

'I Would Like America to Help Me'

INTERVIEW: SAMORA MACHEL

Samora Machel has been president of Mozambique since 1975, when the onetime colony won its independence from Portugal. The Marxist government of Mozambique has ties to the Soviet Union but is still formally nonaligned, and Machel recently visited six European capitals to secure increased economic and military aid. In London, he spoke with NEWSWEEK'S Ronald Henkoff. Excerpts:

HENKOFF: What can Mozambique do to resist such so-called reprisal raids as the one that South African commandos launched recently against the African National Congress office in Maputo?

MACHEL: I would ask: What can the United States do to enable Mozambique to resist these attacks? Given the diplomatic, economic and military relations that the United States has with South Africa, what can the United States do to resist these attacks?

Q. What would you like the United States to do?

A. In order to resist, my people need weapons. The people must be armed in order to defend themselves.

Q. Is the antigovernment guerrilla movement gaining strength in your country?

A. There are only armed bandits in Mozambique. There are no guerrillas in our country.

Q. Has the level of economic and military assistance you have received from the Soviet Union been unsatisfactory?

A. During our struggle for the liberation of Mozambique, we got complete support from the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and East Germany, not only in the supply of weapons but in the training of cadres. I never received any weapons from the West. I didn't even receive diplomatic support. So I cannot start saying whether the Soviet Union has done enough or not done enough. If the United States supported us in weaponry then I could start making comparisons.

Q. Does that mean you would like military support from the West in addition to the military support you receive from the East?

A. My country is a nonaligned country. We have established diplomatic relations with all countries, from all continents, regardless of their social, economic or political systems.



Jean-Claude Francolon—Gamma-Liaison

Machel: 'The West has caused our hunger'

Q. In addition to military aid, what else would you like to see come out of your visit to Europe?

A. This is not specifically a military visit. It is a political and diplomatic visit, fundamentally to establish economic cooperation. We want to establish mutually advantageous relations with Europe. There is no equality now between Mozambique and Western European countries. Mozambique is still emerging from the effects of colonialism.

Q. Do your overtures to the West represent a shift in your commitment to Marxism?

A. I would ask first: if the United States trades with the Soviet Union, does that mean the United States has to abandon its political philosophy?

Q. So the ideology of your own system, then, has not changed?

A. No.

Q. Your recently adopted economic program includes a plan to shift some of the population of your cities to the countryside. What do you hope to achieve by this?

A. We are giving the unemployed a chance to work. At the moment a large portion of the city population is jobless. In the short term, the sector in which they can be most productive is agriculture. We need to have a large population, but our people must be working.

Q. Why does Mozambique, a country blessed with fertile soil and abundant raw materials, have such trouble feeding itself?

A. It is the fault of Europe and the United States. You are the ones who are ultimately responsible for our hunger, because you were the colonialists, and it was you who fostered illiteracy and ignorance among our people. As a result we now have no technology, we have no engineers, we have no agronomists, we have no veterinarians, we have no doctors. We have no knowledge of science. This is all because of colonialism.

Q. What can the West do to rectify this situation?

A. The West knows what it must do. The West, particularly the United States, knows better than I do all the potential that my country has. They know what kind of crops, what kind of cereals and vegetables, ought to be cultivated in each area. They know our potential for fishing, animal husbandry, forestry and mining. I would like the United States to help me and tell me what I have. The United States also knows the strategic value of Mozambique.

Q. Have you received any indications that the United States will help you?

A. Since 1976 we have been inviting the United States to involve itself in our agricultural production. You should consult the State Department to find out what is happening.

Q. Amnesty International reports that your government has executed some suspected criminals without first trying them. Is there any truth to that charge?

A. We are considered to be very bad by Amnesty International because we have the courage to publish our laws. It is a simple fact that in Mozambique we have the death penalty. We instituted it after demands from the people at a time when the Rhodesians were sending mercenaries to massacre our people, kidnap children and rape and kill women. Other countries kill illegally. In our country we do it legally.

Q. Does the law in Mozambique say that there should be a trial?

A. Yes, there are trials. The people who were killed were executed after they had been tried.

Q. So you're saying that Amnesty International is not correct?

A. I'm not the one to say. They have their opinion. We invite Western reporters to come and see for themselves.