

# FRELIMO FACES THE FUTURE

The complex tasks of the national liberation movement in Southern Africa are illustrated in this discussion of the situation in Mozambique by FRELIMO Vice-President, MARCELINO DOS SANTOS, interviewed by JOE SLOVO.

This article, which is exclusive to the "African Communist", throws light on the problems of revolution and social change throughout the African continent, and is an invaluable contribution to the storehouse of revolutionary theory.

*Slovo* Comrade Dos Santos; When one examines the evolution of FRELIMO from its formation to the present time, one cannot fail to be impressed by its achievements. But we also know from reading FRELIMO's published materials, that the path has not been a smooth one — Revolutionary practice has raised, and continues to raise, important problems of a practical and theoretical

nature. The answers which you have found and are continuing to find, are not only vital for the further unfolding of your own struggle, but enrich the storehouse of revolutionary theory in general.

Firstly, could you give us a brief outline of the present military and political position of FRELIMO inside your country and the main characteristics of the latest phase of the struggle?

*Dos Santos* The struggle is developing continuously – by which I mean that regularly, almost every day, we are going into new zones. And this means that more and more people are becoming involved in the armed struggle. At the same time efforts are continuing to consolidate the liberated areas in which the enemy still has small pockets of control, based on purely military concentration: these pockets are situated in a few urban centres which they use as military bases. In the liberated areas generally there is no longer any Portuguese civil administration, there is no more Portuguese trade – all their activities are military activities. The function of these bases is to act against the guerrillas. At these urban centres there are air-military bases from which the planes and helicopters bomb the villages, the cultivated land, guerrilla concentrations and so on. The pattern of these air attacks is, I think, well known. If an action is decided upon by the Portuguese command, they go into one particular region to bomb for several days, one week, or more, and after that they come with helicopters which drop troops to act against their chosen targets. Sometimes they merely act and go back; sometimes they act in order to establish a new base. So we have been meeting and counter-acting these Portuguese actions.

Our primary military aim in the liberated areas is to destroy these bases in order to reduce the possibilities of Portuguese action and to make the liberated areas more stable.

I will refer later to the economic consolidation of the liberated areas which is the other primary aim of the present phase.

These then are the two aspects of our work in the liberated areas which cover Niassa, Cabo Delgado and, now, parts of Tete and Manica eSofala. The fact that the struggle is now reaching areas like Tete and Manica eSofala affects the interests of the main enemy – the colonialists and imperialists – even more directly. Manica eSofala is in the centre of the country. It is important in terms of its economic

development with some industries like sugar, tea, mines, agriculture, etc. It is this area which is one of the main sources of the products which the Portuguese exploit for export. Secondly, this area has a strategic situation in relation to communications – the railways go from Beira to Umtali, to Salisbury and Zambia. Another railway to the North goes across the Zambezi River, one part going to Malawi and another to Tete. Also the roads and even the pipeline – all these factors make Manica eSofala very important and particularly in relation to Zimbabwe. Thirdly, it is important because Beira, the Capital of Manica eSofala, is where the Portuguese Air and Military Command is established.

Countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa are reacting much more strongly as the struggle reaches closer to their borders. The closure of the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia is not unconnected with the growing success of our armed patriots.

*Slovo*            How many Mozambican people live in the liberated areas?

*Dos Santos*    Roughly, between 1,000,000 and 1,200,000.

*Slovo*            And what area of the country is part of what you call the liberated areas?

*Dos Santos*    About 24%.

*Slovo*            What is your estimate of the Portuguese armed force?

*Dos Santos*    About 70,000.

*Slovo*            We know that in other countries, for instance in the Chinese and Vietnamese struggles, there were various stages in the unfolding of the military struggle – the early stages being considered mainly guerrilla with the later growth of mobile units engaged in mobile warfare. Have you reached that stage yet in Mozambique?

*Dos Santos*    We consider that we are waging a guerrilla war even though sometimes we can put into action one battalion with more or less three companies – which is not really the classical type of guerrilla group. But even so, the structure of our army is a guerrilla structure and, when we undertake a large-scale action, we can



bring comrades from different points, put them together, go into the action, after which they return to their points of departure. So our structure remains basically of the guerrilla type although more and more we are in a position to use equipment associated with more advanced stages of mobile struggle such as mortars, cannons, anti-aircraft machines, and so on.

## MORE WEAPONS

*Slovo*           Some time back one sensed that you were short of weapons — that there were more men than weapons. Is this still the position or has that been rectified?

*Dos Santos*    There are still more men than weapons but the supply of weapons has improved. It is not so easy, even impossible, to reach a stage in which you have as many weapons as are needed, bearing in mind that in a guerrilla war the whole population needs to be armed. There is also the even bigger problem of ammunition.

*Slovo*           It has been said that in a guerrilla war the stage is reached when you get your main supply of weapons from the enemy. Has this been your experience from the beginning? Or must one ensure one's own independent supply?

*Dos Santos*    One must ensure one's own supply. Let us take the beginning of our struggle when we were using elementary weapons like the sub-machine gun, automatic rifle, etc. By about the year 1965 (a year after we commenced our struggle) a maximum of 20 cadres were functioning as a group. How could such a group get weapons from the enemy? Let us look at this question concretely. There is a Portuguese base where you know there are weapons — can you capture them with a group of 15 to 20 people? It is impossible. Portuguese troops who go from one point to another travel in convoys. If you attack a convoy the enemy does not run away — it reacts. When you see a convoy of 50 trucks with perhaps from 50 to 100 metres, or 200 metres between each truck, how can you ambush it in order to get weapons? You might succeed in a lightning ambush of one truck but the others will immediately take measures to counter-

attack the small unit. Right from the start we had to ensure our own supply. Naturally we did get materials from the enemy, but it was not the main source of supply. The main source of supply is from those countries who are helping us.

*Slovo* And is this still the position today?

*Dos Santos* This is still the position today, and particularly when it comes to getting sophisticated weapons.

*Slovo* Apart from those areas in which there is military activity (Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Tete, Manica eSofala) in what sort of activity, if any, is FRELIMO engaged?

*Dos Santos* Underground activity which aims to mobilise and organise the people in order to start the armed struggle using every type of action that fits into this framework.

### CLASS STRUCTURE IN MOZAMBIQUE

*Slovo* I now want to go back to the position just prior to 1962. Firstly, could you give us a broad picture of the class and social composition of the Mozambican people?

*Dos Santos* It is quite a complex question. I think that we must distinguish two societies. One contains capitalist relationships which developed as a result of the introduction of elements of capitalism by colonialism. The other one is the traditional type — a sort of subsistence economy. *In the first sector* we find the plantations, some mines, and a few light industries. In this sector you have the foreign bourgeoisie — the Portuguese bourgeoisie, and the people employed in the plantations who come to work as they might do in the towns and factories. They are rural workers in the sisal, coconut and sugar plantations. They come to work on the land which is the property of private enterprise. Then you have areas in which people work their own land but are forced to produce only one crop, mainly rice and cotton, which they then sell at prices fixed by the system — so, they are peasants but not in a free market situation. The workers in towns consist mainly of those who work in the light industries, for example, factories producing soap, oil, beer and

tobacco and some small textile industries and industries which treat the cashew nuts. We also have the workers on the railways and dock-workers. Then there are the people who work in the services, the administration – but in the lower levels of responsibility. There are also teachers in Primary schools and nurses. And finally you have the people who work as domestic servants. So these are the groups which were created by the elements of colonial type capitalism introduced into Mozambique.

In the traditional society you have the chiefs and their entourage and the rest of the people in subsistence type agriculture, with the usual type of relationship between the people of the tribe and the leaders of the tribe, including the handing over to the chief of a portion of what is produced.

But these two societies do not exist in isolation from one another; they are entirely linked. Why? Where do those people who work in the plantations come from? All those people who work within the capitalist sector come from the traditional sector. And most of them do not remain permanently outside the traditional society because, for instance, many of them go to work on the plantations for a maximum period of two years and they then come back to the village and to the traditional system. So that is the main link – going back and forth. Then there are people who do not become absorbed into the capitalist system but who are nevertheless related to it. For instance, the people who produce for themselves must sell their produce in the market, mainly food like grain, cashew nuts. They are forced into the market system to find the cash for colonial-imposed taxes and to purchase commodities which they do not produce themselves. So these two societies are linked and on many levels the persons comprising the two societies are the same. But there is a process of change in that the capitalist sector is growing more and more, and the traditional system is naturally declining.

*Silvo* Mondlane in his book says 95% of the people are working on the land, 5% are workers, and a fraction of 1% are middle class such as teachers.

*Dos Santos* It is really difficult to be precise. We tried to collect more exact statistics. I estimate that not more than 10% of the population are workers employed in the plantations and

in the small enterprises.

*Slovo* That is people working in urban areas?

*Dos Santos* Urban areas and plantations.

*Slovo* But what proportion would you say are actually permanently urbanised and are not just migratory seasonal workers?

*Dos Santos* I'd say not more than 5%.

*Slovo* Mondlane in his book mentioned that in a few areas some of the people had never seen a Portuguese; they were cut off from the integrating economy that you talk about. Does that cover a big number?

*Dos Santos* No, – very small. And this occurred particularly in the Niassa Province. But the whole of the Niassa Province has no more than, let us say, 300,000 people; and it is only in one part of Niassa that they had never met the Portuguese before the war.

### BEGINNINGS OF STRUGGLE

*Slovo* Could you describe briefly the beginnings of political resistance actions in the modern period and in particular the emergence of national political activity as opposed to purely tribal activities. I refer not to the struggles that occurred when the Portuguese first came, but to the period just prior to 1962.

*Dos Santos* It is necessary, in the first place to distinguish different types of resistance. Some types of resistance give an appearance of being merely economic struggles related to immediate reforms but in truth contain significant political overtones. In this category falls the action taken by the workers in the ports – for instance, the Port of Lourenco Marques – which was the result of political organisation although the actions themselves were expressed in economic demonstrations which included salary increases, etc. The actions taken by the cleansing workers in the towns made the Portuguese respond with military force and the action of the enemy gave a political content to these actions. The important actions taken by

the workers of the plantations from time to time were certainly the result of political mobilisation. But the actions taken by some on specific economic issues were not directly and immediately against the colonial system as such. Even in these cases, directly political issues emerged because the reaction was clearly political on the part of the enemy. In a colonial situation it is difficult to prevent simple demands from becoming political even indirectly. But one cannot say that they were, in the first place, politically motivated actions. On 16th June 1960 the Mueda people went to the administration to demand back some fertile land and more than 600 people were killed — there is no doubt that this was a political demonstration. Then there were the efforts of the people working in the rice fields to organise co-operatives. The cattle owners also, less successfully, tried to organise co-operatives. These actions were often the result of politically conscious small groups trying to develop the political consciousness of all the people, and engage them in some activity. Other actions are the result of some people feeling that their conditions are bad and as a result they engage in an action which is objectively a political action but the person so engaged does not necessarily have political consciousness in the sense that he is aware that he faces a political power that must be destroyed, his aim may be limited to the need just to have at least enough money to live.

*Slovo:* In other words, these actions were basically a reaction to conditions and an attempt to improve them. Did this kind of struggle give rise to any sort of broader political organisation amongst workers and peasants?

*Dos Santos:* After 1947 and '48 in particular small groups were created, first in the towns. Later some people, as a response to the enemy strength in the towns, moved their political activities to the bush and village. So, small groups were formed — here one, there another, and so on. At that same time many economic actions were taking place which helped to develop political consciousness. Inside Mozambique there were many people engaged in this type of action who at the end of the '50s were already politically clear. In the centre and in the south different groups who did not know of one another began organising. Some of them began to make rudimentary contact more or less in the years '58 — '59. Those

likes were often established by those who were employed in the Portuguese administration when they were moved from one place to another. But the first organisation of a truly national character was not born in Mozambique as such but was created outside.

*Slovo:* Where were these groups that you are talking about mainly situated?

*Dos Santos:* In towns.

*Slovo:* Did they consist mainly of the wage-earners in the towns or the intellectuals, or middle class?

*Dos Santos:* Mainly people in government administration, in commerce, teachers, and nurses. When we talk of our intellectuals we must understand what it means in relation to Mozambique: most of those who are normally regarded as intellectuals were not just thinkers who wrote in the newspapers, poems, novels, etc. Many of them were also wage earners at the level of administration, etc. In the cultural field we had people who had a clear understanding but others who would, say, try to revive the cultural traditions but who did not have a clear understanding of Mozambican nationalism. The unconnected small political groups were started mainly in the towns, but it was outside Mozambique – in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia – that steps were being taken to create national organisations with a national content. In some ways the level of political consciousness of those who were outside and who founded those organisations, was really comparatively lower than the activists inside, despite the fact that the latter never reached the point where they succeeded to launch a real national organisation. The formation of FRELIMO came about as the result of the union of three organisations which were based in the outside territories I mentioned.

*Slovo:* Before you come to that, I want to ask about the role of what – for want of a better word – one might call the Mozambican national bourgeoisie. Could it be said that this class exists in the real meaning of the term.

*Dos Santos:* There is no national bourgeoisie worth talking about.

*Slovo:* What has been the role of the settler Portuguese compared to, say, the white group in South Africa?

*Dos Santos:* We must say that the situation is not the same as in South Africa because the political power in Mozambique is not in the hands of the settlers. Economically the settlers are not the owners in Mozambique. The owners of Mozambique are those who are in Portugal, in France, in the U.K., in South Africa, Belgium etc. If we look at the situation in Mozambique and we try to find the main contradictions, we find that the main contradictions are between the Portuguese bourgeoisie allied to those in France, in South Africa, England, etc. and the Mozambican people. So the chief oppressor is not in Mozambique. What they have in Mozambique is the machinery for the oppression.

*Slovo:* Is there not a relatively big settled community which benefits economically from the oppression of the Mozambicans?

*Dos Santos:* Yes, naturally.

*Slovo:* Well, won't they resist the kind of change FRELIMO is struggling for?

*Dos Santos:* Ah, that is another question. But we were discussing what is the real force. The real force is not the settler. But the settlers do benefit and they are part of the system. What are they? They are small capitalists compared to those who really own Mozambique. In any case they are not a homogeneous group. Some are workers, some are in agriculture. There are those white people who are in towns, in administration, commerce; there are those who have small industries. So, their reactions can be different. What I am trying to explain is that one should not say that because they are white or because they are settlers they will automatically react against the Liberation Nationalist Movement. Particularly in the present stage one should accept that political consciousness, political action can play a certain role. A lot depends on what perspectives the Liberation Movement can offer for these groups. We have been saying that we are not fighting against Portuguese people; we are fighting against Portuguese colonialism — so those who are not exploiting our people have nothing to fear. When we started the struggle in Manica eSofala for example, we made an appeal to the white population there (it is a province in which there are many settlers) and we said that those who

are not interested in perpetuating exploitation should unite forces with us against the same enemy.

*Slovo:* And have you had any positive response from that type of person?

*Dos Santos:* We have not yet had a clear response but it is at the same time true that it has been difficult for the Portuguese administration to mobilise the whites against us; to unite these whites in a group and form them into a political force against us. This had proved difficult for the Portuguese administration. And after our appeal was issued in the Province of Manica e Sofala, the Portuguese government reacted by saying that what we were putting forward was just propaganda....So provisionally one can at least speculate that if they react like that, then our statements are at least making some impact on the Portuguese population. In general, whilst we recognise the dilemma of those isolated Portuguese whites working on the land, we do not take for granted that just because they are whites they will react against us.

*Slovo:* At the moment you are presenting an alternative to these whites which might either neutralise them in the struggle or might gain support from a section of them?

*Dos Santos:* Yes, this is important. The concentration of whites in the towns is certainly bigger than the whites on the land, and it is when the struggle reaches the towns that we will be able to test more clearly whether our approach has been successful.

### BIRTH OF FRELIMO

*Slovo:* In 1962 FRELIMO was born – the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique. Was it at that stage an alliance of groups i.e. a Front like the F.L.N. in Vietnam consisting of a number of political groups; or was it a Party? The P.A.I.G.C. is called a Party; FRELIMO is called a Front. Is there any significance in the use of the word Front?

*Dos Santos:* Well, it is true P.A.I.G.C. is called a Party and FRELIMO is called a Front. But I would say FRELIMO is a Front – not a Front of organisations in spite of the fact that it was

formed by three organisations which dissolved to create a new one. I would say it is a Front because it groups together all the social groups or social classes with the one aim of eliminating the oppressor. Everybody — whether he is involved in the capitalist or traditional sector — is suffering humiliation because of racism, and economic exploitation, including even the tribal chiefs. So, I would say that FRELIMO is a Front not because it is a federation or something like that, but because in FRELIMO all the social groups are represented.

*Slovo:* So it is correct to say that when FRELIMO was formed it represented all strata of the Mozambican people. Now, at that stage in 1962 when the organisation was formed what was the minimum basis for this unity between the various social groups? What was the minimum ideological framework in 1962?

*Dos Santos:* Just to be against the colonial oppression and for national independence. Nothing else.

*Slovo:* Now we know that FRELIMO was formed out of three organisations which existed externally — UDENAMO, MANU and UNAMI. What part did the cadres inside who had been working clandestinely, play in the formation of FRELIMO?

*Dos Santos:* I would say that they played the major part. In 1961 cadres started to come from the groups which had been working inside. They came to Zimbabwe, to Malawi, to Tanzania.

*Slovo:* To work or to form political organisations?

*Dos Santos:* To join the existing political organisations because they heard about these organisations which had started in 1960. What was the reality when they arrived there? They found in fact that the people leading the organisation did not have clear political understanding, and very little knowledge of the reality of Mozambique. These people who came outside immediately pressed for the creation of only one body. And on 25th June, 1962 a meeting took place which founded FRELIMO. Only four of those elected to the leadership came from the exile group. The rest were from inside. Thus a unity was created with the major part coming from activists in Mozambique. It was an expression of the fact that people had been

working under the concrete reality that gave them the political consciousness, the political awareness, and the capacity of producing a solution to the problems facing the action for freedom.

*Slovo:* From the way you have described the level of political activity and organisation inside the country before 1962, it is clear that it was not the sort of situation in which you could say the people were on the verge of revolution and showed that they were ready for violence. There were isolated confrontations but in general, from your description, it is clear that the position was not on the face of it erupting into insurrection. So what were the main reasons for FRELIMO turning to armed struggle?

*Dos Santos:* In fact the armed struggle started only two years after the formation of FRELIMO. But I think that it is correct to say that even in 1962 everybody – or at least those who were responsible – realised that the armed struggle would be the only way. The 1962 Programme and Constitution of FRELIMO states that we are engaged in a struggle for independence by all means. By then many people in Mozambique had already learnt through bitter experience that it would not be possible to get independence through strikes and constitutional methods alone. Mass action was, of course, still necessary because it is part of the process of raising political consciousness. As a result of the experience of the Mozambican people in quite a number of mass actions, the political consciousness which developed led to new responses. For instance when there was talk of strike actions, many said: “But strike – for what? What goal do we want to reach? Freedom with strikes – impossible!” I am not saying that the masses had spontaneously turned to the idea of armed struggle as a higher form of struggle. But let us say that people began to understand that the type of actions they had carried out could not on their own result in any sort of breakthrough.

*Slovo:* So you are saying that the Mozambican people in general, even though they could not clearly see this in the same way as advanced political cadres could, were beginning to feel that they could not really get anywhere with traditional methods of mass struggle. This was your assessment of the mood of the people in 1962?

*Dos Santos:* Yes, and we acted on it. Immediately after the formation of FRELIMO in June, 1962 our first Congress took place in September, and already in January, 1963 the first comrades

were going to Algeria for military training. At the same time we started intensive political preparations inside the country. Those who were the main inspiration for the creation of FRELIMO – the cadres from inside who were closer to the reality of our situation – set about the task of mobilising and organising the people inside Mozambique. Immediately after the formation of FRELIMO, the small group structure that already existed inside Mozambique automatically became part of the FRELIMO network. The accent at that time was to restructure it in accordance with the knowledge local militants had of conditions in their own localities.

*Slovo:* What was the main emphasis of political mobilisation at that time?

*Dos Santos:* It was to give people a clearer understanding of the nature of the oppression which faced them, and that their problems could only be solved with independence. And to get independence it was necessary to prepare for the armed struggle.

*Slovo:* How did you set about this task?

*Dos Santos:* The first action was to bring out comrades from inside and to send them for military training. At the same time we began mobilising people inside to prepare the conditions for the armed struggle. Of course there were many mistakes. People did not always work in an ideal way. But anyway, this was the main emphasis; to recruit people for military training and at the same time to organise the situation inside for the beginning of the armed struggle. Also one should not forget that in 1962 the Angolan war had already been going for more than a year; the PAIGC had also already declared for guerrilla war by direct action in August 1961. So we already had two examples of people under Portuguese colonialism who were following the road of armed struggle. All this helped to create the understanding that in the long run nothing else could bring about a fundamental change.

*Slovo:* But when you actually started the armed struggle in September 1964, could it be said that, at that stage, the conditions for armed struggle had already been prepared throughout the country? Or did the beginning of armed activity in one part of the

country help to prepare the conditions for the further unfolding of the armed struggle?

*Dos Santos:* Let us say that minimum conditions were created; not everybody was politically conscious. We believed that the conditions were such that we could start in the knowledge that, in starting, other people would be convinced and would also engage themselves in the armed struggle.

*Slovo:* So in other words, you assessed that conditions were ripe in 1964 for the beginnings of armed struggle? At that stage you could not say that the whole country was on the verge of going over to armed struggle, but its beginnings – in other words armed propaganda – would help prepare the conditions and heighten the consciousness for your strategic aims?

### UNDERGROUND STRUGGLE

*Dos Santos:* In general that is so. But I want to add a few comments on the complexities that faced us during this phase. We faced a colonial fascism so it was impossible to have legal and open organisation. The police network was everywhere, even in the bush. So first, it was impossible to organise many people. Why? Because if you go too fast and incautiously in creating organised structures you will open the organisation to infiltration by the enemy. But in spite of the fact that you could not organise everybody into organisational apparatus, what is important is that mobilisation must reach everybody. At least the maximum number of people must be mobilised one way or another even if they cannot be part of the underground structure. It is quite clear that we could not expect to create organisational networks simultaneously all over the country. Secondly, it is impossible to expect that the armed struggle would start at the same time all over the country, and that the whole country would be ready on the same day to start the armed struggle. Why? For the same reasons that we could not organise everywhere; we recognised differences in the levels of political consciousness and understanding of people in different parts of the country. The unfolding of the armed struggle is a process but, of course, the minimum basis must be there. If you want to set on fire a big area of grass, what you have to do is to make sure that at least

part of this grass is in an inflammable condition and at the same time ensure that the drying of the rest has already started. So when you start the fire you are sure that it will spread to parts which, in the meanwhile, are being dried. If we had waited for everybody to be ready to undertake armed struggle, we would never have started.

*Slovo:* What about the theory of the Foco based on the simple proposition that where people are oppressed and, objectively speaking, there is only one way out, the successful injection of a foco will in itself trigger off nationwide support for the armed struggle? From what you have told me, this is not the way in which you proceeded because the beginnings of armed activities were combined with the preparation of minimum conditions, both political and military, throughout wide areas of the rest of the country.

*Dos Santos:* Yes, that is correct. I would add that the armed struggle is a unique instrument. We do not consider mechanically that everywhere, in all countries, armed struggle is the only instrument for independence. No, what is important is for each people to be able to determine for themselves what instrument of struggle will enable them to reach independence. The armed struggle can only be launched when the conditions are ripe for it. Even now for us the basic problem is not guns; the Portuguese have guns too but that does not make a revolution. The problem is the man. It is not because you give the Mozambican a rifle that he becomes a revolutionary – the basic problem is a political one. Political consciousness is the base. So just to start an armed struggle does not mean you will obtain independence.

*Slovo:* Which brings me to the next question. In the case of Guine Bissau, Cabral said that the political and military leadership of the struggle is one – it is the political leadership: “our fighters are defined as armed activists”. Is this FRELIMO’s approach? And have there been any special problems in making sure that the political side dominates the military side, that the political side is in fact in the leadership and stands at the head?

*Dos Santos:* There are different tasks thrown up by the struggle. There is military action, organisation, health activities, work in the field of education and so on. But all are being taken in one direction, under one orientation defined by our political line.

*Slovo:* But who controls the army?

*Dos Santos:* The Central Committee of our Party. The army is also part of the Party. We approach the problem of the relationships between the army and the Party in a way which should apply not only at this stage of guerrilla war but even after independence. What is our basic approach? We must aim to achieve a situation in which armed activists are essentially no different from other activists; from people who are nurses, teachers, workers, peasants; people who are all carrying out tasks which are linked to the one aim based on one political line. Of course, I do not say that there are no problems and your question relates really to the way FRELIMO is trying to overcome the problems. We inherited the political groups which existed in Mozambique and we had to develop them and mould them into a national organisation with a clear orientation. But we must remember that the structure we inherited was basically orientated to mobilising and organising the people politically. In addition we had to create a military force in the first place outside Mozambique. When it comes to the relationship between the military and political organs, the approach is often influenced by the way in which one characterises a situation in which the armed tactic has become the basic weapon. In such a situation one finds that there are different definitions – one says that the armed struggle is now the only form in which politics can be expressed; others will tell you that the armed struggle even when it becomes the main requirement of a given phase is still basically a political struggle and has to be combined with political action and organisation. How did we combine political and military activity? Those who remained in Mozambique concentrated on mobilisation, organising the people in a general political sense. But they also had concrete tasks in connection with the armed struggle; to store food for the time the war started, to organise the structures which would link up with the guerrillas, etc. Of course problems arose. Even though both the military and political structures were working for the same aim, the main tasks of the internal groups had now to be expressed in relation to the fundamentally altered character of our struggle with its primary emphasis on military activity. Those structures inside which up to then had been concentrating on general political mobilisation, now had to adjust to the additional role of becoming an integral

part of armed activity and those who had not had special training were not as well equipped to solve some of the political problems created by our armed activities. For example, problems like the necessary measures required for the defence of the population against bombs etc., where to establish medical centres, where to establish a school, how to organise production — should we go on producing the same things or should we change; those who were in the guerrilla groups were given specialist training in these fields whereas those who were inside the country all the time were not able to acquire this knowledge. Differences appeared in the level of consciousness of the realities. Those who had remained inside were the leaders — of the structure, of the Party and were leading the population. When these new problems emerged the population expected the answers from them. They could give no answers. When the people began looking to those in the guerrilla sector for the answers, a certain amount of unhealthy competitiveness developed. We unfortunately were not able to foresee that this would be a problem. And when we began to understand this problem we took a number of measures including the giving of military training to all our internal cadres. So we have achieved the position where all our activities are carried out by people with both political consciousness and military training. And the artificial division between the military and the political structures began to fade.

*Slovo:* So, as I understand you, you are saying that even to pose the question by asking about the relationship of two separate wings is unreal for your situation; the whole direction is with the Party. Could you just illustrate this briefly in relation, say, to the struggle in the Niassa Province where you have political administration, economic reconstruction activities, an army, a people's militia, and so on?

*Dos Santos:* The central Committee of FRELIMO directs all these activities. At national level the highest organ is the Congress. Between Congresses the direction of the struggle is under the central Committee which has a smaller working executive. At the Provincial level we have a provincial committee which is in day to day charge of all aspects of the political and military struggle under the broad direction of the central committee.

*Slovo:* Now in a broad struggle such as yours it is, of course, in the first place necessary to reach the stage where people's consciousness becomes national rather than tribal or regional. Has this first battle been won in Mozambique? Or are there still some relics of tribalism or regionalism?

*Dos Santos:* I would say firstly that we have not completely won the battle against tribalism. I could not say that in the future we will never have a case of tribalism. But we are confident that FRELIMO as an organisation has the capability to win any challenge that will be made by tribalism. Any action based on tribalism will be defeated. The main conditions for its successful rejection are present. On the general point of whether we have already moulded a nation in the true sense of the word, I want to say that a nation is based on concrete realities. And the most important reality in the present stage in Mozambique is the fight against Portuguese Colonialism. It is our common fight against our common oppressor which plays an outstanding role in creating a national bond between all the diverse groups and cultures; secondly the common action to begin building a new society in the liberated areas also plays an important role in stimulating a national consciousness. To build a nation you have in the first place to build economic realities of which everyone will instinctively feel they are a part. At the level of regional economic subsistence, at the level of an economy based primarily on agriculture at its lowest level, it is difficult for people to relate to one another in a truly national sense, in the sense of even sharing a common economy and all the social links which this creates. So I would say that national economic development is an essential part of the continuing process of building a nation. Of course a nation is a product of history and, its formation goes through different phases. In this sense the work for the final achievement of complete nationhood will continue even after independence although the fundamental elements of nationhood are already in existence and in the process of being further developed in Mozambique.

*Slovo:* Would you say that manifestations of tribalism have created difficulties for you in some of the liberated areas? For example, have the traditional institutions, the tribal chiefs, etc., been integrated into the struggle or are you experiencing problems in this connection.

*Dos Santos:* We had chiefs who were against us and collaborated with the Portuguese. Then there were chiefs who said: "O.K. I close my eyes, you do what you want, but as for myself I cannot do anything." There were others who worked fully with us. Many of the second category thought that independence would enable them once again to re-assert the tribal empire, that FRELIMO would be able to give back to them all the powers which the Portuguese had undermined. **When some of them realized that this was not FRELIMO policy they withdrew and a few went to Tanzania.** But there are those who integrated and who became part of the structure of FRELIMO. We must also remember that the problems of tribalism are not always triggered off by the actions of Chiefs. In fact in many modern struggles tribalism is just a useful instrument for certain people to advance their individual or group interests. We have had people with some responsibility in FRELIMO who fell into this category.

*Slovo:* In other words people who are using tribalism to further their own individual advancement, who try to rely on some power base which they find in tribalism.

*Dos Santos:* Not exactly. It is not really a power base. No. It is power that has its origins in tribalism and is based on the exploitation of tribal values of the people. Some who exploit such sentiments might say: "Why are we going to fight outside our tribal area?" or "You see, our language is not used as much as other languages" or "You see, in this leadership there are no people from our tribe." We have more than 42 tribes. So, you can imagine how easy it is for opportunistic elements to prey on sectional fears.

*Slovo:* Even while this ideological battle which you have described to make people think nationally rather than tribally or regionally, is going on, is there an awareness in FRELIMO of some of the limitations of national consciousness itself especially from the point of view of the future Mozambique? For example, Fanon says that national consciousness has its pitfalls and limitations and one of these is that it very often goes no further than the desire by some groups to occupy the privileged positions of the oppressor. The other limitation of nationalism of which Fanon speaks is that it can degenerate into racialism. Is there in FRELIMO an awareness at least at the top levels, of the limitations of purely national consciousness?

*Dos Santos:* When we talk of limitations we mean there is an aim that in certain situations cannot be fulfilled. If, for example, we are talking of revolution and not just formal national independence, one could say that nationalism and a nationalist struggle have limitations. Of course, within almost every national movement there are different types of nationalism. There is the elementary, primary one — what is called primitive nationalism. But there is also revolutionary nationalism. Some people who take part in the struggle for independence do so not to realise or to satisfy the interests of the people as a whole but to satisfy the interests of a small group. They have a specific ideology which in general has a bourgeois-nationalist framework. In other words within a nationalist movement there can be two general types of ideology — one which is bourgeois and one which is revolutionary. So when we speak about the limitations of national consciousness we mean limitation by those who use the ideology of bourgeois nationalism to prevent liberation from moving on to the revolution. Naturally there are people who are sincere but who lack the knowledge, ideology, political awareness and do not see beyond the very first stages of removing the foreign oppressors from their monopoly of power. But such people when they take part in the struggle soon enough realize the narrowness of their approach. But also there are some who deliberately use tribalism and racism. So, in truth, nationalism is not just one concept. Within it there are two ideologies, and the limitations relate to the aims of the reactionary one. For example, in our struggle, to continue to have racist attitudes is a sign of reactionary ideology which we fight because it is an ideology against the interests of the whole nation. So I would say that it is not a question of pitfalls or limitations but of the characteristics of some types of nationalism.

*Slovo:* But it is correct to say that you are at the moment fighting a broad national struggle the basic aim of which is independence, sovereignty of the people, expelling foreign domination so that the people (in the broadest sense of the word) control their own destiny and so on. Now is there not therefore a danger that, unless you at this stage define more clearly what you mean by true national liberation and the content of national consciousness, you will include under your umbrella all sorts of elements who will agree in

general with your policy of getting rid of a foreign oppressor but when it comes to the question of real independence (as you and I might understand it) would not agree? Therefore is there not a need to define the ideology of revolution and national liberation more precisely than generalities about independence and getting rid of the foreign oppressor?

*Dos Santos:* I agree that this is absolutely necessary but I would like to add that the struggle for independence is a process with a number of phases which the revolutionary must recognise. One should be able in each phase to define the aims, to define the political line most appropriate to that phase. In other words in relation to any given situation we must establish our basic aim, which are the forces that must be brought together to achieve this aim, who are our main enemies, etc. At the beginning in FRELIMO the general aim was to fight colonialism and to many colonialism just means white people. But with the unfolding of the struggle it became clearer that colonialists were not such simple entities. When we faced colonialism in real struggle, we faced the army, the police, the administration; these were the expressions of colonialism. And after that we could go further and say: "Ah, but these are just instruments of something else — of economic interests." And it also became clearer that these economic interests were not only the interests of some white people but could also be the interests of some Black people. There were indeed some white people not linked with these interests. So at each stage and as the struggle progressed one should be able to give greater clarity to the main aim, to define the enemy more scientifically, to define the liberation forces with greater precision — in other words to develop one's ideology, and a more advanced political line. In our case the necessity to define a revolutionary ideology with greater precision emerged when we started to build the liberated areas, to engage ourselves in national reconstruction. As always, the task of building a society economically poses the problem of the type of production and distribution, and especially who is going to benefit from what the society produces. This life process also raises much more sharply than in the classroom the deeper question of the type of ideology to embrace. So to summarise, there comes a stage when it becomes clear why everybody in the nation should accept the idea that the main aim of the struggle is to advance the interests of the working

people. In the field of organising the people we follow collectivistic ways as is the case, for example, with our co-operative movement in the liberated areas. We must also realise that it is not only the enemy who stands in the way of this co-operative effort but even some Black people who act against the general interest of the struggle. But what must be done is to conduct the struggle in such a way that if such people desert this will be no more than an individual person running away and will not be the cause of any significant split.

### WHO ARE THE DEFECTORS?

*Slovo:* Well, talking about that, there have been a number of defections of people like Kavandame, Simango, Gwenjero and Marupe, are these individuals part of the impure element which the revolution's progress rejects or do they represent some more basic class interests in the purely anti-colonial phase of the struggle?

*Dos Santos:* In practice these were individual defections. But one should say that they represent group interests too — the natural attitudes of certain types of social groups. Let us consider the people you mention. Gwenjero was a priest; Marupa was a man from a university and Simango also a priest. Marupa and Simango had responsibilities in FRELIMO. If we look for a compartment for these people we could say perhaps that they represent different elements of the petty bourgeoisie. Kavandame is a slightly different case. He was a man with individual economic interests. In the past he had people working for him, etc. One could say he was a small planter. It is clear that his main aim was always to establish a system in Mozambique which would favour him — a capitalist system. Gwenjero, Marupa and Simango were not taking these positions openly along those lines but they were driven by a desire for individual political power, by a bourgeois ideology and a desire to build a capitalist type system. In fact Kavandame and Simango defected from the organisation at about the same time and Kavandame could without difficulty accept Simango as a political leader because the type of economic system he supported was acceptable. So I would say that the desertions were individual acts but their attitudes reflected those of a class. Kavandame was a small capitalist. The others are petty bourgeoisie who are

interested in political power and are ready to impose a system to represent the material interests of the capitalists.

### QUESTIONS OF IDEOLOGY

*Slovo:* FRELIMO has said publicly that in 1962 it consisted of a heterogeneous group of people linked by the idea of independence and the vague philosophy of nationalism. Beyond this FRELIMO did not really have an ideological line. But your publications suggest that the struggle itself presented the organisation with new tasks which laid bare the contradictions which had been hiding beneath the surface. Can you be more concrete about the developments? What contradictions emerged and how were they resolved?

*Dos Santos:* It is true FRELIMO as such had no clear ideological line apart from primary nationalism. But the very fact that the leadership was heterogeneous meant that different types of ideologies were represented in it from the start. It meant that there were also people who accepted revolutionary ideology and who understood, even if only in an abstract way, that independence must be for the people, and who were in an elementary way against the exploitation of man by man. It was not only the internal dynamic of the process of fighting of the Mozambican people that resulted in understanding by some of those who were in 1962 in the leadership of FRELIMO. A study of the experiences of other countries and the general knowledge acquired by humanity in its struggle against oppression penetrated the minds of quite a few in the leadership. So right from the start, in 1962, different ideologies were reflected at the top. But the tasks facing us in those early days demanded that we create a collective which would accommodate all those who were prepared to work together to get the basic struggle off the ground. So, the nature of the political, social and economic realities of the situation as it then was, demanded a pragmatist attitude. But the struggle grew and new situations emerged and in the process political consciousness and political awareness were increasing and developing even though in some ways our approach still remains pragmatic.

In general what were the Phases? The first phase was characterised by the heterogeneity of the leadership. As I have said the latent

contradictions really emerged when we started to have liberated areas and the question of the organisation of a new life arose. Which way should we follow? So it was in that phase that the contradictions appeared and those who were mainly fighting for their own individual interests or for the interests of a narrow group, came more openly to the surface. Of course, you can find many people who, in the beginning, belonged to the same social group but who, while engaging in the process of the struggle, were able to change and transform themselves. Others refused to change and were rejected by the Movement.

*Slovo:* And would you accept, that however vague the idea is, the point of departure between the first and the second periods is this idea of a society in which there would be no exploitation of man by man?

*Dos Santos:* Yes, this is true.

*Slovo:* Now these developments in the areas which have been liberated – in the fields of economics, health, education, embryonic state structures, etc. are they of a permanent character? Or are they just the reflections of the needs of a war situation? It could be said that in a war situation it is easier to get people to accept a certain type of communal effort even by those who are ideologically not committed to this as defining the form of a future society. Can you reflect on this?

*Dos Santos:* I accept that it is partly made easier by the demands of war. But does that mean that once we have independence the approach will be changed? In the particular conditions of fighting against Portuguese colonialism, revolutionary attitudes are not only possible, but necessary. If we do not follow collectivist attitudes we will not be able to face the enemy successfully. In this sense it is true to say that the internal dynamic of the struggle is such that the conditions generate collectivist thinking. But one should also say that even if the origins of such attitudes are partly pragmatic it can, nevertheless, provide a basis for the growth of real social revolution. There is certainly a strong possibility that in the course of collectivist effort a situation is created from which it will be difficult to withdraw. If our organisation maintains a true revolutionary leadership the special circumstances of the process of our liberation open up real possibilities

for an advance from liberation to revolution.

*Slovo:* You have talked about going beyond the nationalist phase and achieving a real social revolution. How does a movement make sure that this is achieved?

*Dos Santos:* The main defence must be to popularise the revolutionary aims and to create such a situation that if for one reason or another at some future time some people start trying to change these aims, they will meet with resistance from the masses. This must be the defence until the situation has been achieved where the truly revolutionary classes dominate all levels of power.

### NEED FOR A PARTY OF REVOLUTION

*Slovo:* It is correct to have faith in the masses in a general way, but we know that the masses were almost completely silent when Nkrumah was overthrown; we did not witness a single major demonstration. The masses were also completely silent when many other progressives in Africa were deprived of political power by cliques. It is not enough just to rely on the good sense of the masses. What has to be done is to create an apparatus, a Party capable of calling on the masses and leading them at every level.

*Dos Santos:* Yes, this is a problem of building the Party and, in the first place, politicizing the cadres in the aims of the organisation, the political line, the ideology of the organisation. Our methods of work must always allow for free and continued discussion which will facilitate communication at all the levels of the organisation and which will enable the lower levels of the organisation to express their will when we are engaged in defining our orientation, etc. The cadres of the organisation must participate fully and it is through these cadres that the aims are popularised and spread to the masses.

*Slovo:* Are you convinced that FRELIMO is moving along those lines?

*Dos Santos:* I am sure that FRELIMO is moving in that direction. If you read the 1971 message of the 25th September you will see that we consider it as our main task to develop the

political consciousness of the cadres. Everyone must, of course, be involved in the practical work, but equally every cadre must study, it is obligatory to study. In the message of 25th September 1972 again we emphasise the aspect of developing still further the political consciousness of the cadres. Every cadre must be completely equipped to interpret the aims and ideology of our revolution.

*Slovo:* There is a fashionable theory that violence has the effect of cleansing a people fighting a political struggle by violent means. The forces which are of necessity brought into play in the course of an armed struggle give some guarantee that the degeneration which we have seen happen in some parts of independent Africa, will be avoided. In other words, the fires of violence purify. Could you comment on that as a general proposition?

*Dos Santos:* Fire burns, whether it purifies is another question! Whether it purifies or not depends on the type of violence. For example, the fire from the Portuguese burns and destroys. The fire coming from FRELIMO purifies and builds. Why does the fire coming from FRELIMO build? Because it is a revolutionary fire. A reactionary fire just destroys. It is not really the weapon that you have in your hand that counts but the men who carry it. So, if you are a revolutionary your fire purifies, and if you are a reactionary it destroys. If we speak just of violence there is no guarantee that it will purify anything unless it is directed for the good of the people.

*Slovo:* Lenin in dealing with guerrilla struggle said that without a revolutionary ideology behind it, armed struggle in fact becomes corrupt, becomes prostituted, it becomes the area of the adventurer, the brigand, the terrorist in the bad sense of the word.

*Dos Santos:* That is no doubt true. I would add that a revolutionary fire destroys the enemy and purifies us. In the process of the struggle the individuals who are on the side of the revolution grow as human beings and this is important because we consider that there cannot be a new society without a new man. This applies to all revolutionary struggle whether it takes the form of violence or not. And so, the revolutionary fire helps us to purify our ranks.

*Slovo:* But the qualifying word is revolutionary, not the violence?

*Dos Santos:* That is correct.

## UNITY BETWEEN ORGANISATIONS

*Slovo:* I want to come to a few general questions on the liberation movement. There is a good deal of talk of unity in Africa, particularly in the areas where liberation struggles are being waged. And the way in which this is often put in the case of South Africa (even in the case of Mozambique) is that the mere fact of two organisations getting together will achieve something special. In your experience is not unity the expression of a complex process rather than a formal act? Is there not this unreality in the approach to unity, in this insistence on a formal act, as if from there will flow all we want to achieve?

*Dos Santos:* When we speak about unity we mean, in the first place, unity of the people; not just groups who claim to represent the people. Every situation generates numerous individuals and groups who have the ambition to exploit a struggle for their own ends. The real question is: what is represented by an organisation? It follows that unity between organisations only has meaning if they have a real base amongst the people, otherwise it is purely formal and does not serve the interests of a people. Such a kind of unity may even serve to divide the people rather than unite them. Unity is a complex process. It is never achieved easily and its basis is always in the process of transformation. One has to know at each stage what the platform of unity is. In FRELIMO in 1962 what was the base of unity? It was to eliminate foreign oppression. Later the word oppression came to include even internal groups who want to replace foreign oppression with their own. So the base of unity is continuously changing. When we ask two or more groups to unite, we have to establish the base of this unity and the base must be determined by the level of development of the struggle and the objective realities. It is not enough to talk just of unity in principle.

*Slovo:* This year it will be 10 years since the OAU was established. Have you any reflections on its positive and negative features especially from the point of view of the liberation movements?

*Dos Santos:* I think that it has been positive for the liberation movements although I would not say that its role has been fulfilled completely. Many liberation movements were, of course, disappointed in some of their expectations based on some of the early promises. Internationally there has been a very important contribution. If Africa takes a position in favour of the liberation movements (which it usually does) it forces the rest of the world to take notice. Some of the negative features must be related to the level of political development in Africa. You cannot expect more from the whole than from the parts.

### THE DOMINO THEORY

*Slovo:* Right, now I want to come lastly to this problem which worries so many South Africans – the domino theory. Let us hear you on that.

*Dos Santos:* Personally, I do not believe in the domino theory which as I understand it postulates that if one country becomes independent the others (which are contiguous to it) will follow. Tunisia and Morocco became independent and Algeria still had to fight a war to get real independence. I think the main determinant is action inside each country. But this does not mean that there are no possibilities for one country to become independent before the others.

*Slovo:* Do you believe that when the struggle in Mozambique reaches the point of threatening the basic interests of South Africa in a very real way (which will happen more and more as you travel South) that South Africa will stand by? We know that she is already involved. Theoretically, of course, Mozambique can get its independence before the other unliberated countries. But unless there is a struggle going on in South Africa and in the rest of Southern Africa does it not make the prospect much more difficult?

*Dos Santos:* I would like to put the problem somewhat differently. Perhaps we should look further to the content of independence. I think that a stage will be reached in which the main problem will not be whether a country becomes formally independent or not, but what the social nature of the new regime will be. This

will be the real problem. Our enemy will be forced, for one reason or another by one means or another, to accept independence. But when the stage is reached where they have no option, they will try to influence the content of independence. I really believe that South Africa is interested in becoming the stronghold of white supremacy in Southern Africa.

*Slovo:* Must not one work on the assumption that the struggles in Southern Africa are indivisible in the sense that the enemy is more or less united and will throw its forces in at strategic points in order to perpetuate white rule in Southern Africa as a whole? And, therefore, like in any war, one does not allow the enemy to concentrate its forces in this or that area to suit its tactics at each moment. Therefore in order to facilitate the struggle of all the people in Southern Africa whether in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique or in Angola, it would obviously be of enormous importance if there were a meaningful struggle going on simultaneously in each of the countries and especially in South Africa which would make it less capable of playing this role of policeman in Southern Africa?

*Dos Santos:* It follows that any theory which is based on first liberating one territory and then another must be to the advantage of the enemy. Naturally. Therefore, our position on this matter is that there should be maximum action inside each country. Nobody will give help unless you are yourself engaged in action. Secondly, it is an elementary part of the tactics of a struggle such as ours, always to disperse the enemy. This applies at regional, national and international level. We must prevent the common enemy from concentrating on one point – this is clear.