

Remembering Samora

October 18, 1988, marks the second anniversary of the fatal air crash over South African territory that took the life of Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel. Machel was returning from a meeting with other leaders of the Frontline States in Zambia, as always playing a key leadership role in the regional struggles to survive South Africa's aggression and destabilization. Two years later many factors still remain without explanation. Most Mozambicans, and others throughout southern Africa and the world, are convinced that Machel was murdered by the South African military. Whatever new evidence may appear about the crash itself, Samora Machel will go down in history as a tireless fighter to build a just, peaceful and non-racist southern Africa. To mark the anniversary of his death and to underscore the inter-relatedness of the various struggles for freedom in southern Africa, we have chosen to reproduce here an exchange of letters between Graça Machel, Samora's widow, and Nelson and Winnie Mandela. The letters are extracted from Iain Christie's recent biography, *Machel of Africa*.

As Christie writes:

"The Mandelas, Nelson from his cell at Pollsmoor prison and Winnie from her Soweto home, asked for permission to leave South Africa temporarily to attend Machel's funeral. The South African authorities refused, but the couple sent a telex message to Maputo and it was handed to Machel's widow, Graça."

The message read:

Never before have we made application to leave South Africa. Today we believed that our place was to be with you physically.

Each one of us is imprisoned in different jails. We were prevented from being present with you today



Alfredo Mueche/AIM

to share your sorrow, to weep with you, to lighten your grief, to hold you very close.

Our grief for Comrade Samora is so deep that it tears away at the heart. Throughout the night we have kept vigil with you. Throughout today we shall mourn with you for a mighty soldier, a courageous son, a noble statesman.

We must believe that his death will strengthen both your and our resolve to be finally free. For you, victory over immoral surrogate bandits. For us, victory over oppression. Our struggle has always been linked and we shall be victorious together.

A caring world is with you. It cannot and will not fail you. With their support and the legendary re-

solve of the people of Mozambique you can only emerge as victors.

Graça Machel responded as follows:
My dear sister Winnie Mandela,
My dear brother Nelson Mandela,

In a garden there is always one flower more beautiful than the others. Your letter is that flower in the great garden of messages of comfort I have received.

On behalf of my children and my whole family I would like to thank you for your letter, which was, to me, a comradely embrace to soothe my aching heart.

How can I express my admiration for you both? Your own suffering has been long and terrible but still you took the trouble to console me in my time of grief. From within your vast prison you brought a ray of light in my hour of darkness.

To you, in particular, Winnie, I express my sincere admiration. My husband was murdered in just one day, in just one fateful moment. Your husband is being murdered every day, every hour. My sister, thank you for having the strength to console me.

One day we shall meet, either along the path of struggle or on the magnificent road to freedom, and then, looking into your eyes, I shall be able to express my full gratitude.

Dear Winnie,
Dear Nelson,

Samora, your brother, fell on the battlefield. The world will never see Mandela and Samora in triumphant embrace on that glorious day when the flag of freedom is hoisted in South Africa.

Your brother has left us on his last great journey, a journey that began in Mbuzini. Who would have believed it? Who would even have guessed that little village would become the focus of unity between the peoples of our two countries?

Every day, so many men and women die for freedom in South Africa. Now Samora's blood is



Sérgio Santimano/AIM

Graça Machel in funeral procession

mixed with the blood of those heroes. He gave his mind and his action to the freedom of South Africa. Who would have imagined that he would also give his life?

He did not complete his mission. But we will.

With his sweat, courage, intelligence and solidarity he made a decisive contribution to the unity of the people of southern Africa. There are millions of us. In South Africa alone we are 23 million men and women in struggle. It is inevitable that the star of freedom will shine down on us so that Samora's blood will not have been shed in vain. This blood is the mortar that cements the indestructible unity of our peoples.

The free flag of peace shall fly in the place where Samora fell. His blood will be avenged by the fighters of Umkhonto we Sizwe, whose heroic sacrifices will bring freedom to the people of South Africa.

Samora no longer belonged only to the people of Mozambique. Samora and Mandela have the same stature, the same destiny; they are noble sons of Africa and of all mankind. That is why South African mothers wept along with Mozambican mothers over the physical disappearance of Samora. They felt they had lost their own son. We mothers know it hurts to lose

a beloved son. It is as though the womb that generates life has been emptied.

But when we lose a son in struggle we at least have the consolation of knowing that he died for a just cause.

We, Mozambican mothers, offer Samora to the South Africa people so that the guerrilla that he was, the victorious commander that he was, will live on in every Umkhonto we Sizwe fighter and hasten the coming of the day of jubilation.

The end of apartheid will be the greatest tribute to the memory of Samora.

Dear Winnie,

My husband's death has left me with a great emptiness. The solitude I feel is immense. Only by continuing the struggle, contributing to the completion of his work, will my life have meaning.

I was still only a child, Winnie, when you first raised your fist against apartheid. Since then you have never wavered. I wish I had your strength and courage. In this painful hour I look for inspiration from your example.

Those who have locked up your husband are the same who killed mine. They think that by cutting down the tallest trees they can destroy the forest. But history will never forget the names of Samora Machel and Nelson Mandela. The just cause of these two men will triumph, for the greater glory of Africa and the dignity of mankind.

The paths of freedom are long and tortuous. But victory will come one day. It is for this victory that Nelson Mandela is making his sacrifice. For this victory Samora Machel gave his life.

Here I end. Fighters never say goodbye.

AMANDLA!
A LUTA CONTINUA!