THE HORROR OF MOÇAMBIQUE

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SINCE 1951, Moçambique has ceased to be a 'colony'. On June 11th, 1951, the Portuguese Government decided that the 'colonies' should become 'Overseas Provinces'. But what is it that has changed?

When in the last years of the fifteenth century the ships of Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape and reached at last the Moçambique coast, the Portuguese found Arab and Indian traders already installed in the northern part of the territory. These had arrived several centuries earlier, and had for long traded with the Africans, particularly in gold and ivory. And though the Portuguese may have taken to the high seas in order to discover a route to India, it is certain that they had already heard of the ivory and above all the gold of this 'fabulous realm of Monomotapa which stretches from the highlands of the Zambesi down to the sea at Sofala.' For from the first they sought to establish trading posts along the coast, to serve at once as supply stations on the route to India and depots for trade with the Africans.

Little by little the Portuguese set about dislodging the Asian merchants from their positions. They would first make war on the Oriental Sultans, then on the Africans themselves. With the trading stations, the fortresses, the Ambassadors of the Crown with which they surrounded the African kings, the first missionaries would arrive, and an army of occupation.

Right up to the first years of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese had full control only over the trading stations along the coast. The only area in which they established themselves in numbers was on the Zambesi, where they laid areas under cultivation—the Prazos. Soon however a new phase of colonial history began. The effects of the industrial revolution were making themselves felt, and the commercial companies put in their appearance. In order to retain trade monopolies over whole regions, it was no longer enough to have trading posts: the occupation of the hinterland became essential. Thus, when towards the middle of the nineteenth century the imperial powers in Europe were feverishly preparing to occupy and exploit the African interior, Portugal also redoubled her efforts to conquer the hinterland and prevent Britain from overtaking her.

By exploiting differences between African kings, multiplying 'treaties,' 'protective alliances,' and 'punitive expeditions,' the Portuguese sought to overcome the resistance put up by the African peoples, who had up till then managed to contain them in the fortified trading posts on the coast. A powerful obstacle, and the last great bastion of African liberty, then confronted them: the Vatua empire, founded by Manicussi about 1833. In the wave of unification which swept the Bantu society of the time, Manicussi and his successors Muzila and Gungunyama had built an empire extending across the regions of the Limpopo up to the Pungue river, and perhaps right as far as the Zambesi. Despite the technical superiority of the Portuguese, their victory over the Vatua army was an arduous one, and was not complete until 1897, with the heroic death of Maguiguana, the Vatua general who organized popular resistance after the capture of his sovereign, Gungunyama.

However, the 'pacification' of the territory had still to continue for some twenty years, as each tribe heroically defended its own freedom.

For the Africans, defeat meant the end of their hopes of remaining free men. Their whole existence was now to be ruled by the determination somehow to survive. The Zambesi continues to flow in its bed as wide as a great sea, but its waters no longer carry the gold from Monomotapa. From the Congo, through Angola and Rhodesia, its waters now carry the sweat and the suffering of men in the mines and the fields. To its banks cling villages in the middle of the bush, with their huts, their raised granaries and here and there a palm tree tall in the sun. Leaving the last cotton fields and palm trees of Moçambique, it throws itself with jubilation into the immensity of the ocean. It is as if the river itself understood the necessity for reminding men every day of the need to strive towards freedom.

The whole cultural wealth of the peoples of Moçambique bears witness to their refusal to perish. It is proof of their will to survive in spite of everything. In spite of the presence of the Portuguese, the tom-toms still sound in the Batuques on moonlit nights. The woodcarvings of the Makondes have already been seen all over the world, reproduced in specialist publications. Chope music has been set down in note form, and the sound of the famous 'tambilas' (balaphones) of the Chope musicians is still heard throughout Moçambique.

The black people have guarded well their inmost treasure, which is their language. For language is the collective memory

of a people. The African languages have been the vehicles of the countless proverbs, stories, fables, poems, and songs which make up our heritage of oral literature.

But today the African languages are deprived of any status. Teaching in the vernacular is permitted only in so far as it is a medium for learning Portuguese. Nevertheless, from end to end of the country, barely 1 per cent of the African population knows Portuguese. For if the Portuguese forbid the teaching of African languages, they do not favour the teaching of their own language to Africans either—quite the contrary. To the Portuguese, all that is important is 'native' labour, cheap manual labour.

Approximately 90 per cent of the Africans live off the soil, for Moçambique, like all African countries, is essentially agricultural. Since traditional methods of agriculture are today of very little commercial value, the land is largely divided up into huge 'concessions' and 'plantations', which belong solely to Europeans and produce the main export crops. The plantations belong to large agricultural companies, and some of them are highly mechanised, employing a large African labour force. Among the most important are the Incomati Sugar Estates, the Companhea Colonial do Buzi, the Sena Sugar Estates, all producing sugar; the Companhea do Boror, and Sociedad Agricola do Madal producing copra; and a large number of other plantations of sisal, jute and tea. Several of them, such as the Companhea do Boror, are enormous industrial enterprises. With its 89,324 hectares and its two million trees producing 13,000 tons of copra annually, it is the world's biggest copra plantation owned by a single enterprise.

The 'concessions' are different. They are vast regions of small holdings, in which the peasants are compelled to produce a predetermined quota, which is assessed and imposed by the administration. In a region 'conceded' by the State to a 'concessionary' society, which holds the purchasing monopoly over the total produce, the African peasant is obliged to cultivate certain crops—such as rice or cotton—at the expense of all other, food-producing, crops, so that he is entirely at the mercy of fluctuations in the international market, as well as the caprices of the seasons.

It even happens, in the case of rice for example, and in years when the harvest is poor, that the peasants are forced to sell all their crop. If they need cereal for their own personal con-

sumption, they must pay for it on the open market at six or seven times the price for which they sold it.

The export of cotton is all channelled through Lisbon. Cotton grows sporadically everywhere, but mainly in the northern regions of Nyassa. Because of the very large areas it occupies, the great number of manual labourers required, and the way in which production is organized, cotton cultivation remains of considerable significance in Moçambique. The State fixes the price, insists on a monopoly over exporting it, and through protectionist laws guarantees sufficient supplies to industries in Portugal. The Portuguese textile manufacturers thus find in Moçambique a source of raw material produced by cheap manual labour, at a price lower than that on the international market. These are the very same manufacturers that later export 'African' cotton cloths to be sold in the market-places of Moçambique.

Agricultural products are at present the primary source of revenue to the country. They are nearly all condemned to export, because Moçambique remains to this day stagnant in an industrialising world. Portugal is itself an under-developed country of course, and cannot therefore be the motor for any important economic development in Moçambique. One quick glance at the colony's external trade establishes only 28 per cent of imports as coming from Portugal. The rest comes from other countries, such as the United States, Union of South Africa, England and Belgium. And while the goods imported from Portugal are consumer goods, such as textiles, clothes, wines, jams, it is the other countries which sell agricultural and industrial equipment, vehicles and fuels to Moçambique.

An important part of the capital invested in Moçambique is equally not Portuguese. Of the three banks trading there, only one is Portuguese (Banco Nacional Ultramarino); the two others are Barclay's Bank and the Standard Bank of South Africa. Eight of the 23 insurance companies are not Portuguese either. Capital for a large number of agricultural and industrial enterprises is wholly or partly foreign.

Only a very small proportion of raw materials is absorbed on the spot. There is a small textile factory belonging to a subsidiary of a colonial cotton development company whose principal is in Portugal. A few small industries can also be listed, which produce flour (from manioc and maize), beer, ground-nut oil, soaps, cement, as well as plants for refining

sugar, polishing rice, processing rubber, and making Italian pastas.

Coal is the principal mineral wealth at present being exploited, and production attained 218,299 tons in 1956. The Companhea Carbonisera possesses a capital of 1,360,000 dollars, shared mainly by the Belgian Société Minière (40 per cent), the Companhea do Moçambique (private Portuguese capital—30 per cent) and the Portuguese Government (10 per cent).

To these activities can be added stock-breeding, fishing, and fish-curing, the exploiting of oil and of metals—but all at a very low level of production.

The common factor among all these different activities is manual labour. Black, poverty-stricken manual labour. Whether in the plantations or in the concessions, in the extractive and processing industries or in the building trade, it is the black man who provides the labour. To Europeans come 'naturally' the administrative posts.

Several writers, like Basil Davidson and John Gunther, have described the organisation of labour in Portuguese colonies. In particular they have denounced the new form of slavery in the forced labour imposed under the 'contract' system. We shall not go over this ground again. Let us recall only the mechanism. The planters put their demands to the administrative authorities, and these are responsible for forcibly recruiting enough labour in the villages to satisfy the demand. Thus the negro is no longer a slave—today, he is a 'Contratado'.

Official statistics show that African male workers in agriculture are paid from 3 escudos 70 centimes per day, and women from 3 escudos 50 centimes, children 2 escudos 10 centimes. In the mines, workers are paid from 5 escudos 50 centimes, and in some processing industries as much as 8 escudos 70 centimes. The same statistics show that wages for Coloureds and 'assimilados' vary between 370 and 900 escudos per month; and those for Europeans between 1,600 and 3,900 escudos, reaching 5,000 and 7,000 escudos per month in industry.

To this picture of forced and underpaid labour, must be added the unpaid compulsory labour imposed 'in the public interest'. The law actually lays down that prison sentences may be replaced by compulsory labour. As any excuse is good enough to arrest an African, the State is assured of a considerable supply of workers without spending the smallest sum.

The 'Native Tax' is one of the means used for obtaining free

labour. Every black man being compelled to pay tax, he must therefore somehow find the money. He will search for work either in the plantations or in the mines or factories, or even among European families as 'boy'. However, as the annual tax is usually as high as, if not higher than, the monthly salary, an appreciable number of Africans never manage to collect the necessary sum. They are then arrested, and for six months they build roads, railways, houses, working free for the State.

By the Convention of September 11th, 1926, with the Union of South Africa, and that of June 30th, 1934, with Southern Rhodesia, the Portuguese Government is bound to send to these countries a quota of approximately 160,000 workers. In return, South Africa and Rhodesia agree to channel a large proportion of their exports through Moçambique to the ports of Beira and Lourenço Marques. This emigration forms a source of foreign exchange, 'an important source of revenue' for the Portuguese Government, as Henrique Galvao and Carlos Selvagem express it in their study '*Imperio ultramarino Portugues*' (*Vol. IV*).

To legal emigrants must be added the thousands of illegal emigrants. The worker often prefers to emigrate, for the other side of the frontier wages are higher, despite everything. But he will avoid being enrolled in the official contingents, if he can, because that may be worse than staying behind. He thus chooses the secret way. He can join the labour market in the adjoining territory, and defend his own interests better than the Portuguese labour recruiting agents are likely to do.

In January 1947, Henrique Galvao—then deputy of the Uniao Nacional, Salazar's Party, and today a political refugee in Brazil—said in the National Assembly, in a report that was scathingly critical of the methods of recruitment and conditions of work in the Portuguese colonies in Africa "that entire frontier regions are being depopulated, and only old people, sick people, women and children are now to be found there." And he went on: "The most accurate description of this impoverishment (of population) is given us by the catastrophic fall in the birthrate, the incredible level of infant mortality, the growing number of sick and infirm, as well as the mortality figures due to various causes, the most important being the conditions of work and the recruitment of labourers."

Such assertions are all the more convincing because they come from the mouth of one who, although now opposed to the policy

of the fascist Salazar Government, remains in favour of retaining the colonies.

The 'Natives', 98 per cent of the total population, are in fact the pariahs of Moçambique. Just as in the Union of South Africa, they are forced to carry passes. They may not change their place of residence, nor leave one village for another, without prior permission from the administrative authorities. In the towns they are subject to a permanent curfew after nine o'clock. Whatever hospitals, crèches, rest homes and retreats there are in the territory all remain the exclusive privilege of the white minority.

Education for Africans—so-called 'rudimentary' education—is almost exclusively confined to the Catholic Missions. It is on these that devolves the full responsibility for 'training' the Africans to the level of Portuguese 'citizenship.' Rudimentary education consists of teaching African children Portuguese, and the customs and way of life of the Portuguese . . . without forgetting, of course, that there is no salvation outside the Church, and that to be 'civilized' is first to be Christian, and what is more, Catholic. After passing through the rudimentary schools, some African children will learn a trade of some sort, and become carpenters, shoemakers, or even 'boys'. Or else they will simply return to their village.

The Coloureds and 'assimilados' only reach the technical secondary schools, or with much more difficulty, the grammar schools. Rare are those who succeed in pursuing their studies as far as a Portuguese University—for there is no University in Moçambique.

In the administration and the economy, the same stratification obtrudes itself. On one side are the Europeans, occupying the high and middle ranks of power and supervision; these are the masters of the country. On the other side are the 'Natives', the vast majority of the blacks, the peasants on the concessions, the workers on the plantations and the mines, the 'boys' in the homes of the Europeans. Between the two extremes, one finds the intermediate layer of the Coloureds (30,000) and the 'assimilados' (4,000–5,000), who are the skilled workers and petty officials. To this group can also be added the Indian minority (from Goa), whose social status is almost identical with that of the Coloureds, although on the whole their standard of living is higher.

Effectively, the law divides the inhabitants of the colonies of

Guinea, Angola and Moçambique into two categories: the 'citizens' of Portugal, who enjoy full rights; and the Portuguese 'Natives', who possess no rights outside their traditional African institutions—or whatever remains of them.

The first category is made up of Portuguese by birth or by descent. In the same category (but in fact with far fewer rights and all the economic and social limitations already described) are the Coloureds and 'assimilados'—blacks who have attained citizenship. The Natives, so hypocritically described as 'Portuguese', are the rest, that is, practically the whole black population. The Natives can theoretically attain the status of 'citizen' if they fulfil certain very elastic conditions, which tend to make them renounce their African characteristics. They can then join the category of 'assimilado'; but it should be noted that the status of 'assimilado' cannot be transmitted from father to son.

The 'assimilado's' position is in fact a complete violation of the personality of the African, and the certificate of assimilation is a certificate of depersonalisation. The African is expected to know how to read and write Portuguese, and to forget his own ways and customs in order to adopt those of the Portuguese. He is in fact expected to cease to be himself.

But this is not all: promotion to citizenship is a gigantic confidence trick. For even if an African can read and write Portuguese and has learnt 'white manners'—even if he fulfils all the conditions laid down by law—he does not automatically become a citizen. He must make an application to the administration, and authorities only grant citizenship when they choose.

A friend who was a doctor in a town up-country, told us a story of a male nurse who wished to become assimilated. For four successive years he put forward his request in due and proper form. The doctor himself endorsed it. And four times he was refused what under the law was his right.

The reason for the refusal is simple enough: if the nurse should become an 'assimilado', his salary would increase at once six-fold, and would be nearly equivalent to that of a white nurse . . . this in addition to the outrage of the European nurses at having a 'nigger' as colleague. For there is one Portuguese law stronger than any other, as fantastic and yet as real as the baobab tree—and that is the law of racial segregation.

Portugal has absolutely succeeded in keeping the African out of the direction of the affairs of his own country. Without in any

way wounding the conscience of world opinion—complaisant as that may be—she keeps the Africans at a proper distance from the reins of power. And even if the 'Regulos' (customary chiefs) remain in charge of their villages, they have today become mere petty officials of the Government. The traditional customs of succession have been overturned, and the Regulos know only too well that at the least opposition to the administration they will be destooled.

At present the organs of political power are the Governor General, nominated by the Minister for Overseas Provinces in Lisbon to represent the Portuguese Government; the Governing Council, presided over by the Governor General, and forming an Executive for the colony; and the Legislative Council, the national assembly, composed of 24 members, of whom 8 are appointed and 16 elected.

Of the 16 elected members, 7 are chosen by corporate organisations and economic interests (for instance the Patronnat, or Employers' Federation, and the Trade Unions, which are on the classic fascist model and involve only Europeans), while nine are elected by so-called direct universal suffrage, one per administrative district. However, only 'citizens' can elect and be elected. The African—'Portuguese' or not—is not a citizen but a Native, and can enjoy neither privilege.

Of the eight Council members nominated by the Governor General, two are Africans, chosen from among the Regulos, to represent the entire African population of six million. There are 22 European members to represent the 70,000 whites. The Regulos at present sitting are those of Manhica and Zavala, and they have one thing at least to distinguish them—they are the only Regulos who can read and write Portuguese.

Like the other 'Provinces', Moçambique elects two deputies —Europeans—to sit in the Portuguese National Assembly in Lisbon. As all laws are promulgated in Lisbon, it is there that colonial policy is actually dictated.

The present concern of Portuguese leaders is to 'protect' the Portuguese colonies from the evolution which has taken place or is taking place in the other parts of Africa. The wording of the laws affirms, and Portuguese spokesmen constantly underline, that 'the Portuguese nation extends from the Atlantic through the African and Goanese provinces, right to Macao and Timor.' And President Salazar himself never stops proclaiming that 'the Nation is one and indivisible.' For him,

the changes taking place in Africa are 'the work of communist agents.'

But, unless the wish is simply being taken for the reality, these hollow declarations can have no other purpose than to reassure international opinion. In Moçambique itself, sections of the P.I.D.E. (the Portuguese political police) have been stationed for ten years, keeping a close watch on the Africans as well as on liberal Europeans. An airborne army unit, complete with parachute detachments, has recently been installed in the country, while military reinforcements are busy in large numbers patrolling the frontiers with Nyasaland, Tanganyika and the Rhodesias.

Portugal cannot hope to convince anyone that Independence Movements in Moçambique are the work of 'agents of communist subversion.' These arguments are too well known these days, and too well worn. The French, the English and the Belgians have used them before—and Guinea, Ghana and the Congo are independent today. The Portuguese leaders know this well enough, and are doing their best to increase the number of white settlers in Moçambique as fast as they can. European settlements are being hastily created in the valleys of the Limpopo, and in the north. The aim is to build up a sufficiently numerous European population on the spot to resist African nationalist demands. The rulers don't hide the fact: 'The presence of a large number of settlers,' they say, 'is a pledge of our presence here, and an effective guarantee against subversion.'

But it is clear that nothing can prevent Moçambique from following the path trodden by Ghana and Guinea. The Portuguese may retard the movement, but they cannot stop it. The blackout imposed by the authorities over all Moçambique (even ordinary correspondence with people overseas is 'controlled') cannot prevent news from filtering through. The underground political movements continue their agitation, perhaps in no very spectacular or forceful manner, but actively all the same; and the people of Moçambique are confident in the solidarity of the Afro-Asian nations, indeed of all democratic countries, in their efforts for the final liberation of their country.

Translated from the French.