



**TALKING PEACE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA:
DEADLOCK IN MOZAMBIQUE;
BREAKTHROUGH IN ANGOLA**

It is generally agreed that the process of building a prosperous future southern Africa will to a large extent be shaped by the demands for democratisation and political stability. This is true for all the countries of the region, but especially so for South Africa, Mozambique, and Angola – three countries currently experiencing profound socio-political transition. Continuing destabilisation in any of these will have a debilitating effect on the whole of the sub-region. Following previous reports, this one serves as an update on developments in Mozambique and Angola. (See Brief Report 2/91: "Ballots in place of bullets? – Negotiating Mozambique's future", and 6/91: "Angola: Elusive peace?")

MOZAMBIQUE

Hope for a negotiated settlement of the gratuitous conflict in Mozambique is fading rapidly. The peace talks, very much a start-stop affair, have once again ground to a halt. The government and RENAMO signed an agreement on 28 May in Rome which consisted of an agenda for eventual negotiations, but on June 6 the talks were once again interrupted for at least three weeks. According to one of the Italian mediators, this was due to "disagreement over the criteria for the formation of political parties". Transport Minister Armando Guebuza, the government's chief negotiator, is of the opinion that these difficulties arose because of the absence of the necessary mutual trust between the two sides. Not much progress has therefore been made since December 1990, when a partial ceasefire agreement between RENAMO and the government was signed to protect Mozambique's regional trade routes – the Limpopo and Beira corridors. Even though the 7000-strong Zimbabwe army has been restricted to guarding the railroads, rebels have repeatedly sabotaged work on the route between Zimbabwe and the port of Maputo. The 10-nation Joint Verification Commission (JVC) is now effectively defunct. At the same time, the rebels have stepped up their campaign of death and destruction, by concentrating in the southern parts of the country, including the areas surrounding Maputo.

The establishment of the beginnings of a democratic culture has in the meantime also proved to be difficult, as recent reports of an abortive coup attempt demonstrate. The government wants to hold nationwide elections sometime in 1992, but opposition to the ruling party, expressed in party-political terms, is still effectively absent. RENAMO seems to be counting on political advice and support from various rightwing organisations and individuals in South Africa, the United States, Kuwait and Portugal. Even so, many observers doubt the rebels' commitment and will to undergo a transformation from terrorist group to political party. Apart from the rebels, newly established opposition parties seem to be struggling to stay alive, let alone expand. The first opposition force to hold a national congress in Mozambique since independence in 1975, the Liberal and Democratic Party (PALMO), fragmented after serious internal disagreement. Another party, the Mozambique Nationalist Movement (MONAMO), seems financially well endowed, but lacks credibility and stands accused of practising racism. The main problem with the opposition, including RENAMO, is its focus on FRELIMO's past errors and lack of a distinct political vision.

Apart from the many problems related to security, economic restructuring and the absence of democratic norms, the impact of famine and poverty is of growing concern to the government and the international donor community. According to the latest figures, two-thirds of the 16 million Mozambican population are living in absolute poverty. Included in this figure are the estimated 1.2 million Mozambican refugees in neighbouring countries, and the 1.7 million Mozambicans displaced within the country. Worsening the situation is the impact of severe drought in the centre of the country, which means that this year's harvest in Mozambique is likely to be only 50% of the 1990 harvest. Unless donors respond quickly – government sources indicate at least a million tonnes of food aid will be needed – the country will be facing severe famine conditions. The ongoing conflict also causes food insecurity – also amongst the armed forces, with reports of the army being involved in stealing food.

It is clear that a successful negotiated settlement of the conflict in Mozambique would only serve as a starting point for the country's citizens to address a much more complex set of problems. Rebuilding Mozambique will be far more difficult than is generally realised. Fifteen years of RENAMO attacks have destroyed much of Mozambique's productive capacity and social infrastructure and caused losses estimated at US\$15 billion in a country ranked as one of the three poorest in the world.

ANGOLA

In Angola 16 years of bitter struggle, relentlessly fuelled by the dictates of the Cold War, hopefully came to an end on May 31, when President dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi signed an agreement in Lisbon to end the civil war.

The signing of the peace agreement was witnessed by the United States Secretary of State, James Baker, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Alexander Bessmertnykh, and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, a past chairperson of the Organisation of African Unity. The agreements, flowing from a year-long negotiation process and mediated by Portugal, makes provision for a joint commission to monitor the ceasefire. It also calls for general elections between September and November next year. The election process will be monitored by a contingent of 175 UN civilian and 450 military and police observers, and will be overseen by a verification panel comprising the two warring parties and three foreign governments – Portugal, the Soviet Union and the United States.

In the meantime, the two military forces, totalling over 200000 fighters, are to be combined – with British and French help – into a 50000-strong national army. This in effect means that between 150000 and 200000 soldiers will have to be demobilised; and finding employment for them will prove to be a most difficult task.

With guns that are beginning to fall silent, Angolans are now able to shift their attention to the prospects of rebuilding society. An important test for the recently signed peace agreement will undoubtedly be the first general elections. The MPLA is clearly wary of having to face such an election. Its ethnic base of support among the Mbundu people of the north-central region accounts for about 20% of the population, while UNITA's traditional Ovimbundu constituency comprises about 35%. And it cannot be denied that Savimbi is a forceful personality, perhaps too much for the self-effacing dos Santos to handle in a straight contest for the presidency.

Many Angolans would point to a revitalised economy as the basis for restructuring the country. The problem, however, is how to get it going again. Angola earns US\$2.9 billion per year, 95% of that from oil exports, mainly to the United States. Yet, at least until recently, half of it was set aside for the war effort. Manufacturing is paralysed, agriculture has been disrupted by the war and years of tightly restricted pricing policies for farmers, and once healthy diamond and coffee exports have plummeted. The country's foreign debt amounts to more than \$7 billion – almost 95% of GDP – of which half is owed to the Soviet Union.

However, peace could bring prosperity. An end to the fighting could bring a fairly rapid recovery for Angola's economy, which is potentially one of the strongest in Africa. The country produces about 453000 barrels of oil a day – second only to Nigeria in sub-Saharan Africa. Oil accounts for one-third of the Gross Domestic Product, half the government revenue, and over 90% of total export earnings. Since 1988, the government has committed itself to an economic reform programme – the SEF – designed to attract additional foreign investment and stimulate a local private sector. It is these developments, coupled to the prospects of future political stability, that have already attracted a good deal of attention from South African companies, wanting to invest in Angola.

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