

ITH In Mozambique, a Different Struggle

Anti-Marxist Rebels' Gains Felt by All of Southern Africa

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SERRA DA GORONGOSA, Mozambique — The chugging sound of the train caught the guerrillas by surprise and brought the column to a halt in the head-high grass.

"Johnny!" yelled the rebel chief, Afonso Dhlakama, to a commander. "Run with half the men and mount an ambush!"

In two hours, the impromptu assault left another locomotive burned, another railroad blocked, men and women dead — underscoring why this six-year-old conflict is more than just another African war.

The guerrillas of the Mozambique National Resistance, often known by its acronym, Renamo, say they fight a new kind of African war, an ideological battle against communism.

Their fight is unlike the continent's many "liberation struggles," tribal-based civil wars and border clashes over territory.

Despite growing Soviet-bloc support for President Samora Machel's Marxist regime, the rebels have advanced rapidly north and south during the past two years from traditional strongholds in the center.

Independent sources confirm that the rebels are operating in nine of Mozambique's 10 provinces, preferring to strike at the country's vital transportation network.

The fighting affects the whole of southern Africa.

Most states in the region charge

that the rebels' struggle is simply an extension of South Africa's battle to maintain white rule at home.

Pinched between South Africa and the Indian Ocean in the south, Mozambique and its 13 million people stretch northward along almost a third of the East African coast.

Mozambique is crossed by five international railways linking five landlocked countries, including Zimbabwe, to its three deep-water ports — their only alternative to South African harbors.

Mozambique and its neighbors dismiss the guerrillas as bandits. They say Pretoria backs the rebels less to depose President Machel and end his support for anti-apartheid African National Congress insurgents than to paralyze Mozambique and increase the whole region's dependence on South African outlets to the sea.

South Africa and the guerrillas deny the charges.

But on this day Mr. Dhlakama, 30, the rebel group's "president and supreme commander," and his men had other worries.

They were not expecting to hear a train as they marched toward the Trans-Zambezia railroad linking hinterland Malawi to Beira, Mozambique's second largest port. Sabotage had put the railroad out of action for almost two months.

As the guerrilla column climbed from a gully, the train was almost upon it, advancing slowly toward Beira, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) southeast.

Mr. Dhlakama and his khaki-

clad men, who had been on a sabotage mission, sprinted toward the track.

The guerrillas, numbering about 70, blasted away with AK-47 rifles, two 60mm mortars, two light machine guns and a bazooka, all Soviet-bloc or Chinese made.

The 15-carriage freight train halted instantly, and troops in armored freight cars returned fire with heavy machine guns, mortars and small arms.

For nearly two hours, the outnumbered, outgunned guerrillas kept up intense fire.

Then, worried about shrinking ammunition supplies and the possibility that a spotter plane might call in MiG-17 jet fighters stationed at Beira, Mr. Dhlakama ordered a quick assault and the burning of the locomotive.

Then the guerrillas withdrew, carrying captured weapons — two machine guns and three AK-47 rifles — and the corpses of their two dead.

They also carried three wounded, including Johnny Kupenga, the regional commander. Two visiting southern regional commanders were wounded but walking.

Three days and 75 blistering miles later, at his central base below the towering Serra da Gorongosa mountains, Mr. Dhlakama read an intercepted government radio message.

It said 27 soldiers, including two Cuban gunners, had died and there were "many wounded, including the wives of some officers."

That night there was dancing at the base and chanting: "Down with Machel! Down with communism! Long live the revolution!"

Mr. Dhlakama, eldest son of a tribal chief, ignored the killings at the ambush. But he was ecstatic at having captured a Chinese machine gun. His recurring excitement at news of captured weapons underlined the rebels' complaint that "our Western friends give us so little."

He claims two-fifths of the country as "liberated areas" and another two-fifths as operational zones. But he said only 11,000 of his 15,000 men were armed.

All his few heavy weapons and 45 percent of his light weapons were captured, he said.

At a boot camp a day's march to the north, a commander said recruits never fired more than 30 rounds in training before going into combat.

At the central base, men and women nurses extracted bullets from the wounded without anesthetics in a cane-and-thatch operating theater.

Food was plentiful for the 300 guerrillas at the base. Rebel *machambas*, or farms, provide rice, sorghum, vegetables and fruit. A hunting camp in the Gorongosa game reserve supplies fresh or dried meat.

On one farm, 39 captured government soldiers worked under loose guard. One, Lieutenant Antonio Masungu, an intelligence officer, said he had been captured only 50 miles north of Maputo, Mozambique's capital, showing the scale of guerrilla operations.

Hardly a day passed without Soviet-built Antonov transport planes droning overhead, causing Mr. Dhlakama to proclaim the need for ground-to-air missiles.

His forces have cut so many roads and railroads — only one of the five international lines still lies outside striking distance — that Antonovs fly everything from corn to cannons from coastal cities to the interior.

They also ferry thousands of unemployed and "marginal" people expelled from cities to "re-education camps" and state-run "communal villages."

Early this year, Zimbabwe imposed severe fuel rationing for a



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A Mozambican anti-Marxist guerrilla teaches recruits how to load a grenade launcher.

month after saboteurs severed its oil pipeline to Beira, the third sabotage in a year. Mr. Dhlakama said he would continue cutting it "until Zimbabwe withdraws its troops from Mozambique."

Several thousand troops from Zimbabwe and Tanzania plus several hundred Cubans and East Germans have bolstered President Machel's forces during the last two years.

Mr. Machel, 50, came to power at independence in 1975 after leading his Mozambique Liberation Front, known as Frelimo, through a 10-year insurgency against Portuguese colonial rule.

He quickly turned Frelimo into a Marxist-Leninist party and Mozambique into a one-party state.

Nationalization of land and businesses, the gathering of peasants into "communal villages," and a state monopoly on education followed.

About 90 percent of the 260,000

Portuguese settlers left and the economy crumbled.

Mr. Machel backed insurgents fighting the white minority governments in South Africa and Rhodesia, provoking their vengeance — and the birth of his own guerrilla opposition.

The white authorities of Rhodesia created Mr. Dhlakama's Mozambique National Resistance in 1976-77 during its own guerrilla war.

It became a serious threat to Mr. Machel only after UN-supervised elections in 1980 led Rhodesia to black majority rule as Zimbabwe, and Renamo's headquarters staff left hurriedly for South Africa.

One European diplomat said outside Mozambique that the guerrillas were "almost completely" dependent on South Africa for external support.

He said a highly secret frontier wars section in Pretoria coordinated "special training, supplies, radio

communications and air drops" for the guerrillas.

South African Air Force pilots use unmarked planes to parachute supplies to the guerrillas, he said.

Mr. Dhlakama, angrily pounding a table, denied "any links" to South Africa. He said he targeted Mozambique's transport system and took foreign technicians hostage simply because "no guerrilla movement has ever seized power without first battering its enemy to its economic knees."

In the past 20 months, the guerrillas have seized 50 West European and Soviet-bloc civilian technicians. The 20 Westerners were eventually released unconditionally. Six Bulgarian engineers were freed by government troops.

On Aug. 21, the guerrillas killed 20 Soviet mining technicians and captured 24 others — who are still in captivity — in an attack on a gem mine 280 miles northeast of Serra da Gorongosa.