

Mozambique's President Machel Talks About Building a Socialist Future

Recently in an exclusive interview, President Samora Machel spoke at length to Iain Christie and Allen Isaacman about progress and problems in Mozambique. Historian Allen Isaacman, now teaching at the University of Maputo, is a former member of the Southern Africa collective. Journalist Iain Christie works for the Mozambique Information Agency.

The Marxist-Leninist party FRELIMO, created just two years ago, began its first major campaign to admit new members in February last year. How would you describe the party's presence in the country today?

The party structuring campaign which ended last November made it possible to create hundreds of cells in priority work places and residential areas. Tens of thousands of new members have been admitted.

Today, the party is present, through its militants, throughout the country. The party's leadership role in state and society is thus guaranteed.

Mozambique has a high level of illiteracy. What implications does this have for popularizing Marxist-Leninist concepts among the largely illiterate workers and peasants?

This question reflects some misconceptions about Marxism. It suggests that Marxism is like the Bible. "How can they learn the catechism if they're illiterate? How can they learn the Bible if they can't read or write?" That's the concept behind the question. The idea is that it is a foreign experience. How will they learn it if they can't read. But listen—this is the principal point—Marxism-Leninism is a class science.

Do you agree that there are classes in Mozambique, that there is a working class?

1. The Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) was created in 1962 and after ten years of armed struggle (1964-1974) won independence from Portugal. At the front's Third Congress in 1977, the decision was taken form a Marxist party, which retained the name FRELIMO.

Yes, of course. . .

So your question falls. Who is it who makes Marxism? Who is it who makes this science, after all? Is it the scientist closeted with his books?

A science belongs to its creator. Who is the creator of Marxism-Leninism? It is a science of class. It belongs to its creator—the working class. Its creator is the people, the people in their centuries-long struggle against the different forms and systems of exploitation. Its creator is, above all, the working class which, because of its specific role in society, is capable of conceiving of a new society, of new types of relations among the people.

Now then, who is the best Marxist? Is it



A science belongs to its creator. Who is the creator of Marxism-Leninism? It belongs to its creator—the working class

the person in the library reading tomes or the one doing the job? Scientific socialism was not forged and developed among those who spend all their time in libraries and universities. That is a lie! It was not the agronomists who invented geometry; it was the peasants, in the demarcation of their land. They invented the science right there.

The Mozambican workers have a long experience of suffering and struggle against slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. How do you interpret this? Who were the people who took power in Russia? Who were they? Were they from the university? Who were the people who took part in the Long March in China? Who were they? Were they from the university?

Tell me Iain, when I marched with you,² what were we doing? Those who were there with you, helping and defending you, what were they doing? They didn't know how to read and write, those people! The war taught them! The war, experience, practice.

But you yourself have said that socialism cannot be built with an illiterate population.

That's right. During the literacy campaign. Party members are the object of a special literacy drive aimed at raising their scientific knowledge and conceptions of the world. To be able to read, to have the capability to synthesize experiences, to raise them to the level of theory.

There are two things here: one is to see where the theory comes from, where the ideas come from. They come from praxis! Now we want the people to synthesize this praxis, to have the capability to synthesize their experiences.

Thus the illiterate peasants in Cabo Delgado learned the essence of the system of exploitation of man by man that the new exploiters of the Simango/Lazaro group³

2. Iain Christie visited the liberated areas of Mozambique with Samora Machel in 1973 as a reporter for the *Tanzania Daily News*.

3. Uria Simango and Lazaro Kavandame were two FRELIMO leaders expelled in 1969 for corruption. They were subsequently implicated in the assassination of the movement's first president, Eduardo Mondlane.

tried to introduce in the liberated areas. No Marxist went there to say: "Look, this is exploitation, this is this and this is this." They didn't read it in any books, but they felt it—these new exploiters, let's fight them. It was these peasants who struggled and brought about the victory of the cooperatives over exploitative private commerce and the big landowners. It was the peasants! They struggled and made people's power, class power, triumph over feudal and bourgeois power that the new exploiters tried to impose. They didn't know where the door of the university was. They didn't even know the way there.

The people's liberation war, our military science which defeated the colonial-fascist generals, was drawn up and developed by our own illiterate people. Marxism-Leninism did not appear in our country as an imported product. Mark this well, we want to combat this idea. Is it a policy foreign to our country? Is it an imported product or merely the result of reading the classics? No! Our party is not a study group of scientists specializing in the reading and interpretation of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. No! Our party is not that!

Our struggle, the class struggle of our working people, their experiences of suffering, all enable them to assume and internalize the fundamentals of scientific socialism. This same struggle contributes to the continual development and enrichment of Marxism-Leninism, which is the common property of all exploited peoples and classes.

In the process of the struggle we synthesize our experiences and heighten our theoretical knowledge. It's different from first studying the theory of how to wage a war and then going out to do it. We did it and now we synthesize; we resolve it day-by-day.

We think that, in the final analysis, this has been the experience of every socialist revolution.

And indeed the largely illiterate masses played a vital role in the selection of party members in the structuring campaign?

They did. Each candidate for party membership was studied not only by the party structures. Each one was the subject of broad debate by the masses. Decisions were made on a case-by-case basis, and today the masses feel that they have in each party member a truly vanguard element. They are aware that they can denounce those who, by chance, are able to infiltrate into the party or who fail to follow the party line.

The way in which this campaign was carried out greatly enhanced the party's prestige among the masses.

However, other countries, in their at-

It was the peasants who struggled and brought about the victory of the cooperatives over exploitative private commerce and the big landowners



tempts to build socialism, have experienced serious abuses of power by party members. How is FRELIMO trying to avoid this?

Our party has had a great deal of experience with errors and abuses that arise in the exercise of power. During the course of our struggle for independence, we developed and we institutionalized certain essential mechanisms. Criticism is a constant with us, criticism in party structures and criticism by the masses. People's vigilance is also extremely important, and we continually search for ways to increase its use.

The leading bodies are in permanent contact with the masses and daily receive their opinions, criticisms, suggestions, and proposals. The democratic mass organizations are also more and more involved with all sectors of the population, in their work places and residential neighborhoods.

Party militants have the right to contact all party organs, including the Central Committee, and they exercise this right. All citizens have the equal right to get in touch with the state administrative organs, including the head-of-state, and they exercise this right. Letters to the editor in news-

papers and magazines are also an important source of criticism and, thus, control of abuses.

Cases of party and state leaders who were removed from their functions and publicly exposed for deviations from the political line or for improper conduct are well known.⁴

In these circumstances, it seems to us that we can safely say that the eventual abuses of power that arise will be rapidly detected and punished.

We know that there is a high level of unemployment in Mozambique at the present time. What are its principal causes and how is FRELIMO attempting to overcome this problem?

Truthfully, there is not only unemployment in our country, but also underemployment. Many workers are not able to work full-time or are employed only seasonally.

The main causes of this situation are the

4. These include a minister of agriculture, a provincial governor, a member of the secretariat of the Organization of Mozambican Women and several other long-time FRELIMO militants.

historical, economic, and political conditions under which our country has been forced to live for centuries. Colonial domination did not permit normal economic development and left behind such grave problems as a 95 percent illiteracy rate and a backward rural economy. Our country was forced to produce raw materials to fuel the industries of the metropole, and industrial development was never permitted. This reduced the use of our natural resources for our own industries and created an underdeveloped economy. In addition, the colonial-capitalist system, based on the exploitation of cheap manual labor, never allowed Mozambican workers to acquire technical skills. And because unemployment is a permanent condition of both colonialism and capitalism, Portuguese domination, by definition, created the underemployment of a portion of the working class.

These problems can only be resolved by the development of socialism. Only a planned economy permits full employment and gives real meaning to the right to work, which is guaranteed to all citizens by our constitution. Only a planned economy can assure the satisfaction of our material, cultural, and moral needs.

To achieve maximum production and a high level of productivity, we must use all available existing resources to their greatest capacity. This requires the systematic upgrading of the labor skills of Mozambican workers to meet the scientific and technological demands of development. We must also create the type of factories and workshops that are consistent with our economic developmental needs and the requirements of our economic plan. This means giving priority to heavy industry and the already planned or partially begun investments in factories that make agricultural implements, trucks, textiles, paper, and steel, among others. Finally, the transformation of the countryside through the creation of communal villages and the improvement of both state farms and their supporting industrial infrastructure is needed to absorb the rural labor force.

These interrelated actions will allow us to implement our policy of rationally using our work force in conformity with the priorities established by our economic plan. The achievement of this goal will also be facilitated by a salary structure that guarantees equal pay for equal work and to each according to that person's capacities.

In light of the difficulties that a number of countries have faced in their attempt to organize communal villages and other cooperatives on a voluntary basis, how has FRELIMO fared?

The party's decision to create communal villages and cooperatives was received en-

Criticism is a constant with us, criticism in party structures and criticism by the masses



thusiastically by the peasants. The obvious benefits flowing from the establishment of this form of collective production and the concomitant elimination of exploitation stimulated the rapid development of communal villages and cooperatives. Today, there are more than 1,000 communal villages, with more than one million residents, and over 500 agricultural cooperatives with over 30,000 members.

Because of the success of these communal villages and cooperatives, many other peasants have taken the initiative and organized collective production units. Take the case of cotton, whose production during the colonial period was based on forced labor, leaving deep scars on the peasants subjected to it. Today, it is common for peasants to join together and create cotton-producing cooperatives.

The collectivization of production gradually leads to collectivization of other activities as well. Thus, consumer and marketing cooperatives have been created; there is collective construction of houses, and we are beginning to collectively resolve problems of health and education.

The communal villages are centers of collective production and centers of political, social, and cultural life, which will permit us to industrialize, urbanize, and socialize the rural areas. In sum, the communal villages are essentially centers of organized life, collective life.

Naturally, the existing cooperatives have

encountered various problems—material problems. For example, we need to develop techniques to permit us to make the most of our natural resources, such as the construction of small dikes and dams to control the course of rivers and use them for irrigation. There are still problems in developing techniques to fight against natural calamities, such as floods, droughts, hailstorms, and insect plagues, whose effects we can protect against or even wipe out.

What about the role of the state farming sector?

Development is proceeding quickly. We already have more than 500 square miles producing cotton, rice, corn, potatoes, peanuts, and alfalfa under the control of state farms.

The state farms are centers for the diffusion of advanced techniques of use to the cooperatives—the best seed for each kind of soil, the most advanced cultivating techniques, the highest quality fertilizer. They are also centers of scientific-technical training for peasant-cooperative members, centers of high productivity and high revenue.

At the time of independence Mozambique's industry was virtually paralyzed as a result of the flight of most European technicians and factory owners. Since then, how has this sector of the economy been reorganized?

Only a planned economy can assure the satisfaction of our material, cultural, and moral needs



Industrial production is recovering on all fronts. Since independence the principal steps taken include combating the sabotage brought to a head by capitalism in flight—by the settlers who abandoned the country—and establishing priorities for industrial recovery. We have defined strategic sectors and set up state administrative structures to oversee them, and we have set clear objectives for production under new socio-economic conditions. Thus, for example, we have transformed the cement industry into an exporting sector; we have begun to produce agricultural implements; and in the textile, shoe, and furniture sectors we have reduced the number of models and simplified the production process in order to increase production and ensure that our people's needs are satisfied at prices they can afford to pay.

We have also established training programs at all levels to improve the skills of both the directors and the workers, and we have progressively introduced planning and scientific control of production in priority sectors.

The statistics reflect the success to date of our economic recovery and industrial reorganization. From 1977 to 1978 industrial production increased by 20 percent and industrial productivity by 15 percent, and we expect production this year to rise by another 23 percent.

Worker direction of national industry has begun to be felt. Workers participate in

discussions of the purposes of production, and the control of the results of production is increasingly in the hands of workers who, through their representatives, have access to all information needed to control production. The direction of enterprises is also being assumed by persons of working class origin, and many directorates already include a representative of the enterprise's workers.

In spite of serious unemployment problems, there does not seem to be a great deal of crime in Maputo, most policemen are unarmed, and people freely walk the streets at night. How do you account for this, and will it last?

One of the fundamental characteristics of a socialist society is the establishment of cooperation among all people—where individuals stop preying upon other individuals. The struggle against the causes of crime—the social situations that produce crime—is an integral part of the struggle to build a socialist society.

During the war, we practically eliminated crime in the liberated zones. At the same time, it constantly increased in the regions occupied by the enemy, especially in the large cities and areas controlled by the fascist colonial army. The unemployment, the idleness which was forced on the people in the concentration camps called "protected villages," the systematic contempt for women, the indifference to the moral

and physical degeneration of young people, were essential elements of colonial policy which encouraged crime.

At our moment of victory, there were in our country thousands of prostitutes and drug addicts, drug trafficking and gambling networks, gangs of professional thieves. These networks had many links with the colonial police, especially the political police, and functioned as informers for the Western secret services.

Our struggle against crime has three components—the political struggle, the economic and social struggle, and administrative measures. Its objective is the reform rather than the punishment of the delinquent, and, above all the elimination of the causes of delinquency.

Soon after victory, during the transitional government, we launched large-scale campaigns to organize and involve the people in the struggle against crime. The newly formed dynamizing groups played a fundamental role in these campaigns.

Simultaneously, we took administrative steps to close those establishments where criminals and delinquents tended to congregate, and we opened re-education centers for prostitutes, drug addicts, petty criminals, pimps, and drug dealers. From the beginning, most of the gang leaders changed their nationality and left the country.

In the re-education centers, delinquents learn professions and develop good work habits. Already many thousands have been reformed and reintegrated into society.

Statistics from the capital demonstrate the kinds of results we have already achieved. They are especially significant because, at one time, the capital was the major center of crime in the country. Before independence about 1500 homicides were committed each year. In 1977 there were 171 homicides, and in 1978 there were 83, of which only 2 involved robberies. The rest were crimes of passion, crimes motivated by superstitions, or quarrels provoked by drunkenness. From 1977 to 1978 corporal offenses dropped from 329 to 234 for all of Maputo Province. Thefts have also declined considerably, from almost 5,000 incidents in 1977 in the city of Maputo to about 4,000 for the whole province in 1978.

The creation of many new jobs through the development of suburban farming zones around the major cities and increased industrialization, the improvement of the general level of education and culture, the growing social pressure against drunkenness, the increasing responsibility felt by citizens toward their society, the restructuring of the police forces and their improved relations with the masses, and the development of vigilance groups are all fundamental factors which permit us to be optimistic that crime in our society will be virtually eliminated in the relatively near future. □