

On the carpet

Mondlane, would you smoothly outline the social economic structure of Mozambique?

Mozambique has a population of about seven million, of whom about 100,000 are Portuguese, including the soldiers from Portugal who are fighting there.

There are, among the rest of the population, a few thousand Asians. There used to be a lot more but because of the Goa war — they were citizens of India — which participated in the liberation of Goa — quite a number of them have been expelled from the country by the Portuguese Government.

The rest of the Asians are Pakistanis and Chinese.

The economy of Mozambique is agricultural — heavily agricultural. The traditional people still depend on farming to survive.

But industries have been introduced by the Portuguese — there is fishing and shipping.

There are also thousands of Mozambicans — we think about a million Mozambique men — who each year go out to other countries to work. Most of them to South Africa, though well over 100,000 go to Rhodesia and 50,000 to Tanzania.

So this is generally the economy of Mozambique — a straightforward Colonial economy.

Q In September last year, Frelimo declared war on the Portuguese settler regime. How is that war progressing?

A Smoothly as we thought it would, because the war we declared on Portugal is a guerrilla war, it is not a classical, regular war. And therefore it depends on the capacity of the fighters to hide among the population and within the country in the forests.

We are fighting the same kind of war that is being fought in Vietnam, except that we have started later than the Vietnamese, and therefore we are gaining our own experience as we go along. There are difficulties, and yet there are also successes in this struggle.

Q Have you had any serious setbacks?

A None! The Portuguese claim there have been, and in fact each time they make a public declaration they say that they have wiped out the insurgents.

But the interesting thing is they say it every month... as if we were declaring war practically every month!

Their despatches — every month again — indicate that they are losing soldiers.

Their despatches from Lisbon and Lourenco Marques tell not only the numbers but the names of the soldiers they have lost. They are confident to terrorise the population, to bombard the villages, to arrest thousands and thousands of civilians.

We cannot claim dramatic victories because we are not fighting a regular war. We are harassing the Portuguese, we are trying to keep them nervous.

There will be a day when we are going to face them with an army in army confrontation.

At this stage it is a guerrilla war. It will succeed to a point where the Portuguese cannot endure it any more. We are trying to fight the same war that Algeria fought and we are

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We'll win - if it takes 20 years!

fighting the same war that Vietnam is fighting now.

Q You say that the Portuguese are using terror tactics on the African civilian population. Do your fighters take reprisals against Portuguese civilians?

A No: We established early on the principle that our soldiers will not attack any civilians, be they Black, White or Asian.

We believe that our war is against the military establishment of the Portuguese Government which is the power that maintains colonialism.

Our principle is that our war is against the Portuguese Army and not against people or persons just because they are Portuguese.

We have maintained this attitude and there has been no massacre of Portuguese.

In fact there have been cases of attacks in areas where there were Portuguese women and children and our soldiers

have helped the women to move out of the area, wherever the men have disappeared, or they have been killed.

Mainly, because we do not take prisoners in our army... we're not a regular army. So we hurt the men... kill the men and let the women move out to areas where we think they can find safety.

Where it is necessary we help the family to come out — even where men are involved. As you know, we have some Portuguese men in this country who have been brought out by us, under our protection.

Q You started your struggle with a nucleus of guerrilla fighters trained in Algeria. How has training progressed since then?

A Oh, very nicely. We train most of our fighters within Mozambique now. Practically 90 per cent of our new recruits are trained in-country, because that is the most natural environment for their training.

Q What support are you getting for your struggle from the OAU?

A A great deal. In fact with the Committee of Nine of the OAU, I doubt whether we would be as far ahead in our struggle as we are now.

They give us diplomatic protection. Diplomatic contacts are very important, you know, to get more and more support from other countries outside of Africa.

But they also provide us with what Africa can give — funds and other help that we need now.

Q Your party gave detailed evidence against the Portuguese during the recent sitting in Dar es Salaam of the UN Decolonisation Committee of 24. Do you think any tangible results will come as a result of that conference?

A It depends on the definition of tangible! We consider the UN as a moral force and

we have already gained something out of the Committee in this respect. That is a strong resolution condemning Portuguese Colonialism in Mozambique and urging the powers that support Portugal to stop.

This is as much as we want and expect from the UN.

Q No intervention . . .

A I don't believe so. I don't think they will intervene.

Q So, do you think your guerrilla operations will finally defeat the Portuguese?

A Guerrilla methods, as used in Cuba, Algeria, and now in Vietnam, seem to be effective enough to start weakening the enemy to a point where he either negotiates as the French did, before the actual military defeat, or he is forced to a point where an army to army confrontation can defeat him.

Guerrilla warfare has been proven to be effective during the last 40 years. With the Chinese first, beginning with practically nothing and developing into an army of more than half a million people.

I'm sure we can do that very easily . . . and the experience of the struggle we have gained during the last seven or eight months indicates to us that we can escalate the war to a point where the Portuguese will, if not surrender, negotiate at our terms.

I have a great respect for guerrilla tactics . . . they are the war method of today!

Q Would you accept Communist help if it were offered?

A It depends on what kind of help, because we do receive Communist help now. Do you mean an army from China . . . or any army from Russia?

Q I was thinking specifically of arms . . .

A We do receive Communist arms. Most of our funds come from Africa, but we have never hidden the fact it is mostly the Socialist countries in Europe and Asia that are

OVER THE PAGE

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ON THE CARPET: EDUARDO MONDLANE

from age 29

giving us weapons. And we are glad to receive them. But we would welcome them from anyone so long as we get them without strings attached. In the United States, West Germany, Britain, France or Belgium, we would take them, so long as the terms are exactly the same as the ones prevailing between us and the Communist countries which give us weapons.

What we need is the tools with which to defeat the Portuguese.

Q How long do you think it will be before you see your flag flying over a free, independent Mozambique?

A Probably a long time. Probably a very long time. But what is sure is that already Mozambicans are fighting and training within Mozambique. So we are at home... it is really the feeling of being at home that is more important than the fact that the world recognises our being there.

So time is really immaterial now. As we've lived under

Portuguese Colonialism for 450 years it is nothing to fight through five, ten, fifteen or twenty years.

We will finally win. And what is most important, is that we, the Mozambican people, have finally gained courage to stand up to the Portuguese, through the means that make sense to the Portuguese.

Q Do you see yourself as Mozambique's first President?

A No! I don't because really that is not important to me. There are dozens of very good Mozambicans who could be selected. I am honoured only for one thing... that I was president of the committee that decided on the programme for war, and second, that I was president of the committee that met last year to decide on the date of the start of the war.

And I am now constantly presiding at committees running everything that involves the struggle in Mozambique, including directing the war.

This to me is an honour, but nothing more. As to the actual

Presidency of the country, the people of Mozambique will vote when they are able to elect someone.

Q Mozambique's first African Government will face tremendous problems in education, health, and the economy. What immediate plans have your party to tackle them?

A In education, we have already set up a programme. Early in the formation of our organisation, a Secretariat of Education, among other departments, was established.

Immediately, we set up programmes of selecting students — refugees students from Mozambique — to send to secondary schools, technical schools and universities, abroad.

Since 1962, when the first congress of the party met, we have been able to send more than 100 Mozambicans to various countries in the world for higher education.

Aside from that, we have also established an Institute here in Dar es Salaam which is well known and of which my wife is the director. It is educating more than

75 Mozambican young men and women to prepare them for scholarships abroad.

This is a long, little way, but we hope to go on and train people so that by the time the country is independent, we will have enough personnel to run the affairs of the country.

We know it is a tremendous business to run seven million people with a few educated people... but adults everywhere are capable of running themselves, even if they have no modern, Western education.

On the question of health... well, we do not have a single black doctor in Mozambique.

But we will make use of every available doctor who has goodwill, who is in Mozambique now, be he White, Portuguese, Asian, or anybody.

The ones who are born in the country, we want them to stay. Then we will also recruit help from other countries as Tanzania does now, and as do other African countries, where thousands and thousands of foreign expatriates serve. We will do the same.

On the question of economy? We will try to re-vamp the economy in such a way that it fits an independent, self-respecting, self-governing Africa, and therefore we will make use of every available technique which the new independent African States are using.

We will handle it. Our country is much richer in natural resources than most African countries. And our own labour force is well trained.

So we have a great deal of faith in the future of Mozambique in every respect.

Q After independence, what will be your attitude to the Portuguese settlers?

A The same as in most African countries. We will offer the Portuguese the same terms of staying that Kenya and Tanzania have offered settlers. We will treat them as citizens of Mozambique if they so wish to be treated.

We will of course treat all native-born Mozambicans regardless of race or religion, as Mozambicans, until they say otherwise. So this is no problem.

Q What will be your foreign policy, and your policy towards the rest of Africa?

A In this respect, I think it is easy. We will follow mainly the same lines as, say, Tanzania is following. We will be an independent African State, non-aligned in the sense that Tanzania is, and we will make friends with any country with which we feel we have a common interest and a common policy.

We will try to work as fast as possible for the unity of Africa. A natural, regional unity is feasible and we will unite with other African States in the same way Tanzania united with Zanzibar.

We will make regional associations if they are feasible... if they are convenient... with a constant goal of having the whole of Africa united.

Q Dr. Mondlane, what do you see as the greatest problem facing Africa today?

A I think it is history. It is the conditioning that has taken place over the last 100 years of colonialism in Africa.

There is a tendency to condition a nation — the countries which were colonies and which have become nations — into ways of thinking and ways of interest of the former colonial power, that make it difficult for them to see the way to unity.

The nations wanting to keep Africa divided, make use of the traditional lines of difference, established during the colonial days.

I might add that they have managed to keep the Africans divided. But I think a certain

amount of problems are ones which come from within the country.

When you have a group of people who fight for independence — who organise the people for independence and who become leaders — they have built-in interests of their own... probably not material, probably not financial — just problems of prestige.

If one is the President of a country or is the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of the Interior, he feels that his power would be reduced if he joined another country.

I think this is hampering unity, the foreign powers which have interests are making use of it to keep on dividing.

But I'm not at all sure that the imperialist forces are always against African unity. As Chou En-lai said the other day, sometimes they will be against, if unity is likely to threaten their interests, but they will be for it if unity is for their interests.

So imperialism is not the only force which may make for division. I think that there is history, there are also selfish psychological interests on the side of some leaders.

Q Africa tries fervently to stay out of the Cold War yet seems frequently to get embroiled in it. Do you visualise Africa emerging as a third stabilising world power?

A I do. But it has to gain all the material power that goes with it. I don't believe that it is possible for a materially weak continent to be influential today.

Material power is so important today. I do not believe there is such a thing as moral power independent of material power.

The influence of Africa will continue to be weak so long as she is materially weak.

Q You are married to a White American. How did she feel about leaving her homeland to join you in the freedom struggle?

A Because she is part of me... she is a part of my people. She has joined the struggle as a Mozambican, not as an American and she feels very happy indeed because she feels that she is adding year by year something towards the liberation of my people.

It is not very easy, but it is important to her that she is doing something that is related to the independence of the country.

As an educator, she has chosen to concentrate on teaching and organising the teaching of Mozambicans. That is what she is doing here.

Q As an African nationalist do you think an inter-racial marriage presents any special problems?

A No. Not as an African nationalist, but as one who is married to a person who is not an African. I don't think there is any special problem.

The crucial thing is the status of the person who is not an African, who is married to the African, or the other way round.

It reduces itself to a family question... whether or not you are in love with each other... whether or not you think alike.

Otherwise it is a question of associations of people with common interests.

I find myself constantly in association with people who are non-African but who have common interests and we work together.

In this case we happen to be married to each other... we could be just companions... arms fighting against the Portuguese.

I don't really feel any special problem... though there are many people who think that there is.



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