

"DIPLOMATS ASSAULTED" — FRELIMO

NOTES have been sent by Mozambique to Portugal protesting about two incidents in which Mozambican diplomats in the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, were detained and allegedly harrassed by police. The Mozambicans demanded what they called "an official apology, a rigorous inquiry and application of measures which ensure that such incidents do not happen again."

In the first of the incidents at the end of July three administrative staff at the Mozambican Embassy in Lisbon were stopped in the street by armed police without any reason being given. The police refused to recognise their Mozambican passports and demanded Portuguese identity cards instead. The officials were then ordered to put their hands in the air while being searched. Later they were marched to a police station where they were interrogated. They were released at dawn but still without any explanation for their having been taken into custody.

In another incident in early August a Mozambican consular attaché was stopped in a Lisbon street by a policeman who accused him of trying to run away — it is not clear from what. The policeman

also demanded to know where the attaché worked. The diplomat denied trying to run away and explained that he worked in the Mozambican Embassy. He also produced his *corps diplomatique* identity card, in spite of which the policeman ordered him to accompany him to the police station. On the way the policeman demanded to know his salary and when he refused to disclose it, according to the diplomat, the policeman hit him in the face and threatened to shoot him.

The attaché claimed he was assaulted again by the policeman who was later joined by a colleague who also assaulted him. At the police station, where no attempt was made to look at his diplomatic credentials, he was subjected to further ill-treatment. It is not clear whether the police were acting on instructions or on their own initiative.

Grass roots

Mozambique is a Marxist-Leninist state which is neither guided nor controlled by the Soviet Union or Cuba. Its ideology was forged in a long and bitter war against the Portuguese.

Its most significant development is the

communal village, the grassroots structure that is intended ultimately to embrace all the rural peasants, which means 90% of the population. Though the Central Committee of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) knows where it wants to go, there are uncertainties and debates, sometimes incompetence, but always an awareness from the top downwards that people must come first.

Maputo is one of the most cosmopolitan capitals in Africa and is laid out in broad streets and boulevards and has a splendid harbour. Apart from Mozambicans of African, Portuguese and mixed descent there is an ample mixture of aid personnel: Russians, Cubans, Scandinavians, Italians, a few Britons, Chinese, Bulgarians, Indians and Pakistanis.

There is a new fleet of 100 gleaming yellow-topped state-run taxis. Four of the drivers are women, which is considered a breakthrough in terms of emancipation in an occupation that used to be exclusively male-dominated. The Cubans helped in the training and launching of this new service. Taxi drivers will still accept tips if offered, however, and one of the urgent priorities of Frelimo is to define a national wages policy.

Shortages have become part of the contemporary scene. Certain items of food or household requisites simply disappear from the market for a while though this may be as much due to distribution difficulties as anything else. There are transport problems due to vehicles off the road at any one time.

Frustrations

Some of the worst frustrations result from a sometimes crippling bureaucracy left over from Portuguese days and still religiously adhered to by clerks and officials. These frustrations are a part of the inevitable price to be paid for the changes taking place. Mistakes are made and incompetence is in evidence due to the huge gaps in training and the low standards of education—a point never emphasized by the Portuguese.

Only time and a determined government effort at training will change this. Frelimo has already launched a massive nation-wide literacy campaign.

At Nampula in the north is the "cemetery" of Portuguese war vehicles: endless piles of lorries, jeeps and armoured cars that were blown up by mines or otherwise damaged by Frelimo action. It has been turned into a workshop and massive repair yard employing some 350 workers who dismantle the old vehicles and then rebuild them. People are brought here from all over the country for training as mechanics. Half remain at the centre; others go out again with possibly some of the best training of its kind that post-war Mozambique is able to provide. So far 2,000 trucks have been rehabilitated; over the next year a further 1,000 will be made serviceable.

A large number of Portuguese fled Mozambique just before and after independence in June 1975 mainly for fear of



Lisbon: Portuguese from Mozambique crowding the international airport

reprisals from the incoming Frelimo government. But the reprisals never materialised.

At the time of their departure many of the Portuguese had been remitting part of their salaries abroad and then selling the foreign exchange on the black market — part of a swindle which led the government to describe them as "traders in nationality". These transactions left Mozambique on the verge of bankruptcy. Moreover, those who fled destroyed most of their property to prevent it falling into the hands of Frelimo.

In Portugal, however, they found life, as refugees and squatters and because of the acute unemployment, very difficult. Many of them have been desperately trying to get back to Mozambique. But the Mozambicans, despite their need for skilled manpower, are somewhat reluc-

tant to encourage their wholesale return. Furthermore, many of the Portuguese themselves have been disenchanting by the national take-over of businesses.

However some Mozambicans of Portuguese descent who left the country after renouncing their nationality have now been allowed to return and resume their citizenship — an act of clemency typical of the regime.

Even if it is understandable that these erstwhile colonialists who returned to Portugal should have mixed or hostile feelings towards the present regime in Mozambique — and seek to impart them to the Portuguese authorities — this does not condone the apparently unprovoked and harsh conduct of the Lisbon police towards Mozambican accredited diplomats. Such actions can only exacerbate ill-feeling between the two countries ●