

Samora Machel — Aluta Continua!



As this issue was going to press, the founding President of the People's Republic of Mozambique, Samora Machel, was killed in an air crash on South African territory with 32 other comrades. Hundreds of thousands of Mozambicans assembled at Maputo City Hall and the Heroes' Monument in the midst of dignitaries of 69 countries to pay homage to their fallen hero. From Maputo, AJOPE reflects on the causes and consequences for Southern Africa.

Maputo, October 28, 1986.

As Marcelino dos Santos so movingly put in his eulogy for President Samora Machel, it is difficult to know how to remember a man whose voice is still echoing. But in these very difficult moments, there are at least a few things that should not be difficult to do.

At a time when most South African and Western media are trying to discuss the causes that led to the plane crash one can see at work the process that leads to the fabrication of those famous primary and secondary sources so dear to academic historians. Sabotage or accident? If sabotage, by who, how, what for?

Ever since Mozambique's independence on June 25 1975, President Samora has tirelessly insisted on the necessity to preserve the sovereignty of Mozambique. To many, this insistence was not understood. It was thought that the sovereignty of a state was so obvious a fact that it did not require such in-

sistence. Others, still, would see in this insistence an attempt to create a mystique of power.

Yet, for historical and geographical reasons, the insistence was not only important, it was essential.

State Sovereignty versus Capital Fascist Terrorism

Colonial rule from slavery days to 1975 operated on the principle that the people and the land of the continent could be trampled upon because they were the property of capital. Over the years, capital was challenged, but never as victoriously as through the armed struggle organized by FRELIMO, which led to independence.

South African capital, Rhodesian capital, Congolese capital, Tanganyikan capital, be it from mines or plantations treated Mozambique as a huge labour reserve. The wave of independence in the early 60s drastically changed this situation, but not without struggles. With the independence of Tanzania, especially, Northern Mozambique was transformed within less than 10 years from a labour reserve for capital to the well-known liberated zones. That is to say, the border between Mozambique and Tanzania served to bond two peoples into a single-minded struggle against Portuguese colonial rule, allied to Rhodesia and South Africa.

But in contrast to this, South African, Rhodesian and Portuguese capital continued to treat Mozambique as an area vital for its survival. Mozambique was considered as an integral part of the "lebensraum" of Portugal, South Africa and Rhodesia.

President Samora had been stressing that apartheid was the Nazism of the current era, but he was not listened to because, somehow the deaths of black people still, more than 100 years since the formal abolition of slavery, continue to be assessed differently from the deaths of white people. The life of a black miner still does not carry the same weight in the minds of whites in South Africa and in the former colonial powers and their most powerful ally, the USA.

Imperialists are Racists

An illustration of this different assessment was given when President Reagan refused to accept the invitation of the heads of the Frontline States for a summit. Black people are dispensable, be they miners or heads of state. We know how the US government and European powers planned and succeeded in removing Lumumba first politically, then physically. Then, as now, international law is only respectable to the imperialist powers if and only if, they do not interfere with their material and political interests. And, as far as these imperialist powers are concerned, all means, including the most barbarous ones, are acceptable.¹

The imperialist powers which are tacitly supporting the apartheid regime like to proclaim their hatred of apartheid and yet, in the current context they are, in different regions, practising the same policies as the apartheid regime. The leaders of Pretoria know very well that as long as the USA can with impunity invade a country like Grenada; support contras in Nicaragua; blockade Cuba; attack Libya with the avowed aim of removing Muammar Gadhaffi from power; they, too, can carry on with relative impunity the worst kind of atrocities.

Historians have shown that although nazism blossomed in Germany, it could have done so in other countries. The *lebensraum*, the so-called necessity for vital space, is one which is intimately linked to the growth of capital. One of the errors of Marx and Engels, in their adherence to the idea of the breaking of backward socio-economic systems, is that this is not just written in letters of fire and blood.

The error was to believe that, by breaking the backwardness of feudalism, capitalism was opening up an era of civilized behaviour. Through its history, the growth of capitalism has shown that while it is capable of doing away with backward features of feudalism, it is also capable of reintroducing out-moded modes of production, as it did with slavery in the Americas. Moreover, nazism should have been a sobering reminder that in its frenzy for living space and profits, capitalism is capable of threatening its own survival.

In other words, despite Marx's implicit conception that capitalism grows out and away from the famous phase of primitive accumulation, the history of colonial and post-colonial rule shows this not to be the case. And it could be argued that in the current situation in countries like the US and Great Britain, capitalism is showing that it is capable, almost at the stroke of a single administration, of destroying some of the rules and social contracts that had been achieved in its "birthplace".

The Hypocrisy of the Imperialists

The situation prevailing in the past few months in Southern Africa is the single most powerful illustration of how capital is incapable of respecting its own well established rules of international behaviour. It is not only the boundaries of sovereign states that are not being respected. Institutions like the UN and affiliated institutions are now being attacked by those very same countries that had created them.

The same countries that have launched anti-terrorist campaigns and spoken against terrorism have been incapable of denouncing, condemning and imposing sanctions against the biggest single culprit in Southern Africa.

As far as the apartheid regime was concerned, the Nkomati Accord was supposed to have finished off Mozambique. It did not. And so, it had decided

to launch a new phase of threats, some directly mentioning President Samora by name. Feeling vulnerable on their Malawi flank, the apartheid regime used Malawi to pour in as many trained bandits as they could get their hands on. So vulnerable did they feel, that they had raised the stakes by including in their plans of counter-retaliation a plan to assassinate President Samora.

Indeed, it was, in part, this realization that had promoted President Samora to insist, at the 15th session of the People's Assembly earlier this year, that executive power should be reorganized in such a way that, should something happen to him, power must continue to be exercised; something none of the western media has understood.

But this ignorance is not surprising because, like the sovereignty of the newly independent states, the history of these states is negated except when it is written in the perspective of those who claim to best know this continent, because, as they see it, they are the ones who best exploited these former colonial possessions.

President Samora Machel, like many other revolutionaries of the Third World before him, was killed because he adamantly refused to accept this property relation. If sovereignty meant anything, it meant that borders had to be respected, even if, or rather especially when, they constitute obstacles for the reproduction of a regime like the apartheid regime.

The Plane Crash

The theory explaining the plane crash as resulting from pilot error has not fooled those who have followed events in the region. It is consistent with the policy of the South African Regime as well as their imperialist allies toward Mozambique since 1975. This policy was not one in which Mozambique was left alone to develop its own policies. Few western European countries, for example, came to the assistance of Mozambique when it closed the borders with Rhodesia.

There is no doubt that Frelimo made many errors. But a distinction must be made between the errors which were made, or rather which would have been made, with or without interference from the apartheid regime. Yet, this is precisely the kind of distinction that becomes difficult in the case of Mozambique because the apartheid regime never ceased to intervene. In other words, which value should one attribute to the "pilot error" explanation when sophisticated electronic means are used to provoke a pilot error?

Therefore, the responsibility of bringing the plane down can be attributed to South Africa, but the tacit allies of South Africa, namely the US, the UK, the EEC countries all bear just as great a responsibility because they have consistently failed to force on the apartheid regime the respect of the rule

of International Law. They have failed willingly because they would rather defend their economic interests than do away with the rule of fascism in Southern Africa.

Note:

1. At a press conference held in Maputo, 4 of the survivors pointed out that, at least two passengers — a journalist and President Samora's personal physician — called, in vain, for assistance as the South Africans were searching the plane for documents. These subsequently died.