



Afonso Dhlakama

Renamo requires faith and freedom to bring a stop to war in Mozambique

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IN the final analysis it boils down to distrust. Afonso Dhlakama, the portly, almost cherubic-looking leader of the Renamo rebel movement, just does not trust President Joaquim Chissano when he says he wants to convert Mozambique from the one-party vanguard Marxist state he helped to create into a free-enterprise orientated, multiparty democracy.

"He lies," Dhlakama says simply.

Almost in the same breath, Dhlakama says he realises both that the war must end and that it must end through an agreement negotiated between the parties led by himself and Chissano — but probably not this year.

In the past six months the two organisations have been conducting negotiations in Rome under the auspices of the Catholic Church to explore ways of ending the civil war that has dragged on for almost 15 years, killing almost a million people and utterly destroying the Mozambican economy in the process.

The fifth and latest round of talks broke up amid mutual accusations of bad faith — leading Renamo to resume their attacks on troops confined to the Beira and Limpopo transport corridors.

Yet both sides say they intend to return to Rome and continue to talk — because both know there is simply no alternative.

"The only good thing to come out of the Rome meetings is that we have met, face to face, and will continue to meet until an agreement is reached," says Dhlakama, "but I see no

Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama has dashed hopes for peace in the immediate future in war-ravaged Mozambique. In an exclusive interview with KEN VERNON of The Pretoria News Africa Service he tells why the war that has killed an estimated 1-million people in 15 years must continue, and talks of his plans for how peace must come about.

possibility that that can happen this year.

"There are so many problems — political problems to be resolved, but the biggest problem is that the Frelimo government is not really serious about either negotiations or about implementing a multiparty democracy".

In reply to the question that his interpretation is diametrically opposite to what the government itself is saying about its new constitution, his answer again boils down to distrust.

"No, this new constitution is not a constitution of the Mozambican people, it is a constitution designed by Frelimo to show to the outside world so that it may continue to get money.

"Just go to the country where people are still forced to live in communal villages like prisoners, with no freedom, and you will see that Frelimo is not serious about democracy."

Dhlakama shrugs off the formation of opposition political parties in Maputo, and government plans to hold an election some time this year as more "propaganda".

"It is impossible to hold elections this year. Firstly, there is no electoral law — the

war continues and neither Chissano or I or anyone know how many Mozambicans there are.

"Any election will be a farce, an election in Maputo and Beira only. As for these 'parties' — such as Padelimo and Unamo — they are creations of Snaap (the Mozambican secret police) designed as window dressing by Chissano to make him look good."

What then are the major differences between Renamo and Frelimo under the new constitution?

"They are many, very many. Firstly, the law defining how political parties can be created is very vague. Secondly, under the constitution, the President has far too great a power. For example, he can declare a state of emergency any time he wishes and for as long as he wishes. That is not democracy.

"Thirdly, only the President can approve the Budget and only he can decide what is spent where — wherever and however he likes.

"Fourthly, the constitution says all land and water belongs to the State — that is free-enterprise?"

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There were many other problems, such as the role of the army, which under Frelimo was a party army, he said.

But isn't it possible to have a ceasefire while these political problems are sorted out? After all, people are dying.

The answer again is distrust.

"No. Renamo cannot accept a ceasefire until the political problems have been solved because the government will use the ceasefire to rebuild to fight Renamo. It is not possible to trust Marxists, they could drag talks on for years and years — that is not what we want.

"Also, if the political problems are not resolved, and Frelimo remain in charge, they can say at any time that Renamo people are against the constitution and simply throw them in jail. No, it is not possible to accept this.

"At the same time it is not that we want the killing to continue, we don't. We have been in the bush for 14 years fighting Frelimo, and it has not been easy. All that time we wanted negotiations, but Frelimo just called us 'bandits'.

"A ceasefire is easy, I must just give the order," he says, dismissing suggestions that he does not control all those killing under the Renamo banner. "But we need guarantees from the government, and the war can't end until the political problems are resolved or the 14 years we have spent may have been wasted."

What then is the Renamo plan, if any, to end the war?

"Firstly, there must be agreement on the political problems. Secondly, we must discuss the details of the transition period. Thirdly comes the ceasefire and lastly we demand the presence of an independent organisation to supervise the country while we have elections."

Dhlakama says he envisages a body, such as the UN ("but not only the UN as they, he claims, are biased toward Frelimo), which would actually run Mozambique while the various political parties campaigned — on the same basis as happened in Namibia.

He recognises that this last demand would be very hard for any sovereign government to accept — but he does not accept Frelimo's sovereignty, adding that the condition would not be difficult "if Chissano is serious about peace".