

## MOZAMBIQUE: The murder of Evo Fernandez ION(330) 30/4/88 p. 3

The assassin of **Evo Fernandes**, whose body was found near Lisbon on April 21, five days after the former secretary-general of Renamo was reported abducted, is still at large, and there is no reason to believe that light will ever be shed on the murder. In Maputo the former European spokesman of the Mozambican rebel movement, **Paulo Oliveira**, who had defected to the government, claimed on April 23 that the murder was at the instigation of private United States interests which were opposed to South African control of Renamo, and wanted to promote its representative in Washington, **Luis Serapiao**.

This theory, like that of a strictly internal feud in Renamo, is not shared by high-level politicians in Mozambique, who do not exclude the possibility that Evo Fernandes was eliminated by South African secret agents in spite of his close links with Pretoria (Maputo has denied Renamo allegations that the Mozambique authorities were responsible).

***I.O.N.**- This last hypothesis is far from fantastic at a time when negotiations between the Mozambican government and Renamo are in preparation (see ION N°329). Mr Fernandes, who was often portrayed as "Pretoria's man", never ceased to be the "éminence grise" of **Afonso Dhlakama**, the president of Renamo and its chief of military operations. He asked Mr Fernandes to prepare a political manifesto and a draft constitution, after removing him from the post of secretary-general in July 1986 because of internal rivalry and putting him in charge of Renamo's research department. Evo Fernandes was certainly one of the few Renamo leaders to be able to face up to the South Africans when he considered that the movement's interests were different from those of Pretoria. It seems that during the last months he was preparing to negotiate a political compromise with the Maputo government without involving the South Africans. Hence the theory of an assassination by South African agents, because of Pretoria's refusal to give Renamo some autonomy. The previous secretary-general of the movement, **Orlando Cristina**, was also mysteriously murdered in South Africa in 1983 just as he appeared to be growing closer to the United States. Two other leaders of Renamo's external political wing, **Mateus Lopes** and **Joao Ataide**, were recently killed in a bizarre road accident in Malawi.*

*For their part, the authorities in Maputo have always hitherto refused to negotiate directly with Renamo, on the grounds of its alleged internal divisions, and refuse to acknowledge it as an opposition movement. Since 1984, therefore, they have concentrated on negotiations with South Africa, considering (certainly wrongly) that only Pretoria has the power to maintain or eliminate Renamo. In this respect, it is worth noting that a Mozambican minister, **Jacinto Veloso**, who prepared the N'komati agreement of 1984, went to South Africa this week to set up, according to reports, a meeting between President **Pieter Botha** and his Mozambican counterpart, **Joaquim Chissano**. Like the South Africans, the Mozambicans are interested neither in autonomy for Renamo (or its transformation into a political organisation), nor its coming under the control of U.S conservatives. Considering that the rebels would not have become the formidable striking force they now are without the aid of Pretoria, Maputo prefers to find, whatever the cost, a new compromise with South Africa, a sort of N'komati II, provided it is given assurances that such an agreement will lead to a return of some sort of peace to Mozambique. This is why whoever was behind the assassination of Mr Fernandes, his disappearance satisfies many people.*