

Arab News (Jeddah) 20/8/82

ANC blames S. Africa for killing Mrs. First

MAPUTO, Aug. 19 (Agencies) — The banned African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa has blamed Pretoria for the killing here on Tuesday of Ruth First, one of its leading members.

The ANC, in a statement, accused South Africa of resorting to naked terrorism in an attempt to destroy the organization, and vowed to avenge the killing of the anti-apartheid campaigner. The statement said Mrs. First's death would act as an inspiration in the ANC's fight to overthrow the government of South Africa.

Mrs. First, 59, a White South African exile living in Mozambique, died when a parcel bomb exploded in her office at the Eduardo Mandalane University Center for African Studies, where she was director of research. Three persons injured in the explosion are still in hospital.

The parcel bomb that killed Mrs. First was delivered last week, the Mozambique news agency AIM, said.

The ANC runs its sabotage campaign against the white-minority South African government from bases in Mozambique and other neighboring black countries.

Mrs. First was the wife of the exiled leader of the South African Communist Party, Joe Slovo, who South African officials say is a major force behind black nationalist guerrilla attacks in South Africa. Officials in Pretoria have confirmed Slovo was a key target of a South African raid against ANC offices near Maputo in Mozambique in January 1981. The raid missed Slovo but at least 12 movement officials were killed.

AIM said Mozambican security officials declined comment on the investigation into Mrs. First's assassination. However, AIM said it had learned the parcel arrived during the previous week but remained unopened in Mrs. First's office. The device was apparently intended to explode during a United Nations

conference at the university attended by academics from Africa, Europe and the United States, AIM said.

AIM quoted a security official as saying the assassination could be compared to other attacks against ANC officials outside South Africa which "were proved to be the work of South African secret services." A spokesman for the South African police in Pretoria said the government had no comment on the killing. The government has denied ANC accusations of involvement in previous slayings of ANC officials in Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Lesotho.

Mrs. First was charged with treason in 1956 along with 155 other activists opposed to South Africa's system of race segregation and white-minority rule, but the charge against her was dropped two years later. She was "banned" in 1962 under the Suppression of Communism Act and detained for 117 days in 1963, about which she wrote a book on solitary confinement called "117 days."

She fled the country the next year and lived in Kenya and London before settling in Mozambique several years ago, writing on South African issues and working as director of research at the University's Center for African Studies.

Portuguese President Gen. Ramalho Eanes sent a message to Mozambican President Samora Machel condemning the bombing, AIM said. A British organization, International Voluntary Service, and the Dutch anti-apartheid movement also sent letters condemning the attack. There was no indication where the parcel bomb was posted or where her husband was at the time.

Mrs. First's three daughters, Shaun who lives in the United States, and Robin and Gillian, now living in London, were expected to arrive in Mozambique soon for the funeral, AIM reported. No date was set for the service.