

Pan-African Agency Report on Machel's Death: "Accidental or Planned?"

PANA in English 1750 gmt 20 Oct 86

Text of special report datelined Dakar, 20th October, by PANA Director-General Auguste Mpassi-Muba entitled "The death of President Samora Machel: accidental or planned?":

Apartheid advocates in Pretoria shed crocodile tears upon announcing the death of Mozambique's president Samora Machel. Their cohorts in Renamo (MNR) were prompt in confirming the news, rejoicing in their hearts for this long awaited event. No African worthy of the name would be surprised by these reactions, when one knows the relentlessness with which Pretoria's racist regime and its puppets of Renamo undertook to hunt down Mozambican leaders.

Machel knew himself to be the target for Pik Botha and South African army generals and security services, in the face of impending economic sanctions, the implementation of which was to bring independent countries in the region to use Mozambique's ports to escape Pretoria's blackmail.

Three days ago, on 17th October, the Mozambican News Agency (AIM) sent us a message signed by its director, Carlos Cardoso, saying that generals of the racist Pretoria regime were studying various schemes to physically eliminate President Samora Machel. AIM's message, which is on our cast of 17th October [word missing] gmt, says "President Samora Machel could be one of the chosen targets of the South African military hierarchy if the threatened raids against Maputo by the South African armed forces are carried out".

Observers in Maputo believe that the (?assassination of the) Mozambican leader appears to be in the minds of the South African generals and there are already certain public indications of this. In his threat on 7th October, South African Defence Minister Magnus Malan declared that Samora Machel "appears to have lost control of the situation", then South Africa would act "accordingly". Malan's threats were directed specifically at Samora Machel rather than against Mozambique or its government in general. The following day, Deputy Foreign Minister Ron Miller, a politician whose name is linked to the military faction of the apartheid regime, repeated Malan's threats, also pointing an accusing finger at President Samora.

There followed a major campaign in the South African press, radio and television, in which there were two fundamental and interlinked themes - opposition to Samora Machel, and a veiled call for direct South African intervention. The statement on the SABC, for instance, broadcast an item from dubious sources trying to implicate Samora Machel in the activities of the Portuguese armed groups FP-25, several of whose members are currently on trial in Lisbon accused of terrorism. This is an attempt to equate Samora with men like Libyan leader Col Qadhafi who is considered in Western eyes as a "promoter of international terrorism". It is a classic way of building up to an assassination through a propaganda campaign that will win public acceptance of the murder. The South African government daily 'Citizen' openly called for intervention on 10th October, suggesting that there were ANC targets in Maputo that could be "taken out".

The hypothesis of an accident put forth all too quickly by the Pretoria regime must therefore be put aside. If there was sabotage of or attack on the plane, the authors are to be found only among South African army and the renegades of MNR.

Machel, whom I had the egregious [sic] honour to meet at the recent non-aligned summit in Harare last September, seemed to have taken all due precautions to avoid any plane mishaps in South African territory. He travelled in a Russian-made Tupolev with no precise schedule to ward off any attempt by the enemy. Furthermore, one look on the geographic map will show that Maputo is a few dozen miles from the South African and Malawi borders. It was quite possible to scramble communications and attract the President's plane above the South African territory where the racist army's artillery and missiles could act and they would to render plausible the theses of an accident, which Pretoria endeavours to do.