

Samora Machel

EPISODES FROM LIFE

President Machel's 50th birthday was celebrated throughout Mozambique during the month of September with voluntary work campaigns, cultural programs and announcements of new projects by various groups. TEMPO magazine devoted an issue to recollections of Samora Moises Machel-the child, the man, the fighter, the leader -by those who know him. What follows are excerpts from a 1974 interview with Machel which appears in that issue.

We publish it because we believe that talks about the experiences not only of Machel but of the People as a whole. "I did not know my grandparents, neither maternal nor paternal. But I had the luck to know those who knew my paternal grandfather who in around 1920 was already more than 100 years old. He was a soldier in the resistance wars against Portuguese invasion. My parents told me that he had many bullet wounds. My father use to tell me stories about the brutality of the invasion, its inhumanity, how the invaders treated the people who were captured. In this way, when I was a child, I was educated in the spirit of resistance. My father told us these things for us to understand certain phenomena that was happening, in particular in the region where we lived."

Samora Machel talked about the influence of the old men in the area on his education as a revolutionary. One in particular was a Methodist pastor with whom he lived during the school year because the minister's house was closer to the mission school than his parents' home.

"These old protestants were always persecuted. They participated in the war of resistance against the occupation of our country by colonialism. When they became protestants it was a form of resistance. It was they who inspired us, these elders from here. We were not born from nothing. The constant spirit of struggle, struggle, struggle,... It was these elders who taught us. They talked with us and said: It is necessary to combat the Portuguese, they are foreigners. It was they who taught us. We could not have learned this anywhere else. Books about Marx never arrived here, neither did any other book talking against colonialism. Our books were these old men. It was them who taught us what colonialism was, the evils of colonialism, what the colonialists did when they entered here. They were our source of inspiration. Never betray, said these elders. Never betray in time of war. Because of this we never gave up."

Machel also spoke of the role of shopkeepers in the region.

"I am going to tell you what made me aware of what was exploration. Those stores belonged to two shopkeepers

Antonio and Joao. At the same time that stores were banks, post offices,... these storekeepers corrupted the administration. When people traded their products here, they were obliged to buy this and that... they could not take all the money. It was a network well mounted. The people had to buy clothes, liquors, etc. and it was they who fixed the price that they wanted. The shopkeepers became cattle-raisers, robbing them through wine. They took their workers in three trucks and would go from house to house, looking for whoever had drunk wine the night before... They would say: you drank a bottle of 20 liters and did not pay. It was in this way that they became cattle ranchers, the bandits. With the money that they gained here, they constructed houses and buildings in Maputo. Here (in the district) they never did any developing..."

Machel's oldest brother was killed in South Africa in 1944. In the same interview he recalled what working in the mines meant.

"The men were sold for the mines of South Africa. And when they were there, the women were taken for road work, for six months, in the construction of roads, or in construction work for shopkeepers, or on the plantations of European farmers. I lost many relatives in South Africa. Some returned with tuberculosis, mutilated, blind, completely useless and without compensation. Others died in South Africa, including my oldest brother. When he died in the mines, my father received a note which said that he should go there and receive an indemnification of 40 pounds. But it said also that they would not give all of the indemnification immediately. My father received only 10 pounds and the other 30 stayed in the administration's safe, where he was to go from time to time soliciting small quantities to the extent necessary. It is clear that he never received any indemnity. Forty pound indemnification for the death of a man, an accident in the mines. Still in addition to this, my father had to sign a form declaring having received a total of 40 pounds."

And about his experience in the school system which was available to Africans during colonialism.

"When it lacked 15 days before the 4th class exam, they said to me: Either you are baptized or you leave the mission. The Sisters of Charity and the Father came to see me and told me this. It lacked only 15 days. I had already submitted my papers. I accepted. I was baptized and christened. They gave me many presents, cloth with the face of St. Francisco Xavier, etc. They were satisfied because they had converted a Protestant. They had gained flock. This was in 1950.

"Afterwards I thought: well I made



"My experience is not isolated. It is the experience of all of us," - Samora Machel, Mozambique's president.

the 4th Class as a brilliant student, I will go to the secondary school or at least to the commercial school - Sa da Bandeira - technical school. When I made the application for there, the Fathers came to see me and said: Go to the seminary, go the Magude to the junior seminary. I said: No. I won't go. I want to go to the secondary school, it is normal. I don't want anything of the seminary.

"Then they went to talk with the administrator, they blocked everything, and I was not allowed to enter the secondary school. I went to Lourenco Marques but could not arrange things. The Fathers blocked me. I returned to Xai-Xai in 1951, practiced as a nurse. Then in 1952, I went to Miguel Bombardo Hospital in Lourenco Marques to take a course in nursing."

As he concluded his interview in 1974 he remarked on the common experience.

"My experience is not an isolated experience. It is the experience of all of us Mozambicans. All of us have this experience of life under colonialism. In 1961 and 1962, we had sad moments of anguish, with the persecutions which occurred at the PIDE installations. Some of my friends were prisoners. They were less vigilante, less cautious, they wanted to confront colonialism only with words... But who laughs last, laughs best. Today, we are one people, and not a Portuguese people, but a Mozambican people. And we are constructing our destiny with our own hands." ■