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REPORT ON A VISIT TO MOZAMBIQUE

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It has been over five months since I returned from spending the latter half of October 1975 in Mozambique. In spite of the fact that this report has been delayed in the writing because of a necessary pre-occupation with the urgent developments in Angola, nevertheless I feel it may be worthwhile to summarize some of my observations and reactions.

I was in Mozambique a little less than four months after independence. Therefore the government, under the leadership of Frelimo, was just beginning to get itself organized. I was particularly fascinated to be in Mozambique because for many years through the work of both of the American Committee on Africa and the Africa Fund I had been close to the liberation struggle. We had given some support to medical, educational and agricultural projects in the liberated areas of Mozambique and some Frelimo projects located in Tanzania. Also we had given some support to the external, political work of Frelimo in the United States. All of those who had supported Frelimo's struggle for ten years or more knew the capability of the movement to effectively organize the liberated areas of the country. The intriguing question was: could this experience of organizing during an armed struggle be used for giving leadership and direction to rebuilding the entire country?

Mozambique has a special significance in the unfinished struggle for freedom in southern Africa because of its relationship to South Africa - the common border in the South, the economic ties through Mozambique labor used in South Africa's mines, the Cabora Bassa Dam built with South African capital, the use of the Mozambique railroad and ports by South Africa. Frelimo has always been openly antagonistic to South African aims. What policies would now be followed as Frelimo supported the unfinished liberation struggle?

Mozambique is a large country. It has a population of over 8 million people. Its border stretches from Tanzania in the north to South Africa in the south, a distance of approximately 1700 miles along the Indian Ocean. It is fairly narrow in relation to its length being a little over 700 miles at its widest point and perhaps 50 miles at its narrowest point near the South African border. In a fairly brief visit, obviously it would be impossible to cover a great deal of the country. During the less than three weeks I was there I spent probably half the time in the Maputo area (formerly Lourenco Marques). I traveled to Ponta do Oura to the extreme south virtually on the South African border. I traveled to Gaza Province, the next province north. I had about a half a day in Beira, the second largest city and seaport of the country. I had several days in Tete Province where I visited the Cabora Bassa Dam and other places. Thus I touched only 4 of the 10 provinces of the country. Among others in Maputo I talked with the Vice President and Minister of Development and Economic Planning, Marcelino dos Santos, the Foreign Minister, Joaquim Chissano, the Minister of Health, Helder Martins, with Janet Mondlane, now heading up one of the divisions of the Ministry of Health, and I visited
the national headquarters of Frelimo and sub-offices. I was able to visit schools and hospitals and talked with a large variety of people representing various pursuits. I got a good taste of the country without being able to satisfy everything that I had hoped to see and wanted to learn because time would just not permit it. I received a very fine welcome from our Frelimo friends and every facility available was given to me to help me visit the places I had time for. Since I do not speak Portuguese, I was given very fine assistance by Frelimo workers facilitating not only my travel but my conversation.

The liberation struggle had not been ended for very long when I was in Mozambique. Therefore the experience of 10 years of war was still fresh. Some of those whom I met and some who accompanied me I had known as a result of several visits to Frelimo projects and headquarters in Tanzania during the long years of struggle. One commander who traveled with me from Maputo to Tete had been a teacher at Bagamoyo and had been called to join the Frelimo force that opened up the Tete front in 1970. Although he comes from Cabo Delgado himself, he was in the Tete campaign during the years before the overthrow of Portuguese rule and now was still connected with the Frelimo operation in that province. The Frelimo worker who traveled with me most of the time in the Maputo area spent several years in the Machava prison. He and about 75 others had been captured on May 10, 1965 as they were trying to leave Mozambique to go to Dar es Salaam for training and to join Frelimo forces. The head of Frelimo work in Gaza Province had been part of the 75 as had been the administrator of the Manjacaze district in Gaza Province.

I spent a day traveling to and from the home area of Eduardo Mondlane in Gaza. This is still a Mondlane area and I met quite a few of Eduardo's relatives including another Eduardo Mondlane, age 10, for whom the first president of Frelimo would have been a great uncle. This young lad and his sister walks 24 miles each day to attend school. A rather sizeable house, compared with most of the round huts which were in the Mondlane compound, was still uncompleted. It had been started after Eduardo Mondlane visited there when he was with the UN in 1961. He had left the funds for this building to be constructed. The PIDE (secret police) stopped the construction and now, 15 years later, this house is still uncompleted.

In the Tete area I visited Wiriyamu, the Mozambique village which is a counterpart of the My Lai Massacre of Vietnam. Some 400 people were massacred there by machine gun fire in December 1972. The site of this former village is now vacant except as a memorial to those who died there. A large common grave marked by a mound is a visible sign of the tragedy. A canopy has been built in the center of what used to be the village under which there is a chest which contains the bones of some of the victims.

Tete Province was an area of severe struggle. Here the Portuguese had forced the people into the "protected villages", the aldeamentos. When I was in Tete we saw many of these former "protected"areas. In one small district of the province there were 14 aldeamentos. They are all still standing and people are still living in them but of course without the restrictions which prevailed when the Portuguese were present. Each village now has a school, and a local Frelimo organization. Some of these aldeamentos undoubtedly will be converted into communal villages which will be the basic organizational unit of rural community life under Frelimo's leadership.

In this report I can briefly summarize my impressions under three main categories:

1. Frelimo has a sense of direction in reconstructing Mozambique. The process
of taking leadership in a country and attempting to establish purpose and order, is a very difficult and complicated one. The process is proceeding slowly in Mozambique. Yet to the sympathetic observer a clear sense of direction comes through. How well the purposes are being achieved will have to be judged after a certain lapse of time. But there can be no doubt about the attempt to establish a direction. This can be illustrated in many ways.

a) Communal Villages - Developing agriculture and the rural life of the people has been given the highest priority by the government. The construction of communal villages will be the organizing medium for this task. The process is just now beginning. The people are being prepared for a move into the villages by a vast educational effort. These villages will range in size from 500 to about 1000 families. They will be sub-divided into units of about 250 families with a green area in between the units. The plan is for the villages to be circular with the common facilities at the center such as health clinics, stores, market, schools, etc. The fields for agricultural development will be located in the surrounding area. The people will work the land in common, but there will be plots where the families can grow vegetables for themselves. It is expected that through these villages production can be vastly improved, Frelimo political activities can be better organized, diversification of food achieved, better education developed, health facilities improved, cultural activities encouraged, small industries expanded. Obviously from the government's point of view the administration of the country will be much easier through this system of communal villages.

It was made clear to me that not all of these villages will be devoted only to agricultural pursuits. In some areas of the country there will be communal villages whose main pursuit will be mining or fishing. It will all depend on where the villages are located and what the economic base of a particular section of the country is.

I visited one of the areas where a communal village was in its initial stage in Maputo Province near Bela Vista to the south of the capital. Here the land had been plowed and cultivated and was ready for planting. The village itself had not yet been constructed and the people were living in a more traditional fashion in their family compounds separated from one another by a quarter mile or so. They were beginning to work in the fields together, however.

b) Grupo Dinamizadores (dynamizing groups) - Frelimo has not yet worked out the details of just who should be a member of the party. Obviously those who were in the liberation struggle and were living in liberated zones are members. But what to do about the population both in the urban and in the rural areas of the country where the people did not have the opportunity of any direct contact with Frelimo? As a way of organizing the people for participation in the building of their country and also preparing them for membership in Frelimo, the units called dynamizing groups have been established. These groups are sort of cells organized both geographically and vocationally. Thus each geographic area of the country, whether in a city or in a rural area, has its GD. But also the schools, the industry, the place of work, also has a GD. One can choose to belong to the group in either place. Or one can choose not to belong at all. Belonging to one of the groups is optional. Those, however, who want to play an active part in the task of building the country, will join a group.

Each of the groups is divided into operational sections such as the OMM (the women's organization); mobilization and organization; information and propaganda; culture; and social affairs. Each of the groups is a democratic unit. They
elect their leadership and those who will be responsible for each sector of its operation. They encourage weekly meetings for criticism and self-criticism. They are engaged in all kinds of activities from organizing against theft in the community, to stamping out prostitution or alcoholism, or dealing with racism if it should arise, etc. The groups take responsibility for cleaning up the neighborhood. Usually this takes place on Sunday morning as members of the groups appear with their brooms and other implements to sweep the streets, to clean up fields, etc. The groups are in effect the training ground for responsible citizenship and the medium for Frelimo to try to achieve its national purpose through the cooperation of the citizens.

c) **Peoples Shops** - During the years of the liberation struggle Frelimo established Peoples Shops where there could be an exchange of goods outside the money economy. The produce grown by the peasants was exchanged for basic needs such as clothing, salt, and other products that had to be imported. The principle of the Peoples Shops (Loja do Povo) has now been adapted to independent Mozambique. These shops are not run for profit. They are owned and operated by Frelimo. The one I visited in Maputo was managed by a Mozambican of Asian ancestry. There was a long queue of people waiting outside. Prices were probably 10% below those of an ordinary shop. This particular shop was not well-stocked but, like all such efforts, was new. These shops seem to have a resemblance to cooperative stores in our experience.

d) **Frelimo cadre schools** - While I was in Maputo the first Frelimo cadre school was opened for the purpose of training people for various governmental and party positions. 90 students were chosen for the first 6 months training. All of those chosen came out of the Frelimo military forces. The need for trained personnel is so great that this first training school is but one of many which will undoubtedly be established at time goes on.

e) **Culture** - Frelimo strongly encourages the people in cultural pursuits - that is to rediscover their own traditions of dancing, the arts, theatre, etc. One Saturday afternoon while I was in Maputo I was moving casually around in one of the areas called Malhangalene. I heard the sounds of singing and drumming in the distance. Soon I saw a Frelimo flag and discovered that I was near one of the local Frelimo offices. Inside a wall enclosure there were many children and adults. The purpose of this particular gathering was to teach the children to dance traditional dances. This was being done with inspiration, and the event was a weekly occurrence on Saturday afternoon. The local grupo dinamizadores is responsible for planning and implementing this weekly event.

f) **The flag** - The symbols on the Mozambique flag are indicative of the purpose of the country. The hoe stands for the importance of agriculture; the star for solidarity with people everywhere struggling for liberation; the wheel for industry; the gun for their own liberation struggle; and the book for education. These are the cardinal principles of Frelimo.

g) **Racism** - Frelimo has always been very clear in its position against any form of racism. The government and party leadership includes people of European, Asian, and African ancestry. The whites who have left the country have done so because they were fearful of their positions previously preserved by the colonial administration. Or they have left because they have been out of sympathy with Frelimo aims and purposes. I talked with youthful Mozambicans who looked forward to the future under Frelimo.

2. **Frelimo is practical** - in spite of the fact that Frelimo has a pretty
definite purpose of the end of country it hopes to build, the leadership does not expect this to be accomplished overnight. In discussion with any Frelimo advocate, it will readily be said that they hope to build a socialist society. However this will be a society which will be uniquely Mozambique. It will not be patterned after the socialism of any other country. Nothing is done too precipitously. This is reflected in the following ways:

a) The nationalization process is proceeding slowly. At the time I was there only four occupational areas had been nationalized - lawyers, doctors, teachers, and undertakers. The main bank had been taken over by the government, but other banks were still under Portuguese control. Large plantations such as those that grow sisal were still under private ownership. Private industries and stores were still operating. Further nationalization has taken place now including unoccupied and unused land, apartment buildings for rent. Private homes are not affected.

b) Policy towards South Africa and Rhodesia - Although it is unlikely that if Frelimo had formed the government of Mozambique the Cobora Bassa Dam would have been built with South African capital, now that Frelimo has inherited the dam, there is no immediate intention of ending the agreement with South Africa. I spent a day visiting the dam which is a huge project. When construction was at its height, there were some 7000 workers involved. Now there are only 1000. Of the five turbines in the dam, only 2 are presently functioning. None of the power as yet is being utilized in Mozambique. It is all transmitted to South Africa. The government does not look upon the dam as the same sort of serious problem in its relations with South African mines, or the use that South Africa makes of the railroad and the harbors of Mozambique. Some 10,000 Mozambicans are employed as a result of South African use of the railroads and harbors, Since unemployment could be a serious problem, it is difficult at the moment to end these relationships. Yet it will undoubtedly be done at some point in the foreseeable future. Frelimo makes quite clear that they intend to support the liberation struggle in South Africa. However it is not yet clear just what tactics this struggle will demand. Consequently Frelimo will wait until they are asked by the South African liberation forces for particular support before they decide what their own policy should be.

At the time I was in Mozambique Rhodesia was still making use of the rail facilities to the port of Beira on the Indian Ocean. I was told that a study was under way to ascertain just what goods were being exported from Rhodesia and what the economic effect on Mozambique would be if this transportation was brought to an end. When the study was completed and the struggle had entered an ever more serious stage in Rhodesia, President Samora Machel announced the closure of the border on March 3, 1976 and henceforth no Rhodesian exports will go through Mozambique ports.

c) Mozambique does not give very high priority to tourism. They have not ended it however. I was taken to Hotel Polana, a very fine hotel with a beautiful view of the Indian Ocean, palm trees on the lawn, a large swimming pool, etc. This hotel used to have some 200 guests 90% of whom were South African. When I was there there were only about 60 guests and about 5% of them were South African. Obviously Frelimo does not think that tourism will do very much for the growth of their country along the lines in which they are interested.

d) Institutions or facilities which had been inherited from the Portuguese are put to use and transformed. The case in point would be the aldeamentos. They are not being abolished, but they are now a part of the communal village system.

(* this sentence uncompleted. It should read as follows)

South Africa as it does the some 100,000 Mozambican laborers who work in the
3) Frelimo is trying to win the support of the people. This is being done by educational efforts and not simply by coercion. Of course there is a problem of security for a new government under revolutionary party leadership. When one travels through the countryside, there are roadblocks from time to time manned by Frelimo soldiers at which the occupants of the car must show their travel permits. There were about four or five checkpoints during the day's travel we took from Maputo to Manjacaze (a distance of some 150 miles or so). Frelimo must be vigilant. On September 7, 1974 and again on October 21st, there were uprisings in Maputo in an attempt to overthrow the Frelimo government led by Portuguese dissidents. Some 600 people were killed mostly on the October 21st effort. Again in December of 1975 there was an attempted coup, this time by some Frelimo troops who for the most part had not been involved in the liberation struggle against the Portuguese. This was a number of weeks after I had left Mozambique and so my reports are second-hand. My understanding of the events of December is that some of these soldiers were beginning to act like Portuguese colonial troops - engaging in prostitution, drunkenness, and dealing with civilians in a disorderly fashion. Frelimo has strictly forbidden such actions. The dissident troops attempted to take over the radio station and the airport. There was very little loss of life because Frelimo loyal troops were given orders by President Samora not to shoot to kill. Only two soldiers and less than 10 civilians were killed in the firing that took place.

The aim of Frelimo is to involve the people in the grupo dinamizadores voluntarily and to inculcate them with Frelimo principles. There are prisons of course, but Frelimo has established what are called re-education centers. These are the places, located in rural areas, where a wide variety of people are located who may be involved in prostitution, drug addiction, petty thievery, and even some of those who have been the enemies of Frelimo politically. In these centers, there are constant discussions, criticism and self-criticism, and at the same time cooperation in community life, by growing their own food and acting as responsible members of society. I did not attempt to visit any such centers. On another occasion I would hope to do so.

I was impressed by the sense of purpose and dedication which reflected itself in almost everything I saw. Obviously Frelimo leadership knows what direction it is trying to go and is implementing this idea as effectively as possible. I had the overwhelming feeling that Frelimo would succeed in building a country which can become an important model in Africa and for other parts of the world. There are tendencies which can be criticized - a bureaucracy which apparently goes along with any functioning government, a slowness in getting things done partly due to lack of trained personnel, a formality which perhaps is an inheritance from the Portuguese. One hopes that an elitism will not grow up and that the common touch which has been an important part of Frelimo success during the liberation struggle, will be maintained and strengthened in the years ahead.