

# LSM NEWS

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE LIBERATION SUPPORT MOVEMENT  
Volume 2, Issue 3. Fall 1975



**Feature:**  
**A NEW  
GENERATION  
OF WOMEN**

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# LSM News

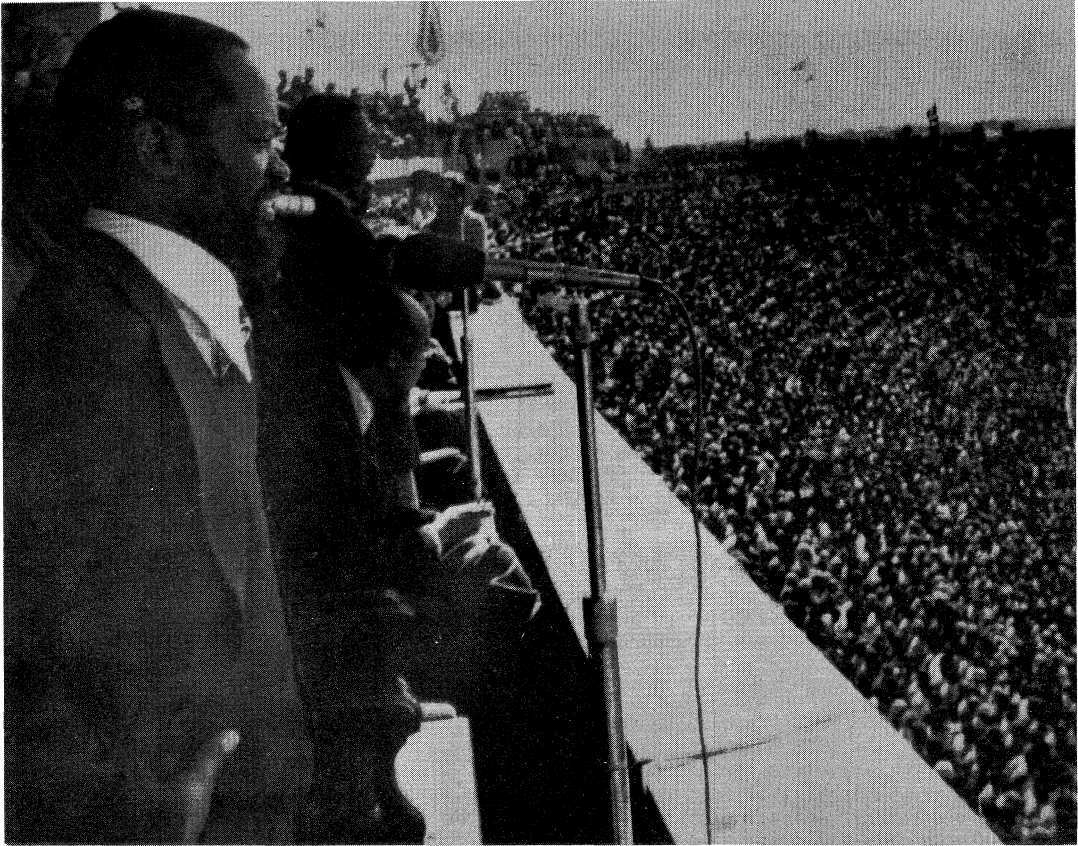
Quarterly Organ of the  
Liberation Support Movement

**Its purpose** is to let people know about LSM -- our practice, politics, questions and contradictions -- in the struggle for international socialism.

**Issues** will include:

- reports from Portugal, Guinea-Bissau, Namibia and Mozambique
- interviews with liberation movement leaders
- analyses of material conditions and revolutionary potential in North America
- discussion of LSM's actions: audio-visual programs, anti-corporate campaigns, material support and informational work
- our relations with liberation movements and
- the dangers of neo-colonialism, national chauvinism, racism and social imperialism.

**Standard subscriptions ..... \$2.00**



*President Machel at a political rally in Mozambique.*

# IN NORTH AMERICA & AFRICA

"Let us develop  
a genuine proletarian  
internationalism..."  
Che Guevara



North America

# LSM ACTIONS

What has LSM been up to?

## LSM BAY AREA UNIT MOZAMBIQUE INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

LSM Bay Area Unit, together with the Black Panther Party, Ethiopian Students, Winter Soldier Organization, and Bay Area Namibia Action Group, held a celebration on June 29th to mark the historic occasion of Mozambique's independence after 500 years of colonization. Demonstrating their solidarity and continuing support for FRELIMO and the Mozambican struggle, the crowd of over 500 people greeted the opening of the evening with a standing ovation and cries of "Viva FRELIMO!" and "Long Live Mozambique!" After a dinner featuring African dishes, the main speaker, Ben Gurirab, chief representative of the SWAPO delegation to the U.N., spoke of the significance of the victorious struggle led by FRELIMO - the shifting balance of power in southern Africa, the blow to the imperialist system and the inspiration to the intensifying armed struggles in Namibia and Zimbabwe.

A representative from the Union of Vietnamese in the U.S. spoke of the similarities between the struggles and the victories of the Mozambican and Vietnamese people. The rest of the program included a film on Mozambique, movement poetry and songs. Funds generated by the event - \$1900 - are being sent to FRELIMO along with messages of solidarity from organizations throughout the Bay Area.

## LSM EAST COAST UNIT DISCUSSES OUR BI-ANNUAL CONGRESS

The East Coast Unit traveled to Vancouver in July to attend LSM's bi-annual Congress. We joined with other LSM units and comrades to reassess LSM's anti-imperialist position and plan a common practice for the next two years.

The unity built at this Congress was especially important for the ECU because of the geographic distance separating us from the rest of the organization. This unity was built through principled struggle. Problems had emerged around the conduct and agenda of the Congress and some unconstructive attitudes had come out. Criticisms were made, however, as leadership assumed its responsibility and membership struggled to improve its participation, too. The result was a more productive Congress and a valuable political experience for all. This demonstration of LSM's open-minded and self-critical approach to politics reaffirmed for the ECU members our commitment to the organization.

## SUPPORTS VANGUARD STRUGGLES

The ECU presented the film "Last Grave At Dimbaza" to a Park Slope (Brooklyn) audience May 31st. The film, depicting daily life under South African *apartheid*, was very moving for all of us. In an open discussion afterward members of the audience expressed their shock at learning of the intensity of oppression in South Africa, and expressed their solidarity with the struggle there. This discussion had its shortcomings. For example, we failed to raise the question of what progressive North Americans can do about imperialism in southern Africa. However, several people met with the ECU afterwards to find ways to concretely support the struggles in southern Africa.

We are also continuing to raise the estimated \$700 needed to ship a load of medical equipment to the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO). Contributions are coming from many sources, including ECU members, who are donating a large portion of their August paychecks to send these materials. *LSM NEWS* readers wishing to contribute to this project can write to LSM/ECU, P. O. Box 673, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202. We plan to ship the supplies in October.



North America

# FROM STUDY GROUP TO UNIT

by LSM Vancouver Unit

In December 1974, the LSM Information Center formed a Vancouver Group composed of LSM volunteers and other interested people. We felt that through political discussion and practice a core of people might come together to form a more permanent body within LSM, carrying out actions which would complement and, locally, expand the work of the Information Center. At the outset about fifteen people attended meetings regularly. Our numbers sometimes dropped as low as six, but they often rose to twenty. We made several mistakes along the way, but were able to learn from them and in fact lay the basis for the present LSM Vancouver Unit. With this transformation from group to unit still fresh in our minds we propose in this article to examine some of the contradictions apparent in the group and those conditions which moved us to a new level of commitment and practice. We hope others will be able to learn from our experience.

From its inception the Vancouver Group was designed to meet different needs. Some people were interested in joining LSM and wanted to participate fully in our practice while others just wanted to find out more about us - our theory of imperialism, our experience with the liberation movements - there were a variety of (mostly intellectual) motivations. In order to meet these different sets of interests we set out to lead discussions on political writings and LSM's theoretical perspective, as well as to organize some film programs and other activities in the Vancouver area. The Vancouver Group was not a tightly knit body with unifying aims and objectives. Its strategy (we later realized) was never clearly articulated, with a balance between study and practice defined and agreed on. Because of this several conflicts arose.

One of our initial problems was that the group quickly coalesced into a study group. While many members desired to become "revolutionaries," this ambition did not stem from a revolutionary practice or environment. Most everyone enjoyed the weekly discussion sessions but not many were willing to participate wholeheartedly in a practice. This fed into many of our petty-bourgeois class attitudes which place intellectual pursuits high above "manual" labor. Talking of revolution was easy; acting as revolutionaries was much more difficult. When it came to organizing actions - setting up film programs or literature tables or pickets or other practical activities - our numbers dwindled to just a handful. Eyes were often downcast, scrutinizing a spot on the rug, when even the smallest task was mentioned by our group leader. Many members were disturbed with feeling "pressured" into going beyond study and this led to a division between the "academics" and "activists." In most cases members with student backgrounds placed study over practice while others, workers or "lumpen middle-class," were more eager for other forms of activity.

At some point the contradiction between "activists" and "academics" came to a head and several people who were only interested in a study group left. Others with university backgrounds began to question their former approach to politics and through struggle within the Vancouver Group saw the need for practice. This began the resolution of one of our biggest problems. At last, our discussions started focusing on practice - and as a result they became more lively and productive. We decided, as a group function, to prepare an Indochina program. For nearly a month we studied various publications dealing with Vietnam and discussed how we could relate our newly acquired knowledge and ideas to the Vancouver community. Now our study had a practical purpose - moving people to support the Vietnamese revolution.



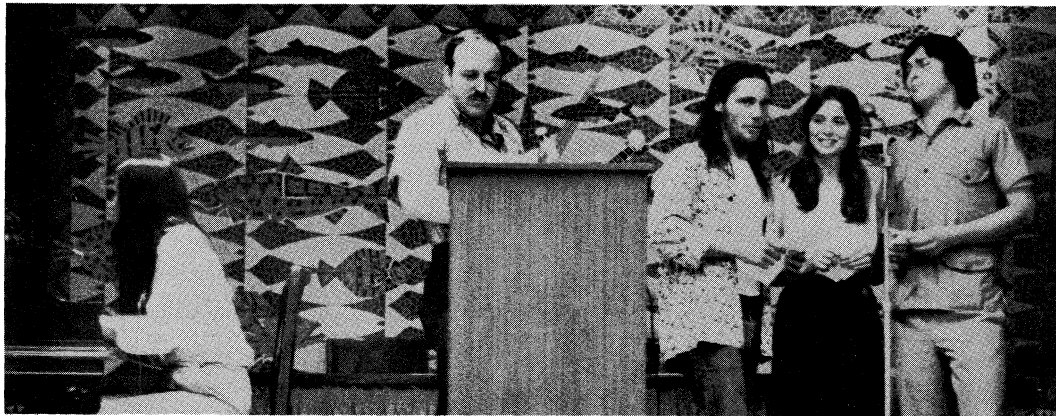
This Indochina program also benefitted from examination of earlier mistakes. Previously, individual members had put on a number of small film/discussion programs - one member in charge of one at the university, another somewhere else. We tended to work in isolation and as a result our programs were usually poorly attended and demoralizing. In contrast to these we spent a lot of time together working and planning the Indochina Program, we got a good film and prepared speakers, singing and poetry readings. We had a good turnout and were able to send the PRG \$250 which was collected to aid in national reconstruction. This was the success we needed! We could see what our united efforts could bring and what a concrete contribution we could make to the struggle, if we worked together.

Work on the program also provided a basis for criticism/self-criticism, not only around our practice but also around our class tendencies which held back that practice. Previously we'd had very little criticism at our meetings, primarily because we lacked the basis for it. For example, it became clear that our leadership had sometimes been heavy-handed, decisions were not clearly articulated, and suggestions were not solicited from other members. This resulted in some frustration and brought out other contradictions, especially individualism. Some members tried to participate in and decide upon everything while others remained silent and passive. Both tendencies undermined the constructive development of the group: the former because of the lack of respect for leadership, proper procedures and others' ideas, and the latter because a small body must rely on creative suggestions and criticisms from everyone. Alternating between aggressive monopolization and defensive aloofness, our individualism hampered the growth of group solidarity.

But resolving these problems has been the basis for our development. Dealing with the contradictions between our non-revolutionary backgrounds and desired socialist goals has strengthened us. From the Vancouver Group several of us decided to increase our commitment to revolutionary politics and formed a Vancouver Unit of LSM. Several other members of the Vancouver Group have joined us as volunteers. As a unit we're responsible to LSM for carrying out a concrete practice aimed at advancing the national liberation struggles and international socialism. Elsewhere in this issue of *LSM NEWS*, you'll find a brief description of some of the projects that we've undertaken to advance the struggle in our own small way.

Have we solved all of our contradictions? Hardly! But, we're struggling with some, and as we do we'll always face new contradictions. Political practice and struggle will be the basis of our growth. It will require that we study the problems we face and try to grasp their roots so we can turn our failures into success.

We hope this article has been enlightening for our readers, as it has been for ourselves in preparing it. We, the members of the Vancouver Unit of LSM, look forward with excitement to the ongoing development of our practice and invite others to work with us.



*LSM/Vancouver Group singers - Indochina program.*

# North America COALITIONS

## A Critical Assessment by LSM Bay Area Unit

In preparation for LSM's bi-annual Congress, the BAU summed up and evaluated its past year's practice. An important part of this practice has been participation in several anti-imperialist coalitions in the San Francisco Bay area. We felt it necessary to clarify our objectives in this work and analyze the different strengths and weaknesses of each of these coalitions.

One of the most important objectives of coalition work is to bring together, in principled alliances, the much divided left forces within the US. We see this as a prerequisite for building any "mass" movement in the future and strengthening our own contribution to the struggle for socialism.

However, to develop principled relations our energies must be directed toward serving the interests of the masses who are presently leading the revolution. Anti-imperialist forces in North America today are predominantly petty-bourgeois - drawing on the life experiences of students and intellectuals, lumpens and workers. This class background, encompassing a range of non-revolutionary values and life-styles, poses many dangers which, if not recognized and dealt with, deflect us from a revolutionary course. Criticism is a vital tool to direct and maintain our practice in serving the revolution and not our own non-revolutionary self-interests. However, because of our strong petty-bourgeois individualism we find it difficult to be self-critical. We in LSM have found this a great weakness in building strong coalitions in the Bay Area and would like to discuss it at some length here.

In this article, the Liberation Support Movement/Bay Area Unit reviews its participation in two quite different coalitions. The Committee for National Liberation in the Middle East (CNLME) and the May Day Coalition (MDC) offer an instructive contrast between unprincipled and principled alliances. Our criticisms of the CNLME, which include self-criticisms, are not intended to denigrate sincere and hardworking members of CNLME; we make them so that others can benefit from the lessons we learned including those which resulted from our own errors.

### COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In early 1975 the Organization of Arab Students (OAS) and the Iranian Students Association (ISA) called for the revival of the CNLME in the Bay Area. The coalition had originally formed in response to the 1973 October War in the Middle East and became inactive during the summer of 1974. Membership of the revived coalition included the OAS, ISA, Guardian Bay Area Bureau, Revolutionary Union (RU)/Revolutionary Student Brigade (RSB), LSM/BAU and a number of individuals.

Work was initially begun on a Middle East cultural program with the objective of reaching an American audience broader than just the student community. Through songs, folk dances and skits about the liberation struggles in Palestine and Oman, the coalition hoped to educate and build solidarity among progressive Americans.

Preparations for the event began without principles of unity or even an organizational structure. Publicity and program committees were formed to handle a loose division of labor. All important decisions were made at general meetings. This ultra-democratic, haphazard form of organization facilitated the growth of negative tendencies and made it difficult to check them. When LSM later pointed out the relationship between the lack of

structure and clear unity and the coalition's practical problems, we were assured by others that this would be worked out *after* the event.

Problems arose quickly. Assignments were sometimes not carried out. Meetings were cancelled when key people did not show up and often started late because of tardy arrivals. RU/RSB members were particularly unreliable in carrying out assigned tasks and did not attend committee meetings. Yet they packed general meetings in order to direct the outcome of important votes. Meetings were often dominated by internal debate, initiated by RU/RSB, over the role of Soviet social imperialism in the Middle East - a question which the coalition should have clarified at the outset within principles of unity. Instead the coalition was often diverted from its work (writing skits, locating a hall, publicity), and the cultural program had to be moved back from February to April.

Within CNLME, LSM strived to set an example of discipline in our work and comportment. However, although LSM struggled hard to resolve the practical problems in coalition work, we failed to grasp the *class roots* of the difficulties and consequently to deal with the ideological source of indiscipline and unprincipled behavior. We dealt not with the real problem but with the symptoms - a form of economism. We overlooked the coalition's common petty-bourgeois class origins and the resultant liberalism, sectarianism and opportunism.

The RU/RSB has recently become notorious for their opportunism on the left. Their splitting tactics in the last year have been directed at VVAW/WSO, People's Translation Service, Indochina Solidarity Committee and other left groups. Although in the past we have seen signs of sectarianism and opportunism on the part of the RU, LSM has also engaged in fruitful joint activities with them.

In the CNLME, RU members distributed only a very small number of coalition leaflets and instead produced and promoted their own leaflet which made the cultural program and the coalition demonstration against Moshe Dayan appear to be RU events held in conjunction with "third world" groups, the ISA and OAS. They rationalized their failure to fulfill commitments by dismissing the coalition's importance because it had no position on Soviet social imperialism.

The committee wrote a pamphlet to be used both for publicity for the cultural program and as a primer on the Middle East. The pamphlet was discussed and criticized in both committee and general meetings. Yet the RU/RSB did not raise criticisms on the section dealing with zionism until *after* the pamphlet was published. They stacked a general meeting and forced through a decision to redo it at the expense of time and money. The pamphlet was not ready until the night before the program and thus useless for publicity.

On numerous occasions the RU/RSB held back the work of the coalition through their sectarianism - a preoccupation with their own self-importance and correctness over all others. This tendency is often found in the petty-bourgeoisie and is a wall between the revolutionary masses and the radical petty-bourgeoisie.

LSM must be self-critical for failing to confront RU/RSB's sectarianism and for unconsciously responding to it in an unprincipled way. An LSM member was elected by the coalition to speak at the program on behalf of North American groups. A committee was to write the speech. The RU/RSB packed the next general meeting and insisted that only one of *their* members could represent the coalition. They charged that LSM was the "enemy of the working class" and that RU was the only North American organization that had ties with the "masses." They also asserted that "mass organizations" should have greatest voice in coalitions.

In response to the RU/RSB's ultimatum, the OAS began unilaterally negotiating with the Guardian Bureau, LSM and individuals who strongly opposed it. LSM questioned the viability of a coalition that would cave in to sectarianism and opportunism. It was clearly a question of principle; the right of a member organization to represent the coalition was being challenged.

The attack on LSM's political position was another question. We refuted the assumption that we were the "enemy" of the North American working class simply because we had observed that they were not moving in a revolutionary direction at this point in history. We questioned why the RU/RSB had worked with an organization they considered the "enemy"



for several months (in fact for several years). In any case LSM would not be representing our particular position at the program but that of the coalition as a whole.

LSM accepted the OAS request to acquiesce to the RU/RSB in exchange for their commitment to strongly criticize the RU/RSB's tactics at the program sum-up meeting. In retrospect, we realize that this was a liberal and unprincipled decision, made to keep an unprincipled peace to hold the coalition together for the program. We should have brought the issue of the RU/RSB opportunism before the entire coalition and struggled to expose its class basis and implications for CNLME. By avoiding this ideological struggle, we didn't deepen the coalition's understanding of the class forces at work, and we failed to oppose those political tendencies which sooner or later would divert the coalition from its anti-imperialist course. We didn't advance US anti-imperialist work around the Middle East by compromising for the sake of the program, but allowed the coalition to continue to move toward an irreparable split and demoralization.

#### **ROLE OF ISA & OAS**

"Third world" organizations have played important leadership roles in anti-imperialist coalitions in the Bay Area. The Union of Vietnamese has been instrumental in organizing and giving direction to local Indochina coalitions as have the OAS and ISA in Middle East coalitions. Although these are broadly based student organizations, they share a strong anti-imperialist orientation and a commitment to building support for the struggles in



*PFLO militants*

their homelands. Often they have been able to prevail over the North American left tendencies of in-fighting, splitting and wrecking.

In CNLME, however, we do not feel that OAS and ISA played such a role. Their members shared in the general failure to carry through on work. From the outset, and particularly in response to the RU/RSB ultimatum, the OAS and ISA each assumed postures of "neutrality." They attempted to rationalize and camouflage their liberalism behind a policy of non-intervention into internal disagreements within the US left. In some previous coalitions, we had also noted the tendency of members of both groups to express private criticisms but be unwilling to raise their criticisms publicly.

LSM again failed to understand the class question. Although members of the ISA and OAS are from the "third world," they are also generally from the petty bourgeoisie. Studying in North America is a "privilege" not generally available in the societies from which they come. Because of their earlier proximity and contact with the masses of imperialism, the radical sector of such petty bourgeoisies is both larger and more politically advanced than its North American counterpart. Yet they share many of our class weaknesses. We should not fear (indeed we must overcome liberal timidity) to criticize constructively such weaknesses in our comrades from proletarian nations. On the other hand, they have a duty to establish principled and critical relations with anti-imperialists within North America and to provide leadership in building support for their sisters-and brothers-in-arms. They do not have to take positions on every internal theoretical dispute in the North American left, but they should be in the forefront in exposing unprincipled practice which undermines the anti-imperialist struggle.

#### **MAY DAY COALITION**

LSM did not play so large a role in the MDC because we did not join it until the work was well underway. We felt, however, that we learned a great deal from the coalition's organization and from the principled relations among member organizations. There were weaknesses but they were not the dominant aspect.

The May Day Coalition was initiated by a Latino group, Center for Autonomous Social Action - General Brotherhood of Workers (CASA), and the Union of Democratic Filipinos (KDP). It included a wide range of organizations such as Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization (international), Prairie Fire, Women's Union, and Bay Area Gay Liberation. The coalition was organized solely to hold a May Day celebration which would be an alternative to the sectarian events staged by groups such as RU/RSB which use such occasions for rhetorical speeches and flag waving for their own membership - under the pretense of representing a united national working class. The May Day Coalition began with a more realistic view of the "fragmented and sectorialized proletariat" within the US. It formulated the key task before the left as a "determined struggle against the real barriers of racism, national chauvinism, and sexism which have created divisions within the proletariat." The goal of the celebration was to begin to forge this unity.

In summary, the main points of unity were:

1. During the current crisis the imperialist ruling class has increased attacks on national liberation movements as well as on US workers, particularly and most severely on third world people.
2. Racism is the most formidable barrier to the unity and development of the struggle of the US working class.
3. Proletarian internationalism demands a conscious struggle against national chauvinism through the defense of the rights of immigrant workers, who are now under hysterical attack.
4. Solidarity with the heroic national liberation struggles of the Third World is an inseparable part of the struggle of the US working class and of the establishment of militant international working-class unity.

Although we had some significant differences (LSM feels current attacks on US workers have not yet created significant revolutionary potential), we felt that the coalition did view the process of creating revolutionary subjective conditions as a

protracted one. We also agree that combatting national chauvinism and racism is an important immediate task. Principled compromises are often required in order to unite a broad spectrum of organizations. Since we agreed with what we saw as the important parts of the points of unity, we decided to join.

The May Day Coalition also clearly divided labor among several committees, the heads of which provided leadership and accountability for work through the steering committee. The coalition was provided with channels for handling problems in a smooth, principled and objective manner. A chairperson was always prepared to lead meetings with a clear agenda.

Eighteen hundred people attended the May 4th event - a picnic and program in an Oakland park with educational displays set up by coalition members. The coalition concluded its work with a sum-up meeting which included thorough and constructive criticism. For instance, many members felt that the steering committee had made an error in failing to consult the general meeting when it decided not to allow Bay Area Gay Liberation to have a booth. There had been confusion about whether the booth had been previously approved, and the final decision was not made until the day before the event. However, criticisms were discussed in a comradely manner and as a result such a coalition could work together again in the future. The point, then, is not that this coalition was free from error but that such errors were not fatal because the coalition was equipped to deal with them.

Although the class basis of the MDC was the same as that of the CNLME, the MDC's negative tendencies never developed out of control. The structure provided a way to

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resolve problems. More importantly, the coalition had a clearly agreed upon ideological basis of unity *within* which groups were willing to bring out differences, raise criticisms and engage in principled struggle. Strong leadership by CASA and KDP also played a role in keeping the coalition on track. In the CNLME, it had been in the interest of the RU/RSB to keep the basis of unity vague and undefined and to maintain the loosest possible organization. Under those circumstances it was impossible to hold the RU/RSB accountable to the coalition, and they used the coalition in every way possible to advance their own organization rather than to support the Palestine Liberation Organization and the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman.

#### LESSONS OF COALITION WORK

Based on these and other experiences, we feel that we can single out some important elements of strong progressive coalitions. We suggest that these be considered as a first step toward a more scientific understanding of the coalition form, which is an important precursor of higher forms of political organization. We hope others can develop these suggestions, and we encourage such an exchange of views.

1. Clear principles of unity: Principles of unity should be established at the formation of a coalition and should define the objectives and scope of both unity and permissible disagreement for prospective members. There should be a clear and definite commitment for those who join.

2. Clear organizational structure: There must be a rational division of labor, such as committees and a leading coordinating body, a basis for voting rights, e.g. number of votes per organization or per active member of a committee, and clearly established procedures for the coalition to follow in making decisions.

3. Leadership and accountability: Overall direction and coordination must be provided by a leading body which must also check to make sure that work is completed. Coalition members with experience in disciplined organizations can play an important role in such bodies. Accountability means that people must be held responsible for keeping their commitments. No political organization can function properly without it.

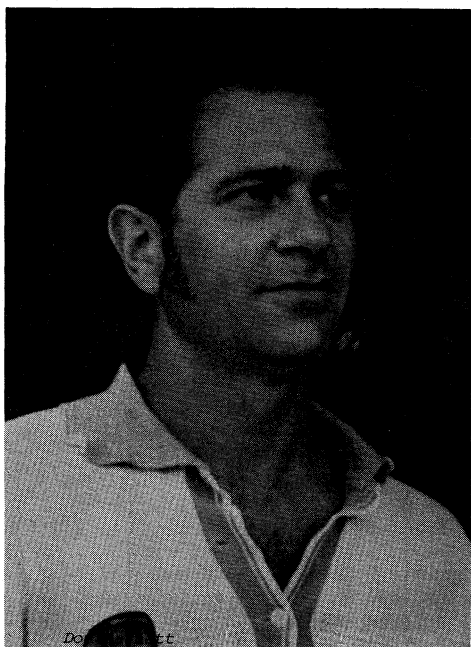
4. Principled style of work: Principled behavior must be demanded of all coalition members. Conduct must not undermine the principles of unity; commitments must be met; and criticisms must be made constructively in order to advance coalition practice. Personal attacks merely intended to denigrate other members should be avoided.

5. Individual identity: Groups joining coalitions do not abandon their own political lines and practice but do commit themselves to working, within the coalition, for its particular objectives. Meetings should not be used to advance extraneous matters which disrupt the meetings. Groups retain their right to raise their own positions in their own publications and in discussions at coalition events.

If we have hopes of winning more North Americans to the fight for international socialism, we must all strive for honest, principled relations. At this point in history it would be utopian to expect to join coalitions only with groups with whom we have total agreement. We can strive for more unity through comradely criticism and theoretical discussion while engaging in principled common practice. This is worth struggling for!

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Friends:

With great sadness we have received the news of the death of Don Barnett. Without doubt this is a great loss for the revolutionary movement that found in him a great defender and hard-working propagandist. Even though it is true that the loss of young lives like that of Barnett is regrettable, the work of revolution is one of substitution. One generation prepares another and guarantees the continuity of the task undertaken. This is the lesson emerging from all revolutions and you have understood that.

Receive a testimony of our sorrow at the death of companero Don Barnett and conviction that his work will continue.

With revolutionary greetings,  
Department of Distribution and Exchange  
Tricontinental Publications  
Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples  
of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL)  
Havana, Cuba

"Our people have said enough and started to go!"

Beloved Comrades:

I just received the materials you sent. It is the best I have read, for and by my oppressed comrades. It's absolutely imperative that I thank you for responding so warmly to my request. Please do not fail to send me the next edition. It's people like yourself that gives me the impetus, and desire to return to society as a people's servant.

I take your works, papers, and books very seriously. LSM philosophy is written in the context of left-wing political struggle and in the service of such a struggle.

Respectfully yours, Q.C., Stateville  
Prison, Joliet, Illinois

Dear LSM,

Enclosed please find a check for two dollars to cover the cost of a year's subscription to *LSM NEWS*. Also, I would appreciate a catalog of LSM's books, pamphlets, posters, and other articles. I already have the majority of LSM's pamphlets, and they have been invaluable to me in my study of imperialism and the fight for international socialism.

I was grieved to learn of the death of Don Barnett, who made a vital contribution to the movement by fostering the internationalist perspective which so many Western Marxists are still lacking. I trust that LSM will continue to fight for proletarian internationalism in a principled

---

way, a way that reflects concrete social reality and not the subjective perceptions of certain ethnocentric, chauvinist "radicals."

Finally, while I was a student at Trinity College in Connecticut I had the good fortune to attend two of LSM's audio-visual demonstrations on Revolution in Africa. Despite the fact that the second demonstration I saw in the fall of 1974 was hurriedly run and poorly organized (which was only in part the fault of the LSM people), both experiences helped to provide the necessary impetus and direction for my study of Africa from a revolutionary point of view. Keep up the good work, and do what you can to ensure a tighter performance in the lecture/demonstrations.

In Struggle, W.O., Terryville, Conn.

Comrade Brothers,

I must start by sending to you my warmest regards on account of your long-standing contribution to liberation of the African people and those of the wider world as well. I am a Kenyan and despite the fact that my country is allegedly free the feelings of the majority of our people are that it is a colony of capital and the new black class that has been established. Our country is not free. It is in the grip of a new oppression more ruthless than even the British imperial oppression.

Your wonderful work in support of liberation will be of no use if in these nations capitalism and imperialism are established. Independence is a lie in many African countries which have succumbed to capitalism and neo-colonial control. It is for the purpose of exposing the situation in my country that I am writing to you.

The task I am laying on your desk is joining the struggle of the Kenyan people by exposing the fraudulent lies and misconceptions which abound asserting that

my country is free. It is not free unless and until the Kenyan poor expropriate the expropriators.

Yours in the Struggle,  
K.K., Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Dear Comrades:

The *LSM NEWS* is a great success. It will be of tremendous help in keeping us informed of the latest developments in the struggle for liberation. Your analysis of the problems in Angola and Zimbabwe was extremely useful in clarifying certain problems of our political work here in Australia.

Thank you. A Luta Continua!  
S.I., Victoria, Australia

Dear friends at LSM:

It was with deep shock that I picked up the latest issue of *LSM NEWS* and read of Don Barnett's early death.

It was only shortly before he died that Lori Barnett and Beth Youhn were with us and we had a very fine visit.

I know how much his death must have hurt all of you, both in your lives and your work. I hope that the superb latest issue of *LSM NEWS* is an example of the fine work you will do to carry on what he started.

I enclose \$20.00. I would like it to pay for a subscription for *LSM NEWS*. I also would like to get any recent material you have on Angola. I am planning on doing an educational on the Chinese relationship with Angola, and I am particularly interested in any materials in which you discuss your decision to support MPLA against FNLA and UNITA.

C.N., Tacoma, Washington



International

# FRELIMO ATTACKS CAPITALISM

No Honeymoon For the Exploiters, by Ole Gjerstad

In just thirty days FRELIMO has made it clear that the reality of state power has in no way affected the party's revolutionary line and that Mozambique will not remain a People's Republic in name only. On 24 July, Lourenco Marques Day and a public holiday, President Samora Machel gave his first major policy speech to an enthusiastic capacity crowd of 80,000 at the city's huge Machava Stadium. In unequivocal terms the President launched a frontal attack on the structures of exploitation and oppression. Independence must have content - now! "Our comrades sacrificed themselves, our people were bombed and burned with napalm, and still our land is controlled by a handful of people. Where is our freedom? What happened to the liberation of the land?" President Samora then announced that "as of today" land rent is abolished, and the State is taking over all private medical, lawyers' and funeral services as well as private and missionary schools.

For those who have followed the development of FRELIMO and the Mozambique liberation struggle, this comes as no surprise. The nationalizations are a logical continuation of the revolutionary process started in the liberated areas during the armed struggle; one more step on the road to socialism. Moreover, the President himself had predicted such measures when touring Tanzania and Zambia in the months prior to independence; first an attack on the worst forms of privilege, then a major renovation of the state apparatus, which "in its essence still reflects the interests and dictatorship of the colonial bourgeoisie over the vast masses of working people," according to the communique of the first official session of Cabinet, two days after Samora's speech.

Yet surprise was the common reaction here in Lourenco Marques, if not so much over the principles outlined as their sudden effect. While the 95% African crowd at Machava applauded wildly, doctors, lawyers, missionaries and others directly affected were stunned; most had expected at least a comfortable period of transition during which they could coolly weigh their options and prepare countermoves or orderly departure. Not so. "*Senhores* doctors, you have exploited us enough," Samora exclaimed. "Enough."

The following morning lines at the airline offices were half a block long. "Every time Samora makes a speech a thousand Whites leave the country," a wealthy Portuguese accountant told us shortly before independence. There must have been many times that number who made up their minds during this last week of July. Of course, many left a long time ago; both Portuguese officials and the most reactionary settler elements started to pack soon after the Lusaka Agreement and the failure of the fascist putsch. Among those who remained the large majority adopted a wait-and-see attitude. Now their lack of alternatives weighs heavily; Portugal at the moment offers few temptations, Rhodesia is at best a temporary haven and South Africa is interested only in those with particularly useful skills. In addition, many Whites with deep-set roots here welcomed the end of the colonial regime. If the changes with independence were not to be too drastic, they would like to stay. That is, "The revolution is fine as long as my daily life doesn't suffer."

## THE BATTLE AGAINST RACISM

Considering the great material privileges of most settlers in relation to their black employees, co-workers or servants, the revolution would hardly be worthy its name if it left their privileged position untouched. If Mozambique is to be developed for the benefit of the masses of its people, this group inevitably has to make some sacrifices.

So far, however, they have not suffered much; the importation of private cars has been restricted, certain luxury items have become more expensive and the circulation of foreign currency strictly controlled. And, in principle, the recent nationalizations are not so much an attack on their material conditions as a move to make the same social services available to all Mozambicans. However, after a point, material considerations are not always primary. Perhaps it is not surprising, given the deep-seated racism and colonial mentality which pervade Mozambican society, that an equally important cause of much settler anxiety is the growing African confidence and self-respect, generated by FRELIMO. In the factories, plantations and schools, on buses or in shops and restaurants relationships are changing between "masters and servants." In a country where authority and privilege have been so closely tied to skin color and where Whites largely defined themselves by their "superiority" to other races, such changes are bound to come hard. The thought of now having to bury their dead with no more pomp and ceremony than the "savage natives" is sometimes more upsetting to the lords of the opulent Summerschild mansions than their being made to double their servants' wages. And for the white factory workers who sense that the manager is now turning his back on them to gain favor with the Africans on the new FRELIMO-inspired factory committees, the changes are no less threatening.

FRELIMO's position is clear enough. Since early in the armed struggle the movement has stressed that its enemy is neither the white man nor the Portuguese people, but colonialism and imperialism. Today this is stressed again and again: the new Mozambique has room for everyone - whether of African, European, Chinese, Indian or mixed ancestry - who can contribute to the development of the country by his or her own honest labor and not by the exploitation of others. Recalling the decolonization of other settler colonies like Algeria or Kenya, or the 1961 massacres in northern Angola, no small credit is due FRELIMO for the near total absence of racial violence since the installation of the Transitional Government late last year. Now, with state power at its disposition, its task is to remove the roots of racism, to destroy the structures that bred the superiority and inferiority complexes and build a basis for harmonious coexistence. "We must recognize," said President Samora in his Machava speech, "that it will be no easy battle to unite the people, to bring together men and women of various races; a tough battle but a necessary one." This aim cannot be achieved by proclamations and decrees, he added, but only "by collective labor, by working together; only by fully engaging ourselves in the tasks of national reconstruction can we eliminate racism."

#### **POLITICS IN COMMAND**

There is little doubt the Government's recent move will cause the departure of people whose technical skills and knowledge Mozambique badly needs. In this sense the country faces the same general dilemma as others looking for a way out of the quagmire of dependency and underdevelopment: either preserve colonial and neo-colonial structures to retain foreign aid and expertise, or tear down the structures of exploitation and face economic sabotage by imperialist forces. The former option implies the continuation of foreign control and local misery, the latter a great deal of hardship, austerity and, most likely, becoming the target of the well-known Chile type "de-stabilization" campaigns. Given FRELIMO's commitment to socialism and the extreme underdevelopment of Mozambique, their choice is clear. With less than one hundred doctors for a population of eight million, with lawyers' fees beyond the annual income of most peasant families... who benefits? "*Um punhado de gente*," Samora said, "a handful of people."

With this step FRELIMO has shown its determination to "put politics in command." It has made known that it very much wants skilled workers and professionals to stay but is not prepared to make major political concessions, even if their departure may cause serious problems. "We know there will be sabotage," continued the President, "and we are prepared to face a crisis. To those who want to leave we say: the door is open - out of Mozambique! Go to South Africa, go wherever you like.... Mozambique has no room for exploiters." The Cabinet's declaration takes the theme still further: "We do not worry because our cadre are not fully prepared technically. Technical knowledge is secondary

to political line and class consciousness. The highly qualified technicians of colonialism and capitalism did nothing to help our people because they served...the exploiting classes."

#### "WORK IS AN ACT OF LIBERATION"

The full effect of the recent measures is by no means clear. However, the abolition of land rent will immediately ease the burden on those tens of thousands of semi-proletarianized families who live on land expropriated by European planters or big companies. In the President's words: "It is the people who work the land, therefore the land belongs to the people... The land is liberated by the people, thus the people must control the land." With other land reforms still to come, this move will help propel the development of agriculture, the basis of the Mozambican economy for the foreseeable future.

The other nationalizations aim to remove the profit motive from legal, medical and educational practice, to eliminate corruption and privilege. In the private schools, for example, teachers used to deliberately mystify their lessons so as to set up as tutors and make money on the side. Now schools must serve the cause of the people and the unity of the nation. The President spoke from personal experience when he assailed the missionaries for collaborating with colonialism in their divisive and paternalistic attitude toward Africans. "A (Mozambican) Catholic is above all a Catholic; his head is in the Vatican, his body in Mozambique.... Who will think for you, Mozambican...? Don't you have a mind? Why didn't these churches make Mozambicans?" As an extension of the fully State-controlled educational system, according to the Cabinet communique, a national service will be instituted where "all citizens, without distinction, will receive political-military training...guaranteeing the popular character of the armed forces by direct participation in production (and) in close contact with the masses." These are some of the first major steps toward creating a new type of Mozambican man and woman, toward reconquering Mozambican culture and personality, for so long buried by the oppressive weight of colonialism. As a banner stretched across the entrance of a Lourenco Marques school proclaims: "Make the Schools a Base for the People to Seize Power."

This is the spirit which prevails within FRELIMO and among its growing number of supporters, including a small but significant minority of white Mozambicans; on this basis they are mobilizing the people to transform plans into realities. True, outside assistance is needed - the figure of \$400 million has been mentioned as a minimum to get the country on its feet - and this may well pose considerable problems for the Government in the near future. Above all else, however, comes hard work. "There are no miracles when it comes to developing our country," the President stressed. In order to pay for the new schools and hospitals "it is necessary that the Mozambican people work hard. It is Man who will build our country. Man is our strength.

Hard work and austerity, vigilance and national unity - four closely related factors essential to Mozambique's future. Together they form the basis for consolidating and building on the gains of the liberation struggle while facing the external pressures and provocations that this new revolutionary state is bound to be subjected to.

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Samora Machel

Africa

# SWAPO PRINTSHOP PROJECT



At the request of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) LSM has launched an international campaign to provide SWAPO a complete printshop. SWAPO is leading the struggle of the Namibian people against *apartheid* and imperialism. Their struggle for national self-determination has many fronts, and one of the most important is education and information. To enable the movement to expand and improve its informational work - printing texts for technical and political education as well as communiques and bulletins for publicizing the struggle - SWAPO has called on LSM to co-ordinate a

printshop project with progressive groups and individuals in North America. We have begun raising funds to purchase and send to SWAPO full printing equipment and supplies. To further advance the movement's self-reliance in this area we are preparing two cadre to help train six SWAPO members in the techniques of offset printing.

Our member in Lusaka, Zambia is presently finalizing project details with SWAPO's Department of Education and Culture. We will soon be distributing an informational brochure fully describing this important project. *LSM NEWS* readers wishing to join in these efforts can send contributions, suggestions and questions to:

SWAPO PRINTSHOP PROJECT  
Liberation Support Movement, Box 94338  
Richmond, B.C., CANADA V6Y 2A8



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**Feature:  
A NEW  
GENERATION  
OF WOMEN**



*Right: Carmen Pereira  
Left: Omani Woman  
Bottom: Chantal Sarrazin*



Feature

# IN GUINEA-BISSAU

Interview with Carmen Pereira, by Chantal Sarrazin

*Carmen Pereira is a leading member of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), which defeated the Portuguese colonialists (and their NATO allies) after ten years of protracted guerrilla struggle. LSM's Chantal Sarrazin conducted the following interview with her in Bissau in June of this year.*

## CARMEN: WOMAN REVOLUTIONARY

*LSM:* Comrade Pereira, can you briefly tell us how and why you joined the PAIGC?

*PEREIRA:* I come from a family which was well-off by African standards and much respected in the city of Bissau. My father was one of the few African lawyers. But I saw what the Portuguese did in my country: wealth for a few, with extreme poverty for the great majority. I saw them putting my Guinean brothers and sisters in prison for the smallest protest, and I realized that this life was not a good one.

I first heard of PAIGC in 1961. Then, one day I discovered Party documents my husband was hiding; I told him he should have talked to me about the struggle. In 1962 the repression in the towns really escalated. My husband was in danger and decided to slip out of the country to join the Party abroad. I was on my own but soon began making my own plans to go and work for the Party. Later that year I managed to get out of Bissau with my two children and baby. On the way we passed by a concentration camp in Tite and saw prisoners being treated very badly by the Portuguese. Some had been so badly tortured they were bloody and lying on the ground, unable to get up. This confirmed my decision to go and join the Party.

In Senegal I met Amilcar Cabral, who encouraged me. But I had myself and the children to support, so I went to Zinguinchor on the border of Guinea-Bissau where I worked as a seamstress. From my wages I was able to feed my children and 30 Party comrades at the same time. I was 25 years old and my political understanding was just starting to develop.

*LSM:* What responsibilities have you had since then?

*PEREIRA:* At the end of 1963 I was sent for political and nursing training in the Soviet Union. After 11 months abroad I returned to carry on the function I had at the border. The armed struggle had been launched and soon the Party gave me another responsibility: finding safe places for treating our casualties, and then teaching nursing to a group of young women. Later, I was sent to the South Front as a health *responsável* (cadre) and opened the first Party hospital in our country. At first it was difficult to convince the population to come to the hospital for treatment. Under the colonialists one had to pay to receive treatment, so the people were not accustomed to doctors and nurses. The Party organized health brigades to give medicines to the population and to teach them modern hygiene and the importance of seeing a doctor.

At the end of 1967, the Party appointed me political commissar of all the South Front. At that time many people thought a woman couldn't carry out a responsibility like that. My work required a lot of travelling, and walking was the only way. Many ambushes were set up by the colonialists. I was responsible for the political mobilization of all people - men and women - in that region. I put my children in Party schools and committed myself completely to the political work.

In 1969 I was appointed member of the Executive Committee of the Struggle. That same

year I was given responsibility for the national reconstruction of the South Front. It was hard work. One had to oversee the operation of all sanitary posts and other facilities. In 1973 we had our first session of the National Assembly. The enemy tried desperately to prevent it: they sent planes to drop bombs and massacre the population, hoping to stop the deputies from meeting. Despite this we had our Assembly; it was a great accomplishment. I was elected as deputy for Bissau, Vice-President for the National Assembly and member of the State Council. After this Assembly - at which we made our formal declaration of independence - I returned to the South Front. I told the population how we'd managed to hold the Assembly and what decisions were taken. I explained everything to them because they were the ones who fought to make the National Assembly possible.

After the fall of colonialism, I came here to Bissau. I am now working for the Secretariat-General as a member of the Party's Executive Committee of Struggle and the Commission of Organization at the national level.

*LSM:* As a woman revolutionary, what problems have you had and how have you been able to deal with them?

*PEREIRA:* Before I joined the struggle I was very timid and didn't speak much. I couldn't be among people too long because I was shy. And I was very afraid when seeing people with guns. Now, I don't hesitate to talk and have learned to use a gun myself. This change is due in large part to the advice of our great comrade Amilcar Cabral. His writings, the seminars he gave us and the many conversations we had with him were a tremendous inspiration and gave me the confidence to struggle.

I have learned that the first thing one must have is political determination. To win the people's respect and confidence it is necessary to be disciplined and serious about one's responsibilities. It is especially important to follow every directive and line of the Party. With the people's respect and confidence one can work without too many difficulties.

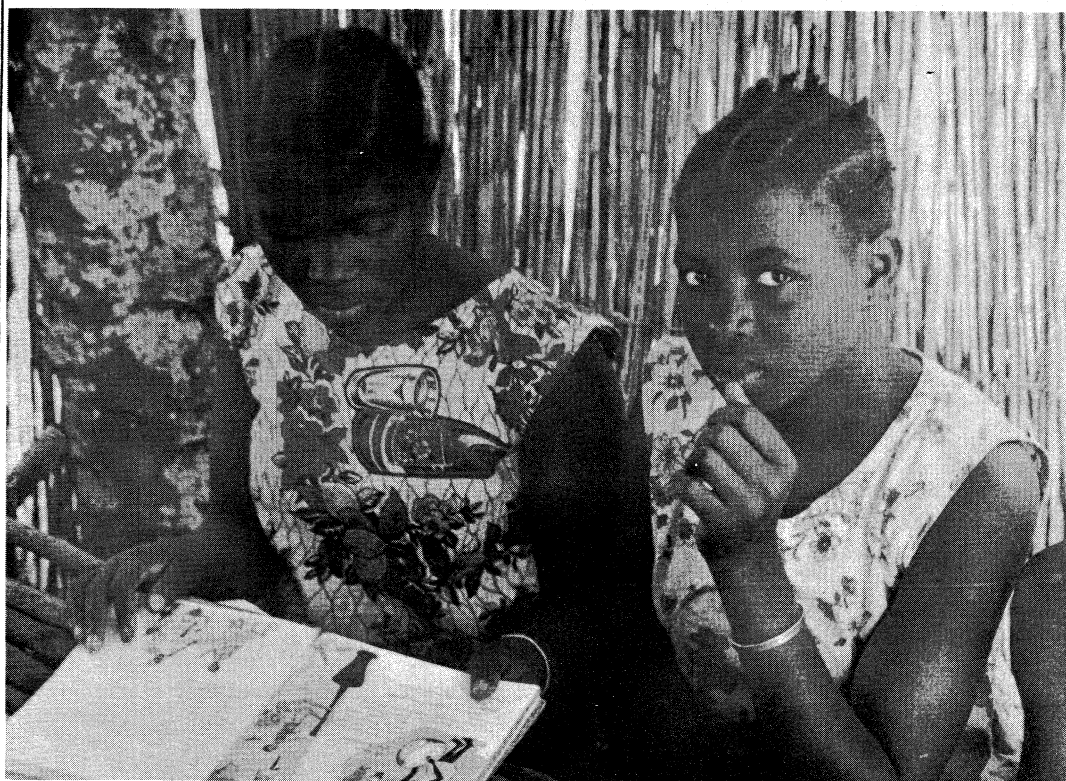
**L***SM:* What was the woman's position in the traditional system of Guinea-Bissau?

*PEREIRA:* There are many tribes and each one has its own customs. Among the Muslim tribes the position of women was very backward. To greet her husband, for example, a woman would have to kneel and put her forehead on the floor. She went to work and the husband stayed home. She worked till sundown, came home, greeted her husband, prepared the meal, got some water for him to wash with, brought him food and knelt before giving it to him. The Party has struggled against such negative traditions and done away with most of that. Now men work with the women in the fields.

In the past a Muslim man never wanted a woman to go to a meeting. There were many meetings during the struggle and women were very interested to hear what was going on. The men would refuse to let them go for three or four times, but the women would keep insisting. Finally, the men were obliged to accept. Now, women are on the village committees and are sometimes elected president. Men now accept women leading meetings because it is a Party directive and they see why it is correct.

But there is still work to be done. After our coming to Bissau, the President of the State Committee in Gabu had many problems with the Fula tribesmen. They could accept anything except having women on their village committee. So we did some political work. To inaugurate a house just built in Gabu, President Lay-Seck invited me. He called a meeting for the population and I led it. At first, men were upset to see a woman leading, but afterwards they were satisfied. Ever since that day, they have let women participate in meetings and committees.

There are still, of course, problems with backward traditions. The Party's approach is to struggle against what goes counter to our principles and particular goals at each stage of the struggle. We can't change these traditions overnight. Only the evolution of the struggle will overcome all the negative aspects of tradition.



*Education in Guinea-Bissau*

*LSM:* What is the situation regarding polygamy? What is the Party doing to overcome it?

*PEREIRA:* Polygamy, in a country which has been backward for so long, is very difficult to combat. In the countryside it is still common because of the traditional economic structure. Polygamy is not illegal yet and the Party has not taken any severe measures against it. But we are doing much political work to show that it is no longer necessary, especially in the cities. In meetings we talk about the negative aspects of polygamy; Party militants can only have monogamous marriages; women can now get divorces; and our youth are growing up believing in monogamy because of the new education. Little by little we will overcome polygamy.

*LSM:* How did women participate in the armed struggle?

*PEREIRA:* From the beginning women played an active and essential part in gaining the independence of our country. Throughout the struggle we did vital clandestine work. Men, having to carry identification cards, couldn't do this work as well. We brought food to the guerrillas. Also, the Local Armed Forces (FAL) included women, some of whom became commanders. Many women became nurses, trained by the Party either abroad or inside the

country. And all nurses received military training at popular military centers. They had to be military people as well as nurses so they could defend their patients and themselves if attacked by the enemy. Other women, in addition to their regular functions, became political commissars. In all areas of the struggle women's participation was vital to our success.

*LSM:* In 1972 Amílcar Cabral mentioned that some nurses trained by the Party left their responsibilities after they got married and had some children. How did you deal with that problem? Does it still exist?

*PEREIRA:* Yes, during the armed struggle we did have some problems like that. Everyone has his or her own problems in life, and some individuals put these ahead of the interests of the Party. Some nurses returned from abroad and wanted to spend their time just treating their sick parents; others abandoned their posts and went to where their husbands were. We had to struggle a lot with this problem, to educate these militants about the necessity of carrying out one's responsibility and serving the whole people. Generally, this education work was quite effective.

*LSM:* National reconstruction, like the armed struggle, demands certain sacrifices - for example, the separation of couples. Some nurses I met accepted this by saying: "I do what the Party wants." Considering women's traditional role of subordination, do you think there is a danger of their accepting directives without understanding why?

*PEREIRA:* We are in a crucial stage in Guinea-Bissau: we need to defend our independence, and begin improving the material conditions of the people. For example, there are still traitors and enemies in the country; our army needs to be ready in both the towns and countryside. And health conditions are very bad in the countryside; we need to send our nurses to sanitation clinics throughout the country. Sometimes this means that couples need to be separated so as to carry out responsibilities in different geographic areas. The Party and State are doing much to bring couples together, but sometimes separation is still necessary.

Our people understand that there is a great difference between the Party's authority and the old Portuguese colonialist authority. The Portuguese colonialists didn't give us time to see and learn and think; they were only interested in exploiting us. Now, under the Party, we have the chance of learning and developing. We are free. The nurses are free to say what they think; if there is some problem with their work they can discuss it with a responsible person in the Party.

The Party taught us the rights of women in our country. The Party led the liberation war, built the National Assembly, gave us the correct political orientation...the Party did everything. This is why young people respect what the Party says, and why the young nurses you talked with accept being separated from their husbands.

*LSM:* In some meetings I have noticed a timidity among the women to express their thoughts. How do you deal with this problem?

*PEREIRA:* One thing we must do is reinforce the political brigades doing education work with such women, to continue to help them become politically stronger. Each work area, such as a hospital or production center, has regular meetings of all the people working there to discuss problems, raise criticisms, and so forth. At these political meetings sometimes the women don't dare get up and say what they are thinking. We are explaining to them why it is necessary for them to express their feelings, to speak out. Some of the women, mainly those who never lived in the liberated regions, are not used to meetings and so they are naturally timid. But the Party is going to keep reminding them to express themselves and, little by little, they will overcome this problem.

*LSM:* During the second session of the National Assembly this year, some people proposed that women pay taxes, as the men do. What is your opinion on this question?

*PEREIRA:* These discussions were quite important. Some people thought that the women would get more autonomy by having to pay independent taxes. My opinion is that we need to distinguish between women in the towns and cities and women in the countryside. In the countryside, a woman works with her husband and the product of their labor is for both, or for all if it is polygamous. It would be very difficult for the peasant women to have to divide up their produce, figure out their taxes, and so forth. At this stage, it would only create more problems for them.

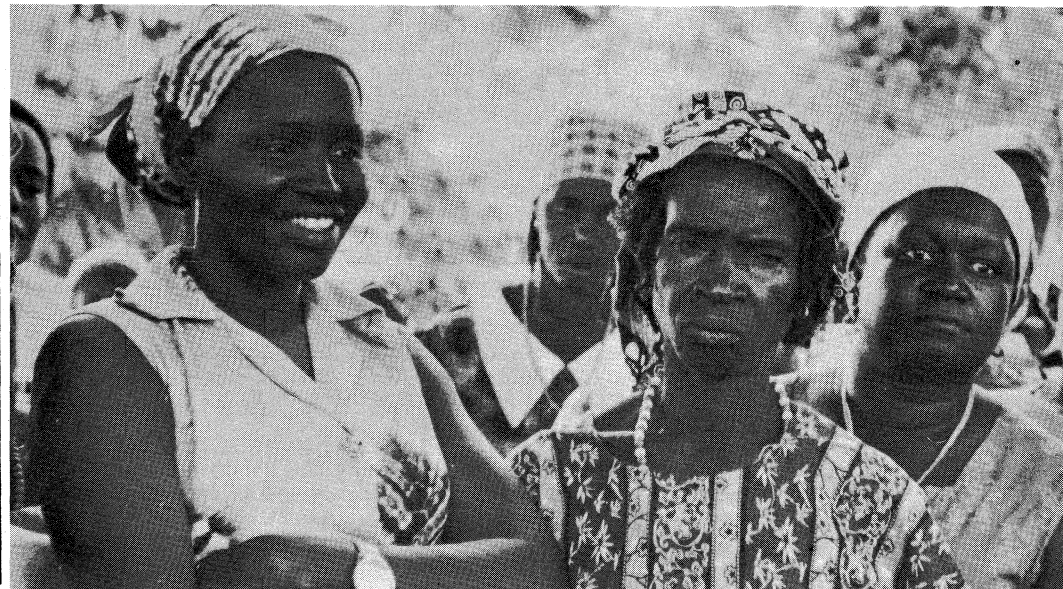
It is different in the towns and cities. Here, the women receive their own salary and can pay taxes. For example, at the end of the month I get a salary and I pay taxes; the same for my husband. Once we have developed the countryside - improved the social and economic conditions, acquired machinery, established factories, etc. - then women there will be able to pay taxes too.

*LSM:* During the struggle the Party decided not to form a special organization for women as other liberation movements did. Why? And what is the position regarding a women's organization now?

*PEREIRA:* At the beginning of the struggle the Party created the "Democratic Union of Women of Guinea," but we lacked cadre for this. All the experienced women were at the front - participating in the armed struggle, doing political work, etc. - so they could not take part in the organization.

Now that the war is over the Party has created a committee composed of ten leaders, cadres and militants of the Party. The committee is now preparing to organize the women of the Party. Last month we had a meeting and made a proposal to the Party about the type of women's organization we wish to have. As I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Party, this will pass through my hands. Soon we will be establishing our women's organization.

In the liberated zones the women know what a women's organization is and they are very interested in it. But in the zones formerly occupied by the enemy the women do not fully understand. So we will be doing more work to convince them of the importance of a women's organization. Political education...always.



*Women at a political discussion in Guinea-Bissau*



Feature

# WOMEN IN LSM

A Few Insights, by Lori Barnett and Beth Klaver



Many people that we contact through our film programs and *LSM NEWS* express curiosity about the position and role of women in LSM. They wonder what problems we face due to our conditioning as women, what problems we encounter from male chauvinism, and what stand we take on the women's movement in North America. These questions as well as discussions within the organization have sparked our desire to write about our experiences and ideas on women's liberation. In this issue we will describe how we understand some of the negative tendencies among us, such as female timidity, intellectual and personal dependency, and masculine elitism, and the methods we employ for dealing constructively with these obstacles. A later issue of *LSM NEWS* will include our analysis of the women's movement in North America.

The women and men in LSM generally come from petty-bourgeois backgrounds (intellectuals, skilled workers, etc.). Our ingrained class values are, in many ways, in contradiction to our socialist goals. Some of the contradictions we face, such as individualism, prevail in both sexes; others, such as passivity, apply particularly to one sex.

Women in LSM face the same contradictions which confront other North American women of the same class. We have been groomed in passivity and submission, unambitious for ourselves yet ambitious for our men. After centuries of immersion in the nuclear family and dependence on men it is impossible for women to suddenly become self-motivated, independent persons without experiencing some problems. During a discussion among LSM women, one comrade said:

In my family and church I was taught strict subordination. Things were decided for me, I was to listen and follow. I never developed any confidence in my own judgement and always depended on someone else. For a long time I considered my older sister more capable than me; then it was my husband. I had no self-determination. It also created a kind of laziness. When faced with problems I tended not to deal with them but relied on a stronger person for the answer. Now I must be strong and not allow myself to revert to old patterns. I have to participate fully on my own.

This comrade's submissive role had been instituted at an early age by the family and the church, two of the most effective instruments used for preserving the values of capitalist society. In order for her to become a person with the independence and self-determination necessary in working for a new society, she has had to struggle to overcome these tendencies.

In a contrary situation, one of our comrades experienced a conflict between the values and habits she acquired and the expectations of bourgeois society. She describes her problem in this way:

In our society there are certain qualities which have been shunned in women; one of these is aggressiveness. Before coming into LSM I had many problems because I'm aggressive. As soon as any male friend saw that I relied on my own intelligence that was it, he didn't want anything more to do with me. If you choose to be independent and demand respect you've chosen a tough road. A man is expected to be aggressive, even to push people around. But if you're a woman and stand up for your ideas, you are condemned by men and women.

This comrade's self-reliance and aggressiveness, while threatening male chauvinist attitudes, on the other hand became a positive attribute in LSM. She contributes her ideas without fear and provides an example for the more timid members.

Another comrade described how her lack of education reinforced a low self-image:

One problem some of us face is our lack of formal education compared with men in the organization. It took me a long time to accept the fact that not being an "intellectual" wasn't a degrading thing. For several years I've associated with university people, and having only a high school education I usually felt inferior to these "educated" people. In this instance, my comrades helped me by pointing out my good qualities and emphasizing that a university education isn't the same as intelligence, nor is it a pre-requisite for doing valuable political work.

Male intellectual elitism was also at work in this comrade's case. Her husband felt that he was in some ways politically superior and more mature than she because he had a university education and had read more books. This elitist attitude reinforced her feelings of inferiority. What could she offer? How could she compare with her husband or to others who knew so much more than she? We struggled hard with them, pointing out that all people are at various stages of development and have different strengths and weaknesses. Our woman comrade, for instance, was very sensitive, had a straight-forward approach, and could easily establish good rapport with others. Her husband, on the other hand, had an intellectual understanding and more political experience yet he was somewhat insensitive to people's problems and needs. In time both comrades realized that politics is much more than intellectual information or theories and we all need to learn from the strengths of others. Through discussion and practice both comrades became much stronger members and achieved a personal relationship based on genuine mutual respect.

Male intellectual superiority runs very deep in our culture. Just as men have been socialized to assert control and run things, women have been socialized towards intellectual as well as personal dependency. One break-through for both men and women is understanding that "book learning" doesn't rank above other skills or abilities. To some extent we must struggle with our sense of job hierarchy. From previous experience we've learned that some jobs carry more status and prestige than others and we often determine these divisions on the basis of class and sex. We place writing skills high on the list and typing at the bottom; yet both are important for the revolution. When we join the organization we start with what skills we have. We make use of the best skills we have to offer and over time develop skills in other areas. We try to take a positive attitude towards whatever we are doing, never labelling any responsibility as "shit work." Everything that needs to be done is important, from printing to public speaking, from keeping our work areas clean to writing. Each task or mission is important, a part of the whole process.

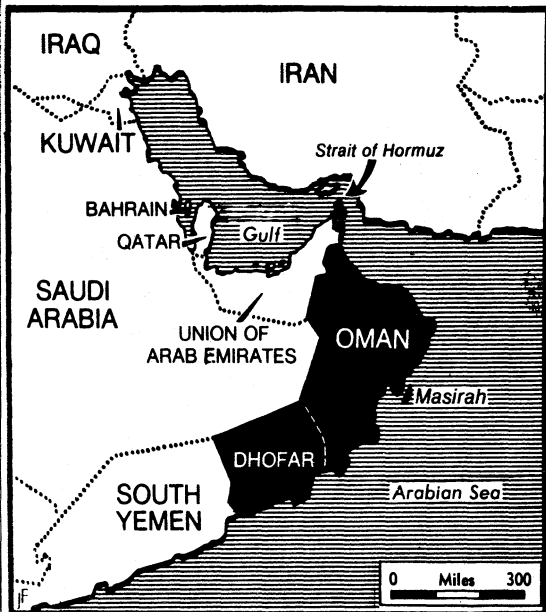
We must also realize that "book learning" and writing are not only reserved for a select few. Especially since the death of our leading theoretician we have encouraged every LSM member, regardless of age or sex, to develop analytical and writing skills. We *all* have the capacity to understand and interpret the world in order to learn how to change it. Marxism is a scientific method which anyone of normal intelligence can grasp and apply in developing our knowledge and theory and in examining and solving problems in our practice. This is important because in order to sustain a strong commitment to any political theory and practice, we must clearly understand it. We can't simply rely on a subjective feeling that it is correct or blindly accept the word of others.



Feature

# IN THE ARABIAN GULF

Interview with Fatima Ahmed of the Omani Women's Organization,  
by Dennis Mercer



*Fatima Ahmed, PFLO member and Omani Women's Organization representative at the United Nations this May, was interviewed by LSM's Dennis Mercer in New York City. The following interview was recorded in Arabic and English, translated by a comrade from the Palestine Information Committee, and edited by Comrade Mercer.*

*Comrade Ahmed discusses:*

*CURRENT STAGE OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE*

*PFLO'S STRUCTURE*

*ECONOMICS AND MEDICAL CARE*

*AGRICULTURE*

*ROLE OF WOMEN*

*EDUCATION AND CRITICISM*

## THE ARMED STRUGGLE

*LSM:* The revolution in Oman is not well known here in North America. So perhaps, Comrade, we could begin by discussing the background and current stage of the struggle.

*Ahmed:* It's true, we've been successfully waging armed struggle for ten years but still our revolution is not well known the world over. On the 9th of June 1965 our people launched armed revolution for the purpose of throwing off foreign domination and ending oppression in Oman. A particular aim has been to remove foreign military bases from our country. Initially these bases were British; now they are shared by Britain and the United States.\* They serve the current campaign of terror aimed at liquidating the progress of our revolution among the people. This campaign takes several forms including concerted bombardment of civilian population centers and harassment, arrest, torture and often execution of our comrades in the cities. In addition to the growing American involvement, Iranian, Jordanian and British troops are all fighting to prop up the regime of Sultan Qabus.

The ruling al Bu-Said family has long been a puppet of the imperialists, in particular the British. For over three decades until 1970 the ruler of Oman was Said bin Taimur, father of the current sultan. When popular discontent against him became open and wide-

spread Britain replaced Said by his son Qabus, staging its "palace coup" of 23 July 1970. Qabus attempted some minor reforms but they did not alter the fundamental oppression and foreign control of Oman. His bid for popular support failed miserably; the people did not respond to his attempts at face-lifting the regime. That reform operation lasted three years and was coupled with heavy bombardment of our liberated territories. You see, widespread repression of any popular movement has continued for two hundred years.

After the failures of his early policies, in December 1973 Qabus finally called on his ally, the Shah of Iran, for troops to defend his throne. The first Iranian incursion occurred in December 1973 with about 3,000 Iranian troops. Of course, the Shah is not simply a disinterested ally but has his own motivations. First, his expansionism, seeking to control the entire Gulf area. Recently the Front captured Iranian documents



*PFLO militant*



revealing their designs to occupy wide areas of the whole peninsula. Secondly, the Shah fears any progressive regime neighboring Iran and will attempt to stop it as far away as possible. He has publicly declared that Iranian troops were sent to suppress the revolutionary forces and stop the forming of a progressive regime in Oman, one similar to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). Both of these factors are linked to imperialist oil strategy in the area, for Oman is strategically placed near oil routes and the Indian Ocean.

*LSM:* In December 1974 US-trained Iranian troops launched another offensive against the western region of liberated Oman. What have been the results of this offensive?

*Ahmed:* This campaign included about 11,000 Iranian troops but did not achieve any success either. The first positive outcome was that the masses gathered even more firmly around the Front, fully supporting our defense of the revolution. This campaign demonstrated the strength of the Front, its capacity to repel such a wide range attack. Also, we gained a tremendous amount of war materiel left behind by the Iranian troops. I might note, we're now compiling some of the documents and weaponry we captured for a public display for our tenth anniversary celebrations. So you see we have consolidated our movement through political campaigns which clarify the treachery of Sultan Qabus, willing to bargain Oman's independence to save his throne, and the threat the Iranian forces represent, not only against the Omani people but also against the whole Arabian peninsula.

On the negative side, the campaign did result in the destruction of large numbers of cattle and sheep as well as widespread burning of crops. However, though they were able to attack the people's sources of livelihood, the attacking forces did not gain control over any new territory.

Another side to this campaign which I'd like to point out: Qabus succeeded in getting the participation of Jordanian troops so as to quell objections from Arab circles about the use of non-Arab (i.e. Iranian) armies. These were the same troops used in the Black September massacre against our Palestinian comrades. They are specially trained and indoctrinated in hate against the Palestinian people - in fact, they were told they were being sent to Oman to fight Palestinians there.

However, Hussein's support for the sultan is nothing new. Jordanian security forces were introduced in Oman in 1970. Several of our comrades have undergone torture and execution at the hands of the Jordanians - with the assistance of British security agents. Also, the first consignment of Hawker-Hunter planes (at least 15), as well as some of the most advanced weaponry that Hussein obtained from the US, has now arrived in Oman. On the other hand, several planeloads of Jordanian troops killed in Oman have been carried back to Jordan already.

Our people are determined resolutely to struggle even if all imperialist forces are brought in against us. One clear conclusion we can draw from this most recent campaign is that if people are determined to hold their ground, they can do it. Through thirty years of hard struggle the Vietnamese people actually held their ground and won victory. We draw inspiration from their experience and attempt to learn from it.

*LSM:* Perhaps we could go into some of the specifics of this campaign. For example, in the bourgeois press here there were reports of Iranians occupying the fishing town of Rakhyut and moving to cut the Front's lines of movement and supply between the PDRY and the western region...

*Ahmed:* Yes, actually the people of Rakhyut evacuated the town and moved to the mountain areas three years ago. It had been open to intensive bombing well before this past offensive and so was evacuated.

As for cutting our communication with the PDRY, this has been a very clear imperialist objective for many years now. No doubt imperialism has used its instruments of propaganda to broadcast victory, but again in this case there's been no such thing.

\*For example, the island base of Masirah, made available to American aircraft following Qabus' visit to Washington in January 1975. [D.M.]

*LSM:* Taking the "Red Line" has been another objective of the reactionary forces. Perhaps first of all you could describe what is the Red Line, and does the Front now control it?

*Ahmed:* The Red Line is actually a road - built by the British for military purposes - which connects Salalah and the mountainous areas of Dhofar with Muscat in the northeast. All strategic points remain firmly under Front control, though the Iranian reactionary forces haven't yet admitted publicly that they've been defeated in their efforts to control the Red Line. The fact that Qabus had to call in Jordanians for this drive is one clear indication of their lack of success.

I must point out that I have not been actively engaged in the armed struggle myself. All I know is that all liberated territories remain under control of the Front and the ferocity of the attacking reactionary forces has only increased the determination and willingness to sacrifice of our militants. We have to understand too that in fighting people's war losing or gaining a bit of land is not the real measure of success. Victory stems from the will of the people.

*LSM:* Clearly a large part of the reactionary campaign is aimed at breaking the people's determination by use of terror. Could you give examples of such actions?

*Ahmed:* Let's take the example of our compatriots in prison. Torture of all kinds is carried out under the direction of British intelligence. Burning parts of the body with cigarettes or nails, which are also pressed into the body; removing finger nails; forced sexual abuses...all sorts of brutal tortures carried out in the prisons at Kwite and Beit Falaj.

The terror campaign against the rural population is also directed by the British - they actually plan tactics, firepower, objectives and then leave it for the Iranians and Jordanians to execute these plans. First of all, they conduct daily bombardment; often they hit an area several times in one day. Secondly, they poison wells and other water sources used by the people for their own drinking as well as for their cattle and sheep.

*LSM:* Is this done by ground troops or by aerial bombing?

*Ahmed:* They send first helicopters to locate the wells, then they send planes to throw poison at them. They use similar tactics trying to wipe out all cattle and sheep - another aspect of their economic warfare against the people's livelihood.

*LSM:* It seems the regime makes use of extensive air attack, but it doesn't really control the ground, so that, for example, they can't move troops into a village and round people up for interrogation, summary executions, and so forth.

*Ahmed:* That's true, they don't have the capability of moving into villages like that. However, in cities and occupied areas the repression is vicious. In the cities people are often executed without trial or anything - afterward they just issue a communique that someone has been court-martialed. Also, the regime carries out reprisals against the civilian population. For example, the Front recently conducted an operation in an area normally considered under government control. The reactionary forces immediately rounded up and imprisoned about 800 innocent people...old people, young, religious leaders - no discrimination. They tortured some of them and even executed a few. This is really government policy. If anybody ever attempts to listen to the news of the Front or even shows sympathy they are harshly dealt with. In this case they feared the Front had infiltrated that area. They try to combat the popularity of the Front with intimidation. For example, any Omani will think twice before inquiring about the fate of an imprisoned relative. The normal course is that if they go asking what happened to a family member, where is he or she being held and so on, then they are usually imprisoned themselves. This is the kind of psychological warfare and terror perpetrated in Oman.

*LSM:* How do you explain the phenomenon common to all national liberation struggles, i.e.

people's standing up to the material superiority of the imperialist forces and defeating those forces?

*Ahmed:* The fundamental elements are organizing and mobilizing the people, preparing them for long, hard struggle. For example, we have the People's Militia which helps protect the people as well as politicize them, ensuring their own participation in defending the revolution. That participation generates confidence among the people that they *can* win, that they can defeat imperialism; it gives them courage to stand up and carry out their struggle till victory.

*LSM:* What is the difference between the People's Militia and the People's Liberation Army?

*Ahmed:* The People's Liberation Army is the standing army, attacking the enemy, launching military operations, and so forth. On the other hand, the militia are basically armed civilians, carrying out their normal civilian functions, while they are armed and trained to carry out tasks of defense of their locality. Often too they're called upon by the Front to do other tasks. The militia are less mobile; they defend a particular village or locality, whereas the PLA is a force on the move, attacking here and moving there. The current stage of the armed struggle is one of guerrilla warfare...and the essence of guerrilla warfare is not holding territory but attacking the enemy wherever it is, to concentrate on certain targets and then to move to other ones.

In addition, the militia participates with the PLA in certain operations, especially around its locality. So, if there's a base in the vicinity, the two forces will work together to attack that base.

#### **THE PEOPLE'S FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF OMAN (PFLO)**

*LSM:* Perhaps you could briefly outline and discuss the current structure of the PFLO.

*Ahmed:* Yes, at the base we have a cell and ring structure: the ring is for candidates to join the Front; the cells are composed of Front members. We have cells in all villages and localities. These base units elect delegates to the General Conference which meets every two years. The last meeting was in July 1974, when we formed the PFLO from our previous organization.\* The real power in the Front is embodied in the General Conference. There leadership is reviewed and selected; some leaders may be replaced if it's felt necessary. The Conference elects the Central Command which is like the central committee of most revolutionary parties; it is concerned with policies and direction of the Front in all its aspects, whereas the Central Executive Committee, elected by the CC, is charged with the day-to-day implementation of these policies. The Executive Committee is the highest organizational unit of the Front.

Very important also are the cadre. In our fighting organization every political cadre must have military training, while every militant must also have political training.

*LSM:* Is the Front a democratic-centralist organization?

*Ahmed:* Yes it is. We recognize the responsibility and accountability of leadership at all levels. Criticism/self-criticism is practiced at all levels of the Front, in all facets of organizational and public life - for example, in our schools. The role of criticism, as we see it, is to correct errors and fight against wrong ideas. We train our people to practice this in a very regular fashion.

\*See *Saut al-Thawra* 10 August 1974 (also, *Gulf Solidarity*, Winter 1974-75) for this Conference's Political Communique and PFLO's National Working Program. This Conference resulted in the formation of PFLO out of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf. [D.M.]

## SOCIAL PROGRESS IN OMAN

*LSM:* From your experience in the liberated territories, what would you say have been the most significant problems you've had to face?

*Ahmed:* The main problem I'm familiar with is the economic. Economic life in the liberated territories is very harsh. Both fighters and civilian population rely on cattle and sheep for meat and milk products, which are our main foods. The Qabus regime has launched a concerted campaign to eliminate all cattle since 1970, especially in 1975. Helicopter gunships fly over daily in search of sheep and cattle and when they locate them, they liquidate them.

*Medical services in Oman*



Compounding this problem is our lack of medicines, especially drugs. We need mainly vitamins and other nutritional supplements, for it is very normal that people get not even one meal a day and by and large these meals aren't very nourishing. Quite commonly our fighters live on only one meal or even one cup of tea a day.

*LSM:* What has the Front been able to accomplish in the way of medical care for the people?

*Ahmed:* We've made phenomenal progress in this area. Against a background of total neglect the Front has extended basic medical care to all the people in the liberated territories.

For the first time our people have come to benefit from drugs, injections or any form of what one might call modern medicine - this had been outlawed by the regime!

The Front has trained and equipped medical aides who travel around the countryside in pairs, from village to village, house to house. The main functions of these two-person units are handling immediate medical problems and raising health standards. We've also established a central medical institution, from which several of our mobile teams go out to the villages. When medical aides can't handle certain kinds of illnesses, then the sick people are carried to the center where there are better facilities, more physicians and aides and so forth.

At first people were naturally a little suspicious about these new techniques, but as soon as they recognized the concrete results, the word spread fast and now people happily accept these services. This was the case when we introduced surgery, which we practice on a limited scale.

*LSM:* Have you carried out preventive medicine as well?

*Ahmed:* Yes. Two of the most widespread diseases we faced were cholera and smallpox. We did carry out preventive measures and have achieved some success in eradicating these. However, we still face serious problems. Especially in the interior where battles are fierce, medical resources are limited. As a result people are sometimes martyred from wounds which can't be treated. For example, recently three of our comrades died simply because there was no plasma around. And the problems of shortages are compounded by transportation difficulties. Sometimes, for instance, when a fighter is wounded on the front lines it takes twenty days being carried by his comrades to reach the nearest medical station. The Front built the first road ever in Dhofar but this too was recently bombed.

The policy of Qabus is to destroy all that we have built, trying to force the population to leave the liberated territories and go to villages set up and ruled by the regime, very like the strategic hamlets in Vietnam. Our people don't like this war; it is terribly hard. But we are determined to wage our liberation war to defend and advance the revolution.

*LSM:* You mentioned before that many of the people's wells have been bombed. How have you gone about solving the problem of water supply?

*Ahmed:* Frankly there hasn't been any final solution to the problem of water. I mean we just rebuild what was bombed and it is bombed again.

*LSM:* The National Working Program formulated at your last General Conference raised the need for agrarian reform. Has the Front carried out agrarian reform programs?

*Ahmed:* Yes, we've made considerable progress in this area. We've encouraged expansion of agricultural settlements and cultivation of new grains; we've implemented co-operative farms, and we've drilled artesian wells and instituted a fairly primitive but effective irrigation system which has enabled us to regulate water supply and start up agriculture in new areas. In all we've achieved a certain expansion in the areas cultivated - however, I must point out, in the past two years, especially, all these efforts have been subject to concerted bombing and burning by the reactionary forces.

*LSM:* Do the militants engage in agriculture?

*Ahmed:* Yes, PLA militants have always participated in agriculture to raise resources for their own supply. In the past two years, as I've pointed out, the systematic burning of our crops has imposed a strain on our supplies, for the PLA and the civilian population. I don't want to leave the impression that our fighters live on a cup of tea a day - in fact, once in a while we get in some rice or canned food from outside - but it is not unusual that our militants go into battle without adequate food.

*LSM:* Have there been problems instituting settled agriculture among a herding people? Also, has there been resistance to the co-operative projects from those who owned a lot of property before the revolution?

*Ahmed:* Actually people have joined these projects enthusiastically. You see, even the herding society practiced a form of agriculture. Before, there was widespread cultivation of crops like lima beans and corn in the seasonal fashion. So it wasn't such a drastic change.

As for land tenure, there was little private property in land. However, there were some people who had accumulated some wealth and these people were against the revolution from the start - and they still are.

*LSM:* How do you deal with such people?

*Ahmed:* Actually they have cleared out and are living in the cities now.

### **WOMEN IN THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE**

*LSM:* How did you come to join the liberation struggle in Oman?

*Ahmed:* I grew up in one of our cities and later studied abroad in university. I became concerned with the question of women, i.e. the issue of social differences between men and women. I joined the Front when I saw that here were people setting out to make meaningful changes in the position of women in Omani society. After some time in the Front I began to understand the connection between the national struggle for self-determination and the liberation of the oppressed classes of people in society.

*LSM:* Could you comment on the role of women in the Omani revolution?

*Ahmed:* Women play a very important role in the Omani revolution. The Front understands that the liberation of society means the liberation of women; you can't have one without the other. Nor can liberation come about by the efforts of men alone; it must come through women participating in the revolution. And this implies a certain liberation of men too. These are principal tenets upon which the Front has based its mass mobilization.

Since 1968 the Front has made a concerted effort to draw women into all facets of the struggle. Before then illiteracy among women was total. Now some women comrades are PLA militants; others like myself have been teachers or political organizers. Women are active at all levels except at the moment the top leadership of the Front. Their absence there stems from a lack of developed capabilities for such positions - until there are women ready for higher leadership we aren't going to put up figureheads for mere show.

One of the gratifying things about this revolution is that the issue of liberating women was initially raised by men. Not that there are no men in opposition to this - our political education campaigns are waged to change the thinking of both men and women. But in the Front there's been a nucleus of men who believed firmly in this struggle and actually began the process of liberating men and women from oppressive social roles.

*LSM:* What has been your work in relation to this question?

*Ahmed:* I am a member of the Omani Women's Organization. My main task is raising political consciousness at the village level, contacting women and assisting them in getting into public life...basically political education. However, I've also participated in several international women's conferences like the one at the UN which has brought me here to New York.

*LSM:* What sorts of difficulties have you faced in your work?

*Ahmed:* In the Arabian Peninsula the whole issue of women's participation in public life



has been a very difficult one. The biggest problem as far as I'm concerned has been *persisting* in the struggle. We've seen that some women will participate for a limited time but then will withdraw again. Any woman taking part in the struggle - taking the initiative, speaking up in public meetings, just working day-to-day in public activities, the military struggle, etc. - must face strong social pressure and criticism. With other comrades my main work has been supporting and encouraging women to persist and change the ideas of both men and women. Many women have stood their ground and shown that they can carry out the new responsibilities; this more than anything has won them respect and with time has diminished a lot of unfounded criticism.



#### EDUCATION AND CRITICISM

*PFLO militant*

*LSM:* What have been some of your other responsibilities?

*Ahmed:* As soon as I joined the Front six years ago I was assigned to be a teacher in our schools in the liberated areas. I taught mathematics and was responsible for counseling.

*LSM:* Counseling in what sense?

*Ahmed:* Political counseling, as a political commissioner for the school.

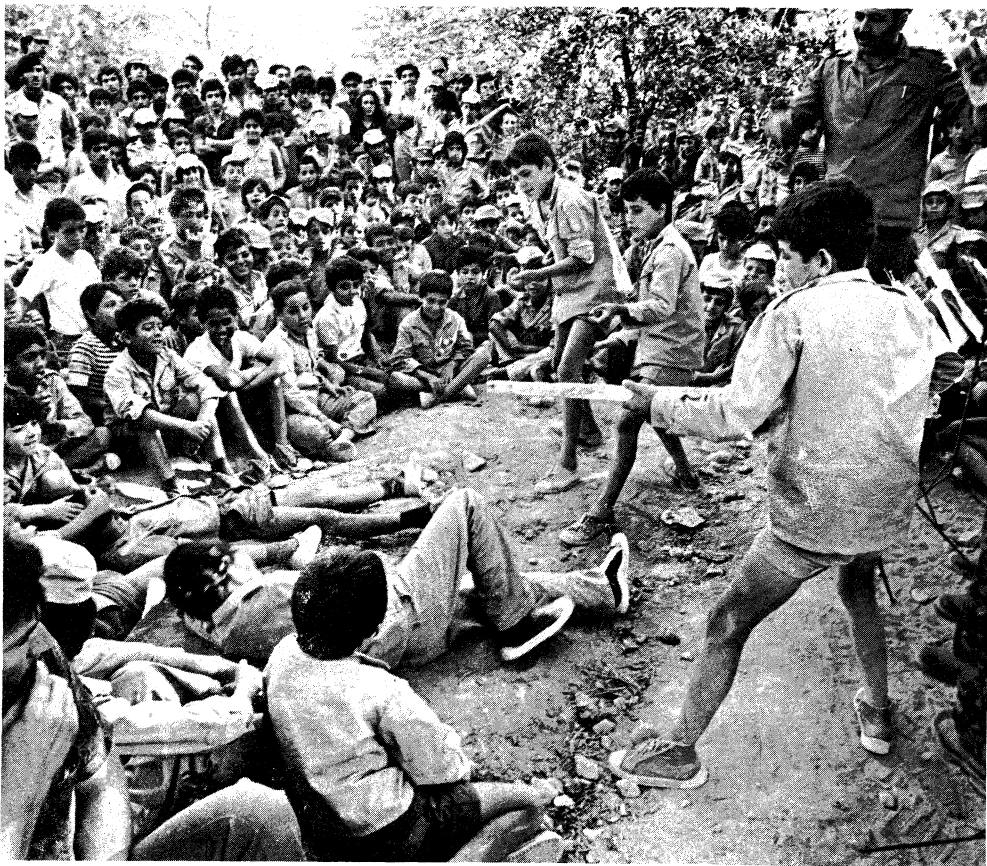
*LSM:* Perhaps you could describe how your schools operate?

*Ahmed:* We have one primary and one secondary school serving the people of the liberated areas, especially the children of the martyrs. The Front has spent thousands of dinars putting up a building and maintaining tools and supplies for educating the young generation - boys and girls. This is one of the most important tasks of the revolution. (Unfortunately I must add that recently nature has worked against us too, for a month

after schooling concluded this year we got an unusually heavy rainfall, resulting in floods which destroyed half the school.)

Students and teachers of both schools live together in essentially one camp. Everybody participates in some way in growing crops to help sustain the school, though the Front provides basic foodstuffs from outside. We teach regular scientific subjects - math, language and so forth - on a daily basis. The older students, starting at age twelve, undergo military training, so that by the time they graduate they are fully prepared to fight.

Also, we conduct intensive political education. Obviously this varies with age - our



students range from six to eighteen, sometimes 20 - and level of technical education. We concentrate on raising students' consciousness about the revolution, the nature of imperialism and Oman's reactionary regime, the role of foreign bases in our country and the goals of building an independent, revolutionary Oman. We hold extensive political sessions once a week. At these meetings all students and faculty practice criticism/self-criticism together. Usually, for example, when a student criticizes another student or a teacher, the other party is given the right to reply, explaining how and why he acted in such-and-such a way. After thorough discussion, and if the teacher or student is wrong, then he will come out and say, "I have made this mistake," and we will

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then clarify what steps should be taken so that this mistake does not happen again. The purpose in this is not only to rectify the error itself, but also to educate everybody that what is shameful is not that one commits errors, but when one persists in committing the same errors despite the criticism of comrades.

*LSM:* Could you give an example of a time when you were criticized?

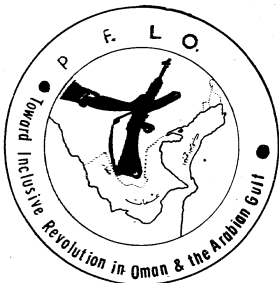
*Ahmed:* Yes. I often used to slip into yelling at students during class sessions. Students would not criticize me in class but would raise their criticism in the political session at the end of the week, saying "You shouldn't shout at us. We do want to learn but it takes time. You should be more patient."

Another example. In the morning everybody, including teachers, gets up to prepare the morning meal and get ready for school. Sometimes, after work had started, the students would find one of the teachers still asleep. So they'd bring it up at the political session: "You should be an example for us - not the last one up in the morning."

*LSM:* How can progressive North Americans help advance the revolution in Oman?

*Ahmed:* Perhaps most important is informing people about our struggle, as well as mobilizing material support. In my meetings at the UN I was shocked to find that by and large the whole American women's delegation wasn't even aware where Oman was. I found myself in the ridiculous situation of daily pinpointing Oman on the map rather than talking about our struggle. The few delegates who knew what was happening in Oman have an important role to play in raising public consciousness, especially regarding US military support for Qabus, the bases and so on.

In some ways our people are a backward people; we have a lot of disease and illiteracy. But indeed we know where America is, probably because we are being oppressed by American power. We also know our own position in the world. We have great hopes of reaching the American people to make them understand our struggle. We also have great hopes the American people will stand with us to pressure their government to stop its intervention. That's of course in concert with the continuation of our revolutionary struggle.



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