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## Africa Without Machel



If there is anything southern Africa does not need, it is more instability. Now a new shiver reverberates from the plane crash on Sunday that killed Mozambique's President Samora Machel — a Marxist-Leninist presiding over a poor, war-torn country, but also a realist who more than once advanced the cause of stability in the troubled region.

When President Machel took over the former Portuguese colony at independence in 1975, Mozambique was undeveloped, its people uneducated. A decade and a long drought later, the rich potential of three deep-water ports, immense hydroelectric power and bountiful mineral deposits remains unrealized. Yet difficulties that would have hardened some leaders' ideology turned Mr. Machel toward pragmatism.

He had long been a central figure in the fight to free southern Africa of minority rule. That activism spurred white Rhodesians to arm his opponents inside Mozambique. South Africa eventually took over the role of training and supplying the Mozambique National Resistance. Mr. Machel

got his weapons from the Soviet Union, and relations with Western countries were cool. When poverty threatened to pull Mozambique under, however, he turned to his enemy. "There are two things you cannot choose: brothers and neighbors," he said. "We can't move our country." And he went to South Africa to talk peace.

The Reagan administration brokered a nonaggression pact between Mozambique and South Africa in March 1984. Relations with the United States also improved as Mr. Machel sought Western aid, technology and investment, and promoted trade with the West. But the nonaggression pact soon soured as South Africa continued to support his opponents. It was a brief moment of hope for those trying to contain the spiral of violence in southern Africa.

Mr. Machel's struggle between principle and survival yielded no clear or lasting victories. The praise to be given is that he persevered. Now, with that energy lost, southern Africa looks unsteadier than ever.

— THE NEW YORK TIMES.