

A Frontline wrist-slap for Zaire's Mobutu

THREE Frontline state leaders are due to meet President Mobutu Sese Seko at the weekend to warn him against continued Zairean support for Unita forces operating against the MPLA government in Angola.

The meeting is to take place in Lusaka on Sunday, according to Frontline state diplomatic sources. Presidents José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Samora Machel of Mozambique will warn Mobutu that failure to end support for Unita could mean neighbouring states cutting Zaire's transport routes to South African ports and railway systems.

A significant portion of Zaire's trade passes through South African ports, but must first traverse neighbouring black African states, notably Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Mobutu's previous undertakings to

By HOWARD BARRELL, Harare

end support for Unita have come to nothing, according to these diplomatic sources, and Zaire has continued to provide transit for Unita fighters, as well as American and South African aid to Jonas Savimbi.

Sunday's meeting represents a further attempt by the Frontline states to force renegade black African states into line in preparation for what is viewed as an impending major confrontation with Pretoria.

In mid-September, Kaunda, Machel and Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert Mugabe visited Malawi to read the riot act to President Kamuzu Banda over his continued support for the South African-backed Mozambique national resistance forces (Renamo) fighting Mozambique's Frelimo government.

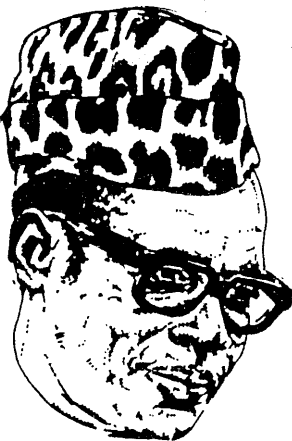


Prime Minister Robert Mugabe

They threatened a trade blockade of landlocked Malawi, much of whose trade with South Africa is transported by road through Zimbabwe and northwestern Mozambique, and Machel directly threatened war. Rehabilitation of the railway line to the northern Mozambican port of Nacala, which ironically serves

mainly Malawi, was one of the objectives behind this meeting. A second was to improve the security of the vital Mutare-Beira corridor, which carries road, rail and fuel pipeline facilities between Zimbabwe and the Mozambican port.

This Sunday's meeting between the three Frontline leaders and Mobutu will be designed to create conditions in which the Benguela railway line, which has been badly affected by Unita and South African military action, can be rehabilitated and brought back into full operation. The line starts at the Zambian copperbelt, passes through southern Zaire and emerges at the Angolan port of Benguela, just south of Lobito. It will be another of the Frontline states' vital transport arteries in what is viewed by those countries as an inevitable sanctions and trade war with South Africa.



Zaire's president Mobutu Sese Seko