

Profits first in Angola

If Jonas Savimbi was not an anti-Marxist, an adulatory liberal press might call him the Che Guevara of black Africa. But Savimbi's UNITA guerrilla army is dedicated to ousting the Cuban and Soviet-backed Marxist rulers of Angola, a goal that has curiously earned him condemnation by a good part of North American media.

The tough, pistol-packing Angolan warrior chief, whom I interviewed recently, is right now in Washington to ask President Ronald Reagan, Congress and the American people for military aid in his struggle against the East Bloc. Already the liberal media have mounted a campaign of calumny and disinformation against Savimbi. Among the leading charges:

- Savimbi is a puppet of the South Africans and a proponent of apartheid.

Savimbi does accept aid from South Africa but stoutly opposes apartheid. He told me the leadership of Angola's Marxist forces is largely mulatto, with Portuguese names. Savimbi's UNITA guerrillas are black and have African names. Who are the racists here?

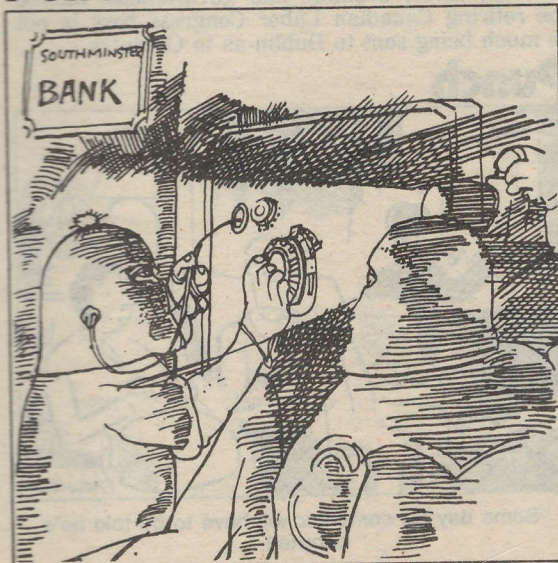
- Liberals charge that Savimbi, a former Marxist is an opportunist and undependable.

Well, how many of our liberals were once Marxists? Are they too untrustworthy? More to the point, should we also abandon relations with China because its leaders, like the young Savimbi, were schooled as Maoists?

- The 35,000 Cuban troops who run Angola for the Soviets will never leave, say the liberals, until Savimbi lays down his arms.

A decade ago there were 10,000 Cubans in Angola. Today there are 35,000. Castro has just promised 20,000 more. Cubans run everything in Angola; they are marrying local women and building permanent homes. The USSR has just invested \$2 billion in

Punch



"I'm not really a criminal—I just got fed up with waiting in line to cash a check."

ERIC MARGOLIS



military infrastructure in Angola. It has built up a sizable naval facility at Luanda, with piers, warehouses, repair yards, and a drydock. All of these signs point to a permanent — and growing — East Bloc presence, not departure.

- Arming Savimbi, claim the liberals, will only help wicked South Africa.

As I have been saying in recent columns, Savimbi's UNITA forces are the last barrier to Cuban troops invading Namibia, Zambia and Zaire. While liberals debate in Congress, the West's vital, irreplaceable mineral sources in southern Africa are being increasingly menaced by Soviet-backed forces. We may soon see a mineral OPEC run by the Soviet Union.

All this is bizarre and depressing, to say the least. Congress this year will lavish \$8 billion U.S. in aid on Israel, Egypt, Turkey and Sudan to supposedly assure U.S. Mideastern oil supplies. Meanwhile, the Soviets are threatening the West's equally vital mineral supplies in southern Africa — and Congress can't seem to find even lose change for Savimbi.

Why is it that pro-western guerrilla forces never have adequate anti-aircraft or anti-tank missiles? Soviet-made HIND helicopter gunships fly unchallenged over Afghanistan, Nicaragua and, now, Angola. Why is it that Soviet-supported guerrillas — in Vietnam, or Nicaragua before the fall of Somoza — always seem to have such weapons?

Savimbi, I fear, will not get the weapons that he needs. He will be slandered by much of the press and quietly denounced by the big American companies that are doing a booming business with the Marxist regime in Luanda. Already Gulf Oil and its parent Chevron, aided by some American banks, are mounting a campaign in Congress against aid to Savimbi. For them, profits come before ethics or even, it seems, common sense.

Canada, America's ally, is busy expanding relations with the Marxist regime in Angola. Cordial relations between Ottawa and Havana make Angola a potentially profitable market for Canadian exports and services — no matter that such assistance will cement Soviet influence in southern Africa.

If Congress fails to support Savimbi, the lesson will not be lost on other black African states. They will rightly wonder where Washington will have the temerity to resist Soviet-Cuban expansion in Africa. An America lacking the resolve to support 60,000 tough, veteran UNITA guerrillas will be unlikely to risk backing the region's far weaker — really almost defenceless — states.

UNITA's destruction will give the Soviets and their proxies the run of southern Africa. Savimbi's trip to Washington may be America's last chance to save its African mineral and political interests.