

THEY BROKE EVERY BONE IN HIS BODY

What really happened on the night that Renamo representative Evo Camões Fernandes was killed and his body left at the bottom of a windmill in a small village in Portugal? Full details of his death may never be known, but Professor André Thomashausen, of Unisa's law faculty, a friend of Fernandes, believes that Frelimo had the most reasons to want him dead.

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven; a time to kill and a time to give life; a time to break down and a time to build up; a time of love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace. (Ecclesiastes, 3:1,3,8)

THESE slightly modified verses from the Ecclesiastes were the message of Evo Camoes Fernandes to his fellow countrymen.

It was printed in *A Luta Continua* of July 1985, the mouthpiece of the Mozambique Resistance Movement (Resistência Nacional Mocambicana — Renamo). He was then still the secretary-general of Renamo.

On April 21, 1988, a telephone call informed me that Evo's dead body had been found at the bottom of a windmill in Malveira da Serra, a small village in the mountains stretching some 30 km to the North of Lisbon, the capital city of Portugal.

I remembered the verses from *A Luta Continua*. Evo had quoted them to me for the first time in 1965, when he, as a law student in Lisbon, had been the leader of a group of 14-year-old boy scouts to which I belonged.

I remembered his provocative smile and self-confidence in the early eighties, when he acted as Renamo's foreign representative and spokesman.

I also saw again his strained and tired face during the evenings of October 1984, when he took part in the tripartite negotiations between Frelimo, Renamo and the South African government in Pretoria.

KIDNAPPED AND TORTURED

DURING the days following the death of Evo Fernandes, the pieces of a gruesome puzzle emerged.

On the evening of April 17, he had accepted an invitation to meet at least two envoys of the Frelimo government in a restaurant in Cascais. He had told his wife Yvette that they were Alexandra Xavier Chagas and Macias Natavidade, acting on instructions of Joao Carlos Esteira, Director of the Department D-13 (Control of External Activities of Renamo), of the Mozambique Intelligence Service, SNASP, and of General Bonifacio Gruveta, chairman of the Frelimo Veteran Soldiers' Association and one of the most influential of Frelimo's "old guard".

According to *Africa Confidential*, a Lisbon publication, Esteira was spotted in Lisbon some 10 days before April 17, and again in Paris in the week following that date.

Gruveta had been pointed out in January, 1987, as one of the authors of a letter circulated in Maputo, in the name of Frelimo's veteran soldiers, calling upon President Chissano to enter into peace talks with Renamo, for the establishment of a government of National Unity.

Much to the surprise of many observers, Gruveta was never disciplined, and emerged rather strengthened than weakened from the reshuffle of Frelimo's military command structures later in June, 1987.

Fernandes left the restaurant on April 17, at 11 pm, in the company of four men, in the motor car of one of his hosts. It was the last time that he was seen alive.

As confirmed by his widow, he was killed with five shots three days later, after he was brutally tortured, with practically every bone in his body having been fractured successively, while he was still alive.

THE VICTIM

FERNANDES, born in Beira, Mozambique, in 1944 (partially of Indian descent), father of six children from two marriages, went to school in Mozambique, studied law in Lisbon and began his career as an investigating officer in the Prosecution Department of the Ministry of Justice in Mozambique in 1968.

Maliciously, Frelimo turned this around and pretended that he worked as a member of the Portuguese colonial secret police.

In 1969 he joined the daily newspaper *Noticias da Beira*. When Frelimo took over in Mozambique in 1974, he was a director of the paper. He left Mozambique to work as an executive of one of the biggest Portuguese book distributors and publishers in Lisbon.

As an educated man who spoke four languages fluently, he soon gained influence in exiled Mozambique opposition circles. In 1984 he became secretary general of Renamo. When Renamo abolished the post of secretary general in 1986, Fernandes's new task was to head a new research department of Renamo.

WHAT MOTIVES?

IN April 1987 Fernandes was requested by Renamo's president Afonso Dhlakama to try and prepare international contacts leading to peace talks with Frelimo, pursuant to Renamo's announcement that they would be willing to enter into such negotiations.

As reported mainly by the Portuguese media, in particular *Africa Confidential* and *Africa Post*, but also by the English *Africa Confidential*, a series of visits and contacts by Fernandes followed, concentrating on France, Spain, West Germany, the USA and finally, early in 1988, also South Africa.

In an interview which appeared in the *Sunday Times* of February 7, 1988, President Dhlakama repeated his offer to negotiate with Frelimo without any pre-conditions.

In early March, Frelimo's Politburo apparently decided to carefully explore the possibilities for such negotiations.

On the other hand, South Africa and Portugal were keen to mediate some kind of understanding between Renamo and Frelimo, as a necessary condition for the envisaged rehabilitation of the Cahora Bassa project.

Likewise, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva was seeking an agreement with Renamo, in order to resume its emergency relief flights in Mozambique. The Red Cross flights had been suspended on December 22, 1987, on account of Frelimo's inability to provide security.

Incidentally, such an agreement was finalised during the last week of April, 1988, and the first Red Cross relief flights both to Renamo controlled areas and to the refugee camps controlled by Frelimo have now been resumed.

Africa Post reports that as a result of Fernandes's secret diplomacy, and with the assistance of an East African country, high level talks with President Dhlakama in the US, in Europe and possibly later also in South Africa were planned and supposed to have been initiated at the end of April.

RENAMO OR FRELIMO?

UNDER these circumstances, only two possible explanations for the assassination of Fernandes exist. He was either eliminated by a faction within Renamo opposed to peace talks, or by Frelimo's intelligence service SNASP.

A third alternative offered by *The Herald* in Zimbabwe blames South Africa for the assassination. According to *The Herald*, South Africa would have wished to rid itself from an alleged "hard-liner" in the leadership of Renamo.

This alternative, however, is highly improbable, Fernandes's efforts were clearly aimed at making a settlement in Mozambique possible, the principle beneficiary of which would have been South Africa.

The theory of a bloody faction fight within Renamo is also not convincing. The fact that Fernandes was tortured speaks against it.

More importantly, however, Renamo's handful of external representatives would never have possessed the means and the sophistication to execute this type of crime.

There is also much less division among Renamo external supporters than what some would like to make believe. So far, none of these supporters has ever challenged Renamo's President Dhlakama, and those who have cut their ties with the overment, have lost all influence in Mozambique opposition politics.

Lastly, Chagas, the key figure with whom Fernandes dined on April 17, had on his arrival from Maputo presented credentials legitimizing him as mediator for Frelimo, and had never been involved in any Renamo activities whatsoever.

The involvement of Frelimo's SNASP, on the other hand, appears highly probable, even if future investigation will not be able to produce proof. Fernandes's efforts were about to give Renamo's leaders international exposure for the first time, with black African assistance.

Renamo's accession to international negotiating tables would have threatened Frelimo's position considerably.

Moreover, international negotiations with Renamo going beyond the question of Cahora Bassa could have caused Frelimo to lose its 13-year monopoly of political power, and an eventually resulting participation of Renamo in the Mozambique government would have introduced fundamental changes in the governmental system of Mozambique.

Last but not least, the people in whose car Fernandes drove to torture and death were shady go-betweens acting on Maputo's instructions.

In this context, it is also interesting that Frelimo has at least once before tried to jeopardise negotiations by an international kidnapping action.

On August 25, 1984, while preparations for the retoria talks between Renamo and Frelimo were well under way, Frelimo's SNASP kidnapped four Portuguese members of a hunting safari in Tanzania.

Frelimo was then convinced that at least two of them were important supporters of Renamo, due to their family ties with Mozambique opposition circles. The four, Adelino Serras Pires, Adelino

Serras Pires Jnr, Carlos Artur Serras Pires Cardina and Rui Monteiro were taken by force from Tanzania and spent four months in various Mozambique prisons, having been tortured repeatedly.

They were only released after several European heads of state had intervened, an assistance owed to the fact that the former French President Giscard d'Estaing had been a member of the hunting safari in question.

WHAT NEXT?

THE next round of talks on the rehabilitation of Cahora Bassa is scheduled to take place later in May in Lisbon.

During the last week of April, high-level talks between South Africa and Maputo took place. At the same time, Anglo American chairman Mr Gavin Relly visited Maputo, as did the chairman of Lonhro, Mozambique's biggest foreign investor. In the words of Evo Fernandes, quoted at the outset, "this is a time for peace".

In a recent message to the international media, President Dhlakama condemned the assassination of Fernandes, but reiterated at the same time Renamo's continuing preparedness to enter into peace negotiations.

Frelimo's propaganda on an alleged support of Renamo by South Africa has failed. Frelimo's biggest coup in this regard, the defection of a Renamo spokesman of Maputo in mid March, 1988, has revealed nothing sensational.

The only factual accusation of the defector related to recent years was that South Africa had assisted Fernandes in obtaining a telefax copier for his office in Portugal during 1987.

As one diplomat in Maputo noted: Frelimo must be pretty shaky, if one telefax machine can pose such a threat to its rule...

Frelimo knows that the war can only be ended through negotiations. Frelimo's amnesty for the rebels, in effect for 10 months now, has not weakened Renamo. A mere 1 000 Renamo followers turned themselves in, of an admitted total number of 20 000 fighters.

The assassination of Fernandes can only be explained as one last and desperate effort of a minority of fanatical Marxists in Frelimo's ranks to prevent what Frelimo will ultimately have to accept — national reconciliation.

THE IMMEDIATE RISK

THE immediate risk for South Africa must be seen in a possible failure to bring about a viable Cahora Bassa agreement.

The anti-South African activists are actually hoping for a Cahora Bassa agreement in terms of which South Africa would assure the security of the power lines, without Renamo and Frelimo both having committed each other to the security of the power lines.

If the reconstruction of the power lines by American and West European technicians is then sabotaged anew, it will be easy to blame South Africa's former and alleged involvement with Renamo. South Africa would stand accused as an unreliable and double crossing partner.

This might become the decisive propagandistic move to force the European governments to agree to the implementation of mandatory sanctions against South Africa.

A Cahora Bassa agreement without at least a partial settlement between Renamo and Frelimo could become the latest sanction trap for Pretoria.

Evo Fernandes paid with his life for having tried to bring about peace in Mozambique. May his sacrifice not have been in vain.