

MNR misrepresented

I REFER to your October edition (p.13) in which British journalist Phil Cohen stated that "the MNR cleverly twist the truth for their propaganda purposes (for having) claimed that Felipe Samuel Magaia, an officer who died in the independence struggle in 1966, was killed by "Soviet imperialist agents who infiltrated Frelimo."

Magaia, Frelimo's first secretary of defence and commander-in-chief of the Frelimo guerrilla army, died on October 10 1966 and at the time the movement's leadership stated that he had been killed in action against the Portuguese. Evidence, however, shows that Magaia was assassinated by his own men while on a mission in Mozambique's northern province of Niassa. In 1981, while touring the province of Cabo Delgado, President Samora Machel disclosed in Ruarwa that a man by the name of Lourenco Matola had in fact killed Magaia.

Magaia's assassination had, right from the beginning, been interpreted by Frelimo guerrillas as part of a conspiracy orchestrated by the Shangaan tribal clan within Frelimo aimed at consolidating their power. Indeed, the presidency of the movement was in the hands of a Shangaan - Dr Mondlane, who surrounded himself with people like: Chissano, Guebuza, Matsinhe, Machel. They were assisted by Marxist hardliners such as Marcelino dos Santos, Revelo, Vieira, and Monteiro who owed allegiance to the Soviet Union.

Military power, however, was embodied in Magaia, a Lomwe, who was highly esteemed as a military commander. He had built a strong reputation among his men inside Mozambique. The Dar es Salaam-based political wing disliked this and in fact strongly opposed Magaia's desire to transfer Frelimo's headquarters to Mozambique's liberated areas.

After his assassination, Magaia's followers, particularly his deputies, were effectively removed so as to pave the way for Samora Machel who masterminded the whole plot. As you probably know, Machel, by then a battalion commander in Nashingwea, Tanzania, was appointed secretary of defence in 1966.

In the context of the present conflict in Mozambique, I tend to agree with the MNR when they state that Magaia, like Matsangaissa, was killed by Soviet agents. Both in 1966 and 1979, when Matsangaissa was killed in action against Frelimo, the Frelimo leadership consisted of people who regarded the Soviet Union as their "natural ally".

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