

Alarm spreads as executions continue

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After the execution of Portuguese national Rui Manuel Nunes da Silva (TTP April 13 1979), alarm has spread in Portugal as a number of Portuguese are known to be held in Mozambique's infamous Machava penitentiary, on the outskirts of Maputo. So far, 23 have been shot by firing squad.

While serious concern is being voiced in official circles about the fate of Armando Monteiro, a former general manager of Mozambique's giant engineering firm metal-Mometal, who has been in detention over 15 months, officials of the Lisbon-based Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) have been canvassing support from the Portuguese government and international organisations for the release of two of their colleagues. Together with Monteiro, the BNU prisoners, Pedro Pires, arrested in February 1978, and Maria de Castro Galhardo, who has been in penitentiary since August of last year, face death penalty under the all-embracing charge of economic sabotage.

Prisoners recently released from Machava report that among the 1600 inmates there are more than 100 Portuguese living in appalling conditions of physical and mental hardship. Machava holds only a small section of the people in Mozambique's prisons and concentration camps whose numbers are believed to amount to tens of thousands.

For many people, their arrest is tantamount to a death sentence. No more poignant plight can be imagined than that of the 240 Mozambique political leaders who were rounded up by Frelimo at the time of the collapse of the Portuguese administration in early 1974. They were seen only once, in June 1975, when President Samora Machel paraded them in the Tancan camp at Nachingwea.

Included were the Reverend Uria Simango, a former Frelimo vice-president; Paulo Gumane, president of Frelimo's rival movement Mozambique Revolutionary Committee (Remo); Dr Joana Simeao; Veronica Nanive, sister Mateus Gwenjere and many others. Their only fault was to believe that, in an independent Mozambique, they would be allowed to participate in free elections.

Where are they now? Simango, Simeao and Gumane are believed to have died in detention. Appeals to international humanitarian organisations, including the International Red Cross, have proved of no avail. Frelimo will



Machel: Portuguese worried

brook no interference from anyone, including diplomatic representatives from friendly countries, when it comes to "revolutionary justice".

"Crimes against the people's security and the security of the State," which the new death penalty law sets out to punish severely, cover such a wide range of ambiguously worded offences that no one in Mozambique can feel safe from prosecution.

It includes everything that may even vaguely fall under the accusation of "actions aimed at destabilising the revolutionary internal order, either through material sabotage or ideological subversion".

To make sure that no person suspected of planning or carrying out an offence escapes punishment, the secret police (SNASP), created and controlled by Machel himself, are entitled to enlist the support of other police branches, Frelimo party officials and militants and the armed forces.

In July last year, after a bomb blast in a cafe in down-town Maputo, Machel ordered the formation throughout Mozambique of vigilante groups. A few days later, Radio Mozambique announced that 500 groups were in operation in Maputo alone involving more than 20000 police informers.

Vigilante fever has reached such a pitch that in the small village of Inharrime, north of Maputo, 70 groups were formed early this month. Frelimo suspects, however, that many vigilantes are double-agents working for the so-called "enemy".

And the futility of the whole exercise was illustrated by a leader of the vigilante groups in the densely populated Maputo suburb of Chamanulo.

Interviewed by Radio Mozambique, he said: "With thousands of people coming and going all the time, how do they expect us to know who is who and what he is up to? All the vigilance was not enough to stop the burning down of the Chamanulo dynamising committee office."

The climate of terror Frelimo has imposed on Mozambique gave rise recently to a strong protest from the Roman Catholic Church in the country, itself under constant harassment.

In a memorandum sent to the president, the Mozambique Episcopacy demanded an end to "arbitrary detentions, to people being sent to re-education camps without guilt being proven and to other situations causing anguish for the detainees and their families".

The Bishops' hierarchy also protested against "the sending of students to Cuba".

Machel reacted promptly, describing Catholic bishops as "agents of imperialism". They officially joined the ranks of the "enemy" when the Maputo dictator accused them of "raising up the people against socialism and proselytising in defiance of the law".

As Catholics face a yet-stronger wave of repression, the Islamic Association in Lisbon presented a note of protest to the Mozambique ambassador against the fierce persecution of Muslims by Frelimo (TTP 23 March 1979).

Machel's views are clear: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims must learn to live under a Marxist-Leninist regime. If not outside, then inside a "re-education camp".

Scissors gangs ridicule Machel

As in the heyday of Idi Amin's despotic rule in Uganda, President Samora Machel of Mozambique provides, from time to time, a touch of light comedy in an otherwise grim atmosphere.

Early this month, spurred on by his strong condemnation of long hair and tight clothes as "bourgeois and decadent", scissors-wielding gangs took to the streets cutting short the hair of passers-by and tearing to ribbons tight trousers and skirts.

Machel complained that he had been misunderstood. As always, the blame was put on the "enemy" within. The director of the SNASP (secret police) told a meeting of leaders of the vigilante groups that the scissors gangs were in fact "reactionaries"

who had seized the opportunity to heap ridicule on the president.

But the scissors episode was not the only way in which Machel can be compared to the Ugandan tyrant. Imitating Amin when the former dictator invited himself to Buckingham Palace, the Mozambican president sent emissaries to the Swiss government to announce that he would shortly be paying the country a state visit.

The Swiss courteously declined the "honour". Apart from other reasons that were not disclosed, the Swiss authorities stated that they could not afford to stage more than one state visit a year and Machel's proposed visit was not on their schedule.