

WITHIN THE SECRET STATE: THE DIRECTORATE OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

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Enter, Stage Right: Murderers

South Africa continues to produce the spectacle of the macabre. With morbid fascination, one observes that this is a society which always reveals a skull behind the apparent smooth face of the ordinary. This emerges from the 'Inkathagate' revelations, so-called because they concern state funding, training and arming of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (*Inkatha yenKuhuleko yeSizwe*) and its supporters. The decisive features of 'Inkathagate', however, lie not in Inkatha, nor in secret police operations, but in the terror arm of the South African Defence Force (SADF) whose crucial body, the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), functioned through the 1980s as the perpetrator of massacres in nearby African countries, of individual assassinations and destabilization of whole states. In so far as the state, in Engels' phrase, consists in the last resort of bodies of armed men, the South African state in the era of P W Botha and of F W de Klerk operated in essence through the DMI. Acting with exceptional ruthlessness and operational freedom, with a vast secret budget, officered by whites and manned by a multilingual collection of black desperadoes from across the sub-continent, this force of corsairs was the heart of the South African state.

The DMI in its personnel resembles nothing so much as the punishment battalions of the German army in the Soviet Union in World War II. The criminal, the psychopath, the captured guerrilla faced with the alternative of hanging or becoming a murderer-in-state: this was the material, drawn from a sub-continent in civil war, out of which the drafters of South African policy drew their unmentionable but indispensable executors. For bloody operations in Mozambique, Angola, Zambia, Namibia and all the front-line states, the DMI was to the South African government what James Bond was to British fiction in the 1950s.

This monster acquired a life of its own. In its special zones of operation, it was South Africa's arm of government, to which the Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, related as ambassador at large. Whatever appeared in the clauses of agreements between the South African government and neighbouring states had absolutely no reference to this secret body of armed men, who operate as though specifically excluded from the provisions of international law, the Geneva Convention and the rules of war. The DMI was in addition the real agent of coercion lying behind the Crocker diplomacy of the Reagan and Bush administrations in the entire southern African theatre. Its three ranking officials, including its chief, General Pieter van der Westhuizen, visited Washington for top-level discussions in March 1981, less than two months after the Reagan administration took office. (Leonard, p 129)

The DMI was born out of the experience in 1975-76, when the SADF backed by the CIA cut through Angola to topple the new MPLA government. Forced to

retreat after the intervention of Cuban troops and a reversal of US policy, the SADF generals considered themselves betrayed. This was crucial. An SADF White Paper of 1977, envisaged a single integrated state command — in acquisition of information, in planning and in execution — under its own dictation. This was placed under the control of military intelligence, greatly expanded. It outlasted, and saw out, Soviet generals, Cuban tank gunners and East German secret police administrators. South of the equator it was, and has remained, the living representative of western control in Africa and the guarantor of President Bush's 'new world order'.

Not only did the DMI organize massacres, it ran political parties and its own multifarious press. The insidious arts of 'psy-ops', of 'winning hearts and minds' — allegedly cheaper than filling them with bullets — brought into being the strange species of the SADF political agent. Out of the military trunk grew the most intricate political and literary foliage. It is worthwhile to trace at least one line of development of this reclusive botanical type.

South Africa has a history of more than seven decades of police spying. In the mid-1960s, the evidence of a Security Police lieutenant and phoney journalist, Gerard Ludi, who had infiltrated the underground South African Communist Party (SACP), helped convict members up to the level of the central committee. Gordon Winter, doyen of the corps of sleaze of the South African press of the time, later surfaced as a material witness to the murder of a white businessman in the Transvaal by members of a London criminal gang and as the confidential agent of the head of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), Major General Hendrik van den Bergh. Later, in the 1980, it was revealed that Craig Williamson (subsequently, Major), of the South African secret police had infiltrated the National Union of South African Students in Johannesburg and then the International University Exchange Fund, in Geneva. His wife, also in the state security service worked in, and kept an eye on, the World Health Organization, Geneva. This was preceded by the 'Infogate' or 'Muldergate' scandal of the late seventies, when it was revealed that state funds had for years been poured through a secret conduit to manipulate both local and foreign media, to the greater glory of the South African regime.

These operations, mounted by personnel of the ministry of police and (in the media scandal of the seventies) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were minuscule in scope and in effect by comparison with what took place when the SADF became the decisive arm of state, at the time of transition from the police regime of B J Vorster to the military regime of P W Botha.¹ Murders by the state then multiplied in scale from retail to wholesale, while destabilization of organizations gave way to destabilization of a whole sub-continent.

With battle honours acquired between 5 and 15 degrees south of the equator in Angola, drawing on world resources of modern 'counter-insurgency' warfare in addition to its nuclear and artillery technology, the SADF became a political power in itself during the 1980s. To some extent it is *the* political power. The trajectory from the Boer commando, as the Afrikaner citizenry in arms, to the juggernaut of the modern security state is the history of the 20th century inscribed on the tip of Africa. Whatever the changes brought about by the current negotiating

process, it is a historical result that will not go away. To imagine that this monster of aggression is to be 'democratized' is the most fanciful of illusions. Ranked beside this political army, with its secret budget, its Military Psychological Institute, its press corps, its foreign and local auxiliaries and its Civil Co-operation Bureau, the military-political role of the ANC army Umkhonto we Sizwe was insignificant.

This is an army that had foreign politics as its theatre of operations, a phenomenon not seen in South Africa since the campaign of General Smuts against von Lettow-Vorbeck in east Africa in World War I and of the South African army against Rommel in the northern desert in World War II. The notion of Clausewitz, that war is the continuation of politics 'by other means', was its first article of faith. Thus the rhetorical statement (derived from Churchill) by its guiding genius, the former Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, shortly after assuming office in 1980:

You ask what is our aim? I can answer in one word – victory. Victory at all costs. Victory in spite of [or by means of – PT] all terror. Victory however long and hard the road may be. For without victory there is no survival. (*Independent*, 12 June 1990)

From this followed war in Angola under the flag of South Africa and of Unita on and off from 1975 to 1989; the sacking of Mozambique, through the proxy terror of Renamo; the reduction of northern Namibia to a free-fire zone; assassinations carried out at will, from the frontline states to France; direct rule by the military of the South African townships and southern Natal in periodic states of emergency; and the making and unmaking of governments. If one sought to study the role of force in history, in order to comprehend the nature of the beast, it would be well to focus one's attention here. It is this body of highly politicized armed men that lies behind the strategy of the so-called Christian Democratic Alliance, aimed to seal together in an electoral union the ruling National Party, the Zulu nationalist party Inkatha, conservative Asian and mixedrace groupings, the leaders of black Bantustan regimes and the conservative black churches, in opposition to the alliance of the ANC, the SACP, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and their newest ally, the Pan Africanist Congress. The figure of Malan in the cabinet, a career general during the invasion of Angola in 1975, personified this domination by the military.

A Friend of Human Rights

One of the brightest stars in this military-political firmament, and the first to expose its operations to public gaze, was a former SADF major, Nico Basson. At the age of 34 already a veteran of the murky realm of South Africa's defence 'spooks', Basson is the survivor of four assaults on his person, all probably from his former colleagues in the special services department of the SADF. When he did his 'national service' (compulsory for white males only) in 1975 – that year of destiny, in which the SADF invaded Angola – Basson served as driver to General Malan, then embarking on the fateful step to his career as the Napoleon of southern Africa. It is in the nature of this species of

political warfare that after military service Basson obtained a BA in psychology and a post-graduate diploma in 'communications'. This academic qualification is interesting, since the political manipulation of arms, of mass murders, of media and of politics by the DMI was carried out through its secret Communications Operations department ('Comm Ops').

In 1980, with his military service, his degree and his diploma, Basson became assistant director of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) in Johannesburg. Thus did the masters of war, its psychology and communications run the principal state organ of propaganda. In rapid succession he then acquired experience 'in the business world' as managing director of a marketing company, became a journalist, then news editor on a Pretoria newspaper, and later became editor of the official newspaper of the SADF, *Uniform*. Back in uniform in the SADF from 1983 to 1987, Basson rose to the rank of major and became the public relations officer and right-hand man of General Jannie Geldenhuys, then chief of the army and later head of the SADF.

In January 1987 he resigned from the SADF 'to enlarge his business interests and to concentrate on further studies', as he states in a curriculum vitae in a book edited by him for his work in Comm Ops. Completing a further diploma in Small Business Management in 1988, he was ready for the call for further active service when I realignments of the great powers dictated that Namibia would have elections to a constituent assembly in November 1989. As a volunteer member of the Citizen Force (the army reserve), he was summoned to Namibia in January 1989 and in March he founded African Communication Projects Ltd in Windhoek, 'to establish his business interests on an international level'. (*Call Them Spies*, 'About the Editors') This international business empire was established with SADF funds, giving him a personal income of 64,000 rand (about £14,000) a month, on orders from his superiors in Comm Ops. As a specialist in the arcane lore of communications, Basson now lent his talents and his funds to the venal and the despairing. Long before the final agreements were signed in the chancelleries, the DMI had its plan to win the peace just as it had aimed to win the war: and by the same means.

In 1989 the objective of the DMI in Namibia was to preserve for the South African state maximum freedom of operation. It sought to do so by denying to its main political rival, the South West Africa People's Organization, (Swapo), which the SADF had combated in the field for over 20 years, an overwhelming majority in the polls. According to arrangements drawn up under UN Security Council Resolution 435, which governed transition to independence in Namibia, if Swapo (recognised by the UN as 'sole and authentic representative' of all Namibians) were to get a two-thirds majority in elections to the Constituent Assembly, it would have had the right to produce its own constitution without reference to any other political body. The fact that Swapo ran a carnivorous one-party state in exile, in which even potential dissenters were destroyed by its security police, did not inhibit the architects of UN policy from this drastic possible result. Just as Swapo aimed to replicate within Namibia the totalitarian regime it had administered over more than 60,000 Namibians abroad, so it was the principal pur-

pose of the DMI, as representative of the totalitarian interests of the old order inside Namibia, to thwart this.

Between the Elephants

An old Sotho proverb says that when two elephants fight, the grass gets trampled. In Namibia, the fighting of the elephants in the run-up to the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November 1989 permitted strangely enough a little grass to grow. In the contest Swapo, funded massively by supporting states and international agencies abroad, faced a wide range of its electoral opponents funded through the South African state. Having manipulated the anti-Swapo fight within Namibia for many years with a heavy hand, this was nothing new. What was new was the mission of Basson, the confidential agent, into the realm of human rights, just as his SADF colleagues were engaged in setting a trap that sprang on 300 or more returning Swapo troops massacred in northernmost Namibia at the beginning of April 1989: the first days of the ill-named 'peace process'. The massacre in northern Ovambo together with the political intrigues of Basson in Windhoek were forerunners to the state-organized massacres alongside the negotiating process now under way in South Africa. In Basson's words, the Namibian scenario ('Operation Agree') was devised as a 'dress rehearsal' or 'trial run' for the real thing, the constitutional readjustment now taking place in South Africa. (*Independent*, 11 June 1991) It followed the well-worn process (initiated by the Rhodesians) in the financing and arming of Renamo in Mozambique while presidents Samora Machel and P W Botha chatted peace, commerce and constitutionalism at Nkomati in March 1984.

Through his shell company, African Communication Projects — more communication! — Basson appears to have funded or assisted a variety of organisations opposed to Swapo during 1989. These were: the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance or DTA (the most important political grouping opposed to Swapo, which had previously administered Namibia on behalf of the South African regime); the paper most closely identified with the DTA, the *Times of Namibia*; editing and publishing with former Swapo detainee, Ben Motinga, of *Call Them Spies*, a book of documents concerning Swapo's repressions abroad; some of the activities of the Political Consultative Committee of Ex-Swapo Detainees (PCC), the general representative body of the returned victims; the Parents Committee of Namibia (PC), led by Stella-Maria Boois, one of two groupings which had campaigned within Namibia since the mid-1980s for the release of Swapo's prisoners; and a small political party, the Patriotic Unity Movement (PUM), composed largely of a section of returned prisoners, drawn mainly from former senior officials of Swapo. The PUM was one of four small parties that contested the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November under the umbrella name of the United Democratic Front, securing the fourth largest number of votes and election of a former Swapo prisoner (and central committee member), Eric Biwa.

The manner of Basson's operation needs pointing out. *Call Them Spies*, which he published immediately ahead of the November elections, contains over 200

pages. Except for a single page introduction, five paragraphs of acknowledgements and a single page foreword by Basson stating how he 'got involved with the PC, PCC and PUM', plus two short biographical sketches of himself and Motinga, the book consists entirely of documents either deposited by former Swapo prisoners, or arising out of the campaign to bring about their release, or copies of press reports concerning the issue. There has been no tampering with primary source material. Many documents are reproductions from an earlier book, *Namibia: A Struggle Betrayed*, (Rehoboth, 1986). Others can be compared with photocopies of their originals (a good number in my possession). Former detainees, and former Swapo members within Namibia who initiated the campaign for their release are satisfied with the authenticity of the material.

The book will continue to serve as an indispensable source for historians, irrespective of the motive of its publisher. To suggest, as has been done, that documents published in the book should not be used because Basson's purpose was 'lying disinformation' entirely miss the point. On this issue, in order to advance their interests, the South African regime and its operative, Basson, had no need of lies. The truth was damning enough. They had merely to provide the facility for the truth to appear. In so far as Swapo was deprived of its two thirds electoral majority in part through such means, it had principally only itself and its atrocious treatment of loyal members to blame. The situation was not unprecedented. When in 1943 the Nazi propaganda service trumpeted the discovery of the mass graves of 15,000 Polish officers murdered by Stalin's secret police in the woods at Katyn, near Smolensk in the USSR, it was unfortunately no 'disinformation', and those who rejected the information as it became revealed because of its source, or because it was expedient, did so at the expense not only of the truth but also of humanity. There are times, such as this, when truth served Dr Goebbels better than the 'Big Lie'. It was as an artist in 'communications' that Major Basson proved his expertise. In the interest of the South African regime's 'total strategy', he published verifiable documents that would otherwise have remained unknown.²

The same applies to reports of statements about and by the recently released detainees in the *Times of Namibia*, by far the most accessible of local newspapers to them. A study of articles on the subject printed by this newspaper shows once again that factual reporting on this issue was all that the DMI required. Similarly, whatever the nature of Basson's services to the PCC, this does not alter the authenticity of statements and allegations made by former detainees themselves. The integrity of these accounts is not in question. There is no conflict, between documentation released by the PCC and the report on Namibia by Amnesty International, released in August 1990. As for the PUM and the PC, the most critical grouping in the campaign in defence of the former prisoners, the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) of Namibia, received no funds from Basson despite participating in an electoral alliance with the PUM; and its leading members had in any case severed relations with the PC in 1987, because members of the latter had co-operated with the International Society for Human Rights, based in Frankfurt. In so far as ex-detainees fell subject to the objectives of the DMI's dirty tricks campaign against Swapo, this was principally the outcome of Swapo's criminal actions.

A Very Political Beast

Basson first revealed his role in a 'scoop' interview published in a newspaper close to the leadership of Swapo, the *Namibian*, edited by Gwen Lister, on 3 May 1991. This was ostensibly under impact of the accumulating horrors in South Africa, which he ascribed to the work of his DMI colleagues. He also spoke of collaboration with advocate Anton Lubowski, the leading Swapo member killed in a political assassination in Windhoek in September 1989. In an open letter to the editor of the *Namibian* in June, a group of 'Vexed Ex-detainees' noted that in a subsequent radio interview Basson had 'said Swapo was among his clients and that's why he had intimate links with Anton Lubowski'. Basson's communicative skills appear to have been spread widely.³ Having blown his cover in Namibia, he later revealed in South Africa that he had placed military agents 'in key positions in Namibian newspapers'. At the same time he

identified three aspects of Operation Agree which he believed were successful: exploitation of the scandal over the torture by Swapo of its own members [this torture is no longer questioned as a reality in even what was previously the most pro-Swapo press]; whipping up of anti-Swapo sentiment over the incursion into Namibia of Swapo guerrillas in April 1989 [really, a massacre set up by the DMI, as Basson indicates]; and building up the credibility of the DTA. (*Guardian*, 11 June 1991)

His revelations concerning Namibia were as nothing, however, compared with his information concerning South Africa itself, which emerged most fully in interviews during June with the *New Nation* and the *Independent*. Operation Agree, he said, had been devised at the end of 1988 by the Minister of Defence, Malan, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha. Throughout all stages the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked hand in glove with the SADF. The aim was to control not only the electoral process in Namibia, but above all in South Africa itself and also the elections due in Angola in 1992.

Basson provided a wealth of detail about Operation Agree, including 'names of senior military officers, names of alleged SADF front companies in and out of South Africa, and names of individuals allegedly running those companies'. (*Independent*, 11 June) The moving spirits behind his own manipulation of information in Namibia were the former head of the SADF, General Jannie Geldenhuys, and the present head, General A J 'Kat' Liebenberg.⁴ The strategy of the SADF was to ensure that the present political and economic power structure in South Africa remained 'essentially the same after the apartheid laws have gone, following democratic elections'. (*Independent*, 12 June) Basson's stated that, 'The SADF is buying AK-47 rifles on a large scale, notably from Mozambique, and supplying these weapons to Inkatha'. The violence around Johannesburg, in which Inkatha supporters were centrally involved, and in which some 1,500 people had died in the previous nine months, had been deliberately orchestrated by the SADF. 'They could stop it immediately if they wished'. (*Independent*, 11 June)

The DMI strategy of 'winning hearts and minds' (WHAM), through deliberate selective violence combined with manipulation of public perceptions, described by Basson, was designed specifically for 'post-apartheid' conditions, in which the major black organizations are nominally free to organize.⁵ According to the *Independent* correspondent, John Carlin, Basson said

it was only now, when apartheid was going and 'non-racial' elections were in the offing, that SADF strategists were beginning to see the prospect of a comprehensive WHAM success...

The end of the violence [in the townships, orchestrated by the SADF] has not been to destroy property or to kill — that has only been a means. The political objectives have all been directed towards the eventual goal of securing white control in the post-apartheid set-up...

The end goal is a divided and undermined ANC, and an alliance of the ruling National Party, Inkatha and other 'moderate' black organizations, which will sweep 'legitimately' to power, with the SADF's own power structure remaining intact.⁶

Intermediary goals were the weakening of the ANC and its capacity to organize, the strengthening of Inkatha as a political force and the division of blacks along ethnic lines, especially between Zulus and Xhosas, the two most numerous linguistic groups. To this end Comm Ops, the section of DMI running WHAM operations, had an officer in every SADF unit and had infiltrated the South African media across the board. Though the SADF was the 'engine' behind the strategy, it was coordinated between key sectors of the state. 'That's the whole thing about South Africa', Mr Basson said. 'It's run in secret and *in camera*'. (*Independent*, 13 June)

What Basson revealed was, in essence, a strategy not utterly unlike that by which power was retained in the old slave-owning South of the United States after its defeat in the civil war and the ending of slavery. The means by which the raised political power of the formerly subordinate blacks, and of white political sympathisers, was put down successfully for almost a century was the violence of the Ku Klux Klan. Under its white sheets, the vanquished Confederacy retained economic and political power in the hands of those who had been threatened to lose it. Thus too in South Africa the killing of blacks, both mass and indiscriminate, as well as individual and selective, by the secret state.

On the Soweto Express

In the month after Basson's revelations came more specific confirmation came about DMI orchestration of Inkatha violence around Johannesburg. A former sergeant in the SADF, a Mozambican, Felix Isaias Ndimene — again in interviews with Carlin of the *Independent* and with the *New Nation* — provided detailed proof of the exact mechanism. Ndimene's information pinpointed One Commando of Five Reconnaissance Regiment ('Five Recce'), crack troops of the SADF's 'Special Forces' — the operational arm of the DMI — as the perpetrators of perhaps the most notorious of these massacres, the killing of 26 people on board a commuter train heading for Soweto at

Jeppe Station, Johannesburg, on 13 September 1990. The regime's assassination bureau, the now disbanded Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB), had previously also been a unit of the approximately 5,000 strong Special Forces, falling under the general command of the DMI along with Five Recce, 32 'Buffel' Battalion (used extensively in Angola) and other more covert units.⁷

Ndimene said he had served from 1983 to 31 January 1991 in Five Recce, after having been kidnapped from Mozambique by an SADF commando in August 1982. Participants in the train massacre, 'my friends', told him what had happened in the tea room at Five Recce's base at Phalaborwa in the north-eastern Transvaal, near the Mozambique border, after returning from their assassins' tour of duty. The day after the massacre, Nelson Mandela had stated that the attacks were not the work of amateurs – that is, in this case, not the work of ordinary supporters of Inkatha – but of highly professional and well-trained killers. Support for this argument came from the manner in which the killers had used their AK-47s; the way in which one detachment had set an ambush on the platform at the same time as another carried out its appalling work on board the moving train; and the strange phenomenon that all the killers preserved scrupulous silence throughout. Ndimene's account satisfied all queries. In his own words,

They got on the train with pangas [machetes] and AK-47s and they were using the name of Inkatha. They shot the people and killed them with the AK-47s. They say they were not allowed to speak during that attack because most of the people were Namibian and could not speak Zulu. (*Independent*, 19 July)

Numerous reports from township residents had mentioned the presence of black men speaking non-South African languages, and with non-South African features, at the scenes of killings, as well as in the single men's compounds which have become strongholds of Inkatha. These were the malignant waste of South Africa's continental wars: Namibians, Mozambicans, Angolans, Zambians, Zimbabweans, even Zaireans, as well as Australians and Irish mercenaries employed for counter-insurgency operations and for cross-border raids against ANC bases, now brought home to roost and concentrated against the defenceless population of the industrial heartland, instruments of a one-sided war let loose by the state against its subjects (or in government calculations, objects).

The white commanding officers of Five Recce were quite explicit about this, in their frank assertion that the ANC was 'still the enemy'. These officers 'used to say that we are not going to fight the same war we fight in Angola...so we started a new training in urban warfare'. An interesting concept of urban warfare, with seasoned counter-insurgency troops deployed against commuters. As Carlin pointed out after a journey on this death railway nearly fourteen months after the Jeppe massacre, South Africa 'must be the only place where people who travel to work by train worry not about arriving on time, but about arriving alive'. The rush-hour commuters at Nancefield station, Soweto, where gunmen from a nearby Inkatha hostel killed eight people two weeks previously, 'conjured up Second World War images of people about to board a train to a Nazi death camp'. (*Independent*, 9 November) Given the degree of unemployment in the Johannesburg-Soweto

area, and the pressure on wage-earners to keep their jobs, plus the hegemonic role of this single line of rail in transport, the precision with which the designers of 'psy-ops' pin-pointed this crucial channel in the total social metabolism is obvious.

For this kind of statecraft, the white commanders of Five Recce had the appropriate categories of academic political science. 'They told us we are not here to defend the government', Ndimene explained. 'We are here to defend the state'. His words confirmed information given to the press two years ago by a friend in Five Recce, Mervyn Malan, now living in the Netherlands. Since Ndimene's testimony, train massacres along the line of rail in the southern Transvaal have continued without pause. That state-organized massacres should focus on the Soweto-Johannesburg link carries a grim symbolism.

According to Ndimene, this trained cadre of homeless political assassins was used as the organizational backbone of mass killings directed against communities supportive of the ANC across the country. He said about 120 Five Recce soldiers based at Phalaborwa had been used in attacks in Alexandra, outside Johannesburg, and in the Pietermaritzburg region of Natal, the seed-bed of constant killings involving supporters of Inkatha and the ANC for the last six years. 'People who went to Natal in March came back in June and told me they were tired of killing children and women'. Added to this, Ndimene provided names of a colonel, a commandant and a sergeant-major in Five Recce, and the names of six soldiers who took part in the Jeppe train massacre. It is not surprising that in the course of weekly political meetings, in which commanders spoke favourably of Inkatha, these multi-lingual assault troops were instructed to learn Zulu: a provocation directed as much against Zulu-speakers as against non-Zulu speakers.

The month after Ndimene's evidence, Martin Dolinck, a former high level operative of the NIS, revealed that the DMI had provided training in guerrilla warfare to 150 members of the Inkatha Youth Brigade in the Caprivi Strip in northern Namibia, contrary to President de Klerk's bland assurance that this was merely training in 'VIP protection' (*Independent*, 2 August).⁸ Much of this training was carried out by Ndimene's unit.⁹

Death-squads and Elections

On the same day as Ndimene's story became public the *Weekly Mail* in South Africa and the *Guardian* in Britain provided documentary proof that the government had funded an Inkatha rally in Durban addressed by the Chief Minister of KwaZulu and leader of Inkatha, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, in the month after Mandela's release from prison. In the immediate aftermath of the rally on 25 March, which was funded in cash by the Security Police through at least one payment of R150,000 (£30,000), there followed a week of strife in which 160 people were killed and more than 20,000 – mainly ANC supporters – made homeless. At the same time, documentary proof showed that large sums of money, eventually acknowledged to be more than R1.5 million (over a third of a million pounds), had been paid in the same way over a number of years to help establish and run the United Workers Union of South Africa (Uwusa) the trade union arm of Inkatha, a dummy organisation set up

to rival Cosatu, which had come into being six months previously in May 1986. The formation of Uwusa — set up with the help of the security police under 'Project Omega' in the manner of the Zubatov unions in tsarist Russia — was followed by a horrific wave of violence on the shop floor, directed against members of Cosatu.¹⁰ The government's auditor-general later acknowledged that President de Klerk had signed the audit authorising the transfer of these funds to Inkatha, out of a secret 'slush fund' held by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The local and international outcry that followed these revelations compelled the demotion to less senior government posts at the end of July of the police minister, Adriaan Vlok, together with the grandfather of WHAM and 'total strategy', the Defence Minister, General Malan. A growing weight of evidence, too vast to document here, reveals the interconnection between the DMI and the security police. This includes the command and funding role of either or both in relation to Inkatha, sanctioned at the highest level of government, as well as to a series of other organisations; the direct use of soldiers and security police in massacres and assassinations; and the existence of a whole battery of bodies of armed men controlled by the state and functioning as licensed killers, ranging from a black criminal gang (the amaSinyora) to the racist white Orde Boerevolk (Order of the Boer Nation), responsible for the fatal bombing of blacks at a taxi rank in Pretoria.

This militarization of a whole society, on the principle of the predation of the state on its subjects, finds expression in the military command structure of the police, with its 48 police generals, its direction by present or former security policemen and the integration of the whole force into structures presided over by the DMI. (Similarly the military command structure of the prisons). It is most probable also that the state-run arms company, Armscor — the subject of an indictment in November before a grand jury in Philadelphia, on charges of evading US sanctions on supply of US weapons and technology to Pretoria — was subject to the global outreach of the DMI. In hearings into the crash of a South African Airways jumbo jet SA Helderberg in November 1987, and in documents available to the *Guardian* (8 and 9 November) and the *Weekly Mail*, it emerged that SAA was routinely used to smuggle military materiel to South Africa, including lethal volatile chemicals. This kind of operation was entirely in the remit of the DMI.

The result of the DMI's grand strategy, as Carlin wrote, was a 'general numbness' throughout the whole society, following the killing of over 3,000 blacks in the previous 15 months, with not one person convicted; and the deliberate assassination of more than 60 activists, nearly all members of the ANC, since its unbanning. (*Independent*, 15 October) In Carlin's judgement, the violence had

disastrously undermined the ANC's capacity to organize, not least as it becomes increasingly high-risk to be identified with the ANC; and it has undermined the ANC's image among black people as the all-conquering, all-powerful redeemer.

That is to say, the strategy of the DMI has so far been a considerable success. This judgement is supported by the experience of the most senior organiser of kill-

ings to speak so far, Captain Dirk Coetzee, former commander at the farm 'Vlakplaas', near Pretoria, operational base of the DMI selective assassination corps, the now defunct CCB. On the run from his former colleagues since he was panicked into revealing his own role — after a confession on death-row by a subordinate in the CCB, Butana Almond Nofomela — Coetzee has been protected by his former targets in the ANC in a succession of safe houses in Lusaka and London, and has survived at least one assassination attempt.¹¹ Coetzee sees in these revelations a single strategy that 'falls into one piece, like a puzzle', with overall direction having been agreed at the top, in the cabinet. In his own words, 'They did not unban the ANC without deciding that they would be able to steer the course: the outcome of the eventual elections, as in Namibia.' (*Guardian*, 5 August)

As Coetzee argued in this interview with the *Guardian* correspondent, David Beresford, the cabinet would not necessarily be party to the 'dirty work' on the ground — 'they would not say OK, we'll slaughter people on the trains with AK-47s' — but they were prisoners of the generals where carrying out the strategy was concerned. His conclusion was that:

The security clique, the security culture, controls not only the South African police force, they also control the South African cabinet.

The ministers have to depend on their generals. What does Hermanus Kriel [the new Minister of Law and Order, with responsibility for police] know? He has never been in a charge office in his life, except perhaps to lay a complaint. He has to rely on this clique, this rotten clique.

Confirmation of Coetzee's basilisk eye view of current South African conditions came in July with an interview with another former member of the CCB, Jacques van der Merwe, who said he had participated in 'taking out' (killing) four people in Namibia during the election campaign. The officer who had 'handled' him in Namibia, a colonel in the DMI, working at army headquarters at Voortrekkerhoogte in Pretoria, had attempted on four occasions — most recently in June — to recruit him for similar 'work' in Natal. In an interview with Carlin broadcast on BBC radio and described in the *Independent*, van der Merwe said that the colonel, whom he named, travelled two or three times a week between Pretoria and Natal (the main scene of Inkatha-ANC killings) to 'organize [the] disinformation campaign, propaganda campaign and even the hit-squads in Natal'. ('File on Four', BBC Radio 4, 23 July)

Supposedly closed down after criticism by the (very tame) Harms Commission, the CCB had merely had its operations redistributed. The means by which the CCB survived its dissolution suggests comparison with the experience of Namibia, where strange military personnel surfaced in various positions in the university (the Academy) in Windhoek in early 1990, to the discomfiture of academic staff. According to van der Merwe,

The CCB has officially been disbanded, but it has been given a new structure whereby these people that were in military positions have been infiltrated into semi-state, parastatal departments such as nature conservation, Escom

[the Electricity Supply Commission], agricultural unions and that. So in essence the CCB still exists, though in name it has been disbanded. (Carlin, BBC)

It is as easy to murder a political figure in South Africa as to buy an ice cream. Shortly before the statement by van der Merwe, Sipho Madlala, in hiding for the previous two months, said that he had 'worked for military intelligence in Natal, that he had been seconded to the security police and that he had taken part in hit-squad killings of senior ANC officials'. (*Independent*, 23 July) On the day after the massive two-day political general strike in early November, organised by Cosatu, the ANC and the SACP against the imposition of value-added tax (VAT) on basic consumer goods, two ANC members were shot dead while entering ANC offices in Johannesburg, 12 hours after a prominent ANC activist, Phumzile Mbatha, was shot dead in Tokoza township. The previous Sunday, the chairman of the ANC's Johannesburg regional branch, Mosima 'Tokyo' Sexwale — a long-term veteran of Robben Island and a former Umkhonto commander — survived an attempted assassination when one of three men in a car aimed a shotgun at him. (*Independent*, 7 November) Not long previously, a notorious camp commander at Quatro prison who had recently returned to South Africa, Sizwe Mkhonto (an Umkhonto 'travelling name'), was also the victim of a violent attack by unknown men. (*Independent*, 18 October)¹² It would be very surprising if certain former Umkhonto members in exile, now Askaris, were not an integral part of the DMI strategy of selective assassination of ANC leaders at middle level and at base.

In the Web of 'Psy-ops'

This is an issue which enormously complicates the issue of the gulag penal system of the ANC in exile, run by individuals such as Sizwe Mkhonto. It is in the interest of those who operated this system to describe the ANC mutineers who rebelled against this system as 'enemy agents'; more specifically, as 'Askaris'. As in Namibia, in an effort to publicize their cruel experiences it is probable that a section of the returned victims of the ANC's prison camps has fallen into the net of DMI 'psy-ops'. A crucial distinction needs to be made between these people, however misguided, and former Umkhonto members turned Askaris, such as Nofomela.

The story was told in *Searchlight South Africa* No 6 of a group of former participants in the mutiny in Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1984 who went through the ordeal of Quatro prison in northern Angola, were released in November 1988, integrated into ANC political structures at Dakawa Development Centre in Tanzania and again suppressed in late 1989 after two former mutineers were elected to the highest positions among ANC exiles in Tanzania. In fear of re-arrest by the ANC security department, this group of eight people fled south through Malawi where they were imprisoned, interviewed by South African security personnel and transported to South Africa in April 1990. The day after their release three weeks later, on 15 May, they gave a factual account of their experiences at a press conference in Johannesburg in the presence of a conservative black priest, Reverend Malamb, and an anti-ANC political commentator from the SABC, Cliff

Saunders. Within two months, one of their number, Siphon Phungulwa, was shot dead in a blatant political assassination after leaving the ANC offices in Umtata in the Transkei. (Trehela, 1991) At the time of writing, no one has yet been arrested for this murder, despite identification of the killers by a survivor. Former prison victims of Quatro are convinced that members of the ANC carried out this murder. Phungulwa had previously been bodyguard in Lesotho to the present Umkhonto chief of staff, Chris Hani, a leading figure in the crushing of the mutiny and subsequent repressions, now general secretary of the SACP.

Shortly after Phungulwa's murder, this group — fearful for their lives, and after considerable harassment — formed the Returned Exiles Coordinating Committee (Recoc) and began to contact parents and relatives of ANC members killed or imprisoned by the security apparatus, Mbokodo, in exile. Recoc's most important publicity effort was to provide detailed information to a veteran white South African journalist, Aida Parker, resulting in publication of an 8-page *Fact Sheet* derived from the *Aida Parker Newsletter* No 141, under the title 'ANC Hell Camps'. Parker has a long history as a publicist close to the South African political structure and hostile to the ANC. The fact sheet includes a brief resume of the history of the mutiny, of the formation of Recoc and the killing of Phungulwa. It contains a 'Preliminary List' of over 200 names of members of Umkhonto who had been killed, tortured, imprisoned or were otherwise believed missing in exile. The most striking feature, however, is 51 photographs — obviously police mug-shots — of Umkhonto members, most of whom had died in exile, many at the hands of the ANC security department. The real names of the people in the photographs is provided. This is important, because members of Umkhonto received 'travelling names' (*noms de guerre*) after going into exile. Their real names were unknown to the main body of ANC exiles, and in most cases would not have been known to members of the Recoc group from their experience in exile. The photographs and the accurate identification of names suggests to other participants in the mutiny, not members of Recoc, that these must have come from DMI or NIS sources. The photographs would have been obtained from the state security forces in frontline states, where South African refugees were registered, photographed and processed on arrival. Such photographs and biographical information routinely (and immediately) became available to the 'Securocrats' in Pretoria.

While these brief biographical notes seem generally accurate, at least one of the individuals whose photograph and name appear in this *Fact Sheet* is regarded by ex-mutineers as actually having been a South African government agent (probably working for the DMI). He was known in Umkhonto as 'Justice', one of the most highly regarded trainees of the generation of 1976 and believed responsible for a mass 'Black September' poisoning of ANC troops at Novo Katenga camp in Angola in 1978, prior to what was later expected to have been an SADF air strike. (The poisoned troops were saved by Cuban doctors. A Cuban military cordon around the camp prevented the supposed agent from signalling to the SADF to launch the air strike, according to ex-mutineers. When the camp was bombed, on 14 March 1979, the troops were not prostrate as planned).¹³

After the revelations about state funding at the highest level for Inkatha, President de Klerk acknowledged in a television address on 30 July that the government had funded also two other black groups: a township body called the Eagles, and an organisation composed largely of (state-appointed) black township officials, the Federated Independent Democratic Alliance (Fida). The Recoc group used Fida's premises as an office. (*Independent*, 22 August) It would have been utterly uncharacteristic for the DMI not to have promoted the accusations of the prison victims of the ANC's security department — the truth of these accusations is not in question — in a manner similar to its operation in Namibia. This does not at all mean that the state has used members of the Recoc group as assassins.

None of the authors of the article on the history of the mutiny in *Searchlight South Africa* No 5 has joined Recoc. One of them in fact travelled to Johannesburg in March to urge leaders of Recoc to disband, because of widespread unease among returned exiles at its relation to the state. While still in Nairobi as refugees from the ANC, the authors of the history of the mutiny had helped to establish another organisation of South African exiles, the South African Returnees Association (Sara). Formed by exiles with a background in different political organisations (including the PAC), the members of Sara drafted a constitution and a manifesto with a strong emphasis on the right to political differentiation and on human rights. Lack of funds, the struggle to exist under conditions of appalling unemployment and the dispersal of members across South Africa prevented these former victims of the ANC security apparatus from keeping Sara in existence, as a forum uncontaminated with supposed association with the state.

While other victims of Quatro strongly oppose Recoc's supposed relation to the state — and have made their views plain to its leading members — the same criterion applies to former mutineers in Recoc as to the former inmates of Swapo's pits in Angola. Primary responsibility for creating conditions so serviceable to state propaganda lies with the ANC. This applies as much to literature deriving from Recoc as to a documentary presented on television by the SABC in the late 1980s, *MK, Disgrace of the Nation*, containing an interview with a former commander of Quatro prison known as Miki, who had been captured in South Africa following a shoot-out with state forces. In South Africa, too, the organizers of state massacres appear also as apostles of human rights.

By now it is clear that despite the evidence of mass support affirmed by the two-day general strike in November, the ANC stands in an even weaker position relative to the state than it did two years ago, at the time of its unbanning. Since then the world has lurched firmly to the right. Racist attacks and anti-immigrant legislation in Europe — barring even seekers of political asylum — are complemented by the appearance in the United States, in election for state governor, of a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan garbed in the business suit of an ordinary Republican Party reptile. These adverse world conditions (for the ANC) enormously strengthen the freedom of the DMI, and its sibling, the NIS, to murder at will in order to carve by force the 'new South Africa' according to the template of the old. President de Klerk, by this interpretation, is merely the constitutional voice of unrestrained violence organized by the state. The monstrous forms of the

DMI are to continue as the centrepiece of South African political life, like the Ku Klux Klan in the post-bellum South, for perhaps decades to come. Apartheid legislation goes; the apartheid state remains.

In exile, the stifling of political discussion within the ANC over three decades, and the police regime instituted over its own members, replicated these conditions, facilitating a profoundly undemocratic political process within South Africa itself. It is a crucial question whether those who fought the South African state from exile with the method of the prison camp can adequately lead the battle for democracy in the 1990s, and beyond. In their open letter to Nelson Mandela of 14 April 1990, the authors of the history of the mutiny in the ANC expressed their view that the yearning for justice in South Africa could only be competently secured by a 'morally clean leadership'. (Ketelo et al, p 67)¹⁴ Beyond constitutions, and beyond the parliamentary fractions of the future, the legacy of the past within the 'new South Africa' — represented most brutally by the DMI — points to the need for a new form of politics. To expunge this terrible history will take a new generation suckled on a different milk.

Notes

1. In South Africa the military is 'positioned at the centre of state decision-making'. (Cock, 'Introduction', p 8) Testimony to this power-shift is provided by Colonel 'Mad Mike' Hoare, the mercenary commander of the failed coup carried out by the South African regime on the Seychelle islands in November 1981. Initial preparations were in the hands of the security police, the National Intelligence Service (NIS), renamed from its previous incarnation as Bureau of State Security. In late September 1979, Hoare was informed by his controller, J Y Claasens, whom he describes as second-in-command of NIS: 'By order of the Prime Minister we [the NIS] have got to back out of this and hand everything over to the Defence Force'. Hoare adds:

It was common knowledge in [security] circles that the Defence Force and the State Security department were deadly enemies, had been for years. It was one of the wounds which it was hoped Prime Minister P W Botha, himself an 'army' man and previously Minister of Defence, would heal. The order was, in effect, a sort of capitulation. (p 78)

Hoare testified to this in a South African court in 1982. Swilling and Phillips report that the secretariat of the State Security Council (SSC) — the super-cabinet that ran affairs under Botha — was drawn 70 percent from the SADF, 20 percent from the NIS and 10 percent from Foreign Affairs. (1989a, p 15) From 1985, the head of the secretariat was General Pieter van der Westhuizen.

2. Even a cursory reading of Basson's biography printed in *Call Them Spies*, from which details in this article are taken, shows the likelihood of SADF funding of the book; and it was for this reason that I stated in *Searchlight South Africa* No 7 that it was 'probable' Basson's SADF connections had 'made publication possible'. (p 84)

3. On 27 February 1989, General Malan described Lubowski as a paid agent of South African military intelligence (ie, the DMI). The Harms Commission, appointed to inquire into assassinations by the state, stated later that Lubowski had received two cheques from SADF sources. (*Libération*, 4 July 1991)

4. When a bank of documents was captured at Renamo headquarters at Gorongosa in Mozambique in August 1985, Liebenberg, then General Officer Commanding Special Forces, was one of a number of very senior SADF figures — mainly in military intelligence — shown to be in direct liaison, either through meetings or messages, with Renamo. (Davies, p 105) Another was General van der Westhuizen, then Chief of Staff (Intelligence), now head of the secretariat of the SSC (see note 1). The DMI controlled Renamo from Phalaborwa in eastern Transvaal.

5. The strategy of WHAM is examined in Oswin (1989). Further examination of the role of the state in organizing massacres can be found in 'The Dogs of War', *Searchlight South Africa* No 7, July 1991. Swilling and Phillips argue that in the South African evolution of the doctrine of WHAM, the

'idealism' of the French general André Beaufré has been 'replaced by the Machiavellian materialism' of the US colonel, John J McCuen, with its emphasis on counter-guerrilla, counter-terror and counter-organizational tactics. (1989b, p 144)

6. In his articles on the DMI, as in his reporting on the trial of Winnie Mandela, and before that on the allegations of the ex-Swapo detainees in Namibia, Carlin was the most consistent and well informed correspondent appearing in the press in Britain.

7. Colonel Jan Breytenbach, the founding commander of 32 Battalion, 'used the well documented experiences and doctrines of the US Special Forces' when he began the unit in August 1975, specifically for intervention in Angola. He used classified US training manuals obtained through 'various contacts I had nurtured over the years and from a course I had attended in the US in my younger days.' (p 13) After an initial career in tanks in the SADF he joined the Fleet Air Arm of the British Royal Navy, taking part in the Suez landings in 1956. Prior to forming 32 Battalion he was founding commander of 1 Reconnaissance Commando, 'the mother unit of Special Forces'. (p 12) In the early 1980s the Special Forces received training in Israel. (*Independent*, 11 November) The horrors of the past few years had an international incubation. General Malan — son of a National Party speaker in the House of Assembly who was also chairman of Volkskas bank — was attached to the French army in Algeria in the early sixties and took the regular command and General Staff Officers Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1963. (Leonard, p 199)

8. Dolinchek had been seconded by NIS to Hoare's failed coup attempt in the Seychelles. Captured on the islands, he succumbed to the blandishments of his captors and later gave his services to the ANC in Zambia.

9. According to Hoare, about half the men in the Seychelles coup attempt (all white) were

members of the Recce Commando, an elite unit which has a reputation in South Africa equivalent to the Green Berets in America or the SAS in Britain. They were highly experienced in combat and many of them had taken part, they told me, in clandestine operations in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia. But what surprised me most was their high standard of education. The majority of them were university students or were employed in executive positions...These men were politically aware and anxious to help their country in any way they could. (pp 95-96)

They are believed to have been members of Five Recce based at Phalaborwa, the same formation as the full-time, mainly black unit to which Ndimene belonged, though the relation between these highly trained part-time white commandos of 1981 and black soldiers such as Ndimene ten years later is not clear. There were six Recce regiments. The whole Seychelles plot fell under the DMI.

10. For an account of murders of trade unionists in 1986 and 1987 by members of Uwusa, drawn from legal affidavits, see Mzala (ch 9). John Bhekuyise Ntshangase, the official for Natal of the National Union of Mineworkers, was murdered in his union office.

11. Nofomela was a former guerrilla in Umkhonto. To prevent defections back to the ANC from captured guerrillas, who joined the forces of the state when faced with the alternative of death, they were required by the CCB to undergo an initiation: the murder of ANC members or supporters. The psychology is quintessential to the DMI. Use of former ANC 'Askaris' in this fashion derives from British army use of 'pseudo-gangs' against members of the Land and Freedom Army in Kenya in the 1950s, and before that from methods developed in Malaya. In Namibia, the ferocious Koevoet likewise had its fraction of 'turned' former Swapo guerrillas.

12. Mkhonto's 'travelling name' is given slightly inaccurately in the report (by Carlin) as 'Mkhonza'. Described in the history of the mutiny as a 'GDR-Soviet trained intelligence officer and former political student at the Moscow Party Institution', he was camp commander at Quatro during its worst period from 1979 to 1982. (Ketelo et al, p 55) A number of prisoners died under his stewardship. Despite Mandela's assurance in April 1990 that those responsible for abuses had been disciplined by the ANC, Mkhonto held a senior security post over ANC members in Britain before returning to South Africa. He was present at a press conference held by Mandela in London during April. His role in the ANC security department of course in no way justifies an assassination bid on him by operatives of the DMI, or anyone else.

13. The 'Black September' incident is mentioned in a forthcoming book on the relation between the SACP and the ANC by Stephen Ellis, the former editor of the London-based newssheet, *Africa Confidential*. In 1988 Ellis published perhaps the earliest account of the mutiny in Angola. (Vol 29, No 24)

14. At the national consultative conference of the ANC in Durban in July, the retiring president, Oliver Tambo, ritualistically abused 'enemy agents' for the mutiny in Umkhonto in 1984. (*Sunday Star*, 21 July) In August, Mandela met 17 former prisoners released by the ANC from its prison at Mbarara in southern Uganda, whom he described by contrast as 'genuine comrades'. He stated that the ANC had undertaken to investigate every complaint made by its dissenting former members — 'the allegations which were made against them, how they were detained, their treatment in prison, the allegation that they were assaulted, (and) that their property was taken away from them'. He stated: 'We are going to go into all those issues, and every single case is going to be thoroughly investigated'. (*Natal Witness*, 30 August) Within a fortnight he announced the formation of a commission of inquiry to investigate these matters, made up of three jurists: Thembile Louis Skweyiya, SC, Bridget Mabandla and Charles Nupen. (*Business Day*, 11 September) At the time of writing the commission appears not to have functioned. Its terms of reference are not known. Political observers and victims of the ANC security apparatus alike expect nothing to come of it.

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