

SAMORA MACHEL: MARCHING INTO HISTORY

THERE'S NO LIFELINE

CP Correspondent

SUNDAY'S plane crash death of President Samora Machel has thrust the frontline states and the nine-nation Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference into a serious crisis.

The effect of Machel's death has been to cast further doubt on the stability of Mozambique's Frelimo government and, hence, the security of crucial non-South African trade routes.

Frontline states chairman President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia has said South Africa remains guilty of Machel's death unless proven innocent — a very widely-held opinion north of the Limpopo.

The extent of rage over Machel's death in the frontline states was evident in the streets of Harare this week, as hundreds of Zimbabweans attacked buildings associated with SA

and Malawi after widespread media reports that SA was responsible for Machel's death.

Whites, identified with South African government actions by virtue of the colour of their skins, were also indiscriminately attacked or made to shout slogans denouncing the Pretoria government before being allowed to proceed.

Young Zimbabweans demanded the immediate introduction of compulsory military service for all in their country, and several demonstrators said they were willing to go and fight alongside Frelimo in Mozambique.

"We have had enough," said one demonstrator.

Machel's death is particularly serious for Zimbabwe, the economic and industrial hub of the frontline states and the SADCC.

Added to Machel's death is that of Mozambique's Transport Minister Alcantare Santos, a key figure in the SADCC's transport commission.

Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert Mu-

gabe's government has pinned its slim hopes of reducing trade route dependency on South Africa, and thereby of surviving sanctions in reasonable shape, on the Mutare-Beira corridor. The passage is currently being guarded, with Frelimo's agreement, by more than 5 000 Zimbabwean troops against attacks by the Mozambique bandits.

The corridor carries a fuel pipeline, road and railway, and would be Zimbabwe's major trade artery if South Africa closed its borders.

Attempts to upgrade the capacity of the corridor are being hampered by the security situation, which has deteriorated considerably in northern Mozambique since last September.

Then, Malawi, apparently giving way to pressure from the frontline states to end support for the bandits, "expelled" several thousands of bandits, who entered the northern Mozambique provinces of Tete and Zambesia as a massive invasion force some 150km north of the Mutare-Beira corridor.

Two other railways to Mozambican ports — from Zimbabwe's South East to Maputo, and from Malawi to Nacala — are out of action as a result of bandit attacks.

The installation of a South African client bandit government in Maputo would be a devastating blow to Zimbabwe, the frontline states, the SADCC and the entire campaign for sanctions against Pretoria. It would also substantially change the character of the growing war in Southern Africa.

At the time of the fatal plane crash, Machel was returning from a confrontation he, Kaunda and Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos had held with President Mobutu Sese Seko over Zaire's continued support for South African- and CIA-backed Unita forces.

The scale of Unita's activities has rendered inoperable the railway line from Zambia's Copperbelt, through south Zaire to the Angolan port of Benguela.

Its closure means the use of more distant SA railways and ports.