

MCH91-27-5-29

Faculdade de Direito,
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Maputo, R.P.M.
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Dear Joan,

I was thrilled to get your letter - had kind of forgotten America and my friends there, even my very special ones, except for a vague kind of feeling that I must send some kind of report some time that might be useful. You don't have to be tentative about asking me to speak about what's happening here - it's been marvellous, marvellous, and I can't wait to tell anybody and everybody, even if they don't want to know. I must stress that my enthusiasm is very personal and very much associated with my feelings as a South African - most of the 'cooperantes' who've come pouring in from every conceivable part of the world, seem to be basically enthusiastic, but some, especially some from the West with definite conceptions of what a socialist society should be like, are more baffled, some even crushed by the difficulties of getting things done and ^{by} the very 'mixed' character of the society, especially here in Maputo.

Where to start? It's going on all the time, I don't like to look back, only to enjoy and be open to what's happening. So I'll give you random thoughts and you can put them together to get some kind of picture.

Happiness is the fulfilment of dreams in conditions of surprise. It's different from simply achieving goals. I have a kind of elation, that was so powerful at first that it kept me in a trance all day and awake half the night. Here we are, those of us working at the University, or in the main Hospital, or for the Ministries, living in a kind of lotus-land, of physically splendid accommodation, with apartments so large that we should feel guilty, and a bureaucratic tradition so well-entrenched that we should be angry. And yet I am in this daze of good feeling. (In fact I have a student's room, eat ~~a~~ simple food at a student cafeteria, and walk miles and miles and miles, to do all the things I have to do, but I'll probably graduate to full status.) ~~in~~ ~~lotus-land~~ ~~land~~). We go where we are needed most - some into rural health or literacy programmes, some to search for material from old

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help,
Mozambique and teach the people to make museums of local history, and some are just teaching English, and many of us are posted right here, in Maputo, not just in Maputo, but in the beautiful, elegant, bourgeois part, close to the barracks where the colonial army were centred, close to the Army Club and the Central Prison, and the former PIDE headquarters, with lovely views of the sea and of the clustered apartment blocks and office buildings of downtown Maputo, far from the squalid homes of the thousands and thousands of people in the crowded outskirts of the city. I walk along the streets here, slightly drugged by the forgotten fragrances of my boyhood, and see miracles on every street corner, and none even seems to notice. Kids are playing, sliding flat stones along the kerb, or older ones just standing and talking, and none is aware of anything unusual except me, because the kids are black, brown and white, and this is southern Africa, the world of viciousness, of racism, of torture, of massacre. The buildings of the colonialists are still intact, still well looked after. The old bourgeoisie have fled, but many of their children remain, they have stayed on, they are proud to be Mozambicans. And there has been a vast, quiet, orderly move of families from the 'seed' city to the 'cement' city. So a new population has been created here to which has been added a vast influx of diplomats and an even bigger one of cooperantes (how nice it is to be a 'cooperante' and not an 'expatriate' as elsewhere in Africa). So soon after the bitter armed struggle, after the centuries of slavery and forced labour, after the obscurantism and murderousness of Portuguese fascism, there is this quiet, calm, open atmosphere. No ~~exec~~ executions after the transfer of power, not even of the traitors who connived at the assassination of Nimalane, just a firm, relentless line of extending people's power, stripping the old reactionaries (chiefs, collaborators) and the new reactionaries (mainly professionals) ~~and~~ of their power and creating new institutions to express new class relationships. Many people are better off materially than they used to be, but possibly many more, especially in the developed southern parts, are a bit worse off - the Government itself speaks openly about the problems of queues, uneven distribution of goods, unemployment and underemployment - but in human

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relationship terms the whole society has leapt forward, by centuries into a new world of human solidarity and dignity. Frelimo has developed a characteristic mode of work - I'm gradually getting its pulse - very correct and moral behaviour at all levels, an orderly approach to problems, lots and lots and lots of discussion. Meetings tend to be quiet rather than passionate, the singing and slogans have none of the fervour and anguish that one gets at South African meetings. There is no cult of the guerilla, and a strong emphasis ^{in fact} on collective work and operating through proper structures. There is great affection and admiration for ~~President~~ Comrade President Samora, and nowhere have I found it stronger than amongst the intellectuals, Ph.D students etc, who normally ^{in other countries} ~~are so~~ scathing about leaders; and this is coupled with a strong emphasis on all occasions on the leading role of the Central Committee (with 60 or so members).

I'm slipping into that seriousness again, and I know it doesn't convey what it's really like, or rather, how it actually comes through to me. A kind of theme that this letter is about, and which I'll end on, is what happens to the world of the rich, of the whites, the world that so many of us come from? Well, here it is intact, undestroyed, unscathed; its meaning is different, it is no longer the centre of power, but rather a kind of relic, a strange garden surrounded by the power of others. Most of the rich have gone - perhaps they'll all end up in America, the new waves of immigrants, 'give me your huddled rich' - but those who've stayed, and taken citizenship, and who work like everybody else and behave like everybody else, well, they're just citizens like everybody else, not degraded or humiliated, but actually making a contribution through their skills and knowledge. One of ^{the} my students is a capitalist - he is the manager of a factory that makes oil drums, ~~and~~ ^{the one who} told me last year that ^{with} independence he had felt re-born. All the other bosses ^{have} pulled out, and now he has to do everything on the non-manual side, and even some of the maintenance. He looks very tired, and can

barely cope with law studies in the evening as well. But the other night at a meeting in our district to choose representatives for the Popular Assemblies, there he was, and one of the first to volunteer to make posters, and he clearly gets such personal pleasure from what's going on. Why do I get such pleasure from his pleasure? Because he's like so many people I know, quite decent as a person, but part of an exploitative system, and he's been liberated by socialism. The revolution hasn't been made by him or for him, but it is wide enough and progressive enough to encompass him. And in his turn, he knows that in this difficult economic period, when the country is being physically attacked by Smith, and economically sabotaged by many interests, he is helping to hold an important sector together. Let me tell you a little more about this election meeting. All the residents in this neighbourhood were invited, by leaflet and poster, this elegant sector with Hollywood-type houses, and about 700 turned up, about half men, half women, about 600 African and 100 non-African. It's the atmosphere I want to convey. Formerly there would have been no election meeting at all - people are very proud here that Frelimo has given people the right to vote for the first time - there would have been few, if any, blacks in a hall in that sector, and there would have been many police around. Now, quietly and calmly, the people present were invited to discuss the meaning of elections, the qualities of candidates, why former PIDE agents and tribal chiefs were being excluded, and so on. It's this calm that moves me so, the easy way in which black, white and brown associate, the speed with which new relationships can be established.

Well, that's enough for ~~now~~ now. Ask me questions, if you want to hear more, it makes writing easier. And tell me what the critics are saying, especially those who claim to be Left, and then I'll really write!

In the struggle, Albie.