

Valeriano Ferrão - Ambassador in Washington

Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs, "The Foreign Policy of Mozambique"

January 27, 1988

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4h12SeuchSM>

One hour, 25-minute speech plus question & answer period

Excerpts from "Lobbyists for the lowly," by Rochelle L. Stanfield

National Journal, 1990, pages 1882-1996.

In Washington, "each organization within the executive is a small world in which different points of view may prevail, and in the Congress, it is even worse," Ambassador Valeriano Ferrao of Mozambique said in an interview. "It is not so easy to work in this labyrinth." Ferrao, a savvy politician considered by the foreign policy community to be one of the most effective African envoys, has an embassy staff of three, plus two drivers. The World Bank lists Mozambique as the poorest country in the world, with an average annual per capita income of \$100. Ferrao, who arrived in Washington in 1983—and was 'very naive,' he said—took four years to hire a lobbyist. He picked [Bruce] Cameron.

"If I had a staff of 50 people," he said, "I am not sure I would be able to target all the places that we should, because not only do you need to know the places, you must have the contacts there, and know how to work it."

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Of a very different nature is Cameron, a former human rights activist, who is also a devotee of congressional operation, particularly the appropriations process, and a super-specialist in access. A Democrat who worked for the Nicaraguan contras in Washington, he knows how to reach conservative Democrats and moderate Republicans. Ferrao, who had support among liberal Democrats and figured that conservative Republicans were a lost cause, recognized the need to get the support of middle-of-the-road Members, and signed up Cameron for that job.

Mozambique, a Soviet client state for years since gaining independence from Portugal, had no diplomatic relations with the United States until Ferrao opened the embassy in 1983. The country got its first \$5 million in U.S. Foreign assistance in 1984, but the aid didn't really begin to flow until 1987—coincidentally, the year Cameron was hired. This year, it will receive \$105 million.

"When the Mozambiquans (sic) hired me, I brought what they needed at that time, which was the swing vote on foreign policy issues," Cameron said. "Mozambique needed to get enough of those votes to defeat the conservative opposition."

Cameron's other area of expertise, the subtleties of appropriations legislation, also came in handy. "I can write legislation like that!" he said, snapping his fingers. So that it cripples the aid or so that it has the same elements as crippling legislation but doesn't cripple it." One Sunday morning in 1987, he recalled, he drafted language that he was able to slip into that year's foreign aid appropriations bill, making it easier for Mozambique to obtain assistance.

But Cameron acknowledged that a combination of factors has helped Mozambique's cause in Congress, including the Mozambique government's steps toward democratization and its willingness to engage in peace talks with the rebel RENAMO guerrillas to end 14 years of civil war. "I add some legislative expertise and contacts with moderate Democrats," he said. But what you've had is a whole bunch of other things coming together for Mozambique."