



Roxo in a maize field giving instructions to his men. Roxo had intimate knowledge of terrain, and most of his troops had been with him for years. This paid off in more KIAs than the entire Portuguese colonial army. Weapons and uniforms captured from the enemy.



# THE WHITE DEVIL OF MOZAMBIQUE

## ONE-MAN ARMY AGAINST FRELIMO

by S. Nielsen

**T**HE big-game hunter was preoccupied with making a head-count when the leopard attacked. Who would expect an early morning attack? His rifle was not close by. Man and beast struggled for over an hour. The hunter bit the leopard, until the animal's body was covered with wounds. The man did not even have a hunting knife, and soon all his protective clothing was stripped away by the leopard's mad clawing. Finally, naked and covered with blood, the hunter succeeded in getting a death grip. He felt the lithe, muscular body weaken, relax, and fall to the ground, neck broken.

The man was Daniel Francisco Roxo — an African legend. A one-man army

whose head price was \$100,000. A warrior whose troops of less than 100 killed more Frelimo terrorists in Mozambique than the Portuguese colonial army of 60,000. A man who strangled a leopard with his hands. A merciless killer, but a man who refused to torture the enemy. A man with an African wife and six children, who loved his home life. A man of charisma and controversy, of fact and fiction.

Roxo was born in 1933 in northeast Portugal, a tough, mountainous area, whose people are known for being hard-working, brave — and enjoying good wine. Roxo emigrated to Mozambique in the early '50s, and worked there first as a civil servant. He helped construct a

year later — women came between him and one of Portugal's highest decorations.

"It was not unreasonable thirst for terrorist blood," he said, "but my own fault. I was too greedy . . . for women. I think they have the ability to drive men crazy."

Roxo had learned from spies in Tanzania that Chinese nurses were in a terrorist hospital in the Tenga hills, about 200 kilometers from the Tanzanian border. To reach the camp, Roxo and his troops had to cross the Luangua River, which was in full flood at that time of year. He baited his men for the operation



UPPER RIGHT: Roxo delivers fallen comrade. In over 10 years of fighting, he lost only three men. ABOVE: Relaxing at home with two of his six children. Captured weapons decorate his house.

with the mystique associated with Chinese girls. He said they could help themselves, but "save one for me."

The group of 22 men quickly understood why the camp had not been hit before; it was a long, tiring march through difficult terrain riddled with terrorist camps. As they approached the Luangua River flood plain, they ran into a terrorist patrol and managed to bring down five out of seven. Roxo knew that the two who escaped would alert the terrorist camp and hospital. Time was of the essence, but the river had to be crossed. Roxo gave orders to his men to wait in an ideal ambush position. Then, he went on recon to locate the terrorist base. The agreed signal was the sound of a night owl.

Roxo could smell the river. It had to be nearby. By twilight, he was moving up its banks. His keen sense of smell detected the odor of cassava, a potato-like plant, a staple African food. Roxo knew he was close, and continued forward with caution. Suddenly, in front of him a shadow — the camp guard. The terrorist camp was only a few yards away, but Roxo knew the guard would go off duty in a few minutes. The terrors kept banking hours — guard duty from 0500 to 1900 only. At exactly 1900, the terrorist started returning to base. Roxo followed, and there was the camp, neatly spread out along the river. It consisted of huts made of branches, grass and mud, basically hidden under the African vegetation, invisible from the air. A camp of at least 100 terrors.

#### THE NIGHT OWL AND THE JACKAL

Roxo planned carefully. He knew that with his small force, he could not cut off all escape routes. A quick surprise action was the only way to go.

Within seconds of the night owl's call, Roxo's men were in place. He told them what to do by drawing his hand across his throat. The guards coming on duty at 0500 must be removed as the first piece of business. With his hands, Roxo indicated

that it would happen at sunrise. His men immediately understood his directions, and they systematically surrounded the camp. Five minutes to remove the guards. Attack at the call of the jackal. Now!

Roxo not only directed, he was in the center of the fray. His hunting knife already resheathed, after being wiped in the grass, having done its duty. Four terrorists dispatched, yet not a leaf moved. The camp was stirring. A bundle of automatic rifles leaning against a barrel caught Roxo's eye.

The cry of the jackal pierced the morning air. Roxo and his 22 men hit the camp by storm. Roxo was in the middle, kicking the rifles, getting them out of the way. Fifteen terrorists were down: Permanently. The men used bayonets, killing the terrors as they ran past.

Roxo took a bad shot in the leg, but it didn't slow him down. Suddenly, it was over. The last of the Frelimo took to their heels. Roxo's men were all intact, but extremely tired. They had not slept in days. Thirty-six terrorists were dead.

### THE LONG MARCH BACK

Roxo was very far from base and the nearest military installation was a few hundred kilometers away. Roxo was standing in a pool of blood. His men did not notice because they were attaching Roxo's famous calling cards to the chests of the dead: cards with a broad black border, white background, and a distinct black cross on the front. Roxo had signed them all.

But the operation was not yet over. Four men were sent across the flooding river. They obeyed without question. They were ordered to look for a supply store or ammunition. In the meantime, Roxo sat down with the taste of blood in his mouth. Only then, did his men realize that he was wounded. The four men returned with food and ammunition. Roxo's suspicions were right. Yet, the men were still disappointed. Where were the Chinese nurses? Maybe, next time. With a wounded leader, they knew they had to return to base.

For the next 12 hours, Roxo was carried through the jungle on his men's backs. There was no question of using a stretcher. Near the trip's end, he had to be tied on, he was so weak. Throughout the entire trip, there was no talking and no eating. The march's pace was only broken when Roxo was transferred from one back to another. Finally, they reached a military camp and Roxo got medical help. Within a couple of weeks he was fit and ready to go.

### STILL WOMAN CRAZY

Roxo, a determined man, had not forgotten the Chinese nurses. Besides, he had admitted to his wife that he was convinced that the terrorist bullet hit him because he was too concerned about getting a Chinese nurse. He had to prove he

was right. The circumstances were also more advantageous.

Roxo received intelligence from army leaders that commandos had invaded the region where he had just been and cleared out the Frelimo bases. The terrors had fled to Tanzania.

This time Roxo's group crossed the river like a Sunday picnic. On their way to Tenga, they questioned locals about terror activities. They noticed a child with a wound dressed with professional care. The child admitted he had been looked after by Chinese nurses at the Tenga hospital.

Roxo and his men never did find those elusive Chinese nurses, but another distraction awaited Roxo back at base.

Radio Peking, Radio Moscow and Radio Tanzania all announced Roxo's death to the world in glowing terms. His leg wound had been reported as fatal. Just more publicity for Roxo, whose answer to it all was: "Ever since those damned broadcasts, the Frelimo have received enough of my 'death' cards to build a house of cards."

### THE HUNTER

Roxo's prowess as a hunter was legendary. He worked downwind from the enemy just like a lion or any beast of prey on the hunt. He mastered animal and bird calls and used them to signal to his men. His reactions were immediate. There is a story that he ran down a Frelimo and simply caught him by the collar, tearing the man's rifle out of his hand.

Another time, his group startled a gazelle while on the march. It ran diagonally across their path. Roxo immediately dropped his rifle and raced towards the gazelle, grabbed it in mid-

leap, and snapped its neck in one flowing movement.

This was the same method he used in tracking down terrorists. He said of himself, "I place myself in the skin of a Frelimo and I think with an African's brain. That way I work out what he will do next. Nineteen times out of 20 I am right."

### UNORTHODOXY WINS

Roxo's unorthodox methods sometimes raised army eyebrows. For example, his plan to free citizens abducted by terrorists. Part of the terrorist strategy was to intimidate and terrorize the local population by "relocating" them. They were taken over the border to Tanzania. Some were trained as soldiers or ammunition carriers. Others were used as cooks or forced to cultivate terrorist food crops. Many of the women were raped. All were heavily indoctrinated.

Roxo's job was to free the displaced people and get them to protected areas. He learned of a terrorist camp about 400 kilometers from Vila Cabral, his home base, which reportedly held 400 local people hostage. Roxo ordered 17 men to dress like the hostages and infiltrate the camp. The men, dressed in rags, were quickly accepted in the camp, and soon knew the routine. At night, one or two would slip away and report to Roxo. He planned to start the attack before dawn. He arrived at 0400 to check out the camp. He signaled the men by animal sounds and they sneaked out of the camp to collect weapons and ammunition from him, before slipping back into camp. They attacked at 0500. Confusion was total: the terrorists were being attacked from within. Before they could get organized, five were dead, four captured — the rest

**M**ozambique — more than 308,000 square miles of fertile land situated across the channel from Madagascar, bordered by the Indian Ocean, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, Zambia, Malawi, and Tanzania. More than 95 percent of the population of 10 million is made up of black Africans, most of whom speak a Bantu dialect. Before the independence agreement, there were about 170,000 whites (largely Portuguese).

Mozambique is overwhelmingly agricultural, with the majority of blacks engaged in subsistence cultivation. The principal crops are maize, cassava, pulses, rice, potatoes, plantains, groundnuts, and sesame. Cotton and cashew nuts are the main cash crops. Mineral wealth remains largely unexplored. However, the Cabora Bassa hydro-electric project,

begun in 1969 across the Zambesi River, will be the largest electrical supplier in all Africa and will facilitate industrial growth in Mozambique and surrounding countries. Mozambique also derives considerable income from moving goods from landlocked countries to her ports.

Mozambique was occupied at the beginning of the 16th century by Portuguese explorers. The Portuguese never successfully dominated the interior and their influence was mainly destructive. Forced labor and slavery were rampant.

After the 1926 revolution in Portugal, the mother country took more interest in her African colonies: Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique. The home government tried to push economic development and black "assimilation." In 1951, Mozambique became an "overseas province," and in 1972 a "self-governing" state. However, by that time nationalist sentiment could no longer be assuaged.

disappeared into the bush. The hostages were freed and returned home.

### ABDUCTION FROM THE MISSION

Roxo's unorthodox methods also got him in trouble with the Catholic church. He stole his bride from a Catholic mission and counted this episode as one of his most successful forays. He had noticed Cecelia, an attractive young black girl, at a mission station in the vicinity of Masangulo, about 90 kilometers from Vila Cabral. Portuguese women would have little to do with Roxo. His profession, they felt, precluded a long-time commitment.

Cecelia and Roxo became acquainted, and things took a natural turn. He took her off into the bush. However, the Catholic church took a dim view; looked for Roxo for months, and even reported the matter to the government. But the couple was never caught and finally the affair was remedied in the conventional manner. They now have six children.

### AHEAD OF THE GAME

Roxo was a keen political observer and guessed the true nature of the growing unrest in Africa long before the so-called experts. In 1962, he noticed the restlessness of the indigenous population. Political agitators, many from Tanzania, were cropping up all over. They made fiery freedom speeches and wild promises to the untutored bush population.

The most significant event came when 1,500 whites were killed in the Portuguese colony of Angola because the authorities there were unprepared. Roxo did not want this to happen in Mozambique, so he went to the Portuguese authorities with his information and political estimation of the

situation. He knew things would deteriorate, and that big-game hunting was over as a profession.

He made his move and got appointed as a clerk in social psychiatry. His job was to warn the natives of the dangers of a possible war and to prepare them not to believe terrorist propaganda.

He was enormously successful because of his wide-spread reputation and the complete trust the natives had in him. He was not considered one of the "great white hunters" because he did not use blacks to do his hunting for him. He always took part and would not sit around the fire waiting for the trophies to come in. The local people gave him all the information he needed. He was one of them.

### NATIVE UPRISINGS

It happened in 1964. The guerrilla war officially started when two little villages were simultaneously attacked by terrorists. Roxo was sent to ascertain whether help had been given the terrorists by Mozambique natives. His recon took eight days. He marched over 100 kilometers. He reported to headquarters, but nothing was done.

Then, on 24 August 1964, a Dutch missionary was attacked and killed by terrorists using bows and arrows. It was the first white death. Portuguese troop reinforcements were sent to the area. They were new recruits fresh from Lisbon, who knew nothing about jungle warfare. Roxo was brought in to teach them. For two months, he trained them in the jungles and harsh mountain terrain. It was tough going, in more ways than one. They were slow to learn, and Roxo came to an important conclusion.

Terrorists are jungle people, he told himself. City people cannot fight bush

people. Bush people would have to be fought by *better* bush people.

### HELL COLUMN FORMED

Roxo rounded up his old hunting companions and received the army's permission to form his own autonomous unit. So, the *coluna infernal* (column from hell) was born. Roxo trained them not to be afraid of gun-fire by shooting as close to their feet as he could. The men would not budge. Then, they would take off at a run, and still the Kalashnikov would chatter after their heels. He taught them to walk so lightly through the jungle that landmines were not triggered. The men were in such good condition that they carried out missions at a dead run, striking so quickly that they gained the reputation of being in two places at once.

### TYPICAL ROXO FASHION

One incident illustrates how he put these techniques to work. Roxo received information that Frelimo reinforcements were crossing a river between Mozambique and Tanzania. He just sat back and waited until the terrs had joined up with the main group. He and a group of his men were dropped by helicopters near the base but out of earshot. They quickly grouped and attacked so suddenly that the terrorists' only recourse was to use bayonets. There was no time to fire. Roxo caught four single-handedly. Another four were shot dead. The rest fled. Roxo's inventory after mopping up was two mortars, three heavy machine guns, many important documents, hundreds of camouflage uniforms, ammunition, a radio transmitter and a field telephone. All hostages in the camp were freed and brought to safety. An excellent haul, and not bad PR.

### COUNTING COUP

In 1972, with 10 years of anti-terrorist activity behind, Roxo captured more than 200 weapons and was credited with 40 kills. The following year he bagged another 30, and collected more than 200 weapons, including 14 heavy and six light machine guns, two long-range cannons, four light anti-aircraft cannons, two mortars, two flamethrowers, 30 Kalashnikovs, nine machine pistols, and 50 Siminov automatic rifles. Roxo lost one man.

### A PARTING SHOT

The man was only the third Roxo lost in a decade of fighting. It was early 1974. A group of about 15 terrorists heavily armed with modern automatic Chinese and Russian rifles, some with nightsights, were moving south to Vila Cabral, the strongest white outpost in the far northwest. It was the capital of Niassa Province, seat of the provincial governor, a strong military base — and Roxo's home. The goal was to move about 50 kilometers from the town and wait to be joined by other groups of infiltrators. They were planning a night attack to coincide with attacks farther south. It was to be a psychological blow

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The insurgent movement was well under way by 1964. Several nationalist groups had united to form the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo), headed by American-educated Eduardo Mondalane. When the Portuguese refused to consider independence, Frelimo initiated guerrilla warfare in northern Mozambique. Mondalane was killed by a mailbomb in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 1969. He was eventually succeeded by Somoa Machel, president of the People's Republic of Mozambique since independence in 1975.

Frelimo received aid from several foreign sources, mainly bordering African countries, but also Sweden, Red China, and Russia. Frelimo forces were considered the best-equipped and trained of the African "freedom fighters."

Independence was precipitated by the military overthrow of the Por-

tuguese government on 25 April 1974, mainly because of dissatisfaction at home with the economic drain to the African colonies. The new regime favored self-determination. A number of reform measures were enacted. Negotiations started with Frelimo, leading to a June 1974 cease-fire, followed by an agreement on Mozambique's independence in June 1975. As black rule became a reality, increased racial violence erupted. There were wide-spread reports of atrocities and massacres on both sides. There was an exodus of Europeans.

Transition to black rule was poorly prepared and too sudden. The economy collapsed overnight, deprived of its manpower. The government recruited from socialist countries, but there were language and readjustment difficulties.

The new Marxist government tried to entice Portuguese cadres to return, but the attempt was met with limited success.

—S. Nielsen

available in this country. Dr. Shick reminds SOF readers that it is always advisable for shooters and non-shooters to have protective eyewear in any shooting situation.



—S. Nielsen

## ROXO

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along with the lightning attack on a major center, Vila Cabral.

To the south another group of blacks was on the prowl. The *coluna infernal*. Roxo held up two fingers. He smelled the terrorists at 200 meters. The Frelimo were nervous because their scout had reported that the white devil was near, the one who killed with his bare hands.

At that very moment, Roxo attacked. Half the Frelimo scattered, their ambush plan abandoned. It was over in minutes. One of Roxo's men was wounded. The troops started to relax in the after-battle silence. Then, through that silence, the sound of a single shot. The bullet slammed into the heart of one of Roxo's men. He died without a word.

### VENGEANCE IS MINE

The man had been with Roxo for six

years. Roxo ordered one of his men to radio a helicopter to find out what was happening. In the meantime, he was gone, slipping into the jungle, blending with the vegetation, a death machine on the run. He knew his goal and kept after it for seven kilometers. Coming to a swift halt, nose in the air, he knew there were six grouped ahead of him, totally at ease, suspecting nothing. Several of the group moved off into the forest. It was time to act. Roxo jumped into their midst like a wild thing. Two managed to loosen their rifles, but the Kalashnikov was already chattering. A neat horseshoe pattern appeared on each chest. The corpses were left with Roxo's death card soaking up the blood. Swift revenge — and sweet.

### LIVING BY THE SWORD

Roxo was in the world's most dangerous business for more than 10 years. He was the epitome of the fighting machine, a one-man army, using both cunning and knowledge. He knew there was a price on his head, a substantial one. His capture or death would have been a great event for any terrorist soldier.

His instructions to his men were as direct and uncompromising as the man himself:

"If you see me being taken prisoner, shoot me."

It didn't come that way for Daniel Francisco Roxo. In the fall of 1976 he stepped on a landmine and died the way he lived.



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### CAMOUFLAGE CAPS

