

***Mediators of Liberation: Eastern-Bloc Officials, Mozambican Diplomacy and the Origins of Soviet Support for Frelimo, 1958–1965***

NATALIA TELEPNEVA

(UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies)

*This article draws on recently declassified archival sources in former Eastern-bloc countries to investigate the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique's (Frelimo) international diplomacy 1958–1965 and to examine how the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) responded to these overtures. The article begins by looking at the development of initial contact between Soviet officials and Mozambican nationalists. The middle-level Soviet officials involved had diverse personal trajectories, but many had prior experience in the international communist movement, and some had fought in the Second World War. These experiences shaped their commitment to ending colonial exploitation and their enthusiastic quest to support 'progressive' African nationalists. My account stresses the importance of key interlocutors in shaping initial Eastern-bloc officials' decisions over which movements to support – emphasising in particular the mediating role played by the trusted figure of Marcelino dos Santos. Dos Santos used his connections with Eastern-bloc countries to facilitate both Frelimo's rise over rival nationalist movements and Eduardo Mondlane's ascendance as Frelimo leader. The Frelimo leadership's successful pursuit of assistance from socialist countries in 1964–65 shows their capacity to leverage the Cold War to their own advantage. The article argues that the Mozambicans in this story, rather than following Moscow's diktat, were the agents of their own emancipation.*

**Introduction**

On 25 September 1964, Portugal's second-largest colony in Africa, Mozambique, erupted in a series of violent assaults against isolated military posts, all of which were co-ordinated by the Mozambican Liberation Front (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* – Frelimo). Frelimo's military commander, 25-year-old Alberto Chipande, led an attack against the house of the local colonial administrator (or *chefe do posto*) in the small town of Chai in Cabo Delgado province. Frelimo's first president, Eduardo Chivambe Mondlane, recounted Chipande's report of the attack:

The guard came and stationed himself at the door of the house of the chefe do posto, seated on a chair. He was white. I approached the guard to attack him. My shot would be the signal to the other comrades to attack. The attack took place at 21 hours. When he

heard the shots, the chefe do posto opened the door and came out – he was shot and killed. Apart from him, six other Portuguese were killed in the first attack. The explanation given by the Portuguese authorities was ‘death by misadventure’. We withdrew. On the following day we were pursued by some troops – but that time we were far away, and they failed to find us.<sup>1</sup>

Frelimo’s attack at Chai, on 25 September 1964, went largely unnoticed by the world, but it inaugurated a new, violent phase of resistance against Portuguese colonial rule that would last until the 1974 coup in Portugal. By then, Frelimo already had assistance from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Over the following decade, Frelimo emerged as the only guerrilla force in the country, owing to its privileged access to resources such as weapons, training and financial support from the so-called Soviet-bloc countries: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), German Democratic Republic (GDR), Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. This military predominance over other local, often rival, actors allowed Frelimo to negotiate with the Portuguese government from a position of strength following the coup in Lisbon, which led to a unilateral transfer of power to the movement on 25 June 1975. Frelimo’s international diplomacy was therefore an important element in its anti-colonial campaign.

Historians’ interpretations of how Third World actors engaged with so-called superpowers has evolved significantly owing to the availability of new source materials since the end of the Cold War. Arne Westad, for example, in *The Global Cold War*, has broadened the framework of debate by incorporating perspectives from the USA, the Soviet Union and Third World elites.<sup>2</sup> New approaches to Cold War history have highlighted the importance of so-called peripheral actors, who played a significant role – in some cases more so than the superpowers – in expanding, intensifying, and sustaining the Cold War across different parts of the world for their own goals.<sup>3</sup> The relationship between the Soviet Union and South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC) has recently been the focus of heated historical debate. Filatova and Davidson’s *The Hidden Thread*, Ellis’s *External Mission* and Macmillan’s *The Lusaka Years* all offer very different interpretations of how much the Soviet Union controlled and influenced the ANC via the South African Communist Party (SACP).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in E. Mondlane, *The Struggle for Mozambique* (Harmondsworth, Penguin African Library, 1969), pp. 14–15.

<sup>2</sup> O.A. Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> T. Smith, ‘New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War’, *Diplomatic History*, 24, 4 (2000); P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2002); J. Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); P.E. Muehlenbeck, *Czechoslovakia in Africa, 1945–1968* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> For discussion, see S. Ellis, H. Macmillan, A. Lissoni and M. Kurbak, ‘Debating the ANC’s External Links During the Struggle Against Apartheid’, *Africa*, 85, 1 (2015), pp. 154–62.

Until now, our understanding of Frelimo's international diplomacy has been fairly limited, and the relationship with the Soviet Union and Eastern European communist parties has been subject to much speculation. Views have been polarised, as some scholars brand the nationalist movements as agents of Moscow, while others assert the agency of African nationalist movements themselves, minimising the importance of connections to socialist countries.<sup>5</sup> The one exception is Vladimir Shubin's *The Hot Cold War*, a study based on primary sources and personal memories, which traces Soviet engagement with the liberation movements in southern Africa from the early 1960s until the 1980s. Shubin argues that Soviet support was not determined by a rivalry with the United States, but that Moscow mainly responded to demands for emancipation from African elites. Building on Shubin's work and using recently declassified archival collections from Russia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Bulgaria, this article investigates how Frelimo and its early critics negotiated their relations with Soviet and Eastern European officials between 1961 and 1964. In so doing, the article contributes to debates about the relationship between the liberation movements and their donors in the so-called 'Eastern bloc', arguing that Frelimo was not subservient to diktat from Moscow. Nationalist leaders took the initiative in seeking support, and Eastern-bloc countries responded, with decisions over assistance being made by middle-ranking officials whose outlook was shaped by prior experience in the international communist movement and a strong commitment to ending colonial exploitation through support for 'progressive' African nationalist movements.

The Soviet leadership renewed its interest in Africa in the 1950s, when the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU), Nikita Khrushchev, realised that a wave of decolonisation in the continent afforded opportunities to support the spread of socialist ideas in the continent and find fresh allies among the new generation of African radical nationalist leaders. This was when the Soviets established initial contact with radical intellectuals from the Portuguese colonies. However, Soviet interest in the Portuguese colonies did not intensify until February 1961, when Lisbon's brutal retaliation to a popular uprising against Portuguese colonial rule in Angola encouraged both Moscow and Washington to engage publicly with the issue of Portuguese colonialism. The Mozambican anti-colonial movement in 1961 was not united, but the Soviets had established first contacts with a number of individuals, particularly with Marcelino dos Santos, a Mozambican poet and activist, who was well-known to the Soviets because of his links to Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) activists and other nationalist leaders from the Portuguese colonies. The election of Eduardo Mondlane as the first president of Frelimo was controversial, and it set off a series of internal splits with various actors struggling for support from socialist countries. Only by mid 1964 did Frelimo receive their first assistance package from Moscow by successfully leveraging their personal

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<sup>5</sup> J.M. Cabrita, *Mozambique: The Tortuous Road to Democracy* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000).

contacts with a group of middle-ranking officials in the CC CPSU International Department. This article emphasises the agency of African leaders in shaping their relationships with Soviet and East European donors. It adds to existing scholarship by highlighting the role of key interlocutors in shaping these connections, particularly the figure of Marcelino dos Santos. Dos Santos, I argue, was able to use his Eastern-bloc connections to enable both the rise of Frelimo over rival nationalist movements, and the ascendancy within it of Mondlane to the position of leader.

### First Contacts

The very first contacts between the Soviets and nationalist activists from the Portuguese colonies date to the mid 1950s, when Nikita Khrushchev turned his attention to the Third World. A deeply pragmatic man of peasant origin, Khrushchev realised that decolonisation gave the USSR a perfect opportunity to ‘extend a helping hand’ to leaders of the newly independent states, and thus win new friends for the Soviet side.<sup>6</sup> However, as someone who had been a true believer in the revolutionary cause, an admirer of Lenin and, according to some critics, of Trotsky’s theory of world revolution, Khrushchev believed that the chances of building socialism in Africa were higher than for capitalism, as many nationalist leaders had proclaimed their interest in Marxist ideas.<sup>7</sup> In the 1950s, Africa remained *terra incognita* (unknown land) for the USSR in cultural, political, and bureaucratic terms: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not have a single department responsible for relations with African countries; there was no Soviet intelligence presence; and almost no cultural or educational exchange between the USSR and African countries.<sup>8</sup>

Only in March 1958 did the Secretariat of the CC CPSU enact a series of measures to expand Soviet reach in Africa. The Central Committee released two top-secret decrees instructing various Soviet ministries to magnify radio and print propaganda in Africa, expand the number of scholarships for African students, and train a network of Soviet Africanists. The Central Committee assigned a special role to the so-called ‘public organisations’, such as the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa and Asia (hereafter Soviet Solidarity Committee) to develop relations with the ‘progressive’ organisations of Africa and Asia. Established as a Soviet branch of the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO),

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<sup>6</sup> G. Mirskiy, ‘Na Znamenatel'nom Rubezhe’, *Vostok*, 6 (1996).

<sup>7</sup> S. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> I. Spizkiy, ‘Obrasovanie Afrikanskih Otdelov Mid I Moi Oput V Narodnoi Respublike Kongo’, in A.M. Vasilev, P.P. Petrik (eds), *Afrika v Vospominaniyah Veteranov Diplomaticheskoi Sluzhbu* (Moscow, Institut Afriki RAN, 2004), pp. 13–46; V. Kirpichenko, *Razvedka: Litsai Lichnosti* (Moscow, Geya, 1998), pp. 89–90; P. Shmelkov, ‘Obshestvennue Svyazi S Afrikoi. Kak Oni Nachinalis’, in A.M. Vasilev, P.P. Petrik (eds), *Afrika V Vospominaniyah Veteranov Diplomaticheskoi Sluzhbu* (Moscow, Institut Afriki RAN, 2000), pp. 28–9.

with headquarters in Cairo, the Soviet Solidarity Committee was assigned to use its representatives in Cairo for liaison with African leaders.<sup>9</sup> The term 'progressive' was of course crucial in this resolution: on the one hand, it meant that the Soviets actively developed contacts with men and women of left-wing views, and, on the other hand, it was flexible enough not to limit contacts with a wide range of individuals friendly to the USSR and sympathetic to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism.

This set of measures increased the role of the CC CPSU International Department. A successor to the Communist International (Comintern), the International Department's role was to maintain and develop relations with communist parties and various left-wing organisations in capitalist countries.<sup>10</sup> Thus the International Department processed information coming from Soviet information bureaus, embassies, and intelligence services, co-ordinated the work of public organisations such as the Soviet Solidarity Committee, allocated cash for foreign workers' organisations, and drafted policy proposals for approval at the CC CPSU Politburo.<sup>11</sup> The International Department was therefore the most important institution within the Soviet bureaucracy for defining policy on African liberation movements.

The overall policy direction for the International Department was set by its long-term chief, Boris Ponomarev. Born in 1905 in Zaraysk, Ponomarev first worked as a low-level party functionary before moving to Moscow, where he studied at Moscow State University and the University of Red Professors. In 1932, Ponomarev became the personal assistant to Georgiy Dimitrov, the head of the Comintern. A true anti-Stalinist, Ponomarev was a strong believer that 'proletarian internationalism' was not simply a slogan but a personal choice.<sup>12</sup> While Ponomarev set policy for the International Department overall, Soviet relations with the liberation movements in Africa were directed by Ponomarev's deputy, Rostislav Ulyanovskiy, and the head of the Africa section, Petr Manchkha.

Like Ponomarev, Ulyanovskiy and Manchkha had had some experience in interacting with the international communist movement. Ulyanovskiy was a native of Vitebsk, in modern-day Belorussia, and started his career as an expert on India. In the 1930s, he was in charge of the section for the 'Far East and the Colonies' at the Comintern's International Agrarian Institute

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<sup>9</sup> 'Postanovlenie Sekretariata ZK KPSS, 'O Meropriyatiyakhpo Rasshireniyu Kulturnykh Obshestvennykh Svyazei So Stranami Aziii Afriki', 24 March 1958, in A.N. Artizov, O.V. Budnitskiy, V.P. Kozlov (eds), *Vozvratit Domoj Druzyami SSSR: Obuchenie Inostranzev v Sovetskom Soyuze, 1956–1965: Dokumenty* (Moscow, Mezhdunarodnyi Fond 'Demokratiya'), pp. 81–3.

<sup>10</sup> The Comintern was established in 1919 to foster socialist revolution around the world but was dissolved in 1943 in the wake of the Second World War.

<sup>11</sup> V. Shubin, *The Hot Cold War: The USSR in Southern Africa* (London, Pluto, 2008), p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> K. Brutents, *Tridtsat' Let na Staroy Ploshchadi* (Moscow, Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya, 1998).

before his arrest in January 1935. Charged with participation in a Trotskyist organisation, Ulyanovskiy was dispatched to the labour camps for the following 20 years, until he was rehabilitated in 1955. Upon his return from Moscow, he worked for a few years as deputy director for the Institute of Oriental Studies, and, in 1961, Boris Ponomarev recruited him to work at the International Department with responsibility for Afro-Asian affairs.<sup>13</sup> Ten years younger than Ulyanovskiy, Manchkha was of Greek ethnic origin. Born in modern-day Ukraine, he first served as a local party functionary before moving to the International Department. He was in charge of maintaining relations with left-wing groups in Albania and Greece shortly after the end of the Second World War. 'A cheerful and life-loving man, a big patriot of the African continent', according to one of his colleagues, Manchkha would at one time cross the Albanian–Greek border to participate in a meeting of left-wing Greek partisans. When Soviet–Albanian relations started to falter in the early 1960s, Manchkha moved to become the first head of the Africa section at the International Department.<sup>14</sup> Neither Ulyanovskiy nor Manchkha were experts on Africa.

The one notable exception was Ivan Potekhin. Born in 1903 in the village of Krivosheino, in modern-day southern Russia, Potekhin had studied at Leningrad's Oriental Institute in 1932. Afterwards he taught in Moscow at the Comintern-affiliated Communist Institute of the Toilers of the East, where he established relations with many of the leaders of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). In 1936, he was accused of Trotskyism and expelled from the Institute with party sanctions – a light punishment for a time when cadres of the Comintern were purged in great numbers during the Stalinist Great Terror.<sup>15</sup> Potekhin came back to play an important role in reviving Soviet–African relations following Khrushchev's turn toward the Third World and became the unofficial liaison between the Soviet Union and African elites. Potekhin visited Ghana in 1958 for the All-African People's Conference while also undertaking some research. In 1959, Potekhin became the first Director for the Institute of African Studies and the first head of the Soviet Friendship Association with the African Peoples.

Khrushchev's denunciation of Joseph Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in February 1956 ushered in a period of relative openness in the Soviet Union towards the outside world, which allowed for large numbers of Soviet citizens to interact with African elites. The Soviets organised conferences, seminars, and cultural exchanges to promote personal contacts with

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<sup>13</sup> Ya.V. Vasilkov and M.Yu. Sorokina (eds), *LyudiiSudby. Bibliograficheskiy Slovar Vostokovedov – Zhertv Politicheskogo Terrora v Sovetskiy Periud* (St Petersburg, PeterburgskoyeVostokovedeniye, 2003), available at <http://memory.pvost.org/pages/ulianovskij.html>, retrieved 25 July 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Kirpichenko, *Razvedka*, p. 205; conversation with Vladimir Shubin, Moscow, 8 April 2015.

<sup>15</sup> A. Davidson, I. Filatova, V. Gorodnov and S. Johns (eds), *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History* (London, Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 9–11.

Third World intellectuals, and advertised the socialist experiment. One of these events was the 'First Afro-Asian People's Writers' Conference', held in Tashkent, Soviet Uzbekistan, in 1958.

One of the participants at the Tashkent conference was the young Mozambican activist and poet Marcelino dos Santos. Born in Lumbo on the east coast of Mozambique, dos Santos was raised in the capital city, Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), before he moved to Lisbon for higher education. In Lisbon, dos Santos studied alongside Amílcar Cabral from Cape Verde and Agostinho Neto and Mário de Andrade from Angola. They were radical intellectuals, who in 1951 founded a group called *Centro dos Estudantes Africanos* as a workshop to discuss African history, culture and politics. They also established close ties with the outlawed PCP, which dominated underground resistance against Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, the Portuguese dictator. Thereafter Marcelino dos Santos moved to Paris for postgraduate studies, where he collaborated with a Senegalese writer and one of the central figures in the *négritude* movement, Alioune Diop, at the cultural review *Presence Africaine*, alongside Mário de Andrade. In 1957, he co-founded the *Movimento Anti-Colonial* (MAC – Anti-Colonial Movement) as the first umbrella organisation for African activists who were campaigning for independence from the Portuguese colonies.<sup>16</sup>

We do not know what kind of conversations (if any) Ivan Potekhin had with Mário de Andrade, Viriato da Cruz and Marcelino dos Santos in Tashkent, but communication did emerge between the African activists and Soviets at the middle level of the Soviet bureaucracy. This was mainly cultural and informal in character, as the capacity of Soviet non-governmental institutions to give assistance was still limited. For example, Potekhin had to decline Mário de Andrade's request for scholarships for students from the Portuguese colonies because of a lack of capacity.<sup>17</sup> Cultural exchanges proliferated, however. Pavel Shmelkov, who in the early 1960s became responsible for sub-Saharan Africa at the Association for Friendship and Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries, recounts meeting Marcelino dos Santos, Mário de Andrade and Agostinho Neto at a poetry reading in Moscow. He recalls that the Library of Foreign Literature at Razin Street was filled to capacity with African guests reading their poetry in Portuguese and French late into the evening.<sup>18</sup>

Personal contact between African nationalists and a small group of people in the International Department would prove crucial in the following years. While inter-war purges and the Second World War left only a few men who were actively connected to the Comintern, all the officials in

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<sup>16</sup> E. Akyeampong and H.L. Gates (eds), *Dictionary of African Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> L. Lara (ed.), *Um Amplo Movimento: Itinerário do MPLA Através de Documentos e Anotações* (Luanda, Lúcio e Ruth Lara, 1997), p. 206.

<sup>18</sup> Shmelkov, 'Obshestvenue Svyasi S Afrikoï'frikoïko–9.

the International Department who would become responsible for the liberation movements had some experience working in the international communist movement – a movement based on the principle that the Soviet Union had a duty to help to defeat colonial exploitation in the spirit of ‘proletarian internationalism’. New to African politics, the Soviet officials relied upon key figures with connections to European communist parties and affiliated organisations to help to determine whom they should support. The PCP and its leader, Alvaro Cunhal, were much respected in Moscow. Marcelino dos Santos belonged to the group of activists from the Portuguese colonies who had good contacts with the Portuguese and French communists, which ensured that the Soviets could trust him as a ‘progressive’ man. Dos Santos thus became a crucial link between the Mozambican nationalists and the Soviets. These contacts, however, mostly remained in the realm of cultural exchanges, until 1961, when a series of popular anti-colonial uprisings in Angola raised the salience of Portuguese colonialism on the international agenda and launched the colonies into the Cold War.

### **The Angolan Uprising and the Foundation of Frelimo**

The rebellion against Portuguese colonial rule started as a series of attacks against government buildings in the Angolan capital, Luanda, in February 1961. Although it was suppressed, two months later a wide-scale uprising spread to the cotton-growing region in the north of the country. This Angolan uprising, together with the brutal response from Lisbon, raised the salience of Portuguese colonialism on the international agenda, launching the colonies into the realm of superpower competition. US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy charged the State Department with exerting pressure on Salazar to institute reform in the colonies and push them towards self-determination.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, the First Secretary of the CC CPSU, Nikita Khrushchev, re-affirmed Soviet support for the wars of national liberation, and, in 1961, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the African Party for Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) received their first assistance packages from the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.<sup>20</sup> In March 1961, the International Department recruited Petr Nikitovich Yevsyukov to work as a desk officer for the Portuguese colonies under the head of the Africa Section, Petr Manchka.

Unlike his more senior colleagues, Yevsyukov’s formative experience was that of active service during the Second World War. Born on 3 January 1921 in Harbin, China, Yevsyukov moved to Moscow at an early age. He served in the Red Army during the Second World War and was wounded twice. He then studied and taught at the Military Institute of Foreign Languages.

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<sup>19</sup> R.D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983).

<sup>20</sup> For further details on the Angolan uprising and its aftermath, see N. Telepneva, ‘Our Sacred Duty: The Soviet Union, the Liberation Movements in the Portuguese Colonies, and the Cold War, 1961–1975’, PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 2015.



Following the dissolution of the Institute in 1956, Yevsyukov moved to work for the Foreign Languages Publishing House. He was brought in to work under Petr Manchkha as the desk officer for the Portuguese colonies in 1961 because of his knowledge of the Portuguese language, but, as he claims, gradually became the man best informed about the situation in the Portuguese colonies, as he filtered information coming from various sources to the International Department. Yevsyukov believed that decolonisation was an inevitable process and that the socialist countries had an internationalist duty to support the national liberation movements:

The October [1917] Revolution, and then the victory of the anti-fascist coalition in World War Two, decisively influence the balance of forces in the world in favour of progress, struggle for national liberation, especially in Africa and Asia. The 'Cold War did not stop this process ... Assistance to nationalists from socialist countries, first and foremost the Soviet Union, was a natural reply to their appeal for such help.<sup>21</sup>

Mozambican nationalism did not have a united liberation movement at the time of the Angolan uprising. The Portuguese ruthlessly persecuted dissent in the colonies and forbade all forms of nationalist organisation. This is why, in the 1950s, the first self-help organisations of Mozambicans were formed in neighbouring countries, such as British-controlled Tanganyika and Nyasaland (Malawi), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and South Africa, which hosted large numbers of Mozambican migrant labourers and where the political climate was relatively free.<sup>22</sup> One of the defining moments for the Mozambican liberation movement was the so-called 'Mueda massacre' of June 1960, when the police fired at a crowd of peaceful protesters in the town of Mueda, Cabo Delgado province, killing up to 600 people.<sup>23</sup>

The bloody events at Mueda encouraged the establishment of nationalist organisations campaigning for national sovereignty: the Mozambique African National Union (MANU); the African Union for Independent Mozambique (UNAMI); and the National Democratic Union of Mozambique (UDENAMO). MANU was rooted among the community of Mozambicans, mostly of Makonde ethnic origin, living in Tanganyika. Consequently it was modelled on the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), led by Julius Nyerere. UNAMI represented Mozambican workers from the Tete district in Mozambique who were living in British Nyasaland. UDENAMO was established in Bulawayo, the centre of the labour movement in Southern Rhodesia, and attracted members of Mozambican self-help organizations, including its first leader, 22-year-old Adelino Gwambe, a former employee of the Southern Rhodesian railways from Inhambane, southern Mozambique. In April 1961, Gwambe represented UDENAMO at the first Conference of Nationalist Organisations of the Portuguese Colonies (CONCP), an umbrella organisation

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Shubin, *The Hot Cold War*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> S. Funada-Classse, *The Origins of War in Mozambique: A History of Unity and Division* (Somerset West, African Minds, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> M. Cahen, 'The Mueda Case and Maconde Political Ethnicity', *Africana Studia*, 2 (November 1999).

that united the MPLA, PAIGC and UDENAMO in the aftermath of the Angolan uprising. Gwambe immediately launched a campaign to raise UDENAMO's profile in Africa and abroad.

Gwambe's trips to the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia had very limited success. In September 1961, he travelled to Moscow at the invitation of the Soviet Solidarity Committee with a request for financial assistance and military training. He did not make a good impression upon Yevsyukov, who described him as an immature politician who was also 'opportunistic', as he had just returned from the United States.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the International Department allocated US\$3,000 for UDENAMO in 1961. That was a token amount, awarded perhaps because Marcelino dos Santos's signature was also affixed to the letter.<sup>25</sup> Gwambe made a better impression in Prague, where he arrived with UDENAMO's vice-president, David Mabunda, in April 1962. A Czechoslovak report characterized Gwambe as an 'inspired champion of independence', who was still quite undecided in terms of his political beliefs, while Mabunda was much more self-confident, made good arguments, and adhered to left-wing views. The Czechoslovaks seemed positive that they had established contact with the representatives of a movement that could play the leading role in the Mozambican nationalist movement, but there is no indication that Prague was prepared to satisfy Gwambe's and Mabunda's funding and training requests.<sup>26</sup>

Yevsyukov seemed to be much more impressed by Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane, a Mozambican professor and activist. Born on 20 June 1920, Mondlane was the son of a Tsonga chief from Gaza province in southern Mozambique. Having received secondary education from Swiss missionaries, Mondlane studied at the Witwatersrand University in the Republic of South Africa at a time when the ANC was rapidly expanding its campaign for majority rule. Mondlane then became involved in political campaigning in Maputo before going for further studies to Lisbon and eventually the United States. There he studied sociology and anthropology at Oberlin, Northwestern, and Harvard universities, and married a white woman from Indiana, Janet Rae Johnson. When working as research officer at the Trusteeship Department of the United Nations, he developed good relations with the administration of US President Kennedy, whom he urged to press Salazar to move towards self-determination within a realistic timetable.<sup>27</sup> In early 1961, Mondlane became well known to young Mozambicans when he toured the country while campaigning for reform. Yevsyukov also recalls Mondlane's trip to

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<sup>24</sup> Shubin, *The Hot Cold War*, p. 120.

<sup>25</sup> Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveisheistorii (RGANI), FOND (F.) 89, OPIS (OP.) 38, DELO (D.) 4.

<sup>26</sup> Archiv Ministerstva Zahraničních Věcí (AMZV), 1970–1974, TERITORIÁL NÍODBORY-TAJNÉ (TO-T), IV/8, Sign. 273, Inv. č. 67, report about Gwambe's and Mabunda's trip from Mozambique to Czechoslovakia, 21–29 March 1962.

<sup>27</sup> Cabrita, *Mozambique*, pp. 5–7.

Moscow with Marcelino dos Santos as representatives of UDENAMO. Mondlane apparently informed them of his plan to unite the Mozambican liberation movement and begin a peaceful struggle for independence, before resorting to violence. Yevsyukov described Mondlane as well informed about the situation in the country and noted that they fully supported his views.<sup>28</sup>

Mondlane also found support from the Tanganyikan authorities – namely Julius Nyerere, who was elected first prime minister of independent Tanganyika in 1961, and Oskar Kambona, the secretary-general of TANU. A newly independent country bordering on Mozambique, Tanganyika provided a safe haven for the nationalist leaders and would be crucial as a launch-pad for any kind of military operation across the border. Julius Nyerere was committed to African liberation, but he feared Kwame Nkrumah's influence and believed that the best way to achieve independence was by peaceful means. Mondlane shared similar beliefs and was thus a suitable candidate, from Nyerere's point of view, to lead the united Mozambican front.<sup>29</sup> In early 1962, Mondlane set off to Dar es Salaam in order to participate in the establishment of a single Mozambican liberation front under Nyerere's patronage. On 25 June 1962, UDENAMO, MANU and UNAMI united under one umbrella organisation – Frelimo – with Eduardo Mondlane as president.

The Soviets relied on Oscar Kambona to ensure friendly relations between Tanganyika and the Soviet Union. One of the most charismatic and influential politicians in Tanganyika, Kambona had regular contact with representatives of the socialist countries in Dar es Salaam. The Czechoslovaks and their Soviet colleagues believed that Kambona was a 'progressive person', an evaluation they had apparently received from various sources, including the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), who shared the information that Kambona had studied Marxism while in London.<sup>30</sup> The Czechoslovak intelligence officer Viliam Ciklamini (code name 'Cidlinský') and Kambona entered into a mutually advantageous relationship. Kambona shared information about the situation in the country, while Ciklamini apparently gave Kambona advice, before eventually offering a group of Tanganyikans scholarships to study counter-espionage in Czechoslovakia.<sup>31</sup> The Soviets believed that Oscar Kambona was instrumental in the establishment of the Mozambican common front in 1962. His positive evaluation of Mondlane – whom Kambona described as a 'sincere and honest person' to his Soviet interlocutors – clearly

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<sup>28</sup> Shubin, *The Hot Cold War*, p. 120.

<sup>29</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1969–1976, volume 28 (southern Africa), Document 195, 'Memorandum of Conversation', Dar es Salaam, 25 April 1976.

<sup>30</sup> Archiv Bezpečnostních Složek (ABS), 11690/305, Hosef Houska to Lubomir Strougal, Prague, 2 April 1962.

<sup>31</sup> ABS, 11690/305, Cidlinský to Prague, 28 February 1963.

played to his advantage.<sup>32</sup> Yevsyukov writes that Mondlane's election was not a surprise to him and colleagues at the International Department because his prestige was unquestionable.<sup>33</sup>

However, Mondlane's election was controversial. In July, a group of Mozambican nationalists – Adelino Gwambe, David Mabunda, Manuel Mahluza, Calvino Mahlayeye and Matthew Mmole – arrived in Moscow, and all of them spoke critically of Mondlane. When the deputy chairman of the Soviet Solidarity Committee spoke to Gwambe, Mahluza and Mahlayeye on 13 July 1962, Gwambe argued that Mondlane had hijacked the election, that voting was quick and done in the form of 'orders', and that he was purposely excluded from any leadership position.<sup>34</sup> Three days later, talks continued, with Mabunda, who had been elected Frelimo's general secretary, arguing that Mondlane's election alarmed them because his 'political orientation' was not yet clear, but that UDENAMO's leadership was still determined to work in the interests of the newly formed Frelimo. Nevertheless, Mabunda stated that UDENAMO could withdraw at any time.<sup>35</sup> The Soviets also had a separate conversation with Matthew Mmole, a former president of MANU, who had been elected Frelimo's treasurer in July. Unlike Gwambe and Mabunda, Mmole had specific requests, asking the Soviet Solidarity Committee for assistance in military training for a group of Mozambican patriots, financial aid, and scholarships, but he could not give a clear answer as to which organisation he actually represented.<sup>36</sup>

The conflict exploded into the open in the following months. Adelino Gwambe announced the withdrawal of UDENAMO first; then Matthew Mmole and Lawrence Millinga were expelled from the organisation, apparently for their criticism of Mondlane and his connection to the US. Tensions increased in the aftermath of Frelimo's first congress in September, as many of the original leaders did not receive leadership positions. Mondlane also caused controversy when he appointed an associate, Leo Milas (real name Leo Clinton Aldridge), to be responsible for information, propaganda and security for the Front. Many suspected Milas, a newcomer in Mozambique, harboured secret contacts to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The crisis reached a climax in December when Milas was beaten up by a group of disgruntled co-workers.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF), F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 70, Ustinov (Dar es Salaam, Councillor) to Moscow, 24 September 1963.

<sup>33</sup> Shubin, *The Hot Cold War*, p. 121.

<sup>34</sup> GARF, F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 53, B. Gafurov (Soviet Solidarity Committee) to Ya. A. Malik (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, USSR).

<sup>35</sup> GARF, F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 53, D. Dolidze (Soviet Solidarity Committee) to CC CPSU, 9 August 1962.

<sup>36</sup> GARF, F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 53, B. Gafurov (Soviet Solidarity Committee) to CC CPSU, 7 August 1962.

<sup>37</sup> W. Opello, 'Pluralism and Elite Conflict in an Independence Movement: Frelimo in the 1960s', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2, 1 (1975), pp. 66–82.

Mondlane's critics used ideologically charged Cold War labels to explain the schism and earn Soviet assistance. On 2 October, speaking to the Soviet Ambassador to Tanganyika, Andrey Timoshchenko, Mabunda argued that Mondlane and his supporters had eradicated 'progressive elements' from Frelimo's executive committee and replaced them with those bribed by the Americans – a thinly concealed reference to Milas. Mabunda also warned Timoshchenko that he was already being called a 'red agent and a traitor' and that he would probably be expelled soon.<sup>38</sup> Two months later, Mabunda approached the Czechoslovakian embassy in Cairo, requesting arms in the name of Frelimo. Prague, however, rejected his request as it became obvious that Mabunda was acting on his own account.<sup>39</sup> Gwambe and his associate, Fanuel Mahlayeye, also approached the Czechoslovakian representatives in Cairo and argued that Mondlane was a 'pro-American agent', and that his task was to destroy the Mozambican liberation movement.<sup>40</sup>

The Angolan uprising was a crucial moment, when the Portuguese colonies were thrust into the Cold War. Events in Angola provided an opening for activists to seek support internationally. Marcelino dos Santos remained a key interlocutor for the Soviets at this time, and that is probably why Moscow offered token financial assistance to UDENAMO in 1961. Soviet ideology played a part in evaluating Frelimo's leadership and prospects. Yevsyukov's positive assessment of Mondlane notwithstanding, Soviet officials were highly suspicious of Mondlane because of his background and connection to the Kennedy administration. The schism within the movement shows how Mozambican nationalists used the Cold War dichotomy to compete for resources. Those critical of Frelimo used the issue of Mondlane's background and connections to the US in order to pitch their own, 'progressive' vision of Mozambique's future to potential allies in the Soviet-bloc countries. To an extent, the Soviet officials bought into the rhetoric of a 'pro-American' Mondlane, an opinion that would colour their attitudes towards the first president for the following several years. Soviet policy thus remained in limbo until the events of the following two years in East Africa would spike Moscow's interest in Mozambican liberation.

### **From Crisis to Recognition**

Tanganyikan politics in 1963 was conducive to Frelimo's mobilisation for armed struggle. On 25 May 1963, delegates from 32 African countries convened in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa to establish the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), which was intended to form the

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<sup>38</sup> GARF, F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 70, Timoshchenko (USSR ambassador to Tanganyika) to Dolidze (Soviet Solidarity Committee, Secretary), 15 November 1963.

<sup>39</sup> AMZV, TO-T, 1970–1974, IV/8 sign. 273, inv. č. 67, record of conversation between Second Secretary Hruzy and David Mabunda on 15 December 1962.

<sup>40</sup> GARF, F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 68, record of conversation between Latip Maksudov and Fanuel Mahluza on 17 May 1963.

continental base for pan-Africanism. The delegates also decided to establish the Coordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa to organise a pan-African effort in support of territories still under colonial rule. Oskar Kambona was appointed the first head of the Liberation Committee. Convinced that Africa would never be fully sovereign or safe until the whole continent became independent, Nyerere intensified his efforts to convince London and Washington to put pressure on Portugal and South Africa to proceed to majority rule.<sup>41</sup> Nyerere's conversations with US President Kennedy in Washington were unsuccessful. Determined to keep US access to the Lisbon-controlled air and naval base in the Azores, Kennedy was not ready to consider the use of economic sanctions against Portugal. The US also abstained when a group of African states proposed to impose an arms embargo against the US.<sup>42</sup> As Oscar Kambona told the Czechoslovak intelligence officer at Dar es Salaam, Viliam Ciklamini, Nyerere returned to Dar es Salaam convinced that Tanzania must actively help to liberate Mozambique, Southern Rhodesia, and South Africa. Portugal was the weakest power among them and thus the main priority would be to liberate Mozambique in order eventually to isolate South Africa.<sup>43</sup> The establishment of the OAU's Liberation Committee in Dar es Salaam and Kambona's election as its first head raised the importance of Dar es Salaam as the hub for liberation movements across the continent and boosted Kambona's influence as a player in the Mozambican liberation movement.

Meanwhile, Frelimo launched a mobilisation campaign to prepare for a military assault in early 1963. One of the first countries in Africa, after Tanganyika, to provide substantial support for Frelimo was Algeria. Having successfully defeated France by a combination of military pressure and revolutionary diplomacy, the National Liberation Front (FLN) provided the first arms and military training for Frelimo. Through his contacts with the Kennedy administration, Mondlane secured US\$96,000 from the Ford Foundation for the construction of a centre to provide lodging, health and education for Mozambican refugees who had fled to Tanzania.<sup>44</sup>

The Frelimo leadership also consolidated their grip over the organisation by excluding the remaining critics. In January 1963, Mondlane's critics, including David Mabunda, his deputy Paulo Gumane, and Fanuel Mahluza, were expelled from the movement and from Tanganyika over their alleged involvement in a fight with Leo Milas.<sup>45</sup> On 25 March 1963, Aleksei

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<sup>41</sup> P. Bjerck, *Building a Peaceful Nation: Julius Nyerere and the Establishment of Sovereignty in Tanzania, 1960–1964* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2015), p. 192.

<sup>42</sup> R.B. Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> ABS, 11960/305, Cidlinský to Prague, 29 June 1963.

<sup>44</sup> Cabrita, *Mozambique*, p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> W. Opello, 'Pluralism and Elite Conflict in an Independence Movement', pp. 66–82.

Teplyashin, one of the Soviet representatives at the AAPSO secretariat in Cairo, wrote to the general secretary of the Soviet Solidarity Committee, Dmitri Dolidze, arguing that the Mozambican nationalist movement was ravaged by internal contradictions. They feared the possibility that Frelimo would fall apart because former MANU members would also withdraw from the front. Consequently, he advised Dolidze to strengthen contacts with the opposition leaders – Mabunda, Mahluza, and others – in spite of their various weaknesses.<sup>46</sup>

Marcelino dos Santos reassured his Soviet interlocutors about Mondlane and the schism in the movement. When Latip Maksudov, the Soviet representative at the secretariat of the AAPSO at Cairo, met dos Santos on 22 May 1963 at the foundation of the OAU in Addis Ababa, dos Santos argued that the schism in the movement had nothing to do with ideological differences or Mondlane's pro-American orientation, and that the real reason that Mabunda had left for Cairo was because he could not handle the hardships of life in Dar es Salaam. He admitted that Mondlane may have been an 'American', but emphasised that his education, contacts in the US, and skin colour made him the only person who could act as a unifying force for the liberation movement in Mozambique. 'We have decided from the very beginning – let Mondlane be at the head of the movement and we will work inside and direct it along the correct path'. Maksudov admitted that his Soviet colleagues were worried about the divisions inside Frelimo and that charges against Mondlane were not unjustified, but at the same time underlined that dos Santos was an 'old friend' whom they trusted and whose opinion was very important.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, the GDR began to comprehend Frelimo's growing importance. On 24 September 1963, Karl Steiner, the GDR's attaché in Cairo, wrote to Berlin arguing that they should pay closer attention to Frelimo and develop contacts because of Frelimo's rising influence. Mondlane had good relations with Nyerere and Kambona, with Marcelino dos Santos exerting a 'progressive' influence upon the movement. The opposition leaders based in Cairo were also progressive, but the consensus among the embassies of the socialist countries was that they should stay within a common front and exert the right kind of influence.<sup>48</sup> On 6 December 1963, Marcelino dos Santos and Frelimo's vice-president, Uria Simango, went on a seven-day visit to East Berlin, looking for funding, scholarships, and material support (clothing and printing presses) from the GDR. The GDR's evaluation of Marcelino dos Santos and Uria Simango was positive, with both being described as men who seemed to possess genuinely consistent and 'progressive' views. Therefore, it was deemed possible to begin co-operation with Frelimo, with

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<sup>46</sup> GARF, F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 68, Teplyashin (USSR embassy in UAR) to D. Dolidze (Soviet Solidarity Committee), 25 March 1963.

<sup>47</sup> GARF, F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 68, L. Maksudov (Soviet embassy in UAR, Cairo) to Soviet Solidarity Committee, 5 June 1963.

<sup>48</sup> Bundesarchiv–Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (hereafter BA–SAPMO), DY 30/IV A2/20/948, Steiner (GDR embassy in Cairo) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (GDR), 24 September 1963.

the prospect of extending an invitation to the women's delegation, providing scholarships in 1965, training cadres, providing shoes, and a second-hand printing press for the office in Dar es Salaam. The report warned of both Western and Chinese influence in Frelimo, but stated that requests for assistance would be seriously considered.<sup>49</sup>

The attitude of the Soviet diplomats in Dar es Salaam remained sceptical of Mondlane, but they nevertheless had come to the conclusion that Moscow should consider limited support to the movement. Writing to Moscow in September, Vyacheslav Ustinov, the councillor of the Soviet embassy at Dar es Salaam, argued that Frelimo had failed to unite all factions and had made no progress in preparation for war against the Portuguese. Mondlane and the movement in general may have turned to the left to some extent, but it remained weak and unpopular among the population. He nevertheless recommended that the USSR should provide scholarships for young Mozambicans to study in the USSR and invite Mondlane to Moscow together with Marcelino dos Santos or Uria Simango.<sup>50</sup> Two months later, Timoshchenko, the Soviet ambassador to Tanganyika, gave the same recommendation to the general secretary of the Soviet Solidarity Committee, Dmitri Dolidze. He informed Dolidze that Marcelino dos Santos had approached the Soviet embassy in Dar es Salaam with a request to dispatch 30 recruits for military training in the USSR, to assist with material aid for Mozambican refugees, and to provide financial assistance to the movement. Timoshchenko reiterated Ustinov's concerns about internal divisions in the Mozambican liberation front, but argued that the Soviet Solidarity Committee should invite 10–15 people for military training and invite a Frelimo delegation to the USSR because the movement contained 'healthy, progressive forces'.<sup>51</sup>

Early 1964 saw a series of uprisings in East Africa with the potential to alter the concentration of power in the region. On 12 January, a radical revolutionary from Uganda, John Okello, overthrew the sultan of Zanzibar and set up a revolutionary council, which proclaimed the People's Republic of Zanzibar six days later. The revolution in Zanzibar spurred anti-government protests in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika. On 19 January, soldiers in the Colito barracks in Dar es Salaam mutinied over low pay and the retention of European officers in top positions. After a period of negotiations between the soldiers and the British, the mutineers went back to barracks. The following day, a British force arrived and bombed the barracks, successfully crushing the mutiny. Convinced that events in Zanzibar and elsewhere in East Africa were linked, Nyerere exploited the power struggle that had emerged in Zanzibar's

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<sup>49</sup> BA-SAPMO, DZ8/163, information about the trip of Uria Simango and Marcelino dos Santos as guests of Solidarity Committee, 6–13 December 1963.

<sup>50</sup> GARF, F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 70, V. Ustinov (Dar es Salaam, Councillor) to Moscow, 24 September 1963.

<sup>51</sup> GARF, F. 9540, Op. 2, D. 70, A. Timoshchenko (USSR Embassy in Tanganyika) to D. Dolidze (Soviet Solidarity Committee), 15 November 1963.



Revolutionary Council to push for the unification of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. On 24 April, the agreement was signed, and the new state was named the United Republic of Tanzania.<sup>52</sup>

Tumultuous events in East Africa thrust the region into the Cold War. The Soviet Union and other socialist countries applauded the revolution in Zanzibar, extended diplomatic recognition, and offered economic assistance. Zanzibar was the first country in Africa to accord the GDR diplomatic recognition, instantaneously inviting East German aid and advisers to the country. The Soviets were deeply disappointed about the British intervention to crush the mutiny in Dar es Salaam and about the union agreement with Zanzibar, as they believed this to be a conservative backlash against revolution.<sup>53</sup> Viliam Ciklamini was particularly disappointed with Oskar Kambona's actions during the soldiers' mutiny in Dar es Salaam. As the only Tanzanian official who had negotiated with the soldiers during the mutiny while Nyerere was in hiding, Kambona could have taken power in the country. However, he declined, and agreed instead to the British intervention in Dar es Salaam, which was considered a treasonous act by Ciklamini.<sup>54</sup> Kambona also supported the act of union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar, thus turning his back on the revolution that he had helped to foster.<sup>55</sup> The relationship between Kambona and representatives from the socialist countries became more distant afterwards, even though Moscow still counted on him as the most 'progressive' person in the country.<sup>56</sup> Ciklamini thus described Soviet attitudes to Kambona: '[t]his might imply that our [Soviet] friends again come to the opinion that in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is a king'.<sup>57</sup>

Events in the region must have played a part in conversations between Eduardo Mondlane, Marcelino dos Santos and their Soviet counterparts when they arrived in Moscow in May 1964. Plagued by the East African turmoil, Nyerere had apparently curbed Frelimo's military preparations. The authorities had confiscated a consignment of Algerian weapons for Frelimo, releasing them only in May.<sup>58</sup> While details of the talks Mondlane and dos Santos held in Moscow are not known, the two did not ask for arms. When dos Santos travelled to Prague after visiting Moscow, he asked for scholarships and humanitarian, material and financial assistance, but also did not ask for arms because they had not yet decided on their specific requirements

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<sup>52</sup> A. Wilson, *The Threat of Liberation: Imperialism and Revolution in Zanzibar* (London, Pluto Press, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> O.I. Natufe, *Soviet Policy in Africa: From Lenin to Brezhnev* (Bloomington, iUniverse, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> ABS, 11690/305, Cidlinský (Dar es Salaam) to Prague, 21 February 1964.

<sup>55</sup> ABS, 11690/305, extract from report no. 88, Dar es Salaam from 29 April 1964 and ABS, 11690\_305, Cidlinský (Dar es Salaam) to Prague, 22 February 1965.

<sup>56</sup> GARF, F.9540, Op. 1, D.155, transcript of the SCSCAA Presidium Meeting, 13 October 1964.

<sup>57</sup> ABS, 11690/305, Cidlinský (Dar es Salaam) to Prague, 30 August 1964.

<sup>58</sup> Cabrita, *Mozambique*, p. 27.

and had not yet figured out how to transport weaponry to Dar es Salaam. The Czechoslovak Interior Ministry denied even these modest requests, citing internal divisions and general inactivity of the organisation.<sup>59</sup> Moscow nevertheless agreed to provide humanitarian assistance and offered 40 scholarships for military training in the USSR.<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile, pressure was building on Frelimo to proceed to armed struggle. In July, Portuguese President Américo R. Tomás made a two-week tour of Mozambique. Large crowds of Africans and Europeans greeted Tomás, with official sources reporting that the trip revealed that peace, progress, and racial harmony existed in Mozambique. Any further delay in the armed struggle threatened a decline in Frelimo's credibility and gave credence to its rivals. In August 1964, a group of armed dissidents linked to the rival group MANU moved into Cabo Delgado and killed a Dutch missionary, Father Daniel Boormans, who was a popular figure in the area. One of those who reported these incidents was Alberto Chipande. 'Armed bandits' would apparently pillage Indian shops, and the Portuguese would tell the population that it was Frelimo's doing. 'This held us back', recalled Chipande.<sup>61</sup>

Once Frelimo had launched its armed struggle, Mondlane doubled his efforts to obtain military assistance from the socialist countries. When he visited Czechoslovakia in October 1964, his main request for the deputy foreign minister, Jan Pudlák, was for Czechoslovakia to train recruits for underground work. In November, Mondlane approached the Czechoslovak embassy again, this time asking for material assistance and weapons, saying that he wanted Czechoslovakian support in particular, as it was a small country without the ambitions of a superpower.<sup>62</sup> In March 1965, Mondlane appealed to the Soviet government, asking it to expand assistance.<sup>63</sup> This is also when Mondlane appealed to the socialist countries to dispatch instructors as teachers at the Mozambique Institute.<sup>64</sup> Then, in April, Mondlane toured south-east Europe, stopping in Sofia, Budapest, and Belgrade. From Bulgaria, Mondlane obtained 170,000 leva-worth of weapons and war material and another 100,000 leva-worth of

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<sup>59</sup> ABS, 11690/312, Vaclavic (Prague), Marcelino dos Santos – visit to Czechoslovakia, 28 May 1964.

<sup>60</sup> Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter AVPRF), F. 659, Op. 2, P. 1, D. 1, Eduardo Mondlane to the Government of the USSR, 11 March 1965.

<sup>61</sup> I. Christie, *Samora Machel: A Biography* (London, Panaf, 1989), p. 34.

<sup>62</sup> AMZV, 1965–1969, TO-T, IV/7, Sign. 273, Inv. č. 67, Dar es Salaam, visit of Eduardo Mondlane to the Embassy on 12 November 1964.

<sup>63</sup> AVPRF, F. 659, Op. 2, P. 1, D. 1, Eduardo Mondlane to the Government of the USSR, 11 March 1965.

<sup>64</sup> AMZV, 1965–1969, TO-T, IV/7, Sign. 273, Inv. č. 67, Eduardo Mondlane to the Chairman of the Czechoslovak Solidarity Committee.

humanitarian aid. Frelimo also received 10 annual placements for enrolment at Bulgarian universities and technical lyceums.<sup>65</sup>

Mondlane's activist diplomacy also bore fruit in relations with Czechoslovakia. On 29 June 1965, after several repeated requests from Mondlane, the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party approved an assistance package to Frelimo, which included the provision of second-hand weapons and war materials worth one million Czech crowns. Czechoslovakia also agreed to dispatch one expert to provide military and political training at the Mozambican Institute.<sup>66</sup> The report, attached to the resolution of 29 June, explained that Frelimo had the 'best external conditions' to wage armed struggle because Dar es Salaam hosted the OAU Liberation Committee, Tanzania bordered on Mozambique, and the movement had already launched a military campaign in 1964. The report also mentioned that members of the Czechoslovak International Department had consulted their counterparts in the Soviet Union, who 'welcomed the initiative', yet warned readers to remain vigilant of Mondlane, given his past association with Americans.<sup>67</sup>

We still do not fully know why the Soviets decided to offer assistance to Frelimo in 1964. Eduardo Mondlane apparently believed that the Soviets had decided to support Frelimo as a deterrent to China's presence in Mozambique.<sup>68</sup> As Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated in the early 1960s, Soviets become concerned that China was challenging the Soviet leadership of the international communist movement.<sup>69</sup> However, the tumultuous events in East Africa and Western actions must have played a part in the calculations. The short-lived triumph of revolution in Zanzibar, the establishment of Tanzania and the central role in this process of Oskar Kambona, a man the Soviets deemed to be 'progressive', must have raised hopes for a revolutionary transformation. So by providing support for the Frelimo, the Soviets would acquire yet another ally for interaction with the Tanzanian elites and with an organisation that contained 'progressive' forces.

## Conclusion

This article shows that Frelimo defined the relationship with officials in Moscow, Prague, and Berlin. Khrushchev's opening to the Third World in the late 1950s provided the foundation for

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<sup>65</sup> Tsentralen D'rzhaven Arkhiv (TsDa), F. 1b, Op. 64, D. 332, Dimo Dichev to CC BCP, 21 April 1965.

<sup>66</sup> Národní Archiv, KSČ-ÚV-ANII, č. f. 1261/0/44, Inv. č. 328, Ka. 138, Prague, resolution of the 115th meeting of the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Communist Party on 29 June 1965.

<sup>67</sup> Národní Archiv, KSČ-ÚV-ANII, č. f. 1261/0/44, inv. č. 328, Ka. 138. Prague, memorandum, 29 June 1965.

<sup>68</sup> Cabrita, *Mozambique*, p. 207.

<sup>69</sup> J. Friedman, 'Soviet Policy in the Developing World and the Chinese Challenge in the 1960s', *Cold War History*, 10, 2 (2009), pp. 247–72.

Soviet policy towards the liberation movements for many years to come. These early years were the apex of Soviet enthusiasm for the potential of socialist transformation in the Third World, with personal contacts established between the nationalists from the Portuguese colonies and middle-ranking officials in the Soviet Union, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia. It was during that early period when a number of middle-ranking Soviet and Eastern European officials working at the International Department, the solidarity committees, the embassies, and the security services would establish their first personal relations with African revolutionaries. This group had diverse backgrounds, but a few shared formative experiences. The oldest had some experience from the inter-war international communist movement and from the Comintern, while the main formative experience of the younger cadres was that of active service during the Second World War. These experiences shaped the post-war cohort of younger cadres, giving them a sense of optimism in the Soviet socialist system as well as a sense of solidarity with the African revolutionaries. While the ideology of Marxism-Leninism was fundamental in how they viewed the world and thus approached potential allies, categories such as 'progressive' were flexible enough to allow people with varied persuasions to be friendly with the USSR. The Czechoslovak officer Ciklamini summed up this strategy as 'in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king' in relation to Soviet relations with Oskar Kambona, but the same can be applied to a variety of Soviet relations with leaders of the liberation movements.

Marcelino dos Santos became the key contact between Soviet officials and Frelimo. His contacts with the Portuguese and the French communist parties, his ideological values, and close relationship with other activists in the Portuguese colonies under the umbrella of the CONCP were crucial factors for the development of trust between him and counterparts in Moscow, Berlin, and Prague. The Mozambicans used Cold War dichotomies in order to compete for support from the socialist countries. Frelimo's critics were ultimately unsuccessful because dos Santos managed to reassure the Soviets that Eduardo Mondlane, of whom the Soviets were suspicious because of his contacts to the Kennedy administration, would not define the ideological direction of the movement. Dos Santos thus enabled Mondlane to become the unchallenged Frelimo leader.

There are a few questions that remain unanswered in the archives drawn on here. We still do not know whether the Soviets attached conditions to their provision of assistance for the launch of an armed struggle. We also do not know if the Chinese challenge to Soviet leadership of the international communist movement was important in the Soviet decision to offer assistance to Frelimo in 1964. However, there is no indication that the Mozambicans were in any way subservient to Moscow. The Frelimo leaders engaged in fairly effective diplomacy to obtain resources for the anti-colonial campaign, with Mondlane taking the lead in the diplomatic offensive. The story that emerges from the former Eastern-bloc archives is one that places

initiative on the side of the liberation movements. They approached the Soviets for assistance, negotiated their own role, and eventually convinced the USSR to collaborate, which gave some liberation movements, such as Frelimo, a powerful advantage over rivals. Therefore the Mozambicans conducted the liberation project as they saw fit, and, for better or worse, were the agents of their own emancipation.