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DOCUMENT

Cultural Offensive of the Working Classes

For a revolutionary path in cultural expression, which is better, keeping the stage and the spectator separate, or interconnected? This campaign will launch this question and search for answers.

It is a reality that in our country we are living in a cultural vacuum, a time of suspension between a national bourgeoisie intimidated by the power of the worker-peasant alliance—the FRELIMO Party—and a proletariat (in formation) lacking outlets of cultural expression.

From the cities (“cement” centers and suburbs) to the countryside (liberated areas, small urban centers, embryonic Communal Villages, small peasant farmer settlements, and isolated peasant families) a transition is occurring, with a great dilemma: where are we heading? To a culture defined by the values of an international bourgeoisie, values that are then “Mozambicanized” by a domestic bourgeoisie? Or to a culture that emerges from below, imposed and revolutionized by its instrument of struggle, FRELIMO?

To be specific:

a) The history of the thousands of men and women who, from 1962 onward, built FRELIMO and the armed wing of the people, the FPLM¹, has not been written. The profound transformations they underwent are not recorded. The story of the great cultural leap from spear to Kalashnikov remains untold.

¹FPLM refers to Frelimo’s armed wing, *Forças Populares de Libertação de Moçambique* Popular Forces for the Liberation of Mozambique.

b) We have a history of colonialism told by the colonialists; but we do not have a history of colonialism written by the colonized.

c) How do people live in the most remote parts of our country?

d) What lessons have been learned on the battlefield against Ian Smith's army, and how might they enrich revolutionary theory?

e) How is the fight against polygamy, lobolo, and sexual initiation rites being waged, and what are the results? What alternatives are being put into practice?

f) What has been the experience of the Dynamizing Groups, and what ideological struggles are already developing within them?

g) What is the sexual philosophy of the majority of our people? What revolutionary and reactionary elements does it contain? In what ways does it come into conflict with the Catholic morality imposed by colonialism and assimilated by thousands of Mozambican citizens?

We do not have a scientific answer for any of these questions. But we know that in our country there is a whole mechanism of bourgeois cultural diffusion that is still in its imperialist phase. We know, for example, that within this mechanism cinema occupies a prominent place. Almost all the films we see are reactionary defenses of consumer society. These are films whose effects—reinforcement of bourgeois historical perspectives—must be countered by the absence of audiences unused to seeing revolutionary cinema.

We also know that we are still circulating a language that is often inaccessible to the masses, from our spoken and written press to government laws. A bureaucratic and bureaucratizing language.

We know, in short, that the creativity of the popular masses in the field of cultural expression is currently limited; but we also know for a fact that the progressive organization of the working classes will eventually give birth to a cultural revolution.

In awareness of all this, the National Institute of Culture decided to launch a campaign guided by the key word-act: RESEARCH. This campaign will be called “CULTURAL OFFENSIVE OF THE WORKING CLASSES” and will last for five weeks.

What is the purpose of this campaign? The word “research” gives a broad answer, but some further detail is necessary.

a) A document distributed by the National Institute of Culture writes:

“This project will appeal to the Mozambican working classes in their locales of work and residence to report their experiences, namely, on the achievements of our revolution, on the neutralization of economic saboteurs, on the production and productivity offensive, on the worker-peasant alliance, proletarian internationalism, our solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe, and the resistance and struggle against colonialism.”

To launch this research work, brigades from the National Institute of Culture, or those nominated by them, will travel from place to place throughout all the provinces, with the task of collecting songs and crafts and recording the histories and myths of the life of our people. It is a very complex job, for which very few cadres are fully equipped.

b) Another, more direct method, allows workers to send their works directly to the Institute in Maputo without waiting for the brigades to come to them. There is no restriction on the topics—workers can write about the subject that most interests them. In this way, the working masses will be able to minimize some of the ideological problems of a campaign directed from above.

c) There is also another very important objective, which is to open the channels of the National Institute of Culture to the working classes, with the aim that they eventually completely appropriate them, thus reducing the risk of bourgeois infiltration, which is ever present when such channels are closed.

d) Much of what is gathered in this campaign will be published by the Institute so that it can begin to register, in each sector and between sectors, the roots and manifestations of our culture; more specifically, its complexity, the diversity of its currents, and its continental and intercontinental origins.

e) Another objective, of great significance for the revolution, is the formation of Houses of Culture throughout our country, in every neighborhood and in every Communal Village. During the campaign, several detailed exhibitions will demonstrate what a House of Culture should be, how it will work, what it should contain, etc. For now, it is important to say that the current aim is for them to become the center of the cultural movement in every locale.

In general terms, these are the fundamental objectives of the campaign that will form the basis of cultural exchange between all regions of the country and launch a proletarian cultural path on a national scale. In other words, theorizing about culture must not be left to elites, however well-intentioned they may be. The National Institute of Culture thus launches a campaign that can contribute to the “de-elitization” of existing mechanisms of cultural affirmation.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Having said all this, it is important to think about the term “culture.” Songs, dances, poetry, stories, sculptures, and theater plays are cultural EXPRESSIONS. They are not culture. They express the life of a certain class in its most varied facets. They do not replace this life.

The class in power imposes its culture on society as a whole. In bourgeois films, in bourgeois books, in bourgeois theater plays, in bourgeois economic, political, and philosophical treatises, we find the idea that the middle classes are the agents of history. In revolutionary songs, in revolutionary films, in revolutionary theater plays, in revolutionary economic, political, and philosophical treatises, we see the proletarian vision of history: it is the workers, those who produce, the working classes, that are the driving force of history.

In capitalist countries we find that almost all ideological state apparatuses (newspapers, magazines, cinema, TV, radio, schools, church, etc.) are in the hands of the ruling bourgeoisie. Its mission is to spread and consolidate throughout society the main idea that without private property there can be no society. So, we see that many workers in capitalist countries have respect for their boss’s property, they don’t touch the boss’s possessions “because it’s a sin.” They have assimilated a set of bourgeois ideas, such as considering women inferior, that they manifest in their lives, day by day.

In these capitalist societies, therefore, it is the bourgeoisie that holds the leash of the class struggle. It is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, a dictatorship that is more consolidated in advanced capitalist countries and less so in countries where the bourgeoisie must maintain itself through fascism because it has not managed to consolidate its culture: Chile, Brazil, and Portugal, in the time of Salazar and Caetano, are examples of this.

In socialist countries, where the proletariat is in power, these ideological state apparatuses affirm and explain that a society without classes, without private property, is not only possible but inevitable. In these countries the class struggle is conducted under the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the final stage of class society. The new culture that develops there, socialist culture, is the culture of the men and women who fight exploitation, who fight the elites, and who fight against all traces of bourgeois culture.

And in our country?

During colonialism, the colonialists said that they were the ones who brought civilization to Mozambique; that without them the Mozambican people would never have had any history. To this end they forced us to learn about the lives of their heroes in school. And they wrote books that celebrated the occupation wars by naming them “pacification wars.” And they said that Mozambicans should be happy to be colonized.

But what did the Mozambicans say? In prisons, on plantations, on the outskirts of cities, everywhere, songs spoke of those who resisted colonial occupation, those who died and suffered because they fought against colonialism; and many songs ridiculed the customs of the colonialists.

Yet the colonial regime—more particularly, the colonial bourgeoisie—managed to make many Mozambicans assimilate elements of their values. So today there are Mozambicans who have a bourgeois way of life and bourgeois values, in their gestures, their relationships, their way of treating workers, in the songs they listen to and in their responses to moments of social unrest, all these demonstrate a degree of bourgeois culture. On the other hand, we also have the worker or peasant, the exploited who does not accept exploitation, who fights for collective property, who does not aspire to luxury surroundings, who says good morning in elevators, and who in their daily life shows concrete signs of antibourgeois sentiment.

We thus arrive at an obvious conclusion: in a society divided into classes, there are two main cultures, the culture of the exploiting class and the culture of the exploited classes.

In many cases there are points of convergence between the two, where the ruling class has imposed its ideas on the minds of those it dominates. Hence, we can see that the revolutionaries themselves struggle internally against the bourgeois cultural ideas they have learned at school. Culture is therefore both the set of ideas in one's head and the contradictions between them. First there is the set of ideas, which will then be manifested in songs, in dances, in all cultural expressions. It is these expressions (art) that influence the maintenance or destruction of such ideas. Underneath both these things is society and the (class) place we occupy within it. In other words, the root of culture is material.

Those who fight against exploitation, in all its forms, develop a revolutionary culture. Those who fight to maintain exploitation develop a reactionary culture. In both cases, this culture is manifested day by day, hour by hour, and is demonstrated specifically and with sophistication, in songs, dances, plays and poems, etc. When we sing a song against Ian Smith, we demonstrate an anticolonial cultural position. The song expresses this anticolonialism, so the cultural data here is anticolonialist; the song is the expression of that.

Culture is what lies behind all manifestations. It is something so vast that Amílcar Cabral has described the armed struggle as the “main aspect of our cultural resistance.”

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