

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE EMERGENCY-II

MOZAMBICANS must be among the most undemonstrative people in the world. When they speak of the war that has destroyed their country, they speak of the *situação*. In the course of two months that I spent in and around Mozambique last year, talking mostly with victims of the fighting and the famines it has caused, by far the most emotional voices I heard were in the capital city, Maputo, where great bellows of rage and grief often woke me in the mornings. The sufferers were always the same South African and Portuguese businessmen, playing tennis on the courts below my hotel-room window.

The *situação* has claimed an estimated six hundred thousand lives since 1981, driven more than two million people from their homes, and left more than six million currently facing severe food shortages (Mozambique's total population is fifteen million), so there are few Mozambicans who have not been personally affected by it. But *afetado* has a specific meaning in Mozambique today. In the west-central town of Chimoio, I was talking to a young man whose job was to count *deslocados*, displaced persons, and *afetados*, affected persons. I asked him, in passing, where he came from. He said he came from Luabo. I knew that Luabo, which is a sugar-refining center on the Zambezi River, had been overrun in 1985 by the rebels of the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, or Renamo, so I asked about that. The young man said that he and his brothers had managed to flee, but their father, who was sixty, had been kidnapped by Renamo. For a while, he said, they heard news of him from friends who had been kidnapped and had escaped. Their father was apparently being held at a base somewhere

north of Luabo and, because he was a mechanic by trade, had been put to work on the rebels' rickety fleet of motorbikes. But then he was moved, and now they had heard nothing for two years. The young man's expression was unreadable. I asked, somewhat lamely, if he considered himself an *afetado*. He said, "Of course not." I had been thinking that if my father were being held prisoner by the rebels I would probably consider myself affected by the war, but he had a place to live, a job, enough to eat—he was not an *afetado*.

Chimoio had an abundance of real *afetados* and *deslocados*. The town is in the Beira Corridor, a strategic transportation route that cuts across the narrow waist of long, skinny (more than fifteen hundred miles of coastline) Mozambique, connecting Zimbabwe and other landlocked countries to the

Indian Ocean port of Beira. The Corridor, which contains a highway, a railway, and an oil pipeline, is strategic because it is one of the few routes from those countries to the sea which do not pass through South Africa, and the only route not to have been closed by Renamo attacks and sabotage. Renamo, which was created by Rhodesian military intelligence in 1976 and, since Zimbabwean independence in 1980, has been extensively supported by South Africa, does attack the Beira Corridor—the rebels' leader has publicly vowed to close it—but Zimbabwe has sent about ten thousand troops to help Mozambique keep the line open. The first time I rode through the Corridor—travelling from the border to Beira in a truck carrying Zimbabwean steel—we came upon the scene of a fresh attack on the oil pipeline. A fierce orange fireball was raging out of the ground in the middle of a green field, sending up

thick bursts of rich black smoke. A few soldiers watched it unexcitedly. We asked a soldier at the next roadblock about the attack. He shrugged. "Renamo," he said. It never made even the local news. Little of the war does.

Countless thousands of peasants have moved to the Corridor, forming a strange, linear city, nearly two hundred miles long, of reed-and-mud huts. The fact that all these *deslocados* come to the Corridor looking to the soldiers stationed along it for security says something about the war in their home areas, particularly since attacks on settlements in the Corridor are never-ending. At a resettlement camp midway between Chimoio and Beira, I asked a peasant why he had built mudbanks up against the walls of his hut, and the man demonstrated: when the *bandidos armados* attacked, he and his family just lay flat on the ground inside



their hut, like this. The banks, which were two or three feet high, stopped bullets quite well, he said. *Bandidos armados*, "armed bandits," is what the government and many Mozambicans call Renamo—a misleading term, it seems, for a force that may number as many as twenty-five thousand men and has reduced the government's effective control of the country to the cities and towns, and not much else, but an accurate reflection of the contempt in which the rebels are widely held.

There was a spate of land-mine explosions in the Corridor while I was around. I asked a government planner who worked in the Corridor about them.

"The *bandidos* like to scatter little anti-personnel mines around on paths in the villages at night, so the first person to come along in the morning steps on one," he said. "The person usually loses a foot or a leg or a hand or an eye. It's often a child. That's Renamo's way of telling the people that Frelimo cannot protect them." Frelimo is the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, the nationalist movement whose guerrillas defeated the Portuguese to win Mozambique's independence in 1975. Reconstituted as a Marxist-Leninist party, Frelimo rules Mozambique to this day.

Not all the attacks in the Corridor while I was there were being attributed to Renamo, though.

"The attacks near Beira itself are mostly social banditry," the government planner told me. "Among us. Not Renamo."

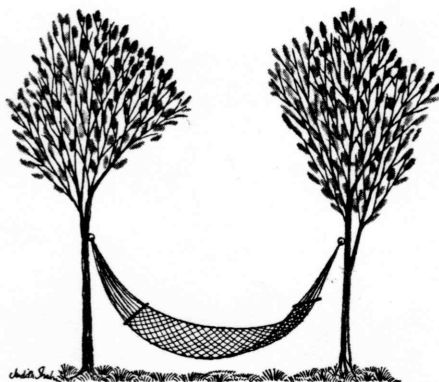
I asked who the attackers might be.

"Probably popular militia." He shrugged. "Maybe soldiers. Guys from farther up the Corridor. They're so poor, and bored, and hopeless, and they have these guns. Some of them just decide to head toward the city and take whatever they can find there."

Deslocados have also flocked to the city of Beira, swelling its population to an estimated four hundred thousand. Beira is a beleaguered place, plagued by shortages of food, housing, and all manner of consumer goods. Because Renamo delights in destroying the transmission lines that carry electricity to the city, Beira has been forced to go without power for boggling amounts of time. As of September, when I visited Beira, it had had power for an average of only five days a month in 1988. That was even worse

than 1987, when it had had power for an average of thirteen days a month. The cumulative effects of the cutoffs were devastating. Little of the city's business could be conducted without electricity, of course. And when the power was off the water was also off, because the pumps needed electricity. The city had a generator, which could provide a small fraction of the power the pumps needed, but whenever it was announced that the water would be turned on for, say, a one-hour period, everyone in Beira would make sure to flush his toilet, and the strain on the system would burst pipes all over the city. People who had outdoor latrines used them; many were forced to use the streets. The water table in Beira, which is built on a swamp, is high, so the latrines were polluting the groundwater. Since most Beirans, deprived of running water, were relying on well water, the pollution was a serious health hazard. Water for cooking and drinking had to be boiled long and hard. That, because stoves weren't working and kerosene was in short supply, required large amounts of firewood. Firewood, because of the huge demand, had become extremely scarce. Wood gatherers were having to go ever farther into the countryside, and the danger of a Renamo attack grew with every mile. So the price of firewood had skyrocketed. Few working people could afford it, and they were starting to burn pieces of their houses or apartments—doors, shutters, windowsills, doorframes. They were even tearing up wooden floors. All the open fires had left a heavy stench of soot in every building in Beira. They had also scorched and blackened the walls. The city looked both besieged and already sacked.

Beira had seen better days: a vast modern train station and a cluster of downtown high rises were hallmarks



of a boom in the nineteen-sixties. Graceful, palm-lined *avenidas*, thick walled old tropical mansions, and, in the business district, colorful sprays of the fancy prewar neon signs of the kind that still adorn Lisbon cafés and dry cleaners' recalled an earlier prime. (In 1988, the neon hung from the façade in sad, unilluminated tangles, and old British-style pillar postboxes stood unapproachable among heaps of garbage.) Beira's prosperity had come mostly from Rhodesia, in the form of port and rail revenues and tourism. When Mozambique gained its independence, however, the new government honored the trade sanctions voted by the United Nations against the illegal Ian Smith regime—sanctions that Portugal had ignored—and the border was closed. The cost to Mozambique of this noble gesture was appalling, and Beira paid most of it. The hotels and holiday camps were suddenly empty. So were the port and the rail yards. The city's wealth vanished. In 1980, when Rhodesia became Zimbabwe, the sanctions were lifted, but the recovery of Beira had hardly started before Renamo began to close in, strangling the city again. The old holiday camps, with their beach bungalows, became shantytowns full of refugees fleeing the war in the countryside.

The only glint of economic hope in Beira in 1988 was flickering around a multilateral attempt to upgrade the Beira Corridor. Because the attempt would not only help Mozambique but help reduce regional dependence on South Africa, it had become an internationally fashionable project: sixteen foreign governments and five international financial institutions were funding the rehabilitation of the port, the railway, the highway, and the oil pipeline. Italy was the largest single contributor. The United States was working on the locomotive fleet. Rui Fonseca, the executive director of the government's Beira Corridor Authority, told me that business at the port was booming and attacks on the rail line were a thing of the past. "We are not an alternative," he said. "We are *the route*. The natural pattern of shipping in central southern Africa has been distorted by South Africa through the armed aggression against our country, and through economic aggression."

Cynics were calling Beira "the new

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Saudi Arabia." That overstated the case, but there were hundreds of foreign workers in town, most of them Scandinavian, and they were there for the money, which was reported to include "hardship pay." And foreign companies and organizations were snapping up not only prime office space downtown but also luxury homes that were being emptied by a new government housing policy. (Frelimo had nationalized rental property after independence, and pegged rents to incomes, but in early 1988, as part of a general retreat from socialist programs, it had reversed itself, pegging rents closer to property values and evicting workers who had been living in spacious houses and apartments previously occupied by the Portuguese. In 1974, there had been a quarter of a million Portuguese living in Mozambique. Ninety per cent of them fled at independence.) The same thing was occurring all over Mozambique, which now has more than a hundred international organizations working to relieve various aspects of the ongoing national disaster that Mozambicans have come to call simply "the emergency." (The *situação* and the emergency are different. The *situação* is the war; the emergency is the mass homelessness, destitution, and starvation caused by the war.) In Beira, as in other towns, the only new vehicles to be seen belonged to foreign organizations. Indeed, Mozambicans sometimes call the foreigners "the new colonialists," and call their Mozambican clerks, drivers, translators, liaisons, and trainees, who are paid partly in hard currency, and thus escape much of the privation that afflicts their countrymen, "the new *assimilados*"; under the Portuguese, *assimilados* were a handful of Mozambicans who, by virtue of their education and their adoption of European customs, qualified for a specially designed second-class Portuguese citizenship.

Prostitutes had even begun to reappear along the Beira waterfront. Prostitution had thrived in colonial times, when white Rhodesians and South Africans came to Mozambique in droves to escape the laws that restricted their access to black women at home. To Beirans, prostitution had become a symbol of their own debasement, and its resurrection was cause for alarm. The foreigners were the main customers, which did not increase their popu-

larity. Neither did the fact that some of the international organizations were building colonial-style "compounds" for their employees, complete with generators, on prime beachfront property given them by the government at concessionary rates.

The power was on in Beira the week I was there. By the time I left, it had been on for nearly three weeks straight, and people were delirious. It was the longest stretch of continuous power all year. The consensus analysis was that the *bandidos* had decided to take it easy on the Pope. Pope John Paul II was going to be visiting Beira later in the month, and apparently even Renamo didn't want to see the Pontiff sloshing through streets full of raw sewage. Some Renamo fighters, it was said, actually wanted to attend the outdoor Mass that the Pope would be celebrating in Beira, and were supposedly already slipping into town.



It was a stunning idea. I wished there were some way to know if it was true. Wouldn't the bandits be recognized and turned over to the police?

The Beiran to whom I put this question said, "Not necessarily. The police are not popular here."

The police in Beira were in fact notorious for their brutality. The city's administration as a whole had always been plagued by incompetence and corruption. Frelimo had been very popular in Beira at the time of independence, but in the late nineteen-seventies the old abuses of power began to reappear, and the ruling party's reputation suffered. Frelimo's leadership was aware of its Beira problem but, as in a lot of other parts of Mozambique, lacked the political and material resources to shore up its support. Many Beirans seemed to see the local Party as an organization for opportunists, and not much more.

Beirans also had a serious Second City complex. As far as they were concerned, all important decisions were made in Maputo. All talented young people went off to Maputo. All the top jobs and perks went to people from Maputo. Why was the capital in Maputo anyway, since Maputo was in the extreme south of a very long country? It had been built there for the convenience of South Africa, and no other reason. Meanwhile, Beira was in the center of the country.

What seemed to rankle Beirans most

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of all, though, was the decision, taken in Maputo, that destroyed the city's prosperity—the decision to impose sanctions against Rhodesia—and the subsequent failure of the national government to help the city recover. No explanation invoking other economic problems and priorities could soothe Beira's anger over that.

How much of Beira's resentment translated into support for Renamo? None, necessarily. At a major intersection in Beira was a big sign celebrating ten years of independence and calling for "the total liquidation of the *bandidos armados*." The sign had been there for three years, and no one had defaced it. But it was in Beira that I first heard the idea that if the *bandidos* were serious about taking power they would lay down their arms and start agitating against the government—start rumors, spark campaigns, incite riots. The government was carrying out a fierce economic-recovery program, following International Monetary Fund guidelines, and each food subsidy removed, each devaluation of the currency put more basic commodities out of the reach of the ordinary worker, let alone the unemployed *afetado*. I thought it was a miracle that there weren't food riots in every town in Mozambique. But it was in Beira that I heard about the warning that the mother of a young man who was a gung-ho Frelimo local secretary gave her son: "Be careful, Frelimo is a chair of *caniço*." *Canico* means cane—the flimsy material with which most Mozambicans are compelled to build their homes.

FRELIMO is not a chair of *caniço*. On the contrary, it is one of the most stable, sophisticated political parties to hold power in post-colonial Africa. The kind of crushing military and economic pressure that has been applied to Mozambique since independence, first by Rhodesia and then by South Africa, would have brought down most governments anywhere. When Samora Machel, the first President of Mozambique, was killed, along with a number of his close advisers, in an airplane crash inside South Africa in October, 1986, a crisis of leadership seemed inevitable. But Joaquim Chissano, the Foreign Minister, was quietly elected by the Frelimo Central Committee to succeed Machel, and he took office without incident. A diplo-

mat who deals with many African governments told me that the Frelimo leadership's indifference to "the exhibitionism of power" was unique in his experience on the continent. The level of corruption in government is certainly, for Africa, spectacularly low. Joseph Hanlon, who was a student at M.I.T. and, more recently, was the BBC's correspondent in Mozambique, told me, "It's getting slightly worse now, but Mozambique is still less corrupt than Boston."

The widespread and sometimes extreme corruption in African governments is a product of, more than anything else, the shallow roots of the modern African state itself. European mapmakers drew the boundaries of African colonies with careful attention to the political balances of late-nineteenth-century Europe but no attention at all to the societies they were carving up into pieces or blithely cramming together. The loyalties of most Africans remained firmly within their own, usually much smaller communities: their tribes, clans, villages, and families. The end of the colonial era, which turned colonial boundaries into national boundaries, did not shift many people's loyalties. A job in one of the new state bureaucracies often represented, above all, an opportunity to increase the wealth of the clan, the family, the village, or the tribe. Thus the most pressing general task for many African governments has been to create larger loyalties, to larger social and economic units, not only in order to reduce corruption but in order to defuse what has often been an explosive problem: internal ethnic conflict. Few governments have been up to the task. The struggle to consolidate modern nation-states virtually overnight has already spawned a long series of dictatorships, leader cults, and military regimes plagued by corruption, incompetence, tribalism, and chronic instability.



In Mozambique, where people speak more than a dozen languages and an estimated two hundred dialects, and have long suffered from extreme underdevelopment, the sense of national identity was almost nonexistent under Portuguese rule. But the leaders of Frelimo, which was founded in 1962 in Dar es Salaam by three outlawed nationalist groups—groups that came from different regions, speaking different languages—concentrated from the outset on reducing ethnic and regional differences; they insisted, for instance, that the movement's guerrillas learn one another's songs and dances. A white Mozambican who was editing a magazine in the capital before independence told me, "The nation is a dream of Frelimo's. It started with the armed struggle, with the gathering of people from all over the country." Although Portuguese was the colonists' language, and many black Mozambicans—ninety-nine per cent of the Mozambicans are black—could not speak it, it was adopted as the movement's lingua franca, and later as Mozambique's official language, because it was seen as a unifying force. Mozambique, unlike some of its neighbors, contained within its borders no very profound ethnic antagonisms. Eduardo Mondlane, an American-educated sociologist, who was Frelimo's founding president, wrote, "Our problem was not one of bringing together major rival groups but of preventing factions from developing within."

Tribal conflicts were successfully minimized within the national-liberation movement. Race, however, became a volatile issue. The fact that a number of Frelimo's leaders were white, Asian, or mulatto—Mondlane's wife, Janet, a white American, was the director of the Frelimo school in Dar es Salaam—did not please those who saw the anti-colonial struggle in racial terms. And yet some of the "black nationalists," as they occasionally called themselves, advocated a less than complete independence from Portugal. Frelimo suffered a series of splits in the late nineteen-sixties, and Mondlane was assassinated in 1969, probably by Portuguese secret police assisted by Frelimo dissidents. Each of these shocks tested the movement—Samora Machel, a former nurse and a charismatic guerrilla commander, succeeded Mondlane only after a tense struggle—but it was the *luta armada*, a guer-

rilla war launched in 1964, that shaped it decisively. Of the ten members of the Frelimo Political Bureau today, nine, including President Chissano, are veterans of the *luta armada*.

The Portuguese, who were also fighting wars in Angola and Guinea-Bissau, were a ferocious enemy. The secret police arrested, tortured, and murdered thousands of suspected Frelimo members and sympathizers. The colonial armed forces increased in the course of the war from thirty thousand men to seventy-five thousand, and they came with fighter jets, bombers, helicopters, warships, napalm, chemical defoliants, and American counter-insurgency training. Frelimo, for its part, had only light weapons. And yet Frelimo's "liberated zones" in the north of the country grew steadily, until they covered a fourth of Mozambique. And the clandestine cells among intellectuals and workers in the towns and cities also grew. Ten years of fighting produced a powerfully disciplined, unusually mature political movement with a leadership deeply committed to the idea of unity—to decision-making by consensus.

Still, there are Frelimo militants who believe that independence came too soon. In April, 1974, a leftist coup in Lisbon brought down the right-wing government. Barely a year later, Frelimo was in power. As the liberators from Portuguese rule, Samora Machel and his comrades were wildly popular throughout Mozambique. But the only people with direct knowledge of Frelimo were in the sparsely settled far north and in a few areas of the south. Millions of long-dispossessed, isolated peasants still needed to be persuaded that they owed loyalty to something called Mozambique. Moreover, Frelimo had far too few trained "cadres" to take over the administration of a country that was left effectively bankrupt and with an illiteracy rate of over ninety per cent when the Portuguese fled.

The ecstatic expectations of most Mozambicans were matched, however, by the enthusiasm of Frelimo. The exploitation of man by man would be abolished forthwith, and national unity forged. "We do not recognize tribes, regions, race, or religious beliefs," President Machel announced at the Independence Day ceremonies. "We

recognize only Mozambicans who are equally exploited and equally desirous of freedom and revolution." The war had radicalized Frelimo, and the prospects for a rapid transition from colonial capitalism to independent socialism must have seemed improved by the wholesale departure of the capitalist class. Abandoned plantations became state farms; abandoned industries were nationalized. Machel announced that it was his ambition to make Mozambique "the first fully Marxist state in Africa," and in 1977 the liberation movement became a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party and signed twenty-year aid agreements with the Soviet Union and Cuba. Along with rear bases



provided by Tanzania, Frelimo's main international support during the liberation war had come from the Soviet Union (it is still Mozambique's main military supplier) and China, and Machel often called the socialist countries "our natural allies." But Marxism, he insisted, had not come to Mozambique as an imported product. His own political education came "not from writing in a book," Machel said. "Nor from reading Marx and Engels. But from seeing my father forced to grow cotton and going with him to the market where he was to sell it at a low price—much lower than the Portuguese grower."

Education, medicine, law, land-ownership, and rental property were nationalized. A huge expansion of the educational system followed, along with a crash program to extend health care into the rural areas, where eighty-five per cent of the Mozambicans live. The rapid decline of the economy caused by the exodus of managers and skilled workers was slowed as thousands of Mozambicans began to receive the training and experience that they had been denied under the Portuguese. In November, 1977, Michael Kaufman, of the *Times*, wrote, "The experience of Mozambique is only two years old and any instantaneous readings of revolutionary change are subject to revision. Still, there is evidence that the degree of mobilization and national purpose attained here is great and may be more durable than anything black Africa has known." As the liberation war in Rhodesia ended, in 1980, and peace seemed a real possibility at last, Frelimo drew up an extraordinarily

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ambitious plan to modernize and socialize agriculture and industry, calling for "the radical transformation of our country." By 1990, according to the plan, agricultural production would increase by four hundred per cent, with the gross national product rising by seventeen per cent each year. All peasants would live in communal villages and work on state farms or coöperatives. Mozambique would produce iron, steel, aluminum, trucks, tractors, and pharmaceuticals. There would be textile mills and huge modern factories throughout the country. The "victory over underdevelopment" would be won in a single decade.

Flying around Mozambique, an outsider finds it easy to empathize with the impulse of the new government to "jump over history." Most of the country presents itself as a gray sprawl of trackless bush. The sight of a road, a rectangular field—a building!—is, after an hour or two, a distinct pleasure, a tiny patch of order and hope. Yet Frelimo's approach to development, drawing on traditions both Stalinist and Portuguese, was centralized planning with a vengeance. Frelimo encouraged popular participation in politics, and the new party recruited members widely (knowledge of Marxism was not a membership requirement, and neither was literacy; the emphasis was on a candidate's standing in the local community), but there was no institutional brake on the leadership's passion for monumental projects. As it happened, the huge foreign investment required for rapid industrialization never materialized. The world recession of the early nineteen-eighties, Mozambique's reasonable refusal to allow colonial-era levels of profits to foreign companies, and the failure of peace to arrive on schedule (after South Africa assumed control of Renamo, the war instead escalated) combined to defeat the ten-year plan even before it was announced.

In the projects that were launched, the lack of national infrastructure and trained personnel proved crippling. The state farms were radically inefficient. Nationalization had been the only feasible way to deal with large abandoned plantations, and by 1980 state farms accounted for nearly all the

country's tea, sugar, and rice production, but in 1981 the Ministry of Agriculture admitted that not a single state farm was profitable.

Most Mozambicans live not in villages but on widely scattered homesteads. Under the Portuguese, people fanned out to escape taxes and forced labor; traditional fallow-farming methods also require lots of land. Such a pattern of living makes it impossible to deliver services—schools, clinics, clean water—to rural areas, or to build mass organizations, or to foster almost any kind of development. Frelimo's proposed solution was communal villages. Ten thousand villages were needed, it was estimated, and by the early nineteen-eighties fourteen hundred had been started. The access to health care and education was a great attraction for peasants—especially women,



who do the bulk of the family farming in southern Africa and suffer the most from isolation and illiteracy. But resources to support the new villages were scarce, and the promises that persuaded people to move into them often remained unfulfilled. Worse, many peasants were forced into the villages, particularly in areas where Renamo was active. And the fact that some communal villages were the same "strategic hamlets" that the Portuguese had used to try to keep the peasants away from Frelimo was lost on no one. Communal villages are a major Renamo target, and some of their residents, eager to return to their ancestral lands, have helped the rebels to burn them down.

Communal villages are meant to be supported by coöperative farms. Co-operatives are a logical, though not the only, way to start modernizing peasant agriculture, but they require relatively complex organization and, if they are to make any technical advances over traditional farming, outside support. Again, the lack of training and resources has undermined plans. Peasants still work their own plots with more enthusiasm and to greater effect than they do the coöperatives' fields. "The peasants do not like Communism"—this was a refrain I heard over and over in Mozambique.

But the starting point for what became known as "the peasant crisis" was the collapse, after independence, of

the rural trading network. The Portuguese *cantineiros* had abandoned the rural shops where peasants bought seeds, tools, cloth, oil, soap, salt, lanterns, and bicycles. Frelimo's efforts to keep the shops going failed. Peasants suddenly had nothing to buy with the money they earned from marketing their surplus, and the lack of seeds and tools made even subsistence farming increasingly difficult. The government policy favoring state farms did not allow for the hundreds of thousands of hoes that needed to be imported each year for family farmers. In the liberated zones of the north during the *luta armada*, Frelimo had made decisions only after consultations with local peasants. But once it was in power, and was relying on central planning, Frelimo seemed to begin to inhabit an imaginary country. The myth of the self-sufficient peasant, for instance, clearly informed the decision not to import enough hoes, and it left the government unprepared when the peasants suddenly stopped producing a surplus. Most Mozambican peasants are in fact heavily involved in the cash economy. The failure of the government to meet their needs led to a mass flight of peasants from the countryside to the cities, and to the disenchantment of millions.

Local Frelimo authorities were often out of touch with local people. In some areas, peasants joined the Party and served as local secretaries, but the district administrators, who were the real authorities in the rural areas, were always outsiders. The deliberate pairing of northerners with southerners, of Makua-speakers with Ronga-speakers, which had been so successful during the liberation war, was carried over into state administration, and there it was a fiasco. Overworked young officials were well versed in Marxism-Leninism, which they had learned at Party schools in courses taught by foreigners, but they rarely had any more useful knowledge to share with their constituents. Some didn't even speak the local language. The difference between the Party and the state was never made clear to many peasants. With the new administrator living in the same house that the old colonial administrator had lived in, waited upon by the same servants, and trying to squeeze all too similar quotas of cotton and cashews out of the district, some peasants may even have wondered what the

ultimate differences were between Frelimo and the Portuguese.

The Portuguese, primarily through forced labor and forced cotton growing, had destroyed the self-sufficiency of peasant agriculture, but many aspects of rural African life—of “traditional culture”—survived colonialism in Mozambique. Christianity, for instance, was never widely accepted; most Mozambicans retained, and still retain, their traditional religious beliefs. The mysteries of death, love, the land, and the weather; the rites of maturity, marriage, medicine, and burial; the structures of kinship, labor, inheritance, and authority—all these are solidly embedded, for most Mozambicans, in a traditional society. In most communities, chiefs, elders, and the traditional healers known as *curandeiros* (who come in more and less religious, and more and less political, versions) retain great authority. Frelimo worked with the traditional structures during the *luta armada* when necessary, but, once in power, the Party approached rural administration with what has since been called “the ideology of the *tabula rasa*.” Traditional society was “feudal.” Chiefs were therefore pushed aside. Most of them had collaborated with the Portuguese anyway. *Curandeiros* were also pushed aside. Religion was *obscurantismo*. The brave new day of scientific socialism had dawned. Reactionary practices that oppressed women, like polygamy, bride-price, child marriages, and initiation rites, were actively discouraged.

The same revolutionary purism that made corruption in high places all but unknown in Mozambique seemed to blind Frelimo to what was happening in the countryside. The traditional structures that the new government tried to sweep away were not in fact feudal; they were not like the chieftaincies in Afghanistan which the Communists there so unwisely took on: they were not broadly based, with the

tenacious nexus of an organized religion. They could not deliver even basic commodities, like seeds and hoes. But the *régulos*, petty chiefs who had worked with the Portuguese, often remained, even after being deposed by Frelimo, the only people in their communities who had any experience in dealing with bureaucracy. They often still controlled access to cattle and land; they were still the “big men” in their neighborhoods. As the war began to rage, and the general anxiety grew, many rural people naturally turned to the traditional authorities, and many of those authorities, just as naturally, were available to Renamo as allies.

And the war has only worsened Frelimo’s problems with the peasantry. The Army’s inability to provide security, let alone social services, has been especially damaging. Although some units are better than others, the Army is, on the whole, inept, unmotivated, poorly led, and poorly fed. Thus to many rural Mozambicans, “Frelimo”

has come to mean not the national-liberation movement, not the ruling party, not even the state, but a dangerous group of undisciplined soldiers—clearly a disastrous political development.

Meanwhile, in the early nineteen-eighties the country’s economy went into an epic dive. A dire combination of war, drought, the peasant crisis, and the world recession, which reduced prices for Mozambique’s main exports, cut agricultural production severely. By 1986, the harvests of major crops like tea, sugar, and cashews stood at roughly ten per cent of the 1981 levels. With exports falling, imports had to be sharply reduced. With nothing in the shops, the metical—Mozambique’s currency—was worthless, and the black market swelled monstrously. Food shortages became chronic. Some of the economic collapse could be laid to Frelimo’s policies, but the decisive factor was the war. Similar collapses have occurred in other African countries,

including some that have not experienced war or severe drought, and that were handed functioning, “turnkey” governments by their former colonial rulers. But the collapse in Mozambique has been unusually thorough. By 1988, Mozambique was one of the poorest countries in the world.

FOR an outsider, the nuances of political fear can be among the hardest texts to read. At a UNESCO seminar on the transition to socialism, held in Maputo, Carlos Cardoso, the director of Mozambique’s state-owned news agency, was asked by a foreigner about *carapau*. The *carapau* is a small, bony, entirely awful-tasting fish that has become the only source of protein available to many Mozambicans. Cardoso’s reply: “The *carapau* is a whale that has been through all the stages of socialist construction.”

I had heard before I went to Mozambique that Cardoso was arrested for making this much-repeated

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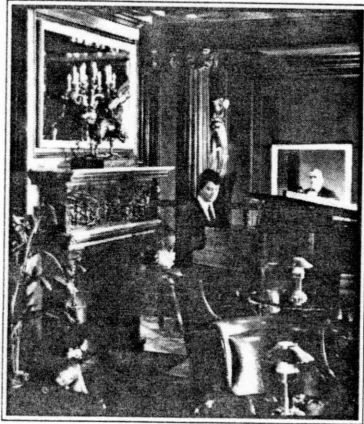
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crack, but when I met him and asked about it he scoffed. He had made the remark; he had not been arrested. Such jokes have been part of Mozambican survival psychology for years. Everybody makes them, including Frelimo militants.

The rule of law—or, more specifically, democratic constraint on the arbitrary use of power—is a hard-won (and never complete, and never secure) condition in any society, achieved incrementally and rarely advanced directly, by coup, revolution, or fiat. At independence, the rule of law in Mozambique was a stock that had been utterly debased by state-sponsored murder and mayhem. (For most Mozambicans, it had never existed in any case.) After the flight of the Portuguese settlers, there were three lawyers and not a single judge in the country. A makeshift system of revolutionary administration based on neighborhood “dynamizing groups” emerged to fill the authority vacuum. Alongside the heady experiment of self-government and the inevitable scramble for position in the new order, many political scores were being settled. Local administrators and local Frelimo committees had the power to sentence, without trial, any “opponents of decolonization” they happened upon to indefinite terms in rural “reeducation” camps. Ordinary criminals, unemployed vagrants, Jehovah’s Witnesses (their crime was their refusal on religious grounds to shout “Viva Frelimo!”), and “prostitutes” (some of whom were apparently just single women who, say, refused to sleep with a member of a neighborhood council) were among thousands consigned, along with suspected political opponents, to the reeducation camps. Conditions in the camps were grim. Beatings and starvation were common, and an unknown number died.

The worst abuses of due process ended, according to Amnesty International, after 1978, when the first laws establishing a new judiciary and legal system were adopted. At higher levels, the judicial system, though still not fully staffed, is being professionalized. Nonpolitical trials are public and are now generally reckoned fair. In political cases, however, indefinite detention without trial and trials in camera are still the rule. The state security service operates with no real accountability, and the death penalty can be imposed

for a political crime such as rebellion, sabotage, or agitation. A high-level delegation from Amnesty International that visited Mozambique last October reported that, as far as it could determine, there were no “prisoners of conscience” in the country’s jails. But there are between four and five thousand security-related prisoners—either captured Renamo fighters or alleged Renamo supporters. An onerous (though haphazardly enforced) system of internal passports, which makes it difficult for people to travel outside their home districts, is justified officially by the war.

Today, according to the government, all but one of the reeducation camps have been closed. And yet the standards of justice, not to mention health and hygiene, inside Mozambican jails remain, at least by Western norms, fearfully low. And the fact that the chances of going to prison for one’s political beliefs are smaller now than they were earlier does not mean that the space exists for loud, freewheeling opposition to Frelimo. “The problem with political opposition is that, in the context of this war, all references are inevitably to Renamo,” a professor in Maputo told me. “And no intellectual, however anti-Frelimo he may feel, would associate himself with Renamo.” The equation of opposition with treason is standard fare in countries at war, but a more immediate problem concerning political opposition in Mozambique is that it is illegal. According to the country’s constitution, Frelimo is the only legal political party. What is more, the press is state-owned. The argument for one-party states in Africa usually rests on the notion that political parties have a tendency to become ethnic parties, which, in turn, have a tendency to destroy national unity. Frelimo has used this argument, along with both Leninist and Stalinist conceptions of the ruling party’s role, to justify making Mozambique a one-party state. But Frelimo’s idea of power actually seems to derive above all from the ideology of the tabula rasa, that fierce dream of building a nation by denying, and thus eradicating, the differences among its people.

Janet Mondlane, the widow of the movement’s founding president, calls it “Frelimotite.” She pronounces the word playfully, but the undertone is



serious. "You know, in Portuguese, the names of sicknesses often end in 'tite,' like 'hepatite.' Well, Frelimotite is a local sickness. Many, many people here, including me, have been seriously affected by it. It's the inability to analyze, within a broader context, what goes on in Mozambique."

Mrs. Mondlane was a teen-ager from Downers Grove, Illinois, when she met Eduardo Mondlane, at a church camp in Wisconsin in 1951. Today, she is a kindly-looking, solidly built grandmother with long graying hair and a great, easygoing laugh. After her husband's assassination, she continued to raise their three children in Tanzania while running a school and a hospital for Frelimo. After independence, she became Mozambique's director for international cooperation. She remarried in 1981, and left public service for a life of farming and writing west of Maputo. In 1986, the war forced her to abandon her farm, and she accepted President Chissano's offer to head a newly formed Mozambican Red Cross. When I met her at her office in Maputo, she was wearing a brilliantly patterned African dress and worrying about software problems. Her native Midwestern English had acquired a few exotic trills and slurs. I asked her to tell me more about Frelimotite.

"It's as if you were put in a box in 1975 or 1977 and the box was never opened," she said. "Some people just cannot get the original ideas of Frelimo out of their systems. They hang on to these extraordinarily unrealistic ideas, which have nothing to do with Mozambique. I mean, just look around. The rural areas have *suffered*. They never benefitted from the big projects after independence, even though everything was supposedly being done for the benefit of the peasants. Now friends come to me and start talking about what's going to happen at the Fifth Party Congress, and I just say to them, 'You're still suffering from Frelimotite, aren't you?' It's absolute belief. For Mozambicans to catch it is understandable. They're not used to independence. They're used to dependence. But it's strange that I fell into it, too."

Mrs. Mondlane seemed to ponder this strangeness a moment, and then went on, "You see, it's difficult to get things accomplished here. Mozambi-

cans are, in general, very laid-back. They are quiet and friendly, but they are also cautious, even fatalistic. They have such a long history of having their dreams not fulfilled. They feel they have to be laid-back just to avoid having their personalities destroyed by disappointment. So Frelimo always had to take the initiative, always be pushing and pushing. For some people in Frelimo, that became a way of life. But if you still hold on to the illusion that you can control everything, that Frelimo can control everything, then you are still quite sick. Because what *happens* is injustice, and the joy of living goes out."

Mrs. Mondlane looked perturbed, and sad. Along with its emergency service and health education, the Mozambican Red Cross, I recalled, was working to improve conditions in the prisons. She sighed, then brightened. "The great thing is that it has taken the leadership only one decade to open up, to see that this business of being closed, of trying to control everything, just wouldn't work. Most places, it took decades."

The Frelimo leadership is, in fact, remarkably self-critical. I asked Luís Bernardo Honwana, Mozambique's Minister of Culture, about Frelimo's current attitude toward traditional society.

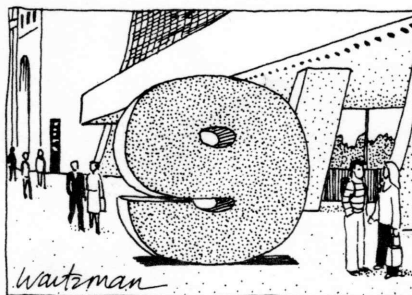
"We didn't realize how influential the traditional authorities were," Honwana said. "We are obviously going to have to harmonize traditional beliefs with our political project. Otherwise, we are going against things that the vast majority of our people believe—we will be like foreigners in our own country. I think we are gathering the courage to say so aloud. We will have to restore some of the traditional structures that at the beginning of our independence we simply smashed, thinking that we were doing a good and important thing."

Honwana, who was educated in Europe, and comes from a prominent na-

tionalist family—one brother was killed with Samora Machel, and another is the chief of the Air Force—is the author of a celebrated collection of short stories, "We Killed Mangy Dog," which explores, among other things, the collision of cultures in colonial Mozambique. "In most African families, even in the cities, some members have assumed Western habits, and won't go to the *curandeiro* if they are ill, or confused, or need a change of luck," he told me. "Others will go. But when disaster strikes, even a Westernized family will always hold a council, and then they may decide to, for instance, placate their grandfather's spirit, which they may have neglected. Traditional beliefs are a point of reference for all those people caught in the middle of the road between Westernization and African society. In a state of flux like a war, the beliefs become even stronger. This war of ours has certainly underlined the shortcomings of our choice to ignore those beliefs. But we are hybrids, we so-called educated Africans, because we will react, sometimes violently, against the imposition of alien values, and yet we ourselves are often the agents of the imposition, all in the name of 'development.'"

The traditional society is conservative, and unreceptive to socialism, Honwana said, and he went on, "But to most Mozambicans independence is a socialist idea. That's partly the work of the Portuguese. When I was arrested for advocating independence"—Honwana spent time in prison, without being charged, in the nineteen-sixties—"they called me a Communist. But our starting point, you must remember, is always colonialism. On the one hand, fat gentlemen sitting on verandas. On the other hand, half-naked people performing forced labor. Everyone understands that this is unfair, that we must establish social justice for those who work. But socializing the means of production, changing the rules of the economic game—these are more elaborate ideas, and are not widely understood. The nationalizations, the discouragement of the private sector—these were not popular policies. Our assumption that we would build socialism through state-owned companies and cooperatives was wrong, in any case."

Frelimo's changed attitudes toward the private sector (it is now en-



couraged), private foreign investment (desperately encouraged), state farms (the more unwieldy are being broken up and given away to private farmers and peasants), and Western economic institutions (Mozambique has joined the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) excite a lot of comment in the foreign press about "Mozambican *glasnost*." José Luís Cabaço, the Deputy Secretary for Foreign Relations on the Frelimo Central Committee and one of the Party's leading theoreticians, says that that is a racist cliché. Mozambique, Cabaço told me, is far ahead of the Soviet Union in its creative reappraisal of the theory and practice of socialism, and Frelimo has always considered Yugoslavia and China more relevant models for its own development anyway. Today, Cabaço said, socialism in Mozambique means simply "a balanced social system." The role of the Party: "maximizing social justice." Beyond that, everything is up for grabs. Already there are Cabinet Ministers who are not Party members. Professional, cultural, and social associations are springing up in the new, less Manichaean climate. The only unacceptable form of association, Cabaço said, would be anything organized on a tribal or regional basis. The only sacred subject is Mozambican sovereignty.

The failure of Frelimo's dreams for Mozambique—universal free and equal health care (it is no longer free and was never equal, and the system has been crippled), universal free education (the cost of textbooks, which students must buy, has soared, and the system, again, has been crippled), public ownership, and a fairer distribution of wealth—inevitably saps the Party's strength. (These are dreams that have been dashed in many countries, of course, including Portugal, where the socialist government that succeeded the dictatorship has been voted out in favor of a conservative regime.) And yet the resistance to new economic and political initiatives in Mozambique comes largely from the bureaucratic class that has developed inside the Party and the government. This group naturally favors state projects over private enterprise, central planning over its alternatives. Frelimo's official commitment to the creation of a peasants' and workers' state notwithstanding, many state and Party deci-

sion-makers clearly favor programs that benefit the cities, where they live, over programs that benefit peasants. The higher ranks of the Party and the civil service are still dominated by the families that were privileged before independence, and these people have largely seen to it that they themselves remain in Maputo, which is one of the few places in Mozambique where anything resembling a middle-class life can be had. The gulf between the comforts of the few and the absolute poverty of the rural and urban masses is as deep as it ever was. Nevertheless, Mozambique has avoided not only gross official corruption and "the exhibitionism of power" but also any conspicuous worship of wealth. When I asked Cabaço why there were no food riots in the cities, he cited "the prestige of Frelimo," and, despite everything, it didn't strike me as a ludicrous idea.

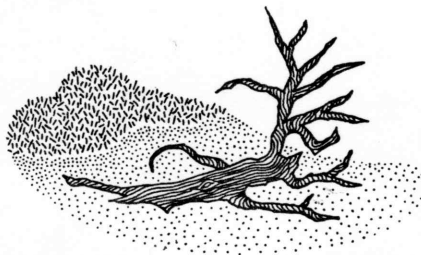
Frelimo, aware that it is in danger of becoming a party of state employees, is trying to broaden its base. According to Cabaço, membership has grown to a hundred and eighty thousand, and the rules restricting the amount of property a Party member may own and, if he is in business, the number of people he may employ have had to be relaxed (to keep the Party from losing touch entirely with the private sector). The Party's emphasis is still on ideology; its relation to the state is supposed to be that of the formulator of policy, of the desired result, which the state then tries to achieve. But the Party schools now place less emphasis on theoretical training than on practical subjects. "Cadres" are now trained in agriculture and engineering before they go out to work as local secretaries in the rural districts.

None of this means that Mozambique is about to embrace market capitalism. Despite rumblings from the Soviet Union that socialism is showing itself to be a non-starter in Africa, recent Frelimo Central Committee statements reaffirm Frelimo's commit-

ment to scientific socialism, and the hundreds of scholarship students who return each year from Cuba and East Germany have all graduated from orthodox Marxist institutions. These graduates are the future élite in Mozambique, and they already make up the bulk of the country's intelligentsia. The overwhelming cultural influence of the West is not about to be replaced by any Eastern European model—the thousands of East Bloc advisers who have worked in Mozambique have not made a great impression; the Soviets, in particular, whom I often heard described as arrogant, second-rate, and racist, seem to be deeply disliked. But in Mozambique the Party is still, as its publications claim, "the leading force in society," with no serious contenders in sight.

Even so, the revolutionary slogans on the walls are fading throughout Mozambique, and nobody calls anybody *camarada* anymore. A government minister is now His Excellency the Minister. In fact, Portuguese-style formalism began to reassert itself under Samora Machel, whose flamboyance seemed to overawe most Mozambicans, and around whom a cult of personality—the fate of too many African governments—showed signs of forming. Joaquim Chissano is a less flashy, less intimidating leader. He is known for letting people speak their minds at public meetings. Machel was also known for encouraging people to speak up publicly. If they had complaints about local officials, for instance, he wanted to hear them. He would see to the correction of abuses that came to his attention, and woe betide any officials who tried to punish citizens for speaking up. But if Machel, who was sometimes called "Mozambique's only authorized dissident," did not like what he heard he cut people off. And there were many subjects with which he had no patience—most notably popular unhappiness with the overrepresentation of whites, Asians, mulattoes, and southerners in the top levels of government. To Machel this was racism (or tribalism, or regionalism) rearing its gruesome head.

Under Chissano, the subject of race is no longer taboo. At public meetings, peasants and workers complain that only blacks seem to be required to do military service, and the President promises to look into the matter. The "Africanization" of the Frelimo lead-

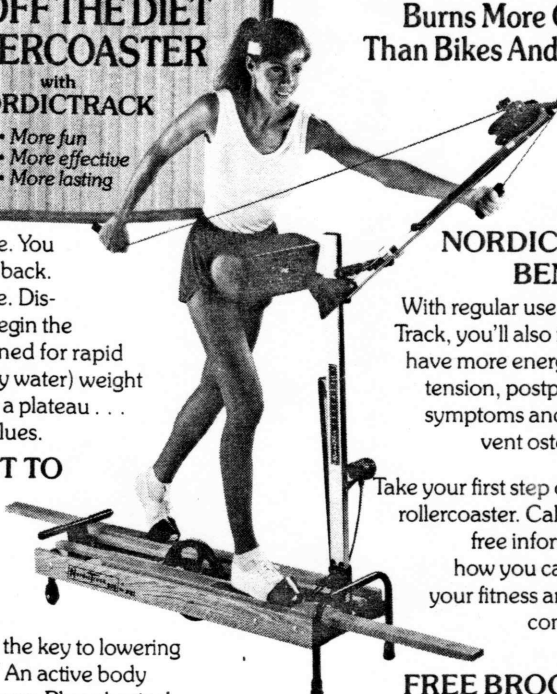


ership, in response to popular pressure, is well under way. There is dismay in some quarters that race has become an issue in a party that has always fought to remain non-racial, but in a country that is ninety-nine per cent black it seems reasonable that the political leadership should be largely black. And the question is less one of race, really, than one of culture. Ordinary Mozambicans want leaders who have some understanding of their culture—who at least understand their languages. When President Chissano, who speaks three Western languages and several African languages, travels in the provinces today, he speaks not in Portuguese but, if he happens to know it, in the local language. "Our idea of unity has been forced to change," Honwana told me. "We've seen that we cannot build unity at the expense of identity, that unity does not mean uniformity."

MAPUTO, the capital of a country up to its eyes in war, does not feel like a wartime city. Its million-plus residents go about their business unhindered by military checkpoints—whose indignities are a daily travail in many African cities, even in countries at peace. Physically, Maputo has deteriorated since independence. Most buildings need paint; many high rises—there are about a hundred of them—carry a patina of soot and scorchmarks caused by cooking fires on the landings. The streets are in disrepair—parts of Avenida Karl Marx, a main thoroughfare, virtually require an all-terrain vehicle. A once-famous bullring on the airport road, now in use as a market, has grown profoundly grimy, like an old coal works. When it comes to post-independence decline, however, Maputo is not in Beira's league, or even close. Much of the Lisbon-style neon still works. The power is rarely off. The restaurants that are open have food; the shops that are open have goods to sell. Indeed, it was only on the first of several visits to Maputo that I noticed the city's disrepair at all. Compared with the rest of Mozambique, Maputo is Paris. It is, in fact, a handsome city, built on a bluff overlooking the ocean and Maputo Bay, its wide avenues lined with flowering shade trees—frangipani, jacaranda, acacia, flame.

A few years ago, the war crept close. At night, tracer bullets lit up the headland across the bay, and when the wind

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blew east gunfire was heard downtown. Anti-personnel mines exploded on the beach, the highways and railways leading from the city were constantly being attacked, and the power was frequently off. Food in those years was scarce—not entirely because of the war—and the shops were, from all reports, empty. But South Africa apparently declined to supply Renamo with the heavy artillery and air defenses that it would have needed to take and hold Maputo. The main theatre of the war shifted back to the center of the country in 1986, and the worst shortages in Maputo ended with the beginning of the economic-recovery program. There are still attacks on every road and railway line connecting the city to the rest of the world, though, and they make life in Maputo feel islandlike, privileged, and somewhat unreal.

It may feel like none of those things, of course, to the hundreds of thousands of people who have fled there from the countryside, or to the relatives they tend to stay with. Because of the influx, the high-rise apartment buildings are extraordinarily crowded, with many three-room apartments sleeping twenty or more. At night, these buildings become a modern Pandemonium. Very few of the elevators work, and a long-term, nationwide shortage of light bulbs insures that most of the stairways are unlit. Because water pressure is often a problem, especially on the upper floors, water is carried in buckets up the stairs. During a climb of ten or fifteen floors, water spills. So the stairways are wet as well as pitch-black, and are jammed with jostling people, children playing, and rats. The wife of a friend of mine slipped one night on the stairs in their building. She was carrying their infant son in a *capulana* (a square of colorful cloth, the Mozambican woman's all-purpose garment) on her back. Mother and child both went to the hospital. The baby was in a coma for five days. When the ordeal was finally over—the baby recovered—I asked my friend if they were considering moving. He said they wouldn't dream of it. Of the choices available, a Maputo high rise was, despite its drawbacks—the stairs, the stench, the crowds—by far the safest and most pleasant place for them to live.

Most people in Maputo live not in the "cement city" but in the "cane

city," the archipelago of shantytowns which surrounds the capital. While the cement city commands a view of the sea and the harbor, most of the shantytowns are built on low ground, subject to seasonal floods. They are immense scenes of poverty and squalor, yet in the morning commuters emerge from them in the thousands, many in starched, pressed office clothes, hurrying down sand roads and dirt paths, through thick woodsmoke and low, cool sunshine, heading for the cement city.

In Maputo, seeing the war is often just a matter of asking someone a question. Once, while I was staying in the luxurious apartment of a United Nations official high above Avenida Eduardo Mondlane, I was having lunch alone. As the cook, a heavyset middle-



aged career servant named Bernardo, was ladling out soup, I asked him in passing how things were in central Gaza, the area he came from. Bernardo set down the soup bowl, wiped his hands on his apron, stared at me unnervingly, and said things were terrible. It had become so dangerous that he had decided to bring his wife and four children to Maputo. But his wife refused to leave her mother, who refused to leave her land. He decided to bring the children anyway, and to sell one of his four goats—the male—to finance the move. Just then, his goats were stolen from their herder by thieves posing as police. Bernardo paid the local militia twenty thousand meticaís (nearly forty dollars, at the official rate) to conduct a house-to-house search. They found three of his four goats, but not the male, and arrested the woman who had them. Bernardo decided not to press charges, because the woman was breast-feeding and was also pregnant, and she promised to pay him, in installments, the twenty thousand meticaís. But now she was back in jail, having stolen from someone else, who didn't care that she was pregnant, and he had no way to bring his children to safety in the city. Did I have any idea how dangerous it was in the countryside now? The *bandidos* could burst into your house at any time. And they would just start killing people, for no reason. Bernardo imitated a zombie hacking with a machete, supplying the sound effects himself—"Za! Za! Za!"—and getting visibly upset. That was what they did! They never

said a thing! They just chopped people up! The robotic silence of the bandits was clearly the most horrifying part of it all to Bernardo. He kept imitating the chopping, his eyes bulging: "Za! Za! Za!"

Maputo's central hospital was just a block away from that apartment, and one-legged people, most of them victims of land mines, were always crutching along Avenida Eduardo Mondlane. One afternoon, I went to the hospital with a translator from the Ministry of Information, who had given us permission to speak to patient Casilda Maquele, a sixty-three-year-old peasant, had been wounded by a bullet in an attack only six days before. It was the second time the bandits had attacked her village. Many people had been killed in this attack, she said, including her father-in-law. Her village, which was across Maputo Bay, was within sight of the city. Flávio Maria, a twenty-three-year-old mechanic in the Army, had been wounded in an attack near the Swaziland border only five days before. One bullet had passed right through him—he showed us the open holes, front and back. Another bullet had already been removed, from his shoulder. This was the first day since he had been shot that he was able to move. Maria said he and his company had been defending a warehouse full of food. The battle had lasted seventeen hours. The bandits had finally succeeded in taking the warehouse. They had stolen the food, and destroyed a lot of equipment. Maria expected to be moved soon to a military hospital and, when he was healed, sent back to the front. Where was the front? Almost anywhere outside Maputo.

The hospital was a hellish place, with a stench that forced me to hurry outside periodically for fresh air. Patients were screaming with unadorned pain; sheets were stained red, brown, and yellow; the wards were dirty and ill-lit; legless men lay on the floor in the corridors. And yet it was the best hospital in the country, my guide assured me. "The last alternative before you go to your grave," he said, with a gentle laugh.

MOST of the foreign civilians living in Mozambique live in Maputo. That amounts to a substantial number. "In the development racket, Mozambique is the trendiest place on

earth," an American official in Maputo told me. "India has a hundred and fifty people here, for Christ's sake." Shaking his head, the official called to his houseboy for more piping-hot cashews and cold beer. We were sitting in his living room, which was large, modern, and immaculate; the previous week's issue of *New York* lay on the coffee table. Maputo's wealthiest neighborhoods, such as Somerschild, a leafy district from which even the Portuguese were once excluded by their British creditor-overlords, seem to be populated almost entirely by foreigners. The government goes out of its way to make them comfortable, reserving for them much of the city's best housing, and even ceding tracts of well-drained land for the construction of whole new neighborhoods—arrondissements so blindingly clean that they might have dropped out of the sky from Sweden. Because leaving Maputo other than by air is dangerous—it is, in fact, forbidden by a number of embassies for their nationals to do so—many expatriates end up living in a closely circumscribed world, bounded by house, office, hard-currency supermarket, the few restaurants that are up to foreign standards, and the company of their fellows. There are shopping sprees to Swaziland and South Africa to break up the routine, but the farthest that many foreigners venture into local society is to join one of several old Portuguese yacht clubs that still molder on the Maputo waterfront.

Few of the officials in the international organizations working in Mozambique are newcomers to the aid business. I was constantly running into people whose résumés contained the same disaster zones: Southeast Asia, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan. The American "aid professionals" would ask me how long I had been "in country," as if we were in Vietnam. And some of them seemed actively resistant to knowing any more about Mozambique than they needed to do their jobs. The international organizations do good and vital work, but the competition among them can get fierce. Some of their differences are honest ones, turning on questions of how to encourage economic development, or how to minimize the debilitating dependence that so often accompanies aid, especially in places where people have been uprooted. Others are pure bureaucratic turf war. One organiza-

tion, using its financial clout, pressures the government to certify it as the sole provider of prosthetic limbs in Mozambique, so that it can corner a lucrative fund-raising market. The losers in this sort of power play (the only real losers are the amputees, but they have no political clout) then plot revenge. While I was in Maputo, accusations were flying that one organization was using photographs of another organization's project to raise funds in Europe, misrepresenting the project as its own. All this infighting gives rise to some fairly good name-calling. Rivals of the British organization Save the Children, which is very active, and very effective, call it Shave the Children. Critics of World Vision, a conservative American church organization, call it Blurred Vision.

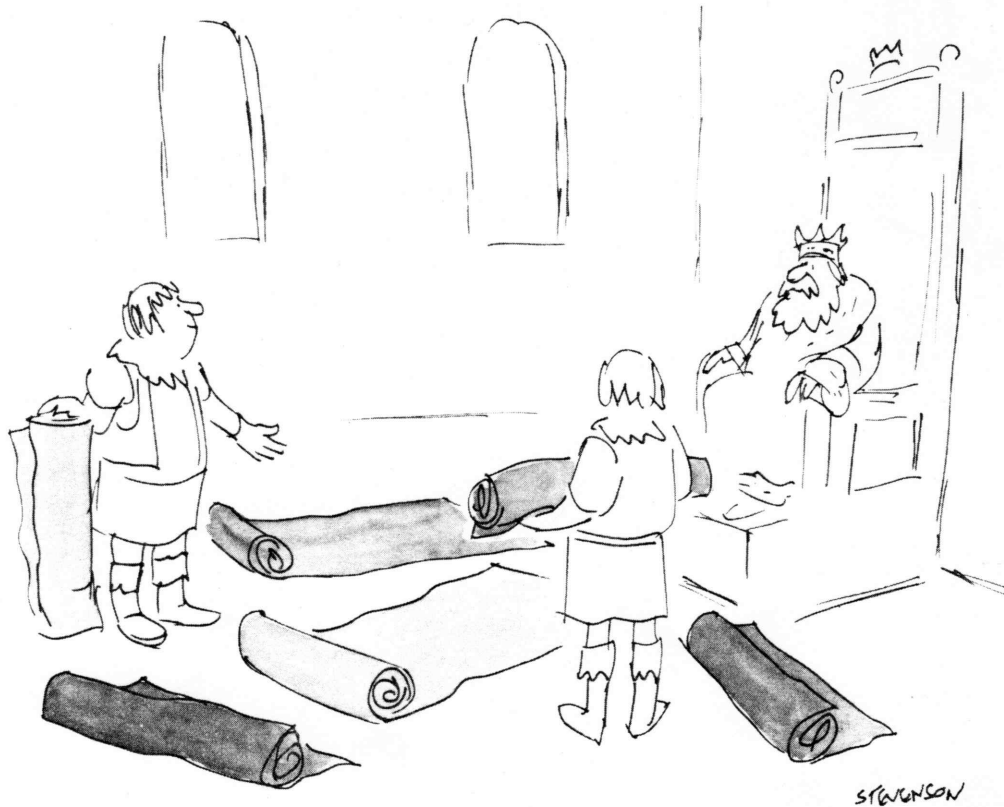
There are also foreigners, known as *cooperantes*, who moved to Mozambique some time ago for political reasons. Most are socialists from Britain, Western Europe, Canada, the United States, or South Africa, and most work for the government. Some have been associated with Frelimo since the *luta armada*, and many have dedicated the best years of their lives to building socialism in Mozambique. Frelimo's ideological swerve in the nineteen-eighties left a lot of *cooperantes* in the political ditch. Some left the country; some who have stayed seemed to me embittered but not sure how to express their displeasure—few, if any, are Mozambican citizens. *Cooperantes* tend to resent the new generation of foreigners—the technocrats who come to Mozambique with lucrative contracts, health insurance, regular home leave, and no visible ideals. Many *cooperantes* see the Western aid effort as a grand political *démarche*. They point out that in 1983, when parts of Mozambique were facing a famine, Samora Machel had to go to Europe and make a number of "pro-Western" statements before the emergency aid he had been requesting for nearly a year

was granted. (By then, it was too late for an estimated hundred thousand people, who starved to death.) The United States, it is often said, has become popular in Mozambique simply by dumping thousands of tons of surplus grain there. And South African destabilization, by "softening up" Mozambique for a repenetration by international capital, has dovetailed too neatly with Western designs. Many Frelimo militants share this analysis, and many have certainly not forgotten American support for Portugal, through NATO, during the *luta armada*. But the leadership refrains from biting the Western hand that feeds the people. "We are not destabilized for our socialist option, but for our independence," Cabaço told me.

The current popularity of the United States is, in fact, due partly to the amount of aid it sends—we are the largest single donor to Mozambique—and partly to our role, in various forms, as an important local employer. There is also the Melissa Wells factor. Mrs. Wells' confirmation as American Ambassador to Mozambique was held up in the Senate by conservative senators, under the leadership of Jesse Helms, for eleven months in 1986 and 1987. Helms and company were trying to use the nomination to shift United States policy in Renamo's direction, arguing that the so-called Reagan Doctrine of providing support to anti-Communist insurgencies in the Third World was being unwisely abandoned in the case of Mozambique. Mrs. Wells, a career foreign-service officer, contended, throughout a process that included two hundred and forty-six detailed written questions from Helms, that Renamo was not a nationalist movement, and not worthy of American support. The bloc opposing her confirmation, which included Robert Dole, disintegrated after a major Renamo massacre of civilians in July, 1987, was reported.

The Mozambican press had followed the nomination controversy closely, so Mrs. Wells was widely known, and admired, by the time she arrived. And her performance in situ seemed only to increase her local popularity. She was Portuguese-speaking, experienced in Africa, knowledgeable about Mozambique, and endlessly energetic, travelling the length of the country to see things for herself, and adopting local projects. From the news reports, it seemed there was hardly an





orphan in Mozambique who was not at risk for the American Ambassador's kindness. She is a tall, handsome woman with the easy manner and the steady gaze of a very good poker player. She is a serious reporter, known for personally investigating important stories, asking hard questions, and making detailed notes. And she is taken seriously by the Mozambican government.

The American Embassy as a whole is on surprisingly good terms—suspiciously good terms, Jesse Helms might think—with the Frelimo government. Indeed, the American diplomats seem ready to try almost anything to “wean Mozambique away from Communism,” as it’s so often put in Washington. I overheard the deputy chief of the United States mission instructing that a card be printed up, in Portuguese, to accompany three bottles of Scotch that he had lost in a tennis wager to the Frelimo Minister of Finance. It seemed that they had a regular doubles game on Sunday mornings. The card would express a wish that the Minister and his partner would be as gracious in defeat as they had been in victory, and it would be signed with Frelimo’s rev-

olutionary slogan, “*A Luta Continua*” —“The Struggle Continues.”

GHOSTS from the colonial past still haunt Maputo. The long beach running north from the city used to be a favorite weekend campsite for white South Africans. They parked their campers and pitched their tents in among shaggy pines behind the beach, and the Mozambicans called them “banana Boers,” because all they ever bought from hawkers was bananas. Everything else they needed—except, perhaps, black women and prawns—they brought with them. Behind the beach, near a stock-car track and a miniature-golf course—both closed and overgrown now—stands a huge building, at least twenty-five stories high. The building was going to be a hotel, but it was unfinished at independence, and the Portuguese builders, before abandoning it, poured concrete down the pipes and down the elevator shaft. And so the building has stood, empty and rusting in the sea breeze, a rather heavily symbolic skeleton, since 1975.

The Portuguese settlers committed a great deal of sabotage and vandalism

before they left Mozambique. They killed cattle, wrecked machinery, drove tractors into the sea, destroyed records and repaired manuals, and, above all, spirited wealth out of the country. Joseph Hanlon, the BBC's former correspondent in Mozambique, estimated, in his book, “Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire,” that some hundred and fifty million British pounds was illegally exported immediately before and after independence. According to Hanlon, the owners of Boror, the world's largest coconut-farming company, simply “loaded the entire 1975 copra crop, worth two million British pounds, onto four ships and sailed away, never to return.” Like Renamo's destruction of infrastructure, the damage caused by this pillage was magnified painfully by the underdevelopment from which Mozambique al-

ready suffered. In the Portuguese case, it was only the last blow in a battering that lasted nearly five hundred years and included centuries of slaving as well as the more recent bestiality of the colonial secret police.

Yet some Portuguese stayed on in Mozambique after independence—the number today is about twenty thousand; most live in Maputo—and the level of racial tension in the country is remarkably low. Among the whites who stayed, a small minority were actively pro-Frelimo. A few had been members of clandestine Frelimo cells during the *luta armada*. The existence of a white left in Mozambique is sometimes attributed to family traditions retained from the days when Lisbon deported political opponents to the colonies, but some Frelimo officials saw their entire families leave without them. A high proportion of young whites, enthusiastic about either the popular revolution happening around them or the prospect of having the family house to themselves, or both, stayed. An American historian who came to teach at Eduardo Mondlane University told me that his white students, who were used to coasting

through school and who regarded independence as a great party, never did their work and then were amazed when he failed them. When food shortages in the cities became so serious that even whites, who had no access to a *machamba*—the family vegetable plot that has always fed the great majority of Mozambicans—began going hungry, more left. Many went to South Africa.

ALL of southern Mozambique lives in the shadow of the neighboring giant, South Africa. When Maputo was built, in the late nineteenth century (it was then called Lourenço Marques), it was to serve the mines and industry of the Transvaal as a port. After independence, Frelimo sought to reduce the country's dependence on South Africa, but the economic integration of southern Mozambique with South Africa was very thorough, and most of the few gains made were reversed as Mozambique's economy was buried by the war. Mozambique supports international economic sanctions against South Africa but, like a number of other states in the region, is in no position to impose sanctions itself. Indeed, comprehensive international sanctions will need to include provisions for increased aid to Mozambique and its neighbors.

In Maputo, the giant's shadow is deep indeed. On television one finds Afrikaner schoolchildren chanting a martial tune between clips of sports bloopers and dog tricks. At the market, every second product—even the onions—comes from South Africa. Although Pretoria has sharply cut the number of Mozambicans allowed to work in the Transvaal mines, men all over southern Mozambique still wear the gum boots and hard hats issued to miners. The deepest part of the South African shadow, though, is military. Maputo is only forty easily traversed miles from the South African border, so it is understandable that Frelimo military strategy after independence concentrated at first on preparation for an invasion. Although the real threat turned out to be another guerrilla war, South Africa has launched a number of raids into Maputo and its suburbs. In 1981, South African commandos drove across the border and destroyed three houses in a Maputo suburb, killing thirteen members of the African Na-

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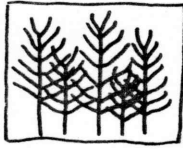


tional Congress, the leading South African liberation movement—it was at that time infiltrating guerrillas through Mozambique—and a Portuguese bystander. In 1983, a dozen South African jets strafed two Maputo suburbs, killing three factory workers, a child, a soldier, and one member of the A.N.C. (he was washing a car) and injuring forty other Mozambicans, most of them women and children. Later that year, commandos bombed the A.N.C. office in Maputo.

The South African forces dwarf those of all its neighbors combined, so Mozambique is virtually helpless against this sort of attack. Some of Frelimo's supporters, like Fidel Castro, are triumphalist in their view of the liberation struggle in South Africa, believing that military and economic pressure could cause the apartheid regime to fall relatively quickly. But Frelimo's leadership is obliged to be realistic about the balance of forces both in the region and inside South Africa, and President Chissano clearly believes that he must work out a *modus vivendi* with Pretoria. For that reason, he has been trying to revive a 1984 "non-aggression pact" known as the Nkomati Accord, which was supposed to end Mozambique's support of the A.N.C. and South Africa's support of Renamo. (Only Mozambique actually abided by its terms.) Chissano also seems to believe that the capitalist democracies, while they have historically been Pretoria's allies, may now be persuaded to help South Africa's neighbors survive the external shocks of apartheid's death agonies. Those agonies are, after all, likely to last for decades.

Frelimo may be less realistic when it comes to ending the war with Renamo. Militarily, it is a stalemate. Reviving the Nkomati Accord is, along with an amnesty law, Frelimo's only declared strategy for breaking the stalemate. Frelimo's assumption, which may be correct, is that Renamo's centralized command and control depend on South African support. But the idea that any amount of diplomatic pressure can end the flow of external support to Renamo while pro-Renamo forces remain strong inside the South African military and police, in South Africa's large Portuguese community, in certain other African states, and in right-wing circles in much of the West seems, at

best, only a hope. In any case, the ability of Renamo units to fight with weapons and ammunition captured from Frelimo or stolen or bought from the popular militia has been amply shown. The government's strategy has a chance, perhaps, of wearing down Renamo over a period of many years. But the Mozambican people do not have many years. Their suffering and their fatal dependence on foreign aid grow every day.



Renamo's leaders say they want negotiations. What they probably want more is the recognition—the international credibility—they would gain from negotiations. The only time negotiations were publicly attempted, in Pretoria in 1984, Renamo's representatives walked out just as a ceasefire agreement seemed in sight. Frelimo has no interest in giving its opponents the political victory that negotiations today would represent, and none of the dozens of governments that give support to Mozambique seem particularly frantic to end the war. The only important issues in the policy debates in Washington, according to Mozambique's American lobbyist, are Frelimo's commitment to Marxism and its ties to Moscow. The State Department would like to see non-lethal military aid going to Mozambique, if only for the protection of convoys delivering food, but conservatives in Congress have blocked that. American pressure on South Africa helped to bring about the Nkomati Accord and the abortive 1984 peace talks but seems not to have been applied since then to ending the war. Meanwhile, giving aid to the victims of South African aggression helps American lawmakers stave off calls for serious economic sanctions against Pretoria. (It does the same thing, even more effectively, for Margaret Thatcher.)

While the war rages everywhere else, people in Maputo end up doing a lot of South Africa watching. A popular explanation, while I was around, for apparent contradictions in South African policy, such as that Pretoria is eager to provide security for the transmission lines that carry hydroelectricity from Mozambique's Cahora Bassa Dam to South Africa—lines that Renamo constantly sabotages—had South Africa taking a "corridor approach" to Mozambique; that is, continuing to sponsor widespread disrup-

tion and destruction, while securing a few corridors, like Cahora Bassa and Maputo's harbor, for its own use. The harbor, it was said, was being eyed in connection with sanctions-busting schemes that Pretoria is developing.

Pretoria's relations with Renamo are, naturally, the subject of abundant speculation. Every peasant or captured *bandido* who can describe a South African supply drop, every mysterious parachute recovered from a lake, every suspicious movement in the Comoros Islands (a tiny country, less than two hundred miles off the northern coast of Mozambique, whose leader is close to South Africa) feeds the Renamo-Pretoria rumor mill in Maputo. South African motives are dissected with Thomist care.

The place in Maputo for foreigners to hear the latest political scuttlebutt and soothsaying is the Hotel Polana. A grand colonial pile, the Polana is built on spacious grounds overlooking the sea just along the bluff from President Chissano's house. Foreign delegations, officials, journalists, businessmen, and international-aid workers awaiting other housing all stay at the Polana, obliging the local élites to put in regular appearances there. The hotel ends up displaying all the peculiar contrasts of late-revolutionary Mozambique. The doormen wear *grandees'* full-length braided uniforms, while the front desk sells a postcard captioned "Luta Armada." (The photograph on that card contains an unusually honest image of African bush war: just a line of peasants walking barefoot on a trail through dry grass and sun-baked dirt with heavy-looking bundles on their heads.) One evening, in the Polana's restaurant, I asked José Luís Cabaço about how the Party planned to handle the confrontation with the power of the national bourgeoisie that the growth of the private sector will inevitably cause. Cabaço, a portly, genial, urbane man with a gray Vandyke, who was a construction executive in Lourenço Marques during the *luta armada* and used his position to photograph strategic sites for Frelimo under cover of commerce, stroked his beard, laughed, and said, "I am cleaning my gun." He was sitting with a beautiful young woman from the Italian Communist Party, who had come to make arrangements for a visit by her boss, Giovanni Berlinguer. Because Cabaço was educated (in sociology) in Italy, he han-

dles the visits of dignitaries from Italy. His most recent guest had been Pope John Paul II. The Pope's visit was generally considered a big success, not least because His Holiness did not call for talks with Renamo, as the government had dreaded he might.

The main action at the Polana, though, is capitalist. Businessmen from all over the world hustle through the lobby, deal out their business cards, and huddle with government officials over lawn tables beside the swimming pool. As Mozambique opens its doors to private foreign investment, everybody and his corporate brother seem to be scrambling for the Land Rover franchise, the office-computer franchise, the oil-exploration and mining concessions. Mozambique's natural wealth, which includes large coal reserves, iron ore, and some of the world's largest deposits of tantalite, not to mention vast tracts of arable land, has been virtually unexploited.

And yet all the wheeling and dealing I observed may have been an illusion. There was another wave of foreign-investment interest after the signing of the Nkomati Accord, but the investment itself never materialized. Even South African businessmen who had pressured their government to make peace so that they could get back into Mozambique lost interest when they saw the extent of the war's destruction. In fact, the only real money to arrive had been four million dollars for the construction of a new, heavily fortified South African trade mission, which was just down the street from the Polana. Many of the accents to be heard around the hotel were South African, some of them belonging to quite voluble characters, happy to explain how they were already using Maputo to get around certain Western trade sanctions.

The true composition of present-day investment is probably best reflected in rumors that Italy is preparing to resume construction of the great sabotaged hotel along the beach north of Maputo. It is said that the Italians plan, when the building is completed, to fill it with the offices of international-aid organizations. Most foreign investment in projects outside Maputo simply must await improvement in the *situação*.

EVERYONE knows that the highways out of Maputo are not safe to travel. Reports of Renamo ambushes

have been almost daily fare for years. Of course, ambushes can happen only where there is traffic, and the fact is that the highways around Maputo are full of traffic. People have to get from town to country, and so they take their chances. Most of the traffic is in convoys with military escorts, but going by convoy is no guarantee against attack. Convoys are regularly ambushed. In October, 1987, at least two hundred and seventy-eight people were killed in one attack on the national highway fifty miles north of Maputo. In such circumstances, one's conception of what is safe collapses into a basic equation: if we got through, it was a safe trip, whether the bus behind us was attacked or not.

Last fall, I rode up the highway from Maputo to Manhiça, a rural district where Renamo is very active—the highway massacre the previous October had occurred in Manhiça—with Lina Magaia, an official in the Ministry of Agriculture. Lina drove the route every week, and she did not like to travel in convoys. "If something happens, you cannot get away," she said. "All the cars and trucks start to run into each other." So we set off unaccompanied in her van, a new charcoal-gray four-wheel-drive Mitsubishi Pajero equipped with a two-way military radio, our only armament an automatic pistol on the seat between us. It was an overcast day. My plan was to spend a few days in Manhiça, where Lina works as a sort of all-purpose rural-extension officer.

The soldiers at the checkpoints all knew Lina. They called her Mama Magaia and tried to bum cigarettes from her. At one checkpoint, she talked for several minutes with a commander. They spoke Shangaan, which left me out, but they were obviously discussing the road ahead. Lina gave the commander a pack of cigarettes. We saw a couple of convoys heading for the city but no traffic going our way. The land we were passing through was deserted. It looked like farmland reverting to scrub. We came to a large, spooky cleared stretch, in an area called Pateque. I had been told in Maputo by a local journalist that Pateque was one of the most dangerous stretches of road in the country—he said he would not travel it for anything—but Lina said his information was outdated. "This was the worst part of the road," she said. "So I went to President Samora—

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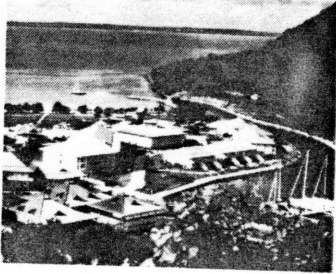
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this was in 1985—and I asked if there wasn't something he could do to improve the security here. His solution was to bulldoze the forest away from the road, to improve the visibility. You see, now you have time to take some action *before* you are ambushed." It was true: there were no trees within several hundred yards of the road, and few places for attackers to hide. We passed through without incident.

Beyond Pateque, at a place called Maluana, the forest came back to the edge of the road. Lina said, "Now I cannot talk. I must pay attention." I began to notice burned, overturned vehicles along the shoulder of the road. Lina started driving at very high speed—seventy-five miles an hour or more. We screamed around curves, and didn't slow down even when we came to an Army checkpoint. The soldiers hurried out of the way, seeming to understand. After several miles, we came to a group of inhabited houses, a place called Esperança, and Lina finally slowed down. She reached into my bag, pulled out a fifth of Scotch I had brought, and, with my permission, took two slugs from the bottle. She sighed. "Now we can relax," she said.

I felt fairly safe with Lina. She had been working in Manhiça since 1982, and knew the area well. In fact, she told me she had been going there since she was a child. Her mother was from Manhiça, and Lina used to visit her grandmother there. She had watched the war come to Manhiça, and in 1986 she had moved her four children back to Maputo. Now she usually saw them and her husband only on weekends. But she had not considered abandoning her work in Manhiça, she said.

Lina was, at forty-three, a formidable woman. She came from a prominent southern clan, the Mabjaia. Her uncle was Mozambique's Ambassador to Swaziland; her brother was the editor of *Tempo*, the country's biggest magazine. Lina's father, a teacher, had become *assimilado* when she was eleven, thereby enabling her to go to a state school in Maputo. She had studied economics in Lisbon on a scholarship until the 1974 coup and then had left to join Frelimo in Tanzania. There she received nine months of military training and rose to the rank of sergeant. The war ended before she saw combat, and she left the Army in 1977, but

there was still, I thought, plenty military dash to her manner. She handled a pistol as if she'd been born with one in her hand. On the day we drove to Manhiça, she was dressed entirely in black—sweatpants, sweatshirt, boots, beret. She was big—tall, and good two hundred pounds—with a big husky voice and an enormous laugh. She had a mobile, expressive face and quick tongue—not, all in all, the defensible bearing found among most African women in southern Mozambique. Lina also had a quick pen. She wrote a weekly column for *Noticias*, the Maputo daily paper, which was popular for its attacks on incompetent officials.

We reached Manhiça in the afternoon, and found a large convoy, perhaps a hundred vehicles, getting ready to leave for Maputo. The people in the cars and trucks all smiled when they saw us arriving safely from the south. Manhiça is a pretty town, spread out on a green plateau above the Incomat River. The cement town probably has two thousand residents, the cane town many times that. The main commercial street, which is the national highway, is flanked by old-fashioned pillared sidewalks. Two small hotel restaurants compete for the carriage trade. We turned off the highway and followed a dirt road out through the cane town, and little children started rushing at the car, all shouting excitedly, "Lina Magaia! Lina Magaia!" Lina pointed to a row of burned houses. "The bandits attacked here two weeks ago today," she said. "They burned forty-seven houses, and they wrecked the office of our farm. Ribangue, which is just coming up here. But the attack was a victory for our militia—they killed four bandits and captured a bazooka and a Mauser."



We arrived at Ribangue, a dilapidated farm headquarters at the edge of the plateau—the fields were down in the floodplain—and were met by Domingos Jasse, a solid-looking, mild-mannered man with a glass eye, whom Lina introduced as the head of defense for the farm. (She later told me that Jasse had lost his eye in the *luta armada*. He had fought for ten years as a Frelimo guerrilla in his home province of Niassa.) Jasse showed me the damage to the farm's office—burned files, a burned desk—and gave me a blow-by-blow account of the attack two weeks

before. The farm's militia, consisting of eighty-seven people with only five automatic weapons, had received word that an attack was coming, and had moved out into the fields. The *bandidos*, they knew, were after the food, seeds, tools, bicycles, and other goods stored in the farm's magazine. When they entered the office, and started smashing it up, the militia ambushed them. Two militiamen were injured when a fleeing *bandido* threw a grenade, but otherwise it was a rout. The *bandidos* had left one body behind, and it was handed over to the man's family, who lived nearby, but the militia now knew they had killed three more, because a young woman whom the *bandidos* had kidnapped—they had kidnapped eleven people from an adjoining cane town during the raid—returned and told them so. She also said that the *bandidos* had had a kidnapped peasant carry one of their wounded, and had killed the peasant when the wounded man died. The *bandidos* had beaten up the young woman, and they had given her a message for the people at Ribangue: they would be coming back for their bazooka and their Mauser, and to place flowers on the grave of their fallen comrade. Jasse showed me the bazooka and the Mauser, now stored with the other valuables in the farm's magazine. The *bandidos* would have to fight very hard to get these back, he said quietly.

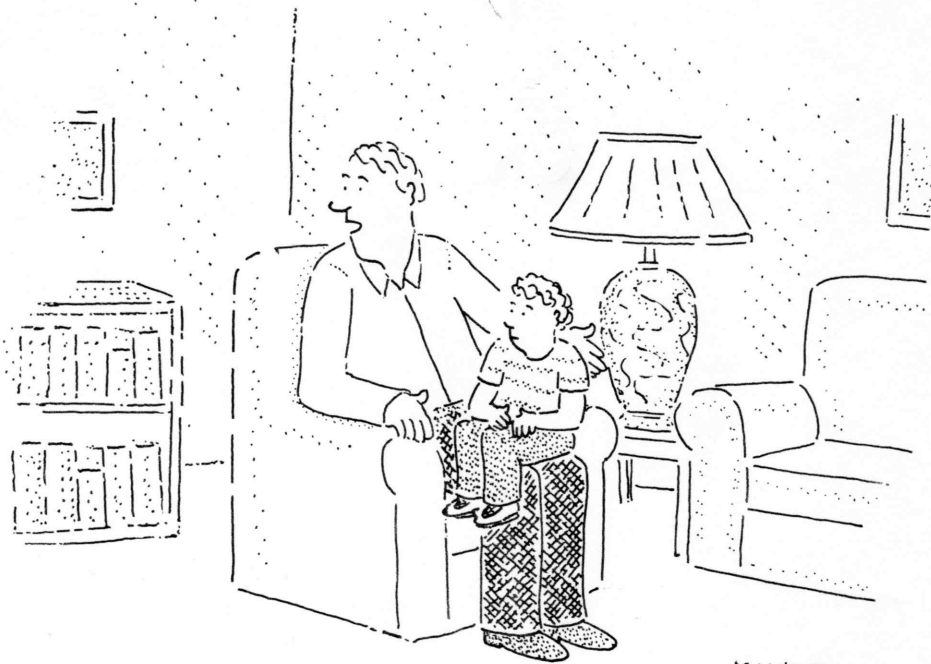
Lina said she only wished that the newspapers covered militia victories the way they covered highway massacres, and then she showed me around the farm. There were pigsties, a henhouse, a duck farm, a large shed full of rabbits, and, down on the floodplain, six hundred acres of corn, beans, cabbage, bananas, and other crops. The fields were divided into small family plots, which suggested a cooperative farm, but Lina denied that Ribangue was a cooperative. It was "a project," she said. Whatever it was, she was clearly in charge of it. She upbraided workers who had not fed the chickens, went over salary sheets, and upbraided the salary clerk for not paying out raises that had been set. When I asked if she received a salary herself, she said she did, but added that she did not get paid if the farm did not make a profit. Though the fields at Ribangue seemed to be flourishing, Lina said they could be far more productive. The main problems were irrigation and drainage. They badly needed a backhoe to reopen

drainage ditches that had been neglected since independence. Lina wondered if I would ask Melissa Wells to help her get a backhoe. We met a man in rags in a beanfield. He grinned when he saw Lina, and handed us two ears of roasted corn, which we chewed as we went bumping around the muddy roads of Ribangue.

I was supposed to stay with Lina in Manhiça, but she already had three houseguests, North Korean technicians working on an irrigation project, and they panicked when they heard that an American was coming. Lina said they were afraid that if their embassy heard that they had stayed in the same house as an American—or were even seen speaking to one—they would be in big trouble. They could be sent back to Korea, and could lose their jobs. I had passed the North Korean Embassy in Maputo a few times, and had been impressed by the tone of a display in the front yard—it was all photographs of the recent visit of the Great Leader, Comrade Kim Il Sung, to Ulan Bator, Mongolia, with captions, in English, pointing out the "rapturous" crowds waving "fervently" while wishing long life with "infinite respect" to an old, dour-looking fellow in a gray suit—so I was sympathetic, and happy to stay in a house around the corner from Lina's.

(But Manhiça was a small town, and on my third day there the inevitable happened: I ran into the Koreans on the street. Without thinking, I waved. They blanched and turned away, and we all just pretended that it hadn't happened.) It was a small, bare three-bedroom cement house that, from the outside, might have been in a post-war working-class neighborhood in Fresno. The whole street had that look, in fact. Two young men who worked at Ribangue also stayed in the house.

I was thoroughly confused by everything I had heard about the war in Manhiça, so that evening Lina brought over a huge map of the Manhiça district and we spread it out on the floor. The map, which had been drawn in 1969, was terrifically detailed, showing every house and hut in the district. Renamo had first come to Manhiça in force in 1984, Lina said, crossing from South Africa into sparsely inhabited western parts of the district. She showed me wild swamplands, far from any road, where the bandits had established their first big encampments, and the routes they had used to move into more populated areas, and where they had first started preying on the national highway. The map clearly showed why the stretch of highway at Pateque had become so



MANKOFF

"Hon, was Skippy your concept or mine?"

dangerous: there were many miles of heavy forest cover on either side of it, with no roads and no villages. A second major group of bandits, Lina said, had come to Manhiça from the north, after a Frelimo offensive in Gaza in 1985. They had moved down the left bank of the Incomati, preying on the villages in the valley and in the sandy, forested hills between the river and the coast. The coastal hills were a roadless maze, full of hideouts, and, Lina said, the empty beaches beyond them were ideal for resupply by sea.

I wondered why, if the bandits had come from far away, the family of the fighter killed at Ribangue was living in Manhiça. Lina said that the composition of the local Renamo bands had changed over the years. The commanders were still all Ndauspeakers, from the north, but now many of the troops were local men. In fact, Lina believed that there were no longer any large Renamo bases in Manhiça but instead just a number of small bands with excellent radio communications, which enabled them to mass for large attacks and then disperse. As Lina waxed military in her descriptions of the fighting over the years in Manhiça, one thing became clear, even to non-military me: Renamo could not be defeated. Even in Manhiça, though it is near the capital, has a railway and a highway running through it, and is, for Mozambique, relatively developed and heavily populated, there were vast, roadless areas for guerrillas to hide in. It occurred to me that if the entire Army were brought to the Manhiça district—which constituted less than one per cent of Mozambique's area—its thirty thousand soldiers might have a chance of actually securing the district, of making it safe for the people who lived there to grow their crops and live their lives without fear of attack. *Might.*

And Lina, to my surprise, agreed. But the Army was not the answer, she said. There would never be enough soldiers to defend Manhiça. No, the answer was militias—local people, well trained and well armed. They were fighting to protect their own property, and so had a level of motivation that soldiers would always lack. What was more, they knew the area, and they often had advance word of Renamo attacks. Many people were disenchanted with the popular militia—the Territorial Defense Force, it

was now being called. They said that militiamen were dangerous, drunken, undisciplined thieves. That attitude, which made Lina furious, had been most cruelly manifested, she said, at a meeting in Manhiça the previous Saturday. Local private farmers and shopkeepers had gathered and, at Lina's urging, had agreed to support the reorganized district militia, but at the insulting level of a thousand meticaís (less than two dollars) a month each. Lina was still spitting mad about the outcome of the meeting. "We *must* help ourselves," she said. "The Army cannot help us." Militias, I gathered, had been the subject of some of Lina's columns in *Notícias*.

It was getting late. I had noticed, under the bed where I would be sleeping, an AK-47 Soviet assault rifle, and I asked Lina about it. She said, "That is for your self-defense, in case the militia fails." She checked to make sure that the rifle was loaded, showed me how to set it on automatic fire, and said good night.

Thinking about it afterward, I wondered why Lina had said, "in case the militia fails." The town was full of regular Army. Earlier in the evening, in the commercial district, I had seen hundreds of people bedding down for the night on the canopied sidewalks. They were from the cane town, Lina said, and from nearby villages; they were afraid to sleep in their homes. Every few yards, a young soldier had sat, cradling an automatic rifle, guarding the sleepers. And open trucks full of soldiers were cruising the streets, the soldiers singing lustily. They were letting people know that they were being protected, Lina said. They had already come past the house several times.

As I was getting ready for bed, I asked one of my housemates, a quiet young man named Alexander, why Lina had not mentioned the Army when she left.

Alexander, who had studied animal husbandry in South Africa and, as a

result, spoke English, looked at me strangely and said, "You have heard her. She believes that the militia, not the Army, must protect us."

I asked Alexander if he had a gun. "No," he said.

I asked him what he thought about my having one.

He shrugged. "The chap who usually sleeps in that room keeps that gun. I think it is not a good idea."

I poured Alexander a glass of Scotch and asked him why.

He said, "Because when the bandits come, they don't come just one or two. They come one or two hundred. You cannot fight them alone. And if they see you have a gun they will consider you the enemy."

I found it hard to believe that Renamo ever came to that part of town, much less in a force of hundreds, and said so.

Alexander stared at me. "They come," he said.

I asked him when Renamo had last come into the center of Manhiça.

"The last time they killed many people here in the cement town was January 12th," he said. "They broke into the shops on the national road and they killed eleven people. But the last attack we suffered here was three months ago—in June. They came into this road." Alexander gestured at the Fresno-like street outside the window. "I was alone here, and I was sleeping, and nobody came to warn me. When I woke up, I heard the bandits singing and firing their guns. I ran outside. There were hundreds of bandits marching in this road. They were beating drums, firing guns in the air, and shouting. It was very dark, so I just stood next to the house and said nothing, and they said nothing to me. They were singing, and they were shouting, 'Where are the men in this town? Where are the soldiers? We are the men in this town!' They went to the national road, and they looted the shops. They took clothes, and they just left their old clothes there in the road. They even took the curtains from the hotels. No one was killed in that attack. But that was when the last white people living here in Manhiça town left. They owned the hotels, and I think they didn't want to see the bandits next time wearing clothes made from their curtains."

I repeated the bandits' question: "Where *were* the soldiers?"



Alexander waved a hand toward the river. "The bandits came from three directions at once," he said. "Everybody ran in the fourth direction, including the soldiers. Why should they stay and fight? The bandits are so much stronger." Alexander regarded me seriously. "We have a very bad situation here," he said, finally.

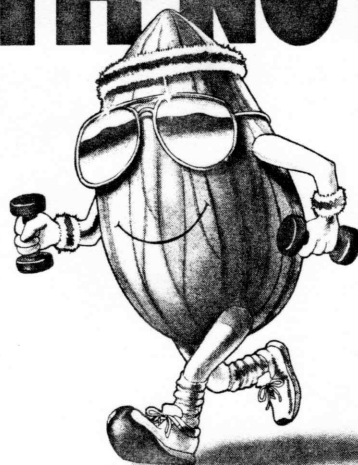
Later, lying in bed, I tried to recall if I had heard anything about militiamen standing guard nearby. Was there even any militia to fail? The month before, there had been a major militia failure a few miles south, at an agro-industrial complex called Maragra. Lina had been very upset about it. From 1982 to 1986, she had been the deputy director of Maragra, and she had created and trained the militia there herself. It had repulsed a number of Renamo attacks, but the most recent, which came late at night, had caught the Maragra militia napping. Six hundred Renamo fighters had overrun the complex, killing twenty-one people and wounding many. The most horrifying aspect of the attack was that a number of teenage boys from Maragra had joined the bandits in looting the homes of their neighbors, and had departed with Renamo. Lina had been lamenting the Maragra militia's fatal overconfidence, but the community's problems clearly went deeper than that. The war in Manhiça contained a large amount of delinquency, apparently, and nonpolitical banditry, as well as organized military activity, possibly supported by South Africa.

I decided that, Alexander's wise words notwithstanding, I liked having a rifle within reach. Somehow, perhaps by reducing, if only symbolically, my sense of vulnerability, it made the possibility of sleep slightly greater. Still, I slept poorly. The problem was less thoughts of a Renamo attack than my bed's mattress, which was thin and lumpy and had a horrible odor that seemed to get stronger every hour. Finally, after a long night, roosters began to crow, birds began to chirp. The dawn revealed a small, too blue room—blue walls, blue curtains—and slowly transformed the assault rifle from a dream-dark lifeline into a battered, prosaic old gun.

MANHIÇA was typical of nothing in Mozambique. Officially, it wasn't even part of "the emergency." There was, therefore, no free distribu-

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tion of food or clothes. (In truth, while there was no starvation in Manhiça, there were plenty of *afetados* and *deslocados*.) The highway, the railway, the abundant water, the fertility of the soil, the proximity of Maputo—all made Manhiça a special case. And the fact that it was in the far south, where the people spoke Ronga and Shangaan, and had been exposed to modern life and ideas, made it, politically, natural Frelimo territory—in contrast to many other parts of the country. And yet, paradoxically, as I travelled around Manhiça I began to feel as if I were seeing all of Mozambique's problems, and all the patterns of the war, in perfect, murky microcosm.

The murk here, as everywhere, shrouded not only the war but local farming and living arrangements. Lina said that communal villages had been a failure, and that the only one still functioning in Manhiça was a model project that received special government support—and yet we visited at least two other communal villages that seemed to be functioning. Both were building schools, and both had militias. I never did find out what sort of operation Ribangue was. Every time I asked someone working there who owned the farm, the answer was "Lina." Lina, however, denied owning it. What had probably happened was what had happened on many coöperative farms: the Ministry of Agriculture had ended up running the show, with little or no formal declaration. In any event, Ribangue was just one of many projects that engaged Lina's attention. Her job description was simple, she said: she was supposed to find out what Manhiça's farmers needed, and then go to the government to try to get those needs met. But her actual work seemed to involve everything from importing bicycles (the trading network in Manhiça, like that almost everywhere in rural Mozambique, had collapsed since independence, and Lina believed that she and the Ministry of Agriculture needed to take up some of the slack), through diagnosing crop diseases, to training militias.

There were many kinds of farmers in Manhiça: subsistence farmers, wealthier peasants, small and large private farmers, Portuguese, Chinese, African, and those on coöperatives and state farms. Lina's decisions about where to focus her assistance were critical, and highly political. Was she still

working toward Frelimo's revolutionary goal, "the socialization of the countryside"? Lina seemed impatient with the question. The former economics student pointed out that Marx had never said that agriculture had to be collectivized, and, as for Lenin, "he had his own cultural-historical situation to deal with, and we have ours." Private farmers, she conceded, were a long-term problem, but Frelimo's medium-term goal was simply to reduce the social and economic gaps between farm workers and their employers. And the government's short-term goal was even simpler: to increase production.

This was Lina's obsession as well as the government's. She talked farm talk with every farmer we saw: the tomatoes killed by the frost; the rice that was getting too much water; the ominous yellowing of the onion tops. She constantly rued her own lack of technical expertise. What she needed most, she said, was surveyors, a hydraulic engineer, and an agronomist. First, though, she needed vehicles for them. And, since they would probably have to be foreigners, she needed houses. There were no houses suitable for foreigners available in Manhiça, so new ones would have to be built. Lina also dearly wanted to establish a farm-equipment shop in Manhiça, selling seeds, pesticides, and pumps, and perhaps offering pump and tractor maintenance and repair. She was excited about the possibility of growing rice in the bottom of a lush valley she showed me, but was in despair over a mealybug infestation that was destroying the district's cassava crop—she had no idea how to combat it. She would give *anything*, she said, to have an agronomist here in Manhiça.

Wandering the back roads of Manhiça with Lina was part celebrity tour. Everywhere we went, the children ran at the van shouting, "Lina Magaia! Lina Magaia!" Peasant women gazed at her adoringly as we sped past. Lina looked entirely unlike any of the other women I saw there.

They wore *capulanas* and head scarves she was now wearing bluejeans, pin-elf boots, and a loose lavender kn blouse, the short sleeves of which kept blowing back over her shoulders. And yet she seemed beloved: the longer we drove, the more the back of the van filled with gifts of onions, bananas, lettuce, carrots, sugarcane. Many bundles were placed there by unseen hands while we were out tramping around in the fields.

Not everybody was ecstatic about seeing Lina. Several times, we came upon individuals with whom she was unhappy—"these so-called technicians they send me," she called them. They were all young men, and they all looked stricken on being found lounging behind a warehouse when they knew they were supposed to be out building a dam. After two or three of these scenes, Lina began to fume. Her biggest problem, she said, was the difficulty of delegating authority. Nobody wanted to make any decisions, so nothing got accomplished when she was not around. People had such terrible work habits! It was a hangover from colonialism. Because of slavery and forced labor, people had the habit of conserving their energy for their own *machambas*—that was why communalization had not worked. Frelimo had made a huge mistake at independence when it allowed people to start believing that life was going to be easier.

I had heard about the onset of "commandism" in relations between officials and peasants, and Lina clearly had a serious case of it going in Manhiça. Her interactions with people were hard for me to read, though. She seemed to chew out all comers without fear or favor. She was obviously a diva, self-involved and imperious. But most of her conversations were in Shangaan, so I understood nothing that was said, and several times, just when it seemed to me that she was riding roughshod over everyone, some worker would answer her more robustly than I expected, get a big laugh from everyone listening, including Lina, and then press his advantage, getting more aggressive and winning more laughs. Lina's moods were mercurial. While she was driving along in silence and I was watching her from the corner of my eye, I could see expressions of tenderness and ferocity and perplexity pass over her great fleshy features,



alternating along with her thoughts.

"Do you see why I love Manhiça?" she said, sighing and waving a hand out the window. We spent most of our time in the floodplain on the right bank of the Incomati or up on the rich green bluff at its edge, but when she asked that question we were crossing an exquisite open plain known as the Mozambique Valley. A eucalyptus wind-break ran alongside the road, which traversed brilliant fields of rice and sugarcane. "Only war could cause famine here," she said. "It's a naturally rich place. And it all makes me so sad. This farm here used to be João Ferreira's place. He was my favorite farmer. He worked so hard. He was going to be a Mozambican Inácio De Sousa." Inácio De Sousa, a white man, had been the biggest farmer in Manhiça. "But João was killed last year, along with two friends, on the way home from a wedding." Lina pointed out a young mulatto man in a battered cowboy hat who was climbing out of a truck. "That is João's brother-in-law. He is trying to run the farm, but he is very, very young. All this unnecessary suffering!" Later, on the edge of the town of Manhiça, Lina pointed to an abandoned house set back in the woods. "This is where João and his friends were ambushed," she said. "The bandits hid in that house. After shooting them, they slit their throats, and took all their clothes, leaving them naked."

I asked Lina if she had ever been ambushed. She said she had not. Several times, she had come upon the scene of a fresh attack, though, and had ferried dead and wounded in her car. She had also been involved, she said, in the defense of Maragra during Renamo attacks. I asked if she had ever been threatened personally by Renamo. She had once heard that the local bandits were hunting "the lady who wears black and organizes the militias," she said. "That was when I always wore black. But they never found me." Another time, in the province of Tete, she had heard a captured *bandido* say, "This is a real war. It has even been written in a book." She assumed that he meant a collection of her stories about Renamo atrocities in Manhiça, which had originally appeared in *Tempo* and had then been published as a book called "Dumba Nengue." "Dumba nengue" was a local expression. It meant, literally, "Trust your feet,"



and in Manhiça it referred to farming areas that had been abandoned but were sometimes visited by former residents, who came to gather fruit and nuts and were always ready to flee from Renamo. The stories were full of murder, torture, rape; of people burned, beheaded, thrown down wells. Ten thousand copies had been published in Mozambique and had quickly sold out. "Dumba Nengue" had also been translated into English and published in the United States. It was still the only local book about the war. But Lina didn't know whether the bandits in Manhiça knew that she was *that* Lina Magaia.

I got a sense of how Lina might have collected the stories for her book when we asked a farm worker in a field for directions. He had a tiny, hoarse voice, and he had trouble speaking. Lina asked him what had happened. He said that the *bandidos* had caught him near Palmeira and had slit his throat. He lifted his head so that we could see the scars. They went from ear to ear, and were at least an inch wide. It was hard to see how he had survived.

Later that day, while we were on the way to Palmeira—it's a small town on the national highway in the northern part of Manhiça—things briefly got tense. Lina spotted three men with rifles standing on a curve in the highway ahead of us. There were burned vehicles overturned along the side of the road. It was obviously an ambush spot. Lina stepped on the gas, we both slid low in our seats, and we went flying past the men, who did not move. "Those might be bandits," Lina said, as we slowed down to normal speed. "Sometimes they will come out and simply stand by the road, waiting for a truck carrying food, or a bus, or any vehicle they want to ambush. People think they're militia. There is no way to know." We stopped at the next village to ask around. Eventually, we found an old man who said that the men *were* militia. They had been stationed out there because of all the attacks on the curve. Afterward, Lina grumbled, "But is anyone feeding those militia? Is anyone paying them? If they are not being paid, how will they get food? And what will they do when they get hungry?"

We were going to Palmeira to see Zeca De Sousa, a son of Inácio De Sousa. Inácio, who died in 1976, had

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been such a respected farmer, Lina said, that Samora Machel himself had given the eulogy at his funeral, praising his honesty. Most of the white and Asian farmers in Manhiça had left after independence. Others, like a Chinese shopkeeper who owned a big banana farm we had seen near Maragra, lived in Maputo. The Portuguese farmers in Manhiça had been prosperous, unlike the illiterate European peasants who settled in, say, the Limpopo Valley, to the north. The most prosperous among them, though, had been Inácio De Sousa. He had controlled the entire banana market in Maputo. And Zeca was still here, growing bananas and rice, raising cattle, and running a large mill and rice-cleaning plant in Palmeira, where he lived, with his wife and child. We looked for Zeca in Palmeira, and were told he was in the fields. We drove out to a large, beautifully laid-out, well-drained banana farm, and found Zeca on an access road, driving a new white Japanese pickup truck with a black roll bar.

He joined us, and we took a tour of his farm. Zeca was a trim, unassuming man of about forty, wearing tinted glasses. He had a crooked, modest smile and a quiet voice. While we drove, I asked him about how the war had affected his operations. Zeca said that the farm and the mill in Palmeira had both been attacked many times. The most recent attack, three months before, had been on Palmeira. Three hundred *bandidos* had rampaged through a nearby communal village, killing and kidnapping, but had been repelled by the militia in Palmeira before they reached the mill. Zeca paid and fed full-time militias both on the farm and in Palmeira. At first, the militiamen, who were trained and equipped by the Army, had been terrified of Renamo. People in Manhiça tended to believe that the *bandidos* were "bulletproof," Zeca said. But the militias had by now killed many bandits, and morale was high. The militias usually received advance word of Renamo attacks from escaped captives. Still, Zeca had recently put up an electrified fence around Palmeira, and powerful lights, which shone all night out into the fields. He was thinking about doing the same thing on this farm. It was all very expensive, though.

I asked Zeca about his family. He

said that his wife and child had been staying in Maputo since the last attack on Palmeira. His two sisters had moved to Portugal after independence, but his mother and his brother still lived in Maputo. His brother was a pilot.

I asked Zeca about his relations with Frelimo. He said that he had lost a little land to a communal village, and that his taxes had gone up. Otherwise, he said, he had had no problems with the government.

Lina erupted: "I love this man. He is doing so much for my country, and he loves this land."

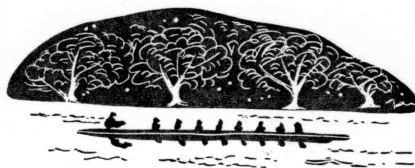
I asked Zeca if he had ever been approached by Renamo.

He was silent for a minute. Then he said, "Twice." The first time had been in 1984. A well-dressed black man had come to him in Palmeira and asked for a lift to Maputo. He said that his car had broken down in Manhiça town. He was cool, Zeca said, but he had nervous eyes. Zeca became suspicious, and turned him in to the police, who searched the man's hotel room in Manhiça. In the room they found South African and Swazi passports, photographs of Samora Machel and other Frelimo officials, and a Renamo document transferring the man from Sofala to Manhiça for "research."

"That means that he was sent to approach white farmers, to see who might support them," Lina said.

The second approach to Zeca had been only five months before. A man had come to him asking for a job, and said he had been living in Matola, a suburb of Maputo. There was something fishy about the references he gave. Zeca had him searched, and, again, the searchers found a Renamo document, transferring him from Matola to Manhiça for "research."

We were passing through a newly planted banana field. Lina stopped the van, and we all climbed out. Lina had been asking Zeca questions about his farming methods between my questions to him about the war. Now she wanted to know how he had dug the large, regular holes in this field, each with a young banana plant growing nicely inside it. Zeca reminded us that we had



seen a machine up at the farm headquarters, attached to the back of a tractor, and said that it was a special machine for digging such holes. So now, that was the last straw for Lina. As we climbed back into the van, she burst into tears. She sobbed and sobbed while Zeca and I sat and squirmed. Through her tears Lina began to rant against, of all things, government bureaucrats. They sat in their offices in Maputo and issued idiotic orders that did nothing but screw up the people trying to work in the country. They called a meeting to enlist support for the new militias without proper preparation, on the wrong day, undermining the entire project. They set ridiculous production goals that did nothing but oppress the people trying to produce, and they arbitrarily reorganized successful projects, destroying them in the process. They sent her stupid, lazy so-called technicians instead of a real agronomist who could teach her things like how to dig proper holes for young banana plants. Lina was sad, she was furious, and, for the first time in her life, she was *tired*.

Zeca and I tried to comfort her. She eventually stopped crying, wiped her face with the back of her hand, took three belts of Scotch, laughed lightly, and resumed driving, plainly in a much better mood.

THE Cubans thought well of the Territorial Defense Force. It had worked for them at the Bay of Pig. Other military advisers in Mozambique were less enthusiastic. Cuba had a strong central government and few remote areas. In Mozambique, creating militias with loyalties that were primarily local—to the farmer or factory owner or administrator who fed and paid them—carried the risk of fostering warlordism. It also seemed like a backward step in the over-all effort of nation-building, the struggle to create larger, national loyalties. But, again, this has been Frelimo's deepest political problem since independence: how to reconcile local realpolitik with abstract modern ideals. And the military reality was that in many places the regular Army was useless. In Manhiça, in March, Renamo had overrun an Army training barracks virtually without resistance, capturing a large number of weapons.

The Army could also be worse than useless. Lina and I went to see the one

cooperante living in Manhiça, an Italian named Giovanni. We found him at his warehouse, very near the spot where João Ferreira and his friends had died. Giovanni was a dapper-looking fellow about forty years old. When Lina asked him how he was, he said, "Fine. Now." His smile was tight. I thought I saw his hands shaking. Lina asked him what he meant. Giovanni said that he had been driving in from Maputo on the national highway earlier that afternoon and had come upon an ambush. A group of soldiers was looting a truck between Maluana and Esperança. He stopped and made a U-turn. The soldiers spotted him, and started shooting at him. He got away without being hit, and reached Manhiça by back roads.

Later, Lina said that Giovanni must have meant *bandidos*, but I had heard him say "*soldados*." Lina sighed hugely, and said that it was a major problem: the soldiers were ill fed. She had often had to feed them herself. But the situation was improving.

That evening, we stopped in at an old house in the center of town to see some friends of Lina's, including a shopkeeper and a part-Chinese farmer named Abraão, whom we had met earlier in his fields. Conversation centered on business and the war. Like Lina, the shopkeeper and Abraão had their families in Maputo and drove back on weekends. Abraão said that he had a hundred and fifty acres and a tractor, and employed fifty-eight people, and also owned a fishing boat in Maputo. But Abraão was not a capitalist, Lina said, because he actually worked the land. In fact, he wasn't making any profits from farming, and would do better to invest his money elsewhere. I asked Abraão if he was really such a good citizen that he made his investment decisions according to Party directives about production, and he laughed. He wasn't a Party member, he said. He just loved to work on the land. But Abraão was not against Frelimo, Lina said. She studied him. Abraão grinned. "He prefers to have an independent position," Lina said. (I later learned that Abraão had fought with the Portuguese during the *luta armada*, and that that would have disqualified him from Party membership even if he had wanted it.)

Later that evening, we ended up down the street at the Hotel Castro—

no relation to Fidel, Abraão assured me, so Americans were welcome. It was a lively bar and restaurant, with drunks falling about, a jukebox, a number of trucks parked out front which had not made it into the last convoy of the day, and soldiers posted at the doors. We ate steaks and mealie pap—a cornmeal mash that is the southern-Africa staple—and drank local beer. I inspected the new curtains—the Castro was one of the hotels relieved of their drygoods by Renamo in June—and met a large number of Lina's friends and associates. At one point, a song by a Brazilian pop singer named Roberto Carlos came on the jukebox, and Lina's face became a vision of bliss. She had owned

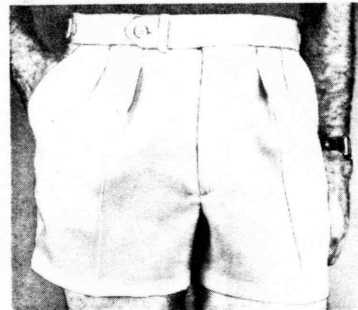
this record when she was seventeen, she said. She used to have parties at her house and play this record, and she and her friends would dance. Roberto Carlos was singing a Portuguese version of Dion's "The Wanderer," and Lina did a hilarious imitation of herself at seventeen seriously bopping. "You know, when I am not working, I really love to play," she said to me.

There were a number of soldiers in the bar, some of them drinking, some of them dancing in front of the jukebox. Few of them looked over eighteen. Abraão studied the crowd critically, then said, "There are only two good soldiers here tonight." He pointed out two older, serious-looking characters, both sober, alert, erect, and well dressed, standing at the edge of the room. One wore a greatcoat. Both wore pistols. I later noticed two young soldiers with pink flowers in their berets, and, for no particular reason, I pointed them out to Lina. Her smile disappeared. She called one of the soldiers over, and spoke to him long and quietly. After he left, she called over one of the watchful officers, and spoke to him. He left, and I asked Lina what was happening. She said that the young soldier had said he and his friend had just completed a British training course in Zimbabwe and had received the flowers in their berets as graduation gifts. That might be true, she said. Or the flowers might mean that the boys were spies for the bandits. The bandits might have told them to wear flowers so that they could be recognized, and would not be killed accidentally in an attack.

I was shocked to hear what I had



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started, and a few minutes later I went outside for some fresh air. I had seen the soldiers with the flowers in their berets go out a minute before, but I did not find them on the hotel steps. The guards in front of the hotel were extraordinarily young—they looked like children—and they wore big, unnervingly cowed East German helmets. I asked one of them where the boys with the flowers had gone. He smiled, held up his hands, and hit the insides of his wrists together. It was the sign for “arrested.”

Some hours later, I found myself back on my evil-smelling mattress, still distressed by what had happened. I had heard before about Renamo attacks in which certain soldiers suddenly turned their caps around backward, were not shot at, and, when the battle was over, left with the enemy. People said that Renamo had spies everywhere, even in the Army. But the boys in the bar with the flowers in their berets seemed to me so clearly what they said they were. (I later asked a British defense attaché about the course in Zimbabwe. He said that the training officer was from the Fusiliers, who wear a hackle, a red-and-white plume, in their cap badge, and that the training officer did indeed award a hackle, or the best locally available equivalent, to his graduates.)

The incident had led me into a series of bar conversations about the Army, some of them even more disturbing than the arrest of the young soldiers. I had asked one of my companions what he thought could induce a soldier to spy for Renamo, and he had said, “To many of these boys, there is no difference, the bandits or the Army. They are taken in just the same. They are never let go, even though the Army says they only have to serve two years. We hear that the bandits are starving, but we *know* the soldiers are starving. They do not get enough food.”

I asked if he had ever heard of soldiers ambushing vehicles on the highway.

He sneered, and said, “They do it. And they are the most dangerous, because they don’t want to leave witnesses, so they try to kill everyone. The massacre at the Third of February—that was soldiers.” The Third of February was the village near the spot where the big highway massacre had occurred the previous October. Rocked by this news, I asked two other solid Manhiça citizens, as discreetly as I

could, who they thought had committed the massacre at the Third of February. Neither blamed the soldiers, but only one blamed Renamo. The other said, very sadly, “I don’t know.” (A number of diplomats had flown by helicopter to the scene of the massacre. When I got back to Maputo, I asked one of them what he thought. He said that the Army had provided very poor protection to the convoy that was attacked, and that there was a chance—a *chance*—that soldiers had joined in the looting, which lasted for hours.)

The man who had accused local soldiers of committing the massacre was, at the same time, sympathetic to soldiers. He said, “Not only is the soldier hungry but his family, wherever they are, they are hungry, too. And he knows it. And his wife knows that if he is killed she will get nothing but a pension for six months. The soldier you see is the same man who was struggling to survive, to see his future, to understand his situation before he came to the Army. He has not stopped thinking. And so he must ask himself, ‘What am I fighting for? So that a few officers, high officials, and the bourgeoisie can eat meat, drive cars, and live in nice houses, while we eat beans, if we’re lucky, and our families starve, must walk everywhere, and sleep on the bare earth?’ Lina loves the soldiers. But have you seen her telling them that they are the victims of injustice? Have you seen her telling the peasants that? No, and you won’t hear her telling them that. Because there is nothing that she can do about it, and they will only look at *her*.”

Was this what Renamo was telling people in Manhiça?

The man sneered again. “Renamo? Who is Renamo?”

It was a good question. I had been struck by the disparity between the intrigues that Zeca De Sousa had described—the shadowy characters carrying Renamo transfer papers and engaged in dubious “research”—and the

world of the Manhiça *bandidos*, such as I had glimpsed it. Although most Renamo fighters were, like most Mozambicans, illiterate—even important commanders were reported to be illiterate—there were levels of Renamo where written records were kept, several captured caches of documents had shown. But there were other levels, probably including some of the Manhiça bands, where records were not kept, and Zeca’s experiences suggested that the communication between, say, the Manhiça bands that battled the Sousa militia and whoever sent the “researchers” to sound him out was poor at best. I had been surprised to see, near Maragra, an undestroyed bridge over the Incomati. It was in an area where Renamo had been active for years. When I pointed it out to Lina, she said that the bandits did not try to destroy infrastructure in Manhiça but simply tried to kill and terrorize. It made me wonder just what their orders, if any, were from outside Manhiça.

Local conditions dictated who Renamo was locally. The mass unemployment caused by the cutbacks in the South African mines and the hopelessness that it bred in many young men were, I had heard, a major aid to Renamo recruitment in Manhiça. The belief that the *bandidos* were bullet-proof was common throughout Mozambique; Renamo fighters, and especially Ndau-speakers, are believed to have powerful magic. And yet the main Renamo magician in Manhiça, who gave the fighters their power, was, according to Lina, a local woman named Nwamadjosi. She was the widow of a former *régulo*, and she was considered a great *curandeiro*. The “advance word” of attacks which Zeca’s militia got suggested that there was a steady traffic of local people between the Renamo camps and government territory. Nwamadjosi was an attraction, apparently, helping to swell Renamo’s ranks; perhaps she was drawing more ordinary business as well. I somehow doubted, in any case, that her line of goods included extolling the virtues of democratic elections—Renamo’s declared objective in the war.

Trying to fall asleep, I began to see the war in Manhiça as a battle between two titanic women: Lina and Nwamadjosi. It was a silly idea—and it wasn’t silly at all. Beyond the fact that they fought on opposite sides, with



very different weapons, Nwamadjosi casting spells and invoking the spirits of the ancestors, Lina importing bicycles and writing books—beyond everything they might be made to represent in the wider world of ideas, politics, values—there was the fact that each of them was a locally powerful individual. Lina was not Frelimo's sole representative in Manhiça, or even, necessarily, its most important one, but she was clearly popular. She was in no danger of becoming a warlord in Manhiça—that wasn't why she favored militias—but in another place, at another time, it would not have been inconceivable. Frelimo has been talking since independence about the need to "decentralize problem-solving in the countryside," but all its instincts have been for centralizing. To fight Renamo, to administer Mozambique, Frelimo needs to decentralize with a vengeance: to cut a thousand local deals with a thousand local honchos. Few of the arrangements will be ideal, fewer will be "modern," but a successful secular state is an impossibility at Mozambique's stage of development—except, perhaps, for international consumption. The pieces are too small, the structures of power too dense and personal, the people too soaked in the sacred.

In the morning, I discovered that, after our long evening in the Hotel Castro, Lina had gone home and written a letter to the Minister of Agriculture about the things the farmers needed in Manhiça; a letter to the local military commander about the problem of non-standard uniforms, with particular reference to the beret-flower incident; and most of her weekly column for *Noticias*. I had seen her houseguests leave for work, so I ventured to her house for coffee, and found her tapping on an old portable typewriter at her dining-room table. The night before, she had groaned, held her great head in her hands, and said, "I smoke too much, I drink too much, I eat too much, I never sleep, I am *so tired*"—but that morning she looked infinitely fresher than I felt. Her beret, in fact, seemed set at an even more rakish angle than usual. She asked me to give her a few minutes to finish the column. It was addressed to a director at the Ministry of Health who had still not handed over an ambulance that the Mozambican Red Cross had given to

Manhiça more than two years before. The director's behavior was a perfect example of office-bound Maputo thinking, and Lina was flaying him without mercy. She wanted that ambulance!

Lina's house was airy and bright, and crowded with potted plants. Pictures of her mother and her children covered a bureau top; one of the children, I knew, was a war orphan she had adopted. A surveyor's tripod caked with mud stood in a corner of the living room. The wonderful old map of Manhiça covered one wall. Mozambican pop music was playing on a radio, and in the kitchen Lina's cook was chopping vegetables. I glanced into Lina's bedroom and saw, propped next to her bed, an AK-47. Also, a pistol on the night table. And a very large knife.

I studied the map of Manhiça. We were planning to return to Maputo that afternoon, and Lina had said that she did not want to take the highway. Apparently, Giovanni's had not been the only report of an attack on the highway between Manhiça and Maputo over the past couple of days. Instead, Lina wanted to take a dirt road that ran along the bluff on the Incomati's right bank. It went through more heavily populated areas. It was dangerous at night, but in the daytime there was only one bad stretch, a few miles south of an Army training barracks. I found the barracks that Lina meant, and the dangerous stretch of road, on the map. The back road did look less vulnerable than the highway, and the bad stretch looked short.

We spent most of the day running around Manhiça. Lina was planning to go overseas on a speaking tour, and she was worried about Ribangue. The stock operations were poorly managed, and the militia needed to be ready for the next attack. She and Domingos Jasse went over his preparations several times. We ran into the local military commander, and he and Lina had a talk about the need for standard uniforms for soldiers, obviating her letter. We went down into the fields at Ribangue, and Lina pondered the blighted cassava crop. "Sometimes I feel that it's me against the land," she muttered. "And I don't know which one will win."

Finally, rather alarmingly late in the day, we were ready to leave Manhiça. We set off on the dirt road, through the cheering columns of children: "Lina Magaia! Lina Magaia!" We

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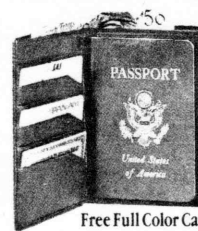
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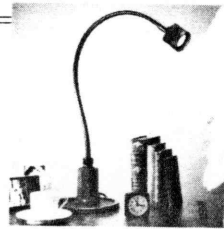
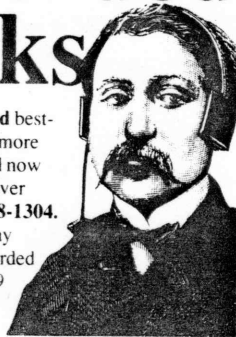
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passed through Maragra, Lina's old headquarters, where a vast old sugar refinery stood silent, closed for lack of spare parts, and the rows of worker housing, their residents nowhere in sight, looked like a town still in shock from the Renamo attack of the month before. Lina was driving very fast. Suddenly, in the woods south of Maragra, she slammed on the brakes. As we slid to a stop, hundreds of young men surrounded the van. They were jogging in the road, running straight out of the low sun—that was why I had not seen them. They were recruits from the nearby training barracks. They were all bare-chested, and they all had their heads shaved, and they came at the windshield in waves, all with hypnotic marathoners' eyes, their skin shining in the dusty golden light. They were singing: a deep, swinging, African chant. The recruits swarmed past the van, and when they saw Lina they tapped the van's roof, but they did not alter their chant. As the last of them passed, I saw that Lina's face was lit with a beatific smile. She put the van in gear, sighed, and said that she really regretted having left the Army. "I think I have the military mentality," she said. She liked the order and discipline of military life, and she believed that military discipline had a role to play in the economic development of Mozambique.

The road turned to sand as we approached the stretch where an ambush had seemed possible. Lina showed me how to release the safety on the pistol, and told me to hold it between my knees. I wondered about the wisdom of my blazing away at any attackers—maybe they wouldn't start shooting if they thought we were not armed—but I figured that Lina knew more than I did. The road dropped into a gully, the sand got deeper, and I felt a sense of menace that I had not felt before in Mozambique. Lina was battling the sand, which slowed us to walking speed. It was already dusk in the gully. The crest of the far slope was lined with abandoned houses. Although it probably took less than a minute, it seemed to take hours to climb the slope beneath the houses, the van screaming and lurching in the sand. I didn't need to be told that any attack would come from the houses. The worst moment was when we emerged from the gully into a scatter of abandoned, bullet-

riddled buildings and had to round a slow, blind corner. Nothing happened, and we were soon speeding down a gravel road, each sending regards to our separate deities.

The Scotch was all gone, but we promised ourselves a stiff drink in Maputo. Lina tried to raise someone on her two-way radio. She was going to be late delivering her column, and she wanted to reassure her editor. I had heard that Lina had sometimes called Samora Machel himself on her car radio. She laughed when I mentioned it, shook her head, and said, mostly to herself, "Samora, Samora." She gave up on the radio. I asked if she ever called President Chissano on the radio. She said, "I never have. I have other ways to talk to him." She nodded at the typescript on the seat between us. It struck me that Lina had been producing engaged journalism—writing with consequences—ever since she was the only black child in her class at school and was jailed for three months, at the age of seventeen, for publishing an anti-colonial poem. The gravel road curved and came up onto the highway. We were now out of Manhiça, and out of ambush territory. The soldiers at the checkpoints seemed surprised to see us. Lina handed out cigarettes, and we headed for the city.

While the buildings multiplied around us, Lina said, "So you have seen Manhiça. People here in the city will tell you Manhiça is too dangerous. They put their hands on their heads and say, 'Oh, all these tragical things!'" Lina did a good imitation of a Maputo worrywart. Then she said, "Yes, there are tragical things, but that is why we must fight. We must not abandon Manhiça." We skirted the crowded, smoky edge of the cane city, passed the United States Embassy, the Hotel Polana, and the South African trade mission, and drove down into the center of the cement city. Outside the editorial offices of *Noticias*, Lina called to a man standing on the sidewalk. She handed him the typescript of her column and asked if he knew where the editor's office was. He said he did. That was all she needed to hear. Lina made a U-turn and we went to find a drink, agreeing not to talk—at least, not that evening—about tragical things.

—WILLIAM FINNEGAN

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