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# Mozambique: Avoiding the Angola factor

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There has been a shaky beginning to the peace process. Yet the 15 October ceasefire has been holding remarkably well - despite, rather than because of, the politicians. Now, the prospect of the imminent arrival of a large United Nations'

military force has given new impetus to the stalled process.

The politicians started to get it wrong from day one. Three days after the ceasefire, the UN announced at its first press conference in Maputo that, rather than being a binding

document, the Rome Peace Accord was to be considered 'flexible'. The dates it contained were only a rough guide and journalists were not to give the UN too hard a time (AC Vol 33 No 19).

The need for 'flexibility' was clear. It was not even remotely possible to keep to the letter of the Accord: it had been drawn up with political and not practical considerations in mind. It stated that within 30 days, all combatants - 21,000 from the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo) and 62,000 from the government - should have made their way under UN supervision to 49 assembly points: 29 for the government and 20 for Renamo (AC Vol 33 No 23). At the camps, they were to be watched over 24 hours a day by UN personnel. With only 21 UN military observers in the country, the numbers simply didn't add up.

On arriving in October, the UN Special Representative to Mozambique and former parliamentarian of Italy's *Partito Socialista*, **Aldo Ajello**, said that, given the short notice the UN had received, it had been quite an achievement for any observers to arrive on time at all. This suggests either that the UN was unaware of what was being written into the Accord in its name or that it had not thought through the problem at the time. Not only that, but it was learnt subsequently that the military assembly points had not yet been identified and no provision made for accommodation, food or water for camps holding up to 5,000 men each.

The result is that, to this day, fighters from both sides are still holding their offensive positions and none have begun the journey to the assembly points. Both parties publicly vented their frustration at the delay in the UN force's arrival and the work of the commissions overseeing the Accord ground to an effective halt. Now, over two months late, the wheels are starting to turn. UN Secretary General **Boutros Boutros-Ghali** has recommended a (mainly armed) UN force around 8,000-strong to oversee the peace process. The sites have been identified and serious thought is now being given to the problems of accommodation, sanitation, food and water.

One of the considerations in opting to send such a substantial force was the catastrophe which occurred on the other side of southern Africa: in **Angola**, a failure to demobilise guerrillas of the *União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) before the September elections allowed them to take up arms again afterwards, when **Jonas Savimbi** discovered he didn't like losing. Though the two situations are profoundly different, politicians in Mozambique are at every turn invoking Angola as a warning - a warning chiefly to the UN - not to fall short of what is required from the Peace Accord. For the UN, this means assisting in full demobilisation and disarmament before the polls.

It is also a warning to Renamo boss **Afonso Dhlakama**, the Savimbi figure in the drama. He is being continually advised - by the ruling *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo), by diplomats and by assorted observers that it is in his best interests to play the game and abide by the rules of the democratic process, win or lose. In Angola, UNITA's tally of votes was not unimpressive; it just wasn't enough to win. The fear in Mozambique, of course, is that Renamo will not only lose but lose massively. In that scenario, despite any pre-election protestations to the contrary by Dhlakama, it

will be difficult for him to accept (after all the foreign encouragement he has received) the end of his short career as a politician.

Under the current reckoning, if the peace process does proceed smoothly towards voting at the end of 1993, difficulties with Dhlakama are probable. Renamo has far less regional basis of support than UNITA. The only territory it actually holds is its Gorongosa Mountain headquarters. Appealing to its tribal base would be of little help: although it originally drew its leaders from the Ndaú, it cannot be said to have captured the imagination of the Ndaú people, who live in a narrow belt across the centre of the country, through Manica and Sofala provinces. It is there that people have suffered the worst effects of the drought and they have not seen Renamo (or the government, for that matter) coming to their rescue when they are starving. Perhaps not surprisingly, the attitude to the elections in many villages and refugee camps in central Mozambique has been one of yawning disinterest.

The attitude to the end of the war, however, has not. Coinciding with the first few months of peace has been the arrival of large quantities of international food aid, both in government and Renamo areas, along with the first heavy rains for three years. If either side can capitalise on the momentum and optimism which that has created, it might just win hearts and minds.

Renamo's only other card is to play hard on Frelimo's failure to develop the countryside or even to maintain any infrastructure to speak of within Mozambique's vast 800,000 square kilometres. This is a result of Renamo's 16 years of destabilisation but it is not necessarily seen as such by people on the ground, who may simply have seen years of Frelimo's neglect and lack of protection from the '*bandidos armados*'.

There are also the newly emerging political parties to consider. At the moment they are weak, divided and extremely short of funds. A few months and the key players may edge nearer to centre-stage. But the pervading feeling is that, despite being at the helm during 16 years of civil war, and despite being extremely inefficient, corrupt and at times incompetent, Frelimo will be carried handsomely through the elections by the inertia of its rule. Whether it will be allowed to govern is another matter. That will depend on Dhlakama and how far he takes Savimbi as his role-model.

But there is another, even less predictable scenario, and one that could lead to the breakdown of the peace process. There is some discussion now within UN circles of the benefits to be had from flooding Renamo areas with as much food as possible and asking donors specifically whether they would put up with this skewed distribution. The idea would be to fill rebels' stomachs and take their minds off Renamo. Dhlakama and his peers would then be left high and dry with no support to call on if things did turn sour. This is a dangerous game. Dhlakama is already deeply distrustful of the UN and what he feels is its bias towards the government. He also knows that turning Renamo into a political machine is going to take all the help he can get. If he learned that the UN was really up to some tricks, he might stop cooperating, crack the whip and see how many of his men followed him back up Gorongosa mountain. This would be Angola without even the elections ●