



Negotiations to end a 15-year civil war are under way and Mozambique is moving towards a

mixed economy and a multiparty system. However, the rebuilding of a devastated country which is dependent on aid will prove a long haul. **Tony Hawkins reports**

# First steps on road to peace

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AMID cautious hopes of a negotiated end to Mozambique's 15-year civil war, President Joaquim Chissano's energies are focused on winning at the polls, the victory that eluded him on the battlefield.

Peace would end an ordeal that has forced some 3m people to flee their homes and left over a quarter of the country's 15m population desperately short of food.

So far, however, all that has been achieved after a year of informal contacts, mediation and direct talks is a partial ceasefire covering the Beira and Limpopo transport corridors.

It could yet fall apart. If the Renamo rebel movement believes - as do many observers - that it will lose the elections that Mr Chissano wants to hold in mid-year, then it will have little incentive to co-operate at the negotiating table.

The rebels have already made one important concession which augurs well for the future. They dropped their original demand that the 8,000-10,000 Zimbabwean troops, who have been supporting the government be sent home. Renamo agreed instead to their being confined to the two corridors.

However, the critical test will come at the next round of talks, due to take place later this month, for the participants will be tackling the thorny problem of access to power. There are many hurdles to be overcome: the nature of the electoral process; the timing of elections; control of the administration; during a transition and access to the media.

Once these issues are resolved - which could take many months - the two sides will still have to agree a country-wide ceasefire and a plan for the integration of their two armies.

Hopes of a successful outcome rest largely on sheer weariness on the one hand and the withdrawal of foreign sponsorship on the other. In the past 18 months, each side has lost its main foreign paymasters with the withdrawals of South Africa, the Soviet Union and the former communist governments of eastern Europe.

The ruling Frelimo party, however, can still call on the increasingly reluctant Zimbabweans, though for how much longer is unclear.

Recently, Frelimo has had the upper hand, both militarily and in the peace negotiations. The astute Mr Chissano has

outmanoeuvred Renamo, shooting both its main foes - the one-party state and the Marxist-Leninist economy.

With a reborn Frelimo, committed to multiparty democracy, a market economy and introducing a new constitution with which few can quarrel, Renamo (which has never had a coherent political programme) has little to offer the electorate.

Initially the creature of Rhodesia in the 1970s and latterly of South Africa, Renamo has murdered and brutalised its way to the negotiating table. Westerners find it inconceivable that such a party, drawn from the ranks of a rag-bag guerrilla army, could win free elections.

The odds are not all stacked against Renamo. There are disaffected groups, especially in central Mozambique, and Renamo has exploited regional and ethnic tensions. Intimidation is bound to feature in the elections and Frelimo can hardly expect to escape all blame for the deepening social misery of the last 15 years.

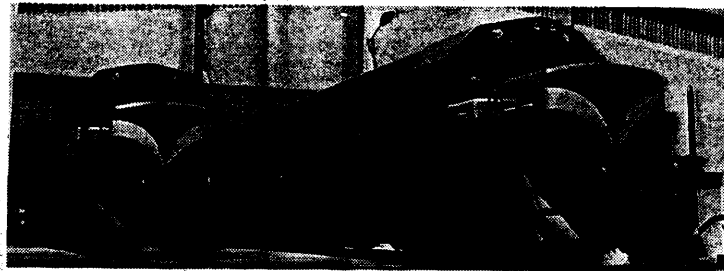
As the aggressor, Renamo holds one powerful card: only when it agrees will the war end. The option to go back into the bush and resume the struggle remains open. Renamo might win votes not because it has a popular programme but because it convinces voters that it is the only party capable of delivering peace.

This is the one advantage that Renamo still has and it is difficult to see how Frelimo can counter it, other than by winning the war.

While the people may blame Renamo for the war, Frelimo's *voile face* on economic policy is an admission of responsibility for much of the hardship people have suffered.

It is still early days. Mr Chissano's hopes for a mid-year poll seem impractical, and elections are unlikely to be held before mid-1992 at the earliest. However, there are no signs of any electable third force emerging to draw votes from those who have had enough of both sides.

For all the domestic respect and international acclaim that he commands, President Chissano has his image problem. The core ideology that sustained the party through



A partial ceasefire has raised hopes for an end to Mozambique's civil war. With peace would come a revival of agriculture, the mainstay of the economy, and the ports and railways could begin to reap the benefits of a rehabilitation programme.

the revolution and the war against the rebels has been turned on its head.

His critics accuse him of betraying the socialist revolution of Samora Machel, Mozambique's founding president who died in an air crash in 1986; of economic and social mismanagement on a breathtaking scale; of corruption and of presiding over the "re-colonisation" of Mozambique - today

by the donors and tomorrow by private foreign capital.

It is ironic that the Marxist quest for self-reliance should have left the economy so heavily dependent on aid. It has turned the economy into "the Donor's Republic of Mozambique". The tag is more than just a cynical gibe. It is a fact of life.

"Our oil import bill alone will exceed export earnings in

A project is a good one if there are Italian, Swedish or Dutch funds to support it.

Chasing the donor dollar has become the most important game in town, whether one is a Mozambican businessman or a foreign salesman. The result is a dependency culture that is the very antithesis of what aid is supposed to achieve.

The ultimate irony is that those who bang the market economy drum the loudest - the donors - are the very ones making investment decisions on the basis of domestic political criteria quite unrelated to market considerations.

Funds are allocated because they fit the donor flavour of the year - be it human rights, the role of women, environmental protection or the informal sector.

Sadly, there is no other option on the table. The economy is in ruins; almost two-thirds of the population live in absolute poverty, meaning that they spend at least 60 per cent of their incomes on food. There are 1.2m refugees, mainly in neighbouring Malawi, and another 1.75m displaced people within Mozambique.

Finance minister Mr Magid Osman believes that the war has cost the country \$15bn. The education system is in tatters; three quarters of primary (3,200) and 15 per cent of secondary schools have been destroyed. Last year, 40 per cent of the school-age population had no access to schools, while another 40 per cent are illiterate when they leave school.

The average age of the vehicle fleet is 20 years; only half the paved roads and 15 per cent of gravel roads are in good condition. Foreign earnings from transport - the ports and railways - fell from \$112m in 1981 to an annual average of \$20m in the last three years.

The constraints on development are obvious: the war and the run-down infrastructure; acute shortage of skills of all kinds; the shallow state-dominated financial system; tiny domestic market; and an unsustainable foreign debt and external payments situation.

The only solution is economic aid along the lines of the Marshall Plan. The priorities are clear - end the war, revive agriculture, inject large

amounts of foreign capital to rehabilitate the infrastructure, train the workforce and repay the debt; dismantle controls, privatise state enterprise and encourage foreign investment.

Mozambique has been a model pupil for the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; it looks to them and the wider donor community to deliver. They, in turn, know that if they bungle this one, what remains of their reputation after a disastrous decade in Africa will sink without trace.

Just as South African destabilisation has done so much damage to Mozambique's economy, so developments in South Africa could now help to transform it.

If the economic powerhouse next door prospers, Mozambique is the one country in the region most likely to benefit - from transport, tourism, investment and exports.

Even if all goes to plan - with the peace talks and with the economy - it is still going to be a long haul. It will take 15 years for living standards to return to their pre-independence levels. However, this will only happen if the donors continue pumping \$1bn a year into Africa's poorest economy.