

Mozambique: A Country on the Road to Liberation

ILLITERACY, UNDERNOURISHMENT, FORCED
LABOR, REPRESSION
FOUR YEARS OF STRUGGLE
50.000 PORTUGUESE SOLDIERS IN MOZAMBIQUE
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE GUERRILLAS OF
ANGOLA, ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA

When the first Portuguese seamen reached the coasts of Eastern Africa in the last years of the 15th century, they found "a cosmopolitan culture perhaps superior to contemporary Portuguese culture: Islamic as the religion, an Arab aristocracy, the political leadership, commerce was practiced by the Swahilis—a mixed race of Arabs and Africans—Persians and later, since the 17th century, by Hindus." The city-states of the Eastern coast, Kilwa among them, flourished thanks to the commerce of the Indian Ocean.

Five hundred years later, the panorama of the southeastern part of Africa still in Portuguese hands—the Mozambique Colony—is one of illiteracy, undernourishment, forced labor, repression against the slightest expression of nationalism; a few agrarian crops that enslaved the African peasant on the plantations; migration to South Africa and Rhodesia, etc., etc.

Nevertheless, that tragic reality does not stop the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Franco Nogueira, to state after a visit that he found in Mozambique "a healthy pro-Portuguese atmosphere."

Those 500 years of "Portugueseism" can be schematically divided into three stages more or less defined:

a) From the first contact, 15th century to the 17th century. After subjecting the coasts by means of military occupation, Portugal imposed the slave trade on the peoples of the zone, even though for geographical reasons, that commerce in human beings was not going to reach the proportions there that it reached in Angola. Slowly, the Portuguese merchants will trav-



el the routes the Arabs had opened in the interior of East Africa always accompanied by soldiers and missionaries.

b) The 18th and 19th centuries are characterized by a gradual occupation of the colony "to protect the Portuguese from the invasions of other colonial powers and from the Arabs, chiefs and tribes." Those are two centuries of abandon, epidemics, skirmishes against the Monomotapa-Zimbabwe Empire. Almost two thousands Portuguese would have to carry out "the colonial enterprise," almost without foreign aid;

c) After the well-known Berlin Conference in 1885, white colonialism established itself in the few urban centers and in Mozambique countryside, to start a more "systematic exploitation of the up-to-then-unknown Portuguese colony of East Africa.

But to start a systematic exploitation, Portugal would have had to have been a true imperialist power in the years previous to the First World War. Unhappily for the followers of the "civilizing mission," Portugal was no more than a caricature of a power.

Hence, the Mozambique exploitation would be, since the beginning of the colonial adventure up to the present, an action intimately linked to international imperialism.

Migrant labor, the transit of ships and European tourism constitute the economic mainstay of the obsolete colonial administration of Mozambique.

Lorenzo Marques, capital and very important port, ships the production of the Transvaal, Rhodesia, Swaziland and, until a little while ago, of Zambia. Another port of Mozambique, Beira, is the fundamental link between Malawi and Rhodesia with the exterior.

Besides the customs collections of Lorenzo Marques and Beira, Mozambique also profits from the annual migration of the African workers to the mines in Rhodesia and South Africa. The official figures in 1964 were 125 000 Mozambicans migrating to Rhodesia and 162 000 taking the road to the mines in South Africa.

The Mozambique Convention is still in force, in spite of all that has happened on this planet since its signing in 1909 between Portuguese and South Africans. It stipulates that every year 80 000 Africans will be recruited in Mozambique to work in the Transvaal, in exchange, 45.5% of the commerce of that region goes through Lorenzo Marques. The figure of 80 000 is deceitful. For instance, in 1963, another 67 000 Mozambique workers crossed the border "illegally" to go to work in the Transvaal.

Fearful of losing its positions in East Africa during the decolonizing wave in the post-war years, Portugal took pains to promote the establishment of middle class Portuguese families in its "overseas province." The white population of Mozambique was 27 438 in 1940. In 1960, this figure was 101 665, and last year 150 000. That is, some 150 000 Portuguese whose economic activity and socio-political attitude can be compared to those of the racist neighbors of South Africa and Rhodesia. What they will do in case nationalist pressure forces any kind of neocolonial maneuver in the governing circles of Lisbon is something that must be taken into consideration, above all within the framework of the prevailing situation in all of Southern Africa.

GUERRILLAS

On June 25, 1962, from the fusion of three parties, there emerges the Front for Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO). And on September 25, 1964, the date of the beginning of the struggle, its Central Committee told the people of Mozambique:

"In your behalf, FRELIMO today solemnly proclaims the general armed uprising of the people of Mozambique against Portuguese colonialism to achieve total and complete independence of Mozambique. Our struggle will cease only with the total annihilation of Portuguese colonialism. . . . The armed struggle we proclaim today, whose objective is to destroy Portuguese colonialism and imperialism, will permit us to install in our country a new, popular social order. . . ."

In spite of the presence of some 50 000 Portuguese soldiers in Mozambique, who in reality are protecting the investments of the international foreign monopolies (80% of the total), the Mozambique guerrillas of the FRELIMO have already liberated vast areas in the provinces of the north, and marches impetuously toward the center and west of the colony.

The struggle has been fruitful for the patriots of Mozambique. Fruitful in all senses: in military and political experience, in combat morale, in the recognition obtained in the international arena as well as in the assistance for the liberated zones.

Its efforts in conjunction with those of the guerrillas of Angola, Zimbabwe and South Africa foretell the total destruction of the racist and colonialist stronghold in the so-called southern cone of Africa.