

Lisbon: a friend ?

There is no secret that Lisbon as a base for the MNR is second in importance only to South Africa itself. From Lisbon, MNR Secretary for Western Europe Evo Fernandes (formerly an agent of dictator Salazar's secret police, the PIDE) trumpets MNR claims to the world. From Lisbon, the head of the MNR's Foreign Relations Department, Guideon Mahluza, announced in August that he was heading a delegation to four Western European countries in search of arms supplies (though there is no evidence that he ever left Portugal). The MNR mingles happily in the shadowy world of the Portuguese extreme right and embittered Mozambican exiles. They seem to have no difficulty in acquiring Portuguese passports.

Equally, Lisbon has been a key point in conspiracies against Angola. The latest of these, codenamed "Operation Kubango," was uncovered in great detail by the Portuguese weekly magazine *Expresso*. It involved a double invasion of Angola, from Namibia and Zaire, timed to coincide with an attempt from within the ruling MPLA-Workers' Party to overthrow the government in Luanda.

All this was most embarrassing for the Portuguese Government of Francisco Pinto Balsemao which, despite its conservative domestic policies, had been diligently pursuing better relations with Mozambique and Angola.

On September 21-22, a summit was held in Praia, capital of Cape Verde, of the Heads of State of all five former Portuguese colonies in Africa — and in a final communiqué they gave Portugal a heavy hint that it was about time conspiracies in Lisbon were brought to an end.

A week later it became known that Lisbon had responded. A police investigation into the activities of Evo Fernandes was under way (and Operation Kubango was already under investigation). But although Fernandes is the most vociferous MNR member in Lisbon, he is far from the only one — yet it soon became clear that the investigation was aimed solely at Fernandes and that he did not seem particularly concerned about it. Suspicion has therefore grown that the Lisbon authorities have only moved reluctantly and intend doing the bare minimum necessary to retain some credibility.

Portuguese Ministers have, however, hastened to assure the Mozambican Government that they will not tolerate the use of Portuguese soil for the plotting of hostile acts "against friendly countries." Diogo Freitas do Amaral, Portugal's Defence Minister, was at great pains to make this clear in an interview on Radio Mozambique. Alvaro Cunhal, general secretary of the powerful Portuguese Communist Party, has denounced the government's attempts to establish better relations with the former colonies as nothing but hypocrisy — the government was pledging friendship with Mozambique and Angola, but was waiting for a chance "to plunge a dagger in their backs."

Mozambique did not take such a pessimistic view of the possibilities of co-operation with the Pinto Balsemao government, right-wing though it undoubtedly was. Indeed, Maputo is going ahead with the most sensitive and controversial form of co-operation — in the military field. This was discussed during Pinto Balsemao's visit to Maputo in June last year. At the end of October Mozambican Defence Minister Alberto Chipande travelled to Portugal at the invitation of Freitas do Amaral.

The forms of co-operation envisaged are fairly modest. Both countries have ruled out Portuguese troops being sent to Mozambique. Under discussion is the supply of light weaponry and uniforms, unspecified logistical support and the training of some Mozambican officers in Portuguese military institutions.

But the political significance of this is immense. It means that Mozambique has a friend — albeit not perhaps a fully reliable one — inside the NATO alliance. It also means that Mozambique's non-alignment has to be taken seriously: the *rapprochement* with Portugal makes it difficult to dismiss

Mozambique as a Soviet stooge.

The prospect has alarmed South Africa. When, in June, Portuguese President Ramalho Eanes, on his own initiative, sent a small consignment of arms to Mozambique, the pro-government English language paper *The Citizen* (usually regarded as the voice of the South African security services) headlined a major article "Portuguese guns against the West."

Repeatedly Pretoria tries to present the conflict in Southern Africa in cold war terms, with itself cast in the role as defender of the West's strategic minerals from imminent takeover by the Soviet Union. But a Mozambican military alliance with Portugal, even at a low level, is in glaring contradiction with Pretoria's crude demonology.

On past showing the MNR and its South African patrons could well respond to Chipande's visit to Lisbon with further selective terrorism against Portuguese citizens living and working in Mozambique. It remains to be seen whether such blackmail will lead the Portuguese Government to waver in its policy towards Mozambique ●