

## **The murder of Eduardo Mondlane and how Mozambique joined the Cold War struggle in Africa in the 70's**

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**1 - During the sixties, Africa and Asia became the main theatres of the cold war. The so-called - in geo political terms- post-modern world was born. The United States, the Soviet Union, as well as Europe and the CPR were the countries that played main roles on the new stage. Quoting Paul Nitze:**

*“For over forty years the foreign and defense policies of the United States have been guided by a central theme, as well-defined basic policy objective. The goal, throughout the Cold War, was for the United States to take the lead in building an international world order based on liberal economic and political institutions and to defend that world against communist attack”. (Foreign Affairs – Fall, 1990)*

**During the sixties, some of these countries tried, to influence – and in certain cases, to manipulate – not only a few local African leaders or African states that had recently gained their independence, but also non-state African actors, such as the movements for the independence of colonies.**

**My principal example of these actions will be given by the Portuguese colonies, and my focal point will be Mozambique.**

**Several groups or coalitions of countries or of political movements emerged as actors. The *Conference of the Nationalist Organizations of Dependent African States*, held in Accra, in June 1961, brought together Uganda, Northern Rhodesia, Tanganyika, Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, São Tome and Príncipe as well as Mozambique. The latter was represented, at the time, by Marcelino dos Santos and Fanuel Mahlusa, both members of UDENAMO, before that movement joined FRELIMO, during its first Congress.**

**Nkrumah's strategy was to use the Conference to bring both the Casablanca and the Monrovia groups together under his leadership. The creation of a common fund was designed to help these movements launched by these groups.**

**In the United States, the Pentagon showed apprehension about the communist influence it expected from three of the more radical actors – Guinea Conakry, Mali and Ghana. Nevertheless General Lemnitzer and many of the political officials of the Kennedy' Administration were convinced that *their pan-african ambitions would prevent them to(sic) a total submission to the East Bloc and...* as he went on to stress... *the Peace Corps was having a great success.***

**A number of non-African countries and non-state actors became more involved in these maneuverings from the early sixties onwards. Others, such as the United Nations, various church movements, public opinion as well as student movements in several northern European countries emerged by and after 1965.**

**Some international actors took on a “para-statal” role. For example the political or military nationalistic movements that foreshadowed future independent countries were often to be found representing those same territories in such *fora* as the various U.N. Commissions.**

**With the focus on Eduardo Mondlane and on Mozambique, the “para-statal” actors which assumed major geo-political importance were: FRELIMO, TANU, ANC and movements in other Portuguese speaking colonies, such as UPA, later to become FNLA, MPLA, PAIGC and so on.**

**Tanzania served as the headquarters of FRELIMO operations. In fact, the famous Mozambique Institute run by Mondlane’s wife, was mostly financed, by the American Government during the Kennedy Administration and this through the Ford Foundation, itself a key non-state actor. When that initial funding was cut off due to pressure from Portugal, the subsequent contributors were the World Council of Churches and the Nordic governments.”**

**2 – During 1961, Mondlane presented to the State Department a strategy paper for Africa, which was well accepted by some of the members of the famous State’s African group. The paper had one main objective: to avoid through direct diplomatic action by the United States a second Congo on the African continent by the outbreak of a war in Mozambique and in the other Portuguese African colonies.**

**Mondlane, aware of the Kennedy administration’s new African policy, tried to gain support from American diplomacy towards Africa through his friends Mennen Williams, Robert Kennedy, Wayne Fredericks, McGeorge Bundy and others.**

**Through diplomatic action at very senior level lasting from ‘62, to ‘64, the United States followed some of the guidelines spelled out in Mondlane’s May ’61 paper. At the same time, in Lisbon, the Minister of Overseas Affairs, Prof. Adriano Moreira, Mondlane’s personal friend, supported by a group of concerned officials and others, took important liberal political steps. These steps would have made Portuguese African policy assume a new face, mainly in the United States, where Mennen Williams assumed that Portugal was about to change its attitude towards African issues.**

**But in the end, these efforts led to no concrete result, as they clashed with Salazar’s dogmatic position. During this period, Mondlane assumed the Presidency of FRELIMO, at its first Congress. He had some hope that a war in that colony could**

be avoided and that his movement would be removed from direct involvement with the cold-war in Africa.

Mondlane was the only Portuguese speaking African leader, who had an American academic background and a remarkable international experience. He obtained all his University degrees in the United States, was Professor at the Syracuse University and had worked as an expert for the United Nations Secretariat.

From the first “Fact Finding Mission” to 18 African countries conducted by a group of Democratic Senators, in December 1960, Mondlane got a clear picture of the future Administration’s approach to Africa, and to Portuguese African policy.

Other than the repeated public statements by Adlai Stevenson in the United Nations, Mennen Williams was probably the most outspoken politician of the new administration. His view was that Portuguese favoured the position of the Soviet Union and China in Africa.

Mondlane, wishing to keep the struggle for independence in Mozambique outside the constraints of the cold-war, was neither an admirer of the Eastern bloc nor of the Soviet model, as viable long-run alternatives for the post-colonial era in Africa.

3 – The promises of the Kennedy’s new policy towards Africa suffered a serious setback. Altogether the crisis over the Soviet missiles in Cuba, the crisis over Berlin and later on, already at the time of the Johnson Administration, the Viet Nam war, forced the United States to reconsider its policy towards Portugal and its overseas policy. Let us remind ourselves that during that period of the cold war, Portugal provided a most important geo-strategic asset to the States – a military base in the Azores.

But Africa’s importance to United States foreign policy, weakened dramatically in the face of graver concerns over Berlin, Turkey and Viet Nam. The so-called African Group of the American administration lost ground.

Meanwhile, in Portugal, profound disagreements over Africa between Salazar and his Overseas Minister Adriano Moreira, obliged the latter to resign from the government. These circumstances modified radically the assumptions underlying Mondlane’s global strategy.

4 – Accordingly, during the late 60’s, Mondlane embarked on an intense diplomatic campaign. On the external front, keeping up his American ties especially those to civil society and to churches, he developed strong links to European countries such as Great Britain, Germany and particularly the Scandinavian countries. In all of these he could find humanitarian and moral help, without forfeiting his old allies in Africa, such as Tunisia and Algeria, in addition to Tanzania led by his friend Nyerere.

**China and Soviet Union became part of Mondlane's external network, mainly as sources of military equipment to support the guerrilla-war he started, in Mozambique, in 1964. Mondlane visited China in late 1963, just before Zhou en Lai made his famous African tour, a tour that started a new era in Chinese-African relations. The Soviet Union acquired a new enemy on the African continent as a result of the new Chinese initiative.**

**Oddly enough, during the same year, Portugal held secret negotiations with Beijing designed to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries. Given the friendly relations between Nyerere and China, the FRELIMO soldiers received military training from the Chinese in Tanzania in addition to their training grounds in Algeria and Tunisia.**

**The Chinese Cultural Revolution changed drastically many of these circumstances.**

**To cover the internal front, Mondlane had to develop an extremely complex policy in order to maintain the cohesion of his movement. Several radical elements eyed him with mistrust, given his background and his American wife.**

**Indeed for some of them, that fact that he was not a confessed Marxist constituted a serious drawback. Indeed, a few months before his murder, published pamphlets and articles, written or inspired by dissident members of FRELIMO, carried very strong accusations against Mondlane.**

**4 – Mondlane's murder in 1969, in Dar es Salam, was an important political landmark. It transformed radically the position of FRELIMO in the 70's.**

**The following are points to consider:**

**A – The circumstances of Mondlane's murder and the identification of those to whom his disappearance from the political scene was beneficial;**

**B – The result of Mondlane's death inside FRELIMO and in general in the Southern Africa region.**

**A – Portugal and its secret political police, PIDE, was the prime suspect. Firstly, the murder would have eliminated one PIDE's enemies in Africa and created a possible vacuum inside FRELIMO, Portugal's declared enemy in Mozambique. At the same time, the physical elimination of one of the outspoken non-communist leaders of the guerrilla movement was tactically convenient to support the official doctrine that the colonial war was a crusade to defend Western and Christian values against Communism in Africa.**

Nevertheless, no documented proof was ever found in support of this theory and, the report made by Scotland Yard and formally asked for by Nyerere was never published by FRELIMO.

South Africa and its secret services -Boss - may have had a similar motivation to that of the Portuguese hard-liners.

The Soviet Union or the Chinese elements of the Cultural Revolution, active in Africa, could have had interest in making disappear from the political scene a man whose background had roots in the United States whose wife was American, and whose political tolerance was well defined by David Martin, in the Daily Telegraph of February 11, 1969, as "... *clean shaven, eloquent and realistic, Mondlane accepted alike communist and capitalist, Arab or Jew, black or white...*"

Some politically radical elements of FRELIMO and confessed anti-white members, like Uria Simango, may have helped foreign Powers interested in murdering Mondlane. The murder of Eduardo Mondlane could benefit, directly or indirectly, several groups and state-actors.

The following could be more than sheer coincidences: we cannot ignore the activity of the French OAS and old elements linked to Vichy, established in Portugal with the authorization of Salazar, through the so-called Aginter-Press. Its director Yves Guérin Serac, was an operational expert in terrorist acts and in the physical elimination of "enemies" of the West in Europe and in Africa.

This organization had direct links to Ordine Nuovo, and Paladin the latter headed by Otto Skorzeny, at the time resident in Spain and deeply implicated in terrorist acts in Italy. The number two of Aginter Press, a certain Robert Leroy was in Dar es Salam, at the time of Mondlane's murder.

**B** – The main effects of Mondlane's disappearance were quickly felt by the international community and by Mozambique itself. In March 69, one month after his murder, the Governor-general of Mozambique wrote to the Portuguese Prime Minister Marcello Caetano "... *the enemy is weakened and demoralized....it is the right moment for the 'coup de grâce'* "

The Press and several diplomatic reports from Dar es Salaam were unanimous in confirming the chaotic internal situation in FRELIMO, where Marcelino dos Santos was considered an important pro-Soviet member and Uria Simango, the Vice-President, a radical pro-China and anti-white militant.

Uria Simango was to be suspended from the Executive Committee in November '69 and expelled from Tanzania in early '70.

The first Congress of FRELIMO in '61, was a kind of "rassemblement" of several small nationalist groups under the umbrella of an independent leader, with a strong

**academic background and strong links to the United States; the second Congress of 1968, already held in Mozambique, tried under the leadership of Mondlane to maintain the unity of the different political and ideological lines inside the party, giving it a certain structure the outward aspect of which appealed to the more radical and pro-Soviet elements.**

**But since his death, FRELIMO started an irreversible slide to the left, ending in the 1977 Congress when a Marxist-Leninist ideology was adopted.**

**The end of Mondlane, was the end of a FRELIMO and a Mozambique both which struggled for independence from Portugal, while maintaining a difficult but independent position in the cold-war.**

**The model, against which Mondlane fought, was finally installed in Mozambique.**

**Thus, during the 70's the Soviet Union acquired an important asset in Southern Africa and changed the region's geo-political balance.**