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Samora Moisés MACHEL
(Phonetic: maSHEL)

BF

MOZAMBIQUE

President (since June
1975)

Addressed as:
Mr. President



As president (since May 1970) of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), Samora Machel directed his country's struggle for independence, negotiated the final peace settlement with the Portuguese, and became Mozambique's first President at independence in June 1975. As FRELIMO head, he is constitutionally Commander in Chief of the People's Forces for the Liberation of Mozambique (army), and he also heads the secret police. Although Machel theoretically shares power with the other members of the FRELIMO Executive Committee, he in fact exerts supreme authority in Maputo and other urban areas and relinquishes only as much power as he chooses.

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An ardent revolutionary who publicly espouses a policy of Marxism-Leninism, Machel has tempered his political philosophy with his own brand of pragmatism. Since independence he has consolidated his power by purging political rivals and has instituted a socialist-oriented state. He has not hesitated to take extensive military aid from the Soviets when he felt it to be in his best interests. In turn, the Soviets have prevailed upon him to use his close relationship with Zimbabwean Prime Minister Robert Mugabe to press their case for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Zimbabwe.

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Machel nonetheless has not discouraged Western investment and development aid. On a visit to the USSR and Eastern Europe in late 1980, he was unable to elicit either a promise of increased economic assistance from the Soviets or support for Mozambique membership in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Even before his Moscow visit, Mozambique had begun to solicit Western technical advice

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[redacted]

and had concluded credit agreements with several Western nations. Those efforts at expanding links to the West were at least temporarily derailed when, in March 1981, Machel expelled four US diplomats, accusing them of being spies. The US Government retaliated by suspending its \$6 million food assistance program. [redacted]

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Machel and South Africa

Machel's principal concern in Africa is the success of southern African liberation movements; he has provided limited aid to the African National Congress (ANC), a South African dissident group. Nonetheless, he is aware of Mozambique's close trade and transportation links to South Africa and is anxious for a period of domestic stability to strengthen an economy debilitated by years of harboring Zimbabwean guerrillas and continuing low-level insurgent activity. He is also concerned about taking any course of action that would provoke increased aid to the South African-backed National Resistance Movement (NRM), an antigovernment insurgent group that operates out of western Mozambique and South Africa. Machel thus has been relatively moderate in his opposition to the Pretoria regime and has made an effort to limit ANC crossborder operations. In September 1980 bilateral discussions were held with a view toward circumscribing NRM and ANC activities. Nothing came of these initiatives, however, and South African commandos subsequently conducted two raids into Mozambican territory. Thus far, Machel has limited his response to public criticism of the raids. [redacted]

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Personal Data

Machel is 47 years old. His lifestyle is austere, although he enjoys the trappings of authority. In press appearances Machel is impressive; open and articulate, he projects a warm and witty personality. He received the Lenin Peace Prize in 1977 and during his trip to the Soviet Union in 1980 he was awarded the Soviet Order of People's Friendship. Machel speaks Swahili, Portuguese, and some French and English. His wife, Graça, is Minister of Education and Culture. [redacted]

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2 April 1981

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