
Mozambique: A hunger that kills

Famine is top of the agenda in the eleventh round of peace negotiations which began inauspiciously in Rome on 10 June. The worst drought in Southern Africa for 30 years has meant that some three million people, one fifth of the country's population, will need emergency food aid according to the United Nations (UN). This puts added pressure on both sides but it is not clear whether it will quicken or delay the peace process.

The number of international observers at the talks has grown: it now includes **Britain, France, Portugal, the United States** and the UN. The eleven-person negotiating team of the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo) has also expanded but though it now includes military officials, it is still led by Renamo's Head of Organisation, **Raul Domingos**. The government's Transport and Communications Minister, **Armando Guebuza**, still leads for Maputo.

This round was to have followed a set agenda. Discussion on the composition of a future joint army and the technicalities of a ceasefire was expected by the mediators: **Italy's Sant'Egidio Community** and the government representative, **Mario Raffaelli**, now also mediating between Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, Renamo once again appears determined to follow its own agenda. On 11 June, it stipulated that talks should include constitutional issues, the composition of the Joint Verification Commission (JVC, which monitors the 1990 partial ceasefire) and famine relief.

What some mediators and diplomats had hoped would be a short round of talks now looks like dragging on. There is logic to Renamo's stance. The drought has caused a disastrous situation south of the Zambezi River. On 22 May, the government released its first official figures of drought deaths: 48 in Sofala Province. With no way of measuring the situation in remote areas, the real figure must be far higher.

For Renamo in particular, the drought is a serious political disadvantage. Following the reduction of external support from **South Africa, Malawi and Kenya**, the rebels have had to rely far more on raiding and taxing the residents of the zones they dominate. Reports from Tete and other provinces south of the Zambezi confirm that life under Renamo is getting harder. One peasant farmer from Sofala told *Africa Confidential* in May that 'We used to only look for food for the *Matsangas* (Renamo) once every seven sun-rises. They now say "Feed us all the time!" Otherwise, they threaten to beat or kill us, because it is a hunger that kills'.

Thousands of hungry refugees from Tete have again begun to cross into **Zambia**, many complaining that Renamo

has increased taxation demands. The story is the same in the south. Renamo faces a dilemma. Further taxation diminishes support and encourages migration to government-held zones. Renamo's policy has been to stockpile food from past taxation. These reserves will be exhausted by August, when the full brunt of the drought will be felt.

Renamo's attacks on food convoys have increased. On 5 April, for example, it attacked a relief convoy at Alto Changane, Gaza Province, destroying five lorries. On 22 May, food-raiding also started again in **Zimbabwe's** Eastern Highlands, the first there since December 1990, as well as in southern Malawi, for the first time since December 1991. Since January, there have been more brutal raids, too, on Mozambique's towns. Renamo increasingly attacks suburbs, especially the '*zonas verdes*', the food-producing areas. In one such raid near Chokwe on 22 April, government troops killed Renamo's independent-minded Southern Zone commander, General **Francisco Paulo Gomes** (AC Vol 33 No 2). There are also reports of pillaging by government units and free-lance robbers.

Although Renamo called for neutral food corridors on 9 April, its leadership, the National Council, is divided over negotiating policy. Several attempts by mediators and Washington to discuss the situation across the table therefore failed in April. On 25 April, Renamo boss **Afonso Dhlakama** at last met **Herman 'Hank' Cohen**, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, in Lilongwe. Cohen obtained an undertaking from Dhlakama to return for the Rome talks and to drop Renamo's 10 April demands that the preset Rome agenda be ignored and that there be discussions on the constitution 'in order', as Renamo put it, 'to suspend all the articles which jeopardise the democratisation process'.

Renamo's dislike of the government's constitution is a recurrent problem. It has publicly set as a precondition for any agreement the suspension of twelve articles of the 1990 constitution which it claims could block implementation of the Rome Protocols. But it will not reveal which these articles are, even though the Italian Ambassador to Maputo and JVC Chairperson, **Manfredo di Camerana**, requested this information in April. The delay may be connected to a dispute, between Renamo's two legal advisors, **Andre Thomashausen** and **Bruce Fein**. Fein has been receiving up to US\$40,000 a month for his advice. But a more fundamental issue is at stake. Although Renamo recognised the legitimacy of Mozambique's laws under Protocol One, it remains unhappy at having done so. Given its sense of

insecurity and its overwhelming desire to achieve equality with the government, it feels it would be significantly disadvantaged if it conceded the government's legitimacy.

Cohen failed to get Dhlakama to agree to a temporary nationwide truce to facilitate food distribution. In spite of discussions with the UN Children's Fund and the World Food Programme in late May, Renamo continues to drag its feet on opening relief corridors.

Renamo has meanwhile been busy seeking international support. Dhlakama met the Organisation of African Unity Chairperson, President Ibrahim Babangida, in Nigeria on 13 June. Di Camerana was also in Nigeria to drum up support for the peace process. Dhlakama, his wife and Vicente Ululu visited Britain on Kenyan passports on 14-19 May. The visit was organised by Lonrho's Roland 'Tiny' Rowland in an attempt to bring Dhlakama together once again with President Robert Mugabe, who was in London on a private visit. In the light of the success of the two men's 10 January meeting in Malawi, Rowland thought a further encounter might accelerate the peace process. Dhlakama appears to agree with this. 'Zimbabwe is the key - without them Chissano would fail', he told us in May.

Although the main objective of his London trip failed, Dhlakama's presence prompted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to invite him for talks with Anthony Goodenough, the new Assistant Under-Secretary for Africa. Talks focussed on military issues in which Britain has a significant interest: as an official observer, as a trainer to Mozambique's army and also as holder of the European Community presidency from July. Policy is still for ministerial contact with Dhlakama only if Renamo signs a ceasefire.

During his London stay, Dhlakama also held talks with 'Rusty' Evans, a Deputy Director General of South Africa's Foreign Ministry, who invited him to Pretoria to meet President F.W. de Klerk to discuss the peace process. Dhlakama also continued his efforts to secure a visa for the USA: he had an HIV test. But State Department policy is still to deny him entrance until he signs a ceasefire.

Dhlakama continues to look for funds. Privately, Renamo has been making financial demands as a condition of further progress. In December, it asked for \$3 million. The figure has now risen to \$10-12 mn. On 16 June, Domingos said there was 'no democracy without money'. Renamo says it needs funds to transform itself into a political organisation. Some funds for non-lethal activities have in fact already been given to Renamo, with Maputo's reluctant acquiescence.

Maputo is not without its problems, either. The drought has focussed attention on the problems of corruption. On 9 June, Niassa Provincial Assembly reported that its investigations had shown that much aid to the province was being diverted and used illegally. In Nampula Province, the army is the main culprit. Some officers have set up protection

rackets, and violence in the province is linked more to this than to Renamo. This has contributed to some former *Naparama* units, such as the *Mukuepas* (AC Vol 32 No 23), joining Renamo, and to some others, such as those under Commander Cinco in Namapa District, setting up autonomous warlord fiefdoms. The Attorney General's office is working hard to challenge what appears to be growing military corruption. Since he declared war on corruption on 24 April, Attorney General Eduardo Mulembwe has received death threats. These probably originate in the army.

The army leadership is closely watching developments in Rome: the eleventh round of talks deals with its future. Renamo proposes a small army, 20,000 strong and split 50:50 with the government. This is unacceptable to the army, which does not want a straight divide and insists the new army should be at least 35,000 strong, thereby maintaining jobs for its own. If women are not to be included in the new force and if the age of service is set at over 16 years, then Renamo may well have trouble providing even 10,000 eligible combatants. Renamo's difficulties seem to include recruitment: for instance, child soldiers are being extensively used in operations in northern Nampula for the first time.

Corruption is not limited to the army. At least three senior government ministers are involved. One reason for its growth is the current political uncertainty. Several business people admitted to *Africa Confidential* that they carried out corrupt dealings on a daily basis. They attributed this to lack of confidence in the future. A particular fear of many officials in Maputo is the future of land and houses. Except for their property, Mozambicans have little that is tangible to show for independence. There is widespread concern that Renamo intends to return 'modern sector' property (e.g. the buildings of the Portuguese in Maputo's 'Cement City') to its former colonial owners. Although the majority of Mozambicans desire peace and reconciliation at almost any cost, any attempt by Renamo to overturn property rights of occupation would prompt urban disorder.

Because corruption is already a serious problem within the ruling party, President Joaquim Chissano has been reluctant to launch a high-profile anti-corruption campaign. During the sensitive peace talks, party unity comes first. But how much longer this unity will last is an open question. As past ideology collapses, ethnic and other allegiances come to the fore. Even in the Political Commission (ex-Politburo), debate and discussion are becoming affected by ethnic and economic alliances.

But it is the drought that is of most immediate concern to Mozambicans. One Gaza peasant echoed a widespread view that, even if an agreement is signed in Rome, 'People are hungry, the killing will not stop' ●