

# Machel crash

*Natal Witness 13/7/96*

**I**N a clear indication of the different value system of the new South Africa, the site at Mbuzini where President Samora Machel of Mozambique was killed in a plane crash in October 1986 has recently been declared a national monument. Though the inquiry headed by Justice Margo found that the accident was caused by pilot error, enough suspicions remain for the TRC to schedule a hearing into the matter.

Now evidence is mounting. For instance, one of the first on the mountainous crash scene was a local resident who was surprised to find security police already there — and showing more interest in rifling through the wreckage than assisting the nine survivors. There is also evidence that there was a signal intelligence Land Rover full of sophisticated electronic equipment in Mbuzini at the time of the crash, as well as of a mobile beacon mounted on a trolley. Finally, there is evidence of an airport official at Maputo being paid R1,5 million to switch off either the Maputo radar system or its beacon.

One does not have to be an expert to put all this together or to conclude that Machel was the victim of South African dirty tricks as much as pilot error. But were the story a novel, however, perhaps the writer might not have thought up the final irony: that the widow of the slain president is now the companion of the President of South Africa.