

Invisible Actors in Cold War Conflicts in Southern Africa The Case of Mozambique

José Manuel Duarte de Jesus

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a difficult and delicate matter to deal with this subject on an academic level. The fact of being a researcher in this field and a former diplomat who served in Africa during the cold-war period help considering that a pure academic and theoretical approach of this problem may oversimplify its complexity. On the other hand, a pragmatic approach based on one owns experience may also tend to overload the analysis with political and sensationalistic distortions.

I will try my best to avoid both inconveniences. Let me explain how the non-visible actors appear in the complex context of the cold war in Africa.

In the cold-war period we have two main poles, the United States and the Western European countries on one side, the Soviet Union and the Eastern block countries on the other. This paradigm was the direct result of the Second World War. The split of the Marxist world, since the early sixties, into two powers and global players in Africa, with the Soviet Union on one side and China along with some smaller countries which followed the latter, on the other, created a greater complexity in the local power-network in Africa. This aspect is especially significant among the nationalist movements struggling for independence of the Portuguese colonies.

Each one of these Global players – the Unites States, the Soviet Union and China – used in Africa their own invisible actors: Intelligence services which created new parallel hierarchies and clandestine networks of power. The infiltration and ex-filtration of intelligence agents in the African nationalist movements of Angola and Mozambique – to give some Portuguese examples – created often situations which were difficult to explain and to interpret in the framework of models used by academic analysts of International Relations.

Keeping our attention in Mozambique, we can refer two typical cases of intelligence agents' infiltrations, one from CIA, the other from KGB. Leo Milas was introduced to Eduardo Mondlane as a Mozambican who left for the States very young and decided to come back. Probably because they both had a common American academic passt, Mondlane protected him during a long period, in spite of the fact that some members of FRELIMO started suspecting the real activities of Leo. Nevertheless during a certain period of time he was responsible for Information, Propaganda and Security¹. He created during his activities in FRELIMO a very tense atmosphere inside the movement and persecuted several elements who were excluded from FRELIMO for some time such as Paul Gumane and Mumguambe. When he went to Germany in 1964, he had contacts with the Friederich Ebert Stiftung, where he left a very negative impression.²

¹ Helder Martins, “*Porquê Sakrani?*”, Maputo, Editorial Terceiro Milénio, 2001

² The author, “*Eduardo Mondlane – um Homem a Abater*”, Almedina, Coimbra, 2010.

The main purposes of CIA were not quite clear and some Mozambicans, like Prof. Helder Martins, think that the idea was more to control FRELIMO than to destroy it. The real name of Leo Milas was Leo Clinton Aldridge, he had the American nationality and graduated from the University of South Carolina. He was finally excluded from the movement. This was a typical case of an invisible actor under covert.

On the opposite side the Soviet Union tried to infiltrate FRELIMO. Even if I do not have at this stage of my research more historical evidence, one must consider the possible KGB man, mentioned in the Mitrokhin Archive whose codename was “Tsom”. According to this source he was a young member of the FRELIMO leadership who studied in Paris and was given military training in the Soviet Union in 1965. According to the same source “*the Center was unimpressed by Mondlane*”.³ Until now, this invisible actor remains still unidentified by the majority of the FRELIMO leadership.

It is interesting to compare both strategies, that of the CIA and that of the KGB: both seemed to be more interested in the inner circle of the movement than in its leader - clever ways of possible manipulation.

A fourth element that we often neglect to consider and that played an important role in the cold-war in Africa are the right-wing extremist and extraparliamentary groups of Europe. As Prof. Bale said “Right-wing terrorism is one of the most poorly-understood political phenomena of our time...”.

As we know today, following the Truman policy in Europe during the cold-war, the British and American secret services used several persons and groups from the extreme right to contain the Soviet advance. Some were elements from the Nazi establishment – as Gehlen in Germany who was the first chief of the BND – others were linked to the fascist regime in Italy. Some younger neo-fascists joined these movements. All of them had the advantage of being deeply anti-communists.

During the Second World War the Allied Forces used a “sleeping agents” network or “stay behind armies” against the fascist threat of the Third Reich and enrolled leftist and communist groups – like the famous Shell network of MI5 in Portugal -. In the same way, during the Cold War, the Western services enrolled as “sleeping agents” for the “stay behind armies” several fascist groups against the communist threat of the Soviet Union.

The war in Algeria and its independence created a new movement formed by all those who disliked De Gaulle and fought for a French Alger – the OAS. Several extreme-right Frenchmen, some old exiled Vichyite and Catholic integralists joined this group and build its hard core, as Prof. Luc van Dongen points out. Its affinities with the philosophy of the Portuguese “Estado Novo” were obvious.

Many of them were condemned in France and found refuge in Portugal under Salazar’s regime. We will come across them in Africa, during the Portuguese colonial war, increasing the number of “invisible” actors.

³ Christopher Andrew e Vasili Mitrokhin “*The World was Going our Way – The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*”, Basic Books, NY, 2005.

It remains to clarify the real outline and nature of the relations between Western secret services and some of the so called “dirty work” or terrorist actions perpetrated by these right-wing secret organizations.

Let us make a quick flash-back on this subject.

By the end of the Second World War, Great Britain had a secret service with a long experience earned during the British Empire. But after the War, the Empire was vanishing. The United States were not equipped with such an instrument. Allen Dulles recognized this fact just after the Victory and tried to convince Eisenhower of the necessity to create a powerful American secret service, probably with its headquarters in Europe – in Berlin. For George Kennan, the intentions of Stalin over Europe were obvious, and in 1948 in a Secret Document he asked for the organization of a structure that could go ahead with “secret operations” all over the world. The NSC 10/2 recognized the necessity of those operations in order to attack the Soviets wherever they represented a menace.

The main concept was based on the conviction that the United States should use the same ways and methods of the enemy. The European extreme-right groups defended the so called *guerre révolutionnaire*'s theory. Colonel Gabriel Bonnet described in 1958 *communist revolutionary strategy as a combination of partisan warfare and psychological warfare*⁴.

The recent public disclosure or partial disclosure of many classified documents in the United States and in Europe allow the academics to make a less theoretical but also more complex analysis of many Cold War conflicts, otherwise difficult to explain.

According to some of these declassified documents, the Department of State approved such methods as “the spread of rumours, bribery and the organization of non-communist fronts”.⁵

With these new accepted methods, new invisible actors enter the geo-politics of the Cold War.

We should distinguish between two main kinds of “special operations”: Covert Operations and Clandestine Operations. Both were often used in Africa.

These extraparliamentary operations rely mainly on the use of extra-legal and subversive methods.

Both the Soviets and the CIA used such operations. Some of them had a huge impact worldwide and remain still today involved in some mystery. I am thinking on covert actions that took place during the 70's, specially the so called “forgery offensive”

⁴ Col. Gabriel Bonnet was Professor at the French Army War College and wrote in 1958 the first book on R.W. through ages. His definition was “RW consists of the application of irregular warfare methods to the propagation of an ideology or political system”

⁵ NCS, Top Secret, DDEL, 1953

actions, as the famous documents FM 30-31, connected to the “Operation Northwoods” against Cuba. This specific case was submitted to the Subcommittee on Oversight of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives through a report of the Director of the CIA, in 1978, and again in February 1980.⁶

The instructions and methods of the annex FM 30-31 follow absolutely the same lines as those used by the European extreme-right clandestine movements of that period.

Concerning the creation of anticommunist fronts, we can see how the “CIA man” in Rome, James Angleton, worked with the Italian secret services which had a lot of old fascists from the OVRA (Mussolini secret services) and how the CIA used often such neo-fascists as “reliable” anticommunists fighters.

One of the problems of any big intelligence structure lies in the difficulty to control it. We have seen several examples of these cases, one of them being Portugal. It is easy to understand the fears of men like Dean Acheson when the CIA was created. *“Pressure had developed to strengthen the newly created National Intelligence Authority. This was done in July 1947 by the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency. I had the gravest forebodings about this organization and warned the President that as set up neither he, the NSC, nor anyone else would be in a position to know what it was doing or to control it”.*⁷

During the sixties and early seventies, two small countries with a political low profile during the Second World War were a paradise for the extreme-right extraparliamentary movements.

In Portugal, Aginterpress was a strong and powerful antenna of such movements working inside the country and worldwide. One of its main areas of operation was Africa until 1969. Its activity in Portugal seem to have declined after that year, for reasons that I am studying now, and it appeared again in action after 1974, from its Spanish exile, when working closely with Skorzeny’s organization in Spain, Leon Degrelle and Portuguese, Italian and Spanish fascist groups.

Aginterpress started operating in the early sixties as a normal Lisbon based Press Agency. Its Director, Yves Guillou, alias, Yves Guerin Sérac, alias Yves de Guernadec, alias Ralph, was a former member of the famous “11 Demi-Brigade Parachutiste de Choc” in Algier and a founding member of the OAS. He worked with the French SDECE and had been condemned in France. We find him present in several international meetings of the extreme-right movement “NEO – New European Order”, since 1952 until 1979, in Paris, Hannover, Lausanne, Milano, Barcelona, Lyon, etc.⁸

His number two, Robert Leroy, was a dark figure of this organization. Former Action Française, former Waffen SS in France, Vichy intelligence officer and, curiously, as

⁶ The hearing record also includes a copy of the “Covert Action Information Bulletin” which published FM 30-31 in 1979.

⁷ Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation – my years in the State Department*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York London, 1969.

⁸ Juerg Frischknecht, Peter Haffner, Ueli Haldimann, Peter Niggli, “*Die Unheimlichen Patrioten*” Limmat Verlag, Zuerich, 1987

stated in his Aginterpress file: “Religion: *Catholique Nationaliste* - Profession: *Saboteur*”⁹.

This man, a convinced defender of the *guerre revolutionnaire* acted mainly in Africa during the sixties with different code names – “Pastiche” or “T-BIS”¹⁰ – and also in Italy during the “*strategy of tension*”.¹¹

Covered and subsidized by Portuguese authorities and by PIDE, sometimes with the discreet help of other big powers involved in the Cold War, Robert Leroy and Jean Marie Laurent, who also worked for Aginterpress, had as important mission to infiltrate the Nationalist movements of the Portuguese colonies.

According to his own declarations “*I have been put in contact with Aginterpress through a common friend, Lerouxel from Nice. I have worked mainly in Africa for this organisation infiltrating the anti Portuguese liberation movements in Mozambique: FRELIMO, MPLA from Angola, in Brazzaville and Dar es Salaam, UNAR from Rhodesia, UAO. I could enter all these organisations as a representative of the Communist Party of Switzerland from Gerard Bouillard....*”¹²

I will concentrate my focus on Mozambique and FRELIMO. Those covert missions were often made by both, who presented themselves as journalists and Maoists.

They found in Switzerland two important coverts. One was Gerard Buillard and his Newspaper “*L’Étincelle*”, from the PCSML – *Parti Communiste Suisse Marxiste Leninist* – and the RPC Embassy in Berne.¹³

Shortly before Mondlane’s murder, Robert Leroix went in a covert mission to several African Countries, and interviewed in Dar es Salaam he interviewed Eduardo Mondlane, Father Gwendjere and Marcelino dos Santos, the interviews were published in *L’Étincelle*, Nr.32, from August 1968.¹⁴

The majority of historians and even of FRELIMO members distinguished two main lines which disagreed inside FRELIMO on some fundamental issues such as problems of gender, race, classes etc.¹⁵ One more social conservative which was also anti-white, racist and separatist, headed by Nkanvandame, Gwendjere, Simango and the so called Chairmen. The Chairmen were his power network.

⁹ Document found and photographed in the Aginterpress Archives after the Portuguese Revolution of 74 by the well known Portuguese journalist Helena Vaz da Silva for the weekly *Expresso*.

¹⁰ *Sentenza-Ordinanza del Giudice Istruttore presso il Tribunale Civile e Penale di Milano, Dr. Guido Salvini* (<http://www.uonna.it/indsalv.htm>), Parte IV, Nr.67.

¹¹ Concerning his life see “*La Guerre Contre-revolutionnaire et Contre-subversive selon Rober Leroy*”, Luc van Dongen in Olivier Dard, François Cochet éditeurs, *Subversion, anti-subversion, contre-subversion*, Actes du colloque organisé à l’Université Paul-Verlaine, Metz, April 2008 – Centre Régional Universitaire d’Histoire, Editions Riveneuve, 2009, pag 283-300.

¹² Verbal-Process of the police from the Federal Swiss Public Persecutor from February 17th, 1970, in “*La Guerre Revolutionnaire et Contre-subversive selon Robert Leroy*”, Luc van Dongen.

¹³ See: mentioned works of Jeffrey Bale, Luc van Dongen, and “*Sentenza-Ordinanza...*” and José Pacheco Pereira, “*O Um Dividiu-se em Dois*”, Aletheia, 2008.

¹⁴ Bibliothèque Nationale Suisse.

¹⁵ Raimundo Domingos Pachinuapa, “*II Congresso da FRELIMO*”, Maputo, 2009.

The other represented the main line of FRELIMO. It brought together more intellectual and progressive groups and its leader was Mondlane.

In my opinion this is an oversimplified analysis of the situation of FRELIMO during the second half of the sixties.

I believe there was a trend against Mondlane and his wife grouping several tendencies and a group supporting Mondlane. This last one was also politically heterogeneous but believed in the necessity of maintaining the unity of the movement in the war against the Portuguese colonialism which anticipated the unity of the Nation.

In other words, it was an ideal environment to infiltrate and exploit all possible internal antagonisms. Part of these antagonisms reflected the climate of the Cold War, others reflected differences of educational levels and tribal mentalities: an explosive mixture that the Portuguese Secret Service – PIDE/DGS – and its ally Aginterpress could easily manipulate and take advantage of.

In May 68 two big assaults on the FRELIMO headquarter took place in Dar es Salaam – one on May 5th and the second one four days later – led by ca. 20 Mozambicans. Uria Simango, the Vice President of FRELIMO, hastened to declare that the author of those assaults was an “underground Portuguese organization” that wanted to liquidate FRELIMO.¹⁶

He also said to Pachinuapa, before the Central Committee meeting that analyzed the murder of Mondlane, “in fact, I knew about the plan to kill Mondlane and I even belonged to this group....”¹⁷

Among the enemies of Mondlane, Nkavandame was not a convinced nationalist; he worked for the Portuguese and turned himself in to Portugal after Mondlane’s murder in 1969. Others like Father Mateo Gwenjere were also racists, against the white, especially against all the white elements working in the Mozambique Institute of Dar es Salaam. Janet Mondlane, a white American woman, was considered as an agent working for CIA. But others, like the Vice-president of FRELIMO, Uria Simango, in spite of sharing these same racist ideas, were convinced of being radical Maoists.

If the CIA and the KGB were more interested in controlling FRELIMO, one way or the other, the extreme-right movements and PIDE were especially interested in destroying FRELIMO. For them the main target was Mondlane, the man who had been able to maintain the unity of the movement.

Here a new kind of invisible actor comes into action.

Members of Frelimo, remote-controlled by apparent radical Maoists, who were anti-soviets and in reality extreme right wing OAS elements, financed by the Portuguese secret police PIDE, could act from inside the Frelimo.

¹⁶ José Manuel Duarte de Jesus, “*Eduardo Mondlane, um Homem a Abater*”, Almedina, 2010

¹⁷ Raimundo Domingos Pachinuapa, “*Memórias- II Congresso da FRELIMO*”, Maputo, 2010

It is in this framework that one should consider several parallel Mozambican Nationalist movements that used a strong radical and leftist language against Mondlane and influence some members of FRELIMO.

The mission of Robert Leroy and Aginterpress was not only to intoxicate Frelimo but also to promote the creation of other sham nationalist movements.

Other movements like UDENAMO and MANU distributed a pamphlet in several African countries, short before the murder of Mondlane, called “*A Profile of Dr. Mondlane*” with severe accusation against him, his wife, but also against Marcelino dos Santos and others.¹⁸

UNAR collaborated with PIDE and Aginterpress. Some military leaders of COREMO worked for the Portuguese.¹⁹

This gives an example of the general atmosphere of political intoxication that preceded Mondlane’s murder.

To conclude, I should like, first, to emphasize the difficulty of recognizing the real actors, who they really were and often who they in reality represented in the geo-politics of Southern Africa during the Cold War period. I focused mainly on the Mozambican case. Second, given the mystery that still exists in Mozambique concerning the murder of Mondlane and the suspicious atmosphere that persisted during a long period have still an impact today and explain certain cleavages of the political tissue in contemporaneous Mozambique.

¹⁸ Jose Manuel Duarte de Jesus, id.

¹⁹ AHD, cot.36, telegrams from the Portuguese Consulate in Elizabethville (today Lumbubashi)).