

One youthful official commented, "I really don't like to be behind this desk—a young person should be outside, in the open air. But we lack *quadros* (cadres, trained people), so I have to stay here."

The colonialist legacy lingers in humorous ways. Outside major offices, bulletin boards list each enterprise's *quadro de honra* (honor roll). The photographs of outstanding workers, from administrators to janitors, are posted, together with descriptions of their achievements.

The captions are flowery and grandiloquent—the style quite obviously an inheritance from the Portuguese. They are on the order of: "For exalted dedication to his tasks, elevated professional consciousness, high patriotic spirit, exemplary discipline..."

The very same bulletin boards used to contain photos of each establishment's *elementos comprometidos*—people who had collaborated with the colonial regime in key ways, together with a short description of their misdeeds. The display lasted for two years, during which the other workers were supposed to observe the doubtful ones closely.

The procedure sounds oppressive; it was actually rather mild. A newspaperman explained, "In many other countries, these people would have been tried and some of them possibly shot. Also, by coming forward with their crimes

they eliminated the possibility they could be blackmailed." At the end of the two-year period, those *elementos* who acted properly were reintegrated completely at their workplaces, their pasts officially forgotten.

Mozambique suffers from a condition prevalent throughout the third world, which might be termed "false urbanization." A growing rural population can no longer make a living from the soil; they have no land, or not enough, or no access to credit, among other factors. They flock to the cities. But the urban economy, locked into dependence on the industrialized world, produces relatively little locally, so there are not enough jobs. The new migrants survive as sidewalk vendors, maids, beggars and in other "unproductive" enterprises. The economy, locked into dependence on the industrialized world, produces relatively little locally, so there are not enough jobs. The new migrants survive as sidewalk vendors, maids, beggars and in other "unproductive" enterprises.

At independence in 1975, the Frelimo government inherited control of Maputo, a city of one million people with productive opportunities for fewer. The government encourages people to return to the countryside, but it has used little or no coercion.

The immediate problem was: how to continue to feed all these people? In the colonial period, the city was a tourist haven (and to some extent a brothel) for South Africa; it was hundreds of miles from the Frelimo liberated zones in the north; it remained potentially the most disaffected part of the country. Large farms in the south owned by Portuguese had produced for Maputo, but most of their owners fled. Frelimo had to step in, establishing state farms on the abandoned plantations. Much of the party would rather concentrate on smaller-scale rural development (as is happening elsewhere), but the government's response was to a large extent conditioned by its desire to keep feeding the capital.

One of these huge farms, made up of ten separate blocks totalling nearly 25,000 acres, is at Moamba, some two hours northwest of the capital. From a distance, each of its sections appears similar to one of the large, white-owned farms across the border in South Africa: a farmhouse; shabby quarters for the laborers; vast, irrigated fields (here mostly potatoes); tractors and other sophisticated implements.

The difference is that here a visitor is greeted by the Frelimo party committee, a group of about 10 serious men in work clothes. Some of them had worked for the old owner. They conducted a tour of the farm, proud in an unassuming way of their stewardship. They said they were not cultivating enough land, blaming a shortage of irrigation pumps and spare parts. One mentally contrasted these cordial, straightforward men with the deferential, serf-like black farm laborers in South Africa, and marvelled at the transformation.

On the way back to Maputo, the guide stopped at a consumer cooperative, one of many set up in both the countryside and the cities to alleviate the intermittent shortages of certain foodstuffs and other essentials. The shop stocked a number of items, including an ample supply of Nestle's infant formula. The guide was very pleased. He immediately bought a container for his child in the capital. He said his little girl thrived on it.

Of course, the guide had access to safe water to mix with the formula; he was literate, so he could read the instructions; and he had an adequate income, so his wife would not have to dilute the formula and possibly cause their child to develop malnutrition. Still, his reaction was a potent demonstration of the multinational's long reach, even though the Mozambiquan government is taking steps to discourage formula bottle feeding.

The economist has been in Mozambique for several years now, teaching at the university and taking part in a number of key studies of various sectors of the economy. He summarizes Mozambique's central problem as "maintaining productivity while carrying out some transformations at the same time."

"Take the state farms," he explains. "In many of them, profitability in the colonial period depended on using a low-paid, seasonal work force, and actual forced labor in some cases. Obviously, the government has ended forced labor, and it would like to stabilize the work force, at a reasonable rate of pay. That is very difficult. When they told you 'the pumps were broken' that may have been partly a euphemism to explain a drop in productivity that isn't only caused by technical problems, even though those certainly exist. The social effects of efforts to reduce exploitation can often reduce productivity as well."

The economist is presently at work on a study of the port of Maputo. These sorts of studies are vital to the party and the government as they plan certain reforms. He explains: "A sophisticated, very subtle wage structure developed in the port during the colonial period. It was partly based on race—the whites earned more—but also partly on the difficulty of the particular job. The men who work in the freezer, for example, earn more than some of the others. The difference may be slight, but it means something to them, and you don't go in there tampering with that wage structure if you don't know what you're doing or you can get some very big problems."

A recent joke: A man caught a large fish in the Maputo harbor. He licked his lips in anticipation, planning to fry the fish and also some potatoes. Then he remembered sadly potatoes were out of stock that week. Undaunted, he decided to grill the fish and have a nice salad with it. No luck here either: certain vegetables were in short supply. He mentally reviewed several more potential dinner menus, and discarded each one when he realized vital ingredients could not be obtained.

Finally, in disgust, he threw the fish back into the water. It swam around happily, leaped up in the air, looked him in the eye, and said, "Viva Frelimo."

A party member told the joke. ■



Allen Sussman

# Letter from

# Mozambique

Pumps are broken and many items are in short supply; such technical problems sometimes mask the social disruption of new programs.

## es North



# LETTERS

*IN THESE TIMES* is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions express in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

## RARITY

THE PERSPECTIVE ON EL SALVADOR'S "half dead" by Renny Golden and Bob Stark (*ITT*, Sept. 9) was a high-light.

Golden and Stark portray in eloquent and moving terms the plight of Salvadoran refugees fleeing the bloodshed in their homeland, often only to be turned back—sometimes violently—at international borders. Their account adds a painful but necessary human dimension to the reportage on El Salvador's brutal civil war. Even more important, however, Golden and Stark describe an aspect of the Salvadoran liberation struggle that I have not seen reported elsewhere, most notably the harshness with which the refugees are treated at U.S. borders. Legal observers in Texas estimate that nearly 200 refugees are deported back to El Salvador every day, many, as Golden and Stark explain, returned to certain death.

We rarely find this kind of crucial information elsewhere in the media. *In These Times* is to be commended for carrying the Golden and Stark piece.

—Ronni Scheier  
Chicago

## GOOD IDEA

A FRIEND, WHO INTRODUCED ME TO *In These Times* yesterday, suggested that I tell you what I told him about

your newspaper.

In a few words—it is a well-written, lively, thoughtful bit of journalism. For me it was a pleasant experience and I hope very much that it continues to grow.

Many years ago I was a daily newspaper editor and publisher and later I did some editorial writing for the labor press. I think labor could do itself a big favor by recommending *In These Times* to its membership. Local unions could profit by providing block subscriptions for their memberships and give up the pitiful efforts to publish their own dull sheets.

—Harry E. Sharkey  
Rochester, N.Y.

## 64 YEARS IN JAIL

IN 1917, AT THE AGE OF 23, ARDELL Mesles was convicted of a crime, perhaps committed out of self-defense, in New Kirk, Okla. Since that date, except for three brief periods of parole, each revoked for insufficient reason, Mesles has been a prisoner in the Oklahoma State Prison at McAlester. Now, at age 87, with no legal assistance since his first trial, and having served 64 years in prison, he is making a last attempt to win his freedom. He may be the oldest living prisoner in the U.S. penal system and the longest serving. Having recently been granted parole, Mesles' request for freedom was denied, with no cause given, by the Gover-

nor of Oklahoma.

Mesles is hoping to spend the last few months or years of his life as a free man and to be buried next to his parents in Comanche, Okla. He has sufficient funds to support himself, friends to oversee his welfare, and a nursing home anxious to care for him. He comes up for parole again in October. We urge you, as a matter of conscience and justice, to write to George Nigh, Governor of Oklahoma, Office of the Governor, Oklahoma City, Okla., on behalf of Ardele Mesles.

For more information on this case write Ronald M. Berger, Department of History, State University College, Oneonta, N.Y. 13820.

—Ronald M. Berger  
Oneonta, N.Y.

## OSHA + DUPONT

IN *THESE TIMES* REPORTED ON THE New York-based Council on Economic Priorities study, *Occupational Safety & Health in the Chemical Industry* (*ITT*, July 15). CEP's study found the chemical industry to be among the most hazardous in the nation, and ranked DuPont worst of the eight firms analyzed. On the positive side, it found that injury and illness rates in the chemical industry have dropped 23 percent since the adoption of OSHA standards, preventing nearly 90,000 injuries and illnesses at an average cost of only \$140 per worker, per year.

In response, OSHA—an agency not lacking in critics—has chosen to spend four man-months of work (and taxpayer money) to undermine our study, which credited the agency for its role in achieving this reduction of health and safety hazards. Indeed, we became aware that OSHA was publicizing their critique when a reporter called us. When asked to supply CEP with a copy, an OSHA official first refused, saying it was an internal document, then later suggested we could obtain a copy from DuPont! Such obvious collusion does not bode well for future OSHA enforcement efforts. Proposed new OSHA guidelines for inspections do nothing to dispel our concerns.

DuPont's OSHA inspection and violation record is clear. Among the eight largest U.S. chemical companies, they had the highest average number of serious (those that could cause death or serious physical harm) violations per inspection and the highest number of total violations per inspection. DuPont also had the highest percent of inspections triggered by worker complaints.

The data base supplied to CEP by OSHA is weak—OSHA records are admittedly incomplete and messy. American Cyanamid, for instance, is spelled 11 different ways! Consequently, one of CEP's recommendations was to improve OSHA's data-gathering, retrieval and analysis. But rather than acting on our suggestions and safeguarding the millions of taxpayer dollars spent on the system, the new administration at the Labor Department prefers to stick its head in the ground, complaining that our study should simply have been abandoned.

The CEP study states clearly that the citation and inspection records of chemical companies are being reviewed to obtain one measure only—albeit a good one—of company performance. We would have preferred to assess several different measures, but the companies refused to provide the information we requested on such measures as lost work days, illness and injury rates and successful programs.

No one measure will give a perfect picture, but relying solely on lost work-day data, which the companies and current administration recommend, would be highly misleading. The Labor Department and the chemical firms know perfectly well that such data is not publicly available on a company by company basis. Furthermore, such data is not capable of measuring serious diseases such as cancer or breathing disorders that may affect chemical workers 20 or 30 years after exposure. They certainly exclude the reproductive

damage that may leave a worker sterile or cause him or her to have a deformed or retarded child.

Ensuring a safe and healthy workplace is not an easy task. It will require strong and concerted efforts by OSHA, industry and the workforce.

—Alice Tepper Marlin,  
Executive Director, CEP

—Ruth Rutenberg

Study Co-author

Former chief economist, OSHA  
New York

## BLACKS AND THE CIO

IN RICHARD THOMAS' ARTICLE INVOLVING the struggle against discrimination by the "left" unions of the '30s and '40s a serious oversight has been made in omitting the union that had the finest record at that time. I refer to the National Maritime Union, which at its inception in '36 fought to have blacks integrated in all job categories and opened union payroll jobs to minorities, some also at the national level.

Up to the time of the inception of the NMU blacks had been relegated to one department on ships, the stewards' department. Deck and engine was all white. The NMU changed this by forbidding all forms of discrimination through its constitution and then shipping all job applicants to positions in rotation with regard only to their qualifications.

The NMU could do this because as an industrial union it controlled all unlicensed personnel on ships. Thomas mentioned the contribution made by the Marine Cooks and Stewards. While this union made its contribution, it should not be forgotten that it was more a craft union and thereby was representing blacks in a traditional category. The NMU, in its contracts, was able to put blacks in the departments that had been nearly fully white. Toward the end of the war, the NMU had a black captain sailing.

—Carl Sanjines  
San Francisco

## BLACK FILM

I THOUGHT YOUR ARTICLE ON BLACK Independent filmmakers was excellent (*ITT*, Aug. 26). Since, given the state of the U.S. film industry, the only currently viable means of access to the media for black Americans is through independent channels, your recognition of their achievements is particularly important.

While it is understandably impossible to be totally comprehensive in so short an article, and you probably had reasons for your selections, I'd like to take this opportunity to point out two omissions: William Greaves, easily the most prolific of black American filmmakers working today, and Jessie Maple, the first black woman to join IATSE as a cinematographer, and an independent producer-director (*Will, Methadone: Evil Spirit or Wonder Drug* and *Black Economic Power: Reality or Fantasy*).

—Wendy Lidell

Assistant Director, Association  
of Independent Video and Filmmakers  
New York

## EYE OPENER

THANKS FOR THE EXCELLENT Coverage of the situation in El Salvador by David Helvar and Renny Golden (*ITT*, Sept. 9). The recent info on Salvadoran refugees was an eye-opener.

—Bob Morrison  
Philadelphia, Pa.

*Editor's note: Please try to keep letters less than 250 words long. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.*

19 SEPTEMBER 1981



THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE TRADES DEPARTMENT  
AFL-CIO

FOR A SOLIDARITY T-SHIRT SEND FIVE DOLLARS AND YOUR SIZE  
(S, M, L, XL) TO: THE FOOD & BEVERAGE TRADES DEPT.,  
815 16th ST., N.W. WASH., DC 20006.