

Mozambique on the Road to Peace?

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DOES the Rome agreement mean the beginning of peace in Mozambique?

On December 1, 1990, at Santo Egidio in Rome, the government of the Republic of Mozambique and the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) signed the first meaningful agreement, in a negotiation process which had begun the previous July. The agreement was mediated by the Italian government, the religious community of Santo Egidio, and the Archbishop of the Mozambican city of Beira. The agreement deals only with the first point on an agenda which had been agreed at the negotiating table. This agenda, decided upon in early November, includes the following points:

- The presence of Zimbabwean troops;
- Political questions;
- A general cease-fire.

Agreement about the agenda was achieved after a break in the negotiating process of about two months, arising mainly from the MNR's refusal to take part in the talks. The MNR alleged that it had been the target of military operations by government forces. Such operations, according to the MNR, prevented it from participating, since it could not simultaneously wage war on the ground, and at the same time negotiate in Rome.

However, the third round of the Rome talks, which reopened in November, resulted in what the Mozambican government termed "a partial cease-fire agreement". The agreement restricts Zimbabwean troops to patrol operations along the Beira and Limpopo corridors, and sets up zones which may not be attacked by MNR forces, extending three kilometers from the outer limits of the corridors. An international verification commission, including rep-

resentatives of both sides in the conflict, was set up on December 18, 1990, and operates out of headquarters in Maputo. Both the Government and the MNR have expressed positive attitudes towards the agreement, but for different reasons.

The MNR signed the accord with the idea of restricting the operations of the well-trained and well-equipped Zimbabwean army, which had earlier helped to over-run MNR bases in a series of engagements. Confining Zimbabwean troops to the Limpopo and Beira corridors would allow MNR forces greater freedom to step up their attacks outside the corridors, and to strengthen their negotiating position through military action on the ground.

The government, for its part, expressed optimism because of the guarantee that economic projects in the Beira and Limpopo corridors would not be attacked. This created the possibility of reducing, even by a little, the economic pressures to which the country has been subjected. In addition, the fact that the Government would not have to worry about defending such projects, and could even attract the population into concentrated settlements close to the protected areas, opened up new possibilities for releasing government troops to be used in different functions. The two sides both confirmed to the international community that the signing of the agreement did not mean the end of the war. Nevertheless, there was some hope that the accord, if it was observed, might be expanded into a general cease-fire and signs were encouraging.

However, there are frightening possibilities that both sides will see the agreement as a way of intensifying military actions, with the objective of strengthening their respective negotiating positions. This

leads to the conclusion that peace was not the main motive which led to the placing on the agenda of the question of the presence of Zimbabwean troops in Mozambique, as the main point for discussion.

In fact, there is evidence that the attempt to reinforce their negotiating position was the main reason which brought the MNR to sign the agreement. According to Rádio Moçambique, both the number of attacks mounted by the MNR on villages in the interior, and the number of civilian victims, have increased since the accord was signed. There has also been a rise in the number of sabotage attempts on the power line running from South Africa, which supplies electricity to Maputo city.

From this line of argument, one can also see that it is inevitable that government forces will also launch counter-offensive operations, so as not to weaken their negotiating position. If the desire to reinforce their military positions led the two sides to sign the agreement for tactical reasons, then there is no doubt that as long as the military balance favours one side more than the other, we will not see any real striving towards peace.

How far will the agreement be respected?

A first reading of the agreement leaves the impression that Zimbabwean troops will be confined inside two parallel lines, six kilometers apart. However, a careful examination of the text leads to the conclusion that the zone covered by the terms of agreement might be wider than six kilometers. This is most noticeable in the case of the Beira Corridor.

For example, the Chlicamba Dam and its electricity sub-station at Mavuze, which are essential for the oil pipeline which supplies fuel to Zimbabwe, are protected targets under the agreement. Rigorous observation of the agreement would lead to the conclusion that military combat between government forces and the MNR could only take place at a distance of three kilometers to the south of the electricity station and the dam, which are, respectively, 50 and 30 km. away from the railway line



No objectives, no code of conduct: child victims of the war at a makeshift school

and the road which link Beira and Machipanda.

Again, the town of Gondola, where repair work is carried out on the locomotives which ensure the continuity of traffic along the Beira Corridor, extends over six kilometers from the railway. The agreement assumes that MNR forces are well aware of all the protected targets under the terms of the agreement, for the accord to function without conflicts.

But even accepting the good intentions of the MNR leadership towards ending the war and achieving peace, one can already foresee that the agreement is impossible to keep, for technical reasons. The spirit of the conditions laid down by the agreement seem impossible to observe by a force which, according to facts well-documented by various authors, has no programme, no objectives and no code of conduct. This is apart from the fact that its leadership has shown that it does not control the activities of its members.

In addition, the lack of regular supplies to MNR forces from their traditional source, South Africa, means that production centres, even though they are guaranteed immunity by the agreement, and the population in general, have been the targets of attacks for subsistence, by people who know nothing except violence. Peace could

still take quite a while to be established on Mozambican soil.

What is left on the table for the Rome talks?

A relevant question which must be asked is: what substantive points of disagreement are there which might remain between the Mozambican government and the MNR in Rome?

Since 1987, the Mozambican government has embarked on a reform programme. The signing of the structural adjustment agreement with the IMF and the World Bank was the first indication of a massive change, which was marked by the switch from a centrally-planned economy to a market economy. The introduction of the Economic Rehabilitation Programme (ERP) in 1987, was intended to correct the development strategy introduced in 1977, when FRELIMO, the front, transformed itself into a Marxist-Leninist party. The ERP included a packet of measures which were intended to reactivate production through the gradual reduction of financial imbalances and greater liberalisation of market forces.

The constitutional reforms which sanctioned the division of power into administrative, legislative and judicial branches; the right to property; free elections for the presidency and for deputies to

the Assembly of the Republic, on the basis of universal adult suffrage; the introduction of a multi-party system; freedom of the press and of information; all these were, among others, measures which dealt with basic and plausible demands made by the MNR at the negotiating table in Rome.

The introduction of a multi-party system, and of a "capitalist" economy, together with the end of "communism" were occasionally presented by some members of the MNR as the reasons for the struggle against the Mozambican government. If this is true, the main justification for the fratricidal hostilities taking place in Mozambique, no longer exists. However, this justification put forward by the MNR was never accepted by the Frelimo government, which always accused the MNR of being a bastion for a foreign project, which already existed during the liberation struggle, and with the objective of blocking Frelimo's nationalist aims. As Armando Guebuza, head of the government delegation in Rome, explained:

"It's not because of the mistakes of our government that there is a war in Mozambique. We haven't had the time to make mistakes. We hadn't yet made any mistakes, even verbally, when the radio station in old Lourenço Marques was captured on 7 September 1974, by the self-described "Free Movement", nor when the radio station "Free Africa" was set up by the former Rhodesians in 1978. The same people who were involved in capturing the radio, and in setting up the "Voice of Free Africa", created and armed the MNR."

Nevertheless, if history were to be put on one side for a moment, and the two belligerent forces were to place peace and reconciliation above everything else, the challenge presently facing the MNR is whether it is capable of ridding itself of the label of "a power-hungry force representing foreign interests" and turning itself into a nationalist movement able to convince itself of the objectives of peace and economic progress of the Mozambican people, that is to say, to make the effort to lay down its arms and assume the role of a political party if the opportunity presents it-

self? In its turn, the Frelimo Party faces the challenge of accepting the principle of a loyal opposition, of being able to co-exist and work with other parties, in establishing and respecting the principles of democracy which feature in its statutes and its programme.

In this way, two possible scenarios may develop in Rome. In the first of these, the MNR will feel that it is at a disadvantage in playing the role of a political party, like the other parties which have emerged inside Mozambique, in terms of the recently-approved law (PALMO, CONIMO, PADEMO). In this case, the MNR will try to drag out the war for a longer period, and will use military pressure on the ground as a way of achieving its political objectives, without having to win at the ballot box. In this model, the negotiating process will be greatly prolonged, with the risk that the agreement signed on December 1 will fall apart. This in turn would imply that government forces and the MNR will again engage in a trial of force, until one of them emerges the stronger. Naturally, such a process is both expensive and wasteful, and in no way benefits progress, peace or reconciliation.

Let us take, as a point of departure, the fact that external pressures have played an important part in the reform process which is taking place in Mozambique. In the second scenario, it would be recognised that the mediators and the "Joint Verification Commission" which monitors after Zimbabwean troops under the December 1 agreement, should play a more active role in the search for peace in Mozambique. This could make it difficult for the MNR to attempt to "buy time" for tactical reasons, with non-substantive questions; for example, a refusal to accept the constitution because it was written by Frelimo, without, however, there being any fundamental grounds for disagreement. Alternatively, this scenario might take place if the MNR itself wanted to achieve peace.

Once the West in general, the church, and humanitarian organisations such as Amnesty International are satisfied with the degree of political and economic reform in-

roduced by the Mozambican government, this could lead to the creation of conditions for the talks to concern themselves with details of changes to proposed or recent reform legislation, technical questions of a general cease-fire, questions related to elections, and the essential question of the reintegration into civil society of former MNR members. In this scenario, the signing of a general cease-fire agreement might take place as early as mid-1991. The peace process would thus be helped along, and might build on the basis of the confidence created by the December 1 agreement.

The growing need for peace

Statistics circulated both by the United Nations as well as by SADCC show that throughout the eight years of the war of destabilisation waged by South Africa against the Frontline States since 1980, the cost to those countries, directly or indirectly, has been around US\$60 billion. Of these costs, US\$45 billion have been borne by Mozambique and Angola. Mozambique has one-third of its population living as refugees in other countries, or as war-displaced persons inside the country, surviving on the goodwill of foreign donor agencies. Most of its industrial and socio-economic infrastructure in the rural areas, such as bridges, health centres, roads and schools, has been destroyed or paralysed. Since 1980, directly or indirectly, this war has claimed 1.3 million Mozambican victims. The Mozambican people are tired of a war which has lasted almost three decades.

In terms of various economic indicators, whether GNP (gross national product), infant mortality rate, exports, return on capital investment, and so on, the country is among the five poorest in the world, despite having an enormous competitive potential in comparison with the other countries of the region.

In order for the investments which have been made to strengthen the transport and energy sectors to bear fruit, the war must stop. In order for mining production and the tourist industry to develop, it is necessary to have peace and to adopt a tough economic recovery programme. The longer

the peace process takes, the further behind the country falls, and the more difficult it becomes to rebuild it.

Many commentators believe that the MNR leadership is unable to control all its forces in the event of a cease-fire. Some even cite numbers in their calculations, saying that the MNR can control a maximum of 60 percent of its forces, and estimating that 40 percent of the MNR's men have now become used to violence as a means of survival. This is discouraging, of course, insofar as it complicates the mechanisms of restoring peace in the country.

Nevertheless, if the Rome talks succeed in reducing the conflict to the level of a police action against gangsters, then they will have achieved their main objective. This reason, more than any other, furnishes a strong motive for going on with the talks. Nonetheless, what has to be acknowledged is that the Rome talks are the necessary minimum, and that the real challenge in restoring peace in Mozambique will be in the post-Rome period, when the genuine sources of conflict existing in Mozambique will emerge.

The question of peace cannot be separated from questions of economic development, of social justice and of human dignity. No government can survive, however democratically it was elected, if it cannot guarantee shelter, sanitation, employment, education, and economic and social stability for its citizens. Many Mozambicans believe that peace also means exactly this. The external debt, the structural adjustment programme, and the challenge of reconstruction will not make the task of any government easier, whether it represented all the shades of national opinion or not. To achieve true peace, it will be necessary to tackle all of Mozambique's problems as a totality. It will be necessary to tackle them in a way which does not simply control the instruments of violence, but which also helps to

establish power structures able to initiate and ensure national economic growth.

The NAPRAMA phenomenon

NAPRAMA is a phenomenon which has developed in Zambézia province, and which has attracted considerable interest in the current conflict in the Republic of Mozambique. We are dealing here with the emergence of a third force with military characteristics.

Although there has been little research on the phenomenon, it is known that the cohesive factor among its members is that they have all lived for several years in MNR captivity. We are dealing with a popular movement, innocent of any political ideology, and with the simple objective of put-

ting an end to banditry in Zambézia province. The evidence shows that this is a phenomenon with a purely and simply popular origin, growing out of the fact that the people understood that there was nothing left for them to do except defend themselves. Their basic weapons are hatchets, pangas, and spears. Their morale has animist roots. They believe that after having been given ritual treatment by the Naprama, they become invulnerable to MNR bullets.

While the origins of the phenomenon and the cult is ancestor worship and is comparable to the well-known case of Alice Lekwena in Uganda, the results are truly different. Members of the Naprama group have not yet been decimated by enemy bul-

lets. With their antiquated weapons, they have cost the MNR enough casualties, for them to be regarded with the greatest horror. Since there are no reports of combats between Naprama and government forces, the MNR regards the group as yet another Frelimo trick.

There are also indications that places where Naprama is thick on the ground are becoming no-go areas for the MNR. Since the evidence indicates that there is absolutely no government control, and since this force is essentially anti-MNR, it has become an urgent question to consider, for the future, what part this grouping will play in the Mozambican peace equation. □

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