



SEPTEMBER, 1973 #22

Information is ammunition for your struggle. A fighter without ammunition is not a fighter. And for you, a fighter without information cannot speak.

Samora M. Machel, President of FRELIMO to CFM delegation, Dar es Salaam, 8/71.

WOMEN AND THE MOZAMBIKAN REVOLUTION

FRELIMO President Samora Machel has described the Mozambican revolution as "not only an armed struggle, but a struggle to create a new society, a new Mozambican, a new mentality." As FRELIMO military operations have expanded to new regions and as more and more Mozambicans have been freed from colonial domination, the struggle against exploitative human relationships and oppressive ideas has also grown. Central to this process has been the fight to liberate Mozambican women from the shackles of Portuguese colonialism and a traditional way of life in which they were completely subservient to men.

THE WOMEN'S DETACHMENT--1967-1972

In 1966 the Central Committee decided that Mozambican women should take a more active part in the liberation struggle and should therefore receive political and military training. In the beginning of 1967, the first group of women from Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces began their training. At first this was viewed merely as an experiment to find out what women were capable of contributing to the revolution. The "experiment" proved highly successful and this first group of women became the founder-members of the first Women's Detachment. They were scattered throughout the interior, each with a different assignment. It was discovered that women could play an important role in the struggle.

The League of Mozambican Women (LIFEMO) had also been established to take care of orphans and of children whose mothers were occupied with the work of the revolution. In 1968 LIFEMO reported to the FRELIMO Central Committee on its activities and received a pledge of cooperation and support. In 1969 LIFEMO was brought into the FRELIMO structure and integrated with the Women's Detachment.

The Women's Detachment has been active both in the military and political fields. Although the military activities of women have mostly been concentrated in the defense of liberated areas, many women have chosen to fight in the advance zones and to take part in ambushes and mining operations. The contribution of women to the military struggle has been highly effective and important. Their impact in the political field, however, has been even greater and has been far out of proportion to their numbers. Women have played a major role in the mobilization and political education of the masses and of the soldiers, explaining the need to fight, the kind of struggle that is being waged, and the reasons for the struggle. The late Josina Machel, who was a Political Commisar in the Women's Detachment and Head of the Social Affairs Section and Women's Section in the Department of External Affairs, wrote of the political work of the Women's Detachment:

...it is stressed that the success of the revolution depends on the combined efforts of everyone such that no one can be omitted, and thus the traditional rather 'passive' role of women must be changed so that their abilities are used to the full....Here we have the rather difficult task of fighting old prejudices that women's functions should be confined to cooking, rearing children, etc. It has been proved that we women can perform this mobilization and education better than the men for two reasons. Firstly, it is easier for us to approach other women, and secondly, the men are more easily convinced of the important role of women when confronted with the unusual sight of confident and capable female militants who are themselves the best examples of what they are propounding.

While the Women's Detachment has been contributing to the revolution through these activities, the liberation movement has committed itself to giving women equal opportunities for education and for training in combat, health work, and agriculture. As part of this effort FRELIMO has carried out intensive political education work against such practices as forced early marriages which often prevent girls from receiving any education after about age ten. Proof of FRELIMO's success can be seen in the tremendous increase in the number of girls attending schools.

THE ORGANIZATION OF MOZAMBICAN WOMEN
AND THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF MOZAMBICAN
WOMEN--1973

In 1972 the Central Committee



MARIA NJANJE, Student: The Woman's Role

...I am very happy to have come to FRELIMO. First of all because I can study -- that was always my dream. With the colonialists only those who have money can study. Here everybody who wants to study is allowed to do so. Another difference I notice is that the Portuguese teachers were not interested in explaining to anyone who did not understand something; while here our teachers make every effort to ensure that we understand everything. The Portuguese troops, when they arrive in a village, steal chickens, pigs, cattle, from the people. The guerillas never take anything from the people. When the Portuguese soldiers find girls on the roads they violate them. In FRELIMO we women are very much respected-- and this impresses our sisters who come from the enemy zone, as I did. We are accustomed to something quite different. Under the colonialists, when a man in uniform appeared, it usually meant ill treatment. We are so surprised at first when we see the guerillas treating us as sisters, not as objects of pleasure....

(From Mozambique Revolution Jan.-
April 1971)

decided to create the Organization of Mozambican Women which would include all women who were in any way involved in the struggle, not just those in the Women's Detachment. FRELIMO was by then fighting in four provinces and increasingly large numbers of people had come under its control. With these successes the need to mobilize women from a base larger than that of the Women's Detachment had become imperative. Further, as military gains continued to be won there was an accompanying need to strive for consistency in the revolution by fighting exploitation at every level. A struggle dedicated to ending the domination of one human being over another could not allow the oppression of women to continue. While significant progress had already been made in liberating women, FRELIMO recognized that the full participation of women in the revolution had not yet been achieved.

The First Conference of Mozambican Women was held

from March 4 to 16, 1973 to study thoroughly these questions. The conference was attended by 80 women delegates from all over Mozambique.

Each woman stood up and talked about her experiences, telling what kind of work she was engaged in, in what ways she felt exploited and oppressed, and what difficulties her sex created for her in her work. Some of the women had little experience in public speaking, but when the more experienced women spoke others were able to overcome their inhibitions and relate their experiences.

The women at the Conference were engaged in a variety of revolutionary activities. Besides members of the Women's Detachment there were nurses, teachers, and women who lived in the villages and worked in production. Although it was clear that the women did their work properly and efficiently, they spoke of certain difficulties they faced in carrying out their tasks. The first of these was that they felt that they were not given as much respect as men, either by men or by other women. The second was a psychological factor, an inferiority complex, which the women felt kept them from fully assuming their role in the revolution.

The Conference analyzed the source of this complex and found that it lay in an interaction of the traditional and the colonial systems. The women discussed, in particular, the initiation rites which young girls undergo in traditional society. At these ceremonies, which

take place at about age five or six and again at puberty, girls are taught a submissive attitude toward men and are told that their place in society is a secondary one. The initiation ceremony which takes place at puberty lasts a full four to six weeks during which time girls are isolated from their villages and put in special houses. They are taught by older women that from that time on their role is to produce children and to look after their husband and home and that all other tasks are forbidden them. The Conference report describes this event as:

surrounded by an aura of mystery and religious solemnity... a major event in the life of a girl (which) has a very powerful psychological impact and makes girls blindly accept what they are taught, traumatising them for the rest of their lives.

The Conference noted other aspects of the traditional system which reinforce women's oppression such as the brideprice-- which "reduces a woman to a mere object to be sold and bought and makes her a simple object of pleasure and reproduction in the eyes of the buyer, the husband"-- polygamy, and forced and premature marriages.

The Conference report states that the colonial system further worsened this situation, subjecting Mozambican women to a double oppression and exploitation:

first the general oppression and exploitation inflicted indiscriminately on men and women alike.... And then the other more specific form directed only against women. By separating women from their husbands through forced labour and denying them the means to support their homes and children, colonialism created the conditions whereby women were forced to resort to selling their bodies, to prostituting themselves, in order to survive. Women debased themselves, degraded themselves and

were subjected to the most extreme humiliation by the colonialists, who not only made of them a labour force and machines for reproduction, but also made them into instruments of pleasure.

Having analyzed the situation of women in Mozambique, the Conference turned to the strategy to be used in fighting the exploitation and subjugation of women. The women stated that the fundamental contradiction is between "Mozambican women and the system of oppression and exploitation in force in our country, which excludes



women from making any decisions on the life of society, even on matters which directly affect them." They agreed that the target of their fight was not men, but rather that it was necessary for men and women to join together to fight colonialism, imperialism, and oppressive aspects of tradition. The Conference pointed out that the present, a time of genuine revolution in which a new society is being created, is an optimal time for the struggle for the liberation of women. Since the women's struggle cannot be separated from that of men who are also exploited under the existing system, the only road for women to take is to engage in the revolutionary process within the framework of FRELIMO. By making themselves capable of taking responsibility and making decisions women will not only contribute to hastening the day of full freedom for Mozambique but will also create the conditions for their integration into social and political life.

The Conference supported the decision of the Central Committee to create the Organization of Mozambican Women which would include women working outside of the Women's Detachment and would involve women who remained on the periphery of the revolutionary process. The Organization will act as a broad front with the Women's Detachment as its nucleus and driving force and will organize and unite the masses of women. The Organization will be part of the structure of FRELIMO and will be headed by a General Secretariat consisting of a General Secretary, a Deputy General Secretary, and the head of the Women's Detachment. These three women plus representatives of the different branches in the provinces will form the National Committee. The Conference also supported the decision of the Central Committee to designate April 7 as Mozambican Women's Day. April 7 is the date of the death of Comrade Josina Machel. Finally, the Conference celebrated March 8, International Women's Day, affirming its solidarity with women's struggles everywhere.

The report states that the Conference was "a decisive and historic moment in our Revolution and in the life of women. A new dawn of hope has risen for our women, for our people." The Organization of Mozambican Women adopted as its watchword the words of President Samora:

The liberation of women is a basic requirement for the Revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition of its victory.

NEWS FLASH *** NEWS FLASH *** NEWS FLASH *** NEWS FLASH *** NEWS FLASH

Guerrilla rockets hit Mozambique dam defence base-- On July 1 FRELIMO guerrillas attacked the command center for Portuguese forces defending the Cabora Bassa dam project. An undisclosed number of rockets were fired into Estima, an important settlement from which all movement to and from the dam, including supply convoys, is controlled. (Daily Tel. U.K., July 2, 1973)

Loan for tire factory -- The United States Export-Import Bank has given a loan of \$1.8 million to cover the sale of American equipment and services for the construction of a tire plant in Mozambique. (Provincia, Ang. July 19, 1973)

Kaulza Di Arriaga, Portuguese commander in Mozambique, recalled to Lisbon -- He can take credit for the understatement of the year: "Personally, I am a fulfilled man, but my mission is far from complete." Inevitably, there is speculation that he will not be completing his mission in Mozambique because of the less than complete success of the mission so far.

committee for a FREE MOZAMBIQUE



616 WEST 116TH STREET #1A

NEW YORK, N.Y. 10027

September 17, 1973

Dear Friends of Mozambique,

On September 25, 1964 groups of militants of the Mozambique Liberation Front attacked several Portuguese posts in northern Mozambique. The war of national liberation had begun.

Today, on the eve of the ninth anniversary of the beginning of armed struggle, FRELIMO has expanded its military operations to five of Mozambique's nine provinces and is building a new society in the areas liberated from colonial rule.

This month's News and Notes is devoted to one of the central aspects of the Mozambican revolution--the struggle against the exploitation of women. Included is a report on the First Conference of Mozambican Women, which was held in March of this year and was attended by eighty women from throughout Mozambique.

African Information Service has recently published a collection of speeches by the late Amilcar Cabral. The book, Return to the Source, can be ordered from AIS, 112 West 120th St. New York, N.Y. 10027. The price is \$1.95 (+ tax for N.Y. State residents). A bulk rate is available.

Venceremos,

Committee for a Free Mozambique

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and Pledgers**

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(partial list)

It costs us about \$2.00 per year to send this to you. Can you help?

We received the following press statement from the FRELIMO office in Dar es Salaam concerning the recent massacre of Mozambican civilians in Tete Province. The FRELIMO statement relates the massacre to its true context--that of Portuguese colonialism. On July 20th FRELIMO Vice President Marcellino dos Santos and Father Adrian Hastings, whose July 10th article in the Times of London brought the massacre to the world's attention, testified before the U.N. Committee of 24 (on decolonization) on Portuguese atrocities in Mozambique. The Committee of 24 responded by condemning Portuguese colonialism and its "total disregard for human life and basic moral values", and by calling for a thorough and impartial U.N. investigation of the atrocities.

P R E S S S T A T E M E N T

World attention has recently been focused – with a mixture of horror and indignation – on a report by Spanish and British priests describing the massacre by Portuguese troops of about 400 Mozambican civilians in a village in Tete Province.

While welcoming the international denunciation and condemnation of this genocidal act, the Mozambique Liberation Front wishes to point out that this massacre must not be seen in isolation. In fact, massacres are the common practice of the Portuguese troops in Mozambique, they are inherent to the Portuguese colonial system. As early as 1960, more than 500 villagers from Mueda in Northern Mozambique, were slaughtered with grenades and machine-gun fire as, in a peaceful demonstration, they demanded independence from the Portuguese authorities.

Time and again, FRELIMO has published detailed reports of many other large-scale Portuguese atrocities against the Mozambican people. These reports – some of which have been presented periodically to the U.N. Commission of Human Rights – describe the bombing and destruction of whole villages, plundering, forced removal of population, the torture and murder of prisoners of war, and the use by the Portuguese army of chemical weapons in the liberated areas. Let us recall just a few cases :-

In June, 1970, the Portuguese troops arrived in the village of Joao, in Tete Province, gathered everybody they could find (about 60 people, among them children), and told them dig a big hole "for us to hide from the bandits". The people, unaware, obeyed. At a certain point the Portuguese told the people to enter into the hole "to see if all of us will fit into it". The hole was still not big enough. The people enlarged it. Then the soldiers said: "Let us try again". The people entered again, and now there was room for all. When our people were inside, the Portuguese started shooting at them. They killed all 60 Mozambicans and buried them in that hole.

In another village, in Xidecunde, in February 1972, the Portuguese soldiers locked 16 people – men, women (some with babies) and children – in a house and threw grenades inside. 15 people were killed – among them 4 pregnant women and 6 babies. Only one woman survived, with the loss of an arm, blown off by the grenade.

On September 28, 1972, in Angonia, Tete, the Portuguese locked up about 30 people inside a house, set fire to the house and burnt all of them to death. The people were accused of knowing the hide-outs of the FRELIMO guerrillas.

In early December, 1972, as a reprisal against FRELIMO's successful attack against the town of Tete, the Portuguese troops rounded up the neighbouring villagers and arrested 60 people. They were locked inside a house and burnt to death.

In May, 1973, Rhodesian troops in Mucumbura massacred 15 people from a village. They took others away in their helicopters, and they were never seen again.

By the end of 1971, Portuguese soldiers in Tete ordered civilians to leave their villages and the day when they were on their way to other places, they were attacked by helicopters and savagely slaughtered. On that occasion, several mothers were caught with their children and forced by the Portuguese troops to crush their babies in mortars. (Reported also in the South African newspaper THE STAR, November 6, 1971).

In our reports we have also denounced an infamous practice which has become common among Portuguese soldiers: killing all pregnant women by ripping open their abdomens with bayonets to take out the foetus in order, in their own words, "to prevent the birth of new terrorists". Sometimes they place explosives inside the woman's dead body as a booby-trap, to kill other villagers when they bury her.

More recently other voices have also been raised in Mozambique, especially those of priests, condemning these crimes. We recall the overwhelming evidence given by the White Fathers Missionary Congregation, who decided to leave Mozambique in May, 1971, appalled by the crimes and torture inflicted on Mozambicans. In October, 1972, a Portuguese priest, Father Afonso da Costa, revealed in a Press Conference in Europe, after being expelled from Mozambique, that he had irrefutable information that over one thousand Mozambican civilians had been massacred in Tete Province alone, between March 1971 and May 1972.

The colonial repression is worsening and spares no one. In June, 1972, 1800 people were arrested in Southern Mozambique, on the grounds that they had contacts with or were working for FRELIMO. In January, 1973, two priests were jailed and sentenced by a military court to terms of 5 months and 20 months respectively, charged with having denounced the atrocities of the Portuguese army. In mid-June, 1972, 30 African Presbyterian church leaders were arrested and jailed; two of them, the Head of the Presbyterian Church in Mozambique, and a member of a local Church Council, were murdered in jail. In announcing their deaths in December, 1972, the colonial authorities alleged that they had "committed suicide".

One does not need to look too far to find the reasons for these acts. It is sufficient to quote the words of the Commander-in-Chief of the Portuguese army in Mozambique, General Kaulza de Arriaga. He has said that "the Portuguese strategy in Africa should be aimed at achieving an equilibrium between the black and white population". After having hailed the export of slaves to Brazil as a good thing, he put forward the present aims of Portuguese action: "on the one hand, the growth of the white population; on the other, the limitation of the black population". He could not have been more explicit.

It is, therefore, this fascist policy of genocide combined with the desperation of the colonialist troops who are suffering defeat after defeat in their war against the Mozambican people, which is the root cause of these bestial acts.

This is the context in which the atrocities denounced by the Spanish and British priests should be seen.

Several times we have expressed our regret that the world conscience, the peace and freedom-loving people, have not played as effective a role as they both could and should have done in denouncing and condemning Portuguese colonialism. It is our earnest hope that the world-wide reaction to the recently revealed crimes of the Portuguese colonial army is an indication of a growing awareness of the true nature of Portuguese colonialism and of the imperative need to oppose and combat it.