

# Fernandes: killer trail points to SNASP

PORTUGUESE DETECTIVES and secret service agents investigating the abduction and subsequent murder near Lisbon on April 21 of Evo Fernandes (44) a key figure in the rebel movement fighting the Mozambican government, are convinced the trail points directly to Mozambican secret agents.

According to police and the Portuguese intelligence services, SNASP — Maputo's East German-trained political police were actively involved in the affair. This virtually uncontradictable conclusion has already provoked a political response in Lisbon. Social Democratic Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva has cancelled a planned visit this year to Mozambique as a sign of Lisbon's anger at the suspected murder of a Portuguese citizen on Portuguese soil by foreign agents.

But Portugal is also determined not to let the matter provoke a fullblown bilateral crisis between the two countries.

Evidence turned up during an exhaustive Portuguese police investigation shows that SNASP, through its D-13, BT and DAF departments, was responsible for the planning, financing and final execution of the plot to assassinate Fernandes, which occurred after the three Portuguese "commission agents" allegedly involved in the affair, had removed themselves from the scene.

It was they who successfully abducted Fernandes from a restaurant in Cascais, a holiday resort outside Lisbon.

Investigators still lack some details, like the names of those responsible for holding and then killing Fernandes four days after he was kidnapped. Police say the alleged suspects entered Portugal on false passports. Police are also not yet convinced the idea was indeed to kill Fernandes ie murder with intent, as there is some evidence that the plan was merely to kidnap him or oblige him to give himself up to the Frelimo government in Maputo as a "recanting terrorist".

## UNEXPECTED RESULT

There is no doubt that the role of **Alexandre Chagas** (a prime suspect in the case and along with Joaquim Conceição Messias now awaiting extradition from Morocco) (see Vol 1 No 8 pg 12) was to convince Fernandes that a

group within the ruling Frelimo party — led by **Bonifácio Gruveta** — sought to negotiate a peace deal between the government and the rebels.

Chagas, who arrived in Portugal on March 1 and subsequently travelled at least once back to Maputo before the killing, has been clearly identified as being on SNASP's payroll. Chagas, apart from raising the question of peace talks, probably also suggested to Fernandes that he might make a "dignified" return to Mozambique in the ambit of the government's current amnesty campaign.

But in his reports back to his controllers, Chagas appears to have overstated Fernandes's true position regarding both peace talks with Gruveta and a possible return to Maputo.

Thus misled by Chagas, the Maputo operationals gave the green light for the final stage of the operation — that is their own meeting with Fernandes. This took place on the night of April 17 and investigators have proved that Chagas departed immediately thereafter for Morocco, entering the country via Algeciras in southern Spain on April 18.

By then the operatives had been faced with the reality - a Fernandes resisting any participation in peace talks or efforts to get him to return to Maputo, and instead of opting for releasing him — which with attendant publicity, would have caused a major scandal — decided to eliminate him three days after the kidnapping. Chagas meanwhile aware that the plan had gone awry and conscious that his controllers in Mozambique would want some pretty full explanations as to why his (Chagas) assessments of Fernandes's views had been so patently overblown, remained in Morocco here he was arrested on an Interpol warrant put out by Portugal.

## MAPUTO DISQUIET

SNASP's direct involvement in the affair and its unexpected outcome appear also to have caused some concern in Maputo where the official reactions have been anything but those of an innocent party.

Maputo has launched an intense counter information campaign at home and abroad, suggesting that the affair resulted from internal Renamo faction fighting or as the result of a "foreign intervention."

More symptomatically is that at the same time as the arrests of Chagas and Messias in Morocco and of a third suspect, Manuel Pinto da Costa in Paris, were announced, SNASP hastened to make public news that it had arrested, theoreticly some time before the murder, three Portuguese citizens, al-

leged to have been preparing to commit "terrorist acts": in Maputo.

Clearly SNASP now has a way of pressuring Lisbon as the fate of the three detained Portuguese citizens will depend entirely on what use Lisbon makes of the information Chagas, Messias and Costa provide to their interrogators once they are extradited to Portugal.

SNASP furthermore could also claim that the elements not yet arrested in the alleged Maputo terrorist plot, were in fact Chagas, Messias and Costa, thus attempting to throw sand across the tracks of those investigating the Fernandes affair.

## OLD PLANS

The elimination operation against Fernandes is not the first such action by SNASP. In 1977 the agency mapped out a plan to wipe out key figures in the "Resistência-África Livre" (Free Africa Resistance), forerunner of Renamo whose headquarters was their Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation office in Salisbury.

The group at that time had a training camp at Bindura and a branch in Johannesburg.

The targets were **André Matsangalisse**, president of the movement and **Orlando Cristina**, its secretary-general.

The chosen assassins were two Criminal Investigation Police (PIC) officers, **Orlando Macamo** and **Zeca Ruço**.

But the plan backfired with Macamo dying at Bindura and Ruço being found shot through the neck at his former flat in Johannesburg's Hillbrow district.

Other SNASP agents involved in the plan were **A. Vlega** and **Jorge Costa** and a former PIC chief **Carlos Raposo Pereira**.

The aborted attempt had been toned down by late Mozambican president Samora Machel who feared providing martyrs to the rebels and damaging Maputo's image of the plan went awry.

In 1981/2 SNASP initiated studies to setup a special branch for the "elimination" of "traitors" kidnapping and shipping them back to Maputo.