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The imaginary of socialist citizenship in Mozambique: the School of Friendship as an affective community

Tanja R. Müller

It is early November 2014, almost twenty-five years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall – in fact a few days before the anniversary. In Maputo, Mozambique, the *Instituto Cultural Moçambique-Alemanha* (ICMA) opens an exhibition in its foyer with the title ‘*da ditadura – a democracia*’ (from dictatorship to democracy), which tells the often rehearsed story of the oppressive former East German (GDR) regime and its fall. Shortly after that opening, in the adjacent ICMA auditorium, an event of a very different kind takes place that evening, also to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of the Cold War: a podium discussion on the lasting legacies of this period of socialist experimentations, in all their complexity. The three key participants are graduates of the *Schule der Freundschaft* (the School of Friendship, SdF), the biggest educational exchange programme between the then People’s Republic of Mozambique and the former GDR, all of whom I first met in 2008 when conducting research on a book about the SdF.¹ The three participants speak vividly about how they remember the time when they first came from poor urban or rural backgrounds in Mozambique to the GDR, with its first-class railways, high-rise buildings, paved roads and unfamiliar but tasty foods.

Most SdF students were in their early teens when they arrived,

after completing their primary education in Mozambique, and they were keen to learn and be educated further. Being chosen to continue their education in the GDR was, at the time, one of very few opportunities available to children in Mozambique to be able to continue studying beyond the primary stage. For them, the former GDR was not the dictatorship put on display in the exhibition in the front hall, but a land full of promise for a better future, one that has left them with 'memories of paradise'.²

In this article I will discuss in more detail some of the contradictory legacies of the SdF in the lives of some of those who graduated from it in 1988, having completed six years of secondary and professional education and returned to Mozambique as young adults. My focus is not so much on the education they received and its usefulness per se, but on the underlying ideological component of the SdF, which aimed to create a cohort of socialist citizens who would in future occupy leading positions in the socialist development of Mozambique. Of course, by the time these particular students returned to Mozambique, the Cold War was almost over: the Berlin Wall would fall within a year of their return. But, even before this, the rationale of the SdF as an institution to produce new socialist citizens had in many ways been made obsolete, given that, from 1984 onwards, Mozambique had gradually been turning away from the socialist development model (a process accelerated by the death of Samora Machel in 1986, though the country was not officially renamed the Republic of Mozambique – as opposed to the People's Republic – until 1990).

These developments only tangentially touched the day to day procedures at the SdF, however, and socialist discipline and behaviour were still being enforced throughout the cohort's time in the GDR, most prominently from the Mozambican side, through the SdF FRELIMO representative (the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, the former liberation movement and subsequently ruling party). Materials from the German National Archives (the *Bundesarchiv* or BArch) that have become available post 1989 clearly demonstrate

this role. But, as Bourdieu has analysed, all education programmes are ultimately dialectic in nature. On the one hand, every system of education is a form of ‘symbolic violence’, manifesting itself in the objective of making its participants internalise its core values.³ In case of the SdF these were the specific, often not aligned, interpretations of socialist values by Mozambican and/versus GDR staff and ultimately the wider political leadership. In this respect the SdF (like most boarding facilities) had aspects of a total institution. At the same time, however, the dialectic nature of education made it also a ‘strategy-generating’ institution. At the level of the individual, but also the wider collective, it enabled students ‘to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations’, in unanticipated ways.⁴

Thus, one can argue, as most of the literature has done, that the SdF was a highly politicised educational exchange programme, and those chosen to participate in it were ultimately pawns in a wider political game;⁵ and that it failed, because, once Mozambique had turned its back on socialism, the professions for which its pupils had been educated became largely irrelevant – and, in any case, it was a country in which professional jobs were almost non-existent. But that is only one side of the story, and perhaps not the most important one, something to which those who sat on the podium at ICMA in November 2014 can attest. For them – as has been the case with other graduates I have met over the years – the SdF has indeed acted as a ‘strategy-generating’ institution in a Bourdieuan sense: they have been socialised into Mozambique’s socialist moment in a far more profound way than most of their contemporaries. Their education made them into what could be called socialist citizens – though not of any specific socialist country, and certainly not in line with the post-Machel FRELIMO definition of socialist citizenship. Their socialist identity, interpreted as such in their very own way, as part of a specific collective, accompanied them back to post-socialist Mozambique. And it provided many of them with the necessary mechanisms for a meaningful response in negotiating difficult circumstances when they later encountered them. It was not simply

a sign of nostalgia that related to their (lost) youth, or their generally outmoded models of thought.⁶

The remainder of this article – which is based on interview and observation data collected among SdF participants in Mozambique in 2007, 2008 and 2014, as well as material from the BArch – will proceed as follows.⁷ First it will briefly introduce the SdF as an institution geared towards educating future socialist citizens for Mozambique. Then it will discuss some of the dynamics in which socialist citizenship was formed and contested. And, finally, it will argue that lasting legacies of educational exchange programmes between former socialist countries are best studied in relation to personalised biographies and solidarity at the micro-level, and that such an analysis may offer distinct insights for wider post-socialist trajectories.

The SdF and the imaginary socialist citizen

In many ways, the SdF was an institution strongly related to the Mozambique – or, rather, the FRELIMO – of Samora Machel, its first post-independence president. And it was also shaped by the personal connections between Samora and his wife Graça Machel on the one hand, and the GDR's Erich and Margot Honecker on the other. Perhaps most notably, each 'first lady' was the education minister of her respective country when the SdF was envisaged, and each played a crucial role in hammering out its details.⁸ These official top-down connections were also complemented by the concrete solidarity shown by GDR educational experts who had before independence worked in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, within the FRELIMO education infrastructure in exile, which later extended its activities into liberated areas in Mozambique under FRELIMO control. Some of these educationists subsequently became involved in the SdF.⁹

Such personal connections did not mean that each partner had the same ambitions for the SdF, or at least not at the official policy level. On the GDR government side, while the education of a group

of young adults with a propensity towards socialism was an important aspect of the SdF, of equal or even greater importance was its professional human capital component: the education of a cohort of qualified Mozambican personnel who would be able to take leading positions in joint ventures between the GDR and Mozambique in the future.¹⁰ On the Mozambican side, however, these educational and professional aspects were subordinate to the objective of creating socialist citizens.¹¹

The GDR approach was in line with the dualism that characterised GDR international development policies more generally, which was centred on securing economic state survival for the GDR while honouring commitments to international socialist solidarity in some form.¹² The latter aim was part of a wider policy within the socialist bloc in terms of its solidarity policy towards newly independent states in Asia and Africa, but for the GDR there was an additional component – its competition with West Germany (FRG) for international recognition (the FRG, as a result of the so-called Hallstein doctrine, insisted that it alone had sole right to represent Germany in international politics).¹³ In response, a key foreign policy objective of the GDR was the strengthening of *de facto* relations through engagement with ‘anti-imperialist’ states in the Third World, in the hope of subsequent *de jure* recognition. Thus, when, shortly after its foundation as the prime Mozambican liberation movement in 1962, FRELIMO asked the GDR for support in its anticolonial struggle, the proposal fitted well into the GDR vision of engagement with progressive liberation struggles and future independent states.

But what on the face of it developed into a close relationship among equals grounded in similar ideological beliefs was in reality underpinned by unequal power dynamics, even if symbolic rituals tried to obscure these.¹⁴ Such issues came to the fore in exemplary fashion during a private meeting in Mozambique between Erich Honecker and Samora Machel before the signing of the main cooperation treaty between the two countries in February 1979 (the treaty that provided

the general foundations for all engagement activities between the two states, thus also including the SdF). What was presented as a friendship treaty based on a mutually beneficial relationship was in fact characterised by quite different ideological and material objectives. According to available notes from the meeting, Honecker dominated the conversation and repeatedly emphasised economic expectations, in particular the supply of raw materials and agricultural produce to the GDR economy, while Machel spoke about his overarching desire to prove that socialism could work as an alternative path to development in a newly independent country.¹⁵

At a meeting with Margot Honecker in 1983, Machel put into words his desire for the SdF to act as a key building bloc within a socialist development strategy: 'The participants must develop into real revolutionaries ... they must learn how to live their lives according to socialist principles'.¹⁶

The aim to educate socialist citizens whose loyalty would lie with Mozambique as their socialist fatherland, rather than with regional, ethnic or other affiliations, was from the beginning apparent in the way pupils were selected, as well as through the organisation of life at the SdF. Because the aim was that the students at the SdF would become part of a future elite, it was regarded as important that participants would come from all parts of Mozambique: this would help create a sense of national belonging to the post-liberation socialist state. Graça Machel summed up the vision in a speech she gave at the SdF in May 1984, where she spoke about three different generations of Mozambican youth, each of which had key responsibilities for creating liberated, socialist Mozambique. The first generation was the generation of Eduardo Mondlane and subsequently Samora Machel and Marcelino Dos Santos, who had left their schools, universities and professions to participate in the liberation struggle. The second generation were those who had defended the socialist route taken by independent Mozambique and its sovereignty against the likes of Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) and its allies in South Africa and beyond. And the third generation was the

SdF generation, who would build socialism through the fight against underdevelopment.¹⁷

One of my interviewees recalls how Graça Machel had personally travelled to remote areas in Mozambique in order to advertise and win support for the SdF initiative from parents, guardians and potential pupils.¹⁸ From the perspective of creating future socialist citizens this made perfect sense: to select malleable young people from among a diverse population group to embark on a prolonged collective-centred experience; young people such as these would offer the best chance for creating new citizens driven by values of solidarity and communal engagement, rather than individual career aspirations.

In the end, a majority of those selected to travel to the GDR came from poor and often rural families, and were selected because they had done well in primary school, rather than because of any previous relationship with FRELIMO or other informal networks with those in power.

In most cases parents or guardians – without whose consent no child could leave – were supportive once they had understood what the SdF was about: in the Mozambique of Samora Machel, a high value was placed on education in all strata of society, even though the majority of school-age children only had a chance to attend primary school (and even this was not available to everyone). And schooling was particularly scarce at secondary level.

A typical example for this lack of education resources is Alex, who grew up with his grandmother in a rural area in Maputo province and was responsible for looking after her cattle from a very young age. He remembers:

I worked with the animals, cows, sheep and goats from when I was about five years old, so I learned early that one has to work, and I liked it, but also I went to school, school was a duty at that time. Samora Machel always said ‘children must go to school’, at the time this was a duty. So in the morning I was with the animals, then I got home, had a shower and went to school for the afternoon shift.¹⁹

When it was suggested to him that he should become part of the SdF cohort he was therefore delighted at this opportunity to continue his education.

Once students arrived at the SdF, the education curriculum was predominantly the responsibility of GDR staff, but the way the almost 900 students lived together was determined by structures that resembled those in FRELIMO boarding schools, and was guided by FRELIMO definitions of good socialist behaviour.

Such organisation was helpful for a smooth process of integration. One of the main units of organisation was the class: the SdF was made up of thirty classes with thirty pupils in each. Each class had a class representative, the *chefe de turma* (who was chosen by and was a member of the FRELIMO Youth Organisation, the Organização de Juventude Moçambicana (OJM)), as well as other people who were responsible for specific tasks and work sections. The overall objective was to develop self-organisation among pupils, based on and guided by socialist values. And such values included – in addition to political consciousness – the virtues of order and discipline, and thus the capacity to take responsibility for one's own actions, and to ensure they were in line with the wider objectives of FRELIMO, and would ultimately be of service to the Mozambican cause.²⁰

The growing conviction that they were part of a select future elite was also conducive to the development of the students, and this was reinforced by speeches such as the one made by Graça Machel in 1984. Such conviction was helpful in overcoming potential homesickness, but it also provided an important foundation for a process of positive identification with the SdF and its value system. Alfonso, for example, says that he was not really homesick; of course he thought about his family and missed them, but at the same time:

I knew I had to be in Germany for seven years, because we had been given a task. In Maputo before we left, FRELIMO representatives always told us 'you go to Germany in order to learn, and

once you come back you will help to rebuild our country'. I did not know exactly how, but I knew I had an important task.²¹

Similar feelings have been voiced by many who overcame homesickness with a focus on learning. As Hipolito recalls: 'Of course sometimes I was homesick, but I focused on my studies. I thought, I must learn, and when I return to Mozambique I have to help others, so I became a very good student'.²²

The special bond between SdF participants – related to a socialist identity – came partly from growing up into adulthood together, as well as the belief that they would play a key part in the future of Mozambique. But it was also reinforced by the difficult times in Mozambique during the six years they spent at the SdF, as an increasingly brutal civil war raged between RENAMO and FRELIMO, accompanied by extraordinary levels of violence.²³ The families and communities of many of the students in the former GDR were directly or indirectly affected by that war, and this served as an additional factor in drawing them together as socialist citizens.

All these factors meant that the students' upbringing at the SdF created a community that self-defined itself as a form of socialist vanguard. This was particularly the case during the first four years of their education, before the commencement of the apprenticeship phase, during which they would spend part of the week away from the SdF boarding facilities. This did not imply, however, that the SdF participants agreed with all the definitions of a good socialist as propagated by FRELIMO. In particular, after the death of Samora Machel, the ideological 'father' of the SdF – which happened at about the same time as the start of the apprenticeships of my interviewees – arguments and disputes increasingly came into the open. Moreover, during this period in Mozambique – though the SdF cohort was scarcely aware of this, and the enforcement of FRELIMO-defined socialist norms continued – socialism as the leading ideological framework for consolidating the post-colonial state was being abandoned. However, growing up in a 'modern' socialist country such as

the GDR ultimately left the SdF cohort with an affective attachment to a type of socialist identity that was always hybrid, and, as such, was ultimately a valuable resource to draw upon in their future lives. This remained the case in spite of the various betrayals by the FRELIMO party that had once sent them to the GDR, as the following sections will demonstrate.

Contesting socialist norms or simply living a normal life?

One reason the GDR was chosen as the location of the SdF was the fact that it was regarded by Samora Machel as one of the most advanced socialist countries, not only in relation to its education system but also more generally. This meant that the SdF cohort, in particular once the young adults reached puberty, were not only educated into socialist beliefs: they also lived the lives of adolescents in an advanced socialist country. In photographs various SdF graduates showed me in 2008 in Mozambique, twenty years after their return, one can see them enjoying their free time. They are usually dressed quite fashionably for the time – especially when compared to East German youth – wearing items associated with ‘Western’ fashion, such as blue jeans, and certain types of belts, hats and watches. This made them – particularly the men – favourites among young East Germans, at times leading to jealousy and fights with local youth.²⁴

On the East German side, this kind of occurrence was predominantly seen as a public order offence, and one way of dealing with this was to recruit informants from the inside who knew what was going on and could alert the authorities to any potential problems. This explains why one of the research participants, Mano, was approached by the East German secret service, the *Stasi* – but Mano interpreted what constituted defiant behaviour in his own way.²⁵

Mano reported very few people, and when he did it was only when he personally felt the student was doing something wrong: ‘For example I never reported those who just went out for the night without permission to enjoy themselves, but there were others who

burned things, destroyed the Mozambican flag – not many, but that was more serious’. Usually he spoke to those who caused minor trouble and ‘tried to help them to see their wrong way’, something he would have done anyway with or without the *Stasi* approach. In fact, the majority of SdF students followed their education through without ever being recorded as having indulged in defiant behaviour, and fewer than thirty students out of the whole cohort of 899 were ever reported – whether in relation to serious delinquency, multiple breeches of discipline or defiance – and sent prematurely back to Mozambique (Mano says he was not involved in any of these cases.) Mano’s overall motivation for taking this position was his own belief that it was indeed the duty of SdF students to work hard to eventually return and help develop Mozambique, and this belief was widely shared by his fellow students. None of the other students knew about Mano’s position – and nor, equally, did he know who, in addition to him, might have been approached.

All of this did not mean that Mano (who was a FRELIMO member, having joined the party during his stay in the GDR when he turned 18) did not avail himself of opportunities for personal enjoyment, including activities that were, strictly speaking, forbidden under SdF behavioural codes. For example, along with two SdF women, he started a show in the discotheque in Magdeburg, which they called ‘tropical disco’. They would perform dance sessions, which they were paid for: ‘we made a lot of money, many people came and liked it, but it was secret and the school did not know’. Mano did not see any problem in doing things that were officially forbidden but normal for adolescents in the GDR at the time, like going to discotheques, listening to ‘forbidden’ Western music or trading ‘Western’ clothes on the informal market. Instead of condemning such things as indicative of tendencies towards antisocialist individualism or affluence-centred thinking – as did GDR reports, the *Stasi* and key FRELIMO cadres – he embraced them as adolescent normality that did not contradict his socialist beliefs.²⁶ And through his adoption of the role of reporting on potentially disruptive behaviour to the GDR

authorities, he subtly influenced and modified the parameters of (in-) discipline.

But the contradictions between narrow ideological settings in relation to FRELIMO and GDR modernity were not always so easy to negotiate, and one issue in particular resulted in a lot of frustration and had a negative impact on the future lives of SdF participants – the refusal by FRELIMO to allow the teaching of English.

Originally, in the 1982 conception of the SdF, English was envisaged (in line with the secondary curriculum in Mozambique as well as the GDR) as an important subject, as it was recognised that English was a crucial language to learn in a country that was surrounded by English-speaking neighbours.²⁷ But those plans were subsequently dropped, a step that was officially justified on the grounds that the teaching schedule did not have the space for it, and that students already needed to engage with two additional languages, Portuguese and German, neither of which was their native language. For many students, however, the opportunity to learn English was quite an important one, not least because it would enable them to work in South Africa or other neighbouring countries if this turned out to be necessary for national political or security reasons. This touches upon the real reason why English was dropped from the SdF curriculum, a decision that was reported as having been strongly propagated by Graça Machel, who insisted that SdF students needed to be educated to become ‘upright revolutionaries who do not look to the West but know on which side of the barricade they stand’: in that ideological conception English was regarded as the language of the enemy or ‘the language of imperialism’.²⁸

Tomas remembers how aggrieved he was by the fact that English was not offered at the SdF:

We could not choose our professions and also other things, fine. Then our minister [Graça Machel] was in Germany and we asked, and the [German] school director supported us, that we should learn English but she said no – if they learn English they will go to

the other side [*nach drüben* in the original, which was the common phrase at the time to refer to the capitalist West]. But that was not why we wanted to learn English.²⁹

By the time the SdF cohort returned to Mozambique, English was almost a prerequisite for working in a leadership position, but it had not been possible for most SdF graduates to learn English outside the school curriculum and working engagements while they had been at the SdF.³⁰

As was the case with enjoying the pleasures of adolescence, learning English was not seen by those who demanded it as anti-socialist. It was seen as necessary for their commitment to help develop Mozambique into a successful modern nation.

How to be a good socialist citizen – GDR pragmatism versus FRELIMO control

These dilemmas and problems are an indication of the mismatch between the often narrow FRELIMO notions of what a socialist citizen should be, and the fact that the education of such citizens with the necessary skills to become part of a professional ruling elite relied on a number of core competencies that GDR pedagogic personnel sought to provide. These included being able to critically engage with a difficult situation, pragmatism, and an understanding of life in a modern socialist country – all elements that had been part of the initial vision of Samora Machel for the SdF, as an example of socialist cosmopolitanism. The strict nationalist-ideological interpretations subsequently adopted by FRELIMO when approaching contentious issues at the SdF could be explained in various ways. One suggestion is that FRELIMO, in essence, was never a socialist party, but always predominantly interested in its own survival and power, and it used socialism as a means of guaranteeing its hegemony.³¹ Another interpretation is that the SdF and its agenda was increasingly marginalised, a process that already started in 1984 but accelerated

with the death of Samora Machel. This was compounded by the fact that Graça Machel, though still education minister until 1989, after 1986 largely withdrew from active engagement, and this meant that the SdF's role as part of a vision for the future of Mozambique became largely irrelevant; but instead of acknowledging this new reality and adjusting SdF ideology and reality accordingly, its original rationale continued to be enforced by key FRELIMO cadres. An important figure here was Marcelino dos Santos, who became a key decision-maker regarding the SdF, and during visits to the SdF would condemn any engagement with 'Western culture', tell students they looked ugly in their 'Western clothes', and inform them that 'everybody can breakdance' but only they could perform traditional Mozambican dances and music – though the young adults themselves had decreasing levels of interest in such things.³² Mano goes so far as to say that Dos Santos was a sort of opposite pole to Machel, and wanted to make the SdF cohort 'pay for having grown up in relative luxury in the GDR', and was thus keen to make their lives as difficult as possible.³³

Roberto's experience offers a personal example of the perverse consequences of the attempted enforcement of FRELIMO's definition of adequate socialist behaviour.³⁴ Roberto was one of the best students in his class, not least because he was known for his independent mind. His GDR teachers valued him because he always brought new and interesting points into class discussions. In the first two years of the SdF, the best students in each class were allowed to spend their summer vacation in Mozambique, and Roberto's teachers nominated him as one of those to be given this opportunity. The ultimate decision about who was to be allowed to travel back home, however, lay with the FRELIMO representative at the SdF, for whom both exemplary grades and 'socialist competition' were important.³⁵ Roberto was in theory well placed even for the latter, as he was *chefe de informação* (information chief), a role that required him to organise regular discussions for his fellow students on contemporary political and other relevant events. Roberto always put a lot of work

into preparing these discussions, asking his GDR teachers for additional sources and materials if necessary, and he led the discussions in a spirit of critical debate, for which he was commended by his GDR teachers. As he says himself, he made an effort not to ‘politicise news or simply repeat party propaganda’.³⁶

Unfortunately for Roberto, his *chefe de turma* was a stalwart of the FRELIMO Youth Organisation OJM, less gifted academically but keen to advance his own standing through strict adherence to FRELIMO doctrine. He reported Roberto to the FRELIMO representative for anti-patriotic behaviour, on the grounds that Roberto did not simply repeat the FRELIMO party line when discussing events such as apartheid in South Africa or racism in Western countries. Roberto was furious when the FRELIMO representative, acquiescing in this interpretation of him as ‘anti-socialist’ and displaying an ‘apolitical attitude’, denied him the trip to Mozambique, in spite of additional lobbying on his behalf by his GDR teachers. ‘Our *chefe* was a real dictator and there was nothing I could do’, he concludes.

From this early experience Roberto made a clear distinction between ‘being proud to be Mozambican and wanting to help develop my country in the way envisaged by Samora Machel’ and FRELIMO, the entity in charge of that process, who were in his view only interested in benefits for themselves. He thus became a bit of a rebel, in particular towards the end of his stay in the GDR. After they had sat their final exams and completed their professional apprenticeships, SdF students were asked to continue at their workplace for no pay. He felt that ‘this was not part of the education – we had already learned everything and completed our exams – this was a way to control us’, and he and a few others therefore simply went to (East-)Berlin (then capital of the GDR) on their own and worked for a few months in a factory for a proper salary. They found a place to stay with Cuban guest workers and good jobs, as they were not only skilled in their professions but spoke German well. This was partly because ‘we could not return to Mozambique empty handed, we had to bring presents for our families after having been away so long, so

we needed to earn some money'. Of course they were reprimanded when they returned to Stassfurt shortly before their scheduled flight back to Mozambique, but at this point there was not much FRELIMO could do.

Roberto insists that this was not 'unpatriotic behaviour', but a refusal to be exploited with no clear rationale. He was, like those with him, fully prepared to return to Mozambique – 'we were proud of what we learned and wanted to do something for our country'. He was on one of the later flights home, and had already heard the rumours that all SdF returnees would be sent straight to the army, but he was 'ready to go, even though I did not understand why they were putting us in the army, as we had other skills that would be much more useful somewhere else'. His (probably correct) suspicion was that the decision to send the SdF cohort to the army was made because FRELIMO did not know what to do with them, as clearly there were no jobs on offer as originally promised, and it was a way to prevent them from getting politically active and challenging FRELIMO. Roberto was lucky in that he managed to negotiate a swift exit from the army, and was eventually able to return to Germany and continue his further education, but he still believes that the way the SdF was used in Mozambique was a big waste, not only of resources but also of people's lives. 'I had the chance to learn so many things, and I could have done so much that would have helped Mozambique, but in the end, though I have still become a role model, it is only for those who know me and some of the children in my extended family'.

This has turned out to be the strongest legacy of their time at the SdF for its participants, a particular understanding of how to live one's life, which, for many, remains related to their definition of what socialism should entail, and how one should practise solidarity.

Conclusion

This article started with the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, and I will now return to this.

What the three former SdF students shared on the podium in Maputo was representative of the opinions of many former SdF graduates, even if they usually would not talk about it in public. In November 2014, after I left Maputo I travelled to Chimoio, where another gathering of former SdF participants took place. Most of them came from the area around Chimoio, but they also included many of those from Beira, and in fact this group has held such gatherings at regular intervals – and I had been present at one of them before, in June 2008.

In the first years after their return from the GDR, when the majority were sent to different sections of the army and thus scattered around the country, it was hard for the graduates to stay in contact with each other, even after demobilisation. But the advent of mobile phones finally made re-connections more easy, and a vibrant Facebook group and other social media connections now serve as an important way for participating in each other's lives again. This has also resulted in regular gatherings like the one in Chimoio in a number of settings, as well as in more concrete support for each other, as Mia from the Chimoio-group explains: 'After we came back [from the GDR] everybody needed to find work for themselves ... build a life ... Now we can look out for those who are still struggling'.³⁷

In November 2014, the group that meets at the Lamimos Lodge near Cruzamento de Tete – a space that also runs cultural events and is owned by two SdF alumni – is made up of very different people: Some have pursued a successful career either in the service of the government or in the private sector, others have started their own businesses, while others again are making a living through occasional work. At these gatherings, they listen and sing along to music from their time in the GDR, including the then forbidden 'Western' music, and celebrate their history as SdF graduates, of which they are tremendously proud, even if people like themselves have mainly been written out of the official history of Mozambique, in a process that has been labelled 'organised forgetting'.³⁸

As Graça Machel stated during an early visit to Magdeburg in 1981, the SdF was built on the premise that 'the People's Republic of

Mozambique sent children to the GDR because it needed many good technicians and qualified workers, and more importantly good young communists should be educated'.³⁹ Rather ironically, perhaps, when seen from the vantage point of how Mozambican history has evolved, the SdF achieved both objectives. First of all, its graduates were good professionals in their fields – the only problem was that no work was available to them on their return to Mozambique, partly because of a general lack of work, and partly because the then FRELIMO elite treated them with great suspicion and left them to their own devices, while scattering them all over the country in order to prevent them from becoming a potent and united force that might challenge the politics of organised forgetting of FRELIMO's once socialist roots. Secondly, even if they did not necessarily become 'good communists', a cohort of people had been educated who highly valued what they saw as the original socialist agenda of Samora Machel, which in their view had been betrayed by the leaders who followed after him. Jorge, who became a FRELIMO member while in Germany, sums up this common feeling: 'We were betrayed, but then I thought about it and felt it had to be like that, because going to Germany was the idea of Samora Machel ... our disadvantage was that Samora died while we were still in Germany. If Samora had still been alive, our lives today would have been very different'.⁴⁰

There may be a degree of nostalgia in this statement – and Mozambique started to turn towards the 'West' from 1984 onwards, while still under Machel's leadership, partly due to the failure of its economic development under socialism, and the fact that it was not admitted as a full member to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), the trading bloc of former socialist countries.⁴¹ But that does not diminish the role of the SdF as a unique opportunity for those who participated in it, not only in that it made available education and training, but also because it succeeded as a strategy-generating institution, and passed on socialist values into their future lives. The SdF graduates who commemorated the Fall of the Berlin Wall in Maputo and Chimoio have prospered in a way that would

not have been possible without the socialism of that time, and its interpretation of international solidarity – a solidarity that found its material expression in the creation of the SdF and other educational exchange and scholarship programmes. This remains the case however flawed this concept of solidarity was on the edges, and the extent to which it was based on the self-interest of the ruling parties and their elites on all sides.⁴²

In that sense the GDR – which is too often simply judged as a past dictatorship, as in the ICMA exhibition – provided an important avenue for freeing the mind and opening new avenues of learning and understanding the world for those who attended the SdF; and in this it serves as a distinctive example of socialist cosmopolitanism. Unfortunately, this part of Mozambique's history is largely ignored not only in Mozambique itself, but also in what is now a united Germany. It has also not had effects that extend much beyond individual connections between former SdF graduates and some of the East Germans they encountered during their upbringing; it has had little discernible effect on racism, particularly in Eastern parts of Germany – a racism that was present before the Fall of the Wall but was suppressed or officially denied during the time of the SdF and similar education and apprenticeship schemes.⁴³

In a rather curious way, these legacies – predominantly at the micro-level – mirror dynamics that have been observed for educational exchange programmes between the Third World and the capitalist West, and in particular the FRG, though these have been mainly at the level of university education. Partly driven by the Hallstein doctrine and East-West competition, West Germany became an important destination for students from Africa and Asia during the 1960s, many of whom subsequently became engaged in left politics and joined transnational networks based on personal connections. These networks shaped patterns of solidarity with third world struggles and created affective communities of their own among their members, but ultimately failed to challenge the

structural parameters in a way that might have transformed wider politics and societies.⁴⁴ Lasting legacies are thus largely confined to the level of individual biographies.

The last word here shall thus be with Mano as an individual member of the affective SdF community, who before we met in Chimoio in November 2014 had had a visit from his former East-German ‘guest-parents’. They had visited Gorongosa National Park together. As it happened, while they were in the park some other (West-) German tourists had heard them speaking German and asked Mano why he spoke German so well. When he answered that he had gone to school in the former GDR, their response was that that must have been horrible. No, Mano replied, it was wonderful. He had received a good education and caring second parents, had learned many new skills and had found new ideas – and those from the West who now spoke so negatively were not the ones who had given support to a country like Mozambique, and helped a child like himself, who at the time had been clever but poor, to get an education – and they were thus not in a position to pass judgement.

Notes

1. Tanja R. Müller, *Legacies of Socialist Solidarity. East Germany in Mozambique*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington, 2014.
2. Tanja R. Müller, “‘Memories of Paradise’: Legacies of socialist education in Mozambique” in *African Affairs*, 109, 2010.
3. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London: Sage, 1977.
4. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p72.
5. Lutz Reuter and Annette Scheunpflug, *Die Schule der Freundschaft. Eine Fallstudie zur Bildungszusammenarbeit zwischen der DDR und Mosambik*, Münster: Waxmann, 2006.
6. Anne Pitcher, ‘Forgetting from above and memory from below: strat-

- egies of legitimation and struggle in postsocialist Mozambique’, in *Africa*, 76, 2006.
7. For concrete details on methodology see Müller, *Legacies of Socialist Solidarity*, pp3-13.
 8. BArch, DR/2/13992.
 9. Mathias Tullner, ‘Die Zusammenarbeit der DDR und Mosambiks auf dem Gebiet der Bildung und die Tätigkeit der Bildungsexperten der DDR in Mozambik’, in Matthias Voss, *Wir haben Spuren hinterlassen! Die DDR in Mosambik*, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2005.
 10. BArch, DR/2/13990, note from 8.9.1980.
 11. Müller, *Legacies*, op cit, pp19-56.
 12. Hans-Joachim Döring, ‘*Es geht um unsere Existenz*’. *Die Politik der DDR gegenüber der Dritten Welt am Beispiel von Mosambik and Äthiopien*, Berlin: Links Verlag, 1999.
 13. William Gray, *Germany’s Cold War. The Global Campaign to isolate East Germany, 1949-1969*, Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 2003.
 14. An important symbolic event here was a 1974 visit of FRELIMO president Samora Machel to East Berlin, before Mozambican independence, where he was nevertheless welcomed following the protocol reserved for heads of state, a gesture of respect that was much appreciated on the Mozambican side.
 15. The content of this meeting was reported in Döring, ‘*Es geht um unsere Existenz*’, op cit, p162.
 16. BArch, DR/2/11233, note about a meeting between comrade Honecker and Samora Machel on 3.3.1983, German original translated by the author.
 17. BArch, DR/2/11233, German translation of the speech of Graça Machel to SdF students on 23.5.1984, German original translated by the author.
 18. Clara, fieldnotes April 2007 in Chimoio. All names have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.
 19. Alex, interview 3 June 2008 in Maputo. Due to the large number of primary school children, schools usually worked in a two-shift system. This is common to this day in many parts of Mozambique,

- see for example Tanja R. Müller, 'Changing Resource Profiles: Aspirations Among Orphans in Central Mozambique in the Context of an AIDS Mitigation Intervention', *Journal of Development Studies*, 46, 2010.
20. BArch, DR/2/11231, SdFKonzeptionen, Pläne, Grundlegendokumente, 1981-1982; BArch, DR/2/13992, Ministerium für Volksbildung; BArch, DR/2/50682, Ministerium für Volksbildung.
 21. Alfonso, interview 31 May 2008 in Maputo. In a number of interviews, participants refer to a seven-year timespan while in reality they only spent six years in the GDR. This is connected to the original plan that envisaged six months of post-graduation practical work experience in the GDR, which would have implied that SdF graduates returned in spring/summer of 1989, but this part of the scheme was not implemented.
 22. Hipolito, interview 18 June 2008 in Nampula.
 23. Alice Dinerman, *Revolution, counter-revolution and revisionism in postcolonial Africa: the case of Mozambique, 1975-1994*, London: Routledge, 2006; Carolyn Nordstrom, *A different kind of war story*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.
 24. In addition, both hidden and open processes of racism were present, even if not acknowledged as such by East German authorities. It is beyond the remit of this article to discuss this in detail, but see Müller, *Legacies*, op cit, pp86-90.
 25. The following is based on an interview with Mano on 12 June 2008 in Beira and various informal encounters from 10-15 June 2008 in and around Beira.
 26. BArch, DR/2/50622.
 27. BArch, DR/2/50623, file 2 from 2; BArch, DR/2/28250. It was initially envisaged that up to 60 per cent of students would use the opportunity to learn English.
 28. BArch, DR/2/11233, Protocol from a meeting between Margot Honecker and Graça Machel on 3 March 1983; Annette Scheunpflug and Jürgen Krause, *Die Schule der Freundschaft - ein Bildungsexperiment in der DDR*, Hamburg: Universität der Bundeswehr, 2000, 15. This statement by Graça Machel is in line

- with a more general dynamic in the first decade of post-independence Mozambique, during which FRELIMO, in its quest for hegemony and legitimacy, regarded any deviation from ideological purity as treason, and much effort was devoted to eradicating behaviours that had been common in the past but would later be regarded as betraying the values of the new socialist personality. See Benedito Luís Machava, 'State Discourse on Internal Security and the Politics of Punishment in Post-Independence Mozambique (1975-1983)', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37, 2011.
29. Tomas, interview 31 May 2008 in Maputo.
 30. Uta Rüchel, 'auf deutsch sozialistisch zu denken': *Mosambikaner in der Schule der Freundschaft*, Schwerin, 2001, 43.
 31. Michel Cahen, 'Check on socialism in Mozambique – what check, what socialism?', *Review of African Political Economy*, 57, 1993.
 32. BArch, DR2/50687, note concerning the visit of comrade Dos Santos at the SdF, 11.5.1985; BArch, DR/2/50682, preparation 4th protocol, 1987.
 33. Mano, encounter in Beira, 15 June 2008.
 34. Roberto, interview 14 June 2008 in Beira.
 35. BArch, DR/2/13992.
 36. See also Benedito Luis Machava, 'State discourse', op cit, in relation to the enforcement of 'appropriate' behaviour (as defined by FRELIMO) within Mozambique at the time when the SdF was being conceived.
 37. Mia, interview 9 June 2008 in Chimoio.
 38. Anne Pitcher, 'Forgetting from above', op cit.
 39. BArch, DR/2/50619, file 2 from 2, note on the visit of Graça Machel to Magdeburg 1981, German original translated by the author.
 40. Jorge, interview 7 June 2008 in Cruzamento de Tete.
 41. Patrick Chabal et al, *A history of postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, London: Hurst, 2002.
 42. For other programmes that threw up similar contradictions in the fields of secondary and higher education see for example Hauke Dorsch, 'Rites of passage overseas? – on the sojourn of Mozambican students and scholars in Cuba', *Afrika Spectrum* 43, 2008; Polly Savage, 'Reading between the lines: African students in the USSR',

in Mark Nash, *Red Africa. Affective Communities and the Cold War*, London, Black Dog Publishing, 2016.

43. BArch, DR/2/50617, Besondere Vorkommnisse 1986-1988.

44. Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front. Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.