

N M S - 11/8/94

First's death no mystery

■ I REFER to your front page report, "Maharaj reveals stolen NIS files", in which you wrote that "exiled activist Ruth First (had) died in a mysterious bomb blast".

"Mysterious" seems to have been the wrong choice of word for the circumstances in which she died have long been established. First was accidentally killed by a letter-bomb addressed to Professor Aquino de Bragança, the late director of the Centre for African Studies at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo.

Professor Bragança told the Portuguese weekly *Expresso* (August 21 1982) that he "became aware of something abnormal while trying to open the envelope, letting it fall on the desk, next to which was Ruth First, who died immediately ..."

At the time of the attempt on Professor Bragança's life, he was one of President Machel's closest advisers. In 1982, the president's Frelimo government was shifting its posture towards the Western bloc.

Machel and Bragança died in a plane crash in October 1986. —
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