

Mozambique liberation movement

Sir,—You may care for some more information about the position of "Mzee" Lazaro Kavendama (Cavandama in your report from Lisbon of April 2) in the Mozambique liberation movement. Rather than meaning "virtually the end of the guerrilla war started in 1964" by FRELIMO against Portuguese colonial rule, "Mzee" Lazaro's defection to the Portuguese, reported by you, is more likely to signal a strengthening of the unity and effectiveness of FRELIMO.

The following points have relevance:

(1) Mzee Lazaro was one of the founders of MANU, an early nationalist movement among the Makonde of Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique. In 1961 MANU sunk its identity in FRELIMO, the Front of Liberation of Mozambique, along with other small nationalist movements, notably UDENAMO. From 1962, accordingly, Lazaro became a principal FRELIMO representative for Delgado province, living partly in southern Tanzania and partly in northern Mozambique.

(2) Lazaro became worried about the political implications of FRELIMO after the latter achieved considerable success in guerrilla warfare against the Portuguese armed forces' beginning at the end of 1964. His worry had little to do with "outside influences"—whether from Russia, China, or the United States—but much to do with the fact that this guerrilla warfare brought to the top young men who were unwilling to accept the traditional position of elders and local chiefs among the Makonde, such as Lazaro himself, and who called increasingly for new and post-colonial structures.

(3) Lazaro and seven other political delegates from Delgado province refused to attend the major Congress of FRELIMO that took place last July in the neighbouring Mozambican province of Niassa. I know this

because I was there. But this Congress was attended by all the nine military and politico-military delegates from Delgado (as well as by some 140 delegates from the other eight provinces of Mozambique). These young men included, for instance, the main military commander in Delgado, a very bright young former schoolteacher called Raimundo, with whom I had some lengthy talks. Raimundo, I think, is typical of these young Mozambicans who see the insurrectionary war they are fighting as the means of building new political structures of an elective and democratic sort, and for whom the existing structures, promoted largely by the needs of Portuguese colonial rule, appear quite inadequate to the tasks of post-colonial reconstruction.

These military and politico-military delegates from Delgado took an active part in the Congress; some of them were elected to the newly-enlarged central committee of FRELIMO.

(4) At the time of this Congress, however, Lazaro and his friends were cooking up a Makonde separatist movement with the aid of a few of the leaders of that part of the Makonde people who live in Tanzania (and whose numbers have been swelled by refugees since the beginning of this war). This became known to Eduardo Mondlane, the newly re-elected president of FRELIMO, and to his colleagues, at a dramatic confrontation which occurred with Lazaro and some of his backers that took place between August 6 and 10, 1968, soon after the Congress itself had dispersed. Here they learned—to quote from a letter which Eduardo Mondlane wrote to me on August 16—that "while we were having our Congress, Lazaro and his friends were making arrangements to (a) block the leadership of Mondlane, if re-elected [at the Congress, which he enthusiastically was], or else (b) split FRELIMO into two movements. . . . The other movement would be composed of Makonde of Cabo Delgado only, and its task would be to liberate that

province and declare another Biafra. . . ."

(5) This splitting movement failed because of Mondlane's energetic riposte, and because of the support which he received from the leaders of the Tanzanian Government, who also now learned of what was in the wind. The latter insisted upon a confrontation. At this confrontation Mondlane was unanimously supported by the Delgado military and politico-military delegates, and Lazaro's position thus became untenable. "At this point," to quote Mondlane's letter, "noting the futility of his position, Lazaro became all peaches. . . ."

In other words, FRELIMO emerged from its Congress last July and then its confrontation with Lazaro last August with a clear victory over these elderly separatists who feared, and no doubt still fear, that the democratic evolution of FRELIMO inside Mozambique must undermine their partly Portuguese-promoted positions of commercial and political privilege.

Now that Lazaro has apparently gone over to the Portuguese, and this in the wake of Mondlane's still unexplained assassination of last February, one may wonder whether his game was not, in fact, deeper even than Mondlane, Simango and their colleagues discovered last August. On their side, of course, the Portuguese have always tried hard to split FRELIMO into its constituent ethnic groupings (another case of European-inspired "tribalism"); and to this end they have used a succession of African agents whose names, for the most part, are known or strongly suspected.

As things stand today, however, the balance of the evidence can only suggest that the Portuguese have failed in these political manoeuvres as clearly as they have failed on the military front. And now they cannot really be at all pleased that Lazaro is openly in their camp. For his use to them, whether large or small, direct or indirect, is at an end.—Yours sincerely,

Ensl Davidson.

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