they had in the ideological struggle in southern Africa. That is why Washington provides aid to Frelimo—to a government that still proclaims in Article 3 of its constitution that it is "guided by the synthesis of the experience of the Mozambiquan people's revolutionary struggle with the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism. These foundations and the class composition of the Party guarantee that the Frelimo Party expresses and embodies the highest legitimate aspirations of the people." Officials in the Bush Administration and the State Department argue that the regime is now officially distancing itself from this sort of ideology. But as Dlakama says of Frelimo, "Of course if they are dependent on British and American aid they are likely to drop the name 'Marxists,' but it doesn't make them feel any differently about real multi-party elections."

Choosing between Frelimo and Ren-

amo may seem, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, like "trying to settle the precedence between a louse and a flea." Still, Western officials tend to be swayed by such documents as the State Department's Gersony Report, which was presented to Chester Crocker in April 1988, accusing Renamo of numerous atrocities in the Mozambiquan civil war. It seems to make no difference that, in private, the Swiss Red Cross has distanced itself

from the one-sided report. As in Yugoslavia today, and even America in the last century, civil wars tend to produce a peculiar viciousness, and there can be no doubt that—as in the Afghan, Angolan, and Nicaraguan conflicts—horrific things have been done on both sides. That makes it all the more mystifying why the West should be mixed up in Mozambique's miseries, especially on the Marxists' side. □



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Quayle's New Level

by Terry Eastland

In early January, the *Washington Post* published its much-anticipated seven-part series on Vice President Dan Quayle by Bob Woodward and David S. Broder. To the alarm of political Washington, Quayle not only survived the event but came out looking better than ever:

Quayle has proved himself to be a skillful player of the political game, with a competitive drive that has been underestimated repeatedly by his rivals.

Some serious charges made against Quayle—including allegations of academic failure or dishonesty and manipulation of National Guard rules—as well as descriptions of vast wealth, appear to be false.

By most accounts, he is more active . . . and more influential than Bush was as vice president.

Such observations—notwithstanding others that were negative—were too much for some apparently outraged journalists; “sweetheart coverage,” Dan Rather called it. In an interview with Howard Kurtz, the *Post*'s own press-watcher, Executive Editor Leonard Downie defended the series, calling it a “new level of journalism,” which he defined as finding out “everything there was to find out about Dan Quayle and Marilyn Quayle” and letting “the facts dictate.” Someone not acquainted with the higher theories of journalism would have thought that plain old reporting was about letting the facts dictate—to the degree facts ever can. But call this journalism old or new, or new-level, it's an improvement over journalism that simply trades on conventional wisdom.

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It all started back in August 1988 when George Bush surprised the world by making the little-known junior senator from Indiana his running mate. Stories about Quayle's academic record, his wealth, his alleged affair with Paula Parkinson, and his National Guard service portrayed the man who would be Vice President as a callow child of privilege. The coverage was partly Quayle's fault, partly Bush's, and very much the press's. Quayle did not help himself by cryptically telling NBC's Tom Brokaw that “phone calls were made” when asked about how he got into the National Guard. Bush, who never had a conversation with Quayle about the vice-presidency or the campaign before selecting him, failed to provide his running mate adequate staff help, and James Baker did him no favors in anonymous comments to reporters. As for the press, it of course went mad.

In his excellent recent book, *Feeding Frenzy: How Attack Journalism Has Transformed American Politics*,¹ Larry J. Sabato of the University of Virginia finds that, for nearly three weeks, coverage of the presidential campaign amounted to coverage of Quayle, the networks devoting from two-thirds to more than four-fifths of their evening-news campaign minutes to the vice-presidential candidate—almost all of it focusing on wealth, family connections, and charges of plagiarism, hardly any of it on the senator's public record. While the reporting on Quayle was not uniformly bad, as a whole it helped freeze an image of the man that has gone unchallenged until now.

Sabato argues that the press has an obligation to debunk any “persistent and debilitating rumor that may be unfairly inflicting great damage on a political fig-

ure.” I agree. He mentions Ben Bradlee, who, while at *Newsweek*, demolished the 1962 rumor about John F. Kennedy's “prior marriage” to a twice-divorced socialite. (A good example, although, as Sabato points out, one cannot recommend the arrangement by which Kennedy got to read and approve the article before publication; I leave it to Dan Rather to describe that kind of journalism, which is well beyond the sweetheart stage.) Quayle, too, has been the victim, not just of rumors but of his image in the media. I'd expand the Sabato recommendation to say that the press is especially obligated to review the received wisdom and do, in Woodward's words, “a thorough job” on a public figure who is next in line to the presidency.

Woodward and Broder were not the first journalists to take this obligation seriously. On November 15, John Harwood of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote a profile in which he observed, “In many ways Dan Quayle never was the man the public thinks it knows.” On December 2, James Gerstenzang and David Lauter of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote a lengthier piece entitled, “Quayle Set on Getting Last Laugh.” Focusing on what the country would get if Quayle were someday President, Gerstenzang and Lauter wrote that Quayle is “a key player” on domestic policy, “a quick study” who has surrounded himself with “an energetic, intelligent staff,” and who has “handled his official duties smoothly.” He has demonstrated “ingenuity in creating instruments of power despite the inherent powerlessness of his own office.”

The *Journal* and the *Times* may have been prodded to take their new looks at Quayle not only by the discovery last May of Bush's atrial fibrillation but also by what they—and the rest of Washington journalism—had known the *Post* was up to since last summer. But the *Post* series promises to be more influential,

¹ The Free Press, 306 pages, \$22.95.