

Veil of secrecy on anti-Frelimo leader's slaying on Transvaal farm

EXILES IN MURDER PLOT

By RAY JOSEPH in LONDON
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A MAFIA-STYLE conspiracy within the shadowy world of Mozambique exile politics is believed to be behind the mystery murder of legendary resistance leader Mr Orlando Christina near Pretoria.

As speculation swept through South Africa's 600 000-strong Portuguese community, informed sources close to the Mozambican insurgents said they believed the murder was the result of internal strife within the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) movement battling to overthrow President Samora Machel.

Mr Christina, a rough, tough bushfighter who was the MNR strongman, was killed shortly after he had formulated plans for an MNR government-in-exile.

These were seen as a major advance in plans by the increasingly successful insurgent movement to topple the Machel regime.

But they could have sealed Mr Christina's fate, for rivalry within the MNR almost certainly lay behind the murder.

Speculation

However a veil of almost total secrecy surrounds the killing on a farm reported to be somewhere in the Pretoria area.

Speculation that Mr Christina was the victim of a Frelimo death squad sent from Maputo is ruled out.

He was under constant and heavy guard when in South Africa, and admission to any house where he stayed was closely scrutinised.

To add to the mystery, close family friends say that despite intense efforts they have not been able to ascertain the whereabouts of his body or even when the funeral is likely to take place.

Lieutenant-General C F Zietsman, chief of the CID, said a post-mortem examination was carried out on Monday, and he assumed the family was then given custody

of the body.

Mr Christina's South African-born wife Francesca is staying with relatives on the

Inquiries at mortuaries, funeral parlours and cemeteries in the Pretoria area have disclosed nothing about arrangements for his burial.

The officer commanding at the State mortuary said Mr Christina's body was not at the mortuary and had never been there.

All that police have said officially about Mr Christina's death is: "The South African Police are investigating a shooting incident in which a white man, Mr Orlando Christina, was killed near Pretoria. No arrests have been made."

A close friend of Mr Christina's disclosed that the guerrilla commander recently attended a meeting in Lisbon at which a Mozambican government-in-exile was established by the 12-member MNR central committee.

The killing of Mr Christina is undoubtedly a severe setback to MNR hopes of toppling the Machel regime, and comes on the eve of a major Frelimo congress in Maputo.

In hiding

Only a few days ago, the guerrillas, through their Lisbon-based spokesman Mr Eyo Fernandes, claimed they were on the brink of overthrowing the Maputo government. Two days after Mr Christina's death became known in Lisbon, Mr Fernandes went into hiding fearing possible attempts on his life.

Mozambique's only comment on Mr Christina's death has come from the official news agency AIM. It recalled that Mr Christina became an agent of the former Portuguese secret police (PIDE/DGS) in 1964, and attempted to infiltrate the ranks of Frelimo.

With the help of Rhodesian security forces he set up the MNR following Mozambique's independence in 1975.

With Mr Christina's death

of Mr Christina's *patrao* (godfather), Mr Jorge Jardim, have also died.

Mr Jardim was the white Portuguese, Beira-based businessman who for years under Dr Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and Dr Marcello Caetano was the most powerful single influence in Mozambique.

Mr Christina, also white, was his righthand man.

Last year, Mr Jardim — one of the principal victims of the 1974 coup which overthrew the Portuguese dictatorship and led to black rule in the African colonies — died of a heart attack in Libreville, Gabon.

Mr Christina built up his reputation years ago when he led hand-picked Jardim units on offensives into neighbouring, Frelimo-supporting states — operations that most men would have regarded as suicidal.

For months, so the legend goes, he operated in the heart of Dar-es-Salaam, where Frelimo had its headquarters.

Meanwhile, the former Mozambican consul in Lisbon, Mr Francisco Vitorino Patricio, was yesterday reported to have sought political asylum in Portugal.

There was no immediate official confirmation of the report and the Mozambican embassy in Lisbon declined comment on the affair.

The consul reportedly fled Mozambique last week on board a flight to Lisbon after being interrogated for several weeks by the Mozambican security services over the earlier defection of the Mozambican ambassador in Lisbon, Mr Joao Ataide.

Mr Ataide fled to Paris late last year after it had been disclosed that he was working for the French security services against the Mozambican government.