

## RETHINKING THE FRELIMO STATE

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The sad trajectory of the Mozambican revolution has been devastating, almost beyond words, for Mozambicans. It has also been a sobering experience for those of us who have, over the years, supported – and sought to interpret – Frelimo's progressive development project in that country. 'Frelimo's progressive development project'? It is a sign of the times that there seems to be something distinctly old-fashioned about even phrasing the issue in these terms. 'Development project'? A misguided expression of modernist arrogance, surely. 'Progressive'? Scepticism about the appropriateness of 'socialist solutions' is so rife (even on much of the left) that this term, too, seems highly suspect. And what about 'Frelimo' itself? This is, apparently, the most suspect variable of all – to judge from much of the current writing about Mozambique.

Of course, it behooves all of us to understand better the sorry pass to which Mozambique has been brought under Frelimo leadership: from a country, admittedly backward, that nonetheless entered upon its independence in 1975 with high hopes to a country in tatters, possibly, now, the most desperately poverty-stricken in the world. Not so long ago, explanations of this disastrous trajectory began with the hard fact of South African destabilization. But increasingly – 'a paradigm shift', we are told by British Africa-scholar Gervase Clarence-Smith – the centre of gravity of accepted explanation seems to have moved, the blame for failure now falling more and more onto the shoulders of Frelimo itself, and onto that movement's various errors of omission and commission.

A useful corrective? Certainly those of us who have been closest to Frelimo over the years are, at least in part, guilty as charged: can there be any doubt that we overestimated the scope of Frelimo's achievements and underestimated the seriousness of the weaknesses attendant upon its efforts? Yet I don't think it mere defensiveness to suggest the danger that the pendulum of explanation has begun to swing too far in the other direction, that the South African role in destroying Frelimo's undertakings now runs the risk of being underestimated rather than overestimated and that the Frelimo project now runs the risk of being caricatured, negatively, beyond recognition. As we will see in this essay, any such extreme rewriting

of Mozambican history, if left unchallenged, could prove very costly indeed, not least in spawning a temptation, on the part of Mozambicans and others, to learn precisely the wrong lessons from the virtual collapse of the Mozambican state.

Something more general is also at stake. The alacrity with which the most negative interpretations of Frelimo's role in Mozambique have been seized upon in many quarters reflects not merely a 'paradigm shift' in the study of Mozambique but a virtual sea-change in much of the discussion, even on the left, of African development prospects. Some aspects of this change are healthy. Concerns about 'democracy' – protean though the notion may be – will not so easily be ignored in future, for example. But some seem more to represent a failure of nerve, a loss of confidence, in the face of the grim fecundity of the 'New World Order' and of trends towards the recolonization of southern Africa. Beware an African Studies in retreat – whether to the benevolent logic of the market or to the 'moral economy' of the village – that casts more doubt than is necessary upon the possibility **and/or** wisdom of heroic purpose and revolutionary possibility. In discussing Mozambique, past, present and future, in the present essay, I will also seek to comment on the 'false solutions', both analytical and practical, that this broader **trend** thus places on offer.

### I A Paradigm Shift?

The range of criticisms of Frelimo practices is, in fact, quite broad, finding perhaps the most dramatic form in South African Communist Party veteran Joe Slovo's assertion, at a New York symposium on 'The Future of Socialism', that Mozambique's attempted socialist project was 'both premature and **wrong!**' How are we to interpret this assertion? At one level it might be considered the mere application, by a long-time Communist, of a rather conventional Third International Marxism to the Mozambican case. After all, even at the highest point of 'fraternal relations' between Mozambique and the Soviet Union, the Soviets were never quite prepared to accord Mozambique any higher status than that of a 'state of socialist orientation' because of its relatively 'primitive' level of social relations.

Moreover, Slovo did not state clearly what he would have had the progressive leadership that found itself in power in Mozambique in the mid-70s actually do with that power – thus rendering his own position, without any further elaboration, a rather too comfortable and passive one. Of course, he is also correct up to a point: the 'backward conditions' Frelimo inherited ('the absolute level of undevelopment' as I have phrased the point elsewhere), as well as the country's underdeveloped class structure and its extreme international vulnerability, would indeed have presented very real problems to any fledgling revolution in Mozambique. And yet the temptation to attach more importance to 'necessary preconditions'

than to concrete political and economic practices in explaining the strengths and weaknesses of an 'actually-existing socialism' can also lapse into a singularly dismissive way of approaching the issue.

Slovo's position does not, in any case, represent the sort of 'paradigm shift' other authors<sup>3</sup> have principally in mind when they use that phrase to summarize a recent redefinition of the terms of analysis of things Mozambican. At stake for them is less a preoccupation with such absolute limits as history had imposed upon Frelimo's ability to realize its aspirations than a debate over the relative importance of several more immediate factors in derailing the process of transformation in Mozambique. In Alex Vines' words there is a move 'in academic analysis . . . away from the causality of the Mozambican crisis being South African destabilization, with the emphasis being shifted to a focus on Frelimo's agrarian policies as the roots of the problem'. Or, in Clarence-Smith's more pungent phrasing, 'in effect, Frelimo dug its own grave in the face of an apparently derisory enemy . . . Renamo exploits all the anger and resentment that Frelimo has created in the countryside through its policies'."

In fact, it is only the more extreme versions of this approach' that argue for a 'paradigm shift' in anything like such stark terms. If we look at the most careful analyses of the war in Mozambique we find that a great deal of weight is still given – correctly – to the impact of Pretoria's sponsorship of Renamo and its ruthless destabilization tactics in Mozambique." Thus, William Finnegan, while quite alert to the flaws in Frelimo's own project, emphasizes the importance of the fact that 'few (new governments in Africa) have had the bad luck to live next door to a powerful foe ready to exploit their every *misstep*'.<sup>7</sup> Even this formulation threatens to understate the case, of course. For there is something remarkably cold-blooded about the current tendency to develop an approach to Mozambique that reduces South Africa's ruthless policy – 'the destruction of an African country'<sup>8</sup> to something like a residual variable. True, every historical situation is 'over-determined', making it virtually impossible ever to hold enough other strands of determination 'constant' to reach, confidently, some definitive account of any one of them. But we ignore at our peril (both moral and analytical) the conclusion of a US State Department report that once described the war in Mozambique as 'one of the most brutal holocausts against ordinary human beings since World War II'.<sup>9</sup>

Not that fully grasping the centrality of this reality need blunt the edge of debate about the strengths and weaknesses of Frelimo's own broad project. It is here that we return to the hard fact that much of the texture of the debate about Mozambique is more fundamentally critical of Frelimo's undertakings than in the days *when* 'scholar-activists' supportive of the movement (the Mozambican versions of Patrick Chabal's notorious '*red-foot*'<sup>10</sup>) were the chief contributors to the literature. A key point of reference in this respect is the work of Christian Geffray," his case-study

showing some of the ways in which, in one corner of the country, Renamo did use both the tensions that existed in and between local communities and the negative reaction of some rural dwellers against Frelimo's economic mistakes and administrative highhandedness to give some domestic political grounding to its activities.

Debate continues to swirl around the accuracy of Geffray's emphasis and the generalizability of his findings." Moreover, Geffray himself would not use such data to blunt awareness of the extreme ruthlessness, even barbarity, with which Renamo has carried out what remains, essentially, a wrecker's role. Even so, such new material has served, as indicated, to sharpen the critical focus on Frelimo. It seems no accident that it is in a review of Geffray's book, prominently published (in the *Times Literary Supplement*) and provocatively titled ('Between Two Terrors'), that Peter Fry gives particularly vivid voice to a new orthodoxy in-the-making on matters Mozambican, contrasting the misguided development efforts of the old Frelimo with those 'who are supporting President Joaquim Chissano in his attempt to set Mozambique on a course of development in tune with the realities of the regional and international political and economic environment and, above all, with the aspirations of the people of Mozambique'.<sup>14</sup>

'In tune with the realities of the regional and international political and economic environment'. A rather jejune way to describe the pattern of Mozambique's resubordination to South African and global capitalist dictate that Chissano has been forced to accept and that we will outline further in section III of this essay. And what about 'the aspirations of the people of Mozambique'? In this regard, Fry makes great play of evidence supplied by Geffray as to Frelimo's overbearing approach to local tradition – epitomized by him in the term *abaixismo* (rough translation: 'down with-ism'). Yet Fry himself acknowledges that things are a bit more complicated than this when, at the end of his review, he qualifies his assertions, now invoking the need for 'debate on Africa's most fundamental problem: how to reconcile the desire for modernity and the need for economic development with the equally strong attachment to very different forms of social organization from those of politically and economically dominant spheres of the world.'" But what kind of politics follows from this kind of understanding? What kind of critique of Frelimo should it ground? We must dig deeper to find the sub-text that permits the easy swing of Fry and others to a new orthodoxy that emphasizes the negative nature of the Frelimo experience.

As noted above, the materials are available for a more careful reprise of the complex dynamics of the war's escalation, one that would demonstrate the ways in which the most assertive proponents of the 'new paradigm' school have overstated their case. Here it is more important to emphasize the extent to which a 'mood-swing' in the most current analytical ap-

proaches to 'progressive regimes' in Africa has provided the premises that help make such overstatement possible. As noted at the outset of this essay what is crucial is the growing hegemony of an approach – joined at a point where left and right seem increasingly comfortable to meet – that is sceptical about the role of the state, sceptical about socialism and, at least in some of its expressions regarding Africa, sceptical about the claims of 'modernity' itself.

Perhaps the strongest manifestation of this mood swing in African studies is to be found in the writings of those grouped around the influential French journal – left-leaning at its launching a decade or more ago – *Politique Africaine*.<sup>15</sup> Darbon, in discussing 'l'Etat prédateur', suggests that 'at the beginning of the 1990s, little remains of the hopes for development that had been placed on the state structures of the African countries. . . . The concept of the state as stimulus or promoter of development seems to have completely failed in Africa'.<sup>16</sup> Bayart takes the point a step further:

The state is the dominant economic agent in Africa whether the regime is single-party, pluralist or socialist. Everywhere the state's integration into the world economy has proceeded apace. Everywhere there has been primitive accumulation, that is, over-exploitation of the peasantry. State accumulation is intimately connected with individual accumulation at all levels (including the highest) and in all countries (including the most 'socialist'). Power in whatever form is inevitably an instrument for the accumulation of wealth. . . . It is, therefore, otiose to seek to establish a conceptual difference between the private and the public sector. Both are the instruments of a dominant class striving to establish its hegemony.]

That said, it also bears noting that the critics save their strongest fire for a state that presumes to intervene in the **name** of socialism. Thus Jean Médard (in his *Politique Africaine* article, 'L'État patrimonialisé') writes of the special temptation both liberals and socialists face of seeing the state as 'the demiurge of development', based on an unlikely hope: 'to realize its role, it would be necessary that the state be a pure instrument of the technocratic rationality of its leaders, who themselves would have to be animated by commitment to the 'general weal' and sufficiently detached from society to remodel it 'from outside' with a great degree of **independence**'.<sup>18</sup> But it is for socialists in **particular** that he reserves his **deepest** scorn: 'within a socialist framework development is even more difficult since, if a capitalist framework at least has the merit of favouring growth, the socialist framework suffocates it. And even if we know **enough** not to confuse growth with economic development, we also know that there cannot be development without growth!'

It will be obvious that Médard's conclusion rests on a vision of the benign workings of the unfettered market-place in Africa that is difficult to square with available evidence regarding the actual experience of capitalist accumulation in Africa. Not that Médard suggests the transition to capitalist growth to be, necessarily, a smooth one. But in his outlining of the impediments to such growth he highlights not contradictions that might be

thought to be inherent in the logic of capitalist accumulation itself but rather those springing from the manner in which capitalism's functioning is held back in Africa by the workings of quasi-traditional patron-client relations." The celebrated trajectory of Goren Hyden – in his quest for an effective means of 'capturing' the peasantry – from enthusiasm for the efforts of Tanzania's 'demiurgic' state to an equal and opposite enthusiasm for the free run of the market is a related case in point."

But Manfred Bienefeld has, in any case, underscored the extent to which many analysts much further to the Left than Hyden have come to espouse 'individualistic resolutions' to development problems, manifesting extreme suspicion of any state's claim to represent 'a general interest' and ready to 'discount the relative dangers and inflate the expected benefits of deepening an economy's entanglement with the international market and of increasing reliance on internal markets'. And this in spite of the fact that, in Bienefeld's view, 'the present African crisis was most clearly foreseen by those looking at Africa from a dependency perspective in the 1960s'. In the process Bienefeld neatly parries Bill Warren's much-cited assertion – remarkably close to the orthodoxy of the World Bank, Bienefeld notes – of 'the historically progressive and economically efficient nature of recent capitalist development in the Third World'.<sup>22</sup> Note, then, that it is on premises much like those Bienefeld here criticizes that Clarence-Smith grounds his own critique of the Frelimo state's original project. Any effort by Mozambique to break its links with South Africa, he suggests provocatively, would be 'like asking somebody to kill the goose that lays the golden egg'. And like Médard he seems to take for granted that development of 'Mozambique's economy along capitalist lines' is a virtual guarantee of 'growth'!"

One further strand to today's ubiquitous critique of the state is also worth noting here, one that may appear to be rather contradictory to the point just mentioned but is often held in uneasy tandem with it nonetheless. Recall, for example, Geffray's influential analysis of Frelimo's practice, cited above. Central to his argument is a critique of the movement's failure to take the layered complexity of Mozambique's local, 'quasi-traditional' society seriously. Ultimately, he seems to go so far as to cast doubt upon the very legitimacy of Frelimo's attempt to change that society at all. As O'Laughlin summarizes his argument, 'Geffray tends to assume that in Nampula there is a homogeneous peasantry, sharply differentiated from townspeople and living within a traditional world dominated by traditional cults, rules and practices. The clearest voices in this world view are those of the lineage elders'. And Frelimo (O'Laughlin paraphrases Geffray as suggesting) should, among other bows to the integrity of local societies, 'honour the authority of traditional leaders who are not on the side of the Portuguese'."

The implication: there is a certain 'modernist' arrogance in Frelimo's decision to do otherwise." O'Laughlin thinks very differently: 'Looking at

15 years of African independence, Frelimo saw this dualism as divisive, anti-democratic and responsible for maintaining economic backwardness in the countryside. I agree', she says. "In short, if genuine democratic empowerment is to occur – if, as one example, the emancipation of women in rural Africa is to be facilitated – the structures of the quasi-traditional world *must* be challenged. To think otherwise is to be 'politically naive. Permit people to respect and honour religious figures and title-holders, to be sure, but the underlying question of how local governance and political power is to be organized cannot be conjured away'. Her conclusion: 'The problem is that dignity and authority were enmeshed in a system of local governance which any socialist political strategy would have to alter.'"

As we will see below, **O'Laughlin** does not view this argument as an excuse for 'well-intentioned' left authoritarianism or even as the occasion for any white-washing of Frelimo's activities. Indeed, she interprets the failure of Frelimo's rural strategy as 'less the "revenge" of traditional society [as Geffray seems to suggest] than the negative fall-out from weaknesses in Frelimo's own application of "modern", socialist politics.'" It should also be clear, however, that **O'Laughlin's** is an increasingly unpopular way of conceiving things – at a time when most observers are so eager to distance themselves from any guilt by association with the notion of 'the state and/or party as modernizing agent' that they would dismiss her formulations more or less out of hand. Not that most such observers are actually all that 'relativist' and 'post-modern' in their own approach to 'quasi-traditional' societies, of course. It is merely that, like Peter Fry, they are comfortable to square this particular circle by leaving any 'progressive' breaching of the supposed integrity of such societies to the workings of 'impersonal market forces'!

Needless to say, there are some valuable insights in much of the literature we have been discussing. Thus, Geffray merely overstates an otherwise important insight when he argues that the Mozambican government too often saw rural populations merely as 'an arithmetical collection of desocialized individuals . . . curiously just waiting for Frelimo to provide them with social organization'. **Médard**, in his description of the 'demiurgic state', also evokes something real regarding the all too common arrogance of ostensibly progressive elites, not least in Mozambique. And **Bayart's** firm emphasis upon the need to facilitate the empowerment of civil society in order to offset the African state's abusive propensities is also to the point.

But can society 'reappropriate the state'? Can a 'more "equal" relation between state and society' be established? **Bayart** does suggest that 'civil society can only transform its relation to the state through the organization of new and autonomous structures, **the** creation of a new cultural fabric and the elaboration of a conceptual challenge to power monopolies'. Nonetheless, there remains a certain Manichean quality to **Bayart's** emphasis on the 'epistemic gulf between state and society,'" one that can

picture the state forever seeking to 'capture the peasantry' but cannot quite envisage the peasantry (and other popular classes) becoming capable, in any foreseeable future, of capturing the state. Indeed, for **Bayart**, 'Africa's potential for democracy is more convincingly revealed by the creation of small collectives established and controlled by rural or urban groups (such as local associations) than by parliaments and parties, instruments of the state, of accumulation and of **alienation**'.<sup>30</sup>

Yet 'the state' – some state – is not about to disappear from the world in which **Bayart's** 'small collectives' seek to find their feet, and chances are that if the state is not itself being transformed into an agent of transformation – thwarting overall societal disintegration, qualifying external dictate and widening developmental possibilities, stemming abuses of power, private and public, facilitating and defending fledgling popular initiatives – his 'local associations' will themselves have only limited prospects of being allowed the space to develop. **Bayart's** is a fall-back position of very modest aspiration then, even if many might consider it a 'realistic' one. And, of course, he is correct to think that the state itself is unlikely to be transformed unless – the paradox is real – the 'civil society' in formation has become strong and democratically assertive enough to force the state to hold to a positive course. But this is merely to suggest that the simultaneity of the need both for leadership **and** for mass action inherent in a process of socialist transformation frames a contradiction that cannot be made to disappear – and demands the construction of an on-going political process that takes **both** terms of this equation seriously. As we will see in the following section, Frelimo – the party, the state – at least momentarily embraced this difficult challenge and it is this that made its project so distinctive in Africa and – not least in the nature of its failure – so instructive.

As anticipated above and in sharp contrast to this approach, the 'new paradigm' emerging in the literature on Mozambique speaks less of the dilemmas facing Frelimo (and of the errors the movement has made in confronting them) than of the fundamentally misguided nature of its entire state-ridden project.\* William Finnegan, in one of the best of recent books

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\* Note, too, one added complication here: root-and-branch criticism of Frelimo's 'statist' project is made both by observers who see Frelimo as having been too socialist and others who see it as not actually having been socialist at all! Thus, Adam and **Moodley** can blithely reduce Frelimo's original project to one of 'rhetorical socialism . . . hardly taken seriously by its proponents themselves', concluding that 'the elite therefore adjusts ideological interpretations as arbitrarily as they adopt them . . . because a collective ideological commitment hardly existed in the first place',<sup>31</sup> a position more or less echoed (albeit from the opposite end of the political spectrum) by Michel **Cuben**.<sup>32</sup> And even so sensitive an observer as William Finnegan is able to remark, in a parallel manner, on the 'breath-taking ease' with which Frelimo now moves to 'switch tracks' to 'some form of capitalism'."

'Breath-taking ease'? Finnegan can only make this remark against the **grain** of the evidence of his own powerful book, the best part of which describes the terrible pounding Mozambique

on Mozambique," goes much further than many such critics in acknowledging that 'the "Marxism-Leninism" and "international proletarianism" of Frelimo were as rigorous as any ruling-party ideology on the continent and had clearly made sense as a framework for national liberation and development in the early days of the revolution'. Yet even he can conclude that 'the end of the Cold War also seemed to highlight the superficiality of Western concepts like communism and capitalism when transplanted to Africa'. In fact, it is really **communism/socialism** he wishes to quarrel with. 'Capitalism' may be a 'western concept' too, but Finnegan has no qualms about asserting, more or less simultaneously, that for Mozambique 'some form of capitalism [has] seemed to become the only economic and political model with a future!' 'Marxism', on the other hand, 'was, pace **Samora Machel**, a European product' that really made no sense under Mozambican conditions.

One must, of course, give due weight to Finnegan's concern – so central to the current literature on Mozambique – at 'the social and economic distance between the elite, whether it calls itself revolutionary or an aristocracy, and the great mass of illiterate peasants'. Nor is he wrong to argue that 'vanguardism has inherent weaknesses – it fosters passivity and authoritarianism – and the victories won by a vanguard in the name of the people rarely end up empowering the masses'. But communism, socialism, Marxism . . . all to be regarded as irrelevant notions? This would be sobering enough coming from Finnegan. Even worse is the fact that many Mozambicans have themselves now been beaten into accepting some such **conclusion.**"

Yet – unless one shares the unreal premises of a Clarence-Smith or a Peter Fry regarding the likely fecundity of capitalism in Africa – can this really be cause for celebration?" Surely there is a need in contemporary Mozambique for a socialist perspective that can make sense of the country's present situation vis-a-vis an ascendent regional and global capitalism and make sense, too, of the social forces that continue to fray Mozambique's own social fabric. Equally important is the need to interrogate the demise of Frelimo's project from such a perspective if the real lessons of its failure are ever to be learned by those who must eventually seek to re-focus the energies of the poorest of the poor in order to reverse the terrible 'liberation' that global capitalism has inflicted upon Mozambique. These,

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had endured for daring, in the first instance, to struggle against its subordination to global capitalist dictate. In so arguing, such critics choose to ignore the testimony of virtually all those who actually examined the Frelimo state closely enough in its early years to have a studied opinion on the subject. For as one such analyst (Bridget O'Laughlin) has recently put the point, 'If we abstract from this history, we tend to see only the defensive measures of the 1980s and forget the optimism, sense of reconciliation and broad mass participation in activities organized by Frelimo, in both rural and urban areas, during the first years after independence.'<sup>35</sup>

in any case, are the unregenerately old-fashioned premises that frame the following two sections of this essay.

## II Evaluating the Frelimo State

We begin, then, by taking seriously the progressive opening represented in Africa by Frelimo's original socialist project, sharing Dan O'Meara's sense that 'as a political movement, Frelimo had proved itself, and would prove itself again and again, capable of a domestic and international political creativity and imagination unique in Africa.' But there is also a need for a comprehensive critique both of Frelimo's project and its practices." For the movement's own failures played some role in producing the present unhappy outcome, whatever the precise weight one might ultimately give them when measured against the impact of other factors, South African destabilization in particular. Of course, not everything now being said by the new generation of Frelimo's critics was profane knowledge to committed observers of Mozambican developments even in the heyday of Frelimo's maximum credibility. However, there is little doubt that when Frelimo came to power in 1975 it proved all too easy to overestimate both the clarity of its vision regarding the modalities of societal transformation and the symbiotic nature of its link to the popular classes – notably the peasantry.

My own first attempts to make sense of the history-making possibilities that seemed open to the Frelimo leadership as it came to power in the mid-1970s turned around the notion (developed out of the work of Hamza Alavi) of the 'overdeveloped', relatively autonomous, state that was up for grabs in the fluid circumstances of Africa's initial transition to independence. Although the degree of the 'post-colonial state's' autonomy remained subject to debate – and the task of transforming it much more difficult than might have been predicted – the concept seemed a helpful one. Certainly, it gave added resonance to my own conviction that the nature of the still forming group and/or class (I referred to it as a 'petty-bourgeoisie-in-the-making', Colin Leys as the 'state-party apparatus', Patrick Chabal simply as the 'revolutionary leadership') that began to take shape around this state was of considerable significance in defining development outcomes. Even more concretely, this formulation anticipated that struggles within this group – such as had already occurred within Frelimo circles in exile in the late-1960s when the hegemony of a cadre of left-leaning leaders was consolidated – would be of considerable importance."

It is important to be very precise about what is being claimed here since it seems necessary to lay to rest a canard that has served, ever since it was first articulated by Gavin Williams some years ago, to caricature this emphasis on the importance of 'petit-bourgeois politics'. At that time,

Williams wrote: 'Since the state is governed by the petit-bourgeoisie, and since their politics is indeterminate, the state may turn in any direction, depending on the ideology of those who come to control it. Like many members of the African "petit-bourgeoisie", Saul appears to think that "what we need is a good ruler, with a progressive ideology".' This is, quite simply, a *reductio ad absurdum* of my argument. Just because one grants some active role to this 'group', it is not to be construed as having been removed from, and placed above, history, the production process, or the broader class structure. Moreover, nothing in the arguments surveyed by Williams suggest that it should be considered as being so isolated.

Such a line of analysis did indeed suggest the importance of the fact that guerilla war had produced in Frelimo a leadership cadre, a fraction of the petty-bourgeoisie, drawn towards a **progressive/socialist** project. But it also made quite clear that the extent to which the potential for consolidating such a project might be realized depended crucially on three variables: the strength of the forces pressing the leadership to diverge from such a project; the nature of the links the leadership would actually forge with those popular classes in whose name it professed to speak; and the capacity of the leadership to develop clear and effective policies for realising the kind of socio-economic transformation it envisaged. Unfortunately, on the latter two fronts the Frelimo leadership's project can be found wanting. Not flawed, *pace* the new critics, so much in the ends ('development', 'socialism', 'anti-imperialism') that it sought as in the means chosen to move towards those ends. This is, at any rate, the judgement underlying the argument that follows.

The constraints on their activity were real enough, of course, ranging from the drag of 'historical backwardness' (the grim legacy of Portugal's primitive colonialism and an exaggerated economic dependence on South Africa, and the shortfalls in education, literacy, health standards and the like that were dramatic even by African standards) to the brutal fact of South Africa's destabilization itself. Moreover, the apparent 'relative autonomy' of the newly independent state proved to be a decidedly mixed blessing. Although Samora Machel spoke eloquently at the very moment of independence of the need to transform, root and branch, the inherited Portuguese colonial state, its old-fashioned, hierarchical and highly bureaucratized structures soon began to entangle the incoming Frelimo team and, no doubt, helped encourage a certain high-handedness in its practices." Did this entanglement also begin to tempt the 'state/party apparat' to develop a 'class interest'? That this might have been so is one principal theme of Joe Hanlon's influential analysis of the Frelimo state's first decade, *Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire*, for example."

Yet the primary weakness of the Frelimo state was not, in the first instance, its parasitic and exploitative nature. A high level of commitment to a transformative project did move the 'state/party apparat' for many

years and both conspicuous consumption and corruption remained relatively unimportant during that time. The pull towards 'high-handedness' was another matter, however. For a second danger of excessive reliance on a state apparatus that remained 'relatively autonomous' was more immediately ominous than any pull towards parasitism. Perhaps if one reads, for 'autonomous', such words as 'ungrounded', 'suspended', 'free-floating' it is possible to get a sense, at least metaphorically, of the nature of the problem: *viz.*, that the Frelimo state remained suspended above the society whose liberation it sought to facilitate (**Médard's** demiurge!) and dangerously compromised by the great difficulty it would ultimately have in rooting its project in an active popular base.

Not that the tension, alluded to in the previous section, between 'leadership' and 'mass action' could merely have been willed away. Frelimo did offer a vision sufficiently coherent, in the first instance, to promise the moulding of a new, nation-wide Mozambican identity. It was also one linked closely enough to the cause of poorest of the poor to promise policies (notably in the spheres of health and education) that could transform such people's lives in positive ways. Not relying naively on mere spontaneity to produce this result, the party used the state to help create organs of potential empowerment for women, workers and peasants. Make no mistake: this project bore the stamp, in many particulars, of 'enlightened leadership', leadership that sought to help various 'progressive' classes and categories to 'name' themselves much more self-consciously.

Nor need this active role in helping draw to the surface of society certain self-definitions (e.g., 'women', 'workers', and 'peasants') rather than others (e.g. 'races', 'tribes', and 'regions') be considered to be, inherently, an arrogance. It only became so to the extent that Frelimo proved incapable of acknowledging to itself the paradox inherent in its role and risking the democratic implications of the task of empowerment it was setting itself. Here Frelimo's decision, in 1977, to pronounce itself a vanguard party became a key moment. This dictated the winding down of the messy and somewhat unpredictable – but often promisingly democratic – politics that were occurring in the *grupos dinamizadores* of the period; in addition, by further encouraging the laying of the firm hand of a fairly undemocratic centralism across the local assemblies, unions and women's organization that it had itself willed into place Frelimo came, in time, to render many of its own progeny still-born. Perhaps we can also argue the even more formative importance of another decision, one that antedated the embracing of the 'vanguard party' model *per se*: that is, the decision, inscribed in the very foundation of a one-party state, to forego pluralism in the name of revolutionary purity." Of course, it is much easier to say this now, with the benefit of hindsight, than most of us found it possible to say at the time. Still, the fact remains that from the very beginning the Frelimo

leadership was unwilling to put at democratic risk its own 'essential' role in the transformation it wished to set in train. And the costs of adopting the model of revolutionary leadership it did were to prove very high indeed.

Nor is it obvious that such costs need have been paid. Democratic leadership can, in principle, succeed in sustaining itself without the collapse into vanguardism and mere fiat that came to haunt Frelimo's practice. But so to succeed would require what O'Laughlin (as cited above) has termed 'socialist methods of political work', methods that would find the party both more sensitive to the nuance of local context and also capable of struggling, competitively, to win popular allegiance to the nobility and efficacy of its project against the pull of other poles of popular identification. This was possible, O'Laughlin insists, even in the Mozambican countryside, where peasants are alert to a diversity of possible strands of potential self-identification – including many 'modernizing' ones, both economic and political, that reach far beyond Geffray's confined world of quasi-traditionalism." As we will see, quasi-traditionalism in its purest expression becomes most potent only as a fall-back position for peasants when other means of security **and/or** progress seem unavailable. But such was the hardness – externally evoked, internally generated – of Frelimo's style that the more positive possibilities of 'mobilization' that O'Laughlin alludes to were all too seldom realised."

Incapable of rooting itself entirely effectively in a mass politics, the Frelimo state had become instead a 'developmental dictatorship' (in Eboe Hutchful's evocative formulation)." This fact must be central to our analysis – but so, too, must the fact that this was a developmental dictatorship **of the left**. My point: we lose far too much if we permit **Bayart** and others to collapse the distinction between 'left' and 'right' in this context into one overarching abstraction and to see all African states as belonging to one genus: the profoundly suspect, necessarily exploitative African state. We must, in short, keep open the space to assert that the weaknesses to which a 'developmental dictatorship of the left' is prone are rather different from those that afflict a 'developmental dictatorship of the right'. For it is only by specification of the weaknesses of the former – and not from any more generalized brand of 'state-bashing' – that useful lessons can be learned from the Mozambican experience.

The chief lesson? That even the most benignly left-wing but **quasi-dictatorial** leadership will have difficulty in sustaining its transformative project unless it allows itself (**and/or** is forced) to be held accountable to real rather than merely notional democratic pressures from below. Of course, it may well be argued that the costs of an undemocratic political practice in Mozambique would have been less had the Frelimo leadership not made mistakes on other policy fronts. The area of economic policy is particularly noteworthy in this regard. As I have argued elsewhere, the adoption of a model of 'primitive socialist accumulation' is by no means the

fated requirement of a left regime in the context of underdevelopment. In principle, Frelimo could have adopted a different approach – what I have called 'the socialism of expanded reproduction' – that built on a more effective interchange between industry and agriculture, urban and rural, and better addressed the most pressing and immediate material requirements of peasants (and others). Instead of producing a 'crisis of reproduction' for the peasantry, such a strategy might have provided the material foundation for the peasants actually embracing as their own Frelimo's modernizing and socializing project."

Not that this failure can be delinked from the movement's own undemocratic practices. Had Frelimo been a bit less confident that it knew what was best for the peasants it might not have adopted so readily an economic strategy that exacerbated their 'reproductive crisis', nor moved quite so aggressively (at least in some areas) to 'socialize' from above – via the communal village programme – their way of life. Significantly, at the one moment at which decisions about economic strategy seemed to bow to democratic input (in the run-up to the Fourth Congress, when both the need to address the reproductive crisis and to adopt a more flexible approach to the use of market mechanisms in the countryside were forced onto the agenda by popular protest), the Frelimo state came closest to striking the kind of balance between leadership and mass action that best promised both economic advance and political support. By then, however, the war of destabilization had escalated to such a point that the pursuit of a more measured approach to rural development had little chance of being implemented. Soon, as capitulation to the IMF and the World Bank loomed large for the Frelimo leadership, the subtleties of pursuing a more flexible and realistic socialist strategy had given way to full-scale retreat before the logic of capitalism.

But how had Frelimo come to abandon 'the peasant line' and democratic practices that had seemed so much a part of its liberation struggle against the Portuguese? In part this paradox may be more apparent than real, for the school of liberation struggle, even if it did serve to radicalize the Frelimo leadership's outlook in important and progressive ways, was probably also a much harder one than many of us realized at the time. It bred a certain ruthlessness alongside the commitment it evoked and, in Frelimo's case, also a cockiness, bracing but dangerous, about the efficacy of revolutionary will in blowing aside apparently insuperable obstacles. Moreover, it is also easy to forget (as Colin Leys and I have noted elsewhere) 'the climate of the times during the "thirty years war" for southern African liberation (1960–1990), a climate that shaped much of the discourse both of the liberation movements themselves and of their supporters around the world. Can there be any doubt that the Left during those years of relative success (both within the region and beyond) too often took the righteousness of its cause for granted, allowing the subtle narcotic of "correctness" to dull its democratic sensibilities?'"

For the Frelimo leadership, however, there was also the Soviet factor, a factor so central, militarily, to the triumph of the Mozambican struggle and one given further credibility by the Soviet regime's own apparent success in the building of 'socialism'. But linking its star to the Soviet Union was, for Frelimo, a fateful choice." For the costs to Frelimo's project of Soviet tutelage can now be seen more clearly than ever to have outweighed the benefits. And yet it was not difficult to see, even at height of Frelimo's powers, that the movement was learning precisely the wrong lessons from what passed for Marxism in Eastern circles: lessons about the most overbearing of vanguardisms," the most inflexible of primitive accumulation-driven economic strategies, the most unnuanced of class analyses, and the most unilluminating and disempowering versions of Marxist methodology." Here was one kind of Marxism – *one kind*, one wants to insist to him – well worthy of Finnegan's scorn. Of course, one must not overstate the case. Frelimo was not merely a prisoner of this 'Marxist-Leninist' embrace. Sometimes its preachments merely meshed – all too comfortably – with the Frelimo leadership's own worst instincts. And sometimes the Frelimo leadership's own sense of itself and the nature of its revolution enabled it to win more helpful insights from the revolutionary tradition. This said, however, it remains true that the impact of Soviet-style 'Marxism-Leninism' was yet another reason for the difficulties Frelimo had in identifying the subtle tactics and strategies necessary to realizing its goals.

Meanwhile, the world was closing in on the Frelimo state. Might a combination of less overweening self-confidence and a sharper set of analytical tools have enabled Frelimo to neutralise some of that onslaught that Botha and Reagan had in store for it? Certainly, had the regime had greater success in fortifying itself domestically – by consolidating, democratically, its popular base and by finding the keys to greater economic advance – it would have been that much less vulnerable to attack. On the other hand, once Reagan assumed power the odds against finessing western hostility and advancing a radical project lengthened precipitously. Perhaps Mozambique could have found room for manoeuvre by ducking some of the fights in the region – it committed itself fully to ZANU's war in Zimbabwe and gave what limited backing it could to the ANC – that were to prove so costly in rousing first Rhodesia's and then South Africa's merciless retaliation. But even to put the question in these terms is to underscore just how cruel was the environment of choice in which Frelimo sought to plot its course in the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, Mozambique was target for South Africa and its allies not merely for whatever role it played in the continuing battle for southern Africa. The symbolic and practical significance of the socialist option (warts and all) that it had chosen might well have been excuse enough for the roll-back mentality that moved its enemies to counter-revolutionary activity. To forget this,

even in the current climate of shifting paradigms and of rethinking 'the state', 'socialism' and of so much else, would be to blame the victim indeed.

### III The State of Recolonization

Perhaps the best testimony as to how much has been lost with the virtual collapse of the erstwhile 'Frelimo state' is provided by a clear description of what that collapse has left in its wake. The Frelimo state was, indeed, a 'left-developmental dictatorship', one weakened (fatally or not we will never know, since it was not left to its own devices) in its purpose by both its dictatorial propensities and by other deep flaws in its strategic vision. But, in potential at least, it bore the promise of providing a protective intermediary between the Mozambican people and a **global/regional** economy that, left merely uninflected, held out no positive prospect for them. It also bore the promise of ensuring a context within which the realization of a better life – a promise the mass of the population was by no means indifferent to – was at least a plausible one for Mozambicans. Are they offered a better promise now that the (admittedly flawed) Somoran project has been smashed and the 'Frelimo state' as formerly defined is no more?

Not that getting a lead on the state of the state in contemporary Mozambique is easy to do. Its writ does not run all that broadly because of the war and the social chaos that now defines so much of Mozambican society. Still, there is a state (and still a Frelimo party ostensibly at its helm) – even though what is left standing in Mozambique seems something remarkably close to the most extreme model of the state's external determination conjured up in the 'bad old days' of dependency theory. Thus Marshall writes of an 'erosion of Mozambican sovereignty' and suggests that 'control has shifted out of Mozambican hands in an alarming fashion'.<sup>54</sup> This is particularly marked, most observers agree, in the free run of decision-making that the IMF and World Bank have now claimed for themselves. Certainly, these bodies make no bones about the thrust of their agenda: basic to the Structural Adjustment Programme has been, in the words of the World Bank, 'the recognition that the closer integration of the Mozambique economy is essential, with domestic industrial and agricultural producers being exposed both to the incentives and disciplines of international markets'.<sup>55</sup> And 'the IMF, for its part, could see the crisis only in terms of excessive state control of the economy, excessive control of foreign exchange and too few exports, with measures of privatization and deregulation as the obvious remedies'. Moreover, neither the IMF nor the World Bank will brook much **challenge**.<sup>56</sup>

Is this what Peter Fry had in mind when, as quoted earlier, he hailed Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano for 'his attempt to set Mozambique on a course of development in tune with the realities of the regional

and international political and economic environment'? Surely we need to compare this version of events with the forlorn flavour of a remark I myself heard Chissano make in a Maputo speech in 1990:

The US said, 'Open yourself to . . . the World Bank, and IMF.' What happened? . . . We are told now: 'Marxism! You are devils. Change this policy.' OK. Marxism is gone. 'Open market economy.' OK. Frelimo is trying to create capitalism. We have the task of building socialism and capitalism here.

We went to Reagan and I said, 'I want money for the private sector to boost people who want to develop a bourgeoisie.' Answer: '\$10 million, then \$15 million more, then another \$15 million. You tell me to do away with Marxism, the Soviet Union and the GDR and give me [only] \$40 million. OK, we have changed. Now they say. 'If you don't go to a multi-party system, don't expect help from us.'"

What could more starkly reveal just how supine Mozambique has been forced to become vis-a-vis western dictate?

Several observers have pointed to an additional dimension to this picture. Thus Hanlon, in his most recent book,<sup>58</sup> provides impressive chapter and verse regarding the powerful grip of the World Bank and IMF on Mozambican decision-making. But he also emphasizes the extraordinary role that is increasingly being played by aid agencies, both foreign-governmental and private, in dictating policy outcomes. While manifesting, via food aid and other programmes, the 'human face' of structural adjustment, aid agencies (World Vision and Care are two whose role he explores in particular detail) have policy agendas (the need for privatization is a common theme). Moreover, Hanlon comes close to suggesting that, in usurping its role over a broad front, such agencies actually become, to a significant degree, the state!

The palliatives offered by 'aid' to the contrary notwithstanding, the costs of buying this structural adjustment package have been high for many Mozambicans. Oppenheimer, for example, writes that 'price rises caused by sweeping currency devaluation and commercial speculation together with underproportional wage actualization and restraint in public sector spending contributed to the lowering of already precarious standards of living of large parts of the population'.<sup>59</sup> And Judith Marshall's various writings have further documented the 'social impact' of such programmes, notably in terms of the erosion of advances in the area of health and education that were once thought to be the most notable accomplishments of the Mozambican revolution.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, it remains far from clear that, having been forced to swallow the pill of structural adjustment, Mozambique can now expect the kind of growth that a Clarence-Smith might foresee as flowing from the capitalist option. Experience of capitalist development strategies elsewhere in Africa is not so very promising in this respect. Nor are the early returns from Mozambique particularly favourable. Thus, one economist's recent analysis concludes, after a careful sifting of the evidence, that 'prospects for growth and development are poor; unemployment is rising; inflation remains high; the balance of

payment deficit is worsening; and the astronomical external debt is rising.'" Indeed, a second analysis of recent economic trends in Mozambique (by Kenneth Hermele) suggests that a likely future for the country is 'a weak and dependent form of capitalism, which basically will serve the South African economy with labour, transport routes, markets and raw materials', a situation that (in Merle Bowen's phrase) would be 'all too reminiscent of the colonial era'.<sup>62</sup>

Another dimension of the impact of opening Mozambique so dramatically to the benisons of the global capitalist economy also bears noting. For the flip side of increased deprivation for many Mozambicans is the crystallization of a distinctly novel level of socio-economic privilege for others. In Oppenheimer's words, we find 'a rapid social differentiation process breaking up an economically inefficient and poverty-bearing, but relatively egalitarian, social order. . . . Consequently, social exclusion became a wide-spread phenomenon. Abject poverty now co-existed with ostentatious consumption'. " Moreover, this new world of 'social exclusion' and differential opportunity ('opportunity' compounded of novel private sector activities and of access to jobs and other spin-offs from the large aid-giving industry now ensconced in Mozambique) creates a milieu, political and social, very different from that which existed in the past.

Thus, the fluidity that may once have marked Mozambique's petty-bourgeoisie-in-the-making and rendered it a potential seed-bed of 'revolutionary leadership' seems increasingly a thing of the past. For this group is now crystallising its self-interest and 'classness' around the new structure of privilege in Mozambique at quite a rapid rate. And as this happens so, in turn, the opportunism that characterises petty-bourgeois politics elsewhere in Africa becomes, increasingly, the norm within Frelimo itself. The old unity of common social purpose that once bound Frelimo together seems lost forever, replaced, increasingly, by a jockeying for position that has seen the invoking even of racist appeals in the heat of battle for political advantage (the trumpeting of a narrowly defined 'African nationalism' by the prominent long-time Frelimo leader **Armando Guebuza**, for example").

True, Hanlon does suggest that within ruling circles there was some attempt, at least in the early rounds of negotiation (1985-6) with the international bankers, to safeguard elements of the old progressive agenda." In this he finds a remnant of the old 'Frelimo state' that is well worth defending. Indeed, he has criticized some in the international solidarity network who feel the need, increasingly, to direct their assistance to Mozambique to initiatives at the grass-roots and within civil society - in order to help revive, in the longer term, the social base for a renewal of progressive politics in Mozambique. But this, Hanlon insists, is to play directly into the hands of the right wing aid agencies with their own agenda of undermining the state and hastening the pace of market-driven

privatization. In arguing his case, Hanlon seems little inclined to make requisite distinctions between initiatives designed to spawn collective forms of popular empowerment and those cast in more privatizing terms. True, Hanlon's point has some resonance: recall our earlier insistence – against the thrust of **Bayart's** argument – on the need to facilitate a positive role for a non-parasitic state if a meaningful process of transformation is to be sustained. Yet to prove his case he would have to identify more convincingly than he does the militant attributes (in terms of both policies and personnel) of the present state that merit defending in this way."

Sadly, it is no longer easy to do so in Mozambique. Nor is it any easier to paint a positive picture when one turns to examining the workings of the new, post-destabilization Mozambican state at the local level. True, the continuing chaos spawned by war makes it difficult to generalize about the reality on the ground in any case. Formally, however, the present Frelimo leadership is said to be learning a rather dubious lesson from Renamo's own manipulation of displaced chiefs to impose its order on areas it controls. For Frelimo has now begun to dismantle what were, in spite of their weaknesses, incipient structures of grass-roots participatory democracy at the level of local government in order to facilitate 'a return to some form of chiefly role . . . in which rehabilitated chiefs are mandated to govern over rural populations and to collect taxes on behalf of the government . . . as an expedient way of reasserting state authority and increasing state revenues in the rural areas'. For Roesch, echoing **Bowen's** summary (above) of another aspect of contemporary Mozambican practice, this revival of a pattern of indirect rule not so very different from the Portuguese mode of governance also has to 'be seen as part of the process of recolonization in Mozambique.' Recall, too, **O'Laughlin's** warning, cited earlier: 'I think it would be a fundamental error to conclude that war in Mozambique shows that Mozambican peasants need colonial-style regulos!'

More informally, the pattern of grass-roots politics as practised by local populations faces a 'retreat to tradition' that it is equally difficult to be sanguine about. For beyond the various barbarities that the collapse of civility and emergence of the rule of the gun and the panga have thrown up in rural Mozambique, there are other revealing developments. Take, for example, the extent to which, 'in the context of the much eroded authority of the state, an intense competition between Renamo, Frelimo and local forces has occurred for spiritually-empowered agency, and that such agency has been part of "progressive", "traditional", and "reactionary" programmes alike.'" Studies of such phenomena, Ken Wilson notes, highlight the proliferation in war-ravaged Mozambique of the truly horrendous brands of 'cultic violence' and 'ritualized destruction' launched by Renamo but also 'the practice of magic and ritual by Frelimo' and others (like the influential Naprama movement) in order to find an effective way

'to counter Renamo ideologically'. This, it must be emphasized, is a world of 'spirit possession', ancestor worship and mystical chiefly powers, where, among other magical possibilities, bullets are expected by some believers to turn to water.

True, it does make some sense to understand such 'religious traditionalism' as 'the Mozambican peasantry's attempt to reconstitute a new system of meaning and social order out of the war-shattered wreckage of Frelimo's post-independence experiment and the colonial-cum-traditional society which Frelimo sought to transform.'" But is it merely a 'western', rationalist bias that suggests the recent analysis of Eboe Hutchful to be relevant to any attempt to make sense not only of the pattern of violence in rural Mozambique but also of this ambience of ideological response to it?

. . . in Africa, no less than in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. developmental dictatorships had degenerated in the process of 'orientalization', in which strong states had clamped themselves on weak and subordinated civil societies. Beneath the political facade of orientalism, however, society had survived, resilient and remarkably unreconstructed. In the face of this **nonresisting** resistance, the historical project of the autonomous, bureaucratized political leaderships had wilted and decayed. The final outcome of the peaceful capture of the enervated state and bureaucracy in Eastern Europe is a potent lesson that could be repeated in Africa, and elsewhere in the Third World. But to those (particularly in the West) who would, as a result of these revolutions and a weariness of 'high politics', romanticize 'civil society' in the abstract, the contradictions revealed within East European society by the lifting of strong state power should prepare them to tolerate in Africa also what *Time* has aptly described as the 'return of the **demons**'.<sup>9</sup>

Again, we must avoid 'blaming the victim'; the cruel cynicism of the South Africans in helping bring Mozambican society to this sorry pass cannot be underscored too often. But it is sad indeed that Hutchful's formulation can seem even minimally plausible as an accurate post-mortem on what is left standing in the wake of Frelimo's efforts to help effect the Mozambican people's liberation.

Social regression seems, in fact, to inform the new Mozambican polity at every turn. For the unleashing of other 'demons' will almost certainly be one key ingredient of the newly competitive politics that a liberalization of the Mozambique's political system is likely to entail. Frelimo in its heyday may well be criticized for having underestimated, in the name of a new national purpose, the ethnic, regional and racial diversities/inequalities that are part and parcel of the Mozambican reality (although it is also the case that those who criticise the movement's insufficient sensitivity to possible popular resentment at the underrepresentation in its ranks of, say 'Africans' or 'northerners' are generally less than clear about what a more subtle progressive politics on this front might have looked like). But the decay of Frelimo's project now finds ethnic, regional and racial parties threatening to crowd out most **other political** expressions on the electoral stage<sup>10</sup> – unless Frelimo itself can retain just enough credibility to keep alive the sense of achieved nationhood that is the one surviving feature of its original high purpose. Yet, as noted earlier, even Frelimo seems in-

creasingly to be riven by developments that reflect the lowest common denominator of petty-bourgeois politics in Africa – with implications that may prove very bleak indeed.

In the urban areas the superimposition of structural adjustment on a situation of war-induced social breakdown (the fall-out, most notably, from the precipitous movement of vast numbers of displaced rural dwellers to Maputo and other centres) is also a volatile one. Crime rates have escalated exponentially, for example. True, there have also been some signs of the rebirth, from the bottom up, of a more progressive politics in such settings. Judith Marshall, writing in 1991, emphasized the importance of a wave of strikes in Mozambique that seemed directly caused by reaction to the grim impact of the structural adjustment programme on the lives of ordinary Mozambicans. And she found considerable promise, too, in the fledgling activities of a trade union movement newly 'autonomous' from single-party control, alongside a number of other mass-based organizational initiatives also beginning to find their feet within 'civil society'.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps it is to this kind of development, even more than to the staging of multi-party elections, that one may look for much of the long-term promise of the freeing of Mozambique's political system from Frelimo's unqualified and too often over-bearing domination.

In the short-run, however, the brand of resistance offered to the politics of structural adjustment by trade unions and other such popularly-based organizations within civil society may not immediately produce any more positive results. In fact, in her recent analysis of contemporary Mozambique Merle **Bowen** follows Jonathan Barker in suggesting that the kind of state crystallizing out of Mozambique's present volatile set of circumstances is quickly becoming the instrument of a 'triple alliance' of elements newly privileged by economic liberalization: 'international financial capital (World Bank and IMF), private capital (foreign and domestic) and (progressive) small farmers'. And, if put under pressure, those who act on behalf of this alliance may soon feel they have no alternative but to abandon any concomitant commitment to a fledgling liberal democratic system in order to control the social contradictions spawned by the economic orthodoxy they prefer." At that point, **Bowen** suggests, 'the most serious threat to ordinary Mozambicans in the approaching era of reconstruction may be the need for an increasingly repressive state to guarantee the smooth performance of the "triple alliance".'

Trading a 'left-wing developmental dictatorship' for a 'right-wing developmental dictatorship'? There is some evidence that this will indeed be Mozambique's fate. Sadly, however, even this sorry denouement – a capitalist-driven rehabilitation of social order – to Mozambique's failed revolution may prove too much to hope for. How much more likely, in light of what has been argued above, is a demon-driven politics and an 'unsteady state' to match: if Frelimo fades away (or becomes, at best, ever

more of a shell of its former self); if warlords continue to stalk the land; if the politics of race and region and religion comes to predominate . . . Then, even were a Yugoslavian/Somalia situation to be avoided, any 'dictatorship' that emerged from this fire-storm with a brief to restore 'law and order' could prove to be very nasty indeed – and anything but 'developmental'.



The costs of Frelimo's failure have been great, however future historians may ultimately judge the relative importance of the three factors—the drag of 'historical backwardness', the impact of external intervention<sup>1</sup> destabilization, the weight of Frelimo's own errors of omission and commission – that have produced the sorry denouement to Mozambique's socialist project. As the last section of this essay has demonstrated there should be very little comfort to be garnered from the decay of Frelimo's original project, however strongly one may feel inclined to decry its various weaknesses. Nor, needless to say, is the future a promising one. The question was posed earlier in this essay whether there is good reason to expect the rebirth of a left practice that can 'promise to reverse the terrible "liberation" that global capitalism has inflicted upon Mozambique'. Unfortunately – I insist that it is unfortunate, paradigm-shifters to the contrary notwithstanding – such has been the extent of the defeat of Frelimo's revolutionary undertaking that socialist advance is not on the agenda in that country for the foreseeable future. Indeed, it may be that, for some time to come, the very most that can be hoped for is that not all Mozambicans will learn the wrong lessons from what has befallen them in recent years. There are some small signs that this is the case. If so, then (to paraphrase Frelimo's antique motto) the struggle really can be expected to continue.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The present essay is in effect, prolegomenon to a longer manuscript on Mozambique, now in preparation and tentatively entitled *What is to be learned? Rethinking the Mozambican revolution*. The essay itself was first presented, in draft form, at the Fall Workshop of the Canadian Research Consortium on Southern Africa, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, December 5, 1992. I am especially grateful to Manfred Bienefeld for helpful comments on that earlier draft.

1. Gervase Clarence-Smith. 'The Roots of the Mozambican Counter-Revolution', *South African Review of Books* (April/May, 1989), p. 10.
2. In his verbal submission to the symposium, faithfully recorded by the present writer, October 12, 1990; Slovo's position, coming from an ANC activist, might also be considered somewhat ungracious given the price extracted from Mozambique for contributing for as long as it did to the broader struggle for southern African liberation, although one also knows that the Mozambican government was itself less than gracious to Slovo and others in 1984 during the period of its all too zealous implementation of the conditions of the Nkomati Accord as they bore, negatively, on the ANC-in-residence in Mozambique.

3. Clarence-Smith, *op. cit.*, and, more recently, Alex Vines. *RENAMO: Terrorism in Mozambique* (London: James Currey. 1991). p. 74.
4. Clarenec-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
5. As advanced, for example, by Jean Copans in his 'Preface' to Christian Geffray. *La cause des armes au Mozambique: Anthropologies d'une guerre civile* (Editions Karthala, 1990) and by Clarence-Smith himself (*op. cit.*).
6. Required reading on this subject is Robert Gersony. *Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts of Principally Conflict-Related Experience in Mozambique: Report Submitted to Ambassador Jonathan Moore and Dr. Chester A. Crocker* (Washington: Department of State Bureau for Refugee Programs, 1988). Equally relevant – and just as sobering – is William Minter, *The Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) as Described by Ex-Participants* (Research report submitted to the Ford Foundation and the Swedish International Development Agency, 1989). On this subject, see also Otto Roesch's paper – prepared for the Queen's Workshop at which the present essay was itself first presented – entitled 'A New Paradigm? Rethinking Renamo's War' (as well as other of Roesch's writings, as published regularly in *Southern Africa Report (SAR)* and elsewhere) and my own essay, 'Development and Counterdevelopment Strategies' in John S. Saul. *Socialist Ideology and the Struggle for Southern Africa* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press. 1990).
7. William Finnegan, *A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1992). p. 70.
8. The phrase is that of Margaret Hall (in the title of her article 'The Mozambican National Resistance Movement (Renamo): A Study of the Destruction of an African Country', *Africa*, 6 [1], 1990). Hall sets up her own careful analysis of developments inside Mozambique – including an unsparing critique of 'the structural weaknesses of the Mozambican state' – by suggesting she will focus 'on the internal processes destabilization has set in train' (emphasis added).
9. Gersony, *op. cit.*
10. As defined in his 'People's war, state formation and revolution in Africa: a comparative analysis of Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Angola', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Studies*, 21 (198 ).
11. *op. cit.*
12. For a further elaboration of this point see Otto Roesch. *op. cit.* Much the best critique of Geffray's own work is Bridget O'Laughlin, 'Interpretations Matter: Evaluating the War in Mozambique', *Southern Africa Report*, 7, #3 (January, 1992).
13. Peter Fry, 'Between Two Terrors', *Times Literary Supplement* (November 9–15, 1990), p. 1202.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Many related themes are beginning to find their way into the English-language literature, viz., James Manor, *Rethinking Third World Politics* (Burnt Hill, UK: Longman, 1991) – a book to which *Politique Africaine* authors Jean-François Bayart and Jean-François Médard make important contributions in any case.
16. Dominique Darbon. 'L'Etat prédateur', *Politique Africaine*, 'Special 10e anniversaire: L'Afrique Autrement', #39, p. 37.
17. Bayart, 'Civil Society in Africa' in Patrick Chabal (ed.), *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limitations of Power in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986). pp. 115–16; see also Bayart's own *L'Etat en Afrique* (Paris: Fayard, 1988).
18. Jean Medard, 'L'Etat patrimonialisé', also in *Politique Africaine*, #39, pp. 25, 26.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 34. Medard refers in this context to a second paper of his, one I have not read but the title of which epitomizes, I suspect, its content: 'Le socialisme en Afrique: l'autopsie d'un mirage'.
20. Médard also notes, in a rather more satisfied tone, that at least this same logic does help to hinder – or at least further distort ('L'Etat prédateur est lui-même prédateur, l'Etat parasite est lui-même parasité') – the malign workings of the 'demiurgic state'; Médard cites in this regard Bayart's notion of the 'revenge of civil society' (against 'l'ambition totalisante de l'Etat!')
21. Contrast, in this regard, Hyden's *Beyond Ujamaa: underdevelopment and an uncaptured peasantry* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1980) with his later *No Shortcuts to*

- Progress: African development management in perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
22. Manfred Bienefeld. 'Dependency Theory and the Political Economy of Africa's Crisis', *Review of African Political Economy*, #43 (1988). pp. 81, 82.
  23. Clarence-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
  24. O'Laughlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 28.
  25. For a manifestation, more generally cast, of this kind of left-leaning 'bad conscience' regarding the claims of 'modernity' see Jean Copans, *La longue marche de la modernité africaine* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1990).
  26. *Op. cit.*, p. 28. O'Laughlin sees the roots of this 'dualism' in the colonial power structure as being far more important than any roots it might be thought to have in any more time-honoured 'tradition'. In addition, 'in most of Africa after independence, this legal and administrative dualism was maintained, although the boundaries between the two systems and movement between them was made more flexible'. Her conclusion: 'I think it would be a fundamental error to conclude that the war in Mozambique shows that Mozambique peasants need colonial-style **regulos**.' We will return to this point in section III, below.
  27. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
  28. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
  29. Bayart, *op. cit.*, p. 120. The rather melodramatic formulation within which this phrase is found is also of interest: '. . . because they more readily lend their services to the state than to its challengers. African intellectuals (with few exceptions) have failed to provide civil society with the original conceptual instruments required for its advance. Even when they have had the courage to offer themselves to the leadership of the resistance, they have in no way been able to transcend the epistemic gulf between state and society.'
  30. Bayart, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
  31. Finnegan, *op. cit.*, from which the several quotations in these two paragraphs are drawn.
  32. Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley, 'Interstate Relations Under South African Dominance', in Wilmot G. James (ed.), *The Scare of Apartheid* (Boulder: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1987).
  33. Michel Cahen. *Mozambique: La Revolution imposée* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1987).
  34. Finnegan. *op. cit.*, p. 240.
  35. O'Laughlin, p. 27; Judith Marshall evokes the promise of this period particularly effectively in her book *Literacy, State Formation and People's Power: Education in a Mozambican factory* (Bellville, SA: CACEIUWC, 1990).
  36. As I have written elsewhere on this subject (in 'From Thaw to Flood: The end of the Cold War in Southern Africa', *Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE)*, #50 [March, 1991]). 'The burden of the past (and the ideological oversimplifications of the Cold War era) rests heavily on a leader like Joaquim Chissano, for example, who can now summarize the situation by suggesting that "Marxism was creating problems for us" – proceeding to elide "Marxism" with official Soviet-style "Marxism-Leninism" in such a way as to leave himself almost no conceptual middle-ground for blunting the charge of the most unadulterated of free-market nostrums' (p. 155. The same might be said of Finnegan.
  37. To be fair, Finnegan is himself little inclined to join in any celebration of the capitalist future he sees as unavoidable for Mozambique; as he puts the point, 'Without some extraordinary natural resource, **such** as oil, it is not at all clear that a severely underdeveloped country, firmly on the periphery of the modern world system, has even a fighting chance of development'. Moreover, he adds ominously, 'in Mozambique's case its dependence is not on the developed North. More directly and more profoundly, it is on South Africa' (*ibid.*, p. 241).
  38. Dan O'Meara, 'The Collapse of Mozambican Socialism', *Transformation*, #14 (1991). p. 82.
  39. It bears noting that O'Meara's own essay (*ibid.*) is itself a powerful and measured contribution to such a critique.
  40. See my paper 'The Nature of the Post-Colonial State: Further Reflections' and also Colin Leys, 'State and Class in Post-Colonial Africa: Comments on John Saul's Theses on the Post-Colonial State', both presented to a panel entitled 'Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie or

- Power Elite? – On Power in Africa'. African Studies Association annual meeting. Philadelphia. 17 October. 1980. See also Patrick Chabal. *Amilcar Cabral Revolutionary leadership and people's war* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), especially chapter 7. 'People's war in lusophone Africa: a comparative perspective'.
41. See John S. Saul, 'The Context: Colonialism and Revolution', being chapter 1 of Saul (ed.). *A Difficult Road: The Transition to Socialism in Mozambique* (New York: Monthly Review Press. 1985).
  42. Gavin Williams. 'There is no theory of petit-bourgeois politics'. *Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE)*. #6 (May – August. 1976).
  43. See Edward Alpers, 'The bureaucratic legacy of Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique'. paper presented to the 1986 Conference of the Review of African Political Economy. Liverpool, U.K., September, 1986.
  44. Joseph Hanlon. *Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire* (London: Zed Books. 1984): as it happens Hanlon's own argument on this point is crossed in his text by several other, seemingly contradictory, emphases.
  45. For further discussion of these decisions, and the general premises underlying them. see my essay 'Development and Counter-Development Strategies in Mozambique'. *op. cit.*.
  46. Jonathan Barker, in his book *Rural Communities Under Stress: Peasantfarmers and the state in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989), has effectively reminded us there is no single 'peasant response' to their world. There is, to begin with, a considerable range of diversity within 'the peasantry'-along lines of class, region, farming pattern and the like – that makes generalization risky. But even when considered in more general terms, what can be affirmed is that peasants are open to respond to a wide range of stimuli and to make them their own.
  47. 'Hardness'. yes, but also '*falta dos quadros*' – the relative lack of trained, skilled and confident cadres below the top leadership level (this fact being itself a reflex of Mozambique's low level of overall development) – helped blunt the edge of Frelimo's positive impact vis-a-vis the populace in the countryside, and elsewhere.
  48. Eboe Hutchful, 'Eastern Europe: Consequences for Africa'. *ROAPE*, #50 (March, 1991).
  49. See my chapter. 'The Content: A Transition to Socialism?' being chapter 2 in *A Difficult Road* and, for the impact of this 'reproductive crisis' on the Mozambican peasantry. also Otto Roesch's doctoral dissertation. *Socialism and Rural Development in Mozambique* (University of Toronto, 1986). Not that the performance of the Mozambican economy was so terribly weak during the first five years of independence. In this sphere balancing off the impact of policy weaknesses against the impact of external shocks – flood and drought, international terms of trade (including rising oil prices) and, in the end, destabilization – is particularly difficult.
  50. Colin Leys and John S. Saul, 'Liberation without Democracy: The Swapo Crisis of 1976', paper presented to the Inaugural Research Seminar of the Canadian Research Consortium on Southern Africa, Montreal, November 6, 1992, p. 30.
  51. Consider, however, the cruel dynamics of the Cold War context of the time; the Frelimo leadership felt it had some good reason to think that, as a regime seeking to evade the writ of global capitalist domination, it actually had little real choice in this regard.
  52. There can be little doubt, for example. that Frelimo learned far too much about police methods from the East Germans and others.
  53. No benefit of hindsight is necessary here. I made much the same points about the costs of Soviet influence in my chapter, 'The Content' (cited above) and also in earlier writings.
  54. Judith Marshall, *War, debt and structural adjustment in Mozambique: The social impact* (Ottawa: The North-South Institute, 1992).
  55. This 1987 World Bank statement is quoted in Marshall. *ibid.* p. 9.
  56. Marshall (*ibid.* p. 8) is here summarizing the account of IMF negotiations with Mozambique found, in fascinating detail. in Joseph Hanlon. *Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots?* (London: James Currey Publishers. 1991): Marshall herself recounts a briefing from Jacinto Veloso. Mozambique's Minister of Cooperation, in which 'we were told quite matter-of-factly that the international donor community had effectively frozen all grants, loans and credits to Mozambique until such times as Mozambique was prepared to accept an adjustment program with the IMF' (p. 8).

57. Quoted in my article. 'Mozambique: The Failure of Socialism?'. *SAR*, 6, #2 (November, 1990).
58. Hanlon. Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots? (*op. cit.*).
59. Jochen Oppenheimer, 'Development Cooperation in the Context of War and Structural Adjustment: The Case of Mozambique', paper presented to the conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies. Montreal. May. 1992.
60. See, most notably, Marshall. *op. cit.* and her numerous reports from Mozambique in the pages of *Southern Africa Report* in recent years.
61. Kim Jarvi, 'Structural Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Case of Mozambique', unpublished paper (Toronto: York University. 1992). Moreover, in Oppenheimer's *view* (*op. cit.*), to the extent that economic decline was momentarily reversed in Mozambique this was 'as a result of a very high and, in the long run. unsustainable influx of external assistance'.
62. Here then, at the end of the day, is Clarence-Smith's 'goose that lays the golden eggs'! Bowen is quoting from Hermele's *Mozambican Crossroads: Economics and Politics in the Era of Structural Adjustment* (Bergen, Norway: 1990) and adds herself that. 'this trend has been reinforced by western governments who have readily accepted South Africa's self-portrayal as the stabilizing and modernizing force in the region' (in her 'Beyond Reform: Adjustment and Political Power in Contemporary Mozambique'. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30, #2 [1992], p. 274.
63. Jochen Oppenheimer, *op. cit.*.
64. See, for example, David Ottaway, 'Black Nationalist Opposition Emerges: Frelimo's Rule. Racial Equilibrium Seen Imperilled in Mozambique', *The Washington Post*, 11 December, 1990 as, for more on Guebuza's politics, my article, 'Mozambique: The Failure of Socialism', *SAR*, 6, #2 (November, 1990).
65. Hanlon, *Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots?* (*op. cit.*), pp. 117 - 8, where he discusses Frelimo attempts to defend some expanded role for the state and also to make the World Bank and IMF take seriously the fact of on-going destabilization as a parameter for defining Mozambique's economic situation. But Hanlon also notes that a meeting with World Bank officials in November, 1985. 'was nearly the last time anyone talked about a "basic socialist framework"'.  
66. There is a certain irony to Hanlon's emphasis here. One of his original contributions to the discussion of Mozambican politics was, as we have noted above, to emphasize – even to overemphasize – the extent to which those who staffed the Frelimo state were taking on many of the attributes of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie. Now, at a point when this process is much further developed, his new book scarcely mentions the implications of this fact for thinking through the pros and cons of supporting the actually-existing state that is in place in Mozambique.
67. Otto Roesch, 'Mozambique Unravels? The Retreat to Tradition', *SAR*, 7, #5 (May, 1992). p. 30.
68. K.B. Wilson, 'Cults of Violence and Counter-Violence in Mozambique' (unpublished paper. n.d.); see also Vines, *op. cit.*, a number of case-studies by various authors currently being edited by Wilson himself at Oxford for future publication and, inter alia. Margaret Hall, *op. cit.*.
69. Roesch, *ibid.*.
70. Eboe Hutchful, *op. cit.*, 'Eastern Europe: Consequences for Africa', pp. 57 - 8.
71. See Ottaway, *op. cit.*, amongst numerous other sources.
72. Judith Marshall. 'Resisting Adjustment in Mozambique: The Grassroots Speak Up'. *SAR*, 7, #1 (July. 1991)
73. For an exemplification of some of the contradictions inherent in the relationship between economic liberalization and political democratization in present-day Africa see Marcia Burdette, 'Democracy vs Economic Liberalization: The Zambian Dilemma'. *SAR*, 8, #1 (July. 1992); see also Issa Shivji, 'The Democracy Debate in Africa: Tanzania', *ROAPE*, #50 (March, 1991).
74. Bowen, *op. cit.* p. 279: the 'triple alliance' model introduced here by Bowen (p. 258) is drawn from Barker's *Rural Communities Under Stress*, cited earlier.

75. On this possibility see the essay entitled 'The Unsteady State: Uganda. Obote and General Amin' in my *The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979).