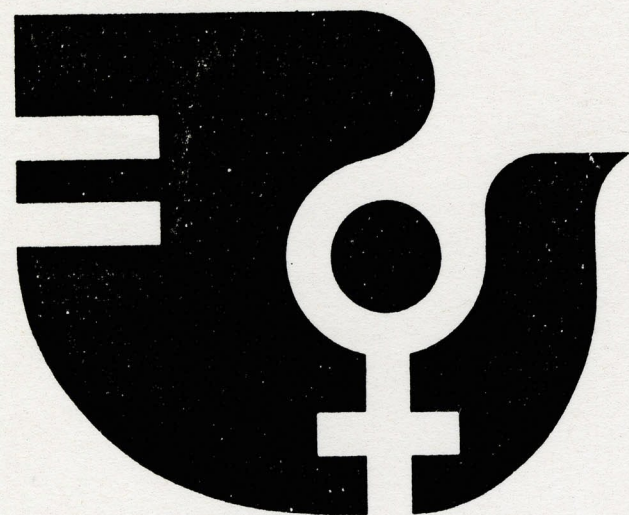


So I would like to use the occasion of this interview to make a vow to our sisters and brothers in South Africa that we as Communists in the United States, that we as participants in the struggle against racism and oppression, as participants in the anti-imperialist movement in general, are going to escalate our efforts and redouble our energies to transmit to the people of the United States the message of liberation which the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress are transmitting to the people of South Africa.



The United Nations official emblem for International Women's Year 1975. The emblem consists of a stylised dove, the biological symbol for women and the mathematical sign for equality.

## Women's Liberation is Essential for the Revolution

*In honour of International Women's Year, we reprint below extracts from a speech by SAMORA MACHEL, President of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), at the opening of the first conference of Mozambican Women on March 4, 1973.*

The main purpose of the conference is to study questions concerning the emancipation of women, to find lines of action which will lead to their emancipation. But a preliminary question arises: why bother with the emancipation of women? And another: why call this conference now?

There are people among us, as our Movement is well aware, who feel that we should devote all our efforts to the struggle against colonialism and that the task of women's emancipation is therefore secondary because it will dissipate our forces. They further add that our present situation, with a shortage of schools, very few educated women and with women still bound by tradition, does not provide any basis for embarking upon consistent action, and that it is therefore necessary to wait for independence for the establishment of sound economic, social and educational foundations for launching the fight.

Yet others, giving a twisted interpretation of our Statutes, claim



that certain local traditions must be respected and that we cannot oppose them at this stage for fear of losing the support of the masses. They then ask why there is a need to emancipate women at this point, when the vast majority of women are indifferent to the matter. After all, they conclude, emancipation would be artificial, imposed on women by FRELIMO.

This is a very serious question. It demands careful study and clear thought.

## THE NEED FOR EMANCIPATION

The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the Revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition for its victory. The main objective of the Revolution is to destroy the system of exploitation and build a new society which releases the potentialities of human beings, reconciling them with labour and with nature. This is the context within which the question of women's emancipation arises.

Generally speaking, women are the most oppressed, humiliated and exploited beings in society. A woman is even exploited by a man who is himself exploited, beaten by the man who is lacerated by the *palmatoria*, humiliated by the man who is crushed under the boot of the boss and the settler.

How can the Revolution triumph without the liberation of women? Will it be possible to get rid of the system of exploitation while keeping one part of society exploited? One cannot only partially wipe out exploitation and oppression, one cannot tear up only half the weeds without even stronger ones spreading out from the half that has survived.

How then can one make a revolution without mobilising women? If more than half the exploited and oppressed people consist of women, how can they be left on the fringe of the struggle? To make a revolution it is necessary to mobilise all the exploited and oppressed, and consequently women as well. If it is to be victorious, the Revolution must eliminate the whole system of exploitation and oppression, liberating *all* the exploited and the oppressed. Therefore it must eliminate the exploitation and oppression of women, it is forced to liberate women.

Moreover, if we also consider the basic need for the revolution to be continued by the new generation, how can we ensure the revolutionary education of the generation which will carry on our work if mothers, the first educators, are marginal to the revolutionary process? How can one turn the homes of the exploited and the oppressed into cells of revolutionary struggle, centres for the diffusion of our line, encouraging the involvement of the family, if women remain apathetic to this process, indifferent to the society which is being built and deaf to the call of the people?

To say that women do not feel the need to liberate themselves, or that it is often FRELIMO, and not the women, which uphold women's emancipation is a paltry argument which cannot stand up to analysis. Women feel their subjection, they feel the need to change their situation. What happens is that the domination imposed by society, by stifling their initiative, often prevents them from expressing their aspirations, often prevents them from thinking of how to wage their struggle. It is here that FRELIMO intervenes. As the conscious vanguard of the women and men of Mozambique, of the oppressed people, FRELIMO formulates the line and indicates the methods of struggle.

It is essential that we understand this phenomenon so as to avoid false and futile debates.

## THE RIGHT TIME TO LAUNCH THE FIGHT

The other question that arises is when is the right time to launch the struggle?

We cannot limit the revolutionary process to certain people while neglecting others, because this would halt the revolution, destroy it. The roots of an evil which we underestimate and decide to pull out at a later date become the roots of a cancer which can destroy us, invading the whole body, before we get to that 'later date.'

Under the present conditions, FRELIMO is no longer able to wage an armed struggle without carrying out a revolution. The precondition for advancing the armed struggle is to attack the very roots of exploitation. The idea of waiting until later to emancipate women is erroneous; it means allowing reactionary ideas to gain ground only to fight them when they are strong. It is like not fighting the alligator on the bank only to fight him in the middle of the river.



The armed struggle, acting like an incubator, has already created the conditions for the masses to be receptive to the ideas of progress and revolution. To avoid joining battle when conditions are ripe is lack of political foresight, an error of strategy . . . . .

Today the conditions for launching a victorious battle really exist. FRELIMO's line has been internalised and developed in practice, our cadres are gaining experience, being tempered in the struggle, and the process of purifying our ranks has thus begun. The revolutionary process has been assured, the struggle has already been transformed into a revolution and national unity is becoming ideological unity.

The participation of women in the armed struggle, the principal task at our present historical stage, enables them to put our unity into practice and creates the conditions for transforming their consciousness, so that they feel their responsibilities, become consciously involved, undertake critical analysis and understand that society is created by ourselves.

So the wind of revolution blows, and with it, necessarily, the wind of women's emancipation. FRELIMO's Central Committee is making us hoist our sails, and this is a favourable moment for us to set sail.

## THE SYSTEM OF EXPLOITATION – THE STARTING POINT

To speak of the emancipation of women clearly implies that they are oppressed and exploited. It is important to understand the basis of that oppression and exploitation.

Let us begin by saying that the oppression of women is the result of their exploitation; oppression in society is always the result of imposed exploitation. Colonialism did not come to occupy our country for the purpose of arresting us, flogging us and beating us with the *palmatoria*. It invaded and occupied our country for the purpose of exploiting our wealth and labour. In order to exploit us, in order to quell our resistance to exploitation and prevent us from rebelling against it, it then introduced the system of oppression; physical oppression, through the courts, the police, the armed forces, imprisonment, torture and massacres; and spiritual oppression, through obscurantism, superstition and ignorance, designed to destroy the spirit of creative initiative, to kill the sense of justice and criticism, to reduce the individual to passivity and make him

accept his exploited and oppressed state as a normal thing. Humiliation and contempt came into being in the process, since he who exploits and oppresses tends to humiliate and despise his victims, regarding them as inherently inferior beings. And then racism appears, the supreme form of humiliation and contempt.

The mechanism of women's alienation is identical to the mechanism of the alienation of the colonised man in colonial society, or of the worker in capitalist society.

From the moment when early man started to produce more than he consumed, the material foundations were laid for the emergence of a stratum in society which would appropriate the fruits of the majority's labour. This appropriation of the product of the masses' labour by a handful of people in society is the essence of the system of the exploitation of man by man and the crux of the antagonistic contradiction which has divided society for centuries.

As soon as the process of exploitation was unleashed, women as a whole – like men – were subjected to the domination of the privileged strata. Women are also producers, and workers, but with specific characteristics. To possess women is to possess workers, unpaid workers, workers whose entire labour power can be appropriated without resistance by the husband, who is the lord and master. In an agrarian economy, marrying many women is a sure way of accumulating a great deal of wealth. The husband is assured of free labour which neither complains nor rebels against exploitation.

Hence the important role played by polygamy in the rural areas of a primitive agrarian economy. Society, realising that women are a source of wealth, demands that a price be paid for them. The girl's parents demand from their future son-in-law the payment of a bride-price – *lobolo* – before giving up their daughter. The woman is bought and inherited just like material goods, or any source of wealth.

But what is more important is that compared with, say, the slave, who is also a source of wealth and an unpaid worker, the woman offers her owner two added advantages. She is a source of pleasure and above all, she produces other workers, she produces new sources of wealth.

This last aspect is particularly significant. Society grants the husband the right to repudiate his wife and demand the re-payment of the *lobolo* should she prove barren, or if the husband thinks that she is. It can also be noted that in many societies, mindful of the value of the labour



power of the woman's children, the principle is established that the children belong to the mother's clan or family. In our society, it is also current practice for the children to continue to belong to the mother's family, especially if the husband has not paid the entire *lobolo*, that is, the purchase price for this wealth. This situation has led to the excessive emphasis on women's fertility and the transformation of the man-woman relationship into the mere act of procreation.

But a particular situation emerged. Owing to his control over the masses, the exploiter acquired vast riches, vast estates, large herds of cattle, gold and jewels and so on. Yet despite his wealth he was still mortal, like other men. The problem then of the fate of his wealth — in other words, the question of inheritance — became crucial. Women are the producers of heirs.

It is therefore clear that the exploitation of women and their consequent oppression starts in the system of private ownership of the means of production, in the system of exploitation of man by man.

### THE IDEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL MECHANISMS OF DOMINATION

A society based on private ownership of the means of production, on the exploitation of men, creates and imposes the ideology and culture which uphold its values and ensure its survival. The economic exploitation of women, their transformation into mere producers with no rights, at the service of their owners — whether husbands or fathers — requires the establishment of a corresponding ideology and culture, together with an educational system to pass them on. Obviously, this is not something which happens all once, but a process developed and refined over thousands of years of the society's existence.

Obscurantism is the beginning of the process. The general principle is to keep women in ignorance or give them only an essential minimum of education. Everywhere we find that illiteracy is higher among women, they are always a minority in schools, colleges and universities, even though they are the majority of the population.

Science has always been kept as man's monopoly, his exclusive domain, in the developed civilisations of the past as in capitalist society today. To keep women away from science is to prevent them from discovering that society is created as a function of certain specific interests

and that it is therefore possible to change society.

Obscurantism and ignorance go hand in hand with superstition and give rise to passivity.

All superstitions and religions find their most fertile soil among women, because they are submerged in the greatest ignorance and obscurantism. In our society, rites and ceremonies are the main vehicle for the transmission of society's concept of women's inferiority, and their subservience to men. It is here too that countless myths and superstitions are propagated with the express intention of destroying women's sense of initiative and reducing them to passivity.

Family education itself emphasises and reinforces this. From infancy the girl is brought up differently from the boy and a feeling of inferiority instilled in her.

None of this is surprising. As we have said, exploitative society promotes the ideology, culture and education that serves its interests. It does so with women, just as it does with colonised people and with workers in capitalist society. All are deliberately kept in ignorance, obscurantism and superstition with a view to making them resigned to their position, of instilling in them an attitude of passivity and servility.

This is where racism comes in. The colonised man is called a second class human being by virtue of his skin. The woman is called an inferior human being by virtue of her sex. In capitalist countries in Europe, they claim that women are creatures with long hair and short ideas.

The process of alienation reaches its peak when the exploited person, reduced to total passivity, is no longer capable of imagining that the possibility of liberation exists and in turn becomes a tool for the propagation of the ideology of resignation and passivity. It must be recognised that the centuries-old subjugation of women has to a great extent reduced them to a passive state, which prevents them from even understanding their condition.

### THE NATURE OF THE ANTAGONISM

It is important to understand correctly the nature of the contradiction or contradictions involved, for only after understanding them will we be in a position to define the target of our attack and plan the appropriate strategy and tactics for our struggle.



We have seen that the basis of the domination of women lies in the system of economic organisation of society, private ownership of the means of production, which necessarily leads to the exploitation of man by man.

This means that, apart from the specific features of their situation, the contradiction between women and the social order is in essence a contradiction between women and the exploitation of man by man, between women and the private ownership of the means of production. In other words, it is the same as the contradiction between the working masses and the exploitative social order.

Let us be clear on this point. The antagonistic contradiction is not between women and men, but between women and the social order. The fact that they are exploited explains why they are not involved in all planning and decision-making tasks in society, why they are excluded from working out the concepts which govern economic, social, cultural and political life, even when their interests are directly affected.

This is the main feature of the contradiction: their exclusion from the sphere of decision-making in society. This contradiction can only be solved by revolution, because only revolution destroys the foundations of exploitative society and rebuilds society on new foundations, freeing the initiative of women, integrating them in society as responsible members and involving them in decision-making.

Therefore, just as there can be no revolution without the liberation of women, the struggle for women's emancipation cannot succeed without the victory of the revolution.

It should be pointed out that the ideological and cultural precepts of the exploitative society which maintain the subjugation of women are destroyed by the advance of the ideological and cultural revolution which introduces into society new values, a new content to education and culture.

But apart from the antagonistic contradiction between women and the social order, other contradictions of a secondary nature also arise between women and men as a kind of reflex.

The marriage system, marital authority based solely on sex, the frequent brutality of the husband and his consistent refusal to treat his wife as an equal, are sources of friction and contradiction. If they are not correctly solved, these secondary contradictions may become more acute and produce such serious consequences as divorce.

But however serious they may be, these factors do not alter the nature of the contradiction.

It is important to stress this aspect, because we now see an ideological offensive taking place particularly in the capitalist world, in the guise of a women's liberation struggle. The aim is to transform the contradiction with men into an antagonistic one, thereby dividing exploited men and women to prevent them from fighting the exploitative society. In fact, leaving aside the demagoguery which hides its true nature, this ideological offensive is an offensive by capitalism to confuse women, to divert their attention from the real target.

We see small manifestations of this offensive appearing among us. Here and there we hear women grumbling about men, as if the cause of their exploitation lay in the difference between the sexes, as if men were sadistic monsters who derive pleasure from the oppression of women.

Men and women are products and victims of the exploitative society which has created and formed them. It is essentially against this society that men and women should fight united. Our practical experience has proved that the progress achieved in the liberation of women is the result of the successes gained in our common struggle against colonialism and imperialism, against the exploitation of man by man, and to build a new society.

## OUR MAIN LINES OF ACTION

The fight for women's emancipation demands, as a first step, the clarification of our ideas. Such clarification is all the more imperative in that there is a profusion of erroneous ideas about the emancipation of women.

There are those who see emancipation as mechanical equality between men and women. This vulgar concept is often seen among us. Here emancipation means that women and men do exactly the same tasks, mechanically dividing their household duties. 'If I wash the dishes today you must wash them tomorrow, whether or not you are busy or have the time.' If there are still no women truck drivers or tractor drivers in FRELIMO, we must have some right away regardless of the objective and subjective conditions. As we can see from the example of



capitalist countries, this mechanically conceived emancipation leads to complaints and attitudes which utterly distort the meaning of women's emancipation. An emancipated woman is one who drinks, smokes, wears trousers and mini-skirts, who indulges in sexual promiscuity, who refuses to have children, etc.,

Others associate emancipation with the accumulation of diplomas, and particularly university degrees, which are regarded as certificates of emancipation.

Yet others think that emancipation consists of achieving a certain economic, social and cultural level.

All these are erroneous and superficial concepts. Not one of them either gets to the heart of the contradiction or suggests a line that will really emancipate women.

Emancipation requires action on several essential levels.

First of all, a political line of action must be laid down. For women to emancipate themselves there must be conscious political commitment. What does this mean in practical terms?

It means, firstly, that the line must be laid down by a revolutionary political organisation which, defending the interests of the exploited masses as a whole, leads them in the fight against the old society. Only such an organisation is in a position to formulate a global strategy for the fight for liberation. In our case, what this means in concrete terms is that in order to liberate themselves, women must internalise FRELIMO's political line and live by it in a creative way. Otherwise they will throw themselves into sterile and secondary battles which will exhaust them uselessly and to no effect.

To internalise and live by our line requires involvement in the tasks laid down by the organisation. Just as a plant needs to strike roots in the ground in order to grow, so does the political line take root in revolutionary practice. Revolutionary practice destroys the exploitative society, unleashes the internal struggle, demolishes our erroneous ideas and releases our critical sense and creative initiatives.

In this context women must be mobilised for internal struggle and for mass struggle, and they must be organised. They will then be able to internalise the political line to start the offensive. They must be involved in the battle for the political education of the next generation and in the battle for the large-scale mobilisation and organisation of the masses. Their commitment to the liberation struggle will then become

concrete action, leading them to take part in making decisions affecting the country's future.

There also arises the need to engage in production.

Releasing the productive forces and launching the process of economic development will lead to deeper ideological understandings, and a sounder knowledge of reality of society and nature.

A third aspect is scientific and cultural education. A scientific and cultural grounding enables women to achieve a correct understanding of their relationship with nature and society, thus destroying the myths fostered by obscurantism which oppress them psychologically and deprive them of initiative.

In this way, women will gradually attain all levels of planning, decision-making and implementation in organising the affairs of children, hospitals, schools, factories, the armed forces, diplomacy, art, science, culture and so on.

It should also be emphasised here that all these needs do not apply solely to women, because men are also alienated, though in different ways.

The last aspect is that of the relationship between men and women, that is, the new revolutionary concept of the couple and the home. We can already see clearly what this relationship should not be. Until now it has been based on the alleged superiority of man over woman, aimed at satisfying the male ego.

We must state here – and this is something new in society – that the family relationship, the man-women relationship should be founded exclusively on love. We do not mean the banal, romantic concept of love which amounts to little more than emotional excitement and an idealised view of life.

For us, love can only exist between free and equal people who have the same ideals and commitment in serving the masses and the revolution. This is the basis upon which the moral and emotional affinity which constitutes love is built. We need to discover this new dimension, hitherto unknown in our country.

## THE ORGANISATION OF WOMEN

Following the principle of mobilising, organising and uniting all our forces in the struggle, the Central Committee, satisfying the aspirations



of the increasingly conscious Mozambican women, has decided to establish the Organisation of Mozambican Women (OMM). The organisation of Mozambican Women is a body which will provide leadership and guidance for all Mozambican women in the struggle for the emancipation of women and for the revolution.

Apart from this, its central task is to mobilise international public opinion in favour of our struggle and to express the solidarity of the Mozambican women and people with the liberating and revolutionary struggle of the women and peoples of the whole world.

One battle the Organisation has to wage is that of keeping the true sense of emancipation permanently alive, reinforcing the ideological struggle against attempts to disparage the women's struggle and isolate it from the revolution. Firm adherence to the line, which must be understood, internalised and lived by in the details of everyday life, will give the Organisation and women themselves the sense of vigilance required to nip in the bud even the slightest reactionary ideological offensive.

We can be sure that the colonialist army, like other reactionary and conservative forces, will react against this Conference and its results and do their utmost to make our decisions remain a dead letter. Comrades of ours who still cling to erroneous concepts will find it difficult to understand the profound meaning of the women's struggle and they will put obstacles in its way.

But the greatest obstacle will be created by women themselves, by their habit of dependence, their passivity and the dead weight of tradition they carry over from the old society.

Women must unite. Unity is the main weapon of the struggle, its driving force. FRELIMO's political line is your platform for unity, while tribalism, regionalism and racism stand against it.

Tribalism and regionalism prevent one from realising the greatness of our country and of our struggle. They make it impossible to understand the complexity of our country and, above all, they disperse one's forces.

Racism is a reactionary attitude. The enemy has no colour. The function of racism in our case and in any struggle is to make it difficult to define the real target, creating confusion so as to divide the national revolutionary and progressive forces, weakening them and leading to their annihilation by the common enemy and exploiter. Our struggle would remain isolated from the world-wide struggle of the progressive

forces against the exploitation of man by man.

Seeds planted among us by the enemy cannot be destroyed by words or magic formulas. The ideological struggle must be started among all women to make them clearly understand the harm of these reactionary ideas. At the same time efforts must be made to explain to women that their experience of suffering, exploitation and oppression in Cabo Delgado, Gaza, Niassa, Inhambane, Tete and Maputo, in Zambezia, Manica e Sofala and Nampula, is the same. All bear the same scars, all have known the same hunger, the same poverty, the same suffering, the same shackles, the same widowhood, the same orphanhood, the same tears caused by colonialism and exploitation.

We are united through the discovery of common wounds and scars, but above all unity is realised through common effort, links are forged through collective work and study, through collective internal struggle, through criticism and self-criticism, and through action against colonialism.

We must also learn from the experience of our sisters throughout the world. That will help us to understand that there are no races or peoples who are exploiters or oppressors. There are no racist peoples, no colonialist peoples. By opening our minds to the experience of others we will not only learn useful lessons, but we will also understand that all countries, all peoples, all races, are waging the same struggle as we are: a struggle against the colonialists and imperialists who have no country, a struggle against the exploiters who have no race. In this way we will be able to see how the struggle of the Mozambican women and of our people is the struggle of all of humanity, and we will understand the warmth of the solidarity between us.

We must give up the pernicious habit of identifying only with those who come from the same village as ourselves, who speak the same language and have the same culture, traditions and educational background. Those with whom we must identify and see as our sisters, giving them our friendship and affection, our help and fraternal warmth, are all those who, like us, are exploited and oppressed, and who are with us in the great struggle for the liberation of women, the country and the working people.

These are all sacred tasks for the Organisation of Mozambican Women, because it is the women's responsibility to bring up the next generation free from tribalism, regionalism and racism, free from the



archaic attitude of oppressing women or passively accepting oppression, free from superstition and imbued with our class feeling and internationalism.

It is also necessary to fight against certain very negative subjective attitudes. Many women comrades think of their commitment as temporary, while they are single, and have a tendency to give up their revolutionary duties as soon as they are married. It is considered normal for wives to return to the village, and for being a wife to become a woman's sole duty. In many cases this is encouraged by the husband himself who still sees the woman as his private property, dependent on him, existing by virtue of him, and tied to him, almost like a piece of luggage, whom he can use as he pleases, who is obliged to go where he goes. This conflicts both with the requirements of the national liberation struggle and with the women's struggle for emancipation.

We must mobilise all women, so that they feel the need to participate in concrete tasks, to feel responsible, and to be actively engaged in the transformation of society. In this respect, married women especially must concern themselves with setting a positive example to the younger single women and show them in practice that marriage is an incentive for the pursuit of revolutionary tasks.

## CONCLUSION

Our struggle is not an isolated struggle. The Mozambican Women's fight, the Mozambican people's fight, is an integral part of the worldwide front of struggle against colonialism and imperialism, against the exploitation of man by man, and for the construction of a new popular social order.

For this very reason we feel that the struggle of our sisters and brothers in Angola, who, under the leadership of the MPLA, have been fighting Portuguese colonialism and imperialism for twelve years is our own. We feel that the struggle of our sisters and brothers in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, who, led by the PAIGC have been fighting Portuguese colonialism and imperialism since 1963, is our own struggle.

Hence we feel bereaved by the recent assassination of our comrade Amilcar Cabral, Secretary-General of the PAIGC. This barbarous crime, like the assassination of our first President, Comrade Eduardo Mondlane, is an attempt to stop the revolutionary advance of our

peoples. It failed in Mozambique and it will fail in Guinea Bissau.

The fight for the consolidation of independence and for revolutionary development in Tanzania and Zambia, Somalia, Congo, Guinea and the whole of Africa is our fight, the fight to consolidate our strategic rear.

The recent victory of the heroic peoples of Vietnam and Indochina, is a great incentive in our struggle. The women and men of Vietnam, of a small country, of an economically backward country, succeeded in defeating the largest and most cruel imperialist power in the world, the United States of America.

We feel encouraged by the successes achieved by our sisters and brothers in the socialist countries, who are building a new society of freedom and progress for women and men.

The women and men of Mozambique congratulate the Portuguese people for the intensification of the struggle against colonial war and fascism in Portugal. The opening of the fourth battle front against Portuguese colonialism in Portugal itself, consolidates the solidarity and friendship of our peoples.

We salute all peoples, we salute the women and men of all continents, who anonymously are like us, fighting to build a new society. To all of them we say that our people's struggle will be intensified, our revolution will be consolidated and triumphant, thus contributing towards the common victory.

Long Live the First Conference of Mozambican Women!

Long Live the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women!

Long Live the Mozambican Revolution!

Long Live the Struggle of the Mozambican people, united from the Rovuma to the Maputo!

Long Live Africa!

Long Live the Organisation of Mozambican Women!

Long Live FRELIMO!

A LUTA CONTINUA. INDEPENDENCIA OU MORTE. VENCEREMOS.

*The full text of this speech, together with a number of other speeches and statements by Samora Machel, is obtainable in MOZAMBIQUE: SOWING THE SEEDS OF REVOLUTION, published by the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guine in London in 1974.)*