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REVIEW ESSAY

EDUARDO CHIVAMBO MONDLANE AND

THE ENIGMA OF REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

by

BONIFACE I. OBICHERE

Dr. Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane's leadership of *Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique* (FRELIMO) from 1963 to February 1969 brought him into the limelight of international politics and the mass media, but it also confronted him with the enigma of revolutionary leadership. Part of this enigma was the perennial struggle for mastery and for recognition by the various leaders of Mozambican nationalist groups in exile; and until his death on February 3, 1969, Mondlane never did quite find his way through the labyrinth of the nationalist and guerrilla struggle for leadership. The debate still continues as to who mailed the bomb from West Germany which snipped out his life prematurely.

The meteoric career of Mondlane has already given rise to a number of books and articles. *The Struggle for Mozambique*, an autobiographical account by Mondlane (Penguin Books, 1969) and *Eduardo Mondlane*, published by Panaf Great Lives, (London, 1972) are at present the major works devoted to his career. *National Liberation: Revolution in the Third World*, edited by Norman Miller and Roderick Aya (New York: Free Press, 1971) and *African Liberation Movements: Contemporary Struggles Against White Minority Rule*, by Richard Gibson, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) are analytical and critical works dealing with liberation movements in the third world in general and in Africa in particular. Another volume on the African liberation struggle is *Guerrilla Struggle in Africa: An Analysis and Preview* by Kenneth W. Grundy (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971).

At the time that Dr. Mondlane assumed the leadership of FRELIMO, it was not his first encounter with liberation parties. He began nationalist activities in South Africa where he attended high school. He became a member of NESAM (Nucleos dos Estudantes Africanos Secundarios de Mocambique), an association of Mozambican students in South Africa and an offshoot of the parent nationalist organization in Mozambique known as the Centro Associativo dos Negros de Mocambique. After his

secondary education, Mondlane entered Witwatersrand University in South Africa, but was soon expelled from the country. He then returned to Mozambique for a brief period where, later, he was accused of subversion but was cleared. In 1950, the Portuguese authorities sent him to the University of Lisbon. From there he found his way to Oberlin College, Ohio, in the U.S. After graduation from Oberlin College, he entered Northwestern University where he obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Sociology. The author of the Panaf *Eduardo Mondlane* is in error when he says that Dr. Mondlane "transferred his studies to the North West University of Illinois, Ohio, where he received a doctorate after his M.A.," (p. 109). Dr. Mondlane later became an Assistant Professor at Syracuse University, New York.

Before going to Syracuse, however, he had been in Harvard University and had worked for the United Nations Trusteeship Department. It was during his service with the U.N. that he met President Julius Nyerere. The friendship that they struck then was responsible for Dr. Mondlane's return to Dar es Salaam in 1963 as the President of the newly formed coalition of Mozambican parties in exile called FRELIMO. It was through the influence of Nyerere that the three major Mozambican parties agreed to merge. They were: UDENAMO (Uniao Democratica Nacional de Mocambique); MANU (Mozambique African Nationalist Union); and UNAMI (Uniao Africana de Mocambique Independente). (Gibson, p. 276). Nyerere's reason for picking Mondlane to be president of FRELIMO was that he "had not been involved in the disputes of the three existing Mozambican nationalist organizations," and "might more easily be able to foster" the unification of the exiled parties (Gibson, p. 277).

The first Secretary General of FRELIMO was David J.M. Mabunda (UDENAMO) and the Deputy Secretary General was Paulo Jose Gumane (UDENAMO). The Treasurer was Matthew Mmole (MANU) and the Vice President was Reverend Uria Simango (UDENAMO), from the Beira Region. Marcelino dos Santos was the Secretary for External Relations and the most internationally known of the new group, having lived in exile in Portugal and France. He was a leftist poet and a communist sympathizer. Leo Milas was the Publicity Secretary, and sometimes performed the role of Mondlane's Personal Representative.

Milas was authoritarian and cantankerous. Soon after Dr. Mondlane left for Syracuse, Milas drove Paulo Jose Gumane and David J. M. Mabunda out of FRELIMO; but was himself expelled from FRELIMO in August 1964 when it was discovered that he did not have the best interest of FRELIMO and Mozambique at heart. His real identity was revealed and his real name

was given as Leo Clinton Aldridge, Jr., from Pittsburgh, Texas. He had joined FRELIMO under false pretenses and had actually worked from within for its dissolution. For a time, Leo Milas and Dr. Mondlane traded accusations, each accusing the other of being a C.I.A. agent and of receiving C.I.A. and Israeli support. (Gibson, p. 278).

Gibson rightly states that FRELIMO has been "constantly beset by fierce faction-fighting, ideological, ethnic and personal rivalries, assassinations, defections and splits." (p. 276). The assassinations, which have deprived FRELIMO of valuable and experienced leadership, include those of Felipe Magaia, Mateus Muthemba, Paulo Kankhomba, Silverio Raphael Nungu, Samuel Kankombe, and, of course, Dr. Eduardo Mondlane in February 3, 1969. (Grundy, p. 104). To further exacerbate the crisis of confidence and leadership, both Mondlane and Marcelino dos Santos were married to white women. In the opinion of most of the rank and file, it was hypocritical of these leaders to profess that they were fighting white domination in Mozambique and at the same time be married to white women. Mrs. Janet Mondlane is a white American who received an M.A. degree in African Studies from Boston University, and Mrs. Pamela Beira dos Santos is a South African white.

The distrust of most of his Makonde followers increased when Mondlane made Mrs. Pamela dos Santos his confidential secretary; and there is no doubt that this factor of distrust was at the base of the attack launched on Mrs. Mondlane and her Mozambique Institute in Dar es Salaam in 1968 by irate and frustrated students. The attack was led by Reverend Mateus Pinho Gwenjere. In May, 1968, a riotous raid was made on the FRELIMO office and a staff member who resisted the attackers was beaten to death. Gibson remarks that though the Tanzanian police restored order, they could not restore the shattered unity of FRELIMO (p. 281). These factors and events have had the effect of exacerbating the discontent of the Makonde who have borne the brunt of the fighting. They have also worsened the ideological, ethnic and personality conflicts within FRELIMO (Grundy, p. 105). The Makonde are the rivals of the Makua; and the Nyanja are the bitter rivals of the Chewe. The Yao, the Ngoni (Nguru) and the Chope also are all involved in the ethnic rivalry. Dr. Mondlane was a Chope and this did not help matters very much (Panaf, pp. 13, 71-75). These and other problems of the Mozambican revolution are also brought out by the author of *Eduardo Mondlane* (pp. 46-52).

Despite all the handicaps that he had to face, Dr. Mondlane brought new inspiration to FRELIMO. He did inspire the guerrilla fighters and he did instill confidence into the

youth. He emphasized the participation of women in the revolution, and his wife Janet has been a key figure in the struggle despite all the accusations that have been leveled against her (Panaf, pp. 128-132; pp. 164-172). Mondlane was aware of the problems of revolutionary leadership, especially in the context of Mozambique. He stated:

Leadership is not based on rank, but on the concept of responsibility; the leader of a certain body is referred to as the man 'responsible' for it. Many of those now 'responsible' had never been to school before they entered the army; they were illiterate, with no formal education, when they joined near the beginning of the war. They have acquired the ability to lead through their practical experience of fighting and political work and through the education programmes of the army. (Panaf, pp. 56-57).

What emerges from a reading of these books on the liberation struggle in Mozambique is the problem of conflicts and cleavages between the guerrilla fighters and the civilian leaders of FRELIMO, a situation made worse by ethnic rivalry and personality conflicts. Even the question of governing the liberated area has posed its own difficulties. According to Mondlane:

One of the chief lessons to be drawn from nearly four years of war in Mozambique is that liberation does not consist merely of driving out the Portuguese authority, but also of constructing a new country; and that this construction must be undertaken even while the colonial state is in the process of being destroyed. We realized this in principle before we began fighting, but it is only in the development of the struggle that we have learned quite how rapid and comprehensive civil reconstruction must be. (Mondlane, p. 163).

The problem of evolving a new structure for decision making in the liberated areas did create conflicts between the FRELIMO leadership in Dar es Salaam and the guerrilla commanders in the liberated areas who could not be controlled from party headquarters hundreds of miles away in Dar es Salaam. FRELIMO had little or no difficulty in securing supplies from the West, the East and from the Liberation Community of the O.A.U.

Mondlane himself once boasted that he could receive aid from the Western as well as the communist countries. But there was great difficulty in getting these supplies into the guerrilla-held areas of Mozambique, and delays helped to increase the cleavage between the civilian party officials and the soldiers. Furthermore, the exaggerated war reports and claims contained in party communiqués increased the pressure on the guerrillas as borne out by the FRELIMO Congress held inside the liberated area of Mozambique in 1968 which proved that the claims were definitely exaggerated. Not even the sympathetic reports of Basil Davidson or Anders Johansson could offset doubts concerning FRELIMO's claims about how much of Mozambique was under their control. More recently, the Movement's failure to stop the construction of the Cabora Bassa Dam was a blow to the prestige of their fighting men.

In conclusion, one must question the propriety of civilian party bosses leading guerrilla liberation movements in Africa. The history of liberation movements in the Third World has shown that the most successful struggles are those in which the ideological commitment of the leaders has been matched by their participation in the actual fighting; and one thinks of such leaders as Che Guevarra, Ho Chi Min, Fidel Castro, Vu Nguen Giap, George Grivas, Houari Boumediene and Mao Tse-tung. Perhaps the election of Samora Moses Machel as the new President and Military Commander of FRELIMO will help to bridge the chasm between the "guerrilla autarkies inside Mozambique and the party leadership based in Dar es Salaam." The successes and failures of FRELIMO and the career of Eduardo Mondlane will continue to be fascinating subjects worthy of further investigation. The works reviewed here have only initiated the study.

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