SOUTH AFRICA

DEFENSE CHIEF BECOMES PRIME MINISTER

[AN] When the South African cabinet met in late April to consider Defense Minister Pieter W. Botha's proposals for a military raid into Angola, Foreign Minister Roelof (Pik) Botha (no relation), warned that the action would likely provoke an outcry from the Western powers.

But the Defense Minister's argument that South Africa could not afford to let guerrillas of SWAPO (South West African People's Organization) escalate their activities prevailed. And on May 4 South African troops killed more than 1,000 Namibians at the Cassinga refugee camp 150 miles inside the Angolan border.

The raid is just one example of the stern militarist stand which has given the new South African prime minister his reputation as a hard-liner. And the lack of strong negative reaction from South Africa's Western allies strengthened. the hand of those within the ruling National Party who think Pik Botha tends towards an unnecessarily conciliatory approach to external critics. That suspicion probably erased the outside chance that the foreign minister had of capturing the party leadership, which automatically carries with it the post of prime minister, from more senior politicians.

As the most senior cabinet member, P. W. Botha won the party caucus election on September 28. And he had the help of Pik Botha in doing it. After a first ballot in which P. W. attracted 78 votes, Pik 22 and Connie Mulder 72, most of the foreign minister's supporters swung behind P. W., who won by 98 to 74 over Mulder.

P. W. Botha is expected to maintain the policies of his predecessor, the new State Presi-

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UNITED NATIONS

KEEPING DIPLOMACY ON TRACK

[AN] Things are not going well for the Western mediation effort in southern Africa. South Africa's new prime minister, Pieter Botha, confirmed last week that his government will go ahead with plans for Namibian elections under its own auspices, rejecting the Western-initiated UN plan. And in Rhodesia neither Smith's 'internal settlement' nor the Anglo-American call for an 'all-parties conference' has made any headway in checking the escalation of war.

The United States and other Western powers, however, are still trying to win more time for diplomatic maneuvers, hoping that the two white regimes and their guerrilla adversaries can be brought to the bargaining table once again.

British Prime Minister Callaghan, meeting with President Kaunda in Zambia over the September 23 weekend, was expected to face strong criticism over revelations, confirmed by the 500-page official Bingham report, that successive British governments had connived in the violation of oil sanctions against Rhodesia. (Since sanctions were imposed in 1966, the flow of oil has continued, facilitated by the South African subsidiaries of American, French and two British companies. Although charges have been leveled against the companies in the past, only with the publication of the Bingham report in September was the full extent of involvement of top company management and government officials documented.)

Instead, the talks apparently centered on new initiatives by Britain, including the possible re-establishment of British authority in Rhodesia, and a transition to independence carried out with the aid of a UN peace-keeping force. Last week British Foreign Secretary Owen,

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DESTINATION – UNKNOWN

[AN] French-born mercenary Bob Denard, who told reporters of his plans to settle down after leading the overthrow of the Comoro government in May, will soon leave the island country, Comoro co-President Ahmed Abdallah announced last week after returning from a trip to Paris.

Denard's role as army chief after the coup had increasingly disturbed African governments. At the July summit of the Organization of African Unity, the Comoro Islands delegation was refused seating, while early last month some hundred countries walked out of a UN conference in Buenos Aires to protest the presence of the Comoro foreign minister.

Mercenary Denard: losing his place in the sun. */Afrique-Asie*

As a result, substantial economic assistance which the new government was expecting from France and other European countries has been held up. Meeting with French President Giscard d'Estaing, President Abdallah was reportedly informed that future aid would be conditional on the departure of the mercenaries. And on a visit to the Comores in August, *AFRICA NEWS* correspondent Tony Avirgan learned that the mercenary force might be replaced by French legionnaires.

Denard's future itinerary, if it resembles his past, may well give many an African state cause for alarm. A brief biography:

- born in Caen, France, in 1929, given name Gilbert Bourgeaud;
- served in French anti-guerrilla campaigns in North Africa and Indochina;
- fought for Moise Tshombe's Katanga secession in ex-Belgian Congo (Zaire) in 1960, under name Bob Denard;
- returned to the Congo in 1965 to fight left-wing guerrillas for the central government, ending up with involvement in a mercenary mutiny;
- joined Gabon leader Bongo's presidential guard, again calling himself Bourgeaud;
- recruited mercenaries to fight in Angola in 1975, under a CIA contract arranged through French secret service contacts;
- led, in January 1977, an abortive airborne invasion of Benin;
- recruited, in late 1977, a French commando unit for the Rhodesian army;
- overthrew the Comoros government headed by Ali Soilih, in May 1978.

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