

A Look Back at the Past, To Understand the Present

The Founding of FRELIMO

The establishment of FRELIMO (the Mozambique Liberation Movement) on June 25, 1962, marked the beginning of a new phase in the struggle against Portuguese colonial rule. As early as 1960 the nationalist fervor sweeping through Africa had captured the imagination of a small, but growing number of Mozambicans in exile who organized UDENAMO (the Mozambique National Democratic Front), MANU (the Mozambique African National Union), and UNAMI (the National Union of Independent Mozambique). From the outset, however, each had a relatively narrow regional and ethnic character. In a country with a multitude of ethnic and language groups parochialness posed obvious organizing problems.

The one effort of any of these organizations at political mobilization, the peaceful demonstration in 1960 at Mueda, Cabo Delgado to demand independence resulted in the shooting down of 600 unarmed men, women and children. What was revealed was the lack of a coherent strategy for gaining

independence, a problem shared by all the exile organizations. Influenced by nationalist gains in the neighboring British colonies, all believed in the efficacy of petitions, protest letters and non-violent demonstrations. They failed to realize, however, that because the retarded Portuguese economy needed colonialism to extract Mozambique's human and natural resources, the colonial regime would use all available repressive measures to frustrate their nationalist objectives.

Small in numbers, detached from internal bases of support, lacking a coherent strategy, and periodically engaging in self-destructive exile politics, the three organizations hardly posed a credible threat to the Portuguese colonial regime. In an effort to overcome the mutual suspicion which divided them, President Nyerere of Tanzania invited the three in 1962 to establish their headquarters in Dar es-Salaam and work toward the creation of a unified movement. Prodded by Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, the

President of Ghana and CONCP (the Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies), the three movements—UAMI rather reluctantly—agreed to merge into FRELIMO under the leadership of Dr. Eduardo Mondlane.

Insurgency ran deep in Mondlane's family. His father and his uncle had both fought in anti-colonial struggles at the end of the nineteenth century. After attending missionary schools in southern Mozambique and South Africa, Mondlane received a scholarship in 1947 to Witwatersrand University in South Africa where he came into contact and collaborated with students opposed to racial segregation, causing his deportation two years later. Back in Mozambique he helped to organize, and was a leading force in the Mozambican Student Movement (NESAM). His powerful critique of Portuguese colonialism and the value he attached to Mozambican culture and history inspired a whole generation of younger high school students, a number of whom subsequently became prominent members of FRELIMO. His activities brought police surveillance, interrogations, harassment and a decision that he be sent to Portugal. In the face of intensified police surveillance, Mondlane fled Portugal and continued his education in the United States. The doctoral degree he

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received in 1960 made him Mozambique's first Ph.D.

In 1961, protected by diplomatic immunity as a United Nations employee, Mondlane returned home a hero. In shanty towns on the outskirts of Lourenco Marques and in his rural Gaza homeland he met secretly with dissidents who detailed the increased oppression and urged him to organize a nationalist movement. He was also courted by Portuguese officials. Mondlane rejected their advances and left Mozambique inexorably committed to the struggle for independence. A little more than a year later he arrived in Dar es-Salaam and was elected President of FRELIMO.

Mondlane's immediate objective was to forge a broad-based insurgent coalition which could effectively challenge the colonial regime. At FRELIMO's First Congress in September 1962, a platform designed to be acceptable to all the diverse interests was adopted. The overarching concern—independence—dictated unity. Unity also meant incorporating into the movement all Mozambicans, of whatever social class or strata—peasants, workers, merchants, artisans and chiefs—who supported the common struggle. Thus, its objectives and composition made FRELIMO a fairly conventional nationalist front uniting ideologically divergent groups on the basis of patriotism and opposition to foreign domination.

In the dead of night on September 25, 1964, FRELIMO soldiers, trained in Algeria with logistical assistance from the surrounding population, attacked the Portuguese administrative post at Chai in Cabo Delgado. Despite reports by a loyalist chief of guerrilla movement in the area, the colonial authorities were taken by surprise, and the guerrillas were able to damage the post, kill one policeman and wound several others before they melted back into the forest. The colonial regime responded quickly. It dispatched heavily armed troops and secret police (PIDE) agents to Chai, arrested and beat a number of suspected FRELIMO sympathizers, but was unable to track down the guerrilla band or crack down the FRELIMO network. In retaliation, colonial troops committed a number of atrocities.

The raid at Chai marked the beginning of the armed struggle against the colonial regime. Employing classical guerrilla tactics—ambushing patrols, sabotaging communication and railroad lines, and making hit-and-run attacks against colonial outposts—and then rapidly fading into inaccessible backwater areas, FRELIMO militants were able to evade pursuit and

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Samora Machel, Mozambique's president and leader of the party with Eduardo Mondlane, FRELIMO's first president in a photo taken during the armed struggle.

Books on the MOZAMBICAN Experience

Edward Alpers. **Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa** (Berkeley, 1975). Examines the origins and the impact of the slave trade and the roots of underdevelopment in Mozambique.

Wilfred Burchett. **Southern Africa Stands Up: The Revolutions in Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa**. (New York, 1978). Examines events and issues leading to formation of liberation groups in each country and covers progress of each through 1977.

Barbara Cornwall. **Bush Rebels** (London, 1973). A first-hand account of the armed struggle by a journalist who visited the liberated zones in northern Mozambique.

James Duffy. **Portuguese Africa** (Cambridge, 1961). A general history of Portuguese colonialism in Africa.

Ruth First. **Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletariat and Peasant** (Sussex, England, 1983). Contemporary study of Mozambican migrant labor flow to South African mines.

Allen and Barbara Isaacman. **The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique** (Berkeley, 1976). Documents the long and varied anti-colonial struggle in Mozambique.

Allen and Barbara Isaacman. **Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982** (Boulder, 1983). Analyzes the colonial capitalist impact and FRELIMO's effort to initiate a socialist path of development.

Frances Moore Lappe and Adele Negro Beccar-Varela. **Mozambique and Tanzania: Asking the Big Questions** (San Francisco, 1980). Compares approaches of Mozambique and Tanzania in solving basic economic and social problems facing each country.

Samora Machel. **Sowing the Seeds of Revolution** (London, 1974). Important speeches and texts from the armed struggle.

Samora Machel. **Establishing the People's Power to Serve the Masses** (London, 1976). Important documents defining the essence of "people's power."

Eduardo Mondlane. **The Struggle for Mozambique** (Baltimore, 1969). Written by FRELIMO's first president fifteen years ago, it remains the classic book on the armed struggle.

Barry Munslow. **Mozambique: The Revolution and Its Origins** (London, 1983). Analyzes the transformation and radicalization of FRELIMO.

John Saul. **A Different Road? Socialism in Mozambique** (New York, 1983). Examines transformation taking place in a number of strategic sectors (agriculture, housing, education, health) in contemporary Mozambique.

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surveillance. In the two northern provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado FRELIMO's peasant network provided critical supplies and ammunition. Gradually, although not without setbacks, FRELIMO consolidated its power and drove the colonial forces out of the surrounding regions progressively expanding the liberated zones. By 1968 the insurgents controlled approximately 20-25 percent of the area and had opened a third front in the strategically important central province of Tete.

The expansion of the liberated areas, however, created new problems for FRELIMO—problems which required creative solutions. Once areas had been liberated, the colonial state apparatus dismantled and exploitative colonial economic institutions disbanded, new economic, social and political structures and relations of production had to be introduced. For these there were no precedents. Moreover, to guarantee the active involvement of the peasants in both the liberated zone and the areas of conflict, FRELIMO had to offer them more than just the end of the colonial order—what was demanded was a vision of hope for a new and just society.

From the outset of the armed struggle FRELIMO was forced to become more than just a nationalist movement. Despite the united front it presented to the world, FRELIMO was really two entities throughout much of this early phase—"a conventional nationalist movement unable to secure an easy transition to power and a revolutionary movement struggling to be born."

The demands placed on FRELIMO by its successes heightened the conflicting ideologies which had been submerged within FRELIMO since its inception—the first, rooted in a narrow nationalist tradition, sought merely to capture the colonial state. The second, increasingly committed to revolutionary nationalism, recognized the necessity to transform basic social and economic as well as political relations. By 1968 these two different "lines"—as FRELIMO periodicals came increasingly to refer to them—each with a different social vision and class orientation openly contested for power.

(To be continued in the next issue.)

THE FOUNDING OF FRELIMO

Conclusion

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One group, including Nkavandame and Gwenjere, enjoying at least the tacit support of Uria Simango, the FRELIMO Vice-President, took a narrow nationalist posture. For them the ultimate objective was to create an independent black nation run by a privileged black elite which would replace the white colonial elite. Indeed, peasants in the liberated zones increasingly complained that Nkavandame, who was Director of the Department of Commerce, was siphoning off profits from FRELIMO's peoples' stores, speculating in products in short supply, and exploiting labor in his private field.

In opposition stood the majority of the Central Committee led by Marcelino dos Santos, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Samora Machel, head of the army, Joaquim Chissano, a senior member of the Executive Committee, and President Mondlane, who had been radicalized by the struggle. Although Mondlane initially sought to maintain the unity of the movement, by 1968 he had come to recognize its futility. The revolutionary faction argued that Lisbon's defeat would mark only the first step in transforming Mozambican society, and it saw the experiences of the liberated zones as establishing a model, however embryonic, for the way in which collective action and ownership could lead to a more equitable distribution of Mozambique's resources. It rejected the notion that a privileged elite should guide the country and appropriate its wealth.

At the Second Party Congress held in July 1968 Mondlane and his allies prevailed. Despite the staunch opposition of Nkavandame, the Congress was held in liberated Niassa province, Mondlane was reelected President, and the Central Committee's size was doubled from twenty to forty. New members came almost exclusively from popularly elected constituencies inside Mozambique and the military—both of whom supported the revolutionary position. The enlarged Central Committee adopted a new program emphasizing the eradication of all forms of social and economic inequality and committing FRELIMO to forge ahead with the process of national reconstruction begun in the liberated zones.

Although defeated, the minority faction led by Nkavandame was not prepared to yield power without a struggle. A few weeks later Nkavandame organized a meeting of FRELIMO

dissidents' in southern Tanzania where he elaborated his plan to establish a splinter organization. In December the Deputy Chief of the Defense Department, Paulo Samuel Kankhomba, was assassinated. Nkavandame was identified by FRELIMO as the culprit, and on January 3, 1969, he was stripped of all his responsibilities. A month later a letter bomb killed President Mondlane at his office in Dar es-Salaam. Nkavandame, along with Silverio Nungu, a senior FRELIMO member, was implicated in the assassination which had been orchestrated by the Portuguese secret police. He fled across the border with the help of PIDE agents and defected to the colonial regime. In May 1970 the Central Committee elected Samora Machel President and Marcelino dos Santos Vice President of FRELIMO.

Like his assassinated predecessor, Samora Machel came from a family steeped in a long tradition of anti-colonial struggle. His grandparents and great-grandparents fought in the wars of resistance at the end of the nineteenth century in southern Mozambique, and his paternal grandfather was one of the leading figures in the Maguiugane rebellion in 1896. His family also suffered for its outspoken opposition. Both maternal grandparents were deported to Sao Tome where they died in exile.

When FRELIMO was formed, Machel fled Mozambique and joined the movement rising quickly within its ranks. In 1963 he went with a small group of militants to Algeria for military training and, after his return to Tanzania, he was placed in charge of FRELIMO's first military training camp. In this capacity he played a central role in planning and organizing the initial phase of the armed struggle. A year later he directed the military campaign in the eastern sector of Niassa, and in 1966, after the death of FRELIMO's first Defense Secretary Filipe Magaia, he took over this post. In the hotly contested ideological debates within the Central Committee to which he was soon after elected, Machel was aligned with Eduardo Mondlane and Marcelino dos Santos, emerging as one of the principal protagonists of the revolutionary nationalist position. The selection of Machel as President and dos Santos as Vice President marked the final victory for the forces of revolutionary nationalism and set the stage for a more explicit adoption of a socialist agenda.

Between the end of 1969 and 1973 the principles and practices developed in the liberated zones were formalized and the war zone extended. FRELIMO's clearer ideological stance facilitated the destruction of the last vestiges of traditional authority. It also highlighted the fact that a black bourgeoisie, if left unchecked, could coopt and ultimately

destroy the revolution. The need to emancipate women received greater emphasis, and advances were made in the fields of health and education. On the military front, guerrilla forces blunted the much-heralded Portuguese defensives and expanded their operations in Tete province and, for the first time, began making significant inroads in the southern half of the country. FRELIMO's front in Manica and Sofala not only threatened the white settler highlands but also Beira, the colony's second largest city. Not even substantial aid from the West, including \$435 million from the U.S., could prop up the colonial regime.

By the end of 1973 freedom fighters were operating only 400 miles from Lourenco Marques and growing opposition to the war paralyzed the colonial army and set the stage in Portugal for the coup of the armed forces movement which overthrew the authoritarian regime of Marcello Caetano on April 24, 1974. In prolonged and difficult negotiations FRELIMO unequivocally rejected the attempts of the new Portuguese government to impose a "neo-colonial solution." On September 7, 1974, the Lusaka agreement was signed establishing a transitional FRELIMO-dominated government and guaranteeing Mozambican independence on June 25, 1975.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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MOZAMBIQUE: FROM COLONIALISM TO REVOLUTION 1900-1982 by Allen and Barbara Isaacman provides a comprehensive background for understanding events in Mozambique today. In addition to valuable historic information it also contains present day accounts of Mozambique's effort to build a new socialist society. Softback copies of the book are available to newsletter subscribers for \$8.00 from the Mozambican Resource center.

MACHEL VISITS EUROPE

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tions which were held as in the meetings with businessmen, we clarified that there is interest in the People's Republic of Mozambique in co-operating with all countries on the basis of reciprocal benefits, equality and mutual respect. We demonstrated also that there are advantages in co-operating with Mozambique and the independent countries of southern Africa.