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*PORTUGAL'S
AFRICAN "WARDS"*

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This pamphlet contains a description of several alarming features of Portugal's present colonial policy in Africa. I have written it in order to discharge what I conceive to be a moral obligation. From June 1956 to May 1957 I was in Moçambique carrying out a research program concerned with Portuguese influence on the cultural transformation of the African peoples. In the course of my work, I came to depend upon a number of people, both Portuguese and Africans, for information and assistance. To these people I became more than a social anthropologist and even more than a friend. Many of them risked their jobs and their personal safety to tell me about the conditions under which they were forced to live, even though in their own minds they could never be entirely certain that I had not been sent to spy on them. They took these risks more out of desperation than out of confidence. For they realized that I might possibly have the opportunity to help them. They knew that if I wanted to, I could at least "tell the world." Under these circumstances, I cannot confine my writing to such "neutral" or purely technical subjects as would lead to no involvement in politically controversial issues.

It is evident from the above, that I cannot claim that this pamphlet has been written in a disinterested or unemotional frame of mind. Nonetheless, it may be of some importance to the reader to learn that the research upon which it is based emerged from an objective and non-partisan background. I do not believe that I can be accused of having found in Moçambique only what I wanted and expected to see. If anything, the Portuguese influence in Moçambique was quite different from what I had anticipated. In the course of my previous field work I had come to accept the theory that the relative absence of serious forms of racial antagonism in Brazil was the result of a distinctive Portuguese cultural tradition or national character. What was needed to confirm this theory was a study of race relations in another area of Portuguese influence. I went to Moçambique fully expecting to encounter a system of race relations which would contrast strongly with the policies of the Union of South Africa and of the other neighboring non-Portuguese areas. If my expectations were not fulfilled, it was certainly not the fault of any prejudices entertained against the Portuguese. Nor, I must hasten to add, have I acquired any such prejudices as a result of my experiences in Africa. This pamphlet is not an indictment of the Portuguese people or a criticism of their national character. It is an indictment of a social and political system which demonstrably molds the minds and hearts of men into shapes that are alien to their own traditions and which threaten one and all with unhappy consequences.

MARVIN HARRIS

PORTUGAL'S AFRICAN "WARDS"— A FIRST-HAND REPORT ON LABOR AND EDUCATION IN MOCAMBIQUE

In 1952, Gilberto Freyre, one of Brazil's most influential authors, returned from a tour of Portuguese territories in Africa and Asia glowing with enthusiasm over his discovery of the "world that the Portuguese created." According to Freyre, there exists a distinct "lusu [Portuguese]-tropical world," made up of the multiracial lands which are, or formerly were, parts of the Portuguese empire. These lands, like Brazil, are reputedly distinguished from the areas of the world at present or formerly under the control of other European powers by an absence of tension between the indigenous colored population and the white colonists and administrators. Freyre's theory is that the Portuguese have known best how to deal with the tropical, non-European populations of South America, Asia, and Africa. Unlike the "Anglo-Saxons," who frequently engender hatreds by their racial snobbery, the Portuguese have no prejudice against color as such. Therefore, the Portuguese, according to Freyre, find themselves surrounded in the Orient, America and Africa with half-caste "lusu-populations" and "a sympathy on the part of the natives which contrasts with the veiled or open hatred directed toward the other Europeans."¹

Freyre's theory of a "lusu-tropical" world stirs hopeful images of new Brazils arising on the continent of Mau Mau, *apartheid* and the Front de Liberation Nationale. The theory is especially enticing when applied to Moçambique, Portugal's most populous "overseas province." Here six million Africans live under Portuguese rule virtually surrounded by territories where racial policies have been a source of grave concern to most of the civilized world.

The casual visitor to Moçambique or the one who is an official guest (as in the case of Gilberto Freyre) stands a chance of leaving the "province" with a fairly good impression. Newly arrived visitors from the Union of South Africa are especially susceptible to the illusion that they have entered a haven of racial harmony. For in Moçambique there are few examples of the overt mechanisms of apartheid which have become the classic symbols of race war in Southern Africa. Absent from the post office, the banks and the public buses are signs announcing "Europeans Only." While every issue of the South African dailies is crammed with fresh reports of crimes, riots, boycotts, trials and race legislation, months go by in Moçambique without the appearance of a single newspaper account of racial tensions. Despite the suppression of an occasional report by the censor, a daily calm really does prevail. Moçambique is one of the safest places in Africa as far as white persons and property are concerned. In the heart of Lourenço Marques' African quarter—a labyrinth of alleys winding among cane huts with galvanized roofs—whites can and do walk about at any hour of the day or night in perfect safety.

Yet these impressions of interracial harmony are hopelessly unfounded. In Moçambique "Europeans Only" notices are not needed in order to maintain an almost perfect separation between the African mass and the Europeans. For example, a bus ride in Lourenço Marques costs the equivalent of one-fourth of the average African's daily wage. Whites transact their business at the post office and bank through African runners and servants. At the movies, soccer games, restaurants, hotels and other semi-public

¹ Freyre, Gilberto, *Um Brasileiro em Terras Portuguesas*, Lisboa, Edicao Livros do Brasil, 1952, p. 39

places, prices and clothing act as efficient color filters. There is no need for establishing native "locations" as in the Union; perfect residential segregation follows automatically from urban zoning

laws and rents. Whites can indeed walk safely in Lourenço Marques' African quarter in the dead of night, but this is because the Africans who live there are forbidden to step out of their houses after nine o'clock.

The gathering of rose-hued impressions about Moçambique is not restricted to white visitors. Africans who come down from the Transvaal on school holidays at Christmas and who cannot speak Portuguese or the local Bantu languages, go back home enthralled by the experience of having ridden in an unsegregated bus. A recent novel, *Blanket Boy's Moon*, by a South African Musuto, even goes so far as to have its hero flee to Lourenço Marques in a chapter entitled, "The Promised Land." Actually, the African visitor from the Union is not subject to the same restrictions as Moçambique's African population since he is legally a "non-native." The foreign African, for example, is exempt from the curfew. Furthermore, Africans visiting Moçambique tend to be deeply impressed by the fact that they can buy alcoholic beverages the sale of which is forbidden to them in the Union. Cut off by a language barrier from communicating with the mass of the local population, the African visitor turns out to be an unsatisfactory observer of the local scene. Thus African as well as white visitors frequently lend themselves to spreading the myth that in Moçambique there is no "color bar."

As for the Portuguese themselves, few have the chance to probe Moçambique's social realities. With Portugal under the thumb of one of Europe's oldest dictatorial cliques, those who know most usually say and write the least. Censorship, a well-trained state police, and a system of both African and European informers discourage even mild criticism from the white colonists. Moreover, most of the Portuguese colonists, including those who are opposed to the Salazar regime, have little to gain from speaking up on behalf of the native peoples. The European population in Moçambique enjoys a level of material welfare far above the average for continental Portugal. With several servants per household and as many cars per capita as in the United States, the white colonists quickly adjust to the degraded and servile condition of the African mass. It doesn't take much to convince them that the African wants to be treated as a child, needs to be beaten when he does something wrong and must be locked up at night for his own good.

Since Portugal's present colonial system rests upon certain doctrinal assumptions which will not stand the light of independent research, it is next to impossible to carry out modern sociological and anthropological research in Moçambique. As a result, the Anthropological Missions to Moçambique, sent out under the auspices of the Overseas Ministry have been almost exclusively devoted to finger print analysis, and the recording of esoteric myths and rituals. The few scientific ethnographies available are the products of missionaries or Portuguese amateurs and in any event touch upon the current situation rarely if ever. To make matters worse, many of the key institutions in Moçambique have an illegal or at best extra-legal existence. Forced labor, to mention only the most obvious example, cannot be discussed with officials because it officially does not exist. In addition, many of the most vital aspects of administrative policy are contained only in confidential intramural memoranda. Official and semi-official spokesmen rarely disseminate more than superficial information. Surrounded by an elaborate legal façade

which professes much of benevolent and even altruistic intent, they habitually leave unmentioned the manifold discrepancies between theory and practice.

What makes Moçambique an unknown land is the silence of her African people. Overwhelmingly illiterate, carefully insulated against provocative news from abroad, subject to corporal punishment and deportation at the whim of the European authorities, their thoughts are never expressed, their real voice unheard. Although illiteracy runs high throughout all of Africa, Moçambique has the special distinction of lacking an educated African elite. At the present moment there is exactly one African with a university degree among the six million Negroes of the "province." Thus, while sources of distorted, inaccurate or deliberately untruthful information are not uncommon, hard facts about race relations in Moçambique remain a rarity. Few countries of the West are more poorly known by area specialists and social scientists. Indeed, the curtain of silence which surrounds Moçambique is one of the present administration's greatest triumphs. Behind this curtain flourishes an apartheid-like system of separate and unequal treatment more severe in many respects than that which exists within the Union of South Africa.

The Indigenato

The contemporary Portuguese state is sovereign over the world's third largest overseas empire. Its overseas possessions have an area of 800,000 square miles and a population of 12,000,000. All of Portugal's overseas territories are called "provinces" and are said to be juridically equivalent to the provinces of the mother country. Citizens of overseas "provinces" are entitled to the same immunities and privileges as Portuguese citizens who reside within the limits of continental Portugal. Against criticism of their "colonial" policy, Portuguese spokesmen stress the constitutional similarities between the overseas and metropolitan provinces. Claiming that the overseas "provinces" are merely integral parts of Portugal they have twice by narrow margins defeated motions within the United Nations' General Assembly which would have required the African "provinces" to be reported on like the rest of the non-self-governing areas. While it is true that citizens of these "provinces" are constitutionally indistinguishable from any other citizens of Portugal, there remains one important difference. In Portuguese Guiné, Angola and Moçambique, only a small fraction of the population enjoys the status of citizen. The rest are legally defined as *indigenas* [natives] and are subject to an elaborate complex of juridical and administrative controls known as the *indigenato*.

The *indigenato* rests upon the juridico-philosophical doctrine that the mass of Africans are culturally, linguistically, morally and intellectually unprepared to exercise Portuguese citizenship. Portugal's presence in Africa is officially described as a civilizing mission whose objective is to convert the mass of *indigenas* into Portuguese citizens. The process of conversion, known officially as "assimilation," requires the *indigenas* to speak Portuguese correctly and to adopt the "habits and customs presupposed for the application of Portuguese common law." Since the first assimilation law in 1917, only five thousand, or less than one-tenth of one per cent of Moçambique's African population, have been granted the status of citizen. In the philosophy of the *indigenato*, there is no room for supposing that civil maturity can ever be achieved outside of the Portuguese state. Eventual Portuguese citizenship, or continued subjection to the *indigenato* are the only alternatives entertained by the present regime. The possibility that

the millions of non-citizens in Portuguese Africa may someday prefer to become citizens of an independent African state is never mentioned.

Today, the basic legal vehicle of the *indigenato* is the statute of the Portuguese Natives of the Provinces of Guiné, Angola and Moçambique (May, 1954). According to this law:

Individuals of the Negro race or their descendants who were born or habitually reside in the said Provinces and who do not yet possess the learning and the social and individual habits presupposed for the integral application of the public and private law of Portuguese citizens are considered to be *indigenas*.

Despite the specific mention of the Negro race and descendants of the same, Portuguese officials and jurists persist in defending the concept of *indigena* as a non-racial one. In a book published by the Overseas Ministry, Professor Adriano Moreira, director of the Overseas School and delegate to the United Nations, writes:

“...it must be emphasized that the reference to the Negro race does not signify any consecration of a principle, however attenuated, of social discrimination, which would have support neither from tradition nor from social usages.”² Nonetheless, the effect of the special status is to deny to individuals of the Negro race, but not to individuals of the white race, the most elementary safe guards against violations of person and property. It is hard to imagine therefore in what sense the law is not the consecration of a principle of racial discrimination. The law does not declare that whites who lack the nowhere precisely defined “learning and habits presupposed for the application of Portuguese law” are also to be considered *indigenas*. If it did, logic would compel us to consider metropolitan Portugal’s illiterate millions as *indigenas* of the metropolitan provinces.

The status of *indigena* is roughly comparable to the status of a minor ward. In defending the system, educated Portuguese appeal to the dogma that the Africans are literally children despite their biological ability to achieve adulthood. As a man-child the *indigena* is supposed to be incapable of looking after his best interests. Hence, the government assumes the responsibility of “protecting” him and of guiding him toward maturity of mind and soul. The terms of the wardship as stated in the numerous codes, decrees and regulations bearing upon native affairs are filled with declarations of good will and altruistic intent.³ The native is guaranteed the right freely to choose the work he wants to do; his employment by non-natives is to be rigorously supervised by the government; and he is to be paid a fair wage under decent conditions of work. The state must endeavor to inculcate habits of industry and labor without forcing its wards to work at activities which are not of their own choice. It will in everything attempt to promote by all available means the moral and material development of native life, slowly replacing savage customs with civilized ones and thereby eventually achieving the full integration of the natives as Portuguese citizens.

Whether the laws by which the wardship has been established are simply the product of a sincere but unworldly paternalism or are from the outset a mere smokescreen for the benefit of the international community does not substantially alter the onerous

² Administracao da Justica as Indigenas, Lisboa, Agencia Geral do Ultramar, 1955, p 23.

³ The term “native” is employed herein in order to distinguish Africans who are legally *indigenas* from those who are legally “civilized.”

circumstances which flow from them. The fact is that the paternalistic devices to which the native is subject reveal themselves only in isolated and infrequent instances as benevolent in effect. The rest is unmitigated exploitation. The wardship, when it conforms to the spirit of the law, does not conform to the letter, and when it conforms to the letter, does not conform to the spirit. Where the law is specific, it is broken by criminal actions; where it is vague, it is easily avoided by subterfuge.

For the administration of the wardship, Mocambique is divided into approximately eighty *concelhos* (urbanized districts) and *circunscricoes* (rural districts). Each of these administrative units is governed by an administrator assisted by a few “chiefs-of-post.” Within the administrative corps, the highest rank held by Africans is that of interpreter. The median population under the control of a single administrator is 63,000, while fifteen of the districts contain more than 100,000 people. Over their African wards, the administrators and to a lesser extent, the chiefs-of-post, exercise broad discretionary powers. According to Marcello Caetano, former Minister of Colonies:

...the preoccupation with achieving spiritual assimilation and the spread of the Portuguese tongue prohibits the use of the indirect method of administration except in a very attenuated fashion . . . the Portuguese authorities follow the life of the native communities with great attention and intervene directly, avoiding the despotisms of the (African) chiefs and combating all backward practices. . . .⁴

Within his district, the administrator executes virtually all police and judicial functions. He has the power to accuse, apprehend, try, and sentence delinquents. No *indigena* can enter or leave his district without his or his chief-of-post’s permission. He has the power to regulate all commercial transactions involving *indigenas* and “civilized” persons, including the sale and purchase of land, machinery and consumer goods. Only with his permission may his wards exercise a particular occupation or profession. He controls all bank deposits and is the executor of all legacies. He can draft laborers for public service and directs the labor of those in penal servitude. He assigns areas and types of crops to be planted and orders or prohibits the sale of cattle. All large-scale feasts and ceremonies must receive his authorization. And finally, he is, in practice, the sole judge of whether or not an *indigena* possesses the qualifications for becoming a legal citizen.

In Moçambique, the administrative districts are understaffed and the responsibilities are overwhelming. Most administrators have no choice but to exact stern, almost military discipline from their wards. In the rural areas, native men and women must salute or remove their hats when any white person passes. Everywhere that the administrator goes within his district, he is greeted with profuse displays of respect, mixed occasionally with genuine admiration but more usually with fear. Yet, despite their key position in the architecture of the *indigenato*, administrators and chiefs-of-post are notoriously underpaid. The fact that they command the lives of thousands of Africans does little to raise their status among the European colonists. The latter tend to regard the administrators as opportunists who have not exiled themselves into the bush without expecting to be paid for it. Obviously men upon whom such extraordinary powers are

⁴ Tradicoes, Principios, e Metodos da Colonizacao Portuguesa, Lisboa, Agencia Geral do Ultramar, 1951, pp. 45-46.

conferred, do not lack opportunities for personal gain. Although there are many administrators whose personal standards are above reproach, the system invites many others who readily succumb to its built-in temptations.

CONTROL OF THE INDIGENA

The Portuguese in Mocambique are extremely proud of the relative absence of major crimes, political strife, and other overt expressions of ferment and discontent. Violent acts against Europeans are practically unheard of. Yet there are only 476 white and 2,351 native policemen, the latter being armed with nothing but truncheons. Addressing the Institute of Native Affairs of the Union of South Africa in 1955, Afonso de Freitas, present administrator of Lourenço Marques, declared:

In view of the numbers [of police] mentioned, it is incontestable that the peace and tranquility we enjoy is not due to “force.”

While the civil order which prevails in Moçambique is not the exclusive result of armed vigilance, “force” in the sense of curtailment of basic liberties under the threat of swift punishment, certainly plays a more conspicuous role than that conceded by Sr. Freitas or revealed by the statistics cited. One of the most useful results of the *indigenato* is the power it confers upon the administration to control the activities and general deportment of the African mass, to limit its geographical mobility and to root out the “maladjusted” individual before he has a chance to do any damage.

The government’s conception of the proper relationship between its wards and the European population is best spelled out in the law called the *Regulamento dos Serviçais Indigenas* (Regulation of Native Workers) of ‘944. This document is the chief legal instrument for maintaining the urban African in a condition of docility and servitude. With its striking resemblance to similar laws in the Union of South Africa and in the United States before the Civil War, the *Regulamento* has its roots deep in medieval philosophies. According to the preamble of the *Regulamento*:

The increasing influx of *indigenas* to the urban centers in search of work has created a problem of social discipline whose resolution requires rigorous supervision over the activities of the native population in these centers not only to prevent vagabondage and criminality . . . but also to correct the bad conduct of domestic servants and other workers.

The law goes on to provide for a native registry and passbook system, the classification of occupations, and the mandatory signing of registered contracts between the *indigena* and his employer. The *Regulamento* then attempts to specify what duties master and servant owe to each other. The master is warned to abide by the contract and to pay his servant regularly, to feed him properly and to refrain from presenting him with tasks beyond his capacity. All misconduct on the part of the *indigena* is to be reported to the administration and in cases of “serious lack of respect, disobedience and refusal to work” the servant is to be sent directly to the police (since 1953, to the administrator). As for the *indigena*, he must “obey orders . . . zealously watch over his master’s property. . . never leave the house without permission. . . and have the maximum respect for his master and the people who live with him.”

The legal lien which the European population has upon the “respect” of their native employees extends in practice to all Africans. Behavior construed as disobedient, impudent or ill-mannered is punished at the administrative center by means of a special instrument called the palmatório. The latter is a thick wooden disk perforated with four or five holes and attached to a short handle. The person who is to be punished is held with his hands palm upwards and is struck up to twenty-five times on each hand. The holes in the palmatorio “suck up the flesh” and raise painful welts. Such punishment is usually administered in the presence of other Africans in order further to humiliate the offender. Every administrative post in Moçambique has its palmatorio, and recourse to this instrument for the punishment of minor infractions is a thoroughly routine and every-day occurrence. It is worth noting that few if any offenses for which the palmatório is used enter the official statistics on crime. Beatings with the palmatorio can be carried out simply by administrative decision, and involve the administrator in a process no more complicated than that by which he spans his own children.

Among the basic devices for the control of the *indigena* is the passbook. All native males over 18 years of age, boys between the ages of 12 and 18 who are employed, and all native women who are employed in urban centers must carry such a book with them at all times. When permission is granted to travel from one district to another, the destination and purpose of the journey are noted in the book. If his destination is the city, the *indigena* is given three days to report to the administrative authorities who stamp the book with the limit of time he is to remain. No *indigena* can find employment unless his passbook is in proper order. The book contains a record of his previous employment, the salary received, and the reason for the termination of service together with other biographical details, his tax record, his photograph and his thumbprint. In his address to the Institute of Native Affairs, the Administrator of Lourenco Marques declared:

Thus it will be practically impossible that an *indigena* who has been living in the city illegally or who has abandoned the service of a former employer might avoid the vigilance and supervision of the authorities. As he will need to work and nobody will employ him, he will be caught in a short time. If he escapes from the city and looks for work in another locality he will not get it because in the passbook it is not shown that he is free. If he destroys his pass book and asks for a new one, he will not go far, because the pass book will be requested from the place where he is registered and in the respective population record it will be shown that he has abandoned his employment or any other occurrence.

By means of the passbook and the continuous duplicate record which is filed at the administrative centers, the administration also regulates within narrow limits the rate of both permanent and temporary rural migration and directs or impedes the flow of workers to strategic areas.

“Peace and tranquility” in Moçambique are also partially the result of the ability of the administrative personnel to designate as *indesejaveis* “undesirables” any *indigenas* who present signs of becoming a threat to the established order. “Undesirables” are liable for deportation to the island of São Tome, a Portuguese labor colony slightly north of the equator off the west coast of Africa. The threat of banishment helps to quiet the relatively

few *indigenas* who are aware that alternatives to the present political system exist. No one knows how many “undesirables” there are or how many have been deported, but mention of São Tome has an unmistakable curdling effect upon the spirit of the Africans throughout Mocambique. Irate housewives in Lourenco Marques sometimes use the name as an idle threat to keep their houseboys in line, but there is no lack of confirmation from official sources that the practice of deporting “undesirables” is a reality:

By undesirable *indigenas* is meant those who may be considered by the administrative authorities to be a source of inconvenience with respect to the governing of the natives and to general order and discipline... and those who, having been condemned to correctional punishment, it would be prejudicial to permit to remain [in Mocambique].”⁵

The effectiveness of the threat of deportation arises from the fact that the administrator need merely submit a request to the office of the Governor General in order for the action to be completed. There are no provisions for a hearing or for witnesses. Apparently, up to 1951, there was not even any need for the administrator to declare what the *indigena* had done to make himself “undesirable”:

The Governor General has charged me [i.e. the Chief of Native Affairs] to recommend that it be resolved that in the proposals made by the administrators for the incorporation of natives considered undesirable in the contingents of laborers contracted for work in the Province of São Tome e Principe. the justification of the reason why the continued presence of these natives is prejudicial to native affairs requires as the fundamental basis of the proposal the detailed enumeration of the faults committed⁶.

One year later, in April 1952, the problem of specifying what the “undesirables” were guilty of, still had not been thrashed out:

In the execution of circulars nos. 1: 983/B/17/2, and 2:038/B/17/2 respectively of 18 and 23 of June 1948, it has happened that sometimes the reasons invoked by the administrative authorities for contracting natives considered “undesirables” for São Tome are insufficient or unclear, from which it results that the respective proposals have to be returned to their origin for supplementary information, frequently with prejudicial effects on the embarkation of the natives, a prolonged stay in Lourenco Marques, or as in the majority of cases, the return of the native to his district because when the proposals are in a condition to be dispatched to his Excellency the Governor General, the ship on which the contingents are taken has already left port...

⁵ *Compilacao das Ordens e Instrucoes de Caracter Permanente*, Imprensa Nacional de Mocambique, 1956, p. 97

⁶ *Compilacao*, etc. Circ. 1: 045/B/17/2. Mar. 31, 1951, p 98

It having been verified up to now that the proposals of the administrative authorities are unclear and lack details about the motives on which they are based, his Excellency, the Governor General also charges me with communicating to you that in the future the facts on which the proposals are based should be sufficiently precise so that he who has to judge them can do so with some reason, and not because of a vague, insufficient or incomplete allegation...⁷

There are many other devices which help to preserve Mocambique's "peace and tranquility." After dark in Lourenço Marques, the African quarter is effectively patrolled by mounted police and plainclothesmen. Even the *indigena* who merely slips out of his house to visit a neighbor a few doors away is considered to have violated the curfew. During daylight hours, in the stores, marketplace, canteens and other places where groups assemble the *indigena* must be constantly alert to the possibility that his conversation is being overheard by African informers in the employ of the administration. The number of spies is probably small, but the fact that they exist is well advertised. Threatened with being beaten by the palmatorio or being exiled to São Tome, the Moçambique native thinks carefully before he commits himself in the presence of strangers. He habitually responds to questions in an elliptical fashion, from which many Europeans derive the impression that he is dense. But the African in Moçambique never confides in anyone except intimate friends or close members of his family, exhibiting in this respect nothing peculiar to the African race or culture but merely the typical human adjustment to an oppressive form of government.

EDUCATION AS CONTROL

In the long run, security from political disturbance cannot depend upon curfews and beatings; it must be based upon an ideologically inert and stagnant mass. Colonial powers which have lost their grip because they have permitted and even encouraged the growth of educated African elites are viewed by the Portuguese with considerable contempt. There is no place in Moçambique for Africans who have been taught how to think for themselves. The present administration has no intention of hastening its own eventual doom by exposing its impressionable wards to that portion of the western world's intellectual heritage which was acquired after the 16th century. While the Union of South Africa, with its recent Bantu Education Act, presents the spectacle of a government feverishly trying to dismantle a relatively progressive native educational system, education in Moçambique has always been guided by the belief that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

The first and usually only phase of the education of African children in Moçambique takes place in special "rudimentary" schools. These are eventually to be run by personnel of the Portuguese Catholic missions, according to the terms of the educational mandate conferred upon the Catholic Church by the Estatuto Missionario of 1941. The objectives of this mandate are set forth in article 68:

⁷ Compilacao, etc., Circ. 1:699/B/17/2, April 25, 1952, pp. 98-100.

Native education will conform to the doctrinal orientation established by the Political Constitution, will for all effects be considered official and will regulate itself by the plans and programs adopted by the governments of the colonies. These plans and programs will have in view the perfect nationalization and moral uplift of the natives and the acquisition of habits and aptitudes for work... it being understood that by moral uplift is meant the abandonment of indolence and the preparation of future rural and industrial workers who produce enough to meet their own necessities and fulfill their social obligations.

The “rudimentary” mission schools have a three year course, at the end of which those African children who pass an examination are entitled to start at the third-year level of a public or mission primary school. In the “rudimentary” schools it is against the law to employ African languages except for the purpose of religious instruction. All of the rural “rudimentary” schools are attached to mission farms and the students spend a major portion of the day working in the fields. Many of these farms produce cash crops which are sold for the benefit of the church and the clergy.

Conspicuously absent from the curriculum of these “rudimentary” schools are any systematic references to personal or public hygiene adapted to African conditions. Indeed, the textbooks used for both “rudimentary” and primary school are the same as those used by school children in Lisbon. Despite the fact that there is an urgent need for alerting the African children to modern means protection against tropical sources of disease, despite the fact that their age tends to be more advanced than that of European first-graders, and despite the fact that most of them will never get beyond the first grade, the official syllabus casually dismisses the entire first year as a period when nothing of significance can or should be taught except how to speak Portuguese:

Since this class is attended by pupils who... don't know a single word of Portuguese, it would be useless and even improper to specify any kind of program...⁸

According to the 1955 Education Yearbook there were 212,428 children matriculated in the Catholic “rudimentary” schools. In the same year, however, only 2,761 students passed the third year examination which would permit them to begin at the third year level of primary school. (Actually, there were even fewer African graduates since the rudimentary enrollment included 1,368 half-caste, non-*indigenas*.) According to the 1950 census, over 99% of the African population was illiterate.

Although the African population was one hundred times greater than the white population in 1954, there were 5,177 African children registered in the regular primary schools as compared with 4,412 whites. On the secondary level there were 808 white pupils enrolled in commercial high schools as compared with 73 Africans; 305 whites were taking industrial training courses compared with 42 Africans; and in the *Liceu*, the best of Moçambique's schools in terms of teachers, equipment, and preparation for university admission, there were 800 white students but only 5 Africans.⁹ No African has ever

⁸ Portaria No. 6:668, Boletim Oficial No. 46, I serie, 1946, p. 482

⁹ Anuario do Ensino, 1955, p. 253 f.

completed the full seven year *Liceu* program in Moçambique. In relation to the average income of African wage earners, the cost of sending a child to the *Liceu* is astronomical. Tuition amounts to the equivalent of one month's wages during the first year and gets progressively higher with each grade passed until it reaches the equivalent of two months' wages in the upper grades.

Most of the actual instruction in the mission schools is carried out by African teachers who are graduates of special year, post-elementary, teacher-training schools. The latter might aptly be described as "rudimentary" teachers' schools since the level of instruction offered is distinctly inferior to that public high school. In setting forth the official curriculum for the African teachers' school, the administration makes it clear it desires only "rudimentary" teachers for its "rudimentary" pupils:

The history of Portugal will be taught by large epochs and in its main outlines. Secondary events will only appear this scheme of fundamental facts, eminent figures and memorable dates to provide continuity. Events of great importance in the unfolding of the drama of Portuguese history... can only be included in a routine spirit, inasmuch as it would bring any advance towards the ends which are aimed at in the development of native teachers.

It should not be concluded, however, that certain episodes which historical criticism holds to be doubtful or even unacceptable need be avoided. By . . . the color with which legend has surrounded them, their narration will produce in minds which are necessarily uncultured, the light and the fervor which a knowledge of rigid facts will not achieve.¹⁰

AFRICAN LABOR: THE BACKGROUND

One of the underlying objectives of the indigenato is the exploitation of African labor, Mocambique's greatest resource. Administrative attempts to create a politically inert and servile native mass through despotic control, beatings, exile and the perpetuation of ignorance, in one sense, merely establishes the pre-condition for deriving maximum economic benefit from the great reservoir of African manpower. Mocambique is no "white man's burden"; large profits of vital importance to Portugal's economy are annually derived from the use and sale of African labor. There is no mistaking the fact that it is the African and not the European who is carrying the burden civilization in Moçambique. According to Marcello Caetano; the former Minister of Colonies:

Portugal... does not accept in absolute terms the principle of the primacy of native interests...

Labor did not assume its present central importance in Moçambique until the close of the 19th century. Throughout almost 400 years of Portuguese rule Moçambique's economy

¹⁰ Portaria No. 6:668, Boletim Oficial No. 46, I serie, 1946, pp. 485-486

had been dominated by relatively small-scale trading for slaves, ivory and precious metals. In 1878 slavery was abolished and a labor code which guaranteed the African “absolute liberty to work or not to work” was established in its stead.¹¹ The colony entered a period of frank decadence, producing nothing of significance, half-forgotten by its motherland. Then in 1886, with the discovery of gold in the neighboring Transvaal, Moçambique acquired a new and vital role in the geopolitics and economy of Southern Africa. The gold mines and the great industrial complex to which they rapidly gave birth were situated some 400 miles from the sea. In Lourenço Marques’ Delagoa Bay, the Portuguese now found themselves holding the natural ocean gateway to this industrial heartland. Somewhat later, with the settling of the Rhodesias, the seaport of Beira came to serve a similar function. Under the impetus of the explosive developments taking place inland, the Portuguese set to work building harbor installations, warehouses, roads and railways. But the situation was precarious. The Portuguese government was on the verge of bankruptcy; England and Germany were negotiating a secret treaty for the partition of all of Portugal’s African territories; African chiefs, incited by the English, were in open revolt; and recruiters from the Rand mines were carrying off a large segment of Southern Moçambique’s African population.

In 1893, a special commission charged with establishing internal order and defending the frontiers was dispatched to Lourenço Marques. It was the conclusion of the High Commissioner, Antonio Enes, that nothing could be accomplished without the introduction of a new labor code to replace the liberal code of 1878:

We need the labor of the natives. We need it in order to improve the condition of the laborers themselves; we need it for the economy of Europe and for the progress of Africa. Capital... needs workers in abundance who are sturdy and cheap... The Negro is a race which still today, after untold centuries, never produced by its own spontaneous effort a single rudiment of civilization... If we don’t know how or we don’t want to oblige the Negro to work. . . we will have to surrender Africa to those who are less sentimental and more utilitarian than we are...

A new labor code was issued in 1899 declaring in its paragraph:

All the natives of the Portuguese Overseas Provinces are subject to the moral and legal obligation of seeking through work the means which they lack for subsisting and for improving their social condition... They have full liberty to select the mode of fulfilling this obligation, but if they do not fulfill it by some means, the public authorities can impose its fulfillment upon them.

FORCED LABOR

The immediate effect of this code was to stimulate a system of labor procurement whereby African men and women were literally hunted down, chained together and

¹¹ Cunha, J.M. da Silva, *O Trabalho Indigena*, Lisboa, Agencia Geral do Ultramar, 1955, p. 143

marched to the farms, roads, docks or wherever their services were required. These forced laborers were called *shibalos*, from the Bantu term for tributary worker. They were miserably housed, underfed and defrauded of even the token wages they were supposed to be paid. It is important, however, to establish the fact that the *shibalo* system has never enjoyed legal sanction. The 1897 Regulamento merely authorized the administrators to conscript Africans who did voluntarily offer their services. *Indigenas* who voluntarily sought employment were to be allowed freedom of choice with respect to their jobs. Nonetheless, in practice, little attempt was made to discriminate between the vast majority who would normally wage labor on their own accord, and the minority who had intention of working for Europeans. Since it was legal for government and private employers to submit requests for workers to the administrator, the latter simply supplied the requested contingents by impressing any unemployed persons who happened be found within the district. To remove all doubt that the shibalo system was illegal, it was specifically prohibited by Portaria in 1906, which says:

...in consideration of the fact that our laws while imposing the obligation to work, leave all persons free to choose the mode, time and place for the fulfillment of the obligation.

The entire structure of the Portuguese colonial administration, however, weighs against the elimination of the *shibalo* system. Only by a detailed investigation of his activities and motives can it be securely determined that a specific individual conforms to the legal definition of a malingerer. There never has been, nor is there at the present time, the remotest possibility that such investigations can take place. A careful processing of each case on its own merits would so elevate the cost of recruitment as to defeat the fundamental aim of procuring cheap labor.

The abuse of African labor in the Portuguese territories during the first quarter of the century gradually attracted the attention of a number of foreign observers. Horrified accounts by English travelers, journalists and missionaries accused Portugal of permitting the practice of slavery in Angola and São Tome. Against these claims, the Portuguese steadfastly maintained that the so-called slaves were merely contract wage laborers who had “volunteered” and who were paid for their services. In 1925, Edward Ross, a professor of sociology of the University of Wisconsin, submitted a report to the Temporary Slavery Commission of the League of Nations detailing the results of his observations in both Angola and Moçambique. Although Professor Ross avoided the use of the term slavery, he concluded that the labor system in vogue amounted to “state serfdom,” and that there was considerable “embezzlement of wages.” In 1928, with the tide of criticism heavily against them, the Portuguese issued a new native labor code, ostensibly designed to put an end to forced labor except for purposes of penal correction and necessary public works:

The Government of the Republic does not impose nor permit that any type of obligatory labor for private purposes be required of the natives of its colonies, but it does not release them from fulfilling the moral duty... of working to secure their livelihood and of thereby contributing to the welfare of humanity.

The 1928 code also reiterates the assurance contained in the 1897 legislation that,

The Government of the Republic guarantees to the natives of its colonies full liberty of choosing the work which best suits them...

Similar guarantees are contained in all subsequent pertinent legislation—the Colonial Act, 1930; The Organic Charter of the Portuguese Empire, 1933; the Organic Law of Overseas Portugal, 1953; and The Statute of the Natives of Guiné, Angola and Mocambique, 1954. This mountain of legislation, however, is uniformly irrelevant to the *shibalo* system which, as we have seen, was illegal under the 1897 code and was specifically outlawed in 1906.

All that is necessary in order for the *shibalo* system to function is for the administrator to have the power to indict Africans as malingerers without having to prove it in a court of law. Under existing laws, natives so accused are faced with the alternative of being conscripted for public works or of “voluntarily” signing a contract with private employers. These laws indirectly equip the administrator with almost complete discretionary power over the African’s mode of employment. If *shibalos* are needed for government road work, or for work on the railroads, harbors, and sanitation brigades, the administrator is legally empowered to conscript such workers out of the ranks of the “malingerers.” On the other hand, in order for a private firm to receive a contingent of *shibalos*, its recruiters merely need be present at the administrative center when a group of suspected malingerers are rounded up and brought in. To meet critical shortages, there are only moral restraints against the recruiter and administrator reaching prior agreement as to when the *shibalo* hunt ought to take place. Although the native affairs department maintains a small staff of inspectors who are charged with preventing violations of the *indigena*’s right to select his own employment, *shibalos* are in no position to make any complaints. When the inspector gets to them they have already signed (by proxy) a contract which is indistinguishable from contracts drawn up for free laborers. To complain under these circumstances involves the *indigena* in direct accusations against his administrator, the man who, without genuine judicial review, may have him beaten or declared “undesirable.” Moreover, most *indigenas* are not even aware of the fact that the *shibalo* system is illegal. As long as they can remember, there has always been the danger of being caught by the *shibalo* hunters. They accept it as they accept other “natural” phenomena such as floods, droughts and disease, trying as best they know how to reduce its noxious effects.

Against a juridico-philosophical background which insists that the African has not the right to be “idle,” the endless repetition of guarantees for freedom from forced labor stand out either as the product of hopeless ignorance on the part of the lawmakers of the conditions which prevail in their territories or a deliberate attempt to deceive the international community. Today the official labor policy is still governed by exactly the same premises which motivated the authors of the 1897 labor code, namely, that the African male is an incorrigible drone who is immune to the lure of wages. Discussing the grave shortage of agricultural workers, José Tristão de Bettencourt, former Governor General of Moçambique, declared in 1942 that,

the large majority of (Africans) do no work, neither for themselves nor for others, but simply live from the labor of their wives.¹²

In 1942, Governor Bettencourt issued circular 818/D-7 whose introductory remarks were almost an exact paraphrase of Antonio Enes' argument for compulsory labor legislation fifty years earlier:

The rendering of work in Africa cannot continue to depend upon the whim of the Negro, who is by temperament and natural circumstances inclined to spend only that minimum of effort which corresponds to his minimum necessities.

Subsequent paragraphs of this circular defined the conditions under which in Moçambique an *indigena* is to be considered idle and obligated to seek employment. In circulars 5 May 5, 1947, these conditions were re-stated together with a clear admission of the fact that the *shibalo* system still flourished:

The recruiters, because of a deficient comprehension of their duties... have limited themselves to appearing at the administrative centers of the districts where they have contracted workers, idle ones or not, who have been ordered to appear there by the administrative authorities.

Today in Moçambique all active male *indigenas* between the ages of 18 and 55 years are presumed to be "idle" unless they can prove the contrary. The required proof (circular 566/D-7), is satisfied in the following way by:

- a) Being self-employed in a profession, commerce, or industry.
- b) Being employed permanently in the service of the state, administrative corps or private persons.
- c) Having worked for at least six months in each year as a day laborer for the state, administrative corps or private persons.
- d) having worked within the last six months in the Union of South Africa or the Rhodesias under a legal contract in conformity with international agreement.
- e) Being a cattle raiser with at least 50 head of cattle.
- f) Being registered as an agricultor africano under the terms of the Statute of the African Agriculturalist.
- g) Having completed military service and be in the first year of reserve status.

Indigenas who cannot supply proof in any of the above terms are considered to be "idle" and as such are subject to recruitment by the government for six months of labor in the public interest (article 6.) These government *shibalos* are put to work on the roads, railroads, ports and the sanitation brigades of the large cities. The docks of Lourenço Marques owe their reputation for being among the most efficient on the East coast of

¹² Relatorio do Governado Geral de Mocambique, 1940-1942, Lisboa, Agencia Geral das Colonias, 1945, vol. II, p. 76

Africa to the presence of several thousand such laborers who, if the traffic demands, can be made to work around the clock. *Shibalos* sweep the city's streets, while other contingents spend the night emptying slop pails in the African quarters. Forced laborers are paid the minimum legal wage for the region they work in—ranging from five dollars a month in the Sul de Save to less than two dollars a month in Vila Cabral and Macondes (circular 929/B/15/12 March 27, 1950), plus food and a few articles of clothing.

Despite the repeated declarations of its illegality, the system whereby *shibalos* are conscripted by private, non-governmental recruiters today probably still furnishes as many workers to private employers as it did thirty years ago. As already indicated, the underpaid administrative personnel are under strong pressure to reach an understanding with the private recruiters who operate in every district. There are several methods by which an administrator can furnish the requested laborers without appearing to break the law and the widespread complicity of the tribal chiefs makes it easy to round up recruits. Empowered to “direct tenacious and convincing propaganda in order to make [the *indigenas*] understand their obligation to employ themselves or work for others” (circular 566/D-7), the administrator need merely insist that the tribal chieftains conduct such propaganda and bring back a certain number of “volunteers.” The chieftains and their police raid the homesteads, overlooking only those who have been liberal in paying tributary taxes. Arriving at the administrative center, the captives are introduced as “volunteers” and the recruiter signs them up. Chieftains who are inefficient in their propaganda are vulnerable to prosecution for collecting taxes and fines. This is a widespread but illegal practice which the administrators tolerate in order to gain the maximum cooperation from the tribal authorities in the procurement of labor recruits.

Private *shibalos* are sent primarily to European farms and plantations. In fact, it can be said with near certainty, that almost all of the African male workers employed by European agricultural enterprises are *shibalos*. In 1953, the Agricultural Statistical Yearbook reported that there were about 90,000 native male agricultural workers. They worked 28 million man-days for which they received 120 million escudos or slightly less than five escudos (17.5 cents) a day per worker. It is a fact well-known among the European planters that Africans will not voluntarily accept such wages when alternative forms of wage employment in Moçambique's cities and in the neighboring territories pay two to three times as much under better working conditions.

The government and private employers together probably hold about 100,000 *shibalos* under contract during a given year. The significance of the laws against idleness, however, is by no means restricted to the actual capture and impressment of *shibalos*. Of far greater importance to the economic structure of Portuguese colonialism in Moçambique, are the effects produced upon the labor force by the threat rather than the fact of conscription for forced labor. The net result of the legal definition of idleness, and of the *shibalo* system which is its inseparable companion, is to force not merely 100,000 workers, but the overwhelming majority of Moçambique's African males, to participate in the European economy on terms which are deeply injurious to native welfare, but highly lucrative for the Europeans, especially in the neighboring territories.

It will be observed that five of the proofs of non-idleness (a, b, c, d and g) either involve migratory wage employment or some other form of withdrawal from the African homestead. Only two of the acceptable activities—to be an *agricultor africano*, or to

have more than 50 head of cattle—can be carried out within the normal context of the rural household. Yet these two alternatives are so defined as to prevent all but a tiny fraction of the male population from offering them as proof of non-idleness. In all of Moçambique, Africans own only six hundred thousand head of cattle. If these cattle were divided evenly into herds of exactly 50 animals, the maximum number of exemptions from forced labor would amount to about 12,000 men. But of course, the herds are not divided in this fashion and far fewer than 12,000 men protected against labor conscription by virtue of their ownership of cattle. Moreover, it is within the power of the administrator see to it that few of the herds attain a size of over 50 head. Meat is in perennially short supply in Moçambique and there is a constant drain upon the native herds to meet the demand of urban consumers. It is the administrator who determines when the cattle will be marketed as well as price and other conditions of sale. Naturally, in any particular district, the relatively large herds are the ones which are sent to slaughter first.

A similar situation prevails with respect to the exemption accorded “African agriculturalists.” Under the terms of *Estatuto do Agricultor Indigena*, farmers who plant large amounts of cash crops may by petitioning their administrator be awarded a certificate which states that they are “African agriculturalists.” In practice, administrators award the certificate only to those *indigenas* who possess plows and other farm machinery. Since there is no aboriginal tradition of plow agriculture in Moçambique, it is only by means of a concerted educational effort in combination with liberal loan arrangements for the purchase of equipment that any substantial number of Africans can become eligible for the certificate. Not only does the government refrain from large-scale attempt to place African agriculture on a modern basis, but in some areas of Moçambique, it is, as we shall see, hopelessly committed to discouraging such developments.

According to the 1950 census, the active male population between the ages of 15 and 55 years in the regions south of Zambezi—roughly the distritos of Tete, Beira, Inhambane, Gaza and Lourenço Marques—numbered 593,834 men. Of this group, 33,766 were listed as exercising the “profession” of agriculturalist. Of the latter, it is not clear what percentage held the certificate of agricultor africano. There is no doubt, however, that most these officially recognized agriculturalists were merely engaged the production of cotton under the government’s forced planting program to be described below. It can be said with absolute certainty, therefore, that less than 5% of the mature, able-bodied males in southern Moçambique are legally entitled to remain within the confines of their homesteads. Of the remaining 95%, the more fortunate find employment in the urban centers, while the less fortunate are either caught by the *shibalo* hunters driven from their homes into the arms of foreign recruiters.

LABOR EMIGRATION

Although Lourenço Marques is the closest ocean port to Johannesburg and the Transvaal industrial heartland, it is not the only port which can be used. Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth and Capetown are all connected by rail to the Johannesburg area. After the Boer War it became possible for the British, they so decided, to completely neutralize the natural advantages of Lourenço Marques harbor by lowering the freight rates on the

alternate routes and raising them on the 350 miles of the Lourenço Marques—Johannesburg railroad which passed through South African territory. But there was something which the Portuguese had which was more valuable to the British than the Lourenço Marques carrying trade. Moçambique contained one of the largest reservoirs of manpower in Southern Africa. Now, while the Transvaal mines were proving to be the world's richest source of gold, the quality of the ore brought to the surface was rapidly becoming inferior to that of mines which lay abandoned in Australia and the United States. The success of the South African mines was simply the result of a greater abundance of cheap labor, rather than the relative amount of gold below the surface. To make the mines pay off, vast amounts of ore had to be broken off and removed from unprecedented depths up to the processing machines.¹³ In effect, it was only the price and quantity of labor which set a limit to the amount of gold which could be mined. Against this background, the mining interests and the Portuguese government entered into a bargain which to this day remains the most important single factor shaping Moçambique's political and economic destiny.

The agreement reached was that the recruiters of the Transvaal mines would be granted a free hand in Southern Moçambique in return for guarantees that a fixed minimum percentage the sea-borne traffic to the industrial heartland around Johannesburg would pass through Lourenço Marques rather than through the rival ports. The original *modus vivendi* reached at the conclusion of the Boer War was followed by the Transvaal Moçambique Convention of 1909, and the Portuguese-South African Convention of 1928, which was revised in 1934, 1936, and 1940. Under the terms of the latest published version of the agreement, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines is granted permission to maintain an annual maximum average of 100,000 Moçambique native recruits at the mines. In return the South African government guarantees that 47.5% of the seaborne import traffic to the Johannesburg area will pass through Lourenço Marques. As payment for a rise in the permitted maximum of recruits from 90,000 to 100,000 in 1940, the South African government also agreed to export 340,000 cases of citrus fruits annually through Lourenço Marques. The South Africans pay the Portuguese government \$5.25 per recruit, permit the Portuguese to maintain tax collecting posts (*curadorias*) within the Union, deliver about half of the recruits' wages to the Portuguese authorities for payment only when the laborer returns to Moçambique, restrict the maximum consecutive contract time to eighteen months, and guarantee repatriation.

The recruiting of mine labor in Moçambique south of parallel 22°S. is carried out by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), a company set up by the Chamber of Mines and granted a monopoly by the Portuguese authorities. As a result of this monopoly, the real wages paid to mine workers are lower today than they were in 1896.¹⁴

During the early years of the mining operations, the mortality rate among African miners was as high as among combatants in the Second World War. Yet the Moçambique contingent accounted for over three-quarters of the African labor force at the mines. From 1902 to the present, 81,166 Moçambique recruits have perished while working on the Rand, not counting those who succumbed at home from diseases and injuries contracted

¹³ In an average year, 67 million tons of ore are processed in order to obtain 425 tons of gold. Smith, J. Russell, *Industrial and Commercial Geography*, New York, 1955, p. 415.

¹⁴ Van der Horst, Sheila, *Native Labour in South Africa*, Cape Town, 1942, pp. 217-218.

while at work.¹⁵ Today many improvements have been made in the health and safety standards of the South African mining industry; yet the work still ranks among the most hazardous and grueling forms of earning a livelihood. Over the years, the Moçambique recruits have won the reputation of being the backbone of the African labor force at the mines. About one-third of the total mining force still consists of Africans from Moçambique. More significantly, however, the Moçambique contingent stays at work for longer contract periods than the other groups of workers and does not respond to the seasonal fluctuation which make other sources of mine labor relatively erratic and unreliable. The migratory current from Moçambique is outstanding for its steadiness and for the ease with which it can be manipulated in relation to fluctuations in demand. Moçambique's migrants can even be used to maintain the quotas of mines which have earned bad reputations among the rest of the labor force.

In 1954, the mines were receiving fresh Moçambique recruits at the rate of some seventy-five thousand per year. What accounts for this perpetual migratory stream and its unique historic role in the establishment of the mining industry? There can be no doubt that there is an intimate connection between Moçambique's internal labor policy and the movement to the mines. The African male in southern Moçambique is caught in a great vise. In effect, the Portuguese labor policy decrees that those who cannot find employment within the carefully regulated labor market of Moçambique's cities, must face the alternative of emigrating to the mines or of being conscripted as *shibalos*. When the hunt for *shibalos* is intensified in a particular district, the recruiting posts of the WNLA, which are strategically placed throughout southern Moçambique, are suddenly deluged with Africans anxious to sign mine contracts. Since even the low wages paid by the mines are several fold greater than the prevailing agricultural wage within Moçambique, the indigena regards emigration as his best defense against the *shibalo* system. The recruiters and the Portuguese make much of the fact that the Africans who have been to the mines enjoy a certain amount of prestige when they return home.

Many Europeans like to believe that the migrations are the result of the African's desire to prove himself in the eyes of the women back home. It is true that the women appreciate a man who has had the courage to commit himself to the intense heat at the bottom of the Rand's mile-deep shafts. Such a man is clearly a better mate than one who is foolhardy enough to let himself get caught by the *shibalo* hunters.

So great is the pressure generated by the legal definition of "idleness" that the Portuguese have found it impossible to confine the total labor emigration to the Union within the limits envisioned by the international agreements. In 1954, according to the *Statistical Yearbook of Mocambique*, there were 173,433 *indigenas* registered at the *Curadoria do Transvaal*. Of these, 62,717 were employed outside of the mines in other industries and services. Most of the latter are illegal or "clandestine" migrants who have been brought under the control of the *Curadoria*. There is every reason to believe that substantial numbers of additional clandestine emigrants remain undetected.

Clandestine migrants are motivated by a desire to avoid both the *shibalo* and the onerous conditions of a WNLA contract. By leaving Moçambique without such a contract they have a chance of finding better wages and working conditions and can return home

¹⁵ Anuario de Mocambique, 1917; Anuario Mocambique, 1940; Anuario Estatística, 1940-1954.

whenever they please. Clandestine migrants from Moçambique are greatly appreciated by employers in the neighboring territories since they will work for less than the prevailing wage and are unusually docile.

The flight of *indigenas* to the Union of South Africa constitutes only one-half of the result achieved by the labor policy in southern Moçambique. A similar exodus occurs in the area between latitude 22°S. and the Zambezi River, outside of the recruiting sphere of the WNLA. Here, in 1954, other recruiting companies held an additional 178,780 Africans from Moçambique under contract. Allowing for some 50,000 undetected clandestine migrants, the grand total of *indigenas* working in the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia may be placed very conservatively at 400,000. Yet as we have seen, in 1950, the total active male population between the ages of 15 and 55 in Southern Moçambique was less than 600,000. This means that something like two-thirds of the mature, able-bodied men of Southern Moçambique are employed in foreign territories. When the domestics employed in the cities, and the *shibalos* are added, a staggering percentage, perhaps as high as 75% of Southern Moçambique's adult male population turns out to be engaged in some form of migratory wage labor involving protracted absences from the rural homesteads. According to Sebastião Soares De Resende, the Catholic Bishop of Beira, there are regions of his diocese in which "80 per cent of the men are habitually away from their land and their families."¹⁶

This enormous contribution of manpower to the European wage economy apparently has no effect upon the dogma that the African males live exclusively "from the labor of their wives." But the most remarkable aspect of the migratory labor system is that it has evolved despite the fact that the peoples affected by it continue to lead an essentially rural life. The men who leave their homesteads do not earn enough money to buy food for their families. The food must be grown by the women who remain at home, into whose hands has been delivered in a fashion never anticipated by aboriginal traditions, exclusive responsibility for clearing, planting, and harvesting the basic food crops. Thus, as a result of their labor policy, the Portuguese have achieved some thing of a demographic miracle. They have succeeded in converting the male half and only the male half of a farming people into permanent wage laborers. By making it impossible for the African male to live in his own home, they have not only prevented the development of modern homestead farming, but they have reduced the productivity of homestead agriculture below its level in primitive times. It need scarcely be added that the absence of practically all mature, able-bodied males, has had profound effects upon the social organization and general well-being of African society.

Force Crops

North of the Zambezi where there are no ports aspiring to foreign transit, the exploitation of African labor takes a different, but equally effective form. Here the chief aim of the labor policy is not to pry the African male loose from his homestead, but to bind him and his family to the land, in the manner of medieval serfs, and to force them all to plant

¹⁶ Hora Decisiva de Mocambique, Lourenco Marques, Imprensa Nacional, 1954, p. 112

cotton. In this modern serfdom, the role of the medieval lord is exercised by twelve private Portuguese companies, each of which has received monopolistic concessions over the cotton production of vast areas of Moçambique. Indigenas within the concession areas of each company are assigned cotton acreage by the administrative authorities. They have no choice in the matter and must plant, cultivate and harvest cotton wherever they are told. Then they must sell the raw cotton to the concession company of their area at prices which are fixed by the government far below those available on the international market. All of the cotton thus produced is ginned, baled and shipped to Portuguese textile mills. Within the concession areas all recruiting for wage labor by foreign or domestic employers is prohibited. The only escape open to the indigena is to flee across the border clandestinely, Moçambique's cotton campaign was begun in 1938 with the creation of the Cotton Export Board. This board instructed the authorities that each indigena in the concession area was expected to plant one-half hectare (1.2 acres) of cotton each year in addition to whatever food crops were normally cultivated. But African agriculture, with its primitive tools and techniques, barely manages to make ends meet from one harvest to the next. The cotton acreage, which in many cases greatly exceeded one-half hectare for every man, woman, and child in a family, could only be planted by withdrawing acreage from the traditional food crops. The intensive measures, including liberal use of the palmadrio, taken to force the reluctant indigenas into producing cotton immediately yielded dramatic upturns in the Cotton Board's graphs.

However, such a phenomenal rise... had the immediate boomerang effect of reducing almost equally phenomenally, the natural native crops. Groundnuts, maize, manioc, kaffir corn, and beans all reached almost famine production figures in the north of the colony...¹⁷

According to official sources, in 1956, there were 519,000 African cultivators participating in the cotton campaign. This figure, however, designates only the number of sellers who appeared at the concession markets and who in most instances bring in the output of an entire household. The actual number of men, women, and children who are being forced to plant cotton there fore probably exceeds one million. In 1956, the 519,000 sellers received an average of \$11.17 per person as their family's reward for an entire year of work.

Cotton is a viable commercial enterprise in Mocambique for the same reason that the low grade ores of the Transvaal mines have come to be the most important source of gold in the world. There is nothing about Moçambique which makes it especially well-suited for cotton cultivation except the presence of a huge, defenseless labor force. Indeed the regions in which cotton is being planted are ecologically marginal areas, subject to sharp fluctuations in weather patterns and to other natural calamities. Since its inception, the cotton campaign has actually amounted to a vast ecological experiment in which the government and the concession companies have attempted by crude trial and error methods to determine which zones are best suited for cotton cultivation. After ordering the indigenas of a particular district to plant cotton, the concessionaires merely wait for the results at harvest time. If the cotton grows, the workers are ordered to plant it for a

¹⁷ Spence, C. F., *The Portuguese Colony of Mocambique*, Capetown, 1951

second year. If it does not grow, the *indigenas* are permitted to revert to their normal agricultural routine. Since the concession company merely provides seed, but pays no wages, they have little to lose if the experiment is a failure in a particular district. It is the *indigena* who assumes all of the risk and who may, consequently, suffer with an empty stomach. Small wonder, therefore, that the Africans have resisted the cotton campaign with every stratagem that they can muster: discarding the seeds furnished to them, pulling up the young plants along with the weeds, and even setting fire to the fields at harvest time.

Despite official claims that the search for suitable cotton lands has been successful, the total production, especially in terms of each individual zone, is still subject to calamitous variations from year to year. Thus, in the *distrito* of Moçambique the output of cotton dropped from 25,510 tons in 1955 to 5,132 tons in 1956. During the same period in Cabo Delgado, it dropped from 14,010 tons to 2,513 tons. Production per hectare which, according to Portuguese statistics, had risen from 215 kilograms in 1950 to a high of 456 kilograms in 1953, had by 1956 dropped back again to 222 kilograms. According to the statistics of the International Cotton Advisory Committee, Washington, D.C., Moçambique in 1956 produced 103 pounds of ginned cotton per acre compared with the world average of 245 pounds per acre and the United States average of 416 pounds per acre.¹⁸

To offset some of the adverse effects of the cotton campaign, raise the level of productivity and improve the health of the cotton growers, the government maintains a special cotton fund, the *Fundo de Algodao*. This fund, however, which in 1956 contained about six hundred thousand dollars, is scarcely an adequate compensation for the deflated price paid the African producers and represents only a negligible fraction of the contribution of Moçambique's cotton crop to the Portuguese economy. In 1956, 22,677,320 kilograms of baled cotton were exported from Moçambique to Portugal. A similar quantity of middling cotton purchased in American markets would have cost Portugal over sixteen million dollars.

Despite the continuing resistance of the African cultivators and the sharp annual fluctuations, the cotton campaign is considered to be a great success by Portugal's present government. Moçambique and Angola today produce enough short staple cotton to meet all of Portugal's domestic needs. The fact that the African *indigena* has done all of the work, taken all of the risks, and received practically nothing in return is not regarded as a serious drawback. Defending itself against criticism of the cotton program, the authors of the 1946 cotton law (Regulan Algod insisted that:

It is not certain that the natives are the exclusive sufferers of the risks entailed in the concession zone. The problem been fundamentally misstated. In fact, it is necessary to make it clear that while the concessionaire intervenes in the production by means of propaganda, the one, the only and the true producer is the native. The "concessionaire," situated within the industrial milieu, while influencing the agricultural process neither can nor should

¹⁸ Cotton Quarterly Statistical Bulletin, January 1956, p. 14

participate in the risks which part of agriculture, but only in those which properly belong industry.¹⁹

Because of his relative freedom from the state censors, Bishop of Beira was able to refute these astonishing claims book, *Ordem Anticomunista*:

The cultivation of cotton in this colony is legalized official document (Decreto No. 35:844). Right at the outset I want to affirm that there are aspects of this activity which only with difficulty be justified in the light of Christian sociology. The first of these aspects is that the risks of production fall only upon the natives. It is true that the authors the *Decreto*... attempt to defend this and other weak points of the present system of cotton production. But they don't succeed. The motive which justifies the fact that the native obliged to shoulder the risk is said to be that he is "the one, the only, and the true producer" of cotton. "The concessionaire situated within the industrial milieu . . . neither can nor should participate in the risks..." But how can one believe this when everyone knows that it is the concessionaire who designates the place, assigns the acreage, furnishes the seed, arranges the work, determines the time, watches out for the preservation of the crop, orders the harvest to begin, etc., etc.? In practice, at least, what difference is there between the activities of these natives and those who work as contracted laborers on the farms? None. Or better yet, a difference does exist: the contract laborers receive clothing, food and board; here, nothing of this is supplied; whether the farm produces or does not produce, the contract workers receive a salary; here they receive the price of the cotton if the seeding is successful, and in case isn't, as occurs in bad years for this kind of crop, they receive nothing.

...The vulnerable aspects of the problem don't stop there. Whoever has frequent contact with certain of the cotton zones has no difficulty in recognizing that the principal effort of the native... is absorbed by the cotton and that there remains not much time or effort to grow the food which is needed by him and by others. I know a region which used to be a granary for lands afflicted with hunger. After the cotton campaign was begun there, the fertile fields ceased to supply food for the neighboring populations and the people of the region itself also commenced to feel hunger. There belongs to my diocese a region in which for six months the black spectre of hunger reaped the lives of the inhabitants.

Finally the last consideration of this unfortunate subject: I know of districts in which the native... received as payment for his harvest from 50 to 90 escudos. And in the same region, and in the same locality, if the native worked at planting other crops, he could grow in an equal area of land, and perhaps with less effort, from 2,000 to 4,000 escudos worth of products.²⁰

¹⁹ Decreto No. 35:844, August 31, 1946

²⁰ *Ordem Anticomunista*, Lourenco Marques, 1950, p. 140-142

CONCLUSION

However distasteful it may be to the many friends of the Portuguese people, and especially to such well-intentioned Brazilians as Gilberto Freyre, there is no escape from the conclusion that the *indigenato* as it works out in practice is simply one of the several varieties of apartheid which are to be found all over Southern Africa. It seems strange that a country which professes a tradition of anti-racism and which has in other quarters of the globe amply demonstrated its sincerity, should in Moçambique be dedicated to one of the most systematic and thorough attempts to erect discriminatory barriers against the well-being and social progress of the great mass of its Negro population. We must remember, however, that America's own brand of *apartheid* is also "strange" in relation to the democratic ideology which has in other respects permeated the institutions and values of American life. When Gunnar Myrdal, the noted Swedish authority on America's race problem, called his book the *American Dilemma*, it was precisely this contradiction between value-system and behavior which he felt obliged to regard as the crux of the matter. It is not at all without precedent, therefore, that we are led to regard Moçambique as the scene of intensive racial discrimination unaccompanied by an institutionalized ideology of racism.

In reaching this conclusion we must not be thrown off by the protests of the Portuguese themselves in Moçambique to the effect that they do not "hate" the Negro, and that they are therefore not racists. It is true that one rarely encounters white colonists in Moçambique who spontaneously emit evidence of a strong, active odium for the Africans. There is, however, no dearth of prejudicial and defamatory stereotypes regarding the Negro race's intellectual, physical, and spiritual qualities. Although admitting exceptions, the clear majority of whites in Moçambique regard the Negro as inferior and accept his inferior social position as irrefutable proof of the fact. The Negro is regarded as an eternal child, amusing in his backwardness, sometimes loyal and hard working, but never the complete equal of a white, never desirable as a wife though acceptable as an illicit lover; in short, a good servant when well-disciplined, who is likeable as long as he doesn't try to take your hand when you offer him a foot. These attitudes coupled with the arbitrary beatings, the discriminatory wages, the forced labor, the curfews, the denial of freedom of movement, the unilateral contracts, the compulsory crop system, the separate and unequal educational system, and the subjection to arbitrary, personal justice on every hand, leave little room for the Portuguese or their well-wishers to maneuver.

Many colonists delude themselves into believing that the *indigena* likes the way he is being treated, that he likes the Portuguese better than the other whites, and that the high level of civil order to be found in Moçambique is proof of the amicable relations between white and African. All of the evidence, however, points in the opposite direction, namely, that some 500,000 Africans from Moçambique prefer to work for the English, who "pay better, treat you better, and fire you instead of beating you when they're dissatisfied." The Portuguese brand of paternalism may have had its virtues under slavery, but in a world of depersonalized wage labor, personal relations left over from slavery have lost their charm unless they are accompanied by a decent standard of living. As for the high degree of civil order in which the Portuguese administration takes such great pride, there is ample evidence that it derives not from the perfection of personal relations, but from

the perfection of intimidation, repressive techniques, and the success with which the African elite has been rendered neutral by emigration, deportation, and lack of education.

The lesson of the Mocambique Dilemma is not that the Portuguese are especially noteworthy as examples of racists or as non-racists, or that their brand of colonialism is exceptionally good or bad, but rather that little in the way of real understanding of these matters is to be derived from the invocation of a nation's "traditions," "soul," or "national character." Racism is not a product of the temperament of a particular cultural or biological complex. It is a phenomenon which is produced in relation to fairly well-defined circumstances of a socio-economic nature. National character may enter into the conditioning circumstances but only as a negligible and strictly mutable factor. However, the fact that the Portuguese people have in other times and places created benevolent interracial systems affords slight solace to the millions of Africans whose lives have been made miserable by the present colonial policy.