

## Africa Report by Leonardo Servadio

### An example of Christian capitalism

*Father Gallipoli says of his successful farm cooperatives in Mozambique: "You cannot evangelize a slave."*

**T**he social doctrine of the church is not just an abstract theory. A recent issue of the monthly *Mondo e Missione*, published by the Pontifical Foreign Missions Institute of Milan, provides an example. Near the Mozambique capital of Maputo, an Italian priest set up a series of farm cooperatives, starting in 1979. Now united in the General Union of Agricultural Cooperatives, these are the most important agricultural enterprise in the country, after the multinational Lonrho.

The union is the major supplier of food for the capital. It includes 200 farm cooperatives, involving 8,000 workers, 82% of them women. They produce rice, millet, maize, chickens, eggs, ducks, hogs, fruit, and vegetables.

The priest who created the union, Prosperino Gallipoli, had to fight with the communist Frelimo government, which expelled him from the country in 1979. Finally he convinced them of the need for his work and, coinciding with the economic woes of the "socialist" experiment started by Frelimo in 1975, at the end of 1979, Father Gallipoli was allowed back.

The union is a perfectly functioning example of cooperative capitalism. It includes all the administrative and logistical support the people need: schools, banks, medical care, warehouses, etc.

We reprint here translated excerpts of the interview Father Gallipoli gave to *Mondo e Missione*:

"Today our cooperatives import 60% of their chicks from South Africa. We raise 100,000 chicks a month, and sell laying hens and chickens for

food. Our objective is to become independent from the need to import chicks, and we are about to succeed, thanks to incubator machines provided by a Bergamo [Italy] firm.

"The Africans work well; they must simply be instructed in the techniques of production and will then be able to enjoy the fruits of their work. Frelimo failed with their *machambas do pove* [common labor fields], because there was no improvement for the workers; on the contrary, their living standards got worse. . . .

"They were bankrupt, the people were depressed and did not work any longer. I reorganized them according to three principles, which are clearly and forcefully repeated to all those who want to join us. First: He who does not work, does not eat. Second: He who works, must produce more. Third: He who produces more, must enjoy the fruits of his work."

"But this is capitalism," asks the interviewer, Father Gheddo. "How come [President] Chissano let you back into Mozambique?"

"It was in 1979, when socialism had failed, and the tragedy of hunger was starting. I said right away: The party shall stay out of my cooperatives. I will take care of educating the people. . . . I provided first of all a technical education: how to plant onions, tomatoes, etc. The Portuguese were great farmers, but taught nothing. When I arrived in the Maputo region, the technology was extremely low. I had to teach agriculture, how to raise animals, irrigation techniques, joinery, and everything else. Then I educated them to the freedom and the

dignity of men and women; then, courses in accounting and programming. Above all I taught the farmer to be adult, responsible, to engage not only in production, but also in decision-making. I trained them in responsibility, in justly distributing the fruits of work. In the state cooperatives, not only did they not pay regularly, but they never paid more than the minimum wage. I started to distribute the surplus that had been produced, and this created enthusiasm, commitment, and loyalty.

"The basic problem of development in Africa is this: that there are people of great humanity, with great human values, but who are not capable of expressing themselves in the modern world: They do not know its language, its rhythms, its mentality, its culture. Not only in agriculture, but also in industry and in politics. They produce little, get tired soon; if they get a paycheck, they do not go back to work for several days, as long as they have money for food to eat. The basic problem is educating people. If in a hundred adults you identify ten who have leadership quality, educate them, free them of their idiosyncratic reactions to novelty, and give them confidence, you have found a treasure. You have found those who will educate the people.

"I tried first to educate through the schools of the cooperatives, then leaving all the responsibilities to the Africans, and changing all those who did not perform well. Indeed, the Africans themselves change them, since the chiefs at all levels are elected and confirmed democratically. . . .

"I always intended my work as pre-evangelization: You cannot evangelize a slave, unless you make him free and give him trust in himself. The secret of success has been technical education, together with education in the Gospel."