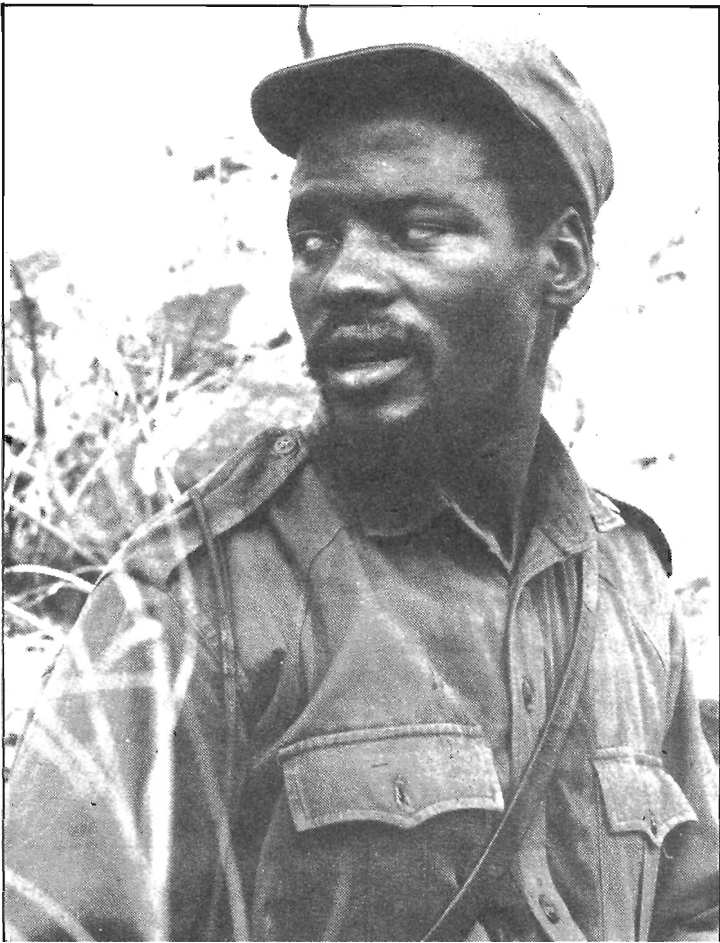


JOAQUIM CHISSANO



President Chissano with Samora Machel (above), and (below) as a guerrilla fighter during the armed struggle



The appointment of Joaquim Chissano to the Presidency of Frelimo, and thus of the Mozambican state, was no surprise. Not that taking the place of a man who presided over the decisive phase of the liberation struggle (after the assassination of Eduardo Mondlane in 1969), and then led independent Mozambique for 11 years, will be an easy task. Samora Machel, the charismatic figure who became a symbol of the anticolonial struggle and of Mozambique's liberation, is, in this sense, irreplaceable.

However, scarcely had the pain caused by President Machel's terrible death begun to lessen when the name of Chissano was on everybody's lips in Maputo. Among the leading Mozambican militants and the close colleagues and advisers to President Machel, Joaquim Chissano clearly has all the qualities of a head of state. With total unanimity, the 125 members of Frelimo's central committee made their choice on November 3.

It was in Maputo (then still known as Lourenço Marques) that Frelimo made its triumphant entry in 1974, after ten years of armed struggle—headed by Joaquim Chissano and Marcelino dos Santos, alongside their leader, Samora Machel. Since then, Chissano has always played an important role in independent Mozambique. Having participated in the negotiations between Frelimo and the Portuguese after the fall of the fascist Lisbon regime, on April 25, 1974, he became prime minister in the transitional government the following September. During these months, he revealed his considerable negotiating skills.

Furthermore, and this is a significant indication of his character, his sense of party discipline was such that, whether or not he agreed with a political or diplomatic stance, he always refused to reveal the smallest detail about it. And once Frelimo's executive organ had made its decision, he abided by it. It was Chissano who told us, "Samora Machel is a true militant, with all that this term represents for our party: sincerity, loyalty, integrity and a lucid and critical awareness of the objective situation of our country and the whole of the region."

However, the tasks confronting Joaquim Chissano are very great. The country has been invaded by mercenaries, trained, armed and financed by South Africa. In sowing death and destruction, in abetting famine in Mozambique, in betraying its solemn commitment made at Nkomati, Pretoria has been trying to isolate Mozambique and weaken the Frelimo leaders and, above all, the president. What the apartheid regime forgot, however, was that Samora Machel was not alone, that Frelimo is a well organized and disciplined party which will remain united in the face of the challenges imposed by the aggressor.

Nor has Pretoria taken account of the determination of the Mozambican people to fight, in spite of the suffering imposed upon them, against the recolonization attempts of the apartheid regime. It has also failed to recognize that the Mozambican leaders still have the option of reinforcing their ties with all those—in particular, the Socialist countries—who will never stand by and let the aggressors annihilate them.

The leadership in Maputo has been strengthened by its experiences of the past decade, with all its hopes and disappointments, the achievements made through almost superhuman effort and the ravages of a merciless war.

With Joaquim Chissano at their head, the Mozambican people know that a capable captain is on the bridge, and that, despite the tempests raging in the region, he will bring the ship home to a safe port.

Simon Malley