

Row rouses anti-Maputo drive in Portugal Gdn. (NY) 29/3/89

By PAUL FAUVET
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MAPUTO—A diplomatic row has erupted between Mozambique and Portugal, centering on the murder last April near Lisbon of Evo Fernandes, the former general secretary of the South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance (MNR).

According to the Portuguese press, the two men charged with the crime, Alexandre Chagas and Joaquim Messias, both Portuguese citizens, have confessed. But the two have also claimed they were hired by a Mozambican diplomat to carry out the assassination.

The Portuguese press has continually published leaks from the police investigation of the case, including the name of the diplomat allegedly implicated, Rafael Custodio Marques, third secretary at the Mozambican Embassy in Lisbon.

On March 15, Portuguese authorities delivered a note to the Mozambican Foreign Ministry requesting that Marques's diplomatic immunity be waived so that Portuguese police could question him.

Mozambique turned down the request and insisted that "neither the Mozambican state nor any of its officials" had anything to do with Fernandes's death.

Lisbon's reaction was to order the expulsion of Marques within 72 hours as a "persona non grata." Mozambique retaliated by ordering the expulsion of José Marcelino da Silva Pereira, commercial consul at the Portuguese Embassy in Maputo, for "activities incompatible with his diplomatic status."

CLEAR SPLIT IN MNR

The Mozambican Embassy in Lisbon has received anonymous death threats over the telephone, and Portuguese authorities have withdrawn the protection normally offered to the building where the embassy is located. This latter move could be interpreted as an invitation to the far right to attack the place.

The embassy has also, however, been swamped with telexes and phone messages of solidarity from Portuguese organizations and citizens outraged at the anti-Mozambican campaign being whipped up over the Fernandes affair.

Fernandes, born in Mozambique of Asian parents, was an agent of the Portuguese secret police, the Pide. When at Lisbon University he was believed to have spied for the Pide on

fellow students from Portugal's African colonies. He was an associate of the most powerful white settler businessman in Mozambique, Jorge Jardim, who appointed him business manager of his daily paper, *Noticias da Beira*. Pro-Frelimo journalists threw Fernandes off the paper in 1974.

With independence the following year, Fernandes, like all Portuguese passport holders, had to choose between Mozambican and Portuguese citizenship. He opted to remain Portuguese and in 1976 departed for Lisbon.

When next heard of, in 1979, he was calling himself the Western European representative of the MNR. In the days before the MNR had an office in Washington, its propaganda was mainly distributed from Fernandes's home in the Portuguese casino town of Cascais. He became MNR general secretary in 1983 and held the post until 1986, when he was demoted to head a research department and was removed from the MNR's national council.

Fernandes was said to have complained of racism in the MNR toward non-blacks; but probably a more serious matter was the persistent allegations that he had enriched himself with money meant for the organization. In Pretoria other MNR leaders accused him in 1984 of embezzling some \$200,000. Fernandes was also suspected of plundering \$90,000 from an MNR bank account in Switzerland. A million dollars intended to purchase military equipment on the international black market also went astray and again, Fernandes was the chief suspect.

From 1985 onward there was a clear split in the MNR's external representation. The Washington office clashed with the Lisbon office, and particularly with Fernandes, as elements on the U.S. far right tried (so far unsuccessfully) to take over control of the MNR from the South Africans.

Fernandes's demotion seemed a victory for the Washington wing. But in fact Fernandes remained a powerful figure, and one-time Western European representative Paulo Oliveira, who defected to Mozambique shortly before Fernandes's death, described him as a right-hand man for the South Africans.

Disputes inside the MNR have usually been solved violently. After the 1979 death in battle of the MNR's first commander, Andre Matsangaiza, a bloody struggle raged inside the group for several months before the current MNR president, Afonso Dhlakama, could consolidate his position.

Fernandes's predecessor as general secretary, Orlando Cristina, was shot to death at an MNR base inside South Africa in 1983. Those suspected of the murder were two other members of the MNR national council, the brothers Adriano and Boaventura Bomba, and they were in turn killed. Two other MNR leaders, Mateus Lopes and João Ataíde, died in a mysterious car crash in Malawi in 1987 that has widely been viewed as an assassination.

Thus one theory explaining Fernandes's death is that it was ordered by his opponents inside the MNR. The MNR, meanwhile, blamed the Mozambican security service, Snasp.

Mozambique, though not wasting any tears on Fernandes, has repeatedly denied any involvement in the killing. "These are not methods used by Frelimo," Foreign Minister Pascoal Mocumbi said immediately after the murder.

PORTUGUESE RULERS CAUTIOUS

The linking of diplomat Marques to the killing seems based on nothing more than the unsubstantiated confessions of the alleged assassins judiciously leaked to the press.

In much of the Portuguese right there is a deep hostility to Mozambique: They can never forgive Frelimo for inflicting a humiliating military defeat on the Portuguese colonial army. Hence there is now a hue and cry in the right-wing press—which includes calls to end all Portuguese aid to Mozambique and even for a complete break in relations.

The Portuguese government is more cautious and seems unwilling to let the affair seriously damage relations. Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva, though condemning Mozambique's expulsion of Silva Pereira, said that Portugal was determined to "deal calmly with the matter." Nonetheless, a question mark has now been placed over the official visit that Cavaco Silva is scheduled to make to Mozambique later this year.

The Mozambican press contrasted the fuss over Fernandes's death with the refusal of the Lisbon authorities to prevent MNR terrorist activity from being organized from Portuguese soil.

"The significance accorded today in Lisbon to the death of Evo Fernandes," wrote the Maputo daily *Noticias*, "contrasts sharply with the complacency and indifference shown toward the thousands of victims of his crimes."