

## AFRICA

# Viva Paix! at last in Mozambique

**I**NHAMINGA was cut off from the outside world for seven years while a Renamo stronghold. Before that, it was held by Frelimo, who took it from the Portuguese colonialists. For two decades, it knew continuous warfare.

Located deep in central Mozambique, 150km north of Beira in Sofala province, it has the haunted, ghostly air of many tales pressing to be told. The intense yet remote stares of its barefoot population of 20 000 silently tell of killings and mutilations, family members dead or disappeared and of deprivation and famine.

The wide tree-lined avenues with once-handsome commercial buildings and spacious homes testify to the boom years when Inhaminga was a thriving railway junction linking Beira port to Malawi. Now the streets are littered with burnt-out shells of cars, trucks and army carriers.

Locomotives rusting in a cavernous warehouse speak of Inhaminga's bustling past as a regional engine maintenance centre. Now the railway's giant cranes and drills stand idly by as women camping in the warehouse carry out the timeless African task of pounding grain with large wooden cudgels.

In many respects, Inhaminga appears a hopeless casualty of Mozambique's 16-year war. Yet the seeds of the country's future peace are being sown there.

Renamo officials are co-operating with the Maputo government and with international organisations. Because the town is still inaccessible by road, emergency food relief is being airlifted to the town. Seeds and hoes are being handed out so that people can start cultivating.

The Mozambicans in Inhaminga, as throughout the rest of the country, are setting aside differences in order to get on with building a lasting peace.

"We are all tired of war. We cannot survive if we continue fighting," said Augusto Xavier, Renamo's director-general of internal affairs, who is over-

*The threat of another Angola if Renamo does not win the coming elections hangs over Mozambique. But in the rebel stronghold of Inhaminga*

**ANDY MELDRUM found encouraging signs for peace**

seeing the relief effort in Inhaminga. "First we start by getting the people enough food to be healthy. Then they will be able to grow their own food."

Articulate and efficient, Xavier contradicts the widely-held view that Renamo has no capable administrators. He said Renamo would not sabotage Mozambique's peace if it lost the elections, as Unita has done in Angola.

"Renamo will respect the election results, even if we lose," said Xavier. "We are not like Unita. We fought for the principles of multi-party democracy and a free market economy. The Chissano government has already instituted those changes, so we have already won.

"Even if we lose the elections we will have won because there will be democracy in Mozambique."

Asked about Renamo's reputation for brutality, massacres and mutilations, Xavier dismissed the charges as Frelimo propaganda.

"The same things were said about Frelimo when they were fighting against the Portuguese," he said. "Now they are in power and they are making the same charges against us, calling us terrorists."

Such responses are obviously self-serving, but Xavier's answers contain positive indicators that Renamo would like to see peace established in Mozambique.

At the muddy airstrip, 3km from Inhaminga's town centre, daily flights bring in 360 tons per month of desperately needed food.

Demonstrating the end of the Cold War, Russian Antonov jets with Rus-



Does he have a future? ... Many areas in Mozambique are not yet receiving food aid

Photo: M SAYAGUES, WFP

sian crews deliver bags of American and European maize.

The Russian planes and crews were hired by the United Nations' World

Food Programme for the massive airlift needed in Mozambique.

The British charity, Action Aid, is funding the delivery of the food to

Inhaminga.

"By giving aid to the people in Renamo areas we are hoping to show Renamo that the international community is working towards peace with them," said Action Aid's emergency unit director Colin Baker. "By delivering emergency food to Renamo areas we are helping to consolidate the peace. This is the start of bringing Renamo into the country's mainstream."

The co-operation of all sides in the delivery of food aid and the onset of good rains bode well for Mozambique. Of course, things could go wrong very quickly. Many areas are not yet receiving food aid and there are reports of hungry crowds attacking food convoys. The Renamo and Frelimo troops have not yet begun to demobilise and disarm. Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama has delayed going to Maputo to take part in the preparations for elections. Yet signs are that all sides — Frelimo, Renamo and the international community — are working to make sure that Mozambique does not return to war, as has happened in Angola.

About 2 000 people have gathered around an abandoned schoolhouse, where food aid is being distributed through their "regulo", a Portuguese colonial term for traditional chief. The atmosphere is rather serious, as the people await the food, but as several families receive their share without problems the mood lightens. A Renamo official leads the group in cheers. "Viva Renamo!" he shouts, punching his fist in the air. The crowd responds: "Viva! Viva Presidente Afonso Dhlakama! Viva!"

The aid officers are noticeably uncomfortable to see their food donations provide the excuse for a Renamo rally.

A few words are exchanged and the Renamo leader quickly grasps the situation. He leads the cheers again, this time to everybody's satisfaction. He enthusiastically shouts, "Viva Mozambique! Viva Paix (Peace)! Viva Democracia! Viva!"