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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 August 1983

Dear Jim,

Thank you for sending me your letter of 26 July about your visit to Dr. Savimbi in Angola. I read your account with interest.

UNITA is obviously going to be a significant factor in the Angolan internal situation for some time. I therefore found particularly useful your comments on Savimbi's own personality and objectives. You will not expect me to comment item by item, but there are some general observations I would make.

I fully agree with you that it is difficult to evaluate with any kind of certainty the real extent of Dr. Savimbi's control in Angola. UNITA is able to inflict considerable disruption on the economy but, so far, unable to occupy the main cities or to establish any administrative structures outside a limited area in its heartland.

The British Government's relations are of course with the MPLA Government. It is the MPLA who have a decisive influence on such questions as the level of British trade and well-being of the British community; and it is with the MPLA that the US Government is conducting negotiations for a Cuban withdrawal which would open the way to a Namibian settlement.

/ My final

My final comment concerns your reference to the British personnel working in the diamond mines in Northern Angola. These people, who I understand are all unarmed, are engaged in commercial employment. I am sure that you would agree that, if they were harmed, there is bound to be strong public reaction in this country against those concerned.

Yours ever  
Margaret

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Sir James S.R. Scott-Hopkins, M.E.P.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 August 1983

*Dear John,*

Angola: UNITA

/ As requested, I enclose a draft reply from the Prime Minister to the letter from Sir James Scott-Hopkins of 26/July.

/ My letter of 29/July on the call by Mr Tiny Rowland gave a general commentary on the points raised by Sir James Scott-Hopkins. The attached notes give a more detailed background. Our own information supports some of his account, especially as regards Savimbi's impressive personality and the high level of UNITA discipline and efficiency. We would differ on the following main points:

- i) Sir James over-estimates, in our view, the degree of Savimbi's control: UNITA is essentially a guerrilla movement, and while it seriously disrupts the economy it has not been able to take the main towns or set up an administration outside its heartland.
  - ii) He over-estimates also Savimbi's prospects for winning power: as my earlier letter stated, our best estimate at present is that he is unlikely to succeed at least in the short term.
  - iii) He greatly under-estimates the degree of South African support for UNITA: their assistance, both in military equipment and operational co-operation, plays an important part in UNITA's successes.
  - iv) We would not share his confidence in Savimbi's assurances that if he came to power he would accept a mixed economy and maintain hostility towards SWAPO: he has supped with a wide variety of devils in the past, and his future policies are largely unpredictable, though we would expect him to continue to be anti-Soviet.
- /v) We would



- v) We would not accept that "the best chance of achieving stability in Southern Africa lies with Savimbi's UNITA". On the contrary, at least in the short term, it is a major obstacle to a Namibia settlement and the prospects that would give for drawing Angola into the Western orbit. Furthermore even if Savimbi won power, civil war would continue for some time and both the West and the Soviet bloc could well be sucked further into providing assistance.

I do not think you would want me to comment on points of detail. However you may wish to know that Angola does not export diamonds to Russia (which is itself an exporter of diamonds). Angola sells its diamonds through the Diamond Trading Company (a de Beers subsidiary) in London.

*Yours ever*

*John Hides*

*for*

(R B Bone)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street



## BACKGROUND

Prospects for UNITA

1. UNITA has recently considerably increased its area of operation. With an estimated 15,000 armed trained men, it now has a good deal of freedom of action in large parts of the country and has some of the main supply links in a strangle. It may well be able to extend its guerrilla operation. We can no longer dismiss out of hand the possibility that it may eventually win power.
2. Such a development is unlikely in the near future. UNITA would at present stand little chance of success in attacks on the main urban centres. It is not strong enough to topple the MPLA unless its outside support were to be much increased or the Soviet Union/Cuba were to withdraw their support from the MPLA. Neither seems likely to happen. Indeed should the existence of the MPLA regime seem in danger the Soviet Union might well decide to take whatever steps were necessary to save it.
3. A Namibia settlement would bring new elements of uncertainty but would be unlikely to favour Savimbi. His current successes rely heavily on South African military support. He could probably continue guerrilla operations for some years even if South African support were cut off, though possibly on a reducing scale. But the MPLA show every sign of insisting on keeping sufficient Cuban troops to maintain at least the present balance.
4. The most probable prospect therefore is a continuing stalemate, with the MPLA retaining power in the main cities, but with UNITA continuing to inflict considerable disruption on the economy while being unable to replace the civil administration outside its tribal heartland. This judgement is shared by the US whose latest assessment is that Savimbi



will be able to do no more than control up to 45% of the country. The US believe that leading South African military and security officials privately accept this view. There is evidence that Savimbi himself does not believe he can gain sole power and is aiming at a place in a Government of national reconciliation.

5. Some form of reconciliation would be the best solution for Angola and probably for the West. This will be difficult to achieve. In the short term it is unlikely that any compromise will be possible which includes Savimbi in a position of power. No MPLA leader would wish to share power with such a formidable figure. What might eventually become possible is an MPLA reconciliation with some of Savimbi's lieutenants, perhaps combined with a degree of regional autonomy.

#### US Attitude

6. The US do not recognise the MPLA Government in Luanda, and have had contacts with Savimbi in the past. They plan to resume these shortly at a junior official level. Their main aim is to counteract South African influence on Savimbi hostile to US efforts to negotiate with the MPLA an agreement on Cuban withdrawal, thus opening the way to a Namibia settlement.

#### Dr Savimbi

7. Dr Savimbi has had something of a chequered past. Son of a prominent Ovimbundu family, Savimbi went to Portugal in 1958 as a member of a group of students supported by the Protestant United Church of Christ. He left Lisbon in 1960 (allegedly because of badgering by the Political Police) and went to Fribourg University and then to the University of Lausanne. In 1962 he was appointed Foreign Minister in Holden Roberto's Government in exile. Having fallen out with Roberto, he resigned in July 1964.



8. Savimbi subsequently consorted with Malcolm X, and visited China, North Korea and North Vietnam. He returned via Eastern Europe to Algiers where he consulted Che Guevara. He sent a group of his supporters for military training in China. Discussed with MPLA leaders possibility of joining that party. 1966 launched UNITA. China continued aid to UNITA late 60s and early 70s. In 1975 joined in Transitional Government, but by end of year obtained South African backing in civil war.

9. A personality of considerable charisma, attractive to several African leaders until he began increasingly to accept South African support. Finds it difficult to collaborate with others unless he is in command. In his guerrilla struggle against the MPLA, Savimbi appears to have adopted an increasingly anti-Communist and pro-mixed economy stance. He has also become progressively anti-Portuguese, and probably anti-white and anti-Catholic. Savimbi's past history, however, suggests that he is an opportunist who deals where he can obtain the best bargain.

#### UNITA/SWAPO

10. Mainly because of tribal (Ovimbundu) connections with SWAPO, Savimbi's UNITA played an early role in training and arming SWAPO. A formal renunciation of its alliance with SWAPO was declared in June 1974. Dr Savimbi has on several occasions said that UNITA has no quarrel with SWAPO. However, in more recent times, probably under South African pressure, he has adopted a hostile stance against SWAPO within Angola.

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despach/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM: Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO: Sir James S R Scott-Hopkins MEP  
2 Queen Anne's Gate  
LONDON SW1H 9AA

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

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SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

Thank you for sending me your letter of 26 July about your visit to Dr Savimbi in Angola. I read your account with interest.

CAVEAT.....

UNITA is obviously going to be a significant factor in the Angolan internal situation for some time. I therefore found particularly useful your comments on Savimbi's own personality and objectives. You will not expect me to comment item by item, <sup>but</sup> There are some general observations I would make.

I fully agree with you that it is difficult to evaluate with any kind of certainty the real extent of Dr Savimbi's control in Angola. However one thing is clear: UNITA remains essentially a guerrilla movement, with all the strengths and weaknesses of such a body. It is able to inflict considerable disruption on the economy but, so far at least, unable to occupy the main cities or to establish any administrative structures outside a limited area in its heartland. The picture is therefore similar to guerrilla insurgencies in several other countries of the world.

Enclosures—flag(s).....



The British Government's relations are of course with the MPLA Government. It is the MPLA who have a decisive influence on such questions as the level of British trade and well-being of the British community; and it is with the MPLA that the US Government is conducting negotiations for a Cuban withdrawal which would open the way to a Namibian settlement.

My final comment concerns your reference to the British personnel working in the diamond mines in Northern Angola. These people, who I understand are all unarmed, are engaged in commercial employment. I am sure that you would agree that, if they were harmed, there would bound to be strong public reaction in this country against those concerned.

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Private & Confidential

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Sir  
JAMES S.R. SCOTT-HOPKINS  
Member of the  
European Parliament

Prime Minister

He has copied this to the  
Foreign Secretary who will be  
providing comment and a draft  
reply.  
A.F.C. 27/7

2 QUEEN ANNE'S GATE  
LONDON SW1H 9AA  
01-222 1720  
01-222 1729

mt

26th July 1983

Dear Margaret,

I have just returned from a visit to Dr. Savimbi in Angola. I was invited to go there together with three other M.E.Ps (one from France - d'Ormesson; Germany - Brock; Belgium - Beyer de Ryck). Originally Lord Chalfont was invited but did not reply.

The first intention was to try to use the four M.E.Ps as intermediaries in negotiations regarding the seven British mercenaries held by the M.P.L.A. and the twenty Czechs held by Unita. I persuaded my three colleagues - after talking to Geoffrey Howe - that this role was quite impossible. Therefore the visit, if it was to proceed, would be purely fact-finding. They agreed without hesitation.

The journey to Angola was from Geneva to Kinshasha, thence by a small two-engined 'plane into a Bush airstrip inside Angola. I was asked to keep the route secret. The flight from Kinshasha took four hours as the approach into Angola had to be from Botswana. From the Bush airstrip the journey by lorry across the Bush took 8½ hours to Unita's operational H.Q. It was quite the most hideous 300 kms. that I have ever travelled.

I should say here that on our arrival at Kinshasha we (the four M.E.Ps) were joined by a Paris-Match photographer and two French journalists. No word of this had been made known previously.

(I mention all these rather tedious journey details to emphasise the point that it was not a journey lightly undertaken but with a serious objective - though I doubt I would have gone if I had known about the journalists prior to leaving).

My impressions of Dr. Savimbi and his organisation and operational ability are as follows:-

- 1) He has an impressive personality. He was trained in guerilla operations and ideology a little in Moscow and for two years in China (I believe at the same time as Mugabe). He has imported all the well-tried tech-

niques of indoctrination into all his training and instruction cadres. He now is fervently anti-Communist and anti-Russia/Cuba.

- 11) He undoubtedly has a well-trying, well-armed force of what he calls "regular troops". The formations fight in uniform and, allowing for his exaggerated figure, number I guess between 3,000 and 5,000.
- 111) Beyond that he claims to control about 10,000 to 12,000 Guerillas whom he arms and directs. \_\_\_\_\_
- 1V) It appears to me that the command structure was sound and working. One striking fact was his communication set-up, operating captured radios and monitoring both Cuban and M.P.L.A. radio messages.
- V) The repair workshops were fairly efficient in restoring to working order captured weaponry of various types ranging from SAM 7's and sophisticated guns to simple rifles and mortars.

He gives the impression that these were the majority of his armaments. I very much doubt it as I saw a fair amount of N.A.T.O. weaponry and ammunition. I suspect a sizeable flow comes in either through South Africa, Botswana or Zaire, though I have no proof, except that the small 'plane that took us was loaded with ammunition on both journeys from Zaire.

- V1) Unita operates without the use of money of any kind, either for the military Guerillas or the civilian population in the villages. For the civilians a barter system operates; they grow the produce (be it vegetable or animal) and in return they receive clothes, hardware and items such as tobacco. For the military and Guerillas they receive clothes and food for their services.

Dr. Savimbi believes that they go into battle for patriotic reasons. I think it is the indoctrination which appears to mesmerise them. Certainly the recruits that I saw training were in that state, but I must admit efficient.

- V11) It is difficult to evaluate with any kind of certainty what is the real extent of his control of Angola. If I were to judge from the many maps in the Unita control H.Q. I would say that about a third of the country, that of the south-east, is under his direct control with absolutely no Cuban or M.P.L.A. pressure at all.

Further, about a third is under his Guerilla control, that being the central land mass extending up to the north-east, including the two railway lines which are non-operational. This entails bottling up the Cuban and M.P.L.A. troops in the towns and controlling by ambush and short sharp attacks any incursions or supply convoys in the countryside. The South African Army are controlling a small area deep down in the south-west.

The problem that I found was that the maps that I studied at Savimbi's H.Q. and those that I saw six months earlier at the South African Army H.Q. in the operational zone on the Angolan/Namibian border, did not match.

Of course a lot can happen in six months of guerilla warfare, but I suspect that the Cuban and East German control is greater than Unita is prepared to admit, though it is true that Unita did capture briefly the main town and centre of administration in central Angola a week or so before my arrival. Equipment and prisoners confirmed this.

- V111) Unita's future military plans, as far as can be disentangled from their propoganda, are a drive to the north-east up to the Zaire border, in order to capture and hold the diamond mines in that area to bring in much-needed funds.

It was during this part of the briefing by Savimbi that the news of the fifty British subjects emerged. They have been recruited recently by the M.P.L.A. using De Beers as agents to slow down the extent of smuggling, mainly by the Cubans. The export of diamonds to Russia is one of the important sources of income for the M.P.L.A. Unita's concern is that whilst quite confident that they can militarily take the area, they have no wish to have any confrontation with the British. Hence his request to me to attempt to get them removed.

It is true that this may well be all propoganda on Savimbi's part, probably it is in part. I came away convinced that there was almost certainly going to be quite a lot of fighting in the area, most possibly guerilla action. Savimbi claims to have 3,000 troops in the vicinity. I doubt that, but undoubtedly he has

infiltrated a largish guerilla force into the area. These British could well get caught in that kind of action.

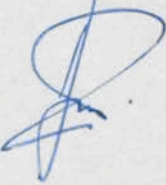
Overall I believe that militarily Unita has made sizeable gains in recent months and seem poised for further expansion. For instance, their base supply camp near the bush airstrip was groaning with military hardware and ammunition. (They certainly were not dummies or mock-ups).

- 1X) Unita's future politically is easier to define. A typical African form of democracy entailing in the end a one-party State, benevolently perhaps, administering a mixed economy. Savimbi himself wishes a negotiation with the M.P.L.A. as soon as they have ejected the Cubans and East Germans. After negotiations he wishes to form a Government of National Reconciliation with, presumably, himself as President. Then to instal a mixed economy, which would guarantee private investment, but with the State owning the main assets (mineral).
- X) I raised with him the question of his present a future relations with SWAPO and Namibia. He accepted that he had helped train and arm SWAPO during the late 70's but because of a sequence of events, such as the South African Army raids into Angola on SWAPO bases and subsequent attacks by SWAPO units on several of his outposts (as SWAPO believed he had helped the South African Army intelligence, which he probably had). He has now turned against them and seems to be attacking their military bases whenever he believes they might cause a further South African raid. I think I believed him on this as the South Africans had told me six months previously that he had withdrawn his support of SWAPO in Angola (probably in return for logistical support by South Africa). I suspect that should he become in full control of Angola he will neutralise SWAPOs Angolan bases. The last thing he would want would be a SWAPO-controlled Namibia.

Finally I believe that there is a strong possibility that Savimbi and his Unita will make the progress they claim to be able to do and force the M.P.L.A. to the negotiating table. I was impressed by the quality of the men Savimbi has recruited around him, both from a military point of view and administratively. They are all left-wing, but very very able. Their organisation outside Angola surprised me,

both in its strength and size. It operates here in the U.K. and in France, Germany and the U.S.A. as well as many African States.

I think that the best chance of achieving stability in Southern Africa lies with Savimbi's Unita. There is one post-script I should add, namely that a U.S.A. delegation is about to visit Savimbi, comprising Congressmen and businessmen.

*Yours ever,*  


The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,  
10, Downing Street,  
London, S.W.1.

c.c. The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, Q.C., M.P.