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## RESEARCH & ANALYTICAL PAPERS

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### MOZAMBIQUE: THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PEACE

African Research Group

Mozambique provides an outstanding example of mediated conflict resolution in Africa. This paper looks at the process of achieving peace and the Mozambican approach to reconciliation.



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# MOZAMBIQUE: THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PEACE

## RENAMO and Warfare

1. The Mozambican National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) was formed in 1976, in Rhodesia, by a white Mozambican, Orlando Cristina. It was started under the direct aegis of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), who set up a radio station outside Umtali (now Mutare) which beamed anti-Government propaganda into Mozambique - host to Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). The CIO provided a military training camp for recruits, which included members of the former elite black units of the Portuguese colonial army in Mozambique, with whom Cristina had been associated before independence. Other recruits were drawn from former Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) ranks who had been punished for various infractions by a notably puritanical and zealous FRELIMO Government post-Independence (25 June 1975). Some were escapees from the numerous re-education camps in Mozambique. Increasingly, RENAMO forays across the border selected such camps as targets, releasing their inmates and swelling their own ranks.

2. Mainly, however, the Rhodesians kept RENAMO on a tight leash, bending them to their purpose, and using them as trackers and guides in operations into Mozambique by such units as the Rhodesian SAS. With the transfer of power to an independent Zimbabwe in April 1980, however, RENAMO's support-base shifted to South Africa, which had a different agenda, combining cover for covert sabotage operations by their own forces inside Mozambique with support for destabilisation of a troublesome neighbour. However, they were stingy in the amount of weaponry they were willing to supply, and this supply also decreased sharply after the signing of the Nkomati Accord of mutual non-aggression between South Africa and Mozambique in March 1984, and was routed more covertly than hitherto. RENAMO had no access to significant resources in Mozambique to fund arms purchases, such as the diamonds available to the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). In the main, RENAMO guerrillas were armed with semi-automatic weapons (AKs), although as time went on bands in isolated areas, especially in the north of the country, were just as likely to use machetes and knives.

3. From the early days of operating out of Rhodesia, RENAMO used mutilation against civilians. Typically, when they attacked a village, they cut off the ears (sometimes also noses and lips) of FRELIMO functionaries. This kind of mutilation had also been employed by ZANLA in its guerrilla war in Rhodesia, but on a much smaller scale, and targeted against known or suspected informers. RENAMO mutilation was a terror-tactic, aimed at cowing new areas of conquest, and subsided when they had established control. Such methods as burning alive were particularly in evidence in road ambushes in Southern Mozambique, where FRELIMO drew its main support. The use of child soldiers was also more marked in the south than in the centre or north of the country. Tales of the enforced brutalisation of child-soldiers to process them as killers and implicate them in atrocities, often against their own kin, is well attested. A study by a French anthropologist in the northern province of Nampula found that forced recruits were first

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imprisoned by RENAMO for weeks in small coops in total darkness, in order to disorient them and break their will.

4. Although politically inarticulate until the late 1980s, RENAMO drew on real grievances and economic discontents. Despite the organisation's longstanding "polecat" status, both because of its artificial origins and then South African support, Afonso Dhlakama was no cipher. RENAMO's titular President since 1982, and effective leader since Cristina's murder in South Africa in 1983, Dhlakama was a man of little formal education, but one who grew in political stature over the years. He was also in effective control of his forces and able to lead them in continued warfare, or into a peace settlement.

### **Peace Negotiations**

5. President Samora Machel believed that South Africa effectively controlled RENAMO, and that it was better to address the organ-grinder than the monkey. The Nkomati Accord of March 1984 was his way of trying to negotiate an end to the war. However, covert support continued to be supplied to RENAMO by South African military intelligence - albeit at a lower level. But the truth was that RENAMO was by then largely self-supporting. It lived off the land - or rather off the hapless peasantry - and most of its guns and ammunition were acquired by capture from the Mozambican armed forces (FAM). Even the expansion of the Zimbabwean National Army (ZNA) presence in Mozambique to some 12,000 men in 1985-6 failed to turn the tide. ZNA paratroops took the RENAMO headquarters at Casa Banana in central Mozambique, only for it to be lost to RENAMO again a couple of months later by the FAM troops who garrisoned it. RENAMO went on to mount a significant offensive in Zambézia Province in 1986 from bases in Malawi. By 1987-8, RENAMO's destruction of infrastructure, and the depredations of both sides against civilians (even if widespread mutilation was the RENAMO speciality) had reduced the country to a parlous state and created millions of refugees.

6. Machel died in an air crash in October 1986 and was succeeded by Joaquim Chissano as President. The latter encouraged the churches to make contact with RENAMO and to initiate a dialogue, which initially took place in Kenya in 1989. In the late 1980s, both Presidents Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya also tried to facilitate talks and to mediate. However, this high-level approach ran against the problem of the asymmetry of the two organisations - one a legitimate Government and the other a politically disreputable military force - and the problem of mutual recognition. Mugabe and Moi gave up after failing to persuade the FRELIMO Government to talk to RENAMO direct. (There was also a complicating balance of distrust - RENAMO distrusted Zimbabwe as mediator and FRELIMO distrusted Kenya.) Chissano for his part failed to draw RENAMO onto his chosen terrain of debate on proposed constitutional changes. (In the end a new Constitution came into force on 30 November 1990 which permitted the introduction of a multiparty state. It had been the object of widespread consultation and popular debate inside the country and in refugee camps outside, but there had been no RENAMO input).

7. Following a failed attempt at arranging a meeting between RENAMO and Mozambican Ministers in Malawi, which involved *inter alia* Tiny Rowland of LONRHO, the scene

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switched to painfully slow, but ultimately successful talks in Rome hosted by the lay Catholic community of Sant'Egidio. Direct talks between the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO started in July 1990. The inclusion of Archbishop Jaime Gonçalves of Beira (a fellow Ndauspeaker from central Mozambique who has never been regarded as friendly towards FRELIMO) in the official mediating team was probably important in gaining Dhlakama's trust in the process. The other mediators were Mario Rafaelli, a socialist parliamentarian representing the Italian Government, and two senior members of the Sant'Egidio community, Andreas Riccardi and Matteo Zuppi. The principal negotiators were Armando Guebuza, Minister of Communications, for FRELIMO, and Raúl Domingos, for RENAMO - both senior figures.

8. Domestic factors favouring a peace settlement included simple war exhaustion on both sides, a lack of resources to make war a profitable enterprise for either, and a lack of external support for its continuance (end of the Cold War and the recent political changes in South Africa). With the withdrawal of Russian supplies of diesel, the Mozambican army was grinding to a halt, while in 1990-92 Mozambique was scourged by drought and RENAMO guerrillas starved along with the peasantry they lived off. The Zimbabwean desire to see a peace settlement and realisation that they could do business with Dhlakama also assisted. Theirs was the most significant foreign troop presence in Mozambique. A partial cease-fire agreement mediated in Rome and signed on 1 December 1990 provided for Zimbabwean troops to be confined to the Limpopo and Beira transport corridors, and eventual withdrawal altogether (a small number of Malawian soldiers on the Nacala corridor was similarly confined). For its part, RENAMO was not to attack these corridors. (They had been a major and consistent RENAMO target.) Despite frequent violations by all sides, the agreement worked on balance to build further confidence.

9. When the General Peace Agreement (GPA) was signed in Rome on 4 October 1992 it represented a vindication of Sant'Egidio's (often criticised) low-key and modest approach towards facilitating dialogue between two bodies deeply suspicious of each other, but also genuinely desirous of peace. An important contributory factor was the personality of Afonso Dhlakama, his desire for respectability and recognition, and his positive response when these were forthcoming. When talks were in the air, back in 1989, he began an important restructuring of his organisation, turning it from a purely military machine, with political window-dressing in the form of external offices disseminating propaganda for foreign consumption, into something which increasingly began to look like a fledgling political organisation. There were, for example, reports of political rallies in RENAMO-controlled areas in Zambézia Province, at which RENAMO commanders publicly apologised for past brutalities and promised better behaviour in future. RENAMO also started recruiting small businessmen and traders.

### **ONUMOZ**

10. ONUMOZ was a UN success, despite certain deficiencies (failure to demine, an inadequate disarmament process, shambolic handling of demobilisation). It was, however, blessed by the desire of the Mozambican parties to the conflict to see it ended, and had an effective UN Special Representative in place in the person of Aldo Ajello of Italy. He had good relations with the international community in Mozambique and was able to

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enlist their cooperation; they were also represented on the various mixed commissions established under the GPA. The most successful aspect of the ONUMOZ operation under Ajello was to build on, and reward, Dhlakama's natural tendency to favour the political option over the military one, by offering the financial means for him to turn RENAMO into a political party. Ajello took a creative approach to setting up appropriate funding (which was promised under the GPA and was one of the lures which led RENAMO to sign). These funds were important for RENAMO since, unlike many other guerrilla movements, it had no major source of revenue:

“The trust fund allowed RENAMO a privileged insertion into the political arena and allayed its fears about competing with the more politically sophisticated FRELIMO regime... Importantly, the trust fund provided Dhlakama with an important means of rewarding and assisting the top RENAMO leadership in adjusting to a new civilian life in peace time. In essence, the trust fund became the lynchpin of RENAMO's political transition and a key aspect of the Mozambican transition.

The decision by donors to provide funding for a political party set to compete with a recognised government was not an easy decision and required flexibility, commitment and innovation. In turn, to the credit of ONUMOZ personnel, if perhaps to the horror of auditors, it is hardly surprising that the funds disbursed were given out in a more liberal fashion than is normally the case with other UN-managed funds.”<sup>1</sup>

11. There were also no major setbacks or disasters similar to the killing of UNITA cadres in Luanda in October-November 1992 following Savimbi's repudiation of the presidential election results. RENAMO delegates opened an office in Maputo. They were not attacked. Their children went to the local schools unmolested. President Chissano held occasional meetings with Dhlakama about such issues as extending Government administration to RENAMO dominated areas, and incorporating some RENAMO personnel. These contacts were not without conflicts of viewpoint, but nonetheless the contrast with Angola, where President dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi had never met inside their own country (and still have not) could not have been greater.

12. The change to a multiparty system in Mozambique was a form of conflict resolution in itself. The general elections of October 1994 were not without mishap - notably Dhlakama's announcement on the eve (26 October) that RENAMO would be withdrawing and referring to alleged electoral fraud. Strong Western and Zimbabwean pressure was brought to bear and on the morning of 28 October he announced an end to the boycott, agreeing to have his allegations of irregularities investigated. (An extra day of voting was declared, as foreseen in the electoral law.) However, accept the results he finally did. They gave RENAMO good enough representation in Parliament - 112 seats, versus 129 for FRELIMO, and 9 for the small Democratic Union (UD) - to encourage Dhlakama's political ambitions for his party in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Moises Venancio, “Did Peace-Keeping Work in Mozambique?”, in Chan & Venancio, eds, *War & Peace in Mozambique*, Basingstoke & London, 1998: pp 98-116

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## **Establishment of peace in the aftermath of conflict**

13. Some public calls from the international community for the formation of a Government of National Unity in Mozambique probably prevented Chissano from including any RENAMO representatives in his Government (as he had been contemplating), lest this appear to be at external behest. However, Dhlakama kept his word and did not "do a Savimbi". A system of mixed Parliamentary commissions into important issues has developed in Mozambique and this appears to have provided RENAMO with a satisfactory mechanism for participation. Doubtless the parliamentary arithmetic itself favours this - commissions tend to have balanced FRELIMO/ RENAMO membership along with one UD representative. (Although Dhlakama has recently stated that he expects the administration formed following Mozambique's second general elections, due towards the end of 1999, to include RENAMO members).

14. Dhlakama clearly enjoys the role of responsible politician. He constantly reaffirms that he has "brought democracy to Mozambique" and has no intention of returning the country to war. On 15 October he was elected Deputy Chairman of the Union of African Parties for Democracy and Development (UAPDD) at its meeting in Namibia. He told a press conference that the UAPDD had been founded with support from the European Peoples' Party, with the aim of establishing a balance between socialist-oriented parties and those on the right. The meeting was attended by centre-right (mainly opposition) political parties.

15. On another level the popular desire for the reestablishment of peace and social order in a world which had been turned upside down and inside out by war cannot be overstated. The cease-fire which followed the signing of the GPA in October 1992 held, with no really serious incidents: in some areas, eg Zambézia Province, soldiers from both sides began fraternising before the cease-fire officially came into effect. Displaced people started to move back to their home areas, and able-bodied refugees over the borders started trekking back as soon as it was clear it was safe to do so. The general mood can be judged by the failure to attain even half of the agreed target number of 30,000 volunteers for the new joint army.

16. With few exceptions, both the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO had tolerated grass-roots peace initiatives in the latter years of the war. In areas controlled by both "peace zones" had existed, usually associated with occult powers/spirit mediums holding sway over a certain delimited area where violence was banned (in contrast with the Angolan situation where political loyalties are so polarised that peacemakers themselves are prone to attack). Traditional mechanisms were also in place in Mozambique to assist the reintegration of the traumatised back into their communities, when the war ended. Ceremonies of "cleansing" were elaborated by the relevant practitioners of healing and/or divination to deal with the wreckage of war - the child-guerrillas who had done awful things, the abducted wives who had been held at RENAMO bases and who might or might not be rejected by their husbands and families on return, and those ex-soldiers on both sides pursued by the vengeful spirits of those they had killed.

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17. Such purification rituals involve entire communities. In contrast to Western psychotherapeutic practice which stresses recovery of the memory of the trauma, indigenous practice in Mozambique has the objective of locking it away<sup>2</sup>. The possibility of establishing a Mozambican Truth and Reconciliation Commission following the South African example has come under debate in the Mozambican Parliament. It did not attract strong support. The Mozambican tendency at every level is more a generalised complicity in forgetting.

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<sup>2</sup> Alcinda Honwana, "Sealing the Past, Facing the Future: Trauma Healing in Rural Mozambique", *Accord* issue 3, 1998: pp 75-80. (Available on the Conciliation Resources website: <http://www.c-r.org/cr/conciliation.htm>)