

Labour turning against Portugal

By PETER NIESEWAND

The Labour Party conference in October may be asked to adopt a policy that Portugal should be expelled from NATO because of her "totalitarian and repressive" behaviour at home and in her overseas territories.

Mr Frank Judd, MP, a Labour spokesman on defence, said the party was "deeply disturbed" at Portugal's membership of the alliance. He was speaking yesterday at a press conference given by a former Portuguese Air Force major, Jose Ervedosa, who served in Angola between 1961 and 1963 and declared himself "a revolted witness of the crimes committed by the Portuguese administration."

Mr Judd said the Labour Party supported liberation both in metropolitan Portugal and in her other territories, and was now committed to finding practical ways of helping to achieve this. "At the party conference we are going to see whether we are prepared to consider pushing for the suspension of the Portuguese from NATO," he said. "Repressive régimes use so much of their military time, expertise, and equipment in holding the situation in their own countries that it is highly questionable if they can make an effective contribution to the alliance."

Mr Judd said the party would seriously consider a call from Major Ervedosa for the establishment of an International Commission of Inquiry—termed

by the major a "court of public international opinion"—to investigate the activities of Portugal and hear witnesses.

Major Ervedosa was a staff officer in Angola in the early 1960s, and also took part in bombing raids on African villages in the country. He said his experiences convinced him that the Portuguese were indulging in genocide.

"The only corpses I myself saw in Angola were after I had bombed a village with napalm. I flew low over the area and saw a woman holding a child by the hand, and they were burning. The Portuguese had told us the village was uninhabited.

"But a lot of soldiers had taken photographs after massacres, and I saw one of these pictures where two or three soldiers were standing smiling, and holding the severed head of a Negro.

"I also heard a report in which about 200 Africans were herded into a stockade and gasoline was poured over them and set alight. Soldiers with machine guns stood around, shooting anyone who tried to get away from the flames."

Major Ervedosa said he was dismissed from the Air Force in 1963, and arrested. After about nine months, he was released. He is now a supporter of the FPLN—the Portuguese Liberation Front whose guerrilla wing, the Revolutionary Brigades, have attacked military installations within Portugal.

● The anti-Portuguese organisation for Guinea-Bissau (PAIGC) confirmed Aristides Pereira as its secretary-general in succession to Dr Amílcar Cabral, who was assassinated in Conakry in January. This was one of several appointments made by the organisation's second congress which, according to a communiqué issued in Dakar, has been held "in a liberated area" of Portuguese Guinea.