

Interview with D. Alexandre dos Santos
Africa, August 9, 1989

Translation of selected passages:

"This war is destructive in the total sense of the word. People cannot travel without danger, they can't cultivate the land because, if they go to the forest, they are captured, they are killed. It is impressive when we travel to see people sleeping on porches and on the side of the road. It is dangerous to sleep at home.

Travel by road is rare, some 40 km from Maputo, at times less, one can't go. Some places one goes by plane. Most of the missions are shut, first because the Frelimo government on closing churches in 1979, required the missionaries to leave. Now that the government authorizes them, one can't go because of the war."

Finally, in January 1988, President Joaquim Chissano gave the green light for the church to begin contacts with Renamo.

"We didn't know how to contact Renamo. I received documents that they sent here and telephone calls from Mozambicans who said they wanted peace. In February of that year we were invited for a conference of the Council of Churches of the U.S., which was totally against Renamo. They wanted me to speak the same way, which I didn't like.

There I met a Mozambican, Dr. Artur Lambo Vilanculos, who lives in New York. It was he then who began the contacts with Nairobi with the Kenyan government to begin the dialogue about peace.

After New York I was in Canada and in Geneva, from where I went to Nairobi. The Kenyan government paid for everything. I spoke with the Kenyan authorities in March. I told them that I wanted to speak with Renamo now that the government had authorized me. Then the Kenyan government bought airplane tickets for me to return with the other churches. I returned to Mozambique with 4 tickets. For me, for D. Jaime Goncalves (Bishop of Beira) and for two pastors of the Christian Council, D. Dinis Dengulane (Bishop of Libombos) and for Pastor Muchache. It was the beginning."

"I spent all the year of 1988 in trips to Nairobi without ever succeeding in meeting the men of Renamo" [they never showed up]

"Until, in January this year, I went to Tete and found the people in a situation so dramatic, above all in the center for displaced people. It so horrified me. I couldn't sleep. I said: One has to do something to stop this.

At the end of January, I went to Rome for other purposes. But those images were so strong that I looked up the Renamo representative. He said to me that they didn't have confidence in the security conditions in Kenya, and that they preferred a European country."

Finally, at the end of February a delegation appeared in

Kenya. The church leaders "brought the task of trying to convince Renamo that it should not continue to kill the people."

"Chissano had shown a great openness in relation to the meeting [of the church leaders] with Dhlakama, and therefore sent a delegation to aid the church leaders."

"Despite the failure to meet [in July], despite the military offensive in Gorongosa, D. Alexandre believes that President Chissano is capable, is really the only one capable of solving the war."