

Mozambique: Peace in the air

Informafica 1 (12)
Oct. 88 p. 6

TENTATIVES moves are underway to establish a minimum platform of agreement between the warring sides in Mozambique aimed at ending the conflict there. Sentiment among members of the ruling Frelimo party and particularly in the armed forces is beginning to swing in favour of a negotiated peace deal without powersharing.

THE SOUTHERN African Roman Catholic Bishops Conference which met in Harare on the eve of the recent papal visit to the region, discussed a confidential report on Mozambique which stated unequivocally that peace was only possible if the government and the rebels reached some kind of compromise. Priests speaking during the debate which followed were even more emphatic on this point. Our sources say the Mozambican

Bishops (all of them without exception) went much further on the issue than their Angolan counterparts have done when dealing with the similar conflict which affects their own countrymen.

The Mozambican bishops' thinking reflects to some extent that prevailing in the Vatican. Although the Mozambican authorities have rejected the efforts to intervene, the Pope has offered his good offices as a mediator in the 13-year-old conflict between Frelimo and Renamo.

Other classified information reaching us recounts that a senior Tanzanian official (whose name we deliberately omit) had recent talks in a Western European country with Renamo sympathisers as a first step towards making contact with the rebel's bush-based leadership.

We do not rule out the possi-

bility that these contacts have the indirect blessing of factions in Frelimo, identified with President Joaquim Chissano, keen to end the conflict and start the rebuilding of the war-devastated economy.

The most incisive peace initiatives however could well come from South Africa. Unlike Angola, Maputo has all the diplomatic trumps in its hand along with solid and growing international support and confidence.

The group within Frelimo which favours a deal with Renamo, without however sharing power, argues the government has nothing to lose in such a move, due to its international prestige. To the contrary they maintain that it would be risky to insist on a military solution given the battle-weary and dispirited state of the government's forces.