

# Charting a Path for the Future

# The Fourth FRELIMO Party Congress

*Mozambique's independence in 1975 brought a radical improvement in the quality of life for its citizens.*

*Before independence Mozambicans lived in a society where privileges were sharply divided along racial lines. The descendants of Portuguese settlers and a handful of others enjoyed a standard of living far superior to that of the majority of the country's citizens. Africans who provided the labor to make the lifestyle of the Portuguese possible shared none of the benefits.*

*Independence brought many changes. Housing, health services and education were nationalized and reorganized to serve all the people and not just a privileged few. Restrictions on jobs formerly reserved for Portuguese and white Mozambicans only were removed. Housing in the city was subsidized and made available to all. Communal villages were established to make the provision of services to formerly isolated peasants easier. Education was made a priority.*

*At the same time, continuous war, drought and inexperienced management lead to uneven economic and social development. The Fourth Party Congress focused on these problems and proposed ways to accelerate the building of the New Society promised at independence.*

FRELIMO's Fourth Party Congress was held in Maputo April 26-30.

The first Congress held in Tanzania in 1962 brought together nationalist groups concerned with obtaining independence for Mozambique and organized them into FRELIMO — the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique. The second Congress held in liberated territory in northern Mozambique in 1968 laid out a strategy for expanding the armed struggle and resolving

(Continued on page 2)

## THE FOURTH FRELIMO PARTY CONGRESS (Continued from page 1)

internal conflicts. The Third Party Congress held in 1977 in independent Mozambique transformed FRELIMO, the front into FRELIMO, the Marxist-Leninist party and took steps to consolidate the gains made by the people in their ten years of armed struggle against colonialism.

In preparation for the Fourth Congress, discussions were held across Mozambique on the principal problems facing the country. In January, Party members began electing delegates to attend. 667 delegates were elected from throughout the country. Of these 72 percent were peasants workers and soldiers. One hundred and five women were elected. Twice the number who attended in 1977.

The tone of the Congress was one of open frankness and honest self-criticism. The report of the Central Committee included statistics and appraisals of every aspect of Mozambican life. The cases of successes, were pointed out as were the examples of the failure of some government policies. For example, the report stated that the policy of the state to favor state farms over family farmers has resulted in decreased productivity for family farms. The report recognized the need to break the dependence on imported raw materials when local materials could be made to serve.

The Central Committee report also outlined the need for more peasant participation in agricultural planning involving their district.

Following the presentation of the Central Committee report and an economic and social directives report which outlined growth targets for each sector, there was an opportunity for delegates to give their views of the problems facing the country as well as to respond to the Central Committee report. Common complaints were the lack of essential consumer goods, building materials, parts for repairing farm machinery and the inability of the state farm machine companies to deliver promised equipment on time. Delegates told of the effect of the drought and black marketeers on their area.

From the province of Inhambane a delegate told of the effect of the MNR on the lives of inhabitants. In one area the first supplies received after some time were later robbed by the terrorists. Other delegates told of how the coal mine operations and the sugar crop production has been affected by the MNR.

Peasants also told of how they successfully fought the MNR. The delegate from a communal village in Gaza recalled how the villagers who had armed to defend themselves, pursued and captured a MNR band which attacked the village. The request from his village was for better weapons.



**Delegates during a vote on a resolution presented at the Fourth FRELIMO Party Congress.**

Other success stories came from a collective farm in Sofala where through self-reliance and practical planning the members increased their food production and were able to organize a food cooperative and a communal lunch room.

Overwhelmingly the delegates who made presentations used the opportunity to put before the nation's highest officials the problems and realities of life in their region and to point out what they saw as the state's shortcomings in areas that affected their lives most.

Foreign invitees including Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's Prime Minister and Oliver Tambo of the ANC, presented messages following the delegates' presentations. Support group representatives from North America, Scandinavia and western Europe were also present as observers.

The election of the new Central Committee was the one session closed to all but voting delegates. It lasted hours longer than scheduled, an indication to many that there was a great deal of discussion about its composition. The result was a Central Committee with 130 members — twice as large as the previous one. The new Central Committee includes many former freedom fighters, many more people from the country side and even some who had been the most vocal critics of government policies at the Congress.

The government reorganization promised by Samora Machel during the Congress was announced at a public gathering on May 21st. The most important change involved the reshuffling of those ministries responsible for the drive to wipe out the MNR and restore peace — the Ministries of Defense, Interior, Security and Justice. It was also announced that new tasks and assignments would be given to members of the government and that many employees of the central government would be transferred to the district level in order to reinforce each district's capacity to plan and administer.

Both private and family farming

sectors are to be provided with the support they need from the state so that they can do more in the fight against hunger.

President Machel's talk stressed that small scale development projects which use local materials and resources which people can provide for themselves will get extensive attention, such as those involving increasing the production of fish, small game, and small factories specializing in items needed by the population on a day-to-day basis. The banks are to be reorganized to lend support, to these small projects. The Ministry of Agriculture is to be reorganized to produce more cereals, cooking oils and meat.

Machel announced the state's intention to stem the tide of people without jobs to the city and to integrate those unemployed already there into agricultural units in rural areas.

The Ministry of Foreign Commerce will be reorganized to make sure that those products produced actually get collected and exported. Radical changes were announced for the housing authority.

In his address before the people, Machel spoke of many of the problems which had been brought up by their representatives at the Congress, and presented the leadership's programs to solve them. Defending the country and providing Mozambicans of every region with the minimum necessary for a decent standard of life were the dual objectives stressed.

The real success of the Fourth Congress was not just that the four day session allowed FRELIMO leadership and party members from across the country to exchange views on the state of the nation, or that it led to new discussions about solving the country's problems. The real success was that it produced new approaches and new determination for continuing the struggle for a better life for all Mozambicans. Although the Congress itself lasted only four days, the spirit will be felt for years to come as the new path charted takes shape.