

FRELIMO

-7-

MOZAMBIQUE: The Kavandame Affair

In early April the news of the defection of Lazaro Kavandame from FRELIMO to the Portuguese was carried by many newspapers across the world. He was referred to as Director of FRELIMO's military operations and as Leader of the Makonde warriors.

The Johannesburg Star (April 5, 1969) carried a leading editorial about the incident:

"The defection of the military leader of the Mozambique terrorists could signal a decisive turn in the punishing 1 1/2-year war which Portugal has fought to defend her East African colony. Lazaro Kavandame, who surrendered to Portuguese officials last month, is now touring districts along the Tanzanian border urging his fellow Makonde tribesmen to lay down their arms.

"The warlike Makonde were the backbone of FRELIMO's 5,000-strong army, and Kavandame is credited as the man who launched their operations in 1964. He ran an effective hit and run campaign in the north of Mozambique that tied down many thousands of Portuguese troops and added a severe extra load to Portugal's defence budget.

"His change of allegiance, which followed secret messages to him from other captured terrorists, may be a reflection of the setbacks which the rebel forces have suffered in recent months. It is very likely to lead to more setbacks....

"...FRELIMO's men in the field have lost a charismatic leader. It would be a major triumph if Lazaro Kavandame's example could start a new phase of negotiating rather than fighting with the Portuguese. But this seems unlikely, as its leaders say they are determined to continue the struggle."

FRELIMO Replies

On April 14th, the following Press Statement was issued by FRELIMO from Dar-es-Salaam:

"(1) Lazaro Kavandame once held an important position in FRELIMO. He was appointed Provincial Secretary of Cabo Delgado Province, and was in charge of commercial activities in that Province.

"(2) However, for some time, FRELIMO has been aware of the connections of Lazaro Kavandame with counter-revolutionary forces, based on the following facts:

(a) He used his post in our commercial structure to serve his own personal interests, exploiting the people in the exchange of goods, and keeping the difference.

(b) These activities were denounced by the people, and FRELIMO established a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the matter. When he found out about this, Lazaro Kavandame organised a group of people, his collaborators in the exploitation of the people, to sabotage the work of the Commission. It was on his orders that the group murdered one of FRELIMO's military commanders on the 22nd December, 1968. His defection, therefore, is to escape trial for this murder of which he was declared to be the organiser by the 16 elements of his group who are under detention awaiting trial.

(c) These activities, culminating in murder, classified Lazaro Kavandame as an enemy of the Mozambican people and of the Mozambican Revolution. In fact, this murder was in accordance with the Portuguese plan of murdering FRELIMO leaders in order to stop the Liberation Movement.

"(3) Therefore, on the 3rd of January, 1969, the Executive Committee of FRELIMO met in order to consider the case of Lazaro Kavandame, and decided:

(a) To dismiss Lazaro Kavandame from his position as Provincial Secretary of Cabo Delgado.

(b) As a result of this dismissal, Lazaro Kavandame is automatically removed from membership of the Central Committee of FRELIMO;

(c) Lazaro Kavandame was also dismissed from the post he held in FRELIMO's commercial section.

Defection

"(4) The defection of Lazaro Kavandame to the Portuguese will not have any effect on our liberation struggle, because:

(a) Contrary to what the Portuguese announced, Lazaro Kavandame has never had any military position in FRELIMO, having held a merely administrative position.

(b) He was denounced by the people of Cabo Delgado themselves as being an exploiter and counter-revolutionary; therefore, the people are now well aware of his criminal character and activities.

(c) Also, contrary to what the Portuguese say, Lazaro was never a tribal chief in Mozambique. The only influence he had on the people derived from the position to which FRELIMO appointed him.

(d) He is ignorant of the present state of the military struggle, as he has not been in Mozambique since December 1967.

"The Portuguese claim that "Portugal is poised for a breakthrough in Mozambique as a result of the defection of Lazaro Kavandame" is therefore completely valueless, and mere colonialist propoganda."