

Machel gave traitor a second chance

By David Martin

THE young audience was singing aggressive revolutionary songs, when down the path through the trees a slight woman, her face etched with Makonde tribal markings, appeared.

Her head was bowed as she approached the centre of the crowd which now watched her in silence. She approached Samora Machel commanding the centre of the stage and he told her to tell the youths what she had done. She remained silent.

Finally Samora began to tell her story. Her name was Veronica Anyayiva. Frelimo had supposed she was a party militant. Instead she had been an agent of the Portuguese secret police. During the liberation struggle she had shown Portuguese troops the location of an orphanage in the liberated zones. The children had been massacred.

Then Cde Machel asked his audience what they should do with her. Until then they had been silent as he paraded Frelimo's prisoners of the war. Again they were silent, unsure how to respond.

Then, with calculated deliberateness, he took the woman by the shoulder, marching her into the seated crowd. What should they do with her he kept demanding. Finally he got the answer he knew he would get.

Killing rejected by Frelimo chief

"Kill her, kill her," the crowd began to shout.

With fatherly care Cde Machel led her back to the centre of the circle. Solicitously he fetched a chair and asked her to sit down. Then he brought her a glass of water.

Finally Cde Machel turned back to the now silent crowd, bemused by what he was doing. Sadly he shook his head. What had just occurred, he said, was a poor comment on Frelimo's political education.

Frelimo did not kill people, he said. People like this woman must be kept alive as "professors of the negative", to teach future generations of Mozambicans what oppression and colonialism had been like.

This incident occurred in early 1975, after the Portuguese coup d'etat and shortly before Mozambique's independence. Cde Machel whom I had known for several years, had sent a message to me in London asking me to come to Dar es Salaam.

From there, with Mar-

celino dos Santos and Jorge Rebelo, I flew to Frelimo's main training camp, Nachingwea, in southern Tanzania. It was later to become Zanja's main training base.

It was a staggering complex. Fields of lush meadows stretched as far as the eye could see. There were pigeries, orchards, large scale chicken breeding and innumerable other agricultural activities. At first sight it was more like a highly successful capitalist farm than a guerrilla base.

Cde Machel commanded centre stage for seven hours as if the leading actor in a Shakespearean drama. It was hot and humid and the lightly foliaged trees offered precious little protection.

Some of the prisoners, such as Reverend Uria Simango, I had known during Frelimo's 10-year liberation struggle. When he appeared, Cde Machel marched him across to me and, laughing, mischievously said:

"David, here is your 'friend'."

Cde Machel was fully aware that the last time I had met Simango was in Dar es Salaam. As we talked he had sat across a small coffee table with a loaded pistol in front of him. I had always suspected the safety catch was off.

Last December, on a duck farm near Chimoloto during a tour of Manica province, Cde Machel recalled this incident and the crisis within Frelimo which had preceded it.

In the late 60s, soon after we had first met, there was a serious division within Frelimo. The issues were racism, tribalism, regionalism and ambition. Simango had led one faction. Cde Machel, and his predecessor as Frelimo's leader, Eduardo Mondlane, had opposed such reactionary tendencies.

The crisis had culminated in the assassination of Mondlane in February 1969. The Portuguese secret police had used internal contradictions to cause divi-

sion and confusion, as the Rhodesians did in the case of Herbert Chitepo.

For a short while thereafter Frelimo was led by a triumvirate: Machel, Marcelino dos Santos and Simango. But this soon collapsed when Simango issued a lengthy document called "Gloomy Situation in Frelimo".

At the time I was political correspondent of the main Tanzanian English language daily newspaper. It was a story we could not ignore. But, equally, it was one that it was vital that we put in context.

It is not always easy explaining to politicians the way journalists work.

But, fortunately, Frelimo's leaders understood on this occasion. The next day we ran parts of the document and at the same time gave Frelimo's response.

Even more important, in Cde Machel's view, was the page one picture we ran with the story. It was of Mondlane's funeral. At the front of the pallbearers was Simango. The juxtaposition of that story and picture signalled Simango's political demise, Machel always believed.

Over the years it was a story he repeated many times and when he did so again last December I found myself wondering if I had been as calculating as he suggested. I rather doubted it.

Nevertheless it was to form the basis of a friendship spanning almost two decades. During those years we spent dozens of hours talking together, almost always through the translation of another dear friend who died with him, Fernando Honwana.

We last met in Maputo in August having just returned from London on a special mission for him during the Commonwealth mini-summit. As always he was filled with optimism. He talked about the development promise of dams being constructed in the south of the country.

Frequently, as he always did, he would thump me or one of the others present, on the leg or arm to emphasise a point. Then he would stride round the room gesticulating, analysing a point and finally laughing in his infectious manner.

His untimely death, and those of other friends like Fernando Honwana and Aquino de Braganca, leaves a painful personal void and deprives Mozambique and this region of some of its most important friends who have played a considerable role in Zimbabwe's history.



DATE: 28 OCT. 1986

SOURCE: HERALD

FILE No.: