

Evo Fernandes death: trail points to Maputo

THERE IS a growing body of evidence suggesting that the kidnapping and subsequent murder of Evo Camões Fernandes, a key figure in the Renamo rebel movement, was the work of **official or semi-official groups** in Maputo. Investigators are puzzled only over the **identity** of these groups which may be: The Mozambican secret service, SNASP; an autonomous group outside of but linked to SNASP; or an ad hoc parallel group formed just for the task. Investigators have not ruled out involvement by Cuban and East German secret agents who train and run SNASP.

Among **relevant information** in the investigation is the fact that the murder was known in restricted Maputo government circles **several hours** before the body was found in the Sintra foothills near Lisbon. The autopsy showed Fernandes (44) died some 12 hours before his body was found.

Police are checking the movements of **João Carlos Esteira**, director of SNASP'S **D-13** branch who along with **two other agents**, was in Lisbon two weeks before the murder.

D-13, formerly run by **Fernando Honwa** (who died in the 1986 plane crash which killed President Samora Machel) is responsible for keeping tabs on **Renamo's** activities outside Mozambique. The planning and execution of the Fernandes assassination bear the hallmarks of a **well-trained and well-equipped** organisation. Portuguese police are looking for two men, named as **Alexandre Xavier Chagas** and **Joaquim de Conceição Messias**, in connection with the affair.

For the past six weeks there have been reports in well-informed Mozambican circles in Portugal and **Swaziland**, about an imminent new round of talks between Renamo and the

Maputo government scheduled for **April 18**. The name of Alexandre Chagas appears as being involved in preparations for the talks for the first time. It has still not been firmly established whether the reports were genuine or merely designed to **prepare the ground** for the eradication of Evo Fernandes. The latter appears most likely, given Chagas's involvement. Chagas is described by those who know him as "**dissolute**" and a man easy to dispose of after a murder.

Another aspect of the plot is the amount of money apparently allocated to it. Chagas appeared to have unlimited means and instructions to involve a large number of people, build up their confidence and dissipate his own negative image.

He used **Manuel Sacramento Gaudencio**, a Lisbon businessman and friend of Fernandes, to setup a meeting with the dead man and also made approaches through the movement's current spokesman **Manuel Frank**. Gaudencio placed a private ranch south of Lisbon at Chagas's disposal as venue for preliminary talks and Chagas spoke of transporting participants to the ranch by helicopter. Chagas also paid for the cost of bringing Renamo's Bonn-based foreign affairs spokesman **Artur Janeiro da Fonseca** and his wife to Lisbon to take part in the proposed talks.

Despite all this the only Renamo figure to appear at dinner on **April 17** with Chagas was Evo Fernandes. It is thought that in preliminary stages, Chagas produced a **credential** purporting to authorise him to lay the groundwork for fullscale negotiations with Frelimo government officials scheduled to arrive in Lisbon on April 15.

Chagas was not unknown to Fernandes and others in Renamo's external wing. He had however always left a negative impression with his contacts. Two years ago he surfaced in Lisbon to invite then Renamo spokesman Jorge Correia to go hunting with him in Spain. The invitation was declined. Later he reappeared,

claiming he had done a deal with the French aircraft manufacturer, **Marcel Dassault** who was said ready to "give" Renamo ten **Matra** missiles and invited Correia to accompany him to Paris to seal the deal.

One mystery remains to be cleared up, **what persuaded** Fernandes, who had been warned by a Renamo colleague not to trust Chagas, to get into the suspected killer's car, without first telling his family, and drive to a destination from which he was not to return alive. The fact that the autopsy shows he was murdered three days after he was kidnapped, proves further that prior to his elimination his captors extracted large amounts of valuable information about Renamo, much of which only Fernandes was privy to.

Evo Fernandes's murder is also thought to reflect the controversy within Frelimo on the question of holding talks with Renamo. The killers thus could have precipitated the action to remove one of the more intractable rebel figures and so sabotage any talks.

Another possibility is that talks are still on the cards but that Frelimo sought to **weaken** Renamo by neutralising the political wing of the movement (mainly Renamo's Lisbon-based officials) before re-opening them.

The 1984 South African-brokered talks in Pretoria between Frelimo and Renamo broke down after Fernandes opposed Frelimo demands. Another member of Renamo's political wing, an Indian named **Gilberto (Gimo)** who represented Renamo in **Malawi**, was reported as missing a few days ago and his home is locked up.

The involvement of Chagas in the whole affair, may at first appear inappropriate. But in fact it presents a number of advantages - he has Portuguese nationality, no clear links to any official Mozambican body, and an alleged **inate propensity** for carrying out other people's dirty work. In colonial times he was a Portuguese secret police **informer** and more recently was identified as an "unofficial" SNASP agent.