

MOZAMBIQUE MOURNS

By PAUL FAUVET
Special to the Guardian

MAPUTO—Mozambique has been plunged into deep mourning by the sudden death of its president, Samora Machel, in a plane crash Oct. 19. The Mozambican leader was returning from a 1-day summit in Zambia, also attended by Presidents Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola and Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire. His aircraft, a Soviet Tupolev 134A, was to have arrived at Maputo airport at 9:30 pm.

When contact with the plane was lost, a search was immediately started. At about 6:50 the next morning, South African authorities informed the Mozambican government that a plane traveling from Zambia to Maputo had crashed on South African soil. The aircraft came down in the Kangwane bantustan, near the point where the borders of South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland all meet.

SCENE OF CRASH VISITED

A delegation of top Mozambican officials, including Security Minister Sergio Viera, visited the scene of the crash Oct. 20 (see story, page 15). By this time the country's citizens had been prepared for the worst by a broadcast informing them that the president's plane was missing. Radio Mozambique had played nothing but funeral music from 8:30 that morning onward.

After the delegation's return, a statement formally announcing Machel's death was broadcast by one of his close friends and comrades, Frelimo Political Bureau member and Secretary of the Mozambican Parliament, Marcelino dos Santos.

Dos Santos said that the president had died

"under circumstances that have not yet been clarified." He did not speculate on the causes of the crash, but drew a pointed parallel with the 1969 assassination of the first leader of Frelimo, Dr. Eduardo Mondlane, who was killed by a parcel bomb sent by agents of the Portuguese regime that was then ruling Mozambique.

Frelimo's enemies, he recalled, had murdered Mondlane "in the hope that this criminal act would impede the development of the liberation struggle." But faced with this loss, he recalled, Mozambicans "united around Frelimo, redoubled their determination and continued the fight." He urged the Mozambican people to react likewise to this new tragedy.

Dos Santos said that the death occurred "at a particularly difficult moment in our history when the most reactionary forces are ranged against our country, seeking to destroy our independence and overturn the gains of the Mozambican revolution."

33 OTHERS KILLED

He urged redoubled commitment "to wipe out the banditry that assails our country"—a reference to the South African-backed contras of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR).

Under the constitution, the Frelimo Central Committee must appoint Machel's successor, since the president of the party is also automatically head of state.

Thirty-three others died in the disaster. These include Transport Minister Luis Alcantra Santos and Deputy Foreign Minister Jose Carlos Lobo. Lobo was well known to friends of Africa in the U.S. from the period when he was Mozambique's UN ambassador.

Leading Mozambican intellectual Aquino De Braganca, director of the Center of African Studies at Maputo's Eduardo Mondlane University, also died, as did a large number of the presidential office staff. Six out of seven Soviet crew members perished, as did President Machel's two Cuban personal doctors. Ten people survived the crash, but some are critically injured. A state funeral will be held Oct. 28.

As an atmosphere of great sadness descended on this city, suspicion deepened that the president had been murdered on orders from the South African military. On Oct. 21 the daily paper *Noticias* suggested that Machel had been assassinated. He was "a major target to be cut down," said the paper in a front-page editorial. At press time Oct. 22 Mozambican authorities had not made any formal accusa-

tion, but nobody in Maputo was referring to the disaster as an "accident."

Suspicion focused on an intense anti-Mozambique campaign by South Africa's government and press over the previous two weeks. Using as a pretext an Oct. 6 land mine attack in Kangwane, Defense Minister Magnus Malan charged Maputo with providing a base for the African National Congress (ANC), in violation of the Nkomati Accord, a 1984 non-aggression agreement between Mozambique and South Africa. Machel, warned Malan on Oct. 15, "has chosen the path of terror and now experiences the results." Mozambique, he claimed, was "on the brink of collapse" due to Machel's policies.

The following day a Mozambique Information Agency (AIM) commentary charged, recalling Mondlane's assassination, that "forces of the same nature, equally soaked in crime, seem prepared to follow their example and murder the Mozambican president." The press campaign and Malan's statements, wrote AIM editor Carlos Cardoso three days before Machel's death, are "a classic way of building up to an assassination."

South Africa has appointed a commission to investigate the crash, as suspicion swirled also around its seemingly long delay in notifying Mozambican authorities of the location of the wreckage; Pretoria acknowledged that it had been tracking the flight on its radar. There was also confusion over the plane's incorrect flight path, and reported statements by two survivors that there had been a blast inside the aircraft just prior to the crash. One of the survivors, a crew member recovering in a South African military hospital, was reported to have indicated that the plane had been shot down.

Pretoria meanwhile argued that stormy weather and pilot error had combined to cause the crash. The ANC, reflecting the widespread suspicion, stated it would hold Pretoria responsible until evidence to the contrary was produced.

BACKGROUND OF RESISTANCE

Samora Machel, 53 at the time of his death, was born into a peasant family in the fertile Limpopo valley in the Southern province of Gaza. He came from a background of resistance to colonial rule: his grandfather had been a chief in the army of Gungunhuana, the last ruler of the Gaza empire, and had fought against the Portuguese occupation of southern Mozambique in the 1890s. The Machel family experienced the sharp end of colonial oppression, as Mozambicans were displaced from their land in the Limpopo valley to make way for Portuguese settlers.

The young Samora trained as a nurse and worked in what is now the Maputo Central Hospital. Hearing of the founding of the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) in Tanzania in 1962, he slipped out of the country to join the guerrilla army. He was included in one of the first groups to be sent to Algeria for military training in 1963, and took part in the planning that led to the launching of armed struggle inside Mozambique on Sept. 25, 1964.

In 1966 he became commander of the Frelimo army, and in 1968 was elected to the movement's Central Committee at Frelimo's second congress, held inside liberated territory in the northern province of Niassa. At that time, Frelimo was wracked by bitter ideological struggles. For some in the leadership, inde-

pendence was just a matter of replacing whites with blacks: a black exploiting class would simply step into the shoes of the Portuguese. Against this faction Machel stood side by side with Eduardo Mondlane in insisting that the liberation war had nothing to do with race, that the working people of Mozambique and Portugal were allies in the struggle against the fascist government in Lisbon and that Frelimo's goal had to be the abolition of exploitation.

The revolutionary line won the day at the second congress, and the leaders of the conservative faction deserted to the Portuguese or abandoned the struggle. After the murder of Mondlane, Machel was appointed first as a member of a presidential triumvirate and then in 1970 to the position of Frelimo's president.

He mapped out the military strategy that led to the defeat of the major Portuguese offensive "Operation Gordian Knot" in 1970, and then to Frelimo's push across the Zambezi River and the drive southward.

FOILED NEOCOLONIAL SCHEMES

It was the war in Mozambique, together with the sister struggles in Angola and Guinea-Bissau, that led to the collapse of the Portuguese fascist regime in a military coup on April 25, 1974. Rejecting anything short of a full transfer of power, Frelimo foiled various neocolonial schemes, and on Sept. 7, 1974, Samora Machel signed the Lusaka Accord with Portugal, setting out the mechanisms of Mozambique's independence. On June 25, 1975, 13 years to the day after the founding of Frelimo, President Machel proclaimed the independence of the People's Republic of Mozambique.

In February 1977, the liberation movement, at its third congress, transformed itself into the Marxist-Leninist Frelimo Party, with the building of socialism as its explicit goal. Machel was confirmed as its president.

But independence did not bring peace. Mozambique was still confronted with hostile white minority regimes on its borders. In March 1976, Machel closed the border with what was then still Rhodesia and imposed full UN sanctions against the Ian Smith regime. Mozambique's role in providing rear bases for the Zimbabwean nationalist guerrillas was crucial in bringing Smith to the negotiating table, and thus to Zimbabwe's 1980 independence.

But Mozambique paid a heavy price: Smith's forces repeatedly attacked the country, and sanctions cost Maputo an estimated \$500 million (mainly in lost port and rail dues). Only some \$120 million was paid back in compensation by the international commu-

(Continued from page 14)

nity, Mozambique and Zambia thus carried a burden which should properly have been borne by the entire UN membership.

After Zimbabwe's independence, Mozambique found itself facing a third war—a clandestine war waged by South Africa through the MNR contras. The MNR had originally been set up by Smith's secret services as a Mozambican fifth column, but were transferred lock, stock and barrel to camps in South Africa's Transvaal in 1980.

South Africa's war has so far cost Mozambique over 100,000 lives and an estimated \$5.5 billion—considerably more than the country's entire foreign debt.

President Machel took his responsibilities as commander-in-chief of the Mozambican armed forces very seriously, and in July of this year he appointed the country's first prime

minister since independence, Mario da Graca Machungo, in order to concentrate his own efforts on the war and on his tasks as head of the party.

after years of patient diplomacy had failed, he threatened in September to close the border with Malawi if that government did not drop its support for the MNR.

His most controversial moment came with the signing of the Nkomati Accord on March 16, 1984. This was a move with which several of Mozambique's allies, including then-Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, disagreed. Machel hoped that the agreement would lead to the end of destabilization, and that Pretoria could be forced to honor its word to stop supporting the MNR. But evidence rapidly piled up that the South African military had no intention of honoring the accord and, from February 1985 on, as the contra war escalated, Machel repeatedly denounced Pretoria's violations of the treaty.

There can be no doubt that Machel's international prestige was matched by enormous

popularity at home. The ordinary people of Mozambique, despite the country's grave economic crisis, maintained their trust in and affection for their head of state.

He had a deep rapport with the people and drew huge crowds wherever he spoke. To watch Samora Machel deliver a speech at a rally was to enter a spellbinding political experience. He would engage in dialog with the crowd, joke with them, break into song, switch languages if he felt the audience was not understanding his Portuguese, and lead the chanting of slogans, particularly the traditional Frelimo rallying cry "A luta continua" (The struggle continues).

NKOMATI ACCORD CONTROVERSIAL

Machel believed passionately in regional cooperation and strove to maintain good relations with all the majority-ruled states in the zone. It was only with great reluctance that,

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