

Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

Two freedom fighters assailed by media

Two military commanders, on the front lines in the battle to save Western civilization, came to Washington, D.C. at the end of June only to be assailed and insulted in shameful fashion by the major news media here.

President Kenan Evren, the former general in the Turkish military who pulled off a coup in 1980 and has led his country as one of the staunchest NATO allies since, and Dr. Jonas Savimbi, president of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), both met with President Reagan and spoke before the National Press Club here in the same week in late June.

Evren was pummeled with a half hour of hostile questions based on every Soviet disinformation slander that has ever been cooked up against his regime.

The 71-year-old leader graciously took the questions, each as they came, and spelled out the facts which demonstrated the falseness of the allegations hurled at him, ranging from charges of torture in Turkish prisons to a Turkish role in an assassination attempt against the Pope.

Evren met the outlandish innuendo about the assassination attempt with the news that it was his government which first discovered that two Turks were plotting such a scheme, and tipped off Austrian authorities.

Although Turkey's border with the Soviet Union is the longest of any country in NATO, and Turkey has the largest standing army of any nation in NATO except the United States, and

for that reason is the third-largest recipient of U.S. aid (after Israel and Egypt), Evren was not in Washington seeking more aid.

Instead, he surprised his audience by only alluding to NATO security issues, and devoting most of his speech to Turkey's success in practicing democracy, and eagerness to expand trade.

Evren's point about Turkey being an important model for the world in proving that democracy can flourish in a secular Islamic nation could not have been more timely. Among other things, the future of Iran will be thrown up for grabs in the succession fight that will follow Khomeini's death.

Evren made the point that Turkey is proving to the world that an Islamic nation does not need to be ruled either by a despot or a religious fanatic. He said the free elections that have occurred in his country since 1980 demonstrate that "the rule of law based on equal rights and the inviolability of human dignity, with guarantees for the protection of human rights based in an independent judiciary," functions in his country.

Savimbi wins support of civil rights leaders

Dr. Jonas Savimbi of UNITA, who has led a remarkably courageous and successful fight against Soviet and Cuban expansionist aims in Angola for the last 13 years, was subjected to similar harsh treatment from the Washington press corps.

However, despite efforts of the major TV networks to play up alleged opposition to Savimbi in the United States, by devoting most of its footage on his tour of Mississippi and Alabama to six demonstrators who followed him from event to event, Savimbi outflanked the U.S. media and

political dupes by winning critical support from some important civil rights leaders here.

The White House press corps was stunned when Dr. Ralph Abernathy, the man who took over the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) after Martin Luther King was assassinated, emerged from the West Wing with Savimbi and delivered a strong statement of support.

Savimbi said that he had asked in 1981 to meet with the Congressional Black Caucus, and got tired of waiting for an answer. So he decided to bypass them and go directly to the American people. In Mississippi and Alabama, he said, he found deep support.

He said those black leaders who would not meet with him here (like Jesse Jackson) are practicing the same kind of prejudice that the civil rights movement fought against in America. "The key to democracy is the ability to discuss, to talk," he said. "What troubles me is that they are not willing to even talk to me."

When told that Gov. Mike Dukakis has promised to cut off U.S. aid to UNITA if elected President, Savimbi said, "He does not yet have all the information. When he does, he will have a different approach, I hope. The fight for freedom goes down well in America."

Savimbi wants the removal of all outside forces from Angola (South Africans as well as the 57,000 Cuban troops), and free elections, which the self-proclaimed Marxist MPLA regime now refuses to have.

When asked about the MPLA offer to form a coalition with UNITA minus Savimbi, Savimbi said he would not expect the Republicans to have the right to demand who they want the Democratic candidate to be in the United States, and neither should the MPLA decide who UNITA's leaders will be.