

Moscow Denies Having Its Warships Off Angola

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By DAVID K. SHIPLER JAN 9 1976

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MOSCOW, Jan. 8—The Soviet Union has no legitimate interest in had no warships off the shores of Angola and termed Western reports of special Soviet movements in the area an invention "clearly provocative in character."

A statement distributed by Tass, the Soviet press agency, charged that the reports had been timed to coincide with the start of meetings on the Angolan situation by the 46-nation Organization of African Unity. The opening session was held in Addis Ababa today.

On Tuesday, American intelligence sources reported that three Soviet naval vessels—an LST, a Kotlin-class guided-missile destroyer and an oiler—were in waters just north of the Angolan coast and were cruising southward.

Yesterday, the White House press secretary, Ron Nessen, expressed official dismay, calling the presence of the ships "further evidence of Soviet involvement in an area where they have 'no legitimate interest.'"

The Tass statement declared: "Certain news services and press organs in the West circulate reports on allegedly special 'movements near the Angolan shores' of Soviet warships with missiles and landing units on board.

"All these reports by Western news services and press organs are vicious inventions that have no foundation whatever and are clearly provocative in character. There are no Soviet warships and no special movements off the Angolan shores."

"Having put into circulation this piece of misinformation, which is timed to coincide with the emergency session of the Organization of African Unity, certain Western circles would evidently like to distract world public attention from their own actions that are aimed at supporting the direct intervention of the South African racists and other reactionary forces against the lawful and sovereign government of the People's Republic of Angola."

Moscow evidently attaches considerable importance to the African session, and some diplomats here say they believe the Russians may even allow their own Angola policy to be influenced by the organization's position.

Moscow sketched its position

in an article published today by the foreign affairs weekly New Times. It appeared to hold open the possibility of coalition as long as mercenaries and South African troops were not fighting with the two American backed factions, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.

"Consolidation of the truly patriotic forces of Angola could of course be of undeniable use," New Times said. "But is it possible to regard as proponents of the people's interest those who are using against their own compatriots the foreign mercenaries who became notorious for their atrocities in Algeria and Indochina, and who—the most glaring fact in Africa—enter into criminal conspiracy with the South African racists, whose regular troops have invaded Angola?"

This seemed to indicate that before the National Front and the National Union could be considered "truly patriotic forces," they must rid themselves of the outsiders. Moscow has said nothing about the several thousand Cuban troops reportedly fighting alongside the Popular Movement.

South Africa Calls Line On Angola Unchanged

CAPE TOWN, Jan. 8 (Reuters)—South Africa's Defense Minister said today that his Government had no intention of changing its policy on Angola.

The minister, Pieter Willem Botha, made this statement in commenting on reports from Washington that South Africa had told the United States it was preparing to pull its troops out of Angola within 48 hours.

The reports, which circulated in Washington yesterday.

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 8—Ron Nessen, the Presidential press secretary, said today that the Administration had received "no official word" of any imminent South African withdrawal from Angola. Asked if an informal message had been passed, he said he would not go beyond his original statement.