

# History Writing and State Legitimation in Postcolonial Mozambique: The Case of the History Workshop, Centre for African Studies, 1980-1986<sup>1</sup>

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*This article discusses, through an examination of the work of the Oficina de História of the Centre for African Studies (CEA) at Eduardo Mondlane University, the politics of historical production and nation-state building in post-Independence Mozambique and the ambivalent position in which CEA historians were placed within that intellectual and political context. This ambivalence is in relation to two main assumptions, which can only be understood in the specific historical context of FRELIMO's strategy for socialist construction. First, the CEA researchers were well aware of their role as critical historians and fought to exercise it at the Centre. Second, they were intellectually engaged in producing a new historical narrative of FRELIMO's liberation war and the liberated zones. This meant not only producing a counter-narrative to the colonial historiography (writing 'history from below', rescuing the 'voices' of the Mozambican people etc.), but also producing a strategy to legitimise FRELIMO's hegemonic project in the post-independence period. It was in the intersection between the social production of historical knowledge and the perpetuation of FRELIMO's worldview that the historians at CEA were able to safeguard and exercise their perceived role as critical historians, opening a new form of historical inquiry in Mozambique: a history of the present, at once critical and policy-oriented. Put differently, the CEA historians were able to safeguard and exercise their critical role, not on the sensitive, controversial and dangerous terrain of writing the history of FRELIMO's liberation war and the 'liberated zones', but on the writing of the history of the present en route to socialism. As they would claim, it was not possible to understand the past unless you could understand the present. With this shift these historians were able to 'escape' from simply becoming 'trapped' by their intellectual commitment to the power elite. This was done by their use of a kind of 'double-speak' that first spoke critically about the present in relation to the historical experience of the liberation war and the 'liberated zones', and, secondly, that worked critically to review other historical productions about Mozambique as a way to criticise FRELIMO's totalising approach to the national historical narrative of Mozambique.*

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## The Birth of the Centre for African Studies

In 1975 Mozambique experienced its first year of Independence. This prompted the mass exodus of Portuguese university staff and students, creating a crisis at the University of Lourenço Marques, the only institution for higher education in the country at that time. In the early years of the newly independent nation, the number of students dropped from 2433 to 740. From 1975 to 1978, the number of lecturers dropped to fewer than ten.<sup>2</sup> Due to the lack of teaching staff, the few graduate students who remained conducted research and taught the majority of courses, themselves under the guidance of a senior teacher.

There were only three undergraduate human sciences disciplines in which one could obtain a Bachelor's degree at the university: Romanistic Philology, History and Geography. These courses were profoundly Eurocentric, glorifying the best of Portuguese 'civilization'. The colonial education system in Mozambique was 'Durkheimian' in the sense that it focused on social order, social harmony and solidarity among Africans and Portuguese, stressing the exceptionality of Portuguese 'civilization' as racially harmonious, multicultural and naturally adaptable to other cultures and people. The research projects covered issues like climate, geography, 'tribes', customs, rituals, administration, economy and ethnology. It had been established mainly to serve the white Portuguese population. It was not by chance that until independence there were only forty black Mozambican students in a university of over 3,000 students.<sup>3</sup> There was indeed, as João Paulo Borges Coelho points out, 'a very small elite [set] of Mozambicans with university degrees or about to acquire them'.<sup>4</sup> According to Borges Coelho, 'the first year of the History course was attended by about 100 students in 1973; that number dropped drastically to 15 in 1975, and to barely half a dozen in 1976'.<sup>5</sup>

In May 1976 the new power elite changed the name from *Universidade de Lourenço Marques* to *Universidade Eduardo Mondlane* (UEM) in homage to the first president of FRELIMO. This renaming symbolised FRELIMO's attempt to make a complete break with the colonial past and impose a new conception of higher education: a popular university in the service of Mozambican people and in the construction of the socialist nation-state. In the first inaugural lecture, the first Rector of UEM, Fernando Ganhão, encouraged the teaching staff and students to engage with the 'Marxist theory of social change', which he claimed was, 'in sharp conflict with the theory of social order' considered by him to be 'one of the most reactionary theories of the bourgeoisie social science'. As for FRELIMO, the genesis of social theory could not be linked exclusively to the study of 'text' in the classroom, but must also include 'practice and social struggles'.<sup>6</sup>

The Rector's argument reflected the 'mutual disregard' between Durkheimian and Marxist social theory. According to Tom Bottomore, 'Durkheim was a convinced opponent of Marxism, and any kind of socialism that went beyond the idea of

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2 See, J. Beverwijk, 'The Genesis of a System-Coalition Formation in Mozambican Higher Education, 1993-2003' (PhD. thesis, Twente University, 2005).

3 M. Buendia, *Educação Moçambicana – História de um processo: 1962-1984*. Livraria Universitária, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, (Maputo, 1999).

4 J. P. Borges Coelho, 'A Investigação recente da luta armada de libertação nacional: Contexto, práticas e perspectivas', *Arquivo*, 17 (Abr. 1995), 159-179, 161. All translations are mine.

5 Ibid.

6 F. Ganhão, 'Problemas e Prioridades na Formação em Ciências Sociais', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 4 (1984), 5-17.

gradual reform within the limits of a capitalist economy.<sup>7</sup> Bottomore also alludes to the emphasis in Durkheim's sociology on solidarity rather than conflict, order rather than change, and the role of ideas (especially moral ideas) rather than the structural elements in determining the form of social life.

The Rector's speech was a strong critique of the colonial research legacy that Mozambique inherited from the Portuguese. Indeed, there were no departments engaged in social sciences research within the university. As Bertil Egero observed, 'empirical research seems hardly to have extended to the universities in Angola and Mozambique. In both colonies, special institutes of scientific investigation were set up and staffed in Portugal and elsewhere, carrying out research mainly in the natural sciences.'<sup>8</sup> In Mozambique, for instance, there was the *Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique* (IICM), founded in 1955 under the control of the *Ministério do Ultramar* in Portugal, which was intended to develop intensive and empirical scientific, technological, economic and sociological investigation in Mozambique.<sup>9</sup>

With the attainment of national independence, many Portuguese cadres left the *Instituto*, which was put under the control of the Eduardo Mondlane University.<sup>10</sup> In 1976, five different centres were formed: *Centro de Estudos de Técnicas Básicas para o Aproveitamento dos Recursos Naturais* (TBARN),<sup>11</sup> *Centro de Estudos de Comunicação*,<sup>12</sup> *Centro de Ecologia*<sup>13</sup> and *Centro de Documentação Científica*.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the 'revolutionaries' dissolved the colonial social sciences research of the IICM to create the new social sciences research institution, the *Centro de Estudos Africanos* (Centre for African Studies, CEA), which would become, during the period under analysis, the most prolific research institution in Mozambique.

Aquino de Bragança, journalist, political activist, scholar, teacher, and personal advisor to President Samora Machel, became the director of CEA. As Immanuel Wallerstein observed, Aquino de Bragança played three different roles in his life. He was a 'militant' when he was a young man in Goa (India); later, in London, Paris, Rabat and Algiers, he plunged himself deeply into activism on behalf of anti-colonial Portuguese-speaking African countries. As radical journalist he was also instrumental in creating (along with African nationalists like Agostinho Neto, Amílcar Cabral and Marcelino dos Santos) the Conference of Nationalist Organisations of the Portuguese Colonies (CONCP).

In 1974, Aquino played a central role in the negotiations that would lead to the Lusaka Accords, which paved the way to the independence of Mozambique. This is where he assumed his second role: the 'diplomat'. Due to his political integrity and

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7 See T. Bottomore, 'A Marxist consideration of Durkheim', *Social Forces*, 4 (Jun 1981), 902-917.

8 See B. Egero, 'Mozambique and Angola: Reconstruction in the social sciences', *Research Report n.4*, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies (Uppsala, Sweden, 1977). For further reading on this topic see also C. Fernandes, *Dinâmicas de Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais: O caso do CEA, 1975-1990*, (Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal do Bahia, Brasil, 2011).

9 The institute had a journal, *Memórias*, which published scholarship on the social and natural sciences. The social sciences section was comprised mainly of studies on ethnology, pre-history, ethno-history, linguistics, anthropology and human geography.

10 L. Brito. Luís Manuel Cerqueira de Brito (depoimento, 2008). Rio de Janeiro, CPDOC/FGV; LAU/IFCS/UFRJ; ISCTE/IUL, 2010.

11 'Centre for the study of basic techniques for the use of natural resources'. This centre dealt with the problem of low-level technological innovation in agriculture, housing domestic equipment etc. See B. Egero, 'Mozambique and Angola: Reconstruction in the Social Sciences', *Research Report 4*, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies (Uppsala: Sweden, 1977).

12 'Centre for Communication Studies' whose purpose was to find ways of improving communication with the peasants, who were often illiterate and who did not always speak Portuguese. This centre was staffed by only two people. *Ibid*.

13 According to Egero, 'this center was composed of the former sections for biology and Botany at the *Instituto*'. *Ibid*.

14 The Centre for Scientific Documentation is as old as the Institute. Over time it developed into the best-equipped bibliographical centre of all Portuguese colonies. The main subjects were biology, cultural anthropology and sociology, including 'African Affairs'. By 1973 the Portuguese closed the centre, and it was not reopened until 1976. *Ibid*.

commitment to the anti-colonial struggle, he had gained the trust of FRELIMO and especially that of President Samora Machel, having been on many occasions called to diplomatic duty in various parts of the world.

Aquino came to Mozambique in 1975. While Samora Machel gave him many jobs, he only required one: the creation of a social sciences research institution.<sup>15</sup> This is where Aquino found his third role: the 'revolutionary'. According to Wallerstein, Aquino chose to create a research centre not because he was 'enamoured with research or archives', or because he 'yearned for the ivory tower'; instead,

[h]e wanted to be more than a militant confronting the enemy in front of a diplomat or interlocutor. He wanted to be a revolutionary and he knew that revolutionaries face their comrades, fighting with them in search of how to actually change the world.<sup>16</sup>

In the first year of its creation the CEA research staff was comprised of young Mozambican historians who had been recruited from the History Department at the University Eduardo Mondlane. Not everyone in this group remained at the Centre; some were transferred to other educational institutions as teachers or occupied administrative positions in the party/state. However, during these 'euphoric years' of national independence, Mozambique became a very exciting place to be, where everything was new.<sup>17</sup> And Mozambique gradually began to attract progressive left and anti-capitalism scholars from Europe, South America and North America eager to contribute to the construction of the socialist alternative in Mozambique.

The Centre was exclusively dedicated to historical research on colonial Mozambique, which it divided into different historical periods (emphasising the eighteenth and nineteenth century). There was also a research section on Anthropology/Archeology and a research group on southern Africa, as the director put at the forefront the imperative to always understand Mozambican reality in a regional context. These areas of research at the CEA were interested in colonial History/Anthropology/Archeology research with very little attention paid to fieldwork within communities. Basically the bulk of the research consisted in compiling or preparing teaching course materials.

The Centre conducted its first collective research project in March 1976. Titled 'Zimbabwe: The Rhodesian Question', it was a study commissioned by the Mozambican government to help FRELIMO and ZANU (PF)<sup>18</sup> leaders have a better

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15 I. Wallerstein, 'Southern Africa and the World - Economy.' *Research Bulletin*, Fernand Braudel Center for the study of Economics, Historical Systems, and Civilizations (Binghamton: State University of New York Press, June, 1987).

16 Ibid.

17 Boaventura Sousa Santos, when alluding to the 'political novelty' that was happening in Mozambique in the early years of independence, quoted Aquino de Bragança: '*Em termos de descolonização o que se passa em Moçambique é totalmente novo. Não está nos livros. Não vão buscar os livros. Não vão buscar as receitas. Isto é novo.*' (Se, B. Santos, 'Aquino de Bragança: criador de futuros, mestre de heterodoxias' in T. Silva, J. P. Borges Coelho, A. Souto, *Como fazer Ciências Sociais e Humanas em África: Questões epistemológicas, Metodológicas, Teorias e Práticas* (Orgs), (Dakar, CODESRIA, 2012). When Jean Luc Godard came to 'experiment' with his new concepts of cinema with Mozambican peasantry, said similarly, '*Moçambique, um país que ainda estava livre de todas as engrenagens que existiam na Europa.*' See *Notícias*, (1978), 4.

18 Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front. FRELIMO's support of ZANU, one of the liberation movements fighting for national liberation from white minority rule in Zimbabwe, would have severe consequences for FRELIMO's socialist development strategy. After independence in Mozambique Samora Machel decided to close its international border with the regime of Ian Smith. As Alice Dinerman pointed out, 'For an economy heavily dependent on transit fees from international trade passing through its ports, the move was not an easy one to make. [...] The price of abiding by international sanctions was not merely economic. Mozambique had already become the victim of cross-border attacks by the Rhodesian military in retaliation for FRELIMO's support for ZANU'. See, A. Dinerman, *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Revisionism in Post-Colonial Africa - The Case of Mozambique 1975-1990* (Routledge, New York, 2006), 49.

understanding of the tensions and contradictions between the black majority of the Zimbabwean population and the colonial settlers on issues related to land reform that could emerge in negotiations for national independence, which would take place later that year at the Geneva conference (from 28 October to 14 December 1976).<sup>19</sup> The production of this research report radically changed the dynamics of social research in post-independence Mozambique, introducing a collective type of research that was concerned with urgent and current issues in Mozambique (in the southern Africa context), but also producing reports politically oriented towards FRELIMO's global strategy for socialist transformation. With this new approach, the old structure of the CEA, focused primarily on pre-colonial history and colonial Mozambique, began to lose significance.

The CEA gained new momentum in 1977 (the same year that FRELIMO transformed into a 'Marxist-Leninist vanguard party' at its Third Congress), with the arrival of Ruth First, who initially came to do research on the Mozambican miners in South Africa. Finding the new ethics of research already in place at the Centre, First's project automatically became a collective undertaking, which was first published in 1977 as a 'Consultancy Report' for the Mozambican government and later, in 1979, as a book (with a collective author: the CEA), titled *O Mineiro Moçambicano – Um estudo sobre a exportação de mão-de-obra*.<sup>20</sup> Upon completion of the survey in 1979, First became the scientific director of CEA and remained in this capacity until her death.

There were now (1976-1979) three major interest groups in the Centre. The first was the 'Nucleus for the Study of Southern Africa', a research group focused on the analysis of the contemporary political and economic situation in the region of southern Africa, with particular emphasis on the internal dynamics of the struggle of the ANC, analysing political, economic and military destabilization of South Africa in the region. The second was the postgraduate course in Development Studies, known as *Curso de Desenvolvimento*.<sup>21</sup> And the third research group was called the *Oficina de História* (History Workshop, OH).

## The Foundation of the *Oficina de História*

FRELIMO's major challenges in the first year of national independence were to consolidate state power and deal with the consequences of the flight of 90 per cent of Portuguese professionals along with the economic sabotages perpetrated by many of them. The next step was to 'smash the colonial state apparatus' and through the experience of the 'liberated zones' build a new state that would be guided not by the

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19 According to Basil Davidson, 'successful guerrilla warfare forced concessions by white-minority government in 1976 but these were nullified by white-minority resistance to any meaningful change. A prolonged conference in Geneva then provided the prelude to the holding of a general election while the war continued...' See B. Davidson, *The People's Cause – A History of Guerrillas in Africa*, (Longman, Essex, 1981), 145.

20 It was also published in Great Britain in 1983 as 'Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant'.

21 The first draft of this project of teaching/research was designed by Ruth First, Marc Wuyts and David Wield (in consultation with Aquino de Bragança), soon after the completion of the 'Mozambican Miner' research. The course was originally designed for students obtaining Master's degree; too few Mozambican candidates had the requisite Bachelor or Honours degree. Ruth First then came up with the idea of making a more 'revolutionary' course, which would bring together students with various academic levels (starting from high school), but also take into account their professional experience. The students were then recruited from various sectors, including people from the government, ministries, provincial governments, armed forces, FRELIMO party, press, university etc. The focus then turned to training personnel directly involved in the tasks of building socialism in Mozambique. See C. Fernandes 'Dinâmicas de Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais no Moçambique pós – independente; o caso do CEA, 1975-1990', (Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil, 2011).

bourgeois class but by the *classes produtivas* (producing classes), not only the ones that possessed the means of production, but also the ones that were the bearers of a dignified culture and history, which was necessary to recover for the nation-building aspirations. The year 1975 was, according to the words of the first president, Samora Machel, 'the year where for the first time, from Rovuma to Maputo, the Mozambican people assume fully the responsibility for their historical destiny'.<sup>22</sup> These people included men, women, children, guerrilla fighters, peasants and proletarians. It was time now to rescue the history of the African people excluded by the colonial historiography and to not forget past colonial oppression and African resistance. As Samora Machel used to sing in his numerous public speeches, '[...] *Não vamos esquecer o tempo que passou, quem pode esquecer o que passou?* [...]'<sup>23</sup> (We won't forget the time that passed, who can forget?). For FRELIMO leaders, Mozambican history was essentially the history of colonial oppression, but it was also the history of the Mozambican resistance in its highest form: the FRELIMO armed struggle.

It was in this context of nation building and the imperative of writing the history of the Mozambican popular resistance and the armed struggle against colonialism that the CEA in 1976, and subsequently the *Oficina de História* in 1980, were created. It was also in this period that a more ambitious project of re-writing the history of Mozambique by the History Department at Eduardo Mondlane University took place. As Carlos Serra, the project coordinator of the first edition said, the aims of the project were 'to create, for the first time in Mozambique, a unified vision of the past, thematically and geographically and to subvert the colonial paradigm to produce a different and dynamic history'.<sup>24</sup>

The first volume of the *História de Moçambique* was written in 1981 and published in 1982, the second in 1983 and the third in 1993. Interesting to note is that the two first volumes of the *História* do not deal directly with FRELIMO's liberation war. The first volume begins with the pre-colonial period and ends with the first attempt by Portugal to implant a colonial state in Mozambique. It was the *Oficina de História* that took the lead in writing the sensitive oral history of peasants and guerrilla fighters and the proletarian history of the late colonial period, including the independence struggle and the experiences of the liberated zones. The *Oficina* also wrote the history of the present, focusing on the old liberated zones in the post-independence era, the socialisation of the countryside and the cooperativization of communal villages.

Accordingly, FRELIMO's additional concern post-independence was to create the conditions for building a national historical narrative that could keep alive the memories of the liberation war, as well as, in a broader scope, to restore the dignity of the Mozambican people that had been 'silenced' and marginalised by colonial historiography. Yussuf Adam, one of the founding members of the OH, alluded to this concern of 'organised remembrance' in comparative terms:

To not lose the memory of the people and not lose the people. What happened, for example, in Algeria. Five or ten years after independence, most of the people who had done things during the liberation struggle have disap-

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22 *Notícias*, (Jan. 1975), 4.

23 I am quoting only the first line of the song.

24 C. Serra, *História de Moçambique*, Vol. 1, (Maputo: Livraria Universitaria, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 2000).

peared. So what we were trying to do was to register that and to respond to concrete problems.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, Teresa Cruz e Silva notes its local significance:

The History Workshop tried mainly to recover that part of the History that had been scratched, forgotten, marginalised, to elucidate the history of Mozambique that nobody knew. To teach the young people [about] the history of Mozambique, the armed struggle for national liberation, the liberated zones etc. It was a new experience for the researchers: the contact, for example, with the liberated zones.<sup>26</sup>

It was thus in this context that the CEA, lead by Aquino de Bragança, became the main locus where this undertaking of re-writing the history of Mozambique was carried out in a more systematic manner. The context of nation building and the euphoria of national independence required that the new historians produce a 'usable past'<sup>27</sup> rather than confine the past to a 'bourgeois' theoretical approach.<sup>28</sup> They needed to write a history that was relevant to the construction of a socialist society under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist party FRELIMO.

Aquino de Bragança, with the assistance of Congolese historian Jacques Depelchin, founded the *Oficina de História* (History Workshop), in 1980 at the CEA. Their objectives were: 'a) to promote the debate and the investigation of themes linked to the History of the national liberation struggle and of FRELIMO; b) to divulge aspects of the armed struggle that contributed to the mobilization of the citizens and the execution of the actual tasks of the Mozambican revolution; and c) to contribute to the capacity of various levels of Mozambican teaching staff so they could effectively teach the History of FRELIMO'.<sup>29</sup> It was, for instance, in the context of these goals that the OH published in 1983 an *Anthology on the History of FRELIMO* on the history of the armed struggle, which was to be used in the classrooms. The project consisted mainly of archival work but also included interviews of the participants of the armed struggle and 'witnesses' of the colonial situation. It focused on aspects of slavery, colonial forms of exploitation and repression such as forced labour, the links between the Catholic church and the colonial education of the natives, the emergency of Mozambican nationalism, culminating with FRELIMO's national liberation struggle and national independence.

The OH was to be a historical research collective comprised of young Mozambican historians as well as expatriate staff. The research group intended to bring a new theoretical approach to the work of the CEA, introducing research that was fundamentally historical, thereby moving away from what was until then the main focus of the Centre led by Ruth First, which had been on analysing the social organisation

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25 Interview with Yussuf Adam by Carlos Fernandes, Maputo, August 2007.

26 Interview with Teresa Cruz e Silva by Carlos Fernandes, Maputo, August, 2007.

27 B. Jewsiewicki. 'African Historical Studies, Academic Knowledge as 'usable past' and Radical Scholarship', *African Studies Review*, 32, 3 (Dec. 1989), 1-76.

28 See for instance the Inaugural Lecture of Fernando Ganhão the first Rector of Eduardo Mondlane University in the opening ceremony of the first year (1976) of the Eduardo Mondlane University: F. Ganhão. 'Problemas e Prioridades na Formação em Ciências Sociais', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 4 (Maputo 1984), 5-17.

29 Oficina de História, 'Regulamento Interno da Oficina de História', [Documento de trabalho restrito. Só para circulação interna], 1982, 2.

of production and the condition of labour in the process of socialist transition in Mozambique.

Researchers from CEA, such as Dan O'Meara, argued that the creation of the OH could also be seen as a strategic move on the part of Aquino de Bragança who wanted to take an active role in its research program and to counter-balance the approach taken by Ruth First at CEA, which emphasised the political economy of Mozambique. But, as I will discuss, the OH also tried to incorporate Ruth First's concern with directing CEA's research into FRELIMO's urgent concerns about social transformation.

Another factor that might have triggered the creation of the OH was linked to criticisms made by researchers and lectures from the Department of History and Anthropology at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, who argued that the CEA was too narrowly focused on the political economy and geo-strategic political issues in Southern Africa without any consideration of the historical and anthropological context. Regarding this concern, Aurélio Rocha, historian at UEM, stated:

Almost as though responding to our critique that it was necessary to introduce a perspective of history, Aquino created the OH. It was created in a late phase of the Centre, and from there they began to develop some interesting studies of history with the coordination of Jacques Depelchin and Ana Maria Gentili.<sup>30</sup>

The Mozambican historian, Carlos Serra,<sup>31</sup> also from the History Department, shared the same view:

The CEA was criticised at the time; for example, the Department of History at UEM gave too much emphasis to the political economy approach. This criticism would contribute to the emergence of the History Workshop under the direction of Jacques Depelchin.<sup>32</sup>

Even though there are different reasons given for the foundation of the OH, a factor that cannot be overlooked is Aquino de Bragança's elevated sense of the importance of historical research. In fact, we can only understand the presence of collective historical research at CEA, imagined and practiced by Aquino, if we take into account his three commitments eloquently described by Wallerstein: to social justice and the liberation of oppressed people from colonial rule, to FRELIMO's socialist strategy for Mozambique and to critical thinking in the university.

The OH took inspiration from the History Workshops held in Ruskin College in Britain and its 'journal of socialist historians' (founded in 1976). They both shared the same vision: their concern was to re-write history taking the people's lives – their *voice* and social life – as the starting point for a critical understanding of the past and a practical tool to address the challenges of the present. This new history of Mozambique, they held, had be grounded in oral accounts of Mozambican people to produce life-stories, interviews, oral testimonies and biographical narratives by

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30 Interview with Aurélio Rocha, September, 2007.

31 Carlos Serra is now a sociologist. He received his PhD in Sociology in 1995 from *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales de Paris*.

32 Interview with Carlos Serra by Carlos Fernandes, Maputo, August 2007.



ex-guerrilla soldiers in the national liberation struggle, as well as the workers and peasants.<sup>33</sup> The use of oral data, according to the OH, was directly linked to an attempt to 'democratize and popularize a new way of doing history', giving 'voice' to Mozambicans who had been 'silenced' during the colonial period, but also going against the 'academic (bourgeois) historical research'. As these historians asserted,

The oral source constituted an exceptional opportunity to give the word to the people. But this word cannot be given with an academic or paternalistic spirit, which would leave the final word to academic experts [or] professional historians, but [the word must be left with] a revolutionary spirit in order to respect and promote the creativity of actors and primary bearers of History.<sup>34</sup>

CEA Historians were deeply aware of the 'distortions' produced by colonial historiography that was based primarily on written sources, particularly in the writings of the Europeans explorers, travellers, ethnographic and ethnological accounts about Mozambicans, their culture, ethnic identities, and social and geographical settings. As Jacques Depelchin states, the OH was 'trying to make a recovery of national history and redeem a history that had been manipulated, forgotten by the colonial power in Mozambique'.<sup>35</sup>

The historians from CEA argued further that the introduction of oral sources would mean a radical break with the Eurocentric/Portuguese-centred scholarship. There was indeed a profound link between the armed struggle for liberation and a 'theoretical resistance' against colonial scholarship led by the intellectuals in the university in Mozambique. According to the power politics, as well as the OH, 'it was not enough to put an end to the Portuguese colonial system. It was necessary also to do it starting from a theory and a practice that did not follow the methods and models of the enemy'.<sup>36</sup> Alluding to this colonial archive, the History Workshop asserted:

In these written sources, full of mystifications, where the real is mixed with falsehood, we found one more reason to encourage the production of an oral history coming directly from the people, because it is in this history that we will find the sieves to begin to separate the myths and assumptions from the facts.<sup>37</sup>

The historian Allen Isaacman – who collaborated with the OH and initiated a collective project with Aquino de Bragança, which focused on writing a 'history from below' of the peasants' role in the FRELIMO's armed struggle from 1964 to 1974 titled, 'Popular Resistance in Mozambique' – remarked that the use of oral narratives and biographies in the historiography of African studies challenged the canon of Western historiography and the assumption that only the so-called 'men of letters',

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33 FRELIMO did not emphasise the pre-colonial past, unlike for example, African political leaders like Leopold Senghor and Julius Nyerere who glorified the idea of the 'traditional' and communal African essence, which would preclude no conflict of any kind. The new political power in Mozambique appealed to a more modern project, which sought to build the 'new man' and a 'socialist society, classless and without the exploitation of man by man.'

34 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1 (Fev. 1983), 38.

35 Interview with Jacques Depelchin conducted by Carlos Fernandes, Maputo, March 2007.

36 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1 (Fev. 1983), 4.

37 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1 (Fev. 1983), 39.

never the anonymous people from the working class or peasantry, could produce biographical narratives.<sup>38</sup> In Mozambique, the CEA-OH supported Isaacman's perspective, bringing out the voices of the 'other', the peasantry and the workers, who have traditionally been excluded from conventional historiography.

It must be stressed, however, that this enterprise did not rely exclusively on oral data; it also involved a systematic documentation of analysis and statistics in order to rescue the historical past and examine the contemporary social reality of Mozambique. The OH was also aware of the risks that a purely biographical approach could have on research as a whole. According to them, 'the method of using the biographical history of the proletariat as a way of entering the world of the worker contains the risk of giving the wrong idea about the central features of the worker's life.'<sup>39</sup> Using a Marxist approach they claimed the importance of the worker's whole family (women, men, elders and children) for the maintenance of the household; this was particularly evident with the Mozambican migrant worker, who provided cheap, seasonal labour to the South African gold mines. As the historians from *Oficina* argued, 'in the colonial and bourgeois civilization the family of the worker was simply ignored. The family was considered solely as a machine of biological reproduction of cheap labour. It is only with this conception that we can understand the extension and the practice of migrant labour.'<sup>40</sup>

From its inception the OH avowed that the production and dissemination of their research on the history of the armed struggle would be taken through a 'process similar to a *colectivo de artesãos* (collective of artisans)',<sup>41</sup> which signified a desire to 'decolonize the historiography of Mozambique' and a deliberative approach to a social history 'from below'<sup>42</sup> which would re-write the history from an African perspective, from the point of view of 'those that lived it.'<sup>43</sup> The 'Mozambican proletariat' was situated in the very process of preparing, designing, collecting and analysing data. As the historians claimed, 'the experience had proved clearly that the workers were able to perform intellectual and scientific work. It was, therefore, above all, a small contribution to the struggle against the division of manual and intellectual labour, inherited from colonialism.'<sup>44</sup> This undertaking implied, according to them, the use of local references and not approximations or associations with other contexts or models. They focused on the concrete experiences of Mozambicans who were still alive and who had participated directly in the armed struggle, not simply as informants but also in the very process of the historical research.

It was only in 1982-1983 when 'RENAMO attacks were severely disrupting the country',<sup>45</sup> the economy was on the edge of collapsing and FRELIMO was becoming more dominant and coercive that OH became more aware of the dangers that could

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38 See for instance A. Isaacman, 'Peasants and Rural Social Protest in Africa', *African Studies Review*, 33 (Sept. 1990), 1-120.

39 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 2/3 (Dez. 1983), 5.

40 'Por uma história da classe operária moçambicana' *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 2/3 (Dez. 1983), 5.

41 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1 (Fev. 1983), 6.

42 The historiography of Africa from the 1960s and 1970s was dominated by studies on resistance to colonial domination, which emerged from research that had as its starting point the Africans who had been marginalised by 'Imperial History'. It is in this context that the concern about writing African history 'from below' – that is, to rescue the voice of African peasants and workers – began to emerge. See, F. Cooper. 'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History', *The American Historical Review*, 99, 5 (Dec. 1994), 1516 – 1545. A. Isaacman. 'Peasants and Rural Social Protest in Africa', L. Vail and L. White, 'Forms of Resistance: Songs and Perceptions of Power in Colonial Mozambique', *The American Historical Review*, 88 (Oct. 1983), 883-919.

43 'A produção nas zonas libertadas', *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 4 (Jul. 1987), 23.

44 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 2/3 (Dez. 1983), 3.

45 M. Newitt, 'História de Moçambique - Moçambique no Auge do Colonialismo 1930-1961', D. Hedges, Book review: *Journal of Africa History*, 37, 3 (1996), 502-503.

emerge in the writing of national history, namely an overemphasis on the experience of the armed struggle and the 'liberated zones'. As they would begin to argue, 'a full understanding of this history also meant looking at the "non-liberated zones"<sup>46</sup> and at the general context of the struggle in all Africa.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the sudden concern with the 'non-liberated zones', the OH continued to concentrate most of its efforts on the 'liberated zones'. The 'liberated zones' were considered to be, in the view of the historians and FRELIMO leaders,<sup>48</sup> the 'laboratory of revolution'<sup>49</sup> since they marked the first experience in 'governing' the people through the socialist principles of collective production, free access to education and health care and engagement in building new institutions based on *poder popular* (people's power). Historians from *Oficina* and FRELIMO officials alike believed that it was important to keep alive the experiences of the 'liberated zones' to serve as a model for the challenges of the socialist transformation in post-independence period. As Peter Meyns pointed out, 'after independence the "Economic and Social Directiveness", adopted by FRELIMO's Third Congress in 1977, reviewed the experiences gained in the liberated zones and restated them as the basic guidelines for development under the new conditions after independence.'<sup>50</sup>

### The 'Voices' from Below and the Teleological Narrative

This section focuses on the methodological approach of the OH in the production of a new historical narrative, which was based primarily on oral history, writing the history from below and bringing to the 'surface' the Mozambican people excluded by colonial historiography. The discussion focuses on the 'empirical object' of OH's historical production during the period 1980 to 1986.<sup>51</sup> The bulk of OH's historical production was published in the *Oficina's* historical magazine, which boasted the evocative title: *Não Vamos Esquecer!* (We won't forget!). The magazine was the primary mechanism for disseminating their research. Rather than restricting analysis to the magazine's publication, the discussion here will also bring to the fore other OH historical productions that were published as 'reports research', mostly as state policy recommendations.

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46 An example of a 'non-liberated zone' would be the then capital of Mozambique, Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), as it was still under full control by the Portuguese authorities during the liberation war.

47 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 2/3 (Dez. 1983), 3.

48 Samora Machel, the first president in post-independence Mozambique remarked, 'The experiences of the liberated zones constitute a precious patrimony for us. Something which we have to defend and use to make a rupture, at the national level, with the old myths, values and habits, with the structures of social life, organisation, and production inherited from the colonialist society, and which still exist in our midst. Practice showed that we could solve production and other problems without huge resources or ultra-modern techniques, but merely by relying on our own strength and organisation. The liberated zones were a political laboratory, a scientific laboratory, a laboratory of ideas. There we could try what had to be done later'. See, W. Burchett, *Southern Africa Stands Up: The Revolutions in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa* (1978), 171-72.

49 Oficina de História, 'Towards a History of the National Liberation Struggles in Mozambique; Problematics, methodologies, analysis', *Reunião de especialistas sobre problemas e prioridades na formação em Ciências Sociais na África Austral*, Maputo, (Aug. 1982), 9-13.

50 P. Meyns, 'Liberation ideology and national development strategy in Mozambique', *Review of African Political Economy*, 22 (Oct-Dec, 1981).

51 The year 1986 should be understood more in terms of one point in a fluid temporal process rather than as a final end point because social processes in Mozambique were changing fast: Ruth First's death in 1982 left the Centre without a strong leader, even though she was not directly involved in the work of the History Workshop. The non-aggression pact between Mozambique and South Africa (Nkomati Accord) in 1984 was seen by most expatriate scholars in Mozambique as a betrayal of the socialist and anti-imperialist cause that FRELIMO had embraced since the liberation struggle. Most of the expatriate leftist intellectuals left Mozambique (and their work at CEA) after the accord. Within this context, the year 1986 is of significance because it was the year that Aquino de Bragança, director of the CEA and founder of the OH died, which signaled the end of the OH and its historical magazine, *Não Vamos Esquecer!*

*Não Vamos Esquecer!* had a short life, with only four editions published irregularly. The first issue came out in February 1983, the second and third issues were published at the same time in December 1983, and the last issue was published in July 1987. Even though *Não Vamos Esquecer!* had a short life – the four editions consisted of a total of 20 articles on subjects such as the cooperativization movement in Cabo Delgado province, biographies of guerrilla fighters, theoretical discussions on the study of the armed struggle as well as the proletarian class, the production in the liberated zones, the role of urban workers in the victory of the nationalist movement, the forms of colonial oppression and popular resistance, etc. We can certainly argue that it represented a serious attempt ‘to write down, to register it in the written form’ post-independent and socialist Mozambique.<sup>52</sup> But it was not only the ‘official written history of the liberation saga’<sup>53</sup> or the ‘written canonical text’<sup>54</sup> as Borges Coelho says, but rather the recollection and organisation of the living voices of the Mozambican historical subjects on the recent experience of colonialism, the armed struggle, the liberated zones, the Mozambican peasants and proletarians of the colonial period.

Unlike the CEA social sciences journal, *Estudos Moçambicanos* (Mozambican Studies), which targeted academics, *Não Vamos Esquecer!* spoke to a non-intellectual audience.<sup>55</sup> Their objective was to ‘let the people speak about themselves.’<sup>56</sup> It was a magazine that wanted to reach the whole society, including peasants, urban workers, and students.

The work of the OH was thus carried out through the recuperation of the memories and personal accounts of its participants, including ex-guerrillas soldiers, peasants, factory workers, migrant workers and women. All editions of the magazine, contained ‘a section on armed struggle’ that left no doubt about its centrality for the magazine:

This section [The Armed Struggle] will be a major part of the Magazine, because it constitutes one of the reasons of its existence: To be heard directly and with a minimum of intermediaries, the voice of the participants, because, as emphasised in the bibliographical note, at the end, the story lives amongst the people and it is there that the main source lies, not only for inspiration but also for production.<sup>57</sup>

According to CEA historians, there were three important points to take into consideration in the development of the theoretical framework for historical research on armed struggle.<sup>58</sup> Firstly, to produce the history of the ‘liberated zones’ through the concept of *classe produtoras* (the producing classes) because, according to them, the Mozambican workers and peasants not only produced material goods, but also political and social spaces free from colonial rule and governed by FRELIMO.<sup>59</sup> The

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52 I am quoting here *ipsis verbis* Borges Coelho’s words to emphasise my partial disagreement with his point of view. According to him, ‘in the thirty five years of independence no serious attempt was made to write it down, to register it in written form’. See, J. P. Borges Coelho, ‘Memory, History, Fiction – A note on the politics of the past in Mozambique’, EHESS, (Oct. 2010), 1-11.

53 *Ibid.*, 4.

54 *Ibid.*, 5.

55 I would like to thank one of the ‘anonymous reviewers’ for calling my attention to this term, as I was initially claiming an ‘anti-intellectualist’ approach of the OH.

56 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1: 5.

57 *Ibid.*

58 Oficina de História, ‘Para uma História da luta de libertação de Moçambique’, *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 4 (1987).

59 *Ibid.*, 15.

productive classes were understood as producers of the liberated zones, which means that they were credited with creating a counter-state.<sup>60</sup> Secondly, the use of the concept of class in this context also meant 'a rejection of the "anthropologization" of the Mozambican subject, which was reflected in the tendency of the discipline to relegate the peasants to their tribal aspect.'<sup>61</sup> The conceptualization in terms of classes would allow, they believed, 'a break with the colonial historiography', which tended mainly through anthropology 'to characterize the peasants by their tribal aspects.'<sup>62</sup> Lastly, it would have to be a 'non-exclusive approach' in the sense that it would not focus solely on the 'liberated zones', or even on the period during the armed struggle, but rather reflect also on varied topics such as the 'working class', communal villages, and 'the urban forms of resistance to colonialism', etc.

The first edition of the magazine reiterated the centrality of the oral accounts, since it not only would rescue the 'silenced voices' of workers and peasants and guerrilla fighters who were directly involved in the armed struggle, but would also disrupt the 'anti-democratic practices of historical and academic (bourgeois) research.'<sup>63</sup> This theme led unavoidably to a reflection on the use, selection and limitations of historical sources. The OH called for a critical analysis of written sources, both in the sense of the tendency to be 'dominated by the written text',<sup>64</sup> and to look critically at its ideological context. One of the privileged sources for these historians was the so-called *fontes da vanguarda da luta* (sources of the vanguard of the struggle), which consisted of elements of political-military direction by FRELIMO and soldiers from the armed forces. They also included *fontes do lado inimigo* (sources of the enemy's side), and those who were *exteriores á vanguarda da luta* (external to the vanguard of the struggle) and who were in solidarity with the national liberation struggle of FRELIMO.

The publication of oral testimonies on the armed struggle and forms of domination and resistance to colonial coercion had two interrelated intentions. Firstly, they intended to show how socialist-oriented FRELIMO, during the armed struggle, came out victorious in their bitter internal cleavages for power and ideological disputes, and had the possibility to ensure ideological unity and 'experiment' with new forms of *poder popular* and collective production in the liberated zones. This was also important pedagogically for the present-day challenges on the 'road to socialism'. The CEA historians stated that the way that victories against Portuguese colonialism were achieved remained as yet unknown by the majority of Mozambican people. Thus it was imperative to write down the experience of the armed struggle and popular resistance and to disseminate it to the entire society.

The second intention was to glorify the 'great men' of FRELIMO's guerrilla fighters. For instance, the project *A Luta Armada através de Biografias* (The Armed Struggle through Biographies), described the forms of popular resistance to colonial exploitation emphasising the Mozambican historical subject, but at the same time, privileging the 'great heroes' of the armed struggle (predominately men), especially the ones who fit in FRELIMO's hegemonic project. Indeed, we can trace FRELIMO's

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60 *Oficina de História*, 'Towards a History of the National Liberation Struggles in Mozambique; Problematics, methodologies, analysis', Reunião de especialistas sobre problemas e prioridades na formação em Ciências Sociais na África Austral (Aug. 1982), 9-13.

61 'Towards a History of the National Liberation Struggles in Mozambique; Problematics, Methodologies, Analysis', 3.

62 *Ibid.*

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.*

growing political radicalization through their interpretation and construction of a new historical narrative about the colonial past, especially of the internal conflicts FRELIMO experienced from its inception in 1962 until 1969, the year of Eduardo Mondlane's murder.

Take for instance the document written by Eduardo Mondlane on the life and death of Paulo Samuel Khankomba, a high ranking military commander of FRELIMO, and Samora Machel's speech *Os Novos Exploradores* published in the same edition of the Magazine.<sup>65</sup> Mondlane's paper accuses Lázaro Nkavandame<sup>66</sup> and his followers of murdering Khankomba. Mondlane sets out three main motives for the murder. The first motive was related to 'Nkavandame's ambition to have absolute control of the entire Cabo Delgado province', which was related to his refusal to accept the democratic centralism of FRELIMO, according to which the people choose their leaders who in turn worked under the guidance of the Central Committee of FRELIMO. The second motive pertained to Nkavandame's intention to control the economic life of the province and enjoy the financial benefits of the work of the people. And the third motive was related to Nkavandame's insistence on having another 'Biafra',<sup>67</sup> meaning that the Cabo Delgado province would be politically and economically autonomous from the rest of the country.<sup>68</sup>

We hardly find in Mondlane's discourse any allusion to Marxist terms such as 'new exploiters', 'exploitation of man by man', the antagonism between the 'shops of the nation', and the 'private shops'. By contrast, Samora's speech, particularly when he addressed the schisms between the two ideological lines, is full of such references, especially to the 'new exploiters' (personified in the figure of Lázaro Nkavandame) who were accused of wanting to reproduce colonial capitalist systems in Mozambique through the defence of private accumulation. The ideologically 'correct' line was that of the 'revolutionaries' who sought to break with forms of capitalist accumulation and create a socialist society.

Both articles intended to show the internal contradictions within FRELIMO and the victory of the 'revolutionaries'. In fact, this type of argument is found in all editions of the magazine. For instance there were two poles of discussion in *Não Vamos Esquecer!* First was the armed struggle, the popular resistance against colonialism and the establishment of the liberated zones as a counter-state. Second was the struggle of peasants and workers, as well as their role in supporting FRELIMO's armed struggle. In the articles that dealt with popular resistance and the creation of a proletarian class, a primary link was established in relation to the nationalist movement as though there were some kind of 'kinship' between them.

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65 'Os Novos Exploradores' was a speech delivered by Samora Machel in 1974, printed in *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 2/3 (Fev. 1983).

66 FRELIMO's Central Committee member, provincial secretary of Cabo Delgado province and president of the Cooperatives Committee in the same province. A successful trader, Nkavandame began as an 'earlier leader of the cooperative movement in Cabo Delgado', and was later expelled from FRELIMO after being accused of being a tribalist, a capitalist (*os novos exploradores*) and a murderer. He then began to act as a Portuguese agent and eventually was directly implicated by FRELIMO in the 1968 assassination of Paulo Samuel Khankomba. He would later also be accused of assassinating Eduardo Mondlane in 1969. He joined Portuguese authorities and started a massive anti-FRELIMO campaign. He was captured in 1975 and eventually killed by the 'revolutionaries'. There are two photographs of him published in the first edition of *Não Vamos Esquecer!* In one of these photographs we can see President Samora Machel showing him, in 1975, his pamphlets against FRELIMO.

67 E. Mondlane, 'Notas Posteriores sobre a Morte de Paulo Samuel Kankhomba', *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1 (1983), 17. Indeed, according to Basil Davidson, this term 'was put forward by Nkavandame at a confrontation between himself and Mondlane under the Tanzanian chairmanship, in the southern Tanzanian town of Mtwara early in August 1968. It will be recalled that secessionists in eastern Nigeria were at the time fighting for an independent 'Biafra against the Nigerian federal government and its forces, and that the government of Tanzania had recognised this secession. But at Mtwara, the Tanzanians supported Mondlane against Nkavandame'. See, B. Davidson, *The People's Cause - A History of Guerrillas in Africa*, (Longman, Essex, 1981), 135.

68 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1 (Fev. 1983).

The first issue of the magazine was entirely devoted to the history of the national liberation struggle, beginning prior to the formation of FRELIMO. It discussed the context in which the first forms of political mobilization were forged with various nationalistic organisations in exile, which would culminate in the formation of FRELIMO. The second and third editions of the magazine were exclusively dedicated to the 'Mozambican working class'. There was here a clear attempt to outline the history of the Mozambican proletariat, which emerged, according to the OH during the colonial era through the presence of foreign colonial capital. The fourth and final edition resumes the founding theme of the magazine, the armed struggle. This edition was concentrated on the liberated zones created by FRELIMO during the struggle. As we can infer, these four editions were intertwined with a specific meta-narrative regarding the historical experiences of the armed struggle and the lessons gleaned from the post-independence period. Even the issue about the working classes does not divert from this purpose. As the editors said,

In Mozambique the working classes must be understood not only as producing material goods, but more importantly as having produced the liberated zones, i.e. having produced an alternative State which in the context of the armed struggle, was born out of the conscious effort of the FRELIMO leadership in order to create a democratic, popular and revolutionary alternative to the colonial state.<sup>69</sup>

The lives of the people who participated in the various forms of rural and urban popular resistance and in the armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism became the main 'archival' source for the OH. The use, for example, of *canções* (songs), which were presented in the first edition of the Magazine in 1983, *Canção de Trabalho dos Estivadores* (Work Song of the Stevedores), was not only a way to show the working conditions of migrants, their concerns, sufferings, strategies and forms of resistance, but also to claim a new approach to historical research and a counterpoint in relation to the dominant historiographical and anthropological narratives from the colonial period which did not grant 'agency' to Africans who lived under colonial rule.

### **Ambivalence and Double-speak in the CEA's History Writing**

This section will examine two issues. First, the construction of a historical narrative of the late colonial past and the FRELIMO armed struggle, arguing that it not only functioned as a theoretical resistance to colonial historiography and the recovery of the historical African subject, but also as an essential point in the political legitimisation and perpetuation of FRELIMO's rule in post-independent Mozambique. Second, OH's strategic shift to focus on a history of the present, which was deeply related to the historical experience of FRELIMO's armed struggle and the establishment of the 'liberated zones'.

These objectives – writing a new history and legitimising FRELIMO's rule in the present – offered clarity and a strong sense of purpose to CEA historians. They believed in FRELIMO's socialist world-view for post-independence Mozambique, even

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69 Ibid., 7.

though that commitment did not mean a blind and uncritical adherence to the dominant ideology. Although this political engagement took different forms among these various authors, they ultimately shared the same support towards FRELIMO's socialist worldview.

There were indeed three main categories of narrative accounts that fit into that political context. First was the use of the dyadic relationship between domination and resistance in the historical analysis of Mozambique. The overarching objectives of OH articles published in the magazine, such as 'colonial oppression and forms of struggle', 'aspects of forced labour in Mozambique in the 1910-20s' and 'forced labour in the north of the country', tried to show the different forms of domination and resistance exhibited by Mozambicans in rural and urban settings alike. Scholars at OH viewed the actions of peasants and urban workers who had been inserted in the colonial world as representative of cohesive and monolithic forms of struggle and resistance against colonial domination, which was ultimately linked to FRELIMO's armed struggle for national liberation.

Thus the group of 'collaborators' were considered 'reactionary', 'enemies of the people' and 'anti-revolutionary'. For example, the theme of the African 'collaborators' (personified by the infamous Lázaro Nkavandame and Uria Simango), as well as the internal conflicts and competition among elite factions experienced by FRELIMO,<sup>70</sup> are in a Manichean dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' revolutionaries, or otherwise as 'collaborators' and 'revolutionaries'. There was no attempt to conceptualise them as embedded in a larger space involving dynamic, individual strategies, acts and negotiations, separate from their political opposition to the ruling party. As Paolo Israel rightly notes, 'the winners described the crisis as a split between a conservative and revolutionary line. For the vanquished, and those that would later take inspiration from them, it was one between pluralism and totalitarianism.'<sup>71</sup> Similar struggles over how to narrate the past were also happening elsewhere, as in Zimbabwe. As Terence Ranger stated, 'within Zimbabwe, "patriotic history" has seemed indefensibly narrow, dividing up the nation into revolutionaries and sell-outs.'<sup>72</sup> In fact, the construction of a new historical discourse of colonialism implied that the revolutionaries of FRELIMO would be the authorised bearers of truth.

Eric Alina-Pisano's discussion of the use of the concept of resistance in social history is useful here as an interpretative frame that provides a more nuanced argument on the limitations of *Oficina's* exclusive use of the 'resistance, collaboration and domination' paradigm.

People's identities were not solely constituted by their status as colonial subjects: they were simultaneously women, men, elders, juniors, members of lineages or ethnic groups, producers and consumers of material goods, land holders, holders of spiritual beliefs, and more. Their identities were overdetermined by these interests and concerns, and resistance cannot capture the full range of either their intent or their actions.<sup>73</sup>

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70 W. Opello Jr, 'Pluralism and Elite Conflict in an Independence Movement: FRELIMO in the 1960s', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2, 1 (Oct. 1975), 66-82.

71 P. Israel, *In Step with the Times: Mapiko masquerades of Mozambique*, (Athens: Ohio University Press [Forthcoming]).

72 T. Ranger, 'Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: the Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 2 (Jun. 2004), 223.

73 E. Pisano, 'Resistance and the Social History of Africa', *Journal of Social History*, 37 (Nov. 2003), 193.



It is true that at times these people resisted or collaborated with colonial powers (see the article, *Os Novos Exploradores* [The New Exploiters]).<sup>74</sup> However, it is also true that they exhibited a vast complexity of human activities, such as ‘acts of negotiation’, or even individual strategies for capital accumulation and household survival activities that do not neatly fall into categories of ‘domination’, ‘resistance’ or ‘collaboration’. Moreover, analysing these activities might also help to produce a more comprehensive understanding of social reality.

A second point to consider is CEA’s focus on the ‘great men’ of the liberation war. Guerrilla fighters, such as Paulo Samuel Khankomba, Filipe Samuel Magaia, Eduardo Mondlane and Samora Machel fully committed to the ‘revolutionary’ line became national heroes in post-independence Mozambique. This is not to say that the OH was not aware of the role played by women in the armed struggle. In fact, there was an attempt by the OH to research this issue, namely the paper produced by the OH and presented by Mozambican historian and member of OH, Isabel Casimiro titled ‘The national liberation struggle in Mozambique and women’s emancipation’, which was presented at the UNESCO meeting on ‘the history of the women’s contribution to the struggle for national liberation and their necessary role in the reconstruction of the newly independent countries,’ held in Guiné-Bissau in September 1983. In this paper, the OH links the processes of women’s emancipation to the armed struggle. Inside the ‘liberated zones,’ FRELIMO would create new forms of organisation of production and new social relations. It was also through the legacy of the armed struggle that Mozambican women were able to create their own political organisations, which would play a key role, not only in the success of the struggle but also in their own social and political emancipation. The OH constantly contrasted the situation of Mozambican women in the ‘liberated zones’ and also in post-independence with their lives and status in the colonial period where they experienced colonial exploitation, land expropriation, forced labour, the effects of men’s migrant labour in sexual division of labour and prostitution.<sup>75</sup>

Frederick Cooper has reflected on the exclusion of women from early post-colonial historiography. According to him, ‘the meta-narratives of nationalist victories – and many of the tales of “resistance” – have most often been told as stories of men, with a rather “macho air” to the narrating of confrontation.’<sup>76</sup> Except for one interview with a female factory worker, and photographs of women in the liberation struggle featured in one article,<sup>77</sup> no attention was paid to women’s emancipation in a society where the ‘new man’ was to be created. Single mothers, for instance, were seen as ‘immoral’ or ‘promiscuous’,<sup>78</sup> and frequently sent to ‘re-education camps’.<sup>79</sup> It was only in 1988 that the CEA would create a ‘sector for the study of women and gender.’<sup>80</sup>

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74 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1 (Fev. 1983), 20-23.

75 See Oficina de História, ‘A luta de libertação nacional em Moçambique e a emancipação da mulher. Maputo, 1983. Documento apresentado ao encontro de especialistas da UNESCO sobre ‘A história da contribuição da mulher para a luta de libertação nacional e o seu papel e necessidades na reconstrução dos países recém-independentes’, (Bissau, 3-7 de Setembro de 1983).

76 F. Cooper. ‘Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History’, *The American Historical Review*, 99 (Dec. 1994), 1523.

77 See, for instance, *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1 (Fev. 1983) 24-25.

78 See J. Hanlon, *Mozambique: The Revolution under Fire*, (London: Zed Books, 1984).

79 According to Thomas Henriksen, ‘for recalcitrant offenders guilty of theft, smuggling, prostitution or political sins, FRELIMO has set up ‘re-education camps’ where the inmates farm and learn the lessons of revolutionary politics’. See, T. Henriksen, ‘Marxism and Mozambique’, *African Affairs*, 77, 309, (Oct. 1978), 441-462.

80 I. Casimiro, ‘Mulher, Pesquisa, Ação e Mudança’, in T. C. e Silva, J. P. B. C., A. Souto, eds., *Como fazer Ciências Sociais e Humanas em África: Questões epistemológicas, Metodológicas, Teóricas e Práticas* (2012).

Finally, the CEA historian's narrative was primarily concerned with producing a new historical narrative of the armed struggle that would persist and be useful into the socialist present. As for the founders of OH, *o passado não podia ser analisado e compreendido senão em função das exigências do presente e dos objectivos do futuro* ('The past could not be analysed and understood unless in the light of the requirements of the present and the objectives of the future objectives').<sup>81</sup> They begin by addressing the issue of oppression and colonial exploitation, discussing the foundation of FRELIMO, the outbreak of the national armed struggle, the various forms of popular resistance and rebellions (for example 'the Mueda massacre'<sup>82</sup>), and culminating with a discussion of the achievement of national independence in 1975 and the challenges of establishing a socialist nation.

The rhetoric of socialism and the reality in the field, however, were not always in accordance. Although FRELIMO's socialist strategy had some success with education and health, economic and social infrastructure were severely affected by a mixture of poor state management, RENAMO's armed incursions, and the floods that ravaged most of the south of the country. In August 1982, Ruth First, the CEA research director, was assassinated in her office by a parcel bomb sent by the South Africa apartheid regime. It was a profound blow to the critical work of the CEA, although she was not directly involved in OH's activities.

The 1983 FRELIMO Fourth Congress had as its major objective the attempt to correct the shortcomings and mistakes made earlier and to herald a new emphasis on decentralised and market-oriented small-scale projects. The Congress also instructed state institutions to provide great support to the cooperative, the family and private sectors. Further policies were made in relation to the agrarian question, as FRELIMO acknowledged that it had committed a serious mistake in underestimating the role of the peasantry while giving full support to the state sector.

In this congress FRELIMO decided that the allocation of resources had to be based on economic pragmatism rather than ideology.<sup>83</sup> They claimed that turning to a strategy more oriented towards the market would correct the economic imbalances that resulted from past policy mistakes. However, there was already a large rural discontent aggravated by the war against RENAMO, which contributed to the forced exodus of people to the cities and the increase of urban unemployment.

It was in this context that the OH induced their major research shift from a strict focus on the colonial period to an urgent policy-oriented history focused on present concerns, which led to two research reports (not published in the magazine). One was titled *A Situação nas Antigas Zonas Libertadas* (The Situation in the Old Liberated Zones) and focused on two communal villages (Aldeia de Namaua and Aldeia Nanhala) and one cooperative (*Cooperativa Agrícola de Moçambique*) from

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81 *Não Vamos Esquecer!* 1 (1983).

82 The Mueda massacre happened on 16 June 1960 in the town of Mueda in Cabo Delgado, the northeast province of Mozambique. On that day, according to Gary Littlejohn, 'the Administrator called a meeting of notables to discuss grievances....and the meeting unsurprisingly also called for independence. When this demand was made, the Administrator called for the 'ringleaders' to be arrested, and when the crown attempted to prevent this, he called out some more troops who had been in hiding and who began shooting into the crowd. It is probable that the number who died was somewhat less than the figure which FRELIMO later gave of 600, but it was nevertheless a massacre'. See, G. Littlejohn, 'Rural Development in Mueda District, Mozambique', *Leeds Southern African Studies* 9.2 (May 1988). M. Cahen, 'The Mueda Case and Maconde Political Ethnicity. Some notes on a work in progress', *Africana Studia*, 2, (May 2000), 29-46.

83 O. Roesch, 'Economic Reform in Mozambique: Notes on Destabilization War, and Class Formation', *Taamuli*, Dar es Salaam (1989), *apud*, M. Bowen, 'Beyond Reform: Adjustment and Political Power in Contemporary Mozambique', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30 (Feb. 1992), 261.

the Mueda district in Cabo Delgado province, exactly the place where the liberation war first began and the first liberated zones were established. The second research report was titled 'Poder Popular e Desagregação nas Aldeias Comunitárias do Planalto de Mueda' (People's Power and the Disaggregation of Communal Villages in the Mueda Plateau'), which I discuss below.

This report followed the 1979 collective project led by Aquino de Bragança and Allen Isaacman on popular resistance in Mozambique, which focused in the colonial period from 1964 to 1974. Its main goal was to look at the various forms of popular resistance, which culminated in 1974 with the peace agreement with Portugal. The history of the armed struggle was principally based on recollections in 'life histories' of peasant men and women. Some of these materials were published in the OH's magazine.

It was in 1981, when CEA historians returned to the field in the Mueda district, that they initiated a new shift in their focus, from the colonial period to the present. OH claimed that in order to understand the history of FRELIMO's armed struggle, the establishment of the 'liberated zones', their victories and contradictions, it was first necessary to understand the post-independence period and the challenges of the socialist transformation. The fieldwork was carried out from 1981 to 1982 and the first version of the report was presented in April 1982 to the First Secretary of the FRELIMO party and the administrators of the district. The final version of the 60-page research report was published in 1983.

By the time it was published the war had reduced FRELIMO's ability to implement its policies of socialist development; the party became even more totalitarian. Abuses of power were ubiquitous: people accused of being critical of FRELIMO, the unemployed, collaborationists, spies, even prostitutes were indiscriminately sent to 're-education camps'. One striking example of this authoritarian atmosphere was the case of the director of the Marxist-Leninist Faculty at Eduardo Mondlane University. In 1981 FRELIMO created the faculty, which had as its main objective to ensure the ideological formation of the students. It included a course on 'Historical and Dialectical Materialism' (which was mandatory for all faculty at the university). The students protested about the orthodox, dogmatic and catechist Marxist teaching in the course. In October of the same year, the director of the faculty, Luis de Brito, one of the first CEA researcher members, asked for demotion from his post, in part due to his support of the student's opposition to the course. As he was one of the first to openly criticise the dogmatism of the course, FRELIMO first sent him to a Marxist-Leninist upgrade training, which he refused to attend. FRELIMO then sent him to a 're-education camp' in the remote Niassa province.<sup>84</sup>

It was in this context that the OH, led by Aquino de Bragança, published the research report on the actual situation of the 'old liberated zones', which was a very honest, detailed and critical account of the situation of Namaua, Nanhala and the Cooperativa Agrícola Moçambique. The report presents an overview of the political economy of the Mueda district from the colonial period to the present, including forms of colonial exploitation, forced labour, land usurpation, cotton production, liberation struggle, the establishment of the first liberated zones, the challenges for the socialist transformation of the countryside, forms of collective production, the pro-

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84 Interview with Luis de Brito conducted by Carlos Fernandes, Maputo, August 2009. See also L. Gasperini. *Educação e Desenvolvimento Rural* (Roma: Lavoro/ISCOS, 1989).

ductive sectors, consumption cooperatives, class relations, peasant social differentiation and the political structure of the communal villages. However, their approach as critical historians is explicit in their discussion (even though very descriptively) of the peasant's interpretation of FRELIMO's armed struggle, the 'liberated zones' and their legacy in the present moment.

The report was based on oral accounts of the peasants from the two communal villages about their interpretations of the failures of FRELIMO's main rural strategy for socialist transformation, which focused on the introduction of collective production, socialization of the field and the organisation of peasantry in communal villages. There was also an allusion to the social differentiation of the peasantry, an issue deeply embedded in FRELIMO's own history, but no analysis of it was provided. Take for instance the old schism in the liberation movement between the 'two lines'. In the post-independence period FRELIMO was worried that the social differentiation of the peasantry could hinder their rural strategy for the socialization of the field and the establishment of collective farms and production. As they asked, 'would we be faced with a new class of exploiters like in the times of Nkavandame?'<sup>85</sup> This was a crucial question for FRELIMO's modernising project as they believed that the key to socialism was in smashing the colonial legacy and starting everything from scratch, assuming that the peasantry was a homogeneous entity. Prior to this point, the only work to analyse the social differentiation of the peasantry was CEA's 1978 *chef-d'œuvre* 'Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant', the research project lead by Ruth First which discussed the impact of the migrant labour to South Africa in the social structure of rural peasantry in Southern Mozambique.

In the OH report on the 'old liberated zones' the historians mentioned not only the social differentiation of the peasantry but also described the peasant's interpretation of the experience of the armed struggle and their present situation. For instance, the researchers perceived while doing fieldwork that the peasants were not motivated and suspicious about FRELIMO's rural strategy. They also mentioned peasant's weak participation in collective production and that they were negatively comparing their grave living conditions in the present (lack of basic food, clothes, lack of production tools, etc.) with the better life they claimed to have had during the times of the armed struggle. As the historians succinctly put it, 'the armed struggle is the reference point of the peasants'.<sup>86</sup>

The peasant's overall interpretation was that during the armed struggle life was better than in the post-independence period. During the armed struggle they worked collectively and they knew where the products and money would go. According to the peasants, they had food, were better mobilised and free of the authoritarianism and formalism from FRELIMO party. However, as the historians asserted, 'the peasants think that they are not receiving a fair price'.<sup>87</sup> In addition, CEA historians mentioned that the peasants in the post-independence period were 'afraid to talk in the meetings' because of 'lack of democracy' and they 'despise the arrogance' of the state and party structures when interacting with them.<sup>88</sup> According to the peasants' inter-

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85 Oficina de História, 'A situação nas Antigas Zonas Libertadas de Cabo Delgado', (Maputo: CEA-UEM, 1983), 59.

86 *Ibid.*, 18.

87 *Ibid.*, 25.

88 *Ibid.*

pretation, 'during the armed struggle we had a government that worked; today we have a government of lies'.<sup>89</sup>

The historians then argued that because Mozambique was facing a difficult period at the present moment, the peasant's interpretation of the liberation struggle was 'idealised and distorted'.<sup>90</sup> But subsequently they reminded FRELIMO officials that

It is important to understand the idealisation not only as a distortion but also and mainly as a weapon in the struggle that we are facing today. The idealisation that the peasant has of the armed struggle is to criticise what he sees as the incapacitation or reluctance of the government or FRELIMO party to solve their problems.<sup>91</sup>

Although this report does not make a deep analytical enquiry into the failures of FRELIMO's rural strategy for socialist transformation, it did discuss the primary role that the party/state played in the crisis of production, commercialisation and socialisation of the field in the Mueda district. The historians included in their critique of the FRELIMO party/state performance the 'ritualised listening'<sup>92</sup> (by which the historians meant, 'they pretend to listen but knew very well that that listening will not change a pre-determined understanding'<sup>93</sup>), the lack of mobilisation activities, the party and state centralised activities in the countryside, formal and administrative interaction with the peasantry, state support in terms of production tools, as well as equal and transparent distribution of income from the collective production in the state farms.

Nevertheless, in their honest criticism of FRELIMO's rule they did not lose sight of their role as policy-oriented historians making recommendations to the power elite 'on the road of socialist transformation'.<sup>94</sup> For instance they advised the government on how to successfully transform the cooperatives into 'socialist cooperatives'.<sup>95</sup> Finally, they cautioned FRELIMO that while 'the population continues to have confidence in [them],<sup>96</sup> one cannot help ask: 'but until when?'<sup>97</sup>

The year of the publication of this report also witnessed the collapse of the Mozambican economy, forcing the Mozambican government to negotiate in March 1984 a 'pact of non-aggression and good neighborliness' with South Africa. This was known as the Nkomati Accord. It was agreed that South Africa would stop financing RENAMO and Mozambique, in turn, would break with their total support of the ANC military cells on Mozambican soil. As a way to gather support from Western countries, while trying to stop the economic decline, Mozambique, at the time one of the poorest countries in the world and deeply in debt, would end up joining in September 1984, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

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89 Ibid., 10.

90 Ibid., 9.

91 The original reads: '*Mas é preciso entender esta idealização não só como uma distorção, mas também e sobretudo como uma arma na luta que se trava hoje. A idealização que o camponês faz da luta armada é para criticar o que ele vê como a incapacidade ou a relutância do governo ou do Partido de resolver os seus problemas*', Ibid.

92 Oficina de História, 'A situação nas Antigas Zonas Libertadas de Cabo Delgado', (1983), 11.

93 Ibid., 11.

94 Ibid., 48.

95 Ibid., 46.

96 Ibid., 26.

97 Ibid.

The Nkomati Accord had a profound impact on the CEA's work, particularly on the work of the CEA's research group on southern African studies, which was comprised primarily of ANC members. The researchers were forbidden to write or talk publicly about South Africa. This was the time that most of them left Mozambique, disenchanted about the FRELIMO's commitment to socialism and the limitation of critical work and dissent in the Centre.

It was also during this time (1983-1984), that the French anthropologist Christian Geffray came to Mozambique to do research on the internal dynamics of civil war in Northern Mozambique. During his stay at the university in the Anthropology and Archaeology Department, he wrote a very critical paper<sup>98</sup> on the scientific work of the CEA and its relationship with FRELIMO's rural strategy. Geffray's critique rested on two points. First, he argued that the CEA's scientific discourse on 'the social existence of the peasantry was theoretically dubious'<sup>99</sup> because the researchers of the Centre did not take into consideration the cultural specificities and social differences of the peasantry, seeing them instead as a homogeneous entity. By contrast, Geffray claimed that 'the social existence of the peasantry was also politically dubious'.<sup>100</sup> Geffray believed that the CEA's work (conceptualised as an 'organ of state') accommodated itself to the discourse of power with the main purpose of legitimising – scientifically – FRELIMO's ideology of nation-state building and the socialist organisation of society. Geffray said that the CEA accepted the official discourse that bought into existence in Mozambique a 'peasantry class'. At the end of his article, he describes some of the factors that contributed CEA's scientific credibility, especially the political and scientific reputation of its founders. He referred to Aquino de Bragança and Ruth First in particular, both of whom enjoyed some influence in political circles because of the undeniable value of their productions within certain scientific fields, the reputation of a 'critical' reflection of CEA researchers and the adequacy of a language to the aspirations of the ruling elite.<sup>101</sup>

Geffray's critique of CEA's view of a homogenous peasantry, however, is also specious. As I pointed out earlier, we find the discussion about social differentiation of the peasantry in OH's article on the 'situation in the old liberated zones', as well as in CEA's collective research on 'The Mozambican Miner: a study on the export of labour'. Indeed, the concluding chapter of this book, entitled 'Workers or Peasants?' undertakes an exhaustive analysis of the social base of the peasantry and discusses the political implications of organising the peasantry into 'communal villages', based on their differentiation into social classes (the poor peasants, the middle peasants and the rich peasants, like those who were working as miners in South Africa). In fact, CEA researchers moved away from the dualist opposition between 'traditional' and 'modern' sectors of the peasantry (a distinction Geffray fails to make), arguing that the peasants were deeply influenced by capitalist accumulation and wages earned in the South African mines.

FRELIMO's commitment to socialism had started to show signs of falling apart, which would culminate in the Fifth Congress in 1989, where they officially promulgated the end of their Marxist-Leninist ideology and opened Mozambique to the

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98 C. Geffray, 'Fragments d'un discours du pouvoir (1975-1985): D'un bon usage d'une reconnaissance scientifique', *Politique Africaine*, 29 (1988), 71-85.

99 *Ibid.*, 73.

100 *Ibid.*, 76.

101 *Ibid.*, 76.

market economy, privatisation and multiparty system. It was in this context that the OH produced in 1985 an article titled, 'People's Power and the Disaggregation of Communal Villages in the Mueda Plateau'.<sup>102</sup> This study addressed a topic doubly sensitive to FRELIMO officials. It addressed the analysis of what OH called the ineffectiveness of FRELIMO's rural transformation strategy and the subsequent 'disaggregation' of the communal villages in rural Mozambique. Secondly, the focus of the case study was the Mueda plateau, which was the symbolic origin point of the liberation war, and the place where the first 'liberated zones' were established.

Focusing on three communal villages near the town of Ngapa, the OH critically examined the factors that led to the 'disaggregation' of the communal villages, emphasising the fragility of FRELIMO and the Mozambican state as one of main factors in this process of the disarticulation of new forms of collective organisation of farmers, erected as major policies in the construction of socialism in Mozambique. The researchers used the term 'disaggregation' to indicate the movement of Mozambican peasants out of the communal villages and their return to their own lands, a process that, according to the researchers, the state had been unable to reverse.

According to researchers from the CEA, although these three villages had distinct origins, they all exhibited, at the time of the investigation, similar problems and contradictions. All of them were characterised by the 'non-functioning of political structures, crisis of food supply, clothing and agricultural production, poor location, low support by the state for the family sector', as well as the 'almost total lack of amusement or leisure organisations'.<sup>103</sup> These were the factors that led to the exacerbation of discontent among the peasants, interpreted by the political structures, as 'acts of rebellion'.<sup>104</sup>

Against this backdrop of production and consumption crisis, and the efficacy of government's rural policies, the researchers ended up questioning the very existence of FRELIMO's 'people's power', and even 'popular participation'. The OH argued that the fact that 'people's power' functioned in the 'old liberated zones' did not mean that the continuation of 'people's power' would be automatically ensured.<sup>105</sup>

Thus the study concludes that forms of 'people's power' in Cabo Delgado, and more specifically in the town of Ngapa, were 'imposed' by the party and state and were not something that had arisen spontaneously at the grassroots level. The problem, according to OH, was in the kind of relationship that existed between the political leadership and the peasants, which was non-democratic and included an 'attitude of superiority' from party members and state institutions. OH suggested that these were not 'acts of rebellion', 'tradition' or 'witchcraft' from peasants who were supposedly against FRELIMO's policies, as alleged by FRELIMO officials. As the OH researchers observed, it would be wrong to reduce the desegregation of communal villages to the manifestations of antagonistic forces opposed to FRELIMO. Nevertheless, the OH historians reminded the government that 'although at a later stage such forces can, in the current situation, find the environment to arise'.<sup>106</sup>

As we can see, this last argument advanced, timidly, the hypotheses about the origins of armed conflict in the post-independence, which would only be explored

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102 Oficina de História, 'Poder Popular e Desagregação nas Aldeias Comuns do Planalto de Mueda', (Maputo: CEA, UEM, 1986).

103 *Ibid.*, 52.

104 *Ibid.*, 39.

105 *Ibid.*, 1.

106 *Ibid.*, 61.

one year later by Christian Geffray in his analysis of the social basis of the civil war in Mozambique.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, the example of Cabo Delgado was too weak to demonstrate this link between resentment, dissatisfaction, breakdown of peasant agrarian policies in relation to the nature of FRELIMO and the RENAMO war. As Colin Darch would remark in 1989, ‘the case of Cabo Delgado, had no organic connection with the emergence of banditry.’<sup>108</sup>

Despite Geffray’s thesis that the peasants’ discontentment (internal dynamics) with FRELIMO’s rural strategy led to social support for the RENAMO rebels, the CEA never gave up its position, in accordance with FRELIMO, that the war was due solely to external dynamics. There was no discussion about the internal dynamics of the post-independence war. Was it a ‘war of destabilisation’ or ‘civil war’? Indeed, this is a theme that Aquino de Bragança and Jacques Depelchin were still reluctant to recognize in 1986. The historians from OH continued to argue – at least until 1986 – that RENAMO did not have a social base in Mozambique.

This is why FRELIMO officials expected too much from the deliberations on the peace agreement with South Africa. Meanwhile, Mozambique did not show signs of economic recovery, nor did the agreement with South Africa show signs of curtailing the ‘RENAMO’ war. South Africa continued to support the RENAMO rebels, who were now spreading all over the country. An attack on Maputo seemed imminent. Geffray’s preliminary finding came to the attention of FRELIMO officials who then invited him to do in-depth research on war, assuring him military protection while engaged in research in Nampula province.<sup>109</sup>

The research group on southern Africa studies continued timidly to write about South Africa, although researchers such as Dan O’Meara had already left the country, disenchanted about the lack of critical debate in the CEA. The *Curso de Desenvolvimento* fell apart after Ruth First’s death. OH’s magazine publication was stagnating after the second issue of the *Não Vamos Esquecer!* published in 1983 – the next issue would only appear in 1987. Nevertheless, in 1986, Aquino de Bragança and Jacques Depelchin published, outside OH, a seminal paper titled, ‘From the Idealisation of FRELIMO to Understanding of the Recent History of Mozambique’,<sup>110</sup> which examined the social conditions of historical production in Mozambique. In a way this paper was a kind of ‘meta-analysis’ of their roles as critical historians, but it can also be read as a self-critique of their own engagement with the production of a teleological history. This article can be seen as the cornerstone of the CEA disengagement from FRELIMO’s hegemonic strategy.

‘From the Idealisation of FRELIMO’ was presented as an in-depth book review of two key works on the post-independent Mozambican historiography, *A Difficult Road: The Transition to Socialism in Mozambique*, by John Saul, published in 1984, and Joseph Hanlon’s, *Mozambique: The Revolution under Fire*, published

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107 See, for instance, C. Geffray and M. Pedersen, ‘Sobre a guerra na provincia de Nampula’, *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos* 415 (1986).

108 See C. Darch. ‘Are there Warlords in Provincial Mozambique? Questions of the Social Base of MNR Banditry’. *Review of African Political Economy*, 45/46 (1989), 34–49.

109 Interview with José Luís Cabaço conducted by Carlos Fernandes, Maputo, September 2009.

110 This paper was first published by the CEA journal of social sciences, *Estudos Mocambicanos*, as ‘Da idealização da FRELIMO á compreensão da História de Moçambique’, *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 5/6 (1986), 30–52. The original version of the paper was presented at a seminar of the CEA on 14 February 1986.



in 1985.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, the main subject of the paper was not these books; rather, they used the pretence of the book review to critique FRELIMO's rule and conduct a self-critique of the type of historical discourse that the OH produced. Indeed, the article proposed in a broad sense the possibilities of re-writing the history of FRELIMO and Mozambique from the contradictions that the country was experiencing in the post-independence period.

OH mentors argued that Saul and Hanlon were 'not neutral and they entirely agreed with the options of FRELIMO',<sup>112</sup> which 'constitutes one of the sources of the problems of the books'.<sup>113</sup> According to the reviewers, a critical engagement with FRELIMO's ideology led them to produce a 'chronicle of a victorious historiography',<sup>114</sup> which only addressed the positive aspects of FRELIMO without taking into consideration the most important question, which was the analysis of the contradictions that led the victorious FRELIMO to the growing failures of its socialist strategy. The founders of OH held that historical analysis should go beyond the writing of 'official' history, conceived as an 'unalterable text'. Historical analysis, in their view, should deepen the critique by analysing 'reality as it is',<sup>115</sup> rather than providing answers that merely reinforce FRELIMO's hegemonic strategy. An analysis of these contradictions would also have to separate FRELIMO's historical role in the national liberation movement from the history of Mozambique as a whole. Indeed, as Terence Ranger suggested in relation to 'the patriotic History in Zimbabwe', it is necessary to separate the writing of a nationalist history from the writing of the history of the nation.<sup>116</sup>

The founders of OH claimed that it was always necessary to take into account the critical analysis of the relationship between intentions and reality, remaining sceptical of the 'official history', which is 'teleological and self-explanatory'.<sup>117</sup> One might wonder why this kind of critical approach from the OH was not present in 1980 when the OH was founded as they started as historians committed to write the 'official' history of the armed struggle and the 'liberated zones'. Here we have to take into consideration that in Mozambique changes were happening very fast, and the critical engagement of CEA was shaped by these changes.

The motives behind the intellectual engagement of CEA's research on FRELIMO's socialist project are quite complex. In order to assess its meaning it is important to distinguish three different contexts of political struggle: first, the local context of post-independence period with FRELIMO's engagement in the construction of a new socialist nation and the 'new man' free from colonialist mentality; second, southern African struggles for national liberation from white-minority regimes (namely in South Africa, Rhodesia, and Namibia); and third, the broader context of the 'Cold War', 'May 68', the Vietnam war, capitalism and the consumerist society, and decolonisation processes in Africa and Asia. Understanding these contexts is crucial not

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111 John Saul, the Canadian sociologist, had established contact with FRELIMO before independence, when he was invited by Samora Machel to visit the 'liberated zones' of FRELIMO. In the years following independence, he came to work as a teacher in Mozambique, both at the FRELIMO party school, as well as in the Faculty of Marxism-Leninism at Eduardo Mondlane University. Joseph Hanlon was a British journalist who lived in Mozambique from 1979 to 1984.

112 A. Bragança and J. Depelchin, 'Da idealização da FRELIMO á compreensão da História de Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 5/6 (1986), 30-52.

113 *Ibid.*, 164.

114 *Ibid.*, 33.

115 *Ibid.*, 165.

116 T. Ranger, 'Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: the Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30.2 (June 2004), 230-234.

117 A. Bragança and J. Depelchin, 'From the idealisation of FRELIMO to the recent History of Mozambique': 1986.

only to understand CEA's support of FRELIMO's rule but also to help 'disaggregate three different layers of expatriate leftist intellectuals'<sup>118</sup> who joined the CEA during the 'revolutionary' year of building socialism in Mozambique. First, the researchers' primary loyalty was to FRELIMO's socialist strategy, and they assigned themselves 'the role of counselor and advisor'<sup>119</sup> to the party/state. Second, there were researchers who were just associated with the CEA. Third, there were researchers whose primary loyalty was to the political struggle of the ANC in South Africa.

CEA's intellectual loyalty to FRELIMO's socialist project began to erode at the end of the 1980's due to several factors. The 'Nkomati Accord' was seen by most of the *red feet*<sup>120</sup> of CEA as a betrayal of the socialist utopia. Some of them left (especially from the Southern Africa Nucleus) after it was signed. Another factor was the aggravation of the conflict with RENAMO and the growing economic crisis and authoritarian rule of FRELIMO. The plane crash that killed Aquino de Bragança and president Samora in 1986 would mean the end of the OH. The magazine would publish its last issue in 1987 (despite promising its readers that it would continue, it didn't). The publication in 1986 of the article on the social conditions of history writing would mark a new approach for critical historians. They began to reflect critically not on the 'errors' of the history of the present but on the controversial history of FRELIMO's armed struggle. This was not possible before. As Jacques Depelchin remarked,

We were doing the history of the liberated zones. The history of the liberated zones is a very controversial history. Controversial in the sense that who tells it and how it is told... there is an official history that has to remain official history. And there was always an apprehension by the rulers on that that thing [the history of the liberated zones] could be derailed.<sup>121</sup>

Indeed, during the first euphoric years of national independence when the CEA was created, the goal was to build a teleological narrative, a sense of history that had as its foundational myth the emergence of the Mozambican modern state born out of the liberated zones. There was an urgency to organise the historical experience of FRELIMO's liberation war with the ultimate purpose of its legacy being useful to the challenges of socialist transformation.

## Conclusion

By way of conclusion I would like to briefly discuss Anne Pitcher's article on the strategies of legitimisation and struggle in post-socialist Mozambique.<sup>122</sup> Pitcher begins by stating that many scholars have 'focused on the importance and uses of individual and collective memory...to construct and interpret the past...and to create a

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118 I would like to thank Ciraj Rassool for calling my attention to these different layers.

119 I. Wallerstein, 'The Evolving Role of the Africa Scholars in African Studies', *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 17.1 (1983), 9-16.

120 P. Chabal, 'People's war, state formation and revolution in Africa: a comparative analysis of Mozambique, Guiné-Bissau and Angola', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 21 (1983), 104-25.

121 Interview with Jacques Depelchin, Maputo, March 2007. The original reads: *Nós estávamos a fazer a história das zonas libertadas. A história das zonas libertadas é uma história bastante controversa. Controversa no sentido em que, quem conta, como se conta...e há uma história oficial que tem que ficar uma história oficial. E havia sempre uma apreensão por parte dos dirigentes de que esta coisa poderia sair do caminho desejado.*

122 A. Pitcher, 'Forgetting from above and memory from below: Strategies of legitimization and struggle in post-socialist Mozambique', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 76 (2006), 88-112.

contemporary sense of a shared political or social identity through reflection on past experiences.<sup>123</sup> But then she asks: ‘what about forgetting?’<sup>124</sup> She takes Milan Kundera’s notion of ‘organised forgetting’ as a contemporary political strategy (to retain power) to argue that Mozambican government officials (who have been running the country since 1975) have deliberately pursued a strategy of manipulating history to obscure the fact that the same party that embraced Marxist-Leninist ideology and tried to implement socialism in Mozambique is the exact same party that is now ‘trumpeting neo-liberalism’<sup>125</sup> as the new building block for national unity.

Although there is a deliberate project in post-socialist Mozambique of ‘organised forgetting’ about the socialist years, as Anne Pitcher argues, the role the national liberation struggle and the historical experience of ‘people’s power’ in the ‘liberated zones’ still plays a crucial role in the strategies to legitimise FRELIMO state power. FRELIMO’s *antigos combatentes* (war veterans) still understand the national liberation struggle led by these ‘revolutionaries’ as the foundation of the independent and modern Mozambican society and the sole reason for the perpetuation of FRELIMO’s rule in post-independent, post-socialist Mozambique. In the same vein, we are currently witnessing the proliferation of publications by individuals on their memories of the armed struggle for national liberation. Some continue to reproduce the world-view of FRELIMO ‘revolutionaries’, but counter-hegemonic narratives are now starting to appear that struggle against the dominant or ‘official’ historical narrative.<sup>126</sup>

This is not to say that the OH’s work was determinant in creating a sense of history where Mozambican history becomes the history of FRELIMO, but rather that during the years between 1980 and 1986, the historians from the Centre were deeply engaged in producing a new historical narrative that, on the one hand, would break with colonial historiography, writing a ‘history from below’, using the methods of oral history, and, on the other hand, link the past with FRELIMO’s challenges for the present and the creation of the ‘new man’ for the future. And it was in this double purpose that the CEA historians were also able to forge a space where they could play their role as critical historians. In other words, they were placed in an ambivalent position where they were engaged in constructing a new teleological history of the Mozambican resistance to colonialism, with a special focus on the liberation war and the establishment of the first forms of ‘peoples power’ and a kind of proto-state. At the same time, they were inscribing a new kind of historical writing that was focused on the urgent demands of building socialism. As writing a critical and iconoclastic history of FRELIMO was a dangerous and controversial thing to do, the OH managed to move out of being trapped by their intellectual loyalty to FRELIMO by creating a new field of historical inquiry, which was oriented toward FRELIMO’s post-independence strategies for rural transformation. And it was through that writing that they were able (through a kind of double-speak tactic) to approach the history of the liberation war critically.

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123 Ibid., 88.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.

126 An eloquent example is the 2004 publication of the Bernardo Ncomo’s book, on the ‘reactionary’ *Uria Simango: Um homem, uma causa*. For a critical review and its effects in the political arena in Mozambique, see M. Cahen, ‘Moçambique: o fim da história... única – Trajectória dos anticolonialismos em Moçambique’, *Africana Studia* (2010), 15.