

UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND MIGRANT LABOUR

Editorial

This is the first issue of the journal of the Centre of African Studies of Eduardo Mondlane University which will be published twice-yearly. **Mozambican Studies** will carry articles and documents of original scholarly work written in and about Mozambique, by scholars and researchers who have conducted research in this country, or who have had access to archives of Mozambican material, or who are working on aspects of Mozambican society in the regional context of Southern Africa.

Like the Centre of African Studies from which it emanates, **Mozambican Studies** will use an inter-disciplinary approach in an attempt to make an integrated analysis of Mozambican society. It will publish articles within the general realm of the social sciences and, as in this issue, by economists, sociologists, political scientists, historians and even and especially non-academics. And it will reject the characteristic bourgeois division of labour in the production of knowledge, and the academic departmentalism, careerism and professional insularity, this induces.

For a materialist analysis is, after all, predicated upon an insistence that the separation between the economic, the political, the social and cultural parts of the whole are artificial and arbitrary. Economics cannot be free from politics; in fact we reject the notion of a 'pure' or technical economics, and conceive rather of a political economy, in which the political — the condition of the class struggle and the role of the state — is an ever-present component of the analysis.

The study of Mozambique needs, then, to proceed from the method of political economy applied to the specific Mozambican conditions not only of the present time, but of a society grown out of the struggles of the past.

Mozambican Studies will not be a journal of history, but it will draw, as this issue does rather heavily, on the work of a young new school of Mozambican historians who have made a dramatic rupture with the legacy of colonial history.

This was a history which made the colonising power the prime mover, thus the subject, of history, and the peoples of Mozambique its mere object. Travellers' accounts, ethnographic descriptions, even the histories of diplomacy and of the development of colonial law and institutions, saw the colonial penetration not only as uncontested, but even as a positive 'civilising' force.

The independence of Mozambique made necessary and inevitable the total reconstruction of Mozambique's history. Such a reconstruction will require the insertion of the peoples' struggles, of the acts of Mozambicans as the subjects of history, but we believe that the making of a revolutionary history requires more than the mere presentation of a contrary version of the events, and more than a descriptive account of anti-colonial resistance and rebellions mounted by Mozambicans against the colonial power.

The task is to analyse and interpret the impact of Portuguese colonial capitalism on Mozambique as a historical system. It involves a general theory of capitalism and a grasp of the methods of colonialism but more than this it must proceed from an analysis of the specific and also the changing ways in which Portuguese capital penetrated Mozambique. This must proceed in turn from a characterisation of the character of Portugal's own economy: a late and feeble capitalism which gave her a weak and dependent position within the international economy, and made her subordinate to stronger capitalisms, not only within the metropolitan economy but also in the colonies. Thus within Mozambique Portuguese capital was not

only not exclusive, it was also not dominant. Accordingly an analysis of the political economy of colonial Mozambique needs to take into account both the changing forms of Portuguese capital, from the 16th to the 20th century, and the presence and processes of operation of foreign capital: the process of integration of the Mozambican economy within the southern African sub-system dominated by South African mining capital.

The articles in this issue by Marc Wuyts and Luis de Brito provide the frame-work for this analysis of colonial capitalism in Mozambique. The Wuyts' article proposes a periodisation of Portuguese colonialism. This is a periodisation as distinct from a chronology: it is not a listing of important events, but a characterisation of the changing forms of successive phases of the political economy. Two essential criteria are used for the changing phases: differences and struggles between different types and factions of capital; and changes in the relations and thus the struggles between capital and labour.

The periodisation concentrates on developments after 1885 and delineates three principal phases, the last two during the Salazar period. It argues that even with the institution of the policy of Portuguese 'economic nationalism', the connection with South African mining capital was not broken but was tightened, for reasons relating to the weakness of Portuguese capital and to the revenue and accumulation needs of the Portuguese state. During the latter phase of the Salazar regime there was an important re-structuring of Portuguese capital in Mozambique, though once again it was achieved with the assistance of foreign capital. This was the period of the open door policy when accumulation was no longer based exclusively on forced labour and forced cropping, which system made labour cheap but unproductive, but increasingly on more mechanised forms of production which in turn generated relative rather than absolute surplus value. This re-structuring of capital is shown to have coincided with different forms of class structure within Mozambique and to have instituted different forms of exploitation of labour. Articles in future issues of this journal will attempt to elaborate on these changing forms of the political economy during the later periods of the colonial system.

The periodisation by Wuyts, and the elaboration of certain of its aspects by Luis de Brito, deal principally with the period after 1885 as do most of the articles. The inclusion in this issue of Nogueira da Costa's seminal article extends this time span but the method of

analysis remains consistent throughout. The principal foci of analysis remain: different forms of appropriation and the competition between different forms and factions of capital; and the struggles between capital as appropriators of surplus, and of labour.

The articles by Nogueira da Costa, Carlos Serra and Judith Head are part of a growing body of analytical material on the changing political economy of Zambésia Province. These three contributions all focus on the key questions of political economy: what forms of capital constituted or followed in the wake of the colonial penetration? Within the Mozambican social formation thus penetrated, how had production been socially organised: what was the character of the process of production, and how was labour organised and how was surplus extracted? What was the impact of colonial-capitalism on these forms of production, and on the method of appropriation?

It will be seen that this focus on forms of labour exploitation introduces the second principal theme of this issue of **Mozambican Studies**. The double theme is expressed in the title: **Underdevelopment and Migrant Labour**. The first theme elaborates the specific form of under-development imposed on Mozambique as a result of the forms of exploitation by capital to which it was subjected. The second theme details the forms of labour exploitation used in different phases of the operation of capital. From the late 19th century onwards, largely as a result of the needs of foreign capital, both plantation capital within Mozambique, and mining capital outside, this specific form was the use of migrant labour.

Migrant labour is in fact the dominant form of labour use to merge in this period in the whole of southern Africa. It is labour which is forced to oscillate between domestic agricultural production within the peasant economy and recurrent periods of wage work in capitalist mining, agriculture or industry.

Capital has used this system of migrant labour to place part of the burden of reproduction of the worker and his family on to domestic production. Capital has thus paid the worker below his cost of reproduction, leaving it to the family plot to maintain the worker between spells of employment, in times of sickness and in old age, and to support the family as a whole.

Both the Serra and the Head articles use this conception of migrant labour to explain forms of accumulation by plantation capital in Zambésia Province. Their studies deal with the period of industrial capitalism when there had already been a prolonged penetration of forms of pre-capitalist peasant production.

The essential backdrop to their work is provided by Nogueira da Costa's analysis of a much earlier period of penetration: the impact of Portuguese merchant capital on the state of Muenemutapa. Here is a pioneering materialist analysis of the pre-capitalist Shona social formation: not a romantic notion of egalitarian African society ranged against White colonialism, but an examination of the organisation of production and thus of the internal class structure, and of the role of the state apparatus in appropriating surplus for the ruling class. Portuguese merchant capital for its part had first to displace Arab merchant capital and it had then to superimpose its needs on the existing forms of appropriation within the Shona social formation. This it did initially by forging an alliance between the Portuguese crown and the Kingdom's ruling aristocracy which led in the initial period to the reinforcement of the existing method of surplus appropriation, but which led later to a crisis in production and to the destruction of the local dominant classes. This is an article rich in historical data but also in its capacity for conceptualisation, as seen in its handling of merchant capital, of the role of political state forms and ideology, and its questioning of certain usages such as 'feudal' and the role of merchant capital in raising the forces of production.

Serra's article on the Zambésia of 1885 to 1930 takes up the theme of how capitalism dissolved and then reconstituted forms of surplus appropriation. The small producers of the pre-1890 period were turned, despite their resistance, into sellers of labour power to the plantations. The change was imposed through the co-option and the re-structuring of the earlier form of *mussoco* tribute, but now appropriation was in the interests of plantation capital, supported by the colonial state. Serra's article argues that until 1919 the annexation of labour time for limited periods of enforced work did not subordinate peasant agricultural production, but in the subsequent period agricultural production was made subordinate to wage labour requirements.

Judith Head's article is a study of such a wage work force on a single plantation. Sena Sugar. The article describes the role of the state in producing a wage labour force by putting regular labour obligations on the peasantry. It shows how the system of migrant labour had special advantages for plantation capital, which could regulate labour flows to its seasonal labour requirements.

Above all this article is an account of how the plantation managed its labour force in order to intensify the exploitation of labour, not

only by putting part of the reproduction costs of the worker and his family on the peasant sector, but by cutting the food and living and health standards of the workforce itself. Consistent with the periodisation of the Wuyts article, Judith Head shows how the labour requirements of other sectors during the 1950s and the 1960s caused a labour shortage, and how, especially in the period 1960 to 1975, there were pressures on capital to change its labour use policy to a more intensive labour use system, linked with a certain mechanisation of production.

The rest of the material in this issue deals not with the production of an internally migrating labour force, but with the long-established system of labour export to the South African mines. The analysis of this system of labour export is contained in other publications of the Centre of African Studies. This issue of **Mozambican Studies** contains accounts by the workers themselves, in the shape of interviews of their experiences; and also an analysis of the present labour-use strategy of South Africa which has changed in the last two decades, and which has had important effects on Mozambique and other labour-supply states in the region.

Over a century the system of labour export has had a deep structural impact on the Mozambican economy. The defeat of colonialism, and the policies for the transition to socialism of Mozambique, make possible a re-structuring of what was a deformed and distorted economy, not least in the agricultural sector. In the sense that this issue of **Mozambican Studies** documents not only the impact of the colonial economy of the past, but also the need to restructure and thus the pointers to the future, it declares its intention to be a journal of serious study, but also a journal of intervention.

It will be a theoretical journal, but not an academic one. It will be aimed at a Mozambican readership but it will hope also to draw Mozambican scholarship to the attention of a wider world. A rigorous political economy of Mozambique is still in the process of being constructed. This journal hopes to make some contribution towards that objective.

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