

## **S African Comment on Mozambique after Machel**

Johannesburg home service in English 0500 gmt 21 Oct 86

Text of commentary:

The death of President Samora Machel has come at a time when Mozambique is facing the most critical period in her history since being taken into independence by Mr Machel in June 1975. The civil war being waged by the Renamo resistance movement against the Frelimo government is at its fiercest, and it is escalating. Because of this, and because of the strain of 11 exhausting years of war, morale is at a particularly low level in the armed forces, which have now lost their commander-in-chief.

The civil war, Marxist policies and a cruel and protracted drought have brought widespread devastation to the economic infrastructure and the social fabric of Mozambique. Against this background, the death of President Machel leaves a huge vacuum that will require strong leadership if the already serious political economic and security position in the country is not to deteriorate further.

The immediate concern for the Frelimo leadership will be whether Renamo will intensify the conflict, taking advantage of what could well be a shaky transitional period in the corridors of power. As southern Africa, and the world at large, anxiously watch developments in Maputo in the critical days and weeks that lie ahead, there must inevitably be concern as to whether the Frelimo leadership will seek to fill the vacuum that has been created, and meet the threat of a possible further escalation of the civil war, by calling for an increase in the already large foreign military force in Mozambique from both communist and African states. An influx of surrogate forces from Cuba would, in particular, gravely aggravate an already seriously destabilised situation [see Note below].

The South African authorities acted expeditiously not only in immediately sending the necessary assistance and arranging for high-level representatives (headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs) to visit the scene of the tragedy, but also in making arrangements for an inspection by both the Mozambican government and the international civil aviation authorities.

The cordial relations that existed between President Machel and State President P.W. Botha - dating from the Incomati accord of 1984 - and Foreign Minister Pik Botha were, for South Africa, of immeasurable importance in the present period of strained relations between the two countries. Mr Machel was an African leader who, in spite of immense pressures from his peers, had the courage, at Incomati, to put the interest of his country and his sub-continent above those of political and ideological differences.

[Note: Another version of this commentary, broadcast by Johannesburg radio in English for abroad (1500 gmt 20 Oct 86), omitted paragraph 3 above and substituted the following: "The danger for Mozambique lies in the possibility of opportunist behaviour by any of the opposing groups in the first period of uncertainty."]