



EDUARDO MONDLANE – SHORT BIOGRAPHY



Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane was born in the district of Manjacaze, Gaza province, on 20 June 1920 and died on 3 February 1969, aged just 49, the victim of a letter bomb assassination. He lost his father at an early age (1922) and was brought up by his mother and her family. At the age of 12, he began studying at a Presbyterian Church school.

In 1936 he went to Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) to continue his studies, where he finished primary school. After completing primary school, he attended an agricultural course run by the Methodist church outside Maputo. While studying, Mondlane was involved in the work of the church. After completing the course in 1942, he returned to Lourenço Marques where the church gave him the task of teaching. In 1945, he got a grant from the church to study in South Africa, at the *Douglas Lain Smith Secondary School*, where he finished his secondary education in 1948.

After completing secondary school, Mondlane enrolled in the same year at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, to study sociology, but with the rise to power of Daniel Malan's Nationalist Party, which instituted Apartheid, he was expelled from South Africa.

In 1948, as a result of many difficulties and frustrations, Mondlane founded NESAM - Núcleo de Estudantes Secundários de Moçambique (Centre of Secondary Students of Mozambique) together with other secondary school students who shared the same feeling of revolt against the injustices of the system¹.

He continued his studies in Portugal on a scholarship offered by the University of Lisbon. There he met other African students who would become leaders of the nationalist and anti-

¹ Sofia Negrão, A VIDA, A LUTA E O ASSASSINATO DE EDUARDO MONDLANE, <https://setentaequatro.pt/ensaio/vida-luta-e-o-assassinato-de-eduardo-mondlane>

colonial movements in various Portuguese-speaking African countries, namely: Mário Pinto de Andrade, Amílcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto and Marcelino dos Santos. He did his master's and doctorate in the United States of America, where he married his wife Janet Rae Mondlane.

In the USA, he worked at the United Nations, in the Curatorial Department, as a senior researcher on the events that led to the independence of African countries. At the same time, he taught history and sociology at Syracuse University, having resigned in 1963 to devote himself to the cause of independence.

In 1961 Mondlane visited Mozambique, which allowed him to have contacts with some local nationalists in hiding. He was the consensus figure to lead the unified national resistance by the three Mozambican nationalist organisations that existed at the time, namely MANU (Mozambique African National Union), UDENAMO (National Democratic Union of Mozambique) and UNAMI (African National Union for Independent Mozambique).

With the support of Julius Nyerere, president of Tanzania, this process led to the creation of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), and at the first Congress, on 25 June 1962 in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, the President of Frelimo was elected, with Uria Simango as vice-president.

He opted for dialogue as the first route to independence, but due to the intransigence of the Portuguese colonial regime, he came to the conclusion that it would not be possible to achieve independence for Mozambique without a liberation war, which began on 25 September 1964 in the district of Chai in Cabo Delgado.

Over the course of the liberation struggle, Mondlane faced several crises motivated by the power struggle within FRELIMO. Some of the former leaders of UDENAMO, MANU and UNAMI did not passively accept the idea that they would no longer be in charge of FRELIMO. From this condition and situation, FRELIMO's unity began to be questioned throughout the armed struggle for national liberation.



Mondlane led Frelimo during the first six (6) years of the armed struggle, a period of deep fragmentation, in which two wings emerged in the movement, the one that saw the revolution as an essential component in the struggle and, on the other hand, the wing that saw the struggle for independence as a greater gain. At the same time, thanks to his experience at the United Nations, he was able to mobilise support for the liberation struggle from the international community. Despite the internal rifts within the party, Mondlane was re-elected at FRELIMO's second congress, held in Mozambique in July 1968.

On 3 February, Mondlane received a letter in his office in Dar es Salaam containing a bomb, for which he was killed. Those responsible for his death remain unknown to this day, although there are hypotheses that point to the Portuguese Security Police (PIDE/DGS), wings within FRELIMO that wanted to take power and even some Tanzanian political figures.

His contribution to the process of building the Mozambican state began during the colonial period and the liberation struggle. In 1948 he founded the Núcleo dos Estudantes Secundários Africanos de Moçambique (NESAM), which, in addition to its academic aims, debated issues related to the Portuguese colonial administration system, such as equality, justice and freedom. He also contributed to the emergence of nationalist movements in Mozambique.

The first president of FRELIMO, Mondlane is described as the architect of National Unity, an advocate of federalism and popular participation (democracy). He was an ecumenical leader with good relations with actors and individuals with different orientations, including nationalists and Marxists (Marcelino dos Santos, Amílcar Cabral and Agostinho Neto), international organisations (United Nations, Arab League) and religious bodies. Today, as a tribute, the country's oldest and largest public university bears his name: "Eduardo Mondlane University". Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane symbolises national resistance against Portuguese colonialism and all forms of colonial domination. With his death, a democratic, federal Mozambique with popular participation remains an ideal yet to be realised.

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