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# War-torn Mozambique has a new enemy: Time

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After two years of faltering negotiations in Mozambique, the peace process is in tatters and a settlement in the war-ravaged country is still nowhere in sight

By KARL MAIER in Maputo

**W**ITH Mozambique's peace talks stalled yet again, one of Africa's bloodiest conflicts continues and the Frelimo government is feeling the pressure of a new, potentially dangerous enemy: time.

While President Joaquim Chissano has sought to put on a brave face over the current impasse, saying his government is prepared to resume the negotiations in Rome at any time, the reality is that, nearly two years on, the Mozambican peace process has precious little to show for its efforts. When the talks broke up recently, they still centred on the first point of a 20-point agenda.

Back home, the austerity programme sponsored by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank has brought some growth to the economy but has also dealt crushing blows to wage earners and the poor.

Crime in the capital and other major cities is soaring, and night time gunshots in Maputo are now routine.

Severe food shortages have once again hit the central provinces of Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia, leaving tens of thousands of civilians displaced by the war, threatened by famine and a host of other illnesses brought on by malnutrition.

The only tangible result of the peace talks with Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo), the December 1 1990 mini-ceasefire on two of Mozambique's regional trade



Joaquim Chissano ... a brave face

routes, the Limpopo and Beira Corridors, has already lost its lustre. The 10-nation Joint Verification Commission (JVC) is now effectively defunct. While the 7 000-strong Zimbabwean army contingent has been restricted to guarding the railroads and rebel fighters have refrained from attacking the Beira corridor, the rebels have repeatedly sabotaged the rehabilitation work on the Limpopo route, which links Zimbabwe to the port of Maputo. The attacks are so frequent that the government no longer bothers to lodge complaints with the JVC.

Renamo has justified its decision to resume attacks on the Limpopo Corridor with an accusation that Zimbabwean soldiers have violated the agreement by dressing up as government soldiers and operating in 52 places. The JVC inspected 18 of the sites where the violations were said to have taken place and found no evidence to back up the

rebel charge. And General Pascoal Jose, one of three rebel representatives to the JVC in Maputo, privately admitted recently that he did not believe his own leaders' claims. "What that says about prospects for a general ceasefire is chilling," said one Western diplomatic source. "Renamo could enter into an agreement, and if things don't go their way, they could simply renege on it, with any kind of claim no matter how outrageous."

Elsewhere, the rebels have intensified pressure since January, especially around the capital, Maputo, where surrounding villages have become their hunting grounds. The city has also been hit by a new wave of power cuts, brought on by sabotage of high tension lines from South Africa.

Apart from the rebels, several other opposition forces have appeared since the Law on Political Parties came into force in February, but none so far has shown the mettle to be able to mount a serious challenge to either Frelimo or Renamo in general elections now tentatively scheduled for next year.

The first opposition force to hold a national congress in Mozambique since independence from Portugal in 1975, the Liberal and Democratic Party (Palmo), virtually self-destructed. At the end of the congress held from May 6-12, one of its founding members, Casanairo Nhamitambo, quit the party while the president, Martins Bilal, accused his vice-president, Dr Antonio Palange, of being a drunk.

A second party, the Mozambique Nationalist Movement (Monamo), resurfaced in Maputo last month with the return from Portugal of Maximo Dias, a major figure in the short-lived opposition movement on the eve of independence, who later flirted with Renamo. While Monamo appears to have ample financial resources at its disposal, its leadership is tainted with allegations of past co-operation with the Portuguese colonialists and is made up largely of Asians.

Those two parties, and several others which have emerged since the beginning of the year, have focused mainly on reacting to Frelimo's past errors but have proposed policies that differ little from the ruling party's own political programme: a commitment to multi-party democracy, a mixed economy, and respect for fundamental individual rights.

Renamo, however potent on the battlefield, remains politically inarticulate. Its draft constitution, a response to the government's new liberal constitution which entered into force on November 30 last year, is poorly written and poorly reasoned. For example, immediately after saying that torture and inhumane punishment will be banned, it calls for the death penalty.

Lacking funding, intellectuals and political savvy, Renamo presents a sharp contrast to Jonas Savimbi's Unita, which earlier this month signed a peace agreement in Lisbon with the government of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos. Ironically, until six months ago, most analysts believed Mozambique's peace process was well ahead of Angola's.

Now, while Angola appears set on the road to peace, Mozambique's war continues to drag on with no end in sight.