

Suspect of Ordering US Missionary Murder Elected Deputy Mayor in Brazil

Contributed by João C. Magalhães
Sunday, 16 November 2008

Three years and eight months after missionary Dorothy Stang was murdered, one of her old political allies, Francisco de Assis Sousa better known as Chiquinho (Little Chico) of the Worker's Party, was elected mayor in Anapu, in the northern Brazilian state of Pará.

His vice-mayor is land-owner Délio Fernandes from the PRP party, who has been investigated as a suspect for having ordered Stang's killing.

The alliance between the two caused surprise among the supporters of the nun's cause. According to the Public Ministry of Pará, in 2005 she was shot six times on a local route in the city because of a dispute with wealthy landowners - including Fernandes - over creating family farming projects in supposedly disputed areas of the region.

According to José Batista of the Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra - CPT), Fernandes, who was never even charged for the murder of the nun, is suspected of using the very same false property deeds as Regivaldo "Taradão" Pereira Galvão, and Vitalmiro "Bida" Bastos de Moura.

Both Galvão and Moura are accused of ordering the killing, but Moura had his sentence overturned this year.

When the nun was killed there were rumors that Fernandes had given protection to Bida while he fled, which has not been confirmed. All of the suspects or accused have consistently denied involvement in the murder.

Chiquinho, who was taught religious education by Stang when he was an adolescent, was the main ally of the missionary in the Rural Worker's Syndicate of Anapu, of which he was the president.

In 2003, he made, with Stang, a document accusing Fernandes of being a forger of property deeds of land in Anapu. Soon after the crime, he became a spokesperson for the cause of Stang. He was speaking with the press and he met with government officials in Brasília to discuss the case.

But, in the last two years, little Chico left the sister's group. To Jane Dwyer, a nun from the same congregation as Stang, the political situation in the city is "beyond critical", increased pressure on the Project for Sustainable Development (Projeto de Desenvolvimento Sustentável - PDS) created by her old colleague.

Three attempts were made to contact Fernandes by telephone for this article, but they went unanswered.

AF