

HE CHALLENGED COLONIALISTS FROM START

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SAMORA MACHEL was faced with a difficult choice at a tender age — to enter a Catholic seminary or not. The latter choice carried with it the risk of losing an opportunity for further education. And he was called upon to make the difficult decision after only six years at school. He refused to enter a seminary.

The missionaries whom he defied saw to it that avenues for further formal education were closed to him and Cde Samora began working, while attending evening classes at a secondary school for adults. He later trained as a medical assistant.

At the age of 30 in 1963, Cde Machel, influenced by his contacts with Cde Eduardo Mondlane, who later became the first president of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo), went to Dar es Salaam.

He returned to Mozambique the next year among the first 250 Frelimo guerrillas who launched the armed struggle on September 25.

Before the war started, Cde Machel had been to Algeria for military training and he was to be personally involved in the hard and bitter fighting that ended with the independence of Mozambique in 1975.

Rising quickly in the guerilla ranks, Cde Machel was appointed military commander after the death of the first Frelimo commander, Filipe Magaia. He became a member of the party's central committee when elected in 1968 at the second congress of Frelimo.

After the assassination by parcel-bomb in 1969 of Cde Eduardo Mondlane, Cde Machel became a member of the troika which constituted the presidency until a new leader was elected.

Other members of the troika were Marcellino dos Santos, a high-ranking member of the Mozambican Government, and Uriah Simango, who later rebelled and collaborated with the Portuguese Government.

Cde Machel was elected president of Frelimo in 1969, but continued to lead his movement from

both Dar es Salaam and the war zones.

"It is necessary to know the temperature inside and the people are the thermometer," the Frelimo leader once said.

Under his leadership Frelimo intensified the armed struggle in Mozambique. More areas were liberated and Frelimo authority was established.

By the end of 1969 Frelimo was in effective control of one-third of Mozambique, mostly in the Niassa and Cabo Delgado areas.

The strains caused by the colonial wars were among the causes which led to the overthrow in 1974 of the Portuguese Government under President Caetano. The new Government under General Spínola immediately embarked on a policy of decolonisation.

Cde Samora Machel led the Frelimo team to the talks at State House, Lusaka, with the then Portuguese Foreign Minister, Mario Soares.

A rather small man with a piercing gaze and a straight military gait, Cde Machel struck observers then as a taciturn and battle-tryed revolutionary who was clearly unimpressed by the formalities.

He stoically went through the emotional ceremony during which an agreement to hand over power in Mozambique to a transitional government for one year was signed.

Events in Mozambique moved swiftly thereafter. A transitional government dominated by Frelimo and headed by a Prime Minister, Mr Joaquim Chissano, appointed by the party, took office on September 25, the date on which the first shots in the armed struggle had been fired in 1964.

Portugal appointed a High Commissioner and a military commission of

members of the two sides was set up. Cde Machel chose not to take part in the transitional government and remained in Dar es Salaam, preparing the party for eventual complete take-over of power and travelling to foreign countries in search of aid for the new Government.

Cde Samora Moises Machel was sworn in as the first President of the People's Republic of Mozambique on June 25 1975. But "A Lutta Continua", he declared on assuming office, "Our struggle now is to excavate the true Mozambican personality from the ruins of colonialism," he said.

His greatest problem has perhaps been to find qualified and skilled Mozambicans to fill the vacuum in various sectors of national development created by the mass exodus of whites.

Socialist Mozambique under President Machel declared at the outset total support for the struggle in Zimbabwe.

"We support Zimbabwe, everywhere we say that and declare it. It is our ally, it has part of our people, and we are also part of the people of Zimbabwe. With all its consequences, we support their just struggle," President Machel said soon after taking office.

He has been true to his word. Undaunted by the superior military and economic might of Rhodesia, he offered his country to ZANU (PF) as a springboard for attacks against the Government of former Prime Minister Mr Ian Smith and the later Government of National Unity.

Thousands of Zimbabweans fled and found refuge in friendly Mozambique. From there they fought the bitter war which, together with the offensive by ZAPU from bases in Zambia, resulted in national independence on April 18.