

Call for peace

Indian Ocean Newsletter (Fr), 89 04 22 (abr) & 89 05 06

One peace manoeuvre comes from the Mozambican Catholic Church which is to publish a new pastoral letter whose theme will be, *"the role of grass-roots Christian communities in the establishment of peace"*. This document confirms the Church's commitment bring about a dialogue between FRELIMO and RENAMO (ION N°377).

According to a reliable source, the Centro Internazionale d'Assisi (Italy), related to the Franciscans, has been very active in this respect. Father **Manuel Carreira das Neves** has, it seems, played a particularly active part. Already in 1986, the Centro d'Assisi engineered a meeting in Rome which was to be attended by representatives of FRELIMO (in particular **José Luis Cabaço**) and RENAMO. In the end, the meeting did not take place due to opposition from FRELIMO radicals, although the President at that time, **Samora Machel**, gave it his support.

At a time when preparations are underway in Mozambique for the revision of its constitution and also for the Vth FRELIMO Congress, four Marxist researchers (three French, one Soviet) whose work focuses on anthropology, history and sociology within the context of the evolution of former Portuguese colonies in Africa and especially Mozambique, have appealed to the government in Maputo for a political solution to the conflict. **Claude Meillassoux** (research director at the CNRS (Centre national de la recherche scientifique) in Paris), **Christine Messiant** (researcher at EHESS in Paris) and **Michel Cahen** (researcher at the CNRS, Bordeaux) and **Jorge Der Luguan** (Universal History Institute, Moscow) have sent a letter to the President **Joaquim Chissano**. In the letter they invite the President to *"force RENAMO to become a legal political party and to call the international community to witness in obliging this organisation to prove it merits its legitimacy, if it can, by participating in the elections and aligning with FRELIMO and all other political parties dependent on the vote of the people."*

According to the researchers, an initiative of this kind is the only way that the leaders of FRELIMO can escape from the dilemma *"imposed by the single party constitution"*: either they accept direct negotiation with the enemy and find themselves forced to make major political concessions in sharing power within the State-Party, or FRELIMO, faithful to its principals, refuses to enter political negotiations and *"has no other choice but to debauch the enemy."* However, the amnesty offered to RENAMO deserters a year ago has not weakened the rebel organisation and the end of the war does not seem to be in sight.

Moreover, Mozambican clergy have published the pastoral letter which we reported was in preparation two weeks ago (ION N°379). They call for an immediate halt to the fighting which, according to their statistics has caused more than half a million deaths and forced more than four million people to leave their home region. They say that reconciliation is a process of *"mutual pardon, tolerance, understanding and sincere openness to all people."* They invite foreign governments and international organisations to intervene to put a stop to external support for the guerillas.