

THE KISSINGER/VORSTER/KAUNDA DETENTE GENESIS OF THE SWAPO 'SPY-DRAMA' :Part II

Paul Trehwela

Between Imperialism and Revolt

The totality of antagonisms in Zambia, sharply heightened by the war in Angola and the detente scenario of Vorster and Kaunda, became concentrated within Swapo during 1975. With the Zambian regime as active protagonist, the pressure bearing downward from the major bourgeois states coincided with a countervailing force pressing upward on the Swapo leaders.

In late 1971/early 1972, Namibia was shaken by the most important labour struggle in the country's history: the strike of the Ovambo contract workers, who, as Soggot writes, demanded 'freedom to travel, to work where they liked, to live where they liked, and to work where the pay was highest' – basic demands against a system of labour control more severe than any existing in South Africa at the time.⁸ This was the first salvo of the working class in its series of strikes in southern Africa during the 1970s, resulting in the organization of workers in combative trade unions: a phenomenon that was to change the balance of forces in southern Africa. Then, in April 1974, the officers' coup in Lisbon brought down the Caetano dictatorship, ensuring the emergence of black-ruled states on the borders of South Africa and Namibia, headed by organizations which had undermined Portuguese colonial rule through armed insurgency.

The new working class militancy, followed by the collapse of Portuguese colonialism, radicalized young people in South Africa, especially high school and university students, and acted as a mighty stimulus towards the Soweto revolt of June 1976. The effect was felt even more immediately in Namibia, with student campaigns that were the precursors to the events in Soweto. Both in its labour and its student struggles, Namibia lit the fuse to a mass of combustible material that was later to explode in South Africa. The interconnection between the two fields of struggle, at once so alike and so unlike, will prove a fruitful field of study for future historians.

In a chapter headed 'The Young Prophets', Soggot records that the year 1973 'ushered in a startling efflorescence of Swapo and Swapo Youth League (SYL) activity' (p 76). Formed in the 1960s, the SYL had been roused by the Ovambo workers' strike to act on its own, independently of its parent body, during the second half of 1972:

The way the Youth Leaguers went about their work was particularly memorable: they presented their listeners with a remarkable melange of prophecy and challenge. Though not given to the mystical belief that freedom would fall from heaven, many members were gripped by the certainty that 1974 was to be the definitive year of freedom in Namibia...[With] a mixture of interpenetrating fact and optimism, fantasy

and political pragmatism, many SYL leaders came to believe and to put out the idea that 1974 was the final year of struggle (p 77).

Soggot does not refer to the Swapo crisis in Zambia in 1974–76; but he perceives its source within Namibia itself, indicating that the campaign of the SYL, with its 'promises of imminent messiah-like liberation', gave rise to a 'tactical tension between Swapo and the Youth League...' (pp 77–8). This tension within Namibia was reflected in rebellion abroad. Swept forward by the activism of the SYL, large numbers of youth, especially high school students, and from a very broad ethnic spectrum, organized resistance within their home communities against the South African regime. They suffered repression and fled abroad to join Swapo's military wing, Shipanga, in Lusaka at this time, recalls his astonishment as 'one group after another arrived. There must have been about six thousand newcomers between 1974 and 1975' (Armstrong, p 98).

Eager for combat, highly principled, courageous, intensely democratic, the young militants demanded intensification of the war with all the self-confidence of youth, just when the Vorster/Kaunda agreement required that Swapo be curbed. As one activist in the SYL during that period in Namibia recalls: 'We felt that we had our own destiny in our own hands. Despite South African power and oppression, we felt that we could push it all through.'⁹

In a memorandum to the Swapo leadership drawn up at the SYL's headquarters in Lusaka on 26 February 1975, the Youth Leaguers in Zambia expressed their 'fear' over the relationship between themselves and 'the comrades who have been here before us', noting 'a gap between us...a result of mistrust or suspicion'. Whenever they asked about something, the memorandum continued,

we are accused of being:—

1. Reactionaries
2. destroyers of the Party
3. and that we are fighting for power

—*Swapo: The 1976 Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p 2.

The psychology of the Swapo leaders against their internal critics is summed up here. This political mind-set, more than anything else, produced the purges of 1984–89. Against this ingrained suspicion, the SYL demanded full internal democracy within their organization. Their standpoint was emphatic and eloquent: 'we deserve every right to ask where we do not understand and to contribute wherever necessary.' These young militants had not left Namibia to exchange South African repression for an equivalent regime in Swapo. 'We strongly repeat that our right to ask or criticize must not be denied or ignored...The call that "all members are free to challenge" must be put in practice.' Specifically, the SYL demanded information about Swapo's constitution following its amendment and review at the Tanga congress more than five years previously, as well as requiring information about 'what form of government Swapo shall establish in Namibia'.

The letter noted that there were times when members in Swapo camps in Zambia did not have food, some were without clothes and there were severe problems with transport, while at the same time party cars were 'used as individual properties' by leaders. 'Leaders must be good examples', demanded the SYL, noting that at almost every meeting up to that time the reverse had been the case, leading to 'a spirit of fear among the members towards our leaders'.

These were telling demands to place on the leaders of any nationalist movement, ringing with the intemperate spirit of Paris in 1789. This rebuke from the Swapo youth led to a meeting on 4 March 1975 at Libala in Lusaka between six members of the Swapo's executive committee (Exco) and 15 members of the SYL, the 'first of its kind', according to the leader of the SYL delegation, Ms Netumbo Nandi Nujoma and Moses Garoeb, the administrative secretary, were absent, but among those present were: Shipanga, Mishake Muyongo (Swapo vice-president, later to play a venal role in the arrest of Swapo critics, only to leave the organization with his own accusations of tribalism and regionalism in 1980), Peter Sheehama (Muyongo's assistant in the 1976 repressions, now minister of security), Nanyemba as secretary for defence, and Peter Mueshihange, now minister of defence, whom Shipanga accuses in his book of 'working rackets' in Lusaka with Nujoma and Nanyemba at that time. Shipanga is specific in his charges:

Nanyemba was very shrewd. He had little formal education, but he was clever. He lived like a warlord, womanizing and spending money freely. He had many business interests: he was in partnership with Nujoma and Mueshihange in two nightclubs in Lusaka—the *Kilimanjaro* and the *Lagodara*.

One of Nanyemba's tricks was to order supplies from the biggest chemist shop in Lusaka and to get one of our supporting governments or groups to settle the bill. Next day the goods were on sale in the Second Class Market [the Asian shopping precinct]...Nanyemba simply pocketed the proceeds. All this was well known in Lusaka, and there were even jokes about how blankets given by Swedish anti-apartheid groups were making the leaders of Swapo rich (Armstrong, p 101).

Charges of corruption were prominent in the criticism of the Swapo leadership by the youth. At the Libala meeting, the SYL members expressed their 'burning desire to know the constitution of the Party'. A member of the Exco (no doubt Shipanga) confessed that 'the drafting committee did not meet. NOTHING IS DRAFTED.' The minutes continue: 'One member of the Exco stressed that it is high time that Swapo should be in possession of the constitution.' It then emerged that the Central Committee had never met since it had assumed office, and that its term of office of five years had expired (so also, therefore, had that of the executive committee). The tone of the meeting was heated. As the minutes report, 'anything short of the immediate calling of the [four months overdue] Congress was not acceptable, one youth shouted'. Severe criticism was made by the SYL of the absence of an acting treasurer-general or an independent auditor. If this was not remedied, the Youth could

not rule out 'the suspicion of corruption and misappropriation of funds' (*Swapo: The Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, pp 4-6).

What cheek! These young upstarts had dared interrupt their elders and betters, the future property-owners of Namibia-in-exile, in their act of primitive accumulation. As the cauldron of civil war in Angola now began to boil over, the young militants of the SYL began an intense struggle against the would-be bourgeoisie of Swapo before it had even come into being. To the leaders of Swapo this was more than just a threat, it was an outrage striking against their whole *raison d'être*. It was precisely an audit, financial or political, to which they could not submit.¹⁰

By the end of 1975, with the South African invasion of Angola in full spate, nothing had materialized from the March meeting of the SYL and the Exco. On 10 December the SYL in Lusaka issued a follow-up memorandum to the Exco, reiterating its demand for a congress, accusing the leadership of preventing a congress from being convened, and asserting that its mandate had expired (as it had, a full year previously). The SYL now also cited general corruption, indiscriminate 'round-ups', 'threats', 'oppression' and 'ruthless intimidation.'

Four months later, on 21 April 1976, the Zambian army and police made a pre-dawn raid in Lusaka, arresting 13 Namibians, six of them leaders of Swapo, including the secretary-general of the SYL and three Exco members: Shipanga, Mishima and Immanuel Engombe. The South African military had begun its withdrawal from central Angola in January, Savimbi had begun his retreat to southern Angola in February, the tortured ZANU military leaders appeared in court on the same day as the Swapo arrests and Kissinger arrived in Lusaka six days later (27 April). These arrests without charge or trial of the most influential Swapo critics secured the political environment for the detente talks in Lusaka between Kissinger and Kaunda.

The six Swapo leaders were detained in Namufobu Camp, where ZANU members had until recently been kept (*Swapo: The Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p 7). By this time the bulk of the ZANU fighters, detained in Zambia since March 1975 following the murder of Chitepo, had been released and had left for Mozambique. The imprisoned ZANU commanders had smuggled a letter from their Zambian prison shortly before the Swapo arrests, addressed to the front-line presidents, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the UN secretary-general, stating that the Zambian government was 'itself a suspect' in the murder of Chitepo. They were convinced, now more than ever, that it was because of

the resolute stand against detente and Nkomo which Chitepo and us took, that Comrade Chitepo was killed and we are being processed for our legalized murder (Martin and Johnson, 1981, p 189).

By now, Robert Mugabe had been provisionally chosen as leader of ZANU by camp officers in prison in Zambia, in place of the more pliable Sithole – secretly chosen by Vorster and Kaunda to govern in a future Zimbabwe, along with Nkomo and Bishop Muzorewa – failed to condemn the killing of thirteen ZANU members by the

Zambian army in Mboroma detention camp on 11 September 1975. Sithole's silence on the killing of his own party members by Kaunda's regime, acting for its detente partners, settled his future. Politically, he was finished as leader of ZANU. The lesson was not lost on the leaders of Swapo. When the Zambian army killed four Swapo members at the same camp nearly a year later, on 5 August 1976, Nujoma and the Swapo leaders around him preserved their positions by enforcing a permanent state of siege within the organization. Sithole disappeared from view; Nujoma became father of the nation.

In a statement known as the Mgagao Declaration, 'one of the most important documents' of the nationalist struggle in Zimbabwe (Martin and Johnson, 1981, p 200), the jailed ZANU fighters declared Zambia to be 'hostile enemy territory' and called for the OAU Liberation Committee and the governments of Mozambique and Tanzania to evacuate them to a 'safer' country so that they could continue the armed struggle. ZANU's central committee, meeting in Salisbury a week after Chitepo's murder, had already sent Mugabe and Edgar Tekere secretly to Mozambique at the end of March 1975 to prepare for resumption of military activity.

Later, in London, Mugabe stated on the BBC Africa Service on 21 January 1976 that:

President Kaunda has been the principal factor in slowing down our revolution. He has arrested our men, locked them up, and within his prisons and restriction areas there have been cases of poisoning, and there's also been murders.

Interviewer: By who?

Mugabe: By his men. By Kaunda's army.

(Martin and Johnson, 1981, p 210).

On the same day, in another interview, Mugabe asserted that the detente exercise had 'caused the death of our Comrade Chairman Chitepo'. Assisted by the presidents of Tanzania, Botswana and also Mozambique (the Frelimo leader, Samora Machel), Kaunda aimed to 'throttle us and throttle us completely.' Chitepo had been murdered 'through or by direct participation of the Zambian government.' The Zambian government had turned out to be 'an enemy of our revolution' (*Revolutionary Zimbabwe*, No 3, pp 1-5). As Mugabe pointed out in a speech in London on 30 January, the detente exercise had in fact been 'hatched in the cities of Washington and London' (*ibid*, p 29): it was to these powers that Kaunda was responding.

Mugabe gave expression here to a very general opinion within ZANU. Within weeks of Chitepo's assassination, an official ZANU publication produced in Sweden accused the Smith regime of having carried out the murder 'with the connivance and complicity of Kaunda', so as to further the 'horse and rider, master-slave detente in Southern Africa' (*Zimbabwe Chimurenga*, March 1975).

From the subsequent detailed investigation of the assassination by Martin and Johnson, Zambian state connivance with Chitepo's killers is not proven but is not excluded. The writers identify the actual killer as Hugh 'Chuck' Hind, a former member of the British Special Air Service (SAS), who had been

recruited in Britain in 1967 by Watchguard, a private security firm run by the founder of the SAS, Col David Stirling, as one of a small team of instructors of the Zambian Police Paramilitary Unit and Kaunda's presidential bodyguard. Possibly still while working with Kaunda's bodyguard in Zambia, Hind was recruited to the Rhodesian security body, the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), for which he did secret agent jobs on call on a retainer basis after he had gone to live in South Africa. As Martin and Johnson remark, one of Hind's 'very considerable' assets was 'his contacts with the Zambian police and paramilitary from his days as a Watchguard instructor...' (1985, p.52). Hind had no problem flying out of Zambia shortly after Chitepo's murder, later returned 'frequently' to Zambia and was killed in a car crash there on 'one of the missions to Zambia' in January 1977 (pp 85, 86). It remains possible that Chitepo's assassination was a joint Rhodesian-Zambian state operation, as ZANU radicals suspected at the time.

A year later the Zambian state apparatus was turned on Swapo. Shortly after the arrests of Shipanga and his colleagues in April 1976, two of the six escaped and secretly told diplomats and the foreign press in Lusaka what had happened. Unlike Mugabe and the ZANU commanders, however, the top Swapo leaders had actively connived at the Zambian arrests. Shipanga reports that Theo-Ben Gurirab (now minister of foreign affairs in Namibia) visited his house suspiciously late a few hours before the arrests began, and two other Swapo leaders - Muyongo and Sheehama - publicly supervised their detention. 'Muyongo was in a transport of delight. In his red sports car he drove ahead of the convoy hooting the horn' (Armstrong, pp 109-10). Shipanga reports having been told earlier that Muyongo, Nanyemba, Ben-Gurirab and Dr Libertine Amathila (now minister of health) had said they were 'going to arrest me and my group', and that at another meeting before their detention, Sheehama, Amathila and John Ya Otto (now secretary of the National Union of Namibian Workers) had 'sentenced us all to death' (ibid, pp108,132). Given the history of arrests and executions within Swapo, these are matters that require investigation, especially since three of the six people mentioned by Shipanga are now government ministers.

The arrest of Shipanga and his colleagues followed a further sharpening of the political struggle within Swapo, similar to the struggle within ZANU. After the abortive meeting between the SYL and the Swapo executive in March 1975, the focus of opposition to detente had moved to a still more potent force: the Swapo military wing, concentrated in Zambia's Western Province. These troops were in camps intermediate between Zambia and areas controlled by Unita, and within striking distance of the eastern prong of the South African army's thrust into Angola. With the South African invasion of Angola, it became both a political and a military necessity to neutralize them. Together Nujoma and the Zambian army ensured this.

Swapo's Secret War

The South African army had moved in strength into southern Angola in September 1975, a month after the beginning of fighting between Unita and

the MPLA.¹¹ By mid-November a South African motorized column had arrived at Huambo (formerly Nova Lisboa) and Bie (formerly Silva Porto) on the Benguela Railway, half way to Luanda. Under 'enormous pressure emanating from Washington', according to R W Johnson, writing not long afterwards, the South African army attempted to hold its forward position on the coastal route to Luanda despite superior MPLA and Cuban forces (p 155).

Some time after this, units of the Swapo military were ordered into battle in Angola on the same side as Unita and the South African army, against the MPLA and its Cuban allies. This crucial, hidden episode in the history of Swapo was the subject of a letter written on 13 March 1976 by members of the Swapo military wing based in Zambia in Western Province. Addressed to Nujoma as president, the letter of the Swapo fighters implicated the top leadership. According to the letter, Nujoma had taken responsibility for the Angolan front and Nanyemba for the Zambian front. The then chief of intelligence of Swapo, Jackson Kakwambi, had himself 'led our fighters to fight alongside the Boers against the MPLA'. Although it was Kakwambi who had given this order to the fighters, it is unthinkable that as chief of intelligence he would have taken such a perilous political step without a policy decision at the highest level of Swapo. The subsequent purge of Swapo members who opposed collaboration with the South African army rules out any other interpretation. There can be no doubt that Nujoma, Nanyemba, Sheehama, Mueshihange and others, under pressure from the Zambian military and from Kaunda himself, ordered this action.

The Swapo fighters who sent this letter to Nujoma in March 1976 apparently still had no knowledge of the detente operation or the constraints it placed on Swapo's military struggle against the South African regime. They supported the SYL demand for a national congress and a new constitution, repeated accusations of corruption, denounced the closing down of SYL offices and reported the following bizarre incident:

Captured Metal Boxes

The Investigation Committee has captured two metal boxes...which were at a certain Island approximately 1000 metres from enemy [presumably South African] bases in Angola. It was guarded by a special group paid by Defence Secretary comrade Peter Nanyemba. These guards receive special treatment. On the day when the Investigating Committee captured these Metal Boxes, the Chief in Commander [*sic*] Awala told the Committee that these boxes contain Party Secret Documents.

a. Why are the Party Secret Documents kept at the front-line while the headquarters is in Lusaka?

b. Why are these comrades [the guards] paid although they are Party members?

(*Swapo: The Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p 8).

The Swapo fighters were near to mutiny, but on opposing grounds to those of the revolt led by Thomas Nhari in ZANU. They complained that their commanders had given their weapons to Unita, leaving them without guns.

Other weapons had been buried, while they had had to arm themselves with sticks. Some 150 Swapo fighters had been sent into Angola 'without enough ammunition, weapons, no communication and no food, and their fate is unknown to this date'. Further, a certain Shikangala had been 'given a gun by Peter Mueshikange to kill the comrades who are against corruption'. They protested against public accusations that Shipanga (not yet arrested) was 'collaborating with the enemy'. Against the 'treacherous acts of the commanders,' in whom they had 'completely lost faith', they declared:

WE REJECT:

A. ANY MISSION ASSIGNED BY THEM

B. TO BE LED INTO BATTLE BY THEM.

This was, unwittingly, an act of defiance against the detente scenario itself. It could not go unpunished, nor did it.

In another letter, written the same day and addressed to the Liberation Committee of the OAU (which at this period also endorsed detente), the Swapo military wing in Western Province declared that it had passed a motion of no confidence 'in the leadership of the whole party, and the commanders in particular'. Their arms had been intercepted by the Zambian authorities and their commanders had told them they were 'not allowed to operate from Zambian soil anymore'. They were resolved to go and fight, but not under the present leadership. First they had to reorganize the party through the holding of a congress. Concerning their own safety, they wrote:

we have 900-1000 ready-trained soldiers without arms or any means of self-defence. We are expecting a surprise attack at any time. The enemy is always shelling in our vicinity. At night we observe flare-lights from the enemy side.

Effectively, they had been disarmed within distance of the South African army and its allies. Their own leaders had placed them in a situation in which they could be massacred at will. Out of desperation, they appealed to the OAU to provide transport to convey food to them at the front 'during the whole transitional period until the congress is held', as well as arms for each soldier and heavy guns for self-defence. This appeal from the expendable victims of detente, an appeal against a cynical act of betrayal, leaves a sickening impression: as also the whole of the subsequent spy-drama, which followed inexorably from the conduct of the Swapo leaders at this time. The dedication and naivety of the Swapo fighters had its complement in the duplicity both of the organization to which they belonged and of the OAU to which they appealed - fruitlessly - against it.

On 23 April 1976, two days after the arrests of the dissident Swapo leaders in Lusaka supervised by Muyongo and Sheehama, the disarmed fighters on the front again defied what they expected to be their imminent death, this time by execution. From Western Province, they issued 'The PLAN Fighters' Declaration', noting that some members of their committee had already been

detained by Swapo. Swapo's Political Commissar had told them 'we are going to cut off your heads'.

The whole history of Swapo, they declared, was 'a tragic one.' In the face of anticipated death, they made a specific statement of their ideals. They gave a detailed account of Swapo's military collaboration with the South African/Unita forces and—for the first time in these documents—issued a general declaration of their belief in a socialist future. 'We won't be silenced because of fear to be executed', they stated.

To be silent means to betray our country. This is a noble task to us, for we believe that Namibia will only be free if these internal enemies are destroyed. We sacrifice to die in order to open and smooth the way to the next generation. To close one's eyes to these evil things means not only to betray Namibia, but also to betray Africa as a whole. Some people may prove us wrong today but history will prove us right. (p 12)

They considered the Angolan civil war to be 'a tragedy to Africa'. Indeed it was, and is, except so far as it served at the cost of immense suffering to wear down (but not defeat) the South African military. Once again, the PLAN fighters expressed their revulsion at being 'forced by reactionary commanders to fight alongside the boers against the MPLA'. They had illusions in the socialist character of the MPLA, whose troops they regarded as 'not only our African brothers, but...allies in pursuing socialism...our comrades in arms against colonialism, imperialism and foreign domination from the African soil'. While naive in taking the politics of the MPLA at its face value, the declaration called emphatically if simplistically for socialism, against which they contrasted the corruption and property interests of the Swapo leaders. They had information from reliable sources, they wrote, that there were:

people in the Swapo leadership who are having farms, hotels, shops and bank accounts, that is why they are less interested in the liberation struggle. When we demand the National Congress where a clear, socialist line be drawn, they consider us enemies, this is because we believe that socialism is a better society. We are against exploitation of man by man and condemn in the strongest terms the exploitation of our mineral resources by foreigners. This is one of the reasons why they don't want the Congress to be held, because they know that in a socialist Namibia there will be no room for private owned shops, hotels etc. (p 13).

The declaration gives extensive details of Swapo battles against the MPLA in central Angola: at Munyango, Kanguembe, Luso and Serpa Pinto. These appear to have been railway battles, in keeping with the interest not only of Unita but of the Kaunda regime and its patron, Lonrho. As Bridgland reports, Kaunda had 'stressed to Savimbi the importance of reopening the Benguela Railway' (p 187). The same interest was doubtless stressed, no less forcefully, to the leaders of Swapo, dependent then on Zambia for their military bases. Luso, Kanguembe and Munyango are station-towns running east to west along the railway. Keeping these open for Zambian (and Zairean) colliery traffic under a Unita administration was the main concern of the Kaunda regime.

Further west along the line of the Benguela Railway, Unita had major bases at Huambo and Bie during the period of the South African advance. It was from Huambo that Unita had declared a Social Democratic Republic on independence day (11 November), at the same time as the MPLA declared the People's Republic in Luanda. Serpa Pinto was the eastern terminal of a shorter, more southerly east-west railway line meeting the Atlantic at Mocamedes. It would appear that Swapo troops were committed to battle in early February during the MPLA/Cuban counter-offensive which dislodged the South African army, and with it Unita, from the Benguela Railway, from Huambo and Bie, and from central Angola. Their role would then have been to help protect the South African army and its Unita clients *in retreat*, when they were most vulnerable. It was a complete reversal of the military goal for which the PLAN fighters had left Namibia to join Swapo.

In each case, the Swapo commanders in these battles against the MPLA are named: Kakwambi, Nakade, Intamba, Hauliyondjaba and Embashu. Details are given about three separate incidents in which Unita was given truck-loads of Swapo arms, while Swapo fighters were in one case left only with sticks. When they demanded weapons, they were told 'Swapo is Unita and Unita is Swapo'. In another incident, PLAN fighters say they were 'defending the MPLA flag' at Ruyana and Mivungu in a major engagement involving trucks, helicopters and reconnaissance planes, against 'the boers, Shipenda rebels and foreign mercenaries'.¹² The civil war in Angola, which was also a war of the super-powers and thus also an ideological war, had become a civil war within Swapo, with its troops committed simultaneously on both sides: by coercion on the side of Unita, voluntarily on the side of the MPLA. It was a critical moment for the Swapo leadership.

Under these conditions, write the PLAN fighters, the Swapo commanders 'began to hate us' and made a separate base for 'loyal' forces. 'They began to call us rebels and a splitting faction within Swapo with Andreas Shipanga as president.' At this point the declaration becomes unclear. It emerges—without details—that between fighting in Angola and their subsequent suppression, the PLAN fighters mutinied.¹³ They arrested two commanders (Kafita and Ushona), whom they accused of burying arms in the ground. Ten days before Shipanga's arrest, on 11 April, a delegation of 15 PLAN fighters from the rebel camp went to the 'loyal' camp at Shatotua to present their case to 150 fighters and trainees, under the command of a Swapo officer, Namara, and under the overall control of a Zambian lieutenant with his own troops. The PLAN delegation was overpowered by Swapo loyalists, seriously beaten up, tied up for a night and a day and compelled to release the 'two corrupted commanders' in return for their own temporary freedom. According to the PLAN fighters, the Zambian troops saved their lives but did not intervene when they were tied up. When they wrote their declaration 12 days later, they expected the firing squad.

Mass round-ups by the Zambian army were already under way, clearly with the agreement of Swapo leaders, when the declaration by the PLAN fighters was written. By June 1976, well over a thousand dissidents were in the Zambian army's detention camps (*Swapo: The 1976 Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p 16).

Nujoma and the exile leadership responded to the threat to their authority by the method of the witch-hunt, with Shipanga cast in the role of Satan.

At the same time two other means were employed by the leaders against the members: a party commission of inquiry, which was not to inquire but exonerate, and the long-delayed Swapo congress, which was not to express the interest of the membership but to thwart it. In the report of the party commission of inquiry submitted to Nujoma in June 1976 there was no mention of Swapo's part in the detente process, and only rudimentary references to corruption: wisely for the commissioners.¹⁴

Shortly before this the Swapo congress, convening at long last in Walvis Bay at the end of May, condemned those who had most ardently called for it — then in detention in Zambia — as South African government spies. The participation of the exiled leaders in the Vorster detente strategy, alongside the South African army, together with their corruption, was concealed from the members within Namibia. Only with the detention of a major part of the exile membership could the leaders have safely convened the congress, and then only by staging this fraudulent token of democracy as faraway as possible from those who knew what had happened. Nujoma was re-elected president. As the editor of the anti-corruption document wryly observes:

In telephonic contact with Lusaka, the internal leadership distributed pamphlets describing how the youth were 'mised' by Andreas Shipanga, the arch villain. At public meetings, house-gatherings, and in private conversations an account was given of Shipanga, the Pied Piper of Windhoek, leading two thousand well-trained guerrillas and Youth members against minor problems in the movement. He 'plotted' against the life of Nujoma, etcetera, etcetera (p 16).

In the same month, leaders of the Youth League arriving from Europe were taken straight from Lusaka Airport to detention. In effect, they were lured by the Zambian state and by Swapo leaders into a trap — a phenomenon that appeared again in the Swapo spy-drama in Angola in the 1980s.¹⁵ With the PLAN fighters and the SYL imprisoned in Zambia, the Walvis Bay congress subverted the substance of the demand for democracy by conceding its appearance. It had a strange and horrifying sequel. For many who played a prominent role in organizing this corruption of democracy, or who slandered the Youth League in the interests of the clique around Nujoma, there followed a tragic fate.

Tauno Hatuikulipi, later a member of the central committee and the military council, died in a Swapo prison in Angola in 1984, accused of being a South African government spy. In the 1970s had been the director of the Christian Centre in Windhoek, a forerunner of the Council of Churches of Namibia which functioned practically as the religious arm of Swapo. His death was not announced for six months, and it was then alleged that he had died by swallowing poison.¹⁶ Another member of the central committee, Lucas Stephanus, was killed by Swapo in Lusaka the same year, and his body never found.¹⁷ Eric Biwa, also on the central committee and now a representative of the Patriotic Unity Movement (PUM) in the assembly in Windhoek, was

deported from Cuba to Angola by plane in 1984 with one leg in a plaster cast, detained on arrival and kept for five years in pits in the ground. Benedictus Boois, also on the central committee, suffered the same fate. The vice-secretary of the Walvis Bay congress, Othniel Kaakunga, subsequently a member of the Swapo politburo, went into exile and was then tortured and detained for three years, two of them in solitary confinement. Of these, Hatuikulipi, Stephanus, Biwa and Boois had scornfully dismissed a group Swapo members, led by Hermanus Beukes, who approached them in Namibia in August 1976, concerned about rumours of impending executions of dissidents (*Swapo: The 1976 Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p.16).

Having helped to strangle the demand for democracy raised by the '74 Youth League, these internal leaders were caught in the noose they had helped to weave. The accusation 'South African spy' which they had pinned on the SYL and the PLAN fighters in the 1970s came to haunt them in the 1980s. At the same time, the PLAN security apparatus necessarily took on the character of witch-finder general, the grand inquisitor for whom even the slightest sign of mental independence was threatening.

In this it was assisted by its *alter ego*, the South African army. Not long after the May congress, perhaps aiming to inflame internal strife within Swapo and discomfort the opponents of the now discredited detente strategy, South African forces attacked two camps of Swapo 'loyalists' in western Zambia on 11 July, killing 24 guerrillas and wounding 45. That, more than anything, wrote *finis* at the bottom of the detente scenario. One of these camps, Shatotua, was the base at which Nujoma's loyalists had captured and nearly killed the members of the PLAN fighters' committee exactly three months earlier, on 11 April. Despite Shipanga having been in detention at this time for 82 days, Katjavivi continues to report – without investigation or even further comment – that 'Swapo attributes this attack to Shipanga's followers and holds him responsible' (p 107).

By the time of the Shatotua attack, the Swapo leaders were rapidly adapting to the changed turn of events. They had committed their troops to the losing party in the Angolan war, and had compromised themselves through their association with the South African army: policy blunders which could only be covered over by suppression of the most principled of their members, systematic falsification of the truth and vilification of any critic. It still remained necessary to adapt to the winning side. This Nujoma and his cohorts did with alacrity. Nujoma's alliance with Savimbi had begun in the mid-1960s, when as Bridland reports, Swapo enabled the first trained Unita fighters to traverse Tanzania and Zambia in order to reach Angola, and when Nujoma provided Savimbi with a Soviet Tokarev pistol (pp 69–71). Now, with the cry '*vae victis*' in the air, Nujoma threw in his lot with the conqueror, abandoning Swapo soldiers in Unita-held regions to their fate. Former Swapo members say these fighters were killed by Unita.

Despite continued fighting, the result of the Angolan war in its first phase was clear. By December 1985, the US Congress decided to end all aid to Unita and the FNLA. As Shipanga explains, from that time:

the Vorster–Kaunda–Ford plan for Angola, with Nujoma in tow, was doomed.

Nujoma began defaching himself from the Pretoria–Lusaka–Washington coalition, and by March 1976 he was spending a lot of time in Luanda negotiating with the MPLA and the Russians...⁵ (Armstrong, p 131).

Already in December 1975 he was visiting Cuba and the USSR (*Black Review*, 1975–1976, p 215), and in July 1976 – following an enlarged central committee meeting near Lusaka – Swapo played the Brezhnev card with a new political programme cut to the changed political situation, adapted especially to its need for bases in southern Angola. It pledged to unite all Namibian people, ‘particularly the working class, the peasantry and progressive intellectuals’ into a vanguard party ‘capable of safeguarding national independence and of building a classless, non–exploitative society based on the ideals and principles of scientific socialism’ (Katjavivi, pp 108–9). In the same tones might Mafia Godfathers seek the solace of Mother Church. Having played one side in the cold war system in Angola, Nujoma now reversed his alliances to play the other. Stalinization of Swapo advanced apace, leading to the crimes of the 1980s.

Only the grisly final act of the Vorster–Kaunda–Nujoma detente required now to be completed. In a press statement on 5 August 1976, Nujoma publicly threatened all the ‘dissidents’ with death by firing squad, adding the graceless lines quoted at the head of this article: ‘The agents of the South African regime and imperialists have been rooted out of our movement, and the Central Committee carried out a systematic purge of all the traitors’. (quoted in Armstrong, p 133) By this time, in addition to the thousand Swapo fighters at Mboroma camp at Kabwe, north of Lusaka, a further six hundred returning from training in the Soviet Union had been immediately arrested and also locked up there. On 5 August 1976, the same day that Nujoma made his brutish remark about the firing squad, the starving unarmed guerrilla fighters tried to break out of Mboroma to march in protest to Lusaka. The Zambian army opened fire, killing four and seriously wounding another thirteen. It was a replica of the killing of thirteen ZANU fighters at Mboroma by the Zambian army the previous year. Shipanga reports:

In documents that they smuggled out of Mboroma, the fighters’ complaints were familiar. They demanded a Congress. They objected to corruption in the leadership. They objected to the transfer of Swapo arms to ‘Unita reactionaries’. They wanted the OAU to provide them with trucks so that they could be transported from Zambia to Angola to begin fighting again in Namibia.

Eventually many of them were transferred to Angola, but several went before Swapo firing squads as soon as they arrived. Many were also kept back in Zambia. There has been very little news of them since, although several are known to have died in detention over the years (pp 133–34).

Angola now became the killing ground for the Swapo leadership, in mockery of the PLAN fighters’ illusions about the socialist character of the MPLA for

which they had been ready to give their lives. The Swapo leaders, who directed their troops to fight against the MPLA on the side of the South African army, were now given a free hand by the MPLA to murder on Angolan soil the Namibian fighters who had demanded to fight with the MPLA, against the South Africans and in opposition to the Swapo leaders. Swapo in Angola became a mincing machine for any member with critical opinions.

Shipanga, whose application for habeas corpus was an embarrassment to the Zambian state, was secretly hustled across the border with his colleagues to prison in Tanzania, where there was no habeas corpus. On 4 March 1978 South African troops slaughtered hundreds of Namibian civilians in a refugee camp at Kassinga in southern Angola. Again, as in the Shatotua killings, Shipanga was accused by Swapo in radio and press reports of having personally led the South African troops into Kassinga. Despite the fact that Shipanga had been a guest of the Zambian and Tanzanian prison systems for nearly two years at the time of the massacre, and was only released on 25 May 1978, the slander stuck. The Swapo leaders were diligent students of Goebbels' doctrine of the big lie. Shipanga reports that when he eventually returned to Namibia after his release from prison—to commence a political career that actually did involve collaboration with the South African authorities, which he had denounced before—he met 'terrible hostility' from the black population because of his alleged complicity in the massacre at Kassinga (p 142).

The psychopathology of Swapo in exile lies in its double life as a nationalist movement: as rebel against the South African regime, and as accomplice of that regime against its own members. Discussing his recent novel, *Chicago Loop*, which deals with murder, the writer Paul Theroux has spoken of the fascination of people leading a double life, since here the writer can 'explore the public and private life and the contradictions between them and also the way in which they mesh together' (*WH Smith Bookcase*, Easter 1990). Swapo concentrates within itself the contradictions of the whole genus of nationalist movements which came to power in Africa since 1957, and also of those international agencies, organizations and individuals which support them. In the relation between the apparent rationality of its aims and its psychotic inner life, its totalitarian internal regime and its proclaimed goal of liberation, the needs it purported to address and the self-interest of its leaders, Swapo provides a laboratory for study of the inadequacy of the existing politics in Africa. It is a form of politics that requires to be submitted to criticism, as a barrier to a genuine emancipation.

As an organization living a lie, Swapo could only be hyper-sensitive to the opinion of any honest person, or even the gentlest of critics. From this stems its guilty paranoia, its morbid suspiciousness, the stuff of which in governments historic crimes are made. With its para-statal authority—first in Zambia, then in Angola—Swapo was camouflaged not only by terror and secrecy but by the whole spectrum of late 20th century official society, including states (both bourgeois and stalinist), churches, the United Nations secretariat, the liberal media, Labour and stalinist parties, well-meaning individuals of all kinds and the majority of the 'trotskyist' left. Its true history tells us as much about these agencies as about itself.

Common purpose between the South African regime and Swapo, as much as their antagonism, acted to produce a common methodology of rule by terror. Its sources are international as well as local. In this way, through the civilizing agencies of the great powers — the US and the USSR — as well as of their medium and lesser acolytes, a process of barbarism was cultivated in southern Africa, now reigning in Windhoek with all the panoply of state. The investigation of Namibia's modern history has barely begun. It has the texture of one of the bloodier of Shakespeare's dramas. That is sufficient for the liberal and socialist luminaries of the universe to find in Namibia the pretext for their suppressed religious zeal.

NOTES

8. Soggot acquired first-hand knowledge for this superbly written factual history as senior counsel in trials of Swapo members in Namibia. People whom he helped save from prison and even from the gallows, such as Victor Nkandi, later died in Swapo's prisons in Angola. Among those he defended in court against the South African regime was the most prominent leader of the contract workers' strike, Johannes Nangutuuala, whose brother Frans was murdered in Angola after resigning from Swapo — allegedly by a prominent member of the present government in Namibia (personal communication from Windhoek, February 1990).

9. Interview with Hewat Beukes, London, 8 April 1990. Editor of the pamphlet on the *1976 Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, Beukes is a son of Hermanus Beukes. His older brother Hans, who had been a member of Swapo's national committee in the early 1960s, fled from Lusaka after the 1976 arrests, and his sister Martha Ford — a member of Swapo's politburo, and secretary of its Women's Council — was later forced out of Swapo. Hewat Beukes and his wife Erica were active in the Swapo Youth League inside Namibia in the 1970s and are now leading members of the Workers' Revolutionary Party of Namibia.

10. My thanks to F S for these comments.

11. Oleg Ignatyev, *Pravda* correspondent in Angola, asserts that South African troops crossed the border into Angola to take command of the Calueque dam on the Cunene river on 8 August: in his view 'the beginning of direct South African aggression against Angola' (p 137). Stockwell says the advance into Angola began in the second week of September (pp 163–4). Johnson gives the date of the initial South African military advance into Angola as 14 July, part of a series of events that 'bear all the hallmarks of Pretoria–Washington coordination' (pp 144, 147). Marcum indicates that South African troops first crossed into Angola in June. About this time, when military collaboration was being prepared with the South African regime, Savimbi made statements distancing himself from Swapo (Marcum, p 268). Marcum cites a report in *Die Transvaler* (Johannesburg) in May 1975 on the break-up of the Unita–Swapo alliance (note 233, p 441). Reality was more complex.

12. Daniel Chipenda, the former MPLA leader and military commander, subsequently fought alongside Unita and the South African army. Mivungu is possibly Mavinga, a south-easterly town near the Zambian border.

13. Eight years later, between January and May 1984, the 'overwhelming majority' of ANC military cadres in Angola mutinied against oppressive conditions in Umkhonto we Sizwe after fighting against Unita alongside the MPLA in western Angola (see Bandile Ketelo et al, 'A Miscarriage of Democracy', *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5). The outbreak of mutiny in the ANC military wing, following the mutiny in PLAN in 1976, can only have played a part in setting loose the Swapo spy-drama of the 1980s.

14. Similarly, there is nothing concerning Swapo's participation alongside the South Africans in the Angolan war, or of charges of corruption against the main leaders, in the 'official' history by Katjavivi (1988), formerly Swapo representative in Western Europe and now a deputy in the national assembly. This contrasts with a factual presentation of the allegations of the Swapo militants by R W Johnson in 1977, only a year after the mutiny. As he notes, since late 1975:

even the external (guerrilla) wing of Swapo had been racked by a major split. A large section of the leadership had launched a bitter attack against Nujoma for refusing to call a party congress...Among the allegations they wished to ventilate at such a congress were their claims that the leadership had connived in Zambian support of Unita; that arms meant for Swapo had been diverted by Kaunda to Unita; that Swapo forces had actually been ordered to fight alongside Unita and the invading South African columns in Angola...(p 254).

Relying apparently on some of the same documents published in Namibia in 1987 by the 'Independent Group,' Johnson's merit as a historian — writing shortly after the events he was recording — was that he took these documents seriously. He was in no doubt of Nujoma's venality as a political leader, reporting Nujoma's threat to punish the dissidents by firing squad. How is one to characterize the subsequent historians who neglect this episode, and Johnson's book? (The author became aware of this passage in Johnson's book only after publication of the first half of this article).

15. Rudolf Kisting, a member of the SYL in Namibia in the 1970s, enjoyed a meal with Nujoma in Harare in the 1980s after returning from study (and marriage) in the Soviet Union. Nujoma urged Kisting to give his services to Swapo in Angola. This was Kisting's intention in any case. He then flew to Luanda in the company of one of Nujoma's bodyguards, who had been present at the meal, and was arrested by Swapo security very shortly afterwards. After torture and years in the pits in southern Angola, he was released last year along with other recipients of President Nujoma's hospitality (communication from Kisting's sister, Dr Sophie Kisting, who was present at the meal).

The same fate befell Kavee Hambira, then working for the Swapo radio programme in Luanda. 'In May 1984 I was told by Mr Hidipo Hamutenya that I was to fulfil an assignment for approximately one week in Lubango. I flew from Luanda to Lubango. When I arrived at the airport the chief of security of Swapo, Solomon Hauala, met me and he immediately arrested me'. (affidavit submitted to the supreme court in Windhoek, 15 September 1989, published in Basson and Motinga, p 176) Hamutenya is a member of the

Swapo politburo and is now minister for information and broadcasting in the government. Hauala has been appointed head of the Namibian army. After torture on a daily basis for ten days and imprisonment in the pits for five years, during which time he states Hauala and Hamutenya personally forced detainees to make false confessions on video, Hambira was released in May 1989.

16. Herbstein and Evenson transmit a crucial error of historical fact, which serves to besmirch people such as Hatuikulipi. They write of 'Swapo's ally, the MPLA' at the time of the 1971-72 contract labourers' strike in Namibia (p 21). This is incorrect. Swapo at that time was allied not with the MPLA, which then had minimal influence in southern Angola, but with Unita: an alliance which Swapo retained until 1976 when Unita, with its CIA and South African backers, lost the war (in its first phase).

This error obscures the nature of Swapo's relation to Unita and to the South African army, during the war in Angola in 1975-6. This prevents an understanding of the evolution of the spy-drama and allows the authors to write of 'the network' in relation to Swapo's prison victims, as if Hatuikulipi and others were in fact spies (p 168). There is no word in this book on SWAPO's de facto convergence with the South African military in Angola in 1975-76.

Though they deal of necessity with the war in Angola, Herbstein and Evenson do not refer to Marcum's basic two-volume study, *The Angolan Revolution* (1969, 1978). There they would have read that 'As late as 26 September 1975, the MPLA reported that it confronted hostile Swapo soldiers in southern Angola' (Marcum, 1978, note 277, p 444).

17. Communication from Othniel Kaakunga, Windhoek, 23 February 1990.

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[See also Part I for other references]

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