

# Peace at last as former foes opt for sanity

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□ **RECONCILED:** Lieutenant-Commander Joaquim Revas, formerly of Frelimo, left, and Lieutenant-Commander Francisco-Antonio Mario, formerly of Renamo, demonstrate their new friendship with an embrace at Catembe training camp.

**M**ORE than sixteen years of civil war in Mozambique has left people desperate for peace — so desperate that they are prepared to do anything to ensure that peace survives, even if it means sleeping beside someone one was once trying to kill.

Two weeks ago 50 soldiers from the governing Frelimo party joined 50 men from the former rebels, Renamo, at an old community centre built by the Portuguese in Catembe, across the bay from Maputo.

They are being trained there by the Portuguese Navy as marines — the first unit in which soldiers of both sides are being trained together. Members of an elite force, they are all volunteers.

A further 60 soldiers are expected to join them for training within weeks.

Those who have joined the marines seem happy with their situation. This is in stark contrast to their counterparts in the National Peacekeeping Force (NPKF) in South Africa with reports of troops deserting, brawling or even of going on strike after a wage dispute.

Navy Captain Guilherme Allen, who is second in command of training the marines, said the formation of a marine corps was the start of rebuilding the Mozambican Navy which had been completely destroyed by the war and years of neglect.

"Creating a marine corps is the cheapest way of starting to create the country's navy which is under reconstruction," Allen said.

But he added that one of the biggest problems encountered so far was changing the training the soldiers received in the Eastern Bloc countries.

"We need to make them proud and disciplined soldiers, with a mind of their own so they can also think for themselves," Allen said, referring disdainfully to earlier training that made the soldiers unthinking automatons.

The run-down training camp, now being cleaned and repaired, has a fine view of Maputo across the bay. But as they marched up and down the parade ground the men were less concerned with the view than with their future in the joint armed forces.

Joaquim Revas, a lieutenant commander who spent 13 years in the Frelimo army after joining at the age of 17, said he had no objection to training alongside former Renamo rebels.

"I am quite happy to be part of the military," said Commander Revas, who was recruited while studying in his home town of Beira. Gesturing to the former Renamo fighter next to

In contrast to the shaky start of the South African peacekeeping force, the former enemies in Mozambique are co-operating easily in the new joint army being formed under the Rome peace accord.

**MICHAEL SPARKS** reports for the Argus Africa News Service from Catembe.



□ **MARINE PARADE:** Former enemies from Frelimo and Renamo stand shoulder-to-shoulder on the parade ground at Catembe, with Maputo's tall buildings as a backdrop.

him, he said: "While we didn't know each other before, we are part of the military, so we do everything together and are quickly making friends."

The man beside him was Francisco-Antonio Mario a lieutenant commander who had fought with Renamo for seven years after being a dissident in northern Niassa province.

He said his attitude had changed now that the war was over, and he decided to join the

integrated army.

He had encountered no problems with his former enemies — and he felt fortunate to be getting three meals a day.

The attitude of regular Frelimo troops who had gathered to register at an assembly point near the marines' training camp was also one of acceptance of the prospect of handing over their weapons and forgetting old enmities.

Many appear to be tired of the

military and look forward to civilian life.

They are motivated partly because of a desire for higher wages but also because of a strong desire for peace.

After years of civil war that devastated the country and caused 1.7 million Mozambicans to flee their homes, it is not just the civilians but these soldiers too who want to see peace and the economic development it will bring.