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Nationalism and Internationalism in the Liberation Struggle in Mozambique. The Role of the FRELIMO's Solidarity Network in Italy

This is the final peer-reviewed author's accepted manuscript (postprint) of the following publication:

*Published Version:*

Nationalism and Internationalism in the Liberation Struggle in Mozambique. The Role of the FRELIMO's Solidarity Network in Italy / Corrado Tornimbeni. - In: SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORICAL JOURNAL. - ISSN 1726-1686. - STAMPA. - volume 70, issue 1, 2018:Published online: 12 Feb 2018.(2018), pp. 194-214. [10.1080/02582473.2018.1433712]

*Availability:*

This version is available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/11585/622769.9> since: 2022-02-28

*Published:*

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2018.1433712>

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**Tornimbeni, Corrado. "Nationalism and Internationalism in the Liberation Struggle in Mozambique: The Role of the FRELIMO's Solidarity Network in Italy." *South African Historical Journal* 70.1 (2018): 194-214**

The final published version is available online at:  
**<https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2018.1433712>**

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# **Nationalism and Internationalism in the Liberation Struggle in Mozambique: The Role of the FRELIMO's Solidarity Network in Italy**

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## Abstract

The leadership that rose to power in FRELIMO in the early 1970s derived great strength from their international status. It was in the international context that they found crucial resources to put into effect their modernist nationalist vision, and the political networks they developed within the context of the Cold War played a major role in securing FRELIMO the status of the legitimate national liberation movement in Mozambique during the liberation struggle. This article specifically focuses on the Italian solidarity network supporting FRELIMO in Mozambique: this network was rooted in personal contacts developed from the early 1960s, and it gained a major role in Europe after the 'International conference of solidarity with the peoples of the Portuguese colonies', held in Rome in 1970.

This article examines the exceptional ability of FRELIMO leaders such as Marcelino dos Santos to 'internationalise' their nationalist project, the brilliant diplomacy of these leaders in exploiting the features of the Italian political system and society, and the unusual amalgam of political and civil society groups across the Cold War divide that came together in support of FRELIMO's cause in Italy . It argues that these factors were part of the vicissitudes of the anti-colonial struggle in Mozambique and are key to understanding how FRELIMO was able to consolidate its power at the time of independence.

Keywords: Mozambique; FRELIMO; international solidarity; Cold War; Italian solidarity committee; Dina Forti; Lucio Luzzato; Reggio Emilia; Marcelino dos Santos; International conference of solidarity with the peoples of the Portuguese colonies.

## Introduction

Since the implementation of multi-party democracy, the foundations of the political system of independent Mozambique have been addressed in scholarly as well as public debates in order to explain both the trajectory of the government of the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) over the years and the nature of the opposition of the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO). In recent years, the orthodox narratives on the liberation struggle in Mozambique have been deconstructed to address, for example, the origins of the liberation front, the alternative visions of the Mozambican nation that existed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the continuities in FRELIMO leaders' ideology and political practice between the 'socialist' and 'post-socialist' periods.<sup>1</sup> What has emerged as a particularly rich field of investigation are the transnational connections of the Mozambican nationalists, as a number of international

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<sup>1</sup>. See, for example: M. Cahen, 'Moçambique: o "fim da história"... única. Trajetórias dos anticolonialismos em Moçambique', *Africana Studia*, 15 (2010), 195-240; G. Derlugian, 'The Social Origins of Good and Bad Governance: Re-interpreting the 1968 Schism in Frelimo', in E. Morier-Genoud, ed., *Sure Road? Nationalisms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 79-102; L.J.K. Bonate, 'Muslims and the Liberation Struggle in Northern Mozambique', in H. Sapire and C. Saunders, eds., *Southern African Liberation Struggles. New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), 58-75; J. das Neves Têmbé, 'Uhuru na Kazi: Recapturing MANU Nationalism through the Archive', *Kronos*, 39, 1 (2013), 257-79; A. Neves de Souto, 'Moçambique, descolonização e transição para a independência: herança e memória', in F. Rosas, M. Machaqueiro and P.A. Oliveira, eds., *O adeus ao império: 40 anos de descolonização portuguesa* (Lisboa: Vega, 2015), 141-56.

conferences and new publications vividly testify.<sup>2</sup>

In 1969, Luigi Pestalozza, a mid-ranking member of the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI), visited a number of African countries on behalf of the party's magazine *Rinascita* and held meetings with African nationalist leaders from the then Portuguese colonies. The first president of FRELIMO Eduardo Mondlane had been assassinated a few months earlier, and the Italian communist politician reported that his murder, besides the tragedy, was seen by some of those nationalists as 'unlocking the political stalemate that his figure had come to create', as Mondlane's position and relationships 'did not allow FRELIMO a clear revolutionary platform on a Marxist basis'.<sup>3</sup> However, Pestalozza was cautious in drawing conclusions from these statements: Marxism-Leninism was not yet an established ideological orientation within FRELIMO, and in those very months a key event in support of the independence struggle in

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<sup>2</sup>. For a few recent examples, see: the *Journal of Southern African Studies*' conference in Livingstone, Zambia, in August 2015, and the journal special issue on 'The Transnational Connections of Southern African Liberation Movements', 43, 1 (2017); the conference on 'The International Solidarity and the Struggle for Self-Determination and Independence of Portuguese Colonies' organised by a network of European university institutes at the Contemporary History Institute of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal (June-July 2016), which has produced two special issues in *afrique e orienti* (XIX, 3, 2017) and *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* (118, 2019, forthcoming); and the conference on 'Transnational Connections in Southern Africa II: The Decolonizing and Post-Colonial Experiences', organised at the Research Centre in Political Science of the University of Évora, Portugal (October 2016) by an international network of scholars coordinated by Helder Fonseca and Chris Saunders. This article is based on a paper presented at the latter conference.

<sup>3</sup>. Archivio del Partito Comunista Italiano (APCI), MFA 0308, 1504-12, Luigi Pestalozza, 'Relazione sul viaggio nei seguenti paesi: Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, Congo Brazzaville, Algeria, Libia, e sui contatti con i dirigenti del FRELIMO e del MPLA, alla Sezione Esteri del Partito, 28 ott. 1969'.

Mozambique and the other Portuguese colonies was being conceived in Italy involving political forces from across the Cold War divide.

During the 1960s, the direction and content of Mozambican nationalism show an interesting plurality of views and strategies that was most evident in the interaction of the ‘national’ and the ‘international’ layers of the anti-colonial struggle. By investigating the transnational connections of Mozambican nationalists, this article is a response to earlier scholarly calls to ‘critically reflect upon those who rendered support’ to the liberation movements in the region,<sup>4</sup> ‘to capture both the regional and global reach of the southern African liberation movements’<sup>5</sup> and to support the dialogue between the global history of the Cold War and the history of decolonisation in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, I contribute to these research fields by addressing what is a unique, remarkably important and under-researched case-study: the Italian solidarity network that supported FRELIMO and the liberation struggle in Mozambique. To this end, I examined primary sources in Italy that have not been accessed before, or which have been studied

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<sup>4</sup>. H. Melber, ‘On the Limits to Liberation in Southern Africa’, in C. Saunders, ed., *Documenting Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa*. Select papers from the Nordic Africa Documentation Project workshop, 26–27 November 2009, Pretoria, South Africa (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2010), 40.

<sup>5</sup>. H. Sapire and C. Saunders, ‘Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa in Context’, in Sapire and Saunders, *Southern African Liberation Struggles*, 3.

<sup>6</sup>. Some notable examples in this field are: P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); O. A. Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); V. Shubin, *The Hot 'Cold War'. The USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

mainly from the point of view of Italian history and its political system, as well as in other archives connected to the liberation struggle in Mozambique.<sup>7</sup>

By considering the multifaceted local dynamics of Mozambican nationalism, the initiatives of the international solidarity groups within the mechanisms of international relations, the diplomatic role that the FRELIMO leadership managed to play on the world stage and the distinctive traits of FRELIMO's supporters in Italy and their initiatives, my work will show how the Italian network of solidarity gained a prominent role in the European and world contexts by the early 1970s, and how it contributed to the struggle for independence led by FRELIMO in Mozambique. This article will also reflect on the

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<sup>7</sup>. This research work was based on the following archives in Italy (whose personnel was particularly helpful in guiding me through the material available): the personal papers of Lucio Luzzato (Fondo Lucio Luzzato - FLL) and the foreign relations section of the Italian Communist Party Archive (Archivio del Partito Comunista Italiano, APCI), both at the Gramsci Institute Foundation in Rome; the personal papers of Giuseppe Soncini and Bruna Ganapini (Archivio Soncini-Ganapini, ASG) at the Library Panizzi in Reggio Emilia. Relevant information was also found in some reports of the Parliamentary Commission on Terrorism in Italy. Documents from the Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique (AHM) in Maputo and The National Archives (TNA) of the United Kingdom in London have been also used for this paper. Other primary resources were accessed through a number of online archives such as: 'The African Activist Archive' (AAA - <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/index.php>); the collection 'Emerging Nationalism in Portuguese Africa, 1959-1965' within the University of Southern California (USC) Digital Library (<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll60>); the online portal 'Mozambique History Net' (<http://www.mozambiquehistory.net>); 'The National Archives' of the USA (<https://www.archives.gov>). A few documents and information were shared with me personally by Matteo Grilli (regarding Ghana), and by Anna Maria Gentili and Vladimir Shubin - with whom I also had fruitful conversations on the subject of this paper. On certain aspects of my work I also benefited from stimulating discussions with Malyn Newitt, Eric Morier-Genoud and Arrigo Pallotti. I am also grateful to Arianna Lissoni, Chris Saunders and two anonymous reviewers for their useful comments.

ideas and visions that were forged as part of the relationship between FRELIMO's leadership and its Italian supporters, and on their legacy for Mozambique post-independence.<sup>8</sup>

### **From the national to the international front: the troubled consolidation of FRELIMO's leadership in the 1960s and early 1970s**

By the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, various contributions began shaping a revision of the history of the liberation struggle and of the origins of FRELIMO in Mozambique. In particular, this new historiography has shown how the formation of FRELIMO was the result of a highly contested process both within and outside the nationalist movement: on the one hand, different Mozambican anti-colonial leaders fought to assert their own vision on the future of the country and to gain power within the new front; on the other hand, these leaders were supported by a number of actors in the African continent and worldwide that competed between them to influence the internal struggle.

Of the three anti-colonial movements that formally merged into FRELIMO in 1962, UNAMI (*União Nacional Africana de Moçambique Independente*) has remained essentially under-researched, while more attention has been directed to the origins of MANU (Maconde/Mozambique African National Union) and UDENAMO (*União Democrática Nacional de Moçambique*), and to the leadership conflicts between and within these two movements as part of the trajectory that shaped FRELIMO during the

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<sup>8</sup>. This paper is the first outcome of a broader research project which aims to investigate the links between Mozambican and Italian politics and society from the time of liberation struggle to the formal peace process of 1990-92.



1960s. This literature has analysed the nuances and contradictions in the support bases of UDENAMO among Mozambicans in Southern Rhodesia and of MANU among populations straddling the north of Mozambique and Tanganyika.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, by contesting the vision of MANU and UDENAMO as mere forms of ethnically identified proto-nationalism, more recent studies, have explored the extent to which the two movements were evolving into real nationalist organisations.<sup>10</sup> The process leading from the formation of UDENAMO to the founding of FRELIMO has been particularly

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<sup>9</sup> - For MANU see: Yussuf Adam and A.M. Gentili, 'O movimento dos Liguilanilu no Planalto de Mueda, 1957-1962', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 4 (1983), 41-75; E.A. Alpers, 'To Seek a Better Life: The Implications of Migration from Mozambique to Tanganyika for Class Formation and Political Behaviour', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 18, 2 (1984), 367-388; A.M. Gentili, 'Sulle origini rurali del nazionalismo mozambicano', *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 13, 1 (1984), 79-112; Yussuf Adam, 'Mueda, 1917-1990: Resistência, colonialismo, libertação e desenvolvimento', *Arquivo*, 14 (1993), 9-101; H.G. West, *Kupilikula. Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005). For UDENAMO see: J.M. das Neves, 'Economy, Society and Labour Migration in Central Mozambique, 1930-c. 1965: A Case Study of Manica Province' (PhD Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1998).

<sup>10</sup>. Bonate, 'Muslims and the Liberation Struggle in Northern Mozambique'; Das Neves Têmbé, 'Uhuru na Kazi: Recapturing MANU Nationalism'; M. Cahen, 'The Mueda Case and Maconde Political Ethnicity. Some Notes on a Work in Progress', *Africana studia*, 2 (1999), 29-46; M. Cahen, 'Anticolonialism & Nationalism: Deconstructing Synonymy, Investigating Historical Processes. Notes on the Heterogeneity of the Former African Colonial Portuguese Areas', in E. Morier-Genoud, ed., *Sure Road? Nationalisms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 1-28; G. Liesegang and J. das Neves Têmbé, 'Subsídios para a História da UDENAMO e FRELIMO: Da fundação e dos planos de fusão da UDENAMO e MANU à revolta da base da UDENAMO em Junho de 1962 e o resurgimento deste partido em 1963: Um plano e primeiros resultados da recolha de fontes para permitir uma leitura sociológica' (Maputo: unpublished paper, 2005).

disputed: this can be viewed as one of the key issues surrounding the development of nationalism in Mozambique, and linking the struggle in the country to the intricacies of both African decolonisation and Cold War dynamics.

Some authors have tried to disentangle the national, regional and continental links established by the first leadership of UDENAMO at the time of its formation in Southern Rhodesia and after its move to Dar es Salaam in early 1961, when this movement effectively gained the status of the first internationally-recognised Mozambican nationalist organisation.<sup>11</sup> Kwame Nkrumah and Ghana's Bureau of African Affairs, for example, backed UDENAMO's leader Adelino Gwambe, and competed for influence with Julius Nyerere in Tanganyika, the Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA), the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) and the Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas (CONCP) founded in Casablanca, Morocco, in April 1961.<sup>12</sup> The Mozambican Marcelino dos Santos, who became CONCP's General Secretary and also joined UDENAMO, was to become the chief protagonist of FRELIMO's diplomacy in Europe and the Eastern bloc

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<sup>11</sup>. Liesegang and das Neves Têmbé, 'Subsídios para a História da UDENAMO e FRELIMO'; Cahen, 'Moçambique: o "fim da história"... única'; J. das Neves Têmbé, 'Mozambique Analysis (Portuguese)', in Arnold J. Temu and Joel das Neves Têmbé, eds., *Southern African Liberation Struggles: Contemporaneous Documents, 1960-1994* (Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2014), 212-98.

<sup>12</sup>. AAA, George M. Houser (Africa collection), Michigan State University Libraries Special Collections, George Houser, 'Draft Report on the Third All African People's Conference Held in Cairo from March 25 to 30, 1961, Confidential not for Publication': [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-FBD](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-FBD), accessed 26 November 2017.

in the following years - besides being one of the key players in the formation of FRELIMO and in the consolidation of its leadership with Eduardo Mondlane as president.

The kaleidoscope of these competing regional and continental relationships found a focal point in the dispute over the 'true' foundation of FRELIMO. According to one view, this happened in early June 1962 at Winneba, near Accra, on occasion of the 'All Africa Freedom Fighters Conference' under the auspices of Nkrumah and with the participation of Gwambe, other leaders of UDENAMO, and part of the leadership of MANU. The more orthodox view, instead, dates the formation of FRELIMO to the end of that month in Dar es Salaam, under the aegis of Nyerere, when the governing bodies of FRELIMO were voted by militants of UDENAMO, MANU and UNAMI but in the absence of Gwambe, who had been expelled from the city by the Tanganyikan authorities.<sup>13</sup> The election in Dar es Salaam of Eduardo Mondlane as first president of FRELIMO, with UDENAMO's Uria Simango nominated vice-president, represented the first step towards the consolidation of FRELIMO's leadership. However, the disputes of those months would continue to mark FRELIMO's splits and divisions at the level of continental and international relations in the following years. For example, less than one year after the formation of FRELIMO, from Kampala (Uganda), Gwambe (UDENAMO), Mmole (MANU) and others left the new front declaring 'its dissolution' and the formation of a new one under the name of FUNIPAMO (*Frente Unida Anti-Imperialista Popular Africana de Mozambique*).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>. Liesegang and Das Neves Têmbé, 'Subsídios para a História da UDENAMO e FRELIMO'.

<sup>14</sup>. USC Digital Library, Emerging Nationalism in Portuguese Africa, 1959-1965, Mozambique Collection, CENPA-272b~01, 'Declaration of Dissolution of FRELIMO, to the President, Defunct Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo)', Kampala, 21 May 1963:

The continental links of Gwambe and other FRELIMO dissidents in the early 1960s have now been openly recognised.<sup>15</sup> They managed to have some sort of representation in countries such as Ghana, Egypt, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia. One faction of UDENAMO, in particular, established a presence in Leopoldville, Congo, that was becoming ‘the scene of a growing alliance of nationalist groups from Southern Africa’ linked to the Angolan Revolutionary Government in Exile (Govêrno Revolucionário de Angola no Exílio, GRAE) and not connected to the liberation movements represented in Dar es Salaam.<sup>16</sup> In 1965, the Mozambique Revolutionary Committee (*Comité Revolucionário de Moçambique*, COREMO) was formed by bringing together other groupings that had separated from FRELIMO. COREMO established its headquarters in Lusaka, launched some minor armed actions in central Mozambique from Zambia, and participated in regional alliances against FRELIMO and its allied organisations in Lusophone and southern Africa.<sup>17</sup>

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<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll60/id/6876>, accessed 26 November 2017.

<sup>15</sup>. Das Neves Têmbé, ‘Mozambique Analysis’.

<sup>16</sup>. AAA, Peter Weiss (Africa collection), Michigan State University Libraries Special Collections, ‘John Marcum to the Executive Board of the American Committee on Africa, Developments in the Angolan Situation, Summer 1963’, undated: [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-23CA](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-23CA), accessed 26 November 2017; AAA, Africa Action Archive collection, George M. Houser, ‘Report on a Trip to Africa, May-June 1963’, undated: [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-B77](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-B77), accessed 26 November 2017. See also L. Passemiers, ‘The Pan Africanist Congress and the Congo Alliance, 1963-64’ in this issue of the journal.

<sup>17</sup>. AAA, Africa Action Archive collection, George Houser, ‘A Report on a Trip to Africa, May 11 – June 10, 1967’: [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-B96](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-B96), accessed 26 November 2017.

However, the political relationships established by these Mozambican ‘dissident nationalists’ could not compare to the networks that Mondlane, dos Santos and other members of FRELIMO such as Joaquim Chissano were able to develop across the two Cold War fronts. Mondlane, who had been pursuing his own project of unification of the three Mozambican anti-colonial movements,<sup>18</sup> was an official of the United Nations (UN), professor at Syracuse University in the USA and had links within the Kennedy administration.<sup>19</sup> Marcelino dos Santos was internationally known through his leadership of CONCP. Joaquim Chissano was one of the leading figures among Mozambican students in Europe, first in Lisbon and then in Paris. Through Nkrumah, Gwambe had some international connections, and his call for an armed uprising enjoyed some support of Che Guevara and the Cubans too, but overall he did not have any particular international status, and when he travelled to Moscow in 1961, for example, he left a very bad impression on the Soviets.<sup>20</sup> The new FRELIMO leaders, who mainly came from the colonial capital and the south of the country more in general, had more opportunities for education in Mozambique and abroad, in particular in European capitals, thanks to which they developed international connections and shared common views about the modern nationalist and anti-colonial ideas that were spreading across the continent by the early 1960s. They were true cosmopolitan personalities, capable of presenting themselves as a new African intelligentsia at the international level and of being recognised as a reliable leadership for the incipient nationalist movement in Mozambique.

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<sup>18</sup>. Das Neves Têmbé, ‘Mozambique Analysis’.

<sup>19</sup>. Details on the connections between Mondlane and the Kennedy administration can be found, for example, in G. Roberts, ‘The Assassination of Eduardo Mondlane: FRELIMO, Tanzania, and the Politics of Exile in Dar es Salaam’, *Cold War History*, 17, 1 (2017), 1-19.

<sup>20</sup>. V. Shubin, personal communication, Bologna, 5 May 2017.

The armed struggle was launched in the north of Mozambique from FRELIMO's military bases in Tanganyika in 1964, which helped to further entrench the international standing of the leadership of FRELIMO, notwithstanding a number of internal troubles, during the second half of the 1960s. Mondlane was re-elected as president at FRELIMO'S second congress in 1968, but he was assassinated in Dar es Salaam in 1969. Initially, he was replaced by a presidential council that included dos Santos, Simango and the military commander Samora Machel. Then, Simango, accused of being involved in the murder of Mondlane, was removed from the office, and Machel took over as the new president of FRELIMO in April 1970.

The story of the defections of those years, including Gwambe, Lazaro Nkavandame, Mateus Gwenjere and Uria Simango, is well-known,<sup>21</sup> and these internal conflicts generated a number of small new movements that, at least on paper, contested FRELIMO's hegemony over the national liberation struggle. In particular, the assassination of Mondlane in Dar es Salaam remains one of the most notorious unsolved events in the history of Mozambique, of decolonisation in Africa and indeed of the Cold War. Recently, Roberts has situated the murder of Mondlane within the political setting of Dar es Salaam, where, in a way, the divisions of Tanganyikan politics combined with those of the Mozambican nationalists, of decolonisation and the Cold War.<sup>22</sup> De Jesus has exposed the role of Aginter Press, the secret organisation based in Portugal which was infiltrating Marxist and Maoist movements in various world contexts in order to

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<sup>21</sup>. W.C. Opello Jr., 'Pluralism and Elite Conflict in an Independence Movement: FRELIMO in the 1960s', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2, 1 (1975), 66-82.

<sup>22</sup>. Roberts, 'The Assassination of Eduardo Mondlane'.

destabilise current or potential allies of the Soviet coalition.<sup>23</sup> Its involvement in Mozambique and other African contexts is partly confirmed by the documents relating to an Italian parliamentary commission on terrorism in 1997.<sup>24</sup>

After the disappearance of Mondlane, the new leadership would complete the evolution of the movement towards a clearer Marxist-Leninist political inspiration.<sup>25</sup> This ideological option seemed to reflect the need to adopt a paradigm of political, economic and social development that accommodated the priorities of the consolidation of the new Mozambican nation, of its path towards rapid modernisation, and of attracting important alliances at international level. Marxism-Leninism represented a ‘modern ideological platform simultaneously straddling the global discourse of national liberation and the local desires for social justice [...]without much reference to ethnicity’.<sup>26</sup> FRELIMO had a radically new project for the ‘national question’ in Mozambique, whose legitimacy has been lively debated from various and sometimes opposite viewpoints by authors such as

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<sup>23</sup>. J.M.D. de Jesus, *A guerra secreta de Salazar em África. Aginter Press: uma rede internacional de contra-subversão e espionagem sediada em Lisboa* (Alfragide: Publicações Dom Quixote, 2012).

<sup>24</sup>. Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi, ‘9<sup>a</sup> Seduta’, Roma, 12 February 1997.

<sup>25</sup>. One of the most popular debates about FRELIMO and the independence struggle in Mozambique regards how and when the Marxist perspective emerged within the movement. In particular, scholars have been divided over the role played by Mondlane. For example, according to an interview by Aquino de Bragança quoted in Saul (‘Eduardo Mondlane & the Rise & Fall of Mozambican Socialism’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 32, 104/5, 2005, 309-15) Mondlane himself was considering Marxism as an option already in 1963. See also: T. H. Henriksen, ‘The revolutionary thought of Eduardo Mondlane’, *Genève-Afrique/Geneva-Africa*, 12, 1 (1973), 37-52; L. Sansone, ‘Eduardo Mondlane and the Social Sciences’, *Vibrant: Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*, 10, 2 (2013), 73-111.

<sup>26</sup>. Derluigian, ‘The Social Origins of Good and Bad Governance’, 99.

de Bragança and Depelchin<sup>27</sup> or Cahen,<sup>28</sup>. The extent to which this project was also at the core of the political discourse supported or influenced by FRELIMO's international solidarities, and in particular the Italian solidarity network, is one of the objectives of this paper.

### **The international diplomacy of FRELIMO and its allies**

By the second half of the 1950s, the African nationalist elites of the Portuguese colonies began interacting with each other in the common cause against colonial rule, and connecting with other liberation and rebel movements in various parts of the world. In that period, the contact and common debates between Portuguese and African students in Lisbon and Coimbra contributed to creating the environment where the anti-colonial struggles and part of their leadership, as well as opposition to the regime of Salazar in Portugal, grew.

Through CONCP, FRELIMO, MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*) and PAIGC (*Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*) reached an ideological alignment that perhaps had no equivalent in Africa at the time. CONCP boosted the political credentials of the three liberation movements at international level, and contributed to their recognition as the 'authentic movements' of

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<sup>27</sup>. A. de Bragança and J. Depelchin, 'Da idealização da FRELIMO à compreensão da história de Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 5-6 (1986), 29-52. In English: A. de Bragança and J. Depelchin, 'From the Idealization of Frelimo to the Understanding of the Recent History of Mozambique', *African Journal of Political Economy/Revue Africaine d'Economie Politique*, 1, 1 (1986), 162-180.

<sup>28</sup>. M Cahen, 'Mozambique, histoire géopolitique d'un pays sans nation', *Lusotopie* (1994), 213-266; Cahen, 'Anticolonialism & Nationalism'.



their countries by the Liberation Committee of the Organisation of African Unity after its formation in 1963. In 1965, the second conference of CONCP in Dar es Salaam decided that the three movements would be represented by one single leader in a number of international meetings and fora: Agostinho Neto from MPLA at the Third Conference of Heads of State and Government in Accra (October 1965), Amilcar Cabral from PAIGC at the second Afro-Asian Conference in Algiers (also known as the ‘Second Bandung Conference’, scheduled for 5 November 1965) and Eduardo Mondlane from FRELIMO at the 20th session of the UN (1965).<sup>29</sup> These leaders were considered to be solid and reliable political interlocutors in the socialist and communist world,<sup>30</sup> but they were also capable of introducing themselves into the academic and political environments of Western metropolises, where international solidarity with the liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies was beginning to grow in the footsteps of similar campaigns such as those in support of Vietnam, Algeria and Cuba. Significantly, these experiences reflected only in part the framework of the Cold War. In this regard, an important role was played by two other organisations: AAPSO and the World Peace Council (WPC). The former linked the liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies to Afro-Asian solidarity initiatives, to the Eastern bloc and, in particular, to the Soviet Union. The latter, as emphasised for example by a report of its Secretary General Romesh Chandra in 1973,

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<sup>29</sup>. FLL, UA 373 (or APCI, MFA 0527, 3080-3112), ‘2ème Conference des organisations nationalistes des colonies portugaises (CONCP), Dar es Salaam, 3-8 octobre 1965, Resolutions’.

<sup>30</sup>. Shubin, *The Hot 'Cold War'*. N. Telepneva, ‘Mediators of Liberation: Eastern-Bloc Officials, Mozambican Diplomacy and the Origins of Soviet Support for Frelimo, 1958–1965’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 1 (2017), 67-81; D. Kaiser, ‘“Makers of Bonds and Ties”: Transnational Socialisation and National Liberation in Mozambique’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 1 (2017), 29-48.

campaigned at the UN and worldwide for the need to recognise FRELIMO, MPLA and PAIGC as the ‘sole and authentic’ liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies.<sup>31</sup>

The international standing of its leadership represented the real ace in the hole for FRELIMO.<sup>32</sup> The remarkable reputation enjoyed by FRELIMO’s leaders at the international level would be particularly effective for the very development of the armed struggle at home, where the army of FRELIMO could offer to the population concrete improvements to their lives in terms of healthcare, education centres and other infrastructure thanks to the help of its international supporters.

First of all, FRELIMO’s international diplomacy was played out at continental level. Besides its Dar es Salaam headquarters, FRELIMO was hosted in military training camps in Algeria, where it also established formal representation that coordinated the movement’s diplomatic initiatives at the international level and managed all the logistics related to the international mobility of its members such as passports, travel tickets, etc.<sup>33</sup>. In Algiers, members of FRELIMO met with those of other African liberation movements including the MPLA, PAIGC and the *Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe* (MLSTP) for the Portuguese colonies, the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) and the South West African People’s Organisation (SWAPO). These circumstances contributed to shape a stable alliance between these movements and the exclusion of other organisations. According

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<sup>31</sup>. FLL, UA 238, Romesh Chandra, Secretary General of the World Peace Council, ‘From Santiago to Warsaw. 1973 - 25th Anniversary of the Wroclaw Congress of Intellectuals, World Peace Council Presidential Committee Meeting, Warsaw, May 5-8, 1973’.

<sup>32</sup>. Derluguian, ‘The Social Origins of Good and Bad Governance’.

<sup>33</sup>. O. Monteiro, *De todos se faz um País* (Maputo: Associação dos Escritores Moçambicanos, 2012), 135-6.

to Oscar Monteiro, a leading FRELIMO representative activist in Algeria and Europe, ‘Together with MPLA, PAIGC, ANC, ZAPU and SWAPO, we represented the alliance of the so-called ‘authentic’ liberation movements [...] all dissident movements were excluded, and the label of “splinter groups” entailed a feature of bad reputation’.<sup>34</sup>

A number of African countries hosted international meetings in support of the nationalist movements from Lusophone and Southern Africa countries that had grouped together in Algiers.<sup>35</sup> Their rival organisations, however, were equally trying to win continental and global attention by coordinating their struggles, as in the case of the so-called Congo Alliance formed in 1963-64. FRELIMO’s rivals in Mozambique tried to take advantage of these diplomatic opportunities too. As maintained by Marcelino dos Santos, for some years Nkrumah continued to play against the continental diplomacy of FRELIMO’s leadership.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, soon after its formation in 1965, COREMO entered into an informal alliance with the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) of South Africa, the South West Africa National Union (SWANU), GRAE and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in the footsteps of the Congo Alliance.<sup>37</sup> COREMO petitioned the OAU and UN for recognition while trying to delegitimise FRELIMO,<sup>38</sup> and it applied

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<sup>34</sup>. O. Monteiro, *De todos se faz um País*, 127.

<sup>35</sup>. APCI, MFA 0546, 1795-1839, ‘Fédération Mondiale de la Jeunesse Démocratique, *Dossier documentaire*, n. 1, 1967. Conférence Internationale de Solidarité avec les peuples des pays sous domination coloniale portugaise, Conacry, 23-26 avril 1967’.

<sup>36</sup>. APCI, MFA 0527, 3058-3060, ‘Dina Forti alla Segreteria del PCI. Nota informativa su un colloquio avuto con il Segretario generale del Fronte di Liberazione del Mozambico. Roma, 9 giugno 1965’.

<sup>37</sup>. AAA, George Houser, ‘A Report on a Trip to Africa, May 11 – June 10, 1967’.

<sup>38</sup>. FLL, UA 96, Mr. Artur X. L. Vilankulu, Comité Revolucionario de Moçambique (COREMO), ‘Question of territories under Portuguese Administration, Request for hearing to the

for membership of AAPSO as well.<sup>39</sup> However, by the beginning of the 1970s, besides its limited capacity to engage in armed struggle for the liberation of the country, COREMO could not compare to FRELIMO with regard to the latter's international diplomacy and the support it enjoyed at global level too.

Beyond Africa, FRELIMO essentially tried to pursue a balance between the Cold War fronts. Thanks to Mondlane, FRELIMO initially found financial help from some private foundations in the USA and, covertly, from some sectors of the Kennedy administration too.<sup>40</sup> However, possibilities for further collaboration between the USA and FRELIMO vanished after the Republicans won the elections in 1968 and considerations about the strategic importance of the Azores' Portuguese military base gained the upper hand. FRELIMO then started looking more systematically to the East,

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Chairman of the Fourth Committee, UN, 25 September 1972, UN General Assembly, A/C.4/747. 4 October 1972'; USC Digital Library, Emerging Nationalism in Portuguese Africa, 1959-1965, Mozambique Collection, CENPA-221~01, 'COREMO, Memorandum Submitted to the 3rd Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity Accra/Ghana, 21st - 27th October, 1965, Lusaka': <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15799coll60/id/7307/rec/2>, accessed 30 November 2017.

<sup>39</sup>. USC Digital Library, Emerging Nationalism in Portuguese Africa, 1959-1965, Mozambique Collection, CENPA-264~01, 'COREMO, Documents relating to COREMO application for AAPSO membership, Council Meeting Necosia-Cyprus, 13.2.1967, COREMO External Bureau, Cairo': <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15799coll60/id/7529/rec/31>, accessed 30 November 2017.

<sup>40</sup>. T. Henriksen, *Revolution and Counterrevolution. Mozambique's War of Independence, 1964-1974* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1983); Roberts, 'The Assassination of Eduardo Mondlane'.

where a number of communist countries provided opportunities for military training as well as other material and financial support.<sup>41</sup>

In Europe, in the 1960s the most active role in supporting FRELIMO was initially played by the Scandinavian countries, where a number of solidarity committees were established to help the liberation movements of Southern Africa.<sup>42</sup> Particularly important was the explicit support granted to FRELIMO (and other liberation movements) by the government of Olof Palme in Sweden, where in 1968 FRELIMO opened an official representation. The unique direct support to the Southern African liberation movements by Scandinavian countries may have led other political parties and civil society movements in West Europe to view the claims of these organisations beyond the lens of the Cold War.<sup>43</sup> FRELIMO enjoyed the growing support of solidarity committees, for example, in the Netherlands and United Kingdom, and by the end of the 1960s this mounting solidarity with FRELIMO in Europe begun playing a concrete role for the end of Portuguese colonialism, coupled with the increasing pressure exerted on Lisbon by the Decolonization Committee of UN.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>. K. Storkmann, 'Helping Decolonization or Fighting the Cold War in Southern Africa? East German Military Support to Mozambique in the 1970s', *afriche e orienti*, Special Issue 2 (2011), 67-79; Shubin, *The Hot 'Cold War'*; Telepneva, 'Mediators of Liberation'; Kaiser, 'Makers of Bonds and Ties'.

<sup>42</sup>. T. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa: Solidarity and assistance, 1970-1994. Vol. 1 & Vol. 2* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 1999 & 2002); Saunders, *Documenting Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa*. See also the 'Nordic documentation on the liberation struggle in Southern Africa' at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden: <http://www.liberationafrica.se>.

<sup>43</sup>. Sapire and Saunders, 'Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa in Context', 5.

<sup>44</sup>. A. Almada e Santos, 'The UN Decolonization Committee and the Struggle for Independence in Portuguese Colonies in the 1970s', *afriche e orienti*, Special Issue 2 (2011), 44-53.

The year 1969 was a turning point for the international diplomacy of FRELIMO. While in Mozambique FRELIMO was in the middle of its internal crisis, a key strategic decision was taken in Khartoum, where an ‘International Conference in Support of the Peoples of Portuguese Colonies and Southern Africa’ was organised by AAPSO and WPC in January.<sup>45</sup> At the end of the event, welcoming an idea that, according to Oscar Monteiro, had first been proposed by Marcelino dos Santos and then formulated within CONCP, it was decided to organise the next conference in a Western and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) country: building on the already consolidated support of the Scandinavian countries, the leaders of the liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies believed it essential ‘to separate’ Portugal from its NATO partners, and Italy was considered the best option.<sup>46</sup> According to the Secretary General of the ‘Mobilisation Committee Emanating from the Khartoum Conference’, Youssef El Sebai, the choice of Italy was also influenced by a series of ‘contacts and consultations’ within AAPSO and WPC and, above all, ‘the generous invitation extended by the Italian friends’ during the conference.<sup>47</sup> As the next section will show, the ‘Italian friends’ of the African liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies offered a double advantage: a coordinated support developed from across the ideological and political divisions of the time, and the possibility to approach the Vatican.

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<sup>45</sup>. FLL, UA 276, ‘International Conference in Support of the Peoples of Portuguese Colonies and Southern Africa, Khartoum, 18-20 January, 1969’.

<sup>46</sup>. Monteiro, *De todos se faz um País*, 143.

<sup>47</sup>. FLL, UA 276, ‘Report by Youssef El Sebai, the Secretary General of the Mobilization Committee Emanating from the Khartoum Conference, International Preparatory Committee for the Conference in Support of the Peoples of Portuguese Colonies. Rome, 22nd January, 1970’, 5-6.

### **The solidarity network in Italy**

The Italian activists that participated in the 1969 conference in Khartoum, notably Dina Forti of the PCI, played an important role in the decision to hold the next conference in Rome and were included in its Mobilisation Committee.<sup>48</sup> Others, like Lucio Luzzato of the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria, PSIUP) and active member of the WPC, as well as future vice-president of the Italian parliament, participated in a number of summits that followed the Khatoum event and where the Rome conference was discussed. For example, the decisions in Khartoum were confirmed at a meeting of the WPC in Berlin in June 1969, where FRELIMO and the Italians shared the view that anti-colonial struggles in Africa and opposition to NATO were part of the same framework.<sup>49</sup>

The Mobilisation Committee operated from Cairo and was composed by AAPSO, WPC, the ‘authentic liberation movements’ of the Portuguese colonies (FRELIMO, MPLA and PAIGC), as well as the ANC, SWAPO and ZAPU. Its Secretary General, Youssef El Sebai, met with Luzzato and other delegates of the WPC in Berlin in October 1969 and then in Cairo in November. In December, Marcelino dos Santos was invited to a presidential session of the WPC again in Khartoum, where he agreed with Luzzato and Guido Fanti (PCI member and mayor of the city of Bologna) on behalf of Italy on the

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<sup>48</sup>. APCI, MFA 0308, 2348-49, ‘Renato Sandri, per la Sezione Esteri, all’Ufficio di Segreteria del PCI, Roma, 8 e 9 gennaio 1969’.

<sup>49</sup>. APCI, MFA 0308, 1469-1471, ‘Renato Sandri, per la Sezione Esteri, Nota su Incontro con Marcelino dos Santos del FRELIMO e Dosi del Afro-Shirazi Party (Zanzibar) di passaggio a Roma per il congresso del P.C. Rumeno, 5 agosto 1969’.

steps to be taken.<sup>50</sup> Eventually, a preliminary meeting for the practical preparation of the Rome conference, to be held in June 1970, was organised in Rome in January that year. FRELIMO was represented by Marcelino dos Santos, Oscar Monteiro, Armando Panguene and Judas Honwana, while the Cairo-based Mobilisation Committee was integrated by a number of heterogeneous Italian organisations and activists that had already been involved either with African liberation movements or with AAPSO and the WPC in the past.<sup>51</sup>

In fact, Dina Forti, Lucio Luzzato, the communist mayor of the town of Reggio Emilia Renzo Bonazzi, the PCI member and manager of the public hospital of Reggio Emilia Giuseppe Soncini, the doctor Silvio Pampiglione and many others had been in contact with some of the leading figures of Mozambican nationalism since the early 1960s. This had been through a number of visits to Algiers as part of the activities of the 'Italian committee for peace in Algeria' (Comitato italiano per la pace in Algeria) - an Italian solidarity network supporting the independence of Algeria from France that was formed in the late 1950s; other visits to Algiers were also organised within the international initiatives of CONCP. Italian activists had also attended as observers the

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<sup>50</sup>. FLL, UA 237, 'Conseil Mondial de la Paix. Session de la Présidence. Khartoum, 13-15 Décembre 1969'.

<sup>51</sup> FLL, UA 276, 'Report by Youssef El Sebai, the Secretary General of the Mobilization Committee Emanating from the Khartoum Conference, International Preparatory Committee for the Conference in Support of the Peoples of Portuguese Colonies. Rome, 22nd January, 1970'; APCI, MFA 071, 457-8, 'Marcelino dos Santos, Presidente della Organizzazioni Nazionaliste delle Colonie Portoghesi per il Comitato Organizzatore, Convocazione della Conferenza Internazionale di Solidarietà con i Popoli delle Colonie Portoghesi'.



Third All African People's Conference in Cairo in March 1961,<sup>52</sup> but eventually it was Marcelino dos Santos and the network of CONCP that attracted their main attention.

Already in October 1961, Marcelino dos Santos, as Secretary General of CONCP, had meetings at the headquarters of *L'Unità* and *L'Avanti* – the PCI and PSI (Italian Socialist Party)'s newspapers respectively. During talks with Dina Forti in the same year he stated that, although Mozambique was not ready for an armed insurrection yet, an armed struggle had started in Portuguese Guinea, and he asked for support of the 'anti-colonial movement of de Andrade' in Angola, particularly by providing medicines.<sup>53</sup> An earlier solidarity initiative concerning the provision of health care - the so-called 'health solidarity' - that Pampiglione had experimented in Algeria may have taught a lesson:<sup>54</sup> health care was to become the trademark of the Italian political partnership with FRELIMO a decade later, particularly through the role of the town of Reggio Emilia.<sup>55</sup>

Not by chance, these first contacts with Marcelino dos Santos and other leaders of the liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies were also developed as part of the activities of the Italian Anti-colonial Committee (Comitato Anticoloniale Italiano –

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<sup>52</sup>. AAA, George M. Houser (Africa collection), Michigan State University Libraries Special Collections, 'George Houser, Draft Report on the Third All African People's Conference Held in Cairo from March 25 to 30, 1961, Confidential not for Publication': [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-FBD](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-FBD), accessed 2 December 2017.

<sup>53</sup>. APCI, MFA 0483, 2691-3, 'Colloquio con Marcelino dos Santos, segretario generale della Conferenza delle organizzazioni Nazionaliste delle Colonie Portoghesi. Direzione del PCI Sezione Esteri, 3/10/1961'.

<sup>54</sup>. APCI, MFA 0503, 0803-4, 'Nota di Giuliano Pajetta sul Comitato Anticoloniale Italiano al comp. Longo e Ufficio Segreteria. Roma, 22 ottobre 1962'.

<sup>55</sup>. M. C. Lanzafame and C. Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia: Mozambico 1963-1977* (Torino: L'Harmattan Italia, 2004).

CAI), that was promoted towards the end of the 1950s by a number of Italian cultural and political figures, including Luzzato and Forti, in support of the anti-colonial struggle in Africa and the Middle East, and primarily in connection to the Algerian context.<sup>56</sup> The role of CAI as the main interlocutor in Italy for the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies, was acknowledged for example by Mario de Andrade of MPLA in 1961, when he wrote a letter to Luzzato from Conakry asking to circulate in Italy some information on the anti-colonial struggles and to organise an event specifically on the situation in Angola.<sup>57</sup>

In late 1961, many of the activists and personalities of CAI founded the Italian Committee for the Amnesty and Democratic Freedoms in Portugal (Comitato Italiano per l'Amnistia e le Libertà Democratiche in Portogallo) too. They saw the anti-colonial struggles in Africa and the opposition to the Salazar regime in Portugal - as well as to 'any form of Fascism' in Europe - as part of a single struggle. This idea, however, often generated conflicts and misunderstandings with the divided opposition to Salazar in Portugal and other European organisations campaigning against the Portuguese dictatorship.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>. FLL, UA 96, 'Alberto Carocci to Lucio Luzzato, Comitato Anticoloniale Italiano, Roma, 29 gennaio 1961'; FLL, UA 96, 'Lucio Luzzato, Comitato Anticoloniale Italiano, to On. Antonio Segni, Ministro degli esteri, 3 febbraio 1961'; FLL, UA 95, 'Lucio Luzzato, Lettera ai partiti politici italiani, Comitato Anticoloniale Italiano, Roma 20 dicembre 1960'; APCI, MFA 0503, 0803-4, 'Nota di Giuliano Pajetta sul Comitato Anticoloniale Italiano al comp. Longo e Ufficio Segreteria. Roma, 22 ottobre 1962'.

<sup>57</sup>. FLL, UA 95, 'Mario de Andrade, President du Mouvement Populaire de Liberation de l'Angola (M.P.L.A.), Letter to Lucio Luzzato, Comitato Anticoloniale Italiano. Conakry, 27 Juin 1961'.

<sup>58</sup>. FLL, UA 373, 'Comitato Italiano per l'Amnistia e le Libertà democratiche in Portogallo, "Notizie dal Portogallo"'. APCI, MFA 0503, 0061-5, 'Rodolfo Mechini, Nota sulla

Dina Forti and Lucio Luzzato had gained a good international diplomatic experience at multiple levels through their role in the foreign relations sections of their respective political parties and in international solidarity organisations such as the WPC. But a number of other activists, including members of Catholic charities and associations, played a leading role in the Italian solidarity network in these early days and they were connected only in part to the national political system. They met in specific cultural associations or the government institutions of small and medium size towns, where other solidarity actions, such as those against the war in Vietnam, were being experimented. It was through these shared political experiences that the growing solidarity with FRELIMO and, to a less extent, MPLA and PAIGC was made possible from across the ideological and Cold War divisions of the Italian political system. The various local committees that were established, for example in Reggio Emilia and Bologna (see below), showed the capacity to maneuver within the complex framework of an Italian political system in transition, where changes in Italian foreign policy towards Africa and other countries of the South played an important role.<sup>59</sup>

It is in this sphere that the opposition party PCI, under the leadership of Enrico Berlinguer, was carving out an autonomous front from the influence of the Soviet Union,<sup>60</sup> and that some sections of the governing party, Christian Democracy (Democrazia Cristiana - DC), were doing the same with regard to the USA and NATO. At the time, PCI and DC

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campagna di solidarietà con il Portogallo. Roma, 22 maggio 1962'. More documents on the relationship between the Portuguese opposition and PCI and PSIUP are, respectively, in APCI and FLL.

<sup>59</sup>. Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia*.

<sup>60</sup>. P. Borruso, *Il PCI e l'Africa indipendente. Apogeo e crisi di un'utopia socialista (1956-1989)* (Milano: Le Monnier, 2009).

were negotiating their power with the Soviet Union and the USA respectively, not least through their commitment towards the ‘Third World’ and the universally recognised principles of self-determination and protection of human rights. Local government authorities and grass-roots organisations understood that they could take advantage of this situation and gain some autonomy in their international solidarity actions. PCI governed municipalities, in particular, pursued their own foreign policy, often but not always in agreement with the national leadership of the PCI. FRELIMO leaders were able to grasp the intricacies and opportunities offered by the political situation in Italy and to use them to their advantage.

While the Italian government was formally connected to the Portuguese regime through the NATO alliance, and some top leaders of the government coalition were active - also covertly - in supporting the Portuguese colonial policy,<sup>61</sup> a number of Italian activists and some delegations from the left political parties were trying – sometimes in competition - to establish contacts with Southern African liberation movements. In this regard, FRELIMO leaders were particularly acute in managing the variety of possible partners in Italy and evaluating the latter’s influence on Italian politics and society as well as their international status.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>. This was the case, for example, of the powerful leader of DC and future Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti: FLL, UA 382, ‘Comitato Italiano per la Libertà del Portogallo e Colonie, Ravenna, Resoconto di una visita in Angola di Franz Josef Strauss, 22-25 aprile 1971’; *Diário de Noticias*, 26 April 1971. In those years the Italian government was also largely accommodating of the apartheid regime.

<sup>62</sup>. APCI, MFA 0308, 1504-12, ‘Luigi Pestalozza, Relazione sul viaggio’.

On occasion of the 1965 World Conference for Disarmament and Peace in Rome,<sup>63</sup> dos Santos arrived in the Italian capital and informed Dina Forti that the president of FRELIMO, Eduardo Mondlane, wished to visit Rome soon in recognition of the growing support enjoyed by FRELIMO in Italy. He also used the opportunity to explain the disagreements between himself and Nkrumah, and to argue that the formation in 1965 of the Mauritian, Malagasy and African Common Organisation (Organisation Commune Africaine Malgache et Mauricienne, OCAMM), supported by France, was challenging the ‘unity of African countries’.<sup>64</sup> In October 1965, a PCI member of parliament, Giovanni Serbandini, on behalf of CAI represented Italy at the Second Conference of CONCP in Dar es Salaam,<sup>65</sup> while in 1966 Dina Forti had another meeting with dos Santos at the WPC in Helsinki.<sup>66</sup> The anti-colonial war in Mozambique had started in 1964, and the contacts between FRELIMO leaders, such as dos Santos and Monteiro, and Italian politicians and civil society activists were rapidly intensifying. The dissemination in Italy of information from the war front in Mozambique and the provision of material help, mainly in the health sector, to the guerrilla bases were the main requests of FRELIMO leaders. This is underlined, for example, by a letter by dos Santos in 1967

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<sup>63</sup>. FLL, UA 95, ‘Conferenza per il disarmo e la pace, Roma, 13-14 febbraio 1965’.

<sup>64</sup>. APCI, MFA 0527, 3058-60, ‘Dina Forti alla Segreteria del PCI. Nota informativa su un colloquio avuto con il Segretario generale del Fronte di Liberazione del Mozambico. Roma, 9 giugno 1965’.

<sup>65</sup>. FLL, UA 373, ‘2ème Conference des organisations nationalistes des colonies portugaises (CONCP), Dar es Salaam, 3-8 octobre 1965 Resolutions’.

<sup>66</sup>. APCI, MFA 0536, 2587-8, ‘Dina Forti, Colloquio con Marceino dos Santos, segretario del FRELIMO (Fronte Liberazione Mozambico) e della Conferenza delle Colonie Portoghesi. 24.6.66’.

and another by Uria Simango in 1968, both directed to the foreign office of PCI.<sup>67</sup> In their reports to their Italian partners, the FRELIMO leaders presented their anti-colonial fight within the framework of the development of a modern form of nationalism, in contrast to the ‘backward claims’ of those advocating more racially or ethnically defined forms of anti-colonial struggle. At the same time, they presented the war for independence as a class struggle against imperialism, although, as Luigi Pestalozza reported after his 1969 trip to Southern Africa, ‘for understandable reasons it is not considered appropriate [by FRELIMO leaders] to openly state the Marxist and socialist orientation of the movement’.<sup>68</sup> FRELIMO’s Marxist perspective emerged more clearly during other occasions, such as a meeting with dos Santos at the foreign office of PCI in Rome in October 1969.<sup>69</sup> However, at this meeting it was agreed that openly showing a Marxist ideological position would hinder FRELIMO’s capacity to attract supporters from across the Italian political system. Therefore, the issue remained in the background while, as seen above, the organising apparatus of the conference in Rome was set in motion by the end of the year.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>. APCI, MFA 0545, 2200, ‘Marcelino dos Santos, Secrétaire aux Affaires Extérieures, Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo) au Section pour l’Etranger du Parti Comuniste Italien, Roma 24 Octobre 1967’. APCI, MFA 0552, 2063, ‘Uria T. Simango, Vice-President and Secretary for Foreign Affairs, FRELIMO, to the Central Committee, Italian Communist Party, Dar es Salaam, January 29, 1968’.

<sup>68</sup>. APCI, MFA 0308, 1504-12, ‘Luigi Pestalozza, Relazione sul viaggio’.

<sup>69</sup>. APCI, MFA 0308, 1469-71, ‘Renato Sandri, per la Sezione Esteri, Nota su Incontro con Marcelino dos Santos’.

<sup>70</sup>. The broad spectrum of the relations that led to the organisation of the conference from inside the Italian society and political system is addressed in full details in Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria*.

## **Towards independence. Rome, the Vatican, Reggio Emilia**

In view of the Rome conference, FRELIMO established a stable presence in Italy through Oscar Monteiro, who settled in the Italian capital, and frequent visits by Marcelino dos Santos. During this period, FRELIMO confirmed the high profile of its diplomacy. In an interview by Lanzafame and Podaliri with Dina Forti, she stated: ‘The [diplomatic] role of FRELIMO, contrary to MPLA and PAIGC, was enormous: they travelled a lot, they were very skillful in networking and in establishing relations with the international contacts that could help them’.<sup>71</sup>

FRELIMO and its Italian partners agreed that the Rome conference should be organised by a new heterogeneous committee, representing the whole spectrum of Italian and international politics.<sup>72</sup> According to Monteiro, this course of events angered the countries of the Soviet bloc, whose influence had characterised the 1969 Khartoum conference under the aegis of AAPSO and also, initially, the Mobilisation Committee for the Rome conference headed by El Sebai.<sup>73</sup> According to the memories of Petr Yevsyukov, desk officer for the Portuguese colonies of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU), Soviet and AAPSO participation in the Rome conference did not go completely smoothly.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>. Interview to Dina Forti, Rome, 27 April 2000, quoted in Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia*, 80. Translated from Italian by the author.

<sup>72</sup>. APCI, MFA 0308, pp. 1504-12, ‘Luigi Pestalozza, Relazione sul viaggio’.

<sup>73</sup>. Monteiro, *De todos se faz um País*, 145-7.

<sup>74</sup>. P. N. Yevsyukov, *Vospominaniya. SSSR i borba za osvobozhdenie portygalskih kolonii v Afrike* (*Memoirs. The USSR and the struggle for the liberation of the Portuguese colonies in Africa*)

Eventually, they could reach Rome thanks to the help of key Italian actors involved in the new organising committee, such as Luzzato, and contribute to the event and its practical and financial organisation.<sup>75</sup>

The ‘International conference of solidarity with the people of the Portuguese colonies’, held in Rome on 27-29 June 1970, was attended by 177 delegations from 64 countries, with official delegations from the UN and OAU too. Many newly independent African governments were represented,<sup>76</sup> and the event was also attended by anti-Salazarist Portuguese militants in exile.<sup>77</sup> Apart from some tensions arising from the divided European political context of that time (for example between the two Germanys),<sup>78</sup> the conference was a big success. It opened new diplomatic fronts for the nationalist movements of the Portuguese colonies, it expanded their international networks and, ultimately, it put Italy in the forefront of the international solidarity movement. Moreover, FRELIMO, MPLA and PAIGC were presented as the ‘authentic’ nationalist movements of their countries. During the conference, no other Mozambican anti-colonial movement apart from FRELIMO was heard: Luzzato just acknowledged

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(unpublished manuscript, c. 1998), 20-1. I thank Vladimir Shubin for providing me with part of this document. See also Shubin, *The Hot ‘Cold War’*, 12.

<sup>75</sup>. Shubin, *The Hot ‘Cold War’*, 12-3.

<sup>76</sup>. Notably Ghana did not send a delegation. It is not possible, however, to say with certainty whether this decision is related to the early 1960s conflict between the Mozambican leaders supported by Nkrumah and the other leaders who gained power within FRELIMO over the years, in particular Marcelino dos Santos, or to other reasons.

<sup>77</sup>. Conferenza Internazionale di Solidarietà con i Popoli delle Colonie Portoghesi, *Atti, documenti e relazioni*, Roma, 27-28-29 giugno 1970. See also Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia*, 55-8.

<sup>78</sup>. Monteiro, *De todos se faz um País*, 141-2.



that ‘the presentation of a supposed Mozambique Revolutionary Committee, COREMO, that is actually absent from the country and the struggle, was attempted’, and described FRELIMO as ‘unquestionably the sole and united’ liberation movement in Mozambique.<sup>79</sup>

One of the strategically more important outcomes of the conference took place on 1 July, and reflected the unique mixture of links established by FRELIMO within Italian society and its political system. Thanks to the mediation of Marcella Glisenti, a Catholic ‘Third-Worldist’, and other members of the conference committee, Marcelino dos Santos for FRELIMO, Amilcar Cabral for PAIGC and Agostinho Neto for MPLA had a private audience with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican. This was ‘probably the most significant act of moral recognition of the legitimacy of the liberation struggles’.<sup>80</sup> The Portuguese regime had always sought the support of the Catholic Church and, shocked by the news, reacted by recalling its ambassador at the Vatican state.

At the end of the conference, following an idea of Dina Forti, formal relations of solidarity were created between the three liberation movements and three Italian municipalities which had already organised a few initiatives in support of the independence of the Portuguese colonies: Reggio Emilia, Prato and San Giovanni Valdarno. According to Monteiro, it was Marcelino dos Santos who insisted on having Reggio Emilia associated to FRELIMO,<sup>81</sup> on the ground that some key activists from this town had already established good relations with him and other FRELIMO leaders in the previous years. From this moment, Reggio Emilia became the leading centre of the Italian

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<sup>79</sup>. FLL, UA 96, ‘Lucio Luzzato, manuscript, w.d., w.p.’.

<sup>80</sup>. Monteiro, *De todos se faz um País*, 148.

<sup>81</sup>. Monteiro, *De todos se faz um País*, 148.

network of solidarity with FRELIMO. The main activities of this network concerned the health sector, particularly the ‘twinning’ of the public hospital ‘Santa Maria Nuova’ of Reggio Emilia, headed by Giuseppe Soncini, with the ‘Hospital Central de Cabo Delgado’, a health centre built by FRELIMO in a liberated area of northern Mozambique. The support provided by the Reggio Emilia hospital in practice took the form of hosting FRELIMO guerrillas and providing them with healthcare or medical training, and by sending medical equipment, supplies and experts to the liberated areas in Mozambique.<sup>82</sup> This support was crucial to the success that FRELIMO’s informal government enjoyed in some of the liberated territories.

In July 1970, shortly after the formalisation of the ‘twinning’ between the Cabo Delgado and the Reggio Emilia hospitals, the latter approved the formation of the ‘Committee for health aids to the people of Mozambique’ (Comitato per gli aiuti sanitari al popolo del Mozambico - hereafter ‘Reggio Emilia committee’), and Soncini was nominated its president. However, Soncini and the Reggio Emilia committee did not limit their activity to providing medical assistance to FRELIMO: they carried out a direct political action in support of the struggle for independence in Mozambique. In so doing, they became a leading partner within FRELIMO’s solidarity networks in Italy and Europe. During the early 1970s, a number of new solidarity groups were formed in Italy, such as ‘Movimento Liberazione e Sviluppo’ (MOLISV) in 1971, and they coordinated their action with the Reggio Emilia committee.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, as documented by Lanzafame and Podaliri, Soncini was also contacted by a number of solidarity

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<sup>82</sup>. Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia*.

<sup>83</sup>. FLL, UA 382, ‘Movimento “Liberazione e Sviluppo”. Presentazione, Ciclostilato in proprio, 4 febbraio 1972’.

organisations around Europe - such as the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guiné (CFMAG) in London - and asked to act as an intermediary to invite FRELIMO militants and leaders to European countries on occasion of public initiatives.<sup>84</sup> In October 1972, an Italian journalist, after visiting the FRELIMO's Campo Educational of Tunduru, Tanzania, with a delegation from Bologna, reported that everybody there talked about Reggio Emilia as the symbol of the international 'anti-imperialist' solidarity.<sup>85</sup> Oscar Monteiro confirmed the status gained by Reggio Emilia in a report to the central committee of FRELIMO in 1972.<sup>86</sup>

In 1971, from Dar es Salaam Jorge Rebelo, Secretary of Information of FRELIMO, sent to Lucio Luzzato a box containing information material on the liberation struggle and leaflets to be distributed to other organisations in central-northern Europe and in Canada, in order to promote 25 September - the anniversary of the launch of the armed struggle in 1964 - as the day celebrating the Mozambican revolution worldwide.<sup>87</sup> Rome and Reggio Emilia were becoming a real hub of the propaganda activities of FRELIMO at the European level, and for this reason it was decided that the three liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies should have a stable presence in Italy

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<sup>84</sup>. Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia*, 125, 197, 202.

<sup>85</sup>. Quoted in Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia*, 165 note 7.

<sup>86</sup>. Monteiro, *De todos se faz um País*, 187-8.

<sup>87</sup> FLL, UA 382, 'Jorge Rebelo, Secretary for Information of FRELIMO, to Lucio Luzzato, vice-president Camera dei Deputati, Roma. Dar es Salaam, 14 September 1971'. FLL, UA 382, 'Lucio Luzzato to Jorge Rebelo, Frelimo, P.O.Box 15274, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Roma, 24 September 1971'.

that could not be limited, according to Luzzato, to their joint representation as part of CONCP in Rome.<sup>88</sup>

Already in 1969, African leaders from FRELIMO, MPLA and PAIGC had showed their interest in organising a second event in Italy besides the Rome conference, and they agreed that a communist administrated town would be a good location. Less than two years later, Reggio Emilia was identified as the ideal choice.<sup>89</sup> With a view to organise a second solidarity conference in Reggio Emilia, Italian activists met with FRELIMO leaders in Tanzania in mid-1972, and travelled to some of the liberated areas of northern Mozambique.<sup>90</sup> Through these trips, FRELIMO intended to demonstrate how the liberation from Portuguese rule also meant the beginning of the construction of a modern and united nation. This was portrayed, for example, by a film documentary, *Dieci giorni con i guerriglieri nel Mozambico libero* (Ten days with the guerrillas in liberated Mozambique), shot and directed by Franco Cigarini in 1972 during a visit by a delegation from Reggio Emilia. In 1972, FRELIMO handed to the Reggio Emilia committee a list of organisations and countries to be invited to the second conference of solidarity,<sup>91</sup> and during one of the preparatory meetings it was decided that the conference should address

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<sup>88</sup>. FLL, UA 382, 'Lucio Luzzato to Marcella Glisenti at Libreria Paesi Nuovi, Roma, 12 ottobre 1971'.

<sup>89</sup>. APCI, MFA 0308, 1504-12, 'Luigi Pestalozza, Relazione sul viaggio'. APCI, MFA 043, 1350-1355, 'Angelo Oliva, Nota sulla Conferenza Nazionale di Solidarietà con i popoli delle Colonie Portoghesi (Reggio Emilia, 24-25 marzo 1973), Roma, 14/4/1973'.

<sup>90</sup>. Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia*, 150-3.

<sup>91</sup>. The list is reported in Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia*, 132. Again, it can be noticed the absence of Ghana.

more specifically the question of NATO's support for the Portuguese regime and the role that Italy could play in this regard.<sup>92</sup>

The formal call for the Reggio Emilia conference was signed in the regional capital city of Bologna by a wide and heterogeneous range of Italian organisations and political forces, including members of both the governing and opposition parties, municipalities, trade unions, cooperatives, NGOs, youth organisations and academic institutions.<sup>93</sup> The conference organisers were also faced with the urgency of events in Vietnam that diverted activists towards other initiatives. But eventually the second 'National Conference of Solidarity against Colonialism and Imperialism, for Freedom and Independence of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau' took place on 24 and 25 March 1973 in Reggio Emilia. The introductory speech by Soncini centered on 'the construction of the national society' that was being experimented in the liberated areas of Mozambique.<sup>94</sup> Again, FRELIMO was the more visible and committed of the liberation movements, and the only one represented by its president, Samora Machel, who made 'a

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<sup>92</sup>. APCI, MFA 043, 1334-6, 'A. Oliva e N. Spano, Conferenza Nazionale di Reggio Emilia per il sostegno alla lotta dei popoli delle colonie portoghesi. Riunione preparatoria di Bologna, 21 novembre 1972'. APCI, MFA 043, 1337, 'Sergio Segre per la Sezione Esteri, Nota per la Segreteria, Oggetto: colonie portoghesi. Roma, 15 gennaio 1973'.

<sup>93</sup>. *Bologna-Notizie del Comune. Supplemento*, Year XIII, 20 March 1973. 'Appello del Comitato d'Iniziativa della Conferenza Nazionale di Solidarietà contro il colonialismo e l'imperialismo per la libertà e l'indipendenza del Mozambico, Angola e Guinea Bissau, Reggio Emilia, Teatro Municipale, 24-25 Marzo 1973' (Bologna 17 gennaio 1973).

<sup>94</sup>. Conferenza nazionale di solidarietà contro il colonialismo e l'imperialismo per la libertà e l'indipendenza della Guinea-Bissau, Mozambico e Angola, *Atti*, Reggio Emilia, Teatro municipale, 24-25 March 1973, pp. 18-19.

very balanced and high profile speech, gaining general approval'.<sup>95</sup> The delegation of the ruling party in Italy, DC, resented the accusations raised by the delegates of MPLA with regards to the Italian government's role in supporting the Portuguese regime, and nearly withdrew from the event. However, the DC delegation eventually decided to sign the final conference resolutions together with the Italian opposition parties, openly supporting the liberation struggles against Portugal, that was Italy's ally within NATO.<sup>96</sup>

At the end of the conference a new national committee was formed, with headquarters in Reggio Emilia, to continue with Italian diplomatic and solidarity initiatives until the independence of the Portuguese colonies was won. Shortly after the Carnation revolution in Lisbon in 1974, a PCI delegation visited Dar es Salaam. The prospects for quick and full independence in Mozambique were still to be determined, and the PCI was requested by Nyerere and the leaders of FRELIMO to put pressure on the Portuguese Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português – PCP).<sup>97</sup> The same was reiterated in November 1974 when a delegation of FRELIMO headed by Marcelino dos Santos was in Italy for a series of meetings in Reggio Emilia, Bologna and Rome, where they held a formal summit with the PCI and its Secretary General Berlinguer.<sup>98</sup>

Eventually, when Mozambique reached full independence, the key role of the Italian national committee based in Reggio Emilia in supporting FRELIMO - both in terms of providing everyday material necessities (above all in the health sector) and of its

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<sup>95</sup>. APCI, MFA 043, 1350-5, 'Angelo Oliva, Nota sulla Conferenza Nazionale di Solidarietà con i popoli delle Colonie Portoghesi (Reggio Emilia, 24-25 marzo 1973), Roma, 14/4/1973'.

<sup>96</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>. APCI, MFA 080, 404-407, 'Tullio Vecchietti, Nota per la Segreteria. Roma, 12 luglio 1974'.

<sup>98</sup>. APCI, MFA 080, 325, 'Sergio Segre per la Sezione Esteri, Nota per la Segreteria, Roma, 3 Luglio 1974'. 'Marcelino Dos Santos ricevuto da Berlinguer', *L'Unità*, 8 November 1974.

diplomatic strategies in the European and Western contexts - was fully recognised. Contrary to the Italian government, that was an ally of Portugal through NATO and had never formally recognised FRELIMO, Giuseppe Soncini received a formal invitation by Marcelino dos Santos to participate with a delegation from Reggio Emilia in the country's independence celebrations on 25 June 1975. Delegations from the PCI, PSI and the municipality of Bologna, together with individual sympathisers, also attended the celebrations.<sup>99</sup>

### **The international dimension of FRELIMO's nationalism and the Italian solidarity network: some conclusions**

After a number of defections, schisms, expulsions and internal struggles, the FRELIMO leadership that consolidated its power during the 1960s and by the early 1970s derived great strength from its international status. Through its political message and tireless international diplomacy, it acted with creativity and vigour within the mechanisms of the Cold War, exploiting the divisions this created rather than being entrapped by them. It is in the international context that FRELIMO's leadership found crucial resources to put into effect the practical aspects of its modernist nationalist vision in the liberated areas. Thanks to this international help, the leadership of FRELIMO could offer to the Mozambican people a concrete alternative to the colonial regime in terms, for example, of healthcare.

A number of sources, included newly explored archives in Italy, show that the political networks developed across the Cold War divide, primarily by Marcelino dos

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<sup>99</sup>. Lanzafame and Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia*, 232 et seq.

Santos, coupled with the activities of FRELIMO on the ground in Mozambique, played a major role in FRELIMO securing the status of the sole legitimate liberation movement of Mozambique among a number of continental and international actors, thus overcoming the competition of other Mozambican anti-colonial leaders and of the latter's connections in the African continent. Eventually, these international networks were instrumental in putting pressure on Portugal and in ensuring government powers for FRELIMO after the Carnation Revolution. In this regard, the international solidarity conference organised in Rome in 1970 marked a turning point in the weakening of the Portuguese regime, not least because Italy was an ally of Portugal through NATO, and because Rome hosted the Vatican State. At the time, the private audience of the African leaders of FRELIMO, MPLA and PAIGC with the Pope was considered a major form of legitimisation for their anti-colonial struggle.

By internationalising their struggle, the leaders of FRELIMO managed to promote a key feature of their political project – fostering a united and modern nation – within political paradigms – including Marxism-Leninism – that could grant legitimacy to their status at global level. The international supporters of FRELIMO often took for granted that Mozambicans were united behind FRELIMO's cause in fighting for their independence from Portuguese rule, but on some occasions they also recognised that 'the construction of the national society' was one of the main goals of FRELIMO. This is very clear in the case of the Italian solidarity network with FRELIMO which shaped an innovative political path where the fortunes of Mozambican, Italian and international politics entwined within the global context of the Cold War.

The distinctive support for FRELIMO that developed in Italy in the wake of earlier solidarity campaigns supporting self-determination claims in other parts of the world, as in the case of Algeria, benefited from the activities of members of the major



political parties. Some of these politicians, notably Dina Forti for PCI and Lucio Luzzato for PSIUP, also had considerable experience in international organisations such as the WPC, through which international solidarity activities were partly organised. In addition, in Italy FRELIMO enjoyed the support of a number of individual activists from across the ideological divisions of the time: communist, socialist as well as catholic civil society organisations worked together for the end of Portuguese rule in Mozambique. Lastly, the Italian solidarity network was also developed through some local municipalities - administered by PCI - which pursued their own foreign policy. After the Rome conference of 1970, one of these towns, Reggio Emilia, headed the Italian solidarity network through its activities, initially in the health sector, and also found itself at the forefront of the solidarity movement with FRELIMO in Europe in the crucial years before Mozambique's independence.

The specific features of the Italian solidarity network with FRELIMO, consisting of a mixture of formal and informal political channels, and of a dialogue between actors from different political traditions, laid the basis for Italy's role in Mozambique in the years after independence. This would eventually contribute to the peace process between FRELIMO and RENAMO in the 1980s and 1990s, during a period in which Italian cooperation activities with Mozambique grew exponentially against the backdrop of the earlier history of solidarity.