I don't think it's related to my processor. For the record, the Northwood Cele does have 8kb L1, but it also has an additional 12kb on L1 (tracer cache).   In addition, this problem doesn't occur with the following games and fullscreen apps that I have tested :

Quake 2
World of Warcraft
Battlefield 1942
Battlefield Vietnam
C&C Renegade demo
Nemu64 & Project 64
ePSXe
Serious Sam
Quake 3
Doom 3 (Ok .. barely runs, but still loads faster than renegade retail does..)

All these games run great..

I think its the way Renegade is programmed. Since none of my other games exhibit this problem, I can only assume it was a problem with the way the hard drive interracts with the core of the game.   I think that the game itself makes direct requests to the harddrive without regard for what other resources are sharing it or need constant updates from. (ESCD, windows, possibly even a raid device... never tested that theory.) To this effet, I think windows is reacting in some way to this .. all speculation still..

I can't reformat. to do so with mean I would be without an operating system unless I had an IDE hardrive larger than 2.0gb... and I don't have an extra drive laying around.

It's because upon installation windows requires drivers for my SATA hd. No drivers, then the installation halts. (ffollowed by reboot) The installation doesn't allow you to load drivers from anywhere else but the floppy drive. Since I own a MB870 MINI-ITX motherboard, it doesn't come with a standard 34pin floppy connector onboard. instead, it comes with a laptop style connector - designed to be compliant with all floppy drives manufactured in the standard laptop floppy drive. (anything year 2000+ basically is compatible basically...)

In addition, it comes with a 44 pin OBPS IDE connector (2.5" laptop), and 1 standard 3.5" drive IDE connector.

Trust me, i'd love to reformat - but I can't. Stupid microsoft. Stupid westwood !