

# Getting Hold of the Lions Tail: The Campaign Against Bureaucracy

by Roberta Washington

**Maputo**—When Mozambique's President Samora Machel visited the docks and two state-owned warehouses here in early January, the conditions he found set the scene for the initiation of the biggest campaign yet against the internal ills which are responsible, to some degree, for the shortages, long lines, and poor service often experienced these days in Mozambique.

Machel and his delegation found thousands of cans of powdered milk, boxes of children's clothing, photographic film, cases of soap, and lightbulbs stacked in random disorder. All of these items are in very short supply or haven't been available in any store here for months. They were all

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*Roberta Washington, a former member of the Southern Africa collective, is now living in Maputo.*

imported products, which because of neglect or bureaucracy never made it out of the warehouse. Some of the items in these and other warehouses visited had been there since 1974.

In the weeks that followed Machel and other senior government officials made dozens of visits to the country's ports and airports, factories, state and privately owned shops, and warehouses. In Sofala, large quantities of beans and cornmeal, which are in short supply in Maputo, were found rotting in warehouses. Badly needed cotton seeds and fertilizer were discovered in a warehouse in Zambezia. Hundreds of blankets and boxes of clothes that were intended for re-education centers were found in another province.

The presidential delegations have included local members of the government and the party as well as local journalists. Often as many as four or five locations were

visited in a day and the central theme of the visits has been to stress that the waste and poor service which results from bureaucracy, indifference, and indiscipline will no longer be tolerated. Very clear orders were given about what was to be done to correct the situations encountered. In most cases the products, when in good condition, were ordered sold or shipped immediately. In other cases, Machel ordered that poorly organized warehouses be straightened out; he sent in soldiers to help. Machel sometimes revisited a site to make sure that problems had actually been corrected.

Health centers also came in for their share of criticism. In mid-February, Machel visited two health centers located in Maputo. Health services are now virtually free and because of the shortage of doctors and other trained technicians—a legacy of the colonial period—there are often many

more people waiting to be seen than can properly be attended to in a day. The first health center that Machel visited was located in a heavily populated area where patients often start arriving as early as 5:00 a.m. The center opens at 7:30. Machel arrived at 6:45 and was on hand to greet some very startled workers, many of whom were arriving late.

**Workers' Role**

"It is necessary that everyone be conscious of the fact that the salary he gains corresponds to the work done," Machel told workers at one visit he made to the airport. "We know that there are difficulties, but it is necessary to fight to overcome them. If we aren't organized, how can we correctly develop our work? The 'chief' is not just in charge of distributing salaries. He must demand planning, hygiene, and accountability."

In visits made to factories, Machel talked to those in charge and to the employees about production problems. He listened attentively as officials in one factory told how the import administration bureaucracy had prevented them from getting badly needed parts for their machines. Other factories, those that produce tires and aluminum ware for example, were praised for their high production level and worker discipline.

At Mozambique's largest beer factory, which has both machinery and raw materials, Machel criticized the workers for their laziness, which he characterized as the chief reason for low production. He noted that there were the same number of workers as before independence, that salaries had risen, but that production had fallen off.

The clean-up campaign has already led to a number of expulsions from jobs and arrests in agencies such as the APIE, the huge state-run housing authority, which came into being after the nationalization of housing in early 1976. Irregularities there included employees who paid little or no rent, others who rented only to family and friends with total disregard for the public, and department heads who illegally used furniture that belonged to the state.

President Machel has frequently taken to the streets after a day of visits, to talk with some of the hundreds of people who gather when they see the presidential motorcade about their ideas on some of Mozambique's current problems. Often the conversations are very frank.

At one such encounter, Machel asked the crowd how they saw the current political situation. One man responded that he used to think that the government was not very worried about their problems.

"We at times were very upset," commented an old man in the crowd, "with looking for things and not finding them, and we even at times cursed you."

"It was this," he continued, "that those who don't like our government want. But now we see that in the end it is not you, Mr. President, who is at fault. It is those who studied. . . ."

"We placed those who studied in charge to use their knowledge for your good," Machel interrupted. "But some of them are using it against you. They can shout, 'Samora brought hunger.' But I didn't bring hunger, I brought independence.

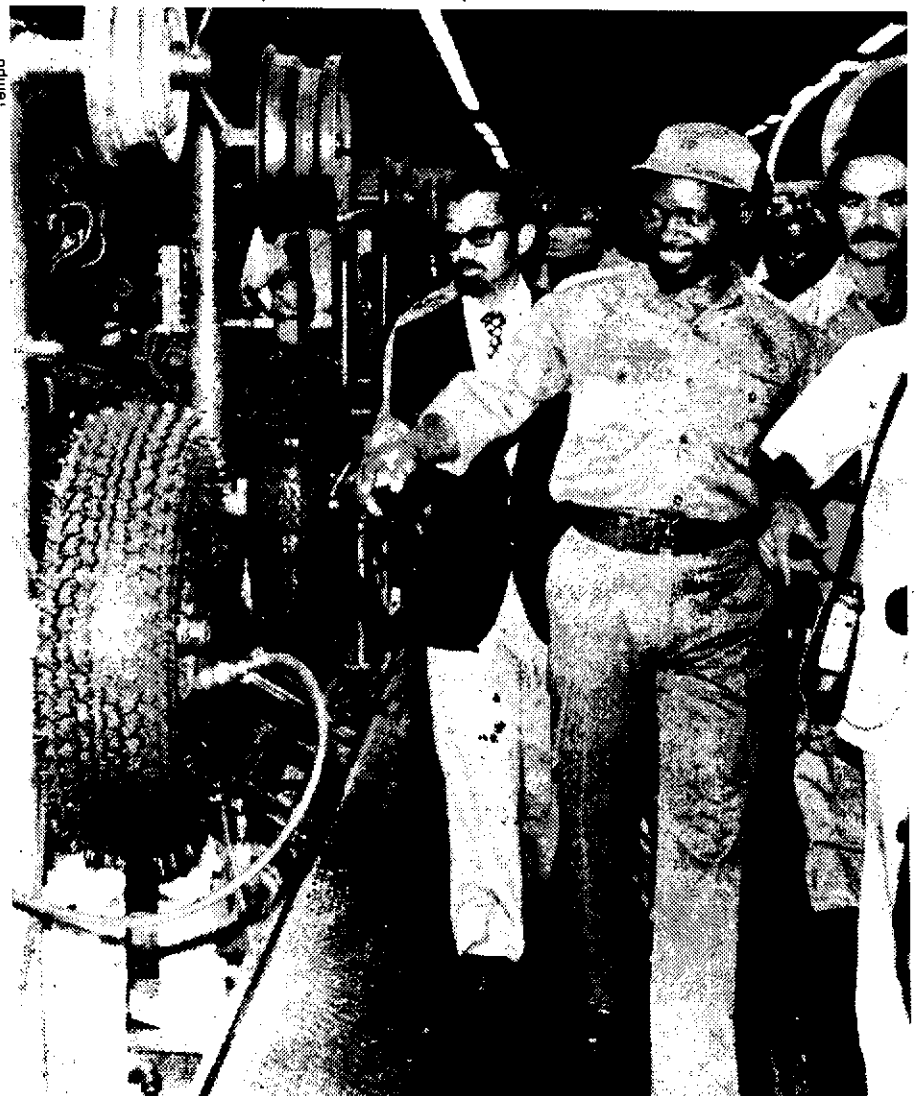
"They say this to say that our government is no good. It is because of this that they hide the food. We know this. But the maneuver is old. In Cuba, in Chile, they did this to say that socialism is bad."

Many people are beginning to ask just how long President Machel, working in Maputo, and the ministers sent out to the provinces can keep up the intensity of their intervention. Machel does not intend to end the current offensive until bureaucracy, indifference towards the public, incompeten-

cy, and internal sabotage have been rooted out. But what will happen when the visits do end?

It is obvious that Mozambique's supply problems cannot be solved by these measures alone. Many of Mozambique's economic problems have deep historical causes that will take some time to overcome. Other problems are similar to those faced by most developing countries. But the current offensive is an effort to push the country towards maximum production with minimum waste. It is a campaign that Machel has promised will not let up until he sees results.

"When you get hold of the lion's tail, you don't let go," explained Machel to several hundred people who had gathered after one of his visits. "If you do, he'll kill you. And when the lion has gotten tired, you pick up a knife and kill it. We have already gotten hold of the lion's tail. And we're going to the end." □



Samora Machel visited factories, warehouses, state agencies and offices.