

Mozambique Reorganizes: The Political and Organizational Offensive

by Paul and Andy Epstein

Beira—An important development is occurring in Mozambique. With the halting of the war in Zimbabwe and its burden on Mozambique, the country has turned its sights inward and begun a major attack on the state apparatus and system of bureaucracy. It has begun an offensive against the work habits developed, including negligence, irresponsibility, incompetence, apathy and passivity, disorganization, lack of direction, privileges, abuses of power, corruption and overt sabotage.

Appearing in public for the first time in 1980 on January 17, President Samora Machel spoke to the people of Beira, under a strong midday sun. In fatigues, relaxed and spirited, he presented a history of this city. He discussed its reactionary past as a British (Rhodesian) concession in which even the Portuguese were kept out of the top positions, best hotels and clubs. When FRELIMO members arrived in Beira in 1975 they were wined and wooed by members of the colonial secret police and other members of colonial organizations.

During the transition government dynamizing groups were formed, but, said Machel, they "had many difficulties in Beira, especially because of racism manifesting itself in the hotels, buses, restaurants, beaches, all over. . . Initiative was destroyed, organization and self-discipline faltered, programming and direction was lost and consciousness was poor." The former colonialist profited by this and infiltrated into the structures of government, companies and factories. "Up to today many have still not been dislodged."

The president talked in the everyday language and style of the people, using traditional parables to bring home his points. Occasionally his speech went into a popular Mozambican song, "We will not forget the time that is past." At one point he whistled the tune.

The people listened and laughed as he described the way reactionaries have camouflaged themselves. "We all know the story of the animals who met to choose

their leader. They chose the leopard who took the chair and dressed himself in fine clothes. But at night, with his court, he went out to hunt the other animals. The parents came to complain and the leopard responded: 'Observe well the characteristics of the animal that ate your child.' The complainant responded: 'The only characteristic we've noticed is the animal has a tail.' But the chief had his tail inside his pants and was always seated. Because of this it was not possible to identify him." The speech was honest and very critical. "Even some of the police leaders in Beira are the same people who oppressed us under the Portuguese," said Machel.

This event in Beira turned out to be the initiation of a major campaign against the ills impeding Mozambique's development. Beira, said Machel, must be the taking off point for an organizational, ideological and cultural offensive against the generalized lack of productivity and against malpractices in the state apparatus and the productive and commercial sectors.

Back in Maputo several days later, the President jumped into his car and went to the port, beginning a series of visits to factories, state agencies, warehouses and offices, which revealed the extent of the incompetence, inefficiency and corruption now being challenged.

The State Apparatus

With independence in 1975, members of FRELIMO took positions in the ministries (e.g. housing, education, health, agriculture, industry). But they were presented with the same institutionalized ministerial apparatus that existed in colonial times.

This is not a problem unique to 'post-revolution' Mozambique. In his in-depth analysis of the Soviet Union (*The Class Struggle in the USSR, 1919-1923*), Charles Bettelheim argues that, from the beginning, the Czarist state apparatus was never dismantled. There were small numbers of cadres to be dispersed in a large area. The pressure of civil and external war put production "for the front" above the process of working together to develop new kinds of governing bodies with real workers' control. Instead of the Party and its ideology controlling the government, the Party members got slowly integrated into the bureaucracy. Leadership in all areas—in government, in the army, in the cities, in the country and in the Party itself—became centralized, hierarchical and formalistic.

In China, there was an attempt to break this pattern, and a Cultural Revolution attacking the systems of privilege was carried out with mass mobilization and organization of red guards. But recent events in-

over



Samora Machel met with workers to discuss ways of increasing production and improving working conditions.

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dicate that there has been a reversal of this trend.

Cuba is also now, at a more advanced level of development, opening an offensive against its bureaucracy. Mozambique has entered this phase just five years after independence, with a direct attack against abuses of power and the system of privileges.

FRELIMO Tradition

The roots of this emphasis, go back as far as Eduardo Mondlane, first president of FRELIMO, who, analyzing events in the newly independent African states of the sixties, observed that independence did not bring about alteration of the state machinery. The state, instead of being dismantled, expanded. The organs of the state, army, police and civil service remained essentially the same. Party leaders and members moved into positions in these agencies. But this was deadly for the party as it became absorbed into the very state machinery that was designed to oppress the people for the colonialists. The party would reappear only at election time to renew its positions. Wrote Mondlane, "The party thus lost its roots in the people and began to serve the interest of the indigenous bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, and became the base for power abuse as well as accumulation of capital."

The Bureaucracy

Portuguese bureaucracy, both at home in Portugal and in its exported colonial ver-

sion in Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique, is particularly labyrinthian. To do anything—obtain a driver's licence, enter school, take a trip—one must first submit a request, on special blue paper, phrased and spaced correctly, on which one affixes various stamps which must then be signed, notarized and stamped with a particular insignia or "carimba." Each step occurs in a different part of town. One frequently waits in lines for hours, only to be turned away for absence of one stamp or carimba. It is exhausting, days go by, initiative is sapped. And this has deadly ramifications for the economy. On the morning of Machel's Beira speech, the newspaper carried an article exposing the discovery of 15 tons of beans that had rotted in a warehouse.

Machel asked the 'responsables' "You were waiting for what?" All this while people spend hours waiting in lines to buy food. Sabotage? Crimes against the people? It can be the bureaucracy itself which leads to lack of personal accountability. ("This is not with me, go to such and such a place.") Irresponsibility, negligence, disorganization, lack of direction, disinterest, inertia, and laziness, as well as outright sabotage are evils now constantly under attack by the President, as prevalent characteristics of a destructive bureaucracy.

Positive Results

The campaign has resulted in changes. Warehouses are being cleared out. Trucks have suddenly been arranged to transport goods. Papers have somehow been com-

pleted and stamped and some goods are appearing in stores. Post offices have been cleaned and books put in order. Visiting the package receiving warehouse of the Beira post office, formerly a dusty mess, one witnesses a remarkable clean-up with organization of package registration. In an office in Nampula a group of waiting people confronted a nasty bureaucrat in a calm and positive way, showing an increased general consciousness of the values and behavior necessary to build a cohesive socialist society. The entire campaign is one of mass political education and consciousness raising.

In February Machel told an all-minister conference: "We have not broken with the colonial methods of work. We live in our offices, inundated with piles of paper, do not know our own secretaries, do not visit hospitals, schools, farms, etc., do not listen to popular opinion, knowing reality only through memorandums and dispatches. We lose direction and focus only on small, daily, routine problems. . . . We don't punish saboteurs, we coexist with them and even pay their salaries. Courtesy, serving the public with delicacy, with good presentation are not integrated into the behavior of the workers of the state apparatus. . . ."

Good solutions for restructuring the state apparatus will take time and collective thought. The solutions being tried are quite varied. But there is optimism here where before there was discouragement. Mozambique has entered a new phase in its continuing revolution.