

COMMANDING HEIGHTS

Benjamin Mkapa

(b. 1938)

President of Tanzania since 1995, Benjamin Mkapa has worked with the World Bank and IMF to implement broad economic reforms, securing financial aid and debt relief as Tanzania continues to open its economy.

From "Mkapa, Benjamin." Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2001.

Born in Ndanda in the Masasi District of Southeastern Tanzania, the last of four children, Mkapa attended local schools before completing a Bachelor's degree at Makerere University in Uganda in 1962. He worked as a district administrative officer in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam for one year before joining the foreign service in 1963. Having joined the ruling party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), Mkapa was appointed managing editor of the party's newspaper in May 1966. In July 1974 he was promoted to press secretary for President Julius Nyerere.

Mkapa served briefly as the first director of Shihata, the Tanzanian news agency, in 1974, before becoming high commissioner to Nigeria (1976-1977). In a series of rapid promotions and reassignments resulting from Cabinet reshuffles, Mkapa held a succession of important government posts in the late 1970s and 1980s. Initially appointed to parliament in 1977, Mkapa was elected to represent the Masasi District in 1985. He was elected to the central committee of TANU's successor, the Revolutionary Party of Tanzania (Chama Cha Mapinduzi, or CCM), in 1987 and received the party's nomination for president in July 1995.

In October 1995 he took 62 percent of the vote in Tanzania's first multiparty elections and began his term as president in November 1995.

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