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Class, Ethnicity and Race

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Dear Mr. Martin,

Americans want to know "what you do." It's the first piece of information needed to classify you. Are you male and a schoolteacher? Until proven otherwise, you're unambitious and probably given to daydreaming. Cab drivers are assumed to be repositories of popular wisdom and bankers to own at least one school tie.

"What you do" accounts as neatly and unsubtly for 87.001% of Mozambique. The 87% are peasants. A few have draft animals, all have hoes, and the great majority is illiterate. They do most of the acute suffering and dying in this war-wasted, dessicated country. They are spoken of in the aggregate and rounded off to the nearest thousand.

The .001% represents the upper echelons of the government. The figure, which may seem so ridiculously small as to be insignificant, is almost certainly a gross overestimate. The upper echelons do not begin at some arbitrary point on a seniority or earnings scale. A "years of service" criterion would have at the top the ethnic Makonde guerillas who fought the liberation war and, independence attained, were sent home with a curt "thank you." Official salaries are insignificant tokens. No one earns more than a minister's take-home pay, some 30,000 meticaís a month, which doesn't buy much in the only commercial network with anything to sell, the black market. (How meager are salaries? A recent puff piece by a local journalist expressed outrage at a neighbor who offered to sell him two kitchen pots for the going price of 11,000 meticaís. He earns 7,000 a month.)

What really divides the few government "haves" from the millions of "have-nots" in Mozambique is access to special

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shops for state and Party officials (often one and the same at such empyrean heights). So "what you do" in Mozambique, as a measure of your place in the social hierarchy, tells less than the old adage "you are what you eat." Special government shops stock canned foods, milk, meat, whiskey — items conspicuous only in their absence from the average Mozambican's diet. The only other groups that consume such rarified comestibles are big-time blackmarketeers, foreigners and majonijonis -- emigrant workers returned from South Africa. These last two pay in dollars and rands.

What the classes really struggle about in Marxist Mozambique is daily bread. The competition isn't nearly as keen in Maputo as in the provincial cities. Three of the capital's four constituent classes are on different consumption tracks, in separate economic niches that mitigate direct rivalry. Top Party and government apparatchiks have their own shops and foreigners have theirs, (the Interfranca), to which Mozambicans with hard currency are admitted in the morning. Consequently, the third identifiable class, big-time blackmarketeers, are the object of the wrath of the fourth, "the People" (i.e. everyone else). Most people fault government mismanagement for food shortages, and resent it when the empowered flaunt their full stomachs (see SJJL-3). But official propaganda drills home the message that hoarders and speculators are to blame for generalized hunger and misery, and the man in the street is only too eager to have a scapegoat on which to focus his fear and hate. In 1983, the public execution of seven Mozambicans for "economic crimes" was well-attended by a furious, vengeful crowd.

The separate and distinct consumption possibilities of the capital's leading classes, the apparatchiks and the foreigners, are like sumptuary laws in their effects: modes of dress and transport proclaim the status of their occupants. Those who travel in white Ladas, white Volvos or, at the very top, black Mercedes, are the special shop crowd. Bearded white men in expensive hand-me-downs are cooperantes (foreign employees of the government). Blackmarketeers, on the other hand, try to make themselves invisible. On Sunday, I made the acquaintance of two ordinary-looking fishmongers who, I was later told, illegally ship lucrative quantities of local shrimp for resale in Swaziland. The dangers of police (secret and civil) extortion and/or imprisonment suffice to suppress conspicuous consumption by all but the most reckless of the capital's third class.

It is precisely outside the capital, where class differences are less manifest, that class antagonisms are most pronounced.* Taken together, the Interfranca, the foreigners, international

* Such a statement may violate the canons of dialectical materialism, but so does applying class analysis to a supposedly classless society.

emergency aid entering through the port and the capital's proximity to South Africa mean that there are, in Maputo, many more goods and the local and foreign currency to buy them than in the provinces. With so much (relatively speaking) to go around, so much corruption and so little effective control, the possibilities of living by arbitrage are considerable. And because the market is conducted underground and price information therefore circulates slowly and incompletely, the well-informed and agile trader can make a killing with relative ease. If, in the process, a bottle of Portuguese wine or tin of Dutch butter finds its way to a humbler table, it is not to be marveled at.

In the provinces, this is not possible. The only "have-have not" criterion outside Maputo is control of the commonest foodstuffs destined for popular consumption. I am told that in Tete Province, areas of which are even now experiencing famine, donated corn is reserved for the apparatchiks and only coarse sorghum reaches stricken areas. In Namula, the remaining stock of the two soft drink factories (production has stopped since they ran out of bottlecaps a month ago) is reserved for government consumption. A number of people remarked to me that, of the holiday foods sent to the province to help celebrate the 10th anniversary of independence from Portugal, June 25th, only a small fraction found its way to average tables. "When the estruturas (government officials) begin to lack basic conditions, they sack everything that arrives," said one shop owner. His 10th anniversary stock was decimated by 31 government officials, all purporting to be fiscais, or price-regulatory police, each of whom took his share of samples to assure compliance with state price controls.

But "class analysis," the study of who consumes what (or whom), explains only the most immediate and superficial of the group antagonisms at work in Mozambique. The present social order must be among the most fragile in the world. Based neither on wealth, education, tradition or administrative competence, it is as vulnerable as a house of cards in a drafty room. The army that props it up is disintegrating. Even more ominous, many SNASP (secret police) agents are abandoning their posts and privileges. After all, secret police can only function effectively as long as the military retains its monopoly on deadly force. With the security situation so badly out of control, SNASP agents have themselves become afraid of a midnight knock on the door by armed unfriendlies, and are getting out before it's "too late." Each time one does, the cards quiver. A social hierarchy organized solely on the basis of conditional political loyalty is by nature brittle.

The classes as currently constituted in Mozambique are, therefore, ephemeral. Ethnicity and race are more enduring,

and provide a sounder basis for analysis.

Ethnicity and race are somewhat difficult to disentangle in Mozambique. It is not because the obvious ethno-cultural differences that follow racial lines make it difficult to decide which is a more accurate identification tag for a given group. That blacks, Indians and whites carry separate and distinct cultural baggage is indisputable. The problem is that people often use the terms "tribe" and "race" interchangeably, and not out of sloppy thinking or ignorance. Apparently, interethnic hostility among blacks here is sufficiently pronounced as to be commonly referred to as "racism." Although conventional Western labels deem such sentiment "ethnic" antagonism, (the term "tribal" has fallen out of favor as a primitivist slur,) Mozambicans' own consciously chosen term should not be dismissed as a technical inaccuracy.

Among the abiding challenges to "nation-builders" in Africa is the difficulty of inspiring among diverse and often mutually hostile ethnic groups a sense of national identity superior to narrower, traditional loyalties. The colonial boundaries established at the 1884-85 Conference of Berlin, which, with minor modifications and elaborations, define current international frontiers throughout Africa, were drawn without reference to the pre-existing territorial boundaries between different African ethnic groups. It is a guiding principle of the Organization of African Unity that this unfortunate colonial legacy remain intact. To admit, in principle, that boundaries ought to be adjusted to accommodate ethnic aspirations would provoke innumerable invasion and secession struggles and pulverize the continent into ethnic cantons. Consequently, ethnic Somalis continue, unhappily, on the Ethiopian side of the border (hence Somali irredentism) and ethnic Ovimbundu in revolt against Kimbundu northerners in Angola.

In Mozambique, no one ethnic group is sufficiently populous or dynamic enough to lay claim to national leadership. In this respect, Zimbabwe is the envy of its larger neighbor. The Shona, President Mugabe's ethnic constituency, are by far the largest and best organized of that country's relatively few ethnic groups. Of course, if you are an Ndebele and feel discriminated against or cut out of your fair share of power, you are less than happy that Shona dominance makes modern Zimbabwe ethnically less fractious than many other African states. But from the point of view of the empowered, it is easier to deal with a small, restive minority than juggle a cauldron of competing and mutually suspicious ethnic groups, no one of them indisputably dominant.

One of the FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) Party's primary goals from its inception was to fight ethnic

chauvanism among Mozambicans. The Portuguese colonial authorities followed a classic "divide and rule" strategy in their relations with the local Africans, exploiting ancient mistrust between ethnic groups to their own advantage. Whereas FRELIMO pushed and pushes the message that "from the Rovuma (river, the northern boundary) to the Maputo (river, in the south) we're all Mozambicans," the Portuguese incited the Makuas against the Makonde, the ethnic group that sent the most men into FRELIMO's ranks, and the Yao against the Nyanja. It is difficult to judge the success of this policy, but there were Yao-dominated areas of Niassa and Makua areas of Nampula where, during the independence struggle, FRELIMO guerillas encountered uniformly hostile populations.

FRELIMO's official policy remains one of no discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity. The 1980 national census does not classify Mozambicans by color or cultural origin. In political practice, however, the government's performance has been less than sterling. Many Mozambicans feel that the government is dominated by southern Shangaan. Most of the top black Africans in the government are, in fact, southerners. It has been suggested that a survey of top military officials would, with the outstanding exception of Defense Minister Alberto Chipande, a northern Makonde, also reveal a heavy preponderance of southerners. (Such a study would be telling but hopelessly indiscrete.) And southerners may be found in top administrative positions throughout the northern provinces.

Though easily misunderstood as a result of systematic ethnic discrimination, this state of affairs is mainly rooted in the particulars of colonial geography. The Portuguese administered this enormous and elongated territory from the southern port of Lourenço Marques (today's Maputo), where the Shangaan dominate. As in many independent African countries, the politically ascendant group is often that which had the most prolonged and meaningful contact with the colonizing power.

Such contact had at least two effects. The first was education, formal and otherwise. Southerners' long exposure to their Portuguese colonizers meant that they acquired the only language presently spoken by some in all regions of the country, a small measure of functional literacy and the experience of watching the colonial administrative and economic machinery run and participating in its lowest ranks. At independence in 1975, southerners were better equipped for administrative tasks than northerners and in closer physical proximity to the site of central government, Maputo. An ancillary result of colonial schooling (formal and hard knocks) was the development of a politicized intelligentsia. One of the sources of the present-day FRELIMO elite was NESAM, the Nucleus of African Secondary Students of Mozambique, a cultural and political discussion group founded in the 1950's. NESAM was based in the African suburbs of Lourenço Marques and counted

current Politburo figures Joaquim Chissano and Mariano Matsinhe among its members.¹

Although much of FRELIMO's top leadership was of southern origin from its inception in the early 1960's, southerners did not always dominate. In the beginning, FRELIMO was an uneasy coalition of nationalist groups of distinctly different ethnic origins. The original coalition consisted of UDENAMO (National Democratic Union of Mozambique), whose militants were of southern origin; MANU (The Mozambique Makonde African Union), which drew support from ethnic Makonde, a group concentrated in Cabo Delgado Province; and UNAMI (National African Union of Independent Mozambique), whose members were from Tete Province.² Throughout the early years of resistance against the Portuguese colonial government, FRELIMO was wracked by internal dissent over questions of goals, strategy and leadership. Even prior to the assassination of its president and unifying force, Dr. Eduardo Mondlane, in 1969, dissenters had broken away to form competing movements. After Mondlane's death, the ideological strains within the Party became unbearable, and the more traditional, nationalist leaders were purged by the Marxist-oriented radicals.

Splinter movements and purges left the FRELIMO coalition with a pronouncedly southern and radical character. The ethnic Makonde guerillas, however, who made up the majority of the fighting force, did not break ranks during the independence struggle. FRELIMO kept the pressure on the Portuguese in the northern provinces and had managed some attacks in central Sofala Province when a group of young Portuguese Army officers, frustrated by their government's refusal to seek a political solution to a debilitating three-front colonial war, overthrew the Caetano regime on April 25, 1974. On September 7th of that year, FRELIMO and the Portuguese signed the Lusaka Accords, which established a mixed, transitional government and drafted a timetable for FRELIMO's ascension to power in an independent Mozambique. The radical faction of the Party had won the day and, as it turned out, the decade.

The dissidents had been routed, but did not melt quietly away. Much of what is today known as RENAMO (Mozambique National Resistance) consists of FRELIMO dissidents and defectors. Some were members of the now-extinct COREMO (Revolutionary Mozambican Current), which broke away from FRELIMO in 1965 and had a brief incarnation in 1967 as the the African National Union of Rombezia.³ This movement

¹Isaacman, Allen, Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982 (Boulder, Colo., 1983), p.78

²Ibid., p.80

³"Mozambique: Havoc in the Bush." Africa Confidential, Vol 23 No 15, p.4

advocated the creation in northern Mozambique (from the Zambezi River to the Rovuma) of an independent state to be known as Rombézia. Other RENAMO members were victims of the 1969 ideological purges, and still others, including its president and military commander, Afonso Dhlakama, post-independence defectors who left FRELIMO for personal or political reasons.

The purpose of this brief and highly simplified digression into the political history of FRELIMO is to introduce some of the centrifugal forces that militate against national unity in Mozambique. The Rombézia enthusiasts resurfaced in Zambézia Province after independence as Africa Livre (Free Africa), an anti-FRELIMO military organization with some local support.¹ They may well have been absorbed into RENAMO, which now operates in all the northern provinces. Popular disaffection with the central government, which, especially by northerners, is often perceived as southern-dominated, may provide fertile ground for northern secessionist agitation. Many northerners just plain dislike southerners, with the same narrow, uninformed prejudice that recalls animosity between the races in Chicago. (e.g. "Southerners? Lazy, ungrateful backstabbers.")

Another factor that complicates the war in the north is religion. A significant percentage of the population, especially along the coast above the Zambezi, is Moslem. One of the stories, perhaps apocryphal, told to me by observant Moslems and Christians alike, is of a speech President Samora Machel made soon after independence in which he declared that "God does not exist" (a tale often followed by a dry little laugh and accounts of baseball-sized hailstones falling the next day). What is certain is that the early years of FRELIMO's rule were marked by active hostility towards organized religion and other forms of "obscurantism." People don't forgive such offenses easily. Stories about FRELIMO officials stomping through mosques with their shoes on remain current long after official policy changes, as it since has, and the government tries to cultivate religious leaders.

I cannot judge whether militant Islam in the Middle East has affected Mozambican Moslems' attitudes, but by many accounts, some Arabs are pitching in to RENAMO's coffers. Alleged culprits include Saudi Arabia, Libya (strange bedfellows), Somalia and the Comoros, the last two of which are said to serve as way stations for arms shipments. The only tattered shred of evidence I have ever heard to back this up is a claim that the RENAMO troops that recently destroyed the newly-restored sugar mill at Luabo, in Zambézia Province, were dressed

¹"Mozambique: Havoc in the Bush," Africa Confidential, Vol 23 No 15, p.4

in uniforms from Libya. Whatever the truth of such claims, their local effect is to reinforce the idea of Moslem hostility towards FRELIMO.

One scenario that must preoccupy FRELIMO is losing control of the northern half of the country. RENAMO is a highly decentralized (or, alternately, disorganized) movement. Even if the government could enlist Robert Mugabe's or Pieter Botha's help to gain control of the south (where the South Africans' investments and interests are concentrated), RENAMO might carry on indefinitely in the north. Peasants in the northern provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado are commonly adjudged loyal to FRELIMO, mostly on the merit of the Party's influence there during the anti-colonial struggle. Indeed, most of the movement's guerillas were recruited there, and the population did much to support their war for independence. The official line is that peasants in these two provinces are long-acquainted with FRELIMO, and understand the value of revolutionary institutions such as communal villages and collective labor, while the rest of the country is still being educated into the Party's philosophy. My impression, however, is that the deprivation of recent years has dissipated whatever political capital FRELIMO amassed during its well-waged guerilla war. In Namoula, I met with a group of Makonde "antigo combatantes," or former fighters in the war against the Portuguese colonial regime. They spoke guardedly, but expressed discontentment with the current situation. One man remarked that he didn't fight all those years for an empty stomach and no shoes. I asked, with naive, "first I've heard of it" inflections, why they didn't complain to the government. After all, I reasoned out loud, as FRELIMO veterans their opinions would certainly be listened to with sincere interest. One of them, who at first insisted on anonymity but days later introduced himself warmly by name, responded matter-of-factly that, patriotic credentials notwithstanding, "everyone here is afraid."

Perhaps the most important wild card in this game is the Makonde. If there develops among them a consensus to take up arms against the government, it may be FRELIMO's death knell. The Makonde are, by general agreement, the most esteemed ethnic group in Mozambique: people of all races, ethnicities and political tendencies speak respectfully of them. They are brilliant sculptors; Makua and Shangaan work is children's whittling by comparison. But their incomparable mettle as soldiers is what makes their political disposition of especial importance. As noted above, Makonde involvement in the struggle for Mozambican independence predates the creation of FRELIMO and, although numerically small, the Makonde contributed the majority of that movement's foot soldiers.

The ethnic pride and consciousness that inspired the Makonde

to resist Portuguese colonialism could, under certain conditions, be engaged against the present government. Despite his contribution to the independence movement, the Makonde "antigo combatente" is very much a forgotten man, and Cabo Delgado Province, where the group is concentrated, is as much a victim of state economic mismanagement as any other province. The charge that FRELIMO is dominated by southerners was originally made by Makonde and other northern leaders within the movement; whatever its merit in the 1960's, it is certain that, relative to their numbers in pre-independence FRELIMO, the Makonde are vastly underrepresented in the present government. Sentiment for a separate, independent Makonde state in Cabo Delgado Province once had some currency there in the '60's. Should their disenchantment with the central government increase, they could turn to active opposition. A telling measure, were it available, of the government's fortunes in the north would be the ethnic composition of RENAMO units operating in Cabo Delgado Province. If there is a significant number of Makonde among them, FRELIMO is in a bad way. "If they're your friends," one man remarked of the Makonde, "they'll defend you to the death. If they're your enemy, you'd better run." More than helicopter gunships or counterinsurgency training, the allegiance of the Makonde may be the catalyst on which any military solution to the war in the north depends.

If the Makonde are held in high esteem most everywhere in Mozambique, the Indians are as universally disliked.

Portuguese chauvanists' pretensions to 500 years of mighty empire notwithstanding, Mozambique was, until after World War II, a largely unpenetrated backwater with very few Portuguese. Until 1752, when the colony was no more than a string of tenuously held coastal trading posts, it was administered from Goa, a conquest on the Malabar Coast of India which remained Portuguese territory until 1961. Long before Mozambique became a locally administered colony, Indian (and Arab) merchants had made their presence felt all along the East African coast. Mozambique's India connection waxed and waned over the ensuing centuries, picking up in periods of relative economic prosperity and especially after the effective occupation of the colony by Portugal during the 1890's. Many Indian business establishments in Maputo's baixa, or downtown, have a severe, turn-of-the-century portrait of "our founder" staring down from above the cash register. (I do not doubt that these stern, watchful images deterred more than one superstitious, would-be thief.)

Why are the Indians so disliked, especially by blacks, in Mozambique? Like the medieval and early modern European Jews and the ethnic Chinese in southeast Asia, they occupy a position in the socio-economic hierarchy that seems to inspire the antipathy of those above and below it whatever the society or century. The Indians in Mozambique are mostly

urban petty traders and artisans. One reason they never controlled trade in the hinterlands is that it was exceedingly difficult for an Indian to get a license for rural commerce. These were reserved for white Portuguese. Consequently, the Indians are found almost exclusively in the nation's larger cities, where they own dry goods stores, fashion boutiques, shoemaking and tailor shops.

Many black Mozambicans consider the Indians foreigners. Some are, in fact, holders of Pakistani, Indian or Portuguese passports. But even locally-born Indians are often looked upon as strangers. I was surprised to hear Governor Gundana of Nampula Province lump Indians and whites with Mozambican citizenship together with French and Swedes when he remarked that foreigners of all nationalities, not just Russians and Cubans, could be found in his bailiwick. One reason for this is that Indians in Mozambique, in general, display very little patriotic feeling. This lack of nationalist sentiment does not mean that they are not attached to their homes; it simply suggests that they do not swell with conspicuous pride when the national anthem is played. "We don't have a flag," an Indian acquaintance explained to me, "our flag is commerce. We go where there's business." In an era when even the most trivial aspects of life in Mozambique have purposely been politicized, indifference to politics gives especial offense.

Some other qualities of contemporary life in Mozambique make the Indians a particular object of popular resentment. Mozambicans are browbeaten, in state union meetings, Party meetings, in the official street graffiti, with the message that "Production is an Act of Militance." Although almost no one pays attention to such tired slogans anymore, a certain misconception that derives from the same mentality has taken firm root. It is the archaic notion that certain economic activities are non-productive or, worse, that the opportunity cost of the labor therein engaged (which is thereby lost to the "productive" sectors) makes such activities a net loss. The social side of the economic coin recalls, mutatis mutandis, the theories of the 18th century Physiocrats, a group of (mostly French) economists that believed that, because wealth was uniquely a product of the soil, all people not engaged in agriculture or mining were, ipso facto, non-productive. It is the idea that traders (the Physiocrats would include manufacturing workers; FRELIMO would not) constitute a "sterile" class that adds nothing of value to the economic life of the nation. In a country in which trade is associated with "exploitation," (which I decline to define), where "buy cheap and sell dear" is considered a social evil, it follows that traders are, at the very least subliminally, regarded as parasites. After all, the reasoning goes, they don't produce goods; they only shift them from place to place, raising the price to the consumer in the process.

The provision of goods to the People at a "just" price was one of the motives behind FRELIMO's takeover not only of economic planning but the active management of Mozambican commercial life after independence. When the Portuguese who owned and ran the rural shops fled the country, the state "People's Shops" that presumed to replace them proved utter failures. The goods sold or pilfered from their shelves were never replaced, peasants stopped bringing their surpluses to exchange for chits or currency that bought nothing, and rural commerce disintegrated. The disappearance of the rural general stores and the traders who ran them is much lamented. But the mentality that trade must be strictly controlled if the People is to be protected from "exploiters" is very much alive, and, if Party militants have their way, may yet prove the death of the encouraging experiment in limited price decontrol now in progress. A recent newspaper article denouncing windfall profiteers who sell tomatoes "far above the cost of production" may be the first nail in decontrol's coffin.

The Indians are traders par excellence. Because of the nature of a highly controlled market in which price information is often distorted (see p.3), many are making a fine livelihood, and can afford the food the average Mozambican can't. In a hungry society, the well-fed are always the object of envy. Top government and Party people are well-fed, and they are duly resented (and omnipotent, so watch what you say to whom). Foreigners are well-fed, often to the indignation of educated Mozambicans who perform the same or more sophisticated tasks and earn an infinitesimal fraction of their foreign colleagues' salaries (and in worthless meticaïs). That leaves, as elaborated above, (a) the blackmarketeers, and (b) the Indians (many believe that all b are a). And since the vast majority of whites are gone and the Indians are equally racially distinct, they have taken the former's place in the popular imagination as the foreign gluttons eating from the People's plate.

The whites aren't all gone, of course. Of the 230,000 or so who were here in the early 1970's, some 20,000 remain. They may be divided roughly into two categories: upper echelon FRELIMO members and apolitical commoners.

The casual observer will be surprised at the number of whites and Indians in positions of political power in Mozambique.* An informal headcount yields nine out of 20 or so ministers, and many others are secretaries of state and national directors. Clearly, their numbers represent more than a symbolic racial leavening.

* There is only one kind of power in Mozambique. Because the State controls the economy, economic and political power are one and the same. The remaining private firms operate under the rules and restrictions invented by the Party, so their "power,"

No discrimination on the basis of race has always been a FRELIMO tenet, and the distribution of racial minorities in positions of responsibility reflects that. (There are, of course, limits: a white parent cannot tell his child that he could someday grow up to be the President of Mozambique.) The criteria for FRELIMO membership are ideological. If popular opinion is to be credited, the whites in the government fulfill those criteria admirably. They are commonly referred to by two epithets: soviéts and oportunistas.

A soviét (as distinct from soviéticos: see SJL-3, glossary) is a true believer who is "more radical than the revolution." He has to be: it's his only constituency. White and Indian ministers' ethnic "constituencies" are negligible in number and by and large indifferent or tacitly hostile to the government. By virtue of their racial histories, soviéts have no ties to any particular region or language group and, therefore, little (if any) popular appeal. In fact, their position as white and Indian leaders in a black African nation is inescapably anomalous. Hence their position on the red extreme of the political spectrum: the only image of Mozambique with which they can legitimately identify is that of the revolutionary society.

Not all whites in the upper echelons of FRELIMO are considered soviéts; some are simply dismissed as oportunistas, opportunists, who took advantage of their limited education in a largely uneducated society to take positions of privilege in the new order. They give the fisted salute at Party meetings with as much gusto as the next guy, but leave the ideological calisthenics to the political heavyweights.

To what extent particular white frelimistas are soviéts or oportunistas (or both, or neither) I cannot say. Of the many aspersions commonly cast, few seem plausible. Even for those white estruturas who don't get involved, internal Party politics is a high-stakes game. Should ideological divisions within FRELIMO become sufficiently serious to rupture Party unity, radical whites and Indians could find themselves on the wrong side of a surge. And whatever latent racial feeling persists among blacks in FRELIMO could, compounded by political differences, inspire the upper handed to make short work of their minority colleagues.

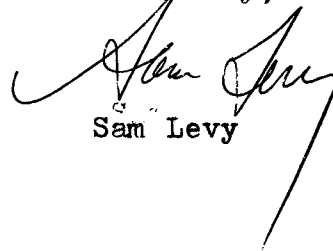
The whites who will probably not directly feel any change in the political wind are those few thousand unoffending average Joe's who stayed on after independence. Some chose Mozambican

if it can be so called, is negligible. As Friedrich Hayek pointed out in The Road to Serfdom, in a totalitarian society, the only power worth having is political.

citizenship, others remained Portuguese. Most decided to stick it out in Mozambique in the hope that, once the hottest political season ended, they could continue, inconspicuous and unmolested, in their work. Others stayed because they had absolutely nothing and no one to go back to in Portugal. Many are saloios, Portuguese peasants who arrived in Mozambique penniless and illiterate, and built up small farms larger than anything they could have dreamed of in the overcrowded metropole. Often identifiable by their flamboyant displays of facial hair, e.g. dense, untrimmed sideburns that meet narrow mustaches in a hairy parabola, they married the local women, fathered mixed-race children and settled lands in remote corners of the provinces. No matter how bad things get, they will stay. Mozambique is their home.

Thus, Mozambique: an omnium-gatherum of whites, Indians, Makondes, Makuas, Shangaan and innumerable other ethnic groups, some struggling to hang on to power, others simply to hang on. Forging a nation-state from such diverse raw materials is a challenge which may prove insuperable for FRELIMO or whomever, if anyone, succeeds it. It's still too early to engrave "e pluribus unum" on the back of the metical.

Sincerely,



Sam Levy

