



The abolition of price controls has made it even harder for low-income Mozambicans to make ends meet.

## Mozambique debates political pluralism

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could threaten national unity, since there would be a danger of parties forming along regional or religious lines.

Chissano insisted, however, that the question of a multiparty system be fully discussed in the nationwide debate on the constitution that will now take place. For several months, the draft will be discussed at meetings to be held throughout Mozambique. This process could result in significant amendments before the constitution is finally voted on by the People's Assembly.

Chissano has been under U.S. pressure to introduce a multiparty system, and he must hope that after the debate he will be able to tell Washington: "See, the people don't want any more parties."

The South African-backed rebels of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) are not a serious factor in the discussion as to whether there should be more than one party in Mozambique. First, Frelimo rejects the MNR's political credentials, arguing that it is merely a military, destabilizing force and not a political party at all. Second, no one imagines that the MNR, loathed and feared in most of the country, could win many votes in a free election.

Far more dangerous would be the creation of a party appealing to the large Islamic population (at least a third of Mozambicans, mainly in the north, are Muslims). Other possible new parties would be an overtly Christian one, or groupings with secessionist tendencies.

There has been discussion of a thorough overhaul of the constitution for at least three years. Indeed, an earlier, less radical draft was produced in 1988, but the Frelimo leadership withdrew it in September 1989. This was done in order to rewrite the document in light of the decisions taken by the party's Fifth Congress in July.

In line with the congress's abandonment of "Marxism-Leninism," references in the constitution to power "belonging to the workers and peasants" disappear, replaced by the bland formula that "sovereignty resides in the people." There is no reference to socialism, merely to "social justice."

For the first time since independence in 1975, the possibility of private ownership of land emerges, albeit hedged with qualifications, including the insistence that land should not be controlled by a minority at the expense of the direct producers. The draft notes, however, that privately owned land can be inherited by the owners' children.

But much of the new draft is concerned with the rights and freedoms of citizens, and this is unequivocally positive. A "right to life" is established, thus abolishing the death penalty, and the draft specifically outlaws torture and all forms of cruel and degrading treatment. There is a right to privacy, and no phone-tapping or interception of mail can be carried out without specific legal authorization.

The courts are independent—and Chissano went to great lengths to stress this point at the Jan. 9 rally. "Even I, as president, cannot order a court, 'Convict that man,'" he said. Suspects enjoy the presumption of innocence until proven otherwise; the burden

of proof lies with the prosecution. There is a right to legal defense, and the state must guarantee legal aid so that no one is disadvantaged through being too poor to pay for a lawyer.

Citizens may also take the state to court to seek compensation for unlawful arrest or any other abuses of power. Citizens have the right to refuse to carry out orders that are illegal or undermine their rights.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed (including the right of religious bodies to own the property they may need for acts of worship). There is to be freedom of opinion, of assembly and of association which may only be limited when public order or other people's rights are put at risk.

### NO REFERENCE TO SOCIALISM

While it may be legitimate to suppose that the abandonment of Marxist rhetoric has something to do with Western pressure, there is no doubt that the provisions concerning rights and freedoms are specifically Mozambican. Concern over the abuse of state power can be traced back to the "offensive for legality" launched by the late president Samora Machel in November 1981.

In an extraordinarily courageous speech, Machel denounced his own armed forces, police and security apparatus for arbitrarily detaining, beating and torturing citizens. Machel roundly declared that Mozambique did not need a secret police, but a genuinely popular security service that relied on close links with the people in order to combat South African subversion.

Thus the democratic concerns of the new constitution owe nothing to Reagan, Bush and Thatcher, though the smug Western media will doubtless present the new constitution as Mozambique "seeing the light."

There is one freedom, however, that is conspicuously absent from the draft—freedom of the press. Several Mozambican journalists have already announced their intention to raise this issue. They point out that the other freedoms mentioned in the draft cannot be exercised properly unless citizens have the right of access to truthful information, free of administrative interference.

The constitution also for the first time enshrines workers' right to strike. Previously the legal situation was murky, but it was generally assumed that strikes were illegal.

Ironically, as Chissano announced the right-to-strike provision, Maputo was already in the grip of a wave of wildcat strikes, mainly over wage disputes. By mid-January, bus drivers, railway, glass, hospital, steel and textile workers, as well as city employees such as gravediggers and street cleaners, had all gone on strike, sometimes only for a few hours, sometimes for several days.

The strike wave has also spread north of the capital, to hospital and building workers in the port city of Beira, to coal miners in Moatize and to bus drivers in Nampula.

An announcement by the Labor Ministry of a 16% across-the-board wage increase for all workers did not halt these actions. The ministry also published a set of regulations on strikes, including the stipulation that

workers must give written notice of a strike 72 hours in advance (or seven days in the case of essential services). So far workers have ignored this.

Some of the strikers' demands are modest indeed. Nampula's bus drivers were demanding not a wage increase, but the payment of back wages owed to them. They had not been paid for 11 months. What is surprising is not that the workers went on strike, but that it took them so long to do so. A second Nampula bus company owed its workers five months' wages; incredibly, they volunteered to go back to work if just two months of the arrears were paid.

### OFFICIAL UNION ISOLATED

Other grievances included demands for an end-of-year bonus (equivalent to an extra month's wages), length-of-service bonuses and increased payment for night shifts.

But the really intractable problem for the government is the demand for huge wage increases being voiced by some public sector workers. Nurses and ancillary workers at Maputo Central Hospital have been calling for a 100% raise, while the hospital workers in Beira were demanding almost 150%—they wanted the salary of the lowest grade of nurses lifted from the equivalent of \$39 a month to \$95.

Health Minister Leonardo Simao tried to tell the workforce that "we cannot give what we do not have," but when representatives read this reply to a meeting of hospital workers in Maputo on Jan. 17, there were cries of "rubbish" and "We want the 100%."

Clearly the ministry cannot just increase hospital wages—it would have to increase pay scales for all health workers (and those in rural areas, facing the risk of MNR attack, are living under much worse conditions than those in city hospitals). Since there are a large number of health workers, such a wage hike would have a major impact on the country's budget, approved by parliament in December with stern warnings that no department would be allowed to overspend.

So far the strikes have been fairly peaceful, although there were ugly scenes on the first day of the hospital strike in Maputo. Three patients were completely abandoned and strikers, who were blockading the hospital, even cut the power supply to the emergency services. When some strikers threw stones at the hospital, shattering the windows of the neurology unit, police fired warning shots into the air.

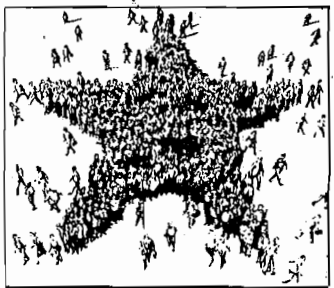
There were also violent scenes at Texlom, the state-run textile factory in Markto, where strikers beat up a member of the management.

These strikes cruelly exposed how isolated the official trade union movement, the Mozambican Workers' Organization

(OTM), has become from the masses of workers. The strikes took place without any reference to the OTM, and even where trade union committees existed, they were ignored. The strikers preferred to elect their own representatives, rather than use OTM structures. Three weeks into the strike wave, OTM General Secretary Augusto Macamo had not said a word.

The root causes of the strikes lie with the International Monetary Fund-inspired economic recovery program that has been in place since early 1987. These measures have stoked working-class discontent. Life was hard before the recovery plan, but workers were protected by a system of heavy subsidies on basic food items and by the preferential distribution of many goods through workplaces at strictly controlled prices. That has all gone now, and the workers are at the mercy of the market forces championed by the IMF and the World Bank.

Low-income earners with large families find it extremely difficult to make ends



SOCIALIST UPEHAVAL

meet, and Western donors have reluctantly agreed to the reintroduction of subsidies to assist the poorest strata (though the exact form of this scheme remains unclear).

In addition, there are growing differentials as managers and technical staff are paid extremely high salaries, sometimes with a foreign currency component. In the state sector this differential is openly justified as a bribe to stop qualified staff from moving to the private sector, to international organizations, UN agencies and the like. A small minority of people are doing extremely well out of the recovery program. The flaunting of wealth by the nouveaux riches—either in private business or in the state apparatus—fuels working-class resentment.

At the People's Assembly in December top Frelimo intellectual Sergio Vieira warned that "when sacrifice and austerity are for everyone, then everyone is motivated—that was our experience in the past. But when a handful of people grab benefits for themselves by illegal means, then we lose confidence and motivation."

# Frelimo relinquishes 'leading role'

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By PAUL FAUVET

Special to the Guardian

MAPUTO—Mozambique's ruling Frelimo party is voluntarily relinquishing its constitutionally enshrined "leading role" in state and society.

A new draft constitution, unveiled by President Joaquim Chissano at a Jan. 9 Maputo rally, at no stage mentions the concept of a "leading role," either for the party or for the working class. Indeed, Frelimo itself is scarcely mentioned (apart from historical references) in the draft.

This is perhaps the sharpest difference between the draft and the existing constitution, where the role of the party is overwhelming, even to the point of explicitly stating that the president of Frelimo shall automatically be head of state.

Under the draft constitution, party and state are clearly separated. Any Mozambican citizen aged between 40 and 65 may run for the job of president of the republic provided he or she has at least 5000 proposers, at least 200 of whom must come from each of the country's 11 provinces.

The election, both for the president and for the country's parliament, the

People's Assembly, will be by direct universal suffrage and secret ballot. This replaces the clumsy pyramid structure of electoral colleges by which the parliament has been elected so far. Under this system the electorate only cast their votes directly (by show of hands, not by ballot) for the lowest tier, that of local assemblies.

The local assemblies then formed electoral colleges to choose assemblies for administrative posts, the next rung up the ladder of local government, and so on, until the provincial assemblies elected the parliament. The link between the electorate and the national assembly was therefore tenuous, to say the least.

The draft says nothing about political parties and is carefully worded so that its provisions are adequate for both a single party and a multiparty system. Chissano made it very clear that he is personally in favor of retaining the current 1-party system and working for the incorporation of differing viewpoints within that structure. The president's argument is that Mozambique is still at the stage of nation-building, and that allowing the formation of various parties

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