

‘They can kill us but we won’t go to the communal villages!’

Peasants and the Policy of ‘Socialisation of the Countryside’ in Zambezia

SÉRGIO CHICHAVA

*Lecturer, Eduardo Mondlane University
Institute of Economic and Social Studies (IESE), Maputo*

Translated by Benjamin Legg, Brown University

After its ascent to power in June 1975, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) adopted socialism as a model for development. This led to the implementation of many policies, one of which was the ‘socialisation and modernisation of the countryside’. More concretely, it involved the implantation of communal villages, collective machambas [farm, plot] cooperatives, the prohibition of initiation rites and the abolition of traditional authorities. In the province of Zambezia Frelimo faced innumerable obstacles to putting the policy of ‘socialisation of the countryside’ into practice. This happened to such a degree that, according to the government of Zambezia in that era, the population of other provinces like Nampula, where this policy was more highly prioritised, fled to Zambezia because they knew that there were no communal villages. The objective of this article is to analyse the ‘socialisation of the countryside’ campaign in Zambezia and the different forms of resistance to this policy on the part of the Zambezian peasants.¹

After its ascent to power in June 1975, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) adopted socialism as a model for development. This led to the implementation of many policies, among which was the ‘socialisation and modernisation of the countryside’ (communal villages, collective *machambas*, cooperatives). Much like the adoption of ‘Marxism-Leninism’ as the official ideology at the Third Congress in 1977, Frelimo claimed that this policy was the result of the experience of anticolonial struggle in the ‘liberated zones’.²

According to Frelimo, the official objective of the policy of ‘socialisation of the countryside’ was to ‘organise the people’ who lived in an isolated and dispersed manner, and to create a ‘New Man’: Portuguese-speaking, not superstitious, not religious, not alcoholic, not polygamous, and inhabiting a communal village. In summation, it involved the construction of a ‘modern man’, free of all vestiges of what was considered ‘feudal and archaic society’ (including traditional power structures) and of capitalist colonial society. These two social structures had no place in the new

1 This work is the result of research conducted in the archives of the Government of Zambezia (AGZ). It’s necessary to highlight that this is not an archive in the true sense of the term, but rather a pile of papers abandoned in a warehouse in Quelimane, Zambezia’s provincial capital, to which I was granted access by the local government in 2004 and 2005. The title sentence is the reaction of a peasant in the district of Morrumbala to communal villages, Administração do Distrito de Morrumbala, *Confidencial, ofício n°35/D/8*, Arquivos do Governo da Zambézia (AGZ), Morrumbala, Sept. 18, 1979.

2 The ‘liberated zones’ are the areas that had been captured from the enemy during the anti-colonial war.

modern socialist society that Frelimo intended to construct. In this sense, the communal villages were viewed as 'embryos' of future Mozambican cities and a new and 'pure' Mozambican society. In the communal villages, peasants were, under the orientation of *Grupos Dinamizadores* (GDs)³ and delegates of the People's Assemblies – symbols of the new 'People's Power' that substituted 'archaic' and 'feudal' traditional authorities – expected to produce collectively on collective *machambas* and cooperatives. They also were expected to resolve their day-to-day problems collectively under the guidance of the party.

In 1980, five years after the declaration of independence, there were throughout the country more than 1,000 communal villages housing 1.3 million peasants, the equivalent of nearly 15% of the rural population.⁴ Cabo Delgado, in the far north of the country, was the province with the highest percentage of people inhabiting communal villages, the majority of which were settlements in which the Portuguese had obliged peasants to organise themselves into settlement camps and thus impede the independence movements in areas of guerrilla conflict. With the arrival of independence, Frelimo had given orders to peasants to stay in these settlement camps. The other settlement camps resulted from conjunctural situations like floods in the Zambezi Valley and Limpopo Valley in the south of the country. These numbers illustrate the lack of success for this policy of 'paternalist-authoritarian modernisation'. However, in Zambezia, which is the object of study in this article, there were practically no settlement camps, nor any communal villages, and it is precisely because of this that it is interesting to discuss the policy of 'socialisation of the countryside' in this province. Zambezia is a province where Frelimo faced innumerable challenges putting this policy into practice. These obstacles happened to such a degree that, according to the Zambezian government of this era, the population of other provinces like Nampula, where this process was more prioritised than it was in Zambezia, fled to Zambezia because it was known that there were no communal villages.

This phenomenon is illustrated in a speech made by the former governor of Zambezia, Oswaldo Tazama, in 1978:

In our province we should pay particular attention to the organisation of cooperatives and the consolidation of communal villages situated along our frontier. We should also pay much attention to the communal villages which [are situated] on the border with Nampula province and even [those] which are located in the Zambezi Valley. You may ask why is it that he only stresses these? [The districts that border Nampula] I will say, because our side of the border with Nampula, which all of us know has the highest population, is the area in which we don't have any communal villages. We are a weight on our comrades in Nampula. While they intensify the work of mobilising communal villages, the peasants flee, saying 'we want to go to Zambezia, because there are no communal villages there', and they cross the Ligonha River. They cross the Ligonha and when they arrive on our side its clear that they don't have anything to speak of. We are therefore, a weight. We are a

3 Created in September 1974, still under the auspices of the transitional government, the GDs had substituted traditional authorities and had as their duty politisation, mobilisation and organisation of the masses, that is, to get them to tow the 'correct' Frelimo line.

4 Centro de Estudos Africanos, *Relatório de Investigação. A constituição e o desenvolvimento de Aldeias Comunais na base de cooperativas agrícolas no Distrito de Mocuba, província da Zambézia*, CEA/UEM, Universidade Karl Marx, Maputo, Leipzig, 1981.

weight on Nampula; and because of this we are insisting that we must overcome this phase.⁵

But the interest in studying the trajectory of the policy of 'socialisation of the countryside' in Zambezia cannot only be reduced to this; it also comes from the fact that Frelimo was never able – politically or socially – to impose this policy on this region, neither during nor after the colonial war. This contributes to Zambezia being the only one of the four 'fronts' (Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Tete and Zambezia), where for varied reasons, Frelimo's armed struggle was a complete failure.⁶ It is equally important to highlight that it was in this province that the first anti-Frelimo movement, the Revolutionary Party of Mozambique (PRM),⁷ began in 1976, and that it had the considerable support of rural populations in the area on the border with Malawi.⁸ When the National Resistance of Mozambique (Renamo) penetrated this province in 1982 with the help of the PRM, it also had the considerable support of Zambezians,⁹ a fact that caused then-president Samora Machel to say that 'armed banditry in Zambezia had specific characteristics'.¹⁰ This support expresses itself today through the massive vote in favour of the former rebel movement Renamo in this province.¹¹

The communal villages, as has been stated, comprised the fundamental pillars of Frelimo policy of the construction of a 'New Man', and of a society without exploitation where collective labour thrived. These communal villages have been described by different authors as one of the causes of the party's unpopularity in rural areas.¹² However, with respect to Zambezia, according to Jean-Claude Legrand, the communal villages were not a contributing factor in the resentment toward Frelimo among peasants, as in 1978, only 0.5% of the population lived in communal villages and in 1982 this percentage was only 2%.¹³ One cannot agree with this rationale, as, in my opinion, the fact that 'socialisation of the countryside' did not impact a large portion

5 Governo da Província da Zambézia, *I reunião provincial das aldeias comunais e cooperativas, discurso de abertura de sua exceléncia o Governador da Província Oswaldo Tazama*, AGZ, Macuse, November 5, 1979.

6 For Frelimo, one of the principal factors that explains the failure of the Zambezian 'front' was the defection by the majority of Zambezians who had joined the movement to the Portuguese side. For more details on this subject refer to the speech of former Frelimo president Samora Machel. *A nossa força está na unidade (Intervenção do Presidente Samora Machel no comício realizado em Quelimane, em 19 de Junho de 1983, para apresentação do novo dirigente da Província da Zambézia)*, (Maputo, Instituto Nacional do Livro e do Disco, 1983), 27-29, (Colecção Unidade Nacional, 3). On the possible causes of the failure of the Zambezian 'front', see S. Chichava, *Le 'vieux' Mozambique. Étude sur l'identité politique de la Zambézie*, (Ph.D. thesis, Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV, Institut d'Études Politiques de Bordeaux, June 2007).

7 The PRM descends from the former African National Union of Rombezéia (UNAR), created in 1969 by Amós Sumane, a dissident of Frelimo and the Revolutionary Committee of Mozambique (Coremo). As its name indicates, UNAR aimed for the independence of Rombezéia, the region between the Rovuma and Zambezi rivers. According to some sources (including Frelimo), UNAR had been created by PIDE-DGS (the Portuguese secret police) and Portuguese businessman Jorge Jardim with the support of his great friend Kamuzu Banda, former president of Malawi. According to these theses, Banda would have supported UNAR because this would permit him to realise his longtime dream of uniting the north of Mozambique to Malawi, that is, all of the area that had been part of the ancient Marave empire, which he considered to be an integral part of his country. For more on this topic see Gulamo Taju, 'Renamo: os factos que conhecemos', *Cadernos de História* 7, UEM: Maputo, (1988), 5-44.

8 Comissão Coordenadora das Forças de Defesa e Segurança, *Relatório*, AGZ, Quelimane, October 28, 1980, Comissão Coordenadora das Forças de Defesa e Segurança, *Relatório*, AGZ, Quelimane, May 25, 1980, Comissão Coordenadora das Forças de Defesa e Segurança, *Relatório*, AGZ, Quelimane, October 28, 1980.

9 For more on the civil war in Zambezia see S. Chichava, *Le 'vieux' Mozambique. Étude sur l'identité politique de la Zambézie*, (Ph.D. thesis, Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV, Institut d'Études Politiques de Bordeaux, June 2007).

10 S. Machel, *A nossa força está na unidade (Intervenção do Presidente Samora Machel no comício realizado em Quelimane, em 19 de Junho de 1983, para apresentação do novo dirigente da Província da Zambézia)*, (Maputo, Instituto Nacional do Livro e do Disco, 1983), 27-29, (Colecção Unidade Nacional, 3).

11 For more on the Zambezian vote in favour of Renamo see S. Chichava, 'Uma província 'rebelde'. O significado do voto zambeziano a favor da Renamo', in L. Brito, et al. ed., *Cidadania e governação em Moçambique*, (Maputo, IESE, 2008), 15-48.

12 For examples see C. Geffray, M. Pedersen, 'Nampula en guerre', *Politique africaine* 29 (March 1988), 28-40; C. Geffray, *La cause des armes au Mozambique. Anthropologie d'une guerre civile*, Paris, Karthala, 1990; Michel Cahen, *Mozambique, la révolution implosée: Etudes sur 12 ans d'indépendance, 1975-1987* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1983).

13 J.-C. Legrand, 'Logique de guerre et dynamique de la violence en Zambézia, 1976-1991', *Politique Africaine* 50 (June 1993), 88-104.

of the Zambezian population does not exclude it from being a factor for Frelimo's unpopularity in the region.

I think that the questions should be reversed: why is it that 'socialisation of the countryside' was less important in Zambezia? Why did it only reach 2% of the population? In almost all districts of the province the policy of communal villages was attempted without any significant success, essentially due to the great resistance of the peasants. Why was there this resistance if this policy was, according to its creators, for the good of the peasants? What were the different forms of resistance to this policy of 'authoritarian modernisation' by the Zambezian peasants?

Using Albert Hirschman's¹⁴ exit-voice-loyalty and Christian Geffray's civil war anthropology¹⁵ models, the objective of this article is to explain the rationale that led Zambezian peasants to resist the policy of socialisation of the countryside and to study the diverse forms of resistance that they generated to oppose this policy.

Exit, Voice and Loyalty: A Brief Explanation of Hirschman's Model

In his most famous work, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations, and States*, published in 1970, Hirschman focuses on the internal dysfunctions of companies, organisations and states. His analysis helps one to understand forms of social conflict and, more broadly, social change. Hirschman effectively proposes a particularly stimulating and multidisciplinary analysis, one which combines political science and economics to allow for a precise census of the different solutions that actors present to remedy dysfunctions or get out of the conflict situations that emerge in the heart of an organisation or society. Hirschman believes that, at the first instance that an actor confronts a situation of dissatisfaction or injustice, there are three types of attitudes that can be adopted: the option of flight (exit), of protest (voice), or, even if dissatisfied, of doing nothing (loyalty). For example, the citizens of a country can respond to repression or political intolerance through emigrating to other countries (exit), through protesting publically (voice), or, in spite of their dissatisfaction, through remaining loyal. The clients of a certain firm can manifest their dissatisfaction with the quality of their products by moving to another competing firm (exit) or by writing letters of complaint to the firm (voice). However, in spite of all of the existing problems in the firm or in relation to product quality, clients can also opt to do nothing, whether out of brand loyalty or loyalty to the firm itself (loyalty), in hopes that the situation will improve one day.

Frelimo: Giving a social basis to Renamo

Even if Renamo was a creation of the Rhodesian secret service that was later supported and armed by the South African apartheid regime, it was thanks to the discontent that the 'socialisation of the countryside' policy brought to a considerable part of the rural sector that the organisation was able to build an internal social base, one which permitted its survival and expansion even after the fall of the regimes that sustained

14 A. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations, and States*, (Harvard University Press, London, 1970).

15 C. Geffray, M. Pedersen, 'Mozambique...'; C. Geffray, *La cause des armes*.

it. One can summarise the thesis of Christian Geffray in a similar way,¹⁶ thus providing the inspiration for this analysis of the ‘socialisation of the countryside’ policy in Zambezia. According to Geffray,¹⁷ based on his study conducted in the district of Eрати in Nampula, this strategy of ‘modernisation’ and ‘socialisation’ of the countryside committed its first fundamental sin by bringing neither considerable social nor economic progress: the population lived in poorer conditions than it did before, without basic infrastructure, potable water, arable land, and many times depending on the local populace of the lands where communal villages had been constructed. Its second error was its authoritarian and paternalist nature, which did not respect the stories, traditions and social relations of the peasants; this aspect has provoked the most lively reactions and countless conflicts with the party/state. Frelimo said that it was necessary to organise the people, as if the people had been waiting for the Party to organise them and as if earlier forms of social organisation were not pertinent.¹⁸ Without denying the importance of exterior dynamics, namely the support of Ian Smith’s Rhodesia and of the apartheid regime in the creation and sustaining of Renamo, Geffray affirms that above all it was the social, economic and cultural de-structuralisation of a portion of the rural population due to the policy of ‘socialisation of the countryside’ that would create the internal social base for Renamo during the Mozambican civil war. This is not to mention the contempt felt on the part of Frelimo towards traditional authority: scorned, humiliated and many times living on the margins of existence, this population and its traditional chiefs would support Renamo, which, taking advantage of their unpopularity, claimed to be against communal villages and in favour of traditional power structures.¹⁹

Geffray’s thesis has been corroborated by other prominent authors like the French historian Michel Cahen.²⁰ At the same time, while considered ‘revolutionary’²¹ when juxtaposed with the until then dominant paradigm that saw Renamo only as an instrument of white-minority regimes of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (today’s Zimbabwe), the work of Geffray was criticised by reputed Mozambique scholars such as Bridget O’Laughlin and Alice Dinerman.²² According to O’Laughlin, Geffray’s thesis about the war in Mozambique fails principally because

(a) he dichotomises internal and external class forces and (b) he dichotomises the traditional world of the peasantry and the modern world of the cities... At the same time, Geffray ignores the classical concerns of Marxists and socialists in the analysis of revolutionary situations. He also fails to treat problematically the nature of the political, economic and cultural structure formed by colonialism, which any strategy of socialist transition had (and has) to confront.²³

16 C. Geffray, *La cause des armes*; C. Geffray, M. Pedersen, ‘Mozambique...’

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 M. Cahen, *Mozambique, La Révolution implosée*.

21 F. Florêncio, ‘Christian Geffray e a antropologia da guerra. Ainda a propósito de La cause des armes au Mozambique’, *Etnográfica*, VI 2 (2002), 347-364.

22 B. O’Laughlin, ‘Interpretations Matter: Evaluation of the War in Mozambique’, *Southern Africa Report* (January 1992); A base social da guerra em Moçambique, *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 10 (1992), 107-142. A. Dinerman, ‘In Search of Mozambique: The Imaginings of Christian Geffray in La Cause des Armes au Mozambique: Anthropologie d’une Guerre Civile’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 4 (1994), 569-586.

23 O’Laughlin, ‘Interpretations Matter’, 25.

For O'Laughlin, the situation was much more complex than Geffray had understood it to be and could not be summarised only as a conflict between a rural sector that had been punished and humiliated by Frelimo and an urban sector that was the primary beneficiary of Frelimo's policies. Provoked by more than simply the policy of 'socialisation of the countryside', the conflict between Frelimo and the peasantry was the result of Renamo's action, which was given practical assistance by the external, imperialist forces of Rhodesia, South Africa, the United States and other Western countries whose central objective was to overthrow socialist regimes like Mozambique's. This is why there was a concentration of Renamo attacks on infrastructure (roads, bridges, schools, hospitals etc.) in rural areas.²⁴

In Dinerman's opinion, if the war had gained a local dynamic, with Renamo managing to establish a certain social support base, this movement could not be considered an independent and 'self-reproducing social force':

It is one thing to observe that Renamo (and the violence, more generally) has acquired a local colouration; quite another to characterise it as an independent, self-reproducing social force. Renamo may be nutritionally and demographically self-sufficient in some areas; but it is not logistically or militarily so. In insisting on the more intemperate case, Geffray leaves this part of his argument open to a curt dismissal.²⁵

For Fernando Florêncio, Dinerman's critique of this aspect is unnecessary because what Geffray was trying to say was that 'Renamo has no political purpose apart from its own reproduction as a military force, which is completely different [from politics]'.²⁶ All the same, Dinerman's principal critique is one against the idea that support by rural populations, in this case that of Erati, for Renamo was a popular reaction against the negation or 'cultural oppression' to which they had been subjected under Frelimo's 'modernising' project.²⁷ According to Dinerman, this conclusion of Geffray's makes no sense because his own analysis shows that the adherence of a fraction of rural youth to Renamo was less for cultural motives, as these youth also saw their local environment and traditions as the cause of their problems. Therefore it was due more to the absence of options for social emancipation in rural areas (a lack of work, schools and teachers), even in urban areas. War was the only way to achieve social and economic emancipation, even if Renamo lacked any political agenda.²⁸

Whatever may be the weaknesses of Geffray's thesis, his work remains pertinent to my analysis of the situation in Zambezia. My analysis will show that the attempt to impose the policy of 'socialisation of the countryside' not only created conflicts among local 'structures'²⁹ of Frelimo, but also opened space for a part of the population to support anti-Frelimo movements, namely the PRM and Renamo.

24 Ibid.

25 Dinerman, 'In search', 570.

26 Florêncio, 'Christian Geffray', 357.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 In the vocabulary of the day, the word 'structure' (*estrutura*) implies the partisan organs of State (people's assemblies, organising groups etc.) and by extension the people who comprised these organs: 'the structure came to visit us' means that a comrade of the party leadership had arrived.

Zambezian Peasant Resistance to the Policy of ‘Socialisation of the Countryside’

Conflicts between rural populations and the State around communal villages were lively and intense in Zambezia. On the one hand, the State obliged people to live in communal villages and, on the other hand, the majority obstinately refused to do so. Peasants also did not want to work in ‘collective *machambas*’ or on cooperatives, preferring to work individually. Frelimo leaders who could not perceive the reasons for this resistance spoke of ‘low political consciousness’ or the ‘absence of the spirit of unity in the heart of the people’. Also, for Frelimo, the policy of ‘socialisation of the countryside’ did not achieve positive results, because within the ‘structures’ there were infiltrators compromised by colonialism, by ‘armed bandits’ or by religious organisations. Due to this, it was necessary to ‘purify’ the Party by eliminating these anti-revolutionary elements. This was one among many reasons that led to ‘structuralisation’ of the Party in 1978, thereby imposing a new dynamic on the ‘revolutionary’ process.

However, there were other factors that contributed to this policy’s lack of success, and peasant resistance to forced ‘collectivisation’ took many forms.

a) Direct confrontation

One of the most visible and emblematic forms of peasant resistance to the process of ‘socialisation of the countryside’ was to respond in a direct manner to what was considered arrogance and lack of consideration on the part of Frelimo. Because of this, many peasants were arrested or sent to ‘re-education’ camps. For example, in July of 1979, in the Chidanda *celula* of Morrumbala, the local administration needed to have a *banja* (meeting) with the local populations to learn the motives for their refusal to live in communal villages. Among the peasants who spoke was an elder named Alfândega:

*We won’t agree to go live in the communal village, that’s why when Davane the nurse called upon us to distribute plots of land we ceased our work, because why work when it was just to help the government and not ourselves. Today when they come to talk to us about the village we respond that ‘Frelimo ruined Mozambique’. [When asked who Frelimo was... Alfândega said] It’s that one [pointing at the official in charge of that locality]. It’s that one who is ruining things here in Chire because he is the representative of the President. *They can kill us but we will not go to communal villages.* That’s why we will flee to Milange District where they don’t have communal villages. [All applauded the elder’s comment. He added] We won’t flee to Malawi because life is hard and everyday you need to buy food in the marketplace, and it’s not like that here. We will just flee to Milange.*

You say that our government is a people’s government, and that the people are in control, now why won’t they accept [our complaints] and why do they continue to insist to build communal villages if we don’t want them...³⁰

30 Administração do Distrito de Morrumbala, *Confidencial, ofício n°35/D/8*, AGZ, Morrumbala, September 18, 1979, my italics.

Accused of agitating the populace and disobeying Party orders, Alfândega, who had been supported by another peasant named Capesse, was, like his supporter, 're-educated' for a week.³¹

The government continued to insist that peasants move into communal villages, albeit without achieving any palpable success. In the district of Lugela (Muelamade, Ruama and Alto Tenede), the population refused to comply with the policy of 'socialisation of the countryside', affirming, *'if the government had the power to send arms to kill us, we would still never accept life in communal villages'*³² In Novanana, Morrumbala District, close to Alto-Molocué, the population said that it wanted nothing to do with communal villages, but rather with God, because if they were independent it was thanks to him.³³ As is well known, Frelimo advocated that its 'Marxist-Leninist' ideology was incompatible with religion.

At times popular resistance took on a violent nature, with some Frelimo representatives having been threatened or killed. This is the case of the secretary of the Carico circle in the district of Gurué, who was murdered by some locals, accused of being most responsible for obliging people to go live in communal villages.³⁴ In Nhacatundo, Mopeia District, the adjunct secretary of the Frelimo party was also murdered by locals. According to the local administration, the objective was to 'impede the process of the implementation of communal villages'.³⁵

b) Rumours

The propagation of rumours with the intent to discredit the process of 'socialisation of the countryside', which as we have already seen was resented as an alien infiltration, doubtlessly constituted a form of *voice* and had a considerable impact on the failure of this policy. Almost all district governments in Zambezia, as a way of justifying the failure of this policy, invoked the action of supposed agitators who circulated rumours to discredit the process and make the Party's mobilisation efforts more difficult.

Allport and Postman³⁶ have already demonstrated that rumours function as a collective mechanism of 'transference of aggression' through which the social body projects the 'collective anguish' of a minority group (political or social elite, administration, communities of foreigners, etc.). According to these authors, rumours would arise around an event or happening when the following two factors are encountered: ambiguity (the incapacity of a social body to interpret an event's meaning) and implication (a high level of interest by members of the social body in the event and its interpretation). From this perspective, rumours should be seen as a response mechanism by peasants in the face of an anomalous situation. The examples that follow reveal this.

In the district of Maganja da Costa the local administration said that people from outside of the district demobilised people, claiming that in other provinces, above

31 Ibid.

32 Administração do Governo do Distrito de Lugela, *Relatório mensal de 15 de Julho a 15 de Agosto, Lugela, AGZ, Quelimane, August 15, 1981.*

33 Governo da Província da Zambézia, *Reunião com as brigadas provinciais para a divulgação do PPI, AGZ, Quelimane, May 8, 1982.*

34 Administração do Distrito de Gurué, *Relatório das actividades desenvolvidas durante o período de 15 de Fevereiro a 15 de Março do corrente, no âmbito político, económico e social, , AGZ, Gurué, March 14, 1981.*

35 Administração do Distrito de Mopeia, *Relatório das actividades desenvolvidas durante o ano de 1979, AGZ, Mopeia, January 6, 1980.*

36 G. Allport and L. Postman, 'The Basic Psychology of Rumor', *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 8, 2 (1945).

all in the south of Mozambique, there were neither communal villages nor cooperative farms.³⁷ This was equivalent to saying that the Frelimo government, viewed as largely comprised of people from the south, intended through this policy to exploit Zambezians, and because of this Zambezians should never accept it.

In the region of Conho, Mopeia District, rumours were spread that it was no longer obligatory to live in a communal village because an official from Maputo had ended this 'bad policy'. According to the local administration, they themselves 'had to retreat' because of this rumour.³⁸ Other rumours held that the government was organising people in communal villages, so that they could be easily exterminated by Frelimo troops. These last types of rumour resonated simply because in some regions of Zambezia, the Frelimo army, along with so-called popular militias, were known for the atrocities that they were committing against the populace.³⁹

c) *Escapism or Exit Option*

Instead of direct confrontation with Frelimo, other peasants preferred to flee. Therefore, several cases of flight to neighbouring countries, district capitals, or other regions of the country where peasants believed that there were no communal villages were reported in Zambezia. In 1981, for example, 30 peasants from the district of Milange who had fled to Malawi to escape communal villages, along with their respective families, were returned to the administration of Morrumbala by the Malawian authorities.⁴⁰ It is necessary to highlight that in border districts of Zambezia – Lugela, Milange and Morrumbala – the difficulty in creating communal villages, cooperatives and collective *machambas* was attributed by Frelimo party officials to the negative influence of Kamuzu Banda's Malawi, a country considered to be imperialist and one which did not have good relations with the regime in Maputo. Even the predominance of religion, polygamy, alcoholism or initiation rites was seen as the result of Malawi's bad influence.⁴¹

The peasants of Morrumbala not only fled to the neighbouring district of Milange, but also to Mocuba in the interior of the province, since they believed that in these regions there were no communal villages. In 1981, with the help of popular militias, the administration of Morrumbala, under orders from the provincial government, decided to destroy all traditional dispersed settlements with the aim of obliging people to accept the communal villages.⁴²

In Mocuba, for example, people who had been obliged to live in the Eduardo Mondlane communal village due to flooding, abandoned it at as soon as the situation had improved in the lowlands along the river bank, where the government revealed that they created their own 'political structures', in what can be considered an example of 'people's self management'.⁴³ For their part, the populations of Socone in the

37 Governo da Província da Zambézia, *Síntese da intervenção de Morrumbala*, AGZ, Quelimane, December 19, 1978.

38 Ibid.

39 Administração do Distrito de Morrumbala, *Informação de carácter confidencial*, Morrumbala, March 5, 1991, Governo da Província da Zambézia, *Síntese da visita de sua exceléncia Ministro da Agricultura ao distrito*, AGZ, Nicoadala, September 20, 1993; Administração do Distrito da Maganja da Costa, *Relatório de trabalho realizado em Mabala, Cabuir e Muoloa de 1 a 11 de Setembro de 1986*, AGZ, Maganja da Costa, September 17, 1986; Administração do Distrito de Gilé, *Relatório da situação política, económica e social do distrito do Gilé referente ao mês de Abril de 1986*, AGZ, Gilé, May 10, 1986.

40 Conselho Executivo do Distrito de Morrumbala, *Para Gabinete do Director do Gabinete da província da Zambézia, Confidencial*, AGZ, Morrumbala, November 13, 1981.

41 Administração do distrito de Morrumbala, *Relatório referente aos meses de Março e Abril de 1976*, AGZ, Morrumbala, April 30, 1976.

42 Governo da Província da Zambézia, *Memorando*, AGZ, Quelimane, October 8, 1981.

43 Governo da Província da Zambézia *Síntese da intervenção de Morrumbala*, AGZ, Quelimane, December 19, 1978.

Ile District and of Muveia in Gurue District fled to Cololo, because it was said that the local Frelimo representative was against collectivisation.⁴⁴ It was normal in Zambezia to encounter some Frelimo representatives at the GD or People's Assembly level who were against the process of the collectivisation of the countryside, discouraging instead of mobilising the populace to move into communal villages.⁴⁵

Reasons for the Failure of the Policy of 'Socialisation of the Countryside'

There were various factors that contributed to the failure of the policy of transformation of the countryside into city. These are the principal ones.

a) A process external to the peasantry

According to Frelimo, the problem of underdevelopment would not be resolved with tractors, fertilizer or better techniques: this would come later. At the start, peasants were expected to embody the Maoist slogan and 'depend on their own forces'. This meant that the local population needed to clear the forests in places where communal villages were to be established with their own axes, machetes, hoes etc. The government's task was only to help to the extent that it was able. But the principle of 'depending on their own forces' was condemned to failure from the start, because it was not connected to any objectives of the peasants themselves, but rather to an objective originating in the bureaucratic imaginary of Frelimo. This principle was not bad in and of itself, the problem being that the peasants were not disposed to mobilise themselves for a goal that was alien, a goal that would not permit them to live in better conditions than they did before, and a goal that was not bringing them material gain or social progress. Naturally, massive state assistance would have helped, but in this case the peasants were mere spectators of the services that the State would have implemented for them.

And yet, even at the heart of Frelimo, the policy of 'socialisation and modernisation of the countryside' was not subject to a consensus, due to its paternalistic character and the lack of respect for local social realities,. That is why on August 18, 1978, the then Minister of Agriculture (Mozambique's first since independence) Joaquim Ribeiro de Carvalho, responsible for the implementation of these public policies, was dismissed from his post and accused of blocking the process of constructing communal villages. He was accused of 'giving primacy to technology at the detriment of popular contributions and initiative'.⁴⁶ Joaquim de Carvalho, who was also accused of having 'petit-bourgeois attitudes' values then considered incompatible with those of Frelimo, was also expelled from the Party's Central Committee.⁴⁷

b) The absence of available land

In the coastal areas of Zambezia the government was confronted by the absence of available land since almost all land was occupied by coconut groves planted by capitalist companies and small producers. It is necessary to highlight that the coast of Zambezia was planted with one of the world's largest coconut groves established at

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Governo da Província da Zambézia, *Memorando*, AGZ, Quelimane, October 8, 1981.

⁴⁶ 'Presidente da Repúblia demite Ministro da Agricultura. Comunicado da Presidência da Repúblia'; *Notícias* (Maputo), no. 17659, August 19, 1978; 'Resolução de casos disciplinares', *Notícias* (Maputo), no. 17657, August 17, 1978.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

end of the nineteenth century and start of the twentieth century by the great magisterial companies and by the local populace. The local government, recognising this situation, stated:

We want to refer in a specific way to the problem brought to us by the coastal region and the populace that inhabits the coastal region in the implementation of socialisation of the countryside. Here the great coconut plantations predominate that are divided up by families or occupied by State or Private Companies. Each family claims as its own the land occupied by these plantations where they farm individually in the monocultural system, making mobilisation towards cooperativisation difficult or almost fruitless.⁴⁸

This constituted a major setback for the policy of collectivisation and was a motive for conflict with the local population because certain Frelimo representatives, with a clear attitude of contempt and arrogance, tried to achieve this policy goal through force. This was the case in the districts of Chinde and Inhassunge, where some palms were leveled in order to construct communal villages, making this program even more unpopular.

c) Lack of planning

In addition to peasants' resistance against this policy as a resented process imposed from outside and failing in its aims at social progress, Frelimo's organisational incapacity also contributed to the policy's failure. The lack of planning and institutional incapacity on the part of the Frelimo government created clashes between the government and peasants who flaunted Party orders to live in communal villages. For example, it was common for peasants to identify and prepare a piece of land for the construction of a communal village, only to have other Party representatives later say the land was inadequate, as this example illustrates:

The initiative of the populace was never lacking. The majority of the time, they choose places and wait for orientation for competent administrators. This orientation was never given, and more seriously, when the peasants began their work, we appeared and said that the place wasn't adequate. This situation breaks the initiative of those who had already accepted to organise their lives according to Party instructions.⁴⁹

The government also complained about the lack of cadres to integrate the different commissions of the communal villages at the district level. There was also a lack of surveyors to demarcate parcels of land, a situation that led the government to resort many times to using peasants themselves as surveyors.⁵⁰

d) The clash between 'tradition' and 'modernity'

Similar to many other regions of the country, in Zambezia peasants often refused to abandon their places of origin to go to communal villages as this meant abandoning

48 Governo da Província da Zambézia, *Relatório sobre a socialização do campo e cooperativização*, AGZ, Quelimane, April 2, 1982.

49 Frelimo, *Relatório do Comitê provincial à 2ª Conferência*, AGZ, Quelimane, January 15, 1981.

50 Ibid.

the tombs of their ancestors, because in rural areas each family had its own cemetery. The populace, which had always lived in dispersed homesteads beside family cemeteries, was wary of catching diseases in the communal villages due to the discontent of their ancestors' spirits, and also of epidemics like cholera brought on by deficient sanitary conditions. As a traditional leader explained:

A person normally lives in the area where their grandparents and parents were buried, and it is difficult because of this tradition for people to abandon their places of origin ... our grandparents never lived in communal villages. Now why should we go there to live? Another motive were the diseases. If there were an epidemic it would affect many people, and nobody would escape because we would share the same wells.⁵¹

The contempt for local traditions viewed as 'archaic' and incompatible with the 'modern' nation that Frelimo intended to build as well as with the *ethos* and *habitus* of the Party's guiding elite – in large part from the South and literally molded by the bureaucratic characteristics of Portuguese urban colonialism in the twentieth century – was one of the reasons for the failure of the 'communal village' policy.⁵²

e) *The PRM, Renamo and communal villages*

When the PRM entered Zambezia in 1976, among its principal targets were the communal villages. One of the most flagrant cases occurred in Muabanama, Lugela District, when on September 20, 1982, the PRM burnt down the only communal village existent in the region.⁵³ According to the local administration, this act had reduced to nothing the achievement of the policy of communal villages in the district of Lugela, as this village was considered the pioneer for the entire district.⁵⁴ A pamphlet from the PRM found in Morrumbala in 1981, written by one of its military leaders, Lucas Saguate,⁵⁵ clearly illustrates that this movement was not only against the communal villages, but also against anything that symbolised the presence of the State such as the so-called 'people's shops':

We arrived here in Molir [Murrire?]. We burnt all of the villages, we arrived in the shop and plundered everything that was there because *we don't want the custom of the people's shop. We don't want communal villages either. Down with the communal village. Attention comrades we cannot continue with the communal village.*⁵⁶

51 Interview with traditional leader Cazimbe conducted by Sérgio Chichava, Molumbo, September 15, 2004.

52 For more on Frelimo elites see M. Cahen, 'Entrons dans la nation. Notes pour une étude du discours politique de la marginalité. Le cas de la Renamo au Mozambique', *Politique Africaine* 67 (October, 1997), 70-88 ; 'Mozambique, histoire géopolitique d'un pays sans nation', *Lusotopie*, 1-2, (June 1994), 213-266.

53 Administração do Distrito de Lugela, *Relatório mensal de 15 de Setembro a 15 de Outubro de 1982*, AGZ, Lugela, October 12, 1982.

54 Ibid.

55 Lucas Saguate had been a soldier of the colonial army in São Tomé and Príncipe. He was arrested and incarcerated for ten years for having participated in a rebellion in Mozambique before joining Frelimo, where he became an instructor in Nashingwea in Tanzania. At independence, Lucas Saguate appeared as one of the principal military commanders of the PRM in Zambezia. Legend has it that he possessed magical powers.

56 Gabinete do Administrador do Distrito de Morrumbala, *Para Gabinete do Director do Gabinete da província da Zambézia. Confidencial*, AGZ, Morrumbala, December 17, 1981. Italics by author.

It is necessary to highlight the fact that, in its destruction of communal villages, the PRM claimed that it had the support of the local populace. This action, which was one among varied forms of *voice*, was locally known by the name ‘*wotcha weka*’ which translates as ‘I will burn you myself’ (implying your communal village). As can be seen, and contrary to what some authors⁵⁷ say when they analyse the civil war in Zambezia, ‘*wotcha weka*’ was not a movement. Gimo Phiri, former leader of the PRM, describes in detail what *wotcha weka* was and how it was a collaboration between his movement and the local populace:

Wotcha weka was a language that the guerrillas used with the populace: are you complaining because of communal villages? Well, the guerrillas organised the populace itself to burn the huts in the communal villages and then to return to their area of origin. [The peasants] burned the villages under the encouragement of the PRM, which took advantage of the fact that the populace didn’t like communal villages. When we arrived in a communal village, we fired some shots in the air so that the inhabitants would know that we had arrived and began to burn the village. That’s why Frelimo thought that we were the ones who had burnt the villages, when in fact it was the populace. This was to end the communal villages ... this was one of the factors that gave us support among the people.⁵⁸

One must make salient the fact that while some peasants burnt their villages out of fear of PRM reprisal, others did it because they were not satisfied with the communal villages, thereby facilitating the goals of Gimo Phiri’s movement. The burning of communal villages by the populace along its flight to Malawi or to native areas of residence was confirmed by the Ministry of Defense over the course of a meeting held in Milange at the beginning of 1982.⁵⁹

Much like the PRM, Renamo,⁶⁰ which also had the support of the peasants, acted similarly when it entered Zambezia in 1982. For example, in Gurué District, where the local administration said that the principal targets of bandits were the communal villages, Renamo burned more than 18 of the 23 communal villages in existence at the time.⁶¹ There is no doubt that the PRM’s and Renamo’s fixation on the communal villages also contributed to their failure, because wherever Frelimo had managed to convince the population to adhere to its project, there were victims of Renamo and the PRM. This implies that living in a ‘communal village’ was equivalent to accepting Frelimo policies that, as we have already seen, these two movements opposed. This merciless war against the communal villages is also confirmed by local witnesses:

57 N. Bowen, *Traders and Livelihood Strategies in Post-Conflict Zambézia*, (Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, Julho de 2000); C. Serra, *De la gestion de corps à la gestion des mentalités en Zambézia, Mozambique (1890-1983). Rapports de domination, conformisme et déviance politiques*, (Ph.D. thesis, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, June, 1995).

58 Interview with Gimo Phiri conducted by Sérgio Chichava, Tete, October 27-28, 2004.

59 Ministério da Defesa Nacional, *Síntese da Reunião Conjunta das Forças de Defesa e Segurança das Províncias do Niassa e Zambézia*, AGZ, Milange, February 4, 1982.

60 For more on Renamo see amongst others Geffray, *La cause des armes*; M. Cahen, *Les bandits. Un historien au Mozambique*, (Paris, Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, 2002); A. Vines, *Renamo: From Terrorism to Democracy in Mozambique?* (Londres, University of York, Centre for Southern African Studies, 1996).

61 Administração do Distrito do Gurué, *Relatório das actividades desenvolvidas durante os meses de Novembro e Dezembro de 1987*, AGZ, Gurué, January 22, 1988.

Here in Milange there were people who wanted to live in communal villages, who had all already accepted the Party's orders ... but Renamo destroyed these villages. Renamo's policy was against communal villages [...] they burned all of the villages because it was easier than attacking Frelimo troops...⁶²

This is also one of the factors that explains the insertion of Renamo into Mozambican society, and consequently its survival even after having lost the support of Rhodesia and South Africa. Renamo took advantage of the antagonisms that separated the population and Frelimo. These include not only communal villages, but also the marginalisation of traditional authorities by Frelimo who were in turn 'recognised' by Renamo. One sees that the question of the population's relationship with the modern State was central during the war. It can be said that the civil war divided the populace into two groups: on one side, the 'State-supporting population', that is, those identified with the Mozambican state, and on the other, a population that supported 'autarchy' that, thanks to Renamo's protection, was able to withdraw from the Mozambican state which it considered to be oppressive and alien. This means that one does not merely deal with a struggle between Renamo and Frelimo, but also a cleavage between 'two populations'. The destruction of the communal villages was, within the overarching strategy of the PRM and Renamo, an effective instrumentalisation of policy, with the goal of capturing the support of the populace that took advantage of the antagonisms that separated it from Frelimo. If Zambezia was one of the provinces most affected by the war, with almost all of its districts occupied by Renamo in 1986 (something that unequivocally affected the implementation of communal villages) one cannot lose sight of the fact that, until 1982, the year that many sources consider the entry point of this movement into the province, the process of collectivisation had advanced very slowly, with only 2% of the population living in communal villages, as stated earlier in this article.⁶³

The Situation on the 'Collective Machambas' and 'Cooperatives'

If in principle some of the peasants did follow the guidance of the Party (many of them seduced by false promises of tractors, vehicles and mills), some out of fear of reprisals and others out of the thought that their situation would indeed be better in the villages, this situation was not very long lasting. In 1977, for example, the administration of Lugela stated that the peasants no longer accepted collective work because the harvest of the two previous years (1975 and 1976) had not yet found a market and was deteriorating. While the government ordered the peasants to 'increase production as a way of defeating hunger and poverty', the peasants refused and asked, 'why increase production, if we still have the fruits of the last campaign? We will increase

62 Interview with Eduardo Santos Buancl conducted by Sérgio Chichava, Milange, September 13, 2004.

63 Just to have an idea of the impact of the civil war on this region, at the peak of the war in 1986, nearly 1.5 million people, or more than half of a local population estimated at around 2,418,851 inhabitants (according to the 1980 census), found itself directly affected and suffered every type of privation (hunger, disease, lack of clothing etc.) Communications between the Zambesian capital, Quelimane, and the districts were completely paralysed. The only means of transport with airplane or boat, whether because of a lack of security or because all roads were completely destroyed. For more details see Bulletin d'Information de l'AIM, Aggression sud-Africaine contre la Zambezia et Tete, AIM, 125 (December, 1986).

production and then what? Who will buy our products from us?'⁶⁴ Frelimo had not yet managed to reorganise the commercial cycle that became disorganised after independence due to the flight of Portuguese and Indian merchants, transportation and communication difficulties (the inefficiency of the port at Quelimane and deficient roads), a lack of markets, etc. The lack of commercialisation was (and is) one of the reasons for friction between the peasants and Frelimo.

Another question is related to the fact that in the majority of cases collective production was not sufficient to provide an adequate cut to the members of the collective. Many times the results of the cooperatives or collective *machambas* were inferior to the production of a single peasant on his family *machamba*, a situation that led many to give up on 'collective labour'. Therefore, for the peasants, the way that 'collective labour' was organised, instead of representing social progress, was a step back. Finally, there was the mismanagement of funds on the part of Frelimo representatives. This was the case of Gurué District, where peasants did not want to deal with cooperatives and collective *machambas* any longer because they said that money had been stolen by the bosses.⁶⁵ This situation could be verified almost everywhere else in the province. Another issue was the lack of agricultural tools like hoes, axes, machetes and insecticides. Similar to what happened with communal villages, there were also reports of cases of destruction and sabotage on the collective *machambas* and cooperatives. One such case is the destruction by arson of a cooperative on September 25, 1979, in Gurué.⁶⁶ 'Socialisation of the countryside' was, therefore, condemned to failure.

A 'State' of Despair: Villages Born from War and Natural Disasters

The only communal villages that Frelimo managed to construct in Zambezia were the result of the wartime situation and of natural disasters (particularly floods). This was the case with communal villages in the districts of Chinde (in Caçaira region, near the district seat), Morumbala and Mopeia, which were built after the Zambezi River floods of 1978. In the latter two districts, inhabitants who were obliged to leave their former places of residency on rich riverbank lands were not authorised to return under the pretext that it was dangerous to live in those areas. This was when the local administration found it best to construct communal villages. The same phenomenon happened in Limpopo Valley in the south of the country.

But even these rare villages never really established themselves because as soon as the situation returned to normal people reclaimed their original areas. The refuge from communal villages to former places of residence was the result of hunger, of the great distances that separated the communal villages from the peasants' farms and of the inadequacy of the new lands on which the communal villages were built for agricultural purposes. Due to this, peasants insisted that communal villages be built in riverfront areas that had been affected many times by the flooding of the Zambezi River. If this was not done, they threatened to flee to other regions of the country where they did not think there were communal villages. The peasants of Mopeia fled

64 'Na província da Zambézia. Ile: Erros do presente modificarão o futuro. Mercados agrícolas do Estado em funcionamento', *Notícias*, September 14, 1976.

65 Conselho Executivo Distrital do Gurué, *Relatório*, AGZ, Gurué, January 9, 1979.

66 Administração do distrito do Gurué, *Relatório referente ao período de 15 de Outubro a 15 de Novembro de 1979*, AGZ, Gurué, November 15, 1979.

to Marromeu in Sofala Province, or to Luabo. Those from Derre in Morrumbala fled to Namanjavira in Mocuba District. In Mopeia, Chico Chale Chissomba, considered one of the agitators of the local population, was arrested with the intent of 're-education'. Up against a wall, the local government decided in an emergency meeting on the compulsory relocation of lowland populations to communal villages built on hills.⁶⁷ In Mopeia, this forced relocation took place in June 1980, and was accompanied by the destruction of the former homes of the peasants. In Morrumbala, compulsory relocation took place in 1981.⁶⁸

Other villages were the result of the need to isolate the population from the influence of the PRM. This was the case of Milange District where this movement was very active. Effectively, the aggravation of the military situation in this region obliged the Frelimo government, as suggested by military leaders in Zambezia, to coerce the population of the district to live in communal villages as we can see from this document of the Mozambican Armed Forces:

Taking as principle the tradition of the first battles of the national liberation struggle, what was fundamental was to gain the support of the population and have full moral and alimentary support. With the evolution of actions of banditry led by *Africa Livre* agents that have had the same experience as us, they are now putting into practice those actions by taking advantage of the isolated population grouped by families. We admit this reality because they are receiving full support, including moral, alimentary and financial support, as well as hiding places for their bases' movements. Our weapons that have been stolen by these bandits are in the homes of the inhabitants. How will our actions bear fruit if the bandits continue to receive support from the local populations? Among those who support them there are some who are consciously counterrevolutionary, and others who do so out of intimidation, but nevertheless both groups contribute to the bandits' survival. This is why we once again propose to take measures to isolate the counterrevolutionaries: *The obligatory gathering of the population into communal villages; the identification of locales where these communal villages should be built.*⁶⁹

This was why Frelimo managed to build more communal villages in Milange than in any other region of Zambezia.

Finally, other communal villages were the result of populations 'rescued' from Renamo bases whose cantonment was the condition imposed on them in order to receive food assistance. Frelimo stated that food was only for those who were living in communal villages. Unable to farm, without any means of survival and debilitated by war, this population was therefore obliged to live in communal villages. This was part of the Maputo regime's strategy to control peasants and impede their contact with Renamo 'bandits'. For example, after the retaking of Morrumbala District in April

67 Comissão Distrital das Aldeias Comunais de Mopeia, *Relatório*, AGZ, Mopeia, May 27, 1980.

68 Ibid; Governo da Província da Zambézia, *Memorando*, AGZ, Quelimane, October 8, 1981. Italics by author.

69 Comissão Coordenadora das Forças de Defesa e Segurança, *Relatório*, AGZ, Quelimane, October 28, 1980. See also Ministério da Defesa Nacional, *síntese dos relatórios da CCFs de Milange referente ao mês de Outubro de 1980*, AGZ, Quelimane, October 28, 1980.

of 1987 (which had been occupied by Renamo for about a year and a half), the government began the work of constructing new communal villages in July. However, since food aid did not reach all of these people because much of it was misdirected by 'structures', hunger and poor sanitary conditions (provoking a high mortality rate), the majority of the population of these new 'villages' fled to their old areas of residence.⁷⁰

The Official Failure of the 'Socialisation of the Countryside' Policy in Zambezia (1981)

In 1981, the provincial government, recognising the failure of the 'socialisation of the countryside' policy, recommended that the Zambezian Commission of Communal Villages study the reasons for this failure and propose solutions for reversing the situation. According to the Commission, in 1981 there were only 21 communal villages under 'development' in the whole province of Zambezia. In addition, there were 18 'embryos' and 85 'future embryos'. These 'villages' only housed a total of 28,460 inhabitants. The Commission affirmed that, 'despite the existence of 2,300,000 potential inhabitants of communal villages, the process of collectivisation was moving very slowly'.

The only village that was considered a success in the whole province of Zambezia was the communal village of Muiane, in Gurué district. This was the only one that possessed its own means to commercialise products. Representatives from this village were sent to regions where the population refused to live in communal village in order to convey their experiences and explain the advantages of collective life.

In regards to collective *machambas* and cooperatives, the situation was also desolate. In 1981 there were only 130 'collective *machambas*' and 'cooperatives' in all of the province, the majority of which were confronting enormous difficulties and existing only on paper.⁷¹ In August of that same year, the Cooperative Coordination Commission of Zambezia recognised the collapse of the cooperatives.⁷² The majority of these had taken on debt with the Bank of Mozambique (BM) the *Empresa Nacional do Comércio* (Enacomo) and the People's Shops,⁷³ allegedly for the purchase of tractors, mills and various other goods, and were not in any condition to pay their debts. However, the greatest factor in the collapse of the cooperatives as mentioned by the Commission was the misappropriation of funds by those responsible for the cooperatives. Among them was the provincial director of cooperatives, Filimão Daniel Nhatumbo, a native of Gaza Province, who was accused of enriching himself at the expense of Zambezian peasants. It should not be startling then that the Zambezians accused the *machanganes*⁷⁴ of stealing their wealth. Disillusioned with these new ex-

70 Administração do Distrito de Morrumbala, *Relatório das actividades realizadas durante o ano de 1988*, AGZ, Morrumbala, December 31, 1988.

71 Comissão Provincial das Aldeias Comunais, *Resenha de actividades desenvolvidas individualmente pelos membros do Conselho Coordenador*, AGZ, Quelimane, July 6, 1981.

72 Comissão Coordenadora das Cooperativas de Consumo, *Relatório*, AGZ, Quelimane, August 13, 1981.

73 The People's Shops (*Lojas do Povo*) had been created by the State in June of 1976 to deal with the substantial flight of Portuguese and Indian merchants after the Portuguese coup of April 25, 1974 and Mozambique's proclamation of independence.

74 The Machanganes or Shangaans are an ethnic group from Gaza Province in the south of Mozambique who, for historical reasons, has close political ties to Frelimo. For populations north of the Save River, all people who live south of that river are Machanganes, and consequently members or sympathisers with Frelimo, a party that always excluded the Northerners.

ploiters who behaved like the old *muzungos*,⁷⁵ many farmers abandoned their co-operatives. For example, at the Irrugo cooperative on the outskirts of Quelimane, the peasants abandoned their work on the collective farms, leaving them to deteriorate. On the other cooperatives, during the harvest, peasants would divide the farm's produce among themselves, without acknowledging the Frelimo representatives' wishes.⁷⁶

The recognition of the failure of the 'socialisation of countryside' policy did not put an end to Frelimo's attempts. On the contrary, the Party continued, with little success, to insist on the policy more or less until the end of the civil war. 'Socialisation of the countryside' was not a principally social or economic objective, but rather an imperative that emerged from the national imaginary of Frelimo with the will to create conditions that would enable political control of the majority of the country's peasant population. The dispersed living habits in contact with the spirits of the ancestors were 'mentally inadmissible' to Frelimo and were completely alien to their paradigm of a modern and homogeneous nation. It was necessary to 'modernise the peasants', even independently of their own social aspirations.

On the other hand, the absence of socio-economic infrastructures to guarantee day-to-day existence created a problem. The relocation of peasants from their original lands to others put them in a situation of socio-economic dependence in relation to the State (which showed itself to be incapable of satisfying their necessities) and to the native populations of the lands on which the villages were built. Far from contributing to solidarity and cooperation, as was Frelimo's desire, the 'communal village' was the cause of inequalities and divisions in the heart of the peasantry. As Anne Pitcher writes on the basis of a case study in Nampula Province, 'these policies were disruptive rather than transformative and did not revolutionise agrarian relations'.⁷⁷ It is in this sense that one should understand the resistance of the peasants to this policy. It is not that they were against 'modernisation' in and of itself, or that they had a 'low political conscience', as Frelimo claims. What they were against was the paternalism, arrogance and hostility to local socio-historical realities that marked the approach to the implementation of this policy.

This policy was carried out all over the country, and a more or less passive or active resistance can be noted depending on the case. Cases similar to those in Zambezia were reported, for example, in Nampula, where, according to Anne Pitcher,

By their own actions, participants also shaped and eventually undermined villagisation and collective production. Residents in both Monapo and Mecuburi challenged villagisation by avoiding it if possible and drifting back to their lands clandestinely. In time, some lent their support to Renamo. In Netia, some local people constructed houses in the communal village but then returned to their own machambas, unwilling to leave their cashew trees.⁷⁸

75 The name *muzungo* designates both the white concessionaires of *prazos* (a system of land concession that operated from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries) of Zambezia and any individual who had a certain level of power and lived in a European style, independent of skin color.

76 Comissão Coordenadora das Cooperativas de Consumo, *Relatório*, AGZ, Quelimane, August 13, 1981.

77 A. Pitcher, 'Disruption without Transformation: Agrarian Relations and Livelihoods in Nampula Province, Mozambique 1975-1995', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 1 (March 1998), 115-140.

78 *Ibid*, 128.

To this, it is necessary to add what Pitcher refers to as 'design flaws and the historical context'⁷⁹ to the list of reasons that the policy failed. In Zambezia, even more than the civil war, the relatively developed level of peasant agriculture, both along the coast and along the Malawian frontier at the other side of province, in conjunction with Frelimo's 'historical weaknesses' in the province,⁸⁰ permitted the peasantry to impede the State from applying its 'paternalist-authoritarian modernisation' paradigm more than in other regions of Mozambique.

79 Ibid.

80 For more on the historical weaknesses of Frelimo in Zambezia see Chichava, *Le 'vieux' Mozambique*.