

# Zaire 'Invasion': Carter Foot In Africa?

## ZAIRE

Zairean officials are characterizing incidents in the copper-rich Shaba region of Zaire as a Cuban-led invasion from Angola, a characterization the Carter administration has not hesitated to use as the pretext for a show of force in Africa. This week Mr. Carter also increased public pressure on South Africa with financial threats and verbal threats by UN Ambassador Andrew Young to South Africa's Ambassador to the U.S., Roelof Botha. Young threatened that the U.S. is on the verge of cutting diplomatic relations with South Africa. These maneuvers, however, are by no means for peace. The threat of cutting off South Africa is part of the "break-away scenario" designed to guarantee a continuation of South African operations against Angola from South African-controlled Namibia, seemingly independent of the U.S.

### *The Strange Events in Zaire*

On March 10 Zaire announced that an invasion had been launched two days earlier from Angola into the Shaba region. Initial reports came from the U.S. embassy in Kinshasha, Zaire. The only other source of information has been the Zairean government, which is charging that as many as 5,000 have invaded the country. Although some American missionaries in the region have been evacuated, others have elected to remain, and there is no independent confirmation of the supposed invasion, the number of people involved in it, or how far it has proceeded.

This morning's *New York Times* however, hit the stands with front-page headlines claiming that the mining center of Kolwezi has been taken by rebel invaders, while today's *Washington Post* and CBS radio report that the invaders are only within 60 miles of Kolwezi.

To alleviate the alleged threat to Zaire President Mobutu's government, Carter personally authorized \$2 billion worth of emergency aid flown to Zaire, without the approval of the U.S. Congress. In testimony to the House International Relations committee March 16 Secretary of State Cyrus Vance said that the fighting in Zaire posed "a dangerous situation," since it threatened the operation of the copper mines, upon which the foreign exchange earnings of Zaire depend: "If something should happen to the copper mines, it would be a very serious blow to the Republic of Zaire."

An editorial in the *New York Daily News* March 17 captured the tone maintained by the Carter administration: "The Reds are up to their old tricks," and the supposed invasion may draw the U.S. into another Vietnam-style quagmire. The *Christian Science Monitor*

claimed March 17 that Zaire was of strategic importance, and that the U.S. and the Soviet Union had confronted each other for power and influence in this region before, a reference to the Belgian-Congo conflict of the early 1960s.

The invasion is being attributed to Kantangan gendarmes, Zaireans who fought in the army of Moise Tshombe, who spearheaded the attempt to establish an independent Katanga in the early 1960s (the former Katanga province is now called Shaba). After the defeat of Tshombe, the Katanga gendarmes took refuge in Angola. Zaire is charging that Cuban-led Katangan gendarmes are carrying out the invasion, although European press sources reported that there was very

## What Kind Of Information The Invasion Reports Are Based On

"How invasion developed" by Michael Kaufman from Kinshasha, Zaire

"At this distance from the invaded area, it is difficult to discern fact from the host of rumors circulating here. But according to Western diplomats who themselves have had no chance at firsthand observation, the invasion began on March 8. Forty men, they say, crossed the border from Angola on that day at a frontier checkpoint where two Zairean guards were on duty without radio communication."

— *New York Times*, March 18

little fighting; Belgian sources reported that about 500 Katangans had returned to Zaire peacefully recently.

Angolan Defense Minister Henrique Carreira warned that the Western countries sending military aid to Zaire were creating the conditions for another Vietnam, this time in Africa. France and Belgium have also sent small arms to Zaire following the U.S. move.

Angola has confirmed fighting in the Shaba region, but reported that it was between Zairean groups and denied providing a base for mercenaries as charged by Zaire; Angola has also charged that Zaire is trying to internationalize its internal problems and increase tensions with Angola.

There is widespread discontent among the Zaire population against the regime of Mobutu. This resentment increased some months ago when all unemployed people in urban areas were forcibly expelled to rural resettlement areas. It is in these areas that the green monkey epidemic was widespread last summer. With the rural population (80 percent of the population) "thoroughly discouraged" according to a U.S.-based

Zaire expert, and urban unrest due to the disastrous economic situation, the events in Western Shaba could get out of control and quickly spread.

#### *Interesting Considerations*

In February, Angolan President Agostino Neto charged that Zaire was being used by the U.S. as a staging base for a Green Beret Special Forces operation against Angola, code named Cobra 77, led by Col. Mike Thompson. A week later an invading force of 200 men, led by three whites, from Zaire attacked the northern Angolan town of Panagala, killing 43 people. Yesterday another massacre by forces based in Zaire was reported by Angolan authorities, this time against the village of

Conongo, in the northern province of Cabinda, killing 31 civilians.

Attributing the present disturbances in Zaire to "mercenaries from Angola," is the first stage of a campaign to discredit Angolan policy in relation to Zaire, according to Angolan authorities. In this way the stage is set for stepped-up operations from Zaire into Angola, as well as the possibility for an invasion by Zaire armed forces. A Zaire desk office of a major New York bank said in an interview that a U.S.-Soviet confrontation over the Zaire situation was inevitable, and could happen quickly: "There are a number of people who would want to force this confrontation. It may be a good time for Carter to show his decision-making powers. It is a test of U.S. will."

## Castro's African Tour Part Of Programmatic Drive To Unify Horn Of Africa

Cuban President Fidel Castro's current tour of Africa — including stops in Algeria, Libya, South Yemen, Somalia, and Ethiopia and Tanzania — are part of a joint socialist sector Non-Aligned Nations drive for the programmatic unification of Arab and African countries in the Red Sea area. The basis for such unification was implied in a joint communique Castro signed with Col. Muammar Qaddafi, the president of Libya, early in the tour which announces that the two countries will cooperate to implement the resolutions adopted by last year's meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Colombo, Sri Lanka — resolutions which call for Third World debt moratoria and a new world economic order.

President Castro's trip follows an earlier programmatic offensive by the Yugoslavian government to defuse the historical border conflicts among these nations on the basis of their common economic interests in development. President Josep Tito was in Libya a month ago, followed by Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Milos Minic's tour through Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Zambia.

After Castro's visit to Ethiopia, he returned to Somalia to push for a Soviet-backed federation of Somalia, Ethiopia, South Yemen and the territory of Afars and Issas (now held by the French). This "common anti-imperialist front" in the Red Sea area will end the potential for an East-West crisis over the Horn of Africa. Somalia had previously proposed the federation of Ethiopia and Somalia specifically as a solution to the dispute over the Ogaden area which borders the two countries) after Ethiopian president Mengistu Haile Mariam had successfully quashed a U.S.-backed coup attempt against his government in early February. Then President Mengistu began to talk openly of federation, agreeing that a union with South Yemen could be easily accomplished, and began to discuss joint economic and technical proposals with Somalia and South Yemen,

calling for the expansion of production and a rising standard of living.

Regional peace was also aided by the Afro-Arab Summit in Cairo (March 7-9), where the potential for an expansion of the conflict between the Eritrean Liberation Front and the Ethiopian government was quietly defused. At this summit, the representative from the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry, Bernard Dinke, explained that the Eritrean conflict was not created by a national liberation movement, but was a maneuver of other countries which intend to destabilize Ethiopia. Mr. Dinke's call for the end to interventions from other countries was quietly supported by the Arabs, who ignored Eritrean Liberation Front leader Osman Sabbe Saleh's memorandum for support of the Eritrean liberation struggle. According to *Le Monde* March 16, Osman Saleh was "discretely conducted out (of the summit) by the authorities who refused to grant him observer status."

In the spirit of this Afro-Arab summit, President Al-Hamdi of North Yemen will sponsor a conference for the heads of state of North and South Yemen, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan on March 22 in North Yemen. President Al-Hamdi noted that disputes between neighboring Non-aligned countries in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa area can only benefit Israel, Rhodesia and South Africa, and, for this reason, the summit will discuss the Eritrean question and various border animosities between African and Arab nations. Such discussion could pave the way for the political unity that is necessary to develop East Africa — particularly Sudan which has the potential of becoming the breadbasket of the Mideast and Africa.

The North Yemen heads of state conference is timed to coincide with the arrival of Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny, who will tour Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique — countries which have been pushing for