

Frelimo fraternises with former enemies

Gdn. 13/5/82

From Joseph Hanton
in Maputo

President Machel of Mozambique warmly shook hands with one of the first secret police agents to infiltrate Frelimo yesterday. This was the claim of a remarkable two-day meeting between the top Frelimo leadership and a thousand Mozambicans who had voluntarily joined the repressive colonial apparatus fighting against Frelimo.

The meeting was part of the final rehabilitation of people who, as President Machel said, would have gone before a firing squad in other revolutions. They were not even purged, but left in their homes and jobs.

However, "the compromised" as they are called lost some civil rights, such as the

right to vote, and their pictures were posted in workplaces so that fellow workers could keep an eye on them and help them through "mental decolonisation."

Frelimo recognises that all Mozambican men were forced to serve in the colonial army, and often to fight against Frelimo. But "the compromised" are the tens of thousands who voluntarily supported the Portuguese: members of the fascist party, ANP, agents of the secret police, Pide, specially trained commandos, and voluntary militia.

President Machel stressed that the meeting was neither a confessional nor a commission of inquiry. It seemed an attempt to come to terms with history.

The President talked to indi-

viduals, sometimes for up to an hour each. By constant probing he extracted stories of villainy and tragedy.

One black man told how, when a white woman jumped a queue in which he was standing, he muttered: "Some day you won't be able to do that." He was reported to Pide, and goaled for five months, and interrogated about possible Frelimo links. After his release, he was called into the Pide office and told: "You are our client now." It was suggested that it would go easier for him if he joined the ANP. He did, becoming one of "the compromised."

A long-time Pide agent admitted that he had denounced many people. "How many were arrested because of you?" President Machel asked. "I don't know. They never told

us what use was made of our reports," the former agent replied. The President continued to press him: "You must have seen people disappear. How many?" Finally, the man admitted: "Many."

But Pide had screened him from the results of his work. It seemed he really had suppressed in his own mind the effect of what he did.

Not all of those who spoke admitted their past. Sometimes the meeting had a mood reminiscent of post-war Germany. A journalist, who served as clerk of the colonial Legislative Assembly and wrote many of its reports, told the President that others wrote the reports and he "only changed a few commas." ANP members said they never attended meetings, and even officials claimed they did nothing and headed moribund branches. President Machel commented: "To listen to you, the ANP only existed in the imagination of Salazar and Caetano."

But the mood was of rehabilitation. It was claimed that, no matter how serious their treachery, these people were victims of colonialism.

What made the meeting so unusual was the rehabilitation of traitors, and the time and energy invested in it by Mozambique's top leadership. The whole two-day meeting was attended by eight of the 10 members of Frelimo's Politburo. Perhaps Frelimo's leaders cannot really forgive these people for what they did to them, without also first confronting them and understanding their history.