

ENDS & BEGINNINGS

Obituary

Samora Moises Machel, 53, founding President of independent Mozambique, was killed in an air crash in South Africa in October. From a poor family in the southern province of Gaza, Machel became a nurse – about as far as he could rise under the Portuguese dictatorship. He joined the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo) in 1963, within a year of its founding by Eduardo Mondlane. After guerrilla training in Algeria, Machel became Frelimo's commander-in-chief in 1968, and its leader in 1970 after Mondlane was killed by a parcel bomb in Tanzania. When Mozambique won its independence in June 1975, Machel became president.

The newly independent state gave immediate support to Robert Mugabe's Zanu guerrillas – enabling them to step up the war against the Smith regime in Zimbabwe.



▲ **Machel: humble beginnings**

The diminutive and charismatic Machel assumed a leading role in regional politics, maintaining a high profile at Frontline summits.

But the Portuguese had left Mozambique with an impoverished economy and the cumulative effects of a crippling drought from 1981 to 1984 and the disruption caused by the South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), forced Machel to turn to the West for aid and to sign the Nkomati Accord with President P W Botha. He agreed to expel the African National Congress (ANC)

from Mozambique in return for a halt to South African supplies to the Mozambique rebels, but the pact has been continuously violated by Pretoria.