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 war against Portuguese invasion. My parents told me that he had many bullet wounds. My father used to tell me stories about the brutality of the invasion, 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 shopkeepers 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 drank 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-raisers, robbing them through wine..."

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