

Rapport

After Machel 1986

The question is not whether the political situation in Southern Africa will be influenced by the death of President Samora Machel, but how — also regarding South Africa.

The possibilities are legion. And in an already restless area it will require special diplomatic ingenuity from South Africa to maintain relations with neighbours at as reasonable a level as is possible under the circumstances. Upsurges of anti-South African feelings in neighbouring countries have already indicated how difficult it could be.

To which type of "Mozambique after Machel" can we look forward? Various developments are possible: a new leader could appeal to a larger extent for communist help than his predecessor (assuming they are not frightened of a Russian/East German/Cuban "Vietnam"!); on the other hand he could recognise that a good neighbour means more than a distant friend; he could put out peace feelers to the Renamo movement or continue to fight them tooth and nail.

Anyway, the new leader's attitude cannot but exercise a major influence on the course of events in Southern Africa. He could help to accomplish greater peace in the area and the gradual return of prosperity in his own country, or he could, by a groundless anti-South African attitude, close his eyes to the results of even more unrest and more anarchy.

South Africa adopted a strictly correct attitude in the face of exploitation of the president's death. Under the circumstances it is all it can or should do. Even the faintest chance of good neighbourliness is indeed too important to gamble away.

Johannesburg

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