

Jacinto Veloso

FRELIMO

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(Maputo, 29 April 1996)

Tor Sellström: How did FRELIMO look upon the Nordic countries when you were in exile in Tanzania?

Jacinto Veloso: From our point of view, support from the Nordic countries was very much appreciated. The Nordic countries, as a whole, appeared as countries that were developed, in an advanced stage of internal democracy and with a foreign policy of understanding and support for self-determination. They were clearly anti-colonialist and, therefore disposed to solidarity with the cause of national liberation. For example, for Eduardo Mondlane—with whom I had the opportunity to work many times in Tanzania from 1964 to 1965—they were real allies and maybe even ideal partners for liberation. They did not have any particular interests or were, at least, equidistant from the East – West conflict.

TS: Generally anti-Communist, why do you think that the Nordic countries supported liberation movements which were close to Moscow?

JV: Examining the question today—not only having in mind what was happening at that time—I believe that the analysts designing the politics of the Nordic countries always interpreted a certain inclination by FRELIMO, MPLA or PAIGC in favour of the East, of Moscow, as an apparent—conscious or unconscious—relationship to reach independence, and not as an internal construction by the nationalists. Today, 20 to 30 years later, it is clear that Marxism-Leninism was not rooted in these countries. However, until this day some Western radical anti-Communists do not believe that that was the situation.

TS: Do you believe that personal contacts between leaders like Eduardo Mondlane and Olof Palme facilitated an understanding of the nationalist factor and the question of self-determination in Mozambique and Southern Africa?

JV: I believe that personal contacts facilitated a lot. There were many contacts. There were contacts between the main leaders. There were contacts or visits to our region by individuals, journalists, politicians and officials from the governments of the Nordic countries. I believe that they must have understood and written reports—some of a public character and others more restricted—with analysis where they saw that the East influenced the politics of FRELIMO, MPLA etc. through pressure, aid

and even through persons directly involved in those organizations. The Nordic countries had a very special way of drawing attention to the fact that a good solution would not be found in the East—and maybe not in the West—but in something genuine to each country.

TS: Do you think that the support was extended with conditions attached?

JV: I believe that the support was limited and today we can say that it was very limited. But it was non-conditional. The Nordic countries could have done much more. But I think that they did not for internal political reasons. Also because there were some risks involved in the solidarity. At the same time, through their contacts they tried to make us understand that for different reasons complete dependency on the East was not the best policy for Mozambique and its future development.

I heard Swedish leaders—persons involved—saying that it was necessary for us to reflect and debate more internally to find our own course of action, not one imposed from abroad. Therefore, I believe that the support opened a dialogue and that the dialogue made us understand the problems.

TS: In the case of Mozambique, there were frictions between the Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP) and FRELIMO. The Swedish Social Democratic Party supported both FRELIMO and PSP. Did you see this as a problem?

JV: I do not think so, because the Socialist Party of Portugal only appeared later. Those who became leaders of the Socialist Party—the fellow party of the Swedish Social Democratic Party—were in the Portuguese Patriotic Front of National Liberation and had various leanings. There are today distinguished leaders of the Socialist Party who were members of the Communist Party and others who were less to the left, being democrats, republicans, independents etc. In my opinion, that was not an impediment, because the relations with the Patriotic Front were good. I myself was in Algeria and worked with them.

TS: As early as in 1966, Pierre Schori from the Swedish Social Democratic Party wrote to President Mondlane, asking him about his opinion of the Patriotic Front. This would mean that the most important relationship was with FRELIMO?

JV: Yes, because the Patriotic Front was very complex. It was a big mixture, with strong internal frictions. I met Pierre Schori in Algeria.

Aquino de Bragança introduced me. De Bragança unfortunately died in the disaster with President Samora Machel. I believe that if he was alive he could tell a lot, because he had very good relations with the Nordic countries and with Pierre Schori. They used to write to each other and discuss questions about future democracy.

TS: Swedish journalists played an active part in bringing Sweden and FRELIMO closer together. Anders Johansson is one example. He formed part of the solidarity movement in Sweden.

JV: Exactly. He used to write for the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*.

TS: He was also the first Swedish journalist to visit the liberated areas.

JV: Precisely. He was in Cabo Delgado.

TS: Did you go to Algeria after your stay in Tanzania?

JV: Yes, I worked at the Algerian airline company, but after work I was with the FRELIMO office.

TS: What was your view of the Nordic countries from Algeria?

JV: There were very close connections, but the Nordic countries had less impact there. Algeria aspired to be the leader of the Third World. They had close contacts with countries like Cuba. However, even in Algeria the Nordic countries were well placed. I remember that there were very good relations.

TS: FRELIMO was not yet in government but it was part of the non-aligned movement (NAM), so to speak. Did you consult with Sweden and Finland concerning declarations at the different NAM meetings?

JV: Not that I recall, no.

TS: When did you leave Algeria?

JV: I left for good after 25 April 1974. I went straight to the peace negotiations with Portugal. It so happened that many of those behind the revolution in Portugal were old colleagues of mine from the military course.

TS: So you were negotiating with your ex-colleagues?

JV: Exactly. And actually very well. There could have been a reaction against that, but their attitude was, on the contrary, excellent. They said: 'You were right'. It was interesting.

TS: After Mozambique's independence, Sweden and the other Nordic countries continued to support the process of independence in Southern Africa. In your country, they sup-

ported ZANU and ANC. What was your view on that?

JV: I do not think that there was any limitation. On the contrary, the open relationship continued after independence.

TS: In 1976, with the change from a Social Democratic to a non-socialist government in Sweden, many believed that the support for Mozambique and the national liberation process in Southern Africa would be affected negatively. But this did not happen. Instead, it increased. Did you have the same contacts with the non-socialist government as with its Social Democratic predecessor?

JV: Well, our contacts were always very good because the cooperation policy remained the same. I believe that a clear notion of international solidarity with peoples that want to liberate themselves is characteristic of the Swedish electorate and that this is independent of the political colour of the parties. Actually, we had times of crisis at the government level when the Social Democratic Party was in power. It was very critical and publicly presented very harsh criticism of the FRELIMO government. In my opinion, this happened for internal Swedish electoral reasons. But the fact is that the moments of major crisis with Sweden occurred when the Social Democratic Party was in power. Nevertheless, the relations were without a doubt always good. Severe criticism such as that often happens when the party in power is politically closer to you and is more to the left. It is a defence mechanism against criticism from the conservative parties. It usually occurs during the months preceding general elections. The rest of the time there is a truce.

TS: You were responsible for national security in Mozambique at the time of the Nkomati Accord with South Africa. Were there any supportive, or critical, reactions from the Nordic countries to the accord?

JV: I think that they were more of the critical kind, if I am not wrong. But, the criticism was not very strong. That came from the East. Until this day, such reactions continue to come from Cuba.

I think that our explanations were accepted. We explained that the accord had advantages for us, but primarily—although it could not be seen at once—that it would have advantages for the liberation of South Africa itself. We set a precedent by concluding an accord on good

neighbourliness and non-aggression between South Africa and Mozambique, an independent African country seriously suspected of being an 'agent' of the Soviet Union. At the time, it appeared to us that the accord also would set a precedent for an internal agreement between the black population and the established white power in South Africa. Although this might have seemed utopic, I believe that this was actually what happened. The final downfall of apartheid started with the Nkomati Accord. This kind of action accelerated the process, even though ANC at that point also opposed the accord. I believe that the immediate advantage for Mozambique was that South Africa at least stopped attacking us directly with their military forces and war planes. Had it only been for that, it would have made sense to sign the accord. But the repercussions were much greater. They culmi-

nated in the election of ANC to political power in South Africa. The Nkomati Accord lit the light at the end of the tunnel for democracy in South Africa.

TS: Soon after the Nkomati Accord, the Socialist International had a meeting in Arusha where Olof Palme, Samora Machel and Oliver Tambo spoke about its consequences. Palme and Tambo criticized the accord, did they not?

JV: I was there. Yes, they spoke. Tanzania was also against the accord. President Nyerere in particular. They did not think that it was a good step to take, but later they admitted that maybe it was right. I myself heard from high-ranking ANC leaders—at the time detained on Robben Island—that the Nkomati Accord, after all, was entered into for the good of democracy in South Africa and to facilitate the legalization of ANC.