

# Mourning under a sombre grey sky

By PHILLIP VAN NIEKERK

THE sadness in Maputo at the funeral of Samora Machel was tinged with anger and the deeply-held conviction that somehow South Africa was responsible for the crash.

Overcast skies and sombre music from radios in the shuttered streets of the capital added to the mood of gloom at the death of the man who led Mozambique to independence from Portuguese colonial rule 11 years ago.

Thousands of Frelimo soldiers, representatives of all organisations and professions and foreign dignitaries gathered on Independence Square early on Tuesday morning to hear the funeral eulogy.

A huge portrait of Machel on the City Hall gazed down on the crowd, and on the unusually cool October day a dirge was broadcast.

From the doorway of the hall, Machel's longtime comrade-in-arms and the second-in-command in Frelimo, Marcelino dos Santos, read the funeral eulogy, his voice at one stage breaking into sobs.

"You were a unique leader," said Dos Santos. "You were to be found in the streets, in the factories, and in the barracks. You did not wait for reports, you were not limited to your office. Nothing hindered you from direct contact with the people, with life."

Dos Santos made a solemn pledge that Mozambique would continue the work of Machel, that it would remain faithful to his example as a "man and as a fighter".

Light drizzle fell on the assembled heads of state and senior dignitaries on the City Hall steps.

Machel's widow Graca, her face contorted in agony, watched the coffin being lowered onto a gun carriage and pulled away by an armoured carrier.

Tens of thousands of people lined the seven km to the burial site at Heroes' Square.

One thing which was not mentioned in the eulogy was the crucial role Machel played in the politicisation of South Africa, firing the imagination of black consciousness leaders in the Seventies.

By defeating the Portuguese in Mozambique, Machel showed black South Africans that what they were striving for could be achieved. As Dos Santos said in the eulogy, the message of Machel was one of anti-racism.

Significantly both national and exiled anti-apartheid leaders — including Jay Naidoo, the general secretary of Cosatu, and Archie Gumede, a president of the United Democratic Front — were accorded the status of VIP guests, along with other heads of state.

A message from Nelson Mandela, which had been smuggled from Pollsmoor Prison, was received and was the only non-Mozambican news item to appear in the Noticias daily



The pain and grief of Mozambique: Frelimo women soldiers at the funeral of Samora Machel



... but while they weep, Mozambicans salute their dead leader with the promise 'A luta continua'

newspaper on Wednesday. Apartheid was also an important component of the eulogy and Dos Santos said that Machel had "fallen in the struggle against apartheid".

He said: "You always fought against apartheid. You understood apartheid as a problem for all humanity because you perceived that what is at stake in South Africa is the very definition of humanity."

"You had a deep loathing for the racist system. You considered the destruction of apartheid would be the liberation of the entire South African people, of both the oppressed majority

and of the white minority, imprisoned behind the bars of fear that they themselves have built.

"You therefore used to say that only when all reached the top of the mountain of equality would they be able to see the beauty of their country and of the South African people."

Dos Santos did not specifically blame South Africa for the crash but he did say: "Voices from around the world, voices from Africa, voices from all the continents are reaching us by the minute. Voices in revolt, seeking the enemy that stole you from your friends."

After the Frontline summit on Wednesday, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, chairman of the Frontline states, repeated the belief that South Africa was responsible for the crash, but specifically excluded Mozambique from that view.

He said the Mozambican government was waiting first for the outcome of the official investigation.

"We have not been impressed by the crocodile tears of the two Bothas. How do you expect them to mourn our colleagues when they have no love for their fellow men of colour."

The predominant view in Maputo is

that South Africa constructed a decoy beacon or used sophisticated technology to lure the plane off course.

At a press conference this week the chief meteorologist of Mozambique, Sercio Ferreira, said that the weather was good shortly before the crash.

The Soviet crew had landed at Maputo airport 65 times, 70 percent of them at night, and had a total of 38 625 flying hours.

Most experienced was the radio operator, Sholipov Anatoly, who had 14 370 flying hours. They had been the president's crew for 18 months.