

Soviet-Backed Forces Cite New Angola Gains

From News Dispatches

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola broadcast from Luanda yesterday that it has seized more towns in its northern offensive.

Tass, the Soviet news agency, reported that the Soviet-backed movement now controls almost all of the north and can turn to winning the south. In a dispatch from Luanda, Tass said that troops of the Western-backed National Front for the Liberation of Angola were retreating in panic toward neighboring Zaire, where it said that factional leader Holden Roberto had taken refuge.

But the Popular Front, which holds the capital, Luanda, said in its broadcast that Roberto might be trying a new "strategic trick." The Popular Front's offensive reached a climax this week with capture of the ports of Ambriz and Ambrizete.

The radio said more than 2,000 prisoners were taken in the northern thrust, now extended 180 miles north of the capital.

Sources in South Africa said an armored column of 1,000 Popular Movement troops supported by 500 Cubans was moving on the south-central town of Luso, which the Western-backed National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) had captured from the movement less than a month ago.

South African artillery is reported to have been shelling across movement forces and

to have cleared a 20-mile zone near Porto Amboim on the Queve River. It was not known if the shelling was offensive or an attempt to defend South African positions south of the river.

In another zone of the former Portuguese colony's civil war, the enclave of Cabinda, the Popular Front was said to have headed off Zaire forces bent on attacking two strongholds.

The report, by the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug, came from Luanda. Zaire has backed the National Front faction and on Thursday it accused the Popular Movement of crossing into its territory—which Zaire called "a cause for war."

The movement blamed Zaire for air attacks this week at northern sites.

The Popular Movement's prime minister, Lope do Nascimento, is in Lagos where he said he is seeking troops and arms from Nigeria, black Africa's most powerful nation.

Nigeria already has provided \$22 million in cash to the movement. Its 250,000-man army is the largest in Africa.

There were these developments elsewhere:

—In Washington, Deputy White House Press Secretary John Carlson said that President Ford was distressed by developments and using all means available to end foreign intervention in Angola. U.S. intelligence sources said a Soviet merchant ship carrying military cargo arrived Wednesday in Luanda and a second was due

to arrive Saturday.

—U.S. officials also estimated that Cuba now has 9,500 troops to Angola, with another 1,000 enroute. They said some of those included in the new total are stationed in the Congo, to the north of Angola.

—In a statement released in Geneva, the National Front denied the reports of collapse in the north, although admitting it had suffered setbacks. "Like the Portuguese colonialism of yesterday," the Soviets and the Cubans "will get the punishment they deserve," the statement said.

—South Africa is considering application for membership in the Organization of African Unity, according to informed sources quoted by Reuter in Johannesburg. The sources acknowledged a probable rebuff but said they were encouraged that 22 OAU members failed to join 22 others in supporting the Popular Movement in the Angolan war.

—The Johannesburg Star reported, without citing a source, that France and West Germany have begun arming the National Front via Zaire.

—Harbor authorities in Walvis Bay, Southwest Africa (Namibia), said they expected 34 more shiploads of refugees from Angola to add to 2,700 persons crammed on 24 small boats that have already arrived. South Africa, which controls the territory, has refused to allow the boats to dock.