

# Nampula: What's Left?

BY OTTO ROESCH

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The Frelimo Party Fifth Congress held this past July suggests that Mozambique has reached a major turning point in its post-independence history. Congress decisions to abandon Marxism-Leninism as Frelimo's official ideology, to open up party membership to "property-owning Mozambi-

cans," to allow party members to employ waged labour over and above the previous limit of three workers, to introduce private schools, and possibly a tiered health system geared to one's ability to pay, all constitute a marked departure from the earlier popular and egalitarian thrust of Frelimo's policies. These changes are very much in keeping with the liberalization of the country's economy under the IMF-approved Economic Recovery Programme (or PRE) introduced in January of 1987. They appear to reflect a significant ideological and class realignment within the Mozambican state. It's a realign-

ment that promises to move Mozambique increasingly in the direction of a market economy and steadily away from its earlier socialist agenda. The policy changes officially introduced by the Congress are an indication of the transformation which Frelimo has undergone. These are the concessions it has been forced to make both as a result of policy failures and the concerted war of destabilization waged against it by South Africa. In the disarray and growing external dependency that resulted from policy errors and the havoc of war, the pressures to embrace market solutions - despite the attendant inequalities - have grown considerably.

As the crisis of Mozambique's socialist project has deepened, it has become possible for anti-popular class forces to coalesce around the state, and for inherited colonial and pre-colonial ideologies and social practices to re-assert themselves, in ways and to a degree that would have been impossible only a few years ago. The northern province of Nampula, which I had occasion to revisit this past June and July, provides an instructive example of this process and of the contradictions which it is generating.

## War and rural transformation

In Nampula province, Frelimo's socialist project has suffered its most serious reversals in rural development. South African destabilization and government errors in agricultural policy, especially the resettlement policies of the communal village programme, have served to shatter the process of rural transformation Frelimo had set in motion during the first years of independence. As in other areas of Mozambique, rural development in Nampula after independence centred on a policy of voluntary collectivization, the resettling of the traditionally dispersed rural population into communal villages that would have either cooperatives and/or state farms as their productive base. Communal villages were seen as the easiest way of integrating the rural population into national economic and political life, and of delivering health and educational services to the countryside.

Launched during the heady days of post-independence euphoria, this strategy of rural collectivization initially met with a certain measure of positive popular response. But as the country's post-independence economic crisis deepened, popular enthusiasm began to wane and the rate of communal village formation began to slow. In many areas of Nampula province, peasants from different traditional political and kinship groupings often refused to join together into single commu-

nal villages, since resettlement in the territory of another group had historically meant economic and political subordination. At the same time, in contrast to other areas

officials to simply dismiss them as irrelevant to the task of national reconstruction often lost Frelimo the support and cooperation of a large part of the peasant population.

In the face of these cultural difficulties in resettlement, and under increasing pressure to meet their resettlement quotas following the introduction of a Ten Year Plan in 1980, local officials increasingly opted for change by decree, rather than through the established processes of consultation and discussion. With the dramatic escalation of Renamo actions in Nampula province after 1984, forced resettlement into communal villages came to be justified on security grounds, and was rapidly extended and accelerated in all areas of the province.

Not surprisingly, forced resettlement quickly undermined popular support for Frelimo and fueled a growing tide of passive resistance to government policies. Increasingly, peasants began to resist resettlement by either pretending to live in the communal villages (while actually residing in their former homes), or by simply refusing to move at all.

Renamo, for its part, has consciously sought to gain propaganda advantage from peasant opposition to the communal village programme, by proclaiming its own "policy" of opposition to communal villages. It has met with some success in using traditional political and religious structures to set up small bases of logistical support for itself in various parts of the province. That support provides them not only with sources of food and recruits, but also with avenues of penetration into new areas of the province, through the traditional networks of political alliances which link traditional authorities to each other. In this regard, Renamo appears to be using much the same channels of "infiltration" which Frelimo used in Nampula during the anti-colonial struggle. The system was exhaustively documented by the colonial state in the late 1960s (see the work of José



*Villagers train for local militia*

Alirio Chiziane/AIM

of Mozambique, especially in the south, traditional political and religious authorities in Nampula continued to enjoy considerable influence and prestige amongst the rural population. The tendency of Frelimo of-



Cooperative Alpha

Post office destroyed by Renamo

Branquinho). If this is indeed the case, one may well wonder the extent to which the South African military is making use of anthropologists – or at least the anthropological research of the Portuguese colonial state – to plan its operations in Nampula and elsewhere in Mozambique.

The extent to which Renamo has been successful in winning over traditional political and religious authorities in Nampula, however, remains unclear and should not be overstated. On the basis of the information I was able to gather, it would seem that only a few traditional political or religious leaders are willing to ally themselves with Renamo because of the terror and senseless destruction the rebels visit upon the people and the country. Despite recent attempts by Renamo military commanders in Nampula to develop a more coherent political strategy (e.g. refraining from attacking the agricultural marketing network until

after peasants have sold their crops), their past and present record militates against them. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that a certain amount of disenchantment has set in amongst some of those traditional authorities who have supported Renamo, as the essentially destructive and predatory nature of Renamo has revealed itself.

But though Renamo does not possess much of a social base in any conventional guerrilla warfare sense, it does enjoy the widespread neutrality of most of the population. The bulk of the rural population of Nampula simply refuses to cooperate with either side: embittered with Frelimo but horrified at and fearful of Renamo, peasants are simply pursuing a survival strategy of non-involvement.

At the present time, many of the province's communal villages are virtually deserted, having been

abandoned either in opposition to government resettlement policies or out of fear of Renamo attacks. The bulk of the rural population has either fled to the relative safety of towns and cities or scattered into what is essentially a no-man's-land out in the bush. In the latter case, peasants have largely passed out of effective state control and reverted to organizing their lives as best they can on the basis of traditional institutions and beliefs.

With the abandonment of communal villages and the collapse of other Frelimo-created institutions in the countryside, relatively little now remains of the far-reaching agrarian transformation Frelimo sought to effect in Nampula province before the escalation of the war.

#### Nampula Faces Its Mistakes

Much of this unfortunate history was openly and critically discussed at a provincial government confer-

ence on socialization of the countryside this past June in Nampula. At the conference, provincial government and party officials sought to chart new directions for agricultural development in the province.

The central proposal to emerge from the conference was that of concentrating scarce government agricultural investments in four priority districts. The investments would target peasant family production to promote the socialization of peasant agriculture, presumably through gradual voluntary villagization, cooperativization and (in some cases) state farm agriculture. In all other districts in the province, agricultural development would be left to foreign aid agencies, the private sector and the play of market forces. How this proposal will actually be implemented in practice, particularly with regard to communal villages, and with what results, remains to be seen.

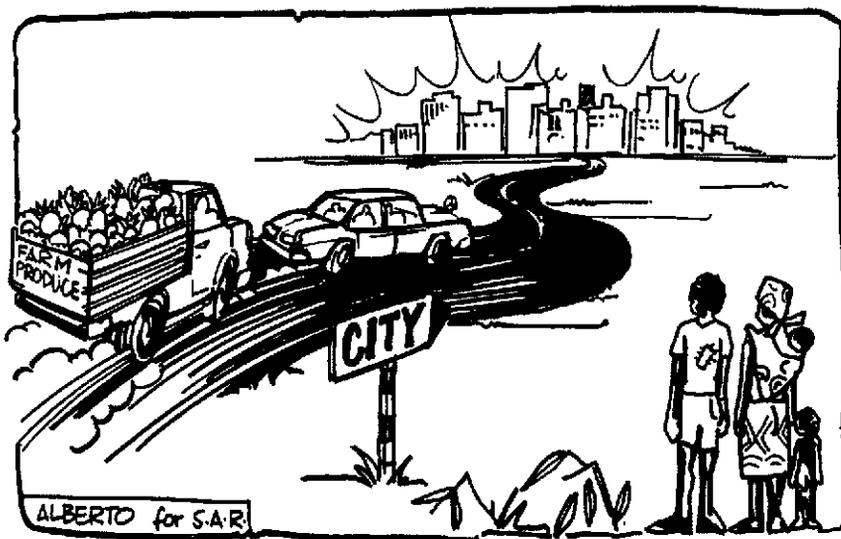
## The power of money under the PRE

The economy of Nampula province, like that of the country as a whole, continues to show signs of steady, if modest, growth under the PRE. The hundreds of millions of dollars of capital and consumer goods made available through concessionary financing from the international (mostly western) community are having a significant stimulative impact on the country's war-ravaged economy. Food and consumer goods are abundant in urban centres although for the bulk of the urban population, the PRE has meant new hardships. Price increases have generally outstripped any wage increases. For the vast majority of the province's rural people, the stimulus which the PRE was supposed to provide to agricultural production has yet to make itself felt. The province's economy, in fact, continues to face enormous problems.

Though marketed agricultural output in Nampula province increased sharply for this year relative to last, actual production levels re-

main very low and only at a fraction of the province's productive potential. The principal reason for this, of course, is the war. Peasants are reluctant to expand production for fear of having their harvests stolen by Renamo or having to abandon their fields and homes in the face of Renamo attacks. On the other hand, as the recent tragic events of Memba District illustrate - where more than 5,000 people starved to death earlier this year - the productive capacity of the peasant sector is

to district AGRICOM warehouses as quickly as possible, so that any losses from attacks would be borne by the state. However, due to serious shortages of sacks and transport in the province, AGRICOM was experiencing enormous difficulties in transporting harvested crops to the safety of its warehouses. The result of the consequent delays in transporting stock-piled crops out of district capitals was, in fact, to have the crops destroyed or stolen in Renamo attacks, an event which has occurred



worn down. It is little above subsistence level and highly vulnerable to recurrent ecological crises, such as drought. Peasant production also continues to be constrained by a lack of tools, seeds, transport, and consumer goods. These things are relatively abundant in urban areas, but rural stores remain largely empty and rural commercial networks continue to work erratically.

During the last season, most of the agricultural marketing in rural areas was being done by the state agricultural marketing agency, AGRICOM. Private merchants were simply refusing to market peasant crops for fear of losing all their inventory and vehicles to Renamo attacks. Merchants that did buy peasant crops sought to resell them

with some frequency over the past year.

## Tribal leaders on the payroll

An indication of the difficulty the state is having in resuscitating peasant surplus production through market liberalization under the PRE, is evident in government attempts to establish highly structured block-farming schemes for peasant cash-crop production. They bear an unnerving resemblance to old colonial forms of peasant cash-cropping.

The Portuguese firm of João Ferreira dos Santos, for example, which has operated in Nampula province since colonial times, is currently trying to establish a block-farming scheme, assigning peasant plots for cash-crop production. The firm is

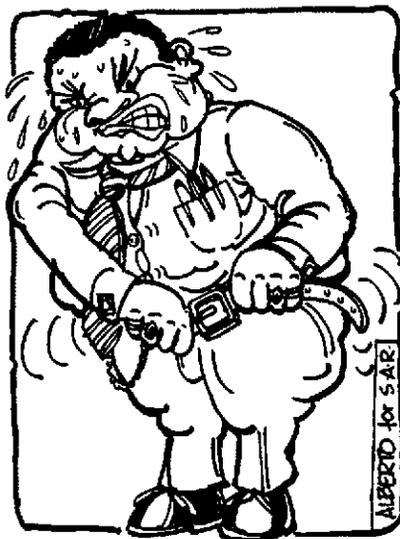
using traditional chiefs and their assistants as production overseers, all with the blessing of provincial and district government authorities. Under this scheme, which is currently being introduced in Memba and Namapa districts, the chiefs are simply being re-labelled "production chiefs" and paid a salary of 18,000 mt per month by João Ferreira dos Santos to co-ordinate and supervise peasant cash-cropping. The degree to which peasants are free to refuse to participate in such schemes is unclear. This development reflects a significant policy shift for Frelimo, not only because it shows a willingness to experiment with forms of production that are uncomfortably similar to colonial cash-cropping schemes, but because it recognizes the de facto power and authority which traditional chiefs continue to exercise in the countryside of Nampula province.

### Public money, private investment

If Nampula province is anything to go by, the domestic capitalist stratum remains firmly wedded to commercial and not productive enterprises. Though there is undoubtedly a pressing need to reactivate the country's commercial network, there is an equally urgent need to increase productive output in manufacturing and agriculture. To date, however, the private sector of Nampula has shown relatively little interest in productive investments.

The low risks and high profits of commerce make productive undertakings unattractive. Moreover, much of the commercial activity of the large merchant houses of Nampula is being financed not by their own capital (which in some cases is very sizeable indeed), but through loans from Mozambican banks. Although, in keeping with the current tight money policies of the PRE, it is very difficult for small merchants to obtain bank loans, the big merchant houses seem to have no difficulty in reaching "understandings" with lo-

cal bank managers. One such "understanding" has reportedly enabled a large merchant house to borrow upwards of 800,000,000 mt (approximately equivalent to US\$1.1 million) from a local Mozambican bank, with no clear indication of the merchant house's ability (or intentions) of paying it back. With loans such as these, the large commercial capitalists of the province have large sums with which to play the flourishing foreign currency black market (now



reportedly involving diplomatic missions and international organizations), while using much smaller sums of their own money to actually engage in official commercial operations. A recent article in the Mozambican magazine *Tempo*, for example, estimated that upwards of 70 million rands of illegal imports enter Mozambique through Maputo every year.

Much of the capital generated in the commercial sector (whether legal or illegal) is being used to finance increasingly affluent lifestyles for some, to corrupt local officials, and to cement alliances with state officials at increasingly higher levels. Commercial profits, in other words, are effectively serving to push the country further in the direction of a market economy and transform the

class character of the Mozambican state.

In this context, the Fifth Congress's recent call for more sacrifices from the Mozambican people - through deferred consumption, harder work and more production - would be easier to accept if there were signs that the hardships of economic rehabilitation were being distributed more equitably. Given the life style of many high level government and party officials in the province, there is little evidence that they are sharing in the belt-tightening that they are asking of the people they represent. And to judge by the increasing number of expensive imported cars circulating in the streets of Nampula, and from the ostentatious affluence of some sectors of local society, the Mozambican private sector has profited enormously since the introduction of the PRE, as have numerous state and party officials.

Though there continue to be voices from within the state and at the base critical of these trends, they would appear to be a minority and very much on the defensive. The General Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of the Green Zones of Nampula city, for example, seems prepared to resist the arbitrary seizures of cooperative lands by state officials and their friends in the private sector. Organizationally, however, the Union is too weak at the moment to pose any effective resistance to the current anti-popular alliance taking shape around the Mozambican state. Similarly, though criticisms of official corruption, the iniquities of the PRE, and excessive support for the private sector at the expense of cooperatives were heard regularly at official levels in the lead up to the Fifth Congress, the final decisions taken by the Congress suggest that these criticisms were coming from only a minority of party members. Their capacity to resist the current political drift away from socialism would accordingly appear to be limited.