

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

JS-8
Dr. Eduardo Mondlane

P.O. Box 5113
Nairobi, Kenya
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Mr. Richard H. Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
366 Madison Avenue
New York 17, New York

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Just below Tanganyika lies Portuguese East Africa, better known as Mozambique, a territory roughly one-eighth the size of the United States, containing some 6,150,000 people, over 100,000 of whom are European residents and soldiers. Like her East African neighbors, Mozambique has an agricultural economy: bananas, cashew nuts, copra, cotton, sisal, sugar, and tea form 90% of her exports. She became a Portuguese colony in 1507, nine years after Vasco da Gama landed on her northern shore on his way to India. Today, in the words of Prime Minister Salazar, the Portuguese regard Mozambique as "an overseas portion of Portugal." However, nationalist pressures may soon force Portugal to abandon this policy. The party now most likely to form the government in the event of African rule is the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) which has its headquarters-in-exile in the capital of Tanganyika, Dar es Salaam. Frelimo's president is Dr. Eduardo Mondlane.



Dr. Eduardo Mondlane

Dr. Mondlane is a solidly-built, balding man with a direct, masculine appeal. He laughs easily and has a habit of leaning forward to tap your arm as he emphasizes a point. The son of a paramount chief of the Thonga tribe, he was born on 20 June 1920, in the bush land of the Limpopo valley in southern Mozambique. Mondlane first saw white men in the Swiss Protestant mission where he started school at the age of ten. After six years, he went to Lourenço Marques and moved around the city working in missions and with boy scout groups until he was twenty-two. He then resumed his studies at an American Methodist

agricultural school and, at twenty-four, entered a Swiss mission high school in South Africa's Transvaal.

"In South Africa," Mondlane says, "I was impressed by the suffering of the African people and struck by the contradiction between the Christian training I had received and the cruelty of the whites. If they believed in Christ, why couldn't they be kind? The teachers at my new school wanted me to become a minister, but I could not resolve this contradiction."

Mondlane had considered becoming a doctor. "But," he says, "as I grew older I realized that I was more interested in understanding human behavior than in curing ills." He applied for admission to the University of the Witwatersrand to study in the social sciences and became the first African from Mozambique to enter a South African university. Fifteen days before the examinations at the end of his second year, the South African Government cancelled his student permit. "They said that I had to go because I was, 'a foreign native in a white university'." He arrived in Lourenço Marques and was immediately put in jail by the police who suspected that an African student association he had started before going to college was really an illegal political organization in disguise. They questioned him at length, but could find nothing unlawful about the association and let him go.

After his release, Mondlane had no desire to remain in Mozambique. He applied to a foundation in New York for a scholarship to study in the United States, but the foundation would not send him there. "I was told that this would involve them in local politics and they suggested instead that I study in Portugal." Realizing that he had no other way of completing the requirements for his degree, Mondlane left Mozambique for Lisbon in June, 1950.

At the University of Lisbon, he was one of 25 Africans in a student body of 3000; among his contemporaries were the Angolan liberation leaders Mario de Andrade and Agostinho Neto. Mondlane recalls his stay in Lisbon with little pleasure. "Every course I took was loaded with Portuguese propaganda. Even worse, when we Africans were away from the University, we were constantly harassed by the police. They would stop and search you and when you got back to your apartment, you found that they had searched that, too. They even followed us into church." To his delight, after a year, Mondlane received a scholarship to Oberlin College in Ohio. He left Portugal in July, 1951. "I was not sorry to go," he says with a grin.

He thoroughly enjoyed his two years at Oberlin. He continued his sociology and anthropology studies, took part in student government and debating activities, and gave talks throughout the Midwest. After receiving his BA degree, Mondlane went on to Northwestern University where he worked under Professor Herskovits. He got an MA in 1956 and spent the next year at Harvard, doing research for a doctoral dissertation on "Role Conflict in Intergroup Relations." He was awarded a Ph.D. in 1960.

In May, 1957, Mondlane joined the United Nations as a member of the research section of the Trusteeship Council. When the Portuguese heard of his new job, they tried to lure him away from the U.N. with offers of highly-salaried teaching jobs for himself and his wife (an

American who graduated from Northwestern and who took an M.A. in African Studies at Boston University while her husband was at Harvard). "The Portuguese," he says, "doubled their offers each year, but we were not interested."

Early in 1961, Mondlane went to Africa for the first time in over ten years with the U.N. committee that supervised the plebiscite in the Cameroons. When his job there ended, he took advantage of his protected status as a U.N. employee and returned to Mozambique. "As hard as they tried, the police could not keep the people from me; thousands of people asked me to organize a national movement. I was well-known because of my education, my time in jail, my U.N. job, and, I suppose, because I had married a white woman. In addition to the popular demonstrations, I received letters from other nationalists asking me to head a liberation party."

Mondlane left the U.N. in the summer of 1961 to join Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs as a lecturer in anthropology. The following June he went to Tanganyika to attend a meeting of Mozambique nationalists. Frelimo was organized at this meeting and Mondlane was elected its first president. He returned to Syracuse in the fall after spending the summer building up his party.

The young Frelimo had its share of teething troubles, most of which were financial. Mondlane says, "We only got out of the morass last March when I came to Africa for good. The recent period of starvation and discontent that resulted in the expulsion of three of our top men is fortunately over, but money is still a problem. Some countries that supported individual nationalists before are not sure of the new party and are holding back. While the Committee of Liberation set up at the Addis Ababa conference has assured us of its support, their money must be used for military training (I can't tell you where, let's just say somewhere in Africa). What we need now is money for the academic training of our people in exile here and for the running of our office. The Tanganyika Government helps us all it can, but it too is short of cash."

I asked Mondlane if there was any connection between Frelimo and the Angolan nationalist groups. His answer was flat and formal. "We will cooperate with any organization that fights for liberation from Portugal, but we are separate from Angola and cannot talk of close relations now."

He brightened when we talked about resistance to Portugal in Mozambique. "If Salazar does not accommodate us soon, there will be trouble in Mozambique. There is much repression, but the Portuguese can't stop us because we are well organized; Mozambique is our home, we have our people on our side. Salazar can't stop us, he can only offer us new terms. Our country will be free in no more than two years time." (When Mondlane arrived in Tanganyika last March, he predicted that the Portuguese would be out of Mozambique within twelve months.)

Mondlane's description of the government that would lead a liberated Mozambique was enthusiastic, but vague, "We want our government to reflect the spirit of modern Africa. We want a strong, well-organized body of power for the people of Mozambique based on the principle of one man, one vote. If you look at the structure of Tanganyika and Ghana you will have some idea of the economic system of the new Mozam-

bique. We must consider that our people have no capital and will structure our economy so they will have a say in running it. We will grow with the system. I believe in experimenting rather than in imposing a prefabricated structure on the country. We will set up committees and see how they work. As for my role in the new government, that is for the people of Mozambique to decide. If they decide that I will be more useful in education, that is where I will go."

When I asked him about other Mozambique nationalist groups, Mondlane answered that although there were no groups opposed to Frelimo, "some individuals, because of sour grapes or the conniving of some foreign governments, publish pamphlets which give the impression that another movement exists, but this is not so." (Shortly after I left Dar es Salaam, a group with the tongue-tiring name of the Mozambique African Peoples Anti-Imperialist United Front (Funipamo) held its first press conference. Its president, Mr. Mathew Mole, attacked Mondlane's, "lukewarm, unreliable, and reactionary leadership" and told reporters that the Tanganyika Government had accepted the registration of his party on 1 October.)

Our conversation turned next to the question of the United States' attitude towards Portugal. "Your country equivocates," he told me, "you say that you approve of self-determination and that you disapprove of selling arms to South Africa, yet you give weapons to Portugal which you know are used against us. The only thing you do for us is to let some of our students study in the U.S. The British won't even do that. America will never change unless her interests are threatened. Only when Salazar becomes a liability will the U.S. change. You support the reactionary government in South Vietnam and you're supporting one in my country. If Portugal sets up a stooge government in Mozambique to show how 'liberal' she is, America will no doubt support it to save Portugal's face. I would like to make an appeal to all Americans who are concerned with freedom and democracy not to wait until all is confusion, but to act ahead of events, to act ahead of time in an atmosphere when planning can be made for a real democratic government in Mozambique."

"To act ahead of time...." When will this time be? Mondlane hopes and plans, but cannot know. Until it comes, he must sit in uneasy exile; seeking support, reconciling factions, and waiting.

Sincerely,



John Spencer