

One of the many pleasures of being here is the sense of accessibility to what's going on - we find ourselves involved in intense discussions about film-making, chicken-breeding, books of account, vaccines, language instruction, broadcasting about rice and hunting and trees that grow in sea-water; and about forests. What do I know about forests? Some are lovelier than others, some you play in, some you chop down for wood. Forests are good things to have. A few months ago Jack and Flo arrived from Italy. Jack is what I call the world's leading Marxist expert on trees - he worked for years in the Forestry section of FAO, and loved/hated it. Now he's independent, so he came as a consultant to the Ministry of Agriculture. The Nordic countries proposed huge investment in afforestation. Was this right? Shouldn't the emphasis be on tree-planting in the localities by the members of *Alders Comunais*? This was his provisional view. He'd seen miracles achieved in the communes of China. But he travelled round with his eyes open, making notes, and came back with a different view. The villages need so much - schools, health posts, water, seed, fertilizers, transport. Trees, which require planning and nursing, and only give long or medium-term benefits, would simply be left out for years. They couldn't be a priority. So the big afforestation schemes

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schemes were on. Trees. Politics. People we know, helping to take decisions. And it's always a question of priorities. Where do we start? Within our resources, how do we proceed? And what's the connection between this one guy from Italy, who knows about China and Chile and the people in the villages, who can't read his document, who can't see him even on television, but whose country it is, for whom the whole thing is about? Everything matters and above all, work matters. So we get involved in these problems, learning all the time about structures, how decisions are arrived at, how cadres are trained, what the 'realities' of the country are. It used to be fashionable to mock the emphasis in socialist countries on tractors and tractor drivers. Here tractors are drama. One tractor might represent a hundred peasant collecting peanuts for three months, and it breaks down because it hasn't got oil, and it hasn't got oil because the driver couldn't get to the school for instruction, and he couldn't get there because of the floods (or a bridge blown up, or simply because a letter was delayed in the post, or a bus broke down) Next month I'm going for four weeks as part of the University July activities to collect infra-structure information required for one of the biggest afforestation programmes. I would rather have gone to work with the new Popular Tribunals

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but it doesn't really ³ matter, I'll be out
in the country, learning about things, finding
out what's necessary before new forests can be
planted. And I'll be a tiny part of the Plan, and
know that however limited my contribution, however
frustrating the project might be at stages, it is
part of a great nation-wide effort to pull the
country up by its shoe laces, and I'll feel
very proud, and very in touch with my
neighbours. It's interesting, isn't it, that horse-
riding is the most extolled of activities in some
countries, as long as it is purely for pleasure, or to
demonstrate skill, as long as it is totally unconnected
with work. To some extent the car replaces it
today as an instrument of the emotions, of self-will.
Tractors are ugly, useful things that other people
drive because they have to make a living somehow.
Here it is different. The tractor is liberation - it
liberates people from hours of back-breaking chopping
up of the soil, it introduces a whole population to
mechanics, to chemistry, to a science of the world,
to collective property, to mathematics. It's not just
a thing, it embodies relationships - between Maputo
and the countryside, between Sweden and G.D.R.,
and Mozambique, between accountants and mechanics
and farmers. And who will drive it? A man, a woman
A young person or an old one? Literate or illiterate?
The young woman tractor driver - so laughed and

sneered at as the ⁴ antithesis of femininity,
the Ninotchka who panned at silk stockings —
in reality crashes through the barriers of centuries.
The beauty is in the meaning of her work, not its
form.

A lot of this has been revelation for me; Not new
concepts, I knew about fetishism of objects, about
'alienation', as ideas, but new as experience. To me
this is a great contribution of socialist society,
under explained, hard to explain. The way work
brings you into relationships with your fellows,
relationships not of competition and antagonism, but
of mutuality. You feel secure in your worth, which
can only be augmented by the worth of others, not
diminished or overhadrowed. You come up with
other people not as black and white helping
each other, but as people engaged in the same
enterprise, not as intellectuals getting on with
workers, but as companions collaborating
towards the same goal. As I said once before,
your private life ceases to be a compensation
for your life in the public domain, it ceases
to be overlaid with frantic longings for expression
and recognition. The satisfactions of work provide
a sound centre for the pleasures and exploration
of private life.

— Albie Maputo. 27/6/78.