

January 20, 2004, Tuesday

FOREIGN DESK

World Briefing | Africa: Zimbabwe: Opposition Leader Denies Treason Plot

The country's main opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, took the stand for the first time in his 11-month treason trial and denied that he ever plotted to kill President Robert G. Mugabe. Mr. Tsvangirai, whose trial has fueled political tension, told the High Court in Harare that he had long regarded Mr. Mugabe as a hero of the liberation struggle and said he fell out with him over the government's handling of trade unions and the economy. Asked if he ever plotted to kill Mr. Mugabe or overthrow his government, the 51-year-old former trade unionist replied, "No, my Lord." Prosecutors say Mr. Tsvangirai plotted Mr. Mugabe's murder before an election in 2002 in which Mr. Mugabe was re-elected amid charges of vote-rigging. If convicted, Mr. Tsvangirai could face the death penalty.

Published: 01 - 20 - 2004 , Late Edition - Final , Section A , Column 3 , Page 6