Interview With President Machel


Zimbabwe Nationalists Move Toward Unified Army

AN: Please clarify how much progress has been made towards uniting the armed forces of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU). Do the forces with rear bases in Zambia and those with rear bases in Mozambique collaborate?

Machel: It is the desire of all of us that there be only one army in Zimbabwe. We admit that there are various parties, in the same way as there are various parties in the United States. But there is only one army in the United States.

That is why we insist that the army [in Zimbabwe] be unified. The army is the symbol of national unity, and therefore cannot be fragmented. Such fragmentation would mean retreat into a state of primitivism—of tribal armies, of feudal armies. We have already gone beyond this.

The job of the army today is to guarantee tranquility, and permit the development of the country. [The army should] also participate in national reconstruction. If it is divided, it cannot carry out its essential tasks of security, tranquility, peace, maintenance of order, and maintaining people’s confidence.

In this respect the steps already taken have been positive. There is already a secure platform around which the two armies can unite.

Unification of the army could only become possible once the top leadership itself understood and promoted the necessity of this unity. The leadership at the top has already understood and carried out [acted on] this understanding.

In the second place, the officials of the two armies must assume and understand the importance of unity. There has been progress in this matter. Further steps are under way and the current process is more promising than in the past. Conditions are favorable now, logistics are coordinated now.

The ZAPU army is in Zambia. There is no [permanent] ZANU army in Mozambique since fighters of ZANU and ZAPU both train in Tanzania. When they come to Mozambique they are on the way to Zimbabwe; Mozambique is a transit point. We support them. We provide the rear bases, the logistic support. However, there are no forces stationed in Mozambique. There are refugee camps [for] about 40,000 refugees in Mozambique. But yes, you can be sure that the army of Zimbabwe will unite.

Mozambican People Take Up Election Challenge

AN: Elections for People’s Assemblies are in process right now in Mozambique. What is the importance of these elections and how are the local people responding to the opportunity?

Machel: You should come, film, see what a real election is in democracy. Come and see how the people elect their deputies.

This is the coming to fruition of the fundamental objectives for which our people agreed to make so many sacrifices—the creation of a popular democratic state.

On September 25, all Mozambican citizens began the process of effective exercise of people’s democracy, electing people’s assemblies at the local level and at the national level. We are building a new type of State on the ruins of the colonial State. Power belongs to, and is exercised by the broad masses through the people’s assemblies.
South Africa

Black Resistance, White Crackdown

South Africa's white-minority government, hoping to contain mass opposition in a single stroke, last month ordered the banning of virtually every major black organization in the country.

A total of 18 heretofore legal organizations, along with two black-circulation (though white-owned) newspapers—the World and its sister publication, the Weekend World—were closed down “permanently” on October 19. More than 50 prominent black leaders were detained under national security laws, and seven white activists and journalists who had given considerable support to the black struggle were banned.

The government justified its headlong dash towards full police state status by a classic exercise in double-think: the organizations, newspapers and leaders were all guilty of creating a “revolutionary climate” and provoking a black-white confrontation.

The Vorster regime's latest excess comes on the heels of widespread and militant protests against the murder in detention, September 12, of Black Consciousness leader Steven Biko. Nonetheless, while the Biko affair has been an important catalyst, recent events are best understood in a wider...