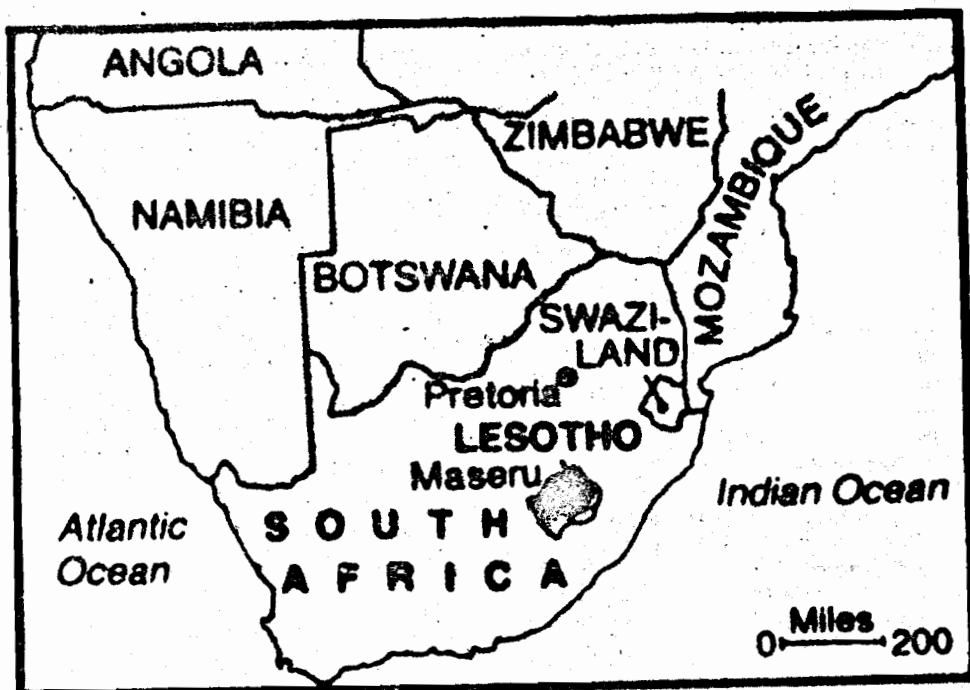


Fragile truce between Pretoria, neighbors



By Glenn Frankel

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (WP) — Amid widespread euphoria here over the prospects for peace between white-ruled South Africa and its black Marxist neighbors, a few voices are warning that fundamental conflicts in the region could inevitably undermine the new detente.

The immediate problem is the extreme fragility of the new rapprochement, which is being played out in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion since each government believes that in the past it has been double-crossed by its rival.

These concerns were underscored by the near-rupture of the de facto truce between South Africa and Angola over Pretoria's claim that Namibian rebels were continuing to use Angolan territory to launch attacks against South African forces.

The leader of the guerrillas, Sam Nujoma, has said that his forces would observe the current disengagement between South Africa and Angola at the Angolan-Namibian border, but he pledged to continue his fight within Namibia.

Angolan and South African members of the joint commission set up to monitor the de facto ceasefire met Saturday in southern

Angola in an attempt to salvage the accord, but no details of their discussions were released. In Luanda, official Angolan sources were quoted by the state-controlled Angop News Agency as saying Angola could not prevent guerrillas from moving in the south because the area was still occupied by South African troops and not under Angolan control. They said Angola would continue to "scrupulously respect" its accord with South Africa.

But an even more fundamental long-term problem, analysts said, are the indigenous groups with deep-seated grievances against their governments that cannot be resolved nor wished away by a regional peace accord. While they may suffer setbacks, the black nationalists seeking black majority rule in South Africa and the anti-government guerrillas operating in Mozambique and Angola will continue to disrupt regional stability, according to these analysts.

The analysts also believe that the conflicts between South Africa's unique blend of capitalism and racial segregation and the Socialist-oriented political systems of the rest of the region also may prove irresolvable.

"The spirit of peace that we've seen in recent weeks is very constructive, but it doesn't alter fundamental attitudes nor the

fact that we have conflicting social systems," said Michael Spicer of the South African Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg. "This detente is not an irreversible trend. Five years from now, things could change back again."

Perhaps chief among these conflicts is the longtime opposition of much of South Africa's black majority to the country's internal policy of racial segregation. A constant source of internal unrest, it inevitably has repercussions abroad.

"The major source of the region's instability is the apartheid policy and that policy is alive and well," said David Welsh, political science professor at the University of Cape Town. "Any serious challenge to apartheid inside South Africa could knock any kind of regional understanding right off its pedestal."

South African officials say they expect that attacks inside the country by the African National Congress (ANC), the main black nationalist resistance group, will significantly diminish once a non-aggression pact is signed with Mozambique and the congress is denied the use of Mozambican territory.

But some analysts believe South African optimism is overstated.

"You cannot kill the ANC by getting Mozambique to play the role of reluctant

policeman," said Tom Lodge, political scientist at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. "The ANC is here to stay. South Africa may have bought some extra time before it becomes a serious problem, but it can't be put off forever."

South African officials also have voiced their hope that the new detente will quiet foreign critics of apartheid, although that appears extremely unlikely, analysts said.

Even Pretoria's new partner in peace, Mozambican President Samora Machel, said last week that his government would "always support the just struggle of the peoples of the two countries and remain on the side of SWAPO (Nujoma's Southwest Africa People's Organization) and the African National Congress."

For its part, Mozambique holds the expectation that the new detente will mean a significant diminution, if not outright collapse, of rebel activities that have played havoc with the country's already desperate economic situation during the past two years. It also anticipates a heavy flow of South African and U.S. investment.

But observers here believe that despite the fact that the rebels have yet to formulate a coherent political alternative to the Machel government, they at least partly reflect genuine grievances against the administration. Even without further support from Pretoria, which is widely believed to have helped arm and train the insurgents, many analysts believe they are sufficiently entrenched to continue fighting.

As for economic help, South African diplomats have made it clear they believe their economy is undergoing its worst crisis in two decades and can offer little surplus capital or trained manpower to Maputo. Although diplomats expect a modest U.S. program of economic development aid for Mozambique next year, they stress that the United States is not in the market for new, impoverished Third World clients.

The lingering obstacle to achieving peace between South Africa and Angola — and, with it, independence for Namibia — remains the impasse over the presence of Cuban troops in Angola. Despite recent soft-pedaling of the issue, diplomats here and in Washington have made clear in recent days that South Africa, with Washington's acquiescence, still insists on a Cuban troop withdrawal as a prerequisite for a Namibian settlement.

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