

# Renamo talks of <sup>WMA</sup> peace - then loots <sup>28/7/10 3/8/89</sup> Maputo's suburbs

AS the fifth congress of Mozambique's Frelimo Party got under way in Maputo, Renamo rebels gave two rather different responses to President Joaquim Chissano's recent peace initiatives.

A statement issued from Renamo's Lisbon office supported the establishment of a group of African heads of state to mediate the conflict, as suggested in the previous week's meeting between Chissano and Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi.

And on Monday at 11pm, the first night of the congress, a large group of Renamo rebels attacked the suburb of Khongolote, on the city's northern outskirts.

They raided homes, looting food and money. A mortar shell set a house alight and three of its occupants, including an eight-month baby, were burned to death.

The raiders meted out hideous punishment to those who refused to cooperate.

Francisco Mathe was woken up by armed men bursting into his house and demanding money. "Since we did not satisfy their demands, they began to beat up my 62-year-old mother. Then they cut off one of her ears," he later told journalists.

The rebels also mutilated Mathe's daughter, Celest, eight. She lost an ear while six-year-old Alberto was stabbed in the neck and chest.

Gruesome mutilations have become a Renamo trademark, both in Mozambique and in the rebels' forays into Zimbabwe.

This raid, like so many that have devastated Mozambique, seemed to justify Chissano's claim, a few hours previously, that "this assault against Mozambican society is one of the harshest and cruellest moments in the history of our people".

He listed the grim statistics — between 600 000 and 700 000 dead from the direct or indirect results of Renamo's war, 822 rural clinics and 2 599 primary schools destroyed or forced to close, 44 factories, more than 1 000 shops and 3 500 trucks and tractors wrecked or damaged.

The aim of the war, said Chissano, "is not to replace one government or regime by another. The sole aim is to make Mozambique and its society unviable".

That analysis has led to a substantial shift in Frelimo's language. The terms "class struggle" and "Marxism-Leninism", which were key in Frelimo's 1977 transition from a liberation front to a political party, are not mentioned in the 315 page central committee report.

Instead, the stress is on "unity" and "consensus" — indeed, the title of the report is "for a national consensus to normalise society". Frelimo insists it remains a vanguard party. However, it is no longer the vanguard of "the worker-peasant alliance" but of "all the Mozambican people".

The cross-class alliance that Frelimo is now trying to construct embraces all sectors of Mozambican society — including businessmen and religious believers who were viewed with hostility in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Chissano cited the threat from Renamo to justify this changed concept of the party.

"Since our essential task is to combat the destabilisation of which the country is the victim," he said in introducing the report, "all Mozambican classes and social strata are involved."

"Our enemies," he added, "are only those who take up arms against the people in the service of foreign designs, and deliberately persist in rejecting the will of the Mozambican family to reintegrate them."

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*As a watershed Frelimo congress opened this week, Renamo's leaders sent a message of conciliation from Lisbon ... while a band of its rebels attacked a Maputo suburb, killing, mutilating and looting.* **PAUL FAUVET** reports from Maputo

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The congress has not yet moved to discuss amending the party statutes. But it is considered a foregone conclusion that references to Marxism-Leninism will be removed, and instead the ideology of Frelimo will be defined as "the synthesis of the experiences of the revolutionary struggle of the Mozambican people with the universal principles of socialism" — a formula used in the theses that were the bases for pre-congress discussions.

The central committee report frequently attacks the South African government for its violations of the 1984 Nkomati non-aggression accord and its support for Renamo. Chissano is, however, prepared to believe that today its southern neighbour has finally stopped supporting the rebels.

His main guest, Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's former president, did not agree. "All the evidence indicates that South African support for the bandits continues up to today."

Chissano reiterated Mozambique's support for the African National Congress, and said that at every meeting with South African officials — the latest was with FW de Klerk just a week ago — he had raised the question of releasing Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners.

There could be no "significant change" in South Africa, the Mozambican leader said, while the ANC and other democratic organisations remained banned and leaders such as Mandela remained imprisoned.