

Participation of Students in the Struggle for National Liberation

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Excerpt from a White Paper issued by Eduardo Mondlane, President of FRELIMO, in 1967. Translated from Portuguese by Douglas L. Wheeler and printed in African Historical Studies, II, 2, 1969.

As stated in the introduction, once FRELIMO was formed and structured, it attempted to introduce students to the experience of the struggle for the national liberation of the Mozambican People.

This attitude was as much a necessity of the situation as it was part of the needs and aspirations of the Mozambican People. The student is part of the People, like any other group, and the same duties fall to him [since these duties] come from the same rights. Furthermore, *due to the situation of illiteracy of more than 95% of the population, being a student in itself is a privilege*, and it is normal, therefore, that this privilege postulates a major fulfillment of duties, *especially since the benefit of a scholarship is a direct consequence of the struggle of the masses, mainly composed of illiterates.*

But everyone realizes that *the majority of students do not aspire to have special privileges*, since their privileged situation is somewhat *against that for which they are struggling*, when, directly by their physical presence, or indirectly, they contribute to the fight against Portuguese colonialism and imperialism, responsible for the present obscurantist situation in the Fatherland.

It is for this reason — keeping in mind as well the sum of the technical knowledge of students and intellectuals for the sake of the development of the struggle for national liberation, and recognizing the need for a close unity between the student, the intellectual, and the masses, and knowing that [students] still have a great deal to learn — that FRELIMO has established a certain number of principles of conduct.

Quite a while ago the Central Committee of FRELIMO decided *that all students who leave Mozambique, before pursuing their studies, must participate during a certain period in specific tasks in the struggle for national liberation.*

Thus, from the very beginning, it was required that the student could by this participation acquire through practice initial revolutionary training and would fully participate in the struggle and aspirations of the masses; at the same time, [the student would] be putting his knowledge *acquired by study at the disposal of the national cause.*

On the other hand, it is necessary to keep in mind certain other factors and possibilities, including individual [situations] :

- Youths over 18 years of age, who have not completed primary schooling
- 4th class* – are immediately integrated into the politico-military programs.
- Youths under 18 years of age, who have completed primary school, are integrated into the IM [Mozambique Institute] where they can pursue secondary studies up to the level of 2nd cycle of high school.+
- Other youths, approaching 19 years of age, who are attending advanced classes in technical and [liberal arts] high schools, be encouraged, if necessary after a period of recycling in the IM, to continue their studies in foreign Universities and Technical Schools.

The Central Committee is still attempting to place students in different countries and in this placement process, the Committee is keeping in mind the kind of training possessed by the candidates.

In this spirit, the Central Committee succeeded on the one hand to integrate students, and on the other to provide the needed training of leadership personnel so useful for the Fatherland. This [student] integration in the movement was possible, thanks to the direct effort furnished the revolution during the period preceding and following the cycle of studies in the IM, thanks again to the work done during the school holidays of the IM. Therefore, *the student went abroad precisely because FRELIMO had decided this was best*, and the student was in this way continuing as a part of the national action.

This last point deserves some attention: we should explain that, when an act is carried out due to a decision by FRELIMO, when it is carried out in a disciplined manner, it is always a revolutionary act.

In the context of the struggle for the national liberation of Mozambique, *which is our historic task in the present phase*, because FRELIMO and only FRELIMO *knows* [and] understands the real motivations of the People and clarifying their historic objectives; [only FRELIMO knows how] *to organize, to unite, to educate the people politically and to prepare them militarily, because FRELIMO and only FRELIMO was capable of defining strategy and tactics adequate in order to unleash, to develop, to consolidate, to extend and to carry to success the armed struggle of national liberation; FRELIMO* [therefore] *appears as the incarnation of the will and aspirations of the Mozambican masses, the depository of national sovereignty and leadership for the fatherland.*

* Fourth class, or *quarta classe* in Portuguese, represents the first major stage of primary schooling in the Portuguese system. Depending on the school and area. '4th class' certificates are attained after 3–5 years of school beyond the first year of primary school. Often such a certificate is a major prerequisite for employment in Portuguese Africa in jobs which require literacy.

+ Passing from primary to secondary school in Portuguese Africa is difficult for many students. There are three cycles in secondary school, the first two, the second three, and the last two years. Certain civil service jobs are customarily attainable after successful completion of the second cycle.

Thus, to obey FRELIMO is to obey the Fatherland, to pursue an objective which is the historic task of our People in the present phase of national liberation.

It is not necessary to be a member of FRELIMO for there to be a duty to obey the decisions of FRELIMO. In the present situation of FRELIMO, since it embodies the historic will on the People and fulfills it in the struggle it is leading, FRELIMO *appears as the will of the fatherland; its leadership cannot be questioned, because it is exercised for the sake of goals which are indisputable: independence, unity, and the liberation of the fatherland.* Therefore, *it is enough to be a Mozambican to be obliged through patriotic duty to obey FRELIMO.* It is clear that, besides being patriots, those who are also members of FRELIMO have a double duty: as a patriot and as a member of the party, subject to its internal discipline. It is clear that the first duty, the fundamental one, is that which concerns us here.

It is therefore normal that, in the phase that preceded the creation of FRELIMO, UNEMO for example, although assuming a patriotic attitude, had not desired to ally itself with or accept the political leadership of ONE party, since none of the parties then in existence was capable of assuming the leadership and responsibilities of the Fatherland; to act in any other way, UNEMO would have risked dividing students and continuing to keep a division in the patriotic ranks. But since FRELIMO was confirmed in its role as catalyst of national energy and as an expression of the historic objectives of the Fatherland, UNEMO, quite rightly, has accepted *the political leadership of FRELIMO.*

When they did this, UNEMO fulfilled its patriotic duty; at the same time, there were within UNEMO students who, either because of a lack of understanding or from ignorance, were not members of FRELIMO, or they belonged to organizations which, though composed of Mozambicans, were *not* [truly] Mozambican (either because they did not embody the historic Mozambican will, leading the struggle, or because — and this is even more serious — they opposed FRELIMO, which does embody and lead the will of the Fatherland): the acceptance of the political leadership of FRELIMO on the part of UNEMO meant that all the students in that body would indirectly be integrated into the organized action of the Mozambican people against colonialism and imperialism, for the liberation of the Fatherland.

Thus it is understandable that the student, in the United States or in the Democratic German Republic, for example, attending classes, could continue to be a part of and to participate in the organized action of the People. In fact, that student sent abroad by FRELIMO (or by UNEMO which acts under the political direction of FRELIMO) *is carrying out one of the points of the FRELIMO programme:* the training of leadership groups needed for the liberation and development of the Fatherland.

It is for that reason also that FRELIMO, fully understanding its historic role as the embodiment of the will and objectives of the Fatherland, acts so that *all* Mozambicans participate in the different tasks of the national liberation, whether or not, technically, they are members of FRELIMO. And

in the same way, affirming its non-partisanship, the Central Committee of FRELIMO has already had occasion to inform students orally that those students who are not members of FRELIMO and who, because of a lack of understanding or lack of information, even if they are members of pseudo-Mozambican organizations, *can, if they wish, fulfill their patriotic duty by being part of a programme in which FRELIMO will place them.*

There is one last point: the Central Committee, although it is the leadership of FRELIMO, is an organ accustomed normally to formulating the will of FRELIMO since, as already stated, it does embody the objectives of the Fatherland.

It is now necessary to discuss this because the Central Committee, responding on the one hand to the legitimate desire expressed by the majority of students to participate more directly in the struggle for national liberation (many students even wished to interrupt their studies or even to abandon their studies in order to dedicate themselves to the tasks of the struggle; the Meeting and Congresses of UNEMO always affirmed the readiness of students and their desire to play a more direct role in the struggle), *still considering the needs of our own struggle* which is encountering serious difficulties due to the deliberate obscurantist policy of the colonialists, *and also taking into account the need for revolutionary training* for leadership and future leadership groups of the Fatherland, and that this *training* can be effective only when there is close cooperation with the masses, also recognizes the financial impossibility of students returning periodically to Africa during their long holidays; *the Central Committee of FRELIMO decided and orally informed students that* students who had finished the first cycle of higher education in which they were matriculated (preparatory, preliminary instruction for arts and sciences, BA, BS, or the equivalent) *should not register for the next higher course of study without first interrupting their studies for at least a year, in order to participate directly and closely in another task of national liberation*, one different from that in which they now find themselves (that is, their own personal scientific education for advanced leadership).

Given the situation of the educational system, in the Anglo-Saxon educational system only, this interruption [of one year] is logical after the first cycle of higher education, while in other European systems, the first cycle is a preparation which requires immediate continuation on to the second cycle — diploma, licentiate.

Nevertheless, the Central Committee accepted one exception to this rule in the interruption of studies at the end of the first cycle of higher education in the Anglo-Saxon system, an exception that can be absorbed by an interruption at the end of the first cycle of the European system: in the case of youths in the Physical Sciences or related fields, or even in medical studies, they can interrupt their studies only with *serious harm which for all practical purposes would destroy previous efforts*. Since in this case the interruption has the same consequences as would those in the European system, it means a *pure loss* of time and effort put in: therefore, the Central Committee decided

to allow the mentioned exception.

However, these rules, whose need is evident, carry with them in practice two major exceptions, unfortunate and unallowable.

The first is that of youths who have finished the second cycle of secondary school* — or *Form IV* — who, instead of working for a while for the Revolution before resuming their studies, leave the IM, desert the ranks of the Revolution, thus encouraged by imperialism or by its agents disguised as nationalists. In most of the cases these youths take refuge in Kenya, Sudan, and above all in the United States. In the past there were some cases in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Rumania, but these 3 countries, understanding the Mozambican situation and realizing that their good will in being sympathetic to the Mozambican struggle was being abused, have now ceased to be *unwilling accomplices* in these desertions.

The second exceptional case, which until now has occurred only among students in the United States is with youths who have completed the first cycle — BA — and who, instigated by imperialists and for purely egotistical reasons and their corruption, refused to interrupt their studies. It has been learned that there were cases of students who had finished their MA (licentiate, or diploma), and decided against the rules of FRELIMO and without authorization from UNEMO, to take up internships, further specialization, and to prepare for Ph. D. candidacy (DES, third cycle of higher education), doctorates, etc. . .

These students attempted to justify their undisciplined and egotistical behaviour by asserting: (1) that in the past, even before the formation of FRELIMO, there were cases of Mozambican youths who went abroad to study not returning to Mozambique; (2) that Mozambique needs leadership with superior training; (3) that future leaders, the leaders of tomorrow, the leaders of the next phase, must conveniently prepare themselves. These arguments, almost certainly infused with bad faith, cannot stand up to the reality of the facts and of the struggle.

The first argument falls on its very basis: one must reread what was written before on the history of Mozambican students abroad to see that this pretext lacks foundation. Kamba Simango returned to Mozambique and *was forced into exile*; Eduardo Mondlane was persecuted by PIDE in Mozambique and when he completed his studies, the Portuguese wanted to make him return so as to support a *colonialist propaganda manoeuvre*; and Guilherme Mabunda only now has completed his medical studies and these require a period of internship which he is now fulfilling. There are no other cases in any event during the period which precedes the formation of FRELIMO as

* In the Portuguese African educational system there are both technical and academic high schools. There are discernible trends in the situation of African students in the academic high schools (*liceus*) where it is difficult for Africans to get beyond the *quarta classe*, more Africans are enrolled in the technical than in the academic high schools as of the late 1960s, and a high dropout rate among Africans in higher education. See Samuels, 'Angolan Education,' 66.

well as the unleashing of the armed struggle, and for good reason.

Let us now examine the second argument. Mozambique needs trained leadership, of course! *It is for this same reason that FRELIMO has a programme.* And this programme is made possible *because there is a struggle in Mozambique.* If there are countries which offer study scholarships today, it is because the Mozambican people *are giving their blood* for the conquest of national independence, for the liberty of Mozambique, *in the cause of the freedom of humanity.* Socialist countries and various organizations show a solidarity without struggle, while the imperialist countries, the United States and various organizations which collaborate with Portugal against our People, give scholarships in an attempt to educate a leadership which will be favourable to their side. *But if this occurs, it is because there is a struggle in Mozambique.* Even those students who have deserted the ranks of the revolution and were able to get scholarships *are benefiting directly from our struggle on the international plane.*

Mozambique needs a revolutionary and trained leadership, leaders whose technical training is supported by a revolutionary will and idea, leaders who possess a true dedication to the people and to the revolution, who can be remembered only in the heat of the people and the struggle, in fidelity to the needs of the Fatherland, formulated by FRELIMO which embodies its will and objectives in the present historical phase. This is one of the reasons why FRELIMO obliges the IM students to work during their holidays, to participate directly in the tasks of the Revolution before going abroad, and [it encourages them to] interrupt their studies after the first higher cycle, etc . . . This serves to 'immerse' the student, the intellectual, and the future trained leadership in the bosom of the Revolution.

Everyone must understand this: although the Fatherland needs trained leaders, today as well as tomorrow, it *only needs leaders who are revolutionary*, otherwise even the colonialist [or 'colonialist-trained'] leaders would be excellent for us, since they have academic titles and technical qualifications. But we do not need them because *their knowledge is used to oppress the people*, since their wills, ideas and interests oppose the very revolution that serves the people.

It is fundamental to realize that *the struggle is the most important and best training school there is in the world.* We have comrades who yesterday did not know how to read and who today defeat the colonial army led by officers graduated from Military Academies, who are doing their apprenticeship, and who have torrents of counter-revolutionary knowledge. We have increased production in the zones under our control with our 'ignorant' peasants under the direction of our Central Committee where the only numerous diplomas perhaps are from primary schooling. Nevertheless, we have gotten results superior to those of the companies and the colonial state with all their engineers, agronomists, laboratory experts, technicians, etc . . . We teach more children and adults to read and write than the colonialists and, in the meantime, unlike them [the colonialists] we have no primary school graduates, privately schooled teachers, etc. . . This then is the great

lesson of the popular war, the revolution which is now occurring in our Fatherland, in so-called Portuguese Guinea, in Vietnam, or in any part of the world. *The revolution also needs and cherishes its students, leaders and revolutionary intellectuals, but they can get more of an education in the revolution than in the university.*

The standard of living of the students, even though limited, is far and away better than that of most of the inhabitants of our land, and, besides, the material opportunities open to students after graduation are enormous; it is evident, too, that the revolution cannot compete in salaries with imperialism or with the international companies, especially since presently there are neither salaries nor minimum comforts which are the norm in any University. On the other hand, the education provided by Portuguese high schools, seminaries and technical schools, by imperialist teaching establishments, by the cooperation of information media and at the disposal of imperialism is used to inculcate in students, in the leadership and intellectuals, the dangerous idea that they are superior to the masses and that they are entitled to a privileged social and material situation. These are the germs planted in the mind which open the door to many desertions and treacheries, not only in our country but also in all the countries dominated by imperialism. Only our national faith, our revolutionary convictions, practice in the struggle, and communion with the masses permit us to meet the challenge of this situation.

The imperialist propaganda of corruption stresses, above all, that the students are the leaders of tomorrow, the future leaders. We must firmly denounce this imperialist poisoning which is indecent, criminal, and which tries to make our students into accomplices of imperialism through the exploitation of the blood and sweat of the People.

Leaders are forced, whether or not they are intellectuals, to participate in the different tasks of the revolution, in the sacrifices and daily dedication to the People, in revolutionary study and practice. And there is no other kind of leader, nor can there be. It is the revolution that trains the leaders, and our young students should be *vigilant* faced [as they are] with imperialist intoxication, with imperialist corruption: only with vigilance and a reinforcement of revolutionary convictions and love of the people can we avoid corruption and treason: being a part of the struggle gives us the needed defences.

Furthermore, we should say, in the spirit of self-criticism that should always condition us, that the Central Committee due to inadequacies, albeit not serious, must also share the blame in this problem.

The demands of the struggle often cause us to neglect the political education of students abroad, and this neglect is excessive due to ephemeral contacts and texts. On the other hand, the decisions and writings of the Central Committee are not often given proper written publicity, thus facilitating the spread of false information and a lack of understanding of the real situation. Finally, the Central Committee has been hesitant in its decisions when faced with abuses and the flagrant lack of discipline of certain people, and although the Committee never has, at least morally, sanctioned this

behaviour, there are those who could interpret tacit approval – albeit in bad faith – from this silence.