

# Machel's big role in freeing Zimbabwe

## *Herald Reporter*

**PRESIDENT Samora Machel's links with Zimbabwe go back many years and he, his movement and his country played a major role in the liberation of Zimbabwe, despite great suffering from retaliatory action of the regime.**

The potential for these close links arose in 1968 when Frelimo opened its Tete front against the Portuguese colonial for-

ces. After receiving little response from Zapu, to whom Frelimo was allied, discussion took place with Zanu (PF) which was willing to fight.

According to David Martin and Phyllis Johnson in *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* there were several meetings between Frelimo and Zanu (PF) which ended with Frelimo allowing Zanla to pass men and arms through Tete into the north-east of Zimbabwe.

During 1972 Zanla forces, still very small compared to what they would become by victory, started building up in the north-east and in

December 1972 the first shots in what was to be continuous military action against the Smith regime were fired.

The collapse of the Portuguese dictatorship in April 1974 brought the day of freedom of Mozambique closer and the collapsing Portuguese presence in Mozambique, coupled with a natural reluctance of Portuguese conscripts to die in a war their army had already lost, allowed further build up of men and material through Mozambique and more recruited Zimbabwean youths could cross the border on their way to training.

Mozambique's independence in 1975 and the swearing in of President Machel, was the next great step in the collapse of the white regimes of Southern Africa.

Mozambique made it clear that its freedom could not be complete until Zimbabwe was free and over the next almost four years stepped up support for the liberation armies fighting the regime, with Zanla now receiving supplies from along the entire border.

The Rhodesian regime forces punished Mozambique for this aid, attacking the country several times and massacring

Zimbabweans in refugee camps. These raids culminated in a massive attack of the Limpopo Valley when bridge and other infrastructural services in the best developed part of Mozambique were damaged or destroyed.

Still President Machel and Mozambique held on, continuing to aid their now close allies in Zanla as the liberation forces closed in for the kill on the illegal regimes, eventually forcing them into the negotiated surrender of Lancaster House.

Mozambique not only suffered from the attacks but suffered terribly economically. After in-

dependence Mozambique desperately needed to rebuild its own war-ravaged economy and make up for centuries of colonial neglect.

Instead President Machel closed his border with Zimbabwe, forgoing all the transit revenues and port charges as well as losing trade.

The economic pressures and the use of Mozambique as a rear base by the Zanla forces were crucial in bringing the UDI regimes to defeat by 1980. Without this help the liberation war in Zimbabwe would have been a far longer and eventually bloodier battle.

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