

South Africa Sees Hope Of Angola Understanding

FEB 20 1976

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Special to The New York Times

JOHANNESBURG, Feb. 19—

The expectation that South African soldiers would be facing Cuban columns heading from Angola to South-west Africa has given way here to feelings that some diplomatic accommodation can be struck between South Africa and the Luanda government.

There is much speculation here that some discussions have already begun through intermediaries, presumably Mozambique and the Ivory Coast. When asked about such initiatives, Dr. Hilgard Muller, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, refused to comment. "That is a very important and sensitive issue which has to be treated in the strictest confidence," he said. "I'm afraid I can't discuss it through the medium of the newspapers."

At the same time newspapers here gave prominence yesterday to a Washington report that quoted United States State Department officials as having said the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola had curbed the southward advance of Cuban troops. The report said it had done so to avoid confrontation with the South African forces still in southern Angola. These troops are deployed in units that officials here claim are defending the border of South-west Africa.

Mood Begins to Shift

The mood here began to shift a week ago when the French newspaper *Le Monde* quoted Angola's Foreign Minister, Johnny Eduardo de Santos, as having said that his government would be willing to protect a South African-built irrigation and electric-generating dam within Angola if Pretoria recognized the Luanda government. Officials here said they found the statement interesting and were studying it.

It is South-West Africa, a vast and largely barren territory twice the size of California, that dominates South African responses to Angola. The area, between South Africa and Angola, is administered by South Africa despite several United Nations resolutions condemning that administration as illegal. The resolutions have demanded that the territory be granted independence as the nation of Namibia.

A guerrilla liberation faction called the South-West African People's Organization has waged a largely ineffective terror campaign here, with its members crossing over from camps in Zambia and Angola. On Sunday, in the most recent of these attacks, a white farmer and his wife were killed.

The guerrilla organization has in the past been supplied and trained by the Chinese. Its closest links are with the all but defeated National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, the faction headed by Jonas M. Savimbi. However, with the victory of the Popular Movement, the Luanda leaders pledged publicly to support the guerrilla group's struggle. From Lusaka there have been reports that the guerrilla leadership is now split on the issue of whether to shift its allegiance from China to the Soviet Union.

Alarm at First

In light of this, it had been thought here that the Angolan civil war would spill over into South-West Africa, with Cuban troops seeking to enhance their image of an international revolutionary vanguard. This view led to proclamations of vigilance and preparedness by such officials here as Pieter Willem Botha, the Minister of Defense, who asserted that his Government would respond with much greater vigor to any challenge in South-West Africa than it did in Angola.

But amid indications of a halt in Cuban advances, there is the hope here that relations with the Popular Movement may follow the pattern established in Mozambique. For while the leaders of Mozambique regularly call for the revolutionary overthrow of South Africa's policy of apartheid, or racial separation, they simultaneously are employing South Africans to staff their port facilities and have increased the numbers of Mozambiquans who work in this country's mines.

A high South African official recently noted that his country's relations with Mozambique's governing Frelimo Party "are better than they ever were with the Portuguese."

This feeling is augmented by a belief, perhaps wishful, that Angola's government will be pragmatically concerned with consolidating its power and exploiting its resources rather than expending its energies in continued combat.

Concern About Dam

Officials here indicate in general terms that normalization of relations with Angola would depend on guarantees by Luanda to protect the Cunene River dam and some assurances that it would not permit terrorists to cross over the long border.

The guarantees seem within reach. Two weeks ago in Luanda, the Prime Minister, Lopo do Nascimento, said he regarded the South African position on the dam as something of a red herring. "Do they really think we will blow

it up?" he said. "We are in favor of irrigation and electricity. We may alter its uses a little, adapting it more to our needs, but we will not destroy it."

The second point is stickier. Even without what appears to be a Soviet attempt to replace Chinese influence within the guerrilla organization, the Angolan government could not very well pledge to curb the liberation movement without losing face and credibility as a nation committed to African liberation.

A Certain Skepticism

Moreover, some observers who recently visited Angola, consider the new mood of compromise and co-existence here unrealistic. They cite Angolan charges that South African troops vandalized and destroyed the port facilities of Lobito and Benguela and boobytrapped homes there before withdrawing.

Nonetheless, something short of full mutual recognition but also short of open warfare, remains possible. For one thing there is the view, supported by a growing number of African diplomats, that Rhodesia is a more likely target than South-West Africa for an expansion of the Soviet and Cuban thrust in Africa.

Rhodesia is almost completely isolated from the world community. Should the current Rhodesian negotiations on black-majority rule fail, even South Africa, which has been leaning on the Government of Ian D. Smith to reach agreement with one nationalist faction, might withdraw its support.

Recent reports that Soviet military equipment has arrived in Mozambique, from where any invasion of Rhodesia would have to originate, suggest that if there is to be a spillover or domino effect from the Angolan war it will occur in Rhodesia, not South-West Africa.