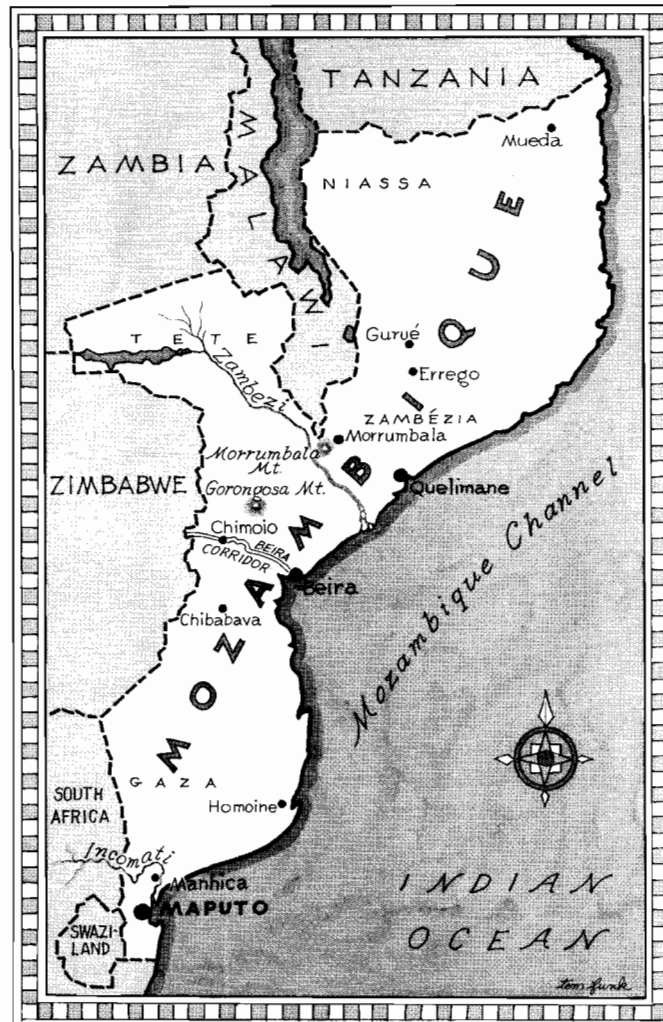


# A REPORTER AT LARGE

## THE EMERGENCY-I

**M**ORRUMBALA MOUNTAIN stands at the crux of the long, languid Y that Mozambique describes along the southeast coast of Africa. The mountain rises nearly four thousand feet from the broad plains on the left bank of the Zambezi, perhaps a hundred and twenty-five miles from the great river's mouth. In the course of two months that I spent travelling around Mozambique recently, Morrumbala Mountain became for me a sort of lodestar, a persistent mirage at the heart of the country. I kept seeing it from different angles—first from the west, later from the north, still later from due south. In retrospect, it seems appropriate that I never actually reached the mountain itself, that I always had to content myself with regarding it from a distance.

The first time I saw Morrumbala Mountain, I was sitting in the remains of a tiny octagonal waiting room—its brick walls had been reduced by bazooka fire to bench height—alongside a grass airstrip near the southwestern border of the north-central province of Zambézia. It was late afternoon, and the clouds in the west had lifted, revealing the mountain's outline. Along with a couple of hundred other people, I was waiting for a plane. All around us was rolling miombo woodland, lush with acacia, cashew, and mango trees and punctuated here and there by sheer rock outcroppings that burst out of the ground like the bluffs in Chinese ink paintings. A light rain began to fall, and a little girl standing beside me whispered, "Calamidades." She was looking at the sky to the southeast. I looked. I saw nothing. Then other children began pointing in the same direction, all murmuring, "Calamidades." The little girl glanced at me, then looked away. Around her



neck, I noticed, she wore a scrap of red felt on a string. Otherwise, she wore only a worn, shapeless piece of burlap. She was a beautiful child, but desperately thin, and she shivered in the cool rain.

"Calamidades" is Mozambican shorthand for the government's ponderously titled Department for the Prevention and Combat of Natural Calamities. The term has come to refer not only to the department itself but to the food and clothes it distributes, which were undoubtedly what those children at the airstrip were thinking of when, their senses sharpened by hunger, they spotted, or heard, the approaching plane—it was, in fact, bringing food. The natural calamities that have befallen Mozambique since the country won its independence from Portugal, in 1975, have included floods, cyclones, and, in the early nine-

teen-eighties, a prolonged drought that led to a famine in which an estimated hundred thousand people starved. The list of not so natural calamities must include Portuguese colonialism itself, which was of a peculiarly oppressive type, and also, paradoxically, the flight of nearly all the Portuguese colonists at independence, an abrupt decampment that left the country with a crippling shortage of skilled manpower. The greatest calamity, however, and the primary cause of the extraordinary, countrywide suffering that people in Mozambique now call simply "the emergency," is unquestionably the war being waged against the government by the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, or Renamo.

The government and many Mozambicans call Renamo *bandidos armados*, "armed bandits," but any suggestion that Renamo's operations are mere uncoordinated banditry would be misplaced. The war, which started in 1976 and intensified drastically after 1981, has destroyed the national economy, most of the country's transportation and communication systems, and much of rural society. According to recent estimates, more than six hundred thousand Mozambicans have died in the war, more than two million have been driven from their homes, and more than six million are currently facing severe food shortages; Mozambique's total population is fifteen million. In 1988, a senior American State Department official accused Renamo of perpetrating "one of the most brutal holocausts against ordinary human beings since World War II." Foreign news reports tend to refer to the conflict as a civil war, but the Mozambican government insists that it is a case of external aggression—that South Africa, its powerful, white-ruled

neighbor, is using Renamo as a proxy force.

Whatever it is called, it is a hard war to report on. Although people are dying in all of Mozambique's ten provinces, there is no front, and few pitched battles. The government releases information sporadically, usually long after the events described, and the only telephone number for Renamo with which I've ever had any success is in Washington, D.C. The only way to develop a real picture of the war, therefore, is by getting out close to it and asking questions. The collapse of the national transportation system makes even that difficult. Mozambique is twice the size of California. Most railway lines and highways are either destroyed or frequently attacked, so huge parts of the country are accessible only by air.

In Zambézia, which is the most populous province—it has an estimated three million residents—land travel is impossible except in the immediate vicinity of Quelimane, the provincial capital, and there are no intra-provincial commercial flights. Quelimane is a port city, and on my first afternoon there I tried to talk my way onto a coastal tramp I found loading grain at the docks, but the captain refused to tell me where he was bound, or even to

confirm that he was the captain. I later learned that cargo boats in that area travel in fear of a Renamo ambush in the narrow coastal estuaries, and that I had failed to convince the captain that I was not an enemy agent.

In the end, I got around Zambézia by hitching rides in a vintage twin-engine Dakota DC-3 that was hauling food to isolated areas as part of an emergency airlift. Millions of Mozambicans today survive only by the grace of international relief. The airlift in Zambézia was being financed that month by the Swedish government. The next month, it was hoped, the Italian government would pick up the tab.

The charter company that owned and operated the Dakota was itself a good indication of the desperation of the Mozambican government. The company, which was leasing its services to the national airlines, called itself Inter-Ocean Airways; I was told it was based in Guernsey, but it was clearly South African. The pilots were Afrikaners, and lived, they told me, "in the only place to live"—South Africa. Their names were Hennie and Ferdie, and they looked and talked like cartoon truck drivers: unshaven, overweight, profane. Hennie, who was in his thirties, flew in swim trunks, san-

dals, and a filthy T-shirt. Ferdie, who was older, wore aviator glasses and long sideburns. They both made no bones about their contempt for Mozambique, and how it confirmed their suspicions concerning majority rule in Africa, or about their motives for working there. "We're here for the money," each of them told me. They got paid according to the amount of time they spent in the air, so they flew their old plane hard, working from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, rarely stopping for more than the few minutes it took a ground crew to heave three tons of cargo aboard or throw it out on the ground.

Hennie and Ferdie didn't care where they flew. When I turned up at the airport in Quelimane with papers from the local authorities giving me permission to fly on the *cargueiro*, they happily rearranged their schedules for the following days so that they could go in the morning to a place that interested me, and return there to fetch me on the day's last flight. My being white may have had something to do with their helpfulness. I was travelling with two black Mozambicans—an interpreter and a young man from the local Calamidades office—but Hennie and Ferdie, who were gregarious with me, never spoke a word to either of my companions. The young man from Calamidades, whose name was Ismail, took to cowering around them, and timidly bumming cigarettes. The interpreter, who had come up with me from Maputo, the national capital, just took their measure and laughed. His name was Boaventura das Dividas. He worked with CARE International, an aid organization that helps Calamidades distribute relief supplies, so he had seen a lot of white people in action. Dividas looked about twenty-five, but he was in his mid-thirties, and was a man of wide experience. He had served in two armies, he spoke at least eight languages—including excellent English, which he had learned as a refugee in Ethiopia—and he owned a physical elegance that could not have contrasted more sharply with our pilots.

Hennie and Ferdie were unreceptive to ordinary Mozambicans' pleas for passage. Because of all the uprooting, there were tens of thousands of people in Zambézia who had been separated from their families, and because land

travel had become impossible many of them collected at airstrips. The worst scene I witnessed occurred at a place that had not been reached by road for over a year. Several peasants had crowded into the back of the Dakota after it unloaded. Hennie spotted them just as he was about to take off for Quelimane. He stormed out of the cockpit and ordered the people off his plane. When they hesitated, he started picking up their bundles and throwing them out the open door. Everybody scuttled off except a rail-thin young man on crutches. He shrank back, but seemed unable to move. Hennie yelled, "Every minute we're on the ground is costing me four dollars and twenty-five cents!" Finally, he grabbed the young man's crutches away from him and hurled them out the door. The young man, whose legs were withered, fell to the floor. While Hennie jogged back toward the cockpit, the young man crawled to the door, and a dozen hands reached over the threshold and lifted him from the plane.

Hennie and Ferdie were, in fact, not allowed to carry passengers without government permission, and they did carry wounded soldiers when they found them, even without permission. After we got back to Quelimane that evening, Hennie told me that he blamed the government for not allowing him to carry hardship cases. "There's nothing wrong with the *people* in this country," he said. "It's the *management*." Hennie and Ferdie said they esteemed the Tanzanians who worked in the control tower at the Quelimane airport more than they did Mozambicans. "At least they speak the language," Ferdie said, meaning English. I wondered what Dividas, who was standing with us, made of that remark, but he just caught my eye, smiled wryly, and made no comment. Although both pilots had apparently been working for years in Mozambique, where the official language is Portuguese, neither seemed to speak more than a few words of it.

Hennie and Ferdie liked to fly either very low, skimming the trees in order to surprise and thus foil potential snipers, or above five thousand feet, out of the range of small-arms fire. They hadn't figured out what to do about surface-to-air missiles, however, because the missiles' range was great-

er and, as Hennie explained to me, "they're heat-seeking, and these pipes are hot." He indicated the Dakota's exhaust pipes. "We really should put guards on them." The Mozambican Army—usually known simply as Frelimo, for Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, the country's ruling party—had surface-to-air missiles, and the only two civilian aircraft shot down in the war had been shot down by Frelimo. Both of those incidents had been publicly regretted by the government, and stricter anti-aircraft guidelines had been issued afterward, but Renamo, too, had surface-to-air missiles—I had seen a news photograph of a Renamo fighter wielding one—so I was banking on the assessment of a British military journalist who reported that they apparently didn't know how to use them.

In any case, Hennie and Ferdie didn't know or care who was shooting at them. "You know what they say," Hennie told me. "Frelimo by day, Renamo by night." This little aperçu meant "They're all the same anyway" and "The government blames everything on Renamo—including its own Army's depredations," and it was, in fact, a common saying among some of the expatriates working in Mozambique.

The Dakota was a big, ponderous prewar plane that canted upward severely while it was on the ground. "Little Annie" was painted under the pilot's window, and Hennie and Ferdie didn't bother with a door—too much trouble to open and close. Inside, it felt like an old railroad locomotive. There were no seats outside the cockpit—just a big, filthy tarp on the floor. There was an axe, painted blue, on the back wall. My companions and I rode on fifty-kilogram sacks of yellow corn and pinto beans stamped with the message, in English, "Furnished by the People of the United States." Sometimes the sacks, of rough white plastic fibre, were covered with bugs, and we would get covered with bugs, too. Hennie and Ferdie said that bullets from the ground would go through one sack but not two—they had found bullets lodged in the second sack of a pile—so we rode on top of at least two sacks whenever we could. Hennie and Ferdie put steel plates under their seats for the same purpose. Ferdie showed me where



the plane had taken two bullets just a month before I flew with them. One had severed a brake cable, causing them to land awkwardly; the other had missed a fuel tank by three inches. Those shots had been fired in the Ile district, in northern Zambézia. I flew to Ile with Hennie and Ferdie, and we came in high, then made a steep descent, trying to limit our time as a target. It was their first trip into Ile since getting shot there, but Hennie reckoned that it was fairly safe now. "I've had these boys on a diet," he said, meaning that Ile had received no food deliveries for a month. "They want to see a few loads get on the ground."

In flight, the Dakota seemed to swim through the air, swerving from side to side like a rudderless barge. A warm wind roared through the open door; the green countryside of Zambézia rambled past below. Zambézia is Mozambique's most fertile province. In peacetime, it is a cash-crop cornucopia of rice, maize, coconuts, cashews, cotton, and, in the northern hills, tea; more than half of Mozambique's exports come from Zambézia. But roughly half the people of Zambézia have fled their homes since 1981, and most of the land we flew over looked deserted. Fields were overgrown, and were swiftly reverting to bush. There were no herds of cattle—a stunning absence anywhere in southern Africa—and no herds of game. And yet flying over Zambézia was a constant all-points assault of intense visual beauty, with Maxfield Parrish thunderheads rising around the plane like immense, glowing marble pillars and, beneath us, glinting rivers running dark-green threads through a landscape out of Isak Dinesen. It was, in its wildness, ideal country for a guerrilla army. And yet it was scarcely thinkable that a Renamo operated in such scenery.

Hennie and Ferdie banked in for landings at terrifying angles, practically clipping the treetops with the plane's lower wing. When we came to a stop, one of them would jump out, run around to the front of the plane, and stand guard there, to prevent people from running into the propellers. The danger of someone's doing so became extreme whenever a sack of food burst during unloading. I saw crowds at airstrips go wild when even a small amount of corn spilled from a sack. Children, their hunger-bright eyes rolling, would scabble madly af-

ter it, stuffing handfuls of dried grass and turf into blackened tin cans along with the kernels. Hennie and Ferdie had had close calls; they had seen miraculous broken-field running between the props by both children and adults. "It's my nightmare that someone will run into a prop someday," Ferdie told me. "We really should just turn off the engines, but it takes too long to cool them down and re-start them, and time for us is money."

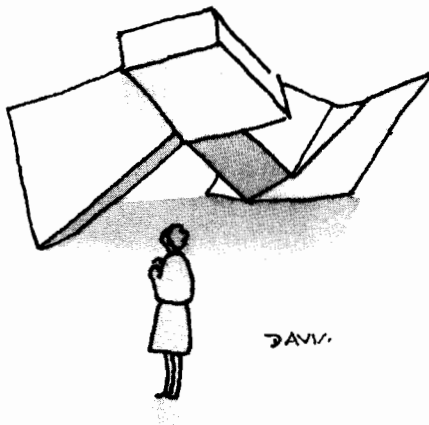
**T**HE town of Morrumbala, which is in southwestern Zambézia, about twenty miles east of Morrumbala Mountain, had been occupied by Renamo for nineteen months. Frelimo retook the town in April, 1987. This sequence of events sounded like a conventional war story, and that was one of the reasons I had wanted to visit the place. I also visited several other towns that had been occupied by Renamo, but Morrumbala was the first.

From a distance, jouncing in from the airstrip, it looked idyllic. The "cement town"—a term that is used in Mozambique to distinguish European-style settlements, which were once occupied primarily by the Portuguese colonists, from the African settlements, or "cane towns," that invariably abut them—covered two gentle hills with fifty or sixty substantial pastel-colored buildings. Neat columns of dark-green acacias flanked wide red-earth roads. As we drew closer, though, it became clear that Morrumbala had been sacked. All the houses, for instance, had lost their roofs. And when we reached the town itself the idea that anything like a conventional war had been fought there coughed once and died.

Every window, every window frame, every door, every doorframe, every piece of plumbing or wiring or

flooring had been ripped out and carried away. Every piece of machinery that was well bolted down or was too heavy for a man to carry—water pumps, maize mills, the generator in the power station, the pumps outside the gas station—had been axed, shot, sledgehammered, stripped, or burned. Outside a bank, a safe, yellowing slowly in the sun, lay on its side, a gaping bazooka hole in its door. Some buildings were still identifiable from bas-relief signs carved in the masonry above their doors—"PADARIA" ("Bakery"), "CORREIO" ("Post Office"). Many buildings were scorched, and the burned wreckage of trucks, tractors, and cars littered empty lots. There were few signs of battle—only a spatter of bullet holes in walls and pillars—but a thousand relics of annihilative frenzy: each tile of a mosaic smashed, each pane of a glass-block wall painstakingly shattered. It was systematic, psychotically meticulous destruction. The only building in town with its roof untouched was the church. The only other structures intact were Morrumbala's two fountains. There was one fountain on each hill, and the northern fountain was faced with *azulejos*, blue-and-white Portuguese tiles. The scene depicted on it—painted, according to the legend, in Lisbon—showed a serene St. Anthony holding a cherubic white baby.

Morrumbala was the capital of an administrative district with a population estimated at two hundred and thirty thousand. At the time I visited, the town itself was home to roughly forty thousand people, over ninety per cent of whom were *deslocados*—displaced persons. There weren't many people around in the middle of the morning—nearly everyone was out in the fields working. Most of those I could see wore rags and looked ill-fed, but they did not seem to be starving. Except during the drought and famine of 1983-84, and in a few acute local crises, the scenes of mass hunger in Mozambique do not resemble the nightmare images that emanated from Ethiopia in 1984: bare hills carpeted with skeletal bodies. Most of Mozambique is not subject to cyclical drought and famine. War generates chronic shortages, and for Mozambican peasants displacement usually means a precarious diet of leaves and roots and, perhaps, wild game until they can reach a food-distribution



center or can plant and harvest a crop.

The most pressing needs in Morrumbala, I was told, were for maize, seeds, hoes, and clothes. Maize was coming in by air—Hennie and Ferdie brought five loads of three tons each on the day I visited—along with occasional shipments of blankets and tools. But the last road traffic to reach the district from the outside world had been a military convoy ten months earlier. Another convoy had tried to reach it a few weeks before my visit but had been destroyed by Renamo on the highway in Mopeia, the next district south. Doctors from *Medecins Sans Frontières* and other relief organizations made flying visits, and UNICEF had brought in stocks of medicines.

I saw UNICEF medicine stacked in a doorless room at the district hospital. For all I knew, it was being used, but it looked forgotten and ripe for stealing. The hospital was a rambling white-washed building at the end of a tree-lined lane. It was getting a new roof of corrugated tin. The maternity ward, which had been burned out, was being used as a carpenters' workshop, but the rest of the hospital seemed strangely quiet. There were several male nurses, each of whom grew solemn when he saw me, but no patients except in the infirmary. The infirmary was a big, very dark room with a few mats strewn on the floor and a few people curled in the shadows. It felt like a storehouse for the doomed. In the hospital courtyard, fifty or sixty women and children were sitting in the dirt outside rudimentary grass tents. These were recently arrived *deslocados*. The children all had swollen bellies and looked seriously malnourished, but the hospital administrator assured me that they were healthy. They had been examined and vaccinated, and were now being fed. As soon as huts were ready, people would be issued cooking pots and blankets and moved to one of eight "accommodation centers" that ringed the town.

Behind the hospital, the cane town began. Small cane-and-mud huts covered the hills, and a surprising semblance of normal life was going on. Given seeds, a hoe, and the chance to cultivate a field without being attacked, a Mozambican peasant can work wonders. Morrumbala has fertile soil and gets good rainfall, so there were glistening vegetable gardens everywhere. But a close look at some of the new

huts revealed an unusual small door at the back. I asked a woman who was pounding maize in a mortar about the door. She grimaced and said that it was for escaping in the event of an attack by the *bandidos armados*. Most of the people in Morrumbala had arrived there destitute and traumatized, but many seemed to have quickly reestablished parts of their old lives. A spirited meeting was taking place under a tree—I was told that it was a divorce proceeding—and next to a new hut I saw an "African piano": fifteen panels of wood of graduated length lashed together and laid over a trench of graduated depth. A tap on a panel produced a rich, vibrating tone.

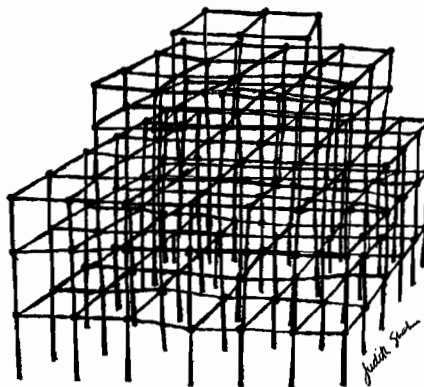
The troops now holding Morrumbala were Tanzanian; Mozambique receives security assistance from several of its neighbors, most notably Zimbabwe and Tanzania. The Tanzanian role in the war was supposed to be strictly defensive, and I noticed that the troops had built underground bunkers at each approach to the town. Gardens full of chard and tomatoes flourished beside the bunkers. Unlike any Mozambican soldiers I had seen, the Tanzanians wore complete uniforms, with pressed fatigues, smart red berets, and reflecting sunglasses. They laughed when I greeted them in English, and answered, "Good morning!" As in most of the places I went in Mozambique, nobody seemed inclined to question my movements.

Dividas chatted with the soldiers in Swahili, and afterward reported that, according to the Tanzanians, the "security zone" in Morrumbala extended only two or three kilometres from the center of town. In other words, any place farther out was subject to attack, even in the daytime.

I was interested in Renamo's occupation of Morrumbala. I first pictured it as a scene of rampaging *bandidos*

shooting out the lights, swilling the contents of decent people's liquor cabinets, and sleeping in their feather beds. I was told by various people who had lived through it, however, that the town was deserted for the entire nineteen months of the occupation—Renamo commanders rightly believing that towns present fat targets for Frelimo air strikes. On the morning Renamo arrived, everyone, including a handful of Frelimo soldiers stationed in the town, ran off. The rebels spent two days destroying whatever could not be carried away, then rounded up every able-bodied person they could find, loaded them down with plunder, and marched them off to their bases in the bush. Most of the doors, windows, and zinc roofing sheets—each porter was required to carry two sheets—ended up in Malawi, a neighboring country whose southern tip is about forty miles from Morrumbala, and were traded there for soap, salt, gasoline, flashlight batteries, and sugar. Clothes, food, furniture, radios, motorcycles, and so on stayed at the bases. A major Renamo base was established in the Morrumbala district—I later met people who had been marched to the base from homes more than a hundred and fifty miles away—but the encampment closest to the town of Morrumbala was out near the airstrip. During their occupation, the rebels allowed no one to enter the town, and people told me that the grass in the center of town had grown as high as the walls of the buildings. Renamo dealt with the local population through *régulos*, petty chiefs who had once worked for the Portuguese, and *majubas*, local collaborators and enforcers. The Renamo commanders spoke Ndaui—Ndaui are a small ethnic group from central Mozambique—and spirit mediums known as *curandeiros* or *feiticeiros* enjoyed great influence. When Frelimo, backed by Zimbabweans, returned to Morrumbala, Renamo made an orderly retreat. Thousands of *majubas* and porters left along with the fighters.

Frelimo had retaken Morrumbala sixteen months before, and reconstruction of the cement town had been slow. Some houses were inhabited again, but building materials were scarce. Reed mats covered the windows and the doorways, and all the new roofs were of thatch, which gave the cement houses it covered a disreputable, bad-toupee look. But the hospital



was getting its tin roof, and a new diesel pump had water flowing in the fountains again. And school was in session: all over town we passed groups of children sitting on the ground under mango trees, some singing like robins, others listening to a teacher talk.

Much of the credit for Morrumbala's steady resumption of normal life belonged, I had been told, to Alcanji Nhampinga, the district administrator. On the morning I arrived, Nhampinga was just returning to Morrumbala, by light plane. He was a tall, lanky, studious-looking man of about forty, with a constant toothy smile and an air of profound preoccupation. He had been to Maputo, and wore a clean gray three-piece suit, but at the airstrip he climbed straight into the back of a truck that was waiting there. We rode into town together. The truck, Nhampinga explained, was one of only two working civilian vehicles in the district, and the other was a motorcycle. "This truck was a gift from the Japanese," he said. "It came with the last convoy. It broke down here in Morrumbala, and was left behind." Nhampinga grinned guiltily. A good trick, I thought. "We repaired it, but one of its batteries is dead now, and there are no spare parts or tools. We start it by touching two wires together." The truck's health was clearly one of Nhampinga's numberless preoccupations.

When we reached his house, which was one of the bigger thatched buildings (half of it had been turned into a military command post, government administrators and their families being a favorite Renamo target), Nhampinga found a group of his assistants waiting. He made a short, quiet speech to them in Chuabo, the local language; heard a report on what had been happening in his absence; then apologized profusely to me, in Portuguese, for his inability to show me around—there were some things he just had to attend to.

It was several hours before we saw Nhampinga again. By then, his coat and vest and round-framed glasses were gone, his sleeves were rolled up, and there was a smear of red mud on one shoulder of his shirt, but he was still smiling, still distracted, and still apologizing. His wife had given us lunch—bean soup and a chicken stew—in their dark, bare house, and Nhampinga apologized for having been absent. But he was still deter-

mined to show me at least one thing: his generator. It had been built by the best mechanic in Morrumbala, from parts cannibalized from the remains of many different machines. They hadn't been able to find a flywheel, so he had milled one out of wood. I thought the generator looked great, sitting burly and immaculate in a cement shelter in the administrator's back yard. The wiring to the house was finished. The Nhampingas' was going to be the first house in town to get electricity in the post-Renamo period. All they needed now was two batteries. I asked when the batteries would come. Nhampinga shrugged, embarrassed. It was a question of money, he said. I recalled that a district administrator's monthly salary came to about fifty dollars. This is a fair measure of Mozambique's poverty: Nhampinga was, after all, the most powerful man in a district of two hundred and thirty thousand people.

**B**UT the depths of dispossession have a million levels, and in a place like Morrumbala the lowest levels are occupied by the most recently arrived. In a cement-walled yard behind the ruins of a bank, under a cashew tree at the edge of a tomato patch, I found Alexandre Naman- yanga, his wife, Dshassa, and their four children. They were *deslocados* who had arrived that same morning. The Namanyangas were in bad shape. All the children were extremely thin, and at least one of them seemed dangerously listless. The family had no clothes at all; they covered themselves as best they could with tree bark. I couldn't imagine what they made of me, but Dividas and I sat talking with the Namanyangas for an hour or so. Mr. Namanyanga was a small, good-looking man with calm, intelligent eyes and a wispy beard. He did most of the talking. His wife was also quite alert, though she and the children were obviously frightened. The whole family shivered the whole time we talked, all having caught a chill, they explained, while walking in the bush the night before.

Mr. Namanyanga, speaking in Sena, a local language, said that he and his wife had lived as peasants near the Minduru Mission, not far from Morrumbala, until six or seven years before. Then the war came to their area, and, though they saw no violence themselves, he said, they fled. They

settled in an area that he called Tandekia. I got out my Michelin map—which, I noticed, still listed Morrumbala, somewhat surreally, as a town with an “equipped” camping site—but Mr. Namanyanga could not show me, even generally, where Tandekia was. He said he had once gone to school for two years but had since forgotten how to read. Mrs. Namanyanga said she had gone to school for four years, but she, too, had forgotten how to read. After further discussion, it turned out that Tandekia was the name of the chief in that area, and possibly not an official place-name at all. The Namanyangas were allowed to farm there, in any case, and their three younger children had been born there. The big problem in Tandekia had been lack of clothes: the Namanyangas had been wearing nothing but tree bark for the last six years. When her husband murmured this information, Mrs. Namanyanga pulled self-consciously at her rough reddish skirt and glanced at my leather-sided running shoes.

Tandekia sounded to me like Renamo territory, but the Namanyangas,

after discussing the matter, could not tell me whether Tandekia, the chief, was with Renamo or Frelimo. I suggested some ways that they might be able to tell the difference—if they ever saw, say, a Mozambican flag, or a Frelimo soldier, or a working motor vehicle in the area, that would suggest that it was government-held territory—and they seemed to want to oblige me with a definite answer. But they said they had never seen any of those things. The fact that they and their children were so thin made me wonder if armed men had been taking away the food they grew, but they said they had seen no armed men. They had started hearing shooting in the distance, however, and that was why they had fled Tandekia. They said they understood that Morrumbala was a government-held town; indeed, that was why they had come there—they had heard the government had food. But they could not tell me, when I asked, who the President of Mozambique was. (It's Joaquim Alberto Chissano.) Mozambique itself seemed to be a fairly hazy idea to the Namanyangas. This was not some sort of African know-

nothingism, I was convinced—and Dividas agreed—but sheer lack of information. The Namanyangas had simply not heard much—if anything at all—about the modern nation-state in which they officially lived.

Among the dozens of *deslocados* I talked to in Mozambique, the Namanyangas were neither typical nor extraordinary. Many people in their situation did not know who the President of Mozambique was, while plenty of others did. Those who could read and write and speak Portuguese (this describes far less than half of all Mozambicans) naturally tended to know more about the greater world than those who lacked these skills. Most people could say whether they had been living under a Frelimo or a Renamo administration at their last address, and some could tell me far more about their experiences than the Namanyangas did, but every “interview” of this sort was utterly problematic.

Many people seemed to figure that the safest attitude to assume with me was a hear-no-evil, see-no-evil shrug, almost as if to say “What war?” (The

Namanyangas may have been doing some of this.) The nature of the war—a conflict in which most attacks occur at night, neither side has a regular uniform, and Renamo's forces are reported to include many semi-independent bands (and have spawned at least one breakaway army)—only increased the difficulty of establishing precisely what had happened to anyone. Also working against people's willingness to tell me their war stories, of course, was the natural reluctance to recall traumatic events, particularly fresh traumas to one's own family or friends.

The interpreter could make a big difference. Dividas was superb at reassuring people, questioning them gently, and, when necessary, giving me advice. I employed other interpreters who shouted at people, and who even refused to translate what they said—"She's lying," one man in Malawi kept insisting. In Mozambique, local officials were usually willing to let me interview people privately, but if the people spoke only an obscure language it was sometimes necessary to use a second interpreter, and the choice was again critical. Dividas would delay

things for as long as it took him to find a local interpreter whom he reckoned our interviewees would not find intimidating. But with all these forces swirling underneath these already stilted conversations, the facts in the narratives we elicited rarely felt entirely stable.

And yet the world itself could not have felt very stable to people like the Namanyangas. While we talked, the place where we sat seemed to me perfectly solid and secure; the world was still on its axis. For refugees, and especially for peasants driven off their land, however, the world is decidedly *not* on its axis. Their homes and all that accompanies that fundamental notion—kin, society, sustenance, identity itself—have been torn from them by terrifying forces. To the Namanyangas the town of Morrumbala did not, I imagine, look the least bit secure. I wondered if they would be willing to send their children to school. Many *deslocados* were not, for they had learned the hard way that it was dangerous to let their children out of their sight. If there was an attack, they wanted to be able to grab their kids as

they ran. And who could promise the Namanyangas that the war would not sweep across Morrumbala again at any moment?

Weeks later, across the border in Malawi, I talked to a man who had once returned to Morrumbala too soon. He was a forty-nine-year-old refugee named Orlando Passanjezi Galave. Mr. Galave was a *mutilado*—his left hand, his right ear, his lips, and his nose had been hacked off. I first noticed him—he was hard to miss—while I was walking through a dusty yard where several dozen newly arrived refugees were waiting for food and medical attention, and several hundred others, also Mozambican refugees but of longer standing, were intrepidly gathering for a bus trip back to parts of Mozambique that they had been assured were now secure. The two groups seemed to be ignoring each other, perhaps understandably. I stopped and asked Galave, who was there greeting the new arrivals, where he came from, and when he said, "Morrumbala," slurring the words around his permanently bared teeth, I asked if he would mind telling me his



story. He considered me silently for a moment—he was a short, wiry, bright-eyed man—then began to speak in rapid Portuguese.

He had been a successful peasant farmer, he said, the owner of a motorcycle, two bicycles, and a good patch of land near the town of Morrumbala. In January, 1983, a group of *bandidos* accosted him in his fields. They said the government must have given him the bicycle he had with him, to help him spy on Renamo. They bound his hands behind him, marched him to their camp, and presented him and his bicycle to their commander. He was left on the ground overnight, with his hands still tied behind him. In the morning, when he refused to confess to being a government spy the Renamo commander hacked off his right ear with a knife, stuffed the ear in Galave's mouth, and then forced him to chew and swallow it. Galave was blindfolded—the blindfold was red, he recalled—and was told that there was more mutilation in store for him. Galave murmured that he had placed his fate in the hands of God. "Do you know God?" his captors demanded. No, Galave admitted, he did not know Him. His captors proceeded to chop off his nose, his lips, and his left hand. They had trouble severing the liga-

ments in his wrist, but managed eventually. They then slit his throat—Galave showed me a ten-inch-long scar I had not noticed—and carried him out to the road, "so that Frelimo might find me."

Galave, bleeding heavily, fainted. When he awoke, he saw that there was no one around, and crawled into the bushes, where he fainted again. The next time he awoke, he could hear the *bandidos*, who had returned, searching for him. Galave lay still, and eventually heard them give him up for dead. That evening, he found some mud with which to stanch the bleeding at his wrist and throat. The next day, he got up and tried to walk, but he was lost, and every time he saw people they fled at the sight of him. Just when he thought he must be at the point of death, he came upon a ripe watermelon in the bush. "This watermelon was a gift from God," Galave told me solemnly. He broke it open with one foot, ate it all, and, with renewed energy, resumed his trek. He eventually found his way back to his farm. It was deserted—his family had fled at the news that Renamo was near—but Galave waited there, and he was on hand when his family returned to collect their belongings. His family carried him into town, and a plane was called from

Quelimane, but the pilot, fearing sniper fire, refused to come. Finally, a military plane carrying wounded soldiers out of Morrumbala took Galave to Quelimane.

Galave spent the next two years in hospitals in Quelimane, Maputo, and Beira (the second-largest city in Mozambique). A Swiss specialist took skin grafts from his thigh to close his wrist. Surgeons in Maputo tried to rebuild his lips—"but that was a failure," Galave said, pointing to his exposed gums. There was nothing to be done about his nose or his ear. Since he could not go back to farming with only one hand, he and his wife decided to settle in Quelimane. In 1985, they returned to Morrumbala to collect their belongings. It was the worst time they could have picked. Renamo

launched a major offensive across Zambézia, and the Galaves were trapped. They had to flee Morrumbala on foot. They eventually made their way to Malawi, and at the time I met Mr. Galave they had been there three years, living on handouts from international relief organizations. Some of the people sitting in the dust around us, he said, were old neighbors of his from Morrumbala. Until their escape last week, they had been living with Renamo.

I told Galave that I had been in Morrumbala and Quelimane, and that both were in government hands. He stared at me awhile, then said he thought he would wait until the war was over before trying to return.

THE cruelty of Renamo mesmerizes everyone in Mozambique, from the peasant whose own head sinks before its scythe to the members of the many foreign delegations that come to survey the wreckage. Westerners grope numbly through their own history for precedents and analogies, and often alight on the European Middle Ages. One British newspaper even quoted a Mozambican official as saying, "This is a war from the Middle Ages." In the sense that tribal and feudal arrangements still

dominate rural Mozambique as they did, say, medieval Germany centuries before the consolidation of the modern nation-state, the metaphor is useful. But the butchery taking place in Mozambique is, unfortunately, not so foreign to modern warfare.

Renamo's ferocity does have unique aspects. In 1985, the United Nations sponsored a vaccination campaign for children in south-central Mozambique. The country's child-mortality rate has risen horrifyingly as a result of the war—it is now approaching three hundred and seventy-five deaths per thousand live births, probably the highest in the world—and many thousands of children are dying each year from preventable diseases like measles. In a vast area with no newspapers (and few literate people), radio was the obvious choice for announcing the campaign. But it was feared that announcements would provoke Renamo attacks. So the vaccination campaign was conducted clandestinely. Small teams went out to schools and villages to proselytize about the importance of vaccinations, with nothing said about dates. Weeks or months later, word would suddenly go out through the Frelimo Party structures, down to the level of the ten-family cell: the vaccination team is coming tomorrow. People would be assembled, vaccinated, and dispersed as quickly as possible. Although some of those who were vaccinated were *later* attacked by Renamo, the campaign was, on the whole, a success. But the United Nations health workers I spoke with said that the campaign's security problems had been unprecedented in their experience.

According to the government, Renamo has destroyed more than seven hundred clinics and rural health posts. By the end of 1987, it had killed at least twenty-one health workers and kidnapped many more. In July, 1987, a Renamo attack on the town of Homoine, which, according to the government, killed four hundred and twenty-four civilians, included a rampage through a hospital in which patients, even pregnant women and newborn babies, were killed in their beds. Along with health centers, prime Renamo targets are schools, relief convoys, and relief workers. More than two thousand schools have been destroyed. As of 1985, a hundred and

twenty-five teachers had been killed or were missing. Relief convoys are attacked regularly: CARE International's inventory list for its trucks is studded with the notations "ambushed," "burned," and "mined," often with an accompanying "killed" for its drivers. Captured Renamo documents show that international-aid workers are indeed considered valid, even important, military targets.

According to the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference, Renamo has boiled children alive in front of their parents and has used the decapitated heads of old people as seats. *Newsweek* quoted a peasant saying that Renamo was eating children. The *Guardian* reported that Renamo was crushing skulls, disembowelling people, and nailing them to trees. In April, 1988, the United States Department of State issued a major report, based on interviews with nearly two hundred Mozambican refugees, that included, in its catalogue of Renamo's violence against civilians, "shooting executions, knife/axe/bayonet killings, burning alive, beating to death, forced asphyxiation, forced starvation, forced drownings, and random shooting at civilians in villages during attacks." The State Department's report, which estimated that a hundred thousand civilians may have been murdered by Renamo, had a powerful impact on the debates in this country over American policy toward Mozambique. It had a powerful impact on me, too. Among other things, it reinforced an unexamined assumption that Renamo came from Hell.

Several months after the release of the State Department's report, I met, in Maputo, an American psychologist who was working with war-damaged children. He told me some of the worst Renamo stories I heard. He

said that a six-year-old boy had been forced to light the match with which Renamo burned down his family's hut, and had then been forced to watch while his family ran outside and were hacked to death and burned. He said that a ten-year-old boy had seen his best friend decapitated by Renamo and had then been forced to carry his friend's head on top of his own head back to the Renamo camp. The psychologist had worked with child soldiers from the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and he said he thought that



Renamo's behavior toward the children it abducted was "more insidious than what the Khmer did, from a psychological point of view." Renamo's ultra-violence was linked somehow to the psychology of South African apartheid, he said. Beyond that, he couldn't explain it. This, to me, was another way of saying that Renamo comes from Hell.

But the time I spent in Mozambique undid that idea for me. I don't doubt that Renamo is linked in a multitude of ways to South Africa, and I don't doubt that Renamo has murdered civilians by every method mentioned in the State Department's report, and probably forty others. But Renamo does not come from Hell. Renamo comes from Mozambique.

THE fact that some people scarcely realize they live in a country called Mozambique stems from the fact that Portugal, which declared the place a unit to begin with, never had the wherewithal to turn it into one. The first Portuguese arrived in 1498, but it was not until the twentieth century that Lisbon even gained control of the entire colony. There was competition from Swahili traders for commercial supremacy along the coast. Inland, two African empires and numerous independent chieftaincies frustrated the attempts of the Portuguese to extend their rule. In the seventeenth century, Portuguese merchants did lucrative business with the great gold mines of the Muenemutapa empire, in what is now west-central Mozambique and eastern Zimbabwe, but in 1692 the Muenemutapa army drove the Europeans back to the coast. In the eighteenth century, the major international trade was in ivory. In the nineteenth century, it was in slaves. Powerful slave-raiding states grew up, and the entire northern half of Mozambique was impoverished and almost depopulated as more than a million people were captured, sold, and shipped to Brazil, the United States, and the Caribbean islands. Still, in 1885, when the European powers were dividing up Africa at the Berlin Conference, the effective rule of Portugal in Mozambique was confined to a few coastal settlements. The area that the Europeans called Mozambique contained people speaking more than a dozen different languages and an estimated two hundred dialects.

The sudden appearance of large-scale mining in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, created demands for migrant labor and the development of Mozambique's ports, and these changes, in combination with Portugal's weakness, shaped Mozambique's economy decisively. In the southern city of Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), "only 27 percent of the investments in 1900 consisted of Portuguese capital," Allen and Barbara Isaacman write in their book "Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982." "The city's electrical system, trolley system, and first modern wharf complex were all financed by foreign, primarily British, capital—a situation not unlike that in Lisbon itself." Even the concessionary companies licensed to develop agriculture and industry in Mozambique were largely British-owned. On the plantations that were started, labor conditions were frightful. The slave trade persisted, in one form or another, into the twentieth century, and forced labor was not abolished until 1961. Hundreds of thousands of Mozambicans fled their homes for the higher wages and marginally less brutal colonial systems in neighboring states. The effects of this exodus were profound: at independence, less than ten per cent of the land was under cultivation. (Today, because of the war, the figure is only four per cent.)

Although Mozambique runs north-south, nearly all development in the country was along east-west lines. Railroads, highways, and ports were built to serve Rhodesia and South Africa as outlets to the sea. The South Africans agreed to pay part of the wages of Mozambican mineworkers directly to the Portuguese in gold. These remittances became the mainstay of the colonial government's budget, and southern Mozambique was effectively integrated into the expanding South African industrial economy. António Salazar, the dictator who came to power in Portugal in 1932, struggled to assert the metropole's control over its colonies, and in the late nineteen-forties Portugal did finally manage to account for more than half of Mozambique's external trade.

Under Salazar, Portuguese emigration to Mozambique increased sharply. The European population of the colony was twenty-seven thousand in

1940; in 1970, it was over two hundred thousand. The Salazar regime was trying to export some of its social and political problems, such as unemployment and landlessness. Most of the Portuguese who went to Mozambique were peasants—a 1955 census showed that only a third of them could read and write—but racial discrimination guaranteed them a level of security and comfort that few had known in Europe. Blacks were barred from most jobs; even the bus drivers and the movie ushers were white. Local industry grew, and, in the nineteen-sixties, actually boomed. By 1975, Mozambique was the eighth-largest industrial producer in Africa. But Africans were banned from trade, and that meant that the country had no indigenous business class. As Joseph Hanlon, a correspondent for the BBC, wrote in his 1984 book, "Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire," "Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in Africa not because it lacks natural resources, nor because Portugal left it undeveloped, but rather because Portugal actively underdeveloped it."

Among the many features of their own repressive political machinery that the Portuguese brought to Mozambique was a fearsome secret police. In the decades following the Second World War, when other African countries were gaining their independence, the Portuguese were crushing every hint of resistance to colonial rule in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau. Nationalist groups were harassed, outlawed, and driven into exile, their leaders jailed, tortured, and murdered. In 1960, a group of Mozambican peasants gathered in the northern town of Mueda for a peaceful protest, and colonial troops opened fire, killing at least six hundred. Finally, in 1962, three outlawed nationalist groups met in Dar es Salaam, in the newly independent Tanganyika (now Tanzania), to found the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique. Frelimo's first president was Eduardo Mondlane, an American-educated sociologist (and Mozambique's first Ph.D.). Frelimo's armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism began in 1964.

The war lasted ten years. Eduardo Mondlane was assassinated in 1969. His successor was Samora Machel, a former nurse and a gifted commander. Frelimo received support from China and the Soviet Union. Its main rear

bases were in Tanzania, and, despite Portugal's vast military superiority, Frelimo, waging guerrilla warfare with light weapons, steadily expanded its "liberated zones" until they covered the northern fourth of the country. Frelimo also had cells among intellectuals and workers in all the major towns. Portugal was fighting grueling wars in Angola and Guinea-Bissau at the same time, and in April, 1974, a leftist coup in Lisbon, led by military officers fed up with the colonial wars, toppled the government. A year later, Samora Machel became Mozambique's first President.

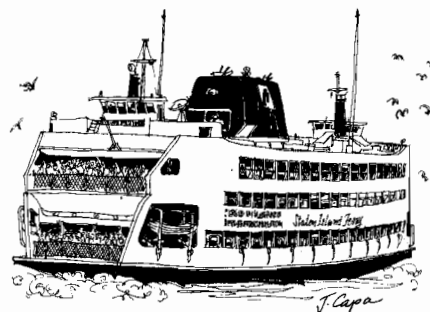
The war had radicalized the Frelimo leadership, and in 1977 the liberation movement became a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party and signed long-term assistance pacts with the Soviet Union and Cuba. By that time, more than ninety per cent of the Portuguese in Mozambique had departed. Frelimo was non-racial—its leadership contained whites, Asians, and people of mixed race as well as blacks—but the end of legal racial privilege was clearly intolerable to many whites. The new government guaranteed that private wealth would be protected, but post-independence nationalizations of land-ownership, rental property, and social services, including education, medicine, and law, sped the flight of the former rulers. Most went to South Africa or back to Portugal, abandoning their farms and factories and, in many cases, destroying the cattle, tractors, and machinery they could not take with them.

Frelimo was left to run an effectively bankrupt country with virtually no trained people. The illiteracy rate was over ninety per cent. There were six economists, two agronomists, not a single geologist, and fewer than a thousand black high-school graduates in all of Mozambique. Of three hundred and fifty railroad engineers working in 1975, just one was black (and he was an agent of the Portuguese secret

police). A large-scale expansion of the educational system was undertaken, along with a crash program to provide health care in the rural areas, where eighty-five per cent of Mozambicans live. An ambitious plan to modernize and socialize agriculture and industry was drawn up. As the victor over the Portuguese, Frelimo was hugely popular, but the basic task facing the new government was still nation-building. The colonial regime had violently discouraged all forms of national consciousness, and millions of isolated peasants still had to be persuaded that they belonged to something called Mozambique.

But the gravest threat to the fledgling country was external. While the victory of the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies was an inspiration to the black majorities struggling for freedom in South Africa and Rhodesia, it was regarded with alarm by their white rulers. The liberation war in Rhodesia was intensifying, and Frelimo began providing rear bases to the guerrillas of the Zimbabwe African National Union, or ZANU, the larger of the two movements fighting white-minority rule there. Frelimo also began applying the trade sanctions against Rhodesia which had been ordered by the United Nations, and which the colonial regime had flouted (and South Africa continued to flout), although the cost to Mozambique was staggering. The Rhodesians, on their side, launched raids into Mozambique. They bombed bridges, dams, railway lines, and oil-storage facilities. In August, 1976, they massacred eight hundred and seventy-five people in a refugee camp. They also assembled a gang of former Portuguese soldiers and secret police, Frelimo deserters, and escaped prisoners who had fled Mozambique, and created what its mastermind, a Rhodesian military-intelligence chief named Ken Flower, called a "pseudo-terrorist" movement: Renamo.

**R**ENAMO was originally meant to be a Fifth Column, its task to spy on ZANU guerrillas in Mozambique. Later, its assignment was expanded to include the destruction of infrastructure, in an effort to raise the cost to Frelimo of supporting ZANU. Many Renamo fighters, including the group's first leader, André Matsangaissa, and his deputy, Afonso Dhlakama, had



escaped from "reeducation" camps—rural prisons established by Frelimo after independence. Matsangaissa was a former Frelimo soldier who had been convicted of stealing a Mercedes-Benz; Dhlakama, who fought with the Portuguese colonial army and later joined Frelimo, had also been cashiered for theft. Matsangaissa was killed in battle in 1979—Dhlakama replaced him—but by 1980 Renamo, primarily through raids on reeducation camps, had succeeded in raising a force of between a thousand and two thousand men. Operations, however, were still confined to the center of the country, near the Rhodesian border. And then the Rhodesian war ended. In March, 1980, with independence coming to Zimbabwe, Renamo looked like a spent force. But on the eve of Zimbabwean independence South Africa sent a fleet of military transport planes to ferry the remnants of Renamo south.

Pretoria had been putting great economic pressure on Mozambique since independence. Its economic punishments were caresses, though, compared with the damage that South Africa began to inflict once it had taken

over Renamo. Recruiting was stepped up, training was expanded, and in late 1980 the infiltration of large Renamo contingents into Mozambique by air, land, and sea began. Fronts were opened in the south, near the South African border, and in the north, with transit routes through Malawi (whose government has a long association with Pretoria). By mid-1981, nine of Mozambique's ten provinces were under attack. The ferocity and the scale of the onslaught clearly caught Frelimo unprepared. Ken Flower himself later wrote, "I began to wonder whether we had created a monster that was now beyond control."

South Africa had several objectives in unleashing its monster on Mozambique. One was to stop Frelimo's support for the African National Congress, the leading liberation movement in South Africa. The A.N.C., which is outlawed in South Africa, was using Mozambican territory to infiltrate guerrillas into the country. A second, broader objective was to increase the economic dependence on South Africa of all the neighboring countries. In 1980, coinciding with the

declaration of Zimbabwe's independence, nine of South Africa's neighbors had formed the Southern African Development Coördination Conference (S.A.D.C.C.), whose main purpose was to *reduce* the region's dependence on South Africa. That meant developing the regional transportation system, which, in turn, meant using the short, convenient routes to the sea through Mozambique. Renamo therefore concentrated on disrupting those transport routes, and by 1984 three of the four rail lines running from S.A.D.C.C. countries through Mozambique to the coast had been cut and the fourth was being attacked regularly. Landlocked countries like Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, and Malawi were left with no alternative but to import and export goods through South Africa. A third objective in South Africa's campaign against Mozambique (and its neighbors) was, finally, symbolic: because the fundamental justification for apartheid is that majority rule in Africa is a disaster, it was essential to insure that it always turned out that way.

Pretoria's destabilization campaign

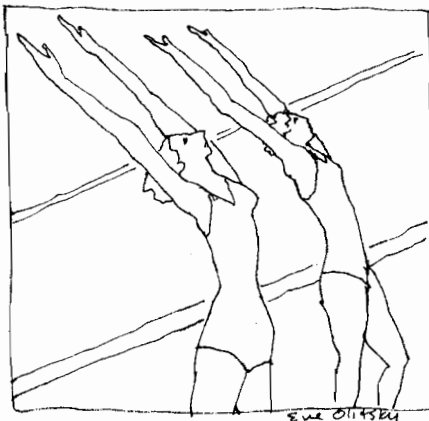
has not been limited to Mozambique. South Africa has recruited, trained, or given support to armed dissidents in Angola, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho as well, and since 1980 the South African military has itself staged bloody raids into no fewer than six nearby countries. In Mozambique, there have been air raids, commando attacks, sophisticated sabotage, and assassinations of prominent A.N.C. members: Ruth First, a sociologist, was killed by a parcel bomb in Maputo in 1982; Albie Sachs, a distinguished legal scholar, lost an arm to a car bomb in April, 1988.

While Renamo remained the blunt main instrument of South African policy toward Mozambique, Pretoria was not Renamo's only source of external support. Portuguese ex-colonials living in South Africa, Portugal, Malawi, and Brazil, including wealthy businessmen who lost property when independence came to Mozambique, contributed heavily. Renamo delegates started turning up at the meetings of the World Anti-Communist League with shopping lists of weapons. Right-wing groups in the United States eventually became important backers,<sup>4</sup> and some of the more dedicated proponents of the so-called Reagan Doctrine in Congress, in the Administration, and in the Central Intelligence Agency—including the C.I.A. director, William Casey; Senator Jesse Helms; and the White House communications director, Patrick Buchanan (who met with a Renamo representative in the White House)—began to push for direct American support for Renamo. This push gained strength after the United States started sending weapons to the South African-backed rebels in Angola, in 1985. The State Department opposed aid to Renamo, but the State Department had also opposed aid to the Angolan rebels.

By 1983, Mozambique was in desperate shape. The national economy had essentially collapsed, all ambitious socialist-development plans were off, and Frelimo was suing for peace. In March, 1984, a "non-aggression pact" known as the Nkomati Accord was signed. South Africa agreed to end its support for Renamo; Mozambique agreed to evict the A.N.C. By all accounts, Mozambique kept its end of the bargain. South Africa did not. Renamo attacks continued and in August, 1985, diaries were discovered at an overrun Renamo headquarters

on Gorongosa Mountain, in central Mozambique, that contained clear evidence of continuing South African support. Top South African officials, including the commander-in-chief of the Army and the Deputy Foreign Minister, had actually visited the Renamo camp only weeks before it was overrun. The diaries showed a split inside the South African leadership over support for Renamo, but no disciplinary measures were taken against those officials revealed to have been violating the accord. Indeed, some of them were promoted.

Evidence that South Africa—or, at least, elements of the South African military—still supports Renamo continues to surface, though none of it is as clear-cut as the Gorongosa diaries. Renamo's chances for official American aid dimmed in 1987, after several major massacres were attributed to its forces, and seemed to disappear altogether in April, 1988, when the State Department, delivering the coup de grâce in its long battle with the Republican right on the issue, released the report that accused Renamo of murdering a hundred thousand civilians. No government can be publicly associated with Renamo now. Even the South African-backed rebels in Angola refuse to let Renamo representatives visit their camps, saying, "They have no nationalist credentials." Today, in fact, governments from almost every point on the political spectrum all but trip over one another in their rush to assist the government of Mozambique. The Soviet Union remains Frelimo's main military supplier, but Margaret Thatcher's Britain provides much-needed radios and training, and even the Reagan Administration last year proposed sending a consignment of non-lethal military aid. (It was not approved by Congress.) Mozambique is the largest single recipient of Italian



foreign aid. (The United States is the largest donor of emergency aid.) In the last five years, Mozambique has turned to Western financial institutions for help, joining the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, encouraging investment by foreign multinational corporations, and making a serious effort to revive a domestic private sector—all somehow without alienating its socialist allies.

So Renamo has lost the propaganda war. And yet the war goes on. In 1986, a major Renamo offensive in Zambézia, driving from Malawi down to the coast, nearly succeeded in cutting Mozambique in two. Samora Machel's death, in October, 1986, in an airplane crash inside South Africa, stunned Frelimo, and the international press reported in December that the fall of Quelimane was imminent. If Renamo had succeeded in taking Quelimane, its plans called for the declaration of an independent republic in the northern half of the country. That offensive fell short, finally, and a joint Mozambican-Zimbabwean counter-offensive in 1987 succeeded in driving Renamo from the main towns. But hundreds of thousands of refugees continued to pour out of Mozambique in 1988, and Renamo still moves freely in the countryside, attacking and pillaging at an undiminished pace.

Externally, Renamo seems to be in shambles. The movement's main international spokesman, a Portuguese lawyer of Goanese descent named Evo Fernandes, was murdered by unknown gunmen in April 1988, near Lisbon. When I went to Lisbon to talk to Renamo, I was told that its new spokesman was a law student whose office was the law-school cafeteria at lunchtime. I never managed to catch him there. Instead, I found the spokesman for a breakaway group, Unamo. Renamo's office in London turned out to be a mailing address where no one recognized the name on the Renamo literature that supposedly originated there. Renamo's office in Washington, D.C., turned out to be space borrowed from a right-wing foundation called Free the Eagle. Its representatives there denounced their brethren in Lisbon.

And yet the war goes on.

ONE evening, I asked Dividas about himself.

"I was born in Beira, in 1951," he said. "My father was a nurse. That

was one of the best jobs an African could have in those days. We lived in a cement house and always had a servant. My father was one of the big men in the community, so the men used to come to our house to talk. I liked to listen to them, but they never let me stay when they talked about politics. I liked to listen to Radio Frelimo, but I had to do it in secret, because my father wouldn't allow it. He said it was dangerous, because someone standing outside the window might hear it and tell the PIDE—the Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado, the colonial secret police. "My father and his friends wanted the Portuguese to leave our country, but they were afraid.

"I went to a Catholic boarding school near Caia. My father wanted to send me on to high school in Beira, but I wanted to stay where I was. In those days, I only wanted to study, and there were too many distractions in the city—sports, girls, different things to do. My father and I could not agree about anything. I didn't know why. Finally, I came back to Beira, but I stopped going to school. On Radio Frelimo at that time, they were always calling for young boys to join Frelimo. They said they had scholarships. Anybody could become a doctor or an engineer. I didn't really care about politics, but I very much wanted an education. So I decided to join Frelimo then. The problem was how to leave the country. There had been some priests who helped boys to leave, but they had been caught by the PIDE.

"When I was nineteen, I joined the Portuguese Army. My father was very unhappy about it, but he would have been even more unhappy if he had known my real plan, which was to desert to Frelimo. I was trained as a paratrooper, then sent to Tete—a northwestern province where the anti-colonial war was intense. "Because I could speak the language there, they made me an interpreter. I went on patrols, and I helped with interrogations. I tried to interpret what people said so that the interrogators heard what they wanted to hear, and in the night I would go to the prisoners and explain to them that they must always tell the same story, no matter what happened, because as soon as they changed their story they would have even bigger trouble. Many people were killed anyway. The worst torturer was a very big black guy named Chico

Nyaka. *Nyaka* means 'snake.' " Dividas laughed quietly, shaking his head. "Chico, Chico, Chico," he said. "Hey, Chico." Dividas pronounced it "sheik-o," and sounded as if he were calling, very gently, to a mad child. "When independence came, the people in Tete found Chico, and before Frelimo could stop them they tore him apart and chopped him into small pieces with machetes.

"My chance to desert came one day when I had to deliver a group of Frelimo sympathizers to the PIDE. I asked the sympathizers to take me to Frelimo. At first, they refused. I said, 'O.K. Then you will suffer.' Finally, they took a chance, and they led me into the bush. We walked for eight hours. They took away my pistol and my uniform. At last, we came to a Frelimo camp. I was very surprised to find some people I knew there. These were people that the Portuguese had interrogated, but I had *believed* them when they said they knew nothing about Frelimo. The camp commander believed my story, because those people told him that I was a good man and had not hurt them when they were prisoners.

"The next morning, a Frelimo soldier who had been following us came into the camp. He had been very frightened when he saw me on the trail, and he said I was a spy. They tied me up, and then they beat me and kicked me. When I said I wanted to fight with Frelimo, they said, 'We are not your brothers! Where are your brothers here?' They sentenced me to death, and the women and children were sent away from the camp. Then there was a meeting to decide how to report the execution. While the meeting was going on, a Frelimo political commissar arrived. He saw me there. When he heard that I had not been captured but had come to the camp myself, he told them to untie me. He

told me that it was all a mistake, and he welcomed me to Frelimo.

"I was sent to Zambia by foot, and then to Tanzania by truck. In Tanzania, I received training in anti-aircraft and rocket artillery. I was at Nachingwea, in southern Tanzania, waiting to go back into Mozambique, but my orders never came. People started saying that deserters from the Portuguese were not trusted, and that was why I was not sent. Then my commander told me that they wanted to send me overseas to study. That was what I really wanted. But the scholarship never came, either. I was in Nachingwea for nearly a year. Finally, people started saying that because most of our leaders were from the south of Mozambique the scholarships were going to other people from the south, and because I was from Beira I would never receive one. That was when I deserted from Frelimo.

"I hitchhiked to the Kenyan border, walked across at night, and went on to Nairobi. I was very hungry, so I went to the police station. The police arrested me, and said they would deport me. But after two days they let me go. I went to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. After some weeks, they sent me to Addis Ababa, and gave me a scholarship. I studied six years in Ethiopia, in English, and I graduated from high school there. I married an Ethiopian girl, and we had a daughter. I was afraid to make contact with my family, because I was sure the PIDE would be watching them, hoping to find out where I was. But after the coup in Lisbon in 1974 I wrote to my sister. She wrote back to me that our father had travelled to Tete to look for me after he heard that I had disappeared. But now he didn't believe it was me writing from Ethiopia. Even after I sent her another letter, he didn't believe it was me. Then, in 1976, when my daughter was born, I sent a photograph of myself with her. My sister told me that our father carried the photograph around with him, and that he would show it to people, especially after a few drinks: his son and his granddaughter in Ethiopia. I think I was his favorite child, even though I disobeyed him. He never wrote to me himself, though. There was still a security risk. Frelimo was in power, and they hated me for deserting, just as the Portuguese





had. Then, in 1977, my father died.

"My family started writing letters begging me to come home. They said they were suffering. Luis Bernardo Honwana, who is now the Minister of Culture, came to Addis Ababa and talked to the Mozambicans there, telling us we should come back. I told him I had never seen him at Nachingwea, and I asked how he could prove that Frelimo would not kill us, and he said he would ask Samora himself to protect me. My wife did not want to go to Mozambique, but when my older brother, who had joined Frelimo, wrote to me that our mother was really suffering, I decided to come back. I was detained at the airport in Maputo, but Honwana and Samora did protect me, and after a few hours I was allowed to go. I found that my family were not suffering—they had just wanted me to come home. My daughter later came from Ethiopia, but I have not seen my wife again. I have a Mozambican wife now, and two more children, and my daughter from Ethiopia also lives with us."

Dividas settled in Maputo and began working for international organiza-

tions there. He got one warning from Frelimo. "Armando Guebuza, who is now the Minister of Transport, called a meeting for people in my position. He said the government would be watching us very closely, and we should know it. I've never had any trouble with the government, but if you write something about me perhaps you could say I deserted from Frelimo because of 'political immaturity.'"

Dividas laughed lightly. If he had stayed with Frelimo, I thought, he would have been in a high-ranking job in the government or the Army by now. Many top Frelimo officials are surprisingly young, and Frelimo, unlike most ruling parties in Africa, is known for rewarding competence.

**I**N Quelimane, Dividas and I stayed at the Hotel Chuabo. Seven floors of glass, steel, wood panelling, and ersatz marble, the Chuabo was said to be the best hotel in Mozambique outside Maputo. Its proprietress, a Portuguese woman known as Dona Amélia, "kept up standards" with a vengeance. She was a stolid, imposing woman in her forties. Every evening, she and her

husband, who was much older, ate supper at the same well-set table in the seventh-floor dining room with the same companion, a dissipated-looking Portuguese with a cigarette hanging permanently from his lip. The three of them represented a significant share of the Portuguese population remaining in Quelimane. After supper, Dona Amélia did her accounts, sitting ramrod-straight on a barstool, while her terrified staff lurked in the background. Her waiters and bellhops all looked and acted as if they had been lobotomized. Samora Machel had once visited the Chuabo, it was said, and a deputation of the hotel's workers had approached the President to protest Dona Amélia's treatment. It was worse than the plantations in colonial days, they said. Machel had been torn. He had long preached the need for black Mozambicans to decolonize their minds as well as their country, but he also had a military man's love of order and efficiency—and the Hotel Chuabo, by God, *worked*. Dona Amélia survived that revolt, and she also survived a crisis, it was said, after her son was discovered to be a Renamo agent. She

even arranged somehow for him to be deported to Portugal long before his prison sentence was served out.

Most of the people in Quelimane—where the peacetime population of sixty thousand has been doubled by the war (the only reason it is not much larger is that the government does not distribute free food in the cities)—lived on the outskirts, in the cane town. The waterfront was quiet, almost deserted; dogs slept in the middle of the street at noon. Quelimane was once the busiest slave port in Mozambique—in the eighteenth-century, thirty thousand slaves a year passed through—and a number of ancient, thick-walled homes from its heyday survived. A few garish new buildings—the Chuabo; the Banco de Moçambique, with its two-story lobby and bright abstract mosaics—evoked the short boom of the nineteen-sixties. Most of the storefronts, though, were empty, or had little in their salt-smearred windows beyond a scatter of cheap, sun-ruined goods. The value of the metical, the Mozambican currency, was such that, to pay for a few small items in Quelimane's only supermarket, I had to count out seven large piles of bills, and when one fifty-metical note disintegrated in my hand the cashier calmly swept the remains onto the floor.

Cash has a gloriously weak hold on the Mozambican imagination. At the Ministry of Information in Maputo, I came upon two American hundred-dollar bills lying on a desk in an empty office. Per-capita income in Mozambique is less than a hundred dollars a year, and this was *hard currency*, so I was flabbergasted. The ministry's offices were unlocked—indeed, nearly every doorknob I touched there came off in my hand—and saw an endless traffic of clerks, messengers, and reporters. But when the young official who sat at the desk showed up, and I pointed out the money, he shrugged, said something about a foreign correspondent wanting hotel reservations, and pushed the bills aside. "Here money means very little," the official said. "You could put this in the street, and the children would pick it up, then throw it down. It's such a new thing, people don't know what it means. I could leave this money on my desk for two days. No one would take it. If I left this shirt, O.K., someone would take it right away." He indi-

cated the South African soccer shirt he wore. It had "Charles" (not his name) written on the breast. His own salary, I knew, was about fifteen dollars a week.

The official was right, no doubt, about what it was safe to leave on his desk. But money was less a new thing in Mozambique than it was a debased thing. In the countryside, it had lost value with the collapse, after independence, of the rural trading network. The Portuguese had abandoned the shops where peasants bought manufactured goods. Frelimo's attempts to keep the shops going failed, and peasants soon found themselves with piles of cash, which they had earned from selling their surplus produce but now had nowhere to spend. Eventually they stopped marketing their surplus. That meant food shortages in the cities. Renamo attacks also prevented produce from reaching the cities. Since cashews and cotton, export crops produced primarily by peasants, are main sources of Mozambique's foreign exchange, the lack of peasant production meant that the hard currency available for imported consumer goods dried up. The pickings in urban shops grew increasingly scarce, and by 1983 money was worth little more in the cities than it was in the countryside. A fierce economic-recovery program, first implemented in 1987, had succeeded in filling urban shops with goods again by 1988, but, after a series of devaluations of the metical, so few Mozambicans could afford to buy anything that, for the ordinary worker, money still meant far less than access to a vegetable plot did. Meanwhile, in rural areas, where Renamo had destroyed or looted over a thousand shops, there was less to buy than ever.



About the value of clothing, the information office was clearly right. In Maputo, where a laborer's monthly salary is about the same as the price of a shirt, I was told that the primary responsibility of the guards posted before every middle-class residence is to protect the clothesline. The journalist Philip Van Niekerk has written about being in a movie house in Lichinga, in the northern province of Niassa, and watching a Soviet film about "a truck driver who rapes and murders two young girls and deposits their naked bodies on a garden dump. As he shoves their clothes into a furnace, the audience rises in protest: it is hard to imagine a worse crime in Li-

chinga than burning clothes." In Quelimane, young women were continually calling out to Dividas on the street, asking him if he wouldn't like to give them his hat or his shirt.

Actually, in the cities in Mozambique, a tide of new prosperity appears to be rising. Late-model Land Rovers are a common sight on streets that, until recently, had not seen a new vehicle since 1975. But the only growth industry in Mozambique is foreign aid, and all the new hardware belongs, in fact, to international organizations. Over a hundred organizations, including governments, religious groups, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental relief and development outfits, have projects going in Mozambique. Their employees number in the thousands; they are spending about a billion dollars a year. The East-bloc countries also have thousands of teachers, advisers, and technicians in Mozambique. Of course, Renamo recognizes the importance of foreign aid, and a captured rebel plan gives priority to stopping "the activities of foreigners because they are the most dangerous in the recovery of the economy." Hundreds of foreigners—most of them Portuguese or Soviets—have been kidnapped by Renamo; dozens have been killed. Today the war confines most foreigners to the cities.

THE war in Mozambique is at a stalemate. Frelimo launches seasonal offensives against Renamo, but, as a Western military attaché in Maputo put it, "Renamo just moves away, like mercury when you try to catch it on the end of your pencil." The Mozambican armed forces are small (fewer than thirty thousand men) and unimposing. After independence, the new government, anticipating a South African invasion, turned the liberation army into a conventional force, relying on Soviet training and

heavy weaponry. The South Africans had, after all, invaded Angola in 1975 on a grand scale. But no invasion came, and when Renamo's guerrilla-style attacks spread, Frelimo's tanks, artillery, and interceptor aircraft were of little use.

Special commandos trained in counterinsurgency by the Soviet Union and Great Britain are the present hope of the Army, but they represent only a small fraction of a small military in a large country. Most of the Mozambican Army is undertrained, under-equipped, underpaid, and underfed. The collapse of the national transportation system, together with the general lack of administrative skills, disrupts military logistics just as thoroughly as it does civilian life. Troops in the field often don't receive pay, uniforms, ammunition, or rations. Morale suffers, and when soldiers are forced to find food any way they can the Army's reputation suffers. Draft evasion is widespread, especially in the cities, and provincial commanders, who seem to be given a free hand in the raising of forces, resort to rough-and-ready conscription, which further tarnishes the Army's image.

Renamo spokesmen say that Frelimo would face defeat if it were not for the

support of "foreign mercenaries," and, in fact, the assistance of Tanzania and, especially, Zimbabwe has been crucial to the government's survival. Zimbabwe may have as many as twenty thousand troops in Mozambique, most of them concentrated around the Beira Corridor—a highway, railway, and oil pipeline that connect Zimbabwe to the port at Beira. The Zimbabwe government owes its own existence partly to Frelimo's steadfast support during the liberation war in Rhodesia, so the current military assistance helps repay a historic debt. It is also essential to the Zimbabwean economy to keep the Beira Corridor open.

Because Renamo's main targets are civilians and infrastructure, its military prowess is difficult to assess. Its record of destruction is, of course, prodigious. Renamo has little, if any, heavy artillery and virtually no mechanized transport. Its communications system, however, is superior to Frelimo's. Captured radiomen describe a comprehensive system, linking all areas of the country with a shifting headquarters in central Mozambique. The headquarters is linked, in turn, with a base in South Africa by an advanced British Racal system, which shifts frequency sixteen times a minute to avoid

monitoring. Renamo has been consistently able to mass large numbers of small units for attacks and disperse them rapidly for strategic retreats. Some Renamo commanders, according to reports, now communicate on solar-powered radios through laptop computers.

The notion, advanced by many observers, that Renamo violence is just "wanton barbarism" (Bob Geldof, on a heavily publicized four-day visit to Mozambique in 1987) is belied by the military facts. Even when Renamo adopted a strategy of mass terror, in the mid-nineteen-eighties, most of its brutalities had discernible motives. Someone was suspected of withholding information, or a village was suspected of withholding food, and the *bandidos* wanted to make sure the neighbors got the message. Predictably, Frelimo-created "communal villages," which were originally intended to be the centerpiece of rural development but have often been used simply to keep peasants away from Renamo, have been major Renamo targets.

Frelimo's declared strategy for winning the war relies inordinately on an amnesty program started in December, 1987. The government claims that more than three thousand Renamo fighters have turned themselves in under the amnesty, which stipulates that they shall not be punished for their actions while they were with Renamo, but the program has had no visible effect on the war. Militarily, Frelimo's declared strategy involves cutting off military supplies to Renamo from outside the country—this interdiction seems to have met with little success—and also cutting off Renamo's food supply. Communal villages play an important role in the effort to deny food to Renamo, and so do the "accommodation centers" for *deslocados*, as I learned first from a peasant named Augusto Mainyoya.

I interviewed Mainyoya amid the ruins of the electrical power plant in Morrumbala. He was a small, thin, sad-eyed man dressed in ragged shorts and a filthy yellow sweater vest. He came from a place he called Codzombe—that was the name of the chief there. Mainyoya said he had left Codzombe because he was tired of living there. I didn't believe that. Mainyoya had a large bandage around his head and a dogged, shattered look. Moreover, when I started talking with him a local

official of some kind—a stocky young man, also dressed in rags, who was helping to register *deslocados*—had approached us and, muttering uncomfortably, told me that there had apparently been some misunderstanding with this man.

Mainyoya eventually told me the story. He had actually been accosted in his fields by Frelimo soldiers. They had demanded to know what he was doing living there in the bush. Where were the bandits? Was he not collaborating with them? When Mainyoya could not answer, but said that he did not want to leave his land, the soldiers attacked him. They stabbed him with bayonets and smashed his head. Mainyoya showed me a number of fresh stab wounds on his neck and stomach. After he fainted, the soldiers took his wife and children away. Relatives found Mainyoya, and treated his wounds with traditional medicines. After three weeks, he felt well enough to travel, and came to Morrumbala. He had found his family there, safe and well, and got his head bandaged at the hospital, but he was still suffering from dizziness.

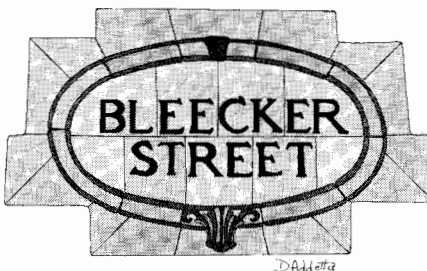
The attack on Augusto Mainyoya had not been a misunderstanding. It was, rather, part of a pattern. In some areas of the countryside, Frelimo troops seemed to suspect every resident of collaborating with Renamo. The suspicion was not, perhaps, unfounded: there were rural areas where it was apparently impossible to live *without* collaborating with Renamo. In such areas, Frelimo was, therefore, simply bringing everyone it could find into the district capitals—a rough-hewn policy, to say the least.

Hundreds of miles south of Morrumbala, in a town called Chibabava, I talked to a widow who said she had six children. But she had only one child—her youngest—with her. It seemed that she had been "captured by Frelimo," as she put it, while working in her fields with her baby on her back. She had told the soldiers about her other children,

but they had refused to allow her to fetch them. Her home was at least forty miles away from Chibabava. It had been nine months since she was seized. The government was feeding her and her baby, but she had no idea what had become of her five older children.

RENAMO's leaders claim that they control more than eighty per cent of Mozambique. The claim is absurd, if only because Mozambique is far too large and undeveloped for any small group to "control" much of it. That includes the government, of course, which itself "controls" little outside the towns and cities. What fraction of the armed men roaming the countryside owe allegiance to any organization? And what fraction of those who call themselves Renamo actually take commands from Afonso Dhlakama? A wild guess on both questions might be half. In many areas, Renamo does not practice anything resembling standard guerrilla warfare; that is, it does not take and hold territory and try to provide some form of alternative administration. Instead, it engages in hit-and-run attacks, usually on nonmilitary targets, pursuing a strategy of maximum destruction and mass terror. In other areas, however, and particularly in central Mozambique, Renamo has held territory, sometimes for years at a stretch, and hundred of thousands—possibly millions—of Mozambicans today live under some form of Renamo administration.

As I travelled around the country, I became obsessed with developing an accurate picture of life with Renamo. It was an ambition sure to be frustrated, because there were countless versions of the thing, many of them contradictory, many of them purely local. Viewed through the stories of those who had survived it, life with the rebels—or *matsangas*, as they are often called, after the first Renamo leader, André Matsangaissa—became a kind of African shadow play, with a large cast of arcane and traditional characters. I imagine that the *matsanga* stories will eventually be adapted to local oral literary traditions and become formalized, but in 1988 most of them were raw and unpredictable. Politically, they are already bitterly contested terrain. Pro-Frelimo researchers return with horrifying tales of slavery, starvation, and mass murder. Pro-Renamo observers find "liberated



zones" of well-fed peasants happy to be rid of Communism. Many of the stories told by both sides are true, I believe, but so is a great deal else.

The standard Renamo practice after entering an area is to loot it and kill any suspected Frelimo members or sympathizers. Usually, if plans do not call for long-term occupation, houses are burned and people marched off to Renamo bases, where they will be used as farmers or porters; or, if the plan is to stick around, the rebels reinstall the local *régulos*—the petty chiefs who once worked, basically as tax collectors, for the Portuguese, and whom Frelimo systematically deposed at independence. I heard about *régulos* who brought their colonial uniforms out of storage, dusting off the epaulets, and some who brought their old enforcers, the African policemen known as *sipais*, out of retirement.

Even more important to Renamo administration than *régulos* are traditional religious authorities. The Portuguese were not energetic missionaries in Mozambique; during their nearly five hundred years of occupation, they succeeded in converting less than fif-

teen per cent of the population to Catholicism. Today, the country has at least as many Muslims—most of them living along the northern coast—as Catholics. But the majority of Mozambicans are what census-takers call "animists"—a term that covers a great range of beliefs and practices. Because the Portuguese were not energetic anthropologists, either, there has been little formal study of Mozambique's indigenous religions, but religious life in rural Mozambique, like religious life everywhere in rural Africa, is definitely complex and intense. Traditional religious figures—known as *curandeiros* ("healers") or *feiticeiros* ("witch doctors")—retain great authority and prestige. Their functions range freely across modern categories: medical, political, religious, psychiatric. They are weather forecasters, marriage counsellors, insurance agents, and priests. Some are knowledgeable herbalists, others are pure fetishists. Apprenticeships are long and costly, and are often limited to persons who have survived serious illnesses themselves. *Curandeiros* were subject to less repression and manipula-

tion under colonialism than chiefs were, so their standing with their flocks actually rose while that of the *régulos* fell. Some *curandeiros* were famous, and some urban *curandeiros*, who charged high fees for their services, became quite rich. After independence, some *curandeiros* went into government training programs and became village health workers, but Frelimo gave them no special recognition and officially scorned traditional beliefs as *obscurantismo*. Like the *régulos*, most *curandeiros* were merely pushed aside by the new government.

Renamo uses *curandeiros* both to gain the respect of peasants and to give its fighters courage. I heard stories of rebels being led into battle by a *curandeiro* waving a goat's tail and of rites meant to make warriors invisible to their enemies. Belief in magic apparently extends even to "the President of Free Mozambique," as Afonso Dhlakama styles himself. Documents found at a captured Renamo base show Dhlakama's adjutant filing straight-faced accounts of battlefield "miracles," in which helpful spirits caused Frelimo troops to shoot at one another.

er. And Renamo's alliance with the supernatural seems to be accepted at face value by many Mozambicans. In every part of the country I visited, I heard people say that the rebels were "bulletproof," that they were "immortal."

Some of this belief is related to the awe in which Ndauspeaking people are held. The Ndaus are one of the smaller ethnic groups in Mozambique, but they have a big reputation for magic and bellicosity. Their homeland is a narrow belt across the waist of Mozambique, from the Zimbabwe border to the sea. Frelimo never really made it to Ndauspeaking country, either before or after independence, so it was a natural base for Renamo's early operations. Ndauspeakers have dominated the Renamo military leadership from the start. Afonso Dhlakama is the son of an important Ndauspeaking chief.

I went to Ndauspeaking country—to Chibabava, which is Afonso Dhlakama's home district—and the *deslocados* I interviewed there were among the most isolated people I've ever met. None of them had been to school. None of them knew how old they were. I asked a woman if there had been any whites in the area she came from. She told the interpreter, "The first time in my life I saw a white person is today. I am very surprised." Nobody knew who the President of Mozambique was. I had travelled to Chibabava partly in hopes of learning more about Ndauspeaking culture and religion. On that score, the trip was a bust. The people I interviewed looked at me as if I were slow. Yes, they went to the *curandeiro*—if they were sick, and if they could afford it. Yes, the *matsangas* no doubt went to the *curandeiro* as well. But that was their business, wasn't it? As for the *feiticeiro*—well, his trade was in spells, a subject which only a fool would discuss. And the ancestral spirits would undoubtedly prefer that we left them out of it, too. On the differences between Ndauspeaking beliefs and other people's beliefs, the Ndaus had little to say: they didn't know any other types of people.

The anti-Ndauspeaking feeling that I expected to find elsewhere in Mozambique I never found. The loyalty of

Ndauspeaking was not an issue even in the Army, I was told. That some Ndaus were *bandidos* did not reflect badly on the others—other ethnic groups were also involved. In fact, the *curandeiros* working with Renamo are often not Ndaus. *Curandeiros* are powerful in every region of Mozambique, and the war, by generating so much anxiety and grief, clearly increases the demand for the solace and guidance of their magic.

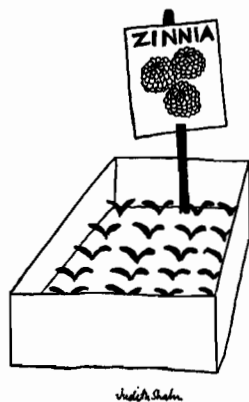
And it is not only illiterate peasants who believe. I heard stories about the spirits from schoolteachers and from air-traffic controllers. It was a teacher, in fact, who first told me the legend surrounding the death of André Matsangaissa. Matsangaissa was killed during an attack on a government position near Gorongosa, in central Mozambique. According to the legend, Matsangaissa was first shot, point-blank, with an automatic rifle, *but he was not harmed*. Then he was shot with a bazooka. That killed him, but the man who fired the bazooka later went mad, the victim of a Renamo witch's spell. The teacher who told me this story had seen *curandeiros* washing the bodies of Renamo fighters with herbs before battles. One of the ways Renamo sought to preserve its reputation for being bulletproof, he said, was by going to great lengths after battles to drag away its dead and bury them secretly. Of course, Frelimo soldiers, most of whom are peasants themselves, also believe in magic, and in March, 1988, in a notorious case, two local officials in Beira killed two old women who were accused of casting spells.

Renamo's entente with traditional structures is sometimes mistaken for the restoration of a pre-colonial order, a "cashless society," to the Mozambican countryside. The war has even been characterized, here and there, as a crusade by African traditionalists against a modern state. In truth, the uprooting of millions of peasants by Renamo has sown only profound disorder. Until a few years ago, Renamo's external wing proudly published the number of villages it had destroyed—in 1981 it claimed to have destroyed eight hundred and three, in 1982 six hundred and seven. The deci-

sive factors in Renamo's dealings with civilians are always the rebels' military aims, not the welfare of the peasants. And the alliances with *régulos* and *curandeiros* are the same. When disputes arise between Renamo and local authorities—as they always will where large numbers of unproductive men are living among people with little to spare—they are settled, inevitably, by the guns of the armed party. Indeed, the death of André Matsangaissa is popularly attributed to the bad advice of a famous wizard who, disgruntled with Renamo's depredations among his people, told Matsangaissa that the government position at Gorongosa was undefended.

Estimates of the number of full-time Renamo soldiers range from eight thousand to twenty-five thousand. A handful have been fighting for twenty years or more, since the early days of the war for independence. These include veterans of the Portuguese colonial army as well as Frelimo deserters. Many fighters were recruited in South Africa, most of them Mozambicans who were arrested and given the unhappy choice of prison or military training. Renamo does a great deal of press-ganging itself, taking men and boys from among its captives for military training. Former Renamo soldiers report being forced to kill civilians as part of their "initiation." Once they've committed murder, they become convinced that they can never be readmitted to civil society, which naturally binds them to their new peer group: Renamo. The fear that Frelimo will kill them if they are captured is apparently widespread among Renamo fighters.

What percentage of Renamo fighters are volunteers? Renamo's spokesmen say they all are, naturally. William Minter, an American researcher, recently concluded, on the basis of thirty-two interviews with amnestied and captured fighters, that over ninety per cent of Renamo's soldiers were forcibly recruited. A high-level Renamo defector who ran a Renamo radio station in South Africa until 1984 says that *all* of his black colleagues there had been kidnapped. As Minter acknowledges, however, his interviews were arranged through the Frelimo Central Committee, and the defector is under Frelimo's protection. Both the defector and the amnestied and captured fighters know, without



necessarily having to be told, that the government prefers the kidnapping version of the Renamo recruitment story. A Mozambican researcher who is himself close to the Frelimo Central Committee told me that he believed that the majority of Renamo soldiers were volunteers. And it does defy common sense that an army of captives would fight as fiercely as Renamo is often reported to do.

Mozambique has a large and growing population of the absolutely marginalized—people with no skills, education, jobs, homes, or future. They are a fertile field for Renamo recruitment, constantly watered by the government's inability to help them. Since the war is the main cause of the collapse of the economy, the war ends up reproducing itself. An economy of pillage has developed alongside the economy of production, and the opportunities in the former are, for some people, simply greater than in the latter. Also, quite apart from the war, many Mozambicans blame the government for the economy's decline. And Frelimo's mistakes have certainly made Renamo's work easier. One such mistake was Operation Production, in which fifty thousand unemployed city dwellers were summarily shipped to the countryside in 1983 and told to start farming. Mozambicans immediately dubbed Operation Production "a recruiting program for the bandits," and it does seem to have been effective as exactly that.

Besides the *régulos* and *curandeiros*, there are many peasants, businessmen, clans, and even whole age groups who have felt that they lost out somewhere in the various redistributions of power and wealth since independence. The Frelimo deserters to Renamo include people who, like André Matsangaissa and Afonso Dhlakama, believed after independence that they were entitled to more spoils of war than their superiors would allow them, and others bearing more recent grudges. Some of the losers in local elections to the national assembly, for instance, have gone off and joined Renamo. From its origins as a puppet group, Renamo has evolved into a broad, violent collection of Frelimo's enemies.

But perhaps the commonest reason for joining Renamo—and certainly the commonest reason for joining the many independent groups of *real* bandits—is hunger: with a gun in hand,

one's chances of eating in rural Mozambique are clearly better than they are without it.

Finally, one of the dirty secrets of the war is the suspicion that being a *bandido* might be fun. I heard about an Angolan mechanic who was captured by Renamo and spent many months repairing the rebels' motorcycles. After he escaped, he reported that the rebels he had lived with were having themselves a hell of a time. They stole motorcycles, used the oil to fashion natty dreadlocks, got high on marijuana and drunk on traditional beer, and spent their days roaring around homemade race-tracks in the bush. When they smashed up the bikes, he was made to fix them. These were illiterate country boys who, if they had not joined Renamo, were probably looking at a career behind a hoe, a life of tedium and deprivation perhaps relieved only by long, dangerous stints in the Army, where the fun quotient was reported to be nil. (Frelimo strongly disapproves of marijuana, while Renamo tolerates and even institutionalizes its use.) Another story I heard came from the survivors of an attack—twenty-one people died in it—on a town near Maputo. It seemed that when the rebels attacked they caught everybody off guard except a large contingent of local teen-age boys, who greeted the invaders enthusiastically, joined in the looting of their neighbors' houses, and, richer by many radios and bicycles, retreated to the bush with Renamo.

But the nature of the war is so different from region to region that it may be misleading to write about "Renamo." In Zambézia, the level of military organization is high. The rebels operate at batallion strength, build major bases, and have held towns for long periods. Meanwhile, in other areas, Renamo is represented by small, roving bands whose relationship to any central command is distant at best. Massacres all seem to happen in the south of the country. People in the center and the north consistently denied that Renamo commits massacres there. Many who had lived with Renamo claimed never to have seen any violence against civilians. A village health worker in northern Zambézia who had spent a year with Renamo told me that the only violence he saw in that time, besides the beating of a



captive who attempted to escape, was the punishment of Renamo soldiers. For mistakes in battle, or for attempts to desert, he said—and I heard this from a number of people—Renamo soldiers were often executed. The health worker, whose recollections of life with Renamo were unusually thorough, was an *amnistiado*. He said he had never carried a gun, and had escaped from Renamo at the first opportunity, so I could not understand why he had had to be amnestied. After the interview, Dividas laughed at me. “Of course he carried a gun,” he said.

**R**ENAMO is first and foremost a military organization. Its political structure, where it exists at all, is minimal. In a few areas, Renamo has gained local support by killing unpopular administrators or managers, but once it gains control of an area it apparently delivers few, if any, services. Some former captives recall attending compulsory political meetings, at which opposition to Frelimo and its works was the sole theme, but none whom I spoke with—or have heard of—report any effort to build a consensus, or to consult with ordinary people, on any issue. The movement is authoritarian to an extreme degree. Its founders and leaders all have military and police backgrounds, and the political understanding of both fighters and collaborators, the great majority of whom are illiterate, apparently hovers near zero. The Renamo flag, which looks as if it were concocted in Pretoria, features five downward-pointing arrows over the slogan “War and Death to the Enemies of the Fatherland.” Renamo’s connection to South Africa seems to be widely understood in the south of Mozambique, but as one moves north that understanding fades steadily. Outside the cities, few people in northern Mozambique know that South Africa exists, and fewer still have heard of something called apartheid. Those who have heard of South Africa seem to associate it with, above all, material wealth. There is no equivalent in Mozambique of the minstrels who ride the trains and buses in North Africa singing for their supper about the suffering of the Palestinians.

“Freedom of religion” is a Renamo slogan, and the rebels’ treatment of priests and missionaries has usually been respectful. In many destroyed towns, the only building left unscathed

has been the church. In some cases, Catholic priests have remained under Renamo, conducting business as usual, and a number of intrepid Protestant missionaries, including some Americans, are apparently working in Renamo territory today. But the Catholic Church and some of the evangelical Protestant sects have often been, at least until recently, unhappy with Frelimo, which after independence closed religious schools and hospitals and even confiscated church property. And Renamo’s warm relations with certain priests and missionaries may be, like the alliances with *régulos* and *curandeiros*, more convenient than immutable.

Renamo, through its European and American spokesmen, claims to run schools and clinics in the areas it controls. I visited an area in northern Sofala where the rebels claimed to be operating dozens of schools, but when I asked people there who had lived with Renamo about the schools they stared at me in disbelief. I did find one place, farther north, where Renamo soldiers had urged the teachers among their captives to start classes again. They had no materials, no classrooms—they were living deep in the bush—but the teachers I interviewed said the Renamo soldiers used to come and sit at a respectful distance from the classes they convened under the trees. The soldiers were illiterate, in awe of education, and did not speak Portuguese, so they apparently never grasped that the teachers had resumed their work using the hated Frelimo curriculum.

The violent hostility of Renamo toward such symbols of modernity as schools, hospitals, and machinery feeds the idea that the movement is traditionalist, or simply anti-urban. It is a bent that would make sense in much of Africa, where ancient and modern worlds collide daily, and the ancient usually gets the worst of it, and where

the cities, the government’s crucial constituency, prey voraciously on the countryside. In the matter of clinics and hospitals, there is the possibility that the *curandeiros* working with Renamo consider modern medicine to be the competition, cutting into their business as traditional healers. But the fact is that when the rebels loot clinics they always take the medicine for their own use, and when they kidnap health workers they always put them to work behind Renamo lines teaching others the mysteries of their craft.

What is so hateful about schools and clinics from Renamo’s point of view is that they are identified with Frelimo. They are, in fact, among the main sources of the government’s popularity. That is why they must be destroyed. The destruction of machinery is less symbolic, but the intent is the same: to make the Frelimo-run society less desirable. It’s a maximalist strategy, and a pure equation: whatever weakens Frelimo strengthens Renamo.

**I**DENTIFYING Renamo’s ideology is not a task for the fainthearted. The movement is often tagged “right-wing rebels” in the international press. The editors of the London *Times* call it “pro-Western.” But few of the illiterate peasants who fight with Renamo are likely to think of themselves as right-wing, and those good Londoners who believe that Renamo is pro-Western should glance through the literature coming out of Renamo’s London office, which takes Western corporations (at least, those investing in Mozambique) to task in terms as blistering as any that Frelimo ever mustered. The same literature pledges to “support all progressive forces within Mozambique” and, for good measure, rails against “apartheid oppression” in “racist South Africa,” while condemning what it has the brass to call “Frelimo’s alliance with Pretoria.” Renamo’s spokesmen hawk their movement’s commitment to “free enterprise,” but the *matsangas* attack privately owned factories and farms just as readily as they attack publicly owned property.

What does Renamo want? Afonso Dhlakama: “Democratic government, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, and the freedom to eat.” Dhlakama has often predicted imminent military victory, but Renamo has never actually been close to winning





the war—to taking Maputo and Beira—if only because its lack of air defenses would make holding the cities impossible. A high-level Renamo defector told me in Maputo that he was told by a South African colonel in 1983 that Pretoria had no wish to change the government of Mozambique, but simply to “put Machel on his knees.” According to the defector, Renamo leaders who understood that Pretoria’s plans gave them no chance of winning the war, and who began trying to cultivate new backers in Washington and Paris by promising to break with Pretoria, developed a habit of dying violently—“destabilization” may be a game with limited objectives, but Pretoria plays it seriously. Renamo’s handlers are in a position to know, in any case, that the rebels would be incapable of governing a country. As it is, the war in Mozambique is inexpensive, at whatever level South Africa still funds it, while a counter-insurgency war—thousands of Frelimo guerrillas would undoubtedly go back to the bush if the government should be overthrown—could quickly become South Africa’s Vietnam.

In an interview last year, Dhlakama shifted position. “Our aim is not to win the war militarily,” he said, “but to force Frelimo to accept negotiations for a democratically elected government.” Frelimo’s position is “Negotiate with whom?” The government derides Dhlakama as a powerless puppet, and the rebel chief is, in truth, no one’s idea of a charismatic politician. He is poorly educated—he attended a rural Catholic mission school—and unworldly. Dhlakama’s skills, such as they exist, are entirely military. What he really wants may be straightforward: power. His chances of getting it by election are small. And the chances of a multiparty election in Mozambique any time soon are probably smaller.

What Renamo’s various foreign backers want is a question with too many answers, most of them contradictory, and that helps explain the homicidal disarray of the movement’s external wing. Along with the Portuguese revanchists, American extremists, and elements of the South African military, there are several Western intelligence services that are persistently reported to retain strong contacts with Renamo, including the West Germans, the Is-

raelis, and, in apparent defiance of official American policy, elements of our own C.I.A. and Defense Intelligence Agency.

What do the rebels themselves want? Because Renamo has no real prospects of taking power nationally, the thousands of *matsangas* have thousands of different, more immediate agendas. This deep political incoherence undermines Renamo’s claim to be a nationalist movement just as seriously as the group’s puppet beginnings and continuing shady international connections do. It also strengthens the government’s argument that the conflict in Mozambique is not a civil war. Other governments in Africa have alienated large parts of their own populations; Mozambique’s unique misfortune has been to live next door to a regime ready and able to organize its malcontents and finance its destruction.

What about “the people,” the hapless millions caught, as they say in Africa, between the snakes and the lion? They are, after all, the ostensible judges—or, in another view, the prizes—of the contest. Everywhere I went in Mozambique, I heard, “All the peasants really want is to be left alone.” I also heard it said that in the areas Renamo controls it gains popular support by running a “minimalist administration”—in contrast to Frelimo’s revolutionary activism. But the State Department’s report, based on refugees’ accounts, makes Renamo administration sound, at least in what its author describes as “control areas,” extraordinarily repressive. “The only reciprocity the captives appear to receive or to expect is the opportunity to remain alive,” the report laconically concludes. My own interviews with people who had lived with Renamo also evoked a brutal, arbitrary system, but the State Department’s tone, which conjured up great slave camps, seemed wrong. The tone of the stories I heard was more modest, more African. Someone’s father was kidnapped. The family knew where he was being held, and they knew the ransom would be two shirts. While the family were trying to find the shirts, he was moved farther away. Now they don’t know where he is. All those who had lived with Renamo talked about hunger, but usually that was why they had left Renamo territory. The International



Committee of the Red Cross started flying into Renamo areas in 1988, and its teams found that the greatest needs there were for seeds and medicine. Food was not an immediate problem.

The cruel truth is that Mozambique's peasants have never been left alone. Autocratic chiefs and kings, slave traders, tax collectors, plantation owners, ten-family Party cells, and now Renamo have all seen to that. The history of Mozambique's peasantry is one of bottomless pain and sorrow, and its store of rage is today being used, cynically and savagely, to destroy the country's future.

**B**UT it's difficult to reconcile such ferocity with the land that presents itself to a visitor. For, despite all the carnage and anarchy that fill the newspapers and hospitals and refugee camps, there are many areas of Mozambique that appear to enjoy a high degree of social peace. The level of distrust and paranoia among strangers is markedly lower than in many other parts of Africa (let alone somewhere like New York City). Warm, civilized exchange is the norm. This paradox haunted me everywhere I went, but nowhere more so than in the district of Ile.

Like many places in Mozambique, the Ile district, in northern Zambézia, is beautiful in the piercing way of imperilled things. Errego, the district capital, is built on a ridge, with tremendous rocks, hundreds of feet high, rising all around it. A park and a playground fill the center of the town, and a wide esplanade lined with trees—eucalyptus, palms, acacias, flamboyants—runs from the pink, tile-roofed hospital, which looks like a miniature Italian palace, to the administrator's house, a grand structure that was roofless and gutted by the time I got there. Renamo had overrun and briefly occupied Errego three times in the previous two years, destroying three tea factories, several schools, and all the machinery at a local coal mine. Ours was the first airplane Ile had seen in a month. No road traffic had reached the area in more than a year. Food and clothes were scarce. There were three hundred thousand people in the Ile district; Errego alone had more than twenty-three thousand *deslocados*.

Dividas and I spent most of our day in Ile interviewing *deslocados*. Just as we had started talking with a doughty

young mother named Elena Adriano, a boy came running up, saying that the *cargueiro* was at the airstrip. The airstrip was six miles away. Our instructions from Hennie and Ferdie had been to rush to the strip as soon as we heard the plane returning, but we hadn't heard the plane. I doubted we could have missed it. But it was mid-afternoon. I ran for the administrator's Land Rover. Dividas was reluctant to abandon Elena—his wife is named Elena, and the coincidence delighted him. As we tore out of the camp, he called, "Ciao, Elena!" And he was still grinning a minute later when one of our fellow-passengers spotted a DC-3 high in the sky, headed south.

We pulled over. It was definitely Little Annie, droning through the puffball clouds. I jumped out and started waving my arms. Eight or ten local people who had been riding with us were hugely amused. I asked one of them to take off his shirt, which was white, and I waved it. The plane did not change course. I watched it recede until there was no doubt left. The others tried to stifle their laughter. Even Dividas seemed amused. He shrugged. "They'll come back," he said. "They'll make a special trip."

Our host that day was an unassuming, serious young assistant administrator named Jamar Romão. When I asked Romão about the fate of the hundreds of people from Errego who had been kidnapped by Renamo—they included the town's postmaster—he said that he could be certain only about what befell them during the first weeks, because after that his own wife and children had escaped, and few others had returned in the two years since. But, he said quietly, his wife and children had told some terrible stories.

Romão had been overjoyed to see the food we brought to Ile. He was going to send it immediately to a place called Mulevala, he said, which had been liberated by Frelimo less than two weeks before. The people there were starving. But Mulevala was more than a hundred kilometres away, and local men were going to be carrying the food there on their heads, so first they would have to tear each of the big, fifty-kilogram sacks in half, then sew each half closed.

Since fuel was precious in Ile—Dividas and I had brought a drum of diesel from Quelimane, which had gone into the district's two working

vehicles—we proceeded to the airstrip. It was on a wide plateau surrounded by dark, brushy hills. Hundreds of people were there, still milling excitedly after the departure of the Dakota. The district's one truck was already loaded with the latest delivery. But Romão was nonplussed to hear that the sacks contained maize. The only thing Ile did not need was maize, he said. He had sent that message to Calamidades in Quelimane every chance he got. There was a white face in the airstrip crowd—an Italian priest. He was deeply tanned and wore his hair in a homemade crewcut. He told Romão that the Dakota's pilots had indicated that they would return for us.

We had several hours, at least, to wait. There was a thatch-roofed lean-to at the edge of the airstrip, which turned out to be, on closer inspection, a school. Most of the five hundred schools still functioning in Zambézia had, according to the provincial director of education in Quelimane, no materials whatever—they consisted of a teacher and students meeting under a tree—but the school at the airstrip in Ile had a roof and some rudimentary benches. Class was out, but six or eight children were shyly watching Dividas and me from across the road. We sat down on a grassy bank, they drew closer, and Dividas asked them their names.

There were Luísa Sábado and Victoria Viegas and Zeca Vidro. All but the smallest children spoke some Portuguese. They learned it in school, they said. Dividas asked who among them was the best student. They gig-

gled and squirmed, and Zeca, a thin boy with huge eyes, was finally nominated. Dividas asked who the best soccer player was. More giggling, more squirming, and another boy was pointed out. Dividas asked to see the school-exercise book that Luísa, an angel-faced thirteen-year-old, was carrying. With painful reluctance, she handed it over. It was a geography workbook, tattered from what looked like use by several predecessors. It had scenes of karate fighting drawn on the cover in a childish hand, with the caption "The Five Masters of Xao-Lin." "The Five Masters of Xao-Lin," Luísa mumbled, studying her bare feet desperately, was a movie she had seen in Gurué. Gurué, the capital of a prosperous tea-growing district, was about fifty miles north of Ile. She had travelled there by bus, Luísa said, long ago, when the roads were open. It was the farthest she had ever been from Ile. Yes, she would love to see Quelimane someday. And Maputo. She wanted to go to secondary school. Dividas asked when she planned to marry, and Luísa said, "When I am nineteen." She tried to suppress a smile, but that looked difficult to do; her lips had two or three extra flutings, for maximum expressiveness. Their expression in repose was a gentle, precocious irony. Dividas asked Luísa if she had heard of America, and she whispered, "No." None of the children had.

Did the children want to hear a story? They did. By this time, a number of people had collected around the edges of our group, including a noisy older man—"drunk from *aguardente*," Victoria Viegas whispered to me—who sat nearby and tried to get the children to listen to *him* rather than to this stranger in the clean white cap. But the children listened to Dividas. His first story was called "How the Pig Got a Flat Nose." It was a variation on the Icarus myth. The pig had always wanted to fly, so his friend the eagle made him a pair of wings out of wax. After ignoring the eagle's advice and flying too close to the sun and losing one of his wings, the pig careered through the sky with his remaining wing, out of control, for several minutes, thrilling the children of Ile, before he finally lost it, too, and crashed to earth, nose first.

Next, Dividas told "Why the Crocodile Eats People." It was a much sadder story. While Crocodilo was liv-



ing peacefully on the riverbank, some people suddenly came and took three of her *crianças* (babies). She went to the village the next day to find them. The villagers were having a big party. To her horror, Crocodilo saw that the people had baked one of her *crianças* and were eating it. She could not see her other *crianças*, and she could not approach, because of the party. She enlisted the help of a hen, and the hen reported that the others were still alive. The next day, Crocodilo returned, hoping to rescue them, but now the hen told her that her two remaining children had also been killed. Crocodilo went back to the riverbank heartbroken and enraged. Her revenge, she vowed, would be to eat the next person she saw.

While Dividas was telling these stories, I noticed an infant whose mother had drawn close to listen. Although the mother looked healthy, the baby was clearly suffering from severe malnutrition. It was extremely scrawny, with lots of loose, grayish skin and a frightening, monkeylike look. It was a look that I had seen on a number of infants in Zambézia. The baby was clinging to its mother's breast, but it was obviously finding no nourishment there. Its chances of surviving another year were, I guessed, poor to nil. The mother noticed me watching her, and looked alarmed. I turned away, and studied the children sitting on the ground around us. Most of them were painfully thin. Victoria's wrists were tiny. Several of the children had the potbellies that meant either malnutrition or parasites, and one boy was missing an eye. But none of them were starving, as far as I could tell. All of them had probably lost friends or neighbors or family members to hunger or the war, but as they listened to Dividas they looked so lovely, so unbrutalized, so oblivious of everything else, including the spectral infant sucking frantically behind them, that I found I had, at least temporarily, lost all interest in discovering the details of their hard times.

As Dividas came to the end of "Why the Crocodile Eats People," a teen-age girl dressed in a loud, new turquoise dress and white platform shoes walked past, laughing raucously. Her clothes were wildly out of place in Ile, and Dividas asked Luísa if the girl was, by any chance, "a friend of the director of Calamidades." Luísa laughed. She was indeed, Luísa said. Luísa herself

wore shapeless gray rags full of holes through which her breasts, despite her best efforts, kept falling. Some of the younger children wore nothing but scraps of burlap.

Dividas and I dug through our bags and came up with half a dozen ballpoint pens. We started handing them out. Each child who received one would pull off the cap and slide out the cartridge to check the ink level, while the others cheered or hooted, depending on what was revealed. Luísa got the last pen, and she let the tension build as she slowly withdrew the cartridge. It turned out to be full to the brim. The other children screamed with glee and envy, and Luísa whispered, "God is great."

Hennie and Ferdie returned, dangerously late in the day, bringing yet another load of unneeded maize. The children of Ile ran out to the plane with their tin cans, and the last I saw of them they were darting under the district's truck to snatch the stray kernels that fell from the sacks.

That evening, I asked Dividas about the prospects of a Luísa Sábado. Would she really be able to go to secondary school? "If this war ends, yes," he said. "But she must be able to leave that area. Even just to go to Gurué. She doesn't like the clothes she has. You can see that. She wants a new dress. She says she doesn't want to marry until she is nineteen, but if some boy just a little bit clever, who perhaps works at the hospital, offers her a new dress, she may go with him. Then, if she gets pregnant, the parents will get involved, a marriage will be arranged, and her education will be finished. Or if she gets a new dress from Calamidades some soldier might notice her and start to give her little things. And if she gets pregnant with him he may not marry her. She is too isolated. Many people in this country are too isolated. Luísa's world is small now, because of the war."

—WILLIAM FINNEGAN

(This is the first part of a two-part article.)