

Mozambique: What Is To Be Done?

BY BRIDGET O'LAUGHLIN

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*In our last issue we published an extended review-essay by Bridget O'Laughlin that used Christian Geffray's *La Cause des Armes au Mozambique as a touchstone for exploring the roots and resonance of the war in Mozambique* ("Interpretations Matter," SAR, January, 1992). In that text, she noted that the body of her review had not, in her words, "addressed so far the underlying question that many readers of SAR seem to want answered: What does reading Geffray tell us about where Mozambique and Frelimo?" She therefore concluded her essay with the following final section, one that can also stand on its own as a useful contribution to the broader debate on the "new terms of solidarity" in southern Africa.*

Since Frelimo's Fourth Congress there has been a process of criticism of the policies I have discussed in my review and a reformulation of strategy. In the wake of these changes, does Frelimo today represent class interests that we as socialists can continue to support?

Frelimo itself was relatively open about the changes in its positions at the time of the Fifth Congress. It defined itself as a broad mass party encompassing all classes. Therefore its program no longer included the end of exploitation as a strategic objective. There are probably forces within Frelimo who accept the building of national capital as a legitimate goal for this phase and feel that in the longer term socialist construction is still on the agenda, but the party did not present a socialist platform. Although the word socialist (either as social democracy or democratic socialism) reappears in the documents of the

Sixth Congress, there is no evidence on paper or in practice that Frelimo at this point is pursuing a socialist strategy. Although there is more open coverage of political debate in the media, this does not apply to discussions within Frelimo itself. Nonetheless it seems clear that there are different strategic positions within Frelimo, and that socialists are a minority.

Socialist solidarity means taking class analysis into the negotiation and organization of assistance. As socialists we want to work as directly as possible with labour unions, cooperatives and associations of small producers. We know that a capitalist state, which is what Mozambique now has, cannot be counted on to promote the interests of the working classes.

Does this mean that socialist solidarity organizations should cease to support the Mozambican gov-



Central Committee meeting of Frelimo - voting major constitutional change, 1990

Joel Chiziane/AIM

ernment? Should we instead influence the NGOs with whom we work to negotiate projects of assistance directly with nascent progressive Mozambican NGOs, unions and cooperatives? Capital has jumped in quickly here. Mozambique now has, for example, associations for executives, junior executives and women executives and a Rotary Club with international contacts and visits. Many churches also receive international aid from parent or related organizations. Associations that represent groups with little economic and political clout clearly need support.

Direct support to unions, cooperatives and progressive NGOs is presently accepted in Mozambique, and should be the principal focus of socialist solidarity work. Such projects should not be viewed, however, as a total alternative to support for programs based in the state-apparatus. Mozambican NGOs are new and fragile, and most are themselves directly or indirectly dependent on the state for infrastructural support. Further, many Mozambicans most deeply in need are not reached by existing Mozambican NGOs and are living in situations that make it very difficult for them to organize their own representative organizations. Public health and education systems delivering mass-based services are under attack and cannot be adequately replaced by scattered community-based projects.

One solution to these problems would be for the foreign NGO to organize and administer projects directly, thus determining how resources will be allocated and controlling the application of funds. Indeed many of the existing NGOs in Mozambique do operate in this way, setting themselves up as a kind of parallel state apparatus, an alternative to what is viewed as a corrupt and/or inefficient Frelimo state. I do not agree with this option, for at best it maintains a weak and inefficient state and at worst deepens

problems of coordination and efficiency. There are many areas, like health and education, where only the state can furnish mass-based services. It must be helped and pressured to do so.

This does not mean that a donor organization has no control over what kind of projects are realized and how money is allocated. Most donors do in fact negotiate with the Mozambican government as to how aid will be used. If progressive forces in the Americas learned something out of the 1970's, it would seem to be the lesson that the state is both representative of the dominant class forces in society and a terrain of struggle. This is presumably a lesson that progressive NGOs put into practice regularly in their work since most receive a substantial part of their budget from the governments of their own clearly capitalist countries. Negotiating with the Mozambican state is similarly possible and necessary.

The Mozambican state is presently controlled by the Frelimo party. The new constitution introduced, however, a multi-party system, which means that in the future there may be a non-Frelimo government. Given the present multi-party context, it seems to me that solidarity groups and NGOs should in general channel their support work directly to target-groups, through local NGOs and through the state, rather than fund the projects of a particular party. In the case of Frelimo and the transition from a unitary party/state, this rupture will often seem like abandoning of old loyalties and trusted friends. And Frelimo itself may, as a political movement, move even further from its former program of socialism or its present program of democratization. Those who come to hold state-power may represent forces so reactionary that they refuse to work with progressive NGOs.

As of now, however, the Frelimo government is the legitimate and sovereign government of Mozam-

bique. No matter how vituperative the critique of Frelimo, no serious observer would suggest that Renamo or some other political grouping has constituted on any part of Mozambican soil a legitimate counter-state. Geffray, for example, concludes that although Renamo is more than an association of bandits, it is not a political organization. He sees it as a parasite, living off the reproduction of the war. Most of the political groupings that have thus far declared themselves as opposition to Frelimo in the forthcoming elections share an even sharper adherence to a strategy of development based on promotion of a national bourgeoisie, sometimes defined in purely racial terms.

The war has destroyed Mozambique, including the moral fibre of a country where one once walked without fear, in city and country, at any hour of the day or night. Solidarity organizations have fought for so many years to publicize the cynical tolerance and sometimes direct support for this terrible war coming from the advanced capitalist countries. It would seem to me tragic to abandon this stance of solidarity with Mozambique because Frelimo is no longer a representation of our own dreams of socialism.

Sorting out the relationship of solidarity groups to Mozambique will of course force us to re-examine the political base of solidarity work in our own countries. The marxist critique of capitalist society remains strong and convincing, but we have sometimes used Third World revolutions as a surrogate proof for our own anti-communist working-classes that socialism really can make life better, somewhere. Establishing a clearer rationale for socialist solidarity work means being able to show the real interdependence of struggles that unite workers and peasants in different countries. It also requires a critical and prolonged discussion among all socialists of the experience of socialist strategies of political and economic development.