

FROM the Rovuma river in the north to the Limpopo in the south, the Mozambican people waged a relentless struggle to dislodge the Portuguese colonialists -- and the driving spirit was Samora Machel.

Born into a peasant family at Chilemba village in Gaza province, Machel's grandfather had fought alongside the legendary Mozambican resistance leader of the 1890s; Magwegwane Khosa.

A bright student at school, young Samora attained one of the highest distinctions that a black in Mozambique could attain -- he qualified as a nurse. With money he earned, he continued his secondary school education at night school.

In the 1940s, the Portuguese colonial authorities introduced forced cotton cultivation. Vicious corporal punishment was meted out to those who resisted children and adults alike.

These events had a profound effect on Samora Machel. He said in an early interview: "It was with the independence of Congo and its tumults that I began to think seriously about the possibilities of Mozambique becoming independent."

"Then it was that the consciousness of being oppressed, deprived and exploited began to have its effect, as well as those ideas about independence."

In 1960 a peaceful protest in the town of Mueda resulted in the massacre of six hundred people by Portuguese troops -- and from that point the dye was cast in the

Driving spirit of a nation's struggle

Mozambican struggle.

With the formation of Frelimo in June 1962, Machel was instructed by the organisation to leave the country and make his way to Tanzania. He arrived in Dar es Salaam in 1963.

He left almost immediately for Algeria with a small group who were the nucleus of the new army.

His time in Algeria was taken up mainly by reading revolutionary theory -- the works of General Giap and Mao Tse Tsung.

Although he would later shift to a strong Lennist position, Mao had at that stage great influence on his thinking. It was from Mao's works that he recognised and understood the need to mobilise and maintain popular support -- lessons he would remember for life.

In September 1964 Machel was involved in selecting guerillas to open the eastern sector of Niassa, in the north of Mozambique, and was thereafter commanding operations in Tete and Cabo Delgado.

Following the assassination of Filipe Magalal, secretary of Frelimo's Defence Department, Machel was appointed to the post, also becoming a

member of the central committee.

While Frelimo was enjoying enormous success in the military struggle against the Portuguese, tensions between the left and right within the organisation were increasing -- reaching a peak between 1967 to 1969.

Some of the reactionaries -- such as Uria Simango and Lazaro Kkavadane -- within Frelimo began to see the struggle as simply an ethnic one.

Machel's tactic of resolving the problem was an astute one; he deepened the contradictions "so as to resolve them and thereby create an even deeper and more profound unity around a common set of revolutionary principles".

It was during this time that the reactionary elements was isolated and neutralised.

Many from these ranks left the organisation to form a plethora of organisations -- Mozambique Revolutionary Committee, Coremo, the Mozambique National Independence Union, Unami -- organisations which were to be absorbed into the MNR.

With the assassination of Mondlane in 1969, Machel was appointed to a three-man Council of the Presidency with Marcelino dos Santos and Simango.

In 1970 the council was dissolved by the Central Committee and Machel became president.

Under his leadership Frelimo's liberated zones inside Mozambique grew rapidly in the years 1972-1974, with more war fronts being opened.

Under the strain placed on Portugal as a result of the war in Mozambique and Angola, the Armed Forces Movement staged a coup.

This opened the way for Machel to lead a Frelimo delegation in independence negotiations with the new Portuguese government held in Lusaka.

Finally on June 25 1975, independence was declared and Samora Machel became the first president of the People's Republic of Mozambique.