

[Back to Article](#) [Click to Print](#)



Friday, Feb. 14, 1969

## Murder by the Book

Eduardo Mondlane was a revolution ary, and the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) he headed was one of black Africa's more effective independence movements. Tall, handsome Mondlane was also a scholar who loved the bookish academic world he abandoned just six years ago, and it is clear that his enemies knew their man all too well. Last week an expertly built bomb killed him as he worked at an American friend's villa' in Dar es Salaam. The bomb had come to him concealed in a book.

His assassination was the culmination of some 18 months of increasing difficulties within Frelimo's leadership.

Mondlane himself, educated in South Africa, Portugal and the U.S. (an Oberlin College graduate, with a Ph.D. from Northwestern University), was damned as a moderate by more radical leaders.

Frelimo's military operations in Mo zambique reflected these difficulties. The tempo of combat has dropped in recent months, or so the Portuguese claim, but Frelimo's estimated 8,000 well-trained guerrillas (most of them Mozambicans trained in Tanzania and sup ported from that country) are tying down more than 40,000 Portuguese regulars. The major centers of Frelimo activity are in northern Mozambique, where the rebels fully control three districts: the area around Tete, on the Zambezi River in the northwest and on the Mueda plateau in the north.

As in any guerrilla war, the fighting can be vicious, and Mondlane, a gentle and cultivated man, seemed to some of those he met remarkably out of character as the leader of such a movement. Perhaps his single greatest talent lay in wangling aid from both the Communist and capitalist worlds: "I get weapons from the East and money from the West," he told a TIME correspondent last year.


Radical Target. But he had enemies in both ideological blocs as well. He believed that he was marked for death by Portugal's secret police (PIDE), who knew him as the most direct threat to continued Portuguese control over his native Mozambique. He was also a target for radical Mozambicans who look to Communist China for inspiration. In March 1968, angry radicals forced the temporary closing of the Mozambique Institute, headed by Mondlane's American wife Janet, and two months later a Frelimo central committee member was stabbed to death in a pitched battle for control of Frelimo's

headquarters in Dar es Salaam.

One of Mondlane's enemies linked to the factional clashes was Father Ma-teus Gwengere, a militant Catholic priest who fled Mozambique in mid-1967 and since then had consistently opposed Mondlane. Last July, however, Mondlane seemed to have reconciled all the opposing factions within Frelimo. After persuading them that continued conflict could only harm their common cause, he went on to stage party elections in a "liberated area" of northern Mozambique. It was a dramatic propaganda victory, and Mondlane was confirmed as head of Frelimo. Nevertheless he was forced to expand the membership of Frelimo's executive committee to pacify his rivals.

PIDE's Death List. Now Frelimo faces another severe internal struggle to choose Mondlane's successor. The leading contenders are Rev. Uria Simango, Mondlane's bearded vice president, and Marcelino dos Santos, his external affairs minister. Simango leans toward Peking, dos Santos toward Moscow, and a prolonged struggle between them could damage Frelimo severely. Nothing, of course, would please Portugal (and PIDE) more, and some Frelimo spokesmen believe that PIDE is behind a plot to wipe out the front's leadership. Certainly, Frelimo leaders have an undisputed penchant for dying of unnatural causes. Only six weeks ago, the deputy chief of Frelimo's armed forces in Mozambique was shot dead under mysterious circumstances, and the murder two years before of a close Mondlane associate has never been solved. Simango himself is said to be on PIDE's death list.

In Lisbon, the controlled Portuguese press blamed Mondlane's murder on the "extreme left-wing faction," but skeptics doubted that version. A source close to Premier Marcello Caetano's government made no secret of his feeling that Mondlane was "a moderate, a man we could eventually talk to, and his disappearance is a loss." In black Africa, the press hailed Mondlane as an outstanding liberation leader, and Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere said that "the best way of crying for him is to increase our efforts for the liberation of Africa." As far as Frelimo goes, at any rate, those efforts have been badly damaged by Mondlane's murder.

 **Click to Print**

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,900625,00.html>

---