

Peace — Mozambique's awesome challenge

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PACIFISTS used to ponder: "What if they called a war and nobody came?"

In Mozambique their dream might come true.

After 16 years of civil war which ended indecisively and helped make Mozambique one of the poorest countries in the world, the anti-war sentiments among the population would be the envy of pacifists everywhere.

So intense is the anti-war feeling that soldiers mutinied earlier this year, not for better conditions or more pay but for the novel reason that they were not being demobilised quickly enough.

In addition, both the government and Renamo struggled to provide enough volunteers for the 30 000-strong new Mozambican army, ADM, although the process of demobilisation is regarded as fairly successfully completed.

Maputo resident Mancial Angurte, 39, was one of about 70 000 troops demobilised. "I fought for Frelimo for 11 years and I have nothing to show for it," he says plaintively. He was wounded twice in clashes with Renamo.

Despite his double leg injury, he joined Renamo earlier this year and is assisting the election campaign of the organisation's leader Afonso

Dhlakama.

He was trained as an electrician and now wishes to return to his profession, but few jobs are available. Why not stay in the army then, which would at least provide an income? His answer reveals Mozambique's gloomy predicament: even when he was part of the army, he was irregularly paid.

Although the ghost of the spectacularly unsuccessful Angolan election hangs over the this week's election, the situation is markedly different. In Angola there is enough oil and diamonds to seemingly make the fight seem worthwhile. Hence, Dhlakama has consistently said even if he lost he would not go back to war. The statement is less a declaration of political statesmanship than a recognition of the political realities.

Apart from the popular opposition to returning to the bush, his former principal allies, SA and Malawi, have new governments and maintaining supply lines would prove much more difficult if not impossible.

Dhlakama's statements last week in which he apparently backtracked from his commitment not to go back to war should he lose were therefore curious. Mozambican observers saw the statements as an attempt to pressure the Frelimo government

TIM COHEN in Maputo

into promising him a place in a government of national unity similar to the SA model. More likely though, the statements were simply the products of speculation by a shamelessly biased Maputo Press core, which has demonised Dhlakama for years.

In SA, the expectation of a change in government was enough to keep government supporters in state-owned media more or less neutral.

But members of the state-owned Mozambican Press do not expect there will be a change in government, and are therefore more likely to continue their instinctual support for Frelimo.

In any event, Dhlakama once again ruled out returning to the war if he lost the election at the weekend and denied he was stockpiling weapons. "It is not true. We don't like war," he told reporters after a meeting with Western ambassadors and UN special envoy Aldo Ajello.

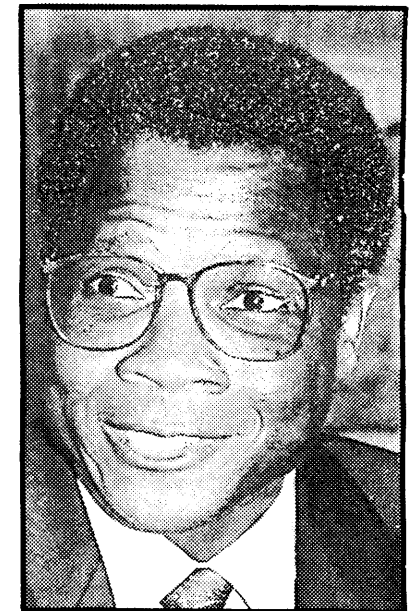
But just because Renamo and Frelimo supporters do not relish the

prospect of returning to the bush does not mean they have become fervent supporters of non-violence.

Dhlakama's principal style of campaigning in the south, where he is much less popular, has been to gather a few thousand of his supporters and hold festive motorcades through the shanty-towns that surround Maputo. At one of the largest at the weekend, his supporters adopted novel vote-catching tactics, blocking oncoming cars and buses and threateningly shouting "Maringue" at the startled occupants. Maringue was Renamo's base during the bush war.

When Frelimo supporters threw stones at the departing motorcade, Renamo bully-boys would jump out of the back of the trucks and, in full view of journalists, ferociously attack the perpetrators with sticks. But although the incidents were frequent and some stones even whipped by the bakkie Dhlakama was standing on, the retaliation, though violent, did not cause serious injury.

The more worrying trend associated with the demobilisation of members of both armies has been a dramatic increase in crime and banditry. Twice in the past week gunmen attacked now thriving restaura-



□ DHLAKAMA

rants in Maputo, on one occasion shooting waiters and patrons in the process.

The incidents provide some indication of the awesome challenge that will face the new government even if it is installed peacefully.