

# “We don't want to emphasise multiracialism; we emphasise an anti-racist society”

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## Interview with President Joaquim Chissano

Joaquim Alberto Chissano was born in 1939 and studied in Mozambique, Portugal and France. He was a founder member of the Mozambican Liberation Front (Frelimo) in 1962 and was secretary to its first President, Dr. Eduardo Mondlane. During the 1974 independence negotiations with the Portuguese Government, he was an active participant and was Prime Minister of the transitional Government of 1974-1975. He became Foreign Minister in the first Government of the People's Republic of Mozambique in 1975 and held this post for 11 years. Following the tragic death of President Machel in 1986, Joaquim Chissano was elected President, with the dual mandate of crushing the armed bandits, and restoring the economy. A quiet, pragmatic man, he is nevertheless possessed of great eloquence and humour, and *The Courier* was fortunate in obtaining this face-to-face interview, which he gave in English, which shows those qualities to the full.

AIM — Antonio Muchawo



► *Your Excellency, Mozambique is a multiracial society with cultural roots both in Africa and the wider lusophone world. How significant is this for the future of multiracial societies in this Southern African region?*

— When the Mozambican people started the struggle for their liberation, their objectives were very well defined: we were fighting against a system, a colonial system, and not fighting against men, even the men who were practising it. Of course the men who were conducting it were foreigners, were Portuguese, but by settlement here (some whites were born here) some Portuguese had become Mozambicans and we were ready from the beginning to recognise them as such. It will be the same for any race. We always thought about majorities and minorities in the sense of options, of where one wants to stand, and not through the colour of skin or race, etc. During the struggle we had a minority, those who were fighting against the people of Mozambique, and a majority, those who were fighting with the people. And among those we counted people of Indian and European origin; they were within our movement, and today they are still in the leadership of the Party at the very highest posts. None of them feels guilty about what their

ancestors did as settlers or as colonialists because they are not colonialists, they don't feel like that. When we came to the transition government in 1974 we made the point again that we wanted everybody to feel free in Mozambique, and safe. But there was a big campaign to persuade settlers to leave the country, mounted in Lisbon in such a way that the Portuguese government had to launch an air-bridge to transport the refugees. We could have started here with a big number of Europeans who would have taken Mozambican citizenship if they had not been frightened by those who were opposed to independence. Even so, if we take the whole of Africa, we are proud to say that we are one of the few countries who have in the leadership a number of Whites, including those who are elected by the people in their Committees and Assemblies. It suffices to say that it gives us pride when we have as an interlocutor between our Government and the South African Government, a white Minister who is a member of the Politburo, who fought for the independence of Mozambique. It gives us pride because it's a gesture, a symbol of what we would like to see happen in South Africa. We, in Mozambique, don't want to emphasise multiracialism; we emphasise an anti-racist society, whereby we go

beyond the representativity of the races in the activities of society or political or cultural life. And I will tell you that this is not very easy; our first President had to die for this, for the fight to bring this concept forward and to defend it. Who knows whether some of those who are fighting us still are fighting this concept which we defend and will continue defending. They utilise racial lines, tribal lines. Even here, after the revolution, people would ask "Why is that White taking this post, why not that Black, etc.?" But today this question is no longer asked. The question is, how one behaves, be he white or black. It took time and it needed the courage of Whites and Blacks to forget about some past resentments. And they are forgotten now because our Party has taught people that we are fighting a system. This is again what we wish to see happen in South Africa. So, in short, we feel that we could in many aspects be taken as an example to be followed although we acknowledge that this demands the goodwill of all the parties involved in society

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*“Neither puppets of China nor of Moscow”*

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► *You have managed to forge new and constructive relations with capital-*

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*ist countries whilst not abandoning your ties to socialist ones. Is this a shift in foreign policy or merely in economic policy?*

— Here again I could trace the answer to this question to the days of the struggle for independence in Mozambique. And actually I would start from the early days when, in Mozambique, there was no liberation movement at all, but people already thought about independence. And what they thought was that one day the country which fought for its independence, which is today a big power, would come to liberate us; and that was referring to the United States of America. The first contacts were made with the West and it is not by chance that the Ford Foundation of America built the Mozambique Institute. We trained our men to fight in Algiers, not necessarily because it was a socialist country but because it was an African country, and also we sent our men to Israel to be trained for telecommunications and for first aid. It was about this time that we also started contacting socialist countries and sending some cadres to be trained there in very small numbers. The door was open for the whole world to participate in supporting Mozambique in the struggle for liberation—and our view has always been that of cooperation with the whole world on the basis of common objectives. But soon we had to start the armed struggle and we noticed it was from that time that the West drew apart from us, though we never ceased going there, we tried to convince governments, social organisations, people, and we certainly had sympathisers in the West. We had big movements in support of our struggle. I remember that big demonstration which took place in London during

Dr. Caetano's (\*) visit. There were thousands of people in the streets. I remember that in Italy we succeeded in having very big conferences comprising all parties, including the Christian Democratic Party. It's not by chance that Italy is today at the forefront of cooperation with Mozambique because of the solidarity of all the parties which started years ago, even before independence. So our will to cooperate with the West was always there. I was the first man to be called to make a statement, after Independence, at the United Nations and I said that we were ready to cooperate with all, including those who did not support us during the struggle. We had achieved our aim so we had no quarrel with anybody. Relations with the socialist countries were immediately continued because during the struggle they supported us in other ways, humanitarian or military, and that just continued. For economic development, they were there on the spot while the West was still hesitating and studying what way we would follow, whether we would become puppets of Moscow or puppets of China. But it should have been obvious we were neither, because we came with Chinese instructors and with Soviet weapons, and in those days China and the Soviet Union didn't have good relations. It was not only on the military side that the West hesitated. Even in the field of economic cooperation they didn't come immediately to help us rebuild the country. Well, when I speak about the West, I must say that I exclude some countries who always cooperated with us such as the Nordic countries and Holland. Now, since our independence and I am very well

(\*) Portuguese President, successor to Dr. Salazar overthrown in 1974

placed to say it because I was Foreign Minister—it was our job to try to improve relations with Western countries. We did all that we could to explain our position and we started from the point of independence and non-alignment because we always believed that we should cooperate with everybody. We had some success in some countries starting with Italy and later France, and much later Great Britain, and today we see the United States of America coming fourth—this is since 1983. But our offer of cooperation with the West could be illustrated by one thing. In 1976 or 1977, when Ian Smith started attacking us very strongly, massacring people and destroying infrastructures utilising armed bandits incorporated in his army, President Machel called two Ambassadors, one was the British Ambassador and the other one was the American Ambassador, and asked them to ask their leaders what Mozambique should do. This shows that we never ignored the presence of the West and the importance of the West even in the solution of conflicts like that one.

## **"Botha still has to work hard"**

► *The reaffirmation of the Nkomati Accord at Cabora Bassa in September where you met with President Botha should have marked a downturn in South African support for the armed bandits. Has there been any sign of reduced bandit activity in the field yet?*

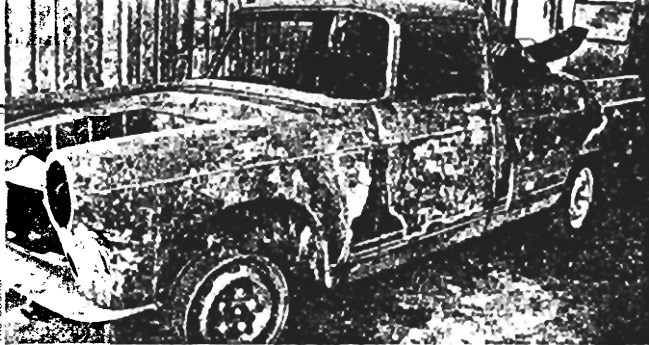
— There is a sign of reduction of the activities of the bandits in the field but I would not give credit for this reduction to the goodwill of the South African Government only. We have been, since 1986, reorganising our forces and giving them better fighting capacity. We have been in contact with our neighbours, including Malawi, to get them to adhere to different agreements and bringing them into the fight against banditry which jeopardises the interests of these countries too. But the fight against banditry is not only to be waged in the military field, it has to be waged also on the political field, which means better mobilisation of the people and involvement of the people in the struggle. Thirdly, we also had to fight

*"I think President Botha has quite a job to do," South African non-lethal military aid arriving at Beira; part of that job*

Photo: A. ...



on the economic front. This is very important not only because it gives us more capability for supporting our own soldiers but also because the population becomes less vulnerable to the manoeuvres of the bandits and those who support banditry. And, last, we have the diplomatic front, which includes the struggle to decrease the support for the bandits, whether from South Africa or from other forces outside Mozambique, in Africa or Europe or America. We succeeded in reducing the propaganda which was distorting our case. They were saying that there was a civil war in Mozambique; today, thanks to our diplomatic effort, the whole world knows that, in Mozambique, what we are fighting is terrorism, and we deserve support by everybody. And so, the measures which we are taking in order to achieve some results by political means, are appreciated by the world; I am referring for instance to the Law of Amnesty (\*) which has brought to our side now more than 2 000 ex-bandits. But I must confess that it seems that there is a movement, a positive movement in South Africa to try and stop support for banditry. President Botha still has to work hard because there are many forces there of different kinds, and if he is of good will, as I think he is, he should try and help us to dismantle the network which was established by South Africa. I think that President Botha has got quite a job to do. I think that he is convinced that peace in Mozambique is a good thing for both Mozambique and South Africa but he has to convince others. I cannot make a judgement now, because we just met in September (\*\*), and this war has been going on for many years. I hope that, as we continue the contacts with South Africa, better results will be obtained in the future. We just had a Joint Security Commission here and it went fairly well. But there are still some who are trying to continue to distort the cause by pretending that the bandits are a so-called political movement with whom we should find a political settlement, well, it's possible, but I am still waiting to hear from any corner what kind of settlement would be possible.



The Courier

*"The bandits are saying that the Economic Recovery Programme... has got no effect in the rural areas. They don't say that they have destroyed schools... hospitals... sawmills and factories in the rural areas."*

► *It has been suggested that Renamo has capitalised on the Government's relative neglect of rural interests. If there is some truth in that, what can the Government do to win "hearts and minds" in the rural areas?*

purposes, because destabilisation started in 1976 and the rural policy

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*"We may have committed some mistakes"*

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— These are several issues which those who say this refer to frequently. One is that we have herded the populations into communal villages which they look at as if they were concentration camps, which is not true. We organised the communal villages, through persuasion, with the aim of establishing a new order for our population, taking into consideration that ours is a very vast country and, it would be difficult to provide assistance to people living over vast areas; we mean schools, hospitals and related structures and even technical advice on agricultural and other kinds of activity. But also our thought was applied to those who were already living in what we called concentration camps which were hamlets created by the Portuguese during the struggle for independence. When we came to independence, we tried to give a new meaning to such agglomerations of population and we called them communal villages, so it was effectively the conversion of the hamlets into communal villages. Well, what some people might have exploited is the world "communal". If we had thought that people would have exploited this, then we maybe would have called them kibbutzes, because kibbutzes are closer to a communist life than our communal villages. Our communal villages are far from what the kibbutzes are in terms of socialisation of men and society. This is one explanation of the reference but it is easy to see that this was taken in bad faith, just for political propaganda

was adopted at the very same time. It became a very comprehensive programme, both to try and bring development to the rural areas and to rescue people from natural calamities. In the process, we may have committed some mistakes in the dimensions of the villages conceived, the placing of some of the villages, and so forth, but the aims were very sane and we would have got very good results; indeed we *have* good results in many of such villages. Today the bandits are saying that the Economy Recovery Programme may be valid for the towns but it has got no effect in the rural areas. They don't say that they have destroyed schools in the rural areas, they have destroyed sawmills, they have burned hospitals, schools and factories and hampered our efforts to develop rural areas. The bandits and the people who backed them, who created them, who supported them didn't give us time to see whether what we were doing was wrong or right. I don't know how they made the assessment that it was wrong, because these were unique experiences, they had seen this nowhere and yet they ventured to say that it was wrong. They said that we had dismantled the system of traditional chiefs, this is not wholly true. During the struggle for independence what we did was to bring to our side the chiefs who had some prestige among the people and we worked through them to mobilise the people for the cause of liberation. But in

(\*) Expired on 31 December 1988

(\*\*) Interview took place in December 1988.

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Mozambique you cannot speak about chiefs as you can speak about chiefs in Ghana or even in Zambia or Tanzania where chiefs today have lost much of their power. Well, I used to say that chieftainship in Mozambique died a natural death. It's possible that in one part of the country or another there might be a chief who would be respectable and we did not pay very much attention. I recognise that after the revolution we should not have just ignored the existence of what we recognise today as eminent persons in villages, who are not necessarily ex-chiefs but who are respected, and maybe this is what our enemies have taken advantage of and tried to paint the death of chieftainship in tragic colours. What is funny is that they claim that we should keep the system of chieftainship which is an hereditary system but at the same time they claim that we should be more democratic. Today people who replace the chiefs in the villages are elected, or, if nominated, can be replaced if complaints are made against them. So it's a contradiction, we are accused of not being democratic but at the same time our accusers request the maintenance of a wholly monarchic system of chieftaincy. Thus, by using misleading terminology, making some purely technical misjudgements, and overlooking some respected people we may have committed the mistakes in the implementation of correct policies for rural development which have been utilised by the enemies of our government and of our party.

► *Is enough being done by Mozambique's international partners—both in SADC and the wider world—to help restore peace and security to the country? What more needs to be done?*

— Well, some efforts have been made, but of course not enough. When we speak about the defence of the economy and the defence of the economic joint ventures which we undertake with our partners, we always find the same answer: that no military assistance should be given, or in the best cases "yes" to military assistance but it must be non-lethal. It means that our partners sometimes don't understand very well that we are facing terrorism. They are still afraid of getting involved in what they see as a civil war. The truth is

that we are fighting terrorism and we are fighting for development, we are fighting to improve the living standards of the people and all of this needs peace, needs the end of terrorism, the end of destabilisation. There is now at last a growing understanding of the nature of destabilisation, there is an understanding that it was created from outside Mozambique to start with, and even today it is supported from outside Mozambique and directed from outside Mozambique. So, understanding this, I think our partners who are really interested in bringing in change for the better in Mozambique should envisage a stra-



APM António Muechewe

*"The question is, how one behaves, be he white or black"*

tegy which would guarantee the success of all investments which we are making in Mozambique, and to underpin the viability of future programmes for the area, for the SADCC countries. We have suggested that in all cooperation should be a defence component to each project.

► *Equipment or manpower?*

— Not manpower. A defence component means 10-15% of the cost of the project set aside for defence purposes even if it is to buy non-lethal equipment or supplies of other kinds. This would enable us to prepare the very workers of the projects to protect themselves. We have now decided that the best way of fighting against banditry is to equip the people to defend themselves because they are the targets of banditry. The army by itself cannot be present in every corner of the country. Our partners,

in what concerns development projects, could add a defence component, because it's a heavy cost for us to pin down a battalion to assist the construction of a dam, or pin down thousands of soldiers to protect the Nacala Corridor, or the rehabilitation of the Limpopo line, or to escort those in mining or oil and gas prospecting.

*"Those who are against us are... to the right of the right."*

► *So do you think the efforts at the moment are not quite enough?*

— They are not enough. The other side is that the condemnation of banditry should be, in some cases, stronger. Countries should take very sharp measures and not equivocate about terrorism. We know that at this moment the extreme right-wingers in some countries in the West are trying to create a political image for the bandits and make a big effort to try organise them as a political movement in Europe and in other countries in the West. We are trying to do something in order to counter this but you will find that some governments will not apply enough measures in order to avoid this. This weakness which is being felt on the ground by the bandits may be compensated for by an image which they can get overseas. Those who are against us are not conventional right-wingers like Mrs Thatcher or even like President Reagan. They are to the right of the right. All our friends overseas should contribute in order to help us convince the bandits that we are serious when we say that they can come and join us and build this country peacefully. Instead of just negotiating with them when a citizen of their country is kidnapped by the bandits and being ill-treated, friendly countries should tell the bandits how wrong they are and cut off all the bridges with them.

► *Given the security situation, is it reasonable to seek foreign investment at the present time? If it is, what fields are likely to attract investment?*

— Despite the security situation, investment needs to be promoted and has been accorded considerable

importance. Because of the war, Mozambique's policy is to organise production on a war economy basis. Thus, we encourage foreign investment in areas where security is not threatened or areas where the necessary conditions to guarantee security can be created. Good examples of this are Tabex-Manica (tobacco for export and maize) and Lomaco (crop and livestock production and industrial activities), which both brought about the conditions of security enabling them to produce in the areas where they operate (Manica, Sofala, Gaza and Maputo). There are similar examples all along the railway corridors where secure conditions have been created for foreign investment and where, as a result, growth areas have been promoted. The priority fields for investment are agriculture, minerals, transport and communications, tourism, consultancy services and oil exploration.

▶ *You have embarked on a courageous programme of structural adjustment. Can you ensure that the social and economic consequences remain acceptable, and that it does not impede any drive to increase agricultural output?*

— First of all let us outline the economic consequences of the Economic Rehabilitation Programme (PRE). The objective of the PRE is to reverse the negative growth trend of national economy observed up to 1986. As you are doubtless aware, agriculture forms the basis for Mozambique's development. As a result of implementation of the PRE in 1987 GDP grew by 4%; agriculture accounted for the largest proportion, and marketed farm production rose by 10%. It is hoped that this year real growth of GDP will be around 4%, and that the volume of marketed farm produce will increase by almost 9.7%. In addition to these general effects, the PRE, by means of a dynamic pricing policy, which acts to the producer's advantage, encourages increased agricultural production, and it is hoped that marketed farm produce will achieve the following growth rates for 1988: "mapira" (sorghum) 60%, cashew nuts 40%, maize and beans 30%, groundnuts 20%, rice 13%, seed cotton 10%. With the PRE we have managed to

reduce the rate of inflation, which was 166% in 1987, to 60%, and it is hoped that by the end of the year it will be down to 50%. The unofficial market declined sharply, and even disappeared in certain cases. A great effort is being made to provide incentives for the rural population as regards marketing of farm produce. There is greater dynamism in the business sector. My aim in giving these few examples has been to show how the PRE has provided a real incentive for increased production, particularly in agriculture.

Now for the social effects. I would say that the PRE will have short- and medium-term effects on the rural and urban population. In the short term, the social consequences will be relatively unfavourable for a certain section of the population comprising the unemployed and their families, workers whose wages are not sufficient to support their families, pensioners, orphans, displaced persons and drought and war victims. This is the result of the rise in prices and the drop in subsidies to the consumer and to businesses. This situation will be reversed in the medium term, since the recovery of the economy will bring social benefits for the entire population. In order to alleviate the negative social effects, the Government has adopted certain measures, including the following: general wage and salary increases to offset the effects of the devaluations; continued subsidisation of certain prices and certain enterprises, the creation of funds for educational social action, health social action, social security system, and a programme for the supply of energy in more accessible forms (use of kerosene and coal).

▶ *Negotiations are now under way for a successor to the current Lomé Convention. What would you like to see included?*

— I should first like to make the point that cooperation under the present Lomé Convention is noteworthy, being a definitely positive trend. We in Mozambique would like the Community countries to indicate more clearly their position regarding measures for abolishing apartheid in South Africa, which is responsible for destabilising and hindering the economic development of the countries of the

region—parties to the ACP-EEC Convention—by its attacks on them; we believe that Europe has a responsibility for helping to remove apartheid. Mozambique has not yet worked out a definitive proposal regarding the future Convention, but we would consider that the present Convention meets the ACP countries' aspirations. It is hoped, nevertheless, that the new Convention will embody principles and procedures most likely to lead to attainment of the ACP States' objectives, namely, greater flexibility and adaptability of the machinery for achieving the objectives laid down, and in particular a guarantee that the operation of Stabex will be fully satisfactory as well as a better adaptation of the structure of the European Development Fund to the present reality of the structural adjustment programmes which many ACP States are undertaking, and, finally, greater emphasis on industrial development. In this connection machinery should be set up to facilitate access to the Community market for industrial products from the ACP countries. We should like to see the next Convention taking into account, in the allocation of funds, the difficult situation of the least-developed countries with a heavy external debt burden. Finally, the Lomé Convention foresees aid for emergency situations but it foresees only aid for emergency situations created by natural calamities. In our case we have a bigger calamity which is man-made—not a civil war, it's created from outside and is the result of terrorism, and we have lots of displaced people who don't fall under what is foreseen by the Lomé Convention. I think that, as we are renegotiating, something could be envisaged to help such emergency situations. I speak about my country, but I think that this could apply to some other countries like Angola. The other thing which I would stress is that we need to boost intra-regional trade; again here I am moved by the efforts which we are making within SADCC, and we should get some support from the international community, and the EEC in particular, so that we can develop our intra-regional trade. We are laying down the bases, which are transport and communications but we'll need a lot more.

Interview by T.G