

Staff Reporter

THE murder in Portugal of Evo Fernandes, the best known propaganda voice of Mozambique's, armed bandits, focuses attention on the violent internal power struggles which have been characteristic of this surrogate movement since South Africa inherited it from Rhodesia in March 1980.

A one time secretary-general of the Mozambique National Resistance, Fernandes was found shot dead on a roadside near Lisbon last Thursday.

Fernandes disappeared the previous weekend, lured to an appointment, his wife said, by someone claiming to represent the Mozambican authorities. The Mozambique embassy in Lisbon has denied sending any emissaries to meet him. His wife confirmed that he had been threatened recently by other MNR factions.

Factions

There has been friction and killings between factions fighting for control of the MNR, representing two groups with ties in the United States and France on the one hand and South Africa and West Germany on the other.

Two prominent MNR officials were killed in Malawi last November, allegedly in a "car accident". But contradictory stories emerging from Malawi at the time suggested that Joao da Silva Ataide, a former ambassador in Portugal who defected to MNR in 1982, and Mateus Lopes had been murdered.

At first it was denied that there had been a car accident. Then official sources admitted there had been an accident but denied that it involved bandit leaders. Finally it was admitted that Ataide and Lopes had died "when their car collided with a petrol tanker".

Another senior MNR official in Portugal, Paulo Oliveira, who had been a deputy to Fernandes and closely associated

Fernandes latest victim of MNR faction fighting

with the other two fled to Mozambique in March, accepting the government's amnesty.

Oliveira, like Fernandes a Portuguese citizen, said he believed that he was about to be eliminated.

At a Press conference in Maputo on March 23 Oliveira described a power struggle for control of the MNR. One group, which he referred to as a "Washington-Paris axis", was trying to break the monopoly control exercised over the MNR by the South Africans and by "a very strong axis between Pretoria and Bonn which now has a great deal of control over the armed group Renamo".

Negotiations

Members of the US connection include right-wing institutions such as the Heritage Foundation and Free the Eagle, he said. Their strategy is to try to distance the MNR from apartheid so as to gain international credibility and to try to pressurise the Mozambique government into negotiations.

However, pressure from these US institutions has generated contradictions within the MNR "between the representation in Lisbon, which is controlled by the South Africans, and the representation in Washington", Oliveira said.

Ataide, Lopes and Oliveira were all associated with the "Washington-Paris axis". Fernandes, whom Oliveira said, "never expected to bring the conflict to an end but gambled on a perpetuation of the war" in line with South Africa's plans, had been firmly allied with the Pretoria-Bonn group.

Fernandes, of Goan parentage and a lawyer by training, had a long history of opposition to Mozambique's liberation struggle and independence from Portugal. He worked for the judicial

police in Beira in the colonial era and, according to Frelimo sources, was a member of the feared Portuguese secret police, International Police for the Defence of the State (PIDE).

He became administrator of the newspaper Noticias de Beira, which was owned by Jorge Jardim, godson of the late Portuguese fascist dictator, Antonio Salazar. Fernandes was ousted by the journalists a few months after the April 1974 coup d'etat in Portugal.

He fled to Portugal on September 23 1976, he said later, after receiving a warning that "some military action may start and it would be safer to get away".

Warned

The caller, from what was then Salisbury, was Orlando Cristina, first secretary-general of the MNR. The military action about which he warned was the start of the bandit activity against Frelimo and Zanu, organised and directed by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation.

Andre Matsangaiza, the first leader of the Rhodesian surrogate group, was killed by Mo-

zambican forces on October 17 1979. The CIO then appointed Afonso Dhlakama as his replacement and the sequence of internal killings, of which Fernandes is certainly the latest victim, began almost immediately.

Many key bandit leaders did not accept Dhlakama and his own words record this fact in documents captured in December 1981 when Frelimo forces overran a bandit base at Garagua in Mozambique's Manica province. "Some of you," Dhlakama is recorded as saying, "get and make available drugs to assassinate me in order to take my place."

Elsewhere in the Garagua documents, Dhlakama says in a report he gave on November 9 1980: "Many fighters died this year, including commanders and other heads, and others were maimed and crippled — all because of a power struggle."

Murderous

One of the early victims in the bandits' murderous internal power struggle was Mt. Selinda-educator Lucas Mhlanga, the person the CIO instructors pre-

ferred to Dhlakama. But the South Africans wanted Dhlakama, whom they were told lacked character and leadership qualities, which meant he would not threaten Pretoria's control and objectives.

Cristina, also a Portuguese citizen, was murdered at an MNR base near Pretoria in April 1983. In the wake of his death, two other senior MNR officials, Boaventura and Adriano Bomba, "disappeared".

Two years later, the Johannesburg Star newspaper reported that Boaventura Bomba had been killed at the same MNR base as Cristina. Adriano Bomba, who had defected to South Africa from Mozambique in July 1981 in a MiG fighter plane, had been eliminated at the MNR Gorongosa base in Mozambique.

Who killed Fernandes, Mhlanga, Cristina, the Bomba brothers, Ataide, Lopes, and many others may never be known. But, given South Africa's known control over the MNR and the irrelevance in real terms of other external forces, the suspicion is that their services were terminated by Pretoria.

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