

A State of Exile: The ANC
and
Umkhonto we Sizwe in Angola, 1976-1989

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Historical Studies

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Durban

December 2002

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the help and support of Phyllis Naidoo and my mother Hilde Karin Larsen. My supervisor Professor Yonah Seleti made it possible to finish the work. I am also grateful to the History Programme at the University of Natal for guidance.

Doctor Vladimir Shubin at the University of Moscow and Professor Sean Morrow of the National Research Council read and commented on Chapters Three, Four and Five. Howard Barrell made his thesis available to me on disc. I am grateful to all for guidance and advice. The staff at the archives at Fort Hare and the Mayibuye Centre were extremely helpful in finding the right boxes and transcripts. I would also like to thank all those who were willing to be interviewed. I am especially grateful to Major-General Willie Leslie and Lieutenant Mathule Mathiba of the SANDF who informed me about the plight of those MK veterans who had returned home but who were not yet re-integrated into South African society.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the mothers of those who have been or are in exile.

Abstract

After its banning in 1961 the ANC, together with the South African Communist Party, adopted the armed struggle. Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) was formed and had its debut in December of the same year. When the MK command was arrested at Rivonia outside Johannesburg most of the remaining members went into exile. The banning of the ANC forced the members not just to go underground but also to go into exile and their first haven was the newly independent Tanzania. The 1960's witnessed the flight into exile of most members of the organisation.

In Tanzania, members of the ANC and MK came into contact with members of other liberation movements, including the liberation movements from Portuguese Africa. As the 1960's progressed MK was responsible for training recruits in various African countries, most notably in Tanzania and Zambia. In 1967 they launched their first major campaign, together with the Zimbabwe People's Union (ZAPU), into southern Rhodesia in an effort to reach South Africa. The campaign failed and several members were put in prison in Bechuanaland. On their release some of the cadres, amongst them Chris Hani, voiced criticism of the leadership. This criticism was expressed just as the leaders of the organisation gathered for their first major conference in exile, the Morogoro conference in Tanzania. At Morogoro the emphasis on armed struggle was affirmed, and it was agreed that the other pillar supporting the struggle would be international relations. After the Morogoro conference MK continued to train recruits in Zambia and Tanzania, but the situation was increasingly difficult as internal problems in these countries led to the expulsion of several liberation movements.

In 1974 a new wave of South Africans went into exile, and at the same time the liberation war in Portuguese Africa entered its last phase. When Angola became independent the ANC began negotiating with the new government about the possible establishment of new training facilities for MK in Angola.

When the students of Soweto went into revolt, reacting against the introduction of Afrikaans as the main language in their schools, the ANC, the MK command and their rivals the PAC were taken aback. The first wave of new recruits was flown to Tanzania before they were re-routed to Luanda. In Angola they were sent to the southern parts of the country, to Benguela and later to Nova Katengue. By 1979 nine camps had been established in Angola: there was a transit camp outside Luanda, and camps at Benguela, Nova Katengue, Gabela, Fazenda, Quibaxe, Pango, Camp 32 (Quatro) and Funda. The main camp was Nova Katengue. The camp got the nickname of University of the South because of the emphasis there on ideological, political and academic courses. But one episode of attempted food poisoning and later the bombing by the South African Air Force focused attention on the need for internal security in the camps, and a Security Department took shape in the region. After the bombing which left Nova Katengue flattened to the ground, MK left their southern camps; a series of meetings took place in Luanda which resulted in a revised strategy outlined in "the Green Book".

In 1979 MK participated in a second campaign together with ZAPU; as the attempt to reach South Africa was once again unsuccessful most of the participants found themselves back in the Angolan camps. This failure, together with the degrading conditions in which the cadres were living, fuelled a spiral of discontent in the camps. The food was sparse and the sanitary conditions were bad. A feeling of stagnation

spread among the cadres, who were disillusioned at the bleak prospect of infiltrating back into South Africa. In the beginning of the 1980's the roads between Luanda and the eastern camps around Malanje, Caculama and Camalundi became unsafe as the South African-backed UNITA guerrillas increased their attacks. MK forces were deployed around the town of Cacuso to guard the railway line and secure the safety of the road, and this deployment aggravated the dissatisfaction of the cadres.

At the end of 1983 some members of the security department beat a sick cadre to death. This triggered off a mutiny in some of the camps. The leadership defused this, the first in a series of mutinies. In 1984 a second mutiny took place in Viana. The mutineers elected a Committee of Ten to forward a set of demands to the leadership. But the leadership was not ready to listen and the Angolan presidential guard quelled the mutiny. When a third mutiny erupted in Pango three months later no demands were made and no committee was elected, but the Pango mutiny was more violent. After the disturbances at Viana but before the Pango mutiny, a commission had been sent out from Lusaka to find the reasons for the uprising. The commission found that the main reasons were the deteriorating living conditions, the lack of proper health services and the deployment on the eastern front. Later reports came to similar conclusions regarding the reasons for the mutiny. However, the reports differ regarding the degree of punishment used in the region after the mutinies.

The Committee of Ten was imprisoned after the mutinies. However preparations were made to meet their main demand, which had been for the calling of a national consultative conference and in 1985 the Kabwe conference took place in Zambia. Some restructuring of the organisation and army took place and the much criticised Security

Department was made accountable to the leadership. Life in the Angolan camps continued much as before but efforts were made to provide some vocational training and better health services. The deployment on the eastern front came to an end, but soon MK came under attack on the roads between Luanda and their northern camps. The attacks intensified as other forces in Angola gathered around the south central town of Cuito Cuanavale, and eventually the siege of Cuito Cuanavale forced the South African regime to the negotiating table. After the siege the Namibia Agreement was signed. One of the terms of the agreement was that MK had to leave Angola and search for new havens, and in 1989 and 1990 most of the cadres were flown to Uganda.

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Preface

When I was 8 years old my family moved to Luanda, Angola. My mother had volunteered as a consultant to the Norwegian People's Aid, which at the time was looking into projects for the exiled South African and Namibian community in Angola. Through this work she became familiar with the ANC and MK personnel based in Luanda and Viana. Our house was soon a meeting point for staff at the Luanda office who came to talk to my mother or to relax. One visitor taught me how to use a bow and arrow, pointing at one of our banana-plants. My tutor was Mzwandile Piliso, chief of ANC security in Angola.

This was in 1985. The ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe had just experienced a series of mutinies in the Angolan camps and the situation was still tense. So was the overall situation in Angola, in its tenth year of civil war. My mother would sometimes take me through the roadblocks out of the city and to Viana where she helped build a clinic for ANC and SWAPO. While she worked I would lay my hand on the ground to listen to the "Stalin-organs" go off at a distance or I would chase snakes out of the bush, accompanied by MK cadres not more than a decade older than me.

As I grew older I used to wonder about what I had experienced and why. When we moved back to Norway at the end of 1986 my mother continued working for the ANC and I was familiar with the movement and its history. But there were parts missing, significantly their presence and activities in Angola. When allegations started to surface in the early 1990's about widespread abuses in the camps, this lack of information became more apparent.

The history of the ANC in exile still remains largely unwritten. The years in exile represent the formative years of the organisation and careful analysis is necessary in order to understand the organisation today. Some studies of the ANC in exile have been conducted and likewise studies of ANC and MK activities in South Africa itself. But there is a gap in the literature about the MK in exile. Given that thousands of young South Africans went into exile to get military training and that the majority of them ended up in Angola, a study of ANC and MK activities in Angola is necessary. It is necessary not only to understand the history of the movement but also to understand the history of South Africa. Furthermore one can argue that an understanding of the relationship between the ANC and MK and their hosts, the Angolan government, is necessary to understand the foreign policies in the region.

The need for academic inquiry into the subject is also necessary to investigate the serious allegations directed against the movement after it left Angola. The ANC and MK command has had to answer to allegations of torture and abuse, which the ANC's political enemies have used to discredit the organisation. Both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and independent reports have looked into the allegations, but both the movement and those who claim to be its victims would benefit from a wider study of the context around the alleged cases.

Establishing a context would be helpful to understand the plight of thousands of young cadres that lived through exile and war. The activities of MK inside South Africa are fairly well known and the heroes recognised, but the majority of MK veterans, those who never fought on South African soil, are largely ignored. In fact, during the 1980's a growing number of MK cadres fought on Angolan soil. There is limited archival

evidence of MK participation in this war and it is also possible to establish some facts about the fighting in Angola through analysing oral evidence.

Note on sources

I have used transcripts from some of the interviews housed in the Mayibuye Centre for Oral History. I have also interviewed some key players, and during interviews personal stories and tragedies have surfaced. The participation by these MK cadres in the war in Angola has to be acknowledged in order to understand some of the problems they have experienced when re-integrating into civilian life.

To acknowledge their participation in the Angolan war is also necessary to understand the extent of collaboration between the southern African liberation movements. The ANC's political ties have already preoccupied researchers, but MK's military ties have largely been ignored. MK represents a challenge to researchers because of its secretive nature and lack of written records. When sources are available, archival research is of course the preferable historical method. But the archives of an underground army are seldom kept. The challenge of analysing MK in the context of Angola is difficult; however, the recent opening of the ANC archives makes such research possible.

I have not succeeded in tracing any of the archives from the ANC Luanda office. Neither was it possible to access whatever the Angolan government might have recorded of the ANC presence, as the country was still at war. But the correspondence of the ANC main office in Lusaka has been kept, although in two different places: the University of Fort Hare (UFH) and the Mayibuye Collection at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). These records, together with the archives of a Norwegian aid agency, the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), constitute the archival evidence which is at the core of this dissertation.

The training of cadres in exile included political aspects. To understand some of the inner dynamics of the ANC as a whole, it would be useful to understand the nature of the cadres' political and ideological training, and under what conditions such training was done in the military camps. The organisation's own material, like the *Dawn* magazine, gives an insight into what the cadres read and studied.

I have depended largely on interviews to establish information about the conditions in the camps and the political training that was conducted there. I have had discussions with two Norwegian aid workers that worked with the ANC in Angola. The selection of interviewees has been done according to different criteria, two such criteria being age and position. An important criterion has been availability, as most people who were contacted did not wish to speak about their past in the MK camps in Angola.

Two of the interviews were almost four hours long, each done in two sittings. One of these was an interview with Andrew Masondo, former national commissar of Angola, member of NEC and a general in the SANDF. This interview was done on two consecutive days at SANDF Headquarters in Pretoria, in April 2001. The other long interview was done with Peter Rooi Sehube who was almost ten years in Angola, as a cadre, as a mutineer in detention and as a journalist. This interview was done in two sittings on the same day in Rooi Sehube's home in Trondheim, Norway, in June 2001.

Two of the other interviews were between one and two hours long. One was with Lieutenant Mathule Mathiba who works for the SANDF welfare department and the other was with the former head of special operations, Aboobaker Ismail, who also gave

more than an hour of his time to the subject. Both these interviews were done in Pretoria. The last two interviews were conducted at a SANDF re-skilling project outside Pretoria. These two interviews are short and were done to complement the others with voices from some of those for whom freedom did not necessarily mean a new and better life. However, several interviews stored at the Mayibuye archives also give women's voices. The interviews further represent three generations of MK cadres: those who left South Africa in the 1960's, those who left just before or immediately after the Soweto riots in 1976 and the young lions who left after the uprising in the townships during the 1980's.

Chapter 1

A discourse on liberation

The ANC's presence in Angola coincided with the last decade of the 30-year war of liberation in the former Portuguese colonies in southern Africa. This war and the struggle against apartheid generated a considerable body of literature. Post-apartheid South Africa has likewise seen a wave of publications about its recent history. The literature has been characterised as struggle literature or struggle history, in many ways partisan and biased yet also part of a national healing process. In addition much academic analysis has been published internationally, dealing with military and political history.

The literature can roughly be divided into three main categories:

1. Histories, accounts and reports given by observers
2. Biographies and autobiographies, lives of participants
3. Academic analysis

The first category includes historical overviews, some written with the blessing of the organisations and some written by observers. The first and second categories are descriptive in nature and seek to tell the story as it happened, and include both "subjective" and "objective" accounts. The biographies and autobiographies tend to be very subjective. The third category includes academic studies of the liberation struggle in southern Africa, and related subjects.

Partisan history? - descriptive accounts, biographies and autobiographies

Some of the literature, mainly the first two categories, engages directly in a discourse or reflects various sides in the conflict, while some of the works are coloured by post-apartheid events or notions. In effect, some accounts have a tendency to glorify the ANC, while other accounts have been published in an attempt to smear the organisation. The aim of glorifying is evident in autobiographies and biographies but also in histories of the organisation. For example, Francis Meli, who held a doctorate in history and who wrote *South Africa belongs to us*¹, called his own writing partisan history and the ideal of an objective historian utopian.²

According to the British historian Eric Hobsbawm "partisanship" is a word, like nation or violence, that conceals several meanings.³ In its broadest sense "partisan" history simply indicates that history is not a value-free science, as Meli argues above. In a more narrow sense of the word, "partisan" implies writing history to deliberately champion a cause. One can, however, argue that all science has an ideological or political purpose and therefore it is partisan. In the case of struggle history this is certainly true as the choice of the subject already implies a political and ideological choice.

Examples of narrative accounts that are not necessarily written to champion a cause but can still be perceived as partisan are *ANC: A view from Moscow*, by Vladimir Shubin, and *Comrades against apartheid, history of the ANC and the South African Communist*

¹ Francis Meli, *South Africa belongs to us – A history of the ANC*, (Harare: Zimbabwe publishing, 1988) Meli's *nome de guerra* -Wellington Madolwana, himself acting as a political instructor in the Angolan camps between 1976 and 1980. His history of the movement is drawn upon courses conducted for cadres in the camps in South African history. He later became a member of ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC). When he died with grave alcohol problems in 1991 it became clear that he was a security police mole in the ANC leadership. It is unclear when he was recruited but it is widely blamed on his personal problems. His treachery is seen as tragic rather than condemned His history of the organisation is still the most thorough work done on the topic.

² Francis Meli, *South Africa belongs to us* (1988).

Party in exile, by Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba.⁴ Both accounts are written by academics but are descriptive more than analytical in nature. In addition to being "partisan" they represent two different ways of interpreting the history of the ANC and MK. Vladimir Shubin is, like Meli, sympathetic towards his subjects, and follows the tradition of liberation literature. This tradition embraces numerous authors, most notably some of those who have conducted serious studies of the liberation wars in southern Africa and have, over a period, written extensively about the various wars and the participants involved in them.⁵

Stephen Ellis, on the other hand, is suspicious of the ANC and MK, seeing the MK as a tool of the South African Communist Party. Together with his co-author, known as "Tsepo Sechaba", Ellis follows the tradition of looking at the ANC and MK as front organisations used by the Soviets to control Africa. Ellis and Sechaba in this respect form part of a tradition of apartheid literature on counter-insurgency. This tradition has produced a significant body of literature, often produced by journalists or military historians. Examples from the war in Angola include Fred Bridgeland's work on Savimbi and UNITA and Willem Steenkamp's stories about the lives of SADF soldiers⁶ at the front. This tradition also includes conspiracy theories produced by the apartheid state or their peers, for example the various papers produced at state

³ Eric Hobsbawm: "Partisanship" essay 1979, compiled in *On History* (London: Abacus, 1997)

⁴ Vladimir Shubin: *ANC-A view from Moscow* (Cape Town: Mayibuye Books 1999)

Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid- the ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile* (London: James Currey 1992).

⁵ This would include David Birmingham, Howard Barrell, Basil Davidson, Joseph Hanlon, Gail Gerhardt, Phyllis Johnson, William Minter and Terence Ranger amongst others.

⁶ Fred Bridgeland: *Jonas Savimbi- A key to Africa* (London: Coronet Books 1988) and *The war for Africa* (Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing 1990) Willem Steenkamp, *Borderstrike! South Africa into Angola* (Pretoria: Butterworths publishers, 1983).

departments and universities in the US and Great Britain dealing with subjects like "communist studies" and "terrorology", also referred to as security studies.⁷

The most striking illustrations of partisan writing are to be found in biographies and autobiographies, of which there are many relevant examples. The numerous autobiographies by the ANC and SACP leadership are particularly significant. Clearly partisan are Ronnie Kasrils' autobiography, *Armed and dangerous*, and Thami Mali's biography of Chris Hani, *The sun that set before dawn*.⁸ The biographies are valuable because of their detail, giving insight into some of the discussions inside the ANC and SACP leadership. But it is again important to note that these biographies represent the most partisan writing about these organisations.

The enemies of the ANC, MK and the SACP have also demonstrated their use of biographies in their literature - I have already mentioned the biography of Jonas Savimbi written by journalist Fred Bridgeland. One so-called autobiography that is clearly an attempt to smear the MK commanders and the ANC leadership, although written as an autobiography, is probably fiction rather than fact. In the book *Mbokodo: inside MK - a soldier's story*, it is alleged that the MK camps in Angola were ridden with torture and the abuse of power.⁹ Both Vladimir Shubin and Ronnie Kasrils have argued in their work that the author of this book "Mwezi Twala" lied, even concerning his name.¹⁰ Although as an historical source the book therefore is useless, the very fact

⁷ For a discussion on the terms "terrorology" and communist studies see the compilation edited by Alexander George, *Western State Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1991) An example of military history as security study is John Turner, *Continent Ablaze: the insurgency Wars in Africa 1960 to the present* (Jeppestown: Arms and Armour press 1998).

⁸ Ronnie Kasrils, *Armed and dangerous: from undercover struggle to freedom* (Johannesburg: Mayibuye Books 1998) and Thami Mali: *Chris Hani- the sun that set before dawn* (Johannesburg: Sached 2000).

⁹ Mwezi Twala, *Mbokodo, Inside the MK - A Soldiers Story* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers 1992)

¹⁰ Ronnie Kasrils: *Armed and Dangerous* (1998) and Vladimir Shubin: *ANC - A view from Moscow* (1999). p. 404. Twala's allegations figure several places in these books and both authors discuss Twala's real identity.

that it was published does indicate to what length history and myth has been used in the South African conflict, even after the end of the military conflict itself.

Rank and file members of the ANC and MK have also given accounts of daily camp life, mutinies and battles, some of these accounts having been presented as fiction. Examples include Hein Grosskopf's *Artistic Graves*¹¹ and the novels and short stories written by Mandla Langa.¹² Similar descriptions are also to be found in fiction by other South African writers with a background in exile. Some Angolan literature also contains descriptions of guerrilla life, most notably *Mayombe*¹³ by Pepetela, which was a pseudonym adopted by the author who was later an Angolan minister. He describes the fighting and the infighting of an MPLA guerrilla band in the Mayombe forest in Cabinda in the early 1970's.

Academic analysis of liberation movements

In addition to descriptive accounts and narratives, the literature now includes a growing number of studies seeking to explain and compare various movements within southern Africa. Scholars have been particularly interested in the two main movements in Zimbabwe, but the movements in Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and Tanzania have also been researched. The writing on Zimbabwe reflects that the movements there were largely peasant movements.¹⁴ Unlike these movements, the ANC and MK grew out of a more urban and more educated setting. Most of the recruits were not peasant rebels

¹¹ Hein Grosskopf, *Artistic graves*, (Johannesburg: Ravan 1993).

¹² Mandla Langa, *Rainbow on a Paper sky* (London: Kliptown Books 1989) and *Memory of Stones* (Johannesburg: David Philip 2000).

¹³ Pepetela, *Mayombe*, (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House 1995).

¹⁴ Terence Ranger has made Zimbabwe's liberation movement a lifelong study and has contributed greatly to the study of liberation movements as a whole. A comparative study of the Mau-Mau rebellion in Kenya, the Frelimo in Mozambique and ZANU in Zimbabwe has established itself as a tool to understand peasant rebellions in Africa, see Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe, a comparative study* (London: James Currey, 1985).

but rather township dwellers with a minimum of schooling. A study of the ANC and MK therefore requires another set of analytical tools, different from those required for a study of some of their African cousins.

Although this is a history centred on the activities of an armed movement, MK, this is not a military history. It is a history of “the other armies” – an army subject to the political leadership of the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). In an article in *The long march - story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa*, the author Rocky Williams sketches and explains an analytical tool for understanding MK, and why it is necessary:

Civil Military relations are normally used to refer, somewhat self-evidently, to the relations that pertain between the armed forces and the institutionally established civilian authorities (this) can be extended to a study of armed forces of popular revolutionary movements. To what extent were the armed forces accountable to the political leadership? Did the corporate identity of the guerrilla army reflect a nascent constitutionalism or a nascent praetorianism?¹⁵

Williams suggests an approach to the topic extensively used by Colin Leys and John Saul in their studies on the Namibian liberation movement but with a completely different outcome than those foreseen by Williams. In the introduction to their book on SWAPO, *Namibia's liberation struggle: the two-edged sword*, they accused the Namibian movement of developing an authoritarian leadership in contrast with the liberating ideal of such movements.¹⁶ But in their study, Leys and Saul ignore the context of a country at war and a liberation movement exposed to external pressures. The analysis fits an organisation in peacetime rather than a liberation movement at war.

¹⁵ Rocky Williams, “The other armies: Writing the History of the MK” in *The long march to Freedom - story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa*, (Liebenberg et al. Pretoria: Haun 1994).

¹⁶ Leys, Colin and Saul, John, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: the two-edged sword* (London: James Currey, 1995).

The interaction between military tactics and political ideology is central in understanding why the ANC chose and held on to the armed struggle as a main vehicle for liberation up to 1985. Howard Barrell pointed out in his study of ANC tactics that focusing on armed struggle probably constituted an error.¹⁷ But as his title *Conscripts of their age* indicates, the military road was not an arbitrary choice made by the organisation. At least three factors determined the ANC's turn to, and pursuit of armed struggle. First the police brutality at Sharpeville and later during the Soweto riots. Secondly, the 1960's was the decade of guerrillas and armed uprisings in other places in Africa and in Latin America and Asia. This trend continued in southern Africa well into the 1970's. Thirdly, the prosecution of the armed struggle was self-perpetuating. The second factor indicates why a study of ANC and MK tactics must include a study of the organisation's relationship with comrades in arms like the MPLA and ZAPU.

The liberation movements in Portuguese Africa have been the subject of several studies in which internal politics and the development of guerrilla armies have been investigated. John Marcum's political study of the MPLA, *The Angolan revolution*¹⁸, is concerned with the inner politics of the MPLA, the formation of the Frente Nacional Liberacao de Angola (FNLA) and of UNITA. But this extensive work fails to depict the MPLA as a liberation movement, concentrating instead on political skirmishes inside the political wing of the MPLA. The main focus is to explain why the Angolan movement became fragmented into three parts, finally waging war amongst themselves. The study was published in a series on communist countries, and provides another example of the analysis of an African movement from a western perspective. Nearly all

¹⁷ Howard Barrell, *Conscripts of their age: "African national Congress Operational Strategy 1976 - 1986"*, PhD Theses, Oxford University. 1993.

¹⁸ John Marcum: *The Angolan Revolution, volume 2: Exile politics and Guerrilla Warfare* (Cambridge: MIT press 1978).

the liberation movements of southern Africa have at one time or another been included in what western commentators have termed the Soviet sphere of influence or the communist world. Eric Hobsbawm has stated that the history of communist organisations can be divided into two categories – the sectarian and the witch-hunting.¹⁹ As earlier pointed out there is a body of literature on southern African history from the point of view of western communist studies. In a South African context this history often tended to be sympathetic to the apartheid regime.

Norrie MacQueen has produced a more accessible study of the MPLA²⁰, namely *The decolonization of Portuguese Africa, metropolitan revolution and the dissolution of an empire*. MacQueen includes the MPLA in the context of liberation movements in other places in Portuguese Africa and as an ally of the Portuguese Communist Party rather than in company with the Soviet Union. Together with David Birmingham and a Portuguese scholar, Dalila Cabrita Mateus, MacQueen successfully studied the MPLA as part of a group of movements in Portuguese Africa rather than as a Soviet proxy.²¹

Scholars have also attempted a critical analysis of the apartheid state and its allies. A study done by William Minter tries not only to understand UNITA and the Mozambican Renamo as insurgence movements funded by the South African regime but also points out the devastating effect civil war had on Angola and Mozambique.²² Such studies provide a useful context for understanding the conflict in Angola as a

¹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm: "Radicalism and revolution in Britain" in *Revolutionaries* (London: Abacus, 1973) This article is written about the history of the British Communist Party, but has relevance for all organisations and movements knitted to the Third international. Amongst them the South African Communist Party, and because of that, the MK.

²⁰ Norrie MacQueen: *The decolonisation of Portuguese Africa, Metropolitan Revolution and the dissolution of an empire* (London: Longman 1997)

²¹ David Birmingham, *Frontline Nationalism in Angola and Mozambique* (London: James Currey 1992) and Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *A luta Pela independencia, A formacao das elites fundadores da FRELIMO, MPLA E PAIGC* (Sintra: Editorial Inquerito 1999).

whole. The work of Minter and other scholars in this field would be classified as liberation literature sympathetic to the liberation movements. Some of the studies were clearly done with the purpose of uncovering the brutalities of the apartheid regime.²³ Most of these would belong to the category of descriptive literature, already discussed, but a handful of these works also provide an academic insight. Minter is especially concerned with pinpointing what he terms theories of unconventional warfare.²⁴ Here he includes both theories of guerrilla warfare and theories developed by social scientists and historians. These theories can be useful, Minter reminds us, in an analysis of guerrilla armies on both sides in a conflict.

According to guerrilla theory developed by, amongst others, Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevara and Regis Debray, the main difference between a conventional and a political army is political training.²⁵ In analysing an army that was inspired by political theories one has to consider the theories as the ideal. To determine whether or not MK did conform with its political theory requires a careful study of the army and its political life. Howard Barrell's thesis mentioned above represents an attempt to do this, but further investigation into this question would be useful.²⁶

The reason for the importance of a study of the ANC in exile and of MK in particular, constitutes the latter part of Williams's statement earlier in this chapter. An analysis of the organisational culture in the MK can give us a tool for understanding the internal

²² William Minter, *Apartheids Contras - An inquiry into the roots of war in Angola and Mozambique* (London: Zed Books 1994).

²³ Several essays are collected by Phyllis Johnson and D. Martin, *Frontline Southern Africa* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows 1988). The essays are both narrative and analysing.

²⁴ William Minter, *Apartheids Contras - An inquiry into the roots of war in Angola and Mozambique* (1994), p. 71.

²⁵ Mao Tse Tung: *On guerrilla warfare* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2000), Che Guevara: *Guerrilla Warfare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1998), Regis Debray: *Revolusjon* Pax Forlag Oslo 1967

²⁶ Howard Barrell, "Conscripts of their age-African National Congress Operational Strategy 1976 - 1986" (1993)

evolution of the guerrilla army. At best the analysis would give important insights regarding the political culture in the ANC government and in South Africa as a whole. Former MK commanders have been heavily represented in South Africa's new government and the organisation as a whole spent its formative years in exile. The settlements in Angola represented the largest community of exiles.

Conclusion

Most of the literature, whether descriptive or analytical, mirrors the battle lines of international and regional politics in the period. It is important to keep in mind that although the conflict in Angola was seen from the west as an offshoot of the cold war, it was viewed on the African continent as a war against racist aggression in the south.

In some sense the literature therefore can be termed "partisan". A considerable amount of the literature is sympathetic to the liberation movement, so in other words this can be called liberation literature. To counter this there exists a body of apartheid literature, which is also partisan but sympathetic to the movement's enemies. Of all the literature most partisan works are the biographies and autobiographies. Because of their great detail these are interesting narratives, but the personal narrative can easily be forged because of its individual nature and can easily be used in the building of myth, which in the South African conflict has indeed happened.

As a counterstrategy against myth there has to be careful academic analysis. Within the existing bibliography of studies on southern African liberation movements, the majority of the works consider peasant revolts like that of Mau-Mau in Kenya or the independence war in Zimbabwe. The movements in Portuguese Africa represent

another strain in this literature, some of which considers the movements' politics and allies. Even in the academic field one encounters studies largely hostile to the liberation movements. Likewise, scholars sympathetic to the movements have studied the proxies of the apartheid regime in order to understand what might be termed unconventional warfare. In studying unconventional warfare, or guerrilla war, it is important to bear in mind the theories of such warfare. In any study of MK these theories would also be useful, particularly when considering the evolution and interaction of politics within the organisation.

Chapter 2

A call to arms

As southern Africa entered the 1960's, several events marked the beginning of the end of colonialism and minority rule in the region. In Portuguese Africa, workers' unrest started the cycle of "glorious defeats" that would lead up to the Portuguese colonial wars. In South Africa, as well as in South Africa's protectorate South West Africa and in British-ruled Rhodesia, new legislatures were introduced to keep the non-white population in the grip of the minority. Total liberation of the area was still more than thirty years down the road. After the massacre at Sharpeville in 1960 and the Mueda-massacre in Mozambique and the revolt in Luanda in Angola during the year that followed, the struggle entered a new phase.

As the struggle became armed the organisations built up their armies from outside South Africa. For the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe the first fifteen years of exile was a period of trying, failing, building, failing again and rebuilding. Many occurrences in the first decade of exile were re-enacted in the following two decades, and these events influenced the politics and strategies of the organisation in exile. Chapter one has given a picture of the problems and politics in exile, and the account of these early years serves as an introduction to the organisation's later presence and involvement in Angola. The main question explored in this chapter is why MK set up bases in Angola. In order to answer the above question the following factors will be considered: external relations, the geopolitical situation and the early experiences of building an army in exile.

The chapter also includes a brief introduction to the fight for Angolan independence and the war that broke out immediately after independence in 1975. From this point onwards the Angolan conflict became intertwined with the fight for the liberation of South Africa. It is necessary to give a brief explanation of the contemporary theories concerning guerrilla warfare that lay behind the politics of liberation at the time.

Africa in the wake of independence

In the late 1950's decolonisation spread in Africa. In the 1960's newly independent states realised that the whole continent needed to be free for them to prosper. It was to be the start of a decade of practical Pan-Africanism, in the sense that the theorizing of the earlier years of the century was now followed by action. After Ghana's independence in 1957, its leader Kwame Nkrumah initiated several Pan-African meetings between 1958 and 1960. The initial plan was to instigate economic and political collaboration amongst the newly independent states, which implicitly involved the total liberation of Africa. In 1960, at the third conference in Addis Ababa, differences amongst participants emerged, and the sections that were later to develop into the Casablanca group and the Monrovia group of African states took early shape. In 1960 alone, fifteen African states became independent. This raised the number of independent states to twenty-six, a sharp increase that led to the split in 1961 when Ghana, Guinea, Egypt, Mali, Morocco, Libya and Algeria went on to form the radical Casablanca group.¹ The former French colonies formed the bulk of the Monrovia Group. Both groups maintained their historical commitment to the total liberation of Africa, but it was the Casablanca group who advocated direct support for the liberation struggles.

While the decolonisation of French and British West Africa took place relatively peacefully, the settler-colonies in the south would not let go. Kenya had about 60 000 at the outbreak of the Mau Mau Uprising and Tanganyika had 20 000 at the time of independence in 1963.² West Africa had western-type administration but very few settlers. Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Nyasaland all went through years of unrest and strikes before independence. The Portuguese colonies, Southern Rhodesia, South Africa and South West Africa had a much larger settler population. During the 1960's these territories experienced a rise in the number of settlers, particularly in Angola and Mozambique as the Salazar regime exported Portugal's surplus population.

South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1960 and in the same year the ruling Afrikaner Nationalist Party introduced additional laws to entrench white minority rule. After the events at Sharpeville that year, the outcome of a march organised in protest at some of these laws, the ANC and the Pan African Congress joined the South African Communist Party (SACP) in exile. Communism had been banned ten years earlier under the Suppression of Communism Act, and the new Unlawful Organisations Act would prove a useful tool for the apartheid government up to the second of February 1990 when all three organisations and some of the later fronts were all legalised.³

Although the organisations were banned, the majority of the members continued to function inside the country. For those who had to go into exile, the search began for a safe and nearby haven. Already in 1960 Oliver Tambo had left South Africa to set up

¹ S.K. Asante, "Pan Africanism and Regional Integration", in UNESCO, *General History of Africa vol. 7: Africa since 1935*, (London: James Currey 1999), p. 726.

² Basil Davidson: *Modern Africa, A Social and Political History*, (Harlow: Longman, 1989), p.155.

an external mission. Tambo, Yusuf Dadoo and Tennyson Makiwane visited Cairo, Accra, Dar Es- Salaam and London.⁴ Dadoo remained to set up a base in London while the two others went back to Africa. At this time people such as Andrew Masondo, then a lecturer in mathematics at Fort Hare, formed a network of lecturers and organisers inside South Africa who began recruiting talented young cadres to be educated in exile. The idea was to build an educated elite outside the country who would be useful in the building of the organisation in exile.⁵

The banning prevented the ANC and its allies in the Congress Alliance from utilising lawful political paths. Small groups of more militant activists were promoting the idea of using sabotage against the regime. Having already spent ten years as an underground movement, the Communist Party had formed small units or cells to take up arms against apartheid. After Sharpeville the party found supporters for this course of action inside the ANC and talks about a common armed front started. Nelson Mandela proposed a sabotage campaign at a National Executive meeting in early 1961. Members of the ANC and the SACP then formed Umkhonto we Sizwe - which translates as "Spear of the Nation". Although there were obvious differences between the two "mother-parties", both organisations had members that were both for and against armed struggle. The decision to adopt the armed struggle was not an easy one but it was widely felt that no other option was open after the banning:

As a result of the 1960 massacres at Sharpeville and Langa, the important thing about them is that, African National Congress that was essentially a non-violent organisation was firstly banned after the massacres, so within

³ Ellis and Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid, the ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile*, (London: James Currey, 1994), p.30.

⁴ Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), p. 234.

⁵ Interview Maren Sæbø/Andrew Masondo 11-12 March 2001. Amongst those recruited at Fort Hare in the following year were later Health Minister Manto Tshabalala Msimang and later President Thabo Mbeki.

the movement itself people began to say to themselves, we have tried all means and the answer is that we are being killed.⁶

The issue had been discussed since Nelson Mandela and other radicals amongst the youth had begun advocating it in the early 1950's. There was a concern that "adventurism" would give the government a pretext to arrest the members of the various Congress Alliance organisations en masse. The Communist Party had discussed revolutionary violence the year before, inspired by the Mpondoland revolt⁷, and in June 1960 the SACP and ANC first met to discuss the matter.⁸

According to Elizabeth Jarvis Shean six factors were involved in the change of strategy that led to the formation of an armed organisation.⁹ The factors are intertwined and the first four are more decisive than the last two. The first factor was the show of force by the state at Sharpeville. Second was the rising tide of black unrest in the townships, partly inspired by Sharpeville. The third factor involved the elevation of a more radical leadership: amongst new leaders in the leadership from the former ANC Youth League were Tambo and Mandela. This coincided with the fourth factor, namely, the zeitgeist of African decolonisation in the early 1960's.¹⁰ The young leaders were inspired by events in Algeria. Fifth, Jarvis Shean points to the influence of the SACP. It is important to note here that MK was a joint venture of the organisations and was not formed by the ANC under the influence of the SACP. As I have already pointed out

⁶ Interview MS/Masondo, March 2001.

⁷ Rural revolt in Mpondoland between 1957 and 1960 took form as peasant revolt as described by China's Mao Tse Tung. Lodge assumes the Mpondoland revolts in Natal made Durban communists more attracted to Maoism than to the Soviet inspired SACP. For further information on the Mpondo revolts see Lodge: *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press 1983) or T.H. Davenport: *South Africa - A modern History* (London: Macmillan 1991)

⁸ Interview MS/Masondo, March 2001.

⁹ Jarvis Shean, "Submit or fight: Motivations in the formation of the Umkhonto we Sizwe", Paper delivered at University of Cape Town 2000.

¹⁰ German *Zeitgeist* from the German philosopher Hegel. The spirit of the time, in the 1960's as the decolonisation escalated on the African continent.

there were senior leaders in both organisations who were opposed to the formation of MK. The sixth factor according to Jarvis Shean was the rivalry of the PAC. This last factor may have sped up the formation of MK, but it is unlikely that it was a decisive factor.

After the formation of MK about 300 recruits left South Africa for training in other African countries. Many were captured by the British colonial administration in Northern Rhodesia and sent back. However, by December the organisation had cells in key areas around Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town. Tom Lodge argues that by forming a separate organisation, the ANC was able to stick to its non-violent principles¹¹, but, as Jarvis Shean maintains, Lodge underestimates the importance of this being a joint venture. Pacifism could have been one factor in this but more importantly MK was formed as a separate entity to accommodate those who could not participate in the ANC.¹² Unlike the ANC, MK was open to all South Africans of all colours. Between 15 and 16 December 1961 MK made its birth official through a series of sabotage attempts.

The first years in exile

At the same time Yusuf Dadoo established an external mission. The task was to gather support outside South Africa and to find a suitable place to train the exiles that would form the core of the new armed wing. The geopolitical situation gave the exiles few opportunities to find a training ground close to South Africa. Oliver Tambo, head of the

¹¹ Lodge: *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (1983), p. 233. Luthuli probably knew about the plans of setting up an armed organisation but would not interfere in ANC members' activities as long as it was not done in the name of the ANC. Some, like Masondo, claim he even approved of the plans but insisted on keeping the ANC out of it. If the ANC were to be seen as an underground army the leadership and well-known members would face the gallows.

ANC's external mission and deputy president, and Nelson Mandela, commander of MK, went on a tour of Africa in 1962. Their mandate was dual: to gain support from the newly independent states and to find a training ground for MK cadres. To gain support Mandela explained the adoption of the armed struggle to African leaders.¹³ Mandela and Tambo also tried to get support from the west. At the same time Arthur Goldreich, a member of the SACP, went to the socialist countries for support. Mandela and Tambo received support from Algeria and Egypt; both countries would later give political and practical support to African nationalist movements. However, in the west Mandela and Tambo found that the governments were too engaged with the regime in Pretoria to openly support a liberation movement.

Back in South Africa, Mandela was arrested and Tambo set up headquarters in Dar es Salaam. In October 1962 the external and internal leadership met in the town of Lobatse in the then Bechuanaland. Among the issues discussed were the survival of the ANC as an underground movement inside South Africa, security measures for the organisation's members and the Mayibuye-plan for underground work.¹⁴ The Mayibuye plan was based on a guerrilla theory developed by the Argentinian revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara, the so-called foco theory. The foco theory, or focoism, depicts how a small insurrection can spark a major revolt in a country if the necessary conditions are in place. The theory is based on the Cuban revolutionary war of 1958.¹⁵ When further arrests took place at Rivonia in 1963 the Mayibuye plan was confiscated

¹² One of the MK's early members Ronnie Kasrils gives this as a main reason, the discussion can be followed in his book *Armed and Dangerous*. (Cape Town: Mayibuye Books, 2000).

¹³ Interview MS/Masondo, March 2001.

¹⁴ *The Mayibuye plan* at www.anc.org/history/archive

¹⁵ Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1998). The later term *focoism* explained in Scrutiny, *A dictionary of political thought*, (London: Macmillan, 1996).

and appeared as evidence in the court case against several of those arrested at Rivonia including Nelson Mandela.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was founded at the All-African Conference in Addis Ababa in 1963. On May 25, thirty leaders of independent African states signed the Charter of African Unity in Addis Ababa. The date came to be known as African Liberation Day. The goal of the charter was freedom for all Africa. Under pressure from the leaders of the Casablanca group, the OAU formed a liberation committee to provide practical support for the liberation movements. By this time it was clear that the countries in southern Africa would not go through a peaceful transition to majority rule. The OAU recognised liberation movements in preference to governments in the region, and the ANC and other movements were granted observer-status at the OAU's meetings. The ANC also worked with CONCP, an organisation made up of the movements from the Portuguese colonies.¹⁶

Algeria, Egypt and the Soviet Union all provided training for MK cadres during the early years of the organisation's exile. Some of the camps could provide geographical and climatic conditions similar to those of South Africa. During the 1960's the capital of newly independent Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, became the hotbed of southern African liberation movements. The ANC set up headquarters at Luthuli house, a villa donated by Nyerere's government.¹⁷ In 1962 the city was the final point for the first large detachment of recruits.¹⁸ From Dar es Salaam they went further on to north Africa or

¹⁶ For more on the CONCP see Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *A Luta pela Independencia*, (Sintra: Editorial Inquerito, 1999).

¹⁷ Interview Wolfie Kodesh with Chris Hani 1.4.1993. Mayibuye centre for oral history. UWC. This interview took place just weeks before Hani, then SACP leader, was gunned down by a rightwing extremist.

¹⁸ Vladimir Shubin, *ANC - A view from Moscow*, Mayibuye, (Cape Town: 1999), p. 30.

the socialist countries for training. One of the recruits in early 1963, Ronnie Kasrils, joined up with around 300 others at a camp in Odessa on the Crimea, after a short waiting period in East Africa.¹⁹

Oliver Tambo had become the head of the ANC's leadership in exile. In April 1963 he visited Moscow and secured annual funds from the Soviet Union, starting with 300 000 dollars.²⁰ Tambo was known as an anti-communist in the ANC, but in 1963 the Soviets introduced the concept of the "revolutionary democrat": an African leader leading his people towards a more socially just system.²¹ The concept seems to have been made for Tambo. Tambo also visited Beijing and got some support despite the recent split between the Soviet Union and China and the ANC continued to receive some support from China up to 1965. Despite the Soviet-Sino split the ANC cadres would continue to receive their training in China.²² Tambo's visit to Moscow in 1963 also opened up study opportunities for the first detachment of recruits at Odessa. Cadres who had trained at Odessa were later found in command of MK: in addition to Kasrils recruits like Joe Modise were moulded at Odessa and both became important commanders of MK in Angola. Training at the same time in Moscow was Martin Thembisile Hani, later known as Chris Hani.

¹⁹ Ronnie Kasrils, *Armed and dangerous, from undercover struggle to freedom* (Cape Town: Mayibuye Books 1998).

²⁰ Shubin, ANC – *A view from Moscow* (1999), p. 62.

²¹ Martin McCauley: *The Soviet Union since 1917*, (London: Longman 1992), p.210.

²² The definite split in Soviet - China relations occurred in 1964, affairs had deteriorated since mid-fifties. China since the revolution had obeyed its older revolutionary sister, after Stalin's death the Chinese leaders would no longer play Moscow's game. When Krustchev left the hard-line politics against the US in 1963, Mao Tse Tung and Zhou Enlai went the opposite way. In time there was also a significant ideological difference.

In 1964 the ANC was allowed to set up a training camp at Kongwa in Tanzania.²³ In addition to Kongwa, the organisation had a “transit camp” known as Mandela house which was simply a house in the forest. Headquarters were also set up at Morogoro. Pressure on Dar es Salaam from all the different liberation movements had become a burden for Nyerere's government and by the mid-1960's the Tanzanians had regulated the number of cadres allowed into the capital from each liberation movement.

Compared with the training facilities the ANC had access to in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, the Kongwa camp was fairly modest. However, Kongwa was important because it was a base in closer proximity to South Africa. As it became more difficult to infiltrate cadres back into South Africa the Kongwa camp, and later other camps in Tanzania, absorbed the surplus of newly trained personnel. It was perceived by many of the cadres, who wanted to go to South Africa and fight, that things had come to a standstill. The leadership of the camp was accused of power-abuse as rumours circulated about leaders thought to be leading a luxurious lifestyle.²⁴ Russian historian Vladimir Shubin estimates that by the mid-1960's the number of MK recruits was around five hundred and by 1970 estimates are at two thousand.²⁵ In addition to the camp at Kongwa and the ANC headquarters at Morogoro, there were camps near Mbeya and Bagamoyo.

National liberation movements of southern Africa

The Liberation Committee of the OAU was also seated in Dar es Salaam. The Liberation Committee's main task was to distribute money to the liberation movements. When the committee was formed in 1963 it was to receive yearly contributions from the

²³ Shubin, *ANC - A view from Moscow* (1999), p. 65.

independent states of Africa. Most of the countries were years behind in their payments and the committee scraped the bottom of their coffers. However, the leadership of the various movements remained in Dar es Salaam.

Political allies from the rest of the world came there to meet the leaders. In 1964 and 1965 the city was host to amongst others, the Argentinean Ernesto Che Guevara and the Afro-American leader Malcolm X. Che was on his way to Congo to fight for the Lumumbist forces of Laurent Kabila. Che Guevara noted in his diary that Dar es Salaam in 1965 still was full of "freedom fighters" living in luxury in hotels, working at offices. Amongst those he met in Dar were Agostinho Neto and Lucio Lara from the MPLA of Angola, Eduardo Mondlane and Marcelino dos Santos from Frelimo, Mozambique, and Jonas Savimbi recently defected from Roberto Holden's FNLA, also from Angola.²⁶

Guevara also met with leaders and cadres of the ANC. At a meeting in the Cuban embassy with two hundred invited guests from the movements based in Tanzania he launched his strategy for African revolution. The ANC and MK members must have recognised the foco- theory, prominent in their own Mayibuye plan, along with a wider vision of continental revolution. In Latin America the theory was known as the *domino effect*, whereby the example of the Cuban revolution was to be followed by revolution

²⁴ Ronnie Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous* (1998), p 95.

²⁵ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (1983), p.298.

²⁶ William Galvez, *Che in Africa, Che Guevaras Congo Diary*, (Melbourne: Ocean press, 1999), p. 36; Che Guevara had travelled first openly and then clandestinely around the continent. Although a big inspiration for the stranded community of exiles in Dar Es Salaam the legend did not manage to inspire the Congolese in their fight against Tshombe's mercenaries in Congo. After some months he returned to Cuba disillusioned, never to return to Africa.

all the way down to Cape Horn. The organisations were opposed to such a “step – by – step” southward movement.²⁷

ANC, Frelimo, MPLA, ZAPU, SWAPO and PAIGCC from Guinea-Bissau all received support from the Soviet Union through the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO). AAPSO had more money to distribute than the Liberation Committee. It also offered training in the Soviet Union and scholarships for studying at universities in socialist countries. These organisations were regarded as the "authentic" liberation movements in their respective countries. In addition to the support from AAPSO these organisations had their own common history. The organisations from the Portuguese colonies could trace contacts back to the 1940's and 1950's when their leaders studied at universities in Portugal. Frelimo's leader, Eduardo Mondlane, knew the ANC because he had studied in South Africa. SWAPO was founded in Cape Town under the influence of the Communist Party. Through the migrant-worker system of southern Africa the movements had an understanding of each other's situations.

Cadres of the ANC were co-operating with cadres from other liberation movements on their own. In the area around Kongwa other organisations also had their bases. Frelimo, SWAPO, ZAPU and UNITA camps were all found in the vicinity of the MK camp.²⁸ The communication between cadres was easy. The Mozambicans spoke some Zulu; the SWAPO and ZAPU cadres spoke English or Afrikaans. There seems to have been an understanding amongst the different groups of cadres that they shared a common fate and enemy.

²⁷ Ronnie Kasrils, *Armed and dangerous* (1998), p.98. Tambo from ANC and Marcelino dos Santos from Frelimo, Mozambique were reportedly against Che's vision.

²⁸ Interview Kodesh/ Hani, April 1993.

Interview Wolfie Kodesh with William "General" Twala, Mayibuye centre for oral history, UWC.

Ideology and guerrilla warfare

The training received in socialist countries and in newly independent African states was political as well as military. The cadres were trained in the handling of weapons, explosives and in underground operations. The political training was centred on a Marxist perception of the world and its history. In addition to Marxism, the political training also covered theories on imperialism, revolution and organising of a revolutionary movement as described by Lenin. In addition to the Russian revolution, inspiration was found in the Chinese and Cuban revolution as well as in the struggle for Algeria and later Vietnam.

The cadres and the organisations gained three things from their political training. First, the politics provided an ideological base for their struggle, as they could interpret their own struggle as a bigger fight against colonialism and imperialism. Second the ANC and MK gained political allies. The new allies comprised the MPLA in Angola, ZAPU in Zimbabwe and Frelimo in Mozambique. Although the PAC also fought against the apartheid state it was not an ally of the ANC. The movements in Angola and Zimbabwe were also fragmented. Attempts to reunite the movements in Angola in the 1960's just drove them further apart, and probably they could blame the political training for the gulf between them. As the ANC gained political allies through training, it also gained enemies.

Third, MK derived from their training a theory of guerrilla warfare. Soviet-Sino relations were souring but the ANC continued their studies of Mao TseTung's tactics for guerrilla warfare. In Mao TseTung the cadres could find theories of national

liberation necessary to supplement the theories of Marxism that their mentors taught them in the Soviet Union. Kasrils describes heated discussions amongst cadres trained in the Soviet Union and those trained in China when they all met up back in Tanzania. But Mao Tse Tung's influence on the cadres came second to that of Che Guevara. His book *Guerrilla warfare*²⁹ was released in 1961 and was widely circulated in the first half of the decade. As we have seen earlier the foco theory described in this book inspired the Mayibuye plan, the first strategic document of MK. The foco, the spark, is a small band of guerrillas infiltrated into a country matured for revolution. Inside they orchestrate some spectacular attacks to incite a revolt amongst people inside a country:

We consider that the Cuban Revolution made three fundamental contributions to the laws of the revolutionary movement in the current situation in America. First, people's forces can win a war against the army. Second, one need not always wait for all conditions favourable to revolution to be present, the insurrection itself can create them. Third, in the underdeveloped parts of America, the battle ground for armed struggle should in main be the countryside.³⁰

Insurgencies both in Latin America and Africa were done in this manner in the coming decade. The first part of Mayibuye explains:

The objective military condition in which the movement finds itself makes the possibility of a general uprising leading to direct military struggle an unlikely one. Rather, as in Cuba, the general uprising must be sparked off by organised and well-prepared guerrilla operations during the course of which the masses of the people will be drawn in and armed.³¹

Even after the revelation of the Mayibuye plan at the Rivonia trial the MK continued to nurture this strategy. The theory was acceptable to MK because the organisation had little hope of establishing a conventional army inside South Africa.

²⁹ Ernesto "Che" Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska press, 1998).

³⁰ Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (1998), p. 143.

³¹ Operation Mayibuye, Document found by the police at Rivonia, 11 July 1963, from www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/mayibuye.html.

South Africa had favourable conditions for a revolution, but otherwise very different conditions from the Cuban example. One of the reasons why Castro and Guevara's fighters became popular in the third world was because they recognised the rural masses as a revolutionary force. This was also a feature of the revolutionary theories of Asia. As cited earlier the third "law" for revolutionary warfare is the use of the rural areas as a base. The revolution started in the countryside with the urban class as a last obstacle rather than an instigator of revolt:

...The initiated struggle of small fighting units is constantly nurtured by new forces, the mass movement begins to grow bold, the old order bit by bit breaks into a thousand pieces, and that is when the working class and the urban masses decide the battle.³²

This has been an aberration in guerrilla revolts in the third world as urban workers take the place of *petit bourgeoisie*³³ in classic Marxist theory. Ironically, it was movements that had sprung out of South African townships and their counterparts, musseques, in Portuguese territories that embraced the theory. The ANC, influenced by the SACP, and the MPLA, which was close to the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), were true to more classical Marxism. This was also the case with FRELIMO and PAIGCC who were equally close to the PCP. A movement like ZANU in Zimbabwe or UNITA in Angola was more influenced by Maoism and also fitted better into the "rural" model of Guevara.

The alliance with ZAPU and the Hwange campaign

³² Guevara, "Guerrilla Warfare – a Method", article 1963 in *Guerrilla Warfare* (1998). When reading Howard Barrell's thesis on ANC strategy I discovered that he had used almost the same citation as I have to illustrate the use of Guevara in the Mayibuye document. But I considered it important to let the comparison stand for the sake of my whole argument hopefully without being accused of plagiarism as some of my points and Dr.Barrell's differ slightly. For especially the SACP's use of Guevara's theories, Barrell's thesis is worth reading.

³³ As the middle class in European society in a revolutionary situation is believed to support the upper classes, so is the urban proletariat in underdeveloped countries. This is central to Mao Tse Tung's adoption of revolutionary theory for the third world.

With growing numbers of trained cadres in camps in Tanzania the main task for the ANC leadership was to get forces back into South Africa. One step in that direction was the independence of Zambia in 1964 and in 1965 the ANC opened an office in Lusaka. In Lusaka the leadership started discussions with the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU). Hani was called to the office in Lusaka to investigate the possibility of getting cadres through Zambia, Rhodesia and Botswana back to South Africa.³⁴

From bases in Zambia and Tanzania small groups were to move towards South Africa overland to fulfil Guevara's vision of instigated revolution. In May 1967 a group of fighters was sent from Tanzania to northern Mozambique to fight alongside Frelimo. The other possible route was through Ian Smith's Rhodesia, which had just declared unilateral independence from Great Britain. In 1967 MK fighters fought alongside ZAPU cadres in northern Matabeleland in Rhodesia. ZAPU travelled alongside the MK forces to explain their presence to the local population.³⁵ The campaign took place in what is today the Hwange National Park and has been dubbed the Wankie Campaign.³⁶ It started in July when a joint guerrilla force crossed from Kazangula, Zambia over the Zambezi River to Victoria Falls. Oliver Tambo and the ZAPU vice-president James Chicarema announced the alliance on 15 August 1967. By then the force was engaged in fighting in Hwange and continued fighting through September.³⁷ This was MK's first military alliance and the first time the ANC engaged directly in armed action outside South Africa alongside an ally. The alliance with ZAPU was to become a reference

³⁴ Interview of Kodesh/Hani, April 1993.

³⁵ Dabengwa, "ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe war of national Liberation" in Bhebe and Ranger, *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's liberation war*. (London: James Currey, 1995), p. 27

³⁶ Wankie is the Rhodesian name of Hwange; the name was changed to Hwange after Zimbabwe's independence in 1967.

³⁷ Johnson and Martin, *The struggle for Zimbabwe, the Chimurenga war*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), p.10, this book is one of the classic examples of partisan history that came out of the southern African Liberation Wars. The book has a foreword by Robert Mugabe and claims to be a complete

point for further military alliances as the ANC and MK became involved in other conflicts on the continent, notably a decade later in Angola.

ZAPU and MK fighters were trained and equipped by the Soviet Union and its allies and shared political training.³⁸ The Soviet Union was otherwise not directly involved in the campaign in Zimbabwe and the decision to pursue the campaign lay with the ANC and ZAPU.³⁹ Chris Hani explained:

In addition to the physical preparation there was also the political preparation, the need for us to forge an understanding between the forces of MK and the forces of ZAPU and to understand the historical necessity of the battles of Wankie....

The training was successful according to Hani:

The spirit of cohesion and unity between ourselves and ZAPU was magnificent. We were working together as one unit, consulting and discussing together. There was no friction whatsoever within this Unit.⁴⁰

The first detachment, the Luthuli detachment, was followed into Rhodesia by the Cape detachment. The Luthuli detachment's aim was not just to open a path back into South Africa but also to establish a forward base in Zimbabwe for further use of the route. With this as a goal the detachment was split into two, a western and an eastern front. On 13 August, the western front met the Rhodesian forces and eleven men were killed including one who was left with ZIPRA soldiers but who later died from his injuries. A week later MK lost four more men. In addition to the loss of men the fighters had to leave most of their equipment behind when they fled. The SADF was already in Rhodesia when it became clear that many of the guerrillas infiltrating were South

history of the struggle for Zimbabwe. It fails to address the role of ZAPU in this struggle except from its first chapters where the authors give a short outline of the Wankie Campaign.

³⁸ ZAPU was both a guerrilla army and a political organisation. In 1971 ZAPU became a political organisation with Zimbabwe People's Army, ZIPRA, as an armed wing.

³⁹ Shubin, *ANC - A view from Moscow* (1999), p. 94.

⁴⁰ Chris Hani, "The Wankie campaign", in *Dawn*, souvenir issue 1986

Africans.⁴¹ More SADF soldiers were sent from South Africa to stop the insurgency.⁴² The cadres of the eastern front crossed the Zambezi at the end of 1967 and started fighting in March 1968. Shortly thereafter they were forced back to Zambia and the attempt to reach home through Zimbabwe ended. The detachment then crossed into northern Botswana but was held by the police. Amongst this group was Commissar Hani.⁴³

Later a small group made it through to the home country and was arrested in Pietermaritzburg in 1969. South African security forces suspected cadres would come via migrant workers' routes through Botswana. Botswana was a member of the OAU, and as a member it was obliged to further the cause of South African liberation. But their powerful neighbour in the south held the landlocked state hostage and Botswana allowed the South African security forces to operate within Botswanan territory. White officers from Britain and South Africa commanded the policemen who arrested Hani and his group.

According to Dabengwa, of the military high command of ZAPU, the Hwange campaign was the correct strategy for the Zimbabweans⁴⁴, but it was later criticised, partly because of its lack of support amongst the local people. The operations were a failure militarily and tactically for MK. The foco strategy had been tried but had failed in this instance⁴⁵, but the campaign gave the cadres their first taste of battle and produced a band of veterans later known as *umgwenya*, crocodiles. Howard Barrell

⁴¹ Dabengwa, "ZIPRA in the Zimbabwean War" in Bhebe and Ranger, *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's liberation war* (1995), p. 27.

⁴² Shubin, *ANC – A view from Moscow* (1999), p. 78.

⁴³ Interview Kodesh/Hani, April 1993.

⁴⁴ Dabengwa, "ZIPRA in the Zimbabwean War", p. 28.

⁴⁵ Interview Howard Barrell/ Joe Slovo, Oct. 1989.

notes how the Luthuli detachment, and later the Cape detachment, influenced and upheld the spirit of the organisation up until the mid-seventies.⁴⁶ The stories of the *umgwenya* reached the townships at home and were recorded as an inspiration for the next generation of fighters who were to emerge in the following decade. The campaign also gave MK and the ANC an opportunity to evaluate tactics. It would still be some time before they abandoned the focoism of early years but the campaign would start the search for an alternative strategy.

Morogoro conference

There was no evaluation of the Hwange campaign. After two years in a Botswanan prison, Hani wrote a memorandum that almost cost him expulsion. The Hani memorandum added to growing dissatisfaction amongst young cadres with the leadership. It also joined a chorus of external critiques on the campaign. These critiques were voiced amongst other South African liberation movements as well as various leftist groups. The campaign was seen as hot-headed, the ANC was criticised for applying Soviet tactics and so on.⁴⁷ Internally the leadership was criticised for not putting together a formal report on the campaign. There was also dissatisfaction within the organisation on account of the behaviour of the leadership. In a memorandum by Ben Turok to the Preparatory Committee of the Morogoro conference he notes that “drunkenness was at one time a major feature of our office in Dar Es Salaam – day and night. Some comrades were drunk for days on end, and those who should have set an example were sometimes no better”.⁴⁸ It was obvious that exile had begun to take its

⁴⁶ Howard Barrell, *MK the ANC's armed struggle*, (London: Penguin, 1990), p.25.

⁴⁷ Shubin, *ANC - A view from Moscow* (1998), p.81.

⁴⁸ Ben Turok, Memorandum April 1969, Document 13 in Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest and Challenge* (1997)

toll on the cadres and commanders. Some had been away from home for close on a decade. Accusations of power-abuse by camp commanders resurfaced.

In 1969 the ANC called for a conference at its headquarters in Morogoro. Hani was banned from participation. After his memorandum he was branded as a traitor, but according to Hani the memorandum was what triggered the conference.⁴⁹ Ahead of the Morogoro conference in 1969 a conference preparatory committee oversaw 13 months of discussion culminating in fifty-three documents from different strata in the ANC structures. Central to the discussions was the relationship between the ANC and other movements. The conference was opened on 25 April 1969 by the executive secretary of the OAU Liberation Committee, George Magombe. The delegates sat through greetings from TANU, Frelimo, MPLA and ZAPU. It showed the rising importance of the ANC's external allies. Solidarity with other liberation movements was stressed not only in the agenda of the meeting but in articles and speeches in the ANC organ *Sechaba*, published in the same year.⁵⁰ It was stressed that the alliance with ZAPU was of importance despite the military failure of the Hwange Campaign.

Amongst the most important administrative changes was the opening up of membership for all and the formation of what later was to become known as the Revolutionary Council (RC). A new National Executive Council (NEC) was elected and the number of members reduced from eighteen to nine. The old NEC was not elected, but the new council was made up of the leadership that had escaped Rivonia and was supplied with

⁴⁹ Interview Kodesh/Hani, 1.4. 1993.

⁵⁰ BOX 43, Mayibuye, UWC *Agenda and Resolutions* –African National Congress Consultative Conference Morogoro and *Sechaba* vol. 3. No 7 July-69. In Karin and Gerhardt: *From protest to Challenge* see document 11 Transcript of Radio Freedom Broadcast 1969 p. 377. As well as broadcast made by Oliver Tambo on the eighth anniversary of the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, *Capture the Citadel*, Dec -69 at www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history.

office staff from the offices in Morogoro and Lusaka. Needless to say this caused problems with its legitimacy. The old leadership continued to function from Robben Island but was supplemented by staff in exile. As the emphasis shifted to armed struggle, the RC became more prominent.

But, as in the early part of the decade, emphasis was still on diplomacy. One of the most important outcomes of the conference was discussion on the ANC's role on the international scene. Various forces in southern Africa now intensified the battle. The battle-lines had been drawn between the colonial powers and the African nationalist movements. The ANC considered itself a part of the socialist revolution against the imperialist powers, stressing third world solidarity against the industrialised West, identifying itself with struggling people in Africa, Latin America and Asia. The ANC decided to strengthen its ties with ZAPU and to form alliances with Frelimo, MPLA, SWAPO and PAIGCC of Guinea-Bissau.⁵¹ Solidarity was extended to the people of South Vietnam who had "added glorious pages to the history of liberation"⁵² and to the Arab people of Palestine.

According to an article, *Intensify the revolution*, which appeared in *Sechaba* just after Morogoro, the ANC's struggle was part of a complex and difficult international situation. According to this article, MK was part of "the mighty anti-imperialist Force", and it contended that the alliance with ZAPU was founded on a belief in a united struggle to rid southern Africa of imperialism.⁵³ The article also denounced the PAC as a stooge organisation for the imperialists together with ZANU of Zimbabwe,

⁵¹ BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, *Resolutions*, African National Congress Consultative conference, Morogoro 1969

⁵² BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, *Resolutions*.

⁵³ *Sechaba* vol. 3, no 7 (July -69).

UNITA and FNLA in Angola and Coremo in Mozambique. In the "Strategy and Tactics" statement adopted by the conference the international situation was described as follows:

Beyond our borders in Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, and Namibia are our brothers and sisters who similarly are engaged in a fierce struggle against colonialists and fascist regimes. We fight the unholy alliance of Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa with the latter as the main economic and military support. The historic ZAPU/ANC alliance is a unique form of co-operation between two liberation movements, which unites the huge potential of the oppressed people in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. The extension of co-operation and co-ordination of all the people of Southern Africa as led by FRELIMO, ZAPU, SWAPO, MPLA and the ANC is a vital part of our strategy.⁵⁴

The conference represented a radicalisation of both the politics of the ANC and the tactics of MK. There is no doubt that the conference represented a step to the left. Norrie MacQueen points to the fact that radicalisation and Marxism was part of the *zeitgeist*⁵⁵, exemplified by the student revolts in Europe and America in the late 1960's. For the movements in Portuguese Africa the student revolts in Europe were linked directly with their own allies in the Portuguese Communist party (PCP) who were the visible opponents of the Salazar regime. The ANC and MK were no more immune to this *zeitgeist* than their Angolan or Mozambican counterparts were. As a growing number of the ANC cadres also got their political training in the socialist countries it is likely that Marxism took root in the depth of the organisation. Some of the cadres gained an academic education at the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow. The curricula included Marxist-Leninist political and philosophical theory and history. Increasing contact between cadres of different movements, like the contact between the ANC and Frelimo during training in Tanzania, allowed cadres to exchange ideas at

⁵⁴ Strategy and Tactics, Statement adopted by the ANC at the Morogoro Conference, April – May 1969 Document 14 Karis and Gerhardt, *From Protest to Challenge* (1997), p. 387.

⁵⁵ Norrie MacQueen, *De-colonization of Portuguese Africa - Metropolitan revolution and the Dissolution of Empire*, (London: Longman, 1997), p. 56.

grassroots level. It is therefore difficult to understand the radicalisation of the ANC as a dictate from above.

The Lusaka manifesto

Two years after the Morogoro conference the secretariat reported on the external situation. At the time of the Morogoro conference, independent states in the region signed what was to be known as the Lusaka Manifesto. The Lusaka Manifesto sought to find a political resolution and a peaceful settlement to the problems in southern Africa. The ANC strongly opposed the manifesto. But the organisation did not oppose it publicly as the ANC's "haven" countries were driving forces behind the manifesto, in particular Zambia and Tanzania.⁵⁶ Relations with the OAU Liberation Committee became strained after the Lusaka Manifesto. The committee was at this time accused of financial mismanagement⁵⁷. There was widespread dissatisfaction with George Magombe as leader of the Liberation Committee and the OAU's members blamed him for the ineffectiveness of the Committee. After seven years of existence none of the movements that had received support had liberated their countries. In retaliation Magombe could blame the independent states: most of the countries that were meant to contribute had never done so and by 1970 the Committee had no money left. The ANC continued instead to nurture bilateral relations with other African countries. Amongst those countries singled out were Zambia, Tanzania, Algeria and the United Arab Republic, countries that traditionally had helped the organisation. Other countries that were considered possible allies were Sudan, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Sierra Leone and Congo Brazzaville.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ BOX 66 Mayibuye UWC, ANC; *Report of the secretariat* covering the last two years, 1971 p. 3.

Tanzania was especially mentioned in the RC report of 1967. Relations between TANU and the ANC reached an all-time low in 1969. In July that year the ANC had received notice to vacate its Kongwa camp in fourteen days. The official explanation was that the TANU government regarded the growing numbers of MK cadres as a security risk. If the ANC could not get its cadres to South Africa within fourteen days from the notice, the cadres would be regarded as refugees and interned in a refugee camp. For the ANC this would mean the liquidation of MK, but with the help of the Soviet Union the cadres were sent on "refresher courses". The secretariat's report does not give any reason for TANU's actions.

However, there was not only one reason for this but several. In addition to the official assumed "security risk" TANU had become a close ally of the Chinese and this made relations with the Soviet-supported ANC tense. Tanzania reduced its support of the movement to what could be channelled through the OAU Liberation Committee headed by the Tanzanian Magombe. The Liberation Committee was short of funds, and the money earmarked for the ANC had a tendency to disintegrate before reaching the intended recipient.

Tanzania, which preferred the PAC, had lost its support from the OAU the year before because of internal disunity. TANU tried to mend the organisation behind closed doors in Tanzania. The PAC leader Potlako Leballo enjoyed strong contact with government officials and when an attempted coup was discovered in Dar es Salaam, he implied that there had been ANC involvement. This was probably the definite reason for the

⁵⁷ *Africa Confidential* No 7, 28 March 1969.

⁵⁸ *Africa Confidential* NO. 7, 28 March 1969, p.5.

fourteen-day expulsion order.⁵⁹ The airlift of all MK personnel to the Soviet Union released TANU of all MK cadres for over a year. Meanwhile relations with Tanzania improved and cadres were allowed to return to Kongwa.⁶⁰ Tanzania's ruling party TANU gave the ANC a set of guidelines to follow and within two years the relationship was normalised. However the organisation's main military base was not as safe a haven as before.

In 1969 a summit of the OAU voted against any form of dialogue with the South African regime. For the ANC it was a full recognition of "the liberation movements as the only authentic spokesman of their countries".⁶¹ The organisation was now closely watching developments on the rest of the continent. The Liberation Committee's bankruptcy in 1970 had not changed the situation dramatically. Most of the liberation movements were already dependent on bilateral support. From this point the Soviet Union played a much more important part in southern Africa. At the same time South Africa forged closer bonds with Rhodesia and Portugal, and through them, NATO. The help received from the Soviet Union and China was marginal compared to the "investment" by NATO in the area. While the Soviets supplied outdated military equipment, South Africa and Rhodesia were able to purchase the latest technology from the western countries.⁶² Two thousand four hundred African graduates from Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow proved a more lasting support for the liberation movement. In 1970 alone, nine hundred and thirty four out of about four thousand students were from Africa.⁶³

⁵⁹ Shubin, *ANC – a view from Moscow* (1999), p. 99.

⁶⁰ BOX 66 Mayibuye UWC, *Report of the secretariat*, p. 6.

⁶¹ BOX 66 Mayibuye UWC *Report of the secretariat*, p. 8.

⁶² *Africa Confidential*, no 7, 3 April 1970.

The ANC had personnel and cadres in Zambia. Under the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia found itself in the crossfire because of its role as a guerrilla haven. In 1969 *Africa confidential* reported that Zambia was the target for Portuguese raids. Zambia harboured both Frelimo and MPLA at the time, besides the ANC, ZAPU and SWAPO. Before 1971 Kaunda also harboured UNITA, but Savimbi's forces were expelled because of internal quarrelling. Kaunda also threatened the Zimbabwean movements that they would be expelled if they could not unite. Kaunda sent out a general warning to the movements by further expelling the PAC and ZAPU. In an article about Zambia's problems the Confidential estimated that Zambia was hiding at least six guerrilla camps in 1969.⁶⁴ Some years later it could have been half this number.

The ANC was also marked by internal quarrels in the years after Morogoro and now lived under constant threat of expulsion from its haven countries. The ANC realised it could not count on Zambia and Tanzania as safe havens for its guerrilla aspirations. Chris Hani was deployed to Lesotho in 1974 to start a forward front from there, but the relationship between the ANC and the little kingdom would not make possible a large-scale insurrection. A new generation came out of the country in 1973 and 1974; the number of cadres in the camps grew and the ANC needed a new haven that would harbour MK and its training camps.

Fall of an empire

While the ANC was moving and reorganising throughout the 1960's and early 1970's other developments on the continent were to change the situation in southern Africa

⁶³ *Africa Confidential* no 7, 3 April 1970.

dramatically. The struggle in Portuguese Africa was intensifying and together with the radicalisation of European opinion this could mean the end of the Portuguese “overseas territories”. The ANC's preferred ally in Angola, Movimento Popular do Liberacao de Angola (MPLA), had taken up arms at the time of the formation of MK.

When the Organisation of African Unity was formed in 1963 it recognised the MPLA's opponent, Frente Nacional de Liberacao de Angola (FNLA) as the official liberator of Angola. The organisation set up its Governo Revolucionario de Angola no Exilio (GRAE) – an exiled government - in Kinshasa with Holden Roberto as its leader. GRAE was recognised by the majority of the OAU and the African group at the UN.⁶⁵ But in 1964 Roberto and his head of external affairs, Jonas Savimbi, began a power struggle, which ended in the defection of the latter. The MPLA was to re-emerge and in November of the same year the organisation achieved recognition alongside the FNLA in the OAU. Agostinho Neto had re-organised the movement under his central leadership and had collected support from the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Soviet Union. The MPLA also began receiving help from Cuba, mostly medicine. The MPLA's strength was to be its ties with the PAIGCC in Guinea and Frelimo in Mozambique. Savimbi made a comeback in 1966 with the formation of Uniao Nacional por Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA).

As with the ANC, the independence of Zambia enabled the MPLA to set up bases in that country. This opened up an eastern front into Angola.⁶⁶ In eastern Angola, the MPLA met growing hostility from Savimbi's UNITA forces. Savimbi, strongly inspired by Maoist doctrines, relied on enemy supplies. When he could not get enough supplies

⁶⁴ “Zambia in the frontline”, in *Africa Confidential* No 5, 15 February 1969.

from battles with the Portuguese he concentrated on the MPLA units, equipped by the socialist countries. In 1971 Angola was the least active front against the Portuguese. In 1972 Savimbi signed a truce with the Portuguese, according to which they were to leave UNITA alone so that the rebels could fight against the MPLA in the central highlands.⁶⁷ The Angolans could be left to fight each other while Portugal could concentrate on the far graver situation in Mozambique. The war was no interruption of business. On the contrary, the profits taken out of the African colonies increased in the early 1970's. Expectations were even higher when oil was discovered in the Angolan enclave of Cabinda. In 1971 the territories were profitable enough for Portugal to take up another four hundred million US dollar loan from the US to secure its position in Angola and Mozambique.⁶⁸ SWAPO had by then established bases in Ovamboland in southern Angola. In 1973 internal disputes flared up again inside the MPLA.

In 1974 Portugal signed a deal with South Africa for a scheme to build a dam on the Cunene River in the south.⁶⁹ At the same time the Caleque pumping station was opened up on the border, to supply water to the South African showpiece bantustan in Namibia - Ovamboland. The liberation movements condemned the developments as a manifestation of South African imperialism. The Information and Publicity Department of SWAPO in Dar es Salaam provided the other organisations based in Tanzania with documentation from the World Council of Churches concerning the dams.⁷⁰ SWAPO feared that the Cunene Dam would strengthen the South African military presence in

⁶⁵ Dalila Cabrita Mateus: *A Luta Pela Independencia*, (1999), p. 125

⁶⁶ Mateus: *A Luta Pela Independencia* (1999), p.122

⁶⁷ Norrie MacQueen, *Decolonization of Portuguese Africa - Metropolitan revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (1997), p.174

⁶⁸ *Africa Confidential* no. 1, 7 Jan. 1972

⁶⁹ *Africa Confidential* no. 5, 8 march 1974.

⁷⁰ BOX 11, UFH, Department of Information and Publicity, SWAPO: *Cunene Dam Scheme Press Release* February 1972.

northern Namibia and southern Angola. A military helicopter base accompanied the dam project at Ruacana Falls from 1966. Portugal and South Africa were tightening their military alliances with the building projects.

The African wars had an effect on Portugal itself. Portugal did not suffer big casualties, nor was the war a significant economic burden, but the fighting became unpopular among the population. As earlier acknowledged, radicalism was provided by the zeitgeist in Portugal. The African wars were Portugal's own Vietnam. The universities became hotbeds of protest against the government. African leaders met and formed movements and they also built alliances with the Portuguese dissidents. In April 1974 demonstrations caused the military to desert the old regime. A peaceful revolution displaced the right-wing dictatorship. A new left-wing government immediately prepared for negotiations with the parties in Portugal's overseas colonies.

The new Portuguese authorities had natural sympathies with the MPLA, which was at the time based around the capital Luanda. This was crucial for the further developments in Angola. In the north, the FNLA was fighting with support from Zaire and the USA. In the southeast, UNITA was based amongst the Ovimbundu people. Since 1972 the Portuguese Special Police, PIDE, in order to help fight the MPLA, had deployed UNITA.⁷¹ The three movements were called in to a power sharing conference in the Portuguese village of Alvor early in 1975. An agreement regarding the shared government of the new Angola was signed and the date for Angolan independence set for 11 November 1975.

⁷¹ Michael Wolfers and Jane Bergol claimed this in what has been deemed a "partisan History" of the MPLA's struggle for Angola - *Angola in the Frontline*, (London: ZED Press, 1983). Historians who opened the PIDE archives in Lisbon later proved the involvement of PIDE in UNITA activities. The papers described Portuguese covert actions in Angola during the sixties and seventies.

Segunda Guerra - The second war over Angola's independence

It was soon to become clear that some of the signatories of the Alvor agreement would not follow it. Already, even before the signing, the FNLA was fighting the MPLA groups in the northwest of the country and forced them down towards their base in the Luanda region.⁷² Throughout the talks in Portugal, the groups had opposed the possibility of the FNLA receiving Zairian support. When Zairian troops actually entered Angola to fight alongside the FNLA, the Soviet Union sent arms to the MPLA. There was a brief cease-fire in April before the leaders of the three movements, Agostinho Neto, Holden Roberto and Jonas Savimbi were called to sign a new deal in Kenya in June.

By this time the South African army was already advancing into the south of Angola and in Washington the CIA was discussing the possibility of doing the same. The Americans had stepped up their supply of weapons to both UNITA and the FNLA.⁷³ When Angola was still a colony of Portugal the important harbours of Luanda and Lobito had been accessible to NATO, and with the prospects of a Soviet-friendly government coming into power the US had to move. The South Africans had launched the plans for a "greater Ovamboland" in 1974. The bantustan of Ovamboland was to cover northern Namibia and southern Angola. The Cunene Dam had been an attempt at development in the region. When Portugal crumbled in 1974, South Africa had invested 600 million Rand in Cunene⁷⁴. British mining projects and more dam projects were

⁷² George Wright, *The destruction of a Nation: United States policy Towards Angola since 1945*, (London: Pluto Press, 1997), p. 60

⁷³ It later became clear that the CIA had urged the South Africans to enter Angola and promised support if they did. A report by CIA Africa chief John Stockwell: *In search of enemies, a CIA story*, (1978) confirmed this.

⁷⁴ Bergol and Wolfers, *Angola in the Frontline* (1983)

intensifying the South African presence. In April UNITA attacked a South African engineer at the Caleque Dam. A brief invasion subdued UNITA in the region. In August the South African Defence Force had established a permanent base at Caleque, with UNITA now as allies. In the beginning of September this was confirmed by Pretoria.⁷⁵ The MPLA was at this point driven out of Cunene province and was hastily withdrawing towards Benguela. The southern front fell during October. In early November Benguela was lost, thus the road to Luanda was opened for the invading South Africans.

When South Africa invaded in August, the president of the MPLA, Agostinho Neto asked the world to help against the invaders. This was done openly, not covertly only to certain countries. The rest of Africa and the OAU reacted with disgust at the apartheid regime's aggression but had no means to stop them. The west would rather have seen UNITA or the FNLA take power in Angola but could not openly support Pretoria's engagement. The UN condemned Pretoria's actions. The Soviet Union, who had supported the MPLA with weapons and training, would not engage more directly on the African continent. As the South African column advanced rapidly towards Luanda, the Angolan government sent out repeated calls for help.⁷⁶

Cuba had as early as 1965 sent an international brigade to fight with the MPLA on the Cabinda front out of Congo Brazzaville.⁷⁷ In early October several Angolan ports

⁷⁵ *Africa Confidential* no. 18, 12 Sept 1975, Official version was that the SADF had posted about 30 men to guard a pumping station, The MPLA claimed at least 1000 troops with armoured cars and helicopters had attacked guerrilla outposts in Cunene.

⁷⁶ For an eyewitness account of the South African advance in Southern Angola, Ryzard Kapusjincki: *Another day of Life*, (London: Penguin, 1977)

⁷⁷ Interviewed David Deutshmann with Jorge Risquet in *Changing the History of Africa*, (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1989), p.3. Risquet led two columns of about 100 men from Congo Brazzaville to Cabinda this year at the same time as Che was engaged in fighting in the other Congo. Risquet went on

received Cuban ships with personnel and material. The Cubans set up five schools where Cuban instructors were to train Angolan soldiers from Forças Armadas Populares do Angola (FAPLA). The Portuguese coast-guards let the Cubans embark. The Cuban training camp in Benguela was attacked by the SADF on 3 November. The decision had by now been taken in Cuba to involve its forces from Forças Armadas Revolucionárias (FAR) directly in the Angolan conflict. On 8 November several planes with Cuban "tourists" arrived at Luanda's airport.⁷⁸ A FAR commander, Jorge Risquet, has pointed out that the decision to involve troops in Angola was taken in Havana, not at Moscow's request.⁷⁹

That the Cubans were the aggressor on the Soviet Union's orders has long been the version preferred by some strata of the western media. This version backed up South Africa's claim that it was merely defending itself from communism by repeatedly invading Angola. The apartheid-state's theory of "total onslaught" launched in 1978 was built on this African example of revisionism.⁸⁰ Later on the Soviet Union would send instructors and weapons, but the weapons were often old and well used, some even from the Second World War. The Soviet Union never had any regular forces in Angola.

In late November and in December FAPLA and FAR were busy driving back the SADF. The joint Angolan/Cuban force experienced problems early in December, still fighting on two fronts. In addition to the SADF invasion to the south, a force made up

to be a commander in Angola and finally headed the foreign relations department in the Cuban Communist Party.

⁷⁸ Gabriel Garcia Marques, "Operation Carlota", in Risquet, *Changing the history of Africa* (1989), p. 41.

⁷⁹ Interview Deutshmann /Risquet in *Changing the history of Africa* (1989)

⁸⁰ Vorster told the South Africans that their land was threatened by a total onslaught put in scene by the Soviet Union and Communist allies in Africa. The clearest evidence of this was the Cuban presence in Angola. To make this a viable thesis you had to turn history on its head, i.e. claim that the Cubans had "invaded" Angola before the SADF.

of the FNLA, Zairians and mercenaries still operated north of Luanda. The FNLA was stopped at Quinfangondo just hours north of Luanda. With the northern front under control, pushing the SADF southwards became easier, especially with the additional help of Soviet logistics. At the beginning of 1976, thirty-thousand Cubans helped FAPLA to drive the South Africans southwards.⁸¹ On 26 March the last column of the SADF crossed the Cunene River back into Namibia.

The threat of a leftwing government in Angola was one of the reasons for South Africa's invasion, in addition to the wish to guard economic interests, another important reason for the South African invasion. South Africa feared an MPLA government in Luanda would play host to SWAPO/ Plan and ANC/ MK. The ANC had already been established in South African opinion as a communist party. The white minority in South Africa saw the Soviet behind both the new Angolan regime and the ANC. The defeat of the SADF in Angola was to send trembles through South Africa.

Conclusion

The first fifteen years of the ANC and MK in exile posed several problems. First was the problem of actually building an underground army inside the country. I have not gone into this problem in detail in this chapter as my concern first and foremost is what happened in exile. The second problem was to build an external political network and further to build an army in exile. The first part of this chapter outlined the political alliances built to solve this problem. The alliances were built partly to lobby the case for South African liberation before the world, and partly to find bases for an army in exile. The building of an army of exiles was to realise the strategy adopted in the

⁸¹ Interview Deutshmann /Risquet in *Changing the history of Africa* (1989)

Mayibuye document: an insurgency inspired by the Latin American revolutionary Che Guevara.

As the first camps were established in Tanzania and Zambia new problems started to emerge. It was crucial to get the cadres of MK back into South Africa. Together with the Zimbabwean movement ZAPU the ANC leadership devised the plan for a common insurgency in 1967 and 1968. The insurgency failed on MK's part and criticism against the overall strategy was voiced. The first national conference of the movement in exile was to follow. The leadership was re-organised but the strategy was retained. More efforts were put into building alliances with the governments and movements of the neighbouring states.

The alliance building increased as the fronts in southern Africa moved towards independence in Portuguese Africa. The politics leading to the Lusaka manifesto were viewed by the ANC as a move against the Pretoria regime. The manifesto was only one of the problems the ANC and MK now faced with its host countries Tanzania and Zambia. Infighting between liberation movements made the host countries reluctant to serve as host. Further they were concerned about their own security, playing host as they were to an increasing number of freedom fighters from neighbouring states.

A further move for MK therefore seemed imminent. Frelimo and the MPLA in time gained power in Mozambique and Angola, and both were allies of the ANC. This was one of the reasons South Africa invaded Angola. The invasion was strongly condemned by African governments and the liberation movements of southern Africa.

Chapter 3

Dawning of a new era

A new wave of struggle was under way at “home” with the workers’ unrest in Durban in 1973. With the formation of the students’ movements and the black consciousness organisations, South Africa witnessed the first organised resistance movements since the banning of the ANC and the PAC in 1961. The liberation of the Portuguese colonies further inspired a new generation inside South Africa.

The liberation of the Portuguese territories had several lasting effects on South Africa. Firstly, the political map of the region was changed for the worse for the defenders of apartheid. Portugal and South Africa had a history of working together against African guerrillas in the region. With the liberation of Angola and Mozambique South Africa had lost a local white ally. Secondly, the independence of Mozambique and Angola had important economic implications as it could endanger the economic hegemony of South Africa in the region. South Africa faced the spectre of hostile radical new independent states close to its borders. Both states would have Marxists in their governments and nationalise South African interests in the countries. Radical politics could also inspire other states in the region to nationalise. Most of the states in the region were economically tied to the apartheid regime. Angola had possibilities of becoming a black economic power in the region and would lessen the dependence of countries like Zambia on their neighbours South Africa and Rhodesia. Thirdly, the events in Angola and Mozambique inspired a series of revolts inside South Africa itself.

The former chapter showed briefly how South Africa, under the pretext of defending its economic and strategic interests at Ruacana Falls, waged a full-scale invasion of Angola. This chapter will try to outline some of the continuing attacks by the SADF on southern Angola. Ruacana Falls and the Cunene Dam were Pretoria's initial reasons for attack. These attacks were the South African answer to the first and second change that Angolan and Mozambican independence imposed on the South African reality. These attacks are of special interest to this study as they provide a necessary context for understanding later MK activities in Angola.

Trouble was brewing in South Africa itself. The series of revolts inspired by Angolan and Mozambican independence spiralled out of the control of the apartheid regime. The initial revolts were triggered by the forceful introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instructions in all schools. The protest came to a climax on 16 June 1976 when a school strike in Soweto ended with the police opening fire on the marching children. The unrest spread rapidly to other townships and a rising number of children, many in their early teens, were baptised in the struggle. A growing number also ended up in prisons or on the run. The apartheid regime was not prepared for such a massive uprising. Neither were the liberation movements in exile. A flood of young men and women turned to the ANC to get them out of the country and give them military training. Thousands had to make it over the borders by themselves, as the organisation was hard to find. Dozens of others were smuggled over. As many as six thousand young people may have left the country in the aftermath of the Soweto riots.¹ Before long the ANC's residences and camps in Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania became inadequate. The ANC was now to put into use its new haven - Angola.

¹ Howard Barrell, *MK the ANC's armed struggle*, (London: Penguin, 1991).

This chapter seeks to examine how the haven came into existence and what were the agreements between the Angolan government and the ANC. This chapter will also examine how the Soweto generation was turned into what in MK came to be known as the June 16 and the Moncada Detachment. More detachments were to follow after them. The account will include the establishment of the first camps in Angola and their military and political training. These years were crucial in the forming of the MK army but were also important in the evolution of the SWAPO fighters, Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). The conclusion of this chapter will discuss some of the similarities and differences of the two armies (MK and PLAN) and will attempt to explain how they turned out so differently in spite of the fact they fought the same enemy.

It is necessary to establish the ideological evolution of the ANC in these years. This was part and parcel not only of the life of the leadership in Lusaka but also of the life of the cadres in Angola. Politics became an integral part of the daily life of cadres in Angola. The chapter attempts to establish the importance of political education and formation in the overall strategy for the training of the cadres. That politics clearly differentiated the ANC from ZAPU and SWAPO will be demonstrated in this chapter. The other decisive factor was their numerical strength. The archives of this period 1976-1979 are partly lost; however, there are a few documents available in the archives of the University of Fort Hare and the Mayibuye Archives at the University of the Western Cape that came from the ANC Angolan mission. Consequently, this chapter draws on oral interviews and some secondary sources to fill in the gap. The chapter also relies heavily on the compilation of Jack Simons' diary and lectures from Angola

in 1978.² Some other secondary sources are the ANC's own printed material such as the journals *Sechaba* and *Dawn*. The latter was an MK newsletter printed in Angola from 1978. It is therefore important that the reader should be aware of possible bias from the type of sources used.

The ANC moves to Angola

When the ANC started to move cadres to Angola in 1976 it was the culmination of bilateral relations between the ANC and the MPLA as well as an act influenced by regional and global politics. The move into exile in the 1960's had thrown the leadership of the ANC together with leaders of other liberation movements. As the last chapter showed, both leaders and rank and file cadres had experienced contact with freedom fighters from other parts of southern Africa. There were other factors that decisively affected the ANC's move.

After fifteen years of exile, the ANC knew the value of a safe haven for recruits. Tanzania and Zambia had proved to be hospitable to ANC personnel but were anxious about MK's military activities. Both President Nyerere and President Kaunda had reasons for this, either because of internal problems or outside aggression. Ideologically the two presidents also differed from the ANC, most notably Kaunda with his firm entrenchment of a "third way" solution, namely, negotiation with Rhodesia and South Africa. In 1974 the apartheid regime struck by planting a bomb in Lusaka that killed ANC deputy chief John Dube and wounded two other ANC members. The ANC had at this time about two hundred and fifty cadres in Tanzania and one hundred and thirty in

² Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack - The political lectures and diary of Jack Simons*, Nova Catengue, (Johannesburg: STE publishers 2001).

Zambia.³ Kaunda met Vorster on the Livingstone Bridge at the Victoria Falls in 1975. At the top of the agenda was the situation in Rhodesia. After the meeting, Joshua Nkomo of ZAPU continued discussions with Ian Smith until March 1976. None of the other Zimbabwean nationalist leaders supported the talks. Kaunda and Nyerere also met in Tanzania and decided to appeal to the USA to bring an end to the war in Angola.⁴

The ANC had two main concerns. The first and foremost was to obtain a base for the training of cadres close to home in order to infiltrate them back into South Africa. Secondly, after the Morogoro Conference, the ANC attempted to build alliances in the region to get rid of the apartheid government in Pretoria. The ANC continued to oppose Kaunda's further workings on a "third way" plan, the *détente*. The organisation voiced its concern at the OAU meeting in Dar es Salaam in April 1975.⁵ On the other hand, Kaunda was staunchly against the Russian and Cuban intervention in Angola. Zambia was already dependent on Western aid.⁶ The relationship between Kaunda and the MPLA became increasingly strained during the 1970's as a result of MPLA infighting on Zambian soil.⁷

It is not clear when exactly the ANC and MK decided to move their troops to Angola. It appears though that the first steps were taken late in 1975 or early in 1976. Angola was already at war with South Africa and had little to lose by harbouring MK guerrillas. In December 1975, the NEC discussed a re-launching of MK activities in South

³ Vladimir Shubin, *ANC - a view from Moscow*, (Cape Town: Mayibuye Books, 1998), p. 159 and 109.

⁴ Colin Legum, *Battlefronts of Southern Africa*, (New York: Africana Publishing, 1988), p. 89.

⁵ Shubin, *ANC - A view from Moscow* p.160.

⁶ Kenneth Good, "Zambia and the Liberation of South Africa", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. No. 25, vol. 3 (1987).

⁷ John Marcum, *History of the Angolan revolution: Vol. 2 Exile Politics*, (Cambridge: MIT press, 1978) Marcum is preoccupied with the infighting in the Angolan movements in several chapters of this volume

Africa.⁸ The NEC discussion took place in the wake of the first wave of young exiles influenced by the Black consciousness movement that came out of South Africa in 1974. Chris Hani was sent to Lesotho in 1974 to recruit cadres. At the same time a conduit to smuggle recruits through Botswana and Swaziland was found. When the Alvor agreement on Angola was signed early in 1975 and the Pretoria regime invaded southern Angola, MK greeted a small wave of new exiles coming to Zambia and Tanzania for military training. After the MPLA leader, Agostinho Neto, declared Angola independent on 11 November, ANC officials flew in from Lusaka with representatives of African states and other liberation movements.

Apart from talks on intensifying the struggle, the NEC meeting in 1975 was dominated by what was happening in Angola. One of the arguments for intensifying the struggle was that this would put pressure on Pretoria inside the country to divert its forces from Angola. The ANC strongly supported the young government in Luanda. The ANC organ *Sechaba* dedicated most of the first issue of 1976 to the history and struggle of the MPLA. Oliver Tambo states in the same issue:

The recent invasion of Angola by South African troops is the most dangerous crisis faced by Africa since the US intervention in the Congo and later invasion of Guinea by fascist Portugal. Then as now the forces of imperialism intervened to try to turn back the moment for Africa's liberation and the achievement of genuine independence of its people... we are part and parcel of this struggle for democracy and peace.⁹

By recognising Angola's struggle as his own, Tambo showed an understanding of the regional politics shared with most ANC members of the time. The South African aggression against Angola showed how far Pretoria was willing to go. For the ANC this

⁸ Shubin, *ANC - A view from Moscow*, p. 164.

was a diplomatic opportunity to strengthen ties with the MPLA and also with other players further afield, outraged by the South African invasion. But it was some months later, after the Soweto riots, that the ANC could fully exploit these diplomatic ties. The invasion of Angola and the riots in Soweto would, apart from building the alliances in the region, increase support for the ANC by the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. The Scandinavian countries increased their support for the ANC following the riots in the townships as a wave of sympathy swept the world.¹⁰

After the SADF's defeat in March 1976, the ANC established official representation in Luanda, Angola's capital. The ties between the MPLA and the Zambian government were strained. Zambia was still pursuing its "third way" in 1976 and was sceptical of the Marxist-leaning governments in Angola and Mozambique. Kaunda had also for a short time supported UNITA. There is no evidence of when the first MK recruits arrived in Luanda or in Benguela further south in the country. They may have been there just before the riots in South Africa in June 1976. The first groups were to be trained by Cuban commanders left behind after the sacking of the South African troops.¹¹ When Soweto went up in flames in June the same year the first group of young exiles were sent through Lusaka to Dar es Saalam. In August of the same year Tambo met Neto in Dar es Salaam for talks on training facilities in Angola for MK.¹² Around September 1976 Andrew Masondo claims to have given this group some

⁹ *Sechaba*, 1st Quarter 1976.p 5-6.

¹⁰ *Scandinavia and the national Liberation of Southern Africa* is planned in three volumes, My figures are from Tore Linne Eriksen: *Norway and the National Liberation of Southern Africa*, (Lund :Nordiska Afrika Institutet, 2000).

¹¹ Interview Maren Sæbø with Aboobaker Ismail, nom de guerre Rashid (the name which I will use hereafter), former MK instructor in Angola and head of MK Special Operations. Pretoria 7.12.2000

¹² Maren Sæbø interview with Andrew Masondo, National Commissar, Angola 1977 - 1983. (Pretoria 12.04. 2001) Member of RC and NEC, same period. In September 1976 in transit in Dar to Moscow, after being "rescued" out of house arrest in Umlazi, Natal by a MK unit. Prior to his house arrest he served 13 years Robben Island.

preparatory training in Dar es Salaam before departure to Luanda.¹³ A chartered flight under the command of Mzwai Piliso left Dar es Salaam for Luanda.¹⁴ The group of new exiles was sent to Engineering camp outside Luanda.¹⁵ In January 1977 a convoy of 11 buses left Luanda for Benguela. Here they were to set up a new camp - Novo Katengue.¹⁶

Just after the NEC meeting in 1975, the SACP's Central Committee met in Moscow. According to Vladimir Shubin, their host country appealed for practical assistance from the ANC for Angola.¹⁷ At this time neither the ANC nor MK could render support of any nature. The ANC could not render military support to the MPLA, although the organisations were rather active on the diplomatic front. The Soviets saw the defeat of South Africa in Angola as important, and increased support for both the ANC and ZAPU. ZAPU, SWAPO and MK moved their bases to Angola.¹⁸ The decision to move ANC personnel to Angola was taken between the two movements, the ANC and the MPLA in Moscow. But the decision was not, as some observers claim, a decision taken by the Soviets.¹⁹

¹³ Interview MS/Masondo.

¹⁴ Interview Wolfie Kodesh with Thoko Theodora Mavuso. At the Mayibuye Centre for Oral History UWC.

¹⁵ Interview MS/ Rashid.

¹⁶ Interview Kodesh/Mavuso and Kodesh with Abraham Lentsoane. At Mayibuye Centre for Oral history UWC.

¹⁷ Shubin. *ANC - a view from Moscow*, p. 164.

¹⁸ Keith Sommerville: *Southern Africa and the Soviet Union - From Communist International to Commonwealth of Independent states*, (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 220.

¹⁹ In his book *The War for Africa*, (Gibraltar: Ashanti Publishing, 1990), journalist and biographer of Jonas Savimbi, Fred Bridgland sees everything that happened in Angola in these years as a result of the "Brezhnev doctrine", According to this "doctrine" he claimed that Moscow used every weapon available too "keep Africa Marxist" - in this case, keep MPLA in power. Bridgland sees cold war-conspiracies as the driving force of Southern African history. It may have been that Moscow appealed to ANC to help MPLA in 1975, but this appeal went out to all the non-aligned states and to members of the OAU.

Whatever the role of the Soviet Union, support for the MPLA had a long history in the ANC. Tambo met the MPLA and discussed the situation inside Angola in the last years before independence.²⁰ The two movements also discussed the situation in Portugal and the prospect of Angola becoming independent. These discussions were bilateral and any decisions were taken independently of Moscow.²¹ Both the MPLA and the ANC had close allies in the SACP and the PCP respectively. The appeal for help to Luanda on the other hand came from African states rather than from the Soviet Union. Angola was accepted as a member of the OAU in February 1976. Guinea and Guinea-Bissau had together with the Cubans answered Luanda's call for help the year before and had allowed troops to be stationed in the country. Other African states also discussed sending help to the MPLA, which was now recognised as the government of Angola. Nigeria's President Murtala Mohammed welcomed the Soviet support of the MPLA.²² South Africa was the natural "bogey-man" of black Africa and anyone challenging apartheid would be welcome. This inter-African solidarity has been overlooked in many works done on this period of Angolan history as the paradigm of the cold war has dominated the literature and the press.

Arguably, the ANC's move was initiated by the organisation's will to help the MPLA. It was however initiated after an invitation from the Angolans to the ANC to use their territory as a training ground. You will recollect from the discussion in the last chapter that the ANC needed a new base outside Tanzania. If Moscow influenced the decision, the reason for the ANC's presence in Angola was not initially to help the MPLA or the

²⁰BOX 61, UFH, Oliver Tambo Papers, *Notes* made by Oliver Tambo in meeting with the MPLA. The four page handwritten note is not dated but from the context it is clear that the meeting took place while MPLA was still fighting the Portuguese. Amongst the themes are military collaboration between the ANC and the MPLA.

²¹ Confirmed by Dr Vladimir Shubin in mail to author.

²² Sommerville, *Southern Africa and the Soviet Union*, p. 220.

Cubans as some have stated²³. The ANC established itself in Angola simply to train MK cadres. With time however, the ANC's presence in Angola became more strategic.

Shelter for the children of Soweto

Nova Katengue in southern Angola was little more than old barracks on the Benguela railroad. In the years following the Soweto riots, Novo Katengue was to house between five- to seven-hundred cadres at a time. The camp was to become the MK's most successful training camp in exile. Besides Nova Katengue, the MK had a small camp at Gabela about halfway between Benguela and Luanda. There were two transit camps, Benguela and the Engineering Camp. The Engineering Camp outside Luanda was the first stop for cadres before going south to Nova Katengue. According to Abraham Lentsoane he and other recruits stayed there together with ZIPRA and PLAN fighters from SWAPO.²⁴ A special training camp was also set up in Funda, also close to Luanda.

The ANC established five camps in their first year in Angola. These were Gabela, Benguela, Nova Katengue in the south, and Engineering and Funda camps outside Luanda. Like Nova Katengue most of these had very humble beginnings, often in old structures abandoned by the Portuguese. When the colonial masters left, they sabotaged the infrastructure so as not to leave anything for the new government. Rashid, who came to Funda as an instructor just after completing his training in GDR in 1976, explains:

- It was quite old buildings, basically it was a storage structure and then it was a farm. Portuguese when they abandoned their farms they took cement and poured it into the pipes so that the house.... What happened to

²³ Most notably Ellis and Sechaba: *Comrades against Apartheid*.

²⁴ Interview Kodesh/Lentsoane

a lot of this buildings and all that, is that the you had to break down the building in order to fix that, but you know we found a way to refurbish those buildings.²⁵

The MPLA's army, FAPLA, and the Cubans were involved in training cadres at Gabela.²⁶ This camp was the training ground for the first forty cadres in 1976. Gabela closed early in 1977 and the cadres were moved to Benguela transit camp and to Nova Katengue.

If the camps were improvised when it came to structures, this was even more so with the food. Tinned meat and soup came from the Soviet Union and China. The cans and their contents earned nicknames like Red Army and Mao Tse Tung.²⁷ The Soviets also sent sugar, rice and maize-meal that were shipped in to Benguela or Lobito. The ANC headquarters in Luanda purchased vegetables and flour, but the country was in a state of civil war and supplies were not always available at the market. The unreliable food supply was a recurring cause for discontent in the camps, as it had been in Tanzania in the 1960's. Now, with more than ten times the number of cadres in Angola food was scarce:

...When we got to Angola, it was during the time when MPLA had problems, with supply, we had the money but we didn't have the products to buy...sometimes in the morning we had just a little *pau* (bread) with condensed milk dipped into water.²⁸

With the increasing number of cadres arriving in Luanda during 1977 and 1978, the food situation became worse. Many of these new arrivals had spent some time in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe and were not accustomed to the "bush food":

²⁵ Interview MS/ Rashid. The quote may appear incomplete but Rashid changes subject in the middle of his narrative

²⁶ Interview MS/Rashid, see also Appendix One, *ANC second submission to the TRC* at www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/misc/trc2.html.

... What is interesting is that when we were in Dar es Salaam, now we were treating the young people from June 16 and they were saying to us, they actually went on strike one time, that we were overfeeding them, that the people were dying at home... So when they came back from the Soviet Union and they were in Angola, they came to me and said: Commissar, we are hungry, I reminded them that no, we don't want to overfeed you because people are dying at home... In a revolution you never know when you are going to go hungry.²⁹

Andrew Masondo's reminder did not work for long as complaints about the food were mentioned often in later reports from the camps. The camps soon worked out systems of getting a more varied diet. By trading the tins of food from the Soviet Union or China with local villagers, the cadres could acquire fresh meat or vegetables. After a while most of the camps would keep poultry, although farming never caught on.

University of the South

By far the most important camp during these first years was Nova Katengue. It is remembered for two outstanding events, the food poisoning by South African agents and as the only ANC structure in Angola that was directly hit by the SADF Air Force. In the first year, the camp instructors were often Cubans.³⁰ Veterans from the Wankie Campaign, the group that had left just before Soweto and the odd soldier that had fought with the allies in Europe in the Second World War were also to be teachers for the Soweto generation.³¹ The Wankie campaign veterans, the Luthuli detachment, was important in the training, as they had been in action in southern Africa.³²

²⁷ See Kasrils autobiography, *Armed and Dangerous* and interview Hilda Bernstein/ Gwendoline Sello,, *Oral history of Exiles Project*, Mayibuye, UWC. The interview is also reproduced in Bernstein: *Rift- the exile experience* Red Army was called so because it resembles small red beans.

²⁸ Interview MS/Masondo.

²⁹ Interview MS/Masondo.

³⁰ Interview MS/Rashid and Kodesh/Mavuso.

³¹ Amongst Communist Party veterans there were people who had fought Nazi- Germany for the British. Their influence was probably more for morale than military skills.

³² Interview MS/Masondo.

Along with the military training went the political training. Commissars and political instructors included Mark Shope, Ronnie Kasrils, Jack Simons and Francis Meli. Several of the instructors were white or coloured. Many new recruits who had grown up with the Black Consciousness movement wondered what white people were doing in the camps.³³ In spite of this, Kasrils claims the students got along with their white lecturers well.³⁴ Before leaving from London for Angola in 1978, Ronnie Kasrils brought charts from the Natural History Museum in Kensington to use in class at Nova Katengue. To explain the evolution of man was important to clear away the notion of race amongst the cadres.³⁵

The academic credentials of the lecturers - Simons was a professor and Meli had a PhD - caused Nova Katengue to be referred to as the University of the South. Simons himself was impressed by the discussions amongst his pupils, many of whom had been trained in Moscow:

Feb. 7, Wednesday: back from class - Andrews platoon, good discussion – as yesterday. Much interest in "nationalism" as dealt with in classics, and in relation to our situation. Most of members participate and we do manage to resolve problems, reconcile differences and arrive at conclusions.³⁶

The ANC's appeal to get books from its supporters paid off and the camp soon had a library. Abraham Lentsoane confirms Simons' notion that the students were interested in the lectures. Lentsoane was impressed by Mark Shope's lectures on trade unionism and Simons' lectures on Marxism.³⁷ Some of the most important training given at the

³³ Interview MS/Masondo.

³⁴ Interview Howard Barrell/ Ronnie Kasrils, London: 1989.

³⁵ Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous* p. 169, in fact, one of the charts from the Natural History Museum was a chart showing ape developing into man.

³⁶ Jack Simons *Diary* in Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*, p. 103.

³⁷ Interview Kodesh/Lentsoane.

camp was not just in politics and history but in elementary subjects like geography and mathematics.

During the two months Simons spent in Nova Katengue at the beginning of 1977, he experienced a camp on alert as "Ian Smith's mercenary thugs" attacked the ZAPU camp nearby. Although many classes were abandoned because of alerts, Simons' seminars on South African history continued.³⁸ Besides writing down his thoughts on the teaching Simons leaves a documentary on the growing tensions in the camp. He noted down difficulties, mainly malaria and heavy rains which would bring other diseases. This led to tensions with the Cubans who had easier access to medicine and clean water. The day after noting down his satisfaction with class, Simons is more of a pessimist:

Feb.8, Thursday...Am told that +/- 120 cases of malaria - nearly half of our population. But not a single case amongst Cubans. According to table gossip, they allege malaria is an African disease-very vulgar and ignorant comment. Cuban doctor, I'm told shows no interest in what amounts to an epidemic - surely concern to medical science, and inclines to believe that many of us are malingering. If true, this attitude reflects the width of chasm between "them" and "us".³⁹

There were also cultural activities in the camp. Holidays were celebrated with sport and cultural activities. Amongst these were: 8 January, forming of the ANC; 16 June, in commemoration of the youth uprising and 26 June, signing of the Freedom Charter. Football was a popular pastime and the cadres would form teams with names from home, like Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallows. Culture consisted of performances of dance and music or poetry reciting. Artworks would be on display and later camps would have their own studios for this. Cadres performed self-written plays about their former life in South Africa. Although the movement's own holidays dominated, other

³⁸ Simons' diary in Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*, p. 103.

³⁹ Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*, p. 103.

days, like the Soviet Union Holiday on 23 February, the founding day of the Red Army in 1918 were also commemorated:

Feb. 24, Saturday, yesterdays commemoration of Red Army Day went off well, with a display of relevant Soviet literature, introduced effectively by members of ex-Moscow "special" platoon - a baseball match (in which Cub predominated and a football match between "champion" Dynamos and a "picked team". At night a culture evening - Speeches by Cuban Commissar and Camp Commander (very good) , followed by concert (highlight a drama, centred as usual around a shebeen, the most vividly remembered social aspect of Soweto life - coupled with crime). B/stan removals and resistance (the political element a relatively new note in "Shebeen" acts)....⁴⁰

The cadres' reaction to the training was mixed. Many showed their enthusiasm as in the observations by Simons and Kasrils , others protested that they had not come to Angola to talk politics or sit in classes.⁴¹ A near mutiny in Quibaxe in 1977 indicates that cadres were becoming restless. Some may have found classes inspiring; others saw them as an obstacle to getting home with an AK 47. Many of the cadres were in their late teens, some as young as fifteen. Their age, according to Rashid, forced the ANC to hold back most of the cadres⁴², and education was a way to do this. When first going into exile every recruit would be asked whether academic training in Tanzania or military training in Angola was preferred and most of the youngsters opted for military.⁴³ In March 1977, the Novo Katengue camp got three more anti-aircraft guns. Simons' mission was over and his health was seriously affected by malaria. His "university" disintegrated as the defence role became more important than the academic training. Simons himself noted this decline in his diary.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*, p. 108.

⁴¹ Interview Wolfie Kodesh/ Siphso Binda.

⁴² Interview MS/ Rashid.

⁴³ Interview MS/ Masondo.

⁴⁴ Simons diary in Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg: *Comrade Jack*. p. 107.

Comrades – gender and race

Along with Nova Katengue, the ANC opened transit-camps in Benguela and outside the capital Luanda in the first year of their presence in Angola. In a transit camp outside Benguela, MK could have housed around five hundred men in tents and twenty five women in a house. Like Funda, the Benguela transit camp was an old Portuguese farm. One of the women in transit there, Gwendoline Sello, was more impressed by Nova Katengue where she was moved after Benguela.⁴⁵ Nova Katengue had several brick buildings, barracks, a dining hall, kitchen and a small hospital. The transit camp at Benguela was soon abandoned because of the lack of such facilities. In 1977 the ANC were given several plots by the MPLA to build their camps. In Luanda MK already used Viana as a transit camp. North of the capital they were given Caxito. During 1977 and 1979, the Angolan government granted five camps east and north of Luanda: Caxito, Quibaxe, Pango, Fazenda and finally Camp 32, later called Quatro.⁴⁶ These camps would house between a couple of hundred to almost a thousand. The ANC was given total autonomy to rule their camps and carry out their military training.⁴⁷ Pango and Quibaxe were to be the main training camps. These two camps were situated northeast of Caxito, on the verge of the Dembos forest. Quibaxe was used for cadres who had gone through initial training at Nova Katengue or in eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. Pango was largely populated when cadres were moved from Nova Katengue in 1979.

⁴⁵ Interview Hilda Bernstein/ Gwendoline Sello.

⁴⁶ Although the names of these camps seems to match those named in *ANC's second submission to the TRC*, some of these camps came into being earlier than the submission admits. The TRC's list is neither complete nor correct. Many of the camps were short-lived and of rather little significance, especially in the light of the TRC. The most disputed camp - and the one of most concern to the TRC - Quatro or Camp 32 is mentioned in the submission with correct details.

⁴⁷ Interview MS/Rashid.

There were few women and even fewer white men in the camps. As interviews in the Mayibuye Archives indicate, the women in the camps were given the privilege of shelter in the few buildings available.⁴⁸ One of these buildings in Luanda was the former South African embassy. Some women were also able to do some shopping in Dar es Salaam before leaving for the Angolan camps. Women's underwear was in short stock in Luanda.⁴⁹ Otherwise they were given the same food and training as the men.⁵⁰ There was a woman commander who handled the female group of cadres. Certain issues they would discuss separately from mixed gender classes.⁵¹ The men were appreciative of their female comrades and did what they could to help them. Masondo recounts that during the shortage of water "the guys just sacrificed for the ladies".⁵² A female cadre, comrade Precious, confirms his statement:

Sometimes it used to be tough: there's no water in the camps and then you are menstruating. We have to share a cup of water...our menfolk used to sacrifice some water for us.⁵³

But problems between the sexes would sometimes emerge. The ANC tried to solve this by including women's emancipation into the curricula of political courses.⁵⁴ Like the other problems in the camp, these kinds of problems would be openly discussed. Some conflicts were solved between the women and the command:

In the camp we used to have meetings to address problems. Some were within the camp as a whole, everybody could participate. But certain problems we used to discuss as women and then if we had reached a certain conclusion, we used to go to the camp commander... then he would see what to do with the problem.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Interviews Bernstein/Gwendoline Sello and Katleho Moloi in Mayibuye Centre for oral history. Reproduced in Bernstein, *Rift -the Exile experience*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994)

⁴⁹ Interview Wolfie Kodesh with Jumainah Modiakgotla in Mayibuye Centre for oral history.

⁵⁰ Interview MS/ Masondo.

⁵¹ Interview with Cde Precious cited in Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*, p. 14.

⁵² Interview MS/ Masondo.

⁵³ Interview Cde Precious in Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*, p. 14.

⁵⁴ See Jack Simons' lectures in Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*.

⁵⁵ Interview Cde Precious in Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*. p 14

The attitude towards women seems to have been better than amongst the PLAN fighters of SWAPO. Most Namibian women in Angola were civilian refugees but those who joined PLAN were not always treated with respect. Ellen Ndeshi Namhila writes about rape and concubinage in the PLAN camps.⁵⁶ Her story is not a single occurrence. In the camps of another ally of MK, ZIPRA of ZAPU, women seem to have gone through the same experience as their MK sisters, trained and treated as men. Former ZANLA women combatants speak of a more gender divided camp life where women often had to do the cooking or mending of clothes.⁵⁷

According to Andrew Masondo the punishment for rape of Angolan women by MK soldiers was death. This also applied to MK recruits raping their own female comrades. This occurred later in the ANC's stay in Angola. The death sentence could have stopped female recruits from reporting instances of rape as they did not want to be responsible for a comrade's death, even if he was a rapist. It would be naïve to see the absence of reports on violence towards women in the camps as evidence that it did not occur. The political classes and discussions stressed gender equality, as did the publication *Dawn*. But the camp-life was male-dominated and hard and if rape didn't get reported, the instances of violence towards Angolan women suggest that it did take place. But for women as for men the worst was still to come.

As for the colours present in the camp the huge majority were black Africans. Apart from some white instructors like Simons and Kasrils, there were few white, coloured and Indian recruits. One cadre put the number of Indian and white recruits at 5%.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ellen Ndeshi Namhila, *The Price of Freedom*, (Windhoek: New Namibia Books, 1997).

⁵⁷ Interviews with former female combatants of ZANLA and ZIPRA are found in *Women of Resilience*, (Harare: Zimbabwe Women Press, 2000).

⁵⁸ Interview with Cde Reggie Mpongo in Ansell, Shreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*. p 13.

White and Indian recruits were important for MK as they were easier to infiltrate back into the country and could access areas barred to black combatants. While the African recruits often ended up staying in the camps for a prolonged period, white recruits were hastily put into action. Some of them came to Angola only for crash courses that could last between two weeks and three months.⁵⁹ Even though the white commanders could not yet be in the leadership of the ANC, they were visible in the Revolutionary Council and in the MK high command. White commanders and instructors were an important factor in convincing new recruits that white people were not necessarily bad. One such "symbolic" figure was Commander Joe Slovo who often travelled between camps in Angola.

Recruits for special training were moved from Funda to Caxito and then on to Quibaxe. Some were also sent to the smaller training facilities at Fazenda. East of Luanda, close to the provisional capital Malanje was where MK was given a farm. The idea was that cadres were to grow fresh food as this was often in abundance in the other camps and Luanda. As the diaries and accounts from the camps during these early years show, the first years in the camps, despite problems with logistics and food, went fairly smoothly. Most cadres would stay for no longer than eight months before being sent to the front.⁶⁰ Recruits were eager to learn and discussions were at a high level. There were of course problems with getting used to the hot climate of Angola and being away from home, but it was a common notion that their stay was only temporary and they would soon return home.⁶¹

⁵⁹ For MK tactics involving whites see MS interviews Masondo and Rashid.

⁶⁰ Interview MS/Rashid.

⁶¹ Interview Kodesh/Lentsoane.

The ANC was given an office in a formerly well-to-do neighbourhood with Portuguese villas in Luanda. The residential villa in Vila Alice was shared with SWAPO and the Front for the Liberation of West Sahara, Polisario.⁶² The office in Luanda housed the chief representative, Cassius Make, and the MK commander Joe Modise. Commander Joe Slovo, head of personnel and training in the region, Mzwai Piliso and National Commissar Andrew Masondo, all of whom were on the NEC, were also based in Luanda. The military headquarters were for a time based in Luanda. The camp commanders would report to the Regional Command in Luanda who would report to headquarters either in Luanda or Lusaka. Instructions would be sent back along the same route, in reverse. The MK Chief Commander Joe Modise would spend his time between Lusaka, Luanda and the front.

Ronnie Kasrils, who also visited Luanda frequently, describes in his autobiography, *Armed and Dangerous*, the fever-pitch of life in Luanda in these early years of independence.⁶³ Luanda saw itself as the light of revolution in Africa. The three organisations sharing offices in Vila Alice were not the only guerrillas in town. Angola's prime minister Lopo de Nacimento declared in Moscow that Luanda was the centre of Marxism in Africa.⁶⁴ The signature tune for Radio Angola was *Trincheira Firme a revolucao da Africa*, the Firm Trench of Revolution in Africa.⁶⁵ The ANC could feel itself more at home than in Lusaka. Meetings of the Revolutionary Council were often held in Luanda because so many were present there at all times. It was increasingly difficult to work from Lusaka. From 1978 the MK journal *Dawn* was

⁶² This is partly my own recollection, supplemented with Ronnie Kasrils: *Armed and Dangerous*. Polisario's full name is Frente Popular de Liberacion Saharawi Revolucionario (Spanish)

⁶³ Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous* p. 139.

⁶⁴ de Nacimento's speech has been noted by both Kasrils in *Armed and Dangerous*, and Wolfers and Bergol in *Angola in the Frontline*. (London: Zed, 1983).

⁶⁵ Interview MS/ Rashid, his translation from Portuguese.

printed in Angola's capital and later the same year Radio Freedom also started broadcasting on Luanda Radio. Several Radio Freedom journalists would from now onwards be based in Luanda, although Radio Freedom had its main base in Lusaka.⁶⁶

The ANC had a residential house in Luanda and later they would also have several underground houses for intensive training. These houses were to be kept secret from the cadres in the camps until people had been trained for special missions.⁶⁷ Cadres that received their training in such houses were not always exiles, but sometimes people in positions or with work back in South Africa who went on long "holidays". This explains some of the secrecy and tight security sometimes surrounding such houses. The secrecy gave birth to myths both amongst cadres and foreign agencies.⁶⁸ As more and more cadres left South Africa for exile, the camps in Angola became crowded. Getting fully trained units back into the country was becoming increasingly difficult. In addition, many of the new recruits were too young for missions.

The training

As a structure of rank and file in Angola took shape, training and cultural activities became increasingly important. In the MK operations report submitted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission⁶⁹, the ANC lists eleven "military subjects" that were taught in the Angolan camps. In addition to military training such as the use of firearms and

⁶⁶ *Sechaba* 2nd Quarter 1978.

⁶⁷ Interview MS/Masondo.

⁶⁸ In *Comrades against Apartheid*, Stephen Ellis claims that several IRA volunteers from Northern Ireland trained MK cadres in sophisticated explosives in a Luanda flat. Hardly the stuff for suburban passing of time, IRA techniques in 1978 were not particularly sophisticated. Ellis seem to have gotten his information from a Tory MP that in turn got it from a leak in the MI6. There were individuals with Irish accents based in Luanda at the time but that some of those were from the provisional IRA does not seem plausible. The IRA's bombing campaign had landed most of their "engineers" in prison at this time and they had enough problems at home to keep them busy. See Eamonn Mallie and Patrick Bishop: *The Provisional IRA*, Heinemann 1987 London, Private Sources

⁶⁹ Umkhonto we Sizwe Operations Report, appendix to the *Second Submission to the TRC*.

tactics, the cadres attended a course in what was dubbed military combat work (MCW). It was a course in underground and clandestine methods and organisation. It also generated the planning of insurrection. Together with this the cadres were trained in military engineering, in effect sabotage, use of explosives and so on. But MK was trained for conventional warfare as well as guerrilla warfare. This was mirrored in the organisation of the camps that were built along the lines of conventional army organisation:

The training was of a joint sort, formal military training as well as training to be able to operate conventional units as well. And the organisation of the ANC camps was actually done along formal military lines. It wasn't as all were organised as guerrilla forces, there was a proper hierarchy in the camps, people were organised in traditional units, platoons, companies, battalions. Training also included not only light weaponry but also artillery.⁷⁰

First aid was briefly touched upon, but it was only later that MK had full-time courses in nursing and healthcare. Another important subject was the use of anti-aircraft weaponry as camps in the south were increasingly in danger of air-attack. The political training was done both by instructors, like Jack Simons, and by Commissar Ronnie Kasrils, who ran classes in both Quibaxe and later Nova Katengue; he has stressed that the political training was important for keeping discipline.⁷¹ This was mainly the job of the political commissars in each camp. The role of instructor was different from that of a commissar. Masondo who served as National Commissar explained:

...You see, even the political instruction was actually part of the work of the commissariat, although a commissar and a political instructor are not the same. We had political instructors, we had commissars, because, what was the task of the commissar? The task of the commissar was to take the politics and make them into day to day life of the cadre. The commissar was also the custodian of the welfare of the soldier. The commissar was the representative of the soldier in the National Executive and the whole system had both a command and a commissariat...⁷²

⁷⁰ Interview MS/Rashid - In 1977 instructor at the Funda and later Caxito camp.

⁷¹ Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, p.156 -157.

⁷² Interview MS/Masondo.

As with Simons' course in South African history in Nova Katengue, Kasrils' course on the same subject in Quibaxe attracted considerable interest from the cadres. Kasrils was not impressed by the cadres' knowledge of the subject. The courses that were run in Quibaxe were often preliminary courses for people going to Nova Katengue. Many of the cadres were very young and could hardly read or write. That resistance to minority rule in South Africa was older than apartheid was news for the cadres, products of the apartheid education system. Kasrils also noted that the young recruits with little or no political training were interested in "communism". He explains that this was the result of the preoccupation of the regime in Pretoria with communism as the main enemy.

The generation of 1976 was better educated than the ones to follow. One of their instructors put the average educational level at between standard seven and ten. This was to drop as the schools were hit by new upheavals from 1976 onwards.⁷³ Some in this generation had even attended university, and a few had degrees. People from the Durban area were influenced by the organising of the Black Consciousness Movement at the Black section (UNB) of the University of Natal. Mandla Langa who went into exile later and trained in Angola, has written about the climate amongst young people in Durban in the years Steve Biko attended UNB:

Something of a cultural upheaval hit the shore of Durban. Student organisations invited musicians, painters, poets, ideologues and cultural groupies. They were to be seen in the city in their outlandish clothes lugging shoulder bags full of the literature that could give the Publications Control Board a collective coronary: Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, Che Guevara's *On Guerrilla Warfare*, Mao Tse Tung, Regis Debray, Carlos Marighella, Frantz Fanon's *wretched of the Earth*, Amilcar Cabral's *Return*

⁷³ Interview MS/Rashid.

to the Source and Revolution in Guinea. It was a mixed bag of political thinking from Trotsky to Marcuse via Mao.⁷⁴

For those without university or earlier political experience the more educated cadres would introduce some of these books to read. Books were circulated in the camps and one of Regional Chief Mzwai Piliso's ideas was a camp library system. The ANC appealed to Cuba, the eastern bloc, the Soviet Union and the International Anti - Apartheid movement for books. Soon there was a large amount of political and historical literature in the camps for the cadres to read. Piliso hoped this would further the academic and political thinking of cadres without much formal training in that area.⁷⁵

It was the emphasis on political training that distanced MK from other liberation armies in southern Africa. The commissars were present in most organisations but they varied in effectiveness. Women ex-combatants from Zimbabwe interviewed in *Women of Resilience* remember little or no political training in the ZIPRA and ZANLA camps.⁷⁶ In training PLAN fighters, SWAPO had commissars but kept courses to a minimum.⁷⁷ Angola's own FAPLA forces had political training and commissars. The MPLA was founded by urban intellectuals and closely linked to the Portuguese Communist Party. In the MPLA's early years as a guerrilla force, a system of commissars had been developed.⁷⁸ As the MPLA guerrilla force transformed into a conventional force,

⁷⁴ Mandla Langa, *Rainbow on a paper sky*, (London: Kliptown books, 1989), p. 72. Langa left the country in the 80's, went to Angola, joined the cultural group Amandla and kept on working for the ANC cultural department.

⁷⁵ Interview MS/Masondo.

⁷⁶ *Women of Resilience*, ZPH.

⁷⁷ Leys and Saul, *Namibia's liberation struggle the two-edged sword* and Ndeshi Namhila, *The Price of Freedom*

⁷⁸ Basil Davidson, *In the eye of the storm*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974) and Pepetela, *Mayombe*, (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1995).

FAPLA was a conscripted army, the commissars lost some of their importance. Information about the Angolan army after its reorganisation in 1978 is scarce.

ZAPU/ZANU and SWAPO camps both had civilian refugees and trained fighters in Angola. The refugees did get various degrees of political instruction. The MK camps had only military recruits. But overall the ANC had a greater intellectual capacity than their allies and this was important in educating their army, MK.⁷⁹ There was a significantly higher proportion of people with higher education in both the ANC and MK. MK's command structure had a significantly higher number of university graduates than the structures of command in related armies.⁸⁰

In the first years in Angola the political training kept cadres busy. This to some degree reduced the homesickness and boredom normally expected in army camps. But as the cadres experienced prolonged stays in the camps, courses may have been repeated. Lentsoane noted how the course on South African history developed by Jack Simons continued for years. Some cadres went through it several times. This, he argues, did promote some criticism and debates on alternative subjects, such as the history of Cuba or Vietnam.⁸¹

Relationship with the MPLA and the Cubans

The political climate in Luanda was different from that in Lusaka. Angola was a country at war, so dealing with the MPLA as a movement meant dealing with FAPLA, the army, and the Cuban forces FAR (Forças Armadas Revolucionario). The

⁷⁹ As in Bordieu: cultural and educational capital.

⁸⁰ Partly because of the earlier exiles who had spent a proportion of both the 60's and 70's in universities in Europe or the Soviet Union.

⁸¹ Interview Kodesh/Lentsoane.

relationship between the two movements, the ANC and the MPLA was excellent. The ANC had open access to ports and airports in Angola and they did not pay taxes or customs duty on their equipment⁸². Neither were the MPLA interested in what kind of shipments the ANC were receiving. Officials' baggage would not be checked at the airport. There was not even any need for clearance for weapons on the flights to Lusaka:

...from the airport it (the ANC) was also able to send staff to Zambia, Lusaka and so on, so you know. In fact the authorities there gave total carte blanche to the ANC officials, they were seen as a part of the whole family...there was a healthy kind of spirit, you know this grew over years.⁸³

There is no doubt that the ANC leadership and the MPLA leadership felt like part of the same struggle. At the same time they had a mutual agreement not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. When the MPLA had to fight off a coup attempt in 1978, the so-called Nito Alves coup, the ANC avoided taking sides. The situation was serious in Luanda for some days while MK cadres continued their training out in the camps. According to NEC and RC member Andrew Masondo, he and his colleagues waited for the storm to pass.⁸⁴ Earlier skirmishes in Tanzania had taught the organisation to stay outside infighting in host-countries.⁸⁵ Oliver Tambo spoke about the MPLA's struggle as part of the ANC's own struggle. A greeting from the NEC to the MPLA's first congress⁸⁶ in Luanda 1977 stated:

We bring this historic first congress of the MPLA warmest and most fraternal greetings from the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress, from its militants and combatants, from the workers and the peasants, the women and the youth: from the entire struggling

⁸² Interview MS/Rashid.

⁸³ Interview MS/Rashid .

⁸⁴ Interview MS/Masondo.

⁸⁵ See chapter 1, ANC got accused in 1970 for conspiring to overthrow Nyerere. ANC pleaded not guilty but evacuated to the Soviet Union.

⁸⁶ MPLA changed from a movement to a party during 1977. Although the MPLA had been in existence 21 years, this was their first party congress.

people of South Africa. We feel genuinely proud that we are active participants in the making of African history here in Angola at this time...⁸⁷

The relationship was strong on the diplomatic front. But occasionally the relationship would be more complicated as some MK-cadres contravened Angolan law. Both FAPLA and MK experienced serious shortages of some food and became dependant on each other for certain things. This could of course also create tensions. After the Nito Alves coup-attempt, FAPLA had problems with their supplies:

..in the morning we just saw a group of FAPLA's you know, coming, storm into our kitchen and demanding food. They saying: This is our bread, you know, its Angola... nothing to do but to give them.⁸⁸

The relationship between the two armies MK and FAPLA included some collaboration. This included transport of supplies and, in the early stage, training. In comparison with MK's relations with other armies, those between MK and FAPLA were weak.

The FAR was more important as a comrade in arms than FAPLA due to their presence in some of the MK camps. FAR could provide different training and medical support. FAR also helped organise defence in MK's southern camps.⁸⁹ In 1978, one hundred and twenty three ANC delegates visited Havana and the International Youth Festival on invitation from the Cuban Communist party. The young cadres were intrigued to meet Cuban veterans from the campaign against the SADF in Angola 1975-76.⁹⁰ In Nova Katengue the Cubans ran the hospital.⁹¹ The close relationship with the Cubans was also manifested in the naming of one of the MK detachments with a Cuban name. After

⁸⁷ BOX 61, UFH, Oliver Tambo Papers, *Message of the ANC of South Africa to the 1st Congress of the MPLA*, Luanda Dec. -77.

⁸⁸ Interview Wolfie Kodesh/ Siphso Binda.

⁸⁹ Evident in Simons' diary and Kasrils' biography. Also several of the interviewed remember the Cubans in this role.

⁹⁰ *Sechaba* 4th Quarter 1978, p. 2 – 3.

the initial first detachment called 16 of June, the second detachment trained was called the Moncada detachment.⁹² In 1953 Fidel Castro's guerrillas had stormed the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba. The Moncada attack in Cuba is seen as the start of the Cuban revolution. The story of the Moncada attack and other stories from the Cuban revolution were known to MK cadres. Cuban heroes like Camilio Cienfuegos and Che Guevara were covered in articles in *Dawn*.⁹³ Some of the cadres even received training in Cuba, especially in the medical field. If the relationship between MK and the Cubans could be strained as during the malaria epidemic reported by Simons, the overall relations seems to have been good. Rank and file used the Cuban revolution as an inspiration although their own experiences were different. Of the other forces on Angolan soil, more contact seems to have been established with FAR than any other.

The Soviet Red Army had no regular soldiers in Angola but MK had some sporadic contact with Soviet instructors.⁹⁴ This was limited to the special training camps. FAPLA and FAR could be a source of supplies, and as cadres started to pick up Portuguese and Spanish, this became easier:

As time goes on you'll understand, you know and of course you'll be mingling with FAPLA you know. The same yards you know...Of, course we're closed from South Africa er, so seldom for either beer or for aguadente you know. Then with the Cubans also will trocar (exchange).. Give them a shirt and they'll give you a cigar or something....Got on very well. Well there would be some mischievous FAPLA guys. Even our guys, you know, fighting with some FAPLA's, some Cubans one or two... But it was good really. They used to give us their food, the Cubans..⁹⁵

The day-to-day contact was more important than any ideological preference. As with the football games at camps in Tanzania between liberation movements, and sporting

⁹¹ Interviews Wolfie Kodesh with Siphon Binda at Mayibuye centre for oral history, and Kodesh/Mavuso

⁹² Shubin, *ANC - A view from Moscow*, p. 186.

⁹³ *Dawn* volume 2 no.4.

⁹⁴ Interview Kodesh with Tony Yengeni at Mayibuye centre for oral history.

events in Nova Katengue between Cubans and South Africans, the interchanging of supplies seems to have cemented contacts all over Angola.

Guerrillas or urban militants?

The groups of recruits despatched to Moscow and Odessa after Soweto now came back to the African continent to teach their bretheren. The romanticism of the Latin-American rebellion was not lost in the scientific Marxism taught by the Soviets. Guevara and now also the Frenchman Regis Debray still had their disciples in MK and the ANC. As we have seen from the "reading list" of the generation of 1976 both Cabral, Fanon and Debray were mentioned.⁹⁶ The new generation had themselves been involved in physically fighting the regime. According to Ronnie Kasrils this inspired a further move away from the focoism of Che Guevara towards new theories.⁹⁷ The focoism reflected in the Mayibuye document of 1964 had outlived the Rhodesian campaigns of 1967 and 1968, and was now increasingly scrutinized by a new generation.

The foco theory focused on a rural insurrection, while most of the new recruits were from the townships. Debray wrote his "Revolution in the Revolution" after he was sentenced to thirty years' imprisonment in Bolivia around the time of Che's death in 1967.⁹⁸ Like Che he had volunteered on behalf of the Latin-American revolution. Before this he had taught philosophy at the University of Havana. Debray was not a supporter of Moscow, the nest of what he called "the senile communism". Rather than

⁹⁵ Interview Kodesh/ Binda, edited MS.

⁹⁶ Mandla Langa's "readings" as stated over include these three third world revolutionary thinkers. These three are also prominent amongst other "reading lists" and several of my interviewees stated having read them while in Angola.

⁹⁷ Interview Barrell/Kasrils.

following dogmatism every guerrilla movement or people's revolt should learn by their own experiences rather than read classics such as Lenin's *State and Revolution* or Mao's *Guerrilla warfare*. Further Debray points out that the revolutionary transforms himself as he makes the revolution. Debray was known to cadres but not included in the classes. His theories, though, seemed to fit with the new generation of cadres in MK.

Through *Dawn* in 1978, cadres were exposed to articles concerned with political armies, armies of national liberation, revolution and political violence.⁹⁹ The different ways of struggle was a subject for study. Later on, analysing news became a part of daily life. Every morning, news would be presented followed by discussions. The situation in Angola was also used and analysed, as in the following fragment from an article about national liberation and young national states. The author was commissar "Che O'Gara" January Masilela:

The role of FAPLA today in Angola and Frelimo in Mozambique give a clear understanding of the role played by armies of young national states. Under the leadership and guidance of MPLA, FAPLA started armed struggle as small units with primitive weapons and was transformed into a regular army in August 1st 1974.¹⁰⁰

The above extract shows FAPLA as a regular army, as it was important to show cadres the difference between MK and their allies.¹⁰¹ Another movement that watched the MPLA closely was ZAPU. A strategy document by ZIPRA's main strategist J. Z. Moyo, signalled the reorganisation of the army in 1976.¹⁰² Moyo argued that a liberation army must be prepared to move in as a conventional army to defend

⁹⁸ I have not found an English version of this book. My Norwegian translation (*Regis Debray: Revolusjon*) was published in by Pax Oslo 1968. Any cites from this text will be translated by me from Norwegian.

⁹⁹ *Dawn* volume 2 1978 no. 3 –6.

¹⁰⁰ *Dawn* volume 2 1978 no. 6.

¹⁰¹ Later Masilela became a secretary of Defence in the new South Africa.

¹⁰² Jeremy Brickhill, "Daring to storm the heavens, the military strategy of ZAPU 1976- 1979", in Bhebe and Ranger, *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation war*, (London: JamesCurrey, 1995), p.56.

liberation. The theory was adopted from the Vietnamese general Nguyen Von Giap. The ANC was also inspired by the general but did not adopt the policy of changing into a conventional army.

As well as the Marxist texts and the various revolutionary offshoots and military histories, another influence came in strongly after 1976. This was of course the literature of the Black Consciousness Movement. Those who had experienced the organisation in the universities before fleeing South Africa brought influences from the Afro-American thinkers like George Jackson, Malcolm X and more recently, Angela Davis.¹⁰³ They had read literature on the civil rights movement as well as the Black Panthers, a radical Afro-American group crushed by the FBI in the early 1970's. Apart from the well-known slogan "Black is Beautiful", the Afro-Americans had explained the necessity of violence in the course of freeing themselves, a thought earlier expressed by Franz Fanon. Although not official ANC policy, the theories and methods of the urban Afro-American militants were discussed amongst the cadres in the rank and file. Most of the cadres were themselves from the sprawling townships, not unlike the American ghettos. Going to the front would mean infiltrating back into South Africa and organising from these townships. Histories of movements organising in urban settings also circulated with the cadres. When Tokyo Sexwale was based in Lesotho he read an organisational biography of the Provisional IRA along with Marx and Guevara.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Interview Maren Sæbø with Peter Rooi Sehube aka Pat Moloi aka Buda (Hereafter refereed to as Sehube) Trondheim 5.6. 2001. Buda left South Africa in 1975, 24 years old, member of BCM

¹⁰⁴ Police testimony of Tokyo Sexwale 1977 in Karis and Gerhardt: *A Documentary History of Black Politics*. P. 692.

Black September - conceiving a Security Department

In September 1977 the recruits at Nova Katengue came down with a violent sickness after breakfast. The Cuban medical staff from a nearby camp treated the South Africans - somewhere just over 500 people - for food poisoning.¹⁰⁵ As the camp recovered, two of the recruits were found to have put poison in the breakfast. They later claimed that they had obtained the poison from the South African Security Forces. From the Rhodesian war it is known that the Selous Scouts, allies of the SADF, used amongst other things thallium and rat poison against ZIPRA.¹⁰⁶ The poison found in Nova Katengue was believed to be rat poison. This episode taught the ANC to "be more vigilant" with the screening of the recruits who now came to Angola. Just after 1976 there was no screening of new recruits that arrived out of South Africa. The ANC leadership, of whom Masondo now was a member, looked with pity on the young exiles:

You know there was this fact that our children were massacred, were put in prison and the whole thinking was one of "oh shame, let us treat them softly". To the extent when people came we never searched them.¹⁰⁷

Masondo arrived back in Novo Katengue just after the episode that later became known as "Black September", the poisoning of the breakfast. He and Camp Commander Julius Mokoena sat down to work out a code of conduct for MK. This was to help both in matters of discipline and to avoid episodes such as the food poisoning. The two recruits who were found guilty of poisoning the food were given a second chance. But their action was to inspire tougher means against later suspected agents and agents

¹⁰⁵ Interview MS/Masondo.

¹⁰⁶ Alexnder, McGregor and Ranger, *Violence and Memory, one hundred years in the dark forests of Matabeleland*,(Oxford: James Currey, 2000), p. 144.

¹⁰⁷ Interview MS/Masondo.

provocateurs. The code of conduct was approved by the RC and the NEC and later became the Code of Conduct for the ANC.

Amnesty International has noted "crackdowns" on indiscipline in the camps in Angola from the late 1970's.¹⁰⁸ Amongst things cracked down on were the smoking of marijuana, theft, fighting between cadres and disregard of camp rules.¹⁰⁹ At this early stage offenders were held in their respective camps. Fourteen cadres who refused orders in Nova Katengue in 1977 were sent to the newly opened camp at Quibaxe north of Luanda. The fourteen had just completed their six months' initial training and demanded to be sent back to South Africa at once.¹¹⁰ After a near-mutiny in Quibaxe, the "Quibaxe 14" were handed one to three months' camp duty without the right to carry weapons.

If Angolan law was broken, offenders were sent to Angolan prisons. Experiences in the first years in Angola were vital in the forming of the security department of the ANC. It was incidents such as the food poisoning and later the bombardment of the Nova Katengue Camp that prompted the framing of new security procedures. By 1978 the screening of new recruits had begun in the camps. This was especially important for people going to the front areas. A main reason for the screening was the fear of attacks after the SWAPO camp at Kassinga was levelled by the SADF Air Force in May 1978. A security department headed by Siphon Makana, was designed for this task by late 1978.¹¹¹ The department was under the command of the ANC National Security

¹⁰⁸ Amnesty International Report on Torture III-treatment and executions in African National Congress camps Dec. 92 (AFR 53/27/92).

¹⁰⁹ *ANC second submission to the TRC*, (1997) response to questions raised by the Commission for Truth and reconciliation.

¹¹⁰ *ANC second submission to the TRC*. (1997)

¹¹¹ Interview Wolfie Kodesh with Josias Tshabalala, Mayibuye centre of oral history.

Department in Lusaka (NAT). As with the infamous prison camp of Quatro, the security department only got properly into shape in 1979.

Meeting in Luanda 1978

In 1978 several members of the RC and MK High Command went to Vietnam to learn from the recent triumphant Vietnamese guerrillas how to beat a technologically advanced army. MK recognised it needed some new strategies. Little had been done in this area since 1969 when the original Mayibuye plan based on Che Guevara's "foco-theory" had been revised by the ANC. The Strategy and Tactics document of 1969 was incomplete, as the situation in southern Africa had changed significantly. When the RC now wanted MK to renew its tactics it could be seen as a late reaction to the big changes that had occurred both in southern Africa and in South Africa in 1975 and 1976.

A need for change in tactics became evident when MK started to suffer casualties when infiltrating back into South Africa in 1977:

It was very different from traditional guerrilla warfare, when they fought from the borders in large units to the centre of the country. In this case the ANC basically had an approach where they would infiltrate small pockets of the country deep into the heart amongst the masses of the people, in the townships. And in fact the ANC was fighting the struggle from the heart of the country outwards. Because initially, and because of the development of the country, we don't have bush, we don't have the forest that we could operate from. And we suffered a number of casualties in the rural areas.¹¹²

The campaign of 1977-79 thus had some of the same weaknesses as earlier campaigns, notably Wankie. In 1977, twenty-three actions were recorded inside South Africa, thirty in 1978, and in 1979 the number dropped to thirteen. Some of the incidents were battles

with the South African Police (SAP).¹¹³ There were too many borders to cross to effectively send in large numbers. Small units were used, at the most eighteen people but usually from around three to five.¹¹⁴ These units functioned in the urban settings as most of the cadres were themselves from the townships.

A series of meetings, several of them in Luanda, took place in 1977 and 1978. In 1977 the NEC had formed what was to become known as regional political committees (RPC).¹¹⁵ The RPC reported directly to the NEC from the different regions, one of which was Angola. At this time Angola became an important meeting point. This was important for contact between the ANC leadership and the rank and file, who were now mainly based in Angola. The radical environment in Luanda could perhaps have influenced the strategic meetings of 1978. In 1979 the series of meetings resulted in "the Green book".¹¹⁶ The Politico Military Strategy Commission (PMC) who finalised the Green Book, were mostly based in Lusaka. But several of the members spent longer periods in Luanda and other parts of Angola, like commanders Joe Modise and Joe Slovo.¹¹⁷ The Green Book stresses the importance of "peoples war": participation from all layers of society in a revolution. The inspiration, argues Barrell, was the trip by the Strategy Commission to Vietnam in 1978 and the theory of Ho Chi Minh' s People's war. The theory explains the involvement of the whole population in a liberation struggle.

¹¹² Interview MS/Rashid.

¹¹³ Tom Lodge, "State of Exile – The African National Congress of South Africa 1976 –1986", in Frankel, Pines and Swilling, *State, Resistance and Change in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988).

¹¹⁴ Interview MS/Masondo.

¹¹⁵ Shubin, *ANC -a view from Moscow* p. 185.

¹¹⁶ *The Green Book* 1979, at www.anc.org.za/archives/MK.

¹¹⁷ Howard Barrell, The turn to the masses, The ANC strategic review 1978-1979, *Journal of Southern African Studies* no. 1, vol. 18 (1991).

The politics of Angola however are also reflected in the green book: Ho Chi Minh's theory has an Angolan counterpart. The MPLA had in the final years of Portuguese rule developed "Participação Popular", a term that denotes active mass support, a legacy to the movements against Portuguese colonial rule from the time of Amilcar Cabral.¹¹⁸ After independence Angola went through a period of mass participation in building schools and clinics, reducing illiteracy and agricultural research.¹¹⁹ In the MPLA stronghold of Luanda the government helped the growth of radical groups in the *musseques*, or Angolan townships. All sides of society were absorbed into action committees or Amilcar Cabral committees.¹²⁰ Unions and women's organisations played an important part in organising society. This backfired on the MPLA when some action committees instigated the Nito Alves coup attempt in 1977.¹²¹ The effort of organising the whole of society was not lost on the ANC officials. Mass action was central to the strategy launched in the green book.

Apartheid strikes back

During 1978 the SADF increasingly operated against SWAPO camps and troops in southern Angola. With the attack on the SWAPO refugee camp at Kassinga on 4 May 1978, the SADF showed it was capable of reaching far into Angolan territory from the air. Nova Katengue was further from the border than Kassinga but attacks on nearby ZIPRA and SWAPO installations warned MK that the enemy could strike. On 14 March 1979, South African jets dived towards the complex at Nova Katengue. Most of

¹¹⁸ Basil Davidson *Conclusion* in *The Black Man's Burden, Africa and the curse of the Nation State*, (USA: Random house, 1992).

¹¹⁹ Bergol and Wolfers, *Angola in the Frontline*. see chapters 1-3

¹²⁰ Bergol and Wolfers, *Angola in the Frontline*, see also Birmingham, *Frontline Nationalism*. For the theoretical backdrop see Amilcar Cabral: *Revolution in Guinea – an African people's struggle*, (London: Stage, 1969).

the camp's inhabitants were outside the camp. They had been sleeping in the bush for months already after Vorster had proclaimed in a speech on the radio that he was ready to attack a SWAPO camp at Katengue. The Cubans, on the other hand, had calculated the SADF Air Force would not reach that far into Angola. Masondo recalls a discussion with the Cuban Commander and Politburo member of the Cuban Communist Party, Jorge Risquet, about the possibilities of attack at Nova Katengue:

You know we quarrelled with our Cuban comrades. They were telling us, No it is too far, this people can come here, We said, look he (Vorster) will come here, and as a result we prepared for the Canberra's. And when did it come - they came when we would be on parade, or having our breakfast. Now that showed that they had a lot of information.¹²²

When the SADF's Canberras came down on Nova Katengue only 11 people were in the camp preparing that day's breakfast, amongst them the Cuban commander and commissar. About 600 men were coming towards the camp for breakfast after a night in the bush. One of them, Siphon Binda, remembered that about twenty-six had been killed in the nearby ZAPU camp some weeks before.¹²³ So when the Canberras came to Katengue, he and others were in nearby culverts:

There were two culverts, railway bridge. There was one unit next to the camp and another one not far from the camp, then it was there, you know, er. We were about 30 in that culvert - What is interesting is that just before the bombardment, or just before we moved to the culvert, we were staying in one place, open place, so to speak, you know, but I think we assessed the situation that er., no, is not safe to be here, then we got alternative place. That was the culvert.¹²⁴

Siphon Binda and his unit had climbed down into the culvert at three in the morning. When he and others ventured out of the culvert around seven in the morning they

¹²¹ *Africa Confidential*, no 2, 20 January 1978, p. 1-3.

¹²² Interview MS/Masondo

¹²³ Not so nearby, probably in Boma in Moxico province, southeastern Angola.

¹²⁴ Interview Wolfie Kodesh with Siphon Binda, Mayibuye centre for oral history.UWC.

spotted a plane they first thought to be friendly. After realising the planes were fighter jets, the men did not need any command to roll down into the culvert again:

Inside we went. Arrived there, everybody down quiet. Immediately after there was a loud bang. Waaa! That was the first target. Means they hitting our transport depot. Then there was ack, ack, ack, ack, sound of gunfire, ack, ack, ack, boof, Everybody knew we've had it. There's the bombardment now ...I remember I peeped trough the culvert and then I saw, aah, that Boer was enjoying himself, man.¹²⁵

Nova Katengue's anti-aircraft gun was firing at this point. MK claims to have shot down one of the South African jets. The SADF Air Force later denied this. True or not, the battle was short and uneven. Everything alive in the actual camp was killed including chickens and goats. Three people were burnt out of recognition, one a Cuban.¹²⁶ Only one woman was left alive in the actual camp. Mary Minnie had crawled under a bed in one of the dorms and survived. The dorm and Nova Katengue were totally destroyed.¹²⁷ MK claimed to have shot down one of the planes¹²⁸, and on South African radio it was announced the same night that a plane had crashed in Angola.¹²⁹

The ANC was lucky. In 1979, the Angolan Government presented a detailed report to the UN on South African aggression since March 1976. The SADF had conducted seven major bombing-raids into Angola, the biggest being the massacre at Kassinga. It was estimated that five hundred and seventy Angolans had died in these attacks. In addition six hundred and twelve Namibians and one hundred and ninety eight Zimbabweans were also reported killed in these attacks, all of them killed in attacks on

¹²⁵ Interview Wolfie Kodesh with Sipho Binda, Mayibuye centre for oral history.UWC.

¹²⁶ Interview MS/Masondo.

¹²⁷ Interview Kodesh/Binda. Mary Minnie was daughter of the late Vusi Minnie hanged by the regime in the 1960's. Mary was later killed inside South Africa on engagement.

¹²⁸ Interview Kodesh/Binda

¹²⁹ Jack Simons' diary in Ansell, Schreiner and Sparg, *Comrade Jack*, p. 113.

SWAPO and ZIPRA camps.¹³⁰ The death toll after Nova Katengue was three, including one Cuban. The aim of the attacks was to drive a wedge between Angola and their allies, but the SADF did not succeed.¹³¹ What they succeeded in, however, was to militarise the presence of external liberation forces in Angola. SWAPO was already engaged in the war, ZAPU and the ANC now had to intensify guard duties and training so as to be able to fight off further attacks.

After the attack, Nova Katengue was closed down as the command would not risk another raid. Most of the cadres were moved to the newly established Quibaxe Camp in the north. The ANC would never have a camp in the south again. That the Canberras had attacked when the cadres should have been on a morning parade fuelled the need for better security in the camps. Mzwai Piliso and Andrew Masondo were convinced the attacker knew the exact routine of the camp. The attack was believed to be linked to the poisoning a year earlier, since everybody had been poisoned at breakfast shortly before they were to be on parade. Had the attack taken place that day more people would have been killed. Masondo later recalled that the two incidents were investigated as one. What saved the camp was believed to be bad communications between Pretoria and their agents in the camp.¹³²

The other armies

The developments that took place inside MK during these years can be compared with what happened in SWAPO's PLAN forces and in ZAPU's ZIPRA, both of whom also had found sanctuary in Angola. But there were several major differences between

¹³⁰ Marga Holness, Angola - the struggle continues, in Phyllis and Martin, *Destructive Engagement, Southern Africa at War*, (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1986), p. 93

¹³¹ Leys and Saul: *The two- edged sword*, p. 30.

¹³² Interview MS/Masondo.

PLAN, ZIPRA and MK. Both PLAN and ZIPRA fought a more conventional guerrilla war as they could enter directly into their own countries, while MK cadres had no direct access to their home front.

SWAPO headquarters were moved to Angola in 1976.¹³³ The MPLA was sceptical about the Namibian organisation after its short interlude as an ally of UNITA. The Ovimbundu people of southeast Angola were close to the Ovambos of northern Namibia. Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA claimed to be fighting on behalf of the Ovimbundu, while SWAPO got its leadership from among the Ovambo. In Angola SWAPO built a "state in exile" with an armed force, PLAN, a health department, schools and structures for accommodating refugees. SWAPO had in these years up to thirty-thousand refugees in Angola while the ANC and MK cadres numbered only fifteen hundred. MK had military camps in Angola while the ANC civilian refugees were based in other countries. SWAPO had both military and civilian camps in Angola.

The civilian SWAPO refugees got to experience the war through attacks such as the one on Kassinga. The boundaries between the civilian refugees and the armed PLAN forces became blurred and a political culture of authority developed. Accounts from the PLAN camps tell of harsh disciplinary punishment and little internal democracy. The punishments also extended to the civilian Namibian refugees.¹³⁴ Leys and Saul have called this "paradox of liberation without democracy". Leys and Saul hint that this can be found in other movements that fought alongside SWAPO:

¹³³ Leys and Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: the two-edged sword*, (London: James Currey, 1995).

¹³⁴ Apart from Leys and Saul's analysis there are several biographies with examples of SWAPO's authoritarian nature. See Ellen Ndeshi Namhila: *The price of Freedom*, New Namibia Books, Windhoek 1997. Namhila was trained as a nurse by SWAPO in Angola and later went to Cuba for studies.

The paradox of "liberation without democracy" that seems to stalk SWAPO's development may also be viewed instructively from a comparative perspective - highlighting similarities with and differences from the histories of other liberation movements fighting brutal racist dictatorships elsewhere in Southern Africa - the very process of struggling for liberation especially by resort to force of arms, almost inevitably generates political practices that prefigures undemocratic outcomes.¹³⁵

Leys and Saul argue that all movements using force in a liberation struggle become what they have set out to fight. But these authors do not take into account the main thing that distinguishes a guerrilla army from a conventional one, namely, political training. The MK commissar Andrew Masondo mentions political training as crucial to avoid "political practices" as described by Leys and Saul:

Politics within the camps of the ANC was an important issue and in fact it is politics that made it easier for us to actually keep quite a number of our people in the camps...I know some people do say there were serious problems you know, serious commentators will tell you that MK for a liberation army.. it's really surprising that they didn't have more problems ... SWAPO, ZAPU, ZANU all of them (had problems because of lack of) politics.¹³⁶

In the early years of the ANC presence in Angola their numbers were relatively small compared to the numbers of SWAPO in the area. SWAPO were also directly involved in fighting in the south of the country and had need of a tighter military structure. The ANC did not escape problems altogether during this period as the incident with the Quibaxe 14 has shown.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed three questions. The first question concerned the reason why MK moved to Angola. The main reasons were political, such as the ties between the ANC and MPLA and the weakness of those between the ANC and Kaunda in Zambia

¹³⁵ Leys and Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle*, p. 5.

¹³⁶ Interview MS/Masondo

and Nyerere and TANU in Tanzania. Mozambique would have been MK's first choice because of the proximity to South Africa. But this would be a threat to the young state's security. Angola had already been invaded by the SADF. MK did not, on the other hand, arrive to build up a defence in Angola against UNITA and the SADF. The sheer number of recruits arriving after Soweto also contributed to the move.

The second question discussed in this chapter is the setting up of structures and the training of the new generation of MK cadres. The first camps were scattered around Luanda and the southern towns of Lobito and Benguela. There were few buildings and facilities in the camps but the cadres seemed to settle down. This was partly because of the extensive training and political courses that were conducted. The military training comprised both basic courses and special courses ran by instructors belonging to both MK and the Cubans. The camp Nova Katengue became known as the University of the South due to its academic courses. A headquarters and administration were set up in Luanda. The military command based there was also part of the political leadership in Lusaka, Zambia. By the end of the period MK's most important camps were Engineering, Fazenda, Funda, Caxito, Quibaxe and Pango. Novo Katengue was abandoned after an air attack by the SADF Air Force.

The third question posed in this chapter relates to the evolution of MK in Angola. This question is crucial to understanding what was to happen later in the Angolan camps. The influx of a new generation of cadres required a rethinking of strategy. This rethinking was influenced by the cadres in the camps in Angola, as well as the Angolan situation. New structures also needed to be built, most prominent among these was a new security department. The security department was built after incidents of attacks on

the Nova Katengue camp by infiltrators and the SADF. But the most important weapon against both agents and disillusioned cadres was political training.

Chapter 4

Paradox of exile

As the second decade of the ANC in exile drew to its end, the Soweto generation had lost some of their romantic notions about liberation, MK command had lost some innocence and the leadership dubbed 1979 the "year of the spear". The ANC decided to commemorate the centenary of the battle of Isandwana and to highlight a new intensity in MK's struggle. After the meetings in Luanda the year before, new targets had been included in the repertoire of those units making it back to the country. Police stations and energy installations now became favourite targets of the growing number of homecoming trained MK soldiers. A series of operations had been launched to set off this new offensive; the plan envisaged seven operations to go off in less than twenty-four hours. Such a spectacle was to serve as "armed propaganda" to help with the main tactic of the ANC in the coming years - mass involvement.

The year 1979 was also the year of renewed aggression from South Africa against the young Angolan state. Since the attack on Kassinga in 1978, repeated attacks had been directed towards civilian SWAPO camps and PLAN camps in southern Angola and Zambia on the border to the Caprivi Strip. In 1980 the SADF was to launch what later became known as "Operation Smokeshell" originally dubbed "Operation Sceptic", and "Operation Protea". In June of that year the SADF crossed over the border into Angola with troops for the first time since their defeat in 1976. In the four years that had passed they had preferred air-attacks and the use of UNITA or mercenaries in their campaigns against Angola. Parallel to the build up in the war between the SADF and Angola, MK had also built up its structures in Angola.

On the regional and geopolitical stage changes were about to occur. In Rhodesia the Smith regime sat at the table with moderate Zimbabwean nationalists. Britain's attempt to get ZANU/ ZAPU around the same table was about to bear fruit. Before that time MK had participated alongside ZIPRA in a final campaign from Botswana and Zambia. Further away Reagan was elected the new president of the United States of America. His administration was to launch a campaign of "constructive engagement" towards the apartheid regime. Reagan also promised a tougher stand against what he deemed to be the Soviet Union's terror network in the neighbouring countries, setting off a series of disasters for frontline states like Mozambique and Angola. The following five years saw renewed aggression from South Africa not only against Angola but also Lesotho, Zambia and the new-born Zimbabwe. Mozambique and Botswana were forced to sign agreements with their powerful neighbour. Both agreements hampered the ability of MK to operate in these countries.

The period 1979 - 1984 provided some of the paradoxes the ANC were to encounter during exile. The organisation had for years built up a guerrilla army whose first goal was to take the struggle back into their home country. However, the longer one stayed outside the country the harder it would be to return. The units that had infiltrated back into South Africa just after 1976 could use their knowledge of their home-townships when they infiltrated back into the country. At the end of the decade the South African security forces became more vigilant in monitoring the routes used. As more and more cadres stayed outside for longer periods it was harder to successfully get them back into South Africa. When not deployed to the front cadres were left idle in the camps and dissatisfaction grew. With growing dissatisfaction came tension between cadres and

leadership who in turn fuelled suspicions of agents provocateurs. The screening of those being deployed into the country became more widespread as suspicion grew. This affected the forward areas and consequently MK became less effective as an armed insurrectionist force. This chapter will explain developments within the ANC and MK rank and file. Factors within the organisation and those that were external will be examined so as to broaden our understanding of the forces at play.

The chapter will be based largely on archival sources. The appearance of ANC documents after 1980 dealing directly with Angola enriched the pool of sources available to researchers. In the papers of Treasurer General T. T. Nkobi and Secretary General Alfred Nzo, reports from the Luanda mission started appearing in 1980. Lists of inventory and expenditure constituted the first archival evidence of MK's activities in Angola. Earlier papers had been lost. This chapter will be based more on primary material than were the earlier chapters. The archival material is supplemented with interviews and some secondary sources.

This chapter covers a series of episodes, or near-mutinies, culminating in a series of mutinies in the ANC camps in Angola in 1984. The handling of the mutineers by the ANC leadership has been a subject of many debates in post-apartheid South Africa. Although the material used in this chapter draws mostly upon the organisation's own reports on the matter, the Amnesty International report on ill treatment in the Camps and some biographies and interviews help to counter-balance the party's views. What is important is the availability of the organisation's records for analysis by scholars and drawing out lessons from the struggle against apartheid in this period under study.

A second ZAPU campaign

In 1978 preparations had been made for sending a new MK detachment into Zimbabwe as part of the struggle for independence in that country. MK sent cadres with six to eight months' training from Angola to be further trained in Zambia at ZIPRA training facilities. Peter Rooi Sehube had been at the "western front" in Botswana for two years. He describes ZIPRA's commando courses as a "surviving" course for people who were destined for the front.¹ The cadres were taught how to survive in the bush for days without food, crucial if you were to cross into South Africa by foot. MK lost a significant number of cadres in rural areas of South Africa mainly as they approached villages and towns in search of food. But the ZIPRA course was also part of the new ZAPU strategy of building a more complete army. One of the cadres of this commando course was Barney Molekoane. He was later to become a hero for his exploits inside South Africa. From this special training course tens rather than hundreds were destined to become operative back in South Africa. After the initial wave of increased MK activity at the end of 1978, 1979 began with a rapid fall in the number of reported incidents of armed action.² But most of the cadres also from this course ended up in Lusaka or were sent back to Angola. Sehube himself was sent to Luanda.

As many as one hundred and fifty or even two hundred cadres could have been sent into Zimbabwe together with ZIPRA just at the end of the war of liberation.³ The aim was to liberate Zimbabwe, not to advance further to South Africa. The ANC believed that as soon as Zimbabwe became independent it would be easier to go through that country. But when the Lancaster agreement was reached over Zimbabwe in 1980, MK units

¹ Interview MS/ Sehube.

² Tom Lodge, "State of Exile - The African National Congress of South Africa 1976 - 1986" in Frankel, Pines and Swilling: *State, Resistance and Change in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988)

were told to report at the dismissal points together with their ZIPRA comrades. It soon became clear that the emerging nation of Zimbabwe would not let MK use its territory as an entering point back into South Africa. Pretoria had made it clear that this would be a declaration of war between the two countries. MK units that were deployed in Zimbabwe were therefore moved at independence, many of them back to camps in Angola.⁴ Cadres that had now received advanced training in Zambia and subsequently fought in Zimbabwe found themselves idle back in Angola. This idleness would contribute to growing dissatisfaction in the camps.⁵ The veterans from this second Zimbabwe campaign were to be central in the problems that evolved back in the camps in Angola.

Life in exile

A report from the United Nations Humanitarian Committee for Refugees (UNHCR) stated in 1981 that the ANC had about five thousand refugees in Angola.⁶ Three thousand four hundred of these were in the Luanda area, and sixteen hundred were in Benguela. The refugees living in Luanda itself were "scattered amongst local population". The report noted that the ANC had a community house and a transit centre provided for by the MPLA government. A large group of the refugees were living in Luanda's immediate surroundings. There is no mention in the report that these "refugees" were living in guerrilla training camps, neither is there any mention of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Throughout the report ANC and MK personnel are simply referred to as "South African refugees".

³ Interview MS/ Masondo.

⁴ Interview MS/ Mathule Mathiba , 4.4.2001 Pretoria, Mathiba's *nom de guerra* was Allie Nkosi.

⁵ Interview MS/ Sehube.

In modern world politics refugee camps are often used as recruiting and training grounds for guerrillas. Other African examples are SWAPO camps in Angola or Rwandan Hutu- camps in the Congo. Another famous example would be the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. However, most of these camps are mixed camps, with both civilian refugees and trained guerrillas. In both the Palestinian and the Rwandan camp, guerrillas were recruited from among the refugees.⁷ The ANC camps in Angola were MK camps; the refugees had already volunteered to undertake military training on arrival. ANC civilians, except for a few administrative and educational staff in Benguela and Luanda, were harboured in Zambia and Tanzania.

Most of the five thousand refugees in Angola in 1981 were therefore MK personnel. Their distribution seems to confirm this. The majority of the refugees were adult men, seventeen hundred. Following this group was a group of "school-age" boys, another fourteen hundred refugees. The number of women was one thousand, the number of girls, nine hundred. The number of girls and boys attending classes was not specified. The UNHCR recommended that tents, blankets and agricultural tools be sent to the refugee camps in addition to two trucks for transport. Medication would also be provided. Furthermore, the committee recognised that the ANC had the full responsibility for the refugees and would provide for their day - to - day management, health care and teaching.⁸

⁶ BOX 35 UFH, *Assistance to South African Refugees in Angola* UNHCR note 1981(no exact date on doc.).

⁷ On recruitment of hutu refugees to the infamous Interahamwe hutu extremists and The ALIR (Armee Liberation Rwandese) see African Rights Report: *Rwanda, insurgency in the Northwest*, London September 1998 and Mahmood Mandani: *When victims become killers, colonialism, nativism and genocide in Rwanda*. (Oxford: James Currey, 2001).

⁸ BOX 35 UFH, *Assistance to South African Refugees in Angola*.

The day-to-day life in the camps continued as in earlier years. Pango, Viana and Quibaxe now had small libraries. Pango and Quibaxe also had art studios.⁹ The material was donated by private persons and organisations, most of which were from the ANC's European allies. An art exhibition was produced and sent on display to Cuba and Europe, unfortunately it disappeared on the way.¹⁰ The celebrations of important days continued. Cultural groups had been formed in the camps and now they came together under the trombonist Jonas Gwangwa and formed the ensemble *Amandla*. There was a printing shop in Luanda where *Dawn* was produced. Apart from a printing press the shop had a darkroom, a layout department and an art room. The printing shop served, in addition to the ANC, MPLA, SWAPO, the Cubans, Polisario and Fretilin, a group for the liberation of East Timor.¹¹ In addition to the cultural productions, there was some agricultural production in the camps. The list of animals being bred in the camps included pigs, chickens, sheep, goats, ducks, and in some camps even cattle. The animals had been acquired from the Angolans in exchange for second hand clothes and tinned meat. The eggs, milk and meat were a welcome addition to the food that had not improved much even though supply lines were now better established.

Reports from the region that reached the Lusaka mission show what kind of food was now served in the camps. The staple diet was still rice, pap made out of mealie-meal, beans and some tinned meat and fish from the Soviet Union.¹² The ANC had made a deal with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that Russian fishermen operating on

⁹ Interview MS/ Mathiba.

¹⁰ Interview MS/ Masondo.

¹¹ BOX 73 UFH, Joe Modise- File, *Report on the commission of the NEC, Financial Report of organisation in Front Line States*, March 1984.

¹² BOX 35 UFH *Report* by Wolfie Kodesh on his visit to the region 1982, and Mokeba to Nzo, *Reference list, Soviet Shipments to Luanda*, 28.02.83.

the Angolan coast would deliver some fresh fish.¹³ The cadres would also get some sugar for their tea and condensed milk or milk powder - although not regularly. Chief of Logistics Wolfie Kodesh notes that a storeroom in Lobito had eight hundred and forty-four tins of biscuits. In 1982 the ANC had stores in several Angolan cities with supplies from the Soviet Union, GDR, Yugoslavia, Cuba and Sweden. The Swedish State Aid Agency (SIDA) was the largest single contributor to the ANC in Angola.¹⁴ In 1982 SIDA contributed with 350 000 SKr in addition to one million SKr granted for the previous year. The money was meant for food and agricultural tools.¹⁵ The Chief Representative in Luanda, Uriah Mokeba, wanted to use some of the money for a deep freezer, "furnisher" and a carpet.¹⁶ This was not granted from Lusaka who replied to Mokeba that some of the money used at the Angolan office had placed the organisation "in shame" when they were summoned to a meeting with SIDA in Lusaka.¹⁷ It had to be understood that the money was meant for necessities. Others who supplied the ANC in the region were UNHCR and WHO. The support that came from the UN agencies was delivered *in naturalia* in effect, as goods not money. It was delivered at the ports of Benguela and Luanda. Some confusion reigned over what exactly was stored at the ports and how to deliver it to the camps. Willie Kodesh had to launch "operation clean-up" in 1982.¹⁸ The operation seems to have just temporarily solved the problem. Later reports tell of similar confusion around stores and storerooms.

¹³ BOX 35 UFH, *Letter* from Uriah Mokeba to SG Alfred Nzo 28.09.82.

¹⁴ BOX 94, UFH, *Financial Report for the year ended 31st December 1980*, early 1981, The SIDA grant is the single largest receipt. This did not change significantly in the following years.

¹⁵ BOX 35, UFH, *Letter* from Mokeba to TG T.T. Nkobi 07.06.82. In the early 1980's the Swedish Kronor (Skr) would be about 5 to a US Dollar.

¹⁶ BOX 35, UFH, *Letter* from Mokeba to TG T.T. Nkobi 08.07.82.

¹⁷ BOX 35, UFH, *Reply* from Nkobi to Mokeba 20.7.82.

¹⁸ BOX 35 UFH, *Report* by Kodesh

In addition to visiting the store-rooms and the camps Kodesh visited a fully operational printing shop and heard plans for a sewing shop at Viana transit camp. The report he wrote for Secretary General Alfred Nzo in Lusaka suggests a society of refugees rather than soldiers. Their efforts to grow their own food and sew their own uniforms, reflects the situation in Angola at the time. There are continuing reports of problems with transport in the region. The ANC supply stores were situated in the harbours of Lobito and Luanda. The logistics department in Luanda had received a number of GAZ and Kraz trucks from the Soviet Union.¹⁹ Other vehicles were also at their disposal. The roads in Angola were unsafe and vehicles often broke down. The lack of spare parts for these vehicles added to the problem.²⁰ On the road to Malanje the increasing UNITA activity would further complicate transport.

ANC/MK had far from reached the numbers of SWAPO/PLAN in the area but they were adapting to their methods. SWAPO tried to be self-sufficient to a degree, setting refugees to till the land. In a letter to the British aid organisation OXFAM Alfred Nzo asked for support for a farm:

A large proportion of our refugees are stationed in Angola. At various intervals over the years there have been food crises for one reason or another. These have been beyond our control. We therefore feel a great urge to become self-sufficient. This farm will have a cushioning effect against shortages of food in the future - even if it is not possible to become completely independent of outside help...²¹

The letter explains that the ANC has some experience in agriculture from similar projects in Tanzania and Zambia. In April 1983 submissions on the Malanje Farm

¹⁹ BOX 11 UFH, Letter from Regional Chief Uriah Mokeba to SG Alfred Nzo, 28.4.83

²⁰ BOX 73 UFH, Joe Modise-file, *Report on the commission of the NEC, Financial Report of organisation the Front Line States*. March 1984. The organisation had at this point almost 40 vehicles at its disposal of which several were grounded after accidents or because of lack of parts.

²¹ BOX 35 UFH Letter from the Treasurer General to OXFAM Lusaka concerning *Farm in Angola*

Project were handed over to the UNHCR.²² The problem however was a lack of technical support for machines it would need for irrigation and harvesting. The lack of machines and spare parts was also the main problem for the printing works.

Besides farming, the organisation took other steps to train its cadres and become self-sufficient. The Labutsebensi Printing Works had been set up by the ANC in Luanda in January 1982 for the following reasons:

First and foremost it is part of the ANC's program to train young South Africans forced to leave the country because of their opposition to apartheid to take their rightful place in South Africa's economy.²³

The printing shop was the first step in a programme of vocational training around Luanda. Later the programme would also include mechanical courses. In May 1982 project manager Patrick Letlalo proposed a seminar in the use of the machines at the printing shop for the editorial staff of *Dawn*, the ANC bulletin *Mayibuye* and the bulletin of the women's section *VOW*.²⁴ The project was financed by the Finnish NGO, Finnsolidarity. A Finnish citizen, Markku Vesikko, trained the cadres.

The documents exchanged with the sponsors, in this case OXFAM and Finnsolidarity, make no mention of military activity. On the other hand they are full of political rhetoric. The printing project was described as liberating:

The Printing Training Project aims at printing and publishing a vast field of educational, cultural and scientific material unavailable in South Africa because of Apartheid repression. The printing shop in the words of the ANC National Executive is to become a "fountain of truth, a source of liberation and liberating news."²⁵

²² BOX 35 UFH Letter Mokeba to T.T.Nkobi, 11.4.83.

²³ BOX 35 UFH, Letter from the TG to Oxfam, *Farm in Angola*.

²⁴ BOX 66 Mayibuye UWC, ANC Printing Training Project, Letlalo to Sizakele Sigxashe *Proposed seminar*. 4.5.82.

²⁵ BOX 35 UFH Report on the *Labutsebensi Printing Works* by Patrick Letlalo to ANC President, Head of International Relations, Treasurer General, Chief Representative Luanda. Lusaka Mission Papers.

A printing press could initiate a broader circulation of printed matter in the camps both for educational and democratic reasons. Luanda had few printing presses of its own and the staff would have been Portuguese speaking. Obviously it would be a problem to get literature and information in English in Angola. Information and literature was central to the ANC strategy against both illiteracy and boredom in the camps. As MK had built up a system of theoretical and political training, the need for printed material would increase. The organisation's radical ideal of education would require the production of its own material.²⁶ It was desirable to save or even make money through the setting up of a printing press.²⁷ There is no mention in the documents that other organisations benefited from the printing shop.²⁸

The letters between the Lusaka and Luanda offices thus show how the training camps of MK increasingly took on the character of a refugee society. The daily running of the camps was complicated by the special conditions in Angola. The problem of transport in the region became a permanent factor. Food supplies were badly interrupted by the ongoing war and MK like other groups of "refugees" became dependent on foreign aid. The training, both military and political still had a central role but as cadres stayed on in camps longer, day-to-day activities had to be provided. The presence of libraries and art studios alone did not guarantee their use. One cadre Mathule Mathiba remembers using the art studio in Quibaxe almost entirely alone.²⁹ He would sometimes team up with cadres from neighbouring Pango camp to hold an exhibition. The artworks later

²⁶ For radical theories on Education and Liberation Paolo Friere: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Middlesex: Penguin 1996)

²⁷ BOX 35 UFH, Report on the *Labutsebensi Printing Works*.

²⁸ There is nothing that indicates that sponsors like Finnsolidarity or SIDA would mind organisations like Polisario and Fretilin to use the shop, also the fight for Western Sahara and East Timor would have some support amongst Scandinavian donors.

toured other places, like Cuba and Sweden, but were lost somewhere on the road.³⁰ The existence of a printing shop provided some training beyond the military and political skills. But the number of cadres deployed as printers and writers of *Dawn* was limited to a small community in Luanda.³¹

Politics of suspicion

After the poisoning of, and attack on, Nova Kantengue, suspicions grew within MK. It became evident that *agents provocateurs* operated in the ranks. In the second submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission the ANC stated that it started to select cadres for specialised training in intelligence and security after the above-mentioned episodes. The training emphasised "use of force as counter-productive" and took place mainly in the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union.³² In 1979 the cadres drilled in "security work" were back in Angola. They went into action that very same year when some of the cadres training at Fazenda camp mutinied. The mutiny was solved after the head of personnel Mzwai Piliso negotiated with the mutineers.³³ With the unearthing of a spy-ring in 1981, later known as the Shishita operation, imaginary agents were also found. The Shishita operation branded amongst others the commander of the Quibaxe camp and one head of security as apartheid spies. The Quibaxe commander was believed to have been in the perfect position not only for spying but also for sabotaging and pointing fingers at others. He died later in Quatro.³⁴ Dissatisfaction with the commanders is believed to have fuelled some of the allegations

²⁹ Interview MS/Mathiba.

³⁰ Interview MS/ Masondo.

³¹ Interview MS/ Sehube.

³² *ANC Second Submission to the TRC 1997* at www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/misc/trc2d.html.

³³ *ANC Second Submission to the TRC 1997*

³⁴ Ellis & Sechaba: *Comrades against Apartheid, the ANC and the South African Communist Party in exile* (London: James Currey 1992), p. 116-117.

of the Shishita operation. A security network had been established in the camps and did in some cases oppose the commanding structure already there.³⁵

The uncovering and investigating created tensions that would grow into dissatisfaction. Amongst cadres in Angola it was believed that up to 80% of those arrested and questioned during the Shishita operation were in fact innocent.³⁶ The dissatisfaction was focused on the newly created NAT network in Angola and the leadership:

That's when you know, the Security Department became a little robust in terms of handling disciplinary violations, for instance, we had guys who would you know, sell stuff from the camp to the peasant, the you know, for purposes of various reasons, alcohol, meat, dagga, I mean we ad a special problem in the camps and it wasn't in my own opinion handled properly because that was a social problem in the camps that needed some better handling so a lot of beatings took place of guys who were involved in some of these things.³⁷

According then to Mathiba, black market activities, drinking and smoking dagga could land you in the same kind of trouble as if you were an enemy agent. If beatings took place in the camps it was in conflict with the Geneva Convention. The Geneva Convention looks after the rights of prisoners of war. Oliver Tambo had signed the Convention the same year as the Shishita operation on behalf of the ANC.³⁸

The Shishita operation and similar operations were a product of the increase in "dirty war" tactics deployed by South Africa and their allies. According to Dr. Shubin, the main weapon of the western intelligence agencies against the southern African Liberation Movements, was infiltration.³⁹ MK had discovered this the hard way through

³⁵ Interview Kodesh/ Lentsoane.

³⁶ Interview MS/ Sehube.

³⁷ Interview MS/Mathiba.

³⁸ See article "ANC signs the Geneva Convention" at www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/geneva.html.

³⁹ Shubin, *ANC - A view from Moscow* (1999), p. 205 According to Soviet Intelligence, there is a need for studies on counter-insurgency warfare in the third world during the cold war as most studies are still

its first eighteen years in exile. As shown in the previous chapter this prompted the screening of recruits that came out of South Africa after 1976. There was still a belief in the ANC that it could solve security problems with political training. It was believed that many of the infiltrators that came out of the country would change when they were told the truth about South African politics. Masondo claims this happened with some of the infiltrators. But he also points out that the situation in the camps made the task for infiltrators easy:

... sometimes people think we just became ruthless...you know, one thing I can tell the leadership of the African National Congress tried by all means to make life very, very well for our people but you see, as time goes on the enemy also became very hectic within us, we started to see *agente provocateurs*, You can't expect that living like this we would not have difficulties. One of the problems of a revolutionary force is time, the longer you stay outside, the more people become restless, but, that's were the politics (provided relief).⁴⁰

National commissar Masondo strongly believed in the power of politics. But he was not the only one who believed in politics; the ANC's president Oliver Tambo saw the security problem in the camps as part of a political problem.⁴¹ Up to 1979 security problems were solved through political means such as political training for cadres considered as "shady".⁴² However the growing number of idle soldiers in Angola contributed to the escalation of the security problem. The MPLA government was also pressing the ANC to discipline cadres that broke Angolan law. The relationship between the two movements required that the ANC be responsible for MK cadres based in Angola. Although political training would continue to be important within the movement, a new security structure would now permanently deal with security

marked by a visible east/west divide. Statements like these can probably be rectified by looking on the CIA involvement for instance in Latin America. The Kremlin archives are today open for researchers, archives of western security forces will be closed for a number of more years, if they at all will be opened.

⁴⁰ Interview MS/ Masondo.

⁴¹ Shubin, - *ANC - A view from Moscow* (1999), p. 205.

problems. MK did not altogether abandon solving conflicts by means of politics but would in the future also solve them by disciplinary measures such as solitary confinement and prolonged detentions.

In February 1979 the NAT consisted of three people based in Luanda⁴³. As the department took over the screening of new recruits it was reorganised and expanded. There were to be security personnel in all the camps that would report directly to the Revolutionary Council. The security officers were independent of the camp command. After 1981 the officers reported directly to Mzwai Piliso, who reported to the NEC in Lusaka. Piliso had now become the head of security. The network of security personnel did in some cases exploit their position. This was made easier because of the independent status they enjoyed in the camps, they did not report to camp command, or any other command. They moved freely between camps and Luanda. This parallelism in command fuelled the dissatisfaction that led to operations like Shishita.

In 1979 the building of the later infamous Quatro camp or Camp 32 started. The camp was built in the proximity of the Quibaxe camp northeast of Luanda. Young cadres that had undergone special training and had been carefully screened staffed Quatro. The age of these young security officials puzzled some of their older comrades:

Why they didn't choose us elderly youth that was a question, they choose especially young cadres, who they could easily bend to their will, and why didn't they choose elderly who had been trained... We realised that there is a kind of cynicism in this. Why do you have such young men in the department of security? Why it is now only young men that are policing even amongst us? Why don't they get people that are responsible in terms of their age group? You see whenever they were used, we were suspicious from the onset of the security.⁴⁴

⁴² Interview MS/Masondo.

⁴³ Shubin, - *ANC - A view from Moscow* (1999), p. 205.

Peter Rooi Sehube said this was a re-occurring theme in discussions in the camps and that this may have added to suspicions. Rumours of favouritism, security breakdowns and an internal "spy-force" evolved. Another observation of the guards in Quatro, from 1982, found the group young but *very impressive*.⁴⁵ The observer regrets that he or she was not able to see any of the *defaulters or renegades* during the observation tour.⁴⁶ Already it seems that what got reported to Lusaka and what was felt by the cadres in Angola showed some disparities. The age of the security guards of Quatro would later be up for scrutiny. When abuse and torture in the ANC camps in Angola was raised at the TRC hearings the age of the guards was held up as a partial explanation for the irregularities⁴⁷. The person responsible for selecting guards to Quatro was Mzwai Piliso. If indeed the selection was a display of cynicism as stated by Sehube, this indicates power abuse by the Security Department. Piliso must have known about the psychological dependence upon their commanders that young soldiers develop. This factor contributed to making them less critical of orders.

The official name of the camp included the description *Rehabilitation Centre*, somewhat a description of MK policy towards perpetrators of indiscipline in earlier years. The intention was to restore useful cadres that had been led away from the ANC's policies, either as agents for the enemy or as victims of internal *agents provocateurs*.

People maybe who had been trained in security and some of them because screened. The official name of the camps included the description we thought they were loyal, the main thing was loyalty. And to make sure that they did not become frustrated I instructed that they be allowed sessions to go to Luanda and have some good time to relax.. and also the inmates, we tried by all means to have a program from the commissariat because there

⁴⁴ Interview MS/ Sehube.

⁴⁵ BOX 35, UFH, Report Luanda signed JKN to TG 04.04.82.

⁴⁶ BOX 35, UFH, Report Luanda signed JKN to TG 04.04.82.

⁴⁷ *Second submission to the TRC ANC 1997*

were also a commissar of the camp ..to see if people could become rehabilitated.⁴⁸

According to Masondo some actually became rehabilitated even in Quatro. For most of the cadres detained, a stay in the camp would be months rather than years. But after three years in use Quatro had to be enlarged. In 1982 the camp authorities sent a requisition to the ANC construction department asking for means to build nine more rooms.⁴⁹ Thus the perception amongst cadres that security became more strict after 1981 seems confirmed. The blurred line between punishment and politics also left an impression that the Security Department also functioned as a kind of political police force inside MK.⁵⁰

Perpetrators of offences against Angolan law would in some cases be kept in Angolan prisons. A cadre that shot an Angolan in an ANC store in Benguela in 1982 got one year in prison⁵¹. The episode was most likely an accident with a fatal outcome. An offence like this was not commonplace. But the sheer numbers of cadres in Angola, most of who were armed did allow for accidents to happen. The increasing problems with food and other supplies resulted in the cadres' involvement in theft from stores and dealing in the black market. Black market trade would sometimes be seen as breach of conduct. At other times the trade would be encouraged as supplies grew scarce. Stealing from stores, whether Angolan, Cuban or the ANC's own was a more serious offence and would land cadres in Quatro. The murder of a fellow cadre would also land you in Quatro. The murder of an Angolan national as above would land you in regional

⁴⁸ Interview MS/ Masondo.

⁴⁹ BOX 35 UFH, Douglas Sepate to ANC Construction 22.09.82.

⁵⁰ Interview MS/ Sehube.

⁵¹ BOX 11 UFH, *Letter* from Uriah Mokeba to ANC Department of International Affairs, 6.6.83.

prisons, either Benguela or Luanda. There are no more reports of MK cadres in Angolan prisons in the first years of the 1980's.

However, as mentioned above, the blurred line between punishment and politics has undoubtedly left an impression that the Security Department was a political police force. The fact that the warders in Quatro were loyal - and very young - has contributed to this. The community of ANC and MK personnel in Angola could be compared with that of a nascent state with different departments taking care of different parts of the cadres' lives. The organisation had a law and threatened force against those who did not subject themselves to the rules. But there was an obvious deficiency in internal democracy. Several of the interviews conducted do show a disparity between the ranks and their commanders on the topic of security. The danger of the security issue blowing into a full conflict was not sufficiently discussed by the command. But there were other factors that would contribute to later internal problems. The cadres' problems with internal security do not seem to be responsible alone for what was to come later. Other factors may have been more direct causes and the frustration of not getting home possibly the most constant factor.

Distress in exile

For a short time MK used a former ZIPRA camp outside Malanje, which was called Hoji Ya Henda (Camalundi) after an MPLA martyr.⁵² The camp, a former college, had cabins and other structures when MK moved there in January 1981. Six hundred cadres, many from the recent ZIPRA campaign in Zimbabwe, were moved in. Hoji Ya Henda's location was well known and the cadres were soon moved away because of security

⁵² Interview MS/ Mathiba.

reasons.⁵³ The activities of Hoji Ya Henda were moved to a camp simply called The Farm. The Farm outside Malanje also needed some renovation. This was the second farm project in Angola initiated by the ANC. The farm had been abandoned since Angolan independence and was in 1981 granted to the South Africans by the MPLA. Storerooms and main building needed repair, dorms similarly needed to be restored and the area was overgrown. But there were about six thousand acres suitable for maize, rice and vegetables.⁵⁴ Cadres were already benefiting from fruit grown on the farm - like bananas and paw-paw. The ANC and UN worked out a plan for growing other crops and for keeping poultry and cattle. Kodesh noted that the project should be prioritised since a food crisis was "approaching".⁵⁵

Because of the presence of a large group of veterans from the last Zimbabwe campaign on the Farm, the camp developed a reputation as a "punishment" camp.⁵⁶ The units that had fought in Matabeleland had the feeling of being left behind after the initial campaign. This must have influenced younger generations that arrived in Angola. Mathule Mathiba claims that several of the cadres kept at the farm were there for some offence committed either at the front or somewhere else in Angola.⁵⁷ Apart from the Farm, Pango also became a breeding ground for discontent; both camps had a significant number of Zimbabwe veterans.⁵⁸

⁵³ Interview MS/ Mathiba.

⁵⁴ BOX 35 UFH Letter from Mokeba to TG 17.08.82.

⁵⁵ BOX 35 UFH *Report* by Kodesh.

⁵⁶ Interview MS/ Mathiba.

⁵⁷ Interview MS/ Mathiba.

⁵⁸ Interview MS/ Schube.

The cadres had little or no personal life in the camps. Most of them lived in tents or dwellings.⁵⁹ In Quibaxe, Viana and Pango the dwellings were often open or just roofed with asbestos. A request to the office of construction in Lusaka asks for allowances for timber for roofing dwellings and for cement to build water reservoirs in these three camps.⁶⁰ The problems with proper food and supplies mentioned earlier and unclean water supplies, led to the deterioration of the overall health of the cadres. Malaria was rife and snake-bite occurred. Untreated this could lead to death. Malaria was treated in the camps with quinine.⁶¹ Snake-bites would be treated at hospital in Luanda if serious.⁶²

There was a problem with the courses. Some cadres had been in Angola for three or four years. The course in ANC history taught in Nova Kanetsu some years previously was still taught. A number of the cadres were by now familiar with this subject and asked for something different. Some cadres discussed subjects they would like to include in the courses. Cuban and Vietnamese history, as well as courses for standard Eight and Nine were suggested.⁶³ Besides the academic stagnation more and more cadres carried out other activities like digging trenches instead of furthering their studies. This added to a feeling of monotony and boredom in the camps.

There were few women in the camps. But the number of applications for marriage in the Lusaka Papers, indicate that cadres had some contact with both female MK cadres and Angolan women. As the cadres were under the “paternal” wings of the organisation, Lusaka had a last say in whom would marry whom. Permission would be

⁵⁹ Interviews MS/Mathiba, MS/Ngulube.

⁶⁰ BOX 35 UFH Douglas Sepate to ANC construction 22.09.82.

⁶¹ Interview MS/Ngulube.

⁶² BOX 35 UFH, Report Luanda region signed JKN to TG, 04.04.82.

granted from SG Alfred Nzo's office together with a small allowance for dowry, rings and a wedding feast.⁶⁴ In January 1983 the cost of weddings prompted a proposal to ban the ceremonies, as the costs involved were by now substantial. It was argued that money used for luxuries like rings could be utilised in sending cadres back into the country.⁶⁵ Cadres continued to wed but not always with rings.

Female cadres who fell pregnant were sent to Zambia or Tanzania, as Angola was not considered a suitable place for mothers-to-be nor for toddlers. Lusaka also received requests from women for abortions, preferably not in Angola, as the hospitals were deemed not suitable.⁶⁶ This was by no means something taken for granted. A letter from Chief Representative Uriah Mokeba at the Luanda office to TG in May 1983 spells out considerations regarding pregnant cadres.⁶⁷ Mokeba points out that the three official residences in Luanda were not enough to accommodate the pregnant women as they were also used for staff at the Luanda office and in some cases were in fact offices. The organisation had instead been forced to hire three hotel rooms at unaffordable cost. The tinned food that was the staple diet for cadres in Angola was not viewed as sufficient for pregnant women, the Angolan government had very few qualified gynaecologists and one woman waited two-and-a-half months to see one. The Angola office therefore requested a new directive from Lusaka. The office asked that the directive that forced pregnant women to deliver in Angola must be revoked.⁶⁸

⁶³ Interview Kodesh/Lentsoane.

⁶⁴ BOX 35, UFH, *Letters* to Secretary General (SG) Alfred Nzo from Angola region.

⁶⁵ BOX 35, UFH, *Note* at the TG's office concerning weddings in Angola, 14.01.83.

⁶⁶ BOX 35, UFH, *Letters concerning pregnant women* Angola region 1983-84.

⁶⁷ BOX 11, UFH, *Letter* to T.T Nkobi from Uriah Mokeba 02.05.83.

⁶⁸ BOX 11, UFH, *Letter* to T.T Nkobi from Uriah Mokeba

The constant transfer of letters concerning women's health issues suggests that there was a growing concern over the situation of women in Angola. As the camps became militarised and daily life increasingly more difficult, women were moved away from camps to houses and to Viana transit camp outside Luanda. Camps like Quibaxe and Pango still had some women. An increase in violence against women is also reported in the archive. One incident, the Quibaxe incident of May 1983, affected both the way in which the ANC would subsequently handle women cadres and the relationship with the local government. The incident is also an example of the heightening pressure cadres must have felt. On 23 May 1983 an MK soldier left Quibaxe with his AK and 30 rounds of ammunition. The following day people from a nearby village descended on the camp claiming that he had raped and killed one local woman and injured another one.⁶⁹ This was found to be the case. The villagers were up in arms and referred to a similar incident that took place in 1981. The commissar of the village demanded a coffin, wine and food for the funeral proceedings. The ANC complied.⁷⁰ Not long after this incident, a jealous comrade killed a female MK soldier. The ANC had to rethink strategy concerning keeping women in the camp as it was a matter of their own security. In regard to relationships with Angolan women, this was widely accepted but rape became punishable by death. The Quibaxe incident also indicates that the pressure of camp life could trigger extreme cases of violence.

The Quibaxe incident also fuelled the pending conflict between the ANC and the commissar of Malanje and member of the MPLA polit-bureau, Joao Lopez "Ludi" Kissasunda.⁷¹ Ludi knew the ANC from camps in Tanzania and seemed to bear a

⁶⁹ BOX 11, UFH, *Letter* from Uriah Mokeba to SG Alfred Nzo 06.06.83.

⁷⁰ BOX 11, UFH, *Letter* from Mokeba to Nzo.

⁷¹ BOX 35, UFH, *Letter- Request for ANC farm in Malanje*, Uriah Mokeba to T. Nkobi 03.12.83.

grudge against MK.⁷² His official explanation for evicting MK from the farm in 1983 was the security of a nearby village, which was in fact 17 kms away. The ANC would help the 32 families that lived near the farm buildings to move and give them material for shacks⁷³. In the end the South Africans had to move onto a nearby plot.

In defence of supplies

The ANC leadership tried to solve the growing problem of restlessness in different ways. Every camp would have camp duties like defence, cooking or maintenance to fill up the cadres' day. As we have seen, security became increasingly important. An important aspect of this was the defence of camps in case of attacks similar to that on Nova Katengue in 1979. There was also an ongoing debate on whether MK's should be used more offensively against UNITA and their South African allies. A tactic discussed was to deploy forces alongside SWAPO in the south. Masondo dates this discussion back to 1978:

Yes, some people got restless ...Others for instance would say: Commissar we want to have practical experiencing war, OK what we going to do, we want to fight or we want to go in with SWAPO...I told the President, President Tambo, and then we went to see the MPLA, and I remember we met Lucio Lara. Lucio Lara said to us: No we don't think that you should fight UNITA, you are doing a good job inside the country to keep, you could not be doing as much, you see the fact that you keep on fighting (the SADF inside the Country)⁷⁴

There were other reasons not to fight alongside SWAPO. As SWAPO was recognised by the United Nations as a representative of the Namibian people fighting against colonialism this could create complications. If MK fighters were captured alongside PLAN fighters Pretoria would use this politically by pointing out that their involvement in Angola was directed at the prevention of terrorism. Although PLAN would be

⁷² Interview MS/Masondo, Lucio Lara was a minister in the Angolan government and regarded as the brain behind Angolan tactics.

⁷³ BOX 35, UFH *Letter - Request*

recognised as a "legitimate" army by some members of world society, the MK was surely not recognised as such.

In 1978-79 UNITA was on the verge of collapse. The SADF once more came to their rescue.⁷⁵ At the end of 1979 UNITA established its headquarters in Jamba in south eastern Angola.⁷⁶ When the South African Air Force (SAAF) shelled the towns of Lubango and Xangongo in September of that year it drove one hundred and thirty thousand refugees northwards.⁷⁷ The Angolan government forces and the Cubans had established themselves at Cuito Cuanavale. During 1982 and 1983 the strategy of the SADF and UNITA was to drive them from there. At the end of 1983 the better part of Cunene and Moxico Province were under the control of UNITA.⁷⁸

In the end MK was dragged into the internal war in Angola. Malanje is about three hours east of Luanda, Caxito with its nearby Quibaxe, Pango and Quatro camps lies about two hours to the north-east. Most of the road goes past dry savannah but there are some densely bushed areas. This bush was "bandit-country" i.e. an area occupied by UNITA. Already in 1976 Umkhonto we Sizwe had spotted FNLA in the area north of Malanje.⁷⁹ Now it was increasingly UNITA that moved amongst the dry bush. Then at the beginning of the new decade they attacked an MK convoy with supplies on its way to Malanje:

⁷⁴ Interview MS/ Masondo

⁷⁵ Joseph Hanlon: *Beggar your neighbour - Apartheid power in Southern Africa*, (London: James Currey, 1986), p.157. For more on this offensive see: Steenkamp: *Borderstrike*, (Butterworths: Publishers,1983).

⁷⁶ John W. Turner: *Continent Ablaze - The Insurgency Wars in Africa 1960 to the present*, (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers: 1998), p. 111. For a description of the HQ of Unita see Fred Bridgeland's biography of Jonas Savimbi, *A key to Africa* (1988)

⁷⁷ Hanlon, *Beggar your neighbour - Apartheid power in Southern Africa* (1986), p. 159.

⁷⁸ Turner: *Continent Ablaze - The Insurgency Wars in Africa 1960 to the present* (1998), p.110.

⁷⁹ Interview MS/ Rashid.

...you know we used to pass UNITA until we suspected that UNITA was given some instructions from South Africa to attack, do you know what they did? They decided to when we were in Cacuso, they attacked our convoy of food and they killed one of our girls that was in logistics. ...So I went to the camps after they killed Caroline, I said to the Comrades: comrades, we don't want to fight in Angola, but you see, now, what is happening is that UNITA now wants to cut our supplies, UNITA now has killed one of our sisters. Now in African tradition we say about our sisters - if a person beats your sister in front of you and you can't fight him then it means you really fear him. But then I said to them, we are going to fight the UNITA but nobody is going to be forced to fight UNITA. And then is when everybody said: we volunteer, we volunteer....⁸⁰

Abraham Lentsoane tells of a campaign to defend the railway line between Luanda and Malanje in 1981.⁸¹ Mathule Mathiba remembers that he was deployed in Cacuso to clear up the road between Luanda and Malanje in 1982. Mathiba claims that Commander Joe Modise came to Malanje and ordered the men to fight. His recollection of the ranks' response is also different:

Cacuso is a small town. Well our presence of course, we came in armed and you know a lot of military activity was taking place there. The town became safer. But that was not the idea, because then Joe Modise came to address us and then in his militant way -WE just imagined we were just going to guard bridges but from his address we were going to start hunting down UNITA. It was something that many guys were opposed to, a lot of guys really objected to that. But you know that our situation in Angola there were such that one could not express his dissent easily.⁸²

The cadres were far from enthusiastic and would have preferred not to fight at all. It is difficult to say if these accounts are of one or two, or even three incidents but there seems to be a big difference in perception. Most probably there were several mobilisations between 1981 and 1983. That could allow us to follow the changing of morale in these accounts. The NEC of which Masondo at this time was a member declared Angola a military zone from 1983.⁸³ This is reflected in the letters sent from

⁸⁰ Interview MS/ Masondo.

⁸¹ Interview Kodesh/Lentsoane.

⁸² Interview MS/ Mathiba.

⁸³ *ANC Second Submission to the TRC*. (1997)

Luanda to Lusaka. In a letter dated 18 July that year Mokeba informs SG Nzo of destabilisation in the Malanje area. "Bandits" have captured a village nearby one of the camps in the Malanje area. The Luanda office had come to an agreement with FAPLA that MK would patrol an area surrounding their camps.⁸⁴ A month later Mokeba again writes to Lusaka stating that the situation in the Malanje area is becoming critical. Both Joe Modise and Chris Hani were at this point in the area "combing" it.⁸⁵

Ernest Cannie Ngulube who came to Caculama in 1983 still depicts some of the enthusiasm:

...Actually the morale was very high, because we thought that OK we have given ourselves to the ANC, it was like our parents you see, so what was happening it was not for us to say: why are we fighting here, we did understand that, it is not that you are fighting them, you are protecting the others, when you were training you were being protected, so we had to protect even the others so that ...OK there were some things like, others would say: we must go and fight at home, not fight here in this... Because we were taught that UNITA was part and parcel of the regime⁸⁶.

How many were engaged in the battles around Cacuso is difficult to establish. According to Masondo two battalions were based in the vicinity. That would make between one thousand and twelve hundred cadres.⁸⁷ In the camps everybody took a turn at defence, and there was an anti-aircraft battery for each camp. Others again went on patrol. On these patrols they would meet UNITA fighters. Villages around the camps were also attacked; MK cadres went to clean up:

I was deployed in a camp...there was a lot of action around at that time, we ad fire all night long and then on the investigation the following day we found out that UNITA attacked a village. And we found people with missing limbs, let me see, not people, we found bodies without heads,

⁸⁴ BOX 11, UFH, *Letter*, Mokoba to Nzo 18.07.83.

⁸⁵ BOX 11, UFH, *Letter* Mokeba to Department of International Affairs, 22.08.83.

⁸⁶ Interview MS/Ernest Cannie Ngulube, Pretoria 4.4.2001.

⁸⁷ Interview MS/Masondo, One battalion was three companies, one company around 200 men. Companies divided into units.

some were missing limbs or limbs that cannot even be compared to some of the bodies that were around there.⁸⁸

Incidents such as these upset the cadres. Mathiba and Lentsoane who participated in this clean up, also remember clearing up roads after an ambush and general maintenance of the roads. Landmines often destroyed the roads. MK personnel and vehicles were among the casualties. Serving as a commissar Mathiba saw several cases of traumatised MK cadres before the deployment at Cacuso ended.

In 1981 Peter Rooi Sehube was deployed in the Cacuso area. Sehube and his comrades at first welcomed the deployment as a change from the monotonous camp life:

we heard about that operation, we heard about that kind of spirits, from the cadres who wanted to fight. That spirit was not only in Pango, in Quibaxe, I mean in Malanje (Caculama) That spirit of wanting to be engaged was prevalent in every ANC camp, we are trained and we are wasting here. Let's have that experience of fighting UNITA because UNITA is part of the trench of South African Defence Force. This pressure, like it came from Malanje, it was presented in every camp than ultimately it was agreed upon that ok, we have to be engaged in the battles against UNITA...The underlying pressure, the most fundamental pressure was coming from inactivity in the ANC camps. It was not maybe mainly from commitment to fighting against UNITA or for the like of Angola or for the... no it basically emanated from that feeling of being useless.⁸⁹

Sehube, Mathiba and Cannie Ngulube's statements all seem to indicate the ambivalence that was felt amongst cadres. The wish to fight was strong but also the wish to fight at home rather than in Angola would be dominant. When fighting in Angola the cadres fought to protect other cadres and also to fight UNITA because Savimbi's troops were seen simply as a proxy arm of Pretoria. Mathiba and Sehube have also added that they

⁸⁸ Interviews MS/ Mathiba, Kodesh/Lentsoane.

⁸⁹ Interview MS/ Sehube.

felt it would be more useful fighting apartheid at home and that this also would help the MPLA fighting UNITA.⁹⁰

Sipho Binda was at the time at the Farm outside Malanje. He tells that a good telecommunication system allowed the camps to keep in contact with each other and helped the "cleaning up" operations:

We used to, of course, engage, in hot pursuit. They ambush our logistics trucks as they go, come from Luanda. We used to go to villages, raid, search and to destroy so to speak... you know and then we got some information.⁹¹

Binda's statement shows that MK were by then engaging in more traditional army warfare rather than using their training in guerrilla warfare. Instead of being guerrillas they were now seeking out guerrillas, instead of "swimming in the water" they were now trying to drain the water away from UNITA. Some cadres found this turn around difficult; others found it useful⁹² as it was a part of their training. The engagement with UNITA did not necessarily indicate a change away from guerrilla tactics. Both Guevara and Debray had stressed the importance of self-defence against attacking conventional armies.⁹³ Fighting another guerrilla army was no doubt a challenge but could, as Sehubé has pointed out, give some insights that later could be useful if cadres were to return to South Africa. Either way the educational aspect of the campaign was not in the forefront of the cadres' minds.

Sehubé claims his unit, and others were not fighting alongside the Angolan army FAPLA but alongside self-defence units of the nearby villages, so-called ODP

⁹⁰ Interview MS /Mathiba, MS/Sehubé.

⁹¹ Interview Wolfie Kodesh/ Sipho Binda 24/3 1993, Mayibuye centre for Oral History, UWC.

⁹² Interview MS/ Sehubé.

⁹³ Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (1998), Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution* (1968).

(Organizãõ Defesa Popular) units. ODP's were not trained and this according to Sehubé created problems for MK:

The training that we had received was anti- guerrilla, it was guerrilla warfare training and now we were going to be fighting against guerrillas (UNITA), and we were fighting with people that were not trained - or they were just people defence units, they didn't have sophisticated training, they didn't have sophisticated weaponry so they depended on us for most of the equipment, heavy equipment.⁹⁴

Leading up to 1984 the "clean up" operations gained unpopularity - the nature of these operations further added to this. Cadres had a hope of going home to South Africa to fight for their freedom but found themselves in an unnerving bush-war fighting for someone else. Again Masondo and Mathiba differ in opinion on the morale. Masondo describes a "genuine feeling" to fight while Mathiba tells of taking psychological strain.⁹⁵ They do agree that UNITA was felt as a threat, especially to the camps in the Malanje area. Besides the Farm and Caculama other less permanent camps were established in the area. Most of them consisted of a cluster of dwellings and tents. Some cadres were also based in Cacusó Town.

The Stuart Report into recent developments in Angola from 1984 notes that an early enthusiasm did exist for so-called LCB - Luta Contra Bandidos, fight against bandits, in MK.⁹⁶ This enthusiasm the report attributes to several factors, the first the acknowledgement by the cadres that their camps needed protection. The two next factors are closer to what Sehubé testified to, the urge to get out of the camp due to

⁹⁴ Interview MS/ Sehubé.

⁹⁵ Interviews MS/Masondo, MS/Mathiba

⁹⁶ *The Stuart Commission Report 1984 Inquiry Into Recent Developments In the People's Republic of Angola*, Lusaka March 14 1984 at: www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/misc/stuartreport.html.

boredom and the eagerness to gain combat experience. As LCB continued the enthusiasm disappeared.⁹⁷

The military effect of MK's operations is difficult to measure. The involvement on the "Eastern" and "Northern" front may have given the MK some combat experience. But the assistance to the FAPLA was minuscule. The fact that MK seems to have been fighting not alongside the FAPLA itself in the Cacus area but alongside self-defence units indicates that the MPLA could have needed its troops further south.

Throughout 1983 the SADF had established itself permanently in the southern Cunene province. The UNITA headquarters at Jamba could be reached by air from SWA/Namibia.⁹⁸ This represented an escalation of the Angolan conflict. In case of all out war it would be important for the FAPLA to keep its back clean. There were fears of an attack from the north by the exiled FNLA and Mobutu's Zairian forces. The MK and locally organised Angolans could hold the front until reinforcements came in case of such an attack. As a conventional military force MK was hardly a solid defence line. But the guarding of convoys and trains was crucial to keeping supply lines open both for civilians and military personnel. MK also strengthened the hold of the MPLA in areas that invariably would support UNITA or the FNLA. The initial enthusiasm for the government had dampened down as the situation in Angola's vast rural areas hardly improved. The general feeling towards MK in the Angolan population still seemed to be that of mutual co-operation.

⁹⁷ Interview MS/ Mathiba, MS/ Sehube.

⁹⁸ Turner: *Continent Ablaze - The insurgency Wars in Africa 1960 to present* (1998), p.110.

Discontent increases

In 1983 Mozambique was about to sign the Nkomati accord. This would make it even harder for MK to infiltrate back into the country. The steady trickle of cadres going back home during the late 1970's and early 1980's continued. But a rising number felt trapped in the Angolan camps. A series of attacks inside South Africa occurred in 1981 and 1982. South Africa fought back more viciously than before. Matola outside Maputo was hit in 1981; several ANC officials died but also many Mozambicans. Then Harare was hit by blasts that killed amongst others Joe Gqabi. In 1982 Joe Slovo's wife Ruth First was killed by a letter-bomb at the University of Eduardo Mondlane also in Maputo. Meanwhile more than forty people, thirty of them ANC officials, were killed in Maseru in Lesotho.⁹⁹ To a certain extent these attacks crippled the MK machinery and infiltration became even harder. Both Swaziland and Botswana had signed agreements with Pretoria and agreed to curtail ANC members' mobility through their countries. By 1983 there were not many roads back into the country and the Nkomati accord was to close one of the few remaining ones. The leadership tried to explain the problems that arose from signing of the Nkomati:

We explained it to them. And I can tell you that I am sure most of our people understood, But you see, with that thing you got a provocateur who was articulating now and maybe other things were not in place properly. It is easy for them you know to rim about the situation were there would be some dissatisfaction.¹⁰⁰

Nkomati also prompted a meeting on tactics between the Revolutionary Council and the NEC. The meeting was to be held in Luanda for security reasons.¹⁰¹ Since 1979 the plan

⁹⁹ For more on these attacks see Hanlon: *Beggar your Neighbours* (1987), Johnson and Martin: *Frontline Southern Africa* (1988), *Destructive Engagement*, (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1988).

¹⁰⁰ Interview MS/ Masondo.

¹⁰¹ Interview MS/Rashid.

had been to integrate the RC into the political leadership of the ANC.¹⁰² Now the high command of MK was set up under the name of a Politico-Military Council (PMC). The members and their working areas were more or less the same as in the former RC. Joe Modise became commander, Hani commissar, Kasrils was to head intelligence and Joe Nhlanhla was the secretary.¹⁰³ At the meeting commanders discussed how to take the struggle inside South Africa to a new level, to the People's War that had been described in the Green book... It was also acknowledged that there were internal problems that needed immediate action:

The 1983 meeting was precisely a crisis of confidence, not of a lack of confidence, in that many of the people or these elements that the South African agents were pushing were trying to say that the ANC leadership was retarding people from going to the front and not wanting to prosecute the armed struggle when in fact nothing could be farther from the truth... The ANC carried on a number of operations inside the country and was beginning to turn the tide of the liberation struggle.¹⁰⁴

As with the Nkomati accord the leadership resolved to try to explain and discuss what was happening inside the country to the cadres since it now was becoming obvious that personnel were restless. When all senior commanders and Oliver Tambo met in Luanda in December 1983, the United Democratic Front (UDF) had been formed inside the country. This was the realisation of the "Green Book" strategy. Howard Barrell estimates that MK at this stage had trained eight thousand seven hundred cadres.¹⁰⁵ Obviously more could be done to get these back into the country. The leadership also looked to SWAPO and noticed some of the same problems.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ellis & Sechaba: *Comrades Against Apartheid, The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile* (1994), p. 129.

¹⁰³ Barrell: *MK - The ANC's armed struggle* (1990), p. 49 -50. Others in the PMC were Cassius Make, Bob Tati and Jackie Molefe.

¹⁰⁴ Interview MS/Rashid, at this time head of Special Operations and responsible for a string of spectacular attacks on the Pretoria regime in 1981-82 just preceding this meeting.

¹⁰⁵ Barrell, *MK - The ANC's armed struggle* (1990), p. 52.

As we have seen, discontent had risen around living conditions in the camps, deployment to fight UNITA, the security department and the idleness of camp-life. The libraries, art studios, production of Dawn, educational programs and the farming could do little, other than for short periods take the cadres' minds off the realities of exile. More seldom than often did the leadership take the trip from Lusaka to Luanda and further out into the camps. When Chris Hani visited Caculama in December 1982, Thami Mali wrote:

ANC leaders had not visited the camps regularly enough. The movement of guerrillas into South Africa was frustratingly slow and irregular, As the long days passed soldiers who were hungry for action grew more and more dissatisfied.¹⁰⁷

Oliver Tambo had toured the camps in 1982 and requested the cadres to voice their concerns.¹⁰⁸ The answers he got disturbed some of the leaders in Lusaka. As a result Hani set out on a tour of the camps in early 1983 to see what needed to be done. He told the cadres in the camps of the difficulties of getting back into South Africa and answered questions from anxious combatants. When he returned to Lusaka he had spoken to one thousand cadres individually and later the same year he returned.¹⁰⁹ Hani's visits seem to indicate that the leadership in Lusaka by now must have known that something was going on. Masondo, who continued to travel between Luanda and Lusaka must have known. But they did not necessarily know how to defuse the situation. The accumulated problems can in retrospect look like a time bomb in the hands of the MK command. But apart from Hani's trips little seems to have been done

¹⁰⁶ Interview MS/Rashid.

¹⁰⁷ Thami Mali: *Chris Hani - The Sun that Set before Dawn*, (Johannesburg: Sached Books, 2000), p. 66.

¹⁰⁸ Ellis & Sechaba, *ANC - Comrades Against Apartheid* (1992), p. 129.

¹⁰⁹ Mali, *Chris Hani - The Sun that Set before Dawn* (2000), p. 67.

about the situation. Was Angola, as many cadres indicated, a "storing space", left behind and forgotten.¹¹⁰

Many felt that their continued stay in Angola was a kind of punishment. Some were said to be in Angola after criticising the leadership or airing political ideas not along the lines of the ANC's official programme. The duty in Angola was a kind of punishment. At the movement's school in Tanzania, Somafo, some of the same criticism was raised.¹¹¹ Some said they were at Somafo as punishment rather than being deployed back into South Africa. There were similarities between the camps in Angola and Tanzania, apart from the hardships of camp life, and abuse of power by the higher command is reported in both countries. Many must have asked themselves the question why they were not sent to the front or to universities abroad. Many would also ask themselves why they were sent to fight UNITA and maybe die, when others sat safely in Lusaka or London.

The second submission of the ANC to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1992) identifies at least six different reasons for the rise of discontent.¹¹² Two of the factors can be blamed on the specific situation in Angola. Firstly, UNITA had adapted a strategy of hitting ports and supply lines. This would affect the amounts and quality of supplies sent to the MK camps. Secondly, Angola is a tropical country and is infested with malaria and dengue fever. There was little, or at times no, medicine available to cure these fevers. Cadres would also suffer from malnutrition. Two further reasons for discontent can be found in the organisation of MK in Angola and in the frontline states.

¹¹⁰ see Interviews MS/Sehube, MS/Mathiba, MS/Ngulube.

¹¹¹ Sean Morrow, "Dakawa Development Centre: An African National Congress settlement in Tanzania, 1982 – 1992" in *African Affairs* (1998) no. 97.

¹¹² *Second Submission to the TRC* (1997)

The third reason was the frustration of the veterans from the second ZAPU campaign who felt they had been "dumped" in Angola. This feeling was shared with others that had been to the front and then found themselves back in Angola. The fourth reason was the presence of the Security Department, their abuse of power, the conflicting lines of command and the punishment dealt out. The two ultimate, and most evident reasons were the frustration over deployment in Angola and the lack of deployment back into South Africa. The TRC report also points out that the leadership had been criticised by the cadres for bad management of human resources and lack of information on what happened in the outside world as well as a deficiency in the provision of cultural activities.¹¹³

Conclusion

MK's presence in Angola underwent a change after the bombing of Nova Katengue and the development of more permanent command and security structures in Angola. The second joint operation with ZAPU increased the numbers of cadres with some military experience in the camps. This in time increased the call for employment at home. More cadres were in fact infiltrated back into South Africa than before. But the majority of cadres would now stay two or three years in Angola. The rise in numbers in the camps made the distribution of food and other supplies more difficult which in turn made supplies scarce. Lack of facilities in the temporary camps induced more hardship. Several of the camps that replaced the abandoned Nova Katengue were temporary tent camps without any permanent structures. The stagnation of academic life also made the cadres' daily life more difficult.

¹¹³ *Second Submission to the TRC (1997)*

When cadres between 1981 and 1983 were deployed on what was to become the eastern front in the area around Malanje, their reactions were mixed. Many welcomed the deployment as a break from the monotonous camp-life; others would rather be deployed at home. Problems in the command and between command and rank and file surfaced during the deployment. When the cadres came under fire and ultimately experienced casualties these problems caused added stress. The trust between commanders and rank and file, and between MK and their allies in FAPLA or the ODP was decreasing. Initial enthusiasm about the deployment disappeared.

Frustrations about deployment may have led to renewed discussions amongst cadres about strategy and tactics. This in turn could have fuelled criticism against the leadership, in particular the local MK command structure. Also fuelling the discontent was the notion among some cadres, in particular those who had already been to the front, that being in Angola was some kind of punishment. The leadership of MK and the ANC in Lusaka tried to defuse the situation by travelling to Angola and holding discussions with the cadres in the camps. This may have had an effect in the short run but it did not seriously address the problems of the camps.

The second submission of the ANC to the Truth and Reconciliation commission seems to confirm the problems the leadership of MK and the ANC now faced in Angola.

Interviews that have been conducted further confirm these frustrations - over food, the health situation, deployment and the security department.¹¹⁴ Even though Hani and Piliso tried to defuse some of the discontent that now flourished in the camps, there were factors that were beyond the control of the leadership. Again there were other

¹¹⁴ Interviews MS/Ngulube, MS/ Mathiba, MS/Sehube.

factors, such as the abuse of power in the security department, that should have been dealt with.

Chapter 5

Makatashinga - the mutiny

Towards the end of 1983 the troops deployed in Cacuso to "clear the area of bandits" demanded an end to the deployment. Tactics did not work; the MK had suffered casualties both in South Africa and Angola. The Security Department had grown into a separate chain of command. All camps would now have one commander and one security officer. The confusion in the command fuelled discontent. Discontent had grown in the camps during the early 1980's. A problem with the deployment on the eastern front in Angola was about to ignite the discontent. The events that followed were dubbed Makatashinga, Kimbundu¹ for "tired soldier".

Makatashinga, the mutiny, was the darkest hour of exile for MK and the ANC itself. The organisation was later criticised for its handling of the mutiny and subsequently on account of the lack of information about these events that it released to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the 1990's. Some of this criticism was probably justified. Articles and books dealing with the events are often biased or have been written for a specific political purpose. Most obvious amongst these are articles that were published in South African newspapers between 1991 and 1994. These were meant to limit the public support for the ANC in the pending elections.

To map the events I have therefore used a combination of papers in the Mayibuye archives, the archive of the ANC at Fort Hare University, interviews and the reports released by the ANC itself, Amnesty International and the Truth and Reconciliation

¹ Kimbundu is the language of the population in the area MK was deployed in Angola. Translation by Schube.

Commission.² On a second visit to the University of Fort Hare I found the draft for the first internal report, the *James Stuart report of Inquiry into recent developments in Angola*. The report gives a unique glimpse into the conditions of the camps and the lives of the cadres before, during and just after the mutinies.

The interviews, both those I have myself collected and the ones found at the Mayibuye Archives, have been conducted with a variety of those in command and the rank and file. Two interviews are of special interest in relation to this chapter. The two interviews, one with National Commissar Andrew Masondo the other with Peter Rooi Sehube, a suspected mutineer, both took four hours to conduct. During the research for this chapter I noticed that the mutiny is still a taboo subject among former cadres. Several did not want to talk about the mutinies or declined being interviewed at all, because of the mutinies. The ANC officials referred me to the reports when questioned about it.

Dangerous deployment

It puzzled many cadres to have both a military command and a system of security officers to command them. According to Peter Rooi Sehube the parallel command could have dangerous consequences. His unit was deployed outside Cacusso to ambush a UNITA unit:

Now, your commanders, you were to listen to your commanders then it occurred that we were deployed in a certain direction, then they came the security commanders, because they were always there, they wanted to be seen, they wanted to be felt, then we were changed into a new deployment, and we were deployed in a different direction whereby in the following morning, in the, when darkness slipped and it was clear to see everybody we learned that our positions were facing each other. It was sheer luck that there was

² Hereafter referred to as the TRC report.

no accidental shot that...Ok, because had there been any accidental shot we would have shot each other.³

Sehube and his comrades did not think this was an accident but blamed the security officer for deliberately putting two MK units up against each other. It caused a grudge against the Security Department. In another incident the deployment of MK to guard the train between Cacuso and Malanje was cancelled on allegations from one security officer that the MK cadres were trading their tinned meat with the Angolans for bread. This put the whole railway line in danger. Incidents like these further fuelled allegations that part of the Security Department tried to sabotage MK operations in Angola.⁴

MK soldiers complained that FAPLA were badly trained and heavily infiltrated, and it made their commanders incompetent. Some comrades thought FAPLA led MK units into ambush or betrayed them. The FAPLA forces were viewed as badly infiltrated and un-disciplined unlike their Cuban comrades in arms. The capture of UNITA soldiers by MK exemplifies this scepticism:

We capture one guy with all the sketches and the letters communiqué about the ambush the UNITA staged against us. We used to capture a lot of them and hand them over to the MPLA guys, you know, but of course there were problems. MPLA also, FAPLA because some of them were sympathetic with UNITA, but those guys were infiltrated you know. We would hand over a confirmed UNITA activist you know, or soldier and then in no time he'll be released.⁵

In operations across the Kwanza River on 26 December 1983, five comrades were killed in a badly planned attack on UNITA bases in the area.⁶ Meanwhile cadres who had been taken off duty at Cacuso and sent to protect the village of Cangandala

³ Interview MS/Sehube, June 2001

⁴ Interview MS /Sehube, June 2001 and MS/ Mathiba, March 2001.

⁵ Interview Wolfie Kodesh/Sipho Binda, Arpil 1993.

⁶ *Stuart Commission Report: Inquiry into Recent developments in the People's Republic of Angola*. At the ANC electronic Archive: www.anc.org.za.

rebelled. Cadres deployed around the village of Musafa followed their example. A group of soldiers had already been taken off duty and sent to Pango. These soldiers, with support from others in the camp, now staged an armed take-over of the camp when news of the 26 December attack reached them. There were also voices of discontent in Quibaxe, and nearby Pango. Caculama was tense when a cadre died in custody of the security officers. In early January groups of mutinying soldiers from Cacusó and Musafa went to Viana. The leadership of the Angola region was in Tanzania:

We were having a meeting in Dar es Salaam of the NEC. Then we heard that it was this mutiny there and comrade Mzwai and I went. We started at camp 13 at Quibaxe. And then I said to Mzwai: no, let's not go there by force. I'll go there as a commissar, I'll go aloof with just a few chaps and try to defuse. I mean the chaps, they were armed. So we went there and I told the chaps, I'm willing to discuss, we will sit down and discuss. But don't threaten me. We sat there, we discussed and by the time comrade Mzwai came with a potential force, it was over.⁷

Piliso and Masondo only managed to defuse the situation for a short time. In the meantime the regional commander Julius Mokoena, Commissar Edwin Mabitse and Commissar Chris Hani had been to Viana.⁸ The first group of mutineers that came to the camp had been disarmed voluntarily. A dialogue between leadership and dissatisfied cadres had been instigated. These first events indicated a serious problem with the deployment on the eastern front and the treatment of wounded and sick comrades. There are few records of what was discussed between cadres, commanders and commissars in January 1984 but whatever it was no promises were made. The security department dubbed the events the disgruntlement as the events appeared to stem from undisciplined acts rather than real political concerns. But the revolts in December 1983 and January the following year were only the beginning of a series of

⁷ Interview MS/Masondo, March 2001.

⁸ *Stuart Commission Report*, see also Mali: *The sun that set before dawn*, Chris Hani (1993) and Ronnie Kasrils: *Armed and Dangerous* (1998).

mutinies in the various camps. As the first mutiny was defused in Viana, the second was already in the pipeline

The Viana mutiny and the Committee of Ten

The Security Department filed a report on 3 January 1984⁹ in which the criticism and revolt in December was conceived as a discipline problem. There was no mention of the bad conditions in the camps or other possible explanations for the unrest. It was noted that cadres had little confidence in National Commissar Andrew Masondo. Hani on the other hand was popular:

The area is presently characterised by an alarming rate of disillusionment. This manifest itself in the high rate of drinking, bad response to the bell, lack of morale generally... Some comrades talk about the fall from grace of the National Commissar. They say he is too sluggish in his approach to problems of the region and have been completely dwarfed by comrade Chris who is presently the darling of the combatants.¹⁰

In addition to Andrew Masondo, cadres voiced criticism against Commander Joe Modise. They held the commander responsible for the tactics. They felt the struggle was too "slow". In effect, not enough cadres were infiltrated back into South Africa. Instead cadres had the perception that the front in Angola was prioritised.

Indirectly, there was criticism of the health conditions in the camps in the security report, with discussion of problems regarding the lack of treatment of cadres. They criticised the ineffective health system of the organisation, exemplified by failure to contain a lethal malaria attack. Other ailments also fuelled the cadres' disillusionment:

A number of comrades are suffering from kidney ailment in Caculama, none has been taken to Luanda for proper treatment. This unhealthy state

⁹ BOX 86 UFH. Angola file in Secretary General Alfred Nzo's Papers, *Extract from Security Department Report* 3.01.1984.

¹⁰ BOX 86 UFH. *Extract from Security Department Report* 3.01.1984.

of affairs has resulted in some comrades coming up with a slogan "get out of Angola to avoid death".¹¹

The report also noted a rise in cases of mental illness and suicide. The report implied there were problems in the camps but it did not suggest any solutions that could have defused the situation. Weeks after the report was filed, a case involving a cadre with both physical and psychological ailments resulted in renewed criticism of the Security Department. A cadre that had suffered from epileptic attacks after a case of malaria lost control of his tongue. After developing cerebral malaria he accused the leadership of various crimes against the rank and file. He was arrested by the security department and beaten until he died. For many this was the spark that made them rebel.¹² This second group of mutineers would not be disarmed. In Viana cadres now started a series of meetings:

In Luanda there were meetings and meetings and it was agreed upon a committee, now being elected, a committee of ten, who can, because it was agreed that it was legitimate for revolutionaries to take up a stand, we agreed on many, we talked about a lot of things. Now that we have agreed upon what we want, we need to have people representing us, a committee was established.¹³

The election of the Committee of Ten took place on Monday 6 February 1984.¹⁴

Sehube explains how they waited in Viana for the leadership to come and discuss their grievances:

... these are the ones that are going to negotiate with the leadership because the authority put by the leadership was not effective any more because we don't want to talk to that, we want to talk to the leadership and here are the committee that will represent us. The leadership had heard this. I think Modise had already flown to Angola and Mzwai was there in Angola and I don't know about Oliver Tambo and the political leadership was adequately briefed of the situation.¹⁵

¹¹ BOX 86 UFH, *Extract from Security Department Report* 3.01.1984.

¹² Interview MS/ Sehube, June 2001.

¹³ Interview MS/ Sehube, June 2001.

¹⁴ *Stuart Commission Report* names the ten, The Committee represented different parts of MK in Angola, amongst them the head of the Women's Section in Angola, Kate Mhlongo, the commissar of the cultural group Amandla Jabu Mafolo and a representative of DIP, Zaba Maledza. The Luanda District Commander Sidwell Moroka was elected into the committee in absentia.

¹⁵ Interview MS/ Sehube, June 2001.

Two meetings with the command were scheduled for the next few days. The soldiers wanted to speak on Radio Freedom and meet the international press.¹⁶ The broadcast and the meetings did not take place. Instead the presidential guard of FAPLA went into Viana on Tuesday 7 February to disarm them. A circular defence had been organised at the camp. When the presidential guard moved in they found themselves surrounded by mutineers that urged them not to interfere in internal MK matters. The mutineers told the Angolans the ANC leadership had set them up.¹⁷ A request from the mutineers was forwarded to the Soviet military attaché. The request was repeated to the Cuban and East German embassy. One of the mutineers later rewrote the request from memory:

270 cadres of the ANC in Viana camp are surrounded by FAPLA forces, and a dangerous situation is developing in the camp. The source of the problem is that the ANC cadres are demanding the holding of the National Conference to solve serious and urgent problems facing the movement with the view to raising the level of the struggle to a higher level against the racists in Pretoria, by fighting inside South Africa. There are, however, some other members of the ANC in this region who are opposed to the demands of the 270 Viana cadres. Consequently a confrontation situation has arisen in which FAPLA has been called in to disarm the Viana camp cadres.¹⁸

The Angolans however carried out orders. According to a security report filed in Lusaka later the same year one cadre was described as having fired four RPG shells.¹⁹ Apart from this episode the mutineers gave up without serious fighting. The death toll stood at one. The Angolans' first concern was probably Angola's own security situation. To apportion blame for the decision to intervene on behalf of the ANC leadership would be mere speculation. There is nothing in the archival evidence that

¹⁶ BOX 86 UFH, Angola file in Secretary General Alfred Nzo's papers, *Report* 13.05.1984, signed Morris Seabelo.

¹⁷ Interview MS/ Schube. June 2001.

¹⁸ BOX 86 UFH, Angola file in Secretary General Alfred Nzo's papers, *Request to Soviet, Cuban and GDR embassy, Luanda*, rewritten from memory by Zaba Maledza, undated.

¹⁹ BOX 86 UFH, Angola file in Secretary General Alfred Nzo's papers, *Report* 13.05.1984, signed Morris Seabelo.

suggests that others besides FAPLA or the ANC leadership were involved in the decision.

The agenda the Committee of Ten had set for the meeting with the Regional Command included the call for a National Conference. The ANC was still officially guided by its National Conferences although the last one had taken place at Morogoro in 1969. In the meantime there had been changes to the leadership that took the day-to-day decisions, the NEC, but rank and file had not been sufficiently consulted. As the request from the mutineers to the Soviet military attaché shows there were concerns about the strategy and tactics of the organisation amongst the rank and file. In particular there were concerns over the operations on the eastern front in Angola.

The Committee also wanted a discussion about the Security Department, the vacillation of the regional commissar, logistics, the medical situation and contact with leadership. It wanted all ANC centres to be notified about the events surrounding the mutiny and the mutilated body of Solly Sibeko, the cadre with epilepsy killed by security, to be buried by his comrades.²⁰ None of these demands was met immediately. After the interference of the Angolan forces the mutineers were rounded up and sent to Luanda Central Prison and Pango in the north.

The Stuart Commission

Already in February 1984 the National Executive in Lusaka decided to set up a special commission to investigate the events that had taken place in Angola. The commission was made up of respected members of the Lusaka and Luanda ANC community. At the

²⁰ *Stuart Commission Report.*

head of the commission was James Stuart. Otherwise it was made up of Anthony Mogalo, Sizakele Sigxashe, Aziz Pahad and Mtu Jwili. An investigation was launched into the causes of the events of December 1983 up to March 1984.²¹ In March 1984 the PMC and NEC read what later was to be the Stuart Report and forwarded it to a working committee to deal with the most urgent needs in the region of Angola.²²

The investigation had centred around five major questions: The root cause of disturbances, nature and genuineness of grievances, outside involvement, aims and methods, connections in other areas and ringleaders and their motives.²³ During the investigation the committee travelled to the Angola region and interviewed cadres in all the camps including those held at Pango. The committee also interviewed the commanding officers and members of the Security Department.

The commission's findings on the root cause involved the episodes earlier discussed, unpopular decisions at the front and the death of sick cadres. The nature and genuineness of the grievances fill most of the pages of the draft report. The conditions of the camps had deteriorated since the destruction of Nova Katengue claimed the draft. As long as Nova Katengue existed, there was a notion of MK as a people's army amongst the cadres. The commission now found this perception to have vanished. The commission found this perception to have vanished because of abuses by both security and other superior officers, and administrative staff in the camps. Further the deployment of personnel worried the cadres. The complaint was that officers did not deploy people according to their qualifications. Political commissars were deployed in

²¹ This investigation would later result in the Stuart Commission Report.

²² BOX 86 UFH, *Minutes* of meeting NEC/PMC 17.03.1984. Present was in addition to NEC/PMC member, James Stuart.

kitchens and engineering instructors sometimes found themselves being deployed as guards. Cadres blamed the confusion surrounding deployment on power struggles amongst officers and bureaucracy.

The draft of the Stuart report is incomplete: the pages dealing with the work of the Security Department are missing. It does however contain the remains of a chapter on the use of violence and reported deaths in camps, and cadres' reports about being locked in a goods container and being beaten with a pistol. These were punishments for drinking and smoking dagga. Violence had become a norm noted the Stuart Commission. It is difficult to establish the picture the commission members built this statement on as most of the commission's evidence is missing from the archive. In addition to security personnel, ordinary camp administration and logistics figure amongst the cadres' grievances. The commission notes that most of the logistical problems, that in turn became problems related to food and medicine, were man-made. Lack of proper food resulted in malnutrition. Skin diseases as a result of this are especially mentioned in the draft of the report.

The Stuart Commission found only one fully trained medical doctor in the region; he had not been outside Luanda. Medical orderlies visited the camps; some trained on the job. In addition to the problem of malaria, it was clear that bronchitis, TB, asthma and diseases related to malnutrition were all present in the camps. As a result of bad food, kidney problems occurred. There were also cases of mental illness in the camps. In addition to serious shortcomings in diet and medicine the commission noted a lack of

²³ BOX 86 UFH, papers of the Secretary General, *Draft Report, Stuart Commission*, undated probably second half of 1984. The draft is 44 pages long excluding 9 pages recommendations.

uniforms, soap, books for the libraries and radios. It commented that these shortcomings were aggravated by seriously limited academic and cultural activities.

The commission also found that one of the main grievances of the cadres was the long stay in the camps. One of the men interviewed made such an impression on the commission his statement made it to the draft of the report:

Our lengthy stay and conditions in exile has made some of us to lose all sense of human feeling, lose our complete touch of humanity, we do not have resistance.²⁴

The monotonous life in the camps was utilised to rationalise acts regarded as disciplinary acts such as dagga smoking, drinking and even rape. The commission noted that bad conditions and monotonous camp-life made it difficult for cadres to "survive" politically, morally and psychologically. The absence of leadership seems to further worsen the political, moral and psychological state of the cadres. The commission also found that there is criticism against National Commissar Andrew Masondo for failing to realise this.

There is no doubt in the draft that the grievances of the cadres simply cannot be explained as a problem of indiscipline as in earlier reports. The report James Stuart presented in front of the NEC and PMC in March was accompanied by nineteen recommendations. These were handed down to a working committee.²⁵ The recommendations included paragraphs on education, health, administration, transport and welfare. It was recommended the Caxito camp should be phased out and cadres examined because of the prevalence of malaria cases. There were also

²⁴ BOX 86 UFH, papers of the Secretary General, *Draft Report, Stuart Commission*, p. 15.

²⁵ BOX 86 UFH Recommendation of the MK commission after disturbances. March 1984.

recommendations on a military tribunal, treatment of prisoners and enemy agents after the mutiny. General amnesty for the Viana mutineers was not recommended.

On the events during the mutiny in Viana the Stuart commission found that the mutineers had formed a defence in the back of the camp.²⁶ When FAPLA arrived, some of the mutineers surrendered their arms. Others held their positions. A mutineer who threatened to throw a grenade against security officials was shot and later died. Another mutineer tried to throw a grenade that he had taken away from the camp but ended up injuring himself. The mutiny, as the commission found, ended only with these casualties.

The main question for the commission was all along whether there had been a plot behind the mutiny. The commissioners admit that during the investigation they had in mind a possible conspiracy. They did not find one. But they found that Angola had become a dumping ground for suspected agents, dissatisfied and undisciplined cadres. It recommended that this should stop immediately. The commission, in other words, found the camps a fertile ground for enemy agents. It also found that the Security Department was alienated from the cadres. The two officers who personified both the alienation of the Security Department and the allegedly lavish lifestyle of some officers were Mzwai Piliso and Andrew Masondo. The commission also found Chris Hani and Joe Slovo were in the cadres' good books.

The fact that the report could not find a conspiracy, neither between camps nor between regions shows that the demands by the Committee of Ten were justified political

²⁶ *Stuart Commission Report.*

demands. The mutiny was a reaction to years of disgruntlement in the camps. Disgruntlement grew after years of lingering in camps. The fact that the security department and the commissariat had interpreted dissatisfaction as indiscipline probably made things worse. The first draft of the commission's report covers the period ending in March 1984 with a warning. The fire was under control in the region but it was not extinguished.²⁷

The Pango mutiny

In May 1984 three hundred mutineers that had been sent to Pango overran the camp. Rooi Seube claims this uprising was perpetrated by a minority, hissed up by police agents:

The provocation was so extreme that the enemy agents within the ranks of us who had been disarmed just convinced other cadres that this people should be, they are not going to listen. The committee of ten, in fact we have been tricked. We got to stop, they attacked the administration, they took guns and they had hoped it would lead to mass support from the cadres that were the majority that had been disappointed. And we didn't support it. Because that is not how we do things.²⁸

In this second mutiny, three months after the Viana mutiny, eight persons were killed. The mutineers also executed six of their own.²⁹ Regional Commander Timothy Mkwana³⁰ sent a crack force. The battle over Pango left fifteen mutineers dead. In addition, one of Mkwana's own men died.³¹ In the aftermath seven more executions took place.

²⁷ BOX 86 UFH. papers of the Secretary General, *Draft Report, Stuart Commission*, p. 44.

²⁸ Interview MS/Seube, June 2001.

²⁹ Ronnie Kasrils: *Armed and Dangerous* (1998) p. 251.

³⁰ Timothy Mokoena was the nom de guerra of Godfrey Ngwenya

³¹ Ronnie Kasrils: *Armed and Dangerous* (1998) p. 251.

The mutiny in Pango was by far the most serious mutiny in terms of casualties. This is also the mutiny that is commonly referred to as the darkest hour of the ANC's history in exile. The organisation had turned the guns on their own and the trust between rank and file was non-existent in Pango because most of the cadres here were prisoners as a result of the Viana mutiny. This time the mutiny did not spread and the impact limited itself. But there was overall a more cynical approach to this last mutiny by both the mutineers and the staff and officers. The mutineers were desperate and had no other demand than to escape Pango. There was dissent among the mutineers. This grew after the killings by the leaders of the mutiny. This once more brought the question of enemy provocateurs to the surface.

Peter Rooi Sehube also mentions enemy agents as a root cause of this mutiny. But according to Sehube both the enemy agents that had infiltrated the camp and the camp administration must take blame for the tragedy. The provocation from the camp administration was extreme; it made the case easy for possible provocateurs. Sehube even claims that some of the administration themselves were enemy agents.³² He claims that some of the mutineers as well as a staff member later admitted to this. This is hard to confirm as most of the confessions made to the Security Department are withheld from the archives, if they at all still exist.

Another important thing to note on this last mutiny is how the MK command handled it. On the decision to send soldiers against their own comrades and in the end execute several mutineers Hani later said:

A few people were taken up, quite a number not a few - more than a hundred people see supported and they had sympathies or ... They killed

³² Interview MS/ Sehube, June 2001.

our people. They started attacking our people - the ... comrades. Staunch members of the ANC – senior officers. And they took over our camps. WE had to go and capture and kill some of them. Well they were picked up and they were detained at a place called.... a place in Angola. But some of them were executed. Because a mutiny in the army is a serious offence.³³

It was in fact Hani's involvement that saved more of the mutineers from being executed.³⁴ His own experience of being close to execution in 1969 would have been a decisive factor in this.³⁵ Hani's intervention also marked a decisive point in MK's history. It stopped the executions after the mutinies.

The main difference between the Viana and the Pango mutiny was the political organisation in the camp itself. The Viana mutiny was executed with an elected committee to speak for the mutineers. There was discussion amongst cadres on these demands and on the movement as a whole. There were plans for broadcasting demands. Three months later in Pango this was not the case. The mutiny did not come about after discussions between cadres. The mutineers had no set of demands, rather just one demand, to be transferred away from Pango. In Viana demands had been forwarded after a relatively peaceful take-over of camp. In Pango the mutineers overran the administration and killed eight of the staff. Thereafter they executed those in their own ranks that did not agree with the actions.

When the mutiny got out of hand, enemy agents were blamed. This could have been an expression of how difficult it was afterwards for those involved, both mutineers and their superiors, to recognise any responsibility for the tragedy. The lack of political

³³ Interview Kodesh/ Hani, April 1993.

³⁴ Mali: *The sun that set before Dawn*, (1993)p. 69, According to Mali Mokoena was himself against a pardon for the mutineers but realised later that Hani's decision was right.

³⁵ see *Chapter 1: A Call to Arms*.

focus and the violence that erupted put this mutiny on a different level than the Viana mutiny, altogether. In the aftermath the Pango mutiny probably was used as justification for the strict treatment by the Security Department of the mutineers, even those who were not present at the mutiny in Pango.

Discipline and Punish³⁶

The question of how far the internal punishment went after the mutinies has been treated in several reports by both the organisation and outside human rights groups in the decade following the events. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee also dealt with the internal justice system of the organisation. The material on this question in MK's history is quantitatively different from that of other questions asked in this dissertation. What follows below is therefore a shortened version of the main points of discussion concerning the actions of the Security Department after the mutinies.³⁷

According to Amnesty International there existed a regime of ill treatment in Quatro between 1984 and 1988 when it was closed. The ill treatment included bad living conditions, as in other camps, bodily and verbal abuse of women, verbal abuse and beatings of men. Since these measures have little if anything to do with rehabilitation or even punishment they seem to have been perpetrated with humiliation as the single purpose. On the life in Quatro just after the mutinies the Amnesty International Report states:

³⁶ Title Discipline and Punish borrowed from Michel Foucault: *Discipline and Punish - the birth of the prison* (Penguin Middlesex 1991). Apart from this title this part of the chapter does not follow Foucault's theories on prisons although the French philosopher's theories on power has inspired some of the discussion.

³⁷ For a lengthy discussion on the subject I would need to do a whole dissertation on it alone. The TRC report offers the most objective account of the events and is recommended for further study. A lot of the material is included in the *Second submission to the TRC* by the ANC.

What is apparent from the abundant testimony about life in Quatro is that the poor living conditions, the hard labour and the ritualised abuse had no aim but the humiliation and degradation of the prisoners. The systematic nature of the abuses makes it clear that these were no isolated excesses by undisciplined guards but represented a deliberate regime of ill treatment. The reality was in grotesque contrast to Quatro's stated purpose of "rehabilitation".³⁸

But the report absolves the ANC from the claims of systematic torture. It points out that the guards thought the inmates to be enemy agents. This would explain some of the verbal abuse and indicate a reason for the *regime of ill treatment*.

The ANC responded to the Amnesty Report with various statements on the nature of the people interviewed by the organisation. It was pointed out that a lot of the people in Quatro were in fact agents and double agents and therefore not to be trusted. But despite the questionable character of some of the interviewed, their testimonies should not be ruled out altogether. An independent investigation into the ANC's detention centre, the Skweyiya Commission Report from 1992, found similar abuses as the international organisation:

Quatro was essentially a camp for suspected enemy agents and dissidents. The attitude of the camp guards, commanders and medical assistants seemed to be universally hostile to the inmates. The inmates, whether convicted of any offence or not, were denigrated, humiliated and abused, often with staggering brutality. The violence inflicted on the prisoners usually had nothing whatsoever to do with any disciplinary transgression. It was violence for the sake of violence.³⁹

Pango, Quibaxe, Viana and Quatro, all of them were filled with mutineers under varying degrees of imprisonment for the greater part of 1984. Thirty-two mutineers,

³⁸ Amnesty International: *South Africa, Torture, Ill treatment and executions in African National Congress Camps*, 2 December 1992, AI index AFR 53/27/92.

³⁹ *Skweyiya Commission Report 1992*, Report of the commission of enquiry into complaints by former African National Congress prisoners and detainees, Some critics have claimed that this report is far from independent as its head Adv. T Skweyiya is related to Zola Skweyiya who became MK officer of Justice 1986: www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/misc/skweyiyareport.html.

including the Committee of Ten were held in Luanda State Prison. Here they embarked on a hunger strike.⁴⁰ Between February and July 1984 two of these died.⁴¹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that several of the members of the Committee of Ten were held for up to five years without a trial. After being held in the Luanda prison they were transferred to Quatro. Altogether several hundred cadres were held in various camps in the second half of 1984. Most of the mutineers were pardoned after a couple of months. Nine mutineers were sentenced to death and executed during 1984.⁴²

Among those who were held in Quibaxe was Peter Rooi Sehube. After three months his health was seriously compromised and he had to be transferred back to Pango malnourished. His head swelled up, according to Sehube because of stress. He confirms the notion of violence for the sake of violence amongst his handlers. His physical condition has never since been the same.⁴³ Several others have told similar stories but few are confirmed. Allegations of torture and other abuses by former MK prisoners in the press in 1991 prompted further investigation by the organisation. Two reports by persons both attached to and independent of the organisation, the Skweyiya Commission Report and the Motsenyane Commission of Enquiry looked into these claims in 1992 and 1993. As earlier mentioned the Skweyiya Commission found use of excessive violence in the treatment of prisoners, it also found verbal assault common. But the Skweyiya and the Motsenyane reports did not find systematic torture, a pattern of violence or other grave abuses.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ellis & Sechaba: *Comrades against Apartheid* (1994) p. 134.

⁴¹ *The Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)* Vol. 2. Chapter 4, CD- Rom 1998, paragraph 103 up to 180 deals with human rights abuses committed by the ANC. Amongst those interviewed are several members of the Committee of Ten and members of the Angola Regional Command, including Andrew Masondo.

⁴² *The Report of the TRC*, Vol. 2, chapter 4, paragraph 155.

The second important question raised by the report concerns the reason for the alleged abuses. The TRC report quotes the Motsenyane Commission of Enquiry from 1993 when it concludes that the main reason for the human rights abuses in the ANC was the blurred relationship between the Security Department, also known as Mbokodo and the MK command structure in itself.⁴⁵ It also concludes that the *relatively low* number of human rights violations *demonstrates that torture was not a policy of the ANC.*⁴⁶ However, there is no denial that they occurred and that there was an intricate web of reasons for this, the Mbokodo included amongst them. The overall situation in southern Africa, apartheid's *dirty war*, the cold war climate of the Angolan conflict, all were factors that helped create the Security Department in the first place. Added the hard living conditions in the Angolan camps and the isolation people in exile felt as refugees. To simplify the reasons and blame either politics, one part of the organisations or the overall context alone would be inadequate. Neither the perpetrators nor the victims would gain from a simplification. In fact any attempt to understand human rights abuses has to start with a systematic analysis of the context, something that was only partly done by the TRC.

Other explanations for human rights abuses differ almost as much as the stories of the abuses themselves. Amongst theories on violence inflicted on prisoners from their handlers were the theories of Frantz Fanon, theories which were well known by many in the ANC.⁴⁷ Fanon as a psychiatrist had observed French soldiers in Algeria who mishandled and tortured Algerian prisoners. The observations were used to understand

⁴³ Interview MS/ Sehube, June 2001.

⁴⁴ see *Motsenyane Report* and *Skweyiya Commission Report* at www.anc.org.za/ancdocs.

⁴⁵ *The Report of the TRC*, Vol. 2 chapter 4, paragraph 103 – 139.

⁴⁶ *The Report of the TRC*, Vol. 2 chapter 4, paragraph 167.

⁴⁷ Frantz Fanon: *The wretched of the earth*, (Penguin Middlesex 1990). Fanon deals with several case studies of trauma and violence in the chapter Colonial War and Mental Disorder.

how violence was transferred from the coloniser to the colonised and then back onto the coloniser. As we have seen earlier the Security Department was made up of young cadres, no doubt brutalised by apartheid and their life in exile. By branding prisoners in Quatro and elsewhere as agents or traitors they would get an outlet for their anger that in other instances would have been used against the apartheid regime. These are arguments that had been repeated by the ANC although over-simplification has to be taken into consideration. As earlier pointed out the guards seemed to have a grudge towards prisoners and in some cases transcended their own disgruntled feelings onto them.

There seems to be some confusion about the numbers of casualties during the mutiny. In an interview in *Sunday Times* 18 November 2001, Andrew Masondo claims as many as eighty lost their lives.⁴⁸ The figure seems to be closer to fifty. This includes MK cadres killed by mutineers, mutineers killed by security forces and FAPLA, FAPLA soldiers killed by mutineers, cadres executed by mutineers and mutineers that later died in Luanda prison and Quatro.⁴⁹ The inconsistency in the numbers also applies to the number of mutineers executed by a military tribunal after the Pango mutiny. The reason for this may have been the general confusion that surrounded the whole episode. It was the first time MK guns had been pointed at each other with intent and some of the people allegedly shot in action during the operation may in fact have been executed and vice versa. Military tribunals and execution had been used by the organisation since the sixties. Executions had taken place after the Shishita operation in 1981 and for criminal offences like murder and rape.

⁴⁸ Old soldier proud as he fades away. *Sunday Times*. 8.11.2001.

⁴⁹ See ANC list of casualties at www.anc.org.za/archives, Kasrils: *Armed and Dangerous*, Stuart, Motsenyane and Skweyiya Reports. As even these sources do not agree, a definite number cannot be established.

Punishing politics

Was the clamp-down a classic Stalinist purge? Several journalists and writers have claimed that the uncovering of a spy ring in 1979, the following clampdowns in the following years and the imprisonment of mutineers in 1984 seems to have been a product of the "Stalinist" training the security personnel received.⁵⁰ It is hard to trace this claim in independent sources. Whether or not certain political ideas make people more prone to power-abuse is an interesting question. However, these questions are asked rather too often without a wider analysis of context. In this case it is hard to say how "Stalinist" the MK command could have been. The majority of the security personnel had, rightly, trained in the Soviet Union and the GDR but this was in the late 1970's and early 1980's, a good twenty years after the denouncement of Stalin by Khrushchev and over forty years after the original Stalinist purges.⁵¹ There is no doubt that the security personnel were trained in security; nonetheless, to argue that they were trained to hit down on political indiscipline rather than general breach of conduct would be mere speculation. There were more pressing matters for the Security Department to look into than to go around as "thought police".

A report also made some political recommendations like fighting "pseudo-Marxist theories".⁵² This statement would imply that the command did see some ideas as dangerous or wrong. Members of the Committee of Ten later accused the leadership in

⁵⁰ Amongst these Stephen Ellis, "Mbokodo- security in the ANC camps 1961 -1990", in *African Affairs* (1994) no 93, Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid, the ANC and the South African Communist Party in exile*, Paul Trehwela. "A literature of Wolves", *Searchlight South Africa* (8 January 1992). Bandile Ketilo, "A miscarriage of Democracy, the ANC Security Department in the 1984 mutiny in Umkhonto we Sizwe", *Searchlight South Africa*, no 5 (1990) Various articles that appeared in *The Star* during 1991-92 also seem to have followed this thesis.

⁵¹ Martin McCauley, *The Soviet Union since 1917*, (Longman: New York, 1992).

⁵² BOX 43.3, Mayibuye UWC; *Angola Composite Report* with recommendations for a conference VC/RCA.

Angola of suppression of certain political ideas.⁵³ In fact it seems that this was a more common perception than acknowledged by the command and that it no doubt contributed to the build up before the mutinies. But the main reason, as we have seen, was not political suppression.

The final Stuart Commission Report into the mutiny states that there was a difference between the notion of "people's army" that prevailed in the Nova Katengue camp right after the move to Angola and the feeling of despair observed among cadres just before the mutiny.⁵⁴ When there were shortages in Nova Katengue both the leadership and the cadres shared. After the destruction of Nova Katengue elitism evolved according to the report. The administration had granted itself privileges like food, cigarettes and liquor. They used their position to seduce women; order cadres to do work for them and generally mismanage the affairs of the camp.⁵⁵ This indicates that political issues were not properly discussed and that the National Commissariat did not do their job. This could have resulted in some cadres nurturing the perception that punishment was politically motivated.

The immediate political aftermath

During the Pango mutiny the political machinery was already working on recommendations for change in the region. The Stuart Commission Report was studied and reforms planned. The commission had recommended that the demand of the Committee of Ten for a National Conference be met. There had been complaints from cadres that felt they were held from the front because they had other political ideas than

⁵³ See interview MS/ Schube, June 2001, Paul Trehwela. *A miscarriage of democracy*(1990).

⁵⁴ *The Stuart Commission Report*, The Stuart Commission consisted of James Stuart, Antony Mongalo, Sizakele Sigxashe, Aziz Pahad, Mtu Jwili.

⁵⁵ *The Stuart Commission Report*.

the command. As long as this feeling persisted among the rank and file the situation in the region was tense. The foremost demand from the Committee of Ten, the National Conference, therefore soon was initiated. A regional meeting was held in Luanda to make recommendations for a National Conference of the ANC in the following year. The meeting concluded that something had to be done to speed up repatriation of cadres, and improve the living conditions of the rest who would be left in Angola.⁵⁶

Before the conference some political restructuring was done in Luanda. Andrew Masondo was transferred to Tanzania at the behest of the cadres⁵⁷. Mzwai Piliso had to step down as Head of Security but continued to function in the administration in Luanda. The Security Department was about to be totally reorganised and came under closer control of the NEC. Mzwai Piliso and Andrew Masondo both got expelled from the NEC.

The relationship with the Angolan government and other supporters did not suffer any harm. The involvement of the Angolan presidential guard had upset the mutineers.⁵⁸ There can be little doubt that it would have been more fruitful to try negotiation with the Committee of Ten instead of calling in an external force. A speculation that the leadership had set a trap for the Angolans and wanted the conflict to escalate does however remain exactly that. But there is no evidence that the Angolans formally complained about what had taken place on their soil. The ANC did owe both MPLA and the OAU Liberation Committee who were present in Luanda an explanation. The mutinies were the kind of event that could jeopardise both ANC-MPLA relations and MK's stay in Angola.

⁵⁶ BOX 43.3, Mayibuye UWC, *Angola Composite Report*, Lusaka mission papers (1984) VC/RCA

⁵⁷ Interview MS/Masondo March 2001.

But if the punishment was not political, the reaction of the leadership in February to the Viana mutiny indicates a political failure. The ANC leadership had failed in handling the mutinies when it rejected a meeting with the Committee of Ten. A meeting could have defused the situation and possibly restored cadres' trust in their leadership. The absence of higher command in the camps during this period is striking. Although Hani and Piliso visited the camps soon after the mutinies they did not try to talk to the Committee of Ten. But the most striking absentee is Commander Joe Modise. Modise later had to face criticism for not having visited the camps often enough.⁵⁹ When he spoke to his subordinates, he was perceived as authoritative.⁶⁰

Conclusion

In Chapter Four the declining conditions in the camp were outlined. In this chapter the deterioration of the situation reached a climax with the outbreak of mutinies in the camps. Evident from the reports and the interviews the conditions had in some places deteriorated to a point where the leadership should have intervened had they visited the said areas. The Stuart Commission hastily sent out of Lusaka in February 1984 could do little else than note the conditions. The recommendations came too late for the cadres taking part in the second mutiny of May that year.

The direct causes of the mutiny were disgruntlement regarding the deployment on the eastern front and episodes in which sick cadres got beaten by the Security Department. The first mutiny in December 1983 on the eastern front quickly dissolved. By February

⁵⁸ Interview MS/ Sehube, June 2001.

⁵⁹ Interviews MS/Mathiba, MS/Sehube, This is a general perception in some of the literature.

1984 the mutineers in Viana outside Luanda were better organised and managed to set forward a set of demands. The demands were put forward by a committee of ten elected representatives of the various camps and sectors of the MK apparatus in Angola. This mutiny ended when the Luanda administration brought in the Angolan presidential guard. The committee and many of the mutineers were sent to prison in Luanda and to the camp Pango in the north-east. Some were also sent to the notorious Quatro camp. A commission was formed to look into the reasons for the mutinies under the leadership of James Stuart. The Stuart Commission handed to the NEC and PMC in Lusaka in May a set of recommendations on the regions.

But the recommendations were not put into action before a third mutiny erupted at Pango amongst mutineers held as prisoners. In contrast with the mutiny in February, this mutiny did not seem to have a political direction. It was badly planned and went out of hand. It could have gone even further when the leadership started to execute mutineers. But Chris Hani's pledge to the mutineers probably saved the situation for the organisation.

Reports on the mutinies and the punishments that followed mainly coincide. But the report from Amnesty International alleged that there was a pattern of violence where other reports only see sporadic use of force. The reports done by Skweyiya and the Montsenyane Commission are also more focused on the context than the Amnesty report is. In turn the TRC report follows the two commissions in trying to establish a context to understand what happened during the mutinies.

The mutiny ended up as the darkest chapter of the ANC's history. However, the political discussions that were to follow indicate that the leadership took the mutineers seriously on certain questions. The "crisis of confidence" between rank and file and their commanders had reached its zenith and a chain of discussions had begun. All ANC missions and regions had been invited to discuss the agenda for a National Conference at the beginning of 1985. The Angola region started their discussions while the situation was still tense. The next years would be the test as to whether or not reform took place inside the organisation.

Chapter 6

Towards liberation

At the end of 1984 President Reagan was re-elected as President of the US. A continuing conflict in southern Africa seemed likely. But the US was soon to realise that their "constructive engagement" with the apartheid regime was unpopular. South Africa signed the Lusaka Agreement in February 1984 with the MPLA government, which restrained their war machine from any full-scale incursions into Angola. Instead, the SADF intensified their covert operations. However, the situation inside South Africa shifted to the advantage of the liberation movements.

After the mutinies of 1983 and 1984 the ANC evaluated the armed struggle and its armed wing MK at the first consultative conference since 1969. An internal critique on militarism was voiced at regional preparatory meetings. MK cadres got to make recommendations to the consultative conference to be held at Kabwe in Zambia.

In Angola, the situation was slowly returning to normal. It became clear that most of the recruits in the region would not see immediate action inside South Africa. Instead they continued to support FAPLA's fight against UNITA in the country. The following years saw increased activity on the "northern front" near MK's camps around Quibaxe and Caxito. The pressure continued to mount on the supply lines to Malanje and the camp in Caculama.

Although Angola still received support from Cuba, the Soviet Union and East Germany, the fervour of the early independent socialist republic was lost. Years of war

and bad economic planning had encouraged one of Africa's most thriving free markets: an informal economy that ran through most quarters of society. ANC administrative staff and MK cadres had already participated in this economy, partly to gain extra food and solve logistical problems. The Angolan government signed a treaty with the ANC to utilise cadres' professional skills in the formal Angolan economy. Some of these skills were acquired at Viana Vocational Training Centre. The centre was in full operation by 1986.

The final battle for Namibia's freedom was under way in southern Angola. As the various players descended on the southern town of Cuito Cuanavale, MK suffered losses in the north due to increased UNITA activity. MK had no direct role in Cuito Cuanavale but kept UNITA engaged near Luanda, Malanje and the camps in the Quibaxe area.

The ANC and MK had to leave Angola to facilitate Namibian independence after the Namibia Agreement was signed in 1988. As leaders in Lusaka tried to assess the new situation after the signing of the Namibia accord, cadres welcomed the news. At first it looked like they now could move to a newly independent Namibia for easier access to South Africa. Instead, cadres were airlifted to Uganda. The cadres were ambivalent about the move. Some were left behind in Luanda to keep up a diplomatic mission, while others were to keep an eye on MK's arsenal of weapons.

The Luanda archives from this period have not survived. Lusaka continued to store correspondence between the ANC main office and the Luanda region. These relate to organisational matters, thus the growing importance of the military situation in Angola

must mainly be reconstructed on the basis of secondary material. Some traces of the conflict are evident in the Lusaka papers. There are death certificates of cadres that died fighting UNITA and reports on supplies lost in ambush. The Lusaka papers are supplemented with papers from the Scandinavian NGO's Finnsolidarity and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA). These papers present an outside view of the organisation and life in the camps. Together the papers will indicate whether or not the life in the camps improved after the mutinies. Another main source of information for this chapter is again interviews with rank and file.

Before and after the Kabwe conference

The year 1985 was the *Year of Umkhonto we Sizwe*. According to Ronnie Kasrils the armed organisation recorded over 150 actions a year and the flow of recruits out of the country continued. This happened in spite of the government's effort to seal the borders to neighbouring countries.¹ According to Kasrils *Operation Zikomo* successfully infiltrated 500 cadres into South Africa in 1985 and 1986.²

Parallel to the mutinies other events had occurred in Angola that would have consequences throughout the region. In June 1984 a letter bomb killed Jenny Schoon and her daughter Katryn in Lubango in central Angola. Jenny Schoon had been placed by the ANC as an English teacher at the University of Lubango. According to her husband, Marius Schoon, the organisation had not informed them about the situation in the country before they arrived. The situation was not suitable for children. The couple had two under the age of ten.³ Marius Schoon was in Luanda when Jenny opened a

¹ Ronnie Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous - From undercover struggle to freedom*, (Cape Town: Mayibuye Books 1998) p. 244.

² Interview Howard Barrell/ Ronnie Kasrils (1989).

³ Interview Hilda Bernstein/ Marius Schoon, (undated) Mayibuye Oral history of exile Project. UWC.

parcel that killed her and her daughter, while her son Fritz survived. The incident resembled the killing of Ruth First in Maputo two years earlier.⁴ It also showed that South Africa could also strike by mail also in Angola, a country with which it was at war.

The murder of Jenny and Kathryn Schoon took place as the rest of the region was locked into the aftermath of the mutinies. It was a sad reminder that the Security Department did not function as it ought to. Instead of guarding the security of ANC members in Angola, it was caught up in internal matters. The Angolan Interior Minister, Rodrigues Kito, advised the ANC to downplay the killing of Jenny and Kathryn Schoon so as to avoid having everybody up in arms. The Angolans also asked for a replacement for Jenny Schoon at the university⁵ and at the end of 1984, the ANC wanted to comply with this request, but this did not happen.⁶ As the year 1984 was nearing an end, there were indications of upcoming change in the region.

In March 1985 a regional conference was held in Luanda.⁷ The regional conference handed in several propositions regarding the region of Angola to be discussed further at a National Conference at Kabwe in Zambia in June the same year. This was the first National Conference since Morogoro. Amongst the topics discussed in Luanda beforehand were the organisation's cadre policy, the structure, organisation and control in the Angola region, the ideological and political work and the military training.⁸ The

⁴ When testifying in front of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1998, Craig Williamson in fact took the responsibility for parcel bombs, the one that killed First in 1982 and the one that killed the Schoons in 1984.

⁵ BOX 11, UFH, *Letter* Uriah Mokeba to H.G. Makgothi, ANC Secretary for Education, 14.9.84.

⁶ BOX 11 UFH, *Report on ANC in Angola— for the year beginning January 1984 to 8 January 1985*, Uriah Mokeba to Alfred Nzo. 29.3.85.

⁷ Shubin, *ANC – A view from Moscow*, (1999) p. 279.

⁸ BOX 43, Mayibuye UWC, Lusaka Mission Papers, *Letter* from Uriah Mokeba, Regional Political Command Luanda to Joe Nhlanhla, National Preparatory Committee 15.04.85.

sixteen proposals sent to Lusaka from the regional conference gives a rare insight into the political discussions amongst cadres in Angola.

The *Recommendations on Cadre Policy* indicated that the movement should always study the potential of cadres, investigate and expose their talents and improve their cultural life and education. Further, the quality of life as such should be improved through making available sporting facilities and films for educational purposes. Self-criticism should guide both command and cadres. Relationships between men and women have to be *comradely and constructive* and marriage respected.⁹ These recommendations echo some of the concerns voiced by cadres before and during the mutiny and recorded by the Stuart Commission. Even more so does a document on *Structures, Organisation and Discipline in the Region*.¹⁰ Regarding the Security Department the cadres suggested:

The department must be strengthened by the proper selection of the politics, only matured cadres to have responsible positions in the department. Dynamic links between the department and the commissariat should be established in order to eliminate any possibility of hostilities between the dept. and the general membership. Application of the principle of criticism and self-criticism should be guaranteed.¹¹

The document also criticises the use of discipline in the region, especially in the Quibaxe district.¹² The report also asks for the use of a "one man command" meaning a single line of command as opposed to the double line of command that had developed with both the command and the Security Department giving orders.¹³ The final draft of

⁹ BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, Lusaka Mission Papers *Recommendations on Cadre Policy* 15.04.85.

¹⁰ BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, Lusaka Mission Papers, *Structure, Organisation and Discipline in the Region* 15.04.85.

¹¹ BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, Lusaka Mission Papers, *Structures, Organisations and Discipline in the Region*.

¹² Quibaxe district included Pango, Quatro, Quibaxe and the abandoned Caxito camp.

¹³ BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, Lusaka Mission Papers, *Structure, Organisation and Discipline in the Region*.

the recommendations mentioned the mutinies. It maintained that the act of mutiny should be punishable by death but urged that a representative of the NEC should always be present in Angola and that structures in general should be strengthened. This would eradicate the double command by keeping the Security Department under check. The draft underlined the necessity of proper selection of cadres to this department.¹⁴

The regional conference produced two drafts on the ideological and political work. Political training was still seen as crucial in keeping discipline in the camps. The first draft singled out the *need to combat dangerous, divisive and diversionary trends in our ranks*.¹⁵ The draft identified the dangerous trends of militarism, distortion of the concept of a guerrilla army, phrase mongering, destructive criticism that leads to demoralisation, undermining the vanguard role of the movement and failure to understand anti-imperialism. These words echoed some of the earlier complaints. The trend of militarism was perceived as undermining the political aspects of the struggle. Furthermore, certain cadres tended to denounce all discipline as belonging to regular armies only, not to what was perceived as a guerrilla army. Some cadres tended to "phrase-monger" for example use revolutionary phrases or reactionary measures. The draft blamed enemy aggression and misguided political education for the mutiny of the previous year.¹⁶

A second report, *Political and Ideological Work in the Region* recommended intensified education.¹⁷ It also recommended fighting anti-communism and fighting against the

¹⁴ BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, Lusaka Mission Papers, *Draft Resolutions Adopted* 15.04.85.

¹⁵ BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, Lusaka Mission Papers, *Ideological and Political Work in the Region* 15.04.85.

¹⁶ BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, Lusaka Mission Papers, *Ideological and Political Work in the Region*.

¹⁷ BOX 43 Mayibuye UWC, Lusaka Mission Papers, *Political and Ideological Work in the Region* 15.04.85. Although a "twist" on the name of the former report, the intent behind both the documents

"distortion" of the principles of the guerrilla army. Both reports recommended the strengthening of the commissariat and the political courses. Both reports also indicated that there were indeed some political ideas that were not acceptable. The first report put the existence of these ideas down to the effect of infiltration by enemy agents. In short the regional conference in Luanda criticised both the mutinies of the year before and the Security Department.

Just before the regional conference a report was sent to Lusaka tracking the events of the previous year.¹⁸ The report states that preparations for the conference lifted the morale of the cadres. By January 1985 the morale was "normalised". To maintain this "normalisation" the leadership would have to visit the region more frequently.

But the events of 1984 had strained the relationship with the Angolans. Some of the events leading up to the mutinies had taken place in and around Luanda and were therefore known both by the Angolans and some of the diplomatic corps in Luanda. A FAPLA soldier had been killed when the Angolans were called out to restore order at Viana. In the year leading up to the mutiny there were also the episodes of rape and murder of Angolans by MK cadres. The Angolan Interior Minister, Rodrigues Kito, called in the regional command.¹⁹ The MPLA further complained of the rising number of MK cadres in Luanda itself. By 1985 the party stopped issuing ID cards for ANC personnel. According to the MPLA the cadres were becoming a security problem in the

were the same and both texts were sent to Lusaka. The main points in the documents are identical but the structure of sentences, style etc. seems to indicate different authors.

¹⁸ BOX 11, UFH, *Report on ANC in Angola – for the year beginning January 1984 to 8 January 1985*, Uriah Mokeba to SG Alfred Nzo. 29.3.85.

¹⁹ BOX 11 UFH, *Report on ANC in Angola*.

capital.²⁰ To help the relationship, the ANC had to strengthen the relationship with the MPLA.

A Protocol of co-operation between MPLA - Workers' Party - and the African National Congress was signed early in 1984.²¹ The MPLA would hereafter deploy ANC members where they were needed in Angola. The protocol came after a request at the end of 1983 by the MPLA for skilled workers.²² Cadres qualified as skilled workers could be utilised by the MPLA where necessary and get paid in local currency. There was always a need for translators and teachers of English. Peter Rooi Sehube, on his release from Pango, took up a post in the ANC Department of Information with Radio Freedom while simultaneously working for the Angolan Press Bureau, Angop as a translator and a journalist.²³ Construction workers were in demand all over Angola and the ANC had several qualified builders. In exchange the Angolan government provided facilities for a training centre where the ANC could train technical professionals. In turn the idea was that they would pass on their skills to Angolan personnel. The ANC could at any time withdraw a member of its personnel from duty if needed "to give his contribution to the liberation struggle of the people of South Africa".²⁴ The agreement meant a strengthening of ties between the two movements. And for cadres it meant an opportunity to use their skills and forge relationships with Angolans.

At the conference at Kabwe in June 1985, a new NEC was elected. Together with the Stuart Commission Report the recommendations from the regional meeting in Angola

²⁰ BOX 11 UFH, *Report on ANC in Angola*.

²¹ BOX 11 UFH, *Letter* Uriah Mokeba to SG Alfred Nzo 26.1.84.

²² BOX 11 UFH, *Letter* Uriah Mokeba to SG Alfred Nzo 23.12.83.

²³ Interview MS/ Sehube.

²⁴ BOX 11 UFH, *MPLA - Partido do Trabalho - Protocolo de cooperacao entre MPLA- Partido do Trabalho e o Congresso Nacional Africano "ANC" para os anos 1984 -1984*, (Translated by ANC

made a range of suggestions at the conference. Primarily the Kabwe conference dealt with how to move forward in the struggle at home, in South Africa. But several of the organisational recommendations from the region were agreed upon in Zambia. One of the suggestions from the Angola region, the opening up of the National Executive for non-Africans, was accepted. It was also decided to take the struggle inside South Africa "to the white areas" as earlier suggested in discussions in Luanda.²⁵ This opened up the last phase of the organisation's armed struggle. The decision that instantly made an impact in Angola was the final acceptance of a Code of Conduct for MK.²⁶ Amongst the rules were clear recommendations about how command and rank and file were to behave. MK was classified as a revolutionary guerrilla army, excluding the Angola region:

In our external training bases, however, we have conditions and facilities similar to those of a regular army, Here we insist on full military procedures, including the practice of saluting commanding personnel, higher ranks, parades, roll calls and fall ins. These are necessary for the orderly camp life and discipline and co-operation among guerrillas in combat zones.²⁷

The Code stressed political consciousness as the main inner form of discipline. The Code of Conduct found it necessary to stress that all cadres should respect the Geneva Convention on handling of Prisoners of War. POW's in this context meant suspected enemy agents, mutineers and other serious offenders against the Code itself. Amongst the punishments that were recommended were solitary confinement, reprimands,

Luanda office to: MPLA workers Party - Protocol of Co-operation between MPLA - Workers Party and the African National Congress of South Africa "ANC" for the year 1984 - 1985) January 1984.

²⁵ Shubin, *ANC - A view from Moscow*, (1999) p.280.

²⁶ Interviews MS/ Masondo, MS/ Sehuba.

²⁷ *Umkhonto we Sizwe Code of Conduct* at www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/hist/Mk. The code was a part of a bigger document named "Report of Commission on National Structures, Constitutional Guidelines and Codes of Conduct" 1985.

demotions and drills. MK upheld its right to sentence grave offenders to the maximum penalty, execution by military tribunal.²⁸

Change in the region after Kabwe

In 1985 the region had six permanent camps: Viana, Funda, Caculama, Pango, Quatro and Quibaxe. A small camp at Caxito was closed down in 1984 because of malaria²⁹. The organisation still had several residential houses in the capital. MK also had temporary camps around the Malanje area. One of these camps acquired the name of Barney Molokoena after the by now mythic hero of the campaign of the early eighties. The Barney Molokoena camp had no permanent structures other than the dwellings constructed by its inhabitants³⁰. Another camp was renamed Moses Mabhida after the late ANC and SACP stalwart. Pango was renamed David Rabkin. Rabkin died in a training accident on a short course there in November 1985. The accident, which was not the first training accident in the region, prompted a commission of enquiry³¹. The David Rabkin Training Centre would still be known under the name Pango and was now a special training facility. The farming project was established in the Malanje area after having been moved around.

In September 1986 the number of South African "refugees" in Angola was estimated to about nine thousand. Luanda province catered for between three and six thousand.³² The twenty-fifth anniversary of the armed struggle was celebrated in December 1986, in Angola. Kasrils celebrated the event in Pango. He remembers how when they fired

²⁸ *Umkhonto we Sizwe Code of Conduct* (1985): paragraph 8. Punishment.

²⁹ *ANC Second Submission to the TRC* (1992), "Appendix One: ANC structures and Personnel 1960 - 1994".

³⁰ Interview Maren Sæbøl Gideon Ncaphayi "Fundile B-one" Pretoria 4.4.2001.

³¹ BOX 11 UFH, *Death of Comrade David Rabkins*, Regional Commander T. Mkwana to Lennox Lagu MHQ Lusaka, 24.11.85.

shots in the air, a reply came from nearby Quibaxe. Pango, he states, was full of a new enthusiastic generation that already had fought on the streets of South Africa with Molotov-cocktails and stones. But despite the youthful enthusiasm, the daily routine in the camps was as before. Kasrils claims that the situation in 1986 was back to "normal" with a more mature command than before 1984 and Chris Hani as a National Commissar.³³

An unsigned report from the Region, towards the end of the year of the mutinies, was delivered to the PMC in Lusaka.³⁴ The observer visited three structures close to Luanda, Viana, Plot and "Moscow", and the Farm in Malanje. The report found that the main complaint in these places was lack of fresh food. The camps still got some fresh fish from the Soviets every fortnight but otherwise fresh fish, fresh meat and vegetables were purchased from the Angolans. Rice and sugar, sent from western European countries, could be traded with the local population for meat and vegetables. Second hand clothes were also requested from cadres for this purpose. The report notes a "complete lack of enthusiasm for the idea of growing our own vegetables" but the Plot asked for some banana plants.³⁵ One of the main points of the report was the administration of supplies. The regional logistics department was criticized for not doing enough to get supplies to the right places. Some cadres would also accuse their colleagues in the logistics department of stealing or abusing their positions.³⁶

Although life in the camps had not changed much since the mutiny, commissars and commanders were busy explaining to the cadres why:

³² 862-SA-00 NPA *ANC Viana Centre Report* Fimnsolidarity 25.9.86.

³³ Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous* (1998) p. 249.

³⁴ BOX 66, Mayibuye UWC, *Main Observations about situation in Angola* 27.10.84.

³⁵ BOX 66, Mayibuye UWC, *Main observations*.

We would get no normal food... but we understood that we are people that are dependent upon solidarity. The commissars at the camp they stressed the need for understanding that in exile and in the camps, one live an abnormal life.³⁷

The quote illustrates the ANC and MK's dependence on foreign agencies. This dependence became evident at one point in 1985 when the UNHCR froze funds because of the economic situation of the UNHCR itself. All allocations for construction programmes stopped and the organisation had to plead for help from its Finnish sponsors in Luanda, Finnsolidarity.³⁸ In 1987 the story was repeated when UNHCR stopped funds for the ongoing farming project in Malanje. But the decision this time was taken on the grounds that Malanje was becoming unsafe for external expertise. Without this expertise, the project proposed by the UN organ could not be implemented. The experts in mind were three recruits from Finnsolidarity, sub-contracted by the UNHCR.³⁹

There were some tensions between the ANC and the UNHCR on issues related to military personnel. MK guerrillas arrested in the various front-line states were handed over to the UNHCR who would give them refugee status. UNHCR would then hand the refugees over to the ANC. In some cases, they re-appeared in front-line states armed. The UNHCR wanted clarification on whether these persons really were refugees. The ANC officials who led talks with the UNHCR promised to send this request to the proper department inside the organisation.⁴⁰ On one occasion, the UNHCR received two deserters from MK. They fled the organisation after being accused of stealing and sought refuge in the UNHCR office in Luanda. The UN agency used the opportunity to

³⁶ Interviews MS/ Sehube, MS/ Ngulube.

³⁷ Interview Hilda Bernstein/Zebulon Xulu (Berlin 1991), Mayibuye Oral History of exile. UWC.

³⁸ 862-SA-01, NPA, *Fourth report on progress of the Viana project*, Finnsolidarity, Helsinki 18.11.85.

³⁹ BOX 4 UFH, *Minutes of a meeting with UNHCR officials*, Geneva 9.10.87.

⁴⁰ BOX 4 UFH, *Minutes of a meeting*.

remind the ANC that it was UNHCR's responsibility to protect all refugees, also those who ran away from the ANC.⁴¹ Throughout the ANC's stay in Angola, the UNHCR treated the South African exiles as a refugee community. The camps were given status as refugee camps. This did not change when it became evident that the ANC was training guerrillas in Angola.

Foreign donors could control what kind of supplies were sent to the region. Cadres always requested cigarettes. Donors would not supply these. So the report to the PMC from 1984 suggests that cadres be educated on the dangers of smoking to stop their requests.⁴² As the organisation's international contacts changed, so the donors changed. In the 1960's and 1970's eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were the most important donors. In the 1980's the solidarity movement and some governments in western Europe increased aid to the liberation movements of South Africa and Namibia. Most of the basic food still came from the Soviet Union but Scandinavia and the Netherlands increased aid to the organisation significantly in these years.⁴³ Other European countries like Ireland and Italy contributed, mostly through voluntary organisations in these countries. Inter-state organisations like the EEC also contributed.⁴⁴

Delivery and redistribution of donated food and clothes was still a problem. Theft was a usual occurrence at the airport. If goods arrived unannounced they would disappear.⁴⁵ Cars were breaking down and the new mechanical workshop at Viana only postponed

⁴¹ BOX 63, Mayibuye, *Letter*, UNHCR Luanda Representative Pedro Arriola to Uriah Mokeba 1.6.87.

⁴² BOX 66, Mayibuye UWC, *Main Observations...*

⁴³ Aid to the ANC from the Norwegian Foreign Affairs was approx. close to 29 mill. Nkr in 1984. It steadily increased until it was 46 millions per annum. in 1987 - the highest ever. see Eriksen: *Norway and the Liberation in Southern Africa*, (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institutet, 2000).

⁴⁴ In the Report to the PMC *Main Observations*, EEC and Italy is mentioned as donors, the Scandinavian contributors were often State Aid Agencies like the Swedish SIDA and the Norwegian NORAD or Volunteer organisation that received money over the state budget like the Norwegian People's Aid

⁴⁵ BOX 35 UFH, *RE: Monthly Report, Clearing and Forwarding Section* 30.12.87.

the problems. In December 1987, Head of Logistics in Angola, Mabeng, therefore asked for three Land Rovers to be sent from Lusaka to the region.⁴⁶ There was an increase in such requests in the second half of the 1980's. That does not necessarily mean that the roads in Angola were getting worse or that MK needed more transport.

Uniforms were amongst the goods the ANC possessed. The stocks in 1987 included two thousand six hundred from the Soviet Union and two thousand three hundred and sixty seven plain green. The stores also had one thousand four hundred and fifty registered as PLO These were combat uniforms. The records also show seven hundred uniforms branded Savimbi, which were probably captured UNITA uniforms.⁴⁷ The Stuart Commission found a lack of uniforms and boots in 1984.⁴⁸ The stock of uniforms in 1987 indicates that something in fact had happened to the delivery of supplies. There are no further complaints in the records about lack of uniforms.

Command, like Ronnie Kasrils, argues that conditions in Angola did change after the mutinies. To some extent this is true. But living conditions did not change significantly in the camps. The general perception was that the Kabwe conference had listened to the cadres in the Angolan camps. Recommendations had been passed to change for the better the situation of the cadres in Angola.

A new Security Department

According to Ernst Cannie Ngulube, "general mistrust" plagued the camps even after the Security Department was restructured.⁴⁹ The mistrust was not directed against any

⁴⁶ BOX 35 UFH, *RE: Monthly Report*.

⁴⁷ BOX 35 UFH, *RE: Monthly Report...*

⁴⁸ BOX 86 UFH, papers of the Secretary General, *Draft Report, Stuart Commission* (1984).

⁴⁹ Interviews MS/Ngulube, MS/Ncaphayi, MS/Sehube.

particular group or language. The story of the mutiny and the hunt for instigators was told to the "young lions" who arrived in Angola after 1985. This generation had, according to Ronnie Kasrils, little or no schooling,⁵⁰ but they were streetwise. There was a concern that this would create a political problem.

The leadership was aware of the possible problems. After Kabwe the Politico-Military Committee reported to Lusaka on security issues. One such report by Regional Commander Timothy Mkhwana was filed in Lusaka in late September 1987.⁵¹ Mkhwana reported to Lusaka on problems of stagnation in the camps. The number of cadres in the region was one thousand seven hundred and eighty three, just three hundred and forty three of these were undergoing training. One thousand four hundred and forty were fully trained personnel.⁵² Mkhwana urged Lusaka to speed up deployment for trained cadres, as he feared a situation similar to that in 1984. He continues:

In quelling of the mutiny we did not provide a long-term solution. The mutiny was suppressed militarily only. As a long-term solution we were supposed to have got rid of the disgruntled elements in the army, and there is no need for one to state now because recommendations were made and approved at higher levels. But what is necessary to state is that the approval the resolutions were not fully implemented. Of late we have a growing number of desertions in the region...There is a growing and noticeable deterioration of discipline in the region. Also contributing to this problem is the tendency to use and treat Angola as a dumping ground for the disgruntled elements.⁵³

Mkhwana stated that due to the situation in Angola most of the cadres were at all times armed. This could pose a threat to security. The new militant generation that came out of the country between 1984 and 1986 could be even more difficult to quell than older

⁵⁰ Interview Barrell/Kasrils.

⁵¹ Mkhwana later became General Godfrey Ngwenya SANDF, appointed by Kasrils and Joe Modise.

⁵² BOX 66, Mayibuye UWC, "*A matter of great concern*", a report on the current state of affairs in the region, Sept. 87.

⁵³ BOX 66, Mayibuye UWC, "*A matter of great concern*".

generations if there were to be another mutiny. The report therefore recommended that these be repatriated as soon as possible.

Offences perpetrated by the cadres against MK's new code of conduct also found their way to the desk of Secretary General Alfred Nzo. In late 1986, the local Angolan police caught a group of cadres that were stealing. After six months in prison, they were released and then detained by the ANC. Then two of them ran away and contacted the UNHCR, who then requested the release of the group.⁵⁴ The stolen goods, thirty two suits, forty pairs of takkies, three hundred skirts and some perfume were stolen from one of the ANC's own stores and were probably meant for Angola's thriving black market. In addition to clothes MK cadres seem to have provided the black market with sugar. In 1986 the consumption of sugar was nearly as high as the consumption of beans and flour together. The following year the consumption of sugar was halved.⁵⁵

The situation in the camps was reflected in the number of deserters reported during 1987. Timothy Mkwana reported details of eight deserters to the PMC in Lusaka.⁵⁶ According to commander Mkwana, desertion was the latest trend in the region. Some of the deserters had earlier been apprehended and were suspected of being enemy agents; others had reportedly stolen goods from ANC stores. Several had contacted the

⁵⁴ BOX 66, Mayibuye UWC, *Letter* from Mokeba to Alfred Nzo, 08.07.87.

⁵⁵ BOX 35 UFH, *Re: Monthly Report, Clearing and Forwarding Section*, Head of Logistics Mabeng to TG. 30.12.87. In 1986 the consumption of Rice was 6311 drums, the consumption of Sugar 4012 drums, the consumption of Beans 1165 drums and Flour 3653. In 1987 the overall consumption stayed almost the same, with exception of sugar consumption which almost halved. Sugar could be used as currency in Angola and would probably be traded by cadres for a little fresh meat or vegetables.

⁵⁶ BOX 66, Mayibuye UWC, PMC - file, *Report on Desertees*, T. Mkwana 1987. The document has no exact date but was probably sent to Lusaka together with the *Report Morris Seabelo Centre*, August 1987.

UNHCR in Luanda for help. Mkwana describes the UN commissioners' interest in the deserters as "negative".⁵⁷

Another report from the Security Department in Luanda to the PMC in Lusaka was filed in August 1987. In 1987 the Morris Seabelo Centre had six detainees found guilty of "miscellaneous" crimes, a term covering offences from desertion to theft. The centre claimed to have thirty seven confessed agents, indicating that this must have been a serious problem.⁵⁸ Some of the confessions could have been false. It was later admitted that some of them were forced. The Angola region received suspected agents from all other regions. Some were held in Lusaka but the majority went to Angolan camps.⁵⁹ In addition to the thirty seven confessed agents in Quatro three detainees denied the grounds upon which they had been charged and eighteen cases were still under investigation. The centre still held as many as twenty-four mutineers.⁶⁰ The total number detained in Quatro in August 1987 was thus eighty-nine.

Seventeen of the detainees arrived during the preceding four months, all of these were suspected agents. Six of them confessed to have been recruited by a Special Branch base at Germiston outside Johannesburg. Ten case files were attached to the report from Morris Seabelo Centre. Several of the newly detained agents admitted to having served in prison and were recruited upon their release. Their cases also reveal a network of informers in the Angolan camps informing on suspected cadres.⁶¹ This network had been criticised in the wake of the mutinies but continued to function throughout MK's stay in Angola.

⁵⁷ BOX 66, PMC -file, Mayibuye UWC, *Report on desertees...*

⁵⁸ BOX 66, PMC - file, Mayibuye UWC, *Report Morris Seabelo Centre August 1987.*

⁵⁹ *ANC Second Submission to the TRC (1992).*

⁶⁰ BOX 66, PMC - file, Mayibuye UWC, *Report Morris Seabelo Centre.*

In September 1987, the leader of the ANC Department of Security and Intelligence (NAT) Joe Nhlanhla met with the regional NAT structures.⁶² A suspected agent had shot himself in Pango where he was held. He had been walking freely amongst other cadres as Pango did not have facilities to lock him up. This was one of several episodes referred to in the report that the Angola NAT could not explain. They were concerned about their relationship with the army command in the region and complained about being understaffed. They also felt that they were constantly held responsible for the past sins of the Security Department.

Nhlanhla was briefed on the five agents that had confessed that they had been recruited at Germiston police station outside Johannesburg. The agents who had confessed were held on charges of intent to poison cadres in camps in Angola and Tanzania. BOSS agents Scarface and Gilmore at the Germiston base were claimed to be their handlers. The plan was to poison the drinking water and rice in several camps in Angola and East Africa on 8 January 1988 and then shoot the survivors. The plan involved nine agents, six of the suspects were held in Quatro, two were still at large while one was in Quibaxe awaiting transport to take them to Quatro. Nhlanhla noted in his own handwriting that all the suspects were about nineteen years old. The security chief feared that the regime wanted to implicate the young agents in massacres on behalf of the apartheid state so as to guarantee their loyalty.⁶³

⁶¹ BOX 66, PMC - file, Mayibuye UWC, *Report Morris Seabelo Centre*.

⁶² BOX 66, Mayibuye UWC, PMC - file, *Report of Comrade Joe Nhlanhla on meeting with leadership of NAT in Angola*, 3.9.87.

⁶³ BOX 66, PMC - file, Mayibuye, UWC, *Report of Comrade Joe Nharlha...*

The alleged plot led to another round of heightened security in the camps, especially around kitchen areas. The report on the matter recommended that confessions like these should be recorded visually and that suspects should be photographed. It also urged the regional NAT to deliver more regular reports. The issue was not seen as a regional security issue but a security issue in the organisation as a whole. Several of the suspects had been apprehended in Zambia and Tanzania. Apart from the Angolan camps, the Dakawa development project in Tanzania was mentioned as a target for water poisoning.

The department of Intelligence and Security was re-organised after Kabwe. New recruits were sent to Moscow for training. They were to replace those who had "discredited" themselves before and after the mutiny.⁶⁴ Apart from having to file reports to Lusaka, the work of the Security Department did not change considerably. Quatro still held members of the Committee of Ten and other mutineers. It can be argued that there were political prisoners. Mutineers that were back in the camps felt branded and had difficulties obtaining positions or scholarships to go for study.⁶⁵ The reports to the PMC do not specify under which conditions confessions were obtained. Most of the incidents of ill-treatment in Quatro reported to Amnesty International took place between 1984 and 1988. The majority of the complaints were related to food and living conditions. The report does not mention forced confessions, such as confessions obtained under torture.⁶⁶

The Plot - vocational training

⁶⁴ Vladimir Shubin: "Soviet Union/ Russian Federation's relations with South Africa" in *African Affairs* (1995) no. 95.

⁶⁵ Interview MS/ Sehube

The Stuart Report had noted the need for a better health system in the region. At the end of 1983, the ANC had requested the Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) to assist in their running of the print shop. They also requested help to build a health education centre and provide medicine for the ANC health department.⁶⁷ The NPA had been in talks with the ANC health department under the leadership of Doctor Manto Tshabalala Msimang since 1978.⁶⁸

The printing shop, which was operating with the help of Finnsolidarity, a Finnish NGO needed an additional offset printing machine. This was granted from the NPA. Together with Finnsolidarity, plans were made for the clinic and a teaching centre. Marrko Vesikko, a Finnish citizen was running the printing shop. The Plot at Viana was an old ZIPRA camp handed over to the ANC just before Zimbabwe's independence. As in other camps, there were few structures but the advantage was the closeness to Luanda. The Norwegians were initially sceptical about setting up projects in the vicinity of guerrilla camps. Likewise, the ANC would be careful with having personnel from a NATO country in camps in Angola. Earlier, sending students to courses in Norway had solved this problem.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *Amnesty International: Torture, Ill-treatment and executions in African national Congress camps*. 2 December 1992, AI Index AFR 53/27/92.

⁶⁷ 82 -SA-01 NPA (Norsk Folkehjelps Arkiv) Norsk Folkehjelp notat *Angående Prosjekter med ANC*, (Concerning projects with the ANC) 13.12 83.

⁶⁸ Discussion Maren Sæbø with Laila Nicholaysen, NPA Oslo 7.6 2001.

⁶⁹ Vesla Vetlesen. *Frihet for Sør Afrika - LO og kampen mot Apartheid*, (Oslo:Tiden Forlag Oslo 1998) p. 90. "Freedom for South Africa - The Norwegian trade unions and the fight against Apartheid" The irony was that ANC members had received medical training at a NATO base in Oslo, Norway, The Norwegian instructors in field medicine would have a background with the Norwegian Army.

Building was scheduled to begin in January 1984. The architectural plans show a compound with a clinic, a workshop, classrooms and student residences.⁷⁰ The building of a clinic would accommodate the concerns voiced by cadres with regards to the Angolan hospitals. Angolan hospitals were a dreaded place amongst cadres, intensified by lack of language skills. Cuban doctors and nurses primarily staffed the hospitals. Amongst some cadres Cuban doctors were known for *chopping off limbs* as a cure for various ailments.⁷¹ The inability to understand Spanish or Portuguese made communication difficult. Besides the language problem, Angolan hospitals were known to be dirty and overcrowded. Cadres that needed serious medical attention were instead sent to countries like Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia as well as to the Soviet Union.⁷² Less serious injuries could be treated in Lusaka.

In November 1985 the building of the Vocational Training Centre, or Moses Kotane Self Reliance Centre as it was later named, was almost finished. The local government was not yet able to provide necessary technical data for installation of a water supply. The centre also had problems with electricity.⁷³ The Viana transit camp near to the centre was like other camps in Angola, and was no more than an area of dwellings.⁷⁴ Ernest Cannie Ngulube, commissar in Viana just before the mutinies, says his role was as that of *parent* for the approximately two hundred cadres staying there. Their grievances brought before him were of a multi-faceted nature. But they indicated stress after the prolonged stay in the camp.

⁷⁰ 862-SA-00 NPA, *ANC Vocational Training and Self Reliance Centre*, Architectural Drawings 27.01.84.

⁷¹ Interview MS/ Ngulube

⁷² BOX 11 UFH, Letter from Uriah Mokeba to Simon Makana Administrative Secretary, ANC Lusaka, 8.2.85, the letters request for list of names of patients that will go for treatment in various Eastern European Countries.

⁷³ 862-SA-01, NPA, *Fourth report on progress of the ANC Viana Project*, Finnsolidarity, Helsinki 18.11.85.

⁷⁴ Interview MS/Ngulube.

Just before the mutiny, Ngulube was sent to Bulgaria. When he came back, he got a new deployment as cook at the Plot. The camp was ridden with tensions but cadres believed that conditions were about to turn. This did not happen. The vocational training, argues Ngulube, was little more than a means to pass time:

The plot, it was made for people to learn some skills you see, but it didn't function like that, you see there was a misunderstanding between those who were the leaders there on the project and there in Luanda... we were just staying there, like me, if I had (trained) maybe today I would be someone. You would wake up in the morning there was nothing to do. I was in the kitchen preparing some food. I would go to work in the kitchen.⁷⁵

When the Stuart Commission visited the region early in 1984, they found one doctor in the region. They had found that medical orderlies served the camps, but few of these were trained properly. In September 1986 the Norwegian People's Aid was running a training course for nurses; the students were from both the ANC and SWAPO. The Holland Committee on Southern Africa ran the mechanical workshop and the related vocational training. The clinic at Viana still lacked basic equipment.⁷⁶ Equipment had still not arrived in October the same year. Lack of sufficient water and an insufficient supply of electricity further added to the problems of running the camp.⁷⁷ The reports archived by the Norwegian People's Aid reflect problems with various supplies at the vocational training centre at Viana. From 1986 onwards, the organisation had a permanent representative at the centre, Hilde Øieren, who was a trained nurse. In addition to Øieren, a Dutch couple lived for a while in the camp teaching mechanics.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Interview MS/Ngulube.

⁷⁶ 822-SA-01, NPA, *Memorandum on the ANC Viana Centre*, Finnsolidarity, 25.09.86.

⁷⁷ 822-SA-01, NPA, *Seventh Report on Progress of the ANC Viana Project*, Finnsolidarity, 21.10.86.

⁷⁸ Discussions MS with Hilde Karin Larsen (2001) adviser for the NPA and ANC Luanda 1985-86.

As at other camps the cadres at Viana vocational Training Centre had to follow the MK Code of Conduct and strict camp rules. Camp rules included general discipline, respect for the organisation's property and visiting hours.⁷⁹ The last rule was included as Viana had external staff in addition to ANC personnel. Apart from the clinic there was a tailoring shop and a mechanical workshop on the Plot. The students lived in dormitories and ate their dinner in a dining hall. Two dormitories housed eighty one students. The majority of cadres in Viana lived in nearby dwellings. The dining hall and kitchen served all.⁸⁰ The Finnish NGO Finnsolidarity had financed the majority of the structures built.⁸¹

The structures at the Plot represented the largest building project undertaken by the ANC throughout their stay in Angola. The training centre at Viana was the first major educational project that the ANC ran in Angola. The scale and impact were dramatically different from the Latsubensi printing shop established some years earlier. This type of training had normally been run in Zambia and Tanzania. Although some medical training was successful it seemed that the vocational training had little purpose. Some cadres acquired mechanical skills, others learnt basic carpentry but there were few if any specialised courses or follow-a up training. As with the earlier experiments in acquiring farming skills cadres saw Viana as storing place rather than as school.⁸²

Military camps or civilian training facilities?

The ANC health department had specified that a medical training program would be run in Angola. The Scandinavian Aid agencies would not normally be involved in

⁷⁹ BOX 68 Mayibuye, UWC, *ANC Vocational Training And Self Reliance Centre, Viana* 22.12.86.

⁸⁰ Interview MS/Ngulube.

⁸¹ 862-SA-00 NPA, *Contract: Finnsolidarity - Makrotalo - Oy, Certificate of Completion of the Erection*, ANC technical Department and Finnsolidarity. 14.12.86.

projects in military camps but they had been assured that Viana was a civilian camp. However the Norwegian and Finnish personnel in Angola knew that the Plot was a military camp.⁸³ During a visit as early as 1983 a Swedish agency was shown a "civilian" camp at Viana with all military equipment stored away.⁸⁴ In 1984 the MPLA requested that the ANC "make" a registered refugee camp to show off to donors and the UNHCR.⁸⁵

In 1986 the first students were examined at the Health Centre in Viana. A memorandum from the region to Secretary General Nzo in Lusaka outlined a military health service to be established in all three regions in Angola where MK was present.⁸⁶ Priority was given to camps with cadres engaged in fighting UNITA. Health workers were to set up educational programs against "common social diseases". Those mentioned include Malaria, TB, sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and alcoholism.⁸⁷ This was the first time STD's and alcohol were mentioned as a serious social problem, although dagga smoking had featured in the reports from the early 1980's. During 1986 the first cases of HIV infection became evident in Angola amongst MK cadres. AIDS fatalities appeared a few years later in the exile community.⁸⁸ The memorandum recommended that all cadres were screened on arrival in the army, that they received the necessary vaccinations and were informed about common health issues. Training of health personnel would be done at Viana. Special courses were set up for those who showed exceptional organisational skills - with the aim that they be engaged as medical staff inside the country when conflict there intensified. People's committees were to set up

⁸² Interviews MS/Ngulube, MS/Sehube.

⁸³ Discussions MS/ Hilde Larsen and Laila Nicholaysen.

⁸⁴ BOX 35 UFH *Letter* Uriah Mokeba to T.T. Nkobi 28.2.83.

⁸⁵ BOX 11 UFH, *Report on ANC in Angola...*

⁸⁶ BOX 66, Mayibuye, UWC, *Memorandum by Dr. Hagar McBerry and Dr. Bob Mayekiso* to SG Nzo 13.12.86.

alternative democratic health services inside the country. Here the memo went further than merely dealing with the medical problems in the camps. In fact, it foresaw a situation where the ANC might need medical staff for building a new democratic state in South Africa. Although military planning in this document distinguishes it from the policies of the Scandinavian aid organisations, the aim to build a new South Africa is present in documents from both parties.

The relationship between the ANC and the Scandinavian aid organisations continued until the ANC left Angola in 1989. A report from Viana dated January 1988 found that the buildings were in an acceptable state but that there were problems with the students.⁸⁹ They had a "low-level of formal schooling". Most of them had been to preparatory courses in the GDR and Tanzania. Hilde Øieren Seboko, the Norwegian nurse stationed there, took over classes in the beginning of 1988. He filed a report in November the same year. Twenty-two students finished the course in 1988 while two failed, both from SWAPO.⁹⁰ Apart from the courses on medicine and laboratory techniques, the students attended several other classes as they lacked knowledge in some key areas such as English and mathematics. The average age of students from the ANC was twenty-five years old, while that of the SWAPO students was thirty years old. Previous education ranged from standard six to ten amongst the South Africans and standard seven and eight amongst the Namibians. This group was a bit older than earlier groups but their level of education was the same. One important subject was

⁸⁷ BOX 66, Mayibuye, UWC, *Memorandum by Dr. McBerry and Dr. Mayekiso.*

⁸⁸ Own recollection.

⁸⁹ 822-SA-00 NPA *Minutes of the project Assesment Mission to the Moses Kotane Self-Reliance Centre Viana - Angola* 07.01.88. The mission that visited the Centre was composed of amongst others TG T. Nkobi. NPA was represented by Abdel Kader Mekki.

⁹⁰ 862-SA-00 NPA *Rapport fra Helsekurset ved Moses Kotane Self Reliance Centre for perioden 1/5 til 18/6 1988.* (Report from Medical course at Moses Kotane Self Reliance Centre for the period 1/5 to 18/6 1988) Compiled by Hilde Øieren Seboko 23.6.88.

English, the second language for most of the students and the language of tuition of the course.⁹¹

In 1988 politics was introduced as a class at the request of the students. The ANC Commissar in Viana, Patrick Seboko, taught the class and the SWAPO students participated if they wanted to. There was eight hours of classes a day. At nights the students did "homework" for a further two hours under the supervision of a teacher. The training facility lacked textbooks and experienced a shortage of laboratory equipment⁹².

In September 1988 most of Hilde Øierens' students failed in basic subjects. The passing rate in English was four to six students out of twenty-five. About eight to ten students passed in the Mathematics and Science class. The figures were higher for nursing, anatomy and physiology.⁹³ The teachers, in addition to Øieren Seboko, both ANC and SWAPO teachers that helped teach the basic subjects, attributed the high failing rate to lack of interest in these subjects. One teacher in laboratory techniques, Hilde Sæbø, later found the ANC students less eager than the SWAPO students.⁹⁴ This was not confirmed in the failing rates of 1988, as both groups of students seemed to fail in the same subjects.

The Plot at Viana did not escape the problems the other camps experienced. Apart from the problems with the water and electricity supply, the main problem was transport. The

⁹¹ 862-SA-00 NPA, *Rapport fra Helsekurset ved Moses Kotane Self - Reliance Centre for perioden 1/8 til 31/8 1988*, This report covers the same group of students as the earlier report, second semester started with 25 students 3.9.88.

⁹² 822-SA-00 NPA, *Minutes of the project Assesment Mission...*

⁹³ 862-SA-00 NPA, *Rapport fra Helsekurset ved Moses Kotane Self Reliance Centre for perioden 1/9-31/10 1988*, 2.11.88.

donors provided a school bus. But because of a lack of other transport the bus was often used by the camp's administration. This caused some tension between the administration of the camp and the staff at the school.⁹⁵ A series of meetings between the school and the administration proved fruitless.

The relationship between the administration of the ANC and the external teaching staff made up of both ANC, SWAPO, Finnish and Norwegian staff, illustrates the constant negotiating the organisation was involved in to uphold some of its camps. As the organisation was totally dependent on donors and foreign agencies, letters and reports constantly concerned demands and requirements set forward by the UNHCR, SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency), NPA, Finnsolidarity or others. There were fewer strings attached to material donated by socialist governments or organisations from socialist countries such as the AAPSO. A reason for this could be the demands of accountability in various UN agencies and western aid agencies. Another reason could be that the western agencies could not openly support an armed struggle against apartheid, although some of the staff certainly looked favourably upon the armed struggle.

The Northern Front

During the offensive against UNITA on the eastern front before the mutinies, as many as one thousand cadres from MK could have been involved.⁹⁶ Clean-up operations had been abandoned after the mutinies due to their unpopularity with the cadres. Between 1986 and 1989 MK lost more people due to UNITA activity than in any other period.

⁹⁴ Discussions MS/ Hilde Larsen.

⁹⁵ 862-SA-00 NPA, *Rapport fra Helsekurset ved Moses Kotane Self Reliance Centre for Perioden 1/9-31/10 1988.*

⁹⁶ Interview MS/ Masondo, see also Kasrils: *Armed and Dangerous*, p. 249.

Most of the casualties were due to ambushes. Mziwa "Lerumo" Kalako described the military situation 1987 and onwards as follows:

Well at this time UNITA was under strong attack from the combined force of Cubans, SWAPO and MPLA in the south and this was the time when they were shifting their concentration to the North and to the part where MK camps were situated. UNITA intensified its attacks on the northern front from 1987, '88 and '89 and at this time their focus was on surrounding the MK camps and at the same time to cut the supply line from Luanda to Quibaxe...throughout that period MK suffered heavy losses in battles against UNITA at that time, but it was worse 1988, '89 and this is the time where actually the training was disturbed and most of the MK cadres have to be on the road..⁹⁷

Rooi Sehube, in this period at the Department of Information in Luanda, described the UNITA attacks as a "massacre" of MK personnel.⁹⁸ On the northern front, the roads between Luanda, Caxito and Quibaxe area increasingly saw clashes between MK and UNITA. As around Malanje, the problem was the ambushing of supplies that were often going to the three camps of Pango, Quatro and Quibaxe. Supply columns were an easy prey on the narrow roads through the dense bush of the Dembos forest around these camps. In April 1985 nine MK cadres paid with their lives in one single ambush, five Angolans met the same fate.⁹⁹ This forced a meeting with the Angolan minister of External Relations Alfonso van Dunem Mbinda. The outcome of the meeting did not change the way MK was deployed in the area.

MK commandos could also have been involved further south in the country, Zebulon Xulu was commissar of his platoon when they were ambushed in "southern parts". The platoon had been out hunting for meat when they met UNITA. A battle erupted and only Xulu and one other comrade managed to get away. They walked for six days

⁹⁷ Interview Sazi Weldman/Mziva "Lerumo" Kalako, Oral history of exiles project, 4.8.1992

⁹⁸ Interview MS/ Sehube.

⁹⁹ BOX 11, UFH, *Ambush*, Uriah Mokeba to Alfred Nzo 11.5.85.

before they approached a village of only women and children.¹⁰⁰ In UNITA's territories to the south-east men used to be taken away by the guerrillas. Although Xulu was not able to pinpoint this incident it is plausible that he and his men were far into UNITA territory. Others have told similar stories from different parts of Angola.¹⁰¹

A list of attacks around Pango, Quibaxe and Quatro showed no less than twelve incidents during June and July 1987. The majority of the attacks were on nearby villages and ambushes. MK was requested to deploy in the towns of Quibaxe and Phiri, which they guarded for a short time. It was believed that UNITA tried to destabilise the area before the upcoming coffee harvest.¹⁰²

At the beginning of 1987 the SADF pushed Angolan and Cuban forces up to the city of Cuito Cuanavale in the south-eastern highlands. Two years earlier UNITA had been annihilated nearby. The Lusaka Agreement between the MPLA and the South Africans in 1985 prevented the SADF from carrying out further major operations inside Angola. Instead they concentrated on undercover operations and organising special platoons such as Battalion 32.¹⁰³ When the MPLA and FAR advanced towards UNITA headquarters at Jamba in 1986, the SADF did not hold back and called out massive air support for UNITA. In 1987 the Lusaka Agreement was nothing more than a piece of paper.

In mid-1987 the SADF pushed FAPLA towards the town of Cuito Cuanavale. Both armies reached their peak that year, FAPLA was said to have one hundred thousand

¹⁰⁰ Interview Hilda Bernstein/ Zebulon Xulu.

¹⁰¹ Interview MS/ Mathiba.

¹⁰² BOX 66, Mayibuye, UWC, *Report Morris Seabelo Centre*.

¹⁰³ Hamann Hilton, *Days of the Generals*. (Cape Town: Zebra Publishing 2001) p. 81

men at its command. These were conventional units, the EPA (Exercito Popular de Angola) and the village defence committees ODP. Both UNITA and the Cuban FAR could count as many as sixty five thousand each.¹⁰⁴ The SADF figure was harder to estimate. The force had reached one hundred and fifteen thousand standing soldiers in 1984 and forty thousand permanent.¹⁰⁵ The invasion of 1987 was at least as big as the invasion some eleven years earlier consisting of between twenty and twenty five thousand troops. But accounts by the SADF's own generals did not give any figure.¹⁰⁶ In addition to ground troops, the SADF lent heavy air support.

The MK role as guards of convoys became more important as new offensives in the south drained FAPLA of personnel and command. When Xulu was wounded in an ambush outside Quibaxe in June 1987, the area around the camp was so unstable that the wounded had to be taken to Luanda by helicopter:

By this time it was very difficult even to move by truck, so our comrades in Quibaxe consulted FAPLA, and we were organised to move by helicopter with some Angolan People who were hit, because UNITA was hitting at this village, hitting at this village, hitting at this village....¹⁰⁷

Xulu and other wounded were then taken from Luanda to GDR and other eastern European countries for treatment. The wounded had been sent to Yugoslavia, Hungary and Bulgaria together with wounded Angolan soldiers since MK had become involved

¹⁰⁴ John W. Turner, *Continent Ablaze: The insurgency wars in Africa 1960 to the present* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1998) p. 112.

¹⁰⁵ Gavin Cawthra, *Brutal Force - the Apartheid War Machine* (London: IDAF, 1986) p. 260.

¹⁰⁶ Hilton: *Days of the Generals*, (2001) neither are any figures given in Turners *Continent Ablaze* (1998) where most of the other numbers are stated.

¹⁰⁷ Interview Hilda Bernstein/ Zebulon Xulu.

in fighting UNITA. Some stayed on in eastern Europe for academic courses but most returned to Angola as soon as they recovered.¹⁰⁸

Some wounded were sent to the new clinic in Viana. In May 1988 a group of journalists visited the clinic ahead of a conference on refugees in Oslo, Norway. The journalists interviewed five injured MK cadres. The interviewed all claimed to be civilians doing courses in Quibaxe. Subjects mentioned were carpentry and plumbing. Despite being civilian they had been injured in an UNITA ambush outside the camp. In addition to this seven were injured in the ambush and seven had died. When asked whether they had shot back at the UNITA one cadre answered yes, the others hesitated.¹⁰⁹

At Viana the visit by the journalists caused some internal debate. It was not the policy of the ANC to show the external press any of the organisation's camps, in particular not those in the Angola region. The journalists had arrived unannounced in a SWAPO bus. The wounded cadres had clearly tried to avoid questions on the nature of their stay in Angola, not only did they propagate their civilian status but they also gave the impression that ambushes were rare.¹¹⁰ There was obviously still a concern that donors would withdraw support if the military nature of the ANC presence was exposed.

Six months after this incident Chris Hani reported to the Secretary General in Lusaka that five cadres had died in a series of ambushes and at least nine had been injured just

¹⁰⁸ BOX 11 UFH, *Letter* Uriah Mokeba to Simon Makana, Administrative Secretary Lusaka 8.2.85

¹⁰⁹ BOX 66, PMC- file, Mayibuye, UWC, *Report on visit by UN journalists to Moses Kotane Self Reliance Centre on 13.5.1988*, Signed by Florence Maleka and Patrick Seboko 18.5.88

¹¹⁰ BOX 66, PMC-file, Mayibuye, UWC, *Report on visit*

outside Quibaxe¹¹¹. In another ambush the regional commander Timothy Mkwana (Godfrey Ngwenya), was shot:

They didn't come out and fight, they usually ambushed us, I was there when they shot our commander... Mkwana... he nearly lost his leg, we were together at that time... we were three actually, then I was covering the other side. Suddenly the other comrade of my started to call me, Jimmy, Jimmy, I said, what? It's the commander they shot him, Now he was so heavy we tried to lift him... we were driving in a convoy but there are others that were ambushed when they trying to find food... No, they couldn't attack the camps because they were so afraid of us you see, for them to get us they had to ambush us.¹¹²

According to Ngulube his unit did not fight only UNITA. Their radio transmitter received communication in Afrikaans. One of the SADF's main weapons in Angola during these years was the Buffaloes or Battalion 32 under the leadership of Jan Breytenbach. They were often mercenaries and wore UNITA uniforms to conceal their identity.¹¹³ Some of the mercenaries were black South Africans and MK cadres would sometimes be called in as interpreters if they were captured. Rooi Sehubé claimed that black South African Kovoet units made up of Inkatha members were deployed in Angola by the SADF.¹¹⁴ This had also been claimed by the ANC. No evidence has been found to support this claim.¹¹⁵ Even in the Malanje area there were reports of UNITA soldiers talking Zulu and Sotho.¹¹⁶

Further proof of South African involvement was obtained by Ngulube and his comrades from two cadres that had been kidnapped by UNITA and taken to Jamba. The walk to Jamba took two weeks. The story was confirmed by the fact that the ANC contacted the

¹¹¹ BOX 66, PMC -file, Mayibuye, UWC, *Re: Ambush in Angola*, Hani to SG 12.11.87.

¹¹² Interview MS/Ngulube.

¹¹³ Ellis & Sechaba: *Comrades against Apartheid*, (1994) p. 164.

¹¹⁴ Interview MS/ Sehubé.

¹¹⁵ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigated the matter of Inkatha members trained by the Kovoet to do operations in Namibia. The use of Kovoet in Angola was possible, but as an insurgency force alongside UNITA seems unlikely.

¹¹⁶ Interview MS/Ngulube.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) over the matter.¹¹⁷ In Jamba the two prisoners were addressed in Sotho and Zulu.¹¹⁸ UNITA tried to negotiate a deal with the Zambian government. The offer was to hand over two ANC prisoners to the Zambians in exchange for UNITA soldiers held in Zambia. The ANC let the OAU Liberation Committee and the ICRC negotiate for them but was of the view that "Angolan criminals" should not be released in a prisoner exchange.¹¹⁹ In the end the prisoners were handed over to the ICRC. Back in Lusaka they told their story to Ngulube.¹²⁰

The situation in the region got worse during the siege of Cuito Cuanavale. The fighting in the north intensified towards the end of the siege. MK lost more men than ever:

...We lost many comrades more especially in the period of '89 and '88 we started to loose comrades in groups of five, ten but of course this coincided with the Namibian question being discussed, of course with the battle of Cuanavale ...which resulted into the starting of talks and negotiation between South Africa and SWAPO, so this period was marked or characterised in the north by intensified battles between us and UNITA...¹²¹

Mziwa Kalako remembers one battle where MK lost twenty seven comrades at once. The battles on the northern front during the siege of Cuito Cuanavale are otherwise sparsely documented. Neither the *Africa Confidential*, one of the few contemporary sources on the battle, nor a study on the battle, *the siege of Cuito Cuanavale*, mentioned the northern front.¹²² Further investigation has to be done into this part of southern African history.

¹¹⁷ BOX 3 UFH, *Decision* by the NEC concerning prisoner exchange 18.10.88.

¹¹⁸ Interview MS/ Ngulube.

¹¹⁹ BOX 3 UFH, *Decision*.

¹²⁰ Interview MS/ Ngulube.

¹²¹ Interview Weldman/Mziwa Kalako.

¹²² *Africa Confidential* No 14, 15 July 1988, Horace Campbell, *The siege of Cuito Cuanavale* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1990). The 30-page report on the siege put together by

After a seven-month siege the SADF retreated back to the border of South Africa. Both sides claimed to have won the battle, the biggest in Africa since the Second World War. Either way, the strain on troops and resources on both sides had been enormous. It became clear that the war over Angola and Namibia, and ultimately the southern tip of the continent, had to be fought on other battlegrounds. For MK cadres in the region the defeat of the SADF at Cuito Cuanavale was somewhat unreal.¹²³ The cadres expected a withdrawal from Namibia would lead to freedom also for South Africa. Meanwhile they awaited the outcome of talks, of which they were kept informed.¹²⁴

The ANC were probably not directly involved in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. But the organisation could have provided intelligence before the siege. Cadres would be drawn in as translators when FAPLA or the FAR took prisoners who had a South African background.¹²⁵ During the battle MK guarded the northern and eastern front. There were still fears of troops backed by Mobutu falling in at the rear of the MPLA. Throughout the siege of Cuito Cuanavale, UNITA kept up activity in the north-eastern region while their South African allies concentrated on the south-east. This led to some losses for MK. Throughout MK's stay in Angola ninety-nine cadres were killed in ambushes, the majority in the second half of the eighties.¹²⁶ Few concerns over this seem to have been raised. Some argued that MK could have avoided losses by transporting personnel and supplies by a helicopter as ambushes became more

Campbell clearly outlines the importance of the battle in modern African history. The report focuses on the international presence but does not mention MK's presence during the period of the siege.

¹²³ Interview MS/ Sehube.

¹²⁴ Interview Weldman/Kalako.

¹²⁵ Interviews MS/ Ngulube, MS/ Sehube.

¹²⁶ "ANC members who died in exile" Appendix to the *Second Submission to the TRC* (1992).

frequent¹²⁷. But the organisation had neither trained pilots nor helicopters at their disposal. The carriers available to FAPLA and FAR were all engaged in the south. In many ways the northern and eastern fronts therefore suffered.

The Namibia agreement

When Reagan entered the White House in 1980 the question of Namibia's independence was linked with the withdrawal of the Cuban forces from Angola. In a joint statement in 1982 the governments of Angola and Cuba rejected any such notion.¹²⁸In a re-affirmation of this, in 1984 the two governments expressed their willingness to talk but on the condition that SWAPO and ANC represented the people of Namibia and South Africa respectively.¹²⁹

In December 1984 the President of the MPLA, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, championed the cause of Namibia in the UN assembly. Where South Africa linked Cuban withdrawal to Namibia's independence, dos Santos linked a withdrawal of Cuban troops to an introduction of UN troops to ward off SADF forces. This was to ensure no further aggression from the south. A copy of his address to the UN secretariat was also handed over to the ANC in Lusaka. There was no mention of MK forces in the document.¹³⁰

When talks got under way the following year between various parties, the ANC was kept informed of the progress.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Interview MS/ Schube.

¹²⁸ "Joint statement of Principles" Luanda 4.2.82 in Deutschmann, *Changing the history of Africa*, (Melbourne: Ocean Press 1989).

¹²⁹ "Joint Statement of Principles", Luanda/Havana 19.3.84 in Deutschmann, *Changing the history of Africa*.

¹³⁰ BOX 94 UFH, *Jose Eduardo dos Santos to UN Secretary general* 4.12.84.

¹³¹ Interview MS/ Masondo.

In May 1988 meetings between Angola and South Africa took place in Brazzaville in the People's Republic of Congo. An observer from the ANC attended the meeting and reported to the Lusaka office. Foreign minister Pik Botha and defence minister Magnus Malan headed the delegation that also contained the head of the South African Military Intelligence, Dr Barnard. Botha complained about the Cuban offensive in southern Angola. He also pointed out that the border between Angola and Namibia was superficial, drawn by former colonisers. Botha tried to promote the SADF as a guardian of the indigenous tribes in the area. Furthermore South Africa would defend the Calueque Dam on the border to safeguard the water-supply to Namibia. The Angolan delegation led by minister of Justice Fernando van Dunem, said they never intended interfering with either the river or the dam.¹³²

The purpose of the meeting was, from the viewpoint of the South Africans, to establish a bilateral non-aggression pact. A three-point proposal was put forward, a withdrawal of Cuban troops, a national reconciliation in Angola and Namibian independence. The South Africans facilitated the independence of Namibia. As a condition for talks, the South Africans demanded a stop to violence perpetrated by the ANC. A group of MK cadres, allegedly arrested near a civilian airport with a surface to air missile, had confessed to being trained and armed by the Angolans. The Angolans denied this claim by pointing out that they had no common border with South Africa. Malan and Botha proposed another bilateral meeting but the Angolan government did not comply. They referred instead to a quadruple meeting that was to take place in Brazzaville between 15 and 20 June of that same year.

¹³² BOX 9, UFH, *Notes on the talks between Angola and Racist South Africa* 5.5.88.

Angolans, South Africans, Cubans and the USA met in Brazzaville in June 1988 for preliminary talks on Namibian independence. The ANC did not have any formal part of these talks but were kept informed by the MPLA and SWAPO. For the ANC, talks about a solution for Namibia were met by both optimism and scepticism. A telex from Oliver Tambo to President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, president of the MPLA expressed some of the optimism:

Inspired of this result (of the talks) and soncious (sic) of the need to destroy the Apartheid system in South Africa as the ultimate guarantee for Peace. Independance (sic) and Security in all Southern Africa. The ANC reiterates its determination to intensify the struggle on all fronts for the creation of a non- racial and Democratic South Africa. Let the current negotiations and other endeavours be crowned with success for Angola, Namibia, Internationalist Cuba and all of us as well for you in particulars, Comrade President, A luta Continua, A victoria e Certa.¹³³

On one hand the Namibia agreement finally signed in December 1988, signalled that the apartheid regime was about to be defeated. On the other hand the ANC did not trust its old foe and feared an agreement like the Nkomati-agreement signed with Mozambique in 1984. A move from Angola seemed imminent. But the question was where. The military headquarters in Lusaka had to find new training facilities for several thousand cadres. It has been estimated that the greater part of MK's numerical strength outside South Africa, at this time four to five thousand was in Angola.¹³⁴

While MK prepared the movement of a great number of people, a deal was done with the MPLA over the army's weapons. Some of the weapons were shipped to Tanzania and from there on to Uganda, again with the port authorities looking the other way. However, some of the weapons were stored in Luanda. These were handed over to the

¹³³ BOX 61UFH, Oliver Tambo Papers, *Oliver Tambo to Comrade Jose Eduardo dos Santos, President of the MPLA*. 11.11.88.

¹³⁴ Barrell, *MK: the ANC's armed struggle* (1990) p. 66.

Angolan authorities after the first free election in South Africa in 1994.¹³⁵ While the political leadership in Lusaka in 1988 were preparing their own talks, the military leadership were changing their strategy. But the final MK operation, later known as Operation Vula, was not to be launched from Angolan soil.

Move to Uganda

At the time of the signing of the Namibia agreement, the MK force in Angola was a shadow of what it had been two years before. But the move out of Angola was not easy. In April 1990, sixteen months after the signing of Resolution 435 on Namibia, the organisation was still looking for potential new host countries. Tanzania and Uganda had taken a number of cadres but were sceptical about sheltering army camps. A letter from army commander Joe Modise to Secretary General Alfred Nzo of the ANC suggested the organisation should approach Nigeria and Algeria with this in mind.¹³⁶

The uncertainty about the move made the difficulties for those left in Angola worse. Terence Tryon, who took over as Regional Chief in these final years, had the task of closing down the structures:

My time here in Angola has been challenging and extremely difficult. I arrived here at the time of the withdrawal of the army from the region. Essentially I was left with 400 soldiers and no command structure. We then had to organise civilian structures for the region. There was a lot of opposition to this and I received little or no support from HQ or MHQ. A big percentage of the comrades who remained in Angola had no security clearances and a significant number had spent several yrs. in our detention centres, making the work all more difficult.¹³⁷

Tryon had overseen a rapid movement out of Angola from January 1989 to the date of this letter, September 1990. Those who were left in Luanda were in many cases those

¹³⁵ Interview MS/ Rashid.

who had been in detention or under suspicion for enemy activity during their time in Angola. Tryon asked to be released from the further dissolution of ANC structures in Angola.

Cadres left in Angola after the Namibia agreement knew little about the future and what it had in store for them. Commander Joe Modise moved around in the camps and told the cadres about the agreement in early 1989. He also told them it meant that MK had to move. But he did not say where to. According to Ernest Cannie Ngulube there was little warning before they left for Kampala, Uganda:

The late OR came to Angola and explained to us that since Namibia was to be given independence, now the boers have got some like mandates, or what? Because if you see, that we have to get out in Angola, to get out of Angola you see...the problem was that we don't know where we are going to.¹³⁸

Ngulube and his comrades hoped to go to a newly independent Namibia that they could use as a springboard to finally get back into South Africa. Unfortunately, the *Antroponov*, a Russian cargo plane provided by the Soviet Union, took them in the opposite direction. Upon arrival in Uganda the events that had taken place in Angola were repeated. The cadres were left in the bush to build dwellings.¹³⁹ For some of them Uganda became a two-year bush camp with even worse conditions than in Angola.

A group of ANC and MK members did stay on in Luanda to uphold a diplomatic service, and also to oversee the weapon-stores that had been left behind.¹⁴⁰ Close to thirty thousand MK soldiers were registered for integration and demobilisation back in

¹³⁶ BOX 66, Mayibuye UWC Training Places for Regular Army Courses. Modise to Nzo 18.4.1990.

¹³⁷ BOX 62, Mayibuye, *Letter* Terence Tryon to Thabo Mbeki 27.9.90.

¹³⁸ Interview MS/ Ernest Cannie Ngulube.

¹³⁹ Interview MS/Ngulube.

¹⁴⁰ Discussion MS/ Hilde Larsen, NPA representative in Luanda 1994.

South Africa in 1992.¹⁴¹ The majority of these must have been trained in MK's main training ground, Angola. Just a small number trained inside South Africa. In 1994 most of the weapons left in Luanda were handed to the Angolan government.¹⁴² Some of those who stayed on in Luanda had married Angolan women. The structures of the organisation were handed back to the MPLA, intact and in many cases refurbished. The health-centre at Viana was taken apart and sold on the black market. Viana today houses Angolan internal refugees.

Conclusion

This final phase of MK's stay in Angola did not differ much from the earlier phases in terms of living conditions and daily duties. After Kabwe, it became clear that the organisation was moving away from earlier theories of guerrilla insurgency towards political mobilisation inside South Africa. The re-organisation of the whole organisation at Kabwe was partly due to recommendations made by the cadres in Luanda. The cadres regained some confidence in the political organisation of the army.

The last period had begun with the tragedy of the Schoon family. The tragedy once more showed how vulnerable the ANC personnel were in the front-line states. The Schoon family was among the few civilian South Africans sympathetic to the movement in Angola. Still the majority were MK personnel. The Stuart Commission had highlighted some of the needs in the region. Measures were taken to meet these needs. But the ongoing difficult situation in the region continued to make life in Angola hard. The situation also required that the Security Department should carry on its work.

¹⁴¹ Motoumi and Mkenzie, "After the war: Demobilisation in South Africa" in *From Defence to Development, Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa*, (Cape Town David Philip 1998).

¹⁴² Interview MS/ Rashid

But a re-organisation of the department had made them responsible to the leadership in Lusaka.

To further improve the living conditions for cadres in Angola the organisation wanted to strengthen vocational training. The training aimed at imparting skills useful in Angola such as mechanical and medical skills. It was also done to prepare cadres for building a new South Africa. But not many cadres got the chance to do the courses and those who did had few opportunities to further specialise when a course was over. The majority of cadres still did their basic military training in order to be deployed guarding the camps or the roads.

More cadres were infiltrated back into South Africa than ever before. But most trained combatants would fight in Angola rather than in their homeland. The engagement with UNITA shifted from the eastern front to the northern as the Angolan guerrillas attacked the roads and areas around MK's northern camps. Training and daily lives became increasingly difficult as attacks intensified on camps and roads. MK suffered casualties, the majority due to ambushes. At the end of the period MK combatants were engaged in fighting UNITA while Cubans, Angolans and South Africans met at the siege of Cuito Cuanavale. The end of the siege marked a turning point in the war. Talks over Namibian independence began, with the ANC looking on.

Those who were still in Angola when the Namibia settlement was signed in December 1988 faced an uncertain future and some of them would spend several more years in exile. The command in Lusaka had to find a new haven. Not an easy task, the transfer

of MK cadres to other countries continued through 1990 almost two years after the signing of the Namibia agreement.

The organisation left behind core personnel, both from the army and from the ANC in the Angolan capital. Besides diplomatic representation, MK left personnel to handle stores of weapons in Luanda until after the election of a new government in South Africa.

Angola of suppression of certain political ideas.⁵³ In fact it seems that this was a more

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation is to establish an outline of events in order to understand the presence of the ANC and especially of MK in one of the frontline states, Angola. As Angola, together with Tanzania and Zambia, provided shelter for a big proportion of ANC members in exile such an understanding can help in analysing the organisation as a whole in exile. Furthermore such insights will promote an academic understanding of the organisation's first years as a party in government in post-apartheid South Africa. Although members of the leadership of the party were based in Lusaka, Zambia, the large community of exiles in the Angola region provides an example of the organisation's internal political culture. The title of this dissertation "A State of Exile" indicates that the organisation built a community of some proportion in Angola and it also evokes the perception that the cadres stationed in Angola were an exiled community.

This dissertation contains six chapters. The first chapter consists of a literature review. The second chapter gives an introduction to the organisation's life in exile and also tries to explain why the ANC and MK moved to Angola. The last four chapters represent the four distinct periods of ANC and MK presence in Angola. During the first period, 1976 to 1979, the organisation was preoccupied with building up its network of training camps in the southern part of Angola and around Luanda. The main camp was Nova Katengue east of the southern town Benguela. The camp was called University of the South because of the political and academic training conducted at the camp. The second period began after the bombing of Nova Katengue in 1979. Growing dissatisfaction at this time culminated in

open dissent and a series of mutinies in the camps during 1983-1984. This third period ended with the promise of political reform in the region and in the organisation as a whole. The first consultative conference since 1969 took place in Zambia in 1985 and introduced the last period of the presence of the ANC and MK in Angola. This was to last up to 1989, when the organisations had to leave the frontline-state after the agreement on Namibia.

The literature about the liberation war in southern Africa largely reflects the two sides in the conflict, the frontline states and the apartheid state and its allies. Narratives or descriptive accounts are numerous on both sides but a growing number of academic studies are also available. From either perspective a dichotomy of sympathetic or partisan texts and "hostile" texts runs through both the narratives and the academic studies.

An army of exiles

After the Rivonia arrests in 1964 both the ANC and MK concentrated on building an army in exile. This is the focus of Chapters Two and Three. The presence of the ANC and MK in Angola came after years of collaboration and mutual strategic interest as shown in Chapter Two. The main reason for MK's move to Angola was the growing numbers of cadres in the army. The ANC's relationship with the presidents of earlier host countries, Nyerere of Tanzania and Kaunda of Zambia respectively, was strained. Both countries were pressured internationally to refuse to host MK. Further, the presence in these countries of large communities of cadres from other exiled liberation movements fuelled internal divisions. The hospitality of the MPLA in Angola would give a *carte blanche* to MK, which it did not enjoy in the other two frontline states.

The MPLA and the ANC were ideologically closer than for instance the ANC and Nyerere's TANU. Likewise the ANC observed with a degree of mistrust Kaunda's efforts to negotiate with South Africa and Rhodesia. Frelimo in Mozambique, another ally of the organisation, could have provided a more strategic placement for MK troops, but as early as 1975 it was clear that Mozambique's neighbour in the south would not allow the MK training grounds to be located so near to South Africa. Since Angola was already at war with South Africa the country had little to lose by sheltering MK.

After the Soweto riots thousands of young men and women fled South Africa to join the ANC and MK in exile. The majority were channelled to either the organisation's schools in Tanzania or to MK's training camps in Angola. From the ANC/ MK's first years in Angola there are very few documents which have survived. But from interviews and the organisation's own publications it is possible to establish a picture of the camps and structures set up in central and northern Angola before 1980. Between 1977 and 1979 the military high command's greatest challenge was to turn the Soweto-generation into an underground army, but their efforts were blocked by the difficulties involved in repatriating the cadres. However, many young men and women from the townships benefited from education provided in Nova Katengue, the largest camp established by MK in Angola.

In 1978 and 1979 the organization's tactics were revised by the military command during a series of meetings, several of them in Luanda. The meetings resulted in a new strategy,

“the Green Book”, based on the strategy of a people’s war, inspired by the North-Vietnamese.

The situation of the guerrillas-in-exile at the end of the 1970's changed for the worse. After Nova Katengue was attacked, first by a poisoner and then from the air, a Security Department was conceived. The suspicions and tensions that followed these events continued to haunt the ANC community in Angola.

Chapter Four describes how MK in the 1980's developed more permanent structures in Angola. The focus of Chapter Four is the internal political and social evolution within MK and the ANC. As the 1970's came to an end, the power-balance in southern Africa changed again with the independence of Zimbabwe. For the MK cadres, who participated in the last offensive in Matabeleland, the celebration was cut short when they had to return to Angola instead of continuing an offensive towards South Africa itself. Back in Angola the climate in the camps was increasingly tense. The effects of prolonged exile and the special difficulties of living in a country which was in a state of civil war began to have an effect on the cadres. The increase in the number of recruits made the distribution of supplies even harder and this intensified the difficulties. Serious problems with the health system became evident.

The newly formed Security Department added to the tensions. The development of a parallel line of command had serious consequences at the front as MK became more involved in the Angolan war. Although the war provided some action for the cadres, their

involvement became unpopular after MK suffered casualties, and the ineffectiveness of MK's ally, FAPLA, seems to have added to this. There was little or no reaction from the leadership that could have defused the situation.

Makatashinga

The mutinies in 1984 were the culmination of various grievances, but these incidents were as much an indicator of the situation within Angola at the time as an indicator of the organisational culture of the ANC. Although enemy agents might have acted as agents provocateurs, most of the grievances of the cadres were real enough. Possibly the most crucial factor in the build-up to the mutinies was the lack of visits by the leadership to the various camps to listen to these grievances. Although a system of commissars existed in all the camps, cadres felt there was a lack of communication; some felt their stay in Angola was a punishment while others felt that they had been left behind and forgotten.

The first mutiny at the turn of the year ended peacefully after visits by the leadership to the camps. In February a mutiny broke out in Viana outside Luanda. The mutineers elected a Committee of Ten to put forward their grievances to the leadership. The central demand was a call for a consultative conference within the organisation, the last such conference having been held in 1969 at Morogoro. The leadership put down the mutiny with the help of the Angolan presidential guard. A commission was hastily flown out to the region to assess the situation and investigate the reasons behind the mutiny. The Stuart Commission

had hardly finished their work when cadres again mutinied, this time in Pango to the north of Luanda.

The Pango mutiny was different in character from the Viana mutiny. Most of the cadres in Pango were interned mutineers and it was easy for enemy agents to fuel discontent. When violence erupted the leadership sent MK soldiers against the largely unarmed cadres at Pango. This was the only time in the history of the organisation that firepower was used against their own cadres. The majority of cadres that died as a result of the mutinies died during this last mutiny in Pango. Some were executed in its aftermath.

The mutinies exposed serious communication problems between commanders and rank and file in MK. Later reports revealed that there had been matters of concern which the leadership both in Luanda and Lusaka should have discovered and dealt with. When they were discovered it was already too late. Further the reports revealed that there had been some cases of torture and abuse in the camps during and after the mutinies but that no “regime of ill-treatment” existed, as had been claimed by some international organisations such as Amnesty International.

MK in Angola after the mutinies

The central demand of the Committee of Ten had been for a national consultative conference and during 1985 this in fact took place in Kabwe in Zambia. Cadres in the Angola region had delivered their recommendations beforehand; for these cadres this was a

unique opportunity to make their voices heard by the leadership. Some of the recommendations set precedents for the organisation as a whole after the conference. In Angola organisational changes were carried out and the Security Department was made accountable to the leadership in Lusaka.

In Angola, MK increased its efforts in building educational and health services. After 1984 this included the establishment of a printing press, a nursing school and a clinic. Western donors were more involved in the building of facilities than before. The organisation still received donations and supplies from the Soviet Union. Otherwise life in the various camps was left unchanged. The focus of the war-effort was moved from the eastern front around Malanje to the northern front which needed to be protected. UNITA activities increased in this area after 1985 and MK lost more cadres through UNITA ambushes in this period than ever before in Angola. While the situation on the roads between Luanda and the northern camps became critical, the other armies gathered in the region around Cuito Cuanavale in the south.

The organisation's last years in Angola were marked more by routines and less by enthusiasm than before. But it also presented the ANC with opportunities to educate some of its members with some help from foreign donors. When the Namibia Agreement was signed in December 1988, the last period of the stay was drawing to an end, but it took the organisation more than a year to move the majority of their cadres to their new accommodation in Uganda.

When the organisation first arrived in Angola the cadres seemed optimistic, but when they were leaving the country almost fourteen years later there was little left of this optimism. The ANC and MK had lived through their hardest moments in exile. Their military forces had undergone the process of evolving from small guerrilla units to a rather large army, experienced in conventional warfare. The experiences of the ANC and MK in Angola helped form this army and the subsequent political party. Their stay in Angola was part of the organisation's history and would continue to influence its development during the years to come

South African political culture seems to have taken on elements of both language and culture from returned cadres, for example the toyi-toyi first done by cadres who had trained with ZIPRA allies in Angola and Zambia. The conditions in Angola and especially in the camps suggest that several thousand MK cadres may have undergone serious stress. The problems they have experienced on re-entering a post-apartheid society may also indicate that cadres do suffer from serious post-traumatic stress. The SANDF and the South African Government have not done enough for these veterans.

This dissertation has tried to outline the presence of the ANC and MK in Angola. It is clear that their stay in Angola influenced the politics within the organisation. It is also clear that events in Angola have influenced the external relations of the organisation: whether or not these have continued to influence the external affairs of the new South Africa constitutes an important question for further research. There are many important questions

that still have to be answered about the sojourn of the ANC and MK in Angola, and as more archives are made available, more answers will hopefully emerge.

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