

The poet of Maputo calls on FW to end the war

By EDDIE KOCH

MOZAMBIQUE'S national poet, José Craveirinha, has in his filing cabinet a cheque from the SABC for R12,75 dated November 1974, the last time he spoke to a white South African.

Craveirinha, internationally acclaimed as a leading writer in Portuguese, broke that silence this month.

He is the patron of a group of 70 poets, writers, artists and scientists in Maputo who published an open letter in the South African press asking State President FW de Klerk to help end "one of the most terrible genocides in the history of Africa".

It says Renamo continues to receive support from South African territory and asks De Klerk to dismantle all the "mechanisms" that have been used in the past to destabilise the country.

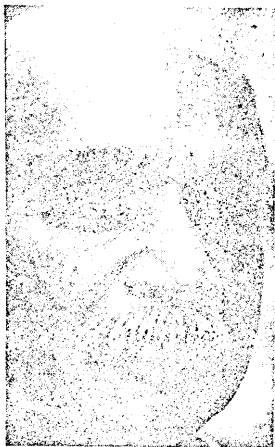
"Mr President. We would not have sent you this open letter if we did not believe that you could not use the powers conferred on you to as head of the South African state to confront without further delay the forces in South Africa that are involved in the destruction of our common future," it adds.

In an interview this week, Craveirinha outlined a growing awareness among diverse groups of Mozambicans that peace in their country depends on a political settlement in South Africa and conciliation with its white population.

"The truth is that we are eating and drinking the industrial development of South Africa. We are only two hours away from South Africa and can fetch pots, wine ... even Coca Cola. But not peace. For me to give something to my grandparents, I depend on De Klerk.

"For the South Africans, its even worse because there industrial and technological development has to be channelled out and we can help them to do that ... How can anybody think they can destabilise a neighbour and not destabilise themselves.

"The Afrikaner has the right to be in Africa and we have to take into account his own love for the land. But they have to be very sensitive. They shouldn't use their intellect only for



Craveirinha ... We are all in the same boat, under the same stars

industrial development or their exceptional system of agriculture. They have to use their intellect at the service of human quality.

"There is not one simple reason why we sent the letters. For many years we have been living an intolerable situation and we are conscious of the fact that we cannot call this thing that is happening a war. In a real war the adversaries are well defined and know how to recognise each other is.

"But the population here in Mozambique is living like a child in a dark room filled with ghosts. The result is fear and confusion.

"The letters may have come too late because thousands of lives have already been lost in this situation of the child in the dark room. But it is better late than never.

"To use another metaphor: We are sailing in a ship that has a very particular characteristic. We don't know whether the bow of the ship starts in South Africa and ends in Mozambique or starts in Mozambique and ends in South Africa.

"Though it seems a paradox, both South Africans and Mozambicans are floating in the same waters under the same stars. They are subject to the same tides, the same winds, the same tempests.

"And they are subject to the same calm."

De Klerk has announced that he will reply to Craveirinha and his colleagues if the letter is sent to him through appropriate channels. Johan Heyns, moderator of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, this week agreed to deliver the letter to the President's Office.

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