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

Paul Trewhela

'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'
Sam Nujoma, 5 August 1976.[1]

A Religious Experience

Independence day in Namibia on 21st March was welcomed by the international media in a mood of rapture. It was a variety of religious experience. As the rites of passage took place in Windhoek on the 30th anniversary of the massacres at Sharpeville and Langa in South Africa, the social and political relations within Namibia underwent a mystical transfiguration.

The past was to be forgotten. Reconciliation was all. Namibia was 'free' (*Guardian*), the outcome was a United Nations 'triumph' (*Independent*), Sam Nujoma the new president was 'a kind man' (*Independent on Sunday*). The tone of wonder appeared at its most elevated in the *Observer*, owned by Tiny Rowland's Lonrho corporation. Under the headline 'Namibia set to become Africa's model state,' its correspondent in Windhoek, the South African journalist Allister Sparks, declared: 'there is an atmosphere now of something quite unbelievable and almost magical happening.'

It was 'almost to good to be true.' Namibia had the prospect of becoming 'the continent's most genuinely democratic and economically viable country,' with 'black Africa's only authentic multi-party system.' The miracle in Windhoek acquired not merely continental but universal significance: 'The whole world, it seems, wants to celebrate this deliciously unexpected event.' Similar compliments on the 'birth of democratic Namibia' were expressed by Glenys Kinnock of the Labour Party and by David Steel, former leader of the Liberal Party, in a letter to the British press.

To these spiritual chords were added the choirs of cash registers jingling, and not principally either for Windhoek's hoteliers and the bed–and–breakfast industry. In the words of the *Observer*, of 18 March,

> The mood among businessmen is bullish. 'It ranges from cautiously optimistic to very optimistic', says Ude Freuse, who runs a consultative forum that brings government and business leaders together. 'Swapo [the South West Africa People's Organization] has been de-demonized and now businessmen see that it is opening new doors to the world for them'

To this could be added the comment of the US financial pundit Eliot Janeway, published in the British press on the eve of Namibia's independence: 'South Africa is the gateway to black Africa, which is the new market about to explode in the world' (*Guardian*, 20 March).

Seldom have the ecstacies of faith ascended to heaven so purely from the cash nexus.

The Case of Andreas Shipanga

The whole affair was characterized by the grotesque. In the fairy tale, Beauty fell in love with the Beast (actually a handsome prince), but in the case of Swapo it is something bestial that is celebrated as beautiful. Under conditions of permanent terror inflicted by the South African regime in Namibia, Swapo in exile was shaped by a history of purges of its members during the 1980s which reached lunatic proportions. Over this period over a thousand Swapo members were purged in southern Angola: tortured, forced to confess to fabricated charges of being South African spies, imprisoned in pits in the ground for up to seven years, executed at will, and very frequently worked, starved or beaten to death. One man who returned to Windhoek with other ex–Swapo prisoners in July last year lost seven brothers in this way. Even President Nujoma's wife was arrested at one point. Some of the best–known heroes of the Namibian resistance were murdered and defamed, in addition to a host of others.

Searchlight South Africa, No. 4, was the first (and perhaps still is the only) South African political journal to make the cause of the ex-Swapo detainees its own, to report extensively on the 'spy-drama' of the 1980s, to interview its victims and to call for an independent international inquiry, as the former detainees themselves demand. (See the statement of the Political Consultative Council of Ex-Swapo Detainees [PCC] in this issue).

Former Swapo prisoners now in Namibia are convinced that very many of their fellows who have not returned continue to be held by Swapo elsewhere in Africa, if they have not already been murdered. Their return is the PCC's first demand. *Searchlight South Africa* undertook to return to the question of Swapo's prisons, and this guided the research resulting in this article. Both the original material on Swapo's prisons and the present article were written in the knowledge that similar atrocities had happened in ANC camps, and that the question of Swapo was an acid test for politics in South Africa. The publication of the first, extended, first–hand account by former ANC members of their experiences at the hands of the ANC's jailers and torturers, appearing in the London *Sunday Correspondent* on 8 April, followed by the ex-ANC members' Open Letter to Nelson Mandela of 14 April, completely vindicated this perspective.

The present article investigates the historical forces that propelled Swapo towards its cycle of tortures and executions, and locates them in complex

inter-relations of global and regional politics of the mid–1970s, focussed on the civil war in Angola. This was not the beginning of Swapo's descent to barbarism, as former Swapo prisoners see it. They report an early rebellion by members of Swapo's military wing at Kongwa in Tanzania in the 1960s, put down by the Tanzanian army on behalf of Swapo's leaders. Very little is known about this event. According to ex–Swapo prisoners, the Kongwa rebellion 'has never been fully discussed even at the highest levels of the organization. To this date, a veil of secrecy prevails over it' ('A Report to the Namibian People'). It is not yet possible to appraise its significance for Swapo's future evolution.

The present article, however, does present the first comprehensive picture of conditions in the 1970s that determined Swapo's fatal course: towards eating its own children. It is a matter that requires a great deal of further research. Yet already a picture emerges of one of the great hidden scandals of southern Africa, centred on political and military collaboration of Swapo's top leaders with the South African government and with Unita when Angola was invaded by the South African army in September/October 1975. Several of the leaders of Swapo most active in the events of that time now head the government of Namibia, including the president, Nujoma, the minister of defence, Peter Mueshihange, and the minister of security, Peter Sheehama.

Swapo's collaboration with the South African government expressed itslf perversely, and in a manner that reversed the real relationships, in the so–called 'Shipanga affair' of 1976. The episode is named after Andreas Shipanga, Swapo's former secretary for information, born in 1931 to a rural family in Ovamboland in northern Namibia. After working in Ovamboland, in Angola, on the gold mines of the Witwatersdrand and in Rhodesia, he went to Cape Town in the 1957 where he was an early member of Swapo's parent body, the Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC). In the early 1960s he was one of Swapo's leaders in Cape Town, and also a member of the Yu Chi Chen Club, a small discussion group with members drawn from several political organizations who shared a common interest in theories of guerrilla warfare[2]. The club was a product of the times: of the all-pervasive conviction after the Sharpeville shootings, that only violence could remove the regimes that ruled in southern Africa.

In June 1963, YCC Club members in Cape Town were arrested and jailed. Among these, Dr Neville Alexander – now a leader of the Cape Action League – and Elizabeth van den Heever spent more than 15 years in prison. Shipanga escaped arrest and returned to Namibia. At the same time, another Namibian associated with the YCC Club, Dr Kenneth Abrahams, was saved from arrest by local people in his native Rehoboth in central Namibia. Shipanga and Abrahams escaped to Botswana (then Bechuanaland, still under British control), along with two of Abrahams' rescuers, Paul Smit and Hermanus Christofel Beukes, one of the first Namibians to petition the United Nations. There the four men were kidnapped by South African police, subjected to a ferocious beating and smuggled back. Abrahams was flown to

Cape Town, the others imprisoned in Namibia. After heated demands from the British government, the South African government was compelled to return the four men to Bechuanaland.

Shipanga then joined other Swapo leaders in exile. Swapo had opened its first mission in Dar es Salaam in 1961, with missions in Cairo in 1962 and Algeria in 1963. Its future course was decided with the setting up of the African Liberation Committee of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in May 1963, which channelled funds from member states to nationalist parties that took up arms against the white regimes in their countries. This was decisive for Swapo, since its main rival in Namibia – the South West African National Union (SWANU), with support originally among Herero-speakers – did not get funding from the OAU because it did not take up the gun.

The first batch of Swapo members arrived for military training in Cairo in 1964. The first guerrillas then entered Ovamboland in the early months of 1966, crossing through Zambia into the Caprivi Strip from their headquarters in Tanzania, and, after a period of preparation, began attacks on police posts. Swapo marks 26 August 1966 as the launch of its armed struggle, the date when South African police attacked a guerrilla training camp. Mass arrests, tortures, very long periods of imprisonment, killings and a military/police reign of terror now became the rule especially in northern Namibia, as Swapo fought the South African state in arms. The huge cost in lives of this war is the permanent background to the Swapo spy-drama.

The Demand for a Congress

Swapo's first two national congresses were held within Namibia in 1961 and 1963, but after the turn to arms the third congress was held at Tanga, in Tanzania, from 26 December 1969 to 3 January 1970. No further congress was held during the next six years. Since the demand for a fourth national congress was central to the internal crisis in Swapo between 1974 and 1976, a knowledge of Swapo's organizational structure at this period becomes important. Shipanga (appointed to the national executive committee as secretary for information at the third congress) describes Swapo's formal structure at this time as follows:

> The National Congress is the supreme policy-making body of Swapo, bringing together people from...the military, the National Executive Committee, and humble cell members from inside Namibia. The resolutions passed by the Congress determine principles and policies and guide the work of all members.
>
> ...the Congress also elects, and where necessary suspends, members of the two other main national structures, the National Executive Committee and the Central Committee. In 1974–75 the National Executive was composed of sixteen members selected from the Central

> Committtee and was responsible for the day–to–day execution of Swapo policy, ensuring that the resolutions of the Congress were carried out by all organs of Swapo, including the military...
> The Central Committee, with 35 members, was the watchdog of the National Executive: it was meant to oversee its work and make recommendations to it, and all important decisions of the National Executive required the approval of the Central Committee (Armstrong, p.99).

Between 1974 and 1976, however, Swapo's internal workings became enmeshed in a vast international and sub–continental embroglio. By the time Shipanga joined the national executive, Swapo had become the personal fiefdom of a small number of top leaders including two from the days of the OPC: the president, Sam Nujoma, and the secretary for defence, Peter Eneas Nanyemba[3] .They disregarded Swapo's constitution, using the national executive committee as a fortress against the whole organization. At the time of the internal crisis of 1974–76, acording to Shipanga, something like a state of siege existed in Swapo. He states:

> Since the Tanga Congress not even the Central Committee had met. The situation was totally unhealthy, because power was concentrated in the Executive Committee, and the military wing, PLAN [the People's Liberation Army of Namibia], had no representation on the Executive, only in the Central Committee (op.cit., p.100).

For militants in the front line fighting the South African state – both within PLAN, waging its military campaign mainly from Zambian bases and in the Swapo Youth League, active politically both inside and outside Namibia – this was unacceptable. It became increasingly insufferable during 1974. As Shipanga reports, the Tanga congress had resolved 'unanimously' that the next national congress would be called at the end of five years, in December 1974. Shipanga says that he constantly urged the Executive that a steering committee be appointed to prepare the 1974 congress.

> Nujoma and Nanyemba kept saying no, there was no need for a Congress. In 1973 they said the same thing. Then, after the military coup in Lisbon, on 25 April 1974, came the sudden collapse of Portugal's African empire(ibid).

The coup propelled Swapo, with its undemocratic and unconstitutional internal regime, into the vortex of great power politics, completely destabilizing relations between members and leaders of the organization. Unable to cope in a revolutionary manner with the powerful currents set loose in central and southern Africa by the developments of 1974, Swapo was pulled into a fatal downward spiral of repression and falsification.

The Slide into the Abyss

At the time of the Portuguese career officers' coup, there were three separate nationalist movements in Angola, each with its own military cadre and specific ethnic base. In the north–east, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), led by Holden Roberto, had organized an uprising on the coffee planatations in March 1961. Based in neighbouring Zaire, and corruptly bound up with the Zairean elite, it rested on Angola's third biggest ethnic grouping, the Bakongo people.

In the capital Luanda, situated in the north–west on the coast, the major organization was the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). It had participated in an urban insurrection in Luanda against Portuguese rule in February 1961. After a period of intense factional strife and dormancy before the coup in Portugal, it was to emerge triumphant from the anti–Portuguese struggle and the subsequent civil war, aided by massive supplies of Soviet heavy arms and the deployment of thousands of Cuban troops, as well as Cuban administrative, teaching and medical personnel. MPLA politics was determined by the association of its major leader, Dr Agostinho Neto, with the rigid Stalinism of the Portuguese Communist Party during long years of exile (and many of imprisonment) in Portugal. Its base was the workers in the *muceques* (hill slums) of Luanda, the intellectuals, the relatively less oppressed urban *mestico* (or mixed race) population, and the second most numerous of the tribal groupings in Angola, the Mbundu, living in the eastern hinterland of Luanda.

The largest ethnic grouping in the country, the Ovimbundu, formed the mass base for the third of Angola's nationalist parties, the National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (Unita). The Ovimbundu occupied the central region of Angola, along the Benguela Railway running east–west from Zambia through southern Zaire to the port at Lobito. The founder and leader of Unita, Dr Jonas Savimbi (a graduate of the University of Lausanne, with a thesis on the Yalta conference), was previously foreign secretary of the FNLA but broke from it in 1964, condemning it as tribalist and incompetent. At this point the Chinese government, seeking a base distinct from the Soviet–backed MPLA after the Sino–Soviet split, provided Savimbi and eleven followers with military training in China in 1965-66. It is not irrelevant to the future development of Swapo that Unita's 'Chinese Eleven' were smuggled back into Angola by Swapo, located first in Tanzania and then in Zambia (Bridgland, pp.67–71).

In January 1975, ten months after the coup in Portugal, the three organizations signed a declaration of unity at Alvor in Portugal. Independence was to follow on 11 November, after elections in October for a constituent assembly. The elections never happened. No one party had support across the whole country, and a combination of international great power politics and internal antagonisms propelled them to civil war. Between June and August 1974, the FNLA based in Zaire received arms from China and Romania, as well as

military instructors from China. From July 1974 the United States, unofficially through the CIA, and from January 1975 officially through the '40 Committee' of the National Security Council, provided the FNLA with large sums of money, which was used to finance an attempted coup. Then, in late August 1974, the USSR sent huge quantities of weapons to the MPLA and in December a big contingent of MPLA officers left for the USSR for intensive military training. The scene was set.

Followers of Agostinho Neto – the leading grouping of the MPLA – attacked members of a rival faction led by Daniel Chipenda in Luanda in February 1975, killing fifteen. Chipenda and his followers fled from Luanda and joined the FNLA, bringing about 3,000 soldiers. The next month, swollen and super-confident with its CIA funds, the FNLA carried out its attempted coup in Luanda; it was driven out by the MPLA in July after massive killings on both sides. In June, MPLA troops massacred Unita members in the suburb of Pica-Pau in Luanda, compelling Unita to withdraw to central Angola where its support was concentrated. Savimbi then flew to Zambia for discussions with President Kenneth Kaunda, and shortly afterwards, on 4 August, after MPLA troops fired on Savimbi's jet at Silva Porto, Unita entered the civil war against the MPLA.

In July, US President Gerald Ford authorized $14m for covert supply of arms to the FNLA and Unita; and on 20 August the chief of the CIA task force in Angola, John Stockwell, arrived in Unita territory on a visit of inspection, dressed as a priest, having previously joined the FNLA's march on Luanda from the north. Information on the US operation comes mainly from Stockwell, a veteran of operations in Vietnam, Zaire and Burundi, who broke with 'the company' in December 1976 and published a book on his role.

In September and October 1975, nearly a thousand Cuban troops arrived by sea to bolster the MPLA. It was they that decisively turned the tide against the FNLA when a second assault was launched on Luanda in November 1975, supported by two regular battalions of the Zairean army, aimed at capturing the capital before independence day, 11 November. The FNLA was routed, never again to appear as a factor in Angolan affairs. Between June 1974 and September 1975 Angola became a cockpit of the superpowers. The mass supply of Soviet war materiel (tanks, armoured cars, trucks, helicopters, MIG-21 jet fighters, rocket launchers, small arms plus the 122mm cannon), together with the Cuban expeditionary force – between 1,100 to 4,000 troops by November 1975, rising to 12,000 by January 1976 – decided the first phase of the Angolan war in favour of the MPLA, in addition to the important factor of popular support in the capital, Luanda. This produced a paroxysm throughout the sub-continent, with profound and grotesque effects on Swapo.

The Detente Scenario

What decided Swapo's evolution in 1974–76 was the response of the government of Zambia to the war in Angola. Swapo had its military bases in Zambia, and was directly accountable to President Kaunda and his army. The Zambian regime was thrown into panic by the war. The country had become independent in October 1964 under the leadership of the United National Independence Party (UNIP), headed by Kaunda, and governed since 1973 as a one–party state[4]. After the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by the Smith regime in Rhodesia in November 1965, Zambia was the most 'frontline' of all the frontline states. Its economy, dependent on the mining of a single product, copper, remained in the hands of the Anglo American Corporation (based in South Africa) and Lonrho, based in Britain. Landlocked, and with a border with Angola of 1,300 kilometres, all its exports and 95 per cent of its imports at the time of independence travelled east and west through the railway systems of Mozambique and Angola, or south through Rhodesia and South Africa. Access to the coast by the shortest route, through Rhodesia to Beira in Mozambique, was cut off after UDI. By the time of the civil war in Angola, Zambia depended heavily on the Benguela Railway, taking copper from the Copperbelt through southern Zaire, and westward through central Angola to the port of Lobito. Clear passage for Zambia's main export along the Benguela Railway was a chief concern of Kaunda throughout the war. This was made even more urgent by the end of 1974, when a fall in the price of copper, brought about by the international recession, left the Zambian economy in a perilous condition.

The combination of world recession and civil war in Angola made Zambia all the more dependent economically on South Africa. While his army raced towards Luanda, the South African minister of economic affairs visited Lusaka in October 1975 to arrange an export credit deal worth a quarter of Zambia's annual imports: the Kaunda regime was desperate for hard currency. South Africa was believed to have become Zambia's most important foreign supplier (*Economist*, 20 December 1975). Official talk of a boycott of South African goods was dropped, a regular air freight service began between Johannesburg and Lusaka, and there were rumours that South Africa had agreed to finance Zambia's soaring bill for oil (which had increased nearly threefold between 1973 and 1974).

At the same time, Zambia depended for its electricity supply on the Kariba dam, the turbines and switchgear for which lay on the Rhodesian side of the Zambezi river. As David Martin and Phyllis Johnson point out in their study of the war in Zimbabwe[5], this left Zambia a 'hostage state', at the mercy of the Rhodesian government which 'could cut off electricity at any time, blacking out Lusaka and the Copper Belt, and flooding the mines when the pumps ceased working' (1981, p.130).

Very shortly after independence, Kaunda's government had given permission to Zimbabwean guerrillas to build bases in Zambia for action against the

Smith regime. Less than two years later, guerrillas from the two main nationalist parties, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU, which had split from ZAPU in 1963), crossed the Zambezi to prepare for military activity inside Rhodesia, which began seriously in April 1966. In October 1966, the Zambian authorities permitted Swapo guerrillas, trained in Ghana and Egypt, to set up military camps for action in Namibia, striking through the Caprivi Strip. At this stage Kaunda's government favoured the MPLA in Angola. Host to guerrillas against white-ruled territories on three of its frontiers – in Mozambique to the east, Rhodesia and Namibia to the south, and Angola to the west – the Zambian government attempted to balance contradictory interests, with its political imperatives at odds with its immediate economic needs.

Soon after UDI, Kaunda had sought and got assurances of increased access for trade from the Portuguese dictator, Dr Salazar. Because of these ties with Portugal, and with Lord Colyton, chairman of Tanganyika Concessions (owner of the Benguela Railway), Kaunda was approached by representatives of the Portuguese military in Mozambique to act as a mediator towards the end of 1973, shortly before the coup in Portugal. Kaunda was warned that the regime was about to collapse (Martin and Johnson, 1981, p.127). Early in 1974 he briefed Rowland about his contacts with the Portuguese military (but neglected to inform Frelimo, the nationalist movement fighting in Mozambique).

Through Rowland and Dr Marquard de Villiers, a South African director of Lonrho, Kaunda's information was passed on to the South African prime minister B.J.Vorster in Pretoria on 29 March. De Villiers again met Vorster, together with General Hendrik van den Bergh, the head of the South African Bureau of State Security (BOSS), the day before the coup in Portugal. According to Martin and Johnson, 'Lonrho's intention from the outset was to bring Kaunda and Vorster together' (1981, p.129), and it succeeded famously. The subsequent continental strategy of the South African government bears all the marks of a major policy orientation of the secret Afrikaner Broederbond: all the major actors in the South African government were members. It also bears the mark of the international interests headed by Rowland, castigated in Britain not long previously by former prime minister Edward Heath as 'the unacceptable face of capitalism'.

Early in July, de Villiers and van den Bergh met in Paris with Mark Chona, special political assistant to Kaunda, and a major figure in the subsequent relations between the two states. Chona then made several visits to meet Vorster in Cape Town to fix this indelicate 'special relationship'. In this way Lonrho provided the 'bridge' (ibid, p.137) to the subsequent Vorster/Kaunda detente that prepared the way for the first South African military invasion of Angola in October 1975. Following a meeting between the Zambian and South African foreign ministers in New York in September 1974, a secret document known as the detente 'scenario' was agreed between Chona, de Villiers and van den Bergh, typed at State House in Lusaka on 8 October,

and endorsed by Vorster and Kaunda. This document was the prototype to all subsequent negotiations over Namibia, and expresses the essence of the current negotiating process over South Africa[6].

Entitled 'Towards the Summit: An Approach to Peaceful Change in Southern Africa', the document noted that a military solution to problems in southern Africa was 'futile', and that the South African government had called for a meeting between Vorster and Kaunda[7]. The document looked to the release of Zimbabwean detainees and political prisoners, as well as the lifting of the ban on ZAPU (headed by Joshua Nkomo) and ZANU, then headed by the Rev Ndabaningi Sithole. Leaders from both parties had been in detention in Rhodesia since 1964. The detente document envisaged circumstances in which 'the current armed strugle will be replaced by a new spirit of co–operation and racial harmony...' Zambia 'and friends' would 'use their influence to ensure that ZANU and ZAPU desist from armed struggle and engage in the mechanics for finding a political solution in Rhodesia.' A similar clause relating to South Africa covered 'ANC or other insurgent activities.' In addition Zambia 'and friends' undertook to persude Swapo 'to declare themselves a party not committed to violence provided the SAG [South African Government] allows their registration as a political party and allows them to function freely as such' – a minimal concession, since Swapo was already technically legal within Namibia, despite unrelenting harassment. Point six of the section on Namibia reads: 'Swapo to desist from armed struggle under conditions in paragraph 5 above.' Martin and Johnson continue:

> Swapo were not consulted about this commitment being made on their behalf by Zambia and soon thereafter they received a letter from the Zambian government signed by the Minister of State for Defence, General Kingsley Chinkuli, ordering them to stop fighting from Zambia' (pp.138–42).

This order from the Zambian military, expressing the interests of the South African and Zambian regimes, cast the die for the subsequent cycle of purges in Swapo. Already in September the foreign press corps in Zambia learnt that the government was intercepting international arms deliveries to Swapo, and reported that it had prohibited all Swapo military activities from Zambian soil. Nujoma and the Zambian foreign minister, Rupiah Banda (another leading figure involved with the South Africans), publicly denied the reports, despite or rather because of their being true. However, the South African press published the story, together with statements welcoming Zambia's action by General van den Bergh and Jannie de Wet, the Commissioner 'for Indigenous People' in Namibia. Again and again, the diplomatic talents of Nujoma extended to a crude denial of a sordid reality.

According to de Villiers, the aim of the detente exercise was 'to sell Mr Vorster to Africa as a moderate and reasonable person'. Indeed he was 'sold'. Within weeks of the drafting of the document, in speeches 'carefully or-

chestrated as part of the detente "scenario"' (Martin and Johnson, 1981), Vorster spoke of 'bringing and giving order' to close neighbours in Africa, while Kaunda– recently author of a book on humanism–described Vorster's speech as 'the voice of reason for which Africa and the world have waited for many years' (Ibid, pp.142–44). The siren voice of South African reason and order was to sing through a wasteland. Less than two years later, the regime of this 'moderate and reasonable' person had brought about the massacre of school students in Soweto, and Angola had been laid open, not to permanent revolution, but to permanent warfare. A recent study of modern Africa reports:

> No one can calculate how many billions of dollars Angola has lost in a decade of war, nor how many civilians have died. But the effect is clear. The country has returned to the same sort of barter economy the Portuguese found centuries ago. Instead of slaves for trinkets, it is coffee for food. Since so many roads are cut, and so few airplanes fly, communication with the interior is hardly better than it was before colonialism (Rosenblum and Williamson, p.189).

The genesis of these conditions was at the same time the genesis of the Swapo spy–drama, the worst of which was acted out in southern Angola between 1984 and 1989.

Enter Kissinger, Stage Right

By October 1974, Kaunda had become particularly disillusioned in the MPLA, then preparing to make its grand bid for power in Angola. According to Bridgland, Reuters correspondent in Lusaka at the time, there had been a 'rapid rundown' in the MPLA's fight against the Portuguese during the early 1970s, as well as 'bitter and bloody strife between its factions on Zambian soil,' including a particularly hideous set of executions of dissidents in August (Bridgland, p.110). As the cycle of violence intensified within Angola, and as the tide of Soviet arms and Cuban troops flowing to the MPLA escalated to fresh heights, Kaunda switched Zambian support from the MPLA to Unita. By August 1975, Savimbi had the use of a jet on loan from Lonrho, together with British pilots, 'provided by Kaunda's close friend, Tiny Rowland', for his military and political forays around the sub–continent (ibid, p.127): a matter not unconnected with the pivotal place of Lonrho in the detente 'scenario'.

James Callaghan, the British Labour Party foreign secretary was informed in August 1974, by Chona and Zambia's then foreign minister, Vernon Mwaanga, of Kaunda's approach to Vorster (Martin and Johnson, 1981, p.137). In December, he sent his political adviser, Tom McNally, to Lusaka to 'find out just how far detente had gone' (ibid, p.193). At the end of the year he made a personal visit to southern Africa, and had talks with Kaunda and Vorster. Then, in the spring of 1975, during a visit to Washington, Callaghan

sought active support for the Vorster/Kaunda detente from the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger (ibid, p.233). About the same time, on 19 and 20 April, Kaunda visited Washington and was received by President Ford. According to Bridgland,

> While public attention was drawn by a White House speech of Kaunda's, criticizing American policy in South Africa, Namibia and Rhodesia, privately he was warning Ford and Henry Kissinger of Soviet intentions in Angola and encouraging them to react effectively and give assistance to Unita and the FNLA (p.120).

This discrepancy between 'public' and 'private' was to mark the whole of the detente exercise, including direct military support by the Zambian government for the joint South African/United States military operation against the MPLA in 1975-76. In addition, systematic deceit by the principal Swapo leaders against their own members – starting from Nujoma at the pinnacle – was printed into the fabric of the organization.

The Storm in Zambia

Lusaka was a focal base of intervention of the world bourgeois countries in the civil war in Angola. Between July and December 1975, Brand Fourie, the top civil servant in the South African foreign ministry, made more than twenty clandestine trips to Zambia to see Kaunda. The US ambassador to Zambia, Jean Wilkowski, according to Bridgland, bustled around Kaunda's presidential office suite at State House 'as if she owned it. She clearly had been at home there for some time' (p.157). A frequent visitor to Lusaka over this period, in his Lonrho jet, was Savimbi. Stockwell comments:

> The South Africans had some encouragement to go into Angola. Savimbi invited them, after conferring with Mobutu [of Zaire], Kaunda, Felix Houphouet–Boigny of the Ivory Coast, and Leopold Senghor of Senegal, all of whom favoured a moderate, pro–West government in Angola (p.186).

The initial advance of the South African military into Angola, as it raced towards Luanda in October and November 1975 from its seat in northern Namibia, took place under the guise of being unspecified white mercenaries fighting for Unita[7]. According to a document issued in December 1975 as *Unita's Official Position* on the war, South African troops first entered southern Angola the previous July. A permanent patrol was established on the Angolan side of the Kunene river in August, and a major force of 800–1,000 troops was in place in September (Legum, 1976b, p.36). Given the preceding history of the detente process and the full-scale invasion of Angola that immediately followed, it is not hard to imagine the content of the meeting between Vorster and Kaunda on 26 August on the White Train on a disused

railway bridge above the Victoria Falls. This was the meeting called for the previous October in the secret document drawn up by van den Bergh, de Villiers and Chona at State House in Lusaka.

It is not true that this meeting was only a 'new exercise in futility', as Martin and Johnson assert (p.216), or that Vorster and Kaunda acted merely as 'umpire' to the – actually futile – meeting between Ian Smith and the Zimbabwe nationalist leaders, Nkomo, Sithole and Muzorewa (Legum, 1976a, p.23). Shipanga is almost certainly correct: the main event on this theatrical occasion was the separate and secret discussions between Kaunda (accompanied by Chona and his new foreign minister Rupiah Banda) and Vorster (with van den Bergh and foreign minister Hilgard Muller), in which the 'main topic' could only have been the coming South African invasion of Angola. Shipanga states that officials of the UN Commission for Namibia later reported South African troops moving by truck and air through western Zambia into eastern Angola. Further, the meeting of Vorster and Kaunda could only have 'reinforced their common commitment to put the lid on SWAPO' (Armstrong, p.118).

The relation of the Swapo fighters to this convergence with Unita and the South Africans could only have been explosive. In effect, they were now required by the Zambian state to collaborate with the armed forces of the regime they were fighting to overthrow. The equivocal relation of the Swapo leaders to the basic military dynamic of the organization they had founded now came into conflict with the idealism of the fighters of PLAN and the militants of the SYL in Zambia. With no internal democracy and the refusal of Swapo leaders to call a national congress, all the elements were in place for rebellion. According to Shipanga,

> Discontent was rising everywhere in Swapo, but it first manifested itself among the guerrillas and some of their commanders. From 1974 the commanders were travelling more than three hundred miles from the front in south-western Zambia, where the country borders briefly on Namibia at the eastern end of the Caprivi Strip, to my home in Lusaka to complain of neglect by Nujoma and Nanyemba (Armstrong, p.100).

Swapo had in fact been coopted into the 'scenario', and it was resistance to this by the mass of militants in Zambia – together with a few individuals at leadership level, such as Shipanga and Solomon Mishima, a fellow founder of Swapo and fellow executive member – which produced the misnamed 'Shipanga affair.' It was in truth the affair of Swapo.

The first fruits of the Vorster/Kaunda detente had appeared in December 1974, when ZANU loyalists in Lusaka were attacked by a group of the guerrilla fighters from the front in Mozambique, led by a senior commander, Thomas Nhari. Martin and Johnson indicate that Nhari had been in touch with Rhodesian military and intelligence since September, 'about the same time as Zambian and South African officials were meeting in New York' (p.159). ZANU survived the revolt, with about sixty deaths from both sides.

Then, on 18 March 1975, in one of the seminal events of the detente period, the principal ZANU leader not in detention, Herbert Chitepo – an adamant opponent of the detente politics of the Zambian government – was assassinated outside his house in Lusaka. Nyerere, who at this time also strongly supported detente, had angrily described Chitepo as a 'black Napoleon' because of his insistence on continuing the military struggle (Martin and Johnson, 1981, p.155). By this time Vorster and Kaunda were 'in daily contact through their secret envoys' (*Observer*, 9 March 1975). A week after Chitepo's murder, ZANU leaders meeting in Rhodesia decided to move their base of military operations from Zambia, sending Mugabe and Edgar Tekere secretly out of Rhodesia to a Frelimo camp in Mozambique to begin preparations. This was a military necessity. The day after Chitepo's funeral, the Zambian government had begun mass arrests of ZANU members. Soon over a thousand fighters from ZANU's military wing were held at Mboroma camp at Kabwe, north of Lusaka: they were not released until nine months later. Rhodesian government and military officials were 'delighted' (*Star*, Johannesburg, 22 March 1975).

In mid–April 1975, top military leaders of ZANU based in Mozambique were lured into Zambia by the government, arrested by Zambian police, tortured, presented with falsified confessions and brought to trial a year later, in the week before Kissinger arrived in Lusaka. In October 1976 the case was thrown out of court, with the judge concluding that one of the accused had been the 'victim of unfair and improper conduct of the part of the police authorities' (Martin and Johnson, 1981, p.181). The judge, afterwards labelled 'anti-Zambian' by Kaunda, further asked the director of public prosecutions to begin proceedings against the police. (Nothing was done). Thus during the crucial period of the Vorster–Kaunda–CIA detente covering the South African invasion of Angola, a crippled ZANU ceased to be a threat either to the white regime in Rhodesia or to Kaunda's regime in Zambia.

Unable to admit the truth about its own pivotal role in the line–up of world imperialism in Angola – referred to by Stockwell, the CIA task force director, as 'our war against the MPLA' (p.155) – the Zambian government had no other resort except repression and falsification. It faced three potentially dangerous sources of resistance. Firstly, there were substantial bodies of highly politicized, armed and trained fighters on Zambian soil not directly amenable to Zambian *raison d'etat*. These were above all the guerrillas of ZANU, then operating out of south–eastern Zambia through Mozambique into eastern Zimbabwe, and the guerrillas of Swapo, operating out of south–western Zambia into Namibia and penetrating into southern Angola.

The Zambian state's attempt to subborn the military forces of ZANU, and to subordinate it to the detente 'scenario', is described in detail by Martin and Johnson. They reveal the extent of Zambian repression of the ZANU fighters, which was not different to that inflicted on Swapo shortly afterwards. What differed was the response to it of the top nationalist leadership and the leading guerrilla commanders. Whereas in Swapo the result was systematic

destruction of the most anti-imperialist cadres, in ZANU the outcome was the 'emergence of a strong, radicalized and relatively autonomous' military leadership, which for over a year 'virtually ran the situation on the ground' in Zimbabwe (*Big Flame*, p.10), compelling major concesions for a period by ZANU political leaders to the guerrillas.

Secondly, the Kaunda regime faced rebellion from within its own armed forces. From Bridgland's investigations, it appears that in late January 1976 – after the Clark Amendment in the US Senate had banned all covert US aid to Unita and the FNLA, and at the very moment when the South African military had begun to withdraw – the Zambian Air Force was ordered to bomb the one important centre on the Benguela Railway inside Angola then not held by Unita and the South Africans, at Teixeira de Sousa on the border with Zaire. The attack failed. Ordered from State House to return to the attack, the pilots refused, supported by their Air Commodore. Seven men then died in a gunfight in the militarized area of Lusaka Airport. Zambian student leaders secretly described the affair at the time as a 'small mutiny' (Bridgland, p.188).

Thirdly, the Zambian government's collaboration with South Africa, the United States and Britain – which through MI6 and agents of the electronics firm Racal placed long-range radio transmitters for Unita in Angola and Lusaka (Bridgland, p.167) – now produced an anti-imperialist rebellious climate within Zambia among the students. In meetings, leaflets and demonstrations, the student union at the University of Zambia in Lusaka condemned the government's support for Unita, challenging the rule of the weak Zambian bourgeoisie and its monopoly of politics. The students gave voice to the most threatening crisis to date in the existence of the Zambian state, and it reacted with violence. On 28 January 1976, Kaunda declared a state of emergency, attacking an unnamed 'socialist imperialist power.' Students and lecturers were arrested, riot police sent to close the university (which was daubed with pro-MPLA slogans) and the students sent home. The Angolan war had compelled the students' union to 'charge the Zambian ruling clique, headed by Dr Kaunda, "our beloved President", with criminal treachery' (Bridgland, p.180).(6)

NOTES

1.Quoted in Armstrong, p.133.

2.According to Shipanga, the Club's name was taken from the Chinese title of a booklet with texts on guerrilla warfare by Mao Zedong and Che Guevara.

3.Nanyemba died in southern Angola in 1983, reportedly in a car crash, after serious disputes between Swapo's military leadership and the security apparatus.

4. In May this year, following the Stalinist collapse in eastern Europe which was its model, Kaunda broached the idea that one-party rule in Zambia come to an end.

The problem in relation to many African countries is that forthright representatives of capitalism, such as the British Conservative MP, Neil Hamilton, a 'long–standing Thatcherite radical', are often factually correct, while the left and the reformist centre glamourize despotism. Concerning Zambia, Hamilton writes: 'All candidates for parliament must belong to his (Kaunda's) United National Independence Party and support the incumbent president. Trade unions also have to be extensions of the UNIP regime; even then, most strikes are banned.

'All national newspapers, radio and television networks are state–controlled. The courts are subject to the president's decree powers and the police have automatic rights to search the individual and his property without a warrant. There is a permanent state of emergency under which the president can order detention without trial of any alleged opponent to the regime' (*Independent*, 5 May 1990). What Hamilton and his kind omit to mention is how serviceable this is to imperialism, that of his country in particular, as the detente operation showed. As for the left and the reformists, most would be outraged – correctly – if the same conditions appeared, say, in Britain. As apologists for despotism, they operate a double standard in relation to Africa, with an actually racist content. The essence of their outlook is that blacks are not fit for anything better.

5..This book provides an understanding of the politics of the sub–continent during the 1970s. Martin covered the Zimbabwe struggle at the time for the *Observer*, Johnson for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

6.. Bledowska and Bloch write: 'Bizarrely, Van den Bergh believed that he could torture blacks at home in South Africa but then act as a conciliator for detente with other black African states' (p.89). Van den Bergh not only believed this, he practised it. For two years at least (1974–76), he did reconcile torture and detente. As author and administrator of Vorster's torture system, inflicted systematically on SWAPO members (among them the present minister of mines and energy, Toivo ja Toivo), he succeeded through Kaunda in drawing Nujoma and Nanyemba into Vorster's military strategy. Van den Bergh was the spider at the centre of the web in the Swapo spy–drama.

7. There is a fascinating but unexplained reference in a table listing meetings in 1974–75 that needs further research. Anglin and Shaw, table 7.1 (p.274) indicates that between 21 and 25 October 1974, a meeting took place in Lusaka between Presidents Kaunda, Nyerere, Machel, and Mobutu together with Chitepo of ZANU and J.Z. Moyo of ZAPU (both later assassinated), as well as the South Africans Oppenheimer and Luyt.. This presumably refers tothe leading capitalists Harry Oppenheimer and Louis Luyt. If so, it would indicate that direct capitalist involvement in the detente process went far beyond Lonhro. This meeting took place two weeks after the detente 'scenario had been typed at State House.'

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To be continued in No.6