

Words of an African Revolutionary

A selection of quotations from the recently published *Samora Machel: An African Revolutionary Selected Speeches and Writings*. (Edited by Dr. Barry Munslow, Translated by Michael Wolfers, Zed Books Limited, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BU. Price £18.95 hardback, £6.50 paperback).

"These old Protestants were always persecuted. They took part in the war of resistance against the colonial occupation of our country. when they became Protestants, it was a form of resistance. It was they who inspired us, these elders from here. We did not grow from nothing. A constant spirit of struggle, struggle, struggle . . . it was these elders who taught us. They spoke with us and said: 'It's necessary to fight these Portuguese, they are foreigners' . . . No book by Marx ever arrived here, nor any other book that spoke against colonialism. Our books were these elders."

Recollections of Machel's youth, from an interview in Tempo, October 2, 1983.

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"Gradually, I saw that nothing would help but collective action. A man on his own couldn't hieve anything. At that stage — it was after 1956 — I began to understand what the key problems were, the key economic and political problems, and just why it was that we Africans were handicapped. Then 1960 taught me more — the independence of the Congo and its tumults. I began to think seriously about the possibilities of Mozambique becoming independent . . ."

Quoted by B. Davidson, In the Eye of the Storm, Angola's People, Longman, London, 1972.

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"We must be very clear on these points. some nationalists, either innocently for lack of a developed class consciousness or because they are involved in exploitation, think that the objective of our struggle should be to install Black power, instead of White power, and to appoint or elect Africans for the various political, administrative and economic positions now held by Whites. The former category of nationalists, once they are actively involved, understand and accept the need to destroy the exploitative state, while the latter category who identify with the system refuse its destruction. In short, for the latter nationalists who are not entirely satisfied with colonial power as it is foreign, the final aim of the struggle would in fact be to 'Africanise' exploitation . . . That is a reactionary standpoint that jeopardises the nature and purpose of the struggle."

Taken from talks in 1971. amended in 1974

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"An official who comes to explain the importance of hygiene and health yet cannot dig a single latrine or clean his house and rid it of flies and mosquitoes, who does not boil his drinking water and continues to frequent medicinemen and witch doctors, leads the people to do the same by the example he sets.

In short, the masses will always say: he's saying this because he was told to say it, but his words are as empty as the wind — let them blow by and everything will go on as before."

Ibid.

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"Mozambique is essentially a rural country, where more than 90 per cent of the African population live in non-urban areas. The urban areas are principally populated by settlers and were planned in such a way as to isolate and



Samora Machel:

easily contain the African population found there. Hence the rural areas are easy for us to approach, while the urban areas, tightly controlled by the enemy, demand more time and energy-consuming work by the cadres and rapidly eat up the efforts of a large number of those cadres.

This explains our priority for struggle in the rural areas and why in the present phase we have not paid much attention to urban guerrilla activity. Although such activity would be spectacular, it would be fatal for us, above all for the heavy cost it would take in cadres.

From a text published by the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1974.

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"We began with a derisively small force. We had on September 25, 1964 about 250 fighters, equipped with old repeater weapons, pistols and a few individual automatic weapons. In each province where the struggle was begun, and in the other provinces, the number of fighters varied between 15 and 25.

In front of us the colonial army ranged some 40,000 men, equipped with modern weapons, with air and naval forces, with a broad network of military bases and positions, easy communications, etc.

However, as we were armed with a correct line, from being weak and frail we changed into a powerful force that inflicts defeat after defeat on the Portuguese colonial troops, and the racist South African and Rhodesian troops."

Ibid

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"The 'pretty girl' with a soft voice . . . like the buzzing of a bee in one's ear . . . the voice modulated to talk to the commander who was used to the sound of cannon, napalm bombs, bazookas and shelling. A beautiful voice asking the commander what he liked to drink, what music he wanted to hear . . .

Next day when the population say: 'That one was PIDE', the commander replies: No, you don't know, I'm the one who knows.' Then the population wonder: 'You weren't here; I know him, he killed my cousin, he tortured my husband, he arrested my brother, he raped my daughter, as a PIDE agent.'

That's Beira. And if we don't keep a wary eye on all aspects of Beira, we shall be aiming with our eyes shut and hit our friends."

From a speech delivered in Beira on January 11, 1980.

"We shall soon be celebrating our fifth independence anniversary. Many of us have already lost the real picture of our colonised country. Many of us have already forgotten what colonial oppression was. Many of us have forgotten what Lourenço Marques was . . .

Who doesn't remember the fairs for the 'sale of lads'? There was a whole system established: recruiting agents went to the marketing centres of Manhiça, Moamba, Matutuine, Magude, Bilene, Macia, Canicado, Manjacaze, and to Gaza and Inhambane. They enticed young people with promises of jobs in the big city, promises of a future. They brought them here like cattle in trucks, rain or shine. When they got to Lourenço Marques they were kept in warehouses, in the cold and the heat. For food they had meal and pounded groundnuts cooked with salt. They stayed cooped up for months as sale goods waiting to be bought.

Along went the bosses, the rich settlers, the ladies with a dog on a leash, the wives of the upper bourgeoisie, and even some of the poor, to buy. To buy what? A hen, a chicken, a goat or what? They went to buy their lads . . .

That was Lourenço Marques: on one side, cement, opulence, the brightly-decked streets; on the other, insecurity, social injustice, discrimination, poverty and wretched darkness. This was Lourenço Marques built for the settlers by the blood and sweat of Mozambican workers."

From a speech in Maputo on March 18, 1980.

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"Against Marxism, against Leninism, which is our epoch's Marxism, imperialism mobilises incalculable human and material resources. The most sophisticated weapons, the threat of thermonuclear, bacteriological and chemical disaster, the ocean depths and cosmic space are deployed in an attempt to neutralise and destroy Marxism-Leninism.

The spectre that haunted the bourgeoisie in Europe a hundred years ago still haunts them, but now it is perceptible throughout the world.

For the oppressed peoples and classes, for the peoples and workers who have taken control of their destiny, Marxism is the shining path, a sun of hope and certainty that never sets, a sun that is always at its zenith."

From a speech in Berlin on April 11, 1983, centenary of Marx's death.

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"There is much absenteeism from work. Absences excused on the grounds of illness are often due to drinking; we might say the reason is a 'hangover'. When such a worker does go to work he uses his machine as a pillow.

There are some cases where people are absent for 20 days in one month. They virtually only go to work to collect their pay, they say they are independent, that FRELIMO brought independence, and as they were in prison, they want to drink now. There are a lot who go in to punch their card but not to work. The foreman comes along and tells them to work, and they answer back: 'You're a fascist.' If someone is told he is damaging the factory and the economy, a shirker retorts: 'I shall make self-criticism.' since when did self-criticism produce?"

From a speech in Maputo on October 13, 1976.