

At the time of going to press, the possibility of a meeting between RENAMO's president, **Afonso Dhakama** and the Mozambican bishops was clouded in a mist of uncertainty. The meeting scheduled for July 12 then postponed until July 19 did not take place. The bishops, playing the role of intermediaries who went to Nairobi to learn the rebel organisation's point of view on Maputo's peace initiative returned empty-handed. A meeting of Church representatives was planned to take place on July 19 with Mozambique's Minister of Justice, with a view to arranging another meeting. In a press conference on July 17 in Maputo, President **Joaquim Chissano** publically confirmed the peace initiative presented in the form of a twelve-point paper (ION N°389). He refused to consider RENAMO as a political party and repeated that they were just bandits with external support. Mozambique's leader mentioned the two principles which RENAMO would have to accept prior to the opening of direct negotiations: firstly, the rebel organisation will have to acknowledge that the present conflict is "an operation to destabilise and not a fight between two political parties." Secondly, RENAMO must accept "to call a halt to all acts of terrorism and banditry" as the first step towards a dialogue. Mr Chissano went on to say that his government was not demanding that the rebels lay down their arms now but they accept these two basic principles. In so doing, he rectified a previous declaration which led RENAMO to refuse a unilateral cease-fire (ION N°390)

In fact, it is not Mr Chissano's statements that kept Mr Dhakama away from Nairobi, but an attack launched a week ago, by the Mozambican army on RENAMO's headquarters in Gorongosa. In a statement issued from Washington, a RENAMO spokesman, Mr **Luis Serapiao** denounced the attack "from FRELIMO radicals trying to sabotage the Nairobi meeting." The Mozambican authorities admitted having shot down an unidentified aircraft in the Gorongosa region, but denied having sought to prevent the president of the rebel organisation from reaching Nairobi. Originally, RENAMO said that the attack on Gorongosa did not jeopardise the meeting in Kenya, but they seem to have changed their mind since then. In the last few days, Catholic dignitaries have been also thinking that perhaps Mr Dhakama had finally decided that the meeting should have been arranged at a lower level, as far as RENAMO was concerned. In 1985, the break down of the first round of talks between Maputo and RENAMO was due to the fact that the rebel organisation had reached the conclusion that FRELIMO was only interested in a cease-fire but not at all in political reforms. The attack on Gorongosa may have jeopardised the opening of peace talks in Mozambique today.

Up until these last few weeks, according to our information, RENAMO insisted on the opening of a dialogue with Maputo being subject to the recognition of the need for a multi-party system and the authorities

agreement in principle for presidential and general elections according to the "one man, one vote" system, and not the indirect voting system currently in use. This position was set out in a letter written by **Janeiro da Fonseca** in the name of RENAMO's president, addressed to **Mario Soares** and the Portuguese government. In this letter, RENAMO's leader demanded that Portugal mediate in the Mozambican conflict. Lisbon is said to be preparing its reply to the rebel organisation.

Also, preparations for Afonso Dhakama's visit to Europe, which is supposed to include a visit to the Vatican at the end of August or at the beginning of September are underway. According to our information, he should be received by representatives from the Vatican State Secretariat. Before the Gorongosa "incident", he was supposed to have a direct meeting with representatives of the Mozambique government and perhaps even certain ministers. During Pope **Jean Paul II's** visit to Mozambique last year, RENAMO held a truce for several days.

Along with the bishops, President Chissano's brother, Pedro Chissano, is said to play an active role in preparing the way towards dialogue with RENAMO, as well as Mr **Pachinuapa**, who, in the Presidency, is a sort of "defender of civil rights". Pedro Chissano served in the Portuguese Army during the colonial years where he was in the commando force. He has maintained close ties with the Portuguese Association of Veteran Commandos, through which, he has contacts with influential figures close to RENAMO. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether or not the FRELIMO wing which is in favour of dialogue will be able to carry through its peace initiative embarked upon a few weeks ago.