

Savimbi: SA was 'painfully

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correct'

Political Correspondent

UNITA leader, Dr Jonas Savimbi's account of South Africa's four-month involvement in Angola was disclosed in a report from Washington pub-

lished yesterday in the pro-Government news-paper Rapport.

The report revealed that Dr Savimbi had visited South Africa twice in the past two months to

plead for military assistance in the Angolan war. Records of a meeting between Dr Savimbi and a United States Senate assistant, Mr Bill Coughlin, will be presented to the

United States Senate's Africa Committee this week.

Dr Savimbi was quoted as saying that South Africa had at all times acted "painfully correctly"

and had at no stage taken military action without the approval of Zaire, Zambia and the Ivory Coast.

He said that by the end of September last year he

had realized that he needed military help to combat the Cuban troops fighting with the MPLA.

South African forces, Dr Savimbi said, were at that stage concentrated at the

dam on the Kunene River.

He flew to Zaire to ask help from President Mobutu, who provided Unita with 11 manned panzers. In the middle of October President Mobutu

made it known that there was an "American friend" who wanted to help.

The American said that no United States troops

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would be supplied, but that aid would be provided to Zaire.

Light American weapons were received but these were not sufficient since at the same time Dr Savimbi approached President Kaunda, President Mobutu, and President Houphouet-Boigny and requested them to ask South Africa to provide secret assistance.

Soon afterwards a South African force of between 1 200 and 1 500 men began moving up the coast to Port Amboine, about 150 km south of Luanda.

The FNLA forces were already in the outskirts of Luanda and, according to Mr Coughlin, this is the point where the Russians poured in massive quantities of arms and thousands of Cuban troops to support the MPLA.

At the end of November about 50 South African soldiers went to assist Unita in central Angola. After being exposed to the Cuban fire power, the South Africans called for reinforcements and the number of South African troops in central Angola totalled 200.

In December South Africa told Savimbi that its troops were to be withdrawn. It was said that South Africa did not get the expected support from the United States and that it could not fight the Russians and Cubans alone. Further South African reinforcements could not be provided without notifying the South African Par-

liament, Dr Savimbi was told.

At this point, Dr Kaunda arranged a meeting between Dr Savimbi and Mr Vorster in Pretoria on December 20. After this South Africa remained in Angola in a defensive capacity.

On Christmas Day the South African commander told Dr Savimbi that his troops were pulling out of Cela for good. Dr Savimbi again flew to Lusaka and another meeting was arranged with the South African authorities, this time in South West Africa.

He was told that the South Africans would remain in Angola until after the Organization of African Unity meeting.

On January 21, after the OAU meeting, South Africa informed him that all soldiers would be withdrawn and within 48 hours the South Africans had pulled back to the dam in the far south of Angola.

According to Rapport, Mr Coughlin read from the notes of his meeting with Dr Savimbi when he divulged his details to the newspaper's Washington correspondent. Mr Coughlin also had talks in South Africa with Mr Brand Fourie, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr Japie Basson, the United Party's foreign affairs spokesman, and Dr F van Zyl Slabbert, the Progressive-Reform Party's chief spokesman on Defence.

The Minister of Defence, Mr P W Botha, last night declined to confirm or deny the accuracy of the newspaper's report.

16 FEB 1976

War threat to Horn of Africa

Trouble in the French territory of the Afars and Issas threatens the West's ability to keep watch on a vital area which includes the entrance to the Red Sea and Suez Canal and the start of the oil run round the Cape, writes ANTHONY DELIUS.

LONDON.—A busload of French schoolchildren was hijacked on the outskirts of Djibouti and caused nearly as much worry about the sea routes round the Cape 4 000 miles away as the war in Angola.

For the event seemed to load the dice for a bitter war which could engulf the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea straits of Bab el Mandeb. Immediately it seemed to lessen the chances of a peaceful French withdrawal from the Territory of Afars and Issas round the strategic port of Djibouti and a coastal base for France and French sea power.

Almost straight across from Djibouti lies the once great British naval base and coaling station of Aden, now well out of Western hands. The United States has long been complaining, too, about Somalia's allegedly granting naval facilities to Russia at Berbera 200 km down the African coast.

Big trouble

Now the prospects are of big trouble in the hand-over of the Territory of the Afars and Issas which would lose the West any real ability to maintain watch and ward in this vital area, which includes the entrance to the Red Sea and Suez Canal and the start of the oil run round the Cape.

The bus hijack was carried out by a freebooting guerilla group called the Front for the Liberation of the Somali Coast, which has its headquarters in Mogadishu, capital of the Somali Republic. The children were those of French soldiers who help guard the territory.

Naturally there was strong feeling among the soldiers about the capture of their children and their abduction to a place a short distance over the Foreign Legion brushed



aside the Somali border guard, killing one, and then shot the hijackers at the expense of one child dead, four wounded and one missing. The result is growing fury between France and the Somali Republic, both of whom complained to the Security Council.

Now the matter has been further complicated by a long statement by the military rulers of Ethiopia, who maintain that the hijacking episode was probably encouraged by the Somalis to keep matters boiling in Djibouti. To see why an accusation like this is like putting out a bonfire with petroleum it is necessary to unravel the extraordinary complications of the Djibouti scene.

First of all the Territory of the Afars and Issas lies alongside the northern end of Somalia. Also Djibouti provides the principal port for Ethiopia's exports and imports, lying at the end of a long railway line coming from Addis Ababa. Then again the Issas are really in fact Somalis and the Afars are part of a much bigger group inside Ethiopia. So that both the Somali Republic (Somalia) and Ethiopia once claimed the territory by right of consanguinity, contiguity and economic necessity.

In recent years both the Somalis and the Ethiopians have given up their claims to the Territory of the Afars and Issas, but the Somalis have been insisting that it should be-

come independent on its own. After much pressure from the Arab League, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, the French have reluctantly announced that they are bowing out. But, in the way the French have, they arranged to keep some strong ties and a base for a couple of submarines.

The reason why the French were confident of doing this was because of their friendly relations with the man who was voted chief minister — and whom many opponents contend the French arranged to have voted to this exalted post. This is Ali Aref, who also happens to be an Afar and has built up friendly relations with the Ethiopians. It was he who the French believed was well in position to take over the control of the territory in independence, to the great joy of the Ethiopians and the intense chagrin of the Somalis.

Opposition

Mr Ali Aref is opposed by the only legal opposition, the Popular Africa Independence League (LPAI), which used to be mainly Issa. Then there is the illegal Front for the Liberation of the Somali Coast, which is even more strongly Somali. Both the League and the Front are recognized by the OAU, to everybody's confusion. Then there is another Djibouti liberation group based on Addis Ababa. Ali Aref relied upon the strength of the Afars in Djibouti and its environs to hold the position for him.

But now there has come about a violent estrangement between the Ethiopian soldiery and the Afars. There are about half a million Afars on Ethiopian soil and their revered Sultan of All the Afars, Sultan Ali Mirrah, refused to obey the land nationalization orders issued from Addis Ababa. No trouble to the Ethiopian army — its soldiers wiped out the Sultan's

capital and would have wiped him out too if he had not fled with his two dozen children to Djibouti.

The sultan was coolly received in Djibouti by both the French and Ali Aref, who were anxious to keep on the right side of the Ethiopians. The result is that the sultan's son has started an Afar liberation movement, the sultan is travelling around the Arab states whipping up support for it, and Afar support of Ali Aref is declining rapidly. The Afar Liberation Front is allying itself with the Arab-backed Eritrean secessionists who want to take the Eritrean province out of Ethiopia and have been at war with the Ethiopian army for more than a year now.

Ali Aref has been struggling to cool things so that there can be a quiet and easy transfer of power from the French to himself and everything remain friendly between former ruler and new independency as possible. But the would-be liberators of the Somali coast are determined that there is going to be a first-class row about who rules in Djibouti, hence the hijacking of the children, and the pitting of the French and Somalis against one another. The opposition league has now come out and started agitating too. And the great powers look on and wonder.

Zambia considers MPLA recognition

16 FEB 1976

LUSAKA. — President Kenneth Kaunda said here yesterday that Zambia was seriously considering recognizing the Soviet-backed MPLA as the Government in Angola.

But, he told a meeting of the ruling United Independence Party (Unip), Zambia was not going to be stampeded into making decisions which were against its principles.

Zambia, one of the leading proponents of a government of national unity in Angola, is one of the few members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which has not yet recognized the MPLA.

The President also referred to Rhodesia and predicted a bloodbath before majority rule could be introduced there.

The inevitability of war in Rhodesia was one of the reasons for Zambia's recently invoked state of emergency, he told Unip party officials.

● Three warships shelled the southern Angolan port of Mocimedeas for two days before landing several hundred Cuban soldiers there on Thursday, senior Western intelligence sources said in Lusaka at the weekend.

The sources said the three vessels were Soviet alligator-class landing craft, but said the nationality of the commanders was not known.

● The UN Secretary-General, Dr Kurt Waldheim, said in Bangkok that the war in Angola was "an African problem" and the United Nations could not intervene because it had not been asked to do so.

— Sapa-Reuter-AP

'Unlimited arms' to fight Smith

NKOMO GETS RUSSIAN OFFER

16 FEB 1975

RUSSIA has offered Rhodesian African leader Mr Joshua Nkomo an unlimited supply of arms and military advisers for use by African nationalists to accelerate the guerrilla struggle against the Smith Government.

The offer, which amounts to a blank cheque, was made at a secret meeting in Budapest, Hungary, reports John Dickie, diplomatic correspondent of the London Daily Mail, today.

Mr Nkomo, who is at present engaged in a protracted round of talks with Mr Ian Smith in a bid to solve the Rhode-

sian crisis by negotiation, slipped out of London 10 days ago after seeing the Foreign Secretary, Mr James Callaghan, for a one-day meeting in Budapest with a high-powered Soviet delegation.

Mr Nkomo's aides will deny that the encounter with the Russians ever took place since they have a cover for his vi-

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sit — his son Phutani is a student in the Hungarian capital, says Dickie.

But it is irrefutable the Russians have offered to provide massive supplies of sophisticated military equipment and training advisers to co-operate from Mozambique. Its President Samora Machel, is ready to turn over guerrilla camps to the Soviets.

Moscow is anxious to get in before the Chinese because of suspicions that Peking may be planning to counter-balance the Russian gains in An-

gola by providing backing in Tanzania for anti-Smith guerrillas.

But, says Dickie, Mr Nkomo kept the Russians dangling, refusing to say yes or no until he had weighed up the chances of Britain making one more try at a peaceful settlement.