

LAND OF LOST OPPORTUNITIES:
TRANSITION AND CRISIS IN MOZAMBICAN
AGRICULTURE

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyses the reasons underlying the failure of the collectivization of agriculture in Mozambique (1975-84). Two explanations are offered; first, Frelimo's socializing policies reflected an inconsistent compromise between dualist and non-dualist views of the relationship between the peasant and "modern" sectors of the economy. Second, the poor and middle peasants actively resisted the collectivist strategy of the government. The conflict between state and peasantry led to the collapse of agricultural production, the defeat of the collectivist strategy, and the slide of the country into a vicious civil war.

Keywords: Mozambique; Agriculture; Modernization; Peasantry; Public policies; Frelimo

Few countries in the world have had a recent history as troubled as Mozambique. Its fragile economy has suffered badly from 30 years of almost continuous war, economic mismanagement, and often misconceived attempts at social engineering. Partly for these reasons, living conditions in Mozambique are now among the most precarious on Earth. This paper discusses an important aspect of these problems: the collapse of the agricultural sector, that accompanied the independence of the country and accelerated in the wake of the failure of the collectivization policies implemented by the Frelimo government.

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This paper has five sections. The first analyses the conflict between the dualist and non-dualist interpretations of colonial agriculture. These opposing views are important, because they allow us to illuminate the flaws in Frelimo's policy of agrarian transition (that is, transition towards collective forms of property and production) from a new angle. This section also discusses the process of internal differentiation of the peasantry, which was influential in the ways in which it responded to the collectivization effort.

Section two reviews the relationship between the peasantry and the "modern" or capitalist sector of the economy, and the mechanisms of exploitation of the peasantry put in place by the colonial state. It also discusses the different ways in which dualists and non-dualists within Frelimo perceived the economic crisis that accompanied the country's independence, and the policies which they proposed to counteract the accelerated fall in output. It will be seen that sharply distinct policies would be adopted, depending on the view that the incoming government had of the peasantry and its links with the "modern" sector of the economy.

Section three discusses the collectivization of agriculture. It describes the process of socialization of the land, and the forms of property, production and social organization that would be put in place, and outlines the motivations underlying each of them. This section argues that Frelimo's agricultural policy was the result of an uneasy compromise between the dualist and non-dualist views within the movement. As a result, Frelimo's rhetoric was non-dualist, but its actions were inspired by a dualist perception of the relationship between the peasant and capitalist sectors of the economy.

Section four reviews the conflicts underlying the attempted collectivization of agriculture, and the reasons for its ultimate failure. Three aspects of collective agriculture are discussed, the state farms, co-operatives and communal villages. The problems within them are discussed with our attention focused on the most critical aspect of each; the conflicts for land (in the case of the state farms), the conflicts for income (in the co-operatives) and the conflicts for labour (in the communal villages). The paper closes (in section five) with an overview of the collapse of agriculture which followed peasant resistance to collectivization, and the reasons for the slide of the country into one of the most vicious civil wars in modern times.

I - COLONIAL AGRICULTURE

In 1975, the year of independence, agriculture produced 22% of the Mozambican GNP, industry 18%, and services 60% (MOURA & AMARAL 1977:11). This was a reflex of the orientation of the economy towards the provision of transport and other services to the neighbouring countries, the size of the colonial administration, and the extent of non-marketed agricultural production. The vast majority of the population was involved in peasant agriculture. As late as 1980, 85.3% of the economically active population worked in agriculture or animal husbandry, and 92.6% of them had no employees (RPM 1983: 33, 36).

1.1 - DUALIST AND NON-DUALIST INTERPRETATIONS OF PEASANT AGRICULTURE

The main features of the Mozambican agriculture, and especially the relationship between its “*traditional*” and “*modern*” sectors, have been interpreted in at least two different ways. They have been called the “*dualist*” and “*non-dualist*” approaches (CASTEL-BRANCO, 1994; O’LAUGHLIN, 1981).

The *dualist* approach is inspired by structuralism, and it was very influential during the colonial period (see, for example, *Província de Moçambique*, 1973). It presumes that traditional (peasant or family) agriculture is a subsistence sector largely independent of the modern sector (mechanized agriculture, plantations and modern industry). Few tools or implements are used in this sector; its productivity is low, and the excedents traded are meagre. This sector is only marginally integrated into the market, and it does not respond well to price signals. In contrast, the modern sector is intrinsically linked to the market. This sector was created by the Portuguese settlers and by British, French and South African capitalists. Especially after the 1880s, these groups displaced the African peasantry from the best-located and most fertile lands, in order to produce crops for the domestic market and for export. They also set up light manufactures to produce non-durable consumer goods for settler consumption and for export.

The *non-dualist* approach is inspired by Marxism, and has a sharply distinct perspective. It departs from the profound changes imposed by colonialism upon traditional agriculture, especially the differentiation of the peasantry. The most important feature of the non-dualist approach is the conclusion that colonial capitalism destroyed the traditional lifestyle of the peasantry to such an extent that it now needs regular employment in the modern sector in order to survive.

Hence, it is no longer a proper peasantry; rather, it has become a *worker-peasantry* (FIRST, 1987; WUYTS, 1978). Hence, from the non-dualist viewpoint the “*traditional*” sector is inseparable from the “*modern*”.

The dualist and non-dualist approaches have sharply distinct policy implications. In order to assess the significance of these approaches, and their impact on the process of collectivization of agriculture, we will start with a digression on the changes imposed on the traditional peasantry by colonial capitalism.

1.2 - THE PEASANTRY UNDER COLONIALISM

Strong forces led to the differentiation of the African peasantry in Mozambique. In spite of the repressive policies of the colonial state (which largely prevented the formation of a rich African peasantry in the country), some peasants managed to improve their living conditions, invest in the land, and increase their status. Three processes contributed to the formation of a middle and rich peasantry in Mozambique². Firstly, the traditional leaders, closely linked with the Portuguese, enjoyed the deference of their subjects and exploited them accordingly. These leaders controlled the allocation of labour power for forced labour and forced cultivation, collected taxes, and distributed the common land for family production. Prisoners were forced to work their plots of land, and they were not subject to the same degree of control by the Portuguese as other Mozambicans.

Secondly, relatively stable and well-paid work in South Africa allowed Southern peasants to purchase consumer durables, improve their houses, and invest in their plots of land buying tools, fertilizer, pesticides, improved seeds, cattle, ploughs, water-pumps and even tractors. Thirdly, in areas near international borders the peasants often avoided the low prices paid by the colonial monopsonies by smuggling part of their products and selling them at higher prices over the border.

Even though these avenues allowed some peasants to improve their living conditions, especially in the second half of this century, they were the exception rather than the rule. The tendency was towards the gradual proletarianization of

(2) FIRST (1987, esp. p. 107-10) discusses the stratification of the peasantry in southern Mozambique in great detail; see also WIELD (1979) and WUYTS (1978).

the peasantry³. By the mid-1970s, as is rightly emphasized by the non-dualist school, most peasants were unable to reproduce themselves through work in their own land. They were forced to sell part of their output, and to find paid employment as migrant wage workers in Mozambique or abroad. In spite of this, the process of formation of an African working class was still far from complete. Most wage workers in Mozambique were primarily peasants, who regularly resorted to migrant labour in the cities or in South African or Rhodesian mines⁴.

The exploitation of the peasantry was the most important aspect of the colonial order. There were four main modes of exploitation of the peasantry in pre-independence Mozambique. All of them required some degree of integration between the traditional and modern sectors of the economy:

- (a) The payment of taxes, e.g. the hut tax or taxes on income obtained from migrant labour abroad. The tax demands of the state were a powerful inducement for the integration of the peasantry into commodity circuits, either through the sale of primary products or of labour power.
- (b) The supply of cheap raw materials for the domestic industry (such as oilseeds and grains) and for export (especially cotton, cashew and copra). The low price of these commodities, zealously enforced by the colonial state, fuelled the growth of Mozambican industry and the profitability of the Portuguese textile industry.
- (c) The production of cheap food, which helped keep wages low, and partly compensated for the outdated technologies employed in most firms.
- (d) The supply of cheap labour power to capitalist enterprises. In agriculture, labour demand was often highly seasonal because of the commodities produced and the technologies adopted. Therefore, profits depended on the availability of cheap labour power as and

(3) At the time of independence, there were around 4,000 big farmers (almost exclusively white), who owned more than 20 hectares of land. There were also 390,000 middle farmers and peasants, who owned 2-20 hectares of land (the average, however, was as low as 3 hectares), while 1.3 million peasants owned less than 2 hectares (HERMELE 1988: 27).

(4) The population of Mozambique in 1971 was approximately nine million, of which 1.15 million were involved in paid employment; 70% were temporary or migrant workers, and only 30% had permanent jobs (MARLEYN, WiELD and WILLIAMS 1982: 116). Mozambican migrant labour in South African mines is discussed in detail by FIRST (1987); for a critique of the concept of 'worker-peasant,' widely used in First's study (e.g. p. 150-53), see Allen (1992).

when required, which was partly satisfied by the forced labour and the migrant labour systems (see CEA 1987, Head 1981, PENVENNE 1993, and WUYTS 1978).

The different opinions held by dualists and non-dualists with respect to the importance and linkages between the traditional and modern sectors in agriculture (and in the economy as a whole) are primarily due to the ambiguous position of the peasantry itself. On the one hand, it relied to a large extent on traditional forms of social organization and production for self-consumption, which lends support to the dualist view. On the other hand, some peasants were to a certain extent (depending on region and level of income) integrated in the capitalist labour market and in the goods markets, sometimes even producing for export (e.g., cashew). The different readings of the economic and social roles of the Mozambican peasantry have determined some of the most important traits the agricultural policies followed after independence.

2 - INDEPENDENCE AND CRISIS

Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique collapsed in the early 1970s because of the increasingly successful anti-colonial war waged by Frelimo (the acronym of the Mozambique Liberation Front), and the triumph of the Carnation Revolution in Portugal. Moves towards independence were accompanied by fierce settler resistance and mass emigration. By 1976, around 90% of the 250,000 Portuguese settlers had left Mozambique. Their departure led to a major economic crisis, because most machines, foreign exchange and know-how in the country were either taken abroad or simply destroyed (see ADAM 1991, BOWEN 1990, EGERO 1992, ch.4, HERMELE 1987 and WUYTS 1989). As a result, between 1973 and 1975, output declined by 38% in industry and 13% in agriculture, and GNP fell by 21% (MOURA & AMARAL 1977:10; WUYTS 1978:29).

The crisis affected the peasantry in three different ways. First, the rural transport and trading systems, controlled by the Portuguese, collapsed. As a result, the marketable output of the peasantry could not be sold, and most inputs and manufactured consumer goods became unavailable. Second, settler farms and plantations were abandoned. This reduced the country's exports and threatened the supply of food to urban areas. The sources of paid work for the peasantry were greatly reduced, and one of their most important markets (the workforce employed in the plantations) virtually ceased to exist. Finally, South

Africa reduced the number of Mozambicans working in its mines from 102,000 (the average between 1960-75) to 47,000 (the average between 1976-85; see First 1987:24 and RPM 1986:34), which further reduced the sources of income of the Southern peasants.

The impact on the peasantry of the collapse of marketed economic activity could be interpreted in two different ways, and these interpretations were very important in the debates that accompanied the conquest of power by Frelimo, now an openly Marxist organization. These alternative views, both of which cloaked under a Marxist discourse, underlay the debate between dualists and non-dualists within Frelimo between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. Dualists within Frelimo argued that the family sector was both willing and able to withdraw from commodity circuits and return to subsistence production, as the means to restore its social and economic integrity and avoid the colonial-capitalist mechanisms of exploitation. This reasoning implies that the peasantry had no need for socialist forms of production, and if Frelimo wished to pursue the collectivist route it would either have to win their hearts or impose its will by force. In either case the decision was primarily political; there was no economic imperative at stake.

In contrast, Frelimo's non-dualist wing saw the collapse of marketed economic activity as a threat to the survival of the family sector. Its earlier conversion into a worker-peasantry had made the African population (especially in the South) dependent on wages to purchase the goods and services necessary for its own reproduction. It follows that, unless the government enacted a swift process of collectivization of agriculture, there could be mass starvation and political unrest in the country. Hence, according to the non-dualist view there was an economic case for the socialization of agriculture, and Frelimo could rely on the peasants own interest to carry out the transition without the need for repressive measures.

The importance of this debate was never openly acknowledged at that time, and even its existence was denied by the heavy centralism within Frelimo. In spite of this, it is possible to capture its increasing stridency through the reports prepared by the Centre for African Studies of Eduardo Mondlane University, in Maputo (the leading centre for non-dualist thought), and the official documents from Frelimo's Central Committee (where dualism was predominant). Lack of recognition that real differences existed, and that they had important implications for economic policy, was partly responsible for Frelimo's erratic actions over the next few years. Officially, the party espoused the non-dualist line, and heavily emphasized the economic rationale underlying its agrarian policy. At the same time, it argued that there was also a political case for collec-

tivization, and that the peasantry should be convinced of its intrinsic advantages. However, in practice Frelimo's actions reflected a dualist perception of the problem, as will be seen below.

Little or no economic assistance was offered to the peasantry in the wake of the economic crisis following independence, because other priority sectors (namely, services, heavy industry and large farms) absorbed virtually all the available resources. The government presumed that the solution to the food crisis depended primarily on the recovery of the modern sector, and its expansion through the large-scale mechanization of agriculture. Hence, when the party determined the collectivization of agriculture, little was offered to the peasants in exchange for their independence and for whatever remained of their traditional lifestyle, both of which were to be quickly eliminated. In practice, repression was an intrinsic aspect of the collectivization strategy adopted in Mozambique.

3 - THE COLLECTIVIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

The Frelimo government tackled the severe economic crisis that accompanied independence mainly through large-scale intervention in the economy. In urban areas, this essentially involved replacing the absent managers with the available cadres and carrying on as usual as much as possible. In practice, however, this was both complex and costly because of the lack of personnel qualified for administrative tasks and the chaotic state of many firms (for an interesting case study, see SKETCHLEY 1985). The main purpose of this policy was to maintain the level of activity. It had no socialist implications, since it did not necessarily lead to changes in the shopfloor hierarchy nor in work practices. Moreover, as the interventions targeted mainly the abandoned firms, large foreign-owned conglomerates were often spared and continued to operate unhindered (see CAHEN 1993 and WUYTS 1989).

In contrast, the crisis in agriculture had a different character (see O'LAUGHLIN 1981); first, because Frelimo abolished the remaining mechanisms of forced labour and forced cultivation of cash crops, which may have contributed to the slump in output. Second, because the incoming government froze the price of foodstuffs at their previous (subsidized) levels. In a context of rising wages and severely reduced domestic supply, this led to shortages, higher imports, and contributed to the pervasive atmosphere of crisis (see RAIKES 1984:98-99).

In addition, a land ownership problem surfaced through the conflict about whether the abandoned farms and plantations should be maintained, or divided

and the land re-turned to the previous (Mozambican) owners. Even though in some areas the peasants took the initiative and occupied some land abandoned by the Portuguese (see ABRAHAMSSON & NILSSON 1994, ch. 9), the new government preferred otherwise. Following its dualist instincts, Frelimo decided that the established enterprises would be maintained, either as co-operatives or state farms. This ruling was made as Frelimo transformed itself from an anti-colonial front into a conventional Marxist-Leninist party in its 3rd Congress, in 1977.

In this Congress, Frelimo declared that state sector would become the dominant in the economy, especially in agriculture. Collective agriculture would have three main components:

- (a) Large and heavily mechanized state farms, generally producing one single crop. They would be the key to the development of agriculture, and should eventually produce most food and export crops;
- (b) Most peasant lands would be transformed into co-operatives, and
- (c) The peasants would be grouped in communal villages. All should join some form of collective production as members of a co-operative or employees of a state farm.

The collectivization of agriculture was not merely part of a defensive strategy to maintain the level of activity. Rather, it was a strategic choice of the greatest importance, for economic and political reasons. Economically, Frelimo knew that the vast majority of the population lived in (and off) the land, and that the productivity of labour in peasant agriculture was very low. The dualist view predominant among the Frelimo leadership indicated that collective agriculture based upon large state farms and co-operatives was advantageous, because large farms were perceived to be necessarily more productive than small farms and peasant production. If this premise is accepted, it follows that the best way to increase the agricultural surplus (to feed urban areas, export, and sustain internal accumulation) was to collectivize the land and engage in large-scale mechanized production⁵.

(5) For Frelimo (1977:125), 'The state farms are the fastest means to respond to the country's needs for foodstuffs, because of their area, the rational organization of human and material resources, and because of the immediate availability of mechanized means of production'. Even if large farms are not more productive than family agriculture, it is clearly easier to extract a surplus from the former, because the increased output must be marketed. In contrast, in family agriculture any extra output may be largely consumed by the household.

More broadly, the Frelimo leadership believed that the transformation of agriculture and the development of heavy industry were essential to redress the imbalance between the relations and forces of production. In a country as poor and undeveloped as Mozambique, the political triumph of the party of the proletariat can be sustained only through the accelerated development of heavy industry and the swift collectivization of agriculture. They would create the working class and its ally, the collectivized peasantry, which the party purported to represent.

Politically, Frelimo believed that family agriculture should be destroyed because it was embedded in a thick layer of “reactionary” social relations, that derived from the synthesis of traditional African values (relations of solidarity, kinship, the traditional symbolism, and the clanic and ethnic power structure) with the rigid social hierarchy imposed by colonialism. As a result, the Frelimo leadership believed that large sections of the peasantry had anti-scientific and retrograde worldviews, and that the reproduction of family agriculture was antagonistic with socialism and the construction of the nation. This dualist point of view is evident in some of Samora Machel’s speeches, for example:

In rural areas life is particularly disorganized, there is no conception of plan or punctuality, and life is deeply dominated by routine and by outdated traditions that inhibit progress and paralyse initiative ... Men live in permanent contradiction with a nature that they ignore and fear (MACHEL 1984:46).

The transformation of a substantial part of the peasantry into a rural proletariat was perceived to be essential to legitimize Frelimo’s claim to hold political power. Underlying Frelimo’s view is the conception that collective agriculture would produce not only food, industrial inputs, and tradable goods, but also a large working class and a peasantry committed to socialism:

The PPI will, in the first place, consolidate national unity, and strengthen the process of nation-building, through the participation of all the people in the tasks determined by the plan and in the creation of a diversified economic structure that covers all the national territory. In particular through the socialization of the countryside, it gives rise to rural communities, thereby changing radically the currently disperse way of life of the vast majority of the Mozambican population (RPM 1981:24)⁶.

(6) The Prospective Indicative Plan (PPI) was the most elaborate development plan ever made in Mozambique. It was proposed in 1979 and proclaimed in 1981, under the inspiration of East European technicians. The main objective of the PPI was to overcome underdevelop-

In sum, for Frelimo the existence of a large and dispersed peasantry posed a problem for socialist transition. The best way to dissolve the traditional peasantry, increase the size of the working class and raise the level of the productive forces was swiftly to collectivize the countryside. The main objective underlying collectivization was to eliminate the peasants' control of the means of production, especially land - the asset that gives them not only the means of survival, but also a sense of identity. The peasants would be transformed into wage workers or, at least, members of co-operatives that would operate under close state supervision. As a result of this exercise, Frelimo hoped to strengthen its political power, bring the forces into line with the relations of production, and raise the productive capacity of the country. This would in turn improve the standard of living of the population. In short, the strategy of dispossessing the peasantry and transforming them into wage workers was legitimized by recourse to the promise of increased levels of production.

This strategy of primitive socialist accumulation is clearly a mirror image of the primitive capitalist accumulation described by Marx (1976, ch.27) and that proposed by Preobrazhensky following the Russian Revolution (see HARRISON 1985, Preobrazhensky 1965, and SAITH 1985b). They are both based on the expropriation of peasant land to eliminate their capacity for accumulation for self-reproduction. They complete the transformation of the peasantry into a social group tightly subordinated to others and strictly dependent on paid employment for survival. They may lead to the development of the productive forces, but only at the cost of massive transfers of resources and people to industry, to the extent that the standard of living in the country may fall in absolute terms.

The collectivization of agriculture in Mozambique led to disastrous results. The state farms went bankrupt, even though 70% of the total investment in 1975-84 was in agriculture and 90% of it went to the state farms (CASTEL-BRANCO 1994:54). Most co-operatives failed and were dissolved, and the output of the peasant sector fell because of the lack of support and the active suppression by the state. The collapse of agriculture led to starvation and dependence on foreign aid, and it was one of the most important causes of the civil war (which, of course, contributed to the further deterioration of this sector's performance). In the remainder of this paper, I show that this modernizing effort was challenged by the peasantry, to the extent that Frelimo's agricultural strategy became unworkable and eventually collapsed.

ment in ten years; hence, Frelimo called the 1980s "*the decade of the victory over underdevelopment*" The plan collapsed in the early 1980s because of the war and other financial constraints, and was quietly abandoned.

4 - PEASANT RESISTANCE

During the anti-colonial war Frelimo relied to a large extent on the mobilization of the peasantry in the North of the country. The peasants tended to side with Frelimo on the basis of an elementary nationalism and promises of a dignified life and an end to exploitation. In spite of this, the process of identification between Frelimo and the peasantry was not smooth. The tensions were partly due to Frelimo's increasing hostility to the traditional power structures in the countryside. They increased as Frelimo gradually clarified the role it expected the peasantry to fulfill after independence⁷.

It can be argued that one of the main obstacles to the implementation of Frelimo's collectivization project was its lack of correspondence with the aspirations and practices of most peasants. After the initial bout of enthusiasm, the poor and middle peasants became increasingly reluctant to join collective forms of production, unless support from the state was forthcoming. This reluctance can be seen as a form of expression of the peasants' rejection to the modernizing agenda promoted by the Frelimo leadership. The reasons underlying peasant resistance were two-fold; first, the peasants resented the level of transfers demanded to support "modern" forms of production and the urban economy. Second, they tried to avoid their own transformation into sections of the proletariat as best they could.

The disintegration of Mozambican agriculture accelerated when the state became unable to maintain the high level of subsidies granted to the state farms and co-operatives, and the resources for the construction of communal villages dried up because of the economic crisis and the war. Instead of adjusting its objectives in light of these difficulties, Frelimo launched waves of repression (such as the *Ofensiva Presidencial* and the *Operação Produção* of the early 1980s) aimed at forcing the peasantry to comply with the modernization programme. The ensuing conflicts contributed to the transformation of South African-sponsored aggression into a civil war, and accelerated the collapse of socialism in Mozambique. This is discussed in detail below; I will first outline the main features of the state farms, co-operatives and communal villages, and discuss three types of conflict that contributed to the collapse of collective agriculture; conflicts for land, income and labour.

(7) The successes that Frelimo did achieve in the liberated zones – in terms of warfare as well as social organization – to a significant extent were related to the fact that Frelimo worked through the traditional hierarchy ... “*This was not simply a one-sided process where the representatives of traditional power were subordinated to Frelimo's objectives. Rather, it was a*

4.1 STATE FARMS AND CONFLICTS FOR LAND

There were continuous conflicts for land between the peasantry and the state, especially through the state farms. Two sources of conflict were particularly important. First, as we have seen above, many peasants claimed that the land occupied by the state farms had been expropriated from them by the colonists and it should now be returned. However, these claims were dismissed by the government. This led to ill-feeling towards the concept of collective agriculture by important sections of the peasantry (see HERMELE 1988 and NEWITT 1995:553).

Second, the state farms were subject to the requirements of soviet-style material planning. Production targets were set centrally in volume terms, translated into areas to be cultivated, and divided up between the various districts and production units in the country. In this system, the managers were personally responsible for the fulfillment of the plan. If the targets seemed out of reach because of bad weather, lack of equipment or the late arrival of inputs, there was strong temptation to extend the cultivated area, regardless of cost, even if the best time for sowing had passed. This often led to the expropriation of the best land cultivated by the neighbouring peasants or co-operatives, and its incorporation into the state farms (this may have contributed to the expansion of the area of state farms from 100,000 ha in 1978 to 140,000 ha in 1982. In spite of this, the total output of these farms fell; see Castel-Branco 1994:55).

The state farms had problems of another sort as well. The collapse of the social relations under which the colonial plantations operated created technical problems for their successors, the state farms. For example, the installed capacity became at least partly dysfunctional, because it is clearly undesirable for a socialist nation to specialize in primary product exports to its former metropolis. Moreover, Frelimo's decision to intensify the degree of mechanization of the plantations, in the context of a degraded trade and transport infrastructure and scarce foreign currency, was an obvious mistake⁸. The state farms were heavily dependent on imported machinery, fuel, parts, chemical inputs, seeds, etc., and on other scarce factors such as skilled workers, trained operators and administrative personnel. It eventually proved impossible to have all the neces-

unity *between different social groups resisting a common enemy and the economic, religious, and cultural oppression which they suffered*'. (HERMELE 1988:24; see also CASAL 1991 and CEA 1986).

(8) HANLON (1979) discusses in detail the reasons for the intensive mechanization of the state farms.

sary inputs delivered on time and in the quantities demanded by the technical characteristics of the state farms.

The lack of trained engineers contributed to the accelerated depreciation of the imported equipment, and the state did not have the means to compel the workforce to make the best use of the machines. In addition, the new management was often unable to explore commercial opportunities at home or abroad, because of the lack of transport, finance, expertise and contacts. As a result, mechanization did not lead to increasing yields per hectare; however, unit costs increased in proportion to the volume of investment. Consequently, most firms operated at a loss, and in some cases production costs (exclusive of amortisation) were up to four times the value of output (see CASTEL-BRANCO 1994:54, and RAIKES 1984:101-03). Losses of this magnitude are clearly unsustainable, and the state farms were gradually drawn towards bankruptcy. This threat was averted only by the virtually automatic granting of additional credit to the state farms, which were not allowed to go out of business because of their strategic importance (see WUYTS 1989).

4.2 - CO-OPERATIVES AND DISTRIBUTIONAL CONFLICTS

Frelimo's strategy of co-operativization of the peasantry faced three serious obstacles. Firstly, there was little experience of co-operative work in Mozambique, because this and other forms of social organization were severely repressed by the Portuguese. These difficulties pointed to the need for a careful development of the strategy, but for the Frelimo leadership the problem of political mobilization in the countryside needed immediate solution. This helps explain why, in spite of all difficulties, the number of production co-operatives jumped from 180 to 370 between 1977 and 1982, while their members increased from 25,000 to 32,000 (Frelimo 1983:32). On top of this (unwarranted) acceleration in the development of the co-operatives, there was a constant difficulty to monitor participation in the collective effort and determine the adequate reward. This is normally a major cause of instability in production co-operatives, and unless it is counterbalanced by a careful mix of democracy and control the survival of the co-operatives is continually threatened, especially if productivity is below expectations (as was often the case). In Mozambique, instability was tackled by recourse to (increasingly ineffective) political persuasion, (decreasing) subsidies, and control through the wage form. However, as most peasants were illiterate, any democratic system of control of the co-operatives was bound to remain extremely vulnerable to abuse, and experience has shown

that abuses were committed and that corruption became increasingly common in Mozambican co-operatives (see CEA 1986).

Secondly, there were few if any landless peasants in Mozambique at the time of independence. Therefore, the co-operatives would lead to higher output only if their yields per hectare were higher than in family agriculture. These gains could result from two sources: from co-operation itself,⁹ or from investment in irrigation works, water-pumps, tractors, transport equipment, storage facilities, etc. However, most poor and middle peasants had few investible resources, because they had lost their usual sources of wage income and their marketed output had decreased dramatically. The rich peasants were often reluctant to join co-operatives, because investment in their own plots seemed in principle to offer a safer route for accumulation (they could behave in other ways too; see below). Support from the state was not forthcoming either, because most of the budget was committed with the state farms and the urban economy (as seen above). The breakdown of the transportation and trade infrastructures added to the problems of the co-operatives, because it often prevented the timely arrival of the inputs and sale of the crops.

In general, the poor and middle peasants joined the co-operatives in the wake of the collapse of their traditional sources of paid employment. In other words, socializing rhetoric aside, the main objective of most members of the co-operatives was a stable source of income¹⁰. It was only a short step for the poorer peasants to be treated as wage workers under the command of the administrators of the co-operatives, usually richer and more articulate. The low productivity of labour and the desire of the administrators and state officials to invest a large share of the output led to very low payments to ordinary members¹¹. This was a self-defeating exercise, because it eventually led to the gradual withdrawal of the poorer peasants from the co-operatives to their own land.

(9) As Marx says, "*Not only do we have ... an increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of co-operation, but the creation of a new productive power, which is intrinsically a collective one ... This is why a dozen people working together will produce far more, in their collective working day of 144 hours than twelve isolated men each working for 12 hours, and far more than one man who works 12 days in succession*" (MARX 1976:443-44).

(10) This is partly why elderly people and women were often over-represented among the membership (see CEA 1979a:27-29 and CEA 1979b:50-52). It was also usual for the men to work in the co-operatives, while their wives cultivated the family plots (CEA 1980a).

(11) "*Not surprisingly the cooperatives that proved most successful were those that attracted experienced and relatively wealthy farmers who found the front of a cooperative a useful way of obtaining state aid that was denied to the private sector*". (NEWITT 1995:557; see also ADAM 1993, BOWEN 1990 and, especially, HARRIS 1980)

The Frelimo leadership considered this withdrawal potentially disastrous for the co-operative movement. However, instead of reconsidering its approach to the co-operativization of the countryside, Frelimo attempted to force the poorer peasants into submission. Work in collective plots became compulsory in many areas, and in others the police blocked the roads to prevent the peasants from absconding¹². Experiences such as these reveals that the co-operative movement in Mozambique was highly vulnerable to being hijacked by the richer peasants, whatever may have been Frelimo's original intentions. Accumulation on their behalf through the co-operatives was supported by the state because it seemed to provide a direct route to higher output levels (see CEA 1979a:33 and CEA 1983:36-43).

Another source of conflict over the distribution of income was the peasants' concern with the transfer to other sectors implicit in the low price of foodstuffs relative to manufactures, and their resentment against the lack of consumer goods. This was partly due to the strategy of maximizing the rate of accumulation in industry and keeping the price of food low in the cities, and partly due to the collapse of the transport and trade infrastructure. The peasants' reaction was to reduce the share of their output sold in official markets and increasingly rely on parallel markets, where their crops received higher prices and manufactured products could be found¹³. The spread of parallel markets fuelled accumulation by small groups working on the fringes of legality, and encouraged corruption within the state and undemocratic practices in the co-operatives.

Frelimo was deeply concerned about the evasion of crops from state-controlled channels. Unfortunately, its attempts to curb the growth of the parallel markets through repressive measures threatened to reduce the standard of living of the peasantry even further, and were resisted. It eventually became impossible to contain the growth of the parallel markets. In sum, the number of participants in the co-operatives gradually declined, their members were reluctant to work, and absenteeism became very high. This contributed to the decline in produc-

(12) In the early 1980s, given the refusal of the population to participate in the tasks determined by the state, it was ordered that "*each family had to cultivate two hectares of land, and in co-operatives each hectare must be worked by three members*"; (ADAM 1993: 54; see also p. 43-59).

(13) Consumer co-operatives were generally more successful than production co-operatives, because they could command scarce consumer goods such as textiles and processed foods and make them available to their members. This is, however, hardly a step towards the socialization of the relations of production in the countryside (see CEA 1986:46-50 and LITTLEJOHN 1988: 8-13).

tivity in the co-operatives, to the extent that it was often *lower* than in family agriculture (see, for example, CEA 1979b: 37-41 and CEA 1980b). Most co-operatives actually operated at a loss, and required subsidies to avoid financial collapse. Partly as a result of these conflicts, support for Frelimo in the countryside gradually waned; its cells ceased to operate, and its representatives disappeared from the scene. The Party's increasingly belligerent attitude pointed towards the criminalization of the peasants and the militarization of work. It could be argued that some areas gradually became arenas of conflict between a repressive and demanding state and an increasingly hostile peasantry (see ADAM 1993: 59-76 and CEA 1983, 1986).

4.3 - COMMUNAL VILLAGES AND CONFLICTS FOR LABOUR

The relocation of the peasantry into newly-built communal villages was one of Frelimo's earliest and most important projects. Frelimo's main arguments for the establishment of communal villages were the following (see CASAL 1991):

- (a) The dispersion of the peasantry prevents the state from providing the rural population with health services, water, sanitation and education at low cost. The communal villages would also contribute to the diffusion of scientific knowledge, as opposed to the "*superstition and reactionary traditions*" widely held in the countryside (see Frelimo 1976:84).
- (b) Communal villages were conducive to the performance of collective labour in the co-operatives and state farms, in contrast with individual labour in isolated plots of land. The experience in the "*liberated zones*" during the anti-colonial war had allegedly shown the enormous potential for collective life and work, and it should be drawn upon in the process of socialist construction (see CEA 1983).
- (c) In a broader sense, the communal villages would be first step towards overcoming the sharp opposition between city and country, one of the main features of underdevelopment according to Frelimo's "dualist Marxism".

Frelimo's vision of "*rural cities*" offering modern amenities and relatively comfortable lifestyles to an undifferentiated peasantry was received with enthusiasm by many poor and middle peasants. There were, however, other

peasants who did not want to move to the communal villages because of their strong links with their ancestral land. After some initial tolerance, Frelimo officials decided that the reluctant peasants should be forced to move¹⁴. Only a short time after independence, by consent or by force, the first villages sprung up.

The use of force contributed to the creation of a fundamental imbalance within the villages. Groups with roots near the communal villages, and the wealthier and more articulate peasants, were given power over the dislocated because of their control of the surrounding land or of skills such as literacy and numeracy. The dislocated were often forced to choose between asking for land from the local leaders (and therefore falling under their control) or regularly walking long distances between their new homes and their old land (which reduced the time available for work and therefore their productivity; see CEA 1986: 12-14, 40-46).

In general, the communal villages faced many problems because of the lack of infrastructure and disorganization in the process of resettlement, and most bore little resemblance with the detailed plans laid out by government officials. They were precariously built, and sometimes lacked even the most basic amenities. This was demoralizing for the peasants who moved there, because they often found themselves in a strange environment and with living conditions worse than before:

While Frelimo literature talks of the communal villages as the basic units of production, they have, often, merely been housing units - and sometimes poorly planned ones at that. The average distance to water, for example, is 5km. In one village, the farms are 30km from the living area. In another, the peasants get up at 3AM to walk for 2 1/2 hours to the communal land, returning home for lunch. In the afternoon, they work in their own land. They must walk 1 1/2 hours each way for water. (HANLON 1979: 167)¹⁵.

(14) In the Mueda Highlands, a former 'liberated area' where Frelimo enjoyed strong support, 72% of the families moved to a communal village, of which 30% were forcibly relocated (ADAM 1993 p. 55).

(15) By 1977, there were approximately 500 communal villages Niassa and Cabo Delgado provinces (where Frelimo's military operations had been concentrated). Floods in the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers led to the construction of 100 other villages, but they were improvised. Some were up to 20km from the fertile land cultivated by the peasants - some of which was subsequently taken over by state farms (which led to conflicts for land; see section 4.1). By 1980, more than 1000 villages had been registered, and by 1984 they were

The construction and prosperity of the communal villages was very important for the Frelimo state. The most important reason why Frelimo persisted with this strategy in spite of the above problems was that it saw the communal villages as *labour reserves* for the state farms and the co-operatives. Let us discuss this in more detail.

In spite of their accelerated mechanization, the state farms (and, to less extent, the co-operatives) continued to depend on the supply of peasant labour in the peak seasons, especially the harvest. (The increase in cultivated areas made possible by mechanization made the scarcity of labour at times more acute than before.) The state farms also needed a pool of employable workers ready to come into service at short notice, to compensate for machines temporarily out of service for lack of fuel or parts. The net result was the reduction of the number of jobs, increased seasonality in recruitment, and intensification of the work.

However, the demand for labour by the state farms and co-operatives often conflicted with the needs of the peasant sector, that produced crops with similar patterns of labour demand. In colonial times this conflict was solved by forced labour. After independence, the preferred route was the “*stabilization*” of the labour force, or the maximization of the proportion of permanent workers in the labour force. In other words, stabilization implied the transformation of occasional workers into permanent workers, or of part of the peasantry into a rural proletariat¹⁶.

The proletarianization of the workforce is conducive to greater labour productivity because it increases the degree of managerial control of the labour process and simplifies the introduction of new technologies. The reward promised to the peasants-turned-workers was an increased level of wages - which was in any case necessary for the preservation of their living standard, if they lost access to the land (see CEA 1980b:38-45). This strategy was problematic, primarily because the stabilization of the labour force would necessarily involve the loss of land, as the peasants became full-time wage workers. This was not an attractive option to many peasants, who preferred to hold on to their plots. As one analyst put it:

1500, of which 600 in Cabo Delgado and 250 in the Limpopo and Zambezi valleys (see CAHEN 1987: 50-53, MEYNS 1980:36 and NEWITT 1995:549).

(16) “*Here lies the importance of the stabilization of the labour force: the separation between agro-industrial workers capable of planning, organizing and directing the work in their production unit, and peasants available throughout the agricultural cycle to build a strong co-operative movement and develop food production*” (CEA 1982b: 9; see also CEA 1979a, 1979b, 1980b, 1981, 1982a).

In spite of the changes [in the system of labour recruitment brought about after independence], the migrant labour system still exists. On the one hand, the expansion [of the agricultural sector] makes complete mechanization impossible; on the other hand, it can be concluded that *the access to their own means of production led to passive resistance by the workers against the process of stabilization* (HEAD 1981:9, emphasis added.)

The attempts to stabilize the labour force were generally unsuccessful. They tended to run counter to the logic of peasant communities, that had been able to preserve (even if only partially and often precariously) their mode of social organization in the face of the onslaught by colonial capitalism. The peasants resisted against being drafted into full-time employment in many different ways, the most conspicuous being absenteeism¹⁷. Partly for this reason, productivity in the state sector also tended to be lower than that of family agriculture (see, for example, CEA 1979a).

The most important aspect of Frelimo's attempt to control peasant labour was through their concentration in communal villages. In practice, Frelimo intended these villages to be labour reserves for the state farms and co-operatives. This is revealed, first, by the requirement that all peasants should engage in some form of collective production, either as employees of state farms or members of co-operatives. Second, by the extremely small plots allocated to the villagers. In one of the earliest and most careful discussions of the communal villages, the Frelimo Central Committee declared that:

All families are entitled to have family property. The dimensions of these properties are determined by the communal village; however, they must not exceed 1/2 ha in the irrigated areas, and 1 ha in non-irrigated areas (Frelimo 1976:93-94).

(17) The level of absenteeism often hovered around 50%. This was caused by the peasants' preference for sharing their workdays between the plantation and their own land, instead of working full-time in the plantations (see, for example, CEA 1982a: 60). In the co-operatives, there was increasing difficulty in making the peasants work in collective plots, especially as the problems outlined above became more acute. When they came, the peasants would tend to arrive late, work only for a few hours, and return to their own land as quickly as possible. As time went by, they would no longer show up, even for important ceremonies such as the raising of the National Flag on Sundays (see, for example, CEA 1983: 52-57).

According to Casal (1991:58), these limits were incompatible with the traditional peasant cultivation patterns. If we take into account the usual system of crop rotation, the area allowed for family cultivation in the communal villages was *less than 20%* of the minimum necessary. The practical effect of this directive was that the peasants would have to devote more than half of their time to collective forms of production, and would be unable to rely on their own plots for survival. An objective such as this could be fulfilled only by force:

There are conflicts between the expanding but weak collective sector and the sector of family agriculture which is at this time the real productive base of the [communal villages]. Within the collective sector there are also conflicts between the development of the co-operatives and the expansion of the [state farm]. Low levels of participation in the co-operatives and their low productivity indicate that the major force of peasant labour is going to assure subsistence in family agriculture. The [state farm] has taken over land cultivated by peasants and land intended for a co-operative, but cannot at this point provide permanent wage employment to replace family production. Participation in co-operatives depends on force in some villages (CEA 1979c:4; see also CEA 1979a:30-31 and CEA 1980a)¹⁸.

It is therefore not surprising that more and more peasants resisted being drawn into communal villages, while others began to move back to their own land. Already from 1976, but increasingly in the early 1980s, the communal villages in places like the Mueda plateau started to fragment, and “*illegal villages*” sprung up.

The illegal villages were treated as rebel areas. Their alleged leaders were arrested, and some were later deported to distant parts of the country. These villages were refused assistance, including schools and health centres, and their water supply was sometimes cut. Many ‘illegal villages’ were demolished or burnt down, but they tended to be rebuilt (see, for example, the harrowing accounts

(18) NEWITT (1995:549) makes an illuminating comparison between Frelimo’s communal villages, the Portuguese aldeamentos and previous villagization experiences in Latin America. Newitt concludes that “*the Communal Village has always had two purposes: to bring about a measure of co-operation and a pooling of resources in peasant agriculture, and to indoctrinate the peasantry in the political or religious ideology of the rulers of the time*”. The increasing repression against peasants in collective villages is vividly related by many; see, for example, CAHEN (1987:58-68), HANLON (1988:12) and MIDDLEMAS (1979).

in CEA 1986:21-33, 55-59). The treatment of the peasantry became increasingly arbitrary. By the mid-1980s, corporal punishment was recommended for a wide variety of crimes, among them the refusal to work. The work norms were tightened, and it became difficult to travel without an official permit (*guia de marcha*). The situation in mid-1982 was summarized by the administrator of Ngapa village, in Cabo Delgado province:

All our national programmes are jeopardized. We do not have agricultural co-operatives even on paper, we have no roads, people do not pay the national reconstruction tax, they do not join the literacy campaign, there are bandits, our youth is marginalized, some of our villages are abandoned ... Our assembly does not work; it does not respond to our problems (quoted in ADAM 1993:53).

CONCLUSION: PEASANT RESISTANCE AND THE COLLAPSE OF COLLECTIVE AGRICULTURE

The attempt to expropriate the peasantry and transform them into wage workers through the collectivization of agriculture met strong resistance and eventually failed. Land ownership was the subject of continuous dispute across the country. In state farms, machines were sabotaged, and peasants sometimes preferred to kill their livestock rather than surrender it. State goods were illegally appropriated, and state agents were physically confronted (see CEA 1979a:67-75). Absenteeism from collective and wage work in favour of work in family plots reduced the productivity and demoralized the collective sector.

Some state officials and administrators mimicked the Portuguese, and complained endlessly against the “*stupidity, laziness and indiscipline*” of the Mozambican peasants (see HERMELE 1984:20-21). The government increasingly resorted to po-litical, economic and administrative pressure against the wall of passive (and sometimes not so passive) resistance in the countryside. There was a progressive militarization of the conditions of work as the Party, the police, the courts and the army became involved in the attempt forcibly to complete the transformation of the peasantry into a rural proletariat (for an account of the infamous *Operação Produção*, see Saul 1985). This was perceived to be necessary to facilitate intensive accumulation, one of the main features of modernity.

By 1983 most state farms were bankrupt, most co-operatives had ceased to operate, and the communal villages were in an advanced state of disintegration. Mozambican agriculture had virtually collapsed (see table 1).

TABLE 1
INDEX OF TRADED AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT FOR SELECTED CROPS, 1983
(1980 = 100)¹⁹

<i>Products for domestic consumption</i>				
Rice	Corn	Beans	Sunflower	
30	80	33	60	

<i>Products for export</i>				
Sugar*	Tea	Sisal	Copra	Cashew
20	33	35	60	20

Source: CASTEL-BRANCO (1994:64).

The failure of Frelimo's economic strategy and the intensification of the war forced a change of course. The 4th Frelimo Congress (1983) sharply criticized the previous agricultural policy, and demanded a U-turn. The new economic policy emphasized peaceful integration with South Africa and an increasing reliance on market mechanisms. This new strategy eventually led to the 1987 agreement with the IMF on a structural adjustment plan (see MOSCA & CENADELGADO 1993, and ROESCH 1992). This agreement marks the end of socialist transition in Mozambique.

It can be argued that Frelimo's development project was intrinsically flawed, because it did not derive from concerns, experiences and initiatives shared by the majority. In particular, its detachment from the problems and aspirations of the poor and middle peasantry, and Frelimo's growing hostility against disaffected peasants opened spaces for Renamo, the rebel group supported by South Africa (see ADAM 1991: 185 and CEA 1986: 33). To this day, Renamo's claims to political legitimacy rely heavily on the divorce between the state and peasant perspectives of development, Frelimo's heavy-handed tactics in the countryside, and the failure of socialist agriculture²⁰.

(19) The data may underestimate the actual output because of the increasing role of parallel markets, which diverted supplies from the official markets.

(20) This obviously does not excuse Renamo for waging a terrorist war against the very peasantry it purports to defend, as well as against state employees or anyone that crossed the path of its more insane formations. The point is that Renamo would not have been

It must be pointed out that this paper does not claim that the social, economic and ideological foundations of the reproduction of the peasantry should have been preserved indefinitely, which would have been both unrealistic and undesirable. However, it shows that Frelimo's intervention was often arbitrary and extemporaneous, as far as peasant logic and subjectively perceived interests were concerned. Being an intervention 'from the outside', it contradicted one of the main alleged objectives of socialism, to give people control over the conditions of their social and economic reproduction. The sharp conflict between the Frelimo state and large segments of the peasantry was an important factor behind the collapse of agriculture, the failure of the transition to socialism, and the slide of the country into civil war.

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able to commit acts of genocide, make the country ungovernable, and still receive almost 40% of the votes in the presidential elections in 1994, had Frelimo adopted policies more in tune with the aspirations of the majority.

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RESUMO: Este artigo analisa as razões do fracasso da coletivização da agricultura em Moçambique (1975-83). Duas explicações são propostas; primeiro, as políticas de socialização da Frelimo eram inconsistentes por refletirem um compromisso impossível entre visões dualistas e não-dualistas da relação entre os setores camponês e "moderno" da economia. Segundo, os camponeses pobres e médios resistiram ativamente às políticas coletivistas do governo. O conflito entre o Estado e o campesinato levou ao colapso da produção agrícola, a derrota da estratégia de coletivização da agricultura, e a generalização da guerra civil no país.

Palavras-chave: Moçambique; Agricultura; Modernização; Campesinato; Políticas públicas; Frelimo.