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A LUTA CONTINUA: MOZAMBIQUE AFTER SAMORA

by Carole Collins

INTRODUCTION: It was with profound shock that I and millions of other people in southern Africa heard, the morning of October 20, of the death of Mozambican President Samora Machel. He died in a plane crash of as yet unexplained circumstances, along with many other Mozambican officials, just inside South African territory.

Shock deepened to outrage in the following days as we heard of the callous behavior of South African officials at the crash site: ignoring the cries of wounded survivors (some of whom later bled to death) as they combed the wreckage for diplomatic papers and film, forcing a bleeding amputee to look at the bodies and identify Machel's, threatening to interfere with medical treatment of one survivor if he did not defect to the MNR.

To many the crash confirmed fears that South Africa had embarked on a decision to widen conflict in the region. It followed a pattern of verbal threats and armed interventions in neighboring countries since mid-year, and specific threats to Mozambique since September. Some observers believe Pretoria is trying to buy time for an increasingly isolated and militarized regime to wrest concessions from the liberation forces both inside and outside South Africa. Just days before the crash, a Mozambican journalist had, with eerie omniscience, reported on a South African decision to try to assassinate Machel and other Front Line States leaders.

Virtually no one I spoke to, except for a few Western diplomats, believes that Machel's death was an accident. South African behavior during and following the crash has contributed to reinforcing this belief. The findings of the international team investigating the crash's causes may do little to erase this belief. The final report is likely to be inconclusive, given the nature of the method most likely used to bring down the plane.

Machel's death comes at a time of intense South African pressure on both Mozambique and the southern Africa region. Indeed, his plane crashed on returning from a critical Front Line States (FLS) meeting with Zaire's President Mobutu, seeking to

SAMORA

It was under an iron grey sky with brisk winds driving a soft rain -- the weather for 'when a great chief dies' said one old Mozambican -- that Samora was laid to rest. His funeral was an occasion for an unprecedented outpouring of grief by the Mozambican people.

Soldiers cried openly from grief, women lay prostrate on the ground wailing. Little children ringing the Monument to Mozambique's Heroes collapsed crying as the cortege approached. And the rain fell heaviest just as Machel's coffin was brought to the crypt for placement.

Only weeks before his death, Machel spoke of his hopes for South Africa in words that evoke Martin Luther King, Jr.: "We want blacks on the one side and whites on the other to climb the mountain separating them so that they may see the beauty of their country, so that they may see the marvel of many colours."

No issue so emotionally engaged Samora, and sparked his intellectual passion, as the need to fight racism. Unlike other liberation movements which stressed black nationalism, FRELIMO became a model of multiracial struggle against white minority privilege. Time and again Samora stressed that Mozambique's struggle was not racial at root, but one aimed at ending the exploitation of man by man.

The gun carriage carrying his coffin -- symbol of his stature as Mozambique's foremost freedom fighter and architect of its independence -- was drawn through Maputo's working class districts. The cortege passed near dirt paths wending their ways between tidy square mud-brick houses and their attached gardens. (Only after independence did these areas enjoy access to water and electricity, and the pride shown in small touches is a far cry from the ramshackle dwellings I saw on my first visit nine years ago. It also testifies to the new spirit of confidence that Samora and FRELIMO brought to Mozambique's poorest.)

From shepherd boy to mission school student, from his work as a male nurse and then guerrilla fighter with the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO, now the ruling party in Mozambique), his life reflected many of the sufferings his people experienced before they won their independence in 1975. FRELIMO's victory sparked dancing in the streets of Soweto, as Africans throughout the region saw it was possible to win their freedom in the face of seemingly overwhelming colonial military might.

It is hard to imagine a Mozambique without Machel -- his name has been synonymous with its struggle for independence for so long. Not many world leaders are called affectionately by their first name. Samora was one of those exceptions.

persuade him to end his support for the Pretoria-backed UNITA bandits in Angola. And his death presages broader and intensified conflict throughout the region. When

Machel was buried October 28, hopes for a less bloody resolution of conflict in South Africa and its neighboring countries appear to have been buried with him.

Despite press coverage describing Mozambique as on the verge of collapse, Maputo was remarkably calm during the funeral. The prompt selection of Joaquim Chissano as Mozambique's new president by the Central Committee on November 3 contradicted western press reports of an alleged power struggle within FRELIMO. Indeed, one of Machel's remarkable legacies is an unusually united party.

His death sparked unprecedented protests and acts of solidarity throughout the region. Demonstrations in Lesotho and Swaziland were suppressed by police action. Zambia postponed its 22nd anniversary independence celebrations and other coordinated events. In peaceful Botswana, where Machel had attended 20th anniversary independence celebrations barely a month earlier, I saw protesting students petition the President's office. In Zimbabwe, university students ransacked the South African trade mission and airways offices, the Malawi High Commission, and stoned the U.S. Embassy.

The day of the funeral, the following solidarity message was received from Nelson and Winnie Mandela in South Africa, addressed to the people and government of Mozambique, to FRELIMO, and to the family of Machel:

"Never before have we made application to leave South Africa. Today we believed that our place was to be with you physically. Each one of us is imprisoned in different jails. We were prevented from being present with you today to share your sorrow, to weep with you, to lighten your grief, to hold you very close.

"Our grief for comrade Samora is so deep that it tears away at the heart. Throughout the night we have kept vigil with you. Throughout today, we shall mourn with you for a mighty soldier, a courageous son, and a noble statesman.

"We must believe that his death will strengthen both your and our resolve to be finally free. For you, victory over immoral surrogate bandits. For us, victory over oppression. Our struggle has always been linked and we shall be victorious together.

"A caring world is with you. It cannot and will not fail you. With their support and the legendary resolve of the people of Mozambique, you can only emerge as victors. Amandla!"

MOZAMBIQUE BEFORE MACHEL'S DEATH

Mozambique, already exhausted by 11 years of unrelenting violence by South African-backed "bandits" known as the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR or Renamo), has experienced an upsurge in MNR attacks on its northern provinces over the past two

years. Just as drought receded from most areas of the country, Mozambicans had to flee by the thousands into Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe to escape MNR violence. MNR attacks on farmers and their fields threatened an unprecedented number of Mozambicans with renewed hunger and famine.

The attacks followed a September meeting of Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Mugabe, Zambian President Kaunda and Machel with Malawi's Life President Kamuzu Banda at which they confronted him with evidence that Malawi was harboring MNR bandits and raised the prospect of possible retaliation by the Front Line States (FLS) should Malawi continue to provide such sanctuary. (The seriousness of the issue for Mozambique was underlined by Machel's devoting increasing time to mobilizing Mozambicans near the border and threatening to station defensive missiles in the region.)

Malawi, South Africa's closest black ally in Africa, has long been linked to the MNR: MNR leader Jorge Jardim was Malawi's honorary consult in Beira prior to Mozambique's independence. The thuggish Malawian Young Pioneers was organized along the lines of Portugal's then-fascist youth movement. Banda made a state visit to colonial-ruled Mozambique in 1971 and was hostile to FRELIMO's presence within Malawi during the independence struggle, allowing PIDE (Portuguese secret police) agents to operate against them. Malawi also harbored COREMO, an anti-FRELIMO group organized on a tribal basis during the 1970's and linked to CIA funding. Banda's actions are undoubtedly tied to his hopes for political and economic expansion. Banda has coveted the northern part of Nacala, lacking a Malawian ocean port, and has dreamed of uniting Mozambique's northern provinces in a federation with Malawi. The first armed incursions by South African-backed forces into independent Mozambique were from Malawi, not white-ruled Rhodesia.

The Wounds of War

As early as last spring, Mozambique was urgently requesting food and other assistance to cope with rising MNR violence. Last May I met with Amos Mohanjane, head of Mozambique's emergency relief operations (known as "Calamidades" or DPCCN). Because of the war, he told me, "people cannot produce anything. They always have to move from one place to another" to avoid the fighting and can't carry much. People lack clothing "because for a long time our shops are empty...our factories are closed [due to MNR attacks]. We have no foreign currency for imports, so we have no imports of clothes....The bandits have stolen all that they have -- clothing, food, animals, hoes."

What does Mozambique most need? Food, clothes and medicines - especially for malaria and diarrhea and antibiotics, he answers. "And peace," he added wryly.

It is hard to know how long the psychological wounds of the war will take to heal. A film by two Swedish filmmakers, Killing the Dream, interviews some MNR victims in a powerfully understated way. To see a teacher whose ears and nose were cut off continue to teach math to children in his village is to experience the quiet, persistent resistance to this brutalization of a whole society.

The FLS have hesitated to act against Malawi, fearing they would undermine the commitment of the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) to end regional conflicts and unite in opposition to apartheid. It is ironic that while Malawi continues to provide covert aid to the MNR, SADCC is helping it upgrade a road through Tanzania to provide an alternative export route to one through Mozambique blocked by MNR action.

Mozambique had also been subjected to an unprecedented series of charges and measures by Pretoria. The South African Government, alleging (without proof) that Mozambique was allowing African National Congress (ANC) military operations against South Africa. It also repeated threats of military action against Mozambique for this alleged violation of the Nkomati Accord of 1984, threats it has repeated following Machel's death. In October 1986 Pretoria announced that it would forceably repatriate over 61,000 Mozambican workers in the next year. This measure threatens to add to Mozambique's economic woes, eliminating or adversely affecting the livelihoods of an estimated 400,000 affected workers and their dependents, and depriving the Mozambique Government of \$70-\$90 million in desperately needed foreign exchange earnings.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Mozambicans had hoped that with independence they would have peace and a period of prosperity. But the rising tempo of struggle for black majority rule in then-Rhodesia and South Africa, and efforts by their white minorities to hold onto their privileges, led to escalating economic and military pressures on Mozambique's new government and efforts to undermine its support for the liberation movement in those two countries.

At the time of Machel's death, the SADCC countries were gearing up to face increased economic pressures as a result of decisions by the European Economic Community (EEC), the Commonwealth and the US Congress to impose sanctions on South Africa. FLS leaders say they are willing to pay the economic costs of such sanctions and of possible South African reprisals and counter-measures. The costs will be steep. Shortages will create hardship for many, and development plans are likely to be undermined by the expected disruption of regional trade. (It should be noted that a decisive FLS switch to alternative transport routes creates new opportunities and savings for them as well.)

All the countries of the region are sporadic targets of escalating military pressures from Pretoria. Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe experienced armed attacks by South African commandos last May. Pretoria threatened further action against Botswana based on charges that it let ANC use its territory to launch attacks on South Africa. Indeed, Botswana reported three incursions by South African aircraft or commandos in the 24 hour period immediately before and after Machel's death. Zambia has experienced incursions by South African troops from the Caprivi strip, a part of Namibia illegally occupied by South Africa along Zambia's southern border. South African-backed UNITA forces have kidnapped Zambian citizens and stolen food and other goods. Angola has suffered regular ground and air attack by UNITA and South Africa directly.

All of South Africa's neighbors have had to cope with the economic and social costs of caring for people displaced by South Africa's bandit surrogates in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

TRAVELING TO MAPUTO

Travel to Maputo is not easy at any time, and from Botswana involves transit via Zimbabwe, South Africa, Swaziland or Lusaka. I was fortunate to get the last scheduled flight to Maputo before the funeral. After an overnight stay in Lusaka, I joined Cuban, Angolan, Benin and PLO diplomats on an Air Angola flight -- in actuality one of two decoy flights timed to coincide with Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos' arrival in Maputo. "We're on South Africa's radar screens right now," a Cuban diplomat joked nervously.

Last May, I passed over Zimbabwe's Chimanimani mountains, then sandy beaches on the approach to Beira, the twisting, sun-glinting reaches of the Nkomati and Limpopo rivers, before reaching the "cement city" of high-rise apartments and vivid, red-tiled roofs rising out of the mists of Maputo Bay. This time, we took a more southerly route, across vast stretches of barely cultivated land, before approaching the lush green of cultivated fields in the Green Zones surrounding Mozambique's capital. We felt a moment of spontaneous anxiety when our plane, duplicating the approach Machel's plane took, passed Maputo and flew south before circling around to land.

It was with tears in our eyes that we landed at Maputo, where a sign proclaims "Welcome to Mozambique, Liberated Zone of Humanity." The airport was subdued as officials greeted dignitaries arriving for the funeral. Sixteen heads of state attended, as well as numerous foreign ministers, Yasir Arafat of the PLO, and leaders of both SWAPO and the ANC. The U.S. was represented officially by Maureen Reagan. Jesse Jackson would also attend. There was also a delegation of organizations from several countries including the American Friends Service Committee, which I represented, the French and Belgian anti-apartheid movements, and the Green Party of Germany.

I arrived too late to attend the funerals of 17 who had perished with Machel. Three of them I had known personally. Aquino da Braganca, the gentle, courtly head of the University's African Studies Centre, had visited my house during the Non-Aligned Summit. I and many other Americans had known Jose Carlos Lobo, a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, while he served as his country's ambassador to the U.N. I had also met Fernando Honwana -- an aide to Machel who played a key role in the Lancaster House negotiations leading to Zimbabwean independence -- last May in Maputo.

On the night I arrived I drove past the City Hall, where Samora's body, in a closed casket due to severe mutilation, lay in state. It was difficult for many fully to realize he was gone. "I kept expecting him to address us," said one teary-eyed teacher.

The funeral was also notable for who wasn't there. A South African request to attend was turned down. Kwazulu chief Gatsha Buthelezi, flying in on his personal plane, was denied permission to land. Pretoria subsequently denied Winnie and Nelson Mandela permission to attend.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Samora's legacy as a leader and builder of national unity was perhaps best evidenced by the smooth transition to a new president barely a week after the funeral.

Generally popular among Mozambicans and a long-time colleague of Samora's, Joaquim Chissano reaffirmed his commitment to Samora's policies, including his refusal to negotiate -- as South Africa has been urging -- with the MNR. On economic policies, however, he reportedly will be more open to private ownership of housing and some transport services, which he urged earlier this year in debates in the People's Assembly.

President Chissano assumes his position at a time of unparalleled threats to the Mozambican people and nation. Renewed MNR activity, both before and after Samora's death, may effectively cut the country in two along the Zambezi River. Although conditions have improved in many areas, they periodically worsen in others, because of the MNR's ability to resupply by South Africa directly (via air and submarine) or indirectly, via Malawi. The MNR has not been able to develop a social base, although it may be making attempts to do so. Evidence uncovered during the March 1986 retaking of its Gorongosa base by Zimbabwe troops included stacks of South African weapons and ammunition as well as packets of carrot and lettuce seed. Leaflets were also found announcing plans to distribute medical supplies and start some literacy classes.

THE WAR ON DEVELOPMENT

The MNR has particularly targeted development agencies and projects -- health clinics, schools, agricultural projects -- for destruction. Cooperantes (expatriate workers) have become frequent victims of MNR kidnappings, along with FRELIMO and government officials and church workers. On November 8th, MNR forces crossed the Malawi border, attacked and kidnapped five foreign cooperantes working on agricultural projects in Ulanje. Radio Maputo reported that survivors saw the bodies of at least two white soldiers being carried back to Malawi and heard Afrikaans spoken during the attack.

Transport has also fallen victim to MNR violence. In 1985, the Maputo-South Africa railway line was open only 32% of the time, the Maputo-Swazi line 38%. The Maputo-Zimbabwe and Beira-Malawi lines are completely shut. The Beira-Zimbabwe line operates almost normally, under protection of an estimated 10,000 Zimbabwean troops.

Such attacks are cumulative in their social impact: thousands of children are fast losing their chance to gain education, a tremendous loss for Mozambique's future development. Lack of food is a major cause of poor nutrition and the health problems, including stunted growth, that follow in its wake.

Mozambique's desperate need for outside assistance has fragmented its planning process and, according to several cooperantes, left the government without a clear strategy towards such aid. The development priorities of NGOs assigned to work in specific provinces tend to affect the coordinated planning of a nationwide development strategy. This reality was behind the government's decision last April to create a new Ministry of Cooperation and try to regain its own initiative over the development process.

Mozambique is also having to cope with direct threats of military intervention, issued by South Africa's military leaders such as General Magnus Malan.

The country's uphill struggle for economic stability and greater productivity has been drawn out by the war. About four million Mozambicans face hunger or starvation due to MNR disruption of farming in the northern provinces of Tete and Zambezia, which used to be Mozambique's granary. The MNR's focus on destroying social services and attacking development activities has resulted in over \$5 billion in damages since 1975. This has included over 500 schools destroyed, one in 10 health units closed, hundreds of rural shops and thousands of peasant huts burned and cattle killed.

The impact on Mozambique's balance of payments has been disastrous. A large part of Mozambique's foreign debt is due to the costs of replacing and reopening what the MNR has destroyed. One American doctor noted that many of the hospitals and clinics attacked by the bandits have been reopened -- but at a tremendous cost. Each electricity pole that is downed -- a fairly frequent occurrence -- costs \$10,000 to replace, one Canadian cooperante told me.

Mozambique's Beira Corridor is key to the capacity of Zimbabwe -- the region's strongest economic power -- and the FLS to reduce that dependence and withstand the impact of sanctions, and expected South African counter-measures. That is one reason why it has become a prime target of MNR attack. Attacks on Mozambique, and its alternative vision of the future, are but part of South Africa's broader aggression against black ruled nations in the region.

HOW CAN AMERICANS RESPOND?

Sanctions imposed on South Africa are important components in the process of reducing the resources commanded by apartheid's repressive apparatus and pushing the white minority toward meaningful negotiations. But they do have costs, for both South Africa and its neighbors. Many of the neighboring economies became closely linked to South Africa during the era of white minority rule. SADCC has since 1980 sought to reduce the region's dependence on South Africa, but critical elements of the infrastructure that will propel trade between the SADCC states are tangled in South Africa's economy.

It is clear that the tremendous humanitarian, political and economic needs of Mozambique and its neighbors will be exacerbated as South Africa attempts to re-colonize the FLS through economic manipulation. U.S. Government policy and political relationships in the region have not been directed toward building supportive relations with the independent governments of southern Africa. Rather, U.S. policy contributes directly and indirectly to South Africa's policy of destabilization. Yet potential to make positive contributions, both by individuals and by the U.S. Government, does exist. The current situation challenges Americans to look deeply at the impact of U.S. policy in the region, to learn more, and to act sensitively in providing tangible material support to people there. Assistance to development of the Beira Corridor more substantial than the 5 million U.S. dollars that has been provided, and pressure on South Africa to end its military assault on Mozambique and its neighbors could do much to alleviate suffering.

Through the combined military and foreign policy that South Africa espouses, a conflict has been triggered that goes deeper than each of its individual components - economic, political, racial, ethnic or others. With each act of destabilization the healing process for Mozambique costs more lives, more time, more money, and the self-sufficiency of the region is pushed further into the distance.

As AFSC's Southern Africa International Affairs Representative (SAIAR) Carole Collins carries responsibility for writing reports, initiating conferences, seminars, and personal contacts which foster greater regional communication, exchange of resources, and economic cooperation. The SAIAR Program complements, where possible, the objectives of the member nations of SADCC (Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference) and other regional structures. To be included on the mailing list, write to AFSC, Africa Programs, at 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Contributions to defray mailing and duplicating costs are welcome.