

Shadowy head

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Evo Fernandes, MNR's head, is a Portuguese citizen born in Mozambique of Asian parentage (his family is from the former Portuguese enclave of Goa in India). In the final years of Portuguese colonialism, he was an agent for the Portuguese secret police, the PIDE/DGS. He was apparently recruited while studying at Lisbon University, and was used to spy on other students from the then colonies.

He graduated in law and returned to Mozambique where he worked in the port city of Beira as a legal adviser for the colonial police. The most notorious of Mozambique's White settler politicians, Jorge Jardim, who worked closely with the PIDE, then chose Fernandes for the post of deputy administrator of his newspaper, *Noticias da Beira*.

After the fall of Portuguese fascism in April 1974, there was a bitter struggle for control of *Noticias da Beira*, which culminated in victory for pro-FRELIMO journalists who kicked Fernandes and other Jardim appointees off the paper.

After a brief spell in prison, Fernandes fled to Portugal where he took up residence in the casino town of Cascais, a few miles west of Lisbon. He found a job with the publishing house of Livraria Bertrand, and little more was heard of him until 1980 when he rose to prominence as the Western European representative of the MNR, feeding a steady stream of sensational claims to Lisbon-based journalists. The postal address for the MNR's radio station, "Voz da Africa Livre," (previously given as a post box in Ian Smith's Rhodesia) was switched to Fernandes' Cascais home.

After the assassination of MNR General Secretary Orlando Cristina at his farm (which doubled up as an MNR training camp) near Pretoria in April 1983, Fernandes disappeared, apparently in fear for his own life. A full-scale power struggle was underway inside the MNR — but it was resolved in Fernandes' favour. He resurfaced in Lisbon later in 1983, and was then named as successor to Cristina in the position of general secretary. Since then he seems to have spent most of his time in South Africa ●

Evo Fernandes

