

# MOZAMBICAN WOMAN in the REVOLUTION



TO THE READER...

*Since the publication of THE MOZAMBICAN WOMAN IN THE REVOLUTION in early 1974, Mozambique has won its freedom from Portuguese colonial rule. Independence was officially proclaimed on 25 June 1975. With FRELIMO's leadership, the Mozambican people have now begun the socialist reconstruction of their country.*

*The selections in this pamphlet discuss the oppression of women and their role in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle. Though the Mozambican revolution has advanced since their original publication, we believe that these documents can still help us develop a fuller understanding of women in the revolutionary process. We plan to contribute more to this understanding with new publications in the future. Your critical comments and suggestions are welcome.*

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# The Mozambican Woman in the Revolution

The development of our struggle constantly gives rise to new situations which require new solutions. Certain approaches which yesterday appeared to us final and satisfactory today seem inadequate, out of place and sometimes even incorrect.

In the process of our growth we learn: and through discussion of our experiences, sometimes inspired by the revolutionary experience of other peoples, we are able to find the most correct path, suited to the specific phase of our development, in every sphere -- political, military and in national reconstruction.

One constant and unchanging principle guides us in the search for solutions: always place the interests of the people before all else.

This is not merely a matter of theory. It is the people who want to know how to organize production in order to obtain better results. It is the health cadres who ask themselves if they should concentrate on giving simple daily treatment or if they should give priority to preventive medicine. It is the political commissars who want instructions on how best to implement our anti-racialist policy, now that we are advancing into zones with a greater concentration of the white population. It is the teachers who want to find ways of more closely relating their lessons to the political and geographical environment. It is the soldiers who need more perfected military techniques to counter the methods used by the enemy -- for example, laying mines on newly-constructed roads. It is the women who feel frustrated because traditional and colonial education left in them a feeling of inferiority towards men, which prevents their full participation in the struggle: they wish to know how to get rid of this complex.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE, FRELIMO  
DECEMBER 1972

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## INTRODUCTION

This selection of writings on *Mozambican Women* deals with a number of important aspects in the struggle for the emancipation of women - Mozambican women, African women and humanity's women. It deals as well with the relationship between women's liberation and the worldwide struggle to end all forms of oppression and exploitation; with the general revolutionary struggle of both men and women against male- and national-chauvinism, racism, colonialism and imperialism, and with the role of women in building a truly human society devoid of all exploitative structures and liberating humanity's full creative and socially beneficial capacities.

On the question of their "double exploitation" as colonial subjects and women, the position of FRELIMO women is made very clear. Their feelings of inferiority have been rooted "...in a combination of the traditional system of education and the colonial system." Customary initiation rites instilled in girls "...a submissive attitude toward men" and taught them that "...their place in society [was] a secondary one." The woman's role, they were told, was "...to produce children and to look after their husband and home - all other tasks being forbidden them." In addition, they attacked as reactionary the traditional practices of bride-price, "which reduces a woman to a mere object to be sold and bought and makes her a simple object of pleasure and reproduction in the eyes of the buyer - the husband," polygamy and forced and often premature marriages which "...condition

women to feel alienated and...confine her to domestic life and agricultural production at the service of her husband, depriving her of any prospects of taking part in political, cultural or social work.."

The other aspect of their exploitation, colonialism, subjected Mozambican women to both the "...general oppression and exploitation inflicted indiscriminately on men and women alike - in the form of forced labor, compulsory crops, arbitrary imprisonment, racial discrimination, etc." - and to "...the other more specific form, directed only against women."

By separating women from their husbands through forced labor and denying them the means to support their homes and children, colonialism created the conditions whereby women were forced to resort to selling their bodies, to prostituting themselves, in order to be able to survive. Women debased themselves, degraded themselves and were subjected to the most extreme humiliation by the colonialists, who not only made of them a labor force for reproduction, but also made them into instruments of pleasure.

Another important section makes clear the danger of confusion as regards *the enemy* and the necessity of adopting the correct and revolutionary political line towards women's liberation. There is unequivocal disassociation from the "...so-called women's liberation movements which proliferate in the capitalist countries...[which]...direct their fight against men, making them their target and accusing them of being responsible for their oppression and exploitation." The masses of working men, it is pointed out, "...are themselves exploited and oppressed ...and...whatever reactionary ideas they may have about women have been instilled in them by the system under which they live. It is against the system, that is, against colonialism and imperialism, that Mozambican women must direct their struggle."

As regards the liberation of women, it is seen as a process which "...cannot be separated from that of men,...the enemy and the objectives are common...[and]...the only road for women to take [is] to engage in the tasks of the struggle, in the revolutionary process." It is in this way that they will hasten their own liberation and, in addition, "...by joining the struggle at all levels, they are opening up new prospects for their future, destroying in practice the concepts which relegated them to a passive and voiceless role in society. In short, they are creating the conditions for participating in the exercise of power, taking their destiny into their own hands."

In fact, increasing numbers of Mozambican women, within the

framework of FRELIMO and through the Women's Detachment and newly formed (December 1972) Organisation of Mozambican Women, are engaging in all the various aspects of the struggle. "We women," they declare, "participate in the actual fighting, integrated in military units; we work as political commissars, mobilising the people, enlightening them on all aspects of our struggle; we transport war materials to the front lines; we defend the people against enemy incursions; we participate in production; we are active in the schools and in the hospitals,... in general, we can say that we do the same work as men. And this we consider as one of the greatest achievements of our revolution."

They point out that correct political consciousness is vital to the achievement of these revolutionary changes and the success of the liberation struggle itself. "It has been our militant role in a political organisation having a correct political line that has given us the proper orientation necessary to make our efforts more effective. It is political awareness that has enabled us to find the most correct path to our emancipation... our women's organisation must be an arm, an instrument of a political movement."

The correct ideology which inspires the new life FRELIMO is helping to build in the liberated regions of Mozambique is one "which puts the interests of the masses of the people before all else, which rejects all forms of oppression and exploitation by any individual, group, class or sex over another, and which aims at establishing healthy and harmonious human relations."

Finally, a number of sections deal with the relationship of the Mozambican women's struggle to the broader anti-imperialist and internationalist revolutionary processes occurring on a worldwide level. Attention is drawn to "...the fact that our struggle is not isolated,...that women's fight is mankind's fight..." They congratulate socialist countries and peoples for assuming "their internationalist duty" in support of the Mozambican struggle, and the "...fight of both women and men in capitalist countries and on every continent against colonialism, racism, imperialism and the exploitation of man and discrimination against women..." is acknowledged as a "...concrete contribution to the cause of the Mozambican people, in general, and of Mozambican women, in particular."

The interconnection of the struggles in the colonised and neo-colonised nations against "...the United States of America, the ringleader of international imperialism," and especially the important victories of the peoples of Indochina, is emphasised, as is the essential link between these struggles and revolutionary developments in the imperialist metropolises.

# The Role of Women in the Revolution.

It was in October 1966, in a meeting of the Central Committee, that FRELIMO decided that the Mozambican woman should take a more active part in the struggle for national liberation, at all levels. It was decided that she should receive political and military training in order to make her more capable of fulfilling whatever tasks the revolution might demand of her. Thus, a few months later, in the beginning of 1967, the first group of women from Cabo Delgado and Niassa began their training. At first this was merely an experiment to discover just what contribution women could make to the revolution -- how they would use their initiative, whether they were in fact capable of fulfilling certain tasks. The "experiment" proved highly successful and this first group of women became the founder-members of the Women's Detachment, and were scattered throughout the interior each with her specific assignment. It was soon discovered that they could play a very important role in both the military and political fields, but especially in the latter.

One of the prime functions of a women's army is, quite naturally, just like the men's army, participation in combat. In Mozambique the women's military activities are usually concentrated in the defence of the liberated areas, thus freeing the men for the offensive activities in the zones of advance. However, many of the women prefer the more active combats in the advance zones and choose to fight alongside the men in ambushes, and mining operations, where they have proved themselves as capable and courageous as any of their male comrades. As another aspect of this function, we also have women working in the Department of Security constantly on the look-out for enemy infiltration.

Although highly effective in the field of combat, their contribution has been less noticeable (just because of their



relatively small numbers compared with the men) than their activities in the political field, where their impact has been far out of proportion to their numbers. Since 1967 the women have demonstrated that they have a key role in the mobilisation and political education of both the people and the soldiers themselves. In this work we explain to the people the need to fight, and against whom, what are the reasons for our struggle, what are our aims, and why we chose an armed struggle as the only means to independence. We explain the work we are doing and the results we have achieved so far. We explain how we are dependent to a certain extent on foreign aid and which countries and organisations are helping us, and that, despite this help, we must be as self-reliant as possible.



In this connection, it is stressed that the success of the revolution depends on the combined efforts of everyone such that no one can be omitted, and thus the traditional rather "passive" role of women must be changed so that their abilities are used to the full. Women are encouraged to give their opinions in meetings, to participate in the various committees, etc. Here we have the rather difficult task of fighting old prejudices that women's functions should be confined to cooking, rearing children, etc. It has been proven that we women can perform this task of mobilisation and education better than the men for two reasons. Firstly, it is easier for us to approach other women, and secondly, the men are more easily convinced of the important role of women when confronted with the unusual sight of confident and capable female militants who are themselves the best examples of what they are propounding. However, our activities are directed equally at the men and the presence of emancipated women bearing arms often shames them into taking more positive action.

In order to achieve self-sufficiency in the liberated areas, we explain to the people that agricultural production must be increased, not only for themselves but also to help feed the army, as the first duty of the guerrillas is fighting and thus they cannot always cultivate enough to supply their bases. We also need extra supplies to assist our comrades in the zones of advance where the constant military activity and the presence of enemy troops make regular agricultural production difficult. It is not a question of persuading the people to participate in the war effort but they have to be explained the political basis and implications of the revolution, and while well aware that they themselves have certain important responsibilities in the struggle, they need guidance as to which particular fields they should work in. Once the people are fully aware of the situation they act without hesitation. In addition to increasing agricultural output, they help transport the sick and wounded, help care for the sick, help transport war material and organize themselves into militants.

In addition to its political work, the Women's Detachment also has extensive duties in the field of social welfare. We assist and give comfort to families who have lost relatives in the war. This is extremely delicate work requiring a great deal of patience. We also run the FRELIMO orphanage, which not only cares for orphans, but also children separated from their parents due to the war. Some of our women are trained in first aid so that they can help the medical assistants in the health centers. Many of our women are also working in the Department of Education in their literacy campaigns and in the primary schools. Here again we have to overcome the outdated prejudices of fathers and husbands regarding the idea of education for

women. But we are gradually winning the battle for they realize that a literate and educated woman can make a far more constructive contribution to the revolution than an ignorant one. We now have many girls in our schools, some of whom have female teachers, and some of these girls are already participating in literacy campaigns for the older people.

Thus apart from its strictly military functions the Women's Detachment has important political duties on two levels. At one level it is charged with the mobilisation and education of the people, to increase the effectiveness of their participation by developing their political understanding of the war. This we do for everyone, irrespective of sex, although we have a unique opportunity to reach our own sex that is denied our male comrades. Once this has been achieved, we work at the next level of encouraging even more active participation by inviting people to follow our example, to leave their homes and train as fighters, nurses, teachers, etc. In this way the size of the Women's Detachment has increased considerably since that first experimental group and the point has now been reached where some of those first recruits have gained enough experience and knowledge so that they can become political and military trainers for their own detachment, and also assist their male colleagues in the bases to instruct elements of the population.

At the last meeting of the Central Committee in April 1969, it was decided that the Mozambican Women's League (LIFEMO) should be completely fused with the Women's Detachment and we are still in the process of integrating into the army all the activities formerly carried on by LIFEMO. During its existence LIFEMO did some useful work but with the development of struggle, the demands of the war inevitably required that all its efforts be concentrated inside Mozambique and hence be conducted by the Women's Detachment in the interior.

*by Josina Machel (1946 - 1971)*

**'We Women  
Have the Right  
to Fight.'**



"My family is from Namau district of Mueda in Cabo Delgado. We were seven children and life was very difficult for us. My father worked in the shop of an Indian trader, where he earned 195 escudos (US \$6.50) each month. We had a very small piece of land, but we hardly had time to grow any crops on it, because we were forced to work in the fields of the companies, growing cotton.

Even the priests were bad. My cousin Jose Lucas was a teacher in the Lipelua Mission. Once he was ill and could not take classes for two days. At the end of the month the priests refused to pay his wages, alleging that he had missed work for two days. My cousin then refused to work in the mission any longer. In reprisal, the priests sent the police to arrest my cousin.

The Portuguese are very bad. They used to come to our villages, enter our houses and steal chickens, cereals, anything. If anyone dared to protest, he was arrested and beaten.

There was a time when they launched a campaign for the children to go to the mission's school. But it was a lie; they wanted the children in order to put them to work on the mission *shambas* and in the colonialist's houses. Women were not respected, even married women were abused in front of their husbands. If the husband reacted or she refused, both of them were badly beaten. The colonialist's argument was that it was an honour for a black woman to be wanted by a white man. I could tell you many more evil things to which we were subjected by the colonialists.

In 1962 when I was in the hospital at the Imbuho mission, an old man came who talked to us secretly, saying that the Mozambicans had created an Organization called FRELIMO to fight the Portuguese and win back our freedom. We listened very attentively. Later in 1963, my father came. He called me and my sister, and explained to us about FRELIMO, warning us to maintain absolute secrecy.

In 1964 there was already a great deal of FRELIMO activity in our region. The FRELIMO organizers told us that we should prepare everything to go to the bush because soon the Portuguese would start arresting and massacring the people owing to our support for FRELIMO. Two days later we went to the bush. And some days later, on the 25th of September, the war started in our region. The people were given the task of blocking the roads with big trees and holes. We also cut telephone wires and cut down the poles.

Since that time I have been very active in FRELIMO. The first mission that I and the other girls were sent on was to go through the villages and explain and mobilise the people for war. We explained what FRELIMO is, why we have to fight and who are the enemy. We also encouraged boys and girls in the village to join our forces. Later on the late Comrade Kankhomba taught us reconnaissance and security work, to detect the enemy agents who tried to infiltrate our zones.

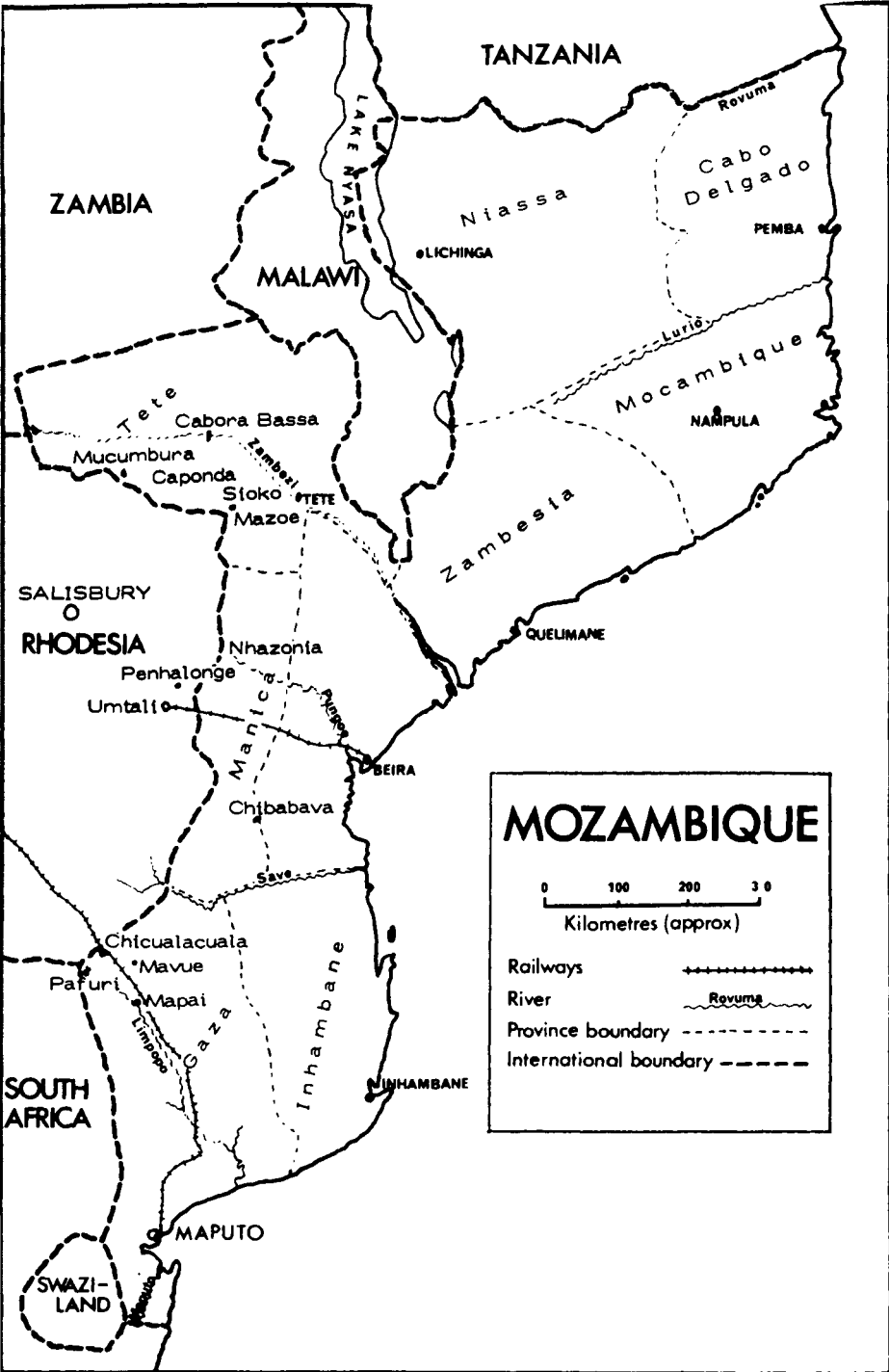
When we girls started to work there was strong opposition to our participation. Because that was against our tradition. We then started a big campaign explaining why we also had to fight, that the FRELIMO war is a people's war in which the whole people must participate, that we women were even more oppressed than men and that we therefore had the right as well as the will and the strength to fight. We insisted on our having military training and being given weapons.

I was in the first Women's Detachment which was given military training in 1967. Our Central Committee had supported our full participation. Since then, the Women's Detachment has been very active fighting, transporting material to the advancing zones, organizing production and participating in the health services.

I have already taken part in many battles. Some of the most important were: an ambush against a convoy on the Namaguanga-Muidumbe road on 15th July 1967, where we destroyed 2 lorries and killed many more of the enemy.

An artillery and infantry attack against the Nangololo post: 2 houses were destroyed and their helicopter came 4 times to collect the dead and take the wounded to the hospital at Mueda. During the 1970 enemy offensive, I participated in 2 ambushes, one on the Mueda-Mocimboa da Praia road, the other on the Nacatar-Mueda road, resulting respectively in 4 lorries disabled, and 3 destroyed. Last year (1971) my unit destroyed 3 lorries in an ambush on the Muatide-Mueda road. I also took part in one big attack against the Muidumbe post in 1971, in which our artillery and infantry forces destroyed many houses. The helicopter came 7 times for the dead and wounded. Shortly after that attack the enemy evacuated the post definitively.

*by a militant from the Women's Detachment.*



**MOZAMBIQUE**

0 100 200 300  
Kilometres (approx)

Railways     

River           

Province boundary     

International boundary

## MOZAMBIQUE

1. Area . . . . . 784.000 Sq. Kms.
2. Population . . . . . 8 million
3. Capital . . . . . Lourenço Marques
4. Principal Towns . . . . . Beira, Nampula, Quelimane, Porto Amelia, Inhambane, Tete, Vila Cabral, Joao Belo.
5. White Population . . . . . About 200,000
6. Main Natural Resources . . . . . Cotton, Cashew-nuts, copra, rice, maize, sisal, sugar, iron, natural gas, oil (not yet exploited).
7. Liberated areas . . . . . One quarter of Mozambique (about 200,000 Sq. Kms.) has been liberated in Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete Provinces.
8. Population of the liberated areas . . . . . 1 million.
9. Portuguese troops in Mozambique . . . . . 70,000
10. Founding of FRELIMO . . . . . 25th June, 1962.
11. FRELIMO's first Congress . . . . . 23 - 28 September, 1962 in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika.
12. Outbreak of the armed struggle . . . . . 25th September, 1964
13. FRELIMO's second Congress . . . . . 20 - 25th July, 1968, in Niassa Province, Mozambique.
14. FRELIMO's leaders . . . . . President: Samora Moisés Machel.  
Vice-President: Marcelino dos Santos.

# The 1973 All-African Women's Conference





*On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the All African Women's Conference, a Seminar was held in Dar es Salaam from 24 to 31 July. FRELIMO was represented by a delegation composed of comrades Deolinda Raul Guesimane - member of the Central Committee and Head of the delegation, Marcelina Chissano and Rosaria Tembe. We quote from their speech:*

For us the All African Women's Conference represents a platform of struggle from where women of our continent can coordinate their efforts in the hard struggle they are undertaking against the many forces which oppress them. To define clearly these forces must be our first task. Then it is necessary to decide on the methods of struggle. Finally, we must study and develop ways in which we can best coordinate our efforts so that they can be made more effective. It is with this perspective that we came to this meeting at which we commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the AAWC.

We are supposed to talk about the role of the women in our struggle. We find this somehow difficult, since in our organisation women and men fight and work together, side by side, in every kind of activity: we women participate in the actual fighting, integrated in military units; we work as political commissars, mobilising the people, enlightening them on all aspects of our struggle; we transport war materials to the front lines; we defend the people against enemy incursions; we participate in production; we are active in the schools and in the hospitals. So, if it is true that some tasks, by their nature, fall more under our responsibility - like taking care of children (we have several nurseries and creches which are run by women) - in general we can say that we do the same work as men. And this we consider as one of the greatest achievements of our revolution. Specially if we consider against which background this situation arises. Traditional society, which kept women absolutely dependent on men, deprived women of any initiative, left them with no voice in the affairs of the community - their only task being the bearing of children and the undertaking of domestic work. And then came colonial society in which women became instruments of labour, even more exploited than men.

All this is being changed now in our country. And we wish to draw your attention to this special point, which tells of our experience: these changes have been accomplished through our political engagement. It has been our militant role in a political organisation having a correct political line that has given us the proper orientation necessary to make our efforts more effective. It is political awareness that has enabled us to find the most correct path to our emancipation.

At the same time, we feel that it is within this political perspective that we, the Mozambican women can formulate the best forms of coordinating our efforts with other African women. Our experience - we repeat - taught us that we must organise ourselves and struggle within a movement, that is, our women's organisation must be an arm, an instrument of a political movement.

We wish now to make an appeal to all African women and to the women of the world to help us surmount the difficulties that we face in order to accomplish our task in a more effective way.

Our appeal is not only for material support. It is primarily a call to the African women and all women, to take an active part in our struggle: to mobilise their people, by organising meetings of solidarity, distributing information about the successes and difficulties of our struggle, using every possible means, such as radio, press, cultural manifestations, exhibitions, etc., to develop at all levels - students, workers, etc. - the solidarity movement with our cause. The effort of political mobilisation represents without doubt, the most important contribution, it creates the material solidarity indispensable for the pursuit of our struggle.

We propose also that the women's organisations in Africa, at national and pan-African level, organise collection of funds and materials useful for our activities. The list of our needs is not limited, it concerns all types of materials needed for the multiple activities that we have to undertake: cloth, clothing, school materials, medical and health equipment, powdered milk, baby foods. . .

The best way to accomplish all of these activities seems to be the creation of support committees at the level of the different organisations existing in the member countries. We feel that this is very necessary in Africa where - we must say it - popular solidarity has not yet found the proper outlet to express the deep feelings of the masses. And, woman must understand that her role of mobilisation starts first of all at home amongst the family.

# A New Life is Being Built



The situation of women being exploited and oppressed beings is not a phenomenon limited to Mozambique. In most countries and on every continent women are to differing degrees deprived of their most fundamental rights, prevented from taking part in political life, confined to the tasks of procreation and looking after the home, and subject to tyrannical authority.

Yet it is in countries such as ours, where traditional concepts on women's submission and colonialist concepts have been combined or juxtaposed, that this oppression and exploitation take the most extreme forms.

In Mozambique a genuinely popular revolution is taking place and being consolidated. As a result of the armed struggle for national liberation launched by the people under the leadership of FRELIMO, vast areas which cover about one-quarter of our country have been liberated, and the struggle has advanced into a new province - Manica e Sofala. In the liberated regions, in Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete, a new life is being built, inspired by an ideology which puts the interests of the masses of the people before all else, which rejects all forms of oppression and exploitation by any individual, group, class or sex over another, and which aims at establishing healthy and harmonious human relations.

The fight to liberate women occupies an important place within this revolution. It was in this context that the 1st Conference of Mozambican Women was held from 4 to 16 March, 1973. The Conference was attended by more than 80 delegates engaged in all sectors of activity, with members of the Women's Detachment predominating.

The agenda included the following items: (1) Reports on activities, (2) Analysis and description of Mozambican women's position in traditional society, colonial society and the present situation, (3) Examination of Mozambican women's involvement in the process of the revolution, giving special attention to the following points: obstacles to their involvement and the nature of existing contradictions, definition of goals, formulation of strategy, tasks of the Organization of Mozambican Women and its place within the structure of FRELIMO.

The Conference was chaired by Comrade Samora Machel, President of FRELIMO, who defined in his opening speech the historical-political context in which the Conference was taking place, analysing the origins of women's alienation and putting forward the line to be followed to achieve success in the struggle for the emancipation of women. The Conference adopted the speech by the President of FRELIMO as a basic document. On analysing the reports given by comrades engaged in armed action

and working in schools, hospitals, nurseries, etc., the Conference noted that Mozambican women organised in the Women's Detachment were working in a correct way, with a high level of consciousness and great efficiency. Among the tasks performed by the Women's Detachment are fighting and mobilising, organising and defending the people, transporting material, ensuring production, recruiting, security work, taking care of nurseries, clandestine work, etc.

The Conference noted, however, that there was a psychological factor affecting most comrades which made it difficult for them to carry out their tasks - an inferiority complex. On further analysis, the Conference found the reasons for this complex to lie in a combination of the traditional system of education and the colonial system. Indeed, it was noted that throughout their lives, at different phases of their growth, girls are subject to what is known as 'initiation rites' which, although varying in form from region to region, all have in common the fact that they instill in girls a submissive attitude towards men and teach them that their place in society is a secondary one. During the puberty ceremony, specifically, girls are told that their role henceforth is to produce children and to look after their husband and home, all other tasks being forbidden them. These initiation rites, which are surrounded by an aura of mystery and religious solemnity, have a very powerful psychological impact and make girls blindly accept what they are taught, traumatising them for the rest of their lives.

The Conference further noted that these initiation rites were merely one of the manifestations of the concept of Women's inferior position prevailing in traditional society. Other manifestations are, for example, the bride-price, which reduces a woman to a mere object to be sold and bought and makes her a simple object of pleasure and reproduction in the eyes of the buyer - the husband. Other examples are polygamy and forced and premature marriages. In the latter cases, children often no more than 10 years old are forced to marry. Apart from reflecting a reactionary attitude, these practices constitute a serious obstacle to women's involvement in the liberation struggle and this in two respects: because they condition women to feel alienated, and because they confine her to domestic life and agricultural production at the service of her husband, depriving her of any prospects of taking part in political, cultural or social work.

The colonial system further worsened this situation. Itself also instigated by the idea that women are 'the second sex', it subjected Mozambican women to double oppression and exploitation: first the general oppression and exploitation

inflicted indiscriminately on men and women alike, in the form of forced labour, compulsory crops, arbitrary imprisonment, racial discrimination, etc. And then the other more specific form directed only against women. By separating women from their husbands through forced labour and denying them the means to support their homes and children, colonialism created the conditions whereby women were forced to resort to selling their bodies, to prostituting themselves, in order to be able to survive. Women debased themselves, degraded themselves and were subjected to the most extreme humiliation by the colonialists, who not only made of them a labour force and machines for reproduction, but also made them into instruments of pleasure.

Having thus analysed the situation of women in our country, the Conference went on to examine the fighting strategy to be used in restoring to women their due place and rights in the new society we are building in a revolutionary way. First the two poles of the contradiction were pinpointed. The Conference declared that the fundamental contradiction exists between Mozambican women and the system of oppression and exploitation in force in our country, which excludes women from making any decisions on the life of society, even on matters which directly affect them. The Conference drew the attention of all delegates to the danger of misinterpretation as regards the targets of the fight, giving the example of the position taken by the so-called women's liberation movements which proliferate in the capitalist countries. These movements direct their fight against men, making them their target and accusing them of being responsible for their oppression and exploitation. The Conference pointed out that working men are themselves exploited and oppressed in those societies, as well as women, and that whatever reactionary ideas they may have about women have been instilled in them by the system under which they live. It is against the system, that is, against the negative aspects of tradition and against colonialism and imperialism, that Mozambican women must direct their struggle.

The Conference noted that the present moment, when a genuine revolution is taking place in Mozambique, is highly favourable for this fight. The revolution has set itself the goal of destroying the old social order based on minority rule, in order to build on its ruins a new society in which power belongs to the working masses, precisely to those who were exploited and oppressed under the previous system, among whom, specifically, are women as such.

The Conference also outlined the means to be used by Mozambican women to achieve their liberation. Considering that the liberation of women cannot be separated from that of men, and that the enemy and the objectives are common, the 1st Confer-

ence of Mozambican Women pointed out that the only road for women to take was to engage in the tasks of the struggle, in the revolutionary process.

In this way, they will contribute directly to the victory of the revolution, that is, to hastening the day of their liberation. What is more, by joining the struggle at all levels, they are opening up new prospects for their future, destroying in practice the concepts which relegated them to a passive and voiceless role in society. In short, they are creating the conditions for participating in the exercise of power, taking their destiny into their hands.

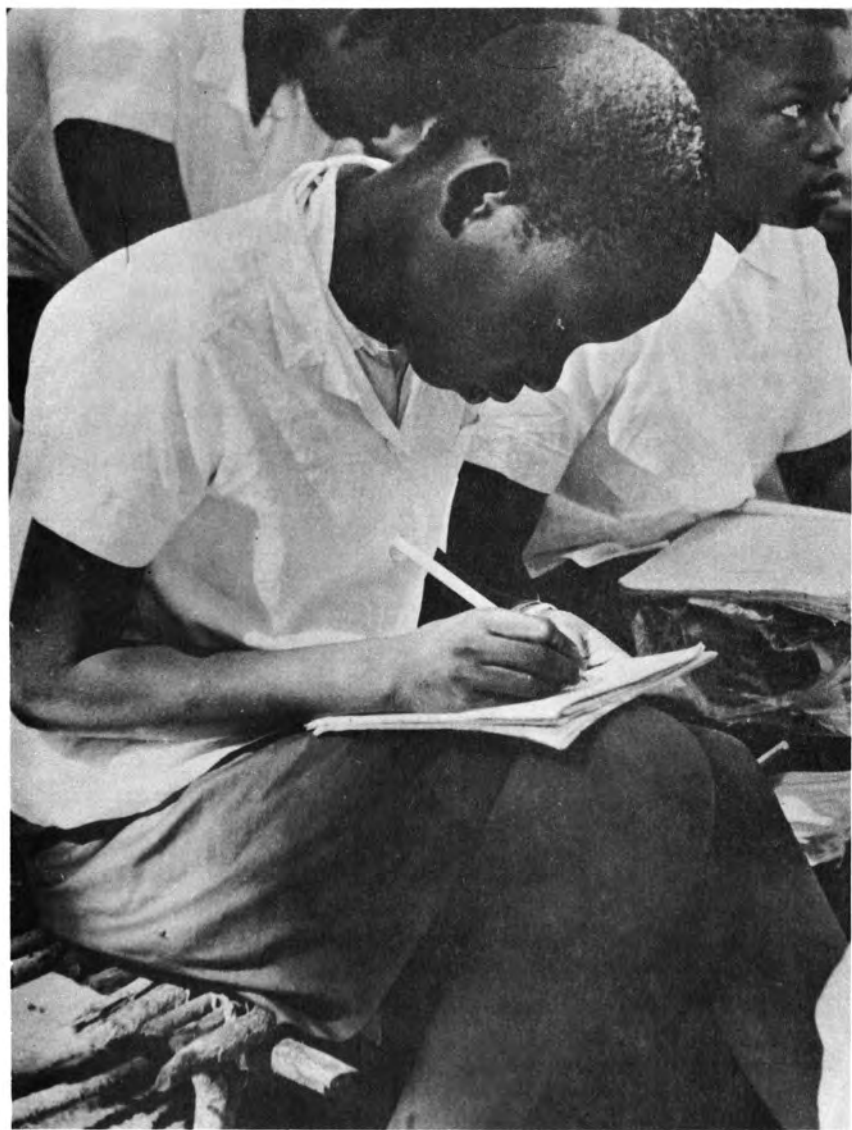
At the same time, this participation cannot be arbitrary or casual, it must come within the framework of FRELIMO, the revolutionary political organisation which upholds all the interests of the exploited people and which is capable of giving a correct orientation to women and defining their tasks.

The Conference hailed the Central Committee's decision at its meeting in December 1972 to create an Organisation of Mozambican Women. Such an organisation had become a necessity, given the fact that the only women's body was the Women's Detachment. It was noted, in fact, that many women were working outside the ambit of the Women's Detachment and did not come within any structure of their own. There were also many potential women militants who did not fulfil the requirements for joining the Women's Detachment and who remained in the fringe of the revolutionary process. The new Organisation will therefore act as a broad front with the Women's Detachment as its nucleus and driving force, and will mobilise, organise and unite women, young and old, married and single, wherever they may be, from the villages to the schools and bases, and the camps outside the country.

The Organisation of Mozambican Women shall be part of the overall structure of FRELIMO, within which it shall be like an arm reaching out to a new sector, the women's sector, whose full and adequate participation has been neglected up to now.

The Conference also hailed the Central Committee for declaring 7 April, the date of the death of Comrade Josina Machel, leader of the Women's Detachment and Head of the Social Affairs Section and Women's Section of the Department of External Affairs, Mozambique Women's Day. The Conference expressed full support for this decision, all the delegates stressing in their speeches the exemplary militant and revolutionary spirit of Comrade Josina Machel.

Finally, the Conference situated the Mozambican women's





struggle within its international context. The delegates celebrated 8 March, International Women's Day which fell within the period of the Conference. The President of FRELIMO said in his speech that the coincidence of the Conference and 8 March, the day on which all of progressive mankind solemnly affirms its support for women's struggle for their liberation, "is a happy coincidence and should be an encouragement to us, since it draws our attention to the fact that our struggle is not isolated, showing us that women's fight is mankind's fight, and making us feel the progress already achieved."

The Conference hailed the struggle of our fighting sisters and brothers in Angola and Guiné Bissau and Cape Verde, who, under the leadership of the MPLA and the PAIGC, have for more than 10 years been fighting arms in hand, like us, against the common enemy - Portuguese colonialism and imperialism.

A moving tribute was paid to our comrade-in-arms Comrade Amilcar Cabral, who recently fell at his post. The Conference vehemently condemned Portuguese colonialism for this further barbarous and brutal crime and reaffirmed its full support for the PAIGC and its total confidence in the victory of the united people of Guiné Bissau and Cape Verde. The Conference addressed special greetings to militant Africa, which is at our side sharing the efforts and sacrifices of the war, moved by the ideal of total freedom for our continent, making special mention of Tanzania, Zambia, the Republic of Guinea and the Congo.

The struggle for liberation of the peoples of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia was described as a direct and valiant contribution to the victory of our struggle.

The Fourth Front opened in Portugal by Portuguese anti-fascist and anti-colonialist patriots in the very midst of the enemy forces was warmly hailed by the Conference as an important step towards consolidating the bonds of friendship and solidarity between the Mozambican and Portuguese peoples.

The Conference expressed its satisfaction at the great victory won by the peoples of Indochina, and of Vietnam in particular, over the United States of America, the ringleader of international imperialism. The victory of the Indochinese people, the Conference stressed, is a source of inspiration for our people.

The Conference congratulated the women and peoples of the socialist countries for their successes in building a new society and for the exemplary way in which they have assumed their internationalist duty.

The fight of the women and men in capitalist countries and on every continent against colonialism, racism, imperialism, the exploitation of man and discrimination against women was considered by the Conference to be a concrete contribution to the cause of the Mozambican people in general, and of Mozambican women in particular.

The delegates summed up the conclusions of the Conference at the closing session. They unanimously noted the high revolutionary spirit of the Conference and the frank, open and constructive nature of the discussions. All delegates expressed satisfaction at having learned a great deal through the Conference.

The speech delivered at the opening session by Comrade Samora Machel, President of FRELIMO, had enabled the Conference correctly to synthesise the spirit and content of the 1st Conference of Mozambican Women.

This was a decisive and historic moment in our Revolution and in the life of women. A new dawn of hope has risen for our women, for our people.

In conclusion, the 1st Conference of Mozambican Women adopted as its watchword the words of the President of FRELIMO: "The liberation of women is a basic requirement for the Revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and a precondition for its victory."





# Maria Njanje.

"When I was 17 years old my parents forced me to marry. This is the custom here -- women marry very young. I would prefer to study rather than to marry, but as I did not see any possibility of being able to continue studying, and as tradition is very strong, I married. I have a son. When FRELIMO arrived, my husband joined the guerrillas. He is a FRELIMO fighter. I showed a willingness to study and so FRELIMO placed me in a school. Before that I was in a FRELIMO base -- as I had the first class, I taught the comrades at the base how to read and write. In my class and at the end of last year I was transferred here, to the Pilot School where I am studying third class.

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



something quite different. Under the colonialists, when a man in uniform appeared, it usually meant ill-treatment. We are so surprised at first when we see the guerrillas treating us as sisters, not as objects of pleasure.

The problem of participation of women in our education program is serious in this province. We must change the traditions which force us to marry when we are very young. I myself am engaged in a campaign aimed at the families in this region to explain to them the need to change this custom: it is harmful to us and to the Revolution."

# *This is the Time...*

This is the time  
we were all waiting for.  
Our guns are light in our hands  
the reasons and aims  
of the struggle  
clear in our minds.

The blood shed by our heroes  
makes us sad but resolute.  
It is the price of our freedom.  
We keep them close in our hearts  
from their example new generations  
-- revolutionary generations --  
are already being born.

Ahead of us we see bitter hardships.  
But we see also  
our children running free  
our country plundered no more.

This is the time to be ready  
and firm.  
The time to give ourselves  
to the Revolution.

Josina Machel

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