

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

### THE PORTUGUESE CONNECTION

[AN] On Oct. 11, in Pretoria, Evo Fernandes, a Portuguese citizen who is one of the top leaders of the Mozambique National Resistance, received a phone call from Lisbon. Following the call, he broke off participation in the tripartite talks over peace in Mozambique with South African and Mozambican government delegations, and returned to Lisbon for consultations. The phone call, it was later reported, came from the office of the Portuguese Defense Minister, Carlos Mota Pinto.

For the next two weeks, press reports said the "Portuguese component" of the Mozambique National Resistance boycotted the commission meetings in Pretoria. Later, a delegation returned for talks at the beginning of November, but then walked out again.

The incident was a dramatic sign of the growing importance of the "Portuguese connection" in the ongoing conflict in southern Africa. In fact, both Mozambique and Angola have become increasingly concerned about support from within the Portuguese government for their guerrilla opponents, precisely at the stage when South Africa may be moderating its position and reaching out for detente.

**Shirley Washington**, a Wheaton College Professor of Political Science who is a specialist on post-colonial Portuguese relations with Africa, just returned from a visit to both Angola and Mozambique. She is presently a guest scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington. The following is her analysis of the background and significance of the recent developments.

Portuguese colonialism in Africa did not end quietly or smoothly. And the scars are still visible from more than a decade of guerrilla struggle in the colonies, which was brought to an end only by the April 1974 coup in Lisbon, mounted by an army weary of the colonial wars.

Against this backdrop, Portuguese President Ramalho Eanes, who met with the late Angolan President Agostinho Neto in Bissau in 1978 and visited Mozambique in 1981, is generally credited with bringing a spirit of reconciliation between Portugal and its ex-colonies. He was the only European head of state to attend the funeral of Angolan President Agostinho Neto in September 1979, and he has provided an element of continuity amidst the changing government coalitions in Portugal.

From 1978 through 1982, relations between Portugal and its two largest former possessions, Angola and Mozambique, were on an upswing. Economic disputes that remained from the confused period of decolonization were being resolved. And both sides seemed determined to take advantage of the linguistic and economic ties for mutual benefit.

Since Socialist Party leader Mario Soares re-

turned to office as Prime Minister in 1982, however, tensions have been growing between Portugal and Angola, and in recent months the tone has become increasingly bitter. At the same time, Portuguese ties with Mozambique, which reached a high point with Mozambican President Samora Machel's state visit to Lisbon in October 1983, are threatened by accusations that Portugal is taking over from South Africa as the main external base for the Mozambique National Resistance.

The downturn comes precisely when Portugal is hoping for improved economic relations with Angola and Mozambique. And the problems are being aggravated by inconsistent policies from the coalition government in Lisbon.

The complex battle over policy is somewhat different in the cases of Angola and Mozambique. But both Luanda and Maputo have made it clear that Portugal cannot expect good relations while allowing groups to operate from Lisbon which carry out terrorist operations in Africa and even kill and kidnap Portuguese citizens.

The current tensions between Soares and the MPLA in Angola began with the prime minister's decision late last year to cancel a loan for a new dam in Angola. In retaliation, Angola this year

cancelled proposed off-shore oil drilling rights for Petrolgal, Portugal's state-owned oil company. In September, Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos made a European tour that explicitly spurned Portugal but included Portugal's Iberian neighbor, Spain. During the visit, Spain's Prime Minister Felipe Gonzales unequivocally denounced UNITA, the South African-backed anti-government guerrilla group in Angola—in pointed contrast to Portugal's failure to make a similar repudiation.

Hints that Angola might go farther and even transfer its embassy in Lisbon to Madrid were later denied. But Ismael Martins, Angola's Minister of Commerce, told me that "because of the Portuguese government's attitude, Angola will seek to diversify trade partners and minimize its trade with Portugal."

Such a move would represent a serious loss for Lisbon. Portugal is Angola's number one trading partner, and the balance of trade favors the Portuguese. Since Angola, with oil revenues, is able to pay its bills, this is one of the few bright spots for the troubled Portuguese economy.

MPLA Party Secretary Lucio Lara, in a recent interview with me, stressed that economic relations "have really been advantageous for Portugal. Portuguese industry, which had been created for the colonies, rapidly benefitted from the improvement in relations resulting from the Bissau meeting [in 1978], and large quantities of products were introduced into this country." But Lara stressed, as did other Angolan leaders with whom I spoke, that future ties with Portugal depended on "the attitude of the Portuguese authorities towards our people."

Though puzzling at first, Portuguese readiness to endanger these profitable ties is largely the result of a long-standing grudge against the MPLA on the part of Prime Minister Mario Soares. Serving as foreign minister during the period of decolonization, Soares negotiated the 1975 Treaty of Alvor, which was signed by three rival Angolan movements, including the FNLA and UNITA. The accord was designed to promote a coalition government after independence, and Soares regards the MPLA as having violated the pact and thrown Angola back into turmoil.

The MPLA, for its part, views Soares as complicit in the campaign by the CIA to use those movements to eliminate the MPLA, whose links with the Portuguese Communist Party further complicate ties with Soares' rival Socialist Party. And it seems at times the bitterness even exceeds that between the Angolan government and more conservative political forces in Portugal.

The Angolan government particularly resents the role of Lisbon as the main publicity center for its opponents, including Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. Portuguese citizens are suspect as well for their involvement in diamond smuggling and currency irregularities.

Early this month a trial of 136 people, including a number of Portuguese, concluded in Luanda. One man, Francisco Fragata, a popular Angolan sports figure of Portuguese origin, received the death sentence, on charges including spying for the Americans and smuggling. A discreet petition from Portuguese President Ramalho Eanes may have induced the Angolan authorities to commute the sentence to a total of 18 years.

Another recent incident of heightening tension concerned the showing of a television special in Portugal favoring Jonas Savimbi's UNITA movement. Angolan protests were met with the reply that to interfere with the program would be to endanger freedom of the press, an argument that met with favor even from some Portuguese normally sympathetic with the MPLA. (Portugal, after all, is just emerging from 48 years of press censorship.)

But the public relations access UNITA enjoys in Lisbon is only the most visible and irritating part of what leaders in Luanda regard as tolerance and even complicity with terrorist attacks against them.

Portuguese relations with Mozambique, it seemed until recently, were on a more even keel. Prime Minister Mario Soares was warmly received on a visit to Mozambique in September, returning President Machel's Lisbon visit of last year. Internal Portuguese politics, however, seems to be threatening this tie as well. Soares' government is a coalition with the conservative Social Democratic Party, which has a strong component of former settlers in Mozambique. It is this group

which evidently still retains hope of regaining positions of influence in Mozambique, and which is actively involved in the Mozambique National Resistance.

The apparent implication of the Portuguese government in the October walkout by MNR delegates from the peace talks in Pretoria prompted quiet objections from Pretoria and Washington and a direct protest from Mozambican Foreign Minister Joaquim Chissano. The Soares government denied responsibility, and in early November, stringent measures were announced against Portuguese citizens engaging in hostile actions against governments recognized by Portugal. It remains to be seen, however, whether Lisbon will make a serious effort to enforce such measures.

A show of sincerity such as this may be essential to Lisbon for its plans to build a role in Portuguese-speaking Africa. Portuguese leaders, com-

mitted to participation in the European Economic Community, have played up their possible utility as a channel to the territories they formerly ruled. Lisbon's own precarious financial base limits direct economic participation. To make up for this limitation, the proposed solution is "trilateral" cooperation: Portugal supplies its long experience and linguistic ties to Lusophone Africa, while other, richer countries are requested to supply the capital.

Although at this stage the former colonies, with Angola in the forefront, vigorously reject any privileged position for Portuguese interests, such ties are attractive for practical reasons. Unless the current Portuguese government can end its internal disarray on relations with the colonies and prove its goodwill, however, the trust that once seemed to be building could erode even further.

Such an outcome would not benefit Angola, Mozambique or Portugal. ■