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# The Discourse of Samora Machel

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Building a nation in battle-torn Mozambique / Iain Christie

Sunday News [Dar es Salaam], 2 April 1972. [veja Amélia Souto and António Sopa, *Samora Machel: bibliografia, 1970-1986* (Maputo: Centro de Estudos Africanos, 1996), item no.714, p.173, and item no.643, p.157]

This rare interview with Iain Christie was re-published in *Sowing the seeds of revolution*. This clipping is taken from Facts and Reports [Amsterdam], vol.2, no.9 (29 April 1972), p.1-3. The interview is very specific, e.g. a question about the Portuguese tactic of laying hard road surfaces to prevent laying of landmines. Item 643 in Souto and Sopa may be the same text: if so, the date of the interview was 14 February 1972.

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# FACTS & REPORTS

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## Building a nation in battle - torn Mozambique

**SAMORA MOISES MACHEL** has been President of the Mozambique Liberation Front since shortly after the death of Dr. Eduardo Mondlane in 1969. He is a soldier-politician in the classic mould and combines the Presidency with the command of the Mozambique People's Liberation Army. He is rarely seen in Dar es Salaam and seldom gives interviews but on a recent visit he spoke to "Sunday News" staff writer **IAIN CHRISTIE** about Frelimo; what it stands for; what it is doing; and where it is going. In this interview the word "Cahora" is used instead of "Cabora" in the name of the giant dam project in Mozambique. Frelimo uses Cahora because it more closely approximates the local people's pronunciation of the site.

**Q—** Since you began military operations near Cahora Bassa, developments in South Tete have received a great deal of publicity, and successful Frelimo operations are reported so frequently, even by the Portuguese, that it appears as though the struggle is more developed here than anywhere else in Mozambique. Is this so? And how do South

Tete and Cahora Bassa fit into Frelimo's overall strategy?

**A—** The struggle in Tete Province is not separated from the development of the struggle in the other provinces. Therefore in order to understand the situation in Tete you have to know the political and military situation in the whole of Mozambique.

Tete is an integral part of our country. The arm cannot live outside the body and Tete is something like an arm in the context of our country. Only when the other parts of the body work properly can the arm also function. It is because the political and military struggle is developing properly in the other provinces that we are having successes in Tete.

It was necessary to develop the war in the other provinces to create conditions for it to start in Tete in 1968. By that time, in Niassa and Cabo Delgado, we were already launching large scale, important combats, already capturing prisoners and war equipment.

We were developing the process of national reconstruction in these two provinces — we had hospitals and schools. So the struggle had already determined important changes in the society there.

These conditions enabled us to begin the fighting in Tete again in 1968 and the struggle is now well-developed. It is developing because the people are becoming more and more involved. But although it may

appear that the war in Tete is more developed than in the other two provinces, this is not the case. What is happening is that Tete is being given more publicity because of the economic interests there. They are the interests of capitalists and international imperialism; for them Tete is like the camel's hump — it is where their strength and reserves are concentrated. And our struggle is affecting these interests.

You know about Cahora Bassa. The great powers are involved there. Then there are the trucks which transport goods on the road through Tete from Malawi to Rhodesia. We attack the roads, trains and trucks, mainly because it is through them that the enemy circulates and distributes its forces.

Cahora Bassa is not our main target. Our plan as it was defined when we started the war is to spread the struggle throughout the entire country, and since Cahora Bassa is inside our country and in a province where there is fighting, it necessarily falls within this plan. We do not concentrate our action in Tete on Cahora Bassa, but of course there are circumstances that make it a very important target for us, namely the extent of imperialist involvement and the implications for our struggle. If the scheme were to be carried out.

**Q—** I know you have schools, hospitals and so on in the northern part of Tete, but do you have these things south of the Zambezi yet?

**A—** Yes. The struggle has

developed quickly here because this is an area where Portuguese oppression made itself felt more strongly than in other places. And there are the people who live near the border with Rhodesia — they suffered double oppression. They were recruited to work in the banana and sugar plantations in Mozambique and when they finished there they were sent to Rhodesia to work in the tobacco plantations. When they finished there they came back and were recruited by the Portuguese again.

So the people there felt oppression more than anywhere else. Men could never live with their families. It was something like slavery.

The result is that the people are aware that the armed struggle is the only solution to their problems. That's why there are so many cases of boys and girls of 15 and 16 joining us. One of the reasons is that they themselves saw their parents being oppressed, exploited and even killed by the Portuguese colonialists.

But in spite of these atrocities we do not retaliate in their brutal manner.

**Q—** What about captured Portuguese soldiers? What is your attitude towards them, and towards white civilians who live in Mozambique?

**A—** When we capture Portuguese soldiers we do not kill or mistreat them. Our people know that these men are participating in the war because they were forced to. They are not defending their own interests or the interests of the Portuguese people, but the interests of Portuguese capitalists and international imperialism.

Then there are the Portuguese soldiers who desert to us. These we consider our allies. Their desertion is an act of support to our struggle.

And there are whites born in Mozambique who want to join our ranks. We do not consider these as foreigners who support us. Such a man is one of us and it is his duty, just as it is my duty, to liberate Mozambique.

Our policy regarding civilians is clear. We do not fight the Portuguese who are in our country because they are Portuguese. We fight the forces of colonial occupation.

This policy is not new. Since the beginning we have said our struggle is not against the Portuguese people but against Portuguese colonialism. And now in Tete one begins to feel this more strongly. There are more concentrations of Portuguese there because the Portuguese population is much

larger than in the other two provinces where we are fighting. They have shops there and plantations. There are traders. We don't harm them. We attack the colonial war machine of repression.

Of course, if those people co-operate with the colonial authorities against us we have to take action against them. We do the same with Mozambicans.

Sometimes civilians get killed when we attack a convoy. But we attack these convoys because in them are troops and arms, and these aren't carried only in military vehicles. Civilian cars are used for this purpose too, so it is impossible to differentiate, to know which is the military car and which is not. That is why civilians sometimes get killed. But it is not our policy to kill civilians. Our targets are military or with a military relevance.

Q:— The Portuguese have been putting hard surfaces on roads in Tete to prevent you from laying mines. They even brought in a new Governor-General who is an expert on road building to help. Have they succeeded in surfacing the roads and, if so, have you devised a way round this problem?

A:— The former Governor was also an engineer. He was brought especially for Cahora Bassa because he was one of its planners. And one of his first statements when he arrived was that the north was calling them, because the north was not developed, had no communications, roads.

The plan of opening roads stems from as far back as 1969. They had already been allocated thousands of pounds just for building roads from Lourenço Marques up to the Ruvuma River, and from Beira to the Zambian border, to enable them to distribute their forces to attack our zones.

We don't control the air and that is not our concern. We do control the ground and we are concentrating on continuing to control it.

The Portuguese have created a myth that road building is the key to their security. The last Governor failed in this task and resigned. The new Governor won't succeed either because we are now in a better position than ever to wreck the plan. Today it is not only our soldiers who destroy the roads — the villagers themselves go out and rip up the surfaces almost as soon as they are laid.

Q:— You have often said that the Mozambican struggle is essentially political and that this must be realised in order to understand the development of Frelimo's military operations. Does this mean that you attribute military success to having the correct political line?

A:— Yes. For Frelimo it is fundamental to have a national consciousness and to develop it into a revolutionary consciousness that allows for an understanding of the objectives of our struggle, the reasons for our revolution, and an awareness of who we are fight-

ing, who are the enemies. This is the primary concern of every leader, of every militant and of the people in general.

Our military situation is now better than ever. And we know that the reason the struggle is successful is that our political line is correct, the people are becoming more and more aware, mobilised and organised. That is what makes the struggle political.

Big changes are taking place in our society now. Political power is being handed to the people themselves, the leadership in the liberated areas is being undertaken by the people of those areas.

The Portuguese will never be able to destroy this new awareness. In some of those areas the people have not known oppression for seven years, they pay no taxes, they don't have to carry the Portuguese boss on their shoulders... when the colonialists went to the villages to collect taxes or to arrest people they were carried by the Mozambicans themselves.

The people have developed their initiative. They discuss their problems and find solutions together. They discuss ways to combat the enemy. They participate in the struggle both in its planning and its implementation. They discuss the kind of life they want to live.

So we no longer discuss if our struggle will continue, if the Portuguese will have successes or not. The struggle is an integral part of the people's lives and what we discuss with the people now is how to make our struggle a real revolution.

Q:— Can you define what you mean by a liberated area? The Portuguese sometimes take journalists into areas which you describe as liberated, then say to them: "Look, there are no terrorists here."

A:— You could have visited pre-independence Tanganyika and travelled for miles in the countryside, where the people lived, without seeing any sign of the administrative authorities, the British. This does not mean that Tanganyika was not dominated by the colonialists; the structure which determined the lives of the people and to which they were subjected was a colonialist structure.

The form of administration and the form of production were colonialist — arresting people for work, for example. The form of teaching in the schools, when and where there was a school somewhere in the countryside, was a colonialist form. The curriculum was British — about the history of Britain, the heroism of the British people.

So although the British were not physically present everywhere, the structure of oppression made itself felt throughout the country.

Now, in Mozambique, these attestations of colonialism, the methods of work under the colonialists, have been removed from large areas of the country. These we call liberated zones. The way of production is a popular way, not the colonialist way, which is characterised by exploitation. The attitude which guides everybody's life is now collective, not individualist.

Problems are solved collectively — and this is something new.

These liberated zones, because of the new type of power, new kind of administration, new way of life, are the targets of the enemy. We do not deny that these zones are subject to attacks, but this happens even in Vietnam and nobody can deny that there are large liberated areas in Vietnam.

And to further clarify the point, "liberated zones" does not mean the complete expulsion of the physical presence of the colonialists. There are still Portuguese there but they are isolated in a few small garrisons. The basic question is: who do the people follow? They follow whose watchword? Is the work they undertake clandestine or open? In our zones the work is open. The watchword comes from the organisation. That means freedom from exploitation, from forced labour. That is a liberated zone.

The Portuguese have taken journalists to Mozambique. We also take our friends. Each one sees for himself, we take people from many countries and last year journalists and students visited us from as far apart as Sweden and Kenya. Our visitors have been to Caço Delgado, Niassa and Tete and have written about what they saw. They have balanced the picture. It was clear to them that Frelimo controls these areas.

Q:— Since the beginning of the revolution in Angola the Portuguese have introduced "reforms" in all the colonies in an effort to persuade the people not to join the armed struggle. Has this caused any serious problems for you?

A:— They do this and they will continue to do it because it is the only weapon they have — dividing the people in order to dominate them, what they have introduced is new methods of corruption, not methods of changing the structure of society. It's not to better the lives of the people, it's the introduction of corruption.

They cannot change their political line because they cannot stop being colonialists. They cannot stop making the people do forced labour because they depend on forced labour.

What they do is divide the people. They give some economic privileges to a few Mozambicans, those who have had some education and who are considered potentially active political leaders, to induce them to defend the colonial system in order to retain these privileges.

They announce "important changes" like the new "State" of Mozambique, to try to create the illusion of a new nation. In other countries that the Portuguese are taking steps towards the independence of our country.

They also try to discredit the liberation movement — by attempting to make the people believe that we are terrorists. For example, they massacre people in a certain place, then bring people from another zone and say: "Look, this is what Frelimo does."

But to answer your question, these tactics do not cause any problem for us. The people are politically aware and conscious; they have lived under Portuguese colonialism since they were born; they have experienced the oppression, exploitation and humiliation in their own flesh; they cannot be cheated.

A typical example is that of Domingos Arouca, the only black Mozambican lawyer. The Portuguese tried to win him over by offering him a high post in the colonial administration. He understood and refused to be part of the colonial machine. Today he is in jail.

Manoeuvres will never succeed.

Q:— Recently the West German Government has been making moves which suggest that Chancellor Willy Brandt is trying to stop German weapons going to Portugal for the African wars. Do you think that Mr. Brandt is making an honest effort?

A:— We cannot see how this can be considered other than as a manoeuvre. The West German Government is linked with the Portuguese so much that it cannot stop its suppliers, they have officers, they manufacture weapons in Portugal. It is easier to make the weapons there than to transport them from West Germany.

A few weeks ago the West German Ambassador in Malawi flew to Mozambique to "visit" Cahora Bassa.

Do you think this adds up to an honest effort?

Q:— What kind of political structure is being built in liberated Mozambique? What kind of society can we expect to see when the entire country is free, and would you like to compare it to any other country's system?

A:— We are fighting against a specific structure which exists in Mozambique. It is an unpopular structure, where there is a privileged class, there is an embryonic intermediate class and there are those who are really miserable; a structure which ensures that the riches of our country do not serve the people.

The people who are fighting, making sacrifices, dying in the war, destroying the enemy, are doing so to win real freedom. The people will create a structure that benefits them, not one that satisfies the selfish aims of an exploiting minority.

There is no need to draw comparisons with other countries.

Q:— How much time do you spend in Mozambique, how much outside in your various diplomatic activities?

A:— The rule is to spend most of the time inside because our external policy is determined by the situation inside. The leadership must stay inside, following the development of the situation so as to be able to formulate the watchword corresponding to the situation at any given moment. The exterior plays an important part in our struggle and this why we have to go

outside from time to time, to inform our friends in Africa, in the socialist countries, the progressive forces in the West, about the development of the struggle. But it is not a decisive part and we go abroad only when necessary.

It is fundamental to our struggle that the leadership and the people participate together in the work inside, and through this we know where to put more emphasis, where to

concentrate more efforts at any specific time. This is a rule of the organisation but it is not because it is a rule that our leadership undertakes its duties inside. They understand that it is necessary to know the temperature inside and that the people are the thermometer.

**Q—:** Are you able to operate politically in the south of your country, where the armed struggle has not begun?

**A—:** Yes. We have political cadres over the whole country. That is why there is a growing awareness among the people that enables them to understand the manoeuvres of the enemy. For example, during Banda's trip, there was a movement of discontent that expressed itself in protests. The colonialists made mass arrests in the whole southern region. The same happened in June, 1970. This is because of our

presence everywhere.

In the Central Committee there are members from all provinces. In all the different sectors of activity there are people from all provinces. This is the political structure.

Fighters came from all provinces, too, and if we do not yet operate militarily in some provinces it is mainly due to geographical problems. But we will cover the whole country. Of this we are certain.