

IV(B) - AFRICA

The death of Samora Machel The first monitored confirmation of the death of the Mozambican President, in a plane crash in South Africa, came in a statement from President P.W. Botha, expressing his "deep regret and profound shock" at the news, transmitted by the South African agency at 0929 gmt on 20th October. The agency had first reported the crash at 0456 gmt on the 20th when it cited Foreign Minister Pik Botha as saying the crash had occurred in a remote area near the border with Swaziland and Mozambique. In a dispatch at 0935 gmt* the agency cited President Botha as saying South Africa had lost "an influential ally in its efforts to develop the economies of southern Africa". The agency said both P.W. Botha and Pik Botha, and their wives, had sent messages of condolence to the Mozambican government and the relatives of the victims of the disaster.

Maputo radio at 0707 gmt on 20th October broadcast a communique from the Frelimo Political Bureau,* read by Political Bureau member Marcelino dos Santos, which said President Samora Machel had been expected to return home the previous evening from the summit meeting in Zambia with the Zambian, Angolan and Zairean Presidents. However, his aircraft had not arrived and while searches for it were taking place a message had been received from the South African authorities about the crash of a plane in Natal province. The communique said party, state and government bodies were meeting "to assess the situation" and called on the population to remain calm. Following this announcement, Maputo radio did not resume its normal programming but carried only solemn music interspersed with frequent repeats of the Political Bureau communique.

In a dispatch from Maputo on 20th October, AFP cited the Mozambican embassy in Harare as saying that those killed in the crash included Foreign Minister Joaquim Alberto Chissano, Transport and Communications Minister Luis Alcantara Santos and Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Mbanze. However, the embassy failed to mention President Machel. The agency cited Paulo Oliveira, European representative of the Mozambique National Resistance, as saying in Lisbon that it was "premature" to say whether the crash was accidental or the result of sabotage.