



Mozambican president and Frelimo (The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) leader Joaquim Chissano speaks to thousands of supporters during his final campaign rally in Maputo

PHOTOGRAPH, JOHN PARKIN/AP

Final lap for UN's man in Maputo

David Beresford in Maputo

THE moment of truth has arrived both for the world's poorest country and for Aldo Ajello. Sitting on the 11th floor of a converted hotel in central Maputo, the head of the United Nations' operations in Mozambique is in a reflective mood as he awaits the outcome of the world's latest experiment in democracy.

This week, Mozambique has its first election since independence, the results of which will be announced in about three weeks. But Ajello, a former Italian politician and journalist, will know the outcome of the poll which could bring peace to 16-million people or trigger the resumption of a savage civil war well before that.

Radio links have been set up at 500 of the more than 7 250 polling stations to inform Ajello of the confidential results of a "quick count". Polling experts estimate it will give, to within 3-5 percent, the outcome of the struggle between Afonso Dhlakama, once seen as the Pol Pot of southern Africa, and President Joaquim Chissano, heir to an oppressive Marxist dictatorship.

Whether and when to release the "quick count" results is just one of many decisions for Ajello. But, after two years of battling to implement the shaky 1992 Rome peace accord, the dapper UN chief is sanguine.

"I don't think there will be war again," he says. But he does fear a "dramatic increase" in banditry and crime because of the numbers of unemployed former government troops and guerrillas.

The demobilisation of the warring armies is seen as the main achievement of the UN here, but Ajello says this is not enough.

"There is no way to impose peace on people who do not want peace," he says. That, he believes, will depend on a post-election political settlement to accommodate both sides.

"Some kind of political settlement must be reached that would make the government comfortable and would prevent the loser feeling, not that he has lost an election, but that he has lost the war," he says.

Ajello doubts whether Renamo — the predicted loser — can or wants to resume hostilities. "The Renamo we used to know has almost disap-

peared," he says. "A new Renamo is growing up which is a kind of aggregation of discontent against Frelimo."

To support this, he cites the fact that the Renamo leadership often does not know about party structures which have spontaneously sprung up around the country.

At a local level, reconciliation is going "beautifully ... wonderfully," says Ajello. But nationally "the confidence building process has been a nightmare" because it is incompatible with electioneering.

Ajello says the lessons of the Mozambique operation for the UN include the need to recognise a conflict between what he characterises as the differing philosophies of "peacekeeping" and "development".

Speed is critical to peace keeping, while development emphasises the importance of educating local people to do the job at hand. This almost ended in disaster when development agencies took over the demobilisation and insisted that troops and guerrillas build their own assembly points. The delays and tensions this caused resulted in riots and mutinies.