

Remembering Eduardo: Reflections on the Life and Legacy of Eduardo Mondlane

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# **Remembering Eduardo: Reflections on the Life and Legacy of Eduardo Mondlane**

**Herbert Shore**

On a sunlit Dar-es-Salaam morning in February 1969, in a small cottage facing the Indian Ocean, Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane was murdered, his life torn away by the explosion of a plastic bomb planted in a book that he opened with the morning mail. On that fateful day, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, Frelimo,<sup>1</sup> lost its leader, Africa lost a great statesman and revolutionary, and I lost a friend and brother, a man closer to me than any other I had known in my lifetime. Poet and *guerrilheiro*, Jorge Rebelo, wrote

Sorrow and confusion fell over the combatants and the people. . . .  
For weeks the military offensive came to a halt. . . . Each of us  
questioned the future of the organisation and the fate of our struggle.  
And many felt as if, with comrade Mondlane, a whole heritage of  
achievements had been lost.<sup>2</sup>

Eduardo Mondlane was gone, but he had transformed despair into hope, fear into understanding and courage for the people of Mozambique. Today, throughout the country you can hear the echo of his voice.

Into the seven years from his election in 1962 as first President of Frelimo to his assassination in 1969, Eduardo Mondlane crowded major achievements usually associated only with a long and active lifetime.

He founded Frelimo from three diverse exile organizations and forged them into a unified movement with space for differences of opinion, views and approach, but focused and concentrated on clear common goals—the liberation of Mozambique from Portuguese colonialism and the creation of a new non-exploitative society.

Under his leadership, Frelimo developed into one of the most successful liberation movements in Africa, unchallenged by any other popularly based organization and ultimately recognized by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations as "the sole legitimate representative of the Mozambican people." He laid the philosophic basis for Frelimo's approach to the liberation struggle and for social transformation after independence and left a living legacy that continues to provide vitality for independent Mozambique today.

His accomplishments as the leader of the liberation movement were more

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1. The acronym is derived from the movement's Portuguese name, *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*.

2. "Editorial," *Mozambique Revolution*, No. 42 (January-March 1972), p. 2.

than considerable, but his reputation and impact went even further, taking on, after his death, almost legendary qualities. He became the subject of song and story circulated among the people.

In the critical period following Mondlane's assassination, Samora Machel, his successor to the presidency of Frelimo, said, "Still it is Mondlane leading us, his vision of free Mozambique...his ideas of revolution."<sup>3</sup>

The killing of Eduardo Mondlane had been a desperate attempt to destroy a nation coming to birth, to shatter the spirit of its people. In this it failed. The war of liberation was intensified in his name. Into his place as President, Frelimo called a brother in war and the cause of freedom, one for whom he had had the greatest admiration, that quiet soldier, whom Mondlane liked to call "the Giap of Africa," Samora Moises Machel.<sup>4</sup>

Today the resurgence of interest in Mondlane among Mozambicans is like an underground river rising to the surface. On a visit to Mozambique in 1986, I heard Armando Guebuza say, "in the midst of our suffering and our struggle, we shall begin truly to rebuild the Mozambique of Eduardo Mondlane."<sup>5</sup>

Mondlane had been a remarkable man, capable of uniting disparate forces and divergent (sometimes even conflicting) views into a single vision of freedom and independence for Mozambique. That same challenge today, in the country's most serious time of crisis, faces the leadership of President Joaquim Chissano, a close associate of Eduardo's throughout the liberation struggle. Mondlane was a world statesman and a diplomat, a teacher, and at times, like so many others in the leadership of Frelimo, a poet and a short story writer.<sup>6</sup> He was indefatigable, leaving his mark on everyone with whom he came into contact. He seemed equally at home on the field of guerrilla battle, in circles of military planning, in the centers of political and economic leadership, in revolutionary councils, in the United Nations, and in the atmosphere of the great universities. It is entirely appropriate that Mozambique's first university should bear his name.

In the first Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture at Syracuse University in February 1970, Amilcar Cabral said that Mondlane's principal merit lay in being able to merge himself with the reality of his country, to identify with his people and to acculturate himself through the struggle which he directed with courage, determination and wisdom. The life

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3. Interview with the author in 1969, quoted in **Mozambique Revolution**, No. 50 (January-March 1970), p. 3.

4. Ed. note: Giap was the chief military officer for Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Cong in the war against France in Indo-China.

5. Discussion with the author, August, 1986. Guebuza is Mozambique's Minister of Transportation and Communication and the leader of the government delegation to the negotiations with Renamo in Rome.

6. Ed. note: In the summer of 1956 in a conversation at which I was present, Alan Paton, author of **Cry the Beloved Country**, urged Mondlane to do more creative writing, telling him that he captured the African idiom in English better than anyone he had ever read.

of Eduardo Mondlane is indeed singularly rich in experience. . . . His life cycle includes all the categories of colonial society, from the peasantry to the assimilated *petite bourgeoisie* and on the cultural plane, from the village universe to a universal culture open to the world—its problems, its contradictions and prospects for evolution.

The important thing, is that after this long journey, Eduardo Mondlane was able to return to the village, as a freedom fighter, and to stimulate the progress of his people, enriched by experiences (and how profound they were) in the world today.

Thus he gave a potent example: facing all the difficulties, fleeing the temptations, freeing himself from compromises of action or compromises of conscience, from cultural (hence political) alienation, he was able to confront his own roots, to identify with his people and to devote himself to the cause of their national and social liberation. That is why the colonialist-imperialists did not forgive him.<sup>7</sup>

When the body of Mondlane was laid to rest, first in Tanzanian soil, all of Africa, it seemed, paid tribute to his greatness. He received a state funeral. The President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, both Vice Presidents, Abeid Karume and Rashidi Kawawa, and all the high-ranking officials of government walked in the cortege, following the coffin to its grave. Representatives came from all of the independent nations of Africa, from most of the nations of the world, capitalist *and* socialist, from the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, from church organizations of many denominations worldwide, from the other liberation movements of Africa—South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Saõ Tomé and Príncipe—and from those of Viet Nam, Palestine and Latin America. They came to pay homage to this man who had walked among them as the very symbol of freedom.

Thousands lined the route of the funeral and crushed their way into Kinondoni cemetery—working people, people of the soil, mothers with children, students from Mozambique and Tanzania, and refugees from other regions who had walked many miles to be there, as the word of Mondlane's death had spread. Fingers of a thousand hands and more reached out to touch Janet Mondlane and her three children— Eduardo Jr., Chudan and Nyeleti— as they passed, gently, tenderly, with the quietness of tears. They wept their sorrow and their anger as the coffin was lowered and the funeral earth covered it, shovel by shovel. Mondlane was laid to rest for a while in

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7. Syracuse University, Program of Eastern African Studies, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, **Occasional Paper No. 57**, 1970. Also quoted in Herbert Shore, "Resistance and Revolution in the Life of Eduardo Mondlane," introduction to Eduardo Mondlane, **The Struggle for Mozambique** (London: Zed Press, 1983), p. xiii. Cabral was given an honorary doctorate on this occasion.

## Childhood and Youth

Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane was born in 1920 in a small rural village near the town of Manjacaze in the southern district of Gaza which straddles the basin of the Limpopo River. His father, Nwadjahane Mussengane Mondlane, was regent of the Khambane clan of the Tsonga people and looked after the responsibilities of leadership until a young cousin would grow old enough to govern. Mondlane's mother, Makungu Muzamusse Bembele, was the last of her husband's three wives and Eduardo was the last of her children, for his father died when Eduardo was still a baby, less than two years old. "A great sorrow after a great joy," the people said. "A gentler man had never governed the land." Gentle, but firm in the defence of the people and their rights, he had, in his younger days, fought in the resistance against the Portuguese, and this tradition continued among the Mondlanes.

Eduardo was singled out early for leadership. He was equipped with an immutable sense of who he was and an understanding that he would be required to prove it. It was his mother who prepared him for leadership. When her husband died, she did not, as she might have, go to live in the household of one of his brothers or cousins. She chose to live a poor widow with the other women of the village and to look after her young son.

Mondlane's boyhood was spent looking after sheep, goats and cattle in the scraggly fields and meadows. His mother, grandmother and sisters, like the other women, worked in the fields all day on hard-scrabble earth, breaking off from work to rush back, cook meals and look after the household chores. The men in the village were few. The younger ones came and went, going off to work on the docks, at the coast, or in the mines of South Africa, or being pressed into unpaid forced labor by the Portuguese authorities.

"You, Chivambo," his mother often told him, "You will restore the village. It is you who will restore our clan."<sup>8</sup> He learned the names of the great leaders of the past—Gungunhane, Maguigana, and the first Monomotapa, Mutota.

With this sense of his destiny, his mother inculcated in him a passionate love for education and a profound belief in the power of education. "The old world of (your) fathers is at an end," she told him. It would be wise if he prepared himself for the new. She urged him to learn all he could of the white man's ways. "It is they," she said, "who hold the secrets of power.

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8. This quote, and others to follow, are from notebooks Mondlane wrote for Andre Clerc, who adapted these into a fictionalized book, *Chitlangou, Son of a Chief* (Lutterworth Press, 1951), and this entire section is based on this material. To restore the village became one of Mondlane's guiding concepts in the course of the struggle against Portuguese colonialism.

You must become master of those secrets and use them to help us all."

Mondlane had three older brothers, each destroyed by the colonial system under which they lived and worked—a chest crushed in an accident on the docks, silicosis of the lungs, tuberculosis.

At the age of about twelve, he went off to school for the first time, walking five miles each way to the rudimentary school in Manjacaze. The teacher knew no Tsonga and little Portuguese. Discipline consisted of continuous beatings. School for him, as he recalled it, was a chaos of thrashings, shouting and hiding under desks and tables. The boys worked for the teacher at manual labor, and Mondlane complained,

A teacher is paid to teach us. Why does he make us work for him for nothing? Why is he always brandishing his stick? It is unjust not to be paid. It is unjust not to be fed. It is unjust to be insulted, maltreated and beaten when one is trying to do one's best.

The lesson was driven home clearly that social justice was an issue of both the location and the use of power. Mondlane shifted to a mission school.

Throughout this period of his education he was not far from the ancient tree under which Gungunhane used to hold his councils. Unmarked, it was known to all through oral tale and song. Each day, to and from school, he passed this symbolic presence of Gungunhane's resistance to the Portuguese.

Upon completion of his rudimentary education, Mondlane left his home area without permission from the authorities to go to Lourenço Marques, where he got a job scrubbing bandages and linens in the Swiss mission hospital and talked his way into being admitted to the mission primary school. He worked in the headmaster's house in the late afternoons and evenings as a house-cleaner, messenger and "kitchen boy." He came to know the lush beauty of the European sections of the city and the crowded squalor of the "African quarters." He also experienced the restrictions of movement imposed upon him by the need for Africans to carry identity cards, permits and tax receipts at all times and to produce them on demand. He was arrested at least once for being on the streets without the proper papers, and only the direct intervention of his missionary patron saved him from a prison term or a sentence at forced labor.

At this juncture, the Swiss missionary, Andre Clerc, came to regard Mondlane as a young protégé, a sensitive intelligent young African who might be groomed for service in the church. When he finished his primary education, Mondlane discovered that under the Portuguese regulatory restrictions, he was unable to attend secondary school. Through the American Methodist Episcopal Mission in Khambane, arrangements were made for him to attend a two-year training course in "dry-land farming." This agricultural training and experience working with farmers in Gaza forged

an even stronger bond with the peasants of Mozambique that remained throughout his life and showed itself clearly in his approach to social reorganization in the liberated zones during the armed struggle for independence.

## Secondary and Post-secondary Study in South Africa

In 1944, again with mission sponsorship and support, he was able to attend the Douglas Laing Smit Secondary School in Lemana, South Africa, where two men in particular became powerful influences in his life.

One was the housemaster of the boys' hostels, H. E. Ntsanwisi, a small white-haired man, strict but kind who often lectured the boys in the dining hall after meals. "You are the leaders of the future," he would tell them.

Wake up! Look and see! The white man does not want to see you in schools. He wants you to stay illiterate and backwards. He wants you to dig his ditches and clean his toilets, and become a source of cheap labor for his mines, his farms and his factories. You are our hope for the future. Africa awaits your leadership. Africa beckons you. You must become the generation that excels."<sup>9</sup>

The other was the Reverend A. A. Jacques, principal of the school, a missionary of the old school, like Andre Clerc, strict, patriarchal, and often dogmatic. He always referred to Mozambicans, especially Tsongas, as "Children of Gungunhane." In the throes of a fatal illness, he talked to Mondlane, who visited him the day before he died, about freedom for Mozambique. "Not just a better life under the Portuguese, but freedom! freedom!"<sup>10</sup>

After graduation, Eduardo went on to the Jan Hofmeyr School of Social Work, an important educational center for students from various parts of southern Africa who went on to become leaders in the liberation struggles, among them Winnie Mandela and Joshua Nkomo. From Jan Hofmeyr, Mondlane matriculated in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand, one of the few South African universities open to Black Africans. At "Wits," an active and popular Mondlane was elected by his fellow students (predominantly white) to represent them on the Student Representative Council and at the National Student Conference.

In the South African general elections of 1948, the Nationalist Party came to power and Prime Minister Daniel Malan began the full and comprehensive implementation of the policies of apartheid. Mondlane's permit to be in South Africa was withdrawn and, in spite of appeals and protests from the students, faculty and administration of the university, he

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9. See Collins Ramusi, *Soweto, My Love* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988), pp. 60-61.

10. *Ibid.*

was expelled from the country.

### Lessons for Mondlane's Approach to the Liberation Struggle

"The desire to fight the white man and liberate my people was intensified after I was expelled from South Africa in 1949," Mondlane said.<sup>11</sup> The experience in South Africa led him to the realization that the liberation struggle was a regional one and that the destiny of Mozambique was inextricably linked to South Africa and the other countries in the region.

What Mondlane came to envision was a greater southern African community of nations working in close cooperative harmony. The framework of that exists today in the Southern African Development Cooperation Conference (SADCC), an interactive network of eleven countries in the region. Mondlane often asserted that Mozambique would never truly be free until Zimbabwe and the other nations of the region, including South Africa itself, were liberated.<sup>12</sup> The region was always a part of his thinking and he himself traced this thinking back through pre-colonial indigenous traditions in which there was an underlying conception of the interdependence of the peoples of the region. "We must not believe that we are simply separate and isolated countries in the shape and with the borders arbitrarily given to us by colonialism."<sup>13</sup>

For Mondlane, the war was always more than simply a military struggle. It was a mode of raising the political consciousness and understanding of the people, mobilizing and organizing them, and empowering them to participate in a process of social transformation. As he stated clearly in his book, **The Struggle for Mozambique**, Mondlane knew that social reconstruction had to take place even while the colonial state was in the process of being destroyed.

We realized this in principle before we began fighting, but it was only in the development of the struggle that we learned how rapid and how comprehensive civil reconstruction must be. . . . We are now having to create structures and make decisions which will set the pattern for the future national government.<sup>14</sup>

This issue was at the base of Mondlane's direct disagreement with Che Guevara on the theory and practice of revolutionary armed struggle. Mondlane rejected Che's ideas that the armed struggle was primary and was

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11. From an unpublished autobiographical summary written by Mondlane in the 1950s.

12. Discussions with the author in Dar es Salaam, 1968.

13. *Ibid.*

14. See Ch. 8, "The New Mozambique," in Eduardo Mondlane, **The Struggle for Mozambique** (London: Zed Press, 1983). The direct quote is from p. 163. This book was originally published by Penguin (U.K.) in 1969.



in itself the means of rallying and mobilizing the people. Mondlane's emphasis was on building a committed popular base within the country, undertaking ground-level mobilization *prior to* military action, establishing village and district political and social institutions, popular militia, etc.<sup>15</sup> He believed that this approach was not only a necessary prerequisite of military victory in the struggle for independence, but must also form the basis for building a new nation from the ground up. He was always searching for fresh ways to meet the people's needs and to facilitate the expressions of their desires and demands. He was concerned that there must always be a continuous free flow from the people to Frelimo as well as from Frelimo to the people.

This issue was also central to the internal dispute between "two lines of thought" that took place within Frelimo just prior to and immediately following the murder of Mondlane. The internal struggle was really to determine what Frelimo was fighting for. A group that formed around Uriah Simango, Lazaro Nkavandame and Father Mateus Gwenjere wanted independence from Portugal without changing the existing social and economic structures. For them, the enemy was Portuguese rule, not the system, and the military struggle was of prime importance, not the process of social transformation.

The supporters of Mondlane saw the enemy as the colonial system which "exploited the peasants." They did not want simply to put Mozambicans into power positions now occupied by the Portuguese. For Simango, Nkavandame and Gwenjere, whites, mestizos and Asians were the enemy. For Mondlane, the system was the problem. Beginning with the Second Frelimo Congress in 1968 and reinforced by the election of Samora Machel to the presidency after Mondlane's death, the ideas of social transformation and of the primacy of political change emerged as dominant and the Simango-Nkavandame faction was defeated. Simango quit Frelimo and Nkavandame defected to the Portuguese. Both then became part of that group of defectors opposed to Frelimo and prepared to assist in the creation of what became the MNR or Renamo engaged in the war of destabilization up to the present day.

### **Higher Education in Europe and the United States**

Following his expulsion from South Africa in 1949, Mondlane was put under surveillance and investigation by the Portuguese secret police and security forces, who concluded that he had "been infected with a communist

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15. Ed. note: Guevara visited Tanzania in late 1965 and held discussions with Mondlane and other Frelimo leaders. Many of the issues outlined here were certainly discussed between them at that time, but the content of this paragraph is based on Mondlane's discussions with the author (and the guest editor and executive editor) that are unrecorded but clearly remembered.

virus" and that he had "an embryonic spirit of black nationalism which should be uprooted as soon as possible to prevent it from infecting others." The investigation recommended that he should be kept under strict surveillance and be given a scholarship to study in Portugal to keep him away from the African population and to see if he "could be cured of his intellectual and political proclivities."<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime, the American missionaries Darrell and Mildred Randall helped get the Phelps-Stokes Fund in New York to arrange a scholarship for him to study in the United States. Mondlane decided at that time that it was important to accept the Portuguese offer, to get to know the metropole at first hand, learn the language well and avoid direct confrontation with the Portuguese government.

As far as I know, I was the first Mozambican to enter Lisbon University.

It was here that I met African intellectuals from the Portuguese colonies for the first time. They were mostly from the Cape Verde Islands, Guinea (called Portuguese), Angola and Sao Tome. Amongst these were the now well-known leaders of the political movements of these same colonies, such as Agostinho Neto, the physician, poet and President of the MPLA, Mario Pinto de Andrade, the MPLA's Secretary for External Relations, Amilcar Cabral, the Guinean agronomist and founding President of PAIGC, and Marcelino dos Santos, FRELIMO's Secretary for External Relations and General Secretary of the CONCP. Marcelino dos Santos was actually at the School of Commerce in Lisbon. Although the majority of the students in Lisbon at that time were concerned about the ordinary civil rights of Portuguese citizens, our political interests were clearly nationalistic. We wanted Portugal at least to acknowledge the right of self-determination for the peoples of all her colonies, and we expressed our feelings by every means available to us.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of all *luso-tropicalismo* pretensions, and the vaunted *assimilado* system to the contrary, for the Portuguese a *negro* was always a *negro* and therefore inferior. One could not break the color bar on the strength of education and personal capacities. The relationship between the democratic struggle inside Portugal and that in the colonies were related and mutually supportive, but the liberation of Africans had to be in their own hands. It could not be subordinated to and subsumed in the overall anti-fascist struggle in Portugal.

We were constantly harassed by the PIDE; practically every month my

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16. From an unpublished Policia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (PIDE, the Portuguese secret police) report in 1949.

17. Mondlane statement quoted in Shore, *op. cit.*, pp. xx-xxi. The full names of the organizations designated by initials in this quote are MPLA, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, PAIGC, The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, and CONCP, Congress of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies. PIDE is identified in footnote 16.

room was ransacked by the police looking for documents, letters, pictures, etc. as they were trying to find evidence of what they suspected to be my political views. The same applied to Neto, de Andrade, dos Santos, Cabral and most of the African students in Lisbon. . . . After a year I felt that I could not continue under these conditions.<sup>18</sup>

After a summer of study in Switzerland, he accepted the Phelps—Stokes Scholarship in the United States and began what might be called his "American years." Mondlane was 30 years old when he entered Oberlin College in Ohio in 1951 as a junior. He graduated in 1953 with a B.A. in sociology and then went on to earn his M.A. and Ph.D. at Northwestern.

## **Courtship and Marriage**

This period in the United States triggered two profound crises in Mondlane's personal life and the development of his thought. He came to the US a confirmed, even dedicated, Christian. His belief in Christianity, however, was based not so much on a mystical religiosity as much as on the social principles he derived from Christian teachings. He believed deeply in a practical *applied* Christianity, and in that sense he was involved in "liberation theology" long before that term was actually created, firm in the belief that the principles and teachings of Christianity could and should be applied to the political and social world and help form the basis for the ultimate liberation of his people. "I am one of those who believes that unless Christian ideals are put into practice, they are of no use."<sup>19</sup>

Mondlane came to judge Christians and so-called Christian societies by the standards of their own Gospel and found them wanting. He knew the role which the Catholic Church had played in collaborating with Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique, but now what was being tested were those elements of the Christian Church that had supported him in the past.

His personal relationship with Janet Rae Johnson became the central testing ground for his attitude toward and expectations of Christianity, the Church and Christian organizations. Eduardo Mondlane first met her at a Christian camp in Wisconsin in 1951, the summer before he entered Oberlin. He was one of the workshop leaders, offering a workshop on Africa, and she a young woman who had graduated from high school that spring. They were attracted to each other from the outset, discovering rapidly that they shared a common vision and dedication. Throughout the following years that attraction grew into a deep, abiding and profound love that, however transformed, remains vibrantly alive today so many years after his death.

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18. *Ibid.*

19. Letter to Janet, 1951.

Janet Rae Johnson was the youngest daughter in a white middle-class midwestern family. They were active and devout churchgoers, constantly involved in church affairs—socials, subscriptions, Sunday school, fundraising for special church projects. Fired by her Christian idealism, Janet dreamed of being a missionary in Africa. They met, fell in love, and found that their destinies were joined in a common vision of their life's work. From this first romantic dream, through her partnership with Eduardo, she grew into a total identification with the people of Mozambique. By the time of Eduardo's death in 1969, she was speaking easily, meaningfully and comfortably of Mozambicans as "my people" and of Mozambique as "my country, my home."

From the very beginning, Janet's family was intensely hostile to their daughter's "inter-racial" friendship with Mondlane, even before it had ever grown into love and courtship.<sup>20</sup> Her mother, father and older sister did everything they could to keep them apart, to limit and even eliminate correspondence between them, and to make certain that they saw little of each other, or better still, did not see each other at all, even calling upon college authorities and representatives of the church and mission societies to assist them. Eduardo was at Oberlin College then, and Janet was a freshman at Western College for Women in southern Ohio. Between them began a prolific flow of letters, more than a thousand, exchanged from the time they met in 1951 until their marriage in 1956. The habit continued for the remaining years of their life together whenever circumstances forced them to be apart for periods of time.

Janet was constant and firm in her resistance to her family's opposition. Stubbornly, she argued with them in terms of their own professed beliefs in Christianity and their ostensible belief in the tenets of American democracy. All her hopes and aspirations—a college education, an understanding and supportive family, the strength of the church, her missionary zeal—were now threatened. The shock of discovering racism and hypocrisy in the church and in her own family was a severe blow.

Even those who had supported Eduardo in the past now hesitated to face this new situation with him. Andre Clerc flew to Ohio to convince them not to marry, but went home persuaded of the rightness of their love and the future that they planned for themselves. An opportunity that had been promised to Mondlane for mission service and research in Zaire (then the Belgian Congo) was withdrawn. At a critical point in their lives, Eduardo and Janet found themselves married (thanks to the warm friendship and sensitive

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20. See Shore, *op. cit.*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

understanding of the Reverend Edward Hawley who performed the ceremony),<sup>21</sup> expecting their first child, with no jobs or job prospects in sight, the completion of their education in doubt, and no support from either the Johnson family or their church sponsors.

Out of this protracted personal crisis emerged a key aspect of Mondlane's strategic thinking. The dynamic of struggle involved not only a strong determined stand, but also a strategy of persuasion and ultimate reconciliation as well. Having decided and taken the action to go ahead with their marriage and their plans, Janet and Eduardo devoted their energies to winning over her family, members of the church and mission societies, friends and opponents alike. Mondlane learned the importance of focusing on the dynamics of any conflict and not merely on the opposing forces. Throughout the rest of his life, he sought to avoid making any conflict a simple "either/or," win-lose situation, but tried always to understand the dialectical process involved and to create new syntheses and reconciliations as the result.<sup>22</sup> In any situation, he sought to deal with the interaction of opposites, rather than the contending opposites themselves.

This view permeated not only his analysis of Portugal and the struggle against Portuguese colonialism, of the United States, its people and its government, but also of the process of forging unity in Frelimo (and ultimately in Mozambique) out of conflicting and often contentious forces.

## **A Return to Mozambique**

Upon completion of his Ph.D. at Northwestern, Mondlane went to work for the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations. He served in the group to oversee the plebiscite in the Cameroons, and then, protected by a UN diplomatic passport, visited Mozambique with his wife and children in 1961. This visit was a focal event in which all the vector lines of Mondlane's life converged and were joined. He was inspired by the thousands of people who flocked to see him and hear him speak wherever he went. He was contacted by many involved in the clandestine opposition to the Portuguese in Lourenço Marques. They gathered to hear him in churches, one of the few places in the country where people could still gather and congregate. He was deeply moved by the welcome given not only to him but to his wife and children by his family and by people everywhere. He was aware that he was under the constant cold eye of the secret police and at least once during the trip there was a serious bomb threat. His trip to Mozambique convinced

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21. Then minister of the Warren Avenue Congregational Church in Chicago, previously associate minister at the First Church in Oberlin (Ohio) where his friendship with Eduardo and Janet began, later Pastor for Refugees (1964-1970) with the Christian Council of Tanzania, and presently Executive Editor of **Africa Today**.

22. See Shore, *op. cit.*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

him that he was witnessing more than a people's desire for a better life. He saw the energy of a *movement*, an attitude that needed a focal center, an incipient organization that needed leadership. By the time he took up a teaching appointment at Syracuse University that fall, he knew that it was going to be a temporary one. The attraction of a comfortable academic career dissolved before the opportunity of becoming involved in his people's struggle for liberation. "Even though I loved university life," he said, "my life was dedicated to the liberation struggle of my people."<sup>23</sup>

### The Formation of Frelimo

The independence of Tanganyika under the leadership of Julius Nyerere and discussions with the three diverse Mozambican groups in exile—MANU, UDENAMO and UNAMI<sup>24</sup>—led to the organization of a meeting in Dar es Salaam in 1962, the end of his first academic year at Syracuse. On the 25th of June, 1962, Frelimo was founded. Eduardo Mondlane was elected its first President by an overwhelming majority. In September of that same year, Frelimo held its first Congress to confirm the elections and draft the program of the organization. Mondlane returned to Syracuse to fulfill the obligations of his academic contract, but the rapid movement of events changed that. He left the university in February 1963 for East Africa. His family joined him in July. Janet Mondlane wrote in a letter to a friend, "He is a dedicated freedom fighter—in fact, the whole family has turned to revolutionary politics."<sup>25</sup>

In the seven years from the birth of Frelimo to Mondlane's assassination, he molded a purposeful and cohesive force out of groups and leaders diverse in ethnic origin, ideology and personality, who were often confrontational. Forging unity was a formidable task. From the beginning Frelimo faced internal conflicts over differing theories of strategy and tactics and jockeying for political power. There were conflicts of personal ambition, personalities, suspicions, illusions and depression that often came with exile, and infiltration by the Portuguese security forces. Through it all Mondlane built a cadre of collective leadership about him, which kept its focus on the dynamic process by which a party and a nation were being forged out of a loose association. They knew that in the long war of attrition that lay ahead, the slowest type of guerrilla war, it was absolutely necessary that a cohesive

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23. Interview with the author, 1968.

24. The Mozambique African National Union, the National Democratic Union of Mozambique, and the National African Union of Independent Mozambique.

25. Letter, August 1968, quoted in Shore, *op. cit.*, p. xovi.

unity be achieved. At the same time, they avoided the imposition of rigid dogma, over-centralization and hierarchy, and allowed for the interplay of conflicting views and positions. It was interesting to note that all the basic difficulties and conflicts in Frelimo originated *outside* Mozambique itself—among students in Dar es Salaam and abroad who sought a privileged position for themselves in the liberation struggle and in exile-based leadership. In the liberated territories and the contested areas, with the exception of difficulties created by Nkavandame in Cabo Delgado in 1968, there was no question of the people's acceptance of Mondlane and Frelimo's leadership.

Mondlane knew from the beginning that he was a marked man. His life was constantly in danger. By late 1968 and certainly in January 1969, he seemed to sense that the end—his personal end, not that of the movement—was inevitable. He had attended important solidarity conferences in Cairo and Khartoum. He had just spurned an offer from the Portuguese to head an "autonomous Northern Mozambique" and recognize a greater Malawi that would take over some Mozambican territory for an outlet to the sea. He had escaped three assassination attempts. But he felt "at peace", as he put it, with great confidence in the leadership of Samora Machel to continue the armed struggle after he was gone.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout his life Mondlane was always observing, listening, thinking, growing. In fact, Basil Davidson cites that ability to grow—to expand and deepen his thinking as the principal characteristic of Mondlane.<sup>27</sup> He believed that the source of genuine transformation was the continual growth of the power of the people. "A revolution and its leaders," he often said, "must trust the people. They must *know* the people."<sup>28</sup> There must always be kept alive that fruitful interchange between leadership and the people, especially the peasants, whose revolution it is. He understood that too often the attempted transition to socialism elsewhere, for very good apparent reasons, led to overstrong centralization, collapsing into rationalizations for adapting bureaucratic methods and the leadership consolidating itself as a new elite class of privileged wielders of power. For Mondlane this sapped the energy of the people's own creativity. Once the active dynamic participatory role of the ordinary people is lost, socialism becomes a hollow shell leading to state-enforced *collectivism* or even state capitalism. He warned against overvaluing administrative or bureaucratic solutions to problems.

There is little or no doubt that Mondlane was a socialist thinker and

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26. Conversation with the author, January 1969.

27. Author's conversation with Basil Davidson, November 1986.

28. Reiterated as late as January 1969, in conversation with the author.

toward the last part of his life he said clearly in an interview with Aquino de Bragança:

I am now convinced that Frelimo has a clearer political line than ever before. . . . The common basis that we all had when we formed Frelimo was hatred of colonialism and the belief in the necessity to destroy the colonial structure and to establish a new social structure. But what type of social structure, what type of organization we would have, no one knew. No, some did know, some did have ideas, but even they had rather theoretical notions which were themselves transformed by the struggle. Now, however, there is a qualitative transformation in thinking which has emerged during the past six years which permits me to conclude that Frelimo is much more socialist, revolutionary and progressive than ever and that the line, the tendency, is now more and more in the direction of the Marxist- Leninist variety. Why? Because the conditions of life in Mozambique, the type of enemy we have, does not give us any other alternative. . . . Frelimo is inclining itself more and more in this direction because the conditions in which we work and struggle demand it.<sup>29</sup>

If his analysis was that of a Marxist, his thinking was permeated with deep democratic beliefs. He believed that a truly Mozambican revolution could carve out a vital democratic socialist space. He often argued against imitating models from the "outside" as a substitute for Mozambican based original or even innovative thinking, arguing that the hope for freedom and justice in Mozambique and, for that matter, in the southern African region rested upon the capacity of people democratically to choose and implement their own forms of social transformation in the face of pressure from either capitalism or state socialism.

There is no short cut to transforming the systems of society or in building socialism, no matter how tempting models may be. What could result is an administrative leadership that is at base unthinking, unsocial and lacking in compassion, no matter what its original motivation may have been. Even at times self-centered and irresponsible.<sup>30</sup>

He believed that Frelimo's role was to empower people to build their own social and economic institutions, to encourage them and assist them in doing so, helping to guide them toward a society based on social justice. "We may have to adapt structures and forms from capitalist countries, where they are democratic, from socialist countries, and from traditional African societies and cultures."<sup>31</sup>

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29. Interview with Aquino da Bragança, Algiers, July 1968. Bragança was then secretary-general of CONCP. He later became Director of the Center for African Studies at Eduardo Mondlane University, a post he held until killed with President Samora Machel and others in the 1986 plane crash.

30. Interview, January 1969.

31. Discussions with the author, November-December 1968.



For Mondlane, Mozambique had to avoid both a rigid command economy and the ultimately heartless, profit-driven forms of competitive capitalism. Neither bureaucratic collective regimes nor democracies mired in capitalism could be models for Mozambique. Socialism he argued, must be built from the bottom up rather than imposed, from the top down, no matter how good the motives and the intentions of those "in charge" might be. It cannot be simply identified with state ownership, but is a dynamic process by which social forces created by progressive associations, organizations, and groups constantly broaden the participation of the people in the economic, cultural and political arenas of the society and in this way control the conditions and direction of their existence. This is "participatory democracy." Mondlane found that, all too often, rigid Marxist-Leninists, for defensive reasons, made the fatal mistake of reducing socialism to a paternalistic, elitist state, emphasizing nationalization and creating monstrous bureaucratic structures that are neither socialist nor capitalist, neither free nor efficient. He understood too that the nature of corporate socialization that accompanies capitalism is actually deeply statist, seeking powerlessness and even regimentation in the labor force and strictures on individual choice.

His comments on the impact of competitive capitalism on the people of the United States, in spite of its democratic forms, is to the point.

I think that the average American is really uninterested in other people. You have extreme individualism here. I feel each one cares about himself first. . . . You will not give material aid to any people until you are sure that you will get some material profit or benefit from them in return. You are more prepared to make friends with dictators and tyrants, but you are not truly interested in the masses and masses of human beings who suffer political, economic and social oppression in many parts of the world. Your ideals on the whole are wonderful. . . . But the majority of the American citizens are inactive insofar as putting into practice those fine ideals.<sup>32</sup>

He did not want this to happen in an independent Mozambique.

Socialism in Africa, for Eduardo Mondlane, required a new culture, a new civilization, built upon the firm foundation of people's own institutions and traditions before colonialism shattered them. Mondlane saw Mozambique as a pioneer in building that new culture—a cooperative, caring, non-exploitative civilization. He called for a society in which wealth would be distributed more equitably and life would be lived more meaningfully, strongly anti-racist, ecologically responsible, and concerned with opportunities and rights for women. A society in which economic growth is channeled toward qualitative living. He admired Sweden and its prime minister, Olaf Palme, and felt that Mozambique could learn much from them, as well as from Denmark, but there would be a danger in using either

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32. In a letter to Janet, 1961.

country as a model for Mozambique.

In the phase of liberation struggle and the first years of independence, Mondlane held that the peasantry would be the principal agents of social change. The process of social change would have to be seen as epochal rather than apocalyptic. It would be a long, slow evolutionary process, guided by Frelimo. The struggle would continue and even intensify in this new phase. There would be setbacks, hardships and sacrifices.

Mozambique would have to show what can be done when pressure is brought to bear on capital in the interest of social practice and democratic participation. Within the revolution there is an evolutionary process. This is Frelimo's guiding role—based on a notion of visionary evolution, walking a tightrope of short-term strategies and tactics and long-term aims. Frelimo would have to mobilize people's active consent and avoid that illusion of consent that comes from indifference, passivity, ennui and dependence induced by the sense of powerlessness. This means that constant specific knowledge is needed of the cultural, experiential and existential realities to make the democratic road to socialism more than an ideal.

Mondlane's nationalism and his socialism were built on grassroots citizen participation in credible progressive projects in which ordinary peasants and workers can see their own efforts make a difference. This, for him, was truly people's power. He held no brief for leaders who saw themselves as father figures doing things for the good of their people. We talked about this benevolent attitude as a flaw in Nkrumah. And frequently we discussed a climatic scene in a play, **Coat of Many Colors** by American playwright, Barrie Stavis, in which Joseph, as advisor to Pharaoh, attempts a vast water scheme to better the lives of the ordinary people of Egypt. Faced with the intense opposition of the powerful religious hierarchy and fast losing the support of a vacillating Pharaoh, Joseph decides to take strong measures to drive the people to complete the project. When his subordinates protest that the people will rebel, Joseph replies, "When the dam is finished they will see that it was done for them." But in the meantime, "They will obey or be punished. . . . When the dam is complete, they can have rest. I am doing it for them."<sup>33</sup> Mondlane shook his head and laughed. "A good man gone wrong. That is no way to build a new society," he always said. He sought to build a revolution without terror, without the messianic glorification of a leader, and without regimentation and command socialization.

Murdered at the peak of his creative political life, physically eliminated from political leadership, Eduardo Mondlane left a legacy that plays an active

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33. Barrie Stavis, *Coat of Many Colors*, Act II, Scene 2.

role in the shaping of contemporary Mozambique. Each step that President Chissano and Frelimo take in the midst of the bleeding crisis today seems to be a move toward what Guebuza called "building Mondlane's Mozambique." The first need is peace, then a mobilization of the people to take their destiny in their own hands.

In 1986 I learned of a small village at the edge of the thick bush in northern Mozambique. There is a clearing in the bush next to the village. The people keep it swept clean. It is cared for tenderly. Although it bears no marker or memorial, it has the feeling of a sacred place, and if you ask the people of the village what it is, they will tell you it is "Mondlane's Place."

It seems that during the liberation war against the Portuguese, Mondlane spoke here to a gathering of people, and since that time they have kept it as a special place in his memory. There is a special Mondlane place in the hearts and minds of the Mozambican people throughout the country. Wherever I went on my last visit, when people heard that I had known him, I was constantly asked about him. "What was he like? What did he think? Would things be different if he were alive today?" Once this horrible, unnecessary and brutal war is forced to end, the soil of Mozambique, watered so much with the blood of its people, may yet become a fertile field in which the legacy of Eduardo Mondlane may flower.

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