

Zimbabwe army drives rebels back to Malawi

Parade Reporter

THE massive military campaign mounted by Zimbabwe's armed forces in Mozambique has driven Renamo rebel leader Afonso Diakama out of his Gorongosa headquarters and back to the Malawi border north of Tete.

Designed to weaken the rebel leader's position at the negotiating table, the offensive comes at a time when Frelimo has just liberalised Mozambique's constitution to incorporate a multi-party state.

For the first time in its post-independence history Frelimo is no longer enshrined as the sole and ruling party — one of Renamo's key demands for agreeing to a ceasefire.

But since it made that demand with the covert clout of the South African regime to back it up, regional politics has changed so much that the bespectacled bandit leader has found himself holding the cards to a worthless hand.

Before Pretoria's President de Klerk embarked on his version of apartheid's perestroika, it suited South Africa to cripple its neighbours, forcing them to expel the ANC and turn them into enfeebled, dependent client states — and Diakama was the pawn to do it for them in Mozambique.

But with its efforts to rehabilitate itself back into the regional and world community following the unbanning of the ANC, South Africa will be looking outside its borders for markets that will satisfy its enormous manufacturing power and potential once freed of

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RENAMO LEADER AFONSO DLAKAMA

RENAMO ON THE RUN

sanctions.

That means the rehabilitation of Mozambique, the mending of its fences with Zimbabwe (the recent visit here by South African MPs is an example), and continued moves towards "irreversible change" and a free and democrat-

ic South Africa.

Mozambique has already instituted more liberal trade and investment policies than Zimbabwe in its efforts to attract the outside capital that will help heal the devastation of 15 years of conflict which has turned the country into

one of the poorest in the world.

Already South African, Zimbabwean and multi-national enterprises like Lonrho have established themselves in Mozambique ready to capitalise on peace and the anticipated investment. Some Portuguese are also returning and investing in the fertile land.

But Diakama, if he's not careful, will not figure in such a future. He has served his purpose and now he must negotiate or die.

But it's taking a long time for the message to sink in. Diakama continues to insist on a withdrawal of all Zimbabwean troops from Mozambique as the other condition for a ceasefire. An impossible demand considering our dependence on the Beira Corridor and other trade routes through Mozambique.

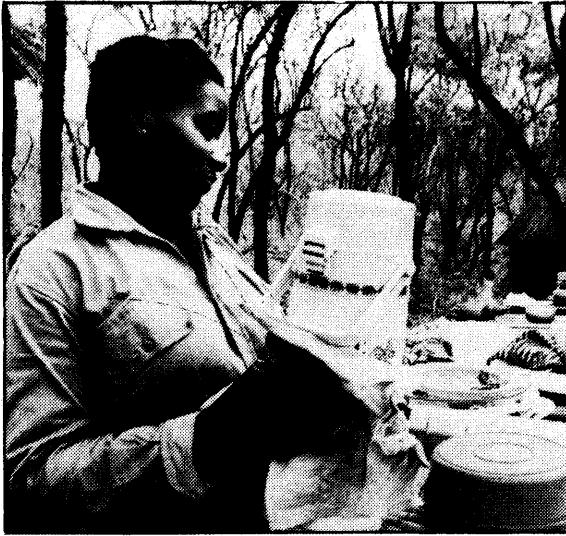
Ironically, South Africa too, is being tormented by Renamo's unruly bandits, who continually blow up the power lines from Cahora Bassa which feed into the South African national grid, and Escom (South Africa's equivalent to ZESA) is known to be desperate to stop this ritual.

It's not inconceivable therefore to see South African troops in Mozambique defending key installations like Cahora Bassa and the



These are Diakama's rag-tag, hit-and-run troops, driven back to tiny field quarters somewhere on the Malawi border.

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RENAMO'S 'NERVE CENTRE'

LEFT: Big Agnes claimed to have walked all the way from Gorongosa just before this picture was taken. She runs the kitchen at Diakama's headquarters.

RIGHT: This young Renamo rebel's beret bears the badge of Transkei's paratroop battalion, which was trained by former Selous Scouts commander Ron Reid-Daly. South Africa's role in supplying and training Renamo has been an open secret for years, but F.W. de Klerk's apartheid perestroika is likely to turn the tables on Afonso Diakama's rag-tag rebels.



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frequently attacked railway line between South Africa and Maputo some time in the future.

A scenario, which is perhaps not too fanciful, is of Zimbabwean and Frelimo troops in the middle and north of Mozambique, and South Africans to the south, which would reduce Renamo to even more of a rag-tag, hit-and-run organisation.

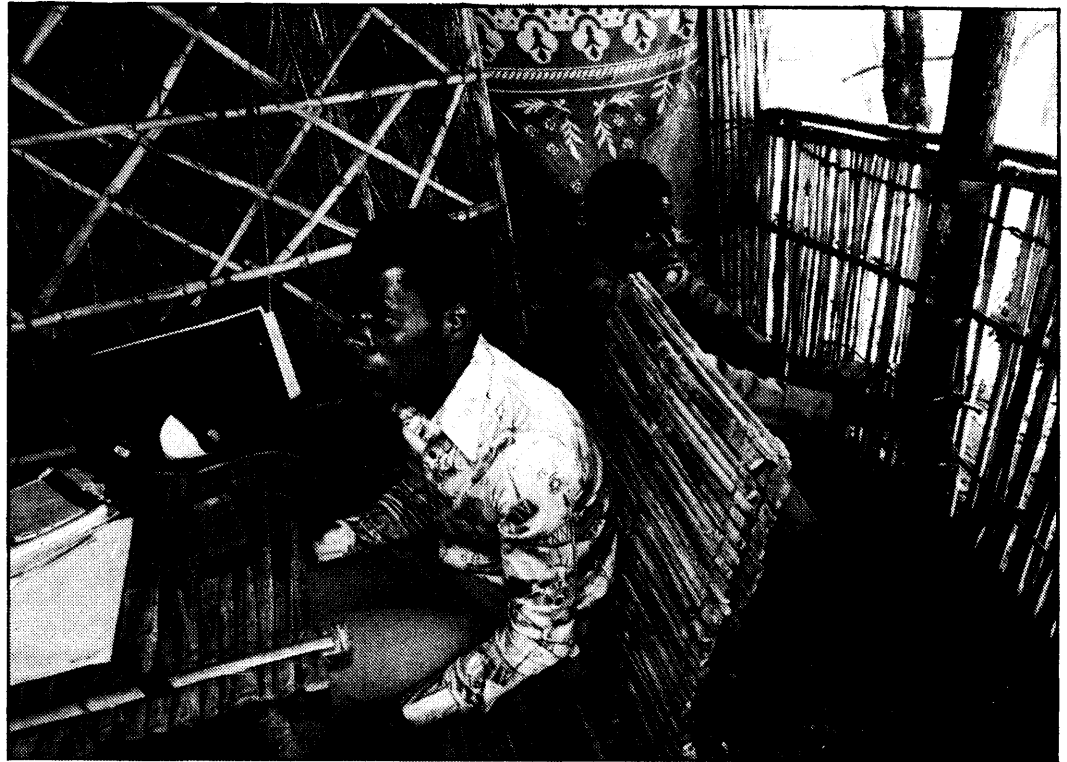
Parade knows Diakama is running out of money and weapons, and according to a recent report published in South Africa, he is lurking just a "hop and a skip" away from the safety of the Malawi border.

As we went to press he had agreed to attend another round of talks in Rome with the Mozambican government and is known to be receiving considerable personal help from the Kenyans, although both have denied this.

Whether this reluctant "willingness" to talk is an indication of Diakama's realisation that his bargaining power is rapidly weakening, is difficult to say.

But our photographs here of Diakama are clearly of a man with his back against the wall holed up in small, primitive field quarters, surrounded by no more than 30 men at arms after being flushed out of Gorongosa by the Zimbabwean onslaught.

Although Dhiakama told the South African reporter that the camp was established especially



The "nerve centre" of Afonso Diakama's rebel headquarters somewhere near Mozambique's border with Malawi. The radio equipment was supplied by South Africa.

for him, there is no question that this deception was clearly meant to play down the fact that he had lost his sprawling base camp to the "bombing and bombing by Zimbabwean aircraft".

"I am the only rebel leader who lives with his people right here in the country," the reporter quotes him as saying. But with the bord-

er just a hop and a skip away, that may not be true for much longer.

Malawi has long been Diakama's ally, and despite efforts by the Frontline States to woo the ageing life president, Dr Hastings Banda, to assist in their campaign to bring peace to the region, Renamo must still receive assistance, for there is no way the

rebel leader could operate his headquarters so close to the border, and fly in and out of Malawi without the authorities knowing.

Certainly, Zimbabwe is making a vital contribution towards forcing Diakama to negotiate for peace — and a chance at the polls — with the few cards that remain in his hand.