

Mozambique: Waiting for Peace

DISCREET moves appear to be underway to secure a negotiated peace to the conflict in Mozambique while avoiding a clear division of power with the Renamo rebels.

At the same time there has been a notable thaw in previously tense relations between Maputo and Pretoria, a development seemingly related to efforts to end the civil war.

For Mozambique the advantage lies in encouraging South Africa to play a constructive role in the Mozambican peace process, a task which Maputo hopes Pretoria will see as being in its own interests.

In recent weeks we have noted increasingly solid signs that Western interests are pushing solution scenarios to the 11 year old guerrilla conflict which has ruined the Mozambican economy and turned the population into nomads and refugees.

1 The Moderates:

Non-orthodox members of the ruling Frelimo party are today privately criticising the late Mozambican leader Samora Machel attributing to him entire responsibility for a policy that has brought the country to economic ruin. More vociferous critics go so far as to label him "a dictator" and all point to the guerrilla war and Machel's inability to resolve it, as a prime complaint.

Criticism of Machel (his portraits have all but disappeared from the walls of government offices and other public areas) has further significance: it confirms a benevolent expectation that his successor, Joaquim Chissano will seek and find solutions for the nation's problems and especially the war. This even extends to the point where some now call the war, Machel's "burdensome legacy". Chissano is clearly aware of the national desire to end the war. It is a widespread

sentiment present virtually wherever Mozambicans meet. Chissano's consolidation of his position will largely depend on how he responds to this deep desire.

But this desire does not find a corresponding echo at all levels of the Frelimo leadership. There are orthodox groups which believe that the "amnesty law" (offered to rebels to encourage them to change sides) goes far enough in bringing about a solution while the moderates hold it possible to go "a little further". Frelimo's orthodox wing, represented by an increasingly decrepit Marcellino dos Santos, is currently a minority in the decisionmaking bodies of the ruling party. But its ability to stir things up remains great. A few weeks after Armando Guebuza (Frelimo's number 2) made some conciliatory and goodwill gestures towards Pretoria, dos Santos dug up the matter of South Africa's alleged "assassination" of Machel.

The current political changes underway in Mozambique (see Vol 1 No 6 page 15 and Vol 1 No 5 page 15) suggest that the moderate wing, which counts on many of the so-called "recycled" cadres especially military men who have recanted recent radicalism, is slowly winning ground in Frelimo. Indeed there are signs that at Frelimo's 1989 congress, only residual revolutionaries will remain.

In private the moderates are categorical that the war cannot be won militarily. But this does not translate into pure and simple backing for talks designed at sharing power with Renamo.

2 External Pressures

Likewise none of Mozambique's main foreign partners - United States, Britain, France and West Germany - believes the war has a military solution. They argue that the government's position in the conflict has de-

teriorated year by year (See page 10).

South African military sources are also categorical about the impossibility of a government military victory. They go further adding that left to its own devices, and provided it remains cohesive, Renamo is in a position indefinitely to pose internal security problems.

Although excluding a military solution the Western countries are not currently in favour of pushing Frelimo into negotiating with the rebels. They prefer to see the government recover some military ground and move clearly towards a moderate line before talks are contemplated.

One mooted solution put about by the West, which regards Renamo as a dark-horse, would be to forge links between Frelimo and Renamo leaving the latter in a subordinate position and without an institutional framework, a solution which would serve both their interests and those of the Frelimo moderates - who oppose sharing power with Renamo.

This was the peace formula suggested recently during his visit to South Africa, by West German opposition leader Franz Josef Strauss. Chissano has indicated he agrees with Strauss. But none, neither Mozambique nor the Western countries, has any doubts that without the blessing of South Africa, such a plan would be at best precarious.

3 Moving towards Pretoria

Moves are underway for a meeting between Chissano and South African President Pieter Botha. Strauss gave such a meeting a boost while in the area and preparations are reportedly underway for a meeting which will be preceded by measures designed to eliminate points of friction currently disturbing bi-lateral

relations.

These are basically the following: Maputo complains that South Africa continues supplying Renamo (see page 9), even though internally there are those who believe this supply is not critical considering that most rebel requirements are seized from government forces. (see Vol 1 No 6 page 7). Pretoria, and especially the military, places reserves on Frelimo's real capacity to move out of the Soviet sphere of influence. Pretoria also complains about the hostility of the Mozambican press and clandestine support for the ANC. But some of the most consistent analyses about Mozambique's current situation suggest that in the near future the country will indeed cutback Soviet influences. (see Vol 1 No 6, page 15). Western countries, including the United States, cite these analyses as part of their efforts to persuade Pretoria to adopt a genuine policy of good neighbourliness, likely to encourage Frelimo's efforts to modify its present system of alliances.

At the same time there are pressures on Maputo to make a gesture of goodwill to help wipe out South African reticences regarding Mozambican politics. Jean Bernard Raimond, French Foreign Minister emphasized the importance of good neighbourliness to Maputo leaders during his visit to Mozambique in February.

Informed sources suggest that Maputo and Pretoria will shortly normalise their relations. The subsequent step would be South African mediation in bringing Renamo to agree to an "arrangement" with Frelimo, preceded by a ceasefire. In late February there were reports that Foreign Minister Rolf "Pik" Botha was preparing to meet with Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama.