

MOZAMBIQUE:

MNR seeks a leader

After the assassination of the leader of the Mozambique National Resistance in April, internal power struggles are surfacing.

The "Mozambique National Resistance" (MNR), the South African sponsored rebel organisation trying to bring down the FRELIMO government, is in turmoil following the assassination of its secretary-general, Orlando Cristina, in April at a farm near Pretoria.

Immediately after Cristina's death, the MNR's representative in Western Europe, Evo Fernandes, disappeared, apparently in fear of his life. Thus the stream of MNR communiqués issued from Fernandes' house in the casino town of Cascais, near Lisbon, was interrupted for a while. Fernandes has been closely associated with Cristina for a long time — under colonialism, the two men were both agents of the Portuguese secret police, the PIDE, and both were based in Beira, working for the most notorious of colonial entrepreneurs, the late Jorge Jardim. Fernandes vanished from sight for two months, not reappearing publicly until late June.

Another leading MNR figure, Artur Vilanculu (who sits on the MNR's shadowy "government-in-exile" set up in March) arrived in Paris from New York in mid-May for the founding conference of *Resistance Internationale* (a rag-bag of East European emigrés, prominent Western right-wing intellectuals, and counter-revolutionary organisations from Africa and Latin America). Vilanculu, too, was scared, fearing that a Mozambican who contacted him by phone in Paris might have been "a FRELIMO agent" intent on sending him to join Cristina.

Before retreating to his New York apartment, Vilanculu gave an interview to French journalists in which he confidently stated that Adriano Bomba would become the new MNR general-secretary and that a statement would soon be made to that effect. Weeks passed and there still has been no public statement. In fact, reports emanating from South Africa stated that Bomba too has "disappeared."

Until Cristina's death, Bomba was the head of the MNR's Information Department. He had been a lieutenant in the Mozambique Air Force, when he defected to South Africa in spectacular style in mid-1981, flying his MiG-21

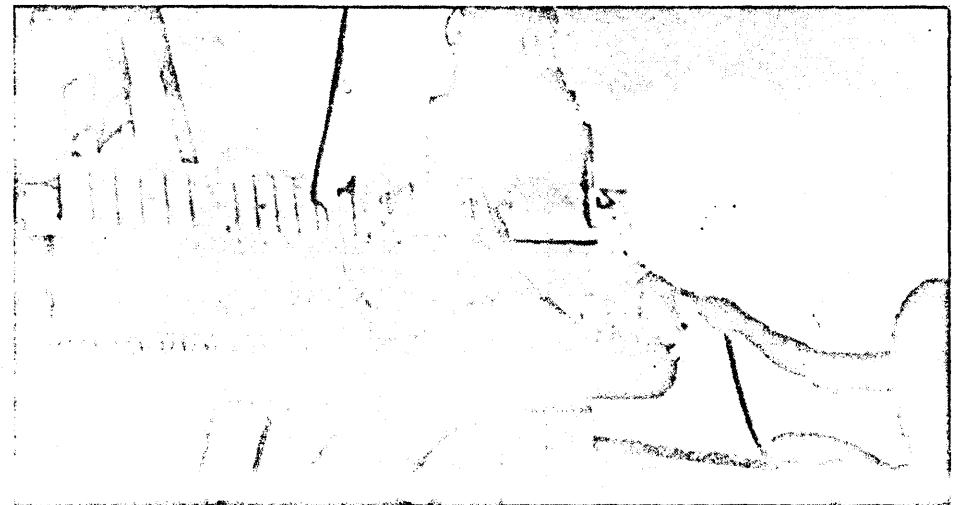
across the border and landing at the Hoedspruit air base in the eastern Transvaal. His rise in the MNR was extremely rapid — within a year of his defection to South Africa, his name was on the list of the 12-man MNR executive council.

Bomba is one of the few highly educated cadres that the MNR possesses, and he may well owe his promotion to this. But it is almost certain to have aroused jealousies among older MNR commanders. The failure of the MNR leadership to confirm Vilanculu's statement indicates at the least that there is disagreement over the nomination of Bomba as Cristina's successor.

Leadership struggles inside the MNR are nothing new. After the death of its first commander, André Matsangaiza in November 1979, the MNR was almost torn apart by savage factional squabbles. The current "Supreme Chief," Afonso Dhlakama, only reached that position after physically disposing of his main rival in a shoot-out inside Zimbabwe in 1980, shortly before the rear base for the MNR was transferred to the Transvaal.

Problems inside the MNR leadership may well account for the death of Cristina. Few people believe the official MNR version, according to which Cristina was killed by two "FRELIMO agents" acting under the unlikely code-names of "Saboteur" and "Political Commissar." The MNR claimed to have captured them — if so, it is rather strange that they have not been presented, no photographs have

Wreckage of a South African spy plane being hoisted out of Maputo Bay after being shot down by Mozambican anti-aircraft fire: the South Africans are bringing in mnr reinforcements by sea



been distributed and no further details whatsoever have been given about them.

Perhaps the worst blow of all for the MNR has been the loss of its radio station, *Voz da Africa Livre* (Voice of Free Africa). This used to broadcast from a transmitter somewhere in the Transvaal every night without fail at 7 pm. About two weeks after Cristina's death, it went off the air and, at the time of writing (late June), it is still silent.

There are several theories to explain this: the most simple is that since Cristina was known to be the main scriptwriter; the radio simply ran out of material after his death. Alternatively, the radio may have fallen victim to internal power struggles or South African Military Intelligence, which has final control over *Voz da Africa Livre*, may have decided that the time was ripe to restructure the whole thing. It would be unwise to assume that the radio's silence is permanent.

In the central provinces of Manica and Sofala, which have been the parts of the country worst hit by the MNR, ever since its foundation in 1976, security on the roads has greatly improved (though travel is still far from 100% safe) and the Beira-Zimbabwe railway is operating more or less normally (though trains do carry a heavily armed guard). Interruptions to the electricity and water supply to Beira are less frequent than last year and the sabotage is generally repaired within a day or two. Joint operation of Mozambican and Zimbabwean troops have secured the Beira-Mutare pipeline and oil has been flowing safely to Zimbabwe.

The South Africans seem to have reacted to this general improvement in the military situation by bringing in MNR reinforcements by sea and thus opening new fronts in coastal areas ●