

South Africa Seeks Accord With Angola Leftists

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JOHANNESBURG, Feb. 12 (AP)—South Africa is openly seeking an accommodation with victorious Communist-backed forces in Angola, but is also preparing for the possibility of a major war.

Officials have repeatedly declared in Parliament and privately that South Africa is willing to seek a peaceful compromise with the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

But the nation is also girding itself for war with troop call-ups, increased military training schedules and a major buildup of forces along Angola's southern border.

South Africans watch developments in Angola with a sense of foreboding and many fear an eventual confrontation with the Popular Movement in the former Portuguese territory.

The Popular Movement forces, spearheaded by thousands of Cuban troops, have swept through southern Angola in recent days to capture a number of major towns.

The defenses of the pro-Western alliance of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola have crumbled before the Soviet-supplied BM-21 multiple rocket launchers, T-34 and T-54 tanks and armed helicopters, and the troops sent in by Cuba.

Since the beginning of its offensive in December, the Popular Movement has virtually wiped out all military opposition in both northern and southern Angola.

Next Objective Unclear

What is not clear is whether the Popular Movement, the Cubans and the Soviet Union are prepared to push their victory all the way to Angola's southern border with South-West Africa, a territory that South Africa has controlled for 50 years under a League of Nations mandate that is now expired. South Africa has refused to withdraw from the mineral-rich territory.

Waiting for the Popular Movement are 4,000 to 5,000 South African troops dug in around the huge multimillion dollar Cunene River hydroelectric and irrigation project at

But at Same Time It Prepares for the Possibility of a Major War

Calueque, about 15 miles inside Angola.

Other South African forces are protecting at least four refugee camps in Angola just north of the South-West African border.

The South African forces, which at one time joined the National Union forces for assaults deep inside Angola against the Popular Movement have now withdrawn to a defense line that sometimes stretches up to 50 miles inside Angola.

The South Africans have invested \$300 million in the Cunene project, which is designed to supply water to the Ovambo tribal region in South-West Africa and power to the entire territory by 1977.

The project was begun while Angola was still under Portuguese colonial administration and was not created to benefit Angolans. South African officials are now saying the project could be modified to benefit southern Angola as well.

The South African Stand

If the Popular Movement forces in Angola now moving south attack the project, South Africa has promised a major confrontation.

"If we are attacked we will retaliate effectively," Defense Minister Pieter W. Botha declared before Parliament recently. "In the past we hit back with small forces. If necessary we will retaliate with greater force."

But Mr. Botha, in a more conciliatory tone, said in an interview published today: "If the region is stabilized and the Ovambo interests and developments are not undermined by the Popular movement—in other words if they restrain themselves in staying where they belong—doubtless discussions could be held with them regarding our interests in that area."

South African officials have repeatedly said both publicly and privately that some agree-

ment could be reached with the Popular Movement such as that between South Africa and Marxist-oriented Mozambique.

The feeling in informed military circles in South Africa is that neither the Cubans nor the Popular Movement would relish a face-to-face confrontation over the Cunene River project.

While the Popular Movement has some superior military equipment, South Africa, in the view of most observers, could easily hold its own and inflict heavy casualties on attackers.

South Africa has also made it clear that it follows a policy of hot pursuit, which suggests that a local attack at Cunene could quickly expand into a major conflict.

South Africa's main supply base in the area is the huge military facility at Grootfontein in South-West Africa, just 200 miles south of the border with Angola.

Grootfontein includes an all-weather air base from which the South African Air Force could launch short-range and thus full-capacity air strikes against attacking forces.

There has been a United Nations-imposed embargo on arms sales to South Africa since 1964 because of this white-ruled country's policies of apartheid, or separate racial development.

South African officials have repeatedly said that they would withdraw all forces from southern Angola if they could win guarantees protecting South African interests in the area.

While not specifically spelled out, such an accord with the Popular Movement would apparently have to include an agreement that the Cunene River project would not be seized and that the border would not be violated.

South Africa fears the Popular Movement and the Soviet Union will openly support African guerrillas of the South-West Africa People's Organization. The guerrillas have kept up a hit-and-run war along the border from bases in southern Angola for years, seeking the independence of the territory.