

RENAMO congress bids for peace

The *Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO) held its first-ever national congress on 5-9 June at Gorongosa in central Mozambique. The congress came to the momentous decision to respond positively to President Joaquim Chissano's peace initiative. Chissano's 12-point peace plan has already won considerable international approval (AC Vol 30 No 13).

RENAMO has decided to accept the government's main conditions for talks, namely a renunciation of violence and agreement to work out differences within a constitutional framework. Sources who attended the meeting said that in his keynote speech, RENAMO's guerrilla chief **Afonso Dhlakama** renounced any personal ambitions and said that the rebels no longer sought to overthrow the Chissano government. The congress also dropped several previous demands, such as for immediate free elections and the withdrawal of all foreign forces in Mozambique - principally the 10,000 Zimbabwean troops helping the government army to defend two strategic transport routes to the sea. Both issues are to be worked out in negotiation rather than on the battlefield.

RENAMO's new flexibility opens the door to some dramatic announcements at the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO)'s Fifth Congress, to be held in Maputo from 24-31 July, its first such gathering in seven years. Chissano is hoping to enter the congress armed with a positive response from the rebels so as to swing the party faithful behind a peace agreement. RENAMO appears to have obliged.

Since Chissano embarked on the current peace efforts in August 1988, giving Mozambican church-leaders approval to meet with the rebels, his biggest problem has been a lack of coherent leadership within RENAMO itself. At the Gorongosa meeting, the movement underwent a major restructuring. The congress chose a new four-member cabinet, a 10-person national council and several new department heads. Gone is the long-time head of RENAMO's external relations, **Artur Janeiro de Fonseca**, now reportedly *persona non grata* in his old home, West Germany. His replacement by **Raul Manuel Domingos**, the former chief of staff of the 20,000-strong rebel army, marks the first time that a military man from inside Mozambique has been the rebels' effective foreign minister.

Another change was the shift of **Vincente Zacharias Ululu** from the head of the administration department - mainly concerned with organising food and labour supplies - to head Information. In an effort to dilute the ethnic group over control of the Ndaue movement, the national council has been shaken up to include one representative from each of Mozambique's 10 provinces.

The Gorongosa meeting provided the strongest evidence yet that right-wing United States groups, almost certainly working with the blessing of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), are winning their battle to wrest control of RENAMO from South African military intelligence operatives (AC Vol 29 No 24). It would have been unthinkable for Fonseca to be dropped unless his South African mentor, Brigadier **Charles van Niekerk**, either had agreed or been neutralised. Washington sources indicate that the Pentagon has now dropped its objections to a State Department peace initiative on Mozambique. Last year, US Department of Defence officials objected to the civilian view that RENAMO should be stopped.

The battle for control of RENAMO has raged for at least two years. It centres around **Thomas Schaaf**, an American religious fundamentalist who established contact with RENAMO when he worked for Zimbabwe's agricultural extension department, Agritechs, in the border town of Mutare. Schaaf is working closely with **Ray Cline**, former CIA chief of operations. The CIA's aim seems to be to steer RENAMO away from Pretoria and remove pro-Pretoria elements in the movement's external leadership. Retired General **John Singlaub**, another CIA contact, also maintains a close interest. He was particularly close to RENAMO official **João Ataíde**, one of several RENAMO people murdered in the US-South African struggle for control.

The battle for control of US policy on RENAMO tipped irreversibly in favour of the State Department after publication of a report by **Robert Gersony**. It accused the rebels of carrying out atrocities and murdering at least 100,000 people. President P.W. Botha, during his 1988 meeting with President Chissano at Songo, promised to cut off South African support.

With RENAMO strong militarily but weak diplomatically, and FRELIMO having overwhelming diplomatic backing but a flagging army, the stage was set to bring the two sides together. Chissano solidified the dominance of the more pragmatic core of the FRELIMO leadership, forging a coalition of himself, Transport Minister **Armando Guebuza**, Security Minister **Mariano Matsinhe**, and his old friend Foreign Minister **Pascoal Mocumbi**, expected to climb to the Political Bureau at the Fifth Congress.

The superpowers are also working together. The Soviet Union backed Chissano's search for peace by informing Mozambique's generals that there would be no more major arms supplies. Moscow has pressured Pretoria too, with Deputy Foreign Minister **Anatoly Adamishin** presenting **Pik Botha** with evidence that South African support for the rebels continues. US diplomats in the region still insist that RENAMO continues to receive supplies from South Africa. FRELIMO units spotted a helicopter arriving at the town of Magde, 50 miles north of Maputo, on 14 June and leaving towards the South African border. Another unidentified helicopter was spotted in the same area on 18 June.

As US ambassador to Maputo **Melissa Wells** championed improved relations with the Maputo government, other people in Washington set about cleaning RENAMO's external representation of its pro-South African elements, symbolised by **Fernandes** and **Fonseca**. Schaaf has visited the RENAMO headquarters in Gorongosa several times this year. All these efforts seem to have culminated in the restructuring announced in RENAMO's June congress. ●