

MOZAMBIQUE ARB-P 15/5

Rebel Leader Murdered

SS

The Portuguese police are seeking clues in the killing of Mr. Evo Fernandes, the former Secretary-General of the Mozambican National Resistance (MNR) the guerrilla movement opposed to the Frelimo Government in Maputo.

Mr. Fernandes, 44, a Portuguese national of Goan origin, disappeared on the evening of April 17th after dining with a Mr. Alexandre Chagas, a Portuguese of unclear political connections, in Cascais where Mr. Fernandes and his family lived, 30km from Lisbon. His body was found late on April 21st with a bullet in the head and three in the chest, dumped near the road to Malveira, near Cascais.

Mr. Fernandes was demoted in 1986 for alleged corruption. Of late he was head of the MNR's research section, and reportedly still a strong influence.

He had worked for the police in Beira, Mozambique, when the country was under Portuguese rule. He was a founder of the MNR, formed in the mid-1970s with the assistance of the white minority government of Rhodesia.

Moroccan and French police later detained three Portuguese men wanted for questioning about the abduction and murder of Mr. Fernandes, Lisbon police said on May 3rd.

They said Mr. Alexandre Xavier Chagas and Mr. Joaquim da Conceicao Messias were arrested on April 29th in Casablanca and that Paris police picked up Mr. Manuel Pinto da Costa the next day.

Portuguese authorities said they hoped the three would soon be handed over though they pointed out that no formal extradition treaty existed with Morocco.

The murder investigation centres on whether Fernandes was the victim of a rebel power struggle or killed on the orders of the Mozambique Government, although Maputo has denied involvement. (FT 23/4, GD 4/5)