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EDITORIALS

1. BORDER WARS

It is still far too early to assess the long term implications of the recent massive South African incursion into Angola. An official statement has put the casualties at 1,000 SWAPO and Angolan Army personnel, not bothering to distinguish between the two. No figures were given for innocent inhabitants of Southern Angola, caught up in what the Rhodesian Security Forces used euphemistically to call "the crossfire", of which, in the nature of things, there were bound to have been many.

The same spokesman has said that it will take SWAPO at least a year to recover from this latest attack. Is what he is saying that, in a year's time, the whole hideous business will have to be repeated? And again the year after that?

The only faint justification there could be for all this slaughter would be that it would lead to a settlement that would save more lives in the future. This will be poor consolation to those who have suffered this time, but it might win some approval in the eyes of history.

Is this likely to happen? Will the West's new proposals now gain acceptance from SWAPO and the Frontline States and

open the way to free elections under international supervision? Or will the sheer size of the South African military operation be regarded as having given South Africa such an advantage in the short-term that there will be more time-wasting?

South Africa has a legitimate complaint against the UN for its acceptance of SWAPO as the sole representative of the Namibian people, but to pretend that that acceptance gives an advantage to SWAPO in any way greater than that enjoyed by the DTA as a result of the all-pervading South African presence in Namibia is ridiculous. Set against the dangers of continuing military escalation in the area such debating points now are trivial. There will never be a moment before an election can be held when one side or the other won't be able to claim to be at a disadvantage. It is a completely neutral supervision of the Namibian elections **on the actual day the votes are cast** which is crucial.

Let's get on with arranging **that** before the whole Southern African scene gets completely out of hand. □