

**EXILE HISTORY:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE SWAPO CAMPS AND THE NAMIBIAN NATION**

by

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Foreword

In 1960, as many Africans prepared for or celebrated their independence from colonial rule, inhabitants of Southern Africa continued to be governed by white minority regimes committed to retaining direct political control and suppressing resistance through violence. In this context, people from Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe began to travel into “exile,” a space located outside their country of origin. Most exiles settled in the “front-line states,” including Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia and, following their independence, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, where those who represented national liberation movements were granted resources from various allies to lead a liberation war and to care for their fellow nationals in camps. Others received scholarships to study overseas, while still others represented their liberation movement in offices spread across the globe. As violence in Southern Africa intensified, so did migration of the region's people across international borders, with hundreds of thousands leaving their national “home” to live abroad over a period of thirty years.

By late 1990, when South Africa's transition to democracy was well under way, most Southern African exiles had repatriated to their countries of origin. Representations of the exile past, however, have continued to proliferate. In the region, as elsewhere, post-colonial states rely on the history of a nation, formed through colonial rule and anti-colonial resistance, to govern their citizens. Central to the history of most Southern African nations is a narrative about the oppression which drove people into exile and the

sacrifices made by exiles to liberate their country of origin. As people interact in, and make claims on, Southern African nation-states, they relate to the socially accepted history of exile in different ways. They may appeal to it when it strengthens their position, elaborate on it when they have been excluded from it, or challenge its authority when it associates them with stigma. In the process, happenings in the past become a basis for mediating relationships between people in the present. It is this relationship between the exile past and present which I call “exile history.”

This dissertation studies exile history through the camps administered by the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), a Namibian liberation movement.¹ Founded in the late 1950s as the Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC) by Namibians living in Cape Town, SWAPO assumed its current name in 1960 shortly after several of its leaders left Namibia for exile.² During the early 1960s the organization established a headquarters in Dar es Salaam and diplomatic offices at the United Nations in New York and in other urban centers, from where it lobbied support for the organization's aim to free Namibia from South African colonial rule.³ It also began, with the support of the

1 After Namibian independence “SWAPO” renamed itself “Swapo Party.” Given its focus on exile history, this dissertation refers to “SWAPO” unless a clear distinction between the pre-independence liberation movement and the post-independence political party is intended.

2 The OPC was renamed the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) when it was founded in Windhoek on April 19, 1959. In June 1960 the name was changed again to SWAPO (Peter Katjavivi, A History of Resistance in Namibia (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1988), p. 45).

3 In 1884 Namibia, then South West Africa, was declared a German colony at the Conference of Berlin. Germany's rule over South West Africa ended with the First World War and in 1919 the region was transferred to South Africa as a League of Nations Mandate. Following the Second World War, South West Africa's mandate status became an object of international controversy. Although the newly formed United Nations had established a trusteeship system to administer territories mandated to governments under the League of Nations, South African officials refused to hand over South West Africa to the UN, arguing that the mandate had expired with the League's dissolution and that South Africa should incorporate it into the country as its fifth province. Although the UN turned down South Africa's proposal, it was unable to force the South African government to place South West Africa under the new trusteeship system. It is in this context that a variety of persons and organizations began to petition the UN and its member states to assert pressure on South Africa to grant Namibia political independence.

Organization of African Unity (OAU) and several allied governments, to train guerrilla soldiers for an armed struggle. In August 1966, shortly after the failed attempt by Ethiopia and Liberia to challenge the legal status of South African rule in Namibia at the Hague, the first skirmish took place between SWAPO guerrillas and the South African Police. SWAPO and South Africa continued to fight a war in northern Namibia⁴ and southern Angola until 1989, when exiles repatriated as part of a negotiated settlement through which Namibia held its first democratic elections and became an independent country in March 1990.

Over its three decades in exile, SWAPO was responsible for the welfare of roughly 60,000 Namibians, about 4% of the total Namibian population at independence, most of whom lived in camps.⁵ The first camp, Kongwa, was located in central Tanzania and granted by the OAU to SWAPO, and several other liberation movements training guerrilla soldiers, in 1963. In the early 1970s SWAPO's center of gravity shifted to Zambia, where it established several camps for guerrillas near the Namibian border and a

4 "Northern Namibia" and "southern Namibia" are used in this dissertation to refer to two regions with distinct geographies and histories. Northern Namibia refers to the area north of the "Red Line," a checkpoint established by the German colonial government in 1896 to protect cattle in southern Namibia, where settlers lived, from the Rinderpest epidemic which had broken out to the north. Unlike southern Namibia, areas north of the Red Line were never settled by Europeans and were administered by indirect rule. By this definition, "central Namibia," a label used by some to refer to the area between Windhoek and the Red Line, is a part of southern Namibia.

5 According to a report issued by the Namibian Institute for Social and Economic Research (Rosemary Preston et al., "The Integration of Returned Exiles, Former Combatants and Other War-Affected Namibians," (Windhoek: NISER, 1993), pp. 5-21), nearly 50,000 Namibians had repatriated to Namibia by the end of 1991. While this number is considerably less than the 70,000 to 100,000 exiles that SWAPO claimed to be administering in its camps in various reports submitted to donors during the 1980s, it exceeds the approximately 43,000 Namibians who repatriated prior to Namibia's democratic elections recorded by the United Nations and documented by NISER (p. 5-21) and others. The number 50,000 does not account for those who died in exile, which, according to SWAPO's official record was 7,792 (Swapo Party, *Their Blood Waters Our Freedom* (Windhoek, 1996)), or several hundred or thousand other people whose "disappearance" during the liberation struggle has not been officially recorded. For discussions of persons whose names have not been included in official UN and SWAPO records, see the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement, "Namibia's Missing Persons," (Windhoek, 1996) and the National Society for Human Rights, "Critical Analysis: SWAPO's 'Book of the Dead'" (Windhoek, 1996).

camp outside Lusaka, where health and educational services were provided by SWAPO to non-combatants for the first time. In 1974, when the collapse of the Portuguese empire opened the Angolan border to Namibians, the number of exiles increased greatly with thousands migrating through Angola to SWAPO camps in Zambia. Over the next few years Eastern bloc and Scandinavian governments and Western church, solidarity and humanitarian organizations sent increasing quantities of aid to SWAPO, most of which were distributed to its exiled members in camps.⁶ By the late 1970s SWAPO had established scores of small, mobile camps in southern Angola, inhabited by exiles infiltrating or fleeing Namibia. Larger, semi-permanent camps were also established in Angola at sites further from the Namibian border. At the time when Namibian exiles repatriated in 1989, most were living in one of these camps, and almost all, including SWAPO officials and students based overseas, had spent time in one or another camp during their years abroad. The camps were, in short, the focal point for a Namibian exile community.

Nearly twenty years after independence, the SWAPO camps remain central to Namibian life. Some, such as Cassinga, which was the target of a South African attack in May 1978, figure prominently in the accepted history of Namibians' resistance to colonial rule. Others, such as the sites where people accused of spying for South Africa were detained near Lubango, have become the focal point of a counter-narrative, challenging Namibia's national history. Still others figure less prominently in public discourse but are invoked when people make claims on the SWAPO-led government and develop

6 Increasing aid was accompanied by declarations of support for SWAPO at the United Nations. In 1973 the UN declared SWAPO “the authentic representative of the Namibian people” (UN General Assembly Resolution 3111, 12.12.1973), in 1976 “the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people” (UN General Assembly Resolution 31/146, 20.12.1976).

relationships with other Namibians. The SWAPO camps, therefore, are central to Namibia's exile history, illuminating both this nation's recent past and the legacy of this past in the present.

At the same time, the camps highlight limits to the ways in which histories of exile and other national histories are often told. Although shaped by diverse individuals living outside Namibian land, the SWAPO camps are represented as part of a single, Namibian history. By focusing attention on the experiences of those who lived in the camps, it should be possible to return these sites from “Namibia” to other local, regional and global contexts in which they were formed. Moreover, one may draw from these experiences to illuminate fictions about “the nation” – about its continuity over time, about its association with a place, about its unity of meaning – that influence not only Namibians but all those who imagine themselves as belonging to a national community.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
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| AACRLS | Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle |
| AI | Amnesty International |
| AFP | <i>Agence France-Presse</i> |
| AME | African Methodist Episcopal Church |
| ANC | African National Congress |
| ANGOP | Angola Press |
| BAB | <i>Basler Afrika Bibliographien</i> |
| BWS | Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement |
| CANU | Caprivi African National Union |
| CCN | Council of Churches in Namibia |
| CCZ | Christian Council of Zambia |
| CP | Committee of Parents |
| DELK | <i>Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche</i> |
| DTA | Democratic Turnhalle Alliance |
| EIN | Ecumenical Institute for Namibia |
| ELC | Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa |
| ELCIN | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia |
| ELOC | Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church |
| Exco | SWAPO National Executive Committee |
| FNLA | <i>Frente Nacional para Libertação de Angola</i> |
| FRELIMO | <i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i> |
| G1 | the first SWALA mission to infiltrate Namibia |
| G2 | the second SWALA mission to infiltrate Namibia |
| HCSA | Holland Committee for Southern Africa |
| ICC | International Criminal Court |
| ICJ | International Court of Justice |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| ICTJ | International Center for Transitional Justice |
| IDAF | International Defense and Aid Fund |
| IGFM | <i>Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte</i> |
| ISHR | International Society for Human Rights |
| LWF | Lutheran World Federation |
| LWI | Lutheran World Information |
| MPLA | <i>Movimento Popular para Libertação de Angola</i> |
| NAN | National Archives of Namibia |
| NBC | Namibian Broadcasting Corporation |
| NISER | Namibian Institute for Economic and Social Research |
| NSHR | National Society for Human Rights |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| OAU | Organization of African Unity |
| OPC | Ovamboland People's Congress |
| OPO | Ovamboland People's Organization |
| PAC | Pan African Congress |
| PCC | Political Consultative Council |
| PLAN | People's Liberation Army of Namibia |
| PC | Parents' Committee |
| PSVRT | Project for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation Trust |
| PUM | Patriotic Unity Movement |
| RDP | Rally for Democracy and Progress |
| SADF | South African Defence Force |
| SIDA | Swedish International Development Agency |
| SPARC | SWAPO Party Archive |
| SWA | South West Africa |
| SWALA | South West African Liberation Army |
| SWANU | South West African National Union |
| SWAPO | South West African People's Organization |
| Swapo Party | |
| SWAPO-D | SWAPO-Democrats |
| SWATF | South West African Territorial Force |
| SYL | SWAPO Youth League |
| TRC | South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission |
| UCT | University of Cape Town |
| UDF | United Democratic Front |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNAM | University of Namibia |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNIN | United Nations Institute for Namibia |
| UNITA | <i>União para Independência Total de Angola</i> |
| UNMD | United Nations Mission on Detainees |
| UNTAG | United Nations Transition Assistance Group |
| VEM | <i>Vereinigte Evangelische Mission</i> |
| WENALA | Witwatersrand Native Labour Association |
| WCC | World Council of Churches |
| WFP | United Nations World Food Programme |
| ZANU | Zimbabwe African National Union |
| ZAPU | Zimbabwe African People's Union |

Chapter 1

Introduction: Reflections on an Exhibition¹

For Namibia, August 26 is an important day. The marking of August 26 extends back to 1923, the year when the body of Samuel Maherero, the paramount Chief of the Herero, was returned to the country for burial. Maherero had fled to Bechuanaland in conjunction with the uprising of Otjiherero speaking groups against the German colonial government in 1904. Since Maherero's return, people have joined annually in the town of Okahandja, the burial site of the Herero paramount chiefs, to celebrate Herero tradition and resistance to colonialism. Forty-three years later, on August 26, 1966, the first skirmish took place between guerrillas belonging to the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO and South African Police at Omgulumbashe in northern Namibia. Thereafter, SWAPO members in exile began to commemorate August 26 annually as “Namibia Day.” Since independence in 1990, the SWAPO led Namibian government has continued to mark August 26th as a national holiday called “Heroes' Day.”

In 2007 I also participated in commemorations of August 26th. At the time I was living in Namibia, conducting research for this dissertation on exile history. Based in the capital, Windhoek, I was traveling around the country collecting knowledge about the thousands of Namibians who had lived in Tanzania, Zambia and Angola during the 1960s, 70s and 80s. By then I had perused many documents related to Namibia's exile

¹ A copy of the “Living in Exile” exhibition, discussed in this chapter, appears in Appendix 2. Photos of the exhibition appear in Appendix 3.

history in public and private collections available in Switzerland, Germany, South Africa and Namibia. And I was in the process of meeting Namibians who had lived in exile or people had some special relationship to Namibian exiles, asking them about their experiences during the liberation struggle and probing their knowledge of specific SWAPO camps. Research participants included persons whom I had known since 2000-2001 when I worked as a volunteer teacher in Tses in southern Namibia, and 2002-2003, when I wrote and published a master's dissertation about the history of the school where I had taught and its former pupils, some of whom had lived in exile themselves.² The majority, however, were new acquaintances whom I had met since returning to Namibia in January 2007 and were residing in Windhoek and the four administrative regions of northern Namibia still known as “Ovamboland,” where most former exiles live.

Heroes' Day presented a unique opportunity for me to meet former exiles who might like to participate in my research and to share my work with them and other interested Namibians. I had been planning to attend since March 2007 when I prepared a grant proposal for the Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle (AACRLS), a government directed initiative to support research and dispersal of knowledge about the Namibian past. In my proposal, titled “Living in Exile,” I indicated that I would like to prepare an exhibition of photographs of Namibians living in the SWAPO administered exile camps for public display, first at the government's commemoration of Heroes' Day and thereafter in other interested Namibian communities. Photographs from the National Archives of Namibia and my private collection would be

² “Remembering St. Therese: A Namibian Mission School and the Possibilities for its Students” (MA Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2002); *Remembering St. Therese* (Windhoek: Out of Africa, 2003); “Student Political Consciousness: Lessons from a Namibian Mission School,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30,3, (2004) pp. 539-558.

reproduced for the exhibition and accompanied by captions created with material gathered from my interviews. In addition to providing information about the photos, captions would also ask viewers to share their knowledge of the photographs on display for a public record. AACRLS agreed to support the project and in March, June and July, during research trips to Ovamboland, I met with several government and SWAPO officials involved in planning the Heroes' Day activities scheduled to take place in Eenhana, the Ohangwena regional capital. Officials were presented with my proposal for "Living in Exile," proofs of the exhibition's endorsement by the AACRLS and my affiliations with the University of Namibia, University of Michigan and the United States Fulbright Program, and reproductions of the photos that would be displayed in the exhibit. All appeared to receive the project favorably, and one, the SWAPO District Commissioner for Eenhana, indicated that he would introduce it to the Heroes' Day planning committee in their upcoming meetings. Thereafter, I called the Commissioner several times over the phone, and each time we spoke he assured me that regarding the exhibition there were "no problems."

Nonetheless, as August 26 approached, I could not glean any information about the Heroes' Day program or how the exhibition would be incorporated into it. Even the week of the event, by which time I had relocated myself from Windhoek to Ovamboland, plans remained opaque. The forces constraining knowledge about Heroes' Day and the exhibition had started to become clearer, however. On Thursday, August 23, I accompanied the Commissioner to the Regional Office in Eenhana which since my arrival on Tuesday had transformed from a sleepy administrative hollow into a beehive of activity. Once in the building, the Commissioner deposited me at the front desk

indicating that the person who could make arrangements for me was “the chairperson of the publicity sub-committee.” Over the next several hours, as I was shuffled from the office of one sub-committee chair to the next, it became clear that no one knew anything about the exhibition. Likewise, none were keen to insert it into the program although all took time from their seemingly hectic schedules to look through the photographs, asking where I had found them, and, in some cases, sharing knowledge about people or places pictured in them. As the chair of the entertainment sub-committee, who appeared particularly sympathetic, opined, he could not intervene “without the party.” The breakthrough moment seemed to come just before midday, when both the Commissioner and a more senior SWAPO official joined me in the entertainment sub-committee's office. After looking through the photographs and making some comments that I did not understand in Oshiwambo, the ranking official proclaimed in English that he liked the photos and that they should be put on display for Heroes' Day. Nonetheless, after the official had left the room, the Commissioner, the entertainment chair and another junior member of his committee could not agree on who should take responsibility for the photos, each pointing his finger at another. After lunch I returned to the Regional Office only to repeat the morning's steps.

When Saturday, August 25 dawned and I was still no wiser about the exhibition's place in the coming events, I made an alternate plan. Entering the office of the Eenhana Youth Centre, outside of which I had been permitted to pitch my tent the previous night, I introduced myself to the administrator and asked him if I might display the photo exhibition on the premises. Within five minutes, I had received permission to attach my photographs and captions to the walls of the Centre's glass foyer. The foyer soon proved

an ideal spot for the photos. Visible from the Centre's central courtyard and only entrance and exit to its activity hall, all manner of visitors walked through the foyer and stopped to look at the photos. These included not only youth visiting the Centre to participate in various activities, but also persons who were staying at the Centre in conjunction with Heroes' Day, among them a group of about eighty persons who had been members of SWAPO's guerrilla army in exile during the 1960s and were to be singled out as "heroes" by the Namibian government the following day. Through the morning and early afternoon I remained in the foyer, observing or chatting with people who entered and listening to some as they shared their knowledge of the photos and experiences in exile.

The situation soon changed, however. In the middle of the afternoon a group of men in military uniform arrived at the Youth Centre and informed me that I would have to leave the foyer immediately in deference to "guests" who would soon be arriving. Walking out to the courtyard, I sat there on a picnic bench with a growing crowd of people as first the 2007 "heroes" and then Namibia's President, Hifikepunye Pohamba, passed through the foyer into the hall and the doors closed. Perhaps an hour later the doors opened and the former exiles emerged slowly, most of them taking time to look at the photos, gesturing at them while talking with companions. Meanwhile, several hundred Namibians and I sat on the outside, able to see every movement, but unable to hear more than the hum of the people speaking and an occasional word. Finally as the President stopped to make some remark about a photo with a colleague about ten meters away from me, I decided I should assert myself and ask someone for permission to enter the foyer. But no sooner had I stood up and opened my mouth, then a soldier standing next to my table stepped in front of me and told me in two words to "sit down." Only

after the foyer had been cleared of people was I able to return to the exhibition.

The following day, without the exhibition, I participated in the government led Heroes' Day ritual. Even just attending this program proved difficult. Despite my conversations with various persons involved in organizing the Heroes' Day gathering on Saturday, I was unable to ascertain when people would travel to the mass grave outside Eenhana. The grave site, which had been discovered by construction workers clearing land for a sewage processing plant in November 2005, was located close to a South African military base from the 1970s and 80s and held the remains of a large number of bodies of people, who, based on their clothes, appear to have been members of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), the guerrilla wing of SWAPO in exile. Apparently, early in the morning of the 26th, state dignitaries and members of the media traveled to the grave and dedicated the monument which had been erected there. A few hours later thousands of Namibians and I gathered in a field outside Eenhana to observe the nation in all its pageantry. Assembling around a parade ground, very much like Namibians first did while living in SWAPO's exile camps, we looked on as representatives of the country's recognized "tribes" performed and soldiers marched and aligned themselves in formation. We watched as the national flag was hoisted and sang the national anthem. And we listened as the President told a story about a nation which had freed itself from colonialism and as he exhorted us, without any hint of irony, to "remember our history."

Nations and their Exile Histories

For students of nationalism, irony embedded in the President's words will not be

lost. As Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm argue in their seminal works, nations are temporally derived forms of social identification, which associate a particular group of people with a state.³ Through narratives which trace the continuity of a predetermined national group over time and obscure the particular circumstances in which national ideologies have been formed, nations have been constituted as “natural” social units, structuring human relations. These narratives, like all histories, require their narrators to forget the past even as they remember it. More than that, national history requires narrators to deny that any past contradicting their stories about the nation has been forgotten.⁴

Exile may be a significant site in the histories of many nations. Whether it refers directly to a location, or to a category of people and state of being associated with it, exile is a widely utilized term, used to denote a space situated outside the boundaries of a national “home.” The word both assumes that a given nation exists and that it is unnatural for its members to live outside a geographical region associated with it. Nonetheless, it is precisely spaces such as exile where national communities, collections of people who relate to one another through an accepted national history, are likely to form.⁵ As several generations of anthropologists have argued, such as Fernando Ortiz with respect to

³ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, (London: Verso, 1983, 1991); Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality, (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴ Homi Bhabha discusses this “obligation to forget” in Nation and Narration (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 308-311.

⁵ My use of “national communities” is somewhat different than Benedict Anderson’s term “imagined communities.” Whereas Anderson discusses communities which are naturalized through national narratives (Anderson 1991, pp. 199-205), I focus on communities whose social basis is the narrative itself, a common discourse through which all community members relate to one another.

“transculturation,” Fredrik Barth to ethnicity, and Liisa Malkki to refugees,⁶ crossing boundaries tends not so much to dilute social units as it does induce those who cross them to form different ones based on ideologies of belonging that are useful in their new social environment. Likewise, one would expect nationality to gain novel and heightened meaning for persons who, as soon as they cross international borders, become enmeshed in new social relations shaped by their common status as exiles. And yet, precisely because exile can be so formative for nations, histories of exile may present a special risk to them, threatening to unravel the carefully constructed narratives that are told about a given nation's past. As a result, most histories of exile are likely to be “exiled” – expelled from the collective consciousness of a nation's members.

Such is the case in Namibia and neighboring countries. As the Foreword notes, Southern African states rely heavily on narratives of colonialism and anti-colonial resistance to shape and govern national communities. Central to any rendering of these resistance narratives are stories told about the years spent by members of the region's liberation movements in exile. From the “front-line states” guerrilla soldiers infiltrated their countries of origin while political leaders urged for interventions from governments and organizations abroad. First, while living in exile and then since exiles' repatriation, a single history of exile has been used to unite Southern Africa's national communities through stories of common struggle against colonial oppression.

Nonetheless, stories from exile that diverge from this dominant narrative are never far from the surface as even a cursory review of the sites and people involved in Heroes'

⁶ Fernando Ortiz, Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar (Durham: Duke University Press, 1947, 1995); Fredrik Barth, ed. Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1969); Liisa Malkki, Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Day 2007 demonstrates. Since the mass grave had been uncovered outside Eenhana in November 2005, speculation had been rife that the bodies therein were killed on April 1, 1989, when, after a cease-fire had been established, PLAN combatants deployed south of the latitudinal line set by the United Nations for their disarmament. The deployment resulted in several hundred deaths which, some argue, should have been prevented. In June 2007 ex-combatants, including some of those honored at Heroes' Day in Eenhana, demonstrated for a week in downtown Windhoek, clamoring for remuneration from the Namibian government to compensate for sacrifices made during the liberation struggle. Some of the demonstrators claimed that the UN mandated the Namibian government to provide ex-combatants with money and homes following independence, claims which the SWAPO-led Namibian government denies. In July the Namibian press reported on an application submitted by the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) to the International Criminal Court (ICC), implicating founding Namibian and SWAPO President Sam Nujoma and three others in human rights abuses committed in exile. In the weeks preceding Heroes' Day, "the ICC Issue" had been capturing headlines daily as various people and institutions voiced their opinions on it, and President Pohamba commented on the issue in his Heroes' Day speech, proclaiming NSHR's application "baseless and frivolous" and "a threat to peace and stability."

One might be inclined to refer to such histories as "silenced." This metaphor, so commonly employed to describe perspectives on the past that are excluded from a dominant narrative is misleading, however. Histories that are absent or muted in certain contexts, such as the government led commemoration of Heroes' Day, may be heard clearly across a range of others. For example, in the course of this thesis I discuss

histories that, while excluded from a widely repeated national narrative, have been accessed through autobiographies, newspapers, internal SWAPO documents, letter exchanges, diary entries, commemorations, rallies, funerals, conferences, formal recorded interviews and informal conversations. Some of these histories, like the aforementioned about April 1, 1989, the promises made to PLAN combatants, and the human rights violations committed by SWAPO officials in exile, clearly contradict the national narrative, profaning the nation's heroic deeds and men. Others extend outside the narrative's parameters and unsettle it in more subtle ways. Such is the quality of many of the narratives which I heard while “Living in Exile” was on display at the Eenhana Youth Centre, when photographs prompted stories known only to small groups of former exiles who lived at particular times in particular places. Although part of Namibia's exile past, they are excluded from the dominant narrative told about it.

Moreover, nations frequently call silenced histories about exile, and other sites formative in the formation of nations, into being. For while certain historical narratives threaten a nation, uniting those with a vested interest in a national political order against them, unequal access to nationally distributed resources may also encourage people to assert these very same stories in efforts to redefine the order and their place within it. From this perspective one may begin to understand apparent contradictions in how people responded to “Living in Exile” and other aspects of my research. On the one hand, I struggled to display the exhibit on Heroes' Day. Although the material was carefully selected so as to be acceptable to government and SWAPO officials who were planning the commemoration, the officials made little effort to support it. Even the formal “approval” of two SWAPO officials seems to have been insufficient to assuage concerns

that officials must have had about an exhibit on exile assembled by a foreigner, whose interests were not easily discerned. On the other hand, some people were not only willing but also eager to participate in research on the same subject. Of the seventy-five persons with whom I held recorded interviews for this dissertation, many went out of their way to meet several times for multiple hours, to edit interview transcripts and chapter drafts, to introduce me to people who they thought would enhance my study, to host me in their homes and visit me in Windhoek, even to travel with me to the sites of former SWAPO camps in remote areas of southern Angola. Certainly, some of my most keen interlocutors are persons who have been explicitly stigmatized through a dominant history of exile, for whom establishing a counter-narrative about the exile past is central to their efforts to reshape their reputation in the present and future. Nonetheless, research participants included people with a wide range of relationships to the nation, even high ranking government officials, who repeat a dominant national history in many settings but during taped interviews for use in a public record shared stories that diverged from it. One of the reasons given by research participants to explain why they divulged such information to me was their hope that I would share my research with “the Namibian people” who, in turn, might better understand “their history.”

What differentiates a dominant history of exile from other histories, is not, therefore, the latter's exclusion from the discourse of a national community, but rather the status of these histories within it. Generally, narratives that confirm the authority of leaders with access to instruments of government become the official version of the past while those that undermine them are associated with stigma and rendered inaudible. Nonetheless, there is considerable variety in the status attributed to histories as members

of a national community establish social relations over time and space. Again, responses to “Living in Exile” are suggestive. Although organizers at Heroes' Day in Eenhana demonstrated interest in “Living in Exile” during one-on-one meetings, it appears to have been threatening to them in the context of the commemoration of a national holiday at which government sanctioned history would be presented. In contrast, for some people who viewed “Living in Exile” at the Youth Centre, the opportunity to rethink national history seems to have been liberating rather than threatening. As one woman said after sharing observations about an exile camp where she had lived that was pictured in a photo: “This is good. Namibians need to know these things. We're only told about the leaders, not the ordinary heroes.” Three weeks later, when two local research assistants and I displayed the exhibit on a wall along a sidewalk in the southern Namibian town of Keetmanshoop, “Living in Exile” was associated with the national narrative itself and was accused of excluding local histories. “Our people were also there, but they are not here [in the photos],” we overheard one man say and others repeat in different words.

The contrasting responses to one of the photographs in “Living in Exile” were particularly dramatic.⁷ Although the photo's caption at the National Archives refers generally to “Commanders... receiving... training at an Angolan base near the Namibian border,” some who viewed the photo were eager to associate it with particular names and places. Even before I assembled the exhibit, several research participants argued that the “Angolan base” could not possibly be located “near the Namibian border” since SWAPO members did not occupy any large brick structures there. It was far more likely, they suggested, that it pictured a building near the Angolan city of Lubango, where PLAN's military headquarters had been located during the late 1970s and '80s. In turn, these

⁷ NAN, Photo Archive, No. 12396. The photo appears in Appendix 2.

interlocutors and other viewers at Eenhana used their knowledge of the SWAPO camps near Lubango and their relationships with the people pictured in the photo to associate themselves with this image and, through it, with Namibians who resisted South African rule. In Keetmanshoop, however, the response was entirely different. No viewers drew from this photo to speak with me about Lubango, a site which many people there associate with the torture and murder of those from the town and surrounding region who joined SWAPO in exile. At one point a woman confronted me directly, asking in a loud voice so that all standing near the exhibit could hear, “Where is Lubango?” When I showed her to the photograph, which bears no obvious traces of the violent stories, which the woman had certainly heard, and the survivors' disfigured bodies, which she had probably seen, she responded, “That's not Lubango” and walked away.

This dissertation examines the structures which shape the social status of these and other exile histories. For even as there is variety in how Namibians relate to their recent past, there are patterns to the status attributed to stories told about it which are at once distinct to Namibia and inseparable from the larger political order of which Namibia is a part. By studying these patterns, “Exile History” not only highlights the suffering of particular communities whose members repeatedly find themselves marginalized by Namibia's dominant exile narrative, but also suggests how social relations are formed through national history across a range of contexts.

An Ethnography of Camps

Of particular importance to this study is the structure of camps. As noted in the Foreword, from 1963 until 1989 SWAPO administered camps for about 60,000

Namibians living abroad in Tanzania, Zambia and Angola. There was considerable diversity to these sites. Some were small and mobile, catering to populations of guerrillas infiltrating Namibia and other Namibians fleeing the country, populations that were constantly in flux. Others were semi-permanent settlements⁸ for thousands that were further from the border and offered inhabitants a variety of services, including health and educational facilities. Some consisted of trained guerrilla soldiers bearing weapons while others had only a handful of guerrillas responsible for protecting mostly untrained and unarmed people. A few prominent camps were visited regularly by foreign military advisors or aid workers, while many were rarely or never accessed by non-Namibians except for the local inhabitants who lived near by.

Despite such differences, these sites shared common features which distinguished them as “camps.” They were places where Namibian exiles lived under the direct oversight of SWAPO representatives, granted authority by the liberation movement to administer Namibians in a particular location. These representatives, usually referred to as “commanders,”⁹ were responsible for monitoring movement, distributing material resources, and dispersing knowledge among those under their care, and they wielded considerable control over each of these fields of activity. Although the rules applied in particular camps varied, “the parade,” the name of the meeting during which commanders and other SWAPO officials communicated with camp inhabitants and of the physical

⁸ As Liisa Malkki notes in *Purity and Exile*, her seminal work on “the camp,” organizations administering refugees and refugees themselves may distinguish between “a settlement” and “a camp,” the latter implying a less permanent living arrangement (p. 304) and/or a military command structure (p. 117). Throughout my research, Namibian former exiles made no consistent distinction between “camps” and “settlements,” and I use the terms interchangeably as well.

⁹ Throughout this dissertation I use the term “commanders” to refer to those who were directly responsible for administering camps and “leaders” to refer to those who were representing the liberation movement in offices. When I do not wish to distinguish between commanders and leaders, I use the more generic term “officials.”

location where that meeting was held, was part of daily life in all of them. In these ways, “the SWAPO camps” not only resembled one another but also camps which Southern Africa's other liberation movements administered for their exiled members. Moreover, they approximate “the camp,” defined in Giorgio Agamben's influential work as “the pure, absolute and impassible biopolitical space.”¹⁰

It is significant, therefore, that scholarship on camps highlights the power of this space to shape national ideology. The first work to focus on this relationship between camps and nations was Liisa Malkki's Purity and Exile.¹¹ Drawing from ethnographic research conducted in 1985-1986 among refugees in Mishamo, a camp in western Tanzania, Malkki discusses how Mishamo's inhabitants encountered “the national order of things” through the camp’s daily social interactions. Inhabitants, in turn, developed a national history, constituting themselves as members of an exiled Hutu nation that had been denied its own state by rival Tutsis, as a means of understanding and giving meaning to their lives in the camp. In contrast, people of similar background and experiences who migrated to the town Kigoma were not administered on the basis of a national identity and were more likely to improve their social status by integrating themselves into their new communities. Consequently, they eschewed Hutu nationalism and adopted a more “cosmopolitan” relation to difference.

The relationship between camp life and national ideology, identified by Malkki at Mishamo and corroborated in its main point by subsequent research on other camps,¹² is

¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) p. 123.

¹¹ Liisa Malkki, Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania, (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹² Jennifer Hyndman, Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Michel Agier, “Between War and City: Towards an Urban Anthropology of Refugee Camps,” Ethnography, 3,3 (2002), pp. 317-366; Michel Agier, On

central to claims made about the SWAPO camps here. As people fled Namibia for exile, they entered a space in which food, shelter, clothing, medicine and weapons – all resources necessary for their survival and for fighting a war – were accessed by virtue of their association with a Namibian nation. They also became targets of South African violence due to their physical presence in a space administered by the Namibian nationalist organization challenging South African rule. Under the circumstances, “the nation” became the primary medium of social relations in “the camp,” irrespective of inhabitants' particular relationships to national and other ideologies before entering and their particular experiences while living there.

Nonetheless, the work of Malkki and others focused on camps does little to consider how social hierarchies within nations may develop in the camp space. As argued here, such hierarchies are a salient feature of the SWAPO camps, where commanders, and the internationally recognized leaders who granted them authority, were responsible for distributing material resources to most Namibian exiles. Through the control of movement and knowledge accessible to camp inhabitants, SWAPO officials also wielded considerable power to define who was working for and against the nation's interests. Those already culturally marked within the Namibian exile community were particularly vulnerable to accusations made by officials taking advantage of their positions and by other camp inhabitants trying to curry favor with elites. In this manner, the hierarchy of leaders, commanders and others, inherent to the structure of the camp, further differentiated itself according to social categories such as region, language, ethnicity,

the Margins of the World: The Refugee Experience Today (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008); Aihwa Ong, The Buddha is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship and the New America, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Zygmunt Bauman, Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts. (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004).

race, gender and class.

To some extent, Malkki and others' focus on how camps produce national communities, rather than hierarchies within nations, may be attributed to the kind of camps which they have studied. To date, ethnographic literature on camps examines almost exclusively camps of refugees.¹³ Whereas Southern Africa's liberation movement camps were governed directly by the movements themselves often with little or no oversight from external donors, refugee camps are usually administered directly by a host nation and/or transnational humanitarian agencies. It is not surprising, therefore, that studies of refugee camps primarily consider the hierarchy of governed refugees and governing foreigners rather than on divisions and inequalities developing among the refugees themselves.¹⁴ Mention of social differentiation among refugee communities is not entirely absent from the ethnographic literature. As Ilana Feldman argues, services delivered to refugees and others "in crisis" are, by nature, hierarchical, strengthening the authority not only of the governing body responsible for administering aid but also of the social networks through which aid is administered.¹⁵ Michel Agier and Aihwa Ong consider how such networks form in the particular camps which they study, noting how various groups of refugees access sources of capital from outside the camp and privileges

¹³ In his book Space in the Tropics: From Convicts to Rockets in French Guiana (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), Peter Redfield considers life among French Guiana's prisoners, who were also organized in camps (pp. 76-108).

¹⁴ See, for example, Liisa Malkki's discussion of the hierarchy that forms at Mishamo between the Burundian Hutu refugees governed in the camp and the Tanzanian officials authorized by the UN to govern them (1995, pp. 105-152), Jennifer Hyndman's of how refugee camps are "structured according to supralocal understandings of local needs" (2000, pp. 87-116), Aihwa Ong's of the relationships that formed among representatives of humanitarian agencies, Thai soldiers and the Cambodian refugees whom she studies (2003, pp.48-65) and Michel Agier's of relations among refugees and NGO workers in the Somali camp Dadaab (Agier 2002, pp. 324-332; 2008, pp. 50-57).

¹⁵ Ilana Feldman, Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). The formation of hierarchy through aid delivery is a central theme in Feldman's chapter titled "Service in Crisis" (pp. 123-154).

from administrators within it.¹⁶ These and other studies do not focus on the hierarchies that form among camp populations, however – perhaps because the social differences within these camps are negligible in comparison to the “powerlessness and uselessness” experienced by all the refugees who live there.¹⁷

It may also be, however, that the structures shaping knowledge produced in national communities inflect scholars' and their interlocutors' representations of camps. As Mia Green notes in her review of Purity and Exile, Liisa Malkki does not consider the possibility that her research participants, most of them highly politicized, adult men, may have used the camp to propagate their narratives of the Hutu nation at the expense of competing histories.¹⁸ If the camp, rather than the town, was the site in which such histories were articulated, it may be a reflection not only of the national ideology that formed there, but also of the ability of certain people to control the representations of camp and nation which Malkki heard within this space.

Certainly, representations of the SWAPO camps have been dominated by this organization and its supporters during the liberation struggle, who repeatedly presented the camps as models of and for a national community. As SWAPO wrote in its first proposal to establish a “Namibian Health and Education Centre” outside Lusaka in 1973: “The philosophical basis of this Center is to germinate a model nuclear community which would form a foundation for the future Namibian society... Through the project... SWAPO envisages to reorient Namibians with different cultural, social and educational

¹⁶ Agier 2002, pp. 329-332; Agier 2008, pp. 53-57; Ong 2003, pp. 53-55.

¹⁷ Agier 2002, p. 329.

¹⁸ Mia Green, “Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania – Book Review,” Journal of Southern African Studies 23, 2 (1997), pp. 386-388.

backgrounds towards the ideals of one Namibia, one People and one Nation.”¹⁹ Similarly, the church, humanitarian and solidarity organizations supporting SWAPO in exile repeatedly portrayed its camps as sites where Namibians were transcending social barriers to create a nation of unified and committed citizens. Camp inhabitants were said to share work tasks according to their abilities and material items according to their needs, which were met with remarkable efficiency despite the circumstances in which exiles lived. Women were taking a leading role in running the camps and accessing levels of education that previously had only been available to men. Tribal divisions, through which the apartheid regime had divided Africans, had become insignificant, if they retained any meaning at all. There were also differences in how SWAPO and its allies described the camps, particularly as they played to some audiences which saw SWAPO members primarily as “freedom fighters” and others which were more ambivalent about SWAPO's military aims but accepted that Namibian exiles needed assistance as “refugees.”²⁰ Allies, however, consistently presented the camps as sites where a new, healthy nation was developing under SWAPO's care. As authors from UNICEF put it following a visit to the SWAPO camp at Cassinga, “Their speeches, their songs, their processions, the defence of their camps and the organization of their health services, their education and sanitation bore witness to or were presage of what an independent Namibia would be.”²¹

On the other hand, the camps were sharply criticized by those challenging

¹⁹ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 2, “Namibian Educational and Health Centre,” 1973, p. 3.

²⁰ SWAPO also made efforts to reconcile these images, by defining “the Namibian refugee” as its own category, encompassing both the qualities of “refugees” and “freedom fighters” (e.g. SWAPO, “The Namibian Refugee” (Luanda: SWAPO Dept. of Information and Publicity, 1988)).

²¹ NAN, File A.614, UNICEF Area Office Brazzaville, “Report on a mission to swapo centres for namibian refugees in angola from 10 to 14 april 1978,” p. 7.

SWAPO's authority to represent “the Namibian people.” Although dissident views were expressed as early as the 1960s among Namibians living in the first SWAPO camp at Kongwa,²² during the 1970s and '80s they became more widely spread as those who had left SWAPO were dispersed abroad and as parties participating in and organizations supporting the government inside Namibia drew from them to undermine their main political rival. In 1985 a German human rights organization, the *Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte* (IGFM), gained international attention when it issued a report challenging the idea that SWAPO was administering “refugee camps,” appealing to images of Nazi Germany to suggest that they were, in fact, “concentration camps” and “breeding camps.”²³ There, people were said to suffer from hunger and poor health. Conditions were especially bad for those who were falsely accused of being “dissidents” or “spies” by leaders motivated by tribal interests and the pursuit of pure power. Women were also badly mistreated, forced to have sex with officials and to bear children, who were taken from them shortly after birth and indoctrinated into the party. Importantly, all these claims were based on the accounts of Namibians who had lived in the camps themselves. And yet, Namibian voices and eye-witness accounts were no less central to the dominant camp discourse as organizations sent representatives to the camps to see them for themselves and to write reports dismissing SWAPO's critics.

Scholarship on SWAPO and other liberation movement camps has also been shaped by national politics. Since the mid-1970s, when the national liberation movements first presented a formidable challenge to white minority rule in Southern Africa, the

²² For a discussion of Kongwa, see the section titled “Tate Nepelilo” in Chapter 6.

²³ IGFM, “Namibia: Human Rights in Conflict” (Frankfurt am Main, 1985). IGFM also had chapters in London and New York which were known as the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR)

concept of resistance has dominated the region's historiography.²⁴ While liberation movement camps have been incorporated into national resistance histories written shortly before or after the region's countries achieved independence, camp life has not been the focus of any scholarly work.²⁵ This omission is striking when one considers that the liberation movements, now ruling parties, first governed their citizens in camps, and it suggests that camps might reveal tensions within nations that are difficult to incorporate into a national resistance narrative. In the academy only political scientists have directly challenged resistance narratives of the recent Southern African past. Drawing from John Marcum's seminal work,²⁶ they highlight how “the politics of exile” pushed liberation movements to focus their energies more on garnering external assistance than on mobilizing grass-roots support and, as a result, to concentrate power in the hands of foreign donors and those leaders who lobbied them.²⁷ This literature, however, makes

²⁴ Several works were particularly significant in developing this resistance historiography: Charles Van Onselen, Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933, (London: Pluto Press, 1976); Allen Isaacman, The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone, eds., Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture, and Consciousness, 1870-1930 (New York: Longman, 1982). In Namibia the central works were SWAPO, To Be Born A Nation: The Liberation Struggle for Namibia, (London: Zed Press, 1981) and Peter Katjavivi, A History of Resistance in Namibia (London: James Currey, 1988).

²⁵ In Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), Harry West discusses the “settlements” and “bases” in the liberated zones of northeastern Mozambique (pp. 133-163). Although the discussion is tangential to his larger arguments and does not consider exile camps specifically, it does offer insight into how social relations were shaped in a similar kind of space.

²⁶ John Marcum, The Angolan Revolution, Volume 2: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978); “The Exile Condition and Revolutionary Effectiveness: Southern African Liberation Movements,” in Christian Potholm and Richard Dale, eds. Southern Africa in Perspective (New York: Free Press, 1979).

²⁷ For “the politics of exile” literature on SWAPO, see Franz Ansprenger, Die SWAPO: Profil einer afrikanischen Befreiungsbewegung (Mainz 1984); Lauren Dobell, Swapo's Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: War by Other Means (Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1991); Colin Leys and John Saul, Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two Edged Sword, (London: James Currey, 1995). Justine Hunter is another political scientist who challenges official representations of Namibia's liberation struggle although her work (“Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia seit der staatlichen Unabhängigkeit” (Doctoral Thesis, Universität Freiburg, 2005); Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia: Umgang mit schweren Menschenrechtsverletzungen der Ära des bewaffneten Befreiungskampfes, 1966 bis 1989 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2008)) draws more from recent

only passing mention of the camps in which most exiles lived, dismissing stereotypes about them without reconciling conflicting images or considering how camps relate to exile politics.

This piece not only focuses attention on life within liberation movement camps, but it also suggests a method for conducting research in and about this kind of space. Drawing from the premise that socially accepted representations of camps are constrained by the national political order in which they are produced, it maintains that this same order also evokes more complex images as citizens relate to one another in a national community. Studying camps, therefore, requires accessing or creating sites in which these complicating images may form. “Living in Exile” was an attempt to create such a site. Drawing from photos of daily life in camps and stories told to me about them during interviews with people who had lived there, the exhibition presented aspects of exiles' experiences that extend beyond national history or a counter-narrative which undermines it. Through the exhibit I hoped to encourage viewers to acknowledge these experiences and to articulate others which they thought were also worthy of recognition. At times “Living in Exile” seemed to achieve these goals, when pictures and captions elicited histories known only to narrow communities of exiles or when viewers discussed what is and is not said in public about what camp life was like. At others it appeared to fail, such as when people answered my questions about photos by reading from the captions which I had written or refused to engage with the images on the premise that they might threaten the ruling party or be endorsed by it at the expense of another group. The remark about the picture of Lubango seems to reflect both the success and failure of “Living in Exile,” an exhibit which could provoke a viewer to speak in public about one controversial

literature on “transitional justice” (see chapter 6) than it does from “the politics of exile.”

history but which could not persuade her to consider another, which has also shaped her life in ways that she may not know.

Certainly, there are differences in the specific methods that may be employed to study camps in the past, like those considered here, and camps in the present, like those examined by most anthropologists. In a field-site such as Mishamo, where inhabitants are confined to the camp and the researcher permitted to visit them only at predetermined times and locations,²⁸ there are likely to be limits to the views one can access about how people are getting along in the camp that do not confine the work of someone able to visit research participants in a variety of settings outside the camp itself. To be sure, moving with former exiles across contexts elicited perspectives considered in this dissertation that would have been inaccessible if my work had been restricted to sites where interlocutors felt threatened to express views diverging from national elites. From this perspective, spatial and temporal distance may offer a better vantage point from which “to see” the camp than if one were an eye-witness, better acoustics in which “to hear” it than if one were listening to people talk inside that space.

Nonetheless, as anthropologists have often noted, ethnography, by its nature, presents opportunity for creating new sites of knowledge production. As the researcher interacts with research subjects over months or years in “the field,” pre-existing social relations are altered, rapport is established and networks are built which may open new vistas on social phenomena. Throughout the process the ethnographer is never a dispassionate observer in a static environment, but rather, as Johannes Fabian

²⁸ Malkki discusses several conditions that shaped her fieldwork. These included regulations which made it necessary for her to leave the refugees before sunset and return to her assigned house, located next to the Settlement Commandant, and the refugees' sense that they were under surveillance, a sense which influenced both how Malkki was perceived by the refugees and how the refugees would and would not gather in groups (1995, pp. 47-51).

emphasizes, “a provider of occasions” involved in an on-going “conversation” with interlocutors.²⁹ It follows that occasions which the researcher provides influence the quality of the dialogue which unfolds. “Living in Exile,” and this dissertation more generally, suggest ways in which a researcher might initiate a conversation about camps which is more intellectually rich and socially engaged than previous studies. For while the exhibit could not have been assembled or displayed in a SWAPO camp twenty years ago, its approach to knowledge production – presenting viewers with images which do not overtly threaten, but which do evade, narration in a national history – might be applied to study contemporary camps and similar settings where representations are deeply embedded in a nation.

Chapter Summaries

This ethnography of the SWAPO camps begins with a study of Cassinga, the camp at the center of Namibia's national narrative. Since May 4, 1978, the day the South Africans attacked this site in southern Angola, Cassinga has been described by opposing sides in the Namibian liberation struggle as either a “refugee” or a “military” camp. In contrast, this chapter focuses on everyday life at Cassinga before the attack, drawing from stories told about its two administrative offices: a PLAN office involved in transferring combatants, supplies and information to and from the front and a camp office which administered new exiles arriving from Namibia who had received no military training. In so doing, the piece undermines the competing national histories that have defined Cassinga, each of which excludes the claims made by the other. At the same time, it illuminates the hierarchical national social structure which pushes histories of

²⁹ Johannes Fabian, Power and Performance (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 4-7.

Cassinga towards a binary opposition and obscures other perspectives on the camp. The chapter thereby moves discussion of Cassinga from a set of questions about a particular camp in the past, to others about how one might study this and similar sites in the present.

Chapters 3 and 4 trace how the national hierarchy which shapes “Cassinga” and other Namibian histories formed in the camp space. Chapter 3 considers the development of this hierarchy through a narrative of the Namibian exile community, following its development from “the exodus,” when thousands of Namibians migrated into Zambia after the collapse of the Portuguese empire in 1974, through “the crisis,” when hundreds of SWAPO members were detained by the Zambian government at SWAPO leaders' request in 1976. By focusing on social practices in particular camps during this time, the chapter highlights the extent to which the camp enabled SWAPO officials to shape group allegiances and manage conflicts that developed between them. In so doing, the piece offers a new perspective not only on how some SWAPO members consolidated power during a period when their authority was contested, but also on qualities of camps which may empower other national elites who live in this kind of social space.

Chapter 4 further examines the formation of a Namibian national hierarchy through “the spy,” an invisible power used to explain events and legitimate cruelty in the SWAPO camps. There, where inhabitants were constantly at risk of South African violence, SWAPO officials drew from their control over public discourse to focus attention on the dangers emanating from outside the camp, which they were authorized to address as national leaders, and away from the dangers generated within them, which could implicate their leadership. At the same time, they played off of the ambiguities surrounding who spies were and how they accomplished their work to heighten fears and

direct them towards people already marginalized inside camps. To develop this point, the chapter draws from recent anthropological literature on witchcraft, which foregrounds the social conditions in which explanations for life's "unfortunate events" become plausible and powerful. It then applies this perspective to SWAPO's camps generally and the mass detention of spies in Lubango during the 1980s particularly, highlighting how spy purges need not have resulted primarily from the infiltration of spies or the manipulation of accusations about spies when "the spy" wielded such power in the camps.

Chapters 5 and 6 shift the dissertation's discussion from social hierarchies formed in SWAPO camps to histories told about them, which have sustained and subverted the hierarchies that formed there. Chapter 5 highlights efforts to challenge accepted histories about the SWAPO camps. First, it studies the Committee of Parents, a group of relatives of those detained as "spies" in Lubango, and how the Committee and its claims were discredited during the 1980s. Then it considers the Lubango "ex-detainees" following their repatriation in July 1989 until Namibia's democratic elections the following November. Finally, it examines the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement formed by some ex-detainees and others following the publication of a book about their experiences in 1995 and 1996. By juxtaposing the production of histories by these three groups at three points in time, the piece not only highlights, as several other publications have, the extent to which certain individuals and organizations obscured truth claims about SWAPO in exile, but also the power of the international political order to define socially acceptable and unacceptable histories over time and space.

Chapter 6 focuses attention on the state-sanctioned reconciliation discourse in Namibia, which legitimates a particular history of exile and shapes the terms on which all

Namibians relate to one another. The piece begins with an analysis of my interview with Tate Nepelilo, a man whose experiences are not only excluded from exile history, but also fall outside the awareness of most Namibian former exiles and who has, as a result, been abandoned by his family and the government. It is followed by the funeral service for Emil Appolus at Vaalgras and how controversies surrounding Appolus' and other local exile histories create tensions within this community and impair the ability of its members to make claims on the state. It concludes with a discussion of responses to "Living in Exile" and how viewers' reactions to it highlighted aspects of their relationship to other Namibians, including resentment and mistrust of various social groups and alienation from the national community. Through these cases, the chapter highlights not only how Namibians have been disadvantaged by a history of exile which does not acknowledge their experiences, but also how they use stigmatized histories to assert their position within a national community. In so doing, it problematizes the idea of "victims" whose histories have been "silent," suggesting instead the need to study the terms on which people establish social relations through national history in and across social spaces.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes by examining the relationship between the histories which Namibians and others tell about their nations and the texts which scholars write about national histories. As I observe, a tension exists in historical writing between the process of deconstructing a national narrative and of constructing a new one. Rather than attempt to write a new national history here, I have drawn from Namibian exiles' stories to highlight paradoxical qualities inherent to national history. Although this approach does not extricate this dissertation from the processes through which Namibians

remember their past, it does suggest ways of approaching national history which are less likely to affirm nations than initiate critical thought about them and create space for imagining other forms of community.

Chapter 2

The Production of National History: Remember Cassinga?

Of Namibia's exile histories, none have been more significant for defining a national community than those told about the South African attack of May 4, 1978 on Cassinga, a SWAPO camp in southern Angola. Within a few days of the attack, news had spread through the exile community and around the world about the raid on SWAPO's "refugee camp," which had left at least 600 dead and hundreds more wounded. In the years that have followed, Cassinga has been invoked by many Namibians to highlight the brutality not only of the South African regime on that day but also of colonialism more generally, the bravery of those who resisted it and, since independence, the magnanimity of those who have reconciled with their former oppressors. Meanwhile the former South African government dispersed its own version of events according to which it had attacked Cassinga "military camp," a legitimate target. Some former paratroopers who participated in the raid continue to commemorate the attack on Cassinga quietly, remembering those who died and the tactical feat of having accomplished a difficult airborne assault.

In these and other contexts,³⁰ threads of memory about Cassinga the event hang on claims that define Cassinga the camp as "refugee" or "military." And while the historiography of Cassinga pushes beyond these simplistic descriptions, scholars

³⁰ The attack on Cassinga was also frequently invoked to support assertions that there were enemy agents working within the exile community since, allegedly, the attack could only have been accomplished with the aid of spies. For more information, see Chapter 4.

continue to employ the same language that confounds a more complicated understanding of the communities that developed in and around the camp. For example, in The Cassinga Event, the first scholarly monograph written about Cassinga,³¹ Annemarie Heywood observes that people inside the camp included “women and children, and adults too old or unfit for active combat” and that “most were teenagers in search of educational opportunities.”³² At the same time the camp “was under strict military control and was run on military lines” and “appears to have been guarded by a unit of 200-300 armed cadres who had at their disposal two anti-aircraft guns.”³³ Despite these and other observations that seem to defy a definitive application of words like military and refugee to describe Cassinga, Heywood concludes her discussion by stating, “There can be no doubt at all that [Cassinga]... was not primarily a PLAN establishment. Contrary to the South African version, it was not a heavily armed military strong-hold but essentially a well-established and orderly semi-permanent settlement for non-combatants who... had found uneasy refuge in a neighboring country.”³⁴ Edward Alexander's master's thesis, “The Cassinga Raid,” the first scholarly piece to examine South African Defence Force (SADF) military archives, argues that at the least South Africa's operational planners thought “the objective they were attacking at Cassinga was a critically important and purely military installation” while also noting that “there *were* refugees at Cassinga.”³⁵

³¹ Annemarie Heywood, The Cassinga Event: An Investigation of the Records (Windhoek: National Archives, 1994), pp. 5-9. Heywood was initially part of a group project sponsored by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) to write a book about Cassinga. The other researchers published their work separately from her own: Mvula ya Nangolo and Tör Sellstrom, Kassinga: A Story Untold (Windhoek: Namibia Book Development Council, 1995). SWAPO and the South African government published shorter pieces about Cassinga prior to Namibian independence in 1990. Some of these are discussed in the section of this chapter titled “Remember Cassinga?”

³² Heywood 1994, p. 20.

³³ Heywood 1994, pp. 22, 23.

³⁴ Heywood 1994, p. 22.

³⁵ Edward George McGill Alexander, “The Cassinga Raid,” (MA Thesis, University of South Africa,

Other seminal pieces on the Namibian liberation struggle render Cassinga in similar language. Colin Leys and John Saul indicate that Army Commander Dimo Hamaambo had established PLAN's "Command Headquarters" at Cassinga in 1976 but that as many as 600 "civilians" died in the attack on the camp two years later because by that date it had become "a reception and transit camp for the continuing flow of exiles."³⁶ Justine Hunter organizes her discussion of Cassinga around evidence that suggests that Cassinga could not have been "purely military" or "purely civilian."³⁷ The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) also offers a thorough critique of common representations of Cassinga, concluding ultimately that "Kassinga was thus both a military base and a refugee camp."³⁸

This chapter examines the SWAPO camp at Cassinga without using "refugee," "military" or similar terms to describe it. For while these words have been useful for people seeking meaning in and justification for their relationship to the event that took place at Cassinga on May 4, 1978 they are an impediment to understanding the camp of Namibians that lived there and the broader communities of which it was a part. In contrast, this piece draws from available sources, including interviews with the surviving commanders who established and administered the camp and whose views have not been incorporated into previous written accounts, to offer a history of Cassinga from its

2003), pp. 49, 52-60.

³⁶ Colin Leys & John Saul, Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword (London: James Currey, 1995), pp. 53, 54, 63.

³⁷ Justine Hunter, Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia: Umgang mit schweren Menschenrechtsverletzungen der Ära des bewaffneten Befreiungskampfes, 1966 bis 1989 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2008), pp. 57-58.

³⁸ TRC, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Volume 2, p. 50. The TRC is not alone in referring to "Kassinga" with a "K." This use, common in many of the denotations of the camp following the South African raid, may derive from the German spelling since Krupp, a German firm, owned the mine at the time of Angola's independence (Gaetano Pagano, Letter in "The Kassinga File," (Geneva: International University Exchange Fund, 1978); Alexander 2003, p. 41). There was a sign in the camp, however, that spelled Cassinga with a "C" and Angola's and Namibia's current governments both refer to Cassinga with a "C."

founding in mid-1976 until May 3rd, 1978. The chapter particularly focuses on the development of two administrative offices at Cassinga: a PLAN office involved in transferring combatants, supplies and information to and from the front and a camp office which administered new exiles from Namibia that had received no military training. In so doing, the piece highlights the limits of the vocabulary foisted onto Cassinga in the aftermath of the attack. Moreover, it offers context for considering why, even since Namibian independence, histories of Cassinga remain fixed on a binary opposition that obscures what transpired at that place, suggesting that the binary and the means of challenging it are part of the structure of national history itself.

A History of Cassinga

The origins of the SWAPO camp at Cassinga must be understood in relation to the shift in PLAN's base of operations from Zambia to Angola in 1976. Although by early 1975 the first PLAN combatants had begun to operate out of southern Angola,³⁹ it was only in March 1976, after South Africa had withdrawn from Angolan territory, that SWAPO officially recognized the MPLA as the sovereign government of Angola and began to coordinate its military activities in the country with it.⁴⁰ In the same month SWAPO transported the first group of PLAN combatants from the front in Southwestern Zambia to Dar es Salaam, from where they were flown first to Luanda and then to Huambo, Angola's second largest urban center. There they resided on a farm on the

³⁹ Andreas Shipanga, *In Search of Freedom* (Gibraltar: Ashanti Publishing, 1989), pp. 102-103; Andreas Shipanga, Interview 20.3.2007, pp. 5-6; Darius "Mbolondondo" Shikongo, Interview 26.3.2007, p. 2; Immanuel Engombe, Junius Ikondja, Ndamono Ndeulita and Hizipo Shikondombolo, Interview 29.7.2007, p. 24.

⁴⁰ For more details about SWAPO's relationship to the Angolan liberation movements during the Angolan Civil War, see Chapter 3.

outskirts of the city, where they were joined by other PLAN combatants, some of whom were assigned to report to Huambo from the Zambian front and others which had been stationed with UNITA units, which they left in the course of Angola's 1975-1976 Civil War.⁴¹

At some point in April 1976, after SWAPO managed to secure and deliver a cache of weapons to the PLAN combatants assembled at Huambo,⁴² the first groups departed for the Angolan front, a network of mobile camps near the Namibian border to the west and east of Ondjiva. It is in conjunction with these trips that Namibian exiles appear to have had their first encounter with Cassinga.⁴³ According to Ben Ulenga, who was a member of the first group of combatants to leave Huambo, the trucks transporting him and his comrades to the front drove through Cassinga, a village located about halfway between Huambo and the Namibian border. It was nighttime and the truck stopped just south of Cassinga proper where Ulenga was assigned to stand on guard until the trucks moved on in the morning. Ulenga recalls that at that time, “There was actually no Cassinga. There was Cassinga on the map, there was a village, but we were totally uninterested in it because there were no Namibians living there.”⁴⁴

Some weeks later, after several more groups had traveled from Huambo through Cassinga en route to the front, a group of PLAN soldiers led by Army Commander Dimo Hamaambo moved to Cassinga.⁴⁵ According to Charles “Ho Chi Minh” Namoloh and Mwetufa “Cabral” Mupopiwa, both of whom accompanied Hamaambo to Cassinga in the

⁴¹ Mwetufa “Cabral” Mupopiwa, Interview 26.7.2008; Charles “Ho Chi Minh” Namoloh, Interview 19.6.2008; Ben Ulenga, Interview 12.6.2008.

⁴² According to Namoloh and Ulenga these weapons were given by the Nigerian government to President Nujoma (Namoloh 19.6.20; Ulenga 12.6.2008).

⁴³ Namoloh 19.6.2008; Ulenga 12.6.2008.

⁴⁴ Ulenga 12.6.2008.

⁴⁵ Theophilus Kalimba, Interview 2.9.2007; Mupopiwa 26.7.2008; Namoloh 19.6.2008.

first group from Huambo, when they arrived, the village was empty.⁴⁶ Although there were subsistence farmers living across the Cuilonga River about 1 kilometer to the west, no people were living at Cassinga itself or on the low-lying hill on which it is situated. Nonetheless, the former inhabitants, who had been workers and administrators at a nearby iron mine before they fled during the Angolan Civil War,⁴⁷ had left perhaps twenty brick buildings, which may have been used previously as offices, dormitories and warehouses.⁴⁸ There was also a wide dirt road lined with gum trees that passed through the middle of the village, connecting Cassinga with Jamba (50 km) and the Angolan interior to the north and Techamutete (16 km) and the Namibian border 260 km to the south.

The fact that the first Namibians who resided at Cassinga indicate that the village was empty at the time of their arrival lends credibility to the widely accepted theory that the Angolan government gave Cassinga to SWAPO because it had been abandoned by its former inhabitants. The often associated claim that the government granted Cassinga to SWAPO because SWAPO requested a site where it could receive its “refugees” fleeing

⁴⁶ T. Kalimba 2.9.2007; Namoloh 19.6.2008; Mupopiwa 26.7.2008.

⁴⁷ Heywood 1994, pp. 17, 20; Alexander 2003, p. 41; Pagano letter in “The Kassinga File.” Heywood indicates that Cassinga was “built around a deposit of high-grade iron ore.” According to Alexander and several sources he cites, the mine was closer to Techamutete, the town 16 kilometers to the south of Cassinga. Pagano writes that “originally Kassinga was inhabited by a few thousand Angolans, mostly workers at the iron mines in Techamutete 16 km away. The mines, once owned by Krupp and Japanese steel interests, never resumed work after the war and so Kassinga... had remained an empty town.”

⁴⁸ Heywood (1994) indicates that in colonial days Cassinga consisted “of a sprawl of houses and mine buildings” (p. 17). Pagano refers to “three or four brick houses and hundreds of straw and adobe huts” that had remained empty since the start of the war (letter in “The Kassinga File”). Alexander indicates that based on SADF aerial photographs Cassinga had no more than 30 permanent buildings in 1978 (pp. 41-42). I draw my conclusions not only from interviews with Charles Namoloh (19.6.2008) and Mwetufa Mupopiwa (26.7.2008), but also from Canner Kalimba (Interviews 1.4.2007; 13.6.2007) and Darius “Mbolondondo” Shikongo (Interviews 26.3.2007; 11.6.2007; 20.8.2007; 3.9.2007), both of whom arrived at Cassinga shortly after Namibians took up residence there, and a trip that I took with Canner and Theophilus Kalimba to Cassinga in September 2007. Namoloh indicates that he thinks that some of the buildings that he found at Cassinga were dormitories. Shikongo refers to warehouses which were filled with timber that were cleared after his arrival (26.3.2007, pp. 4, 15).

from Namibia does not, however, follow.⁴⁹ According to both Namoloh and Mupopiwa, the first Namibian inhabitants of Cassinga consisted entirely of trained PLAN combatants. Some of these were soldiers preparing to travel to the front. For example, Namoloh indicates that other PLAN combatants who had been based with him at Huambo followed him to Cassinga where they waited for SWAPO to supply them with weapons. After some days, these weapons arrived and the soldiers moved to the front.⁵⁰ Meanwhile new groups, which had previously been stationed in Zambia, were arriving in Huambo. When they were armed, usually in Huambo, they too were transported in SWAPO trucks to the front, often stopping at Cassinga for a night en route.⁵¹ Eventually, a more permanent PLAN defense unit was established at the camp.⁵²

Namoloh and Mupopiwa were given a special assignment at Cassinga: to help Dimo Hamaambo establish an administrative office for PLAN.⁵³ The office was located in a Portuguese colonial edifice with white walls, red-tiled roofs and a wide archway supported on pillars located to the west of the main road on the southern side of the camp.⁵⁴ Initially five people worked there: Hamaambo, his personal body guard and

⁴⁹ E.g. The TRC Report states: “The site [Cassinga] was allocated to SWAPO by the Angolan government in 1976, after an appeal for help to cope with an inflow of thousands of refugees” (Volume 2, Chapter 2, p. 50). This claim, which is not supported with a citation, is, at the very least, problematic.

⁵⁰ Namoloh 19.6.2008.

⁵¹ Namoloh 19.6.2008; Mupopiwa 26.7.2008.

⁵² Namholo 19.6.2008; D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 17; 11.6.2007, p. 42; Jesaya Nyamu, Interview 3.4.2008, p. 19; Mwaanga Paulus Ngodji, cited in Alexander 2003, p. 49. Alexander discounts the often cited number of 30 personnel defending Cassinga, noting that “even pro-SWAPO sources put the figure at 200-300.” Nonetheless, the cited SWAPO officials, including a commander in the PLAN office, a commander in the camp office and a high ranking political official, all indicate that the number was less than 100. In these and other discussions of the defense unit at Cassinga, numbers are cited in conjunction with stories about the PLAN presence at the time of the South African attack. No mention is made of when the defense unit was established exactly and any fluctuation in its numbers over time.

⁵³ Namoloh 19.6.2008; Mupopiwa 26.7.2008.

⁵⁴ Eventually some or all of the PLAN office's administrative work was transferred to a brick building that Cassinga inhabitants constructed for Hamaambo along a small road leading west of the main road that runs through Cassinga. Namoloh and Mupopiwa, however, had left Cassinga before Hamaambo's house was built (C. and T. Kalimba, 2.9.2007, pp. 2,3; D. Shikongo 11.6.2007; 3.9.2007, p. 69; Nyamu 3.4.2007, p. 17; Namoloh 19.6.2008).

driver, Namoloh and Mupopiwa.⁵⁵ Of these only Hamaambo, Namoloh and Mupopiwa were involved in the office's administrative work.⁵⁶ Working out of their bedroom at the office,⁵⁷ Namoloh and Mupopiwa began to record and file information about PLAN operations along the Angolan-Namibian border, such as where they took place, who was involved and who died in combat, as well as logistical matters, such as supplies of weapons, food and medicine. To accomplish this task without access to radio communication required both of them to drive frequently to and from the front.⁵⁸ At the same time, they were communicating information that they gathered at the front to various officials and transporting requested supplies back there. To accomplish this communication and transport work, the office maintained a division of labor. Namoloh took most of the trips to the front and to Huambo, where most of the maize-meal for soldiers at the front was purchased.⁵⁹ Mupopiwa, who had grown up partially in Angola and was fluent in Portuguese, was responsible for communicating with the Angolans. His tasks included corresponding with people administering the Angolan warehouses in Luanda, where donations of weapons and food arrived, by sending letters on trucks traveling to and from the Angolan capital. He was also in regular contact with Cuban

⁵⁵ Later they were joined by PLAN Political Commissar Greenwell Matongo, who moved to Cassinga in late 1976 or early 1977 (Namoloh 19.6.2008; Mupopiwa 26.7.2008; Nyamu 3.4.2008).

⁵⁶ Namoloh 19.6.2008; Mupopiwa 26.7.2008. It should be noted that Hamaambo died in 2002 (and Matongo who later joined the PLAN office died in exile). Therefore, according to their testimony, Namoloh and Mupopiwa are the only two living persons with knowledge of the work done in and by the PLAN office during its first months.

⁵⁷ Namoloh recalls: "When I was there, we were... in this one administration [building]. It was both the office and where we were sleeping. Dimo [Hamaambo] was sleeping there, Green[well Matongo] was sleeping there, I was sleeping there, "Cabral" [Mwetufa Mupopiwa] was sleeping there. With Cabral [I was] sleeping in a very small – it was a kitchen I think. It should have been a kitchen. And we were sleeping there. He was sleeping on the stretch and I was sleeping also on the stretch. So we were sharing this. And I had a table there, and I had a typewriter on that table, and I was typing on that table. It was the same, our office and our sleeping room." (Namoloh 19.6.2008).

⁵⁸ Namoloh 19.6.2008; Mupopiwa 26.7.2008. Namoloh, Mupopiwa and D. Shikongo (26.3.2007) recall that at some point while they were at Cassinga, probably in early 1977, commanders at Cassinga began to access other commanders at the front and officials in Lubango and Luanda via radio communication.

⁵⁹ Namoloh 19.6.2008; Mupopiwa 26.7.2008.

soldiers based at Techamutete, who had maintained a base there since shortly after the Cubans' entry into Angola in 1975 and were assisting the Namibians at Cassinga with logistical support. After SWAPO Defense Headquarters was founded outside Lubango in late 1976 or early 1977,⁶⁰ Mupopiwa also began to make regular trips to communicate with SWAPO and Angolan officials there.

The role of Cassinga for gathering and dispersing information, collecting and transporting materials, and accommodating soldiers moving to and from the front between 1976 and 1978 is confirmed by other sources. For example, Darius “Mbolondondo” Shikongo, a camp commander at Cassinga from November 1976 until February 1977 and again from January through May 1978, indicates that those working in the PLAN office were involved in the aforementioned activities and that commanders from the front would regularly visit Cassinga to share and collect information there as well.⁶¹ The South African Defense Force had also collected corroborating evidence prior to its May 4, 1978 attack. For example, in his discussion of materials that he uncovered in the SADF military archives, Edward Alexander cites a military appreciation document sent from the SADF Chief of Staff Operations to the Chief of SADF dated April 1, 1978 which details activities happening at Cassinga that resemble those in which Namoloh and Mupopiwa claim to have been involved while they were working at the office. For example, it alleges that “Logistic planning and the provision of supplies, weapons and ammunition to insurgents operating in central and eastern Ovamboland were undertaken from Cassinga. Medical treatment of the seriously wounded as well as the repair of equipment and the assembly of newly trained insurgents on their way to bases in the East

⁶⁰ Namoloh 19.6.2008; Mupopiwa 26.7.2008; Nyamu 2.4.2008.

⁶¹ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007; 11.6.2007; 20.8.2007; 3.9.2007. See especially 3.9.2007, p. 76.

and West Cunene Provinces all took place in Cassinga.”⁶² Another document titled “8th Minutes of the Military Council” appears to be an internal SWAPO document from a meeting that took place January 1977 at Efitu, a southern Angolan camp. The minutes include several references to Cassinga, therein referred to as “Moscow CHQ.”⁶³ It indicates that Cassinga should provide supplies to “five different active guerrilla areas” and that commanders at the front forward their “problems and requirements” to Cassinga.⁶⁴

With the exception of its earliest days, however, Cassinga was not exclusively or even primarily inhabited by soldiers. As Namoloh, Mupopiwa and others indicate, it was not long before Namibians entering exile, i.e. persons without military training, began to enter Cassinga. Almost all of these newcomers at Cassinga were Oshiwambo-speakers who had crossed into Angola from Ovamboland, the central part of northern Namibia.⁶⁵ Usually those who fled were assisted by PLAN combatants who led them across the border and took them to the camps where combatants were living. After moving through several of these camps,⁶⁶ each successively further from the border, newcomers were picked up on SWAPO trucks and driven to Cassinga.⁶⁷ According to Canner Kalimba, when she and her husband entered Cassinga during the dry season of 1976, the majority

⁶² Alexander 2003, pp. 52-53.

⁶³ “Moscow” was SWAPO’s code-name for Cassinga. “CHQ” was probably an acronym for Command Headquarters.

⁶⁴ Alexander 2003, pp. 57-58.

⁶⁵ Most of those entering exile from the South during this period traveled through Botswana and were sent to SWAPO camps in Zambia. According to Kalimba and Shikongo, few, if any of these, arrived at Cassinga (D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, pp. 11-12; C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 16).

⁶⁶ Some of those who entered exile during the outbreak of the Angolan Civil War seem to have lived in these small camps near the front for many months before being transferred to any settlement to the rear. For example, Theopholus and Canner Kalimba fled from Namibia to Angola in August 1975 (C. Kalimba 2.4.2007). Unlike research participants whom I interviewed who entered exile before August, the month when widespread violence broke out in Angola, the Kalimbas did not move onward into Zambia. Rather the couple moved between various camps in southern Angola until they were finally moved to Cassinga, shortly after Namibians’ arrival there.

⁶⁷ C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, pp. 11, 15, 16; D. Shikongo, pp. 33-34.

of the exiles whom they found there were newcomers from Namibia who had arrived at the camp in this way.⁶⁸ Similarly, Jesaya Nyamu, then SWAPO's Deputy Secretary for Information and Publicity, who visited the Namibian settlements in Angola shortly after he traveled to Luanda to create an information office there in 1976, reports that the majority of persons that he found in Cassinga were Namibians without military training who had recently fled the country. By his estimate there may already have been 1,000 or more people living in Cassinga at that time.⁶⁹

By 1977 SWAPO had begun to move some of those residing in Cassinga north to Jamba, where the liberation movement had gained permission to administer another camp.⁷⁰ Most of those transferred then and over the following months were women and children, who had access to better medical facilities and school resources in the Angolan town, especially since SWAPO medical personnel and teachers were stationed there with them.⁷¹ Similarly, after SWAPO had established its offices in Luanda and Defense Headquarters in Lubango those who were seen as fit for military training or for secondary school or tertiary education abroad were transferred from Cassinga to other places. Nonetheless, from 1976 through 1978 the movement into exile continued unabated and numbers at Cassinga increased as all newcomers who crossed the Namibian-Angolan border had to pass through this camp before they were sent to other destinations.

The arrival of new exiles at Cassinga demanded an administration beyond that provided for combatants by the PLAN office. According to "Mbolondondo" Shikongo

⁶⁸ C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, pp. 4-5. The dry season in Southern Africa generally runs from May until October or November when the first rains arrive in conjunction with the summer months.

⁶⁹ Nyamu 3.4.2007, pp. 12, 17.

⁷⁰ Kalimba 13.6.2007, pp. 1, 4, 10, 16; Shikongo 11.6.2007, p. 30; Nyamu 2.4.2007; Namoloh 19.6.2008.

⁷¹ Notably, Iyambo Indongo, a trained Namibian doctor, ran the medical center at Jamba. Canner Kalimba was a founding teacher at the school there (Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 4).

from the time he was appointed by the SWAPO leadership to be the deputy camp commander or “commissar”⁷² in November 1976, the camp was run by a staff of twenty to thirty persons.⁷³ Together they worked out of an administrative office, another typical Portuguese colonial building located on the east side of the main road that passes through Cassinga.⁷⁴ Each person in the office was responsible for a particular “department” of camp life: logistics, housing, transport, medicine, education, police.⁷⁵ The leaders of these departments were appointed and overseen by Shikongo and the senior camp commander.⁷⁶

The work of the camp office and all Cassinga inhabitants revolved around the daily ritual of the parade. Every morning at a regular time, Cassinga residents gathered outside the parade ground, which was located in a cleared area just south of the PLAN office, to the west of the main road.⁷⁷ There they would assemble in the groups in which they had arrived at Cassinga, each of which was organized according to “sections” and “platoons.” Groups would check for attendance and line up in the order in which they had arrived at the camp, with the earliest arrival queuing first and the most recent queuing last. They would then march, often in military uniform that they received from the Cubans and with wooden guns in tow,⁷⁸ onto the parade ground, passing by the camp

⁷² In Shikongo's case the title commissar denoted that he was the deputy camp commander. Some commissars, especially after the increased involvement of the Soviet Union with SWAPO in exile, were responsible particularly for political education. See the discussion of commissars in Chapter 4.

⁷³ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 3.

⁷⁴ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 16; 3.9.2007, p. 77.

⁷⁵ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 15-16; 20.8.2007, pp. 65-66; 3.9.2007, pp. 76-77.

⁷⁶ Shikongo remembers the commander by his *nom de guerre*, “Nakombole.” He died in the South African attack on Cassinga (D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 17).

⁷⁷ Accounts of the attack of Cassinga, which occurred while camp inhabitants were assembling at the parade, indicate that it took place variously at 6:00, 7:00, 7:30 and 8:00 in the morning. Some of the confusion around the time of the attack is likely to have resulted from the one hour time difference between South Africa and Angola.

⁷⁸ D. Shikongo 11.6.2007, p. 25; 3.9.2007, pp. 73-74; Namoloh 19.6.2007. In talking with Shikongo about photographs of Cassinga available at the National Archives of Namibia (NAN, Photo Archive, Nos.

commanders who stood on either side of the path leading there. Once the last group had entered, the commanders and any visiting SWAPO officials would proceed to the front of the parade. After leading the call and response chants and perhaps requesting the singing of a liberation song or two, they would address the assembled. Central to the content of these addresses was the announcement of daily work assignments, which were given to all camp inhabitants with the exception of those who had particular responsibilities in the camp. Once these and other announcements pertinent to the camp's activities for that day had been made, the parade could be dismissed and inhabitants would proceed to their various assignments.⁷⁹

Most work at Cassinga focused on gathering and preparing materials necessary for daily survival. Water could be collected in large buckets from the Cuilonga River. Wood was available in the moderately forested savanna surrounding Cassinga and was necessary not only for cooking and heating but also for housing. Whereas in the first months inhabitants had resided in buildings left by the Portuguese and Angolans, thereafter the numbers exceeded the available space.⁸⁰ Thus, it was common for groups to be sent to collect wood and grasses that others would use to make huts with wooden pole frames and thatch roofs like those which are common in rural Ovamboland.⁸¹ Some

14119, 14120; both appear in Appendix 2), he indicated that while people in the photos appear to be wearing military uniforms, most were probably not armed or militarily trained. Frequently, uniforms were donated by Cuban soldiers to SWAPO commanders, who, in turn, distributed them to Namibian youth entering camps, many of whom wanted to wear military uniforms. Camp inhabitants would also take sticks and carve them to make them appear like guns. Per Sanden and I also discussed footage of Namibians marching, dressed in military uniforms and carrying sticks which he filmed while he was visiting Cassinga and which was used to produce "Here is Namibia: Inside the Liberated Areas and Beyond." For more details, see the discussion of Sanden and the film below.

⁷⁹ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, pp. 3, 15; 11.6.2007, pp. 38-39.

⁸⁰ C. Kalimba 13.6.2007.

⁸¹ C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, pp. 9-10; D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 19. It should further be noted that these and other research participants who lived at Cassinga all denied that any houses there used corrugated iron, despite a photograph at the NAN labeled "Cassinga" that depicts two persons outside a corrugated iron structure (NAN, Photo Archive, No. 12371, appearing in Appendix 2).

inhabitants also worked agricultural fields located to the west of the camp between it and the Cuilonga, where maize and possibly mahangu and vegetables were grown.⁸² Food was cooked in empty drums in the open air and served once or twice daily, with the main meal at midday.⁸³ A workplace for a tailor, a garage and system of latrines were also created and maintained.⁸⁴

Despite their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency, Cassinga's inhabitants were highly reliant on external aid. Shortly after the camp was founded, SWAPO trucks began to make regular trips from where materials earmarked for SWAPO were stored in warehouses in Luanda to Lubango, Jamba and Cassinga.⁸⁵ The camp office was responsible both for requesting items needed in the camp and for distributing them to its residents.⁸⁶ Even as numbers at Cassinga increased in 1977 and 1978, aid also expanded as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) pledged aid to "Namibian refugees" in Angola at the beginning of that year, followed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Nordic aid agencies and non-governmental organizations.⁸⁷ Food consisted primarily of maize-meal, powdered soup, dried fish and haricot beans. With the exception of instances when the trucks were unable to deliver materials to Cassinga, food appears to have been in sufficient quantity to keep people fairly healthy.⁸⁸ Although there may not have been any

⁸² C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 8; ya Nangolo & Sellström 1995, p. 24.

⁸³ NAN, File A.614, UNICEF Area Office Brazzaville, "Report on a mission to swapo centres for namibian refugees in angola from 10 to 14 april 1978," p. 13; C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 25.

⁸⁴ Nyamu 3.4.2008, p. 15; C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 15; Per Sanden, Interview 5.2.2008, p. 7; UNICEF Report, p. 9.

⁸⁵ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 19; C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 11.

⁸⁶ D. Shikongo 28.8.2007, pp. 61, 64-65; Namoloh 19.6.2007.

⁸⁷ ya Nangolo & Sellström 1995, pp. 23-24.

⁸⁸ UNICEF Report, p. 13; C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 25.

clothing distributed at the camp during its first months,⁸⁹ by April 1978 visitors to Cassinga from UNICEF noted that donated woolen clothing, shoes, hats and blankets were protecting Cassinga's inhabitants from summer rains and chilly winter nights.⁹⁰

A large number of Cassinga's inhabitants were also involved in health and education related work. In the camp there was a clinic, located near the PLAN office, where several trained nurses worked and patients stayed. The clinic held supplies of basic medicines, vaccines and first aid equipment which were applied not only to incoming exiles but also to injured PLAN combatants coming from the front. Facilities, however, were rudimentary and serious cases transferred as quickly as possible to Jamba or Lubango, where better medical facilities were available.⁹¹ There were also several schools in Cassinga aimed at improving inhabitants' literacy and numeracy skills. The first primary school for children was established by Canner Kalimba shortly after she arrived at the camp. According to her, the school was established under a few lemon trees growing in Cassinga and without books or teaching aids since none were available.⁹² In the afternoons Kalimba also worked with William Amagulu to begin an adult education program.⁹³ When the new camp was established at Jamba, Kalimba and the school children moved there with her and there was a period of time when little or no formal education was offered at Cassinga. Later, however, schools for the children passing through Cassinga were re-established.⁹⁴ By 1978 schools appear to have expanded to such an extent that visitors from UNICEF could talk about an "education system" of

⁸⁹ C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 26.

⁹⁰ UNICEF Report, p. 8.

⁹¹ "UNICEF Report," p. 11; Ellen Namhila, Interview 25.7.2008.

⁹² C. Kalimba 2.4.2007, p. 1; 13.6.2007, p. 4.

⁹³ C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 6; William Amagulu, Interview 29.5.2008.

⁹⁴ T. Kalimba 2.9.2007, pp. 2,3.

twenty-six classes some of which were being held in “converted store-houses” left by Cassinga's former inhabitants and newly built “straw structures strengthened with planks.”⁹⁵ From sometime in 1977 “political education” classes led by trained PLAN members also appear to have met at Cassinga.⁹⁶

Unlike Nyango and Kwanza Sul, SWAPO's largest camps in Zambia and Angola respectively,⁹⁷ there were few organized activities for people living at Cassinga when they were not completing assigned tasks. Interviews provide some information about what people at Cassinga did during these times. It was common for people to request permission to visit the Angolan villages on the other side of the Cuilonga River. There, Namibians, especially newcomers who often traveled with some money or clothing which they could use to barter, might procure food, especially meat which was scarce in the diet at Cassinga.⁹⁸ Some, especially the small number assigned to work at Cassinga, might also leave the camp to visit Jamba, where many had family living, or Techamutete, where some had befriended the Cuban soldiers.⁹⁹ There were also people who left the camp without permission. According to Shikongo, it was the responsibility of members of the camp's “military police,” under the responsible member of the camp staff, to address such situations. Apparently, culprits were often discovered when the camp office

⁹⁵ “UNICEF Report,” p. 16.

⁹⁶ T. Kalimba, 2.9.2007, pp. 2,3. According to one document that Alexander uncovered in a South African Ministry of Defence file containing documents allegedly captured from Cassinga, the camp had “four political instructors” in January 1978 (Alexander 2003, pp. 62-63).

⁹⁷ Nyango was founded in Zambia's Western Province in December 1975 and held several thousand inhabitants. Kwanza Sul was founded in the Angolan province of the same name within months of the attack on Cassinga and became SWAPO's largest camp. By the mid-1980s it may have hosted as many as 35,000 inhabitants although population estimates made by SWAPO leaders and other visitors to the camp differed greatly (Leys and Saul 1995, pp. 63-64; Pekka Peltola, The Lost May Day: Namibian Workers Struggle for Independence, (Jyvaskyla: Finnish Anthropological Society and Nordic Africa Institute, 1995, p. 146)). Research subjects who lived in these camps discussed a variety of activities in which they participated there, including performance groups and “the Young Pioneers,” SWAPO's organ for youth programs.

⁹⁸ C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, p. 14; D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, pp. 19-20.

⁹⁹ C. Kalimba 13.6.2007, pp. 12-14; D. Shikongo 11.6.2007, p. 41.

received reports from neighboring Angolans about a Namibian drinking or fighting in the village. The military police would then detain the offenders, holding them in a dugout, a rectangular hole several meters deep like those later inhabited by SWAPO members in Angolan camps during the 1980s.¹⁰⁰ The dugout was visible to all camp inhabitants and was located near the camp kitchen.¹⁰¹

In administering these various facets of life, the camp office could not always differentiate its work neatly from the office administered by PLAN. Although no research participants, including Namoloh, Mupopiwa and Shikongo, indicate that defense unit soldiers were leading military training courses for exiles arriving at Cassinga – an assertion made by the SADF in its internal documents from the period¹⁰² – there were joint meetings held by the PLAN and camp offices.¹⁰³ Meetings might concern camp security, which was the responsibility of the PLAN camp defense unit as well as the camp's military police.¹⁰⁴ The camp office was responsible for the well-being of the PLAN combatants living in the camp. These included the defense unit's members, who were semi-permanent residents of Cassinga, and any combatants passing through the camp on their way to and from the front, which the PLAN office might ask the camp office to feed and accommodate.¹⁰⁵

These collaborations notwithstanding, the PLAN office was a different unit with a separate mandate from the camp office. This point appears to have been misunderstood by Cassinga inhabitants who accounted for Dimo Hamaambo's presence at Cassinga by

¹⁰⁰ It also may have resembled the “dungeons” in which accused spies were later detained near Lubango, Angola as it was deep enough that those imprisoned could not easily escape. For more details about the dugouts and dungeons in SWAPO's Angolan camps during the 1980s see Chapter 4.

¹⁰¹ D. Shikongo 20.8.2007, pp. 64-66.

¹⁰² Alexander 2003, p. 56; TRC Report, p. 47.

¹⁰³ D. Shikongo 20.8.2007, pp. 61-62; 3.9.2007, p. 76; Namoloh 19.6.2007.

¹⁰⁴ D. Shikongo 20.8.2007, pp. 64-65.

¹⁰⁵ D. Shikongo 20.8.2007, pp. 61-62; 3.9.2007, p. 76; Namoloh 19.6.2007.

indicating that he was involved in the same work as those working at the camp office, only at a more senior level. According to persons who worked in the PLAN office and the camp office from their beginning, however, the two had distinct origins and different functions for the Namibian exile community.

February 18 to May 3, 1978

Most printed sources of information about the camp at Cassinga are atemporal accounts offered after the South African attack by persons who themselves spent only a few weeks, days or hours in the camp,¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, there are sources available which offer rich insights into how conditions in and around the camp were changing during the weeks preceding the attack.

According to “Mbolondondo” Shikongo, the numbers at Cassinga in May 1978 were the largest they had been during the entire period that he had been a commander at the camp. He recalls that from early 1978 the flow of Namibians into exile and intake in the camps had been particularly high. Furthermore, while a truck usually picked up Cassinga residents traveling onward to Jamba and Lubango as soon as there were sufficient numbers to fill it, this was not the case during the weeks preceding the attack. The result was a bottleneck at Cassinga such that people who under other circumstances would have left the camp within days remained there for weeks or months.¹⁰⁷ As a result, on the night of May 3, many were sleeping in the open air on blankets because the

¹⁰⁶ See for example ya Nangolo & Sellström 1995, pp. 37-69. Similar accounts are available in SWAPO and solidarity literature following the attack and programs about Cassinga broadcast on Namibia's Cassinga Day holiday available at the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), Television and Radio Archives.

¹⁰⁷ D. Shikongo 11.6.2007, p. 35.

buildings and huts in the camp were unable to accommodate them.¹⁰⁸

Shikongo further reports that some weeks before the attack, perhaps in February or March, he and others on the command staff observed “strange airplanes” flying over Cassinga for the first time.¹⁰⁹ Although the identity and intentions of the pilots were unclear, the camp command thought there might be a connection between them and Johann van der Mescht, a South African prisoner of war. Van der Mescht had been captured on February 18 in a PLAN raid on a SADF base outside Elundu in northeastern Ovamboland and was transported to Cassinga sometime thereafter where he was detained in the camp.¹¹⁰ Due to concern among the camp command that South Africa might launch an attack on Cassinga to free van der Mescht, arrangements were made to transfer him to Lubango, which was accomplished in conjunction with a trip made by President Sam Nujoma to Cassinga sometime before the attack.¹¹¹ Other changes were also made at this time, apparently in response to the repeated sightings of strange airplanes. Whereas children, women with children and elderly inhabitants living in Cassinga had resided near the camp office, after the planes were observed, the office's staff began to arrange for the construction of a satellite camp, 1 km northwest of it, to accommodate persons who would be most vulnerable to a South African attack, which would likely target the office.¹¹² At the same time, the camp office staff also began to build trenches to the

¹⁰⁸ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 3; 11.6.2007, pp. 37, 43. Shikongo further notes that a group of eighty or more exiles arrived at Cassinga the night before the attack.

¹⁰⁹ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, pp. 3, 17; 11.6.2007, pp. 32, 35, 36, 39, 40.

¹¹⁰ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 5, File No. 9, “For Immediate Release,” 4.5.1978; D. Shikongo 11.6.2007, p. 39. It should further be noted that freeing Johann van der Mescht was one of the reasons stated by the South African government for its attack on Cassinga.

¹¹¹ D. Shikongo 11.6.2007, pp. 39-40.

¹¹² D. Shikongo 11.6.2007, pp. 35, 36. When I showed Shikongo an SADF map of Cassinga (reprinted in Heywood's *The Cassinga Event* (p. 24), he referred to the location identified as “Recruits' tent camp” as the satellite camp for “the elderly, the women with children and children.” According to the scale on this map, the “Recruits' tent camp” is located about 1 km northwest of Cassinga.

southwest of the camp.¹¹³ Also, the office started digging a hole on the western side of the main road, intended to store food supplies that could survive an enemy raid.¹¹⁴

Shikongo's account is corroborated in many of its details by several other sources. From April 10 to April 14, 1978, UNICEF sent three representatives on a mission to SWAPO camps in Angola where UNICEF supported “refugees” were living. The subsequent report, which was submitted by UNICEF's Brazzaville office to the mother body on May 2, 1978, is a unique document, the only known published account of Cassinga, written by an organization external to SWAPO prior to the attack.¹¹⁵ According to it, in 1978 there had been a “rapid increase in the number of refugees” at Cassinga. Whereas Jamba had been the largest center in early 1977 when UNICEF first began sending humanitarian aid to SWAPO, by April 1978 Cassinga was larger.¹¹⁶ It should be noted that the empirical basis of some of the claims made in the UNICEF Report are dubious. For example, it maintains that it counted between 11 and 12,000 inhabitants at the camp, a figure which contrasts with most other figures for the camp at the time of the South African attack which place its numbers between 3000 and 5000.¹¹⁷ The Report also maintains that Jamba (which the authors misspell “Djamba”) “is the oldest centre” and Cassinga, “a much more recent centre” despite the fact that there is considerable evidence

¹¹³ D. Shikongo 11.6.2007, pp. 33, 35. The trenches are also clearly visible on Heywood's SADF map (p. 24) and a frequently discussed feature in accounts of what happened at Cassinga on the day of the South African attack.

¹¹⁴ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 15. According to Shikongo, the hole, which had been dug before May 4th, was used for the main mass grave after the South African attack.

¹¹⁵ NAN, File A.614, UNICEF Area Office Brazzaville, “Report on a mission to swapo centres for namibian refugees in angola from 10 to 14 april 1978.”

¹¹⁶ UNICEF Report, pp. 4-5; ya Nangolo & Sellström 1995, pp. 23-24.

¹¹⁷ For a discussion of these numbers see Heywood 1994, p. 19. UNICEF's figure also seems implausible when put in relation to the number that the Report projects for Jamba (6000), the on-going mass migration of Namibians into exile during the 1980s and the number of exiles that repatriated to Namibia in 1989.

indicating that Cassinga predated Jamba.¹¹⁸ In fact, UNICEF's 1977 recommendation of aid for Namibian refugees in Angola, cited in the May 1978 UNICEF Report, makes no mention of Cassinga at all, only of “the refugee population... [in] Djamba (sic), Lubango, Huambo, Cudjiva (sic, Ondjiva?) and Luanda.”¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, the UNICEF Report does provide a general confirmation of the demographic trends which Shikongo described in Cassinga for 1978.

Shortly after the UNICEF representatives had departed from Cassinga, another delegation arrived at the camp. From April 29 to May 3, 1978 two Swedish filmmakers, Per Sanden and Tommy Bergh, accompanied by Jesaya Nyamu and several PLAN soldiers visited Cassinga.¹²⁰ For weeks before their arrival, this group had been traveling by foot in southern Angola and northern Namibia, where Sanden and Bergh had been collecting material for a documentary film commissioned by the SWAPO leadership, the second of its kind.¹²¹ According to both Sanden and Nyamu, they were both eye-witnesses to the attack on the outpost near Elundu in which Johann van der Mescht was captured.¹²² Thereafter, van der Mescht was transported to “Vietnam,” a SWAPO camp with a large number of trained PLAN combatants near Chetequera, a village some 30 km north of the Namibian border. At Vietnam van der Mescht became separated from their

¹¹⁸ Namoloh 19.6.2007; Mupopiwa 26.7.2007; C. Kalimba 2.4.2007; 13.6.2007; D. Shikongo 26.3.2007; 13.6.2007; 20.8.2007; 3.9.2007.

¹¹⁹ UNICEF Report, p.4. The fact that UNICEF did not have any information about Cassinga in its 1977 report begs the question: Why did SWAPO not report Cassinga as a “refugee centre” to UNICEF at that time while it did so in April 1978?

¹²⁰ Per Sanden, Interview 5.2.2008, pp. 7, 9; Jesaya Nyamu, Interview 3.4.2008, pp. 15-16. Nyamu suggests that the trip might have been a few weeks before the attack, but Sanden's very specific narrative overlaps more closely with other accounts of the days just before the South African account and seems more plausible.

¹²¹ Sanden and another cameraman, Rudi Speer, had first made films with PLAN in southwestern Zambia and the Caprivi Region of Namibia in 1973. Apparently, these are the first and only filmmakers to have worked inside PLAN for many years. Sanden developed personal relationships with Sam Nujoma and other SWAPO leaders from the early 1960s when he became involved in anti-apartheid activities as a student in Sweden (Sanden 5.2.2008, pp. 1-2).

¹²² Sanden 5.2.2008, pp. 5-6; Nyamu 3.4.2008, p. 16.

group.¹²³ Weeks later when Sanden and Nyamu arrived at Cassinga, they did not know Van der Mescht's whereabouts.¹²⁴ What Sanden recalls most vividly about the camp are the activities which he filmed there such as marching, plowing, the administering of medical treatment and a special parade held on May 3 in honor of him and his Swedish colleague.¹²⁵ Nyamu, on the other hand, who claims to have visited Cassinga once every two or three months since he had been assigned to the SWAPO office in Luanda in 1976, spoke only of the “reconnaissance plane” that he and some others observed flying over the camp the day after he and Sanden arrived. He recalls, “I remember Dimo [Hamaambo] himself jumping out of his room to look at it. And he told us that it has been a regular visit.”¹²⁶

Another collection of sources confirming aspects of Shikongo's account are files which SADF allegedly captured from Cassinga during the attack. Among the documents,¹²⁷ are two letters signed by Dimo Hamaambo. The first of these dated April 10, 1978 appears to be a photocopy of a letter that Hamaambo sent from Cassinga to Defense Headquarters in Lubango. Therein, Hamaambo indicates his concerns about “an [i]mminent invasion intention of the enemy of our [camp] in Southern Angola.” The circulation of the second letter, dated April 18, 1978, is more ambiguous. Although addressed to “The Commissar, Cassinga Commune, Huila Province, People's Republic of Angola,” Hamaambo writes the letter as if he is informing someone traveling outside

¹²³ Nyamu 3.4.2008, p. 16; Sanden 5.2.2008, pp. 5-6.

¹²⁴ Nyamu 3.4.2008; Sanden 5.2.2008, pp. 6-7. Sanden indicates that he later interviewed van der Mescht in Lubango.

¹²⁵ Sanden 5.2.2008, pp. 9, 15-16.

¹²⁶ Nyamu 3.4.2008, p. 19.

¹²⁷ For a discussion of various documents, see Alexander 2003, pp. 62-63 and Justine Hunter, Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia: Umgang mit schweren Menschenrechtsverletzungen der Ära des bewaffneten Befreiungskampfes, 1966 bis 1989 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2008), pp. 56-58.

Cassinga, probably PLAN Commissar Greenwell Matongo, about developments in the camp:

Dear Comrades, Our Revolutionary Greetings, please! I have the honour to inform your Office that we have removed from Cassinga, a portion of the Namibian Community and settled it about 7 km north of the existing camp. The reasons for this move are as follows: 1. With enemy (S.A.) Air-reconnaissance work going on continuously, we came to the conclusion that S.A. racists [sic] intend to conduct an air-raid on this camp. 2. Jamba which is already overcrowded can no longer accom[modate] more of our people and worse there is a standing order for the removal of our people. The new camp is therefore a “security” place for children, mothers, the sick and expectants. Its [sic] not a military camp. Hoping that you will accept our explanation. I am, Yours for the eliminationof [sic] Imperialism, Dimo Hamaambo¹²⁸

Here again Hamaambo suggests that the camp at Cassinga was at risk, this time making direct reference to the planes, “(SA) Air-reconnaissance work,” mentioned by Shikongo and Nyamu in their accounts. It seems likely that “the new camp... for children, mothers, the sick and expectants” that had been “settled... north of the existing camp” refers to the satellite camp mentioned by Shikongo in our interviews although the distance of 7 km from the main camp differs greatly from the approximately 1 km indicated by both Shikongo and SADF military maps made before the attack.¹²⁹ Hamaambo also suggests an explanation for Shikongo's point that the trucks were not coming to Cassinga frequently to transport people from the camp in the weeks preceding the attack: namely, because Jamba was “overcrowded” and that there was “a standing order to remove our [i.e. Namibian] people.” Perhaps these conditions in Jamba are part

¹²⁸ Justine Hunter, “Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia seit der staatlichen Unabhängigkeit” (Doctoral Thesis, Universität Freiburg, 2005), p. 80. The letter has also been published in German translation in Hunter's previously cited book (p. 57).

¹²⁹ Shikongo 11.6.2007, pp. 35-36; Heywood 1994, p. 24.

of the reason there was an exceptionally large number of people, almost all without military training, residing in Cassinga on the night of May 3, 1978.

Remember Cassinga?

South Africa's attack at dawn on May 4, 1978 at Cassinga resulted not only in mass carnage and destruction at one time and place, but also in diverging memories that have continued to proliferate over the more than thirty years since that day. It appears that the Angolans were the first to produce a public account of the attack. According to information recorded in the SADF Archive, the Angolan Minister of Defense issued a communique about Cassinga at 19h00 Angolan time, which was then transmitted on ANGOP, the Angolan government radio station, at the top of the following hour. The message, translated by SADF staff from Portuguese to English, began:

Once again the racist troops of South Africa have attacked Angola. At 0600 today, 4 May, South African paratroopers coming from occupied Namibia attacked the refugee camp at Cassinga after a bombardment by the South African Air Force. During the whole morning many paratroopers landed on the camp. This is another criminal attack against defenceless people, women and Namibian refugees.¹³⁰

Soon SWAPO also began issuing public statements that supported and elaborated on the Angolan government's portrayal of what had happened at Cassinga. In its May 6 press release, SWAPO refers to “the unprovoked attack on the civilian population in Angola” and “the cold blooded murder of Namibian women and children” although no reference to Cassinga itself is made in this statement or another one released the

¹³⁰ Alexander 2003, p. 161.

following day.¹³¹ A May 8 press release refers both to the “refugee settlement at Kassinga” and “the Namibian civilian population at Kassinga.”¹³² An address presented by SWAPO Secretary for Information Peter Katjavivi at a conference in Basel from May 18 to 21, 1978 offers a more detailed portrayal, according to which “the Cassinga settlement has always been a civilian one... It contained a school, clinic, and agricultural projects but not military installations and no combattants [sic] of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia.”¹³³ Some SWAPO documents from the weeks following the attack do acknowledge the presence of PLAN combatants at Cassinga. For example, the issue of SWAPO's newsletter Namibia Today published shortly after the attack notes that “there were no military installations and no more soldiers than a small unit designated to protect the settlement.”¹³⁴ A special bulletin published by SWAPO in June 1978 titled “Massacre at Kassinga” refers to a “camp defence unit of three hundred armed cadres.”¹³⁵ Nonetheless, these and other SWAPO accounts assert that Cassinga was “a refugee camp.”

In sharp contrast is the South African government's statement issued on May 5, 1978 to the governments of the United States, Canada, Britain, France and West Germany, the so-called “Western Five” then in the midst of intensive negotiations with South Africa and SWAPO over the timing and terms of Namibian independence. After introducing the brief with an account of “border violations by terrorists” that were

¹³¹ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 5, File No. 9, “For Immediate Release,” 6.5.1978; “For Immediate Release” 7.5.1978.

¹³² UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 5, File No. 9, “Press Release,” 8.5.1978.

¹³³ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 4, “Address Given by Peter Katjavivi, SWAPO Secretary for Information and Publicity to the World Conference for the Eradication of Racism and Racial Discrimination, Basle, May 18-21, 1978.”

¹³⁴ Namibia Today, 2, 2 (1978), p. 5.

¹³⁵ SWAPO, “Massacre at Kassinga: Climax of Pretoria's All-Out Campaign against the Namibian Resistance,” (Special Bulletin, June 1978) pp. 16, 20.

supposedly undermining efforts to achieve “an internationally recognized solution in South West Africa” and a short description of the attack, the document proceeds to describe the SWAPO camp at Cassinga:

As expected the SWAPO base headquarters, Cassinga... was an extensive SWAPO military installation [sic], it contained formidable defence works such as trenches, bunkers and underground shelters. It was established beyond doubt that this base constituted SWAPO's main operational centre, responsible for over-all planning, logistics, communications and strategy. Vast quantities of weapons and ammunition were found and destroyed and considerable documentation was found and removed. The SWAPO personnel included women, in uniform, fully armed and actually fighting in the trenches. The dead included some of these... There were also a number of camp followers, including women, who apparently lived in the confines of the base. Some of them might have become casualties. A number of the children who were hijacked across the border on 23 April were found and, at their request, these were going to be taken back. Unfortunately, just as the final evacuation was in progress, an armed attack from the direction of Techamutete occurred... In these circumstances it was not possible to evacuate the children.¹³⁶

Clearly the Cassinga of South African propaganda could not possibly be described as a “refugee camp.” Nonetheless, its authors do attempt to reconcile the women and children whom they acknowledge were in the camp at the time of the attack with their description of “the SWAPO base” at Cassinga. The South African government clearly went to great pains to try to overcome such details that might be seen as contradicting its claims about the nature of the camp. Notably, when the first news reports about the attack were shown on South African television, photos and film taken by SADF during the raid on Cassinga were interspersed with images of Chetequera (aka “Vietnam”), which had also been attacked on May 4 as part of the same military operation despite being located

¹³⁶ NAN, File A.614, Annex I to the “UNICEF Report.”

more than 200 kilometers from Cassinga.¹³⁷ The Chetequera footage was useful for SADF because Chetequera was well armed with hundreds of PLAN combatants and the film of the fighting there included armored cars, personnel carriers and artillery. The interspersed images might appear to offer visual evidence that Cassinga was, in fact, a “military camp.”¹³⁸

Although the South African government's portrayal of Cassinga and the attack was cheered widely by white South Africans,¹³⁹ it is the Angolan/SWAPO version that became accepted abroad. Support came almost immediately from predictable quarters. For example, Radio Moscow transmitted a headline on May 5 describing how the “racist butchers carried out a massacre in the town where there were several thousand old men, women and children who had fled from the South African invaders.”¹⁴⁰ More significantly, on May 6 representatives of the Western Five were among those who endorsed a UN Resolution motivated by the African and non-aligned states which condemned the South African attack on Cassinga and threatened punitive measures should it carry out another operation in Angola.¹⁴¹ Over the following days UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim and the Western Five nations also issued statements in which they expressed their dismay over the raid and highlighted the threat it posed to negotiations about Namibia. Although these statements may not have addressed the “refugee” or “civilian” quality of Cassinga specifically, they did undermine South Africa's efforts to define the camp as a legitimate “military” target, denying any authority

¹³⁷ Heywood 1994, p. 8.

¹³⁸ Interestingly, SWAPO in its initial press statements and later renderings of May 4 almost never refers to the attack on Chetequera. Furthermore, the more than one hundred persons captured during the South African attack at Chetequera and later detained outside Mariental are consistently referred to in SWAPO and solidarity literature as the “Cassinga detainees.”

¹³⁹ Alexander 2003, pp. 162, 165-167.

¹⁴⁰ Alexander 2003, pp. 162-163.

¹⁴¹ Alexander 2003, p. 164; UN General Assembly Resolution 428.

the regime might have achieved internationally to speak on behalf of Namibians in the preceding months through its participation in talks at the UN.

Material produced and distributed by journalists who visited Cassinga also defined the nature of the camp for many international observers. Two of the first people to provide “refugee” images of Cassinga were Per Sanden and Tommy Bergh, who had left Cassinga for Jamba late in the afternoon of May 3. According to Sanden, early in the morning of May 4 as he and his colleagues were approaching Jamba, they observed helicopters and airplanes flying overhead. Suspecting that they were South African but not knowing their destination, the convoy stopped outside Jamba and waited. On May 5 the group was still there when PLAN dispatched several commanders to collect Sanden and Bergh's film of Cassinga and transport it to Lubango. From there it was flown to Luanda and to London, where on May 6 Sanden was able to radio a BBC correspondent who developed some of the film for broadcasting. Sanden's images, including a photograph of women and children (and a few men far in the background) standing at the parade at Cassinga, were then circulated abroad widely.¹⁴² When Sanden was able to return to Sweden, he immediately began editing his material for a longer documentary which was released under the title “Here is Namibia: Inside the Liberated Areas and Beyond” and a publication of the same title which was jointly edited by Jesaya Nyamu.¹⁴³ The film was screened first in Sweden and thereafter all over the world, winning prizes at

¹⁴² Sanden 5.2.2008, pp. 7, 9-10, 15-16. The image is available at the NAN (Photo Archive, No. 12778) and was reproduced in several SWAPO publications, including on the front page of Namibia Today in the issue produced immediately after the Cassinga attack (Namibia Today, 2, 2 (1978)). The photo appears here in Appendix 2.

¹⁴³ Sanden 5.2.2008, pp. 12-13; Nyamu 3.4.2008, p. 15. The film and the publication are housed at the SWAPO Party Archive and Research Centre (SPARC) in Windhoek. Although SPARC's materials were not yet open to the public at the time of research, I received special permission to view the film footage.

documentary film festivals in Leipzig, Amsterdam and Ottawa¹⁴⁴ and is cited in at least one piece of solidarity literature as proof that “Cassinga was a refugee settlement” and that “there were no military installations and no more soldiers than a small unit designated to protect the settlement.”¹⁴⁵ Sanden and Nyamu also emphasize the significance of “Here is Namibia” the booklet, which, according to Sanden, “became the most distributed publication in Namibia” at that time.¹⁴⁶

Sanden and Bergh were also part of a larger group of journalists who visited Cassinga after the attack. On May 6 the first reporters were flown from Luanda to Techamutete and driven to Cassinga, and Sanden and Bergh traveled from Jamba to Cassinga the following day.¹⁴⁷ Articles subsequently written relay stories told by Namibians who were in Cassinga during the attack. Some emphasize narrators' testimony about their recent flight into exile and the short period of time, often only a few weeks or days, that they had been living in Cassinga. Among the objects most frequently photographed and described were the remains of “the” school, highlighting simultaneously a kind of activity that occurred at Cassinga and an identity of attack victims. One author writes: “Three walls remain standing. Inside is a jumble of broken desks and benches, home-made by the young people themselves. Textbooks in Afrikaans

¹⁴⁴ Sanden 5.2.2008, pp. 12-13.

¹⁴⁵ Alexander 2003, pp. 45-46.

¹⁴⁶ Sanden 5.2.2008, p. 13.

¹⁴⁷ Although SWAPO publications state generally that reporters visited “the day after the attack,” those who participated in the visits remember the chronology differently and in more detail. Gaetano Pagano indicates that journalists “arrived at Kassinga at noon on May 6” (letter in “The Kassinga File”). Per Sanden narrates that on May 5th “the Angolan and Cuban troops came into Cassinga to secure the area. And the next day the UNHCR started to send heavy aircraft to evacuate the place. And they also brought in some journalists from Luanda that day in those aircrafts.” Sanden himself says that he arrived at Cassinga on May 7 and filmed the mass grave on that day. Sanden further indicates that he was not aware of reporters who were at Cassinga on May 8, a statement which calls into question Annmarie Heywood's claim that most of the images of Cassinga “were taken on 8 May” (Sanden 5.2.2008, p. 8; Heywood 1994, p. 10).

and English and exercise books litter the floor.”¹⁴⁸ According to another: “The main school building is open to the hot wind. Nearby a group of more than 200 children, survivors of more than 500 primary school children at the camp, watch from the shade of eucalyptus trees.”¹⁴⁹ A visit by UNHCR representatives to Cassinga between May 24 and 28 further documented the destruction of objects identified as a “hospital, dispensary, schools, warehouse foodstuffs... medical and social equipment” as well as various “civilian” vehicles.¹⁵⁰

It is the photographs that the journalists took of an open mass grave, however, that became the most enduring symbol of Cassinga.¹⁵¹ Taken from the grave's edge, the photos are close enough to the corpses that individual bodies, and in some cases the clothing, wounds and even the flies covering them, are discernible. The images demand a visceral reaction. In the weeks following the attack and for years to follow, SWAPO and solidarity organizations published texts alongside the photos that directed this reaction by imputing meaning to the bodies in the grave. In some cases, especially in the first publications about Cassinga after the attack, grave photos were placed alongside quotes from the reporters who had been eye witnesses to them, which highlighted the “civilian” or “refugee” quality of many of the victims. For example, the issue of Namibia Today published immediately after the Cassinga attack features a grave photo beneath a frequently cited text from “The Guardian (London) 10.5.78”: “First we saw gaily coloured frocks, blue jeans, shirts and a few uniforms. Then there was the sight of the

¹⁴⁸ “Massacre at Cassinga,” p. 19.

¹⁴⁹ Alexander 2003, p. 169.

¹⁵⁰ NAN, A.614, “Joint United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and World Health Organization Representatives on their visit to Cassinga and to the Namibian Refugees.” During this visit one of the UNHCR representatives, Tor Sellström, took photographs, some of which have been donated to the NAN.

¹⁵¹ Photographs of the Cassinga mass grave appear in Appendix 4.

bodies inside them. Swollen, blood-stained, they were the bodies of young girls, young men, a few older adults, some young children, all apparently recent arrivals from Namibia.”¹⁵² Similarly, the front page of the SWAPO bulletin “Massacre at Kassinga” features a photo of the mass grave, which is followed later in the text by another journalists' eye-witness account of it: “It was a terrible thing to look upon as I arrived here shortly after the attack. Brightly coloured frocks of the young girls; jeans; checkered shirts of the boys; a few khaki uniforms and swollen bodies of the dead. The victims were mostly young, and had no defence. They had left home a few days or few weeks earlier.”¹⁵³

“Massacre at Kassinga” does not stop at making claims about the identities of those lying in the mass grave; it also abstracts parallels between the Cassinga grave and other acts of violence committed by colonial or imperial governments against victims who might be called civilians. This abstraction of violence is evident on the document's cover where the picture of the grave is located beneath the sub-title “Climax of Pretoria's All-Out Campaign Against the Namibian Resistance.” The foreword of the document, written by President Sam Nujoma, goes on to link “These unarmed Namibians [who] were savagely butchered by racist South Africa's combat force” to “those Namibian patriots who were equally butchered during the Bondelswarts and Windhoek resistance in 1922 and 1959 respectively,” a reference to two seminal events in the Namibian past in which non-violent African resistance to South African rule was answered with brute force.¹⁵⁴ The body of the text continues: “The South African massacre of hundreds of

¹⁵² *Namibia Today*, 2, 2 (1978), p. 4.

¹⁵³ “Massacre at Kassinga,” pp.17-18.

¹⁵⁴ The “Bondelswarts resistance” refers to the rebellion of people in Warmbad, a community in the far south of Namibia, against South African legislation that was pushing community members into wage

Namibians this May, like the recent Nyazonia and Chimoio massacres of Zimbabweans by Rhodesian troops, the 1973 Wiriyamu massacre of Mozambicans by the Portuguese troops, the 1969 My Lai massacre of Vietnamese by U.S. troops and many other such carnages of human beings, has reminded the world, once more, that imperialism is what is rotten in the heart of humanity.”¹⁵⁵ Although possibly the first document to link the events of May 4, 1978 in Angola with these other acts of violence, the same associations were made repeatedly in the years to come as is evident in articles published annually in SWAPO newsletters such as Namibia Today and The Combatant as well as posters created by and distributed among SWAPO members and supporters abroad.¹⁵⁶ Frequently, these publications and posters featured images of the mass grave.

Nonetheless, there are possible readings of the mass grave at Cassinga that do not necessarily contradict, but do complicate, the ones presented above. Edward Alexander provides one in his dissertation, wherein he argues that “a detailed examination of the photographs indicates that the bodies are those of adults more than teenagers, though some of them are certainly young adults. The overwhelming majority of them are in addition men, with only a few women who can be identified amongst them. Most of the men are wearing uniforms and there is little evidence of the 'brightly coloured frocks' although several of the photographs are in color.” Although these assertions are not as

labor. South African forces bombed Warmbad in 1922. The “Windhoek resistance,” better known as the “Old Location Shooting” or “Old Location Massacre” refers to an event on December 10, 1959 in which South African troops fired on a crowd of Namibians resisting relocation from Windhoek’s Old Location to Katutura, an ethnically divided township created by the apartheid government.

¹⁵⁵ “Massacre at Cassinga,” p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ For an analysis of Cassinga posters and their power to render Cassinga a refugee camp, see Nadja Borer, “Images of the Cassinga Massacre – Contested Visualities” in Giorgio Miescher, Lorena Rizzo and Jeremy Silvester, eds. Posters in Action: Visuality in the Making of an African Nation (Basel: BAB, 2009). Anna Vögeli also considers the reception of Cassinga posters in “They gently bring back memories of those events” another article in the same volume.

apparent to others as they seem to be for Alexander,¹⁵⁷ Alexander's observations do highlight that, for someone willing and able to pore over the corpses in the mass grave, its demographics are ambiguous. Another object pictured in the grave photo interrogated by Alexander is the grave itself, which as Alexander notes, “judging by the photographs... was a massive excavation,” unlikely to have been completed in one or two days with picks and shovels as a SWAPO official had informed him. It is interesting to note, therefore, Darius “Mboldondo” Shikongo's claim that the hole used for the mass grave had been created originally as a food storage space in response to the threat of enemy attack heightened by “strange airplanes” that he and other had observed flying over the camp.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, although reporters at Cassinga on May 6 and 7 note that there was at least one other mass grave at the camp other than the one they photographed, which was closed by the time they arrived there, they appear to have accepted without question SWAPO representatives' claims that the 100 or more persons buried in this other grave were laid to rest in that location, separately from the other dead, because it was near the parade ground where they had been assembled when the South African planes arrived. None indicate, as did one former Cassinga inhabitant involved in preparing the graves whom I interviewed on site at Cassinga in September 2007, that the smaller grave was “a mixture of civilians and soldiers” as opposed to the larger grave which was for civilians only. They also do not speak to his and others' claims that both graves were, in fact, closed before the reporters arrived but the larger one was reopened for them.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, Swapo Party's caption to the grave photo printed in *Their Blood Waters our Freedom* (Windhoek: Swapo Party, 1996): “The grave represents the most damning testimony to the heinous nature of the apartheid brand of racism. Apologists of that racist carnage are still trying to downplay the monstrosity of the crime by claiming that Cassinga was a PLAN military base. It is, however, clear from the photograph that the victims died and were buried wearing civilian clothes” (pp. xvi-xvii).

¹⁵⁸ D. Shikongo 26.3.2007, p. 15; 11.6.2007, pp. 32, 35, 36, 39, 40.

¹⁵⁹ Canner and Theophilous Kalimba and Galiano Ntyanba, Interview at Cassinga 2.9.2007, pp. 1-2.

But why would someone be interested in such details about the grave at Cassinga? Or in what this and related evidence presented above suggest about the characteristics of the camp more generally? One might imagine that the apartheid South African government and its apologists would have pursued and distributed any knowledge that could confound descriptions of Cassinga as a “refugee camp.” Nonetheless, the South Africans engaged little with such details, perhaps because to do so would have also required acknowledging qualities of Cassinga that undermined the legitimacy of the attack and strengthened SWAPO's claims to represent the Namibian people. With the exception of references to women and children who were at Cassinga on May 4, 1978, the South African government disassociated itself from any details that could undermine its representation of the camp, going as far as to deny the authenticity of the mass grave photos. Commemorations in news programs in Namibia and South Africa and annual ceremonies organized by South African paratroopers constituted Cassinga as the kind of camp that could be described as the object of a daring airborne assault and worthy of the SADF members who died in the attack.¹⁶⁰

As for other observers, once the link between Cassinga and “refugee” had been established, there was little impetus for anyone interested in Namibia's independence from South Africa to examine the complexity of Cassinga's past. The position of SWAPO and all the organizations and governments that were supporting it by 1978 benefited from the moral outrage incited by a “surprise attack” on a “refugee camp.” In the aftermath of the raid, SWAPO received unprecedented support in the form of humanitarian aid sent to its exile camps and offers from governments to educate Namibians in their countries.

Photographs which I took of the two mass graves at Cassinga appear in Appendix 4.

¹⁶⁰ Alexander 2003, pp. 5-6; see also programs commemorating the anniversary of the Cassinga attack available at NBC Radio Archives.

Annual commemorations of “Cassinga Day” became powerful sites for rekindling support for the liberation struggle among diverse communities in Namibia and abroad. Moreover, the families, friends and community members of those who died in the South African attack were almost all living either in Ovamboland in northern Namibia, where SWAPO had overwhelming popular support, or in SWAPO administered camps in exile. It is not surprising, therefore, that the process of grieving for and honoring loved ones who perished at Cassinga, which has touched thousands of Namibians, became intertwined with the national narrative told by SWAPO leaders about the camp. With these forces pushing interested groups towards consensus in remembering Cassinga as a “refugee camp,” the references to the PLAN camp defense unit, acknowledged in the issue of Namibia Today published following the attack and in “Massacre at Kassinga,” disappear from most subsequent literature.¹⁶¹

Namibian independence has also had little bearing on what is remembered about Cassinga even if independence has reshaped how it is remembered. In 1990 “Cassinga Day” was declared a Namibian national holiday. Since then, the government has organized annual commemorations and produced radio and television programs that have repeated the “refugee camp” story of Cassinga and made it accessible to increasing numbers of Namibians, even as the numbers attending these commemorations and viewing these programs have generally declined.¹⁶² The South African government's position on the camp changed with the end of apartheid, but former SADF paratroopers continue to commemorate the anniversary of the attack much the same way they had for

¹⁶¹ For a more detailed review of references to the camp in later SWAPO and solidarity literature see Alexander 2003, pp. 46-50.

¹⁶² Conclusions are based on the English language programs about Cassinga and English language news broadcast on Cassinga Day available at NBC Radio Archives and NBC Television Archives.

years even if new political circumstances have forced their memory practices to take a more muted form.¹⁶³ Also, as became evident in my research interviews, some SWAPO critics who lived in exile quietly question the dominant narrative about Cassinga and describe the camp in ways that resemble the South African alternative version of it.¹⁶⁴ As noted above, an historiography of Cassinga has developed which complicates common representations of the camp's past. There is, however, little evidence that its interventions have influenced public discourse, and the literature itself remains entwined in the very same questions and language which have obstructed understanding Cassinga for years.

The Production of National History

One might conclude from these trends in Cassinga's representation that the camp's history is inextricable from the binary which has bounded it since May 4, 1978. This conclusion, however, would at once grant too much power and too little power to the national political order in which histories of Cassinga are told. On the one hand, as demonstrated above, there are persons, documents, photographs and films with stories to tell that confound Namibia's national narrative about Cassinga. On the other, it is the value of these stories in a national community which so often both initiates and

¹⁶³ In 1996 the South African paratroopers' annual commemoration became an international headline, pushing the Chief of the new South African National Defense Force to explain the custom to the South African government and the South African Minister of Defense to apologize to the Namibian government and its people. See NBC Radio Archives, CA96/103, News Broadcast 4.6.1996; CA96/115, News Broadcasts 6.6.1996, 7.6.1996; CA96/121, News Broadcast 8.6.1996; "Dis waarheid oor Cassinga – en los maar die askiese!" Rapport, 16.6.1996. Alexander notes that the paratroopers continued to commemorate "Cassinga Day" at the time he submitted his dissertation in July 2003 (Alexander 2003, pp. 5-6).

¹⁶⁴ These counter-narratives are particularly common among those detained at Mboroma (See Chapter 3). According to many from this group who were interviewed and others (see Phillip Shuudifonya, Interview with Keshii Nathanael and Jimmy Amupala in A Journey to Exile (Abertswyth: Sosiumi Press, 2002, p. 184); Hidipo Hamutenya, Interview 2.4.2008, p. 4) hundreds who had been detained at Mboroma and returned to SWAPO were sent from Zambia to Cassinga shortly before the South African attack. Some suggest that SWAPO leaders knew about the attack and made the transfer to Cassinga in order to eliminate their rivals.

incorporates their production.

Consider, for example, Darius Shikongo, the Cassinga camp commander who offered much information presented above. During our first interview in March 2007, Shikongo volunteered that since returning from exile he had been approached only once to tell his story about Cassinga, a brief interview held with the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation's Oshiwambo radio service just after independence in 1990. For Shikongo, journalists' interest in others' stories at the expense of his own was clearly a point of concern: "Some you can hear talking about Cassinga... what they tell the people is sometimes not true... You cannot talk Cassinga without mentioning my name or else you don't know Cassinga."¹⁶⁵ Reasons for Shikongo's concern became increasingly clear as we met over the course of the year. During our first meeting Shikongo mentioned that since independence he had been struggling to make ends meet through a combination of subsistence farming and self-employment, most recently by forming his own construction company. Although he had worked volunteer positions with SWAPO and had enough standing with the party to be invited to several Party Congresses, he had never been offered a paid appointment. Several months later, when we met again, Shikongo expressed his frustration with the Namibian government's treatment of PLAN "ex-combatants," some of whom were then demonstrating on the streets of Windhoek. According to him, the ex-combatants ought to be compensated for their sacrifices during the liberation struggle, particularly since many, like himself, had not had the opportunity to study abroad because of their duties with PLAN. If he and others were not qualified to take up posts in independent Namibia, it is because they were in the bush, risking their lives for the nation. Months later, after several more interviews, Shikongo made another

¹⁶⁵ D. Shikongo, 26.3.2007, p. 5.

confession: that his fortunes with SWAPO had already begun to shift in exile in 1984.

After returning from a military training course in the USSR, he was detained in a dugout on the outskirts of Lubango without any explanation other than that “the orders were coming from the [SWAPO] headquarters.”¹⁶⁶ Two or three months later when Shikongo was released, again without explanation, he was appointed to work in a camp for vehicle repair near Lubango. For Shikongo this assignment was clearly a demotion after having served not only as a commander at Cassinga but also, thereafter, as senior commander at Kwanza Sul.¹⁶⁷

Shikongo's background offers an important context for interpreting his stories about Cassinga. By foregrounding the role of the camp administration office, Shikongo highlighted his own responsibilities administering the most prominent camp in Namibia's national narrative. Part of establishing the administration office's role involved detailing its relationship to the PLAN office, highlighting the latter's little known activities in transporting soldiers, supplies and information to and from the front. Shikongo also narrated at length his actions on the day of the South African attack, describing how he and other commanders assisted residents as they fled from their assailants.¹⁶⁸ For Shikongo, these stories, told to a researcher writing a thesis about Namibia's exile history, are part and parcel of his efforts to assert his place in the national community. In so doing, however, Shikongo shares strands of experience which do not easily fit into the refugee camp story about Cassinga and could be incorporated into an alternative to it.

Certainly there are others who inhabited Cassinga who appear to have less to gain

¹⁶⁶ D. Shikongo 3.9.2007, p. 79.

¹⁶⁷ D. Shikongo, 3.9.2007, pp. 78-80.

¹⁶⁸ It should be noted that Shikongo is not alone in describing his bravery during the South African attack. His name was mentioned in conversations with several research participants, including a taped interview with Jessaya Nyamu (3.4.2007).

and more to lose in telling stories about the camp that do not fit into the national narrative than does Shikongo. Nonetheless, if one reviews the citations above, which include extensive references to now Minister of Defense Charles Namoloh and Deputy Permanent Secretary to the Minister of Defense Mwetufah Mupopiwa, it should be clear that there is no direct correlation between a person's position in the government or SWAPO and the repetition of a narrow party line about Cassinga. The same may also be said of the social background of those who shared stories with me about the camp. As I observed, even vulnerable former camp inhabitants located in very public settings may offer narratives that complicate Cassinga as they negotiate their relationship to other members within a national community.

On May 4, 2007 I participated in a government-sponsored Cassinga Day commemoration for the first time. In an open-air amphitheater at United Nations Plaza in Katutura, Windhoek's largest township, I gathered with 150 to 200 others. Although the numbers were a far cry from the hundreds that attended these events in the early 1990s, there were likely to be many more people watching on television or listening via radio. Most of those present appeared to be over forty years of age or young children, many were adorned with scarves and other clothing in SWAPO's characteristic red, green and blue colors, and I was the only white person in attendance. Approximately thirty, mostly middle-aged women, were seated together wearing identical white T-shirts. They, as I soon learned, were the "Cassinga survivors," a prominent group in camp commemorations. Although there is evidence of persons who were at Cassinga on May 4, 1978 sharing their experiences publicly in exile,¹⁶⁹ since independence survivors had

¹⁶⁹ E.g. The Combatant, "Cassinga Remembered: An Interview with a Survivor," (May 1985), pp. 6-9. Although other articles in The Combatant and Namibia Today about Cassinga make reference to

become regular participants in the ceremonies and media programs commemorating Cassinga Day. Although the individuals representing the survivors have varied, some have been particularly involved in sharing their stories during these commemorations as well as for monographs, Namibian school textbooks chapters and public exhibitions about Cassinga.¹⁷⁰

With the arrival of the dignitaries, the event began. All of us in the audience rose to our feet as SWAPO President Sam Nujoma, Deputy Prime Minister Libertine Amathila and other dignitaries entered the floor of the amphitheater and advanced to the seats set aside for them while, “We Remember Cassinga,” the name and refrain of a song first recorded by Namibians in exile, blared over the loudspeaker. After singing the Namibian national anthem and African Union anthem and listening to an opening prayer, the stories began. The first was delivered by Sophia Shaningwa, the Governor of the Khomas Region, who was responsible for the “introductory remarks.” After acknowledging the various dignitaries present, Shaningwa proceeded to narrate a story about Cassinga:

At 7 am 30 minutes on a bitterly cold day... SWAPO caders¹⁷¹ and supporters at the Cassinga refugee camp were gathered at the parade for their daily work assignments, unaware of South Africa's sinister plan to attack them. That early morning quiet was wrought havoc by the screaming,

survivors of the attack, “Cassinga Remembered” is the only article which I found that featured an interview with one. Stories, poetry and artwork of Cassinga survivors are also published in two texts edited by Henning Melber: It is no more a Cry: Namibian Poetry in Exile (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1982, 2004) and Our Namibia: A Social Studies Textbook (Osnabrück: Terre des Hommes, 1983).

¹⁷⁰ Mvula ya Nangolo and Tor Sellström's Kassinga: A Story Untold (Windhoek: Namibia Book Development Council, 1995) was one such initiative. The text includes sixteen stories of Cassinga survivors transcribed in the text (pp. 38-69). A research project led by Jeremy Silvester at the History Department at the University of Namibia is another. Silvester describes this project in “Cassinga Revisited,” an article published in The Namibian on 7.5.1999. Ellen Namhila's autobiography (The Price of Freedom. Windhoek: New Namibia Books, 1997) also offers a survivor's account.

¹⁷¹ In Namibia people who belonged to SWAPO before independence are frequently referred to as “cadres” and occasionally as “cadres.”

rolling and diving of jet fighters... and other aircrafts. They were dropping bombs indiscriminately. Within a few minutes, everything was turned into a nightmare of destruction and human massacre. Hundreds of mutilated human bodies of women, children and elderly people were just what remained lying around.

Having presented listeners with this image of anonymous, disfigured corpses at Cassinga, Shaningwa abstracted meaning on their behalf. According to her, on Cassinga Day it was important to remember “the act of brutality against the Namibian people in particular, against human kind in general” and “our fallen heroes and heroines.” Libertine Amathila, who delivered the keynote address, offered a similar interpretation. Having rendered a story of the attack similar to Shaningwa's, Amathila stated that the anniversary of “the massacre” should be a “day of reflection” both on “the long and hard journey through which we have come to free this land” and “how we want the future of this country to be.” On the first topic, Amathila had little to say outside repeating assertions about the “cold-blooded” attack on the “refugee center.” On the second, Amathila maintained that “the victims of Cassinga and other victims of the liberation war” had sacrificed themselves for “our freedom” and it was the responsibility of the living to protect and further realize “their dream.” Whereas for the generation of Cassinga the goal had been political independence, it must now be “economic and social stability.” And the road to this social and economic stability was, as Amathila repeated, “the SWAPO party government's policy of national reconciliation” through which “we can build our nation together.”

The final speaker at the event was Agnes Kafula, a Cassinga survivor. With other survivors assembled in two lines standing behind her, Kafula offered a well worn story about the attack. In so doing, she contributed authenticity to claims about Cassinga

refugee camp made by politicians who never lived there – despite the fact that Kafula, like so many of the then teenage girls whose stories have been recorded, had only arrived at Cassinga a few days before the South Africans.¹⁷² Nonetheless, Kafula's narration of the events on May 4, 1978 also differed from Shaningwa and Amathila's stories in important ways. Consider, for example, her account of how Cassinga's inhabitants responded to the attack:

We heard a strange sound approaching from the south[ern] and eastern side of the settlement. This strange sound was from the oncoming enemy jet fighters, and when they suddenly started bombing, tear-gassing and dropping soldiers, it became clear that the settlement was under attack. Our seniors, who were administering the settlement, gave us directions [about] where to run for safety. To be more specific... these were comrades: Darius Shikongo, he's still living, and he was well known as Mbolondondo; Comrade Max Nekongo, he is one of the councilors in the North; the late Dimo Hamaambo; the late Greenwell Matongo; Mocks Schivute, he was... the secretary of the camp; Anna Immanuel and Kauluma... While the jet fighters were busy bombing, a young, brave girl by the name of Paulina ran to the office to rescue the party flag. She grabbed it and wrapped it around her waist and she ran as fast as she could, not only to save her life, but also to save the party flag... Brave as she was, she managed to evade the enemy soldiers. Unfortunately, Comrade Paulina and many others would not live to see the independence of our country and enjoy the fruits of their bravery.

In contrast to those who have rendered Cassinga a symbol for anonymous refugees who sacrificed for the nation, Kafula presents the camp here as a site where particular persons lived who ought to be remembered by the nation's members. By mentioning camp commanders like Shikongo, by telling the story about Paulina, Kafula

¹⁷² For a record not only of personal accounts of the May 4 attack, but also of the limited experiences that many survivors had of the camp before the raid, see the testimonies in Mvula ya Nangolo and Tor Sellström's *Kassinga: A Story Untold* (Windhoek: Namibia Book Development Council, 1995, pp. 38-69).

offers a glimpse of those who lived at Cassinga and their unheralded acts of bravery. In so doing, she not only incorporates the memory of these persons into a predictable national narrative, but also draws from them to assert the status of Cassinga survivors in the Namibian nation. This point is not only suggested by survivors' efforts to mark themselves as a distinct group and the histories that their representative told at the Cassinga Day commemoration, but also by Kafula's concluding remarks: "In light of the significant contributions and deep psychological trauma [of Cassinga survivors], we call on our leaders to come up with any kind of recognition. We are not saying that Cassinga survivors should be compensated in monetary terms, but... we the Cassinga survivors should be consulted in what we think would be useful recognition."

Kafula's comments strike at a fundamental contradiction of national history. While part of a political order in which they are reliant on "any kind of recognition" that national representatives grant them, Cassinga survivors, like so many groups that feel marginalized within a national community, are compelled by this same order to produce histories that may offer them some leverage over the recognition that they are granted. The resulting histories, while deeply embedded in the national narratives which invoke them, offer material which may be used to complicate and challenge these narratives – if one is only able to access them and willing to read them outside the binaries through which national communities define who does and does not belong to the nation.

This chapter draws from such strands of evidence to weave a story about Cassinga that undermines the two dominant narratives about the camp. It does not aspire, however, to replace the "refugee" or "military" camp with a new national history that would be incorporated into one or another competing narrative. Rather, it suggests

multiple histories that might be told about Cassinga, that extend far beyond the Namibian nation to the many communities, events and memories entangled in this word. Moreover, it should highlight how new histories of this camp, and other sites similarly embedded in the nation, might be assembled by those who think that “Remember Cassinga” should be more than a cliché.

Chapter 3

Ordering the Nation: SWAPO in Zambia, 1974-1976

The mid-1970s mark a watershed in the formation of SWAPO and the Namibian exile community. On April 25, 1974 the Portuguese armed forces led by General António Spínola, overthrew Marcelo Caetano and his regime. Influenced by the pressures placed on Portugal over years of fighting liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, the interim government began to prepare its former colonies for independence. For people living along the Namibian-Angolan border and suffering from the violence that followed the Ovamboland election boycott of 1973,¹⁷³ the revolution in Portugal presented an opportunity for the oppressed to flee into exile. From June 1974 to August 1975 between 4000 and 6000 Namibians fled through Angola to Zambia where previously only a few hundred SWAPO members had been living in several camps in southwestern Zambia and near the liberation movement's political headquarters in Lusaka.¹⁷⁴ During and following this period of rapid expansion, tensions built within the Namibian exile community, reaching a climax in 1976. By March PLAN combatants near

¹⁷³ In 1973 SWAPO led a boycott of elections for an independent government in Ovamboland, one of the homelands envisioned in the Odendaal Plan (1964), the South African government's blue-print for implementing apartheid in Namibia.

¹⁷⁴ Andreas Shipanga, *In Search of Freedom* (Gibraltar: Ashanti Publishing, 1989), p. 98; Lauren Dobell, *Swapo's Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: War by Other Means* (Basel, Switzerland: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1991, 2000), p. 47; Colin Leys and John S. Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two Edged Sword* (London: James Currey, 1995), p. 130; Ailonga Collection, File Name: "Amnesty, International Community;" Salatiel Ailonga, "To the Members of the ICSWA Conference, Wuppertal," 12.2.1976. It should be noted that the exodus of Namibians into exile continued unabated in late 1975 and early 1976, but the outbreak of violence in Angola in August 1975 appears to have hindered Namibians from traveling to Zambia after that time.

the Namibian border had imprisoned several of their commanders and requested meetings with leaders to express their concerns about conditions at the front. In April groups of SWAPO combatants and officials were arrested in Lusaka by the Zambian army on the request of SWAPO leaders. In July other combatants in southwestern Zambia, numbering over 1000 people, were also detained by Zambian soldiers. Only in 1977 and 1978, after the remaining SWAPO leaders had consolidated their power and pressure had been placed on them to release their prisoners, were various detainees permitted to rejoin SWAPO, register as refugees or granted political asylum.

Several histories of SWAPO's conflict in 1976 have been written. In the leadership's official narrative,¹⁷⁵ the crisis is attributed primarily to SWAPO Secretary of Information, Andreas Shipanga, and the SWAPO Youth League (SYL), who, due to their aspirations for power and, in Shipanga's case, collaboration with West Germany, misguided the newcomers in exile. This version, referred to as "The Shipanga Crisis," is also reflected in Peter Katjavivi's account,¹⁷⁶ which, while reserving judgment, identifies Shipanga and the SYL as taking leading roles in fomenting discontent. Other histories focus on the new exiles' frustration with how SWAPO was administered during the period and the leadership's unwillingness to address these issues at a party congress which, based on resolutions passed at the previous congress in Tanga, Tanzania, should have convened by the end of 1974.¹⁷⁷ It is from this perspective that Colin Leys and John

¹⁷⁵ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 3, File 2, "Report of the Findings and Recommendations of the John Ya Otto Commission of Inquiry into Circumstances which led to the Revolt of SWAPO Cadres between June, 1974 and April, 1976," (a.k.a. "Ya Otto Report") 4.6.1976.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Katjavivi, A History of Resistance in Namibia (London: James Currey, 1988).

¹⁷⁷ Franz Ansprenger, Die SWAPO, (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag, 1984); Shipanga 1989; Paul Trewelha, "The Kissinger/Vorster/Kaunda Détente: The Genesis of the SWAPO 'Spy Drama,' Part II" Searchlight South Africa, 6 (1991), pp. 42-58; Dobell 1991; Colin Leys and John S. Saul, "Liberation without Democracy," Journal of Southern African Studies, 20,1 (1994), pp. 123-147; Leys & Saul 1995; Keshii Pelao Nathanael, A Journey to Exile, (Aberstwyth: Sosiumi Press, 2002); Hunter, Justine,

Saul suggest that “The Shipanga Crisis” be renamed “The Democratic Crisis.” All studies of SWAPO in Zambia during the mid-1970s indicate that the crisis manifested itself in SWAPO administered camps. Sources, however, tend to depict the camps as a series of places where residents were influenced by persons, like Andreas Shipanga and SYL members, and ideological issues, like the call for the SWAPO congress, rather than as a kind of space which molded social relations among the entire Namibian exile community.

This chapter examines SWAPO in Zambia, 1974-1976 from the perspective of the camps. Drawing from stories about sleeping arrangements, parade announcements, food and weapon distribution, inhabitants' movements and detentions, it argues that camps did not reflect disputes which originated outside of them as much as they shaped a conflict which developed within them. Through their control of this space, internationally recognized SWAPO leaders and the commanders who administered camps on their behalf had considerable power to shape group allegiances and manage the resolution of conflicts, even at a time when leaders' authority was contested within the Namibian exile community. The camps, therefore, highlight how some members of SWAPO consolidated their power during a period when the liberation movement's form was especially fluid and its future contingent.

Moreover, the chapter considers how the 1974-1976 period in SWAPO's past may illuminate qualities of camps and global political structures more generally. Drawing from Liisa Malkki's notion that camps are part of the “national order of things,” an order which inflects life within and extends beyond the camps where many “refugees” and

Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia: Umgang mit schweren Menschenrechtsverletzungen der Ära des bewaffneten Befreiungskampfes, 1966 bis 1989 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2008), pp. 80-92.

other displaced peoples live,¹⁷⁸ the piece considers how SWAPO's camps produced a social hierarchy within a national community. To this end, I draw from Malkki's and others' observations about camp service delivery, spatial control and social networks, highlighting how these qualities may empower national elites in the communities which live there. Thus, while acknowledging “the national order of things,” the chapter emphasizes how things in and around camps may order the social structure of a nation.

The Exodus Arrives

In the memories of many of the first Namibians to travel to Zambia in 1974, the conflict started as soon as they entered the SWAPO camps.¹⁷⁹ From as early as June they had begun crossing the border into Angola in small groups, which, in most cases, were picked up by the Portuguese authorities and transported to Luso (now Luena). By July, 300-400 Namibians were assembled there, most of them young, secondary school educated and ethnically Ovambo. Many of them had led the resurgence of resistance to South African rule inside Namibia since 1971,¹⁸⁰ and a sizable minority were women, perhaps as many as 20%.¹⁸¹ This group was then transported by Portuguese soldiers to a

¹⁷⁸ Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995); Liisa Malkki, “Refugees and Exile: From ‘Refugee Studies’ to the National Order of Things,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995), pp. 495-523.

¹⁷⁹ The narrative that follows of the first exodus group's arrival is derived primarily from my interviews with persons who were part of this group: Abed Hauwanga (26.7.2007; 3.8.2007) Tangeni Nuukuawo (17.2.2007; 23.2.2007), Erastus Shamena (1.3.2007), Sheeli Shangula (25.3.2007) and Ben Ulenga (6.6.2008), as well as two published memoirs (Magdalena and Erastus Shamena, *Wir Kinder Namibias: Eine Lebensgeschichte ausgezeichnet von Kirsti Ihamäki nach Berichten in Ndonga* (Wuppertal: Verlag der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission, 1981, 1987); Nathanael 2002. Where individuals identify details that are not part of all these persons' stories, they are cited accordingly.

¹⁸⁰ In December 1971 Namibians began a strike in which many contract workers spread across the country's urban centers stopped working for two months. Many of the workers were later deported to Ovamboland where, in turn, many contested the South African government's efforts to implement the Odendaal Plan, culminating in the 1973 Ovamboland election boycott.

¹⁸¹ Katjavivi 1988, p. 93; Dobell 1991, p. 47.

place in the bush near the Zambian border from where the Namibians walked for three days until they reached a UNITA camp located near Kalabo, Zambia. There they were met by SWAPO officials, who transported them onward to Senanga, a SWAPO camp.

Senanga, which was located near the Zambian town of the same name along the banks of the Zambezi River, was established by SWAPO during the 1960s for members of the liberation movement traveling between the Namibian border and battlefield to the southwest and Lusaka and SWAPO headquarters to the northeast. The camp consisted of a few rudimentary buildings only – barely enough to accommodate the few men who were stationed there and the officials, also all male, who had come to collect the newcomers from Kalabo earlier that day. Thus, when the exodus exiles arrived in Senanga, there was uncertainty about where the newcomers were going to sleep. During the three days of walking from the Angolan-Zambian border, the new exiles had been sleeping together as a group in the bush. That first night in Senanga, however, some maintained that men and women should separate themselves and sleep on different sides of the camp. Sheeli Shangula, then SYL's Secretary General and a leader among the new exiles, recalls:

[When we arrived at Senanga] they started with this, that boys should not [sleep] in close proximity with girls. They were saying that even at home that men are together with boys. But the question was we were still in transit. There was no permanent structure to say this is the dormitory or the boarding of the girls... [Also,] on the way, maybe I had a bag. One girl just left like that [without a bag] or the bag that she had got torn up. My things and her things were together in one bag. And we didn't have many things. We slept with our clothing and maybe had only one towel to spare. And I remember some girls who would stay at the river washing and waiting for their underwear or panties to dry. Because Senanga is close to the river. So it was not so easy already there to introduce the question of separation... [Also] it was

just a question of security... We left together; now I only know you from my village. Those others, even if we speak the same language, I don't know them.¹⁸²

From Shangula's perspective the matter of sleeping arrangements at Senanga was one to be considered in the context of the exiles' journey: the circumstances in which Namibians entered Zambia in July 1974 necessitated that men and women not be separated at night. Yet, as Shangula indicates, camp administrators saw the matter differently. Some drew from memories of life at home – “even at home... men are together with boys” – to justify separation. Nahas Angula, who would revisit the issue some days later when the new exiles came to Old Farm, the camp where he was an administrator, put the matter like this: “You had these people who came there. They wanted to have communal life, girls and boys sleeping together in the same sleeping quarters. And, of course, we said, 'No. Society is not organized like that.’”¹⁸³

At the same time that SWAPO officials were appealing to gender social norms at Senanga, some were also flouting them. Keshii Nathanael, the President of the SYL, explains that before going to bed the first night it was noticed that some of the women from their party had been escorted by SWAPO officials to a bar in the town of Senanga. There they were given drinks and bedded in the officials' private quarters.¹⁸⁴ Nathanael emphasizes that these practices, which continued over the nights that the group spent in Senanga, were a breach to courtship custom among the Ovambo. He writes that an Ovambo couple could only “afford to be seen together in public” and a man could only give “presents... to a woman not of his immediate family” once the relationship had been

¹⁸² Shangula 25.3.2008, p. 8.

¹⁸³ Nahas Angula, Interview 13.2.2008, p. 5.

¹⁸⁴ Nathanael 2002, pp. 64, 66.

sanctioned through a meeting of the couple's parents.¹⁸⁵ What is more, Nathanael reports that he later learned from “married women,” in whom those who had visited the officials had confided, that the “young girls... had been forced into physical contact with men whom they regarded as their elders.”¹⁸⁶ Not surprisingly, Nathanael and Shangula emphasize that the young men felt threatened by the officials and possessive of the women with whom they had traveled for weeks and, in some cases, had relationships that extended back to Namibia.¹⁸⁷

The following afternoon the newcomers assembled at the parade. There, Peter Mueshichange, SWAPO's Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the highest ranking SWAPO leader at Senanga at the time of the exodus' arrival and one of those implicated in the previous night's events, addressed them on behalf of the liberation movement. Nathanael recalls:

When [Mueshichange] rose to speak we were shocked to hear what he had to say... He said he understood that there were intellectuals among us although he didn't say what was wrong with that. He did, however, warn that SWAPO was a movement of illiterate people – as if that was how he would have preferred us to be. “White belts,” he said again and again, were not for us, adding that he would take whatever measures were required to crush the “white belts” in the movement. A white belt we later learned was a term used in Eastern Europe for “intellectuals.” Mueshichange also warned that those who thought that they were popular at home to forget their popularity abroad. For abroad, he reiterated there was only one leader and he was the law. He demanded that we say after him, “One Namibia! One nation! One SWAPO! One leader!” Quite stunned by what I was hearing, I kept my mouth shut while some of the others shouted the slogans.¹⁸⁸

It is likely that if Nathanael responded this way to Mueshichange's comments about

¹⁸⁵ Nathanael 2002, p. 66

¹⁸⁶ Nathanael 2002, p. 76.

¹⁸⁷ Shangula 25.3.2007, p. 8; Nathanael 2002, p. 66.

¹⁸⁸ Nathanael 2002, p. 65

“white belts,” that many others assembled at the parade had a similar reaction. As noted, many of them had attended secondary school and were seen by others at home as educated, and some, like Sheeli Shangula, had attended university in South Africa as well. Also, SYL members were accustomed to the language of participatory politics, which their leaders encountered during the contract workers' strike in Walvis Bay in 1971-1972 and while studying in South Africa. This discourse could not have been easily reconciled with Peter Mueshahange's message about SWAPO's “one leader.” According to Nathanael, he and several of the SYL leaders met after the speech to discuss their frustrations with how they had been received by the SWAPO leadership, but they had a greater wish “to reach Lusaka to be sent for military training, so... decided not to make an issue of what [they] had heard and seen.”¹⁸⁹ Rather, a few days later, shortly before departing from Senanga, they wrote a letter addressed to SWAPO's leaders in Lusaka in which they declared: “Our wish, in fact our decision, is that each and everybody of us be trained militarily before he/she pursues any ordinary academic studies.”¹⁹⁰

A few days later a fleet of Zambian trucks arrived at Senanga to pick up the new arrivals.¹⁹¹ When they boarded the trucks, many hoped and expected that they would be traveling to SWAPO's headquarters in Lusaka, but that evening they found themselves in northwestern Zambia, far from their desired destination. Upon hearing from a Zambian official that they had arrived at “Maheba Refugee Camp,” a commotion ensued. Only after Zambian soldiers stationed at the camp had coaxed them with food and threatened

¹⁸⁹ Nathanael 2002, p. 65.

¹⁹⁰ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 14, File No. 3, Keshii Nathanael and Sheeli Shangula, “A Statement from the SWAPO Youth League Members that Entered the Republic of Zambia,” July 1974.

¹⁹¹ By the time the Zambian trucks arrived, several leaders among the new exiles had already been transported to Lusaka where they spoke with representatives of the United Nations Anti-Apartheid Committee. Thereafter they were flown to New York to brief the UN General Assembly on recent developments in Namibia (Nathanael 2002, p. 68; Nuukuawo, 17.2.2007, p. 3).

them with violence, did the Namibians finally disembark the trucks.¹⁹² Thereafter, Keshii Nathanael wrote a second letter to the SWAPO leaders in Lusaka, stating on behalf of the group that they were “freedom fighters” and therefore “wanted to be released [from Maheba] to receive military training and... fight the enemy.”¹⁹³

A few days later Zambian trucks arrived at Maheba and transported the group to the Old Farm, a SWAPO camp near Lusaka. On August 26, two days after their arrival, SWAPO held a parade to commemorate “Namibia Day.”¹⁹⁴ For the occasion SWAPO President Sam Nujoma traveled from Lusaka to Old Farm and addressed the newcomers. According to Nathanael, “Nujoma... spoke words of welcome and praise for those of us who had shown courage to organize political work at home and brave all manner of difficulties to come to Zambia... but he concluded his speech on a jarring note. He warned anyone who might be harboring ambitions to break away from the main body of the party that the Zambian Army would crush them.”¹⁹⁵ Anita Ailonga, a Finnish woman who was working at the Old Farm and would soon become entangled in the conflict, recalls Namibia Day 1974 similarly: “Nujoma spoke very harshly to [the youth] and [about] the papers they had written [to the leaders before arriving at the Old Farm]. And there was nothing to be angry about. They were not boasting or berating Nujoma.”¹⁹⁶ In contrast, Nahas Angula remembers the exodus' arrival at the Old Farm and subsequent parades as marked primarily by the SYL leaders' speeches, which suggested that “they

¹⁹² Shamena 1981, p. 58; Shamena 1.3.2007, p. 5.

¹⁹³ Nathanael 2002, p. 69. In this case, Nathanael is paraphrasing his letter from memory. The original was written in Oshiwambo.

¹⁹⁴ August 26 also marks the anniversary of the reburial of Samuel Maherero, an important event in the memory of Namibia's Otjiherero-speaking community. “Namibia Day” is now a Namibian national holiday, commemorated as “Heroes' Day.” I begin the dissertation with a story about my experiences at the national commemoration of Heroes' Day in 2007.

¹⁹⁵ Nathanael 2002, p. 73.

¹⁹⁶ Salatiel and Anita Ailonga, Interview 23.3.2007, p. 11.

wanted to regard themselves as a party within a party” and undermined the SWAPO leaders' authority.¹⁹⁷

This collective story of the exodus' arrival in the SWAPO camps may read as a portent of things to come. Indeed, the manner in which sources narrate these first encounters in 1974 tends to be teleological, presenting events in a way which justifies the sides which individuals took during the SWAPO crisis of 1976. The sides which people took in the crisis and the histories which are told about it were not set at the exodus' arrival, however. Rather, they were shaped over the following two years as a new community of Namibians interacted with one another in Zambia in various settings, above all the camps. Through accounts of these interactions offered by sources with multiple relationships to the crisis, one can observe not only that encounters in camps generated conflict, but also how they shaped it as those who administered camps managed group allegiances within this space.

Old Farm, Nyango and the Politics of the Belly

The origins of the Old Farm may be traced back to 1971 when Namibians who had fled violence in the Caprivi Region along the Namibian-Zambian border and been settled by the Zambian government in refugee camps during the late 1960s, began to present themselves at SWAPO's Lusaka office. According to SWAPO records from the time, the services being provided to refugees were inadequate, above all their rations of food.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, most of the Namibians in the Zambian refugee camps “were

¹⁹⁷ Angula 13.2.2007, pp. 5-6.

¹⁹⁸ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 15, “Application for Assistance South West Africa People's Organization,” 30.4.1971, p. 1; UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 2, “Namibian Educational and Health Centre,” 1973, p.2.

fishermen, unused to the rigours of farming and hence unable to cope with the situation.”¹⁹⁹ It is in this context that SWAPO entered into negotiations with the Zambian government to purchase “a farm” where the liberation movement could assume responsibility for administering these Namibians. By 1973 SWAPO had purchased this land, and in early 1974 it established a school for a handful of youth at the farm which by then had been officially renamed “The Namibian Education and Health Center.”²⁰⁰

The arrival of the first exodus group at the Old Farm in August 1974 constituted a major change in the camp's demographics. Whereas there were, perhaps, 100 residents in the camp at the time the exodus arrived, the majority elderly women from the Caprivi,²⁰¹ more than 300 more exiles, mostly young and Ovambo, entered the camp in the first exodus group. Although many from this cohort quickly dispersed for military training, they were followed by waves of others. Most people in these groups would stay for a few weeks until they were sent away for military training, but some – children, women with young children, elderly and disabled persons – remained at the Old Farm, which became a semi-permanent home. For those assigned to positions with SWAPO in Lusaka, the Old Farm was a place where they could visit fellow Namibians. Some, including several of the SYL and internal SWAPO leaders who entered exile in the exodus, drove the 26 miles from Lusaka to Old Farm fairly often, visiting the camp once a week or more.²⁰²

Among the many encounters which occurred at the Old Farm in the months

¹⁹⁹ “Namibian Educational and Health Centre,” 1973, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ “Namibian Educational and Health Centre,” 1973, p. 3; Angula 13.2.2008. I retain the name Old Farm to refer to the center because there were SWAPO camps later established with the official name “Namibian Educational and Health Centre ” or “Health and Education Center.” Moreover, in popular use, the center outside Lusaka retained the name “The Farm” or “Old Farm.”

²⁰¹ In 1973 SWAPO estimates that there were “about 120 Namibians living at this Center” (“Namibian Educational and Health Centre,” 1973, p. 3). Nathanael maintains that his group was met by “some fifty to a hundred residents” (2002, p. 70).

²⁰² Andreas Shipanga, Interview 20.3.2007, p. 7; Shamena 1.3.2007, p. 9; Shangula 25.3.2007, p. 10.

following the exodus' arrival, the most contentious involved food and other commodities necessary for human survival. From the time the exodus began to arrive, SWAPO was hard-pressed to provide for all of those flooding into its camps. Although circumstances were generally better near Lusaka than in southwestern Zambia, where the liberation movement struggled to transport supplies to its soldiers, conditions of scarcity also prevailed at the Old Farm. There, SWAPO officials began to practice “tactical government,” a term developed by Ilana Feldman to reference “a means of governing that shifts in response to crisis, that works without long-term planning, and that presumes little stability in governing conditions.”²⁰³ Unlike the cases of tactical government that Feldman considers in Gaza, however, in which organizations regularized service delivery to appease populations that might otherwise turn against them,²⁰⁴ SWAPO's tactical government involved sporadically delivering and withholding resources from camp inhabitants in an effort to make them pliable to their leaders' will.

Consider, for example, the work of the Chaplaincy to Namibians. In February 1974 Salatiel and Anita Ailonga moved from Tanzania to Zambia, where they founded the Chaplaincy, a Christian ministry for Namibian exiles. From its origin the Chaplaincy was assisted by several organizations: the Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ), which connected the Chaplaincy with other Christian organizations working in the host country, the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church (ELOC), to which Salatiel belonged in Namibia, and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the Finnish Missionary Society and the *Vereinigte Evangelische Mission* (VEM), with which the Ailongas maintained connections through Salatiel's home church and Anita's previous work as a missionary in

²⁰³ Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 3.

²⁰⁴ Feldman 2008, pp. 123-154.

Tanzania.²⁰⁵ As such, the Chaplaincy received support for Namibian exiles from sources that were external to SWAPO, including, shortly after the exodus began, large quantities of “humanitarian aid.” But since the overwhelming majority of Namibian exiles belonged to SWAPO and inhabited SWAPO camps, the Chaplaincy needed to work through SWAPO to carry out its mission.

One might have expected that working with SWAPO would present no problem to the Ailongas. Salatiel was a founding member of the liberation movement, who had traveled with several of its leaders into exile in 1961 and had been endorsed by it to attend seminary in Tanzania. Anita also had long-standing relationships with some of SWAPO's most senior members and helped the liberation movement pay its rent and buy furniture shortly after it founded its office in Dar es Salaam in 1961.²⁰⁶ Despite these connections, the Chaplaincy found its work obstructed. Upon arriving in Zambia in 1974, the Ailongas were told by the liberation movement to take up residence in Lusaka, rather than at the Old Farm, where they had requested to live.²⁰⁷ With the support of donations from the CCZ, LWF and VEM, the Ailongas managed to purchase a pick up truck and established a routine of visiting the Old Farm, especially on Sundays and other holy days in the Christian calendar, when Reverend Ailonga led worship services.²⁰⁸ But during the 1974-1975 rainy season Ailonga reports that he and others had struggled to travel in and out of the Old Farm due to the effects of the rains on the road. The road was critical for

²⁰⁵ Ailonga Collection, File Names: “Chaplaincy Correspondence” and “General Files A,” Letter from Salatiel Ailonga to Pastor Groth, 20.11.1974; Ailonga Collection, File Name: “Political Matters Affecting the Chaplaincy,” Salatiel Ailonga, “The Work of the Chaplaincy to Namibians in Central and East Africa,” 5.5.1975. The Finnish Missionary Society missionized the northern part of Namibia where the ELOC was later founded. The VEM is the successor of the Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft which missionized the southern part of Namibia where the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa (ELC) was later founded.

²⁰⁶ Ailongas 23.3.2007, pp. 1-2; Paul Helmuth, Interview, 13.7.2007, p. 7.

²⁰⁷ Ailongas 23.2.2007, pp. 4, 6-7.

²⁰⁸ Letter from Salatiel Ailonga to Pastor Groth, 20.11.1974; Ailongas 23.3.2007, p. 10.

bringing food and other supplies to the Old Farm and for transporting sick people to Lusaka, tasks for which the Chaplaincy had primary responsibility at that time.²⁰⁹ Over the coming months Ailonga began to raise money for machinery and materials that could be used to improve the road, presumably for use in mid-1975 during the dry season. At some point that year, however, the project broke down. By way of explanation Ailonga says that while he was working on the road, he began to hear rumors that he was trying to undermine the SWAPO leadership – or worse.²¹⁰ At roughly the same time, the Chaplaincy was chastised by SWAPO leaders for a report submitted by a Namibian pastor affiliated with it to UNICEF and the United Nations Commissioner to Namibia.²¹¹ Apparently the document, which attributes disease in SWAPO's southwestern Zambian camps to malnutrition, unhygienic water, poor accommodation and inefficient transport, was seen by some SWAPO leaders not as a cry to help suffering Namibian exiles but as a critique of the organization's leadership.²¹²

The challenges that the Chaplaincy faced in doing their work may have resulted, to some extent, from deep-seated ideological or personal differences between the Ailongas and the people who were administering the Old Farm. Particularly, Nahas Angula, who was responsible for the Old Farm's school and, for a time, the entire settlement,²¹³ was seen by some former camp inhabitants as “anti-Christian” and,

²⁰⁹ Letter from Salatiel Ailonga to Pastor Groth, 20.11.1974.

²¹⁰ Salatiel Ailonga, Interview 22.6.2007, pp. 27-28.

²¹¹ In addition to Salatiel and Anita Ailonga, two other pastors also worked for the Chaplaincy following their flight into exile during the exodus: Oscar Shamwe and Jesaja Uahengo (Ailonga 22.6.2007, pp. 29-30; Shipanga 20.3.2007, p. 7).

²¹² Ailonga Collection, File Names: “S. Ailonga Chaplaincy to Namibians” and “General Files A,” Oscar Shamhe (sic), “Report,” 7.3.1975; “A short report concerning the situation of the Namibians,” 18.3.1975; Ailongas 23.3.2007, p. 4.

²¹³ In several narratives research participants referred to Angula not only as the school principal but also as the camp administrator or commander. Angula indicates that there were several people who were responsible for administering the camp at different times, of which he was one (Angula 13.2.2008, p. 4).

allegedly, went out of his way to discredit and interrupt Reverend Ailonga's church services.²¹⁴ Nonetheless, the Ailonga's aid, and the political effects that it could have on Namibians living in a space like Old Farm, must also be an important context for understanding why the ministry was obstructed. In the conditions of scarcity prevailing within SWAPO camps following the exodus, the Chaplaincy, with its separate access to donor networks, could be regarded as a rival to the liberation movement, which was struggling to provide for its people. Worship services might also be seen as bolstering the authority of Reverend Ailonga and other pastors who were leaders of a popular church rather than a national community.²¹⁵

The Chaplaincy would have appeared particularly threatening if the Ailongas were thought to be sympathetic to those who from 1974 to 1976 were calling, with increasing alacrity, for a SWAPO Party Congress. Salatiel Ailonga, for his part, denies that he took sides in this or other conflicts within the liberation movement but volunteers that he was naive to leaders' political differences. According to him, he gave directly to different members of the National Executive Committee (Exco), SWAPO's highest organ, upon request: "Nanyemba [SWAPO's Secretary of Defense] came himself and asked to supply food...And Shipanga again himself, he came and asked if I had food... I thought they were working together."²¹⁶ And yet Nanyemba and Shipanga, as at least some Namibians living in Lusaka were aware, were on opposing sides of the party congress issue and had been part of estranged factions within SWAPO for years prior to

²¹⁴ Ailongas 23.3.2007, p. 10; Shamena 1.3.2007, p. 9.

²¹⁵ The ELOC, to which Reverends Ailonga, Shamwe and Uahengo belonged, is Namibia's largest church. Most inhabitants of the Old Farm, who hailed from Ovamboland, where the ELOC is based, would have belonged to this church before entering exile.

²¹⁶ Ailonga, 22.6.2007, p. 26.

the exodus' arrival.²¹⁷ By giving to Shipanga, Ailonga was effectively affirming Shipanga's authority as a legitimate SWAPO leader and threatening the monopoly that Nanyemba, Nujoma and those aligned with them otherwise had on the distribution of supplies in the SWAPO camps.

In the months preceding the crisis, SWAPO leaders continued to govern through distributing and withholding food in the camps although these tactics were increasingly contested and undermined. On December 14, 1975 at a meeting held on the Old Farm parade ground, SWAPO President Sam Nujoma denounced Keshii Nathanael and Sheeli Shangula in public for a statement which the two had published the previous month about the war in Angola.²¹⁸ To critique the statement for the audience at Old Farm, Nujoma focused on how it related to Namibian bellies: “Those two... have written a paper in

²¹⁷ Andreas Shipanga, Nahas Angula and Hidipo Hamutenya, former SWAPO leaders who took different sides in the 1976 conflict and have differing political allegiances in Namibia today, all confirm that the liberation movement's leadership was divided at the time the exodus arrived in 1974 (Shipanga, 20.3.2007; Angula, 13.2.2008; Hidipo Hamutenya, Interview 2.4.2008). According to Shipanga, from as early as 1970 there was discord within the National Executive Committee (Exco) around the issue of creating a steering committee for the next SWAPO Congress which pitted him against other Exco members, above all Sam Nujoma and Peter Nanyemba (Shipanga 1989, pp. 99-100). In 1973, as tensions over the congress mounted, the Exco stopped meeting altogether, and discussion of the liberation movement's business took place entirely through informal meetings among factions (Shipanga 20.3.2008, p. 8). Hidipo Hamutenya reports that, in the same year, several SWAPO leaders, including himself, Hifikupunye Pohamba and Jesaya Nyamu, were lobbying for the writing of a new party constitution and a congress, but higher ranking leaders within the liberation movement were not receptive (Hamutenya 2.4.2008, p. 4). Those who arrived in the exodus and who were given responsibilities with SWAPO in Lusaka also soon became aware of a conflict among SWAPO leaders. Tangeni Nuukuawo indicates that he first observed tensions in September 1974 when he was given a position distributing petty cash to SWAPO members living in Lusaka (Nuukuawo 17.2.2007, p. 3; 23.2.2007, p. 5). While, in theory, Andreas Shipanga was the chair of a SWAPO Finance Committee, in practice, the SWAPO President, Sam Nujoma, and Vice-President, Mishake Muyongo, distributed all of the party's funds to individuals directly (Nuukuawo 23.2.2007, pp. 5-6). There were also stories that various SWAPO leaders were enriching themselves through the sale of humanitarian aid sent to the liberation movement and the management of two nightclubs, rumors that were widely circulated among SWAPO personnel living in Lusaka at the time.

²¹⁸ Since at least September 1975 fighting had broken out in Angola between its three liberation movements, *Movimento Popular para Libertação da Angola* (MPLA), *Frente Nacional para Libertação da Angola* (FNLA), *União para Independência Total da Angola* (UNITA), and foreign governments supporting these forces. Angola became independent on November 11, 1975 and violence was on-going in December at the time of the parade. For further discussion of the Angolan Civil War and how SWAPO members in Zambia responded to it, see the discussion below.

which they accuse Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire of having been involved in war in Angola. Not knowing that all the food you eat comes from Mobutu, they want to sell you out because for them, they don't care because they have somewhere else to go.’²¹⁹

Nathanael's response, in turn, focused on an incident that occurred at the Old Farm the previous night in which food had been withheld from inhabitants as a punishment for alleged misbehavior: “Haven't we passed through difficulties together from the time when we started from home? Why didn't we sell you out then? Sam said that he wanted to warn you because he loved you. Isn't it true that you went to bed on empty stomachs last night?... Isn't it true that the store over there is full of food? Why didn't Sam Nujoma order his people to open that door to provide you with something to eat last night?”²²⁰

Within days of the confrontation at the parade, Nathanael and perhaps twenty-five others were sent on an assignment to Kaoma District, 600 kilometers west of Lusaka, to establish a new camp called Nyango.²²¹ For several weeks the group worked alone, clearing the densely wooded bush and building houses with the saplings, and in early 1976 the residents of Old Farm were transferred to Nyango. Food sources soon became a problem as numbers swelled in the camp.²²² According to Nathanael, in January he and Sheeli Shangula managed to get a lift with Zambian army officials back to the SWAPO offices in Lusaka, where they approached Deputy Secretary of Defense Richard Kapelwa to request food and supplies for the people at Nyango. When their request was denied, they turned to Salatiel Ailonga who told them that there “was enough food and clothing for Namibians at the World Council of Churches' local office merely waiting [to be

²¹⁹ Nathanael 2002, pp. 114-115. Nathanael and Shangula's report had been critical of the FNLA on the basis that it was supported by the United States and Zaire.

²²⁰ Nathanael 2002, pp. 114-116.

²²¹ Nathanael 2002, p. 117; Engombe 25.3.2007, p. 5; Shangula 25.3.2007, p. 2.

²²² Nathanael 2002, p. 117; Engombe 25.3.2007, pp. 5, 16.

collected by] SWAPO.”²²³ Ailonga, in turn, contacted Andreas Shipanga and together the two of them collected the aid and arranged for it to be transported with a Zambian truck to Nyango. Despite initial resistance from Erastus Haikali, the man assigned by the SWAPO leaders to administer the new camp, the aid was eventually distributed.²²⁴ Even afterwards, however, the food at Nyango was limited. According to Hans Beukes, a Namibian with whom Ailonga, Nathanael and Shipanga arranged a lift to Nyango shortly after the aid was distributed: “The effects of malnutrition were easy to see, even to the non-specialist. Tea for breakfast, weak and weakly sugared, nothing else, mealie-meal and kapenta (small dried fish boiled into a stew) for lunch and dinner was the regular fare for the five days I was there. Very little else seemed available to the people.”²²⁵

Allegedly, when Andreas Shipanga returned to Lusaka, he again tried to arrange supplies for the residents of Nyango, by visiting several embassies. Eventually he was offered a large shipment of food from the West German government, but before Shipanga could send the food to Nyango, it was confiscated. In what was probably the first public denouncement of Shipanga, Nyango residents were told from the parade that Andreas Shipanga had collaborated with West German “imperialists” and that with the food he had gathered he intended to poison the Namibian people.²²⁶

Détente and the Front

The coup in Portugal impacted SWAPO not only by enabling Namibians to flee into exile, but also by encouraging Southern African leaders to pursue new geopolitical

²²³ Nathanael 2002, p. 118.

²²⁴ Nathanael 2002, pp. 118-119.

²²⁵ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 15, Letter from Hans Beukes to “Bishop Auala, Daniel Tjongerero, Other members of SWAPO,” 14.5.1976, p. 1.

²²⁶ Nathanael 2002, pp. 120-121; Shipanga 20.3.2007, p. 11.

strategies. Among them was “the détente” entered by South Africa and Zambia's governments in late 1974 or 1975.²²⁷ The logic of a South African-Zambian détente at this time should be seen from the perspective of the two countries' converging interests vis a vis the contest for power in Angola. Neither the South African apartheid regime, which was adamantly anti-communist, nor Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, an outspoken critic of the Soviet Union, wanted to see the MPLA, with its clear Soviet leanings, rise to power in Angola. These circumstances, in conjunction with Zambia's vulnerability to South Africa as the dominant military and economic power in the region, begin to explain why the Zambians entered negotiations with a regime whose policies otherwise contradicted Zambia and the OAU's commitment to liberating the African continent from white minority rule.

With respect to SWAPO, the détente dictated that the Zambian government must halt the operations of this and all other liberation movements from Zambian soil. As a guest in Zambia, SWAPO may have been pressured to align itself with other aspects of the détente, including the Zambian government's support of UNITA. Regardless of how various SWAPO leaders felt about these policies,²²⁸ the organization which they

²²⁷ There are different published accounts of when and how the détente was first negotiated. Historians David Martin and Phyllis Johnson refer to a meeting between Zambian and South African officials in New York as early as September 1974 (*The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981) p. 159). Andreas Shipanga maintains that the “Détente Scenario” was drafted at meetings that commenced on October 8, 1974 between Zambian and South Africa officials in Lusaka. Apparently, soon after the meetings Zambian Army General Kingsley Chinkuli addressed a letter to Sam Nujoma and Peter Nanyemba in which they ordered SWAPO to stop fighting from Zambia. Shipanga indicates that he and other members of the Exco were not informed about this letter at the time (Shipanga 1989, p. 116), but in our interview Shipanga said he had heard diplomats in Lusaka “gossiping” about détente already in late 1974 (Shipanga 20.3.2007, p. 2). In August 1975, Kaunda and Vorster met in an internationally publicized face-to-face summit at Victoria Falls, and, thereafter, observers of Southern African politics were regularly referring to “the détente” in the press.

²²⁸ Colin Leys and John Saul indicate that “Swapo leaders worried about the implications of Kaunda's machinations... for their own cause” (Leys & Saul 1994, p. 129) whereas Paul Trewelha maintains that SWAPO leaders, with their UN centered approach to liberation, actually embraced the détente with its potential for an internationally brokered resolution to Namibian independence (Trewelha 1991).

represented complied with them. SWAPO did not denounce the Zambian government for negotiating with its arch enemy, and it stopped delivering weapons and ammunition to its soldiers at the battlefield in southwestern Zambia. SWAPO avoided taking sides officially in the conflict between the three Angolan liberation movements, and it unofficially delivered weapons to, and fought alongside UNITA – probably even after September 1975, by which time South African forces had entered Angola and begun staging joint SADF-UNITA operations.²²⁹

Among Namibian exiles, those most directly affected by the détente were the soldiers based in southwestern Zambia, SWAPO's main battlefield at this time. According to PLAN combatants at the front between mid-1974 and mid-1976,²³⁰ they experienced shortages of supplies that became increasingly pronounced during these years. Most soldiers who had weapons used carbine rifles, which placed them at a great disadvantage vis a vis the South African troops armed with automatic weapons and other

²²⁹ SWAPO had a long history of close cooperation with UNITA necessitated by the fact that PLAN guerrillas were living and operating in UNITA controlled territories along the Angolan-Zambian border. Many of those interviewed who participated in the exodus recall that soon after they arrived in SWAPO camps, that they were taught to chant “SWAPO is UNITA! UNITA is SWAPO!” For a detailed account of personal networks between SWAPO and UNITA leaders from the mid-1960s see one of my interviews with SWAPO founder and 1960s exile, Paul Helmuth (13.7.2007). With respect to SWAPO's collaboration with UNITA in late 1975, see “The PLAN Fighter's Declaration,” April 1976 (Ailonga Collection, File Names: “SWAPO Office Zambia” and “Political Matters affecting the Chaplaincy”) and “To the President of SWAPO,” 23.3.1976 (Ailonga Collection, File Names: “SWAPO Conflict Zambia” and “Political Matters Affecting the Chaplaincy”). In my interviews with combatants who were at the front and who compiled these documents, we discussed how they had received and evaluated stories about relations between SWAPO and UNITA in Angola (Immanuel Engombe, Junius Ikondja, Ndamono Ndeulita and Hizipo Shikondombolo, 29.7.2007, pp. 15-17; Abed Hauwanga, Interview 3.8.2007, pp. 21-22). As for the timing of the South African intervention in Angola in 1975, evidence is assembled by Paul Trewelha (1991, pp. 47-48, 56).

²³⁰ The following description of conditions at the front in southwestern Zambia from 1974-1976 is drawn from the following soldiers who lived there at that time: Immanuel Engombe, (25.3.2007); Valde Penduleni Haikali (27.3.2007); Abed Hauwanga (26.7.2007; 3.8.2007); Junius Ikondja (18.3.2007; 10.6.2007); Jackson Mwalundange (9.2.2007; 16.2.2007); Charles Namoloh (18.6.2008, 19.6.2008); Ndamono Ndeulita, (18.3.2007; 10.6.2007); Kandi Nehova (7.4.2008); Phillip Nekondo (24.3.2007); Tangeni Nuukuawo (17.2.2007; 23.2.2007; 10.3.2007); Erastus Shamena (1.3.2007); Hizipo Shikondombolo (17.6.2007); Darius “Mbolondondo” Shikongo (26.3.2007; 11.6.2007); Ben Ulenga (6.6.2008); Phil Ya Nangoloh (19.2.2007); Immanuel Engombe, Junius Ikondja, Ndamono Ndeulita and Hizipo Shikondombolo (17.6.2007; 29.7.2007).

sophisticated machinery. Some trained soldiers did not have a weapon or ammunition for their weapon, and there were many stories of weapons received by soldiers that did not function properly. Shipments of food to the front were inconsistent and insufficient, and although soldiers could sometimes supplement their diets hunting game in the bush and trading commodities with local villagers, these practices were not always possible. Medical supplies were sparse or non-existent.

These conditions at the front affected all Namibians who lived there, including “the commanders,” who at this point in time were primarily exiles who had lived abroad since the 1960s and had been appointed by more senior SWAPO officials to train and lead the exodus exiles after they began to arrive in 1974.²³¹ According to the soldiers from the exodus, they used to have frank conversations with some of their commanders about the problems they were all experiencing.²³² Commanders also narrated stories about difficulties that they had suffered previously and how the leaders had responded when some among them had asked questions or offered criticisms. Some of these stories focused on Kongwa, the camp in Tanzania given by the OAU Liberation Committee to SWAPO and other liberation movements in 1963 to train guerrilla soldiers.²³³ Most of the

²³¹ This overlap between the term “commander” and the PLAN combatants whom the exodus exiles found in Zambia upon their arrival was reflected in all of my interviews with soldiers stationed in southwestern Zambia from 1974 to 1976. On occasion, research participants referred to one of the exodus exiles as “commander” of a platoon, but the same person would be called a “soldier” in relation to the previous generation of exiles. As will be demonstrated, this distinction between the “1960s exiles” and “1974 exiles”, between “commanders” and “soldiers” is significant for understanding the SWAPO Crisis of 1976. Nonetheless, it has been largely overlooked in the scholarship on it. Only Colin Leys and John Saul identify two distinct groups of PLAN combatants, those trained both before and after the exodus, that were at odds with the SWAPO leaders (1994, p. 130; 1995, p. 48). Even Leys and Saul, however, do not indicate that the majority of each of the two generations of exiles living at the front took opposing sides to one another in the early months of 1976. Only one of my research participants, after revising transcripts of our original interviews and consulting a variety of people who had been at the front in Zambia in 1976, could identify a PLAN combatant who had been trained before 1974 and who had been detained with “the rebels” at Mboroma (Ikondja 18.3.2007, pp. 8-9).

²³² Ikondja 18.3.2007, pp. 9-10; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 26-27.

²³³ Ikondja 18.3.2007, pp. 9-10; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 26-27.

commanders had lived in Kongwa during the late 1960s when the camp was often a site of unrest, and some had probably been detained following an incident there in 1971 when a soldier attacked Peter Nanyemba with a knife.²³⁴ By narrating such histories, commanders highlighted common qualities of all PLAN combatants' experiences and of their collective relationship to the political leaders.

Nonetheless, qualities of the camp space created tensions between commanders and common soldiers. Like in other SWAPO settlements, commanders at the front were responsible for the distribution of supplies and, as a result, had first access to them. They also controlled access to locations both inside and outside the camp. In practice, this often meant that commanders took meals in their own mess, where rank-in-file soldiers could not observe what they were eating or drinking, and had private or commander-only accommodations, where they could sleep with whom they wanted in relative privacy. Soldiers generally had to request permission from commanders to leave the camp whereas the more senior commanders could leave their camps at any time. Some senior commanders were also in direct communication with the SWAPO political leaders about military affairs and could make requests to them during trips to Lusaka and during leaders' visits to the front.

Such differences, which would lead to social differentiation between commanders and other soldiers under any circumstances, could be expected to cause tensions under the conditions in which Namibians were living in Zambia in the mid-1970s. Soldiers might mistrust commanders' explanations about weapons and food and covet commanders' privileged access to these commodities. Women, who were also at the front after the

²³⁴ Kaufilwa Nepelilo, Interview 4.8.2007, p. 29-31; Jesaya Nyamu, Interview 2.4.2008, p. 5. For more details about Kongwa and these and other incidents that occurred there, see Chapter 6.

exodus but in relatively small numbers, might also cause conflict as male soldiers envied commanders' access to them and as women begrudged the sexual advances of commanders. Some soldiers also resented the basis on which commanders had been granted their status, which seemed to leave no opportunity for exodus exiles to become commanders themselves.²³⁵ Commanders, for their part, risked their status and related privileges if they identified too closely with soldiers, particularly those who might be construed as inciting insurrection against the SWAPO leaders. Thus, when commanders shared their concerns about living conditions with common soldiers or told them histories of Kongwa, they did so in small groups, away from the parade and any more senior officials who could use these revelations to denounce them.²³⁶

Clearly, camp spatial practices not only normalized national categories, a theme which Liisa Malkki discusses in her work,²³⁷ but also shaped a national leadership structure. Moreover, as this structure became increasingly imperiled, SWAPO leaders and their Zambian government allies tried to use the social divisions produced both by the camp space and the spaces between camps to manage the emerging conflict. For example, in late July or early August 1975, the first groups of exiles to receive military training in Tanzania and the Soviet Union began returning to Zambia, among them members of that first cohort which arrived at Senanga a year earlier.²³⁸ Many expected that when these groups returned, they would be sent to the front to join the other soldiers in the fighting there. However, they were sent to Ruakera, a camp located 30 kilometers outside Mwinilunga in northwestern Zambia. Ruakera lay hundreds of kilometers from

²³⁵ Ikondja 10.6.2007, p. 34.

²³⁶ Ikondja 18.3.2007, pp. 9-10.

²³⁷ Malkki 1995, pp. 137-142.

²³⁸ Ulenga 6.6.2008.

the front and was surrounded by Zambian soldiers, who were responsible for keeping the new trainees there.²³⁹

As it became clear that the new trainees were not to be sent to the front, the issue became a source of discontent among different groups of PLAN combatants. Ben Ulenga, one of the first trainees to return to Zambia, recalls his confusion and dismay when, as the truck carrying him from Tanzania to Zambia approached Lusaka, it turned north towards the Zambian Copperbelt, away from the front.²⁴⁰ Upon arriving at Ruakera, he and other soldiers began to ask the camp commanders about why they were there and when the weapons that had been promised to them by their trainers in Tanzania and the Soviet Union would be arriving.²⁴¹ After staying at the camp for some months doing little more, according to Ulenga, than “playing cards and drinking honey beer,” some of them began to flee from the camp.

Commanders were also dissatisfied with the situation at Ruakera. Ulenga recalls that two days after the trainees' arrived there, Greenwell Matongo, the PLAN Political Commissar, delivered a speech to the new arrivals, in which he explained that he and other commanders had traveled to the Tanzanian-Zambian border to meet the newcomers but had been informed by Zambian officials that the newcomers could not travel to the front. According to Ulenga, in making this announcement to the soldiers, “[Matongo] wasn't making a SWAPO announcement. It was like he was washing his hands [of the

²³⁹ According to Andreas Shipanga, the placement of PLAN combatants at Ruakera resulted from a direct order of the Zambian government to the SWAPO leaders to comply with the détente policy: “The Minister of Defense, called us, the SWAPO leaders, to [him] and gave us orders that [our] guerrillas must be rounded up, must be photographed, must [have] their particulars [recorded] and sent to Ruakera, [in the] north, northwest of Zambia. I was there at the time... [as were] Peter Nanyemba, Peter Mueshahange and Mishake Muyongo” (Shipanga 20.3.2007, p. 2).

²⁴⁰ Ulenga 6.6.2008.

²⁴¹ Ndeulita 10.6.2007; Shikondombolo 17.6.2007; Ulenga 6.6.2008.

situation],” distancing himself from the Zambian government and any others who supported its decision.²⁴²

Eventually, commanders took the Ruakera issue up directly with the SWAPO leadership. On October 28th 1975, the PLAN Chief in Command, the PLAN Political Commissar and a camp commander drafted a document, which appears to have been addressed to the SWAPO leaders, about the détente in general and Ruakera in particular.

They write:

1. The freedom fighters of Southern Africa, Rhodesia, Namibia are sold out by the African brothers to the racist Foster (sic) regime.
2. It is very clear we are being sold out by the Zambians...
3. Our people who were coming from USSR and Tanzania after their training are being kept between Zaire and Angola north from Mongu in Sakanya. They are being surrounded by the army of Zambia...
4. The People's Liberation Army of Namibia will never drop her guns until Freedom and independence is (sic) achieved...
5. Zambia has kept our weapons which have been coming from our friends for many years...
6. We want our trained compatriots to be handed over to us or to be sent back to the respective places from where they were coming, the same applies to our weaponseither (sic) to be handed to us or sent back but not to be kept by the Zambian government... 7....

(a) [We] respect the great leader of SWAPO, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia, the acting vice President, high Officers and Commanders of the People's army. (b) The President of SWAPO, the Vice President as well as all officials if you surrender and want us to drop our guns tell us as soon as possibleand [sic] we will know what to do.²⁴³

²⁴² Ulenga 6.6.2008.

²⁴³ Ailonga Collection, File Names: “SWAPO Office Zambia” and “Political Matters affecting the Chaplaincy,” “Very urgent attention is required to the following points,” 28.10.1975. The document is one of several distributed by a group of PLAN combatants at the front in 1976 to other Namibian exiles. It was probably confiscated from the Central Base office under circumstances that will be described below. The authors do not identify themselves by specific names but rather as “Chief in Commander,” “Political Commissar,” and “Chief Camp Commander.” Four research participants who were at the front in 1975 spoke with me at length about the specific commanders to which these titles refer (Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 23-25). Although Greenwell Matongo and others were identified as possible candidates, no consensus was reached.

The clear focal point of the commanders' criticism here is the Zambian government. However, for grasping the situation in the camps, it is also important to note another object of critique: the SWAPO leaders. This reading of the document is suggested by the context in which it was written; it takes a defiant position vis a vis the Zambian government at the same time that SWAPO was officially toeing the line with its Zambian allies. Also, the authors call for a resolution of the situation at Ruakera, referred to in the document with reference to the nearby border town Sakanya, that involves that PLAN combatants stationed there be handed over “to us” (or “sent back to the respective places from where they were coming”). This “us” contrasts with “you,” which in point seven is clearly used to refer to “the President of SWAPO, the Vice President as well as all officials.” Finally, point seven concludes with a statement that appears to be a threat directed at the SWAPO leaders: “if you surrender and want us to drop our guns tell us as soon as possible and [sic] we will know what to do.”

Despite the upset among various PLAN combatants about the group at Ruakera, however, little or nothing was known about this group by common soldiers at the front, and no official announcements about the *détente* had been made to them. It is only when the space was crossed between where the common soldiers at Ruakera and the front were living that they began to respond to their common predicament in new ways. Several weeks after the commanders submitted their statement to the SWAPO political leaders, the soldiers at Ruakera were transferred to the front. There they were assigned to Central Base, a SWAPO camp located less than 10 kilometers from the Kwando River near where the borders of Zambia, Angola and Namibia converge.²⁴⁴ Central Base was the

²⁴⁴ Engombe et al. 17.6.2007, pp. 9, 13, 32; Ikondja 10.6.2007, p. 20; Ulena 6.6.2008.

home of senior SWAPO commanders and a point from which weapons and supplies were distributed to smaller camps located along the River, where PLAN guerrillas were operating.²⁴⁵ Upon learning that a group had arrived at Central Base, some of these soldiers from the River, who were not involved in any military operations and not closely supervised by commanders at this time,²⁴⁶ made their way to Central Base where they managed to exchange news with the newcomers. Those who had been at the front learned about how their comrades had been held for months at Ruakera, and those from Ruakera learned about the problems soldiers had been experiencing at the front and news from the war in Angola.²⁴⁷

By this time the Angolan liberation movements had been fighting for several months. Although PLAN soldiers had been involved in the combat there, most were part of units that had been operating deep in Angola since early 1975, not soldiers who had been stationed along the Kwando River at Angola's southeastern edge.²⁴⁸ Nonetheless, there were some soldiers who had arrived at the Kwando River who had been sent on missions deep in Angola, especially truck drivers who had been commanded to deliver weapons to various units there. They bore stories of weapons intended for SWAPO being delivered to UNITA and of SWAPO soldiers fighting alongside UNITA – despite the latter's supposed alliance with South Africa.²⁴⁹ These stories must have placed additional pressure on soldier-commander relations. Whereas the commanders tended to speak

²⁴⁵ Engombe et al. 17.6.2007, pp. 9, 13; 29.7.2007, pp. 23-25.

²⁴⁶ Nekondo 24.3.2007; Engombe et al. 17.6.2007, 29.7.2007; Hauwanga 26.7.2007, pp. 12-13.

²⁴⁷ Ikondja 18.3.2007, p. 6; Hauwanga 26.7.2007, pp. 12-13; 3.8.2007, pp. 21-22; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 15-17.

²⁴⁸ Shipanga 1989, pp. 102-103; Shipanga, 20.3.2007, pp. 5-6; D. Shikongo 3.26.2007, p. 2; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, p. 24; Ulenga 6.6.2008.

²⁴⁹ The PLAN Fighter's Declaration," April 1976; "To the President of SWAPO," 23.3.1976; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 15-17; Hauwanga 3.8.2007, pp. 21-22.

favorably of UNITA, alongside which they had been operating in the bush for years before the exodus' arrival, those soldiers recently trained in the Soviet Union or by Soviet influenced instructors in Tanzania had been instructed to see the MPLA as Angola's only legitimate liberation movement. Moreover, while SWAPO and Zambian officials had still made no announcements to soldiers at the front about the détente, the commanders had directly ordered soldiers to deliver weapons to UNITA and to join UNITA units in battle. Blame for these orders could only be placed unequivocally on the commanders themselves.

In February or early March 1976 relations between soldiers and commanders reached a tipping point. As many now tell the story, at Kaunga Mash, a SWAPO camp along the Kwando River, there was a chicken, which, while pecking for food one day, uncovered the edge of a box of weapons from the ground. When PLAN soldiers discovered the box, they called on Zambian military personnel stationed nearby to witness as they unearthed one container after another full of guns and ammunition.²⁵⁰ As research participants explain, the significance of the event was not that a cache of weapons was unearthed *per se*. Hiding weapons in the ground was standard practice for SWAPO guerrillas over many years and the knowledge of the locations of weapons would certainly have been restricted information. Rather, the weapons lit a fuse because of the context of their discovery at a time when soldiers' means to defend themselves were highly inadequate and rumors abounded about SWAPO delivering weapons to

²⁵⁰ E.g. Ailonga Collection, File Names: "SWAPO Office Zambia" and "SWAPO Conflict Zambia," "Why we have to meet directly with the Liberation Committee of the OAU," 23.3.1976, p. 1. One research participant presented an alternate version of the story, maintaining that the chicken story was an alibi created by soldiers at the site to protect his friend, who had, in fact, been cooking over the place where the weapons were located. After a commander warned her not to start a fire there, she began to dig and uncovered the weapons (Ikondja, 18.3.2007, p. 4; Engombe et al. 17.6.2007).

UNITA.

Shortly after the incident at Kaunga Mash, two PLAN commanders were blamed for concealing the arms and detained by the soldiers, and other commanders had begun to flee from their respective camps.²⁵¹ Some of the soldiers proceeded to Central Base where they shared information about these happenings and created an “Investigation Committee,” representing various units across the front, and an “Advisory Committee” to assist it.²⁵² In the process the Investigation Committee became the *de facto* command. As one former soldier put it, “[At that time] Central Base, Kaunga Mash was one house. Because it was under the same leadership... the Committee.”²⁵³ The Committee was charged by soldiers to search for more weapons and to investigate rumors circulating at the front. In turn, it held meetings with soldiers to share information and compiled reports that justified the soldiers' actions, discredited those of their former superiors and called for the party congress. With the commanders gone, the Committee used the typewriter at the Central Base office to print this information and attempted to circulate their documents to other Namibians through sympathetic truck drivers, who were traveling to and from the front.²⁵⁴

Even as camp structures at the front appeared to be breaking down, however, they continued to be used by SWAPO leaders to manage the conflict. Soon after the soldiers arrested the commanders whom they held responsible for hiding the weapons at Kaunga

²⁵¹ “The PLAN Fighter's Declaration,” April 1976, pp. 3-4; Ndeulita 18.3.2007, p. 5; Shikondombolo 17.6.2007, pp. 8-9; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 19, 34. Many of those interviewed spoke of the commanders' arrest as if it occurred immediately after the weapons were uncovered. According to one account, however, the two commanders were actually only arrested days or weeks later when an island on the Kwando River was attacked by the South Africans and the commanders refused to give the soldiers weapons to defend their comrades (Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, p. 34).

²⁵² Hauwanga 26.7.2007, p. 12; Shikondombolo 17.6.2007, p. 10; Engombe et al. 17.6.2007, p. 9.

²⁵³ Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 18, 19.

²⁵⁴ Nathanael 2002, p. 126; Ailonga 22.6.2007, pp. 26-27; Hauwanga 26.7.2007, pp. 22-23; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, p. 18.

Mash, they called on their chief leaders, President Sam Nujoma and Secretary for Defense Peter Nanyemba, to visit them at the front and to account for this and other grievances. It was only when Peter Nanyemba arrived at Central Base, that the camp's chief commander, Haiduwa, fled the camp. According to soldiers at Central Base at that time, Haiduwa fled to save himself, not from the common soldiers but from the political leaders: "He did well because [the leaders] were going to kill him; they were going to say he's the one who was influencing the fighters."²⁵⁵ By the time Nanyemba departed from Central Base, following a confrontational meeting with soldiers at the parade, most of the commanders and some loyal soldiers had assembled themselves at Oshatotwa, the camp for PLAN soldiers undergoing military training in Zambia. Located 20 kilometers northeast of Central Base and about 30 kilometers from the Kwando River, Oshatotwa was the first settlement reached when approaching the front from Lusaka.²⁵⁶ Thus, it was possible for SWAPO trucks to continue to transport food to those living at Oshatotwa, while cutting off supplies to all the other soldiers at the front and impeding their travel into the Zambian interior.²⁵⁷ Under these conditions some soldiers at Central Base slipped away from the camp and gave themselves over to the commanders at Oshatotwa, and, allegedly, physical coercion was used by people on both sides to keep inhabitants inside their respective camps.²⁵⁸

Threatened by the commanders and soldiers assembled under them at Oshatotwa and cut off from contemporaneous happenings in Lusaka and Nyango, the Investigation Committee wrote a series of statements in March 1976 which condemned the

²⁵⁵ Engombe et al. 29.7.2007 p. 26.

²⁵⁶ Engombe et al. 17.6.2007, pp. 9, 13; Ikondja 10.6.2007, pp. 19-20.

²⁵⁷ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 16, "Oh World Hear Our Cries," 7.8.1976; "To the President of SWAPO" 23.3.1976, p. 1; Beukes 14.5.1976, p. 2; Ikondja 18.3.2007, pp. 8, 10.

²⁵⁸ Mwalundange 9.2.2007, p. 5; Ya Otto Report, p. 14; "The PLAN Fighter's Declaration," p. 3.

commanders but withheld judgment on Zambia's and SWAPO's most senior officials. In one document, the Committee offers a history of the soldiers problems with weapons, food and medicine since the first ones arrived at the front in late 1974, concluding that “the commanders who are responsible for these deeds were not acting through ignorance, but that they were collaborating with the enemy.”²⁵⁹ The document continues: “Since the treacherous acts of the commanders of sending cadres into battle without weapons and food and burying arms and ammunition in the ground while the fighters are without arms, we have completely lost faith in them. We reject: A. Any mission assigned by them B. To be led into battle with them.”²⁶⁰ In contrast, the Committee emphasizes that the soldiers have “loyalty and confidence” in SWAPO President Sam Nujoma and that they would like the President “to come to negotiate with the fighters concerning the arrangement of temporary commanders” until new commanders can be appointed at the SWAPO Party Congress.²⁶¹ In another document the Committee refers to Andreas Shipanga and asks the President what he plans to do if Shipanga is, in fact, “collaborat[ing] with the enemy.”²⁶²

When, on April 11, 1976, a group from Central Base traveled to Oshatotwa to meet with people there,²⁶³ the commanders responded with violence. According to members of the group from Central Base, they were disarmed, beaten, stripped to their waist and tied to trees for the night. In the morning, after another group from Central

²⁵⁹ “Why we have...” 23.3.1976, pp. 1-3.

²⁶⁰ “Why we have...” 23.3.1976, p. 4.

²⁶¹ “Why we have...” 23.3.1976, p. 4.

²⁶² “To the President of SWAPO,” 23.3.1976, p. 1.

²⁶³ According to members of the group from Central Base, they walked to Oshatotwa to “explain [their] aim and stand to the 150 comrades and trainees in Oshatotwa.” “The 150 comrades” refers to a group of soldiers led by Commander Katjipuka, who had left Zambia on a mission across the Kwando River in January, prior to when the weapons were uncovered. “Trainees” refers to those who had been undergoing military training at Oshatotwa when the commanders assembled themselves at this camp (“The PLAN Fighters' Declaration” April 1976, pp. 3-4; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, p. 32).

Base had come to check on them, the entire group, consisting now of several hundred soldiers, was lined up, tied one to another, led into the bush and threatened with their lives. Only after the Committee had released the two detained commanders were the soldiers able to return to Central Base.²⁶⁴

“Conflict Resolution” in the International System

By April 1976 SWAPO was openly in conflict. At the main battlefield the majority of soldiers were in rebellion against the camp commanders. At the Old Farm and Nyango, SWAPO leaders had denounced Nathanael and Shipanga, and Nathanael, Shipanga and others had disobeyed the SWAPO leaders by distributing food there. Although SWAPO officials had been using the camps to assert their influence and manage tensions among Namibians, their control over those living in them appeared to be slipping. Whereas SWAPO leaders had managed to retain the allegiance of the commanders and to isolate other groups that were dissatisfied with their leadership, rivals continued to influence camp inhabitants and, at the front, the command structure in most camps had been overturned entirely.

Even at this moment, however, the SWAPO camps remained part of a global political order, most of whose constituent bodies both recognized SWAPO as representative of a Namibian nation and granted certain persons the authority and instruments to govern “their people” in autonomous settlements. This order, referred to by Liisa Malkki as “the system of nation-states,”²⁶⁵ not only affirmed nationalism as the

²⁶⁴ “The PLAN Fighters’ Declaration” April 1976, pp. 3-4; Mwalundange 9.2.2007, pp. 5-6; Shikondombolo 17.6.2007, pp. 3, 4.

²⁶⁵ Malkki 1995, p. 5. In referring to “the system of nation-states” or the international system, I mean to highlight the breath of social relations which constitute and are constituted by “the national order of

common ideology binding those living in SWAPO camps in Zambia, but also a particular hierarchy of persons administering Namibians within this space. It is precisely when the patterns of camp life were dissolving and the authority of the officials administering it were most contested that one can best see the resilience of the international system of which the camps were an integral part.

In April 1976 SWAPO's most immediate ally in the international system was the Zambian government. Despite whatever efforts Zambia had made to curtail PLAN operations during the *détente*, its government remained officially allied to SWAPO. As a member of the OAU, Zambia was part of the collection of nation-states which since 1964 had given SWAPO money to support the training of guerrilla insurgents and since 1965 had recognized SWAPO as Namibians' "sole and authentic" representative.²⁶⁶ This formal status, in turn, structured the personal relationships of Zambian and SWAPO officials. As the OAU's chosen liberation movement in Namibia, SWAPO and its President Sam Nujoma had represented the country at OAU functions that also included Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda and a close friendship had developed between them.²⁶⁷ According to Shipanga, Nathanael and others, as tensions built in late 1975 and early 1976 Nujoma, Kaunda and other leaders began to hold private meetings at friends' homes to discuss how to resolve the conflict.²⁶⁸ The Zambian Army commander Major Mulopa also had a close relationship with some SWAPO leaders. Mulopa had been assigned by the Zambian government to monitor the activities of the liberation

things." As Malkki puts it, "the national order of things... is intended to describe a class of phenomena that is deeply cultural and yet global in its significance" (1995, p. 5).

²⁶⁶ Dobell 1991, p. 35; Leys & Saul 1995, pp. 41-42.

²⁶⁷ Leys & Saul 1995, p. 43.

²⁶⁸ Ailonga Collection, File Name: "Political Matters Affecting the Chaplaincy," Jimmy Amupala, Immanuel Engombe, Mifima Solomon, Filemon Moongo, Sheeli Shangula, Sakaria Shikomba, Andreas Shipanga, Keshii Nathanael, Andreas [Tangeni] Nuukuawo, Martin Taneni, Uyumba Ndeshi, "Statement," 16.6.1976; Nathanael 2002, pp. 112-113.

movements operating in Zambia. He was based in Lusaka at the Liberation Centre, a complex where SWAPO maintained its head office alongside the other movements. According to Tangeni Nuukuawo, a SWAPO official who worked at the Liberation Centre, from September 1974 to April 1976, Major Mulopa was responsible for monitoring weapons dispersed to SWAPO, a task which he fulfilled with only a few SWAPO leaders. Mulopa also listened to and responded to the problems of the liberation movements on behalf of the Zambian government, which in practice meant conversing with President Nujoma and a few other individuals. Nuukuawo emphasizes that he and others within SWAPO who were pressing for a SWAPO Party Congress could not access Major Mulopa.²⁶⁹

In addition to these diplomatic and personal ties, the Zambian government and the Nujoma faction of SWAPO leaders also had overlapping strategic interests. Although SWAPO leaders might have had conflicting responses to the *détente* when they became aware of this policy in 1974 or 1975, as tensions escalated among Namibian exiles, there was considerable reason for those supporting the established order to be concerned about distributing weapons to PLAN combatants. Also, the Zambian government had cause to be concerned about a conflict within SWAPO spilling out of its control. Since March 18, 1975, when Zimbabwe Africa National Union (ZANU) leader Herbert Chitepo was assassinated in a car bomb attack in Lusaka, the Zambian government had been an object of criticism for not having intervened to stop violence within a liberation movement and the government was suspected by some of having perpetrated the violence itself.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ Nuukuawo 23.2.2007, pp. 9-10; 3.7.2008.

²⁷⁰ The rationale for this argument is related to the politics of the *détente*. Chitepo is known to have resisted the Zambian government's attempts to halt ZANU military operations from Zambia. Also, he was a high-ranking official in ZANU, a rival to Kaunda's preferred Zimbabwean liberation movement,

Thereafter a state of emergency was declared in which the Zambian Army was granted extended powers to arrest anyone suspected of threatening national security.²⁷¹

Controversy around “the Chitepo affair” heightened again after March 8, 1976 when the commission of inquiry into Chitepo's assassination submitted its report to President Kaunda. Some saw the report simply as an attempt to clear the Zambian government's name with respect to Chitepo's murder.²⁷²

It is in this context that the Zambian government began to intervene in the SWAPO crisis. Sometime shortly after the Investigation Committee formed and began to distribute documents on behalf of the fighters, it became necessary for SWAPO officials wishing to travel outside Lusaka to request permission from Major Mulopa. This included not only officials wanting to visit Oshatotwa, Central Base and the front, where visits had been restricted by SWAPO prior to the new order, but all SWAPO camps, including Old Farm and Nyango.²⁷³ The Zambian Army then took action to disarm the soldiers at the front. Accounts of the disarming differ, perhaps due to the different methods employed at Central Base and along the Kwando River. Several interviewed at Central Base recall that they were told to hand over their weapons to Zambian soldiers by members of the Investigation Committee, following the Committee's first and only meeting with the Zambian government and OAU representatives in Lusaka in early

ZAPU. Some believed that Chitepo's assassination offered the Zambian government an excuse to crack down on ZANU (Martin and Johnson 1981; Trewelha 1991, pp. 45-47).

²⁷¹ Ailonga Collection, File Names: “Chaplaincy Letters” and “General Files A,” Salatiel Ailonga, “Memorandum,” 24.6.1976.

²⁷² Martin & Johnson 1981, pp. 183-184.

²⁷³ On April 8, 1976 Salatiel Ailonga submitted a request to Major Mulopa to visit Nyango during the Easter holiday “in order to attend spiritually to the Namibians.” This request was rejected. See Ailonga Collection, File Names: “Chaplaincy to Namibians in Exile” and “General File A,” Letter from Salatiel Ailonga to Major Mulopa, 8.4.1976; Ailonga 22.6.2007, p. 34.

April.²⁷⁴ Apparently, the Committee had agreed that soldiers would do this in conjunction with promises from the OAU that soldiers would be given more arms, food and uniforms as well as be able to send another delegation to Lusaka to discuss their concerns in detail.²⁷⁵ Others, at the front indicate that they were disarmed by Major Mulopa and the Zambian Army directly,²⁷⁶ reportedly on the premise that otherwise “we were going to shoot ourselves, like the Zimbabweans did.”²⁷⁷ In both accounts, after the PLAN soldiers were disarmed, Zambian troops were placed around the SWAPO camps to guard and keep the soldiers there.²⁷⁸

Then, on April 21 before dawn, the Zambian army and police raided a series of Lusaka houses inhabited by SWAPO members, from which Andreas Shipanga, Sheeli Shangula and four others were arrested. From there they were transported to Nampundwe, a camp on the outskirts of Lusaka where they had detained members of ZANU suspected in the murder of Herbert Chitepo only months before. Over the coming few weeks, five other SWAPO officials, including Keshii Nathanael and Tangeni Nuukuawo, who had eluded the initial arrest because they were representing SWAPO at a conference in the Hague, were detained and sent to Nampundwe.²⁷⁹ At the same time as the first arrests in Lusaka, a group of forty-eight soldiers representing the Investigation Committee was transported from the front on Zambian trucks on the premise that it was to hold more extensive meetings in Lusaka with the OAU. Instead, the group was

²⁷⁴ Ailonga, “Memorandum,” 24.6.1976, p. 5; Mwalundange 9.2.2007; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 20-21.

²⁷⁵ Hauwanga 26.7.2007, pp. 9,10; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 20-21.

²⁷⁶ Ikondja 18.3.2007, p. 5; Nekondo 24.3.2007, p. 10; Haikali 27.3.2007, p. 7.

²⁷⁷ Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, pp. 20-21.

²⁷⁸ Mwalundange 9.2.2007, p. 5; Ikondja 18.3.2007, p. 7.

²⁷⁹ Ailonga Collection, File Name: “SWAPO Conflict Zambia,” “Our Arrest and the Subsequent Detention;” Shipanga 1989, pp. 109-110; Nathanael 2002, pp. 138-145; Nuukuawo 17.2.2007, p. 4.

transferred onward to Ruakera where they were held under the guard of Zambian soldiers for the next several months.²⁸⁰ In June Salatiel and Anita Ailonga as well as Hans Beukes and his Norwegian wife Adel were deported from Zambia.²⁸¹

The Zambian government was soon forced to legitimate these actions. Shortly after the arrests in Lusaka, Sheeli Shangula and Martin Taneni, another co-detainee, managed to escape from Nampundwe and with the help of sympathetic diplomats to release a statement to the international press.²⁸² In response to this and other rumors that SWAPO members had been abducted, the Zambian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement that “certain SWAPO individuals had been placed under protective custody for their own safety.”²⁸³ On May 14 Andreas Shipanga, whose wife Esme had hired a lawyer on his behalf, submitted an application to the Zambian High Court for a writ of habeas corpus.²⁸⁴ After the case was postponed for several weeks, Zambian Minister of Legal Affairs and Attorney General Mainza Chona presented the state's position that it had no case to answer since Shipanga had, in fact, not been arrested. Later the state changed its position maintaining that Shipanga had been arrested and that the grounds for arrest were legal due the declared state of emergency, under which the legal process only applied to Zambian citizens. Eventually, Shipanga's case was sent to the Zambian Supreme Court

²⁸⁰ Ailonga, “Memorandum,” 24.6.1976, p. 6; “Oh World Hear Our Cries,” 7.8.1976; “PLAN Fighters' Declaration,” April 1976, p. 2. In “The PLAN Fighters' Declaration,” which was written by the soldiers at the front in mid-April 1976, a “Brief Notice” dated, April 23, 1976 narrates how the Committee was deceived and sent to Mwinilunga, the town nearest to Ruakera. The authors of the “Brief Notice” are reportedly two members of the Committee who escaped when the committee passed through Lusaka en route to Ruakera (Hauwanga 26.7.2007, p. 10; Engombe et al. 29.7.2007).

²⁸¹ Ailonga Collection, File Names: “Chaplaincy – Relation to Namibians outside SWAPO” and “Political Matters Affecting the Chaplaincy,” “Two SWAPO Leaders Ordered to Quit Zambia,” Times of Zambia, 7.16.1976; Ailonga, “Memorandum,” 24.6.1976, p. 7.

²⁸² Shipanga 1989, pp. 111-112; Shangula 25.3.2007.

²⁸³ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Section B1, Category 16, “Zambians hold 40 members of Swapo,” The Cape Times, 5.5.1976; “Swapo Split,” Rand Daily Mail, 5.5.1976; “SWAPO men held,” Zambia Daily Mail, 5.5.1976.

²⁸⁴ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Section B1, Category 16, “SWAPO official sues for 'habeas corpus,’” Zambia Daily Mail, 15.5.1976.

where it was successful but by that point Shipanga and the ten others detained with him at Nampundwe had been flown from Lusaka to Dar es Salaam and been imprisoned there. Despite the court's orders to the Zambian government to secure Shipanga's release, these were to no avail. As Chona maintained in a response to the court, SWAPO had informed the Zambian government that Shipanga should remain in Tanzania and “consistent with our obligations as a loyal member of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity, Zambia regards SWAPO as the authentic voice of the struggling masses of Namibia.”²⁸⁵ Later, when Chona explained to the court why it had not approached the Tanzanian government to mediate, he replied “SWAPO had refused to do so.”²⁸⁶ When the Zambian government finally made an official request to the Tanzanian government, the latter's reply stated, “There is no legal basis on which the request for his return could be granted”²⁸⁷ Only in May 1978, after considerable lobbying overseas and after political asylum had been granted to the detainees in several European countries, were Shipanga and the others released.

While the Zambian state wrangled with its courts over Shipanga's right to habeas corpus, SWAPO leaders began to legitimate the former's intervention on their behalf. On May 23, 1976, SWAPO Vice President Mishake Muyongo, standing in for President Sam Nujoma, who along with Peter Nanyemba had left Zambia shortly before the April 21st arrests, established a commission of inquiry. Named after John Ya Otto, the Commission's Chairman, the Ya Otto Commission was charged to: “(A) Investigate into

²⁸⁵ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Section B1, Category 16, “Move to have ex-Swapo official released,” Rand Daily Mail, 6.10.1976.

²⁸⁶ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Section 16, “[illegible]... Hostile Request,” Times of Zambia, 15.10.1976.

²⁸⁷ Ailonga Collection, File Names: “Articles, Cuttings,” and “Political Matters Affecting the Chaplaincy,” “Dar turns down plea for Shipanga return,” Times of Zambia, 8.2.1977.

the circumstances and the surrounding which led to the revolt of SWAPO Cadres between June 1974 and April 1976. (B) Recommend a programme and cause of action to prevent an event of similar nature occurring in the future.”²⁸⁸ As Nahas Angula, who was one of the commissioners, volunteered in our interview: “We had somehow to demonstrate to the [OAU] Liberation Committee, to our host in Zambia that somehow we are in control of the situation. So one way of legitimizing that was to have a commission. I think that's how the Ya Otto Commission came about.”²⁸⁹ The make-up of the commission and its methods of inquiry as detailed in its final report seem to support Angula's point. The commission itself consisted of SWAPO leaders and commanders. It interviewed none of “the dissidents under detention.”²⁹⁰ The committee did visit the Ailongas the week before they were deported from Zambia. Anita Ailonga recalls, “They even came to us... But if you speak against SWAPO, what will they do?... They had a committee of just SWAPO leaders! (laughter) [They were] asking, 'Why are you afraid or angry with the SWAPO leaders?' I mean it was nonsense. What would people dare to say?”²⁹¹

The Ya Otto Commission's Report, submitted June 4, 1976, attributes “the revolt of SWAPO cadres” to several factors. The first part of the report focuses on “enemy intrigues and infiltration.” Therein, it alleges that “contrary to the decision of the National Executive Committee of SWAPO,” which had barred diplomatic relations between the liberation movement and the West German government due to the latter's ties with South

²⁸⁸ Ailonga Collection, File Name: “SWAPO Office” and “SWAPO Conflict Zambia,” Mishake Muyongo, “Commission of Inquiry on the Revolt of SWAPO Cadres at Central Base Zambia and Lusaka.”

²⁸⁹ Angula 13.2.2007, p. 7.

²⁹⁰ Ya Otto Report, p. 19.

²⁹¹ Ailongas 20.3.2007, p. 13.

Africa, “Shipanga in July 1975 had a working luncheon with the West German Foreign Minister, Herr Hans Dietrich Genscher. It was during this luncheon it is believed that Shipanga made a secret agreement resulting in a chartered plane full of food stuffs earmarked for SWAPO arriving at Nairobi at the end of last year, and a ship loaded with food stuffs still docked at Mombasa, Kenya.”²⁹² Two leaders among the soldiers at the front, Karistus Shafooli and Jackson Hampembe, are also alleged to have been collaborators with the enemy. Elsewhere the Ya Otto Report identifies a “power struggle” led by some members of the SYL against SWAPO and a campaign of “lies, exaggerations and malicious rumours” resulting in “misguided elements” as contributing to the crisis.²⁹³ Towards the Report's end, the commissioners also include a section on “official shortcomings and incompetence.” Therein, the authors identify “operating for a very long time with neither a written constitution nor a political programme,” “poor channels of communication and mobilisation from the top down to the bottom,” “absence of the Treasurer General and the consequent lack of a sound centrally controlled system of receiving, expending, accounting and auditing Party funds,” and a “tendency to isolate those considered to be trouble makers with a view to silence or punish them”²⁹⁴ – all complaints previously articulated by Shipanga, those detained with him, and soldiers at the front – as causes of the crisis. Thereafter, the report gives a series of recommendations for how shortcomings and incompetence might be addressed at “an enlarged extraordinary meeting of the Central Committee, Commanders, Party functionaries, Representatives and others to be invited.”²⁹⁵

²⁹² Ya Otto Report, p. 7.

²⁹³ Ya Otto Report, pp.13-14.

²⁹⁴ Ya Otto Report, pp.11-13.

²⁹⁵ Ya Otto Report, p. 18.

When, on July 28 the enlarged Central Committee did meet in Nampundwe those who had been detained there a few months earlier were not among the invited. Drawing from the mandate of a congress convened by SWAPO's internal leadership at Walvis Bay in May,²⁹⁶ SWAPO's exiled leaders retained their positions. At the same time many of the Ya Otto Commission's recommendations were implemented and a new SWAPO constitution and political program were adopted. In conjunction with this meeting, President Nujoma offered his first account of the 1976 crisis to the international press:

This problem came about as a consequence of a well-coordinated, well financed conspiracy by the South African regime and its imperialist allies, especially West Germany, to destroy SWAPO as the only effective fighting force against South African occupation of our country. These enemy forces organized agents within our movement to create dissension (sic) and sabotage, calculated to confuse and demoralize our political and military cadres... Due to the vigilance of our cadres, both in the political and military fronts and with the co-operation of the host Government, namely, the Republic of Zambia, the sinister plot against our movement was crushed. The agents of the South African regime and imperialists have been routed out of our movement and the Central Committee meeting carried out a systematic purge of all the traitors. It has also put in a position of responsibility and authority, tested and reliable cadres in order to forge ahead with the liberation struggle.²⁹⁷

Clearly, Nujoma's story closely resembles that told in "the enemy intrigues and infiltration" section of the Ya Otto Commission. To it he attaches his and others' authority to lead SWAPO as well as justifies the Zambian government's intervention on

²⁹⁶ Although the Walvis Bay Congress addressed more than the election of SWAPO leaders, the external leadership appears to have called for a congress inside Namibia that would re-elect them and bolster their position. The Congress re-elected three leaders: Sam Nujoma as President, Mishake Muyongo as Vice-President and David Meroro, who had fled into exile in late 1975, as Chairman. In turn, it called on these three people to make all other appointments within SWAPO on their behalf (Leys & Saul 1995, p. 74; Erica Beukes, Interviews 10.3.2007, p. 1; 13.5.2008, p. 7).

²⁹⁷ Ailonga Collection, File Names: "SWAPO Conflict Zambia" and "Political Matters Affecting the Chaplaincy," "Statement by Comrade Sam Nujoma, President, SWAPO, to Members of the Press, Monday 2 August, 1976, Lusaka Zambia," p. 2.

these leaders' behalf. In the months that followed this narrative was persuasive enough for SWAPO to retain its supporters abroad²⁹⁸ as well as to increase its following at home. In January the United Nations had passed Resolution 385, which called for UN supervised elections in Namibia to be held by the end of August 1976. Although the South African government refused to permit the United Nations to intervene in its “internal solution” to independence in Namibia, initiated in September 1975 with the Turnhalle Talks, by the end of 1976 the General Assembly had recognized SWAPO as “the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people” and that any talks “discussing the modalities for the transfer of power to the people of Namibia” must be conducted with SWAPO.²⁹⁹

There is ample evidence that SWAPO representatives were drawing from the Ya Otto Commission's account of the conflict in Zambia in mending relationships with long-standing allies at home and abroad at this time. For example, Ben Amathila, SWAPO's Representative to Scandinavia, responded to an article in *Dagens Nyheter*, a Swedish newspaper, by defending the actions of the SWAPO leadership with references to the commission: “It is totally wrong that members of SWAPO detained in Tanzania have been kidnapped by the Tanzanian or Zambian authorities. The transfer was effected at the request of SWAPO when concrete evidence had shown that members of SWAPO connived with or unknowingly assisted hostile forces to bring about chaos and discord within SWAPO.”³⁰⁰ And again, “There has been genuine concern about some issues within SWAPO. But according to a commission of enquiries (sic) set up to investigate the

²⁹⁸ By 1976 SWAPO was receiving aid directly from African, Scandinavian and Eastern bloc governments, Western solidarity movements and humanitarian organizations, and the United Nations.

²⁹⁹ UN General Assembly Resolution 31/146; Katjavivi 1988, p. 100.

³⁰⁰ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 14, File No. 3, Ben Amathila, Letter to the Editor, 19.10.1976.

cause of the problem it was found that the grievances were exploited by people who had different aims and who connived with foreign forces to destroy SWAPO.”³⁰¹ In another instance, President Nujoma addressed a letter to Lutheran church leaders in Namibia³⁰² with a narrative that closely resembles his August 2 press statement, but with added detail about the “reactionary elements” who had made false allegations about “starvation and hunger’ among our cadres, ‘inadequate medical facilities’, ‘misuse of funds’ etc.”³⁰³ According to another source then working inside Namibia and sending reports on morale to SWAPO's London Office, “that [Shipanga's and others' arrest] has even taken place has been passed off among grassroot support as South African propaganda. That seems to be the stock answer to any news, propaganda or otherwise, which does not show SWAPO in a good light.”³⁰⁴ Nonetheless, the source noted that during his December 1976 visit SWAPO internal leader Tauno Hatuikulipi had received a copy of the Ya Otto Report, which might be used to respond to any people that “are still curious and ask what happened.”³⁰⁵

Meanwhile, as these and other ripples of the Ya Otto Report were spreading across SWAPO networks around the globe, nothing was said publicly about the largest scale and harshest detention of Namibians in Zambia. In July 1976 after having remained for months without weapons and under Zambian guard, the soldiers from Central Base

³⁰¹ Amathila, Letter to the Editor, 19.10.1976.

³⁰² Since 1971 when the leaders of Namibia's two largest churches, the ELOC and the ELC had submitted an open letter to South African Prime Minister John Vorster, these churches had been outspoken critics of the South African regime.

³⁰³ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 15, Letter from Sam Nujoma to Dr. Leonard Auala and Dr. De Vries, 1.9.1976, p. 4.

³⁰⁴ Peter Katjavivi, Interview 23.7.2008.

³⁰⁵ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 14, File No. 3, “Report on the morale, problems and needs of SWAPO internal,” p.3.

and the front, numbering 1000 or more,³⁰⁶ were transported on Zambian trucks to Mboroma, a camp in the Kabwe District, northeast of Lusaka.³⁰⁷ Within the next few weeks they were joined there by the forty-eight members of the Investigation Committee who since April had been held at Ruakera.³⁰⁸ Documents which the Committee eventually smuggled out of the camp and the memories of former Mboroma detainees paint a picture of the conditions in which they were living there.³⁰⁹ Guarded by Zambian soldiers “who admit readily that they were following orders as laid down by SWAPO top leaders in Lusaka”³¹⁰ the soldiers were not permitted to move outside the camp nor were outsiders, with the exception of a few SWAPO leaders, able to communicate with those within it. At most, soldiers were given mealie-meal, without salt or cooking oil, once daily, and food was often withheld for days at a time. Commodities such as clothes, blankets, soap and tobacco were scarce, particularly since, as the authors of one document report, soldiers had “sold the rest [of the commodities they] had at the front in order to keep [themselves] alive during the cutting off of food supply.”³¹¹ On August 5, after consulting with the Zambian Captain in charge of Mboroma, soldiers arranged themselves in files to depart from the camp en route to Angola, where they hoped to join PLAN units fighting there. Before passing through the camp gate, the Zambian army

³⁰⁶ In their documents the Investigation Committee usually refers to the soldiers as neighboring “more than 1000.” Colin Leys and John Saul project the number to have been 1600 to 1800 (1994, p. 138; 1995, p. 49).

³⁰⁷ Until shortly before their detention Mboroma had been inhabited by ZANU and ZAPU detainees, imprisoned in conjunction with the murder of Herbert Chitepo (Leys & Saul 1994, p. 138).

³⁰⁸ Engombe et al. 17.6.2007, p. 15; Hauwanga 26.7.2007, p. 15; “Oh World Hear Our Cries” 7.8.2007.

³⁰⁹ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 16, “To the Zambian Government, To the A.L.C. of the O.A.U.” 20.7.1976; “Oh World Hear Our Cries” 7.8.1976; “Oh World Hear Our Cries” 11.8.1976; UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 5, File 8, “Appeal for the Release of over 1,000 Namibians in Detentions in Zambia and in Tanzania” 27.4.1977; Engombe et al. 17.6.2007, 29.7.2007; Haikali 27.3.2007; Hauwanga 26.7.2007, 3.8.2007; Ikondja 18.3.2007, 10.6.2007; Mwalundange 9.2.2007, 16.2.2007; Ndeulita 18.3.2007, 10.6.2007, Phillip Nekondo 24.3.2007; Shikondombolo 17.6.2007.

³¹⁰ “Appeal” 27.4.1977, p. 4.

³¹¹ “Oh World Hear Our Cries,” 7.8.1976.

fired into soldiers' ranks. Four were killed, as many as thirteen wounded.

Weeks later stories about Mboroma filtered into the international press. On October 10, 1976 the overseas edition of The Observer published an article about letters smuggled out of Zambia alleging that “1,000 trained Namibian guerrilla fighters are being illegally held under military guard in Zambia, because of their opposition to the leadership of SWAPO” and that “Zambian guards had opened fire on the prisoners.”³¹² A later article in Africa Confidential, reporting on the same documents written by the Investigation Committee, notes that “the letters contain the first news of the large-scale round-up of SWAPO fighters” and first reached Britain “in the first week of September” although the article offers no explanation as to why the letters were not reported in the press until weeks later.³¹³

Only in May 1977, after two soldiers, Sakarias Elago and Hizipo Shikondombolo, managed to escape from Mboroma and travel across northeastern Zambia and Tanzania to report their stories to a BBC reporter in Nairobi, Kenya³¹⁴ was the Zambian government pressured to intervene. Even then, however, the manner of the detainees' release from Mboroma evaded the critique of foreign journalists and others who might have applied pressure on SWAPO leaders to adhere to any principle other than preserving their own power. Although the travel of two hundred Mboroma inhabitants to Maheba, where they were declared refugees, was covered in the press,³¹⁵

³¹² UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 16, “Guerrillas held in Zambia,” The Observer, 10.10.1976.

³¹³ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 16, “Zambia and SWAPO: Plenty of Strife,” Africa Confidential, 22.10.76.

³¹⁴ Ailonga Collection, File Names: “Chaplaincy – Relations to Namibians outside SWAPO,” “Political Matters Affecting the Chaplaincy,” “Network Africa: BBC African Services,” transcription of a report, 2.5.1977; Ailonga Collection, loose sheet, “Two flee Swapo Prison,” The Guardian, 2.5.1977; Shikondombolo 17.6.2007.

³¹⁵ Ailonga Collection, File Name: “SWAPO Conflict Zambia,” “200 Flee Swapo Camp,” The

the “rehabilitation” of the remaining Mboroma inhabitants was not reported. Detainees were pressured to sign “a confession,” indicating among other things, that they “had been misled by Andreas Shipanga” and that they “had collaborated with the enemy” in a South African attack on Oshatotwa, which had occurred on July 11, 1976 – at roughly the same time the combatants were transported from the front to Mboroma.³¹⁶ Most who signed were sent to Nyango where they lived in a separate location from others in the camp and were stigmatized as “Shipanga's people.”³¹⁷ In 1978 several hundred from this group were allegedly sent to Cassinga where some died in the South African attack.³¹⁸ As for members of the Investigation Committee living at Nyango, they simply “disappeared.”³¹⁹

Guardian, 11.6.1977.

³¹⁶ Engombe et al. 29.7.2007, p. 44; Ndeulita 18.3.2007, p. 6; 10.6.2007, p. 8; Hamutenya 2.4.2008, p. 4. In fact, Hidipo Hamutenya and Moses Garoeb had visited Mboroma and presented a plan for detainees' “rehabilitation” before Elago and Shikondombolo's escape, which the two individuals described to Namibians whom they found living in Nairobi (See “Appeal for the Release,” p.7). It was only after their journey, however, that most detainees at Mboroma rejoined SWAPO on these conditions. As for the attack on Oshatotwa, some soldiers were still at the front when it occurred, but others had been removed by Zambian soldiers from the front shortly beforehand (“To the Zambian Government,” 20.7.1976; Mwalundange 9.2.2007, p. 6; Ikondja 18.3.2007, pp. 11-12; Shikondombolo 17.6.2007, p. 5; Engombe et al. 17.6.2007).

³¹⁷ Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 2.7.2007, p. 29; Steve Swartbooi, Interview 29.1.2007, pp. 12-14; Phillip Shuudifonya, Interview with Keshii Nathanael and Jimmy Amupala published in Nathanael's book, A Journey to Exile, pp. 183-185. Shuudifonya is one of the former Mboroma detainees who was sent to Nyango for rehabilitation. Stephanus and Swartbooi are two other persons who were living in Nyango during a period shortly after the group from Mboroma arrived there.

³¹⁸ Shuudifonya in A Journey to Exile, p. 184.; Hamutenya 2.4.2008, p. 4.

³¹⁹ Shuudifonya offers an account of how people “disappeared” from Nyango (A Journey to Exile, pp. 182-184) as does Kandi Nehova in our interview (7.4.2008, p. 7).

Chapter 4

An Anthropology of “the Spy”

In early November 1976 Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus departed from Namibia for exile.³²⁰ Over the preceding months Stephanus had been mobilizing fellow students at St. Therese in Tses and southern Namibia's other secondary schools to organize a strike of the final exams, thereby marking their rejection of Bantu Education and solidarity with the students of Soweto, South Africa.³²¹ After being expelled from school for these activities, Stephanus made his way, with the help of SWAPO contacts, to a point near the Buitepos border post, where he crossed over to Mamuno, Botswana and registered as a refugee. Over the following weeks he was joined there by about fifty others who had participated in the November strikes, the first large cohort of exiles from southern Namibia.³²² They were transported by SWAPO to Maun and, a few months later, to Zambia, where they underwent military training at Oshatotwa with Stephanus appointed as “group commander.” Later that year Stephanus was selected to attend the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN), a tertiary institution which had been established in

³²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the following story about Joseph Stephanus is derived from two of my interviews with him (29.5.2005; 31.5.2005) and his subsequent editing of these interview transcripts. Although the details of his personal story are his own, the general contours of his military training, his education at UNIN and his detention at Lubango overlap with many other sources that are cited in this chapter.

³²¹ Christian A. Williams, “Remembering St. Therese: A Namibian Mission School and the Possibilities for its Students” (MA Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2002); Remembering St. Therese (Windhoek: Out of Africa, 2003); “Student Political Consciousness: Lessons from a Namibian Mission School,” Journal of Southern African Studies, 30,3, (2004) pp. 539-558.

³²² As noted in the Foreword, “northern Namibia” and “southern Namibia” are used in this dissertation to refer to two regions with distinct geographies and histories.

Lusaka in 1976. Upon completing his studies and a brief internship in Benin, he was sent for military training again, this time outside Lubango, Angola, where, since the late 1970s, SWAPO had maintained a network of camps, including the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre. Thereafter, he was given a position as political information officer for the SWAPO Youth League. First from Lusaka and later from Luanda, he edited the SYL's newspaper and represented the organization in meetings at SWAPO's larger settlements and at conferences organized by the liberation movement's allies around the world.

On March 9, 1985, just after celebrating his thirtieth birthday with friends at his Luanda apartment, Stephanus was arrested by SWAPO. After being held at a SWAPO owned house for several days, he was escorted by two armed guards on one of the liberation movement's supply convoys to Lubango. Almost a week later the convoy arrived and Stephanus was dropped at SWAPO's Karl Marx Reception Centre where he was put in a solitary cell and told to write a statement about his life. After several days soldiers returned to his cell and escorted him to a chamber where he sat in front of a group of PLAN commanders. There Stephanus was informed that in his statement he had forgotten to mention something – his “life as a South African spy.”³²³ When Stephanus denied the accusation, he was stripped naked and his hands were tied to the ceiling. Suspended from the ground, the soldiers beat him with bundles of freshly cut sticks while insulting him for his alleged spying, his education and for his cultural background. He was later sent back to his cell where hot water was applied to his fresh wounds and where he waited until he was led out again for another session.

At some point Stephanus was visited by one of his interrogators, whom he had

³²³ Stephanus 31.5.2005, p. 11.

recognized as the former bodyguard of a friend on the Political Bureau, SWAPO's highest organ.³²⁴ The man came to Stephanus alone and advised him: "You just lie to these guys or they will kill you. Then you will go to where your brothers and friends are."³²⁵ After enduring torture almost daily for a month, Stephanus "confessed" that he was a spy. In turn, he was asked several questions: "Who recruited you? Who was your contact in exile? Who were you trained with? What was your mission?" In his responses, Stephanus told stories which anyone with basic knowledge of his personal history and the places where he had lived in Namibia could easily have contradicted but which his interrogators accepted without question. After the interrogators had transcribed Stephanus' story and Stephanus had signed it, he was taken to one of the "dungeons," rectangular underground holes covered with corrugated iron where other accused spies, including many from his 1976 exile cohort, were detained. For the next four-and-a-half years, Stephanus lived in one or another dungeon administered by SWAPO outside Lubango, where he suffered from poor health and many died from illness. Some of his fellow detainees were also commanded to leave the dungeons and subsequently "disappeared."

Two decades since his release from the dungeons and repatriation to Namibia, Stephanus still reflects on why and he and others were accused of spying and submitted to such brutality in Lubango. The structures shaping national history pull against a thorough inquiry into this topic, however. Those implicated in spy accusations and detentions have hidden themselves behind an official history, according to which a large

³²⁴ The Political Bureau or "Politburo" replaced the National Executive Committee as the body responsible for the day-to-day administration of SWAPO following the liberation movement's Enlarged Central Committee Meeting in July 1976.

³²⁵ Stephanus 31.5.2005, pp. 11-12.

number of South African spies infiltrated SWAPO in exile during the early 1980s and the liberation movement responded to this threat with appropriate measures. Others who benefit from SWAPO's patronage tend to parrot the accuracy of these claims while those aligned with opposition parties have used national leaders' involvement in human rights abuses in Lubango as a way to undermine Namibia's ruling party. Ex-detainees, in turn, must choose between the risks of publicly challenging national history and accepting it in order to ingratiate themselves with their powerful accusers.³²⁶ These social dynamics push Namibians to narrate stories focused on who was or was not a spy and on who was or was not responsible for falsely accusing others of spying – stories through which they can make claims on other members of a national community. And yet, as Stephanus' narrative suggests, there was often no relationship between how “spies” were identified in Lubango and attempts to gather verifiable evidence of these persons' collaboration with the enemy.³²⁷ Moreover, many exiles, including those directly involved in spy detentions, seem to have thought that, among those detained, were people who could cause harm to Namibians through spying. If we accept these points, grasping what happened to Stephanus and others in Lubango requires more than information about the physical spies or security operatives involved. It requires knowledge of “the spy,” an invisible power through which events were explained and cruelty legitimated in a national community.

This chapter examines “the spy” from the perspective of the SWAPO camps.

³²⁶ The ways in which former “spies” and others marginalized through their experiences in exile negotiate their relationship to other Namibians and the stakes involved are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

³²⁷ This point is supported not only by my research detailed below but also by the secondary literature on SWAPO's Lubango detentions: Paul Trewelha, “A Namibian Horror.” *Searchlight South Africa*, 4 (1990), pp. 78-93; Colin Leys & John S. Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword* (London: James Currey, 1995), pp. 53-58, 63-65; Justine Hunter, *Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia: Umgang mit schweren Menschenrechtsverletzungen der Ära des bewaffneten Befreiungskampfes, 1966 bis 1989* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2008), pp. 92-107.

Drawing from anthropological literature on witchcraft, above all Adam Ashforth and Harry West's work,³²⁸ I consider qualities of the camps which made spying a plausible and powerful explanation for the misfortunes which people could experience while living in this space. There, where inhabitants were constantly at risk of South African violence, SWAPO officials drew from their control over public discourse to focus attention on dangers emanating from outside the camp, which they were authorized to address as national representatives. At the same time, they played off of the ambiguities surrounding who spies were and how they accomplished their work to heighten fears and direct them towards people already marginalized inside camps. The chapter then applies these observations to circumstances in Lubango during the 1980s, considering how “the spy” became an agent which SWAPO officials could use to coerce and eliminate rivals but which no one could ever entirely control. In this manner, I focus discussion of Stephanus' and others' experiences away from the actions of a few persons and towards a kind of social space in which fears are likely to be expressed and may be abused in particular ways.

“The Notion of [Spying] explains Unfortunate Events”

In anthropology the study of misfortune and its social meaning has long been associated with E.E. Evans-Pritchard and his ethnography Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande.³²⁹ Therein, the Oxford scholar argues that when the Azande attribute certain happenings to witchcraft, they are not practicing bad science, as many Europeans

³²⁸ Adam Ashforth, Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Harry West, Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

³²⁹ Evans-Pritchard, E. E. Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937).

presumed, but rather responding to questions about life's "unfortunate events" that extend beyond the pale of scientific inquiry. To illustrate this point, Evans-Pritchard considers the example of a collapsing granary.³³⁰ When a granary collapses, "every Zande knows that termites eat the support in course of time and even the hardest woods decay after years of service." If, however, people are sitting beneath the granary at the moment of its collapse and are injured, the event raises questions that evade science: "Why should these particular people have been sitting under this particular granary at the particular moment when it collapsed?" Once it is accepted that witches exist and may cause such happenings, a "belief" whose logic is confirmed by all aspects of Azande life, witchcraft may provide a coherent explanation for why the granary collapsed on certain persons at a certain time. And whereas the reader may see "coincidence in time and space" rather than witchcraft in the granary's collapse, the broader questions it raises about why bad things happen to good people are fundamentally human and should be studied, therefore, from an anthropological perspective.³³¹

Evans-Pritchard's contribution to understanding witchcraft and other cultural expressions which colonial powers used to render Africans less rational, and therefore less human, than their European counterparts is not disputed here. Nonetheless, by depicting witchcraft as a "belief," he cast a long shadow which has obscured other possible approaches to the study of this subject and misfortune more generally. As Adam Ashforth notes in his recent work, statements like those made by Evans-Pritchard and others about belief tend to assume that a given notion is part of a logical system of ideas

³³⁰ Evans-Pritchard 1937, pp. 18-32.

³³¹ As Max Weber famously argued, it is this question, "the question of theodicy," to which all religious thought responds as it explains the imperfections of a divinely ordered world (The Sociology of Religion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1922, 1993), pp. 138-150).

shared by a distinct “culture.”³³² And yet contemporary urban South Africans, about whom Ashforth writes, have no common body of thought about witches but do attribute misfortune to, and actively try to avoid, witchcraft. In such circumstances, it is not helpful to think about witchcraft belief as such but rather “the reasons that people accept as plausible the general possibility of occult action.”³³³ And to understand these reasons, Ashforth emphasizes, it is necessary to examine daily life in the townships, where most urban South Africans live.

Ashforth's critique of Evans-Pritchard suggests new possibilities not only for the study of witchcraft but also for social responses to misfortune generally. By describing witchcraft as a belief, Evans-Pritchard had not only considered this phenomenon from a narrow perspective, as Ashforth emphasizes; he had also cordoned off the study of topics that might be characterized as beliefs from other explanatory frameworks which could never be thought of entirely as systems unto themselves. Among these frameworks is the notion of spying. Although few would deny that spies exist as physical entities in the world, spying may be used to account for misfortune without any verifiable evidence that the persons given that label are, in fact, spies. Certainly this use of “the spy” was common within the Namibian exile community considered here. With the possible exception of instances in which SWAPO officials collected verifiable evidence about enemy collaborators, exiles' knowledge of South African spies relied on the mere possibility that they could exist. From this perspective the difference between witchcraft and spying is one of idiom rather than mode of thought or social function.³³⁴

³³² Ashforth 2005, p. 123.

³³³ Ashforth 2005, p. 123.

³³⁴ In his essay on “African Traditional Thought and Western Science,” Robin Horton makes a similar point, arguing that there is a fundamental similarity between all attempts to provide causal context for

Ashforth's intervention also has other ramifications for how we conceive human responses to life's "unfortunate events." If explanations for misfortune are not part of separate systems of belief, it follows that the idioms through which they are expressed may inter-penetrate and alter the qualities of one another. It is this point which Harry West develops in Part II of Kupilikula, his ethnography of "the invisible realm" among people on the Mueda Plateau in northern Mozambique. As West highlights, Muedans have encountered a variety of exogenous people and ideas over the past century which have attempted to eliminate *umwavi*, an endogenous sorcery discourse, and yet, repeatedly Muedans have incorporated these ideas into their own and seen in them novel possibilities for *umwavi* itself. West's analysis of Muedans' participation in the liberation movement FRELIMO and Mozambique's war for national independence is particularly striking for our discussion here. As he notes, FRELIMO officially referred to "sorcery belief" as a form of "false consciousness" that must be overcome in a liberated Mozambique. Nonetheless, Muedans repeatedly interpreted FRELIMO officials' powerful forms of knowledge, especially their capacity to identify and capture people deemed responsible for enemy attacks in and around the FRELIMO bases where many Muedans lived, as evidence of their leaders' *umwavi* powers.³³⁵ Such examples highlight the need to study witchcraft and spying not as distinct and contradictory idioms distinguishable by their "supernatural" and "natural" modes of explaining misfortune, but as inter-penetrating discourses which may jointly shape how people respond to the

happenings that are not directly observed although each must draw from a "particular theoretical idiom" to explain causation (Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science," in Bryan R. Wilson, ed. Rationality (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 35-40). In making this point, however, Horton, like others who have debated the rationality of African thought, assumes that distinct systems of thought, like "African" and "Western," exist.

³³⁵ West 2005, pp. 150-163.

unfortunate events they encounter in new social settings.

For Namibian exiles, the setting which shaped the misfortunes they experienced and their responses to them was the camp. This anthropology of the “the spy” begins, therefore, by considering the circumstances in which camp inhabitants lived and the kinds of people and discourse which could command authority within this space.

Explaining Misfortune in the Camps

To understand the power of “the spy” among Namibian exiles, it is important, first, to highlight that the SWAPO camps were an insecure space in which there was much fear of external violence. Many of those who entered the camps had been harassed, imprisoned or tortured by South African officials before departing from Namibia, and all came from a country in which physical violence was inflicted on blacks who openly resisted the apartheid government. Exiles also encountered or risked encountering violence during their journey abroad when they escaped over the Namibian border and, in many cases, traveled through combat zones. For those who had passed through considerable danger prior to reaching the camps, these settlements may have seemed relatively secure, especially those located some distance from the front. And yet inhabitants knew that as members of SWAPO living in exile, they were at risk. SWAPO camps were attacked by South Africa, including those with a high percentage of people without military training located far from the front-line, such as Cassinga.³³⁶ And from 1976 SWAPO camps located in Angola were also targeted by South Africa's ally UNITA as were the convoys which carried people and supplies between SWAPO's Angolan camps.

³³⁶ For details about Cassinga and the attack on the camp, see Chapter 2.

Many of these misfortunes that Namibians experienced before and after arriving in the camps could be attributed to spying. Some events such as enemy surprise attacks and ambushes particularly lent themselves to spy explanations because of the insider knowledge of SWAPO that seemed necessary for their implementation. Namibian exiles would be unlikely to discount the possibility that South Africa had a hand in any setbacks which they encountered, however. Many had personal experiences with or deep suspicions of people in their home communities who had informed the police about SWAPO meetings or about PLAN soldiers infiltrating the northern part of the country.³³⁷ Thus, the notion that the South Africans were sending agents to inflict harm on Namibians living in SWAPO camps would have seemed both plausible and likely.

The impetus to attribute misfortunes to “the spy” did not come solely from dangers emanating outside the camp, however, but also from those inherent to it. The hierarchical social order of camp life made those on its bottom rungs vulnerable. All were to follow the orders of the camp commanders and, when they were visiting, the political leaders. Questioning orders from these officials was frowned upon on the premise that to do so threatened Namibians' unity of purpose in resisting South African rule. There was generally no place for appealing to personally held moral values or rights in resisting camp authorities' commands. And officials controlled the distribution of food, shelter, clothing, medicine and weapons – all essential resources for survival and for conducting the war. These differences could cause resentment between SWAPO officials and rank-in-file members, and on several occasions, such as those considered in the previous chapter on SWAPO from 1974 to 1976, erupted in open conflict and attempts to alter the

³³⁷ In her MA thesis, “Our Memories of the Liberation War: How Civilians in Post War Northern Namibia Remember the War,” (University of the Western Cape, 2003) Martha Akawa specifically examines suspicions and accusations about South African collaborators in Ovamboland.

liberation movement's leadership.

Under these conditions SWAPO officials had strong impetus to project exiles' fears onto "the spy." By attributing misfortunes in the camps to South African spying, officials focused attention on a threat to national security which they, as the nation's representatives, were authorized to address, and away from inequalities and conflicts in the camps, which might undermine their authority and endanger their lives. In turn, they used the fear of spies to coerce other Namibians to align with their will and to eliminate rivals for power in a national community. In the process, "the spy" became a weapon in power struggles occurring within the camps even as it presented itself always as a danger originating outside of them.

To understand how SWAPO officials projected exiles' fears onto spies, the camp is, once again, an important context. Through announcements at the daily parade, officials could shape a discourse on spying among members of an exile community, all of whom interfaced in the camp space. Generally SWAPO officials spoke about South African agents who had been sent into exile to undermine SWAPO and endanger Namibians.³³⁸ Exiles, in turn, were exhorted to be vigilant and report suspicious behavior to camp authorities so that all might avoid future catastrophes, especially a "second Cassinga."³³⁹ In some instances, announcements focused on specific individuals who were accused of spying, including high ranking SWAPO officials and others known to

³³⁸ See, for example, Hans Pieters, Interview 9.9.2007, p. 29; Steve Swartbooi, Interview 21.9.2007, p. 21; Oiva Alikie Angula, "Brutalised Innocence: The turns of destiny and tyranny," (unpublished manuscript, given to the author in 2008), p. 64; "Comrade President Attends SWAPO Camps," The Combatant, 2, 4 (November 1980), pp. 4-5; "President Nujoma Visits SWAPO Camps," The Combatant, 2, 10 (May 1981), p. 7.

³³⁹ "SWAPO President Visits Southern Angola," The Combatant, 3, 2 (September 1981), p. 4. Many research participants mentioned the South African attack on Cassinga in connection with spying, including Sam Nujoma himself (Interview 4.3.2008, pp. 4-5).

smaller groups of exiles.³⁴⁰ At the same time, officials encouraged exiles to imagine spies' hidden and maleficent powers, the possibility that they might be anywhere and do anything that could cause harm to SWAPO and Namibia.

Much of the specific content of officials' speeches played off of pre-existing sources of suspicion among camp inhabitants. Significantly, most individuals accused of spying were minorities in an exile community that consisted predominantly of Oshiwambo-speakers from rural, northern Namibia.³⁴¹ In the context of fear prevailing in the camps, cultural differences might easily become sources of mistrust. Several research participants indicated that they felt mistrusted by "people from the North," who interpreted what participants saw as benign questions or reasonable grievances as signs of disrespect. Urban, educated women were particularly likely to violate prevailing social taboos if they asked questions to older men or looked men directly in their eyes when

³⁴⁰ Three high ranking SWAPO officials were frequently associated with spying: Mishake Muyongo, Andreas Shipanga and "Castro." Muyongo was the Vice-President of SWAPO when he and several other officials from the Caprivi Region were dismissed in 1980 on the premise that they were trying to revive the Caprivi African National Union (CANU) which had merged with SWAPO in 1964. Shipanga was SWAPO's Secretary of Information at the time he was arrested in 1976. The Ya Otto Report held him and his "enemy intrigues" responsible for "the rebellion" in 1976 (See Chapter 3). "Castro" is the *nom de guerre* of the first Deputy Commander of the South West African Liberation Army, Leonard Philemon Nangolo. Soldiers began to suspect Castro of spying after he infiltrated Namibia and returned to SWAPO in 1966. Although Castro later confirmed that he, like others in his group, had been captured by the South African Police, how he managed to secure his release while others were detained and tried in the 1967-1968 Terrorism Trial remains a matter of contention (See, for example, Leonard Philemon Nangolo, "My History," 1994, gift to the author and Helao Shityuwete, Never Follow the Wolf (London: Kliptown Books, 1990), pp. 124-130, 141-142). In 1969 Castro was arrested by the Tanzanian government where he remained until 1986 when the Norwegian government granted him political asylum. To see how Muyongo, Shipanga and Castro could be linked to one another in a seamless narrative of South African spying see "Racist Hopes Surviving on Malicious Propaganda," The Combatant, (February 1986), pp. 10-11.

³⁴¹ It should be further noted that many Oshiwambo-speaking, northern Namibians had never traveled outside the Ovamboland region to southern Namibia, where people spoke different languages and lived in segregated townships in towns and cities. The majority of those had lived outside Ovamboland would have been adult men traveling to work in the South, and workers' access to those living there would have been tightly regulated by the contract labor system, which required workers on contract to live separately from local people and restricted movements outside the compounds or farms to which they were assigned. Thus, Ellen Namhila was not the only exile to discover upon first arriving in a SWAPO camp that "there were other language groups in Namibia besides Oshiwambo to which I belonged," (The Price of Freedom (Windhoek: New Namibia Books, 1997), p. 12).

they spoke.³⁴² Some southern Namibians were ostracized because of the way they responded to camp food, which often consisted of porridge, garnished with beans or kapenta, components of traditional diets in the North but not in the South.³⁴³ Race too may have been a source of mistrust. Several interviewees suggested that they were not entirely accepted by other exiles because of their skin color, which in the case of “Namas,” “Coloureds” and “Basters” tended to be considerably lighter and less “African” than most Namibians.³⁴⁴ As individuals from minority groups were identified as spies, their cultural practices and racial features also become associated with spying and used to justify the persecution of those who possessed them.

Language appears to have been a particularly significant marker of difference and source of suspicion in the camps. Although officially the language of SWAPO as an organization and its proposed language for independent Namibia was English, most exiles had little exposure to English before traveling abroad. Therefore, in day to day conversation, Oshiwambo was primarily used. Those who felt left out of conversation because they could not speak or understand Oshiwambo well or who sought the company of others with whom they could communicate more easily often associated with people who spoke their mother tongue. Such practices, like when people speaking the same language gathered around one another at the time of eating a meal or moved from one section of a camp where they were assigned to live to another to meet with their same-language friends, could result in accusations that these groups were being “tribalist.”³⁴⁵ If

³⁴² Emma Kambangula, Interview 15.2.2007.

³⁴³ E.g. Steve Swartbooi, Interview 29.1.2007, p. 12.

³⁴⁴ “Nama,” “Coloured” and “Baster” are categories that were used by the South African government to classify Namibia's inhabitants and which Namibians often use to identify themselves. As suggested, they all have a racial component.

³⁴⁵ Pauline Dempers, Interview 23.5.2007; Pieters 9.9.2007; Stephanus 31.5.2005.

groups of exiles spoke in Afrikaans, the lingua franca in southern Namibia, they were particularly susceptible to suspicion since many northern Namibians did not speak the language and had come to associate it with the Afrikaner colonizer.³⁴⁶ Particular groups of people were also associated with derogatory terms in Oshiwambo based on their use of language. For example, Stephanus and others who spoke Khoekhoegowab were frequently referred to as “*kwangara*,” a word used to refer to “Bushmen” and others who spoke Khoisan languages.³⁴⁷ Those who spoke Oshiwambo in a manner considered improper by people raised in the North might be called “*mbwiti*,”³⁴⁸ a term for Ovambos who had settled in the South and whose Oshiwambo had incorporated elements of Afrikaans and other languages to which they had been exposed there. Accused spies report that during their interrogations and detentions in Lubango they were often mocked for being either “*kwangara*” or “*mbwiti*.”

SWAPO officials played off of other sources of camp inhabitants' fears during their parade announcements as well. In describing how spies accomplished their work, officials spoke of items hidden inside spies' bodies which were used by them to transmit messages to the South Africans or to kill Namibians directly. Scars on the body and large breasts were identified as locations where people could hide radios and send messages to the enemy.³⁴⁹ On at least one occasion it was announced that a spy had a hollow wooden leg, which appeared to look like a normal leg while the man did his activities during the day, but which he would dismantle at night, using the radio inside to communicate with

³⁴⁶ E.g. Pieters 9.9.2007, p. 27.

³⁴⁷ Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus and Steve Swartbooi, Interview 25.4.2009.

³⁴⁸ The word “*mbwiti*” literally refers to “weeds” and connotes impurity.

³⁴⁹ Kambangula 15.2.2007, p. 12; Pieters 9.9.2007, p. 28

his South African colleagues.³⁵⁰ Weapons might also be hidden in or near the body, such as a pistol attached to the head of a woman whose hair was particularly long and wavy.³⁵¹ Some women were also alleged to have inserted poisoned razor blades in their vaginae. After enticing a SWAPO official to have sex, the official's penis would be cut in the act of intercourse and he would be poisoned or bleed to death.³⁵²

Parallels between such claims made about spies in the SWAPO camps and ethnographic literature on witchcraft in northern Namibia are striking. As Maija Hiltunen details in her study of Finnish missionary writings on witchcraft (“*uulodhi*”) in Ovamboland during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the evil power (“*iigwanga*”) possessed by a witch (“*omulodhi*”) was understood to reside physically in the witch's body.³⁵³ Although claims about the content of this substance and its location varied, it was sometimes said to be located in a small bag in a woman's breast.³⁵⁴ The methods by which witches did their work were mysterious and always enacted at night.³⁵⁵ It was thought, however, that they did not go to the persons whom they bewitched directly but rather communicated with the ancestral spirits (“*aathithi*”) who were then sent to those whom witches wanted to harm.³⁵⁶ One source indicates that a witch “is able to release her arms, legs and head from her body when falling asleep” and in the morning “joins them

³⁵⁰ Nambinga Kati, Interview 8.12.2007, p. 28.

³⁵¹ Kati 8.12.2007, p. 28.

³⁵² Kambangula 15.2.2007, pp. 12-13; Kati 8.12.2007, pp. 28-29; Pieters 9.9.2007, pp. 28-29; Stephanus 31.5.2007, p. 10; S. Swartbooi 21.9.2007.

³⁵³ Maija Hiltunen, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Ovambo* (Helsinki: Suomen antropologinen seura, 1986). Hiltunen worked for the Finnish Missionary Society in Ovamboland from 1958 to 1962 and from 1964 to 1966. Her text draws primarily from material collected and written by Finnish missionaries since the 1870s when they first began to work in the Ovamboland region. See also *Good Magic in Ovambo* (Helsinki: Suomen antropologinen seura, 1993).

³⁵⁴ Hiltunen 1986, pp. 44-45.

³⁵⁵ Hiltunen 1986, pp. 59-67.

³⁵⁶ Hiltunen 1986, p. 61.

together becoming a whole human being again.”³⁵⁷ Another notes that witches may “shoot a small magical arrow” or “inject poisons” into their victims.³⁵⁸ Although both men and women could be witches, women were generally seen as “better mediums” for harnessing the power of the ancestral spirits for harming living men than men were themselves.³⁵⁹

It would be misleading to infer from Hiltunen's research that Namibians accepted what SWAPO officials said about spies from the parade because the content of their messages confirmed what they already “believed” about witchcraft. In fact, several research participants who recounted officials' claims about how spies did their work mentioned these incidents to register their skepticism. One said that he doubted the claims because neither the radios and weapons nor the bodies of the spies into which they were allegedly inserted were ever shown to people at the parade.³⁶⁰ Another noted that the officials who were killed through hidden weapons were never identified.³⁶¹ They and others questioned whether it was biologically possible for spies to carry radios and weapons inside their bodies, drawing in some cases from scientific theories which they had learned in school to discredit these claims.³⁶² As for the SWAPO officials making the announcements at the parade, they did not refer to witchcraft directly in their speeches but rather used a distinct terminology for spying. When addressing gatherings in Oshiwambo, the words “*espy*,” “*omatuma*,” (“someone who has been sent”) and

³⁵⁷ Hiltunen 1986, p. 62.

³⁵⁸ Hiltunen 1986, p. 63.

³⁵⁹ Hiltunen 1986, pp. 24-25, 46. It also should be noted that in some Southern African witchcraft traditions, witches may harm their victims through sexual intercourse by means of a “*tokoloshe*,” a familiar which works on the witch's behalf. Hiltunen, however, does not identify this as one of the powers of owls, the Ovambo familiar (pp. 65-67).

³⁶⁰ Kati 8.12.2007, p. 28.

³⁶¹ Stephanus 31.5.2007, p. 10.

³⁶² Pieters 9.9.2007, p. 29.

“*omapuli*” (“traitor”) were generally used.³⁶³ On the far fewer occasions when officials referred to “*uulodhi*”/“witchcraft,” they appear to have done so primarily to denounce it as superstition. As the authors of one particularly urgent report to the SWAPO President noted, efforts to educate the rank-in-file in SWAPO's 1976 political program had been impeded because “a very large section of our cadres... are deeply stopped [sic] in superstition (the numerous cases of with-craft) [sic].”³⁶⁴

But who could afford to discredit or discount the claims which SWAPO officials made about spies, especially if their powers might overlap with those of witches? As suggested, witches were sources of fear among people living in the camps. While cases of witchcraft uncovered in this research involved breaches of social taboo involving small groups of people, witchcraft accusations sometimes focused on marginal figures in the exile community, the same people who also bore the brunt of spy accusations.³⁶⁵ By describing spies in a manner that resonated with an Oshiwambo discourse on witchcraft, SWAPO officials simultaneously played off of exiles' fears and affirmed officials' authority to confront agents who were, first and foremost, a threat to a national community. Moreover, an explicit discourse on witchcraft, with its connotations in the West of superstition, could only be a liability to SWAPO as it represented itself to an international community, whereas spying could be used abroad to justify all manner of

³⁶³ According to one research participant, Jackson Mwalundange, the use of these words evolved during the years Namibians lived in exile. In 1974 when Mwalundange entered Zambia in the exodus, leaders were referring primarily to “*omatuma*,” a word which all Oshiwambo speakers knew and did not have negative connotations. Some people, especially those who liked to mix English with Oshiwambo, might refer to a “spy” or “*espy*.” Only later, in the 1980s did people begin to use “*omapuli*,” a term which became associated with the spies detained in Lubango specifically (Interview 23.4.2009).

³⁶⁴ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 3, File 1 “Report to the President: Office of the Administrative Secretary,” 1977.

³⁶⁵ E.g. Namhila 1997, pp. 45-47; Swartbooi 29.1.2007, pp. 15-17. In one particularly striking instance, an interlocutor narrated a story about an Ovambo man from the North accusing an Ovambo woman from the South of witchcraft because, after going to bed with him, the woman had offended him by “touching him on his genitals.” Thus, “the *mbwiti* woman,” one of the chief objects of the spy discourse, had been declared a witch.

happenings in an internationally recognized liberation movement.³⁶⁶

It must also be noted that even the most skeptical exile could not easily question what was said about spies from his or her location in a camp. Classrooms in camps, such as those where commissars taught scientific socialism during the late 1970s and '80s, were likely to corroborate claims about spies dispersed at the parade.³⁶⁷ Some persons had access to radio, but ability to listen to news was impaired by the location of the camps themselves, which were often far from the urban centers, by the language skills of inhabitants and by the suspicions of other camp inhabitants.³⁶⁸ The socially acceptable radio station which exiles often could access and understand was SWAPO's Voice of Namibia, which, predictably, confirmed claims made in the camps about spies.³⁶⁹ Few exiles would have had the opportunity to hear the perspectives of the "spies" themselves after they had been accused. Although several who lived in SWAPO camps during the mid-1970s reported instances in which accused spies were tied to gates and trees in places where all camp inhabitants could see them,³⁷⁰ most were taken to separate camps. There they lived apart from the rest of the exile community with the exception of the commanders and soldiers who were assigned to guard people in these camps. The locations where accused spies were moved were not publicly announced, and free movement inside and outside of SWAPO camps was generally restricted to a few senior

³⁶⁶ For more details, see Chapter 5.

³⁶⁷ It should be noted that SWAPO had been using the term "commissar" to refer to the deputy commander in a camp since the 1960s. These commissars, like Darius "Mbolondondo" Shikongo discussed in the chapter on Cassinga, were often responsible for administering all manner of activity in the camp, not political education specifically. In contrast, during the late 1970s commissars became associated with a more specific role in camp life. Most were trained in scientific socialism and other curricula determined by SWAPO's Soviet allies and were appointed to teach classes in camps. By the late 1970s most camps had an appointed commissar and some, like the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre, had several of varying ranks (Hans Pieters, Interview 21.5.2007, p. 8).

³⁶⁸ E.g. Swartbooi 21.9.2007, p. 24.

³⁶⁹ E.g. Swartbooi 21.9.2007, p. 21.

³⁷⁰ E.g. Ndamono Ndeulita, Interview 18.3.2007, p. 2; Phil Ya Nangoloh, Interview 19.2.2007, p. 4.

officials. It was also not unusual for people to “appear and disappear” from camps. Camp residents rarely knew where they were going when they were commanded to leave a given settlement, and information about other exiles' location was often unavailable even to their closest family members.

All this movement in and out of the SWAPO camps did open camps to knowledge exchanges occurring outside of them. Especially when SWAPO members returned from assignments abroad to one of the camps, there was opportunity to share information between Namibians living primarily within the camps and SWAPO political leaders and students living primarily outside of them, where information tended to flow more freely.³⁷¹ Nonetheless, any knowledge that people did have about spies that contradicted official claims was constrained by the fears which surrounded “the spy.” Questioning claims could be seen as an affront to the authority of figures making them and mark one as a potential spy, especially if SWAPO planted spies to identify those who asked subversive questions as some suspected.³⁷² In such a context, like the circumstances in which people gossip more generally,³⁷³ it was necessary that any exchange of information relating to spies and varying from the official discourse occur within a group of people who trusted one another. It is not surprising, therefore, that when research participants mentioned conversations that they had with others about spies, these were almost always held with people they knew before entering exile or with whom they shared a common language and ethnic identity. Even instances in which they mentioned speaking privately

³⁷¹ For one example of how information could flow among the broader exile community see the section of Chapter 5 on “The Committee of Parents.”

³⁷² Immanuel Engombe, Junius Ikondja, Ndamono Ndeulita, Hizipo Shikondombolo, Interview 29.7.2007; Swartbooi 21.9.2007, p. 38.

³⁷³ Ashforth 2005, p. 66; Max Gluckman, “Gossip and Scandal,” *Current Anthropology*, 4, 3 (1963), pp. 307-316.

with senior SWAPO officials about spy accusations, these conversations usually occurred on tribal lines.³⁷⁴ Counter-evidence and alternative theories about spying could, therefore, travel along personal networks shaped by region, language and ethnicity, but were unlikely to extend outside this range.

Under these circumstances, exiles might privately question aspects of the spy discourse, but they were unlikely to dismiss its content altogether. In turn, “the spy” could become an agent with powers of its own. “Spies” influenced to whom exiles spoke, what they said and where and how they said it. They encouraged people to mistrust others with different cultural practices and racial features and to entertain ideologies derived from witchcraft that might explain how the enemy was threatening people's lives. They changed forms as individuals imagined spies being places and doing things which only those persons could conceive. And, as we shall see, they crossed social boundaries, threatening or attacking officials who had done much to heighten the fear of spies and make dubious accusations in spies' names.

Lubango and the 1980s

Although “the spy” was part of the lives of all Namibians living in SWAPO camps during the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the purge which enveloped Joseph Stephanus and others in Lubango should also be understood in terms of a more specific history. Following the coup in Portugal on April 25, 1974, Angola became accessible to Namibians fleeing their country of origin for exile and PLAN combatants returning from exile to infiltrate Namibia. In March 1976, after South African forces retreated from

³⁷⁴ Andries Basson, Interview 30.5.2007, pp. 15-16, 21-22; Kandi Nehova, Interview 7.4.2008, pp. 14-15; Pieters, 21.5.2007, p. 1; 9.9.2007, p. 27; 11.14.2007, p. 36; Stephanus 31.5.2005.

Angola following the Angolan Civil War, SWAPO pledged its allegiance to the MPLA, establishing an office in Luanda and a network of camps in southern Angola with the support of the Angolan government.³⁷⁵ For the next several years PLAN combatants operated out of a variety of mobile camps near the Angolan-Namibian border from which they regularly infiltrated Namibia and easily received Namibians fleeing across the border into exile.³⁷⁶ These camps were supported by others further removed from the front, including the Defense Headquarters, Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre and other specialized logistical camps, all of which were clustered between 12 and 30 kilometers northeast of Lubango.³⁷⁷

At the turn of the decade, the war's tide began to change.³⁷⁸ From May 1978, when SADF raided Cassinga, South Africa launched attacks deep into southern Angola almost every year,³⁷⁹ utilizing its superior military technology, including its air force, mechanized units and ability to monitor some SWAPO radio communications,³⁸⁰ to push PLAN back from the border. By 1982 SADF occupied much of southern Angola, resulting in the relocation of PLAN's southern-most camps 100-150 kilometers north of

³⁷⁵ For more details on the Angolan Civil War, see the discussion in the section of Chapter 3 titled "Det ente and the Front."

³⁷⁶ Susan Brown, "Diplomacy by Other Means," in Colin Leys and John S. Saul, Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword (London: James Currey, 1995), p. 27.

³⁷⁷ The exact locations of all the SWAPO camps outside Lubango are noted in Annex I to "The Report of the United Nations Mission on Detainees," 11.10.1989 (VEM, Groth Collection, File No. 1335).

³⁷⁸ It should be noted that the change in the war paralleled changes in diplomatic negotiations over Namibian independence. Whereas by 1978 Resolution 435 had been accepted by SWAPO and the South African government as a blue print for implementing Namibian independence, the South African government did not follow through on the terms of the resolution until 1989. Ronald Reagan's election as US President and his administration's "linkage" policy, which required that the Cuban soldiers based in Angola since the Angolan Civil War depart before implementing Resolution 435, are usually credited for the breakdown in negotiations and South Africa's military strategy during the 1980s.

³⁷⁹ Brown 1995, pp. 30, 32; Leys & Saul 1995, p. 55.

³⁸⁰ Apparently, the SADF was monitoring SWAPO radio communications to an extent that SWAPO officials did not grasp at the time (Leys & Saul 1995, p. 55).

the border and making combatants' attempts to enter Namibia much more difficult.³⁸¹ At the same time, UNITA, which had been forced to withdraw to southeastern Angola following the retreat of its South African allies from the country in March 1976, was becoming an increasingly strong presence in southern and central Angola and UNITA ambushes of SWAPO convoys were a common occurrence. By the early 1980s all SWAPO settlements, including those outside Lubango and in Kwanza Sul, seemed increasingly vulnerable to enemy attacks.³⁸²

As setbacks mounted, developments both external and internal to SWAPO influenced how the liberation movement's members understood and responded to their misfortune. In 1978 the South African government established its counter-insurgency unit *Koevoet*.³⁸³ Known for the reign of violence that it unleashed in northern Namibia, *Koevoet* pressured civilians to provide information about the activities of PLAN infiltrators and those assisting them and is likely to have heightened anxieties about South African informers entering exile. In 1980 the government extended conscription to all young men in southern Namibia to create the South West African Territorial Forces (SWATF). From thenceforth PLAN found itself facing a black and white army. The formation of SWATF also increased the number Namibians from south of the Red Line living in exile, which had expanded gradually since 1976, when students involved in mobilizing southern Namibia for SWAPO and organizing strikes following the Soweto Uprising fled the country. These newcomers from the South carried many of the characteristics that marked people as different in the SWAPO camps. Many did not speak Oshiwambo but all spoke Afrikaans. Some had light skin and other physical features that

³⁸¹ Brown 1995, pp. 27, 29; Leys & Saul 1995, p. 55.

³⁸² Brown 1995, p. 35; Leys & Saul, p. 55.

³⁸³ "*Koevoet*" is Afrikaans for "crowbar."

differed significantly than those already living in exile. Almost all had some education, and many were secondary school students who through schooling had been exposed to Namibians from a wide range of backgrounds and communities.

The migration of Namibians fleeing conscription coincided with the development of a conflict within the SWAPO military. By 1980 PLAN had begun to respond to SADF attacks by establishing a more conventional army, transforming its small, mobile guerrilla platoons into larger units and, eventually, mechanized brigades.³⁸⁴ In this context there was impetus for the liberation movement not only to increase the number of combatants,³⁸⁵ but also the number of educated persons working in PLAN, which to that point had consisted primarily of exiles who were unable to access the scholarships which the international community had made available to SWAPO.³⁸⁶ At the same time SWAPO Secretary for Defense, Peter Nanyemba, placed a large number of secondary school educated exiles, most of whom were from southern Namibia, at the Defense Headquarters outside Lubango. Nanyemba rationalized these appointments much the same way that he and others did the move of educated persons to the front more generally, that SWAPO “can no longer have an illiterate army.”³⁸⁷ Nonetheless, they also precipitated a conflict between the Defense Headquarters and Command Headquarters,

³⁸⁴ Brown 1995, p. 31; Stephanus 29.5.2007, p. 5; S. Swartbooi 21.9.2007, pp. 19-20.

³⁸⁵ One source indicates that in 1981 President Nujoma issued a “general mobilisation order” which expanded the age of SWAPO members available for military service from sixteen to fourteen (Political Consultative Committee, “A Report to the Namibian People: Historical Account of the SWAPO Spy-Drama,” (Windhoek: Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement, 1989, 1997)). According to another who was teaching at Kwanza Sul at the time, the number of school learners recruited for military training did increase in the early 1980s, but not because recruiters were following any age-based criteria. Rather, it seems that physical size of potential recruits and the desired number of military trainees at a given time were the basis for selecting people for the camps (S. Swartbooi 21.9.2007).

³⁸⁶ Apparently, most of the UNIN class of 1981 was called to the front immediately after graduation. Nanyemba is reported to have announced at a parade, “Those of us who are coming from UNIN, there's not going to be any secondment for you. Your next secondment will be inside the country” (Michael Kahuika and Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 20.9.2007, p. 2).

³⁸⁷ Leys & Saul 1995, p. 55.

from where PLAN coordinated military operations closer to the front.³⁸⁸ According to research participants stationed at both Defense and Command, Nanyemba's appointments were threatening to officials at Command Headquarters because they reproduced the same structures of authority that had already been established there.³⁸⁹ At the same time they created a stark dichotomy in the educational and regional backgrounds of the two headquarters with Defense made up primarily of educated Namibians from the South led by Nanyemba, an Ndonga, and Command consisting largely of uneducated Namibians from Ovamboland led by PLAN Army Commanders, Dimo Hamaambo and Solomon “Jesus” Hawala, both of whom were Kwanyama.³⁹⁰

By this time the Soviet Union and its allies had become actively involved in how SWAPO was conducting all aspects of the war, including maintaining the liberation movement's security. Although the Soviet government had supported SWAPO diplomatically and militarily as early as 1964, during the late 1970s, when SWAPO shifted its operations to Angola, the personal exchanges between the liberation movement and its Soviet allies increased greatly. In addition to Soviet and Soviet allied officials interfacing with SWAPO leaders in Luanda, Soviet advisors were assigned to a range of units stationed at Defense Headquarters and the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre.³⁹¹ Based in Lubango proper, they traveled to and from their homes and the SWAPO camps where they trained PLAN commanders in various fields, including organizational security.³⁹² At the same time SWAPO members were selected to attend military training

³⁸⁸ The actual location of Command Headquarters shifted repeatedly in response to the war (Brown 1995, p. 31; Willy Swartbooi, Interview 12.12.2007; Charles Namoloh, Interview 9.7.2008).

³⁸⁹ Pieters 21.5.2007, p. 3; W. Swartbooi 12.12.2007, p. 8.

³⁹⁰ Leys & Saul 1995, p. 55; Pieters 21.5.2007, p. 3; Andries Basson, Interview 22.9.2007. Ndonga and Kwanyama refer to the two largest sub-ethnic groups among the Ovambo.

³⁹¹ Basson 22.9.2007, p. 18; Kahuika & Stephanus 20.9.2007, pp. 3-4; Pieters 21.5.2007, p. 8.

³⁹² Basson 22.9.2007, p. 18; Pieters 21.5.2007, p. 8; Hunter 2008 pp. 95-96.

courses in Eastern bloc countries, including classes held in East Germany between 1979 and 1984 aimed at preparing military personnel for security work.³⁹³ Allegedly, persons involved in these classes were incorporated into the SWAPO security apparatus, when it was established by the Central Committee under the command of Solomon Hawala in 1981.³⁹⁴

It is in these circumstances that the first “spies” were interrogated and detained in SWAPO's Lubango camps. One well documented instance, involving six PLAN members from southern Namibia stationed at Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre, occurred in the middle of 1980.³⁹⁵ Told that they were being sent on a party mission, the group was led to a deep underground dugout, or “dungeon,” on the outskirts of the camp where members were detained for four weeks. Detainees were later ordered to exit the dugout one-by-one and pressured through torture to admit that they had been sent by South Africa to spy on SWAPO. According to Oiva Alikie Angula and Hans Pieters, two of the six who were detained, the group was released after a delegation from the Defense Headquarters, led by its chief commissar, Tauno Hatuikulipi, intervened on behalf of the detainees, several of whom Hatuikulipi knew both through their joint activities with

³⁹³ Hunter 2008, pp. 95-96.

³⁹⁴ Basson 30.5.2007, pp. 8, 13; Kahuika & Stephanus 20.9.2007, p. 4; Pieters & W. Swartbooi 9.9.2007, p. 36; Leys & Saul 1995, pp. 55-56; Hunter 2008, p. 99. It should be noted that since at least the mid-1970s PLAN had appointed several commanders, including Jackson Kakwambi, “Pondo” and James Hawala (no relation to Solomon “Jesus” Hawala) who were responsible for “intelligence” and “counter-intelligence.” It seems that both the training and formal mandate of intelligence and counter-intelligence differed from that of the new apparatus some of whose personnel had been trained in the Eastern bloc and whose responsibilities extended beyond PLAN to SWAPO in exile as a whole (Basson 30.5.2007, p. 8; Nehova 7.4.2007, pp. 10, 12; Pieters 21.5.2007, p. 2; Pieters and W. Swartbooi 9.9.2007, pp. 34-35, 36; W. Swartbooi 12.12.2007, p. 7).

³⁹⁵ Oiva Angula offers a very specific narration of the timing of his detention, indicating that it began in July 1980 and ended four weeks later on August 26, the day when Namibian exiles celebrated “Namibia Day” (Angula 2008, pp. 72-84; Oiva Angula, Interview 14.7.2008). Hans Pieters indicates that he was detained in 1979, but a review of his complete biography suggests that 1980 is more likely (Pieters 21.5.2007, pp. 1-2; Pieters 9.9.2007, pp. 19, 31, 35). “A Report to the Namibian People” indicates that this detention occurred in June 1980 (pp. 16-17).

SWAPO inside Namibia and their work as commissars in the camps. Thereafter the six learned from Hatuikilipi and some of their interrogators that they had been accused of spying by another detainee who had implicated as many as seventy others under the influence of torture.³⁹⁶

Clearly this group was not the only one imprisoned in Lubango on spy accusations during the early 1980s. Pieters notes that while he was detained he discovered that there were other people accused of spying held in the same area outside Hainyeko, and after his initial interrogation he was held for a short time with about thirty others there.³⁹⁷ At least some of these early detainees were exiles from southern Namibia who were imprisoned immediately after arriving in the SWAPO camps. As survivors of the detentions at Lubango (“ex-detainees”) discovered following their imprisonment, many of those from the South entering exile in the early 1980s were intercepted at the Karl Marx Reception Centre, where they were interrogated and tortured until they confessed to being spies.³⁹⁸ From there they were sent to the dungeons without having entered any SWAPO camps other than the small, mobile ones they might have passed through between the Namibia-Angolan border and Lubango. Although most exiles were not aware of these detentions at the time, some, including friends and family of the newcomers stationed at SWAPO camps in Lubango, clearly were. Andries Basson, PLAN's Chief Protocol Officer stationed at Defense Headquarters, indicates that he knew of Namibians arriving at the Reception Centre who then “disappeared.”³⁹⁹ In several

³⁹⁶ Angula 2008, pp. 72-84; Pieters 21.5.2007, pp. 1-2; Pieters 9.9.2007, pp. 19, 31, 35; “A Report to the Namibian People,” pp. 16-17.

³⁹⁷ Pieters 9.9.2007, p. 19.

³⁹⁸ Basson 30.5.2007, 22.9.2007; Kahuika & Stephanus 9.9.2007; Pieters 9.9.2007; S. Swartbooi 21.9.2007. Passing through the Reception Centre had been standard procedure for those joining SWAPO in Angola since the late 1970s although the interrogations and detentions were not.

³⁹⁹ Basson 30.5.2007; 22.9.2007.

meetings held at Defense during Basson's tenure there from 1981 to 1983 the matter of disappearing people was discussed. Meetings included not only the administrative staff at Defense Headquarters proper, but also PLAN commanders based at Defense, who were responsible for security and whose immediate superior officer was Solomon Hawala.⁴⁰⁰ While the security officers indicated that those detained had been identified as enemy agents, they would not offer additional detail, even when the “spies” were people that Basson and Hatuikulipi, who also attended these meetings, knew from their work leading SWAPO activists in the Namibian South.⁴⁰¹ It appears that even Peter Nanyemba was excluded from information about the disappearing persons. According to Basson, in these meetings Nanyemba questioned security officers about how they knew that certain persons were sent by the enemy and was privately furious about developments in PLAN occurring outside his control.⁴⁰² It is also alleged that Nanyemba tabled the issue for discussion in December 1982 at a meeting of the Political Bureau but that the issue was not discussed on the premise that it should be addressed directly by “the comrades in PLAN.”⁴⁰³

On April 1, 1983, on the eve of a SWAPO Central Committee meeting in which PLAN's command structure was to be discussed,⁴⁰⁴ Peter Nanyemba died in a car crash. Namibians living in the Lubango camps who were later detained remember Nanyemba's death as a turning point, after which people whom they knew living in those camps began

⁴⁰⁰ Basson 30.5.2007, p. 13; 22.9.2007 pp. 20-21, 23. Apparently, Solomon Hawala was not part of these meetings himself.

⁴⁰¹ Basson 30.5.2007, pp. 8, 15, 16; 22.9.2007 pp. 21-22.

⁴⁰² Basson 22.9.2007, p. 21.

⁴⁰³ “A Report to the Namibian People,” p. 17.

⁴⁰⁴ According to Colin Leys and John Saul's sources, Nanyemba hoped at this meeting “to get support for a radical reconstruction of the PLAN command structure which would have put power decisively into the hands of a reduced general staff recruited by himself” (Leys & Saul 1995, p. 55).

to vanish.⁴⁰⁵ According to Hans Pieters, who was then working at Defense Headquarters as political editor of The Combatant, the permanent staff at Defense Headquarters was gradually arrested after Nanyemba's death. By the mid-'80s most of its fifty members had “disappeared.”⁴⁰⁶ Those arrested included the highest ranking officials from the Namibian South based at Defense, Andries Basson and Tauno Hatuikulipi. According to Oiva Angula on the morning of November 8, 1983, only hours after he had last seen Basson while working on guard duty at Defense Headquarters the previous night, he learned from a PLAN commander that Andries Basson had “defected to the enemy.”⁴⁰⁷ Over the coming weeks the story of Basson's defection was announced from Lubango camp parades and inhabitants warned that Basson could lead the South Africans to them at any time, a claim which seemed to be confirmed in December by Operation Askari, an offensive, in which SADF bombed the SWAPO settlements outside Lubango and caused extensive damage to Defense Headquarters.⁴⁰⁸ Within weeks Tauno Hatuikulipi also disappeared. In July 1984 in an address at a Lubango parade, SWAPO President Sam Nujoma announced that Hatuikulipi had been identified by SWAPO Security as a traitor and that when apprehended he had committed suicide by swallowing a poison capsule hidden in a gold-filled tooth.⁴⁰⁹

From 1983 Namibian exiles living outside Lubango were also brought to the camps there and detained.⁴¹⁰ In some cases, people were arrested directly by SWAPO

⁴⁰⁵ Angula 14.7.2008; Basson 30.5.2007; 22.9.2007; Dempers 23.5.2007; Pieters 21.5.2007; 9.9.2007.

⁴⁰⁶ Pieters 9.9.2007, p. 27.

⁴⁰⁷ Angula 2008, p. 88.

⁴⁰⁸ Angula 2008, pp. 88-94; Dempers 23.5.2007, p. 3; Pieters 21.5.2007, p. 1; 9.9.2007, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁰⁹ Angula 2008, pp. 95-96; “A Report to the Namibian People,” pp. 15-16.

⁴¹⁰ The following account of the arrest, interrogation and detention of accused spies in Lubango draws from the following sources: “A Report to the Namibian People;” Nico Basson and Ben Motinga, eds. Call Them Spies: A Documentary Account of the SWAPO Spy Drama (Windhoek: Africa Communications Project, 1989); Paul Trewhela, “A Namibian Horror.” Searchlight South Africa, 4

Security. For example, a number of SWAPO officials living in Luanda and Lusaka, such as Joseph Stephanus, were captured directly. Students studying in Eastern bloc countries were arrested by the police there and flown to Luanda where they were handed to security and transported in SWAPO convoys headed to Lubango.⁴¹¹ Others were told through official SWAPO correspondence to return to Angola, where they were detained either after they had been sent on a mission to Lubango or immediately upon their arrival in Luanda. Among these detainees were a large number of students studying in Western countries and at UNIN in Lusaka as well as teachers working at the SWAPO administered schools on the Isle of Youth in Cuba, established in 1978.⁴¹² In the latter cases, some disobeyed orders and left SWAPO because they had heard of people disappearing in SWAPO's Angolan camps and wanted to avoid this fate.⁴¹³ Many, however, elected to return, citing confidence in their ability to defend themselves against spy accusations and fear that if they did not return that they would be accused of spying and forced to leave SWAPO to support their actions.

Those detained or who left SWAPO to avoid detention included a very large

(1990) pp. 78-93; Siegfried Groth, Namibia – The Wall of Silence (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1995); Leys & Saul 1995; “Nda Mona” (film, directed by Richard Pakleppa, 1999); “Testimony” (film, directed and produced by the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement, 2003); Hunter 2008, pp. 92-107; Angula 2008; VEM, Groth Collection, File Nos. 1369a, 1369b, “Tagebuchaufzeichnungen;” Angula 14.7.2008; Basson 30.5.2007; Theresia Basson, Interview 1.6.2007; Dempers 23.5.2007; Kala Gertze, Interview 21.2.2007; Michael Kahuika, Interview 16.5.2007; Kahuika & Stephanus 9.9.2008; Kambangula 15.2.2007; Willem Meyer, Interviews 16.6.2005; 17.6.2005; “I left the country on the 15th of November, 1976,” 1990 (personal document, given to the author); Pieters 21.5.2007; Pieters and W. Swartbooi 9.9.2007; Stephanus 29.5.2005; 31.5.2005; 18.9.2007; S. Swartbooi 29.1.2007; 21.9.2007; W. Swartbooi 12.12.2007. Where individuals identify details that differ from the experiences narrated in all the aforementioned sources, they are cited accordingly.

⁴¹¹ Before being transported to Lubango accused spies sometimes were taken to Viana, a town and SWAPO camp located about 20 kilometers southeast of Luanda. The camp was used by a variety of SWAPO members who were traveling through Luanda en route to other locations.

⁴¹² The creation of two schools on Isle of Youth, Hosea Kutako Primary School and Hendrik Witbooi Secondary School, was a direct response to the South African attack on Cassinga on May 4, 1978 (See Chapter 2). Two of the principals of Hosea Kutako, Ben Boys and Steve Swartbooi, were detained in Lubango and the principal of Hendrik Witbooi left SWAPO and traveled abroad to Europe to avoid detention (S. Swartbooi 21.9.2007; Erastus Shamena, Interview 1.3.2007).

⁴¹³ For more details see Chapter 5.

number of the educated southern Namibian leaders and students living abroad.⁴¹⁴ Namibians from the South were not the only ones who were accused and detained, however. Following Mishake Muyongo's expulsion from SWAPO in 1980, persons from the Caprivi region were accused by the security apparatus of attempting to revive CANU, which was allegedly working with the South Africans.⁴¹⁵ Among the detainees were a number of prominent Ndonga officials, such as SWAPO camp chief administrator and Central Committee member Victor Nkandi, fueling theories that spy accusations were also motivated by an ethnic rivalry between Solomon Hawala and other Kwanyamas at Command Headquarters and Peter Nanyemba's Ndonga allies. Well educated SWAPO leaders, especially those who had received scholarships to study in the United States during the 1960s, were frequently named in 'accused spies' interrogations as being responsible for leading the collaboration with the enemy.⁴¹⁶ High ranking officials within SWAPO Security were arrested by others in the apparatus.⁴¹⁷ And in 1988 even President Sam Nujoma's wife, Kowambo Nujoma, and brother-in-law and Central Committee member, Aaron Muchimba, were detained in Lubango.

⁴¹⁴ For example, in preparing my master's thesis on St. Therese, one of four secondary schools offering a standard 10 (grade 12) education to black students in southern Namibia by 1976, I learned that twenty-three of the twenty-seven former students who traveled into exile were detained as accused spies. One of the four who was not detained died in exile before 1980; the other three left SWAPO, apparently to avoid detention (Remembering St. Therese, Windhoek: Out of Africa, 2003).

⁴¹⁵ Alex Kamwi, Interview 26.2.2007, pp. 3, 8-9; Pieters 9.9.2007, pp. 4, 19; "A Report to the Namibian People," pp. 20-21; Leys & Saul 1995, p. 63. It may be, as some allege, that Caprivians were among the first to be accused as spies and detained in dungeons during the early 1980s.

⁴¹⁶ During the 1960s Namibian exiles were offered scholarships to study in the United States through the African-American Institute. The names of members of the SWAPO Central Committee and Political Bureau accused of spying during interrogations mentioned by ex-detainees during our interviews are: Nahas Angula, Hage Geingob, Theo-Ben Gurirab, Hidipo Hamutenya, Nicky Iyambo, Nangolo Mbumba and Mose Tjitendero. With the exception of Nicky Iyambo, who undertook all of his medical studies at the University of Helsinki in Finland, all of these persons studied in the United States through African-American Institute scholarships.

⁴¹⁷ Among the most commonly mentioned are James Hawala and "Babino" Khaibeb, who according to research participants based at Defense Headquarters and Command Headquarters, were responsible during the early 1980s for PLAN intelligence and counter-intelligence (Pieters 21.5.2007; Pieters & W. Swartbooi 9.9.2007).

The methods of interrogation and detention experienced by “spies” were very similar. Having been separated from all other camp inhabitants by armed PLAN personnel, the accused was led to a group of commanders for questioning, usually at the Karl Marx Reception Centre.⁴¹⁸ There he or she was asked to offer an account of experiences before and since entering exile. When the accused was told that he or she had forgotten to mention his/her work as enemy agents and denied these claims, torture followed until a confession was made. Torture took place over days, and sometimes over weeks and months, and usually involved the accused being stripped naked and tied to poles while interrogators beat him/her with sticks. It was also common for accused spies to have hot water and painful ointments applied to their torture wounds, to be told to build their own graves and be buried in them until they were unconscious and to have close friends and family members living in exile threatened with death.

During their ordeal some accused spies were approached individually by an interrogator who indicated that that they should fabricate a story about their collaboration with the South Africans. Those who did provide a fictional account, indicating where and when they were trained and their fellow agents, usually other Namibian exiles whom their interrogators pressured them to name, were taken to camps near to but separated from the other SWAPO settlements outside Lubango.⁴¹⁹ There they were detained in various dungeons with anywhere from a handful to more than one hundred others who

⁴¹⁸ Soldiers who guarded accused spies during their interrogations and led them to and from questioning did not interrogate or apply torture themselves. There were instances in which guards tortured accused spies after their detentions, however (Pieters 9.9.2007, p. 27; Swartbooi 21.9.2007, pp. 25, 38).

⁴¹⁹ The names and locations of the primary camps where most detainees were held are Etale (a.k.a. Etare), c. 15 km northeast of Lubango, Minya (a.k.a. Ominya, Security Prison), c. 16 km north of Lubango, and Mungakwiyu (a.k.a. Bwana's Base), Shoombe's Base and Ethiopia Camp, all of which are within a kilometer of one another at least 20 km, possibly 25 km northeast of Lubango, on the edge of the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre. Estimates are based on the “Report of the United Missions on Detainees,” conversations with ex-detainees and a trip made by the author to Lubango in December 2007.

had also been accused of spying. Movement into and out of the dungeons was restricted by their physical structure, which, at 3-4 meters deep, could only be entered and exited through a sink plate at one end where guards inserted a ladder. Also, the camps in which the dungeons were located had their own commanders and guards, who ensured that detainees would not leave and outsiders would not enter the camp premises. At least twice a day inmates were permitted by guards to vacate their dungeon and use toilet facilities in the camps. Otherwise they were usually confined to their dungeon or assigned manual labor by the guards or commanders.⁴²⁰ Detainees took their meals in the dungeons, usually left over mealie-meal, rice and soup which they were given once or twice daily, and slept in sacks that had carried food donated to SWAPO. With little access to ventilation, nutrition and medical care, many suffered from poor health and died from illnesses thought to have been asthma, beri-beri, cholera and tuberculosis. Other detainees were commanded to leave the dungeons and never returned to them.⁴²¹ Hundreds of persons that were detained in Lubango remain missing.⁴²²

Who is Responsible?

Given the nature and brutality of the spy purge in SWAPO's Lubango camps, it is not surprising that much of what has been written and said about them focuses on who is responsible. With regard to SWAPO Security there is consensus. In "A Report to the

⁴²⁰ Women inmates detained at Minya Base usually spent the day outside their dungeons and helped with various projects.

⁴²¹ Ex-detainees narrate numerous occasions in which those imprisoned in the camps were called out and then disappeared, several of which Hunter narrates (2008, pp. 104-105).

⁴²² Ex-detainees under the aegis of the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement published a document titled "Lists of Namibia's 'Missing Persons,'" (Windhoek: BWS, 1996). The lists name 708 people, including 554 SWAPO detainees who have not been accounted for and 93 SWAPO detainees whose deaths were witnessed by repatriated detainees. For more details on "the missing persons" and the debates surrounding their numbers, see Chapter 5.

Namibian People,” an account of the Lubango spy detentions written by survivors in Angola shortly before their repatriation and Namibia's first democratic elections in 1989,⁴²³ blame is laid, first and foremost, at the feet of SWAPO Security and its leader Solomon Hawala, “the Butcher of Lubango.”⁴²⁴ This analysis is supported by scholars Colin Leys, John Saul and Justine Hunter, whose writing links the Lubango detentions with the formation of the SWAPO Security led by Solomon Hawala and its unchecked abuse of power.⁴²⁵ It is also affirmed by ex-detainee participants in my research, who detailed the involvement of known security officials in their ordeals and indicated that Hawala, specifically, had led some of their interrogations, was a regular visitor in their detention camps and was involved in soliciting “confessions” from all detainees who were released in conjunction with the implementation of Resolution 435 in 1989.

Where sources differ is in the extent to which they portray senior SWAPO leaders as aware of, and/or actively involved in supporting these abuses. For example, “A Report to the Namibian People,” emphasizes President Nujoma's responsibility: “Despite incessant appeals by members of the Organisation, including those under detention, to the leadership of SWAPO especially its President, to act timely and decisively in resolving the [early 1980s spy] crisis through investigation, the leading clique... led by Sam Nujoma utterly and *deliberately* (italics mine) failed to launch an investigation, thereby exacerbating the crisis to the point where no solution could be found to avert it. The problem was in fact left in the hands of the... so called SWAPO security.”⁴²⁶ The authors further maintain that the SWAPO President used Hawala and his subordinates to drive “a

⁴²³ Hans Pieters, Interview 22.7.2008. For more information about the circumstances in which “A Report to the Namibian People” was written, see Chapter 5.

⁴²⁴ “A Report to the Namibian People,” pp. 13, 15.

⁴²⁵ Leys & Saul 1995, pp. 55-56; Hunter 2008, pp. 97-100.

⁴²⁶ “A Report to the Namibian People,” p. 13.

wedge.. between the political leadership and the military one” as a means of securing his own power. Colin Leys, John Saul and Justine Hunter's work provides another perspective. Whereas they note that Nujoma was the only person who had authority over SWAPO Security, they also suggest that Security's activities were beyond his control and he may have been threatened by them, an argument strengthened by the fact that Nujoma's wife and brother-in-law were both detained.⁴²⁷ In a similar contrast, “A Report” emphasizes the culpability of all SWAPO leaders for not launching an investigation to resolve the spy crisis, while Leys, Saul and Hunter note that political leaders, especially those named during the interrogations, may have been directly threatened by it. My research participants also offer their own theories to account for the awareness and involvement of the leaders in the abuses at Lubango. Some maintain that Nujoma and/or other SWAPO leaders were fooled into believing that those detained were spies through false information planted in SWAPO by the South Africans.⁴²⁸ Others insist that, in addition to Solomon Hawala, there was some person or faction in the SWAPO political leadership deliberately using false claims about spies to eliminate rivals, especially those belonging to other tribes.

That some senior political leaders were aware of particular people who were detained and the location of camps where detainees were held is beyond question. In late 1984 or early 1985,⁴²⁹ Hidipo Hamutenya, SWAPO Secretary for Information and Publicity, visited Lubango, where he and others were involved in filming several

⁴²⁷ “A Report to the Namibian People,” p. 14; Leys & Saul 1995, p. 56; Hunter 2008, pp. 99-100.

⁴²⁸ One piece of evidence supporting this claim which merits further scrutiny is “Spies from Nowhere,” an article published in Times of Namibia (23.11.1990). Therein the author offers an account of how the South African government planted false information about spies in SWAPO. The article is based on the testimony of a Cuban officer who liaised between SWAPO, Angolan and Cuban forces in Angola and later defected to a Western country.

⁴²⁹ Hidipo Hamutenya, Interview 2.4.2007, p. 5; Groth 1995, p. 115.

detainees' confessions. According to Hamutenya, he was commissioned to this task by the SWAPO Political Bureau whose members were discussing whether “all those people that were being picked up were the agents of the enemy.”⁴³⁰ It was thought that as Secretary for Information and Publicity, he and others trained in recording and film-making “should go record these people, put their voice on tape... so people are able to judge whether they were indeed credible.”⁴³¹ Those whose stories were recorded during Hamutenya's visit recall being pressured to reproduce their confessions in front of either him or other members of his entourage.⁴³²

Detainees also remember visits by three other members of the Political Bureau, President Sam Nujoma, Secretary of Defense (after Nanyemba's death) Peter Mueshihange and Administrative Secretary Moses Garoeb, each of whom addressed them at the parade ground.⁴³³ Of particular significance to many ex-detainees is President Nujoma's April 21, 1986 visit which they remember as the first time that they saw Nujoma at one of the detention camps. Oiva Angula's narration of Nujoma's speech delivered at Mungakwiyu, a camp located just outside the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre, closely resembles the accounts of others who were present on that occasion:

When Nujoma arrived in the company of Hawala and senior security officers, the whole atmosphere was tense. We were made to line up a hundred meters from the dungeons... The SWAPO leader stepped forward..., “Viva SWAPO! Viva PLAN!... I greet you in the name of the Mandumes, the Witboois, the Mahereros and the Ipumbus that you have

⁴³⁰ Hamutenya 2.4.2007, p. 7.

⁴³¹ Hamutenya 2.4.2007, p. 6.

⁴³² Basson 22.9.2007, p. 27; Groth 1995, p. 115.

⁴³³ Basson 22.9.2007, p. 27; Kahuika & Stephanus 20.9.2007, pp. 11-12, 12-13; Meyer, “I left the country on the 15th of November, 1976,” p. 3; Stephanus 18.9.2007, p. 38; Swartbooi 21.9.2007, p. 31; Angula 2008, pp. 152-153; Groth 1995, p. 107; Trewelha 1990, pp. 89-90. According to one source, Sam Nujoma and Peter Mueshihange were accompanied on one of their visits by Peter Tsheehama, SWAPO Representative to Central Africa, and Ananias Angula (Trewelha 1990, pp. 89-90).

betrayed...⁴³⁴ When Namibia is freed, SWAPO will parade you at Freedom Square. The Namibian people will decide what to do with you.” Before the SWAPO leader could finish... some detainees raised their hands. “Can I ask the President a question?” a detainee said. “No, it’s no time for questions” [a commander] intervened... Hawala then motioned Nujoma that it was time to go. They left unceremoniously.⁴³⁵

For some ex-detainees this speech was a turning point in their understanding of their detention. Whereas previously many imagined that President Nujoma was unaware of what was happening in Lubango and that, once he knew, he would intervene on detainees' behalf, Nujoma's 1986 visit and subsequent ones disabused them of this hope.

Nonetheless, it seems likely that there were limits to SWAPO leaders' knowledge of happenings in Lubango. Hamutenya indicates that he visited the detention camps only once, on which occasion he met only a few detainees and did not visit the places where they were imprisoned.⁴³⁶ Based on ex-detainees' testimonies it may be that Nujoma visited only a fraction of the total number detained, and he might never have seen the dungeons himself.⁴³⁷ There is no evidence that SWAPO political leaders were part of the interrogation of accused spies. Security appears to have maintained some contact with political leaders, at least with President Sam Nujoma, but the dispersal of information may have been limited. Certainly, its content remains opaque. According to Hamutenya, “Hawala was reporting to Sam Nujoma. But I don't think anybody else in the Politburo knew the truth... unless in private somewhere.”⁴³⁸ According to Nujoma, “one cannot say

⁴³⁴ “The Mandumes, the Witboois, the Mahereros and the Ipumbus” refer to prominent figures in the early resistance to colonial rule in Namibia. They were leaders of several of Namibia's largest ethnic groups.

⁴³⁵ Angula 2008, pp. 137-138. See also Groth 1995, p. 125; Trewelha 1990, pp. 89-90; Gertze 21.2.2007, p. 6; Kahuika & Stephanus 20.9.2007, pp. 11-12, 12-13; S. Swartbooi 21.9.2007, pp. 30-31.

⁴³⁶ Hamutenya 2.4.2007, pp. 5, 6.

⁴³⁷ Gertze 21.2.2007 p. 6; S. Swartbooi 21.9.2007, pp. 30-31.

⁴³⁸ Hamutenya 2.4.2007, p. 9.

really you are aware of what happened [with SWAPO Security in Lubango]. Unless something serious happened. Then you will know; you will receive the report.”⁴³⁹

Even Solomon Hawala is unlikely to have known about all the activities of SWAPO Security members. In the case of Pieters' and Angula's four-week detention outside Tobias Hainyeko some months before the new SWAPO Security under Solomon Hawala was formally established, the matter appears to have been resolved when Tauno Hatuikulipi intervened with “Lawrence,” the *nom de guerre* of the man responsible for security at Tobias Hainyeko camp. Although the interrogation and detention methods used on this occasion resemble those experienced by detainees across the 1980s, Pieters doubts that Solomon Hawala or any security officials outside Hainyeko were aware of his 1980 detention.⁴⁴⁰ Even after Hawala became the head of SWAPO Security in 1981 he did not live primarily in Lubango, but rather at Command Headquarters near the front, where he was responsible for coordinating day-to-day operations with PLAN.⁴⁴¹ When he visited Lubango for PLAN meetings or other business, he stayed with security officials who were living at the edge of Defense Headquarters in part of a collection of bunkers reserved for commanders who were passing through.⁴⁴² He could not easily know what all of these officials were doing while he was at the front, let alone more junior personnel responsible for maintaining security in particular camps.

Although such ambiguities make it difficult to apportion blame for what transpired in SWAPO's Lubango camps, they are critically important for understanding

⁴³⁹ Nujoma 4.3.2008, p. 5. The quote was Nujoma's response to my question: “Did you become more aware of what [SWAPO Security] was doing after the struggle ended or were you equally aware during the 1980s of what that apparatus was doing?”

⁴⁴⁰ Pieters & W. Swartbooi 9.9.2007, p. 35.

⁴⁴¹ Basson 21.5.2007, p. 8; Pieters 9.9.2007, p. 21.

⁴⁴² Basson 22.9.2007, p. 23; Pieters 9.9.2007, p. 21.

how a spy discourse achieved its power there. In the Namibian exile community and especially the camps, where inhabitants were at constant risk of South African violence and reliant on commanders to access information and other resources, a few officials need not have naively believed in or knowingly manipulated a story about spies to create conditions for a purge. They need only have drawn attention to the threat of spies and played on exiles' fears of who these spies could be and the methods which they might be using. In turn, senior SWAPO officials used spy accusations to coerce and eliminate rivals in a national community. But they could never entirely contain the ambiguity of “the spy” and the possibility that they too would become victims of its invisible power.

Chapter 5

“Wall of Silence”: Challenging National History in the International System

Challenges to national history in Namibia are as old as the idea of a Namibian nation itself. After the Second World War the United Nations established a trusteeship system to administer South West Africa and other territories mandated to governments under the League of Nations and to prepare these territories for national independence. In opposition, the South African government maintained that South West Africa was not an independent territory destined for nationhood but rather a part of South Africa that should become the country's fifth province. By the late 1950s, South Africa stood opposed not only to the UN but also to nationalist organizations which, drawing from history, competed with one another to represent a Namibian nation. In the 1960s, following the flight of nationalist leaders into exile, SWAPO became the most widely recognized organization representing Namibians both at home and abroad, achieving the status of “sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people” from the UN in 1976. Thenceforth, challenging national history in Namibia became tantamount to contesting the story told by SWAPO leaders about Namibian resistance to colonial rule. And narratives of conflict in SWAPO administered exile camps became the focal point of the most volatile alternative histories.

From at least the mid-1970s, rumours began to spread outside the exile community that SWAPO was committing human rights violations against its own

members in its camps. By 1985 these rumours, and supportive evidence, were being circulated through Namibia and abroad by a group of exiles' relatives, who became known as the Committee of Parents (CP), and by a German pastor, Siegfried Groth. SWAPO's official response was two-fold. On March 4, 1985 hundreds of SWAPO members gathered at the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) in Lusaka to watch a film, in which prominent exiles "confessed" to their activities as South African spies. On February 16, 1986, almost a year later, SWAPO announced at a press conference in London that it was detaining a "South African spy network numbering at least 100 people," but denied that any human rights abuses had been committed, decrying such rumors as "a well calculated campaign organized by South Africa."⁴⁴³ The February 16 press conference and later SWAPO representations of its detentions were generally accepted and reproduced by SWAPO's allies despite the fact that some of these allies had access to contradictory information.

Only in 1989 did discrepancies between dominant exile representations and reality become widely apparent. In that year, exiles were repatriated to Namibia in the lead-up to United Nations monitored national elections as arranged by UN Resolution 435. On May 23 SWAPO announced that it had released its prisoners, and on May 25 journalists met with about 200 people in SWAPO camps outside Lubango, Angola, where they had been detained. At this event, and at a press conference held shortly after their return to Namibia on July 4, 1989, "ex-detainees" shared their experiences – of torture, forced confession and imprisonment by SWAPO's security branch, and of the murder and disappearance of hundreds of comrades. The stories and pictures of the ex-detainees'

⁴⁴³ The Namibian, 21.2.1986. The article has been copied in NSHR, "Critical Analysis: SWAPO's 'Book of the Dead'" (Windhoek, 1996), Appendix A.

wounds were, in turn, published and circulated widely. Although individual SWAPO leaders reacted to the detainees' return in different ways, the party as a whole responded by associating detainees' stories with South African propaganda and touting its reconciliation policy, according to which the histories of these and other human rights violations in Namibia's exile past was a threat to the new nation. Since then there have been attempts to make such histories accessible and accepted in Namibia, led most visibly by the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement (BWS), an organization of ex-detainees and others, formed after the publication of Siegfried Groth's book, Namibia – The Wall of Silence, in 1995.⁴⁴⁴ Nonetheless, almost twenty years since independence, Namibian leaders continue to resist public discussion of abuses that occurred within the liberation movement and those who were abused or “disappeared” in exile are still widely associated with stigma.

This chapter focuses on the Committee of Parents, “the ex-detainees” and the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement, considering how each community, during a distinct period of time, was able to disperse alternatives to Namibia's dominant exile narrative and how, repeatedly, these alternatives have been rendered socially unacceptable. To this end, the piece draws from an existing literature about those who have declared and obscured “the history” of SWAPO in exile,⁴⁴⁵ while placing these and

⁴⁴⁴ Siegfried Groth, Namibia – The Wall of Silence: The Dark Days of the Liberation Struggle, (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1995).

⁴⁴⁵ Erica Thiro-Beukes, Attie Beukes and Hewat Beukes, A Struggle Betrayed, (Rehoboth: Akasia Drukery, 1986); Committee of Parents, “Report on SWAPO Leadership Abuses” (Windhoek, 1987); Nico Basson and Ben Motinga, eds., Call Them Spies: A Documentary Account of the SWAPO Spy Drama, (Windhoek: Africa Communications Project, 1989); Paul Trewelha, “SWAPO and the Churches: An International Scandal,” Searchlight South Africa, 7 (1991), pp. 65-88; Phillip Steenkamp, “The Churches,” in Colin Leys and John S. Saul, Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword, (London: James Currey, 1995), pp. 94-114; Lauren Dobell, “Silence in Context: Truth and/or Reconciliation in Namibia,” Journal of Southern African Studies, 23, 2 (1997), pp. 371-382; Colin Leys and John S. Saul, “Lubango and After: ‘Forgotten History’ as Politics in Namibia,” Journal of Southern

other sources in a broader context. In turn, the chapter argues that the on-going association of certain histories from exile with stigma in Namibia has resulted, not just from the decisions of a few persons but rather from a “system of nation-states,”⁴⁴⁶ wherein certain kinds of representations are readily accepted and others easily discounted. The chapter, thereby, refocuses the moral issue surrounding SWAPO's detentions away from the failure of isolated individuals and organizations and towards a constellation of social entities, which, in the name of resisting apartheid and protecting human rights, allowed national elites to perpetrate violence against people whom they were permitted to represent.

The Committee of Parents

Well before the Committee of Parents was formed in 1985, some parents of exiles were developing a critical perspective on SWAPO's practices abroad. On May 4, 1976 Mrs. Hermanus Beukes flew from Windhoek to visit her son Hans in Lusaka.⁴⁴⁷ Although Hans was a long-standing SWAPO member and one of the first people to petition the United Nations on Namibia's behalf,⁴⁴⁸ he had spent most of his years abroad as a student in Norway and had only returned to Africa with his Norwegian wife some months before his mother's arrival. During her visit Mrs. Beukes became aware of conflicts within

African Studies, 29, 2 (2003), pp. 300-325; Justine Hunter, “Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia seit der staatlichen Unabhängigkeit” (Doctoral Thesis, Universität Freiburg, 2005); Justine Hunter, Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia: Umgang mit schweren Menschenrechtsverletzungen der Ära des bewaffneten Befreiungskampfes, 1966 bis 1989 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2008).

⁴⁴⁶ Liisa Malkki, Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 5. Malkki also develops this and similar notions in her article “Refugees and Exile: From ‘Refugee Studies’ to the National Order of Things,” Annual Review of Anthropology 24 (1995), pp. 495-523.

⁴⁴⁷ Erica Beukes, Interview 10.3.2007, p. 1; Erica Beukes, Interview 13.5.2008, pp. 7-8. Erica Beukes is the same person as Erica Thiro-Beukes, one of the author's of A Struggle Betrayed.

⁴⁴⁸ Peter Katjavivi, A History of Resistance in Namibia, (London: James Currey, 1988) p. 39.

SWAPO through conversations with her son and his friends in the SWAPO Youth League, several of whom were fleeing arrest and were ultimately detained in May 1976.⁴⁴⁹ When she returned from Zambia to Namibia, Mrs. Beukes traveled with documents hidden in the heels of her shoes, including papers written by the SYL and PLAN combatants, who were then complaining about the practices of various SWAPO officials and clamoring for a party congress.⁴⁵⁰ Thereafter, Martha Ford, who was Mrs. Beukes' daughter and a prominent SWAPO activist inside Namibia, organized a meeting between her mother, father and several political leaders who were affiliated, or were soon to affiliate with, SWAPO. Later meetings were held among a wider range of concerned SWAPO members who had learned of Mrs. Beukes' experiences as well.⁴⁵¹

Few SWAPO members living in Namibia, even among the organization's leaders, are likely to have had access to the kind of information that Mrs. Beukes transported prior to her return. Although the South African media reports, which publicized the SWAPO conflict in Zambia following the arrest of Andreas Shipanga and others on April 21, would have been known to many, direct communication between Namibians in exile and

⁴⁴⁹ For more details about the SWAPO conflict in Zambia from 1974 to 1976, see Chapter 3.

⁴⁵⁰ E. Beukes, 10.3.2007, p. 1; Colin Leys and John S. Saul, Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two Edged Sword (London: James Currey, 1995), pp. 74, 90. Although these sources do not indicate which documents Mrs. Beukes brought back to Namibia, they are likely to have included several mass produced documents discussed in Chapter 3. Their titles are: "Why we have to meet directly the Liberation Committee of the OAU," "To the President of SWAPO," "To the President of SWAPO and other Office Bearers," and "The PLAN Fighter's Declaration," all of which are available in the Ailonga Collection, Files: "Political Matters affecting the Chaplaincy," "SWAPO Conflict Zambia." Also, in the Katjavivi Collection at UNAM (Series B1, Category 15), there is a typed letter dated May 14, 1976, written by Hans Beukes and addressed to "Bishop Auala, Daniel Tjongerero and Other members of SWAPO," wherein Beukes details his observations of the conflict within SWAPO in Zambia. Although I was unable to collect information about the circulation of this letter, it seems likely that Mrs. Beukes traveled with it to Namibia. Clearly, Peter Katjavivi, SWAPO's Secretary for Information and Publicity based in London, eventually received it.

⁴⁵¹ Erica Beukes, Mrs. Hermanus Beukes' daughter-in-law, indicates that the first meeting included Hendrik Witbooi, Jöel Stephanus, Stephanus Goliath, Eric Biwa, Ben Boys and Lukas Stephanus (E. Beukes 10.3.2007, p. 1; E. Beukes 13.5.2008, p. 8), all of whom were or soon became prominent SWAPO supporters in Khoikhoi-speaking communities south of Windhoek. Later, Erica Beukes and her husband, Hewat learned about the meeting and were involved in organizing others with the internal leadership (E. Beukes 13.5.2008, p. 7; Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, pp. 21-22).

at home was constrained by the distance, the wars, and the awareness that any mail carried by post could be monitored by SWAPO, the Zambian government and the South African government. Under the circumstances there was little opportunity for “the dissidents” to control how and where their stories were told in Namibia, except through a trusted source like Mrs. Beukes, who not only had the resources to fly between Zambia and Namibia but also the connections to gain an audience with SWAPO's internal leaders.

Nonetheless, the leaders reacted to Mrs. Beukes' information with skepticism and/or caution. According to some who participated in the meetings between Mr. and Mrs. Beukes and SWAPO internal, the leaders were not willing to consider the allegations made about what was happening in the movement in exile.⁴⁵² Perhaps, they, like others listening to the government's version of events, viewed her stories as more South African propaganda.⁴⁵³ Even those who may have taken a different view were under pressure to promote unity within SWAPO, especially at that time when the Turnhalle Talks, South Africa's attempt to create an independent government in Namibia,⁴⁵⁴ were meeting. The paucity of sources and the politically charged context in which they were clearly produced may also have influenced the way that people responded to them.⁴⁵⁵ Still, by sharing these sources, Mrs. Beukes exposed some people

⁴⁵² E. Beukes 13.5.2008, p. 7; Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁵³ According to one source, reporting on morale inside Namibia for SWAPO's London office, “that [the arrest of SWAPO members in Zambia] has even taken place has been passed off among grassroots support as South African propaganda.” (UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Category 14, File No. 3, “Report on the morale, problems and needs of SWAPO internal,” p.3).

⁴⁵⁴ The Turnhalle Talks were initiated by the South African government in September 1975 as an “internal solution” to the question of Namibian independence. The Talks did not involve SWAPO and preempted UN Resolution 385, according to which UN supervised elections should be held in Namibia by August 1976.

⁴⁵⁵ As Erica Beukes later wrote on behalf of the Committee Parents in a narrative about the Committee's formation: “Details remained scanty and the members inside the country were left confused as to the

living in Namibia to dissident stories from Zambia, including several SWAPO activists within her own family who would draw from them and other accounts⁴⁵⁶ to challenge the liberation movement's representation of exile in later years.

During the 1980s new information about conflict within SWAPO in exile began to reach Namibia, especially stories about the detention of accused spies in SWAPO's Lubango camps.⁴⁵⁷ One event that hastened the spread of these stories in Namibia and the formation of a community committed to dispersing them further was the Lusaka Conference in May 1984. The Conference was organized by the South African government as part of its efforts, on-going since the Turnhalle Talks, to find an “internal solution” to Namibian independence that would be seen as acceptable to the international community. SWAPO members participated in the Conference, including representatives from its exiled and internal wings. In the course of the conference proceedings some exiles shared stories with Namibians coming from home about the disappearance of SWAPO members in the movement's Lubango camps, rumors of imprisonment and torture, and their own personal fears.⁴⁵⁸

Among those who listened to the stories in Lusaka was Attie Beukes. Although not related to the family of Mr. and Mrs. Hermanus Beukes, Attie supervised their

real state of affairs. There was always the possibility of sensation in the rumours which could grossly distort facts... Such uncertainty hardly gave the opportunity for drastic action” (CP 1987, p. 1).

⁴⁵⁶ Colin Leys and John Saul indicate, that in addition to the material delivered by Mrs. Hermanus Beukes that some additional “evidence from sources close to the dissidents in Zambia did reach Namibia, such as letters brought by friends from those who had recently gone into exile” (Leys and Saul 1995, p. 74). One letter that was eventually accessed by the Committee of Parents was sent to Bishop Auala of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church (ELOC) by Salatiel Ailonga, a pastor who administered a chaplaincy for Namibians in Zambia from 1974 to 1976 (see Chapter 3). The text narrates the conflict within SWAPO and encourages Auala to visit those detained in Zambia and Tanzania, actions which the Bishop did not take (The letter is reproduced in “Breaking the Wall of Silence: Statements and Clippings, February- April 1996,” (Windhoek: BWS, 1996), pp. 70-71. See also Siegfried Groth's discussion of the letter in *Namibia – The Wall of Silence* (1995), pp. 61-63.

⁴⁵⁷ For a detailed account of the detention of “spies” in Lubango during the 1980s, see Chapter 4.

⁴⁵⁸ Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, pp. 27-28; CP 1987, p. 5; E. Beukes 10.3.2007, pp. 3-4; E. Beukes 13.5.2008, p. 11.

daughter-in-law, Erica, at the Development Office at the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN) and was a friend to the family.⁴⁵⁹ When Attie returned to Namibia, he shared what he had learned with Erica, including the news that her brother, Walther Thiro, was among those thought to be detained.⁴⁶⁰ In turn, Erica approached several pastors and Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, the founder of SWAPO's predecessor, the Ovomboland People's Congress (OPC), who had recently been set free after eighteen years at South Africa's notorious Robben Island Prison.⁴⁶¹ At the same time, she also began to share stories openly among colleagues at the CCN office in Windhoek, and people there and elsewhere began to contact her, asking her what she knew and telling her what they had heard and who might have more information.⁴⁶²

In some respects the conversations in which Attie and Erica Beukes participated following the Lusaka Conference must have resembled those held by others in Namibia at that time. Apparently, there were a number of people who had approached church and political leaders following the Lusaka Conference, and Erica Beukes herself was surprised to learn what others had heard about the detentions, in some cases, years earlier.⁴⁶³ Moreover, there were other social networks in which people were discussing abuses happening in exile independently of Beukes and the Lusaka Conference participants. Take, for example, the Thomas and Isaacks families of Keetmanshoop, a town in southern Namibia. In July 1978 Samuel Thomas, his younger brother Cornelius, his younger sister Wilhelmina and his neighbor and family friend Maria “Amies” Isaacks

⁴⁵⁹ E. Beukes 10.3.2007, p. 4.

⁴⁶⁰ E. Beukes 10.3.2007, p. 11.

⁴⁶¹ Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, pp. 28-29; CP 1987, pp. 6-7 ; E. Beukes 13.5.2008, p. 12.

⁴⁶² E. Beukes 10.3.2007, p. 4; E. Beukes 13.5.2008, p. 12.

⁴⁶³ Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, pp. 28-29; E. Beukes 10.3.2007, p. 4; E. Beukes 13.5.2008, pp. 12, 13. I have heard other accounts of people in Namibia discussing rumors of happenings in SWAPO's Angolan camps in the early 1980s but not from sources willing to go on a public record.

departed for exile. In 1985, members of the Thomas family received a copy of a letter from Amies, who was then living in a UN refugee camp outside Lusaka, addressed to Wilhelmina, who was then living in England, where she had previously received a scholarship.⁴⁶⁴ Both Amies and Wilhelmina had recently left SWAPO, and the letter focuses on Amies' perceptions of what was happening to people that they both knew who had disappeared in Angola, including Samuel Thomas, with whom the Thomas family had lost contact the previous year.⁴⁶⁵ Although it is not entirely clear how the letter was sent from Wilhelmina in England to her family in Namibia,⁴⁶⁶ once it had arrived it became a source of conversation among Samuel Thomas' siblings, Amies Isaack's mother and a group of others with whom they thought they could discuss it in confidence. They also took the letter to Hendrik Witbooi, a high ranking SWAPO leader inside Namibia and the chief in the Thomas' native village, Gibeon, and asked him what he knew of their family members in Angola.⁴⁶⁷ Eventually, a member of the Thomas family living in Windhoek also shared the letter with Erica Beukes and the group then meeting with her.⁴⁶⁸

What distinguished Erica and Attie Beukes' group from others forming at this time was its ability to collect and disperse a wide range of stories. Within months of the Lusaka Conference, the Beukeses had become a hub for the knowledge of various

⁴⁶⁴ Julia Thomas, Interview 20.9.2007, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁶⁵ Letter from Amies Isaacks to Wilhelmina Thomas, 4.3.1985. A copy of the letter is in my possession. It has also been reproduced in Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, pp. 130-135 and in Nico Basson and Ben Motinga, eds., Call Them Spies: A Documentary Account of the SWAPO Spy Drama, (Windhoek: Africa Communications Project, 1989), p. 41. N.B. The documents cited in this chapter from Basson and Motinga 1989 are not photocopies of the original but rather have been typed into Basson and Motinga's text. Where possible I have checked Basson and Motinga's version of a document against the original or a photocopy .

⁴⁶⁶ Julia Thomas believes that the letter was delivered by Willem Konjore, a SWAPO member, well known to people in southern Namibia, where he was a school principal (Thomas 20.9.2007, p. 3). Konjore, however, does not recall the letter (Willem Konjore, Interview 22.7.2008).

⁴⁶⁷ Thomas 20.9.2007, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁶⁸ Thomas 20.9.2007, p. 4.

Namibians about exiles disappearing in Angola and for the communities that were already discussing what was happening there. In collecting this knowledge and establishing these links, the Beukeses' position at the CCN was critical. Not only did it provide them with a space in the capital wherein people could share their stories, but it also linked them to a range of people involved in resisting South African rule at home and abroad who worked with the CCN.⁴⁶⁹ Of particular importance was a CCN fundraising trip taken by Erica and Attie Beukes to Western Europe in February and March 1985. At a distance from Southern Africa's wars, Erica and Attie met both with Namibian exiles who had made their way to Europe and Europeans following events in Namibia. In the process, the Beukeses learned more about the stories coming from Namibians living in Angola and Zambia. Moreover, they accessed letters from exiles, many of which, had been sent to church leaders in Namibia but had received no response.⁴⁷⁰

One particularly important source of information whom Erica Beukes contacted during the trip was Siegfried Groth, a German pastor.⁴⁷¹ In fact, Beukes and Groth had known one another since the 1960s when Beukes was training to become a nurse in Germany.⁴⁷² By that time Groth was the representative of the *Vereinigte Evangelische*

⁴⁶⁹ The CCN was founded in 1978, following the move of most of Namibia's churches to oppose South African rule in Namibia. During the 1980s many SWAPO office bearers were employed at the CCN, and the CCN was involved in channeling funds from foreign donors to SWAPO affiliated projects in Namibia.

⁴⁷⁰ Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, p. 30; CP 1987, p. 7; Groth 1995, p. 141.

⁴⁷¹ There are two published sources which describe Groth's relationship to Namibia and its exile community in detail. These include the previously cited Namibia: The Wall of Silence (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1995) and a book written by Groth's colleague, Klaus Gockel, Mission und Apartheid: Aus der Arbeit der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft (RMG bis 1971) bzw. der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission (VEM ab 1971) in der Zeit nach dem 2. Weltkrieg bis zur Unabhängigkeit Namibias (Wuppertal: Archiv- und Museumstiftung VEM, 2006). In addition, the Siegfried Groth Collection at the VEM has an extensive record of his correspondences with Namibians and experiences in Africa.

⁴⁷² Groth 1995, p. 141; E. Beukes 10.3.2007. Groth and Beukes were again in regular contact during the late 1970s when the VEM administered a scholarship for her to study in the UK (Groth 1995, p. 141). There are two files of their correspondence accessible at the VEM, Siegfried Groth Collection, File No.

Mission (VEM), the mission society that had worked in South West Africa since the 19th century, to Namibia's Lutheran churches, the largest denomination in a predominantly Christian country.⁴⁷³ During the 1960s Groth was a regular visitor to Namibia, but in 1971 his passport had been revoked by the South African government due to his critical position on apartheid. Thereafter, he was commissioned by the VEM's partner churches in Namibia to minister to their members who were living in exile and, following the detention of SWAPO members in Nampundwe and Mboroma in 1976, was given the special assignment to work with exiles who had left SWAPO. Despite the fact that Groth, like most foreign pastors, was not permitted to work in any SWAPO administered camps following the 1976 conflict, he did travel to Zambia (and frequently Botswana) annually to meet with Namibian exiles. By the time Siegfried Groth and Erica Beukes met on March 15, 1985, Groth had amassed a great deal of information about the exile community, including extensive accounts of human rights abuses occurring in exile, and he would share much of his information with her in regular correspondence during the following year.

Shortly after Erica and Attie Beukes returned from Europe on March 21, 1985, the two approached Namibian church leaders again, including the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC),⁴⁷⁴ Hendrik Frederick, the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Windhoek, Bonafatius Haushiku and the General Secretary of the CCN, Abisai Shejavali,

1387; "Erica Beukes;" File No. 1388, "Parents' Committee E. Beukes."

⁴⁷³ The *Vereinigte Evangelische Mission* was previously the *Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft*, the main mission society working in southern Namibia from the early 19th century. It has been estimated that 90% or more of Namibia's population belongs to a Christian church, the highest rate in Africa (E.g. Leys and Saul 1995, p. 11)

⁴⁷⁴ The Lutheran Church in Namibia is divided into three parts that align with Namibia's colonial history. During the apartheid era the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) was the name of the church formed by German missionaries in the South, the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church (ELOC) the name of that founded by Finnish missionaries in the North and the *Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche* (DELK) for German-speaking Namibians.

and discussed the possibility of a meeting between clergy and the families of the missing exiles.⁴⁷⁵ When the leaders did not follow up on these conversations, the families began to take matters into their own hands. On May 9, 1985 they sent a telex to UN Secretary General De Cuellar requesting a meeting and again on May 16, but they received no reply.⁴⁷⁶ On June 2, they issued a memorandum to the leaders of all the large Christian denominations in Namibia detailing information that they had gathered about abuses in exile and demanding a meeting with them.⁴⁷⁷ On July 9, they sent a similar detailed account to a variety of church and solidarity organizations that were supporting SWAPO overseas.⁴⁷⁸ The June 2 document was signed by 132 persons and introduces the authors as “the worried and concerned parents and family members of Namibian refugees in Zambia and Angola;” the July letter similarly refers to “the mothers and relatives of Namibian refugees.”⁴⁷⁹ Later that year, the group began to refer to itself in its writings more succinctly as “the Committee of Parents.”⁴⁸⁰ According to Erica Beukes, the name was not only practical for the purposes of signing letters but highlighted that the group only consisted of family members of those affected and was not a political organization. To maintain this image many of those most involved, such as Attie Beukes and Erica's husband Hewat, never signed documents written by the Committee of Parents because they were not “blood family” of any persons who had disappeared.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁵ Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, p. 31; CP 1987, p. 8; Groth 1995, pp. 141-142.

⁴⁷⁶ Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, p. 31; CP 1987, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁷ Ailonga Collection, File Name: “Political Matters affecting the Chaplaincy,” “Memorandum, Junie 1985, Aan die Namibiaanse Kerkleiers.”

⁴⁷⁸ “Memorandum from mothers and relatives of Namibian refugees to solidarity groups in Namibia on July 9, 1985” in Basson and Motinga, 1989, p. 43.

⁴⁷⁹ The June 2 memorandum was written in Afrikaans. It refers to the “*verontruste en bekommerde ouers en familieled van Namibiaanse vlugtlinge in Zambia en Angola.*”

⁴⁸⁰ The group appears to have referred to itself in its writings as “The Committee of Parents” for the first time in September 1985 (Basson and Motinga 1989, pp. 44-46).

⁴⁸¹ Beukes 13.5.2008, p. 12.

Finally, on September 9, 1985 a meeting was held between representatives of Namibia's two largest Lutheran churches, the Catholic Church, the African Methodist Church, the CCN and twenty-four members of the Committee of Parents. Despite their expressions of good will, the church leaders left the meeting without committing to a plan of action other than that they would meet again as a group to discuss the Committee's concerns.⁴⁸² Ten days later, when the Committee received a letter from CCN General Secretary Abisai Shejavali, suggesting that no plans had been made,⁴⁸³ the Committee launched its own. On September 20 Committee members sent a new series of letters to SWAPO's allies, this time including Sam Nujoma, Eduardo dos Santos, Kenneth Kaunda and Fidel Castro in the list of recipients.⁴⁸⁴ Therein they criticized the SWAPO leadership and called again for an international investigation of SWAPO's camps. In the same month Attie Beukes returned to Europe again on behalf of the CCN and collected additional information.

Clearly, by the end of 1985, considerable information had been exchanged about abuses occurring in SWAPO camps among a variety of communities involved in supporting Namibia's liberation struggle in Namibia and abroad. Nonetheless, on February 16, 1986, when SWAPO announced in London that it had uncovered a "South African spy network, numbering at least 100 people," and indicated that "the rumours and allegations against SWAPO" were part of "a well calculated campaign organized by

⁴⁸² CP 1987, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁸³ "Letter from the Council of Churches in Namibia to Stella M. Boois on September 19, 1985" in Basson and Motinga 1989, p. 44,

⁴⁸⁴ Basson and Motinga 1989, pp. 44-46. Nujoma, dos Santos, Kaunda and Castro were the presidents of SWAPO, Angola, Zambia and Cuba respectively. Castro was an important recipient, not only because of Cuban soldiers deployed in Angola in conjunction with the Angolan Civil War, but also due to strong links between SWAPO and Cuba, where, for example, hundreds of Namibian exiles attended school on the Isle of Youth.

South Africa,”⁴⁸⁵ members of the international community did not raise critical questions. Ten days later, when the Committee of Parents released its own press statement, offering in print for the first time its own history as well as an interpretation of SWAPO's press release, the group found itself isolated from the allies it had once had as SWAPO supporters. Setbacks to the organization and its leaders were immediate and harsh. In March, Erica and Attie Beukes were dismissed from their CCN jobs.⁴⁸⁶ Shortly thereafter, Oxfam Great Britain removed funding from a township teaching project which Erica Beukes was coordinating. In May, pamphlets were distributed in Windhoek townships labelling members of the Committee of Parents “traitors” and calling on Namibians to “Stay Away from South Africa’s Poison!”. In August, Erica Beukes’ house was fire-bombed.⁴⁸⁷

To understand why, despite the available evidence, the Committee of Parents and their truth claims became associated with stigma, it is important to recall their relation to the social structure of global politics. As previously noted, by 1976, the year the United Nations legitimated SWAPO as “the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people,” the constellation of international institutions supporting the movement was firmly in place. Thereafter, any government, solidarity movement or church which criticized SWAPO publicly risked being seen as undermining Namibian liberation and

⁴⁸⁵ The Namibian, 21.2.1986. Apparently, in late 1985 or early 1986, the Committee of Parents began to seek funding to travel to New York and meet directly with UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar. Although the money did not materialize, the Committee sent a fax to de Cuellar on February 9, 1986 indicating their plans to come. Erica Beukes believes that this fax prompted SWAPO to make its announcement about “the South African spy network” several days later (Beukes 10.3.2007, pp. 5-6).

⁴⁸⁶ On May 20, 1986 Abisai Shejavali wrote a letter addressed “To all our pardners (sic) and donor agencies,” indicating that Attie and Erica Beukes had been “dismissed from the services of the CCN.” The letter is available at the NAN in the Collection of the Holland Committee for Southern Africa (HCSA).

⁴⁸⁷ Paul Trewelha, “Swapo and the Churches,” Searchlight South Africa, 7 (1991), pp. 75-76; Beukes 13.5.2008, p. 14.

being called a collaborator with, or puppet of, South Africa – the international pariah. Under these circumstances, there was little impetus for international institutions to look closely into the allegations made by the Committee of Parents about SWAPO abuses in exile.

The Committee of Parents and their claims were not discounted out of hand, however. They were discredited through arguments made and evaluated by representatives of SWAPO and its constellation of allies. Especially in the months prior to SWAPO's London announcement, when the liberation movement took a stance on the Committee of Parents and received no rebukes from its allies,⁴⁸⁸ members of SWAPO and the international community would have been relatively free to assess the Committee openly, especially in their private correspondence. Nonetheless, then as later, the Committee of Parents occupied a precarious position in an international system, where the authority to speak for or to a nation and the authority to present “the truth” are so closely intertwined. As a result, the Committee's representations of SWAPO's camps were vulnerable to any argument that questioned its relationship to “Namibia” and the well-being of “its” people.

Consider, for example, the following correspondence that passed between several church leaders and heads of state towards the end of 1985. Faced with contradictory reports over what was happening in SWAPO's exile camps, the President of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Ninan Koshy, sent a letter on November 12 to the Secretary General of the CCN, Abisai Shejavali, requesting an appraisal of the Committee of

⁴⁸⁸ In its press release and briefing SWAPO appears to have made no direct reference to the Committee of Parents, but it does indicate that “it was revealing this information [about the spies] because rumours and allegations against SWAPO had already begun circulating in Namibia and Europe, claiming that SWAPO was involved in 'fascist' activities against the Namibian refugees” The Namibian, 21.2.1986.

Parents and documents that Koshy had received from them. On December 23, Shejavali wrote a reply which, although addressed to Koshy, was sent to all of the recipients of the Committee of Parent's September 20 letter.⁴⁸⁹ The reply is noteworthy, not only because of the authority that the CCN, as a Christian and Namibian organization, wielded among many SWAPO allies, but also due to how this authority was used to undermine the Committee of Parents and its claims.

Uniting all of the particular points in Shejavali's letter are two basic arguments: that the Committee of Parents lacks the authority to represent exile and that what the Committee of Parents claims to know about exile is unimportant in comparison to, and is intended to undermine, the larger goal of achieving Namibian independence. To advance each point, Shejavali draws from specific anecdotes which call into question the Committee of Parents' position in a Namibian national community. For example, the letter begins with a story about how the Committee of Parents brought its concerns to other people's attention. According to Shejavali, when church leaders and Committee delegates met on September 9, the former discovered that the latter "already had done their homework of teaching people outside Namibia without the *prior notice* (italics his) of the church leaders concerned." Shejavali takes this discovery, and other similar ones that he notes in the letter, to be a breach of protocol, presumably because the Committee should pass all of its correspondence through the CCN, the ecumenical body representing the nation's churches. Certainly he recommends that the CCN take the Committee's claims directly to the Namibian people's official representative, SWAPO, for an assessment: "the church leaders... agreed among each other to have a meeting with

⁴⁸⁹ Ailonga Collection, File Name: "Articles, Cuttings," letter from Abisai Shejavali to Ninan Koshy, 23.12.1985. The letter is also included in Basson and Motinga 1989, pp. 47-48.

SWAPO leadership... to ensure whether there is any substance in the allegations raised.”

A similar concern is evident in Shejavali’s statements about whom the Committee of Parents does and does not represent. According to the author, after the September 9 meeting one delegate from the Committee informed him “that she did not know why she was called to the meeting, which means that some of the people were drawn into the group without knowing what was it (sic) all about.” The way in which Shejavali frames his observation seems to call the Committee's authority into question in two respects. First, it is possible that the number of people belonging to the Committee of Parents is inflated, and, therefore, that it does not have sufficient numbers of people to corroborate its own claims about what is happening in exile. Second, it is possible that those in the Committee have been manipulated by others, perhaps apologists for South Africa, whose interests are less valid than the Committee of Parents' would seem to be as representatives of families whose sons and daughters were SWAPO members in exile. Both of these points seem to be implied again in one of Shejavali’s later comments: “it is not even known to us on behalf of how many Parents this committee is acting.”

As for the particular truth claims that the Committee of Parents makes, Shejavali addresses few of them directly. The points that he does mention are discounted on ideological grounds rather than through a discussion of evidence that the Committee had presented. For example, in response to the Committee's claim that SWAPO’s exile leadership was characterized by “tribalism,” Shejavali responds that “SWAPO is a National Movement, it is not a tribal or tribalistic organization.” More often, the Committee's claims are not discussed in their specifics at all, but are rather measured against the goals which the CCN and SWAPO have set for themselves and, in this way,

minimized. Referring to the tone of the letters received by the WCC and others, Shejavali notes “the spirit is not reconciling at all. It’s (sic) mood is bordering near hate. In this time in Namibia we need to struggle for unity, which is very important on the eve of independence.” Here Shejavali takes Namibia’s need for “unity” for granted as well as the pre-eminence of “Namibia” and its needs versus other kinds of communities. Shejavali’s concluding remarks further accentuate the tacit comparison between the Committee of Parents' interests with the higher goals of Namibian liberation: “I really request that those who have been supporting SWAPO financially to continue to do so, which is in my opinion a valuable contribution towards the exiled and suppressed. These allegations should not stop us nor threaten us from doing the charity work for our fellow men and women.”

It is difficult to ascertain exactly how various persons received Shejavali’s letter. But the silence of church and solidarity organizations in public media following the Committee of Parents' September 20 letter and SWAPO's February 16 press conference is suggestive – if not of the persuasive quality of its arguments, then of the arguments' acceptability for organizations whose members did not want to criticize SWAPO. Certainly, the kinds of arguments, and sometimes the specific points, which Shejavali makes were repeated to discredit the Committee of Parents in the months and years to come.⁴⁹⁰

At the same time that the Committee of Parents was being discredited in this manner, organizations drew from their close relationship with SWAPO and ability to access SWAPO camps, however superficially, to reinforce the liberation movement's

⁴⁹⁰ See, for example, The Windhoek Advertiser, “Swapo hits back over atrocity allegations,” 14.4.1986, reproduced in Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, p. 86.

representation of the exile community. Although reports were made following trips to the camps from as early as 1985,⁴⁹¹ none received more attention than that of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). On February 16, 1987, the LWF, the Namibian churches and SWAPO held a meeting in Geneva during which the Committee of Parents' September 1985 letters were discussed and SWAPO President, Sam Nujoma, accepted an offer by the LWF to visit the SWAPO camps.⁴⁹² Later that year, from December 1 to 6, a delegation of six LWF members,⁴⁹³ travelled to Angola where they spoke to representatives of SWAPO, the Angolan government and the Christian Council of Angola in Luanda and visited Kwanza Sul, a camp composed primarily of women, children, elderly persons located in the Angolan province of the same name. On March 24, 1988, the delegation issued a report about its trip, which states that the delegation was "unable to substantiate the allegations" made by the Committee of Parents but did observe the efficiency with which Kwanza Sul was administered, its effective system for distributing food, and the quality of health services and pastoral care provided there. The report goes on to add that "after such a short visit we would not presume to come to definite conclusions with regard to the allegations made" and that according to SWAPO,

⁴⁹¹ For example, in 1985 members of "435," a Lutheran church affiliated solidarity group in Germany, sent members to visit Nyango, a SWAPO camp in Zambia, in response to the IGF's first report on Namibia titled "Namibia: Human Rights in Conflict" (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), which had likened Nyango to "a concentration camp." During 1987 reports from eye witnesses to the SWAPO camp, Kwanza Sul, were also published in The Namibian ("Visit to Kwanza," 5.6.1987; "SWAPO's Socialist Tendencies Hailed by Exile," 4.12.1987).

⁴⁹² Lutheran World Information, "LWF Delegation to Angola Submits Report on December Visit to Namibian Refugee Settlements," 11 (1988), pp. 11-12; "Report in The Namibian, February 20, 1987" in Basson and Motinga 1989, pp. 59-60.

⁴⁹³ The delegations' members included Reverend Ruth Blazer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, Olle Eriksson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Hanne Sophie Greve of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway, Rev. Helmut Jehle of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Bodil Sollig of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and Dr. Ishmael Noko, director of the LWF Department of Church Cooperation (LWI 1988, p. 11). Apparently, the VEM had requested that Siegfried Groth be included in the delegation, but this was not possible due to the SWAPO leadership's mistrust of him (Groth 1995, p. 163).

exiled members “accused of major crimes such as espionage are not... tried by the civilian but by the military courts” and “that these courts were not at Kwanza Sul.”⁴⁹⁴ It might have further added, if the delegates were aware of documents circulating among other Lutheran clergy abroad, that the focal point of the alleged human rights abuses was not Kwanza Sul but Lubango, where PLAN maintained its headquarters hundreds of kilometres away. Despite such caveats, stated and unstated, SWAPO supporters drew from the report to make bold claims. In his oft cited response, LWF President Gunner Staalsett indicates that “the report made clear that the accusations of human rights abuses were not substantiated” and that “those who have levelled the accusations against SWAPO” were “part of the ongoing South African propaganda war aimed at discrediting the liberation movements.”⁴⁹⁵

With such statements being made by widely respected sources, the Committee of Parents struggled to respond persuasively. And, ironically, in its attempts to do so, the organization sometimes played into the hands of those determined to discredit it. Even before the organization went public, the Committee of Parents was making statements in its written correspondence that exceeded what the organization could establish through its documentary evidence or argue effectively. For example, the Committee wrote in at least two of its September 1985 letters that it suspected SWAPO Administrative Secretary Moses Garoeb and Secretary for Information and Publicity Hidipo Hamutenya to be “agents of South Africa.”⁴⁹⁶ Apparently a response to the role the two leaders played in

⁴⁹⁴ LWI 1988, p. 11.

⁴⁹⁵ LWI 1988, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁹⁶ “Letter to Sam Nujoma, 20.9.1985,” “Letter from the Committee of Parents to the Secretary General of the UN, 20.9.1985” in Basson and Motinga 1989, pp. 44-45.

filming and screening of the films of accused spies,⁴⁹⁷ the accusation was rejected by Shejavali in his December 23 letter and probably by others who respected the two SWAPO leaders. In June of the same year Erica, Hewat and Attie Beukes published A Struggle Betrayed, a book, which, according to the Committee of Parents' February 26 press release, would "provide irrefutable truth that the SWAPO leadership is trying to cover up the sordid truth."⁴⁹⁸ Although the book's 92 pages of documents demonstrate that the Committee of Parents wielded considerable evidence about happenings in the camps at this time, the accompanying text makes blanket, unreferenced and pejorative statements about SWAPO leaders and their allies which, when challenged, could discredit the Committee's authority to make any claims about abuses occurring in exile at all. Moreover, much of the documentary evidence published in the book had been stolen from Siegfried Groth's office during Attie Beukes' trip to Europe in September/October 1985.⁴⁹⁹ On the one hand, this material, including letters written by exiles addressed to family members and church leaders in Namibia and Siegfried Groth's record of his conversations with Erica Beukes during 1985, offers some of the most persuasive evidence of human rights abuses then occurring in exile camps and of the organizations

⁴⁹⁷ On one occasion, probably at the beginning of 1985, Hidipo Hamutenya traveled to the SWAPO camps near Lubango and participated in filming some of those who were detained as spies there (Andries Basson, Interview 30.5.2007, p. 27; Hidipo Hamutenya, Interview 2.4.2008, p. 5). Hamutenya, along with SWAPO Foreign Relations Secretary, Theo-Ben Gurirab, led the February 16 press briefing at which SWAPO not only announced the "spy network" but also screened some of the film that had been taken in Lubango (Hidipo Hamutenya, Interview 2.4.2008, p. 7; Kandi Nehova, Interview 7.4.2008). The films were also screened elsewhere in Europe thereafter and, apparently, Hamutenya and Moses Garoeb were involved in these screenings (Leys & Saul 2003, p. 340).

⁴⁹⁸ Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986. The announcement of the book's release was originally printed in the Windhoek Observer ("SWAPO is Accused of Crimes and Abuse," 1.3.1986). The article has been copied in Thiro-Beukes et al. 1986, p. 77.

⁴⁹⁹ E. Beukes 10.3.2007, pp. 5-6; Groth 1995, p. 144. Attie Beukes spent part of October 1985 with Siegfried Groth at the VEM in Wuppertal. According to Erica Beukes, during the visit Attie encouraged Groth to make the information that Groth had more widely accessible, including records from meetings with Namibian exiles, which Groth had promised would remain confidential. When Groth refused to change his course, Attie took the files himself, which he was able to access directly from Groth's office, where Groth had provided Attie with a space to work.

then aware of it. On the other, its publication may have impaired Groth's ability to work with the UNHCR, AI, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the VEM and the Namibian church leaders, all of which he had been informing about the abuses in SWAPO camps and hoped would influence the SWAPO leaders to change their course.⁵⁰⁰

At the same time, members of the Committee of Parents were making associations that gave its critics new ammunition. Shortly after the Committee's February 26 press release, it received an invitation from the *Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte* (IGFM)⁵⁰¹ to visit its offices in Frankfurt. Although the Committee of Parents declined due to the IGFM's "right wing links," three of its members travelled with the IGFM's support to West Germany and Britain, attending a conference on March 27 on human rights abuses in Namibia. Thereafter, the IGFM became a primary vehicle through which the Committee of Parents' members knowledge of abuses within SWAPO camps was dispersed internationally. At the same time, the involvement with the IGFM was used repeatedly to link the Committee of Parents with South Africa and its apologists. Moreover, it precipitated a split between those who opposed working with the IGFM, centred around the Committee's de facto leader Erica Beukes, and those who participated in the IGFM meetings: Stella Maria Boois, Stella Gaes and Talida Schmidt. In turn, the latter three established their own committee, "the Parents' Committee," which operated separately from the Committee of Parents although the names of the two became conflated in many subsequent publications.⁵⁰²

⁵⁰⁰ There is a variety of evidence of Groth's correspondence with these people and organizations in the Siegfried Groth Collection at the VEM. Some of this material was reproduced in Thiro-Beukes, et al. 1986, pp. 93-106.

⁵⁰¹ IGFM also had chapters in the USA and Great Britain that went by the name International Society for Human Rights (ISHR).

⁵⁰² E. Beukes 13.5.2008, pp. 14-15; Phil Ya Nangoloh, Interview 19.2.2007, pp. 5-6. At the time that the Committee of Parents was formed, Phil Ya Nangoloh was living in the United States. There he began

Why would the Committee of Parents/Parents' Committee make dubious assertions and affiliations when they could offer so much evidence to support their most basic claim: that human rights abuses were occurring within SWAPO in exile? Again, it is important to consider the Committees from the perspective of the international political order. In the mid-1980s relatives of Namibian exiles gathered extensive knowledge about happenings occurring in SWAPO's exile camps. In turn, they attempted to make that knowledge socially acceptable by approaching various leaders, above all, SWAPO's most accessible and influential ally: the churches. When the churches and others would not accommodate them, these families were compelled to take increasingly drastic measures: communicating directly with the leaders of institutions and governments overseas, challenging the moral authority of those who did not respond to them, and aligning with former enemies who were willing to give them a platform from which to expound their knowledge. However, without prominent SWAPO members or supporters standing up for the Committee members' bona fides, these efforts further distanced them from SWAPO and the organizations they most wished to influence.

This is not to say that the Committee of Parents/Parents' Committee's efforts had no effect. With information provided by members of the Committees, Siegfried Groth and the IGFM, Amnesty International published a report on SWAPO human rights abuses in 1987. Although UN Secretary General De Cuellar had not responded to previous pleas made by the Committee of Parents and IGFM, he did respond to Amnesty

corresponding with the Committee of Parents, sharing with the Committee his experiences as an exile in Zambia during the mid-1970s and publicizing them more widely. Following his return to Namibia in late 1986, Ya Nangoloh became the spokesperson for the Parents' Committee and at independence formed the National Society for Human Rights (Ya Nangoloh 19.2.2007; Phil Ya Nangoloh, "A Foreign Education – Angola, USSR, USA" in Colin Leys and Susan Brown, ed. Histories of Namibia: Living through the Liberation Struggle (London: Merlin Press, 2005).

and raised concerns with SWAPO President Sam Nujoma, resulting in a more wide ranging debate over how to gain more information about the conditions among SWAPO in exile. In 1989, when plans were made for implementing Resolution 435, the release of “the SWAPO 100” was an issue of broad international concern. More than that, the news of the Committee of Parents/Parents' Committee made its way to the detention sites outside Lubango where “spies” were being held. According to Beukes and some ex-detainees, the knowledge that there was an organization, especially an organization of Namibians that detainees knew and trusted, that was working on their behalf was a source of hope.⁵⁰³ Nonetheless, the Committee of Parents/Parents' Committee and its claims remained stigmatized through independence. As a result, the Committee was unable to garner support for an investigation of SWAPO's camps that might have challenged the national narrative so readily accepted by SWAPO's international and grass roots supporters.

“The Ex-Detainees”

Between May and July, 1989 the axis of debate about human rights abuses in the SWAPO camps shifted. According to the provisions for Namibian independence outlined in UN Resolution 435, both South Africa and SWAPO were obliged to release their political prisoners prior to UN supervised elections. On May 25, 1989, less than six months prior to the November election date specified by the Geneva Accord, an entourage of international journalists, Angolan government officials and SWAPO members, led by Secretary General Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo, Administrative Secretary Moses Garoeb, Secretary of Defense Peter Mueshihange and PLAN Deputy Commander

⁵⁰³ E. Beukes 13.5.2008, pp. 15-16.

Solomon “Jesus” Hawala, traveled to the camps outside Lubango to confirm the release of SWAPO's “ex-detainees.”⁵⁰⁴

The group drove first to a camp near the Old Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre about 15 kilometers northeast of Lubango, where they met a group of about 100 women and children. After assembling and greeting the visitors in chorus, the group was addressed by Toivo Ya Toivo, who announced that he was accompanied by journalists who would like to interview them.⁵⁰⁵ According to Pauline Dempers, one of the detainees assembled, it was at this moment that a reporter intervened:

It [was] a lady from France... [who] said, 'Tell us, who are these?' She asked Ya Toivo. But Ya Toivo didn't want to say it. He said, 'No, you will hear from them.' And she insisted saying that you are leading this delegation, you have to tell us who these people are. And that's when he started saying that 'these are the spies.' Then the lady... asked, 'Did you also imprison children?' Then Ya Toivo just couldn't answer that. I remember he could not say anything. He just said, 'You will hear from them.' That is what he was saying. And with that the whole chaos started.⁵⁰⁶

“The chaos” to which Dempers refers was an eruption of histories. Women began

⁵⁰⁴ Most of the information about the ex-detainees' release that follows is gleaned from discussions with former exiles about a collection of thirty-two photographs taken by John Liebenberg on May 25, in conjunction with his trip to Lubango as a journalist for The Namibian. Ex-detainees were consulted at a variety of venues, including at the “Strategic Planning Retreat” of the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement held at Rock Lodge outside Okahandja from November 24-25, 2007, when the photos were put on display for the weekend and discussed by more than thirty retreat participants. Five ex-detainees were also formally interviewed about the photographs (Pauline Dempers, Interview 21.11.2007; Emma Kambangula, Interview 26.11.2007; Hans Pieters, Interview 19.11.2007; Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 18.11.2007; Willy Swartbooi, Interview 12.12.2007) as was the leader of the SWAPO delegation, Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo (3.7.2008). Where points represent the views of a particular research participant or of a journalist who wrote about the May 25 encounter, the reference is cited below. Several of these photos appear in Appendix 5.

⁵⁰⁵ Apparently, Toivo Ya Toivo had announced to the women the previous day that there were journalists in Lubango who would be coming to speak with them (Dempers 21.11.2007, p. 13; Kambangula 26.11.2007, p. 21). Male detainees indicate that they were similarly informed that they would be interviewed by foreign journalists (See below).

⁵⁰⁶ Dempers 21.11.2007, p. 15. For another account of the French journalist's intervention, see Kambangula 26.11.2007, p. 17.

to shout in protest they were not spies and that they had been mistreated by those who had accused and detained them. In turn, the reporters moved away from the SWAPO leaders and interacted with the ex-detainees, recording and photographing them as individuals recounted their personal experiences. Later, John Liebenberg, who with Raja Munamava was covering the ex-detainees' release on behalf of The Namibian,⁵⁰⁷ would describe “the angry, frustrated-looking women standing with arms crossed in front of reporters, some with children and babies in their arms, were all adamant that they were innocent of any charges against them and that they had been imprisoned without reason.”⁵⁰⁸ Similarly, the French journalist, Marie Joannidis, reported that the women “want above all to denounce the bad treatment and clear their names of all suspicion.”⁵⁰⁹ One woman told a German television crew that the child she was carrying was conceived when she was raped by a camp guard.⁵¹⁰ Another child allegedly walked over to Toivo Ya Toivo, tugged at his sleeve and asked, “Did you kill my father?”⁵¹¹

The journalists encountered a similar scene at Nakada Base, a camp where 100 male ex-detainees were being held approximately 15 kilometers beyond the women's camp. After being introduced to the journalists by Toivo Ya Toivo, the detainees responded by delivering a statement that a group of them had prepared the previous evening shortly after they had learned of the journalists' pending visit.⁵¹² The statement, delivered by Riundja Ali Kaakunga, began: “For more than ten years we have been

⁵⁰⁷ The Namibian is a widely read English language daily newspaper, which, in 1989, was seen by many as a critic of the South African government and supportive of SWAPO.

⁵⁰⁸ John Liebenberg, “Detainees Speak of Ordeal,” The Namibian, 9.6.1989. The article is also included in Basson and Motinga 1989, pp. 87-88.

⁵⁰⁹ “Report by AFP on May 27, 1989” in Basson and Motinga, pp. 86-87.

⁵¹⁰ The Namibian 9.6.1989.

⁵¹¹ David Lush, Last Steps to Uhuru: An eye-witness account of Namibia's transition to independence, (Windhoek: New Namibia Books, 1993), p. 199.

⁵¹² Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 29.5.2005, pp. 2-3; Stephanus 18.11.2007, p. 45.

forced to incriminate others, and told that we are agents of the South African regime. We have suffered harassment and torture in order to cow us into submission.” Recently, Kaakunga continued, SWAPO had announced that the detainees had two options for their repatriation: “either to agree to imposed re-integration into SWAPO, or to be handed over to South Africa, which would prove our collaboration with the South African regime. We rejected that option and we agreed to be re-integrated into SWAPO. Both these options are unacceptable to us. We want to be released from those who call us South African spies.” Thereafter, the spokesman described the conditions of their detention: the “dungeons,” or underground pits, in which they had lived, the poor food and lack of medical supplies and the methods of torture. In response to the latter, “one of the detainees pulled down his trousers to display a wound that he had incurred during interrogation.”⁵¹³ Throughout all of this, the SWAPO leadership stood by silently. However, when the journalists were eventually urged to leave, the detainees “became agitated... One after another the ex-prisoners undress[ed] to show marks and scars... left by torture.”⁵¹⁴

Reports of the journalists and detainees' encounter did not circulate immediately. Although the journalists represented papers from several countries, including France, East Germany, the USSR and Namibia,⁵¹⁵ groups following “the detainee issue” were only able to trace two articles in which journalists described their visit. Liebenberg's piece “Detainees Speak of Ordeal,” was not published in The Namibian until June 9, 1989 and Joannidis' article for the AFP, while dated May 27, 1989, only became known

⁵¹³ The Namibian 9.6.1989.

⁵¹⁴ AFP 27.5.1989.

⁵¹⁵ Although sources frequently mention the reporters from France, East Germany, USSR and Namibia, some also thought that Britain, Portugal and Angola were represented (Willem Meyer, “I left the country on the 15th of November, 1976,” 1990, (gift to the author); Pieters 19.11.2007, p. 48).

to the IGFM on June 2.⁵¹⁶ In the interim, reports about the detainees that did circulate highlight confusion over who and where the detainees were, what they had experienced and what they wanted. According to a report written by UNCHR Base of Operations Angola, Toivo Ya Toivo contacted its Lubango office on May 19, indicating that those who had been imprisoned by SWAPO had been released and were at that moment registering at UNHCR's provisional site on the edge of SWAPO's Lubango camps.⁵¹⁷ However, UNHCR officers involved in the registration “were not aware of the particular identity of the caseload, who were mixed with normal SWAPO-affiliated refugees.”⁵¹⁸ On May 23, 1989 the SWAPO Central Committee released a press statement from Luanda announcing “a policy of national reconciliation” in accordance with which all detained enemy agents “have been freed and are already registered with the UNHCR to return to Namibia like all other Namibians.”⁵¹⁹ The following day, however, when a spokesperson for UNHCR was asked about the detainees' release, he could not confirm

⁵¹⁶ “Extracts of the report ‘No Escape from Misery,’ by the International Society for Human Rights on August 6, 1989” in Basson and Motinga 1989, p. 104.

⁵¹⁷ VEM, Groth Collection, File No. 1311, UNHCR BO Angola, “Notes on Issue of Ex-Detainees,” p. 1; UNHCR, “Voluntary Repatriation to Namibia Registration Form” for Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, 19.5.1989 (gift to the author). The detainees' release occurred in a series of stages before the United Nations became directly involved. On January 10, 1989, Moses Garoeb visited the detainees, informing them of plans to implement Resolution 435 (Andries Basson, Interview 22.9.2007, p. 27; Michael Kahuika & Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 20.9.2007, pp. 11-12, 12-13; Meyer 1990, p. 3; Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 18.9.2007, p. 38; Steve Swartbooi, Interview 21.9.2007, p. 31; Oiva Alikie Angula, “Brutalised Innocence: The turns of destiny and tyranny,” 2008 (unpublished manuscript, gift to the author), pp. 152-153; Groth 1995, p. 107; Paul Trehwela, “A Namibian Horror,” *Searchlight South Africa*, 4 (1990), pp. 89-90. On April 19 the male detainees were told by SWAPO that they had been released and were moved from the detention camp at Ethiopia to another camp known both as Nakada Base and Production Centre, also located outside Lubango (Meyer 1990 p. 3; Stephanus 18.11.2007, p. 48; Angula 2008, pp. 154-155). The women were similarly “released” in May and moved from the detention camp at Minya to a camp near the Old Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre also outside Lubango (Dempers 21.11.2007, pp. 13; Pieters 19.11.2007, pp. 46-47; Kambangula 26.11.2007, p. 18).

⁵¹⁸ UNHCR BO Angola, p. 1.

⁵¹⁹ BAB, SWAPO of Namibia Collection, 89fSLuPR1, “SWAPO Press Release on the Resolution of the Central Committee of SWAPO Luanda, May 23, 1989.”

that this had occurred.⁵²⁰ On May 25, 1989, the day of the journalists' visit, Cedric Thornberry of UNTAG, the United Nations team responsible for implementing the transition in Namibia, announced in Windhoek that UNTAG observers in Angola had “come across” and recorded the names of 199 ex-detainees, adding that they were “well looked after” although he would not add any other details about the encounter.⁵²¹ Thereafter, SWAPO issued another press statement from Luanda, indicating that the former prisoners had, in fact, “voluntarily rejoined the organisation.”⁵²²

In fact, the day after the journalists' visit a group of PLAN soldiers led by Solomon Hawala tore down the male detainees' camp, forcing them to flee into the surrounding bush. In turn, detainees renewed their efforts to make their voices heard. Three of the men walked the thirty kilometers from Nakada Base to Lubango proper, where they made their way to the offices of the Red Cross, asked for protection and requested their intervention to protect the other detainees.⁵²³ Independently, three of the female detainees also traveled to UNTAG's offices in Lubango, while several others walked to and from the men's camp assessing the situation.⁵²⁴ After “an unofficial visit” from UNHCR to the men's camp confirmed the men and women's allegations, a joint

⁵²⁰ ISHR, 6.8.1989, p. 103.

⁵²¹ ISHR, 6.8.1989, p. 103. Ex-detainees recall that prior to the journalists' visit they were visited by a UNTAG delegation led by Colonel Moriarty, at which time some of them requested that the UNTAG take responsibility for their protection (Kambangula 26.11.2007, p. 21; Stephanus 18.11.2007, p. 48; Pieters 19.11.2007, p. 47; Meyer 1990, p. 3; UNHCR BO Angola, p. 1; The Namibian, 9.6.1989). UNHCR BO Angola indicates that the UNTAG and journalists' visit occurred on the same day, May 24, but most ex-detainees and Ya Toivo himself (3.7.2008) remember the UNTAG visit occurring the day before the journalists' visit. Moreover, the AFP reporter Marie Joannidis indicates that the reporters visited the camps on a Thursday, which, if correct, must refer to Thursday, May 25, 1989 (AFP 27.5.1989).

⁵²² ISHR 6.8.1989, p. 103.

⁵²³ Hans Pieters, one of the men who walked to Lubango, offers a brief account of this experience in one of our interviews (Hans Pieters, Interview 21.5.2007).

⁵²⁴ Theresia Basson, one of the women who walked to Lubango, offers a brief account of this experience in our interview (Theresia Basson, 1.6.2005); Pauline Dempers and Emma Kambangula offer accounts of their own and other women's movement around Lubango during the week following the journalists' visit (Dempers 21.11.2007, pp. 17-18; Kambangula 26.11.2007, pp. 19-20).

meeting was held between UNHCR, the Angolan government and SWAPO whereat arrangements were made for Angola to receive the detainees and UNHCR to offer them humanitarian aid.⁵²⁵ On May 31, the Angolan government picked up 153 of the 199 detainees who had indicated that they wanted to leave SWAPO and transported them from Old Hainyeko and Nakada to Lubango where they were accommodated by the Angolan Provincial Department of Social Welfare and received visits from UNHCR and the Red Cross.⁵²⁶ The following day SWAPO indicated for the first time that some of the detainees were “unrepentant” and had therefore been handed over to other organizations in Lubango.⁵²⁷ In the following weeks, news about the journalists' visit finally began to spread through discussions of Joannidis and Liebenberg's articles and through letters written by the detainees delivered by the Red Cross to detainees' families in Namibia.⁵²⁸

A month later, SWAPO's released detainees became the focus of news again. On July 4, 1989, the group of 153 was flown to Namibia, and on July 6 its members held a press conference with the Parents' Committee and Committee of Parents in a community center located in Khomasdal, a Windhoek township. There, Othniel Kaakunga read a press statement, in which he narrated a history of “the SWAPO spy-drama.”⁵²⁹ Kaakunga explained that between 1980 and 1989 a hunt for South African spies had developed in the Namibian camps. Those who were accused were taken to the SWAPO military

⁵²⁵ UNHCR BO Angola, pp. 1-2.

⁵²⁶ UNHCR BO Angola, p. 2. Those from the group of 199 registered with UNTAG who were not picked up by the Angolans on May 31 repatriated to Namibia with members of SWAPO.

⁵²⁷ ISHR 6.8.1989, p. 104.

⁵²⁸ Maria Higoam, Sophia Kahuika and Emma Motinga, Interview 14.9.2007, p. 4; T. Basson, 1.6.2007, p. 10.

⁵²⁹ This press statement as well as “A Report to the Namibian People: Historical Account of the Swapo Spy-Drama” (Windhoek: 1989, 1997) were written by Hans Pieters and several others while the group of 153 were in Lubango awaiting their repatriation to Namibia (Hans Pieters, Interview 22.7.2008). “A Report” was printed and distributed in Namibia a few weeks after the detainees' return and offers a more detailed history of “the spy-drama.” Unlike the press statement, however, “A Report” appears not to have received much attention in the media. In 1997 “A Report” was published by BWS and the PCC (see below) identified as the document's author.

headquarters in Lubango, Angola where they met with members of SWAPO's security apparatus, who told to them to narrate their life story. When the accused did not confess to spying activities, they were beaten either into submission or to death. Upon confession, written statements were taken and the detained were moved to the dungeons where other accused spies were living. According to Kaakunga, the leaders of SWAPO's security apparatus were directly responsible for the purge, but the broader SWAPO leadership had failed to respond to the situation, allowing the security apparatus to carry out a purge with impunity. Victims, Kaakunga explained, were primarily young intellectuals whom SWAPO leaders viewed with suspicion and fear. By focusing their attention on these people, the leadership diverted attention from its own incompetence and justified their own fear of spies. Kaakunga concluded his remarks by stating, categorically, that the detainees had never been South African spies and remained "faithful to the cause of total liberation of our country." Therefore, the group had constituted itself as the Political Consultative Council of ex-detainees (PCC). The PCC, Kaakunga emphasized, was not a political party but rather a pressure group committed to three objectives: to inform Namibians about "the SWAPO spy-drama," to prevent SWAPO from coming to power and to demand the release of hundreds of other detainees that had last been seen in SWAPO camps near Lubango.⁵³⁰ After Kaakunga had finished his remarks, the conference was opened to the press, but this exchange was soon quieted when seventeen detainees undressed, revealing deep wounds on their backs, legs, breasts and buttocks.⁵³¹ The resulting photographs were circulated throughout Namibia and in many foreign

⁵³⁰ "Press Statement by the Political Consultative Council on July 6,1989" in Basson and Motinga 1989, pp. 92-93. Some of the detainees last seen in Lubango who did not return at independence were, according to repatriated detainees, together with them as late as April and May 1989 – well after the peace process in Namibia was underway.

⁵³¹ "Einigen weht nun der Wind ins Gesicht," *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7.7.89.

papers.⁵³²

SWAPO's official response to the ex-detainees' revelations was to deny some of them and to belittle the significance of others. Immediately after the May 25 meeting between journalists and detainees in Lubango, Moses Garoeb offered journalists an interpretation of what they had heard and seen. According to Garoeb, SWAPO wanted the truth to be known. "Mistakes" were made, Garoeb admitted, "but SWAPO has been fighting a war of survival. Our camps have been bombed and many innocent lives have been lost... as a result of the activities of South African agents." "If these people have suffered, it is nothing in comparison to what has been happening to our people in SADF camps."⁵³³ On July 9, shortly after the ex-detainees' press conference, the SWAPO election directorate declared that all those who had been detained were South African spies and that any torture resulted from the "extreme conditions of a brutal war."⁵³⁴ At no point did SWAPO acknowledge detaining more people than it had released. This position did become tenuous when, between July 12 and July 15, sixteen persons, all claiming to be "ex-detainees of SWAPO" arrived at the UNHCR's offices in Lubango. When questioned about this group and sixty-eight others, all of whom had been held since May isolated from other accused spies at a camp outside Lubango, SWAPO President Nujoma and Secretary of Defense Mueshihange denied that SWAPO still held detainees. Later, however, SWAPO and the Angolan government issued a statement, clarifying that members of the group that had come to UNHCR's attention were "not prisoners but dissidents." Thereafter, arrangements were made for "the dissidents" to repatriate to Namibia although, with the exception of the sixteen who made their way to UNHCR's

⁵³² Trewelha 1991, p. 68.

⁵³³ The Namibian 9.6.1989.

⁵³⁴ Lush 1993, p. 205.

Lubango offices, the others returned to Namibia with SWAPO as common Namibian refugees.⁵³⁵

Despite the efforts of SWAPO leaders to maintain a consistent party line on the ex-detainees, individual responses differed. Referring to his experience on May 25, 1989, Toivo Ya Toivo recalls:

It was terrible. Because when I was there, I knew some people who were detained there, and I started asking for them... [After the meeting with the journalists] I received a telex from Sam Nujoma that he was going somewhere, that I must go back to Luanda... I think that this was just something cooked up because [Solomon] Hawala and Peter Mueshihange reported to [Nujoma] that I was asking things that they didn't want me to ask and that I must go back... And then these people, after I left, they [raided the detainees'] homes.⁵³⁶

As Ya Toivo and other SWAPO leaders were discussing the detainees amongst themselves, some also made public statements which undermined the liberation movement's official position. Most notably, at a rally in Rehoboth, the hometown of the Beukes family, SWAPO Foreign Secretary Theo-Ben Gurirab announced that “as a SWAPO leader I will never defend the humiliation and suffering of torture. If the allegations are true, I apologize to the victims and to their parents and pledge to you now that the SWAPO leadership will take the necessary steps to bring those involved to book.”⁵³⁷ According to one of Gurirab's colleagues, Hidipo Hamutenya, “Ben was reprimanded [for this statement in Rehoboth], not directly, but his story was not

⁵³⁵ UNHCR BO Angola, p. 3; VEM, Groth Collection, File No. 1335, “Ex-SWAPO Detainees, Press Statement August 10, 1989;” Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 17.6.2005, p. 25. It should be further noted that other persons detained in Lubango by SWAPO repatriated as ordinary refugees.

⁵³⁶ Toivo Ya Toivo 3.7.2008.

⁵³⁷ Leys and Saul 2003, p. 340, quoted from Times of Namibia, 19.7.1989.

welcomed by [some SWAPO leaders]. And therefore it was not pursued.”⁵³⁸ Meanwhile, there were SWAPO leaders that went out of their way to meet detainees following their return to Namibia, both to express sympathy and to suggest ways that SWAPO and the detainees might achieve perceived common interests. According to one ex-detainee, these leaders argued that “priority number one was to get rid of the colonial situation and then the issue about our detention and human rights abuses would get attention on a national scale.”⁵³⁹

At the same time, the constellation of organizations which had supported SWAPO for years appeared to be breaking ranks with the party. On July 14, a press release by Father Steegman of the Commission of Justice and Peace, a Namibian ecumenical organization, was published in Times of Namibia indicating the Commission’s “pain” and “disappointment” in listening to “reports of former detainees about their suffering in camps in Angola” and demanding that “those responsible for any kind of torture... be called to account and the victims duly compensated.”⁵⁴⁰ Over the following weeks and months other organizations in Namibia and abroad expressed similar sentiments, including staunch allies such as West Germany's Green Party and the LWF.⁵⁴¹ At the same time, these and other organizations began to ask questions about persons who, according to the detainees, had been imprisoned by SWAPO but had not yet returned to Namibia. In response to SWAPO President Sam Nujoma’s argument that the so-called “missing detainees” could be attributed to South African propaganda, UN Secretary

⁵³⁸ Hidipo Hamutenya, Interview 2.4.2008, p. 8.

⁵³⁹ Stephanus 15.6.2005, p. 19.

⁵⁴⁰ “Torture must be condemned,” Times of Namibia, 14.7.1989. Times of Namibia was an English language daily newspaper.

⁵⁴¹ “Greens Rebuke SWAPO,” The Namibian, 21.8.1989; “LWF admits shock and dismay at reports of SWAPO torture,” The Namibian, 20.10.1989.

General De Cuellar was unapologetically opposed: “I think it is not only a concern of the South African Government, but the [Namibian] population would like to know the whereabouts of 2,000 men.”⁵⁴²

There is no question that the ex-detainees had several advantages in shaping perceptions of what had happened in exile over those who had been opposing dominant representations since the mid-1980s. First, they had their bodies. For Joannidis, the story behind “the marks and scars” on the men is self-evident; they are “left by torture” presumably at SWAPO’s hands.⁵⁴³ The detainees’ actions, as narrated by Joaniddis, assume a similar link between signifier and signified: “The group becomes agitated when the journalists are urged to leave. One after another the ex-prisoners undress to show marks and scars.”⁵⁴⁴ In subtle contrast, Liebenberg is more cautious in how he interprets what he sees, indicating that the detainees’ wounds “were obviously the result of lashes.”⁵⁴⁵ However, his informants, who accompany the marks and scars with a collective story of how they were experienced, assert that the wounds stand for more than this. For the female detainees meeting the press, it is not the wounds which are made to tell a story or affect sympathy, but rather their bodies’ new appendages – their babies. According to Liebenberg, “one of the saddest and most moving moments was when one women (sic) in her twenties pointed towards the baby she held in her arms and told a German television crew that the child was the product of rape by one of the camp guards.”⁵⁴⁶

The use of the detainees’ wounds and babies as evidence of a history of violation

⁵⁴² “De Cuellar and Nujoma at Odds,” The Namibian, 27.7.1989.

⁵⁴³ AFP 27.5.1989.

⁵⁴⁴ AFP 27.5.1989.

⁵⁴⁵ The Namibian 9.6.1989.

⁵⁴⁶ The Namibian 9.6.1989.

is also evident in the knowledge production about the detainees immediately after their return to Namibia. For example, during the weekend following the detainees' press conference Die Republikien printed an enlarged photo of the detainees' unclothed bodies with the following caption: "The *naked facts* (italics mine) of the cruelty suffered by detainees in SWAPO's hell camps in Angola."⁵⁴⁷ The Allgemeine Zeitung takes a slightly different approach, accompanying its three page article on the detainees' press conference with four blown up pictures, each of which is interpreted for the reader through short narratives taken from the pictured detainees' testimony.⁵⁴⁸ Several months later, South African reporter Nico Basson and former detainee Ben Motinga published a book titled Call them Spies in which photographs of detainees' bodies are put to similar use. The book, most of which consists of detainees' accounts of their experiences and documentary material about their detention is prefaced by two page-size photographs. The first pictures an infant of approximately one year with a sign in her hand that reads "I was born IN JAIL."⁵⁴⁹ The other is a photo taken from the July 6 press conference of an unidentified wounded detainee which, according to the captions, "reveal[s] the horrors of the notorious SWAPO security service."⁵⁵⁰

In addition to their bodies, detainees' reputations enhanced the truth-value of their stories. Already during the 1980s, when letters began circulating in Namibia and abroad about abuses within SWAPO in exile, authors repeatedly used certain names as evidence that those accused of spying were innocent of that label. Among these names was Ben

⁵⁴⁷ "DTA pressure to free the rest," Die Republikien, 9.7.1989. Die Republikien is Namibia's main Afrikaans language newspaper. The Sunday edition, from which this caption is taken, was printed in English.

⁵⁴⁸ "Einigen weht nun der Wind ins Gesicht," Allgemeine Zeitung, 7.7.89. Allgemeine Zeitung is a German language daily newspaper, read predominantly by Namibian German-speakers, a minority within the country's white population.

⁵⁴⁹ Basson and Motinga 1989, p. 1.

⁵⁵⁰ Basson and Motinga 1989, p. 3.

Boys. Boys had played a leading role in mobilizing Nama-speaking communities south of Windhoek to support SWAPO before departing for exile in 1978 and becoming a member of the SWAPO Central Committee.⁵⁵¹ According to some former exiles, when Boys “disappeared” in Angola in 1984 and rumors spread that he was a spy it provoked critical questions for them, especially among those who knew him prior to his departure for exile. Theresia Basson, who shared family with Boys and studied at the St. Therese mission school in Tses just after Ben Boys had attended there, recalls “I wasn’t sure what was happening. But then Ben Boys disappeared. And so I began asking questions.”⁵⁵² The authority of Ben Boys opened more questions when SWAPO leaders presented their film of detainees’ “confessions” to audiences in Lusaka on March 4, 1985. Although explicitly intended to account for those “disappearing” in Angola among the exile community, for some the testimony presented by Ben Boys had just the opposite effect. People may have struggled to believe the testimony given Boys’ background. As one person told Siegfried Groth, who arrived in Lusaka for his annual trip fifteen days after the screening, “it was... obvious that the man was under great pressure and that he was making his confession under compulsion. Ben had been a member of the SWAPO leadership, a highly intelligent person with great responsibility.”⁵⁵³ Others who watched the films would have known for certain that much of Boys’ testimony was fabricated. As Joseph Stephanus, an exile who also studied at St. Therese, recalls, Boys was implicating people he had allegedly trained in South Africa at the same time that these people were in

⁵⁵¹ Boys, together with Eric Biwa, Lukas Stefanus and Andries Basson played leading roles in establishing the SWAPO cell in Gibeon from 1976 to 1978 as well as in organizing the meeting in October 1976 during which traditional leaders from several Nama communities, including Hendrik Witbooi, joined SWAPO (Andries Basson, Interview 30.5.2007, pp. 4-6; Katjavivi 1988, pp. 99-100). In 1978 Boys left for exile together with Samuel Thomas and “Amies” Isaacks.

⁵⁵² T. Basson 1.6.2005, p. 5.

⁵⁵³ Groth 1995, p. 106.

school with Stephanus in Tses.⁵⁵⁴

In the lead-up to Namibia's 1989 elections, detainees' reputations continued to impact on how others understood what had happened to them. David Lush offers several insights into these dynamics in Last Steps to Uhuru (1993), an account of the author's work as a journalist with The Namibian during Namibia's transition to independence. According to Lush, when Liebenberg returned to Windhoek with his materials from the May 25 visit to Lubango, the reporters were ready to accept Garoeb's justifications for detaining SWAPO members: these persons were spies and any mistreatment they had experienced was attributable to a harsh war. When reporters began to recognize the detainees in Liebenberg's photographs, however, their understandings were challenged: "‘Hey this is my cousin,’ one staff member said in amazement, pointing to one of the photographs... ‘he was a serious comrade, he suffered for the struggle, that's why he went into exile.’" Thereafter, other reporters also discovered ex-detainees whom they knew and trusted, resulting in a row among the staff about whether and how The Namibian should present the story which was eventually printed on June 9.⁵⁵⁵ Lush continues on to narrate his conversations with colleagues and acquaintances over the following weeks in which family and friends of ex-detainees began to question SWAPO's representations of the detentions on the basis of their personal knowledge of those who had been accused.⁵⁵⁶ According to ex-detainees, there were similar reactions shortly after their return to Namibia when they were received by their communities of origin. In Gibeon, Vaalgras and Gainachas, villages with strong ties to SWAPO and where thirty or more repatriated detainees and many more "missing persons" had family,

⁵⁵⁴ Stephanus 31.5.2005, p. 12.

⁵⁵⁵ Lush 1993, p. 201.

⁵⁵⁶ Lush 1993, p. 202.

receptions were held to welcome and honor exiles returning home. During these events “returnees” told stories about their and others' detentions, which, as first-hand accounts delivered by people known personally to most community members, are likely to have been very persuasive.⁵⁵⁷

However, despite the persuasive powers of their bodies and their reputations, the detainees faced obstacles to shaping publicly endorsed knowledge about their detentions that proved insurmountable. As noted, after the detainees' press conference, SWAPO reiterated its stance that all those released had been spies and claimed that the stories of abuse were exaggerated as part of a South African propaganda onslaught. As a result, for many Namibians, accepting the detainees' stories was taken as sympathy for South Africa and a betrayal of the Namibian nation in utero. This association was strengthened by a history of SWAPO opposition parties raising “the detainee issue” as a political platform during the late 1980s and climaxed in 1989 in the lead up to the Namibian elections. On July 4 when the 153 detainees returned to Namibia, seven political parties were present in Windhoek at the airport to receive them, including the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), a party launched during the Turnhalle Conference of 1975-6 and SWAPO's wealthiest competitor.⁵⁵⁸ Thereafter, the DTA joined the Parents' Committee as a highly visible non-detainee organization clamoring for further investigation into SWAPO detentions and the release of the hundreds of political prisoners that were unaccounted for.

Under the circumstances, few persons who had been affiliated with SWAPO,

⁵⁵⁷ For accounts of these receptions for exiles, see Andries Basson, Interview 21.9.2007, pp. 28-29; Pauline Dempers, Interview 21.11.2007, p. 21; Michael Kahuika and Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 19.9.2007, pp. 14-16; Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 18.9.2007, pp. 38-39; Willem Konjore, Interview 22.7.2008.

⁵⁵⁸ “Parents scorn politicians,” Times of Namibia, 5.7.1989.

including many of the closest friends and family of detainees, were willing to support the PCC's objectives. Some detainees returned to home communities which would not listen to their stories or even allow them to reside there. As one woman told Siegfried Groth: "When I returned home in July 1989 sick after all the torture and imprisonment, I was ordered to go to the SWAPO leadership and ask for forgiveness for talking publicly about SWAPO's violations of human rights. I was innocent, and therefore I refused to take such a step. My family therefore asked me to leave the house... I am often overcome with fear, and I feel like a stranger in my own country."⁵⁵⁹ Although better received elsewhere, ex-detainees struggled to gain public support for their initiatives among historically SWAPO supporting groups. Many communities, especially in southern Namibia, were split between those who felt that they could no longer support SWAPO after hearing the detainees' revelations and others who maintained that SWAPO was the only party which could effectively challenge South African interests in Namibia and therefore must be supported at all costs. Like those SWAPO leaders from exile that approached ex-detainees, leaders in communities at Gibeon, Vaalgras and Gainachas argued that SWAPO would address the PCC's agenda but could only do so once it had come to power.⁵⁶⁰ Even those who embraced the detainees were not likely to openly challenge SWAPO's authority to represent Namibia or exile history. David Lush reports, for example, that the returned detainees' families and friends whom he knew living in Windhoek believed the detainees' stories and, as a result, decided not to vote for SWAPO. They did not, however, campaign against SWAPO or publicly contest the

⁵⁵⁹ Groth 1995, p. 179.

⁵⁶⁰ Dempers 21.11.2007, p. 21; Stephanus 18.9.2007, p. 38; Swartbooi 21.9.2007, p. 43.

party's official justification for its detentions.⁵⁶¹ Similarly, family members of ex-detainees and "missing persons" interviewed in Vaalgras, Gainachas and Keetmanshoop indicate that since 1989 they have rarely spoken about their exiled family members experiences and, when they have spoken, it is usually only among their closest relations.⁵⁶²

The ex-detainees were, in any event, not well equipped to mobilize dissidents among historically SWAPO supporting communities. When they returned to Namibia, most had no money and few possessions. As a result, they could do little to publicize their experiences, let alone to pay for basic necessities.⁵⁶³ And although political parties rivaling SWAPO offered the detainees financial support, the PCC would not accept this as a group although individual members apparently did accept DTA offers to pay for their shopping trips and doctors appointments.⁵⁶⁴ Some of the detainees also expected that, based on their reputation when they had been activists in the country, that they would wield more political influence upon their return than they, in fact, did. Joseph Stephanus, who had been a leader in the SWAPO Youth League in the mid-1970s, remembers that he and other detainees were surprised to see how much the composition of people and political dynamics had changed inside the country since they had left more than ten years before.⁵⁶⁵ And, after years living abroad and imprisoned, the detainees had also changed. Stephanus recalls how he and some other detainees responded to their home communities at the time of their return: "We were malnourished, disoriented, confused, rebellious,

⁵⁶¹ Lush 1993, pp. 203-204.

⁵⁶² From July to September 2007 a research assistant, Steve Swartbooi, and I conducted interviews with thirteen family members of persons who were detained in exile. This research is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

⁵⁶³ Joseph "Pereb" Stephanus, Interview 15.6.2005, p. 23; Willem Meyer, Interview 17.6.2005, p. 6.

⁵⁶⁴ Stephanus 15.6.2007, p. 23; Pieters 9.9.2007, p. 18.

⁵⁶⁵ Stephanus 15.6.2007, p. 20.

disrespectful to the norms and values of our society. Because we were exposed to so many things. The older values no longer made any sense to us. We were disrespectful of the older values in terms of how you are supposed to be as a community member. So, [many in our home communities] just wrote us off.”⁵⁶⁶

In this environment the ex-detainees split over political strategy. On July 20, 1989 a group of ex-detainees established the Patriotic Unity Movement (PUM). Although the group of 153 had united around the PCC, opinions differed on the PUM. Some ex-detainees thought that participating in a party would associate their stories with political motives even more than they already were. Others were concerned about an alliance that the PUM soon made with the United Democratic Front (UDF), which had been able to assemble the necessary signatures to register as a party and raise funds for months before the ex-detainees' return from exile. Although the alliance with the UDF was necessary for PUM to be able campaign, it also attached the party to the UDF's main source of funding, the Namib Foundation, which was suspected by some Namibians to have links with the South African government.⁵⁶⁷ Also, the UDF was widely seen as a “tribal party” representing Namibia's Damara community, an association which ruptured cleavages among the ex-detainees' ethnically and linguistically diverse but predominantly Damara and Nama members.⁵⁶⁸ Moreover, there were ideological differences among ex-detainees, shaped by periods of extended training and study in countries on opposite sides of the Cold War, which, for some, came to a head when the PUM's leadership was selected and

⁵⁶⁶ Stephanus 15.6.2007, p. 19.

⁵⁶⁷ Lush 1993, p. 202.

⁵⁶⁸ Stephanus 15.6.2005, p. 23. Damara and Nama refer to two ethnic categories but one language. In stories about the time of their detention, detainees often contrasted the positions taken by the Damara/Nama detainees and other detainees.

its platforms were written.⁵⁶⁹ Due to such tensions, many ex-detainees did not unite behind the PUM, but rather joined other political parties or distanced themselves from political affiliations altogether.

At the same time, organizations which had formally distanced themselves from SWAPO following the detainees' release made little effort to make ex-detainees' histories more widely accepted. This point is evident in the interactions of various ex-detainees and church leaders following the former's repatriation. Although the CCN was responsible for administering the Repatriation, Resettlement and Rehabilitation program for Namibian exiles, no CCN representatives were at the airport on July 4 to receive the ex-detainees.⁵⁷⁰ Thereafter, when some ex-detainees approached church leaders to share their experiences and concerns with them, the ex-detainees did not feel accepted by them.⁵⁷¹ A number of detainees were in contact with Siegfried Groth following their repatriation and urged him to make the information about their detentions public.⁵⁷² When, on September 18, 1989, Groth published a report, he was chastised for it by colleagues in Namibia and Germany.⁵⁷³ In a letter sent by the ELC's Hendrik Frederik to

⁵⁶⁹ Stephanus 15.6.2005, p. 22.

⁵⁷⁰ According to Philip Steenkamp (1995, p. 113): "The ex-detainees insisted that not a single member of the CCN... be allowed to participate in the management of their return." Regardless of whether the "ex-detainees" as a whole made a statement to this effect in 1989, some research participants interpreted the lack of CCN involvement in their repatriation as signifying that the churches did not want to associate with the ex-detainees.

⁵⁷¹ Steenkamp and Groth refer to a particular meeting at which "the CCN executive met with a group of detainees on August 23" (Steenkamp 1995, p. 106; Siegfried Groth, "Menschenrechtsverletzungen in der namibischen Exil-SWAPO – die Verantwortung der Kirchen," epd-Dokumentation 40/89(Frankfurt am Main: Evangelischer Pressedienst, 18.9.1989), p. 12). Research participants refer to meetings between ex-detainees and church leaders more generally (e.g. Kala Gertze, Interview 21.2.2007, p. 10; Emma Kambangula, Interview 15.2.2007, p. 13).

⁵⁷² Groth 18.9.1989, pp. 1-2, p. 56; Die Tageszeitung, "Du darfst nicht länger schweigen," 28.8.1989; For the files of Siegfried Groth's correspondence with ex-detainees, prior to and following their detention, see VEM, Groth Collection, File Nos. 1230 and 1334.

⁵⁷³ Groth 18.9.1989. In our interviews Pastor Groth indicated that he elected to retire from the VEM earlier than he had previously planned due to tensions that developed between him and others in the VEM after he published his report. He further mentioned that he was not asked to represent the VEM on Namibian Independence Day, 21.3.1990, despite the fact that he had been the VEM's representative responsible

Groth, the Bishop argued that Groth's publication and subsequent interview was undermining “arrangements... which could lead to open discussions and steps toward reconciliation” which were being made “at the local level.”⁵⁷⁴ New articles in late 1989 similarly emphasized church leaders' commitment to promoting dialog between conflicting groups in Namibia although no details about how this would be achieved were forthcoming and claims by Groth and others that the churches continued to shirk their responsibility to confront SWAPO about human rights abuses in exile were consistently denied.⁵⁷⁵

Particularly troubling for ex-detainees were unanswered questions about those who had been imprisoned in Lubango with them but had not yet returned to Namibia and the inability of international institutions to help them answer these questions. Following their return on July 4, the Political Consultative Council and the Parents' Committee issued a list of 530 names of persons who had been detained in Lubango but had not repatriated, including information about each detainee's age, place of residence, year of arrest, year and place of detention in which last seen and, in some cases, date of death.⁵⁷⁶ In August, as more ex-detainees repatriated, additional lists were written and meetings held between ex-detainees and UNTAG officials, resulting in the formation of the United

for Namibia since 1961 (Siegfried Groth, Interview 24.10.2006; Siegfried Groth, Interview 26.10.2006, p. 4).

⁵⁷⁴ Ailonga Collection, File Names: “Chaplaincy after Lusaka for Salatiel Ailonga,” “Political Matters affecting the Chaplaincy,” letter from Bishop Hendrik Frederik to Siegfried Groth, 22.9.1989.

⁵⁷⁵ Ailonga Collection, File Names: “Chaplaincy after Lusaka for Salatiel Ailonga,” “Political Matters affecting the Chaplaincy;” letter from Bishop Dumeni, to Times of Namibia, 13.10.1989; “LWF admits shock and dismay at reports of SWAPO torture,” The Namibian, 20.10.1989.

⁵⁷⁶ VEM, Groth Collection, File No. 1335, “Report of the United Nations Mission on Detainees,” 11.10.1989, p. 3; Hildegard Pütz, Paul and Sandra Caplan and Ralph and Adeline von Egidy, eds. Namibia Handbook and Political Who's Who (Windhoek: The Magnus Company, 1989), p. 324. It should be noted that prior to the ex-detainees' return IGFM, Amnesty International and SWAPO-D had also printed lists of suspected detainees. These were, however, far less comprehensive than the lists created by the Parents' Committee and PCC following ex-detainees' return.

Nations Mission on Detainees (UNMD).⁵⁷⁷ In turn, UNMD compiled two additional lists: a list of all of the 1,077 persons who had allegedly been detained and a list of 32 sites where detainees had allegedly been imprisoned.⁵⁷⁸ Despite the involvement of ex-detainees in shaping the knowledge that the UNMD took with it on its mission, detainees had little influence over the UNMD's research in the field or its final report. On September 2, 1989, the UNMD, departed from Windhoek with ten UN officials, but no ex-detainees, members of human rights organizations, or persons with prior knowledge of the areas of detention were included.⁵⁷⁹ SWAPO officials, however, were consulted in Lubango, offering the UNMD a list of ex-detainees “which corresponded almost entirely with the lists relating to the group recorded by UNTAG observers in May 1989 and the group of 84 detainees whose release came to light in August 1989.”⁵⁸⁰ Although the mission toured Angola and Zambia for nineteen days, only September 6 was spent at the sites outside Lubango where most ex-detainees had been imprisoned and most of the missing persons were last seen.⁵⁸¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that some ex-detainees found the UNMD's research, which concluded that “there were no detainees in any of the alleged detention centres and other places which it visited,” not only inconclusive but also “a useless effort.”⁵⁸²

Despite such obstacles the ex-detainees did manage to achieve some of the goals outlined by the PCC at the time of their return. From July to November 1989, ex-detainees shared their experiences at political rallies across Namibia. Although SWAPO

⁵⁷⁷ UNMD p. 3; Putz, Coplan and von Egidy, p. 324.

⁵⁷⁸ UNMD p. 3. The detention sites are listed in Annex 1.

⁵⁷⁹ UNMD, Annex 2; “Commission challenges Swapo to come clean,” *Times of Namibia*, 16.10.1989.

⁵⁸⁰ UNMD, p. 5.

⁵⁸¹ UNMD, Annex 3.

⁵⁸² UNMD, p. 8; Dempers 21.11.2007, p. 24.

won the November elections, it did not achieve the two-thirds majority that many had predicted and which would have given the party a free-hand to write the Namibian Constitution and implement its policies in Parliament.⁵⁸³ Although it is impossible to know how ex-detainees' stories influenced voters' choices, SWAPO's failure to win a two-thirds majority has been attributed to how Namibians reacted to the ex-detainees' return.⁵⁸⁴ The PUM-UDF received sufficient votes for the PUM's President, Eric Biwa, to be given a seat at the Constituent Assembly, where the Constitution was drafted, and in Parliament. Even the UNMD's report could be interpreted as supporting ex-detainees' claims, for it identified 315 persons from the comprehensive list of detainees "whose present status is unknown and requiring further investigation."⁵⁸⁵

Nonetheless, public discussion of the ex-detainees' experiences subsided after 1989. By then, the PCC had dissolved as a political lobby. Some ex-detainees faced pressures to integrate themselves in home communities where their stories were not welcome. Many, who were in their thirties at the time of their release, had professional and family goals that were often difficult to pursue while living in exile and nigh impossible during their detention. SWAPO also began to recruit ex-detainees for mid-level government jobs, which were appealing to many who were financially vulnerable and had been educated in exile to work as public servants upon their return. Under the circumstances there was little impetus for ex-detainees to continue to share their stories

⁵⁸³ The following are percentages of the national vote which Namibia's three largest parties received in the first national election: SWAPO (56.9%), DTA (28.3%), UDF (5.6%) (Henning Melber, ed. Re-examining Liberation in Namibia. Stockholm: Elanders Gotab, p. 17).

⁵⁸⁴ Dobell 1997, p. 373.

⁵⁸⁵ Having discarded the names of "some 110 duplicated entries," the UNMD's Report accounts for the 1,077 persons on its comprehensive list of detainees in this way: "(a) 484 persons released and/or repatriated; (b) 71 persons reportedly not detained, including SWAPO officials; (c) 115 persons reported dead; (d) 52 persons who could not be identified due to insufficient information; (e) 315 persons whose present status is unknown and requiring further investigation" (UNMD, p. 9).

openly. Moreover, while “the missing persons” was a topic of debate in Parliament when it convened in 1990,⁵⁸⁶ the ensuing investigation of the issue by the Red Cross was limited by the same structures that had hindered the UNMD. As the ICRC notes in its June 1993 final report to the Namibian government, which had solicited its intervention, international humanitarian law stipulates that it could only liaise between “the families of missing persons” and the governments and liberation movements which were “parties to [the] conflict.” Therefore, when “relatives of the missing who had 'last been seen in SWAPO hands' or 'last been seen in SWAPO prison'” did not receive a reply from SWAPO or learned vaguely that “their family member had... 'succumbed to illness in the vicinity of Lubango,'... the concerned families... had to satisfy themselves with such replies, as no more straightforward information was ever available.”⁵⁸⁷ Despite the Red Cross's own prognosis that, given such replies, its investigation “can hardly be considered satisfactory,” Parliament defeated Eric Biwa's motion to table the ICRC report for discussion.⁵⁸⁸

Breaking the Wall of Silence

In 1995 Siegfried Groth published a book, titled in its English translation Namibia – The Wall of Silence.⁵⁸⁹ Therein, the retired pastor shares stories that he had collected while serving as the VEM's representative to Namibia from 1961 to 1990, many of them told by persons detained in Zambia and Angola during the 1970s and '80s. As several

⁵⁸⁶ For a discussion of how “the missing persons” were discussed in Parliament from 1990 to 1994, see Leys & Saul 2003, pp. 340-342.

⁵⁸⁷ ICRC, “Missing Namibians: I.C.R.C. Final Report,” (Geneva, 1993), pp. 1,3.

⁵⁸⁸ ICRC, p. 5; Leys & Saul 2003, pp. 341-342.

⁵⁸⁹ The book was first published in German with the title Namibische Passion: Tragik und Grösse der namibischen Befreiungsbewegung and was translated into English in the same year.

reviewers of the book noted⁵⁹⁰ and as this research confirms, details about Namibia's exile past narrated in The Wall of Silence were not novel to many Namibians and others following Namibian news from abroad. Groth himself had previously published an account of human rights abuses in the SWAPO camps and of the churches' knowledge of these abuses in his September 18, 1989 report, and this report had received attention at the time in Namibia.⁵⁹¹ Nonetheless, the launch of the English translation of The Wall of Silence in Windhoek sparked a new initiative to challenge Namibia's national narrative and to erase the stigma associated with histories of detention in SWAPO's exile camps.

Central to this initiative were two Namibians: Christo Lombard and Samson Ndeikwila. Lombard, who was teaching theology and directing the Ecumenical Institute for Namibia (EIN) at UNAM at the time, obtained a copy of the German version of Groth's book and was the first person in Namibia to respond to it publicly. In a review printed in the Windhoek Observer on June 24, 1995, Lombard encouraged SWAPO and the churches to take the book's publication as an opportunity to acknowledge their responsibility for abuses committed during the liberation struggle and, in so doing, to promote "reconciliation."⁵⁹² Shortly thereafter, Lombard met with Samson Ndeikwila, his colleague at the CCN and a former exile, who had been imprisoned by SWAPO in

⁵⁹⁰ UCT African Studies Library, BAP 322.42 DAU, Timothy Dauth, "Namibia – the Wall of Silence – review," an e-mail submitted to "NUAFRICA: Program of African Studies Mailing List"; Heribert Weiland, "Namibia – The Wall of Silence. The Dark Days of the Liberation Struggle – Book Review" Journal of Southern African Studies, 22, 3 (1996), pp. 501-503; Lauren Dobell, "Silence in Context: Truth and/or Reconciliation in Namibia," Journal of Southern African Studies, 23, 2 (1997), pp. 371-382.

⁵⁹¹ Groth 18.9.1989. In addition to the letter from Bishop Hendrik Frederik to Siegfried Groth cited above, Groth's report also received attention in the Namibian papers at the time as well.

⁵⁹² Christo Lombard, "Alarming Stories from the Darker Side of the Struggle," Windhoek Observer, 24.6.1995 in "Breaking the Wall of Silence: Statements and Clippings, February – April 1996," (Windhoek: BWS, 1996), pp. 1-4 and in "Namibische Passion: Chronik einer Debatte," (Wuppertal: VEM, 1997), pp. 6-9.

Tanzania from 1968 to 1970.⁵⁹³ Ndeikwila soon acquired an English translation of Groth's book, copies of which were first supplied by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation to a small group, including several ex-detainees and church leaders, in mid-1995.⁵⁹⁴ Together, Ndeikwila and Lombard decided to contact people they knew who had been affected by histories described in the book and ask them if they wanted to meet and share their experiences.

Over the next several months a group of ex-detainees and others interested in their experiences assembled on Saturdays in the main hall at the CCN's offices in Windhoek.⁵⁹⁵ As participants in the sessions would later write:

We held long and moving meetings, listened to individual stories. We chose the premises of the CCN as our venue because we all felt most more at home there. We sat in a big circle, starting with a prayer and short bible reflection. People are bitter towards those who had ordered their arrests and detentions, who had smeared their names and caused their rejection by families and friends. Some cried when telling their stories and many of us shared in their tears. This served as healing to the people who have been traumatised for a long time and whom nobody wanted to listen to.⁵⁹⁶

By November 1995 participants in these meetings must also have been discussing strategies for confronting the stigma associated with the stories they were telling. In that

⁵⁹³ Samson Ndeikwila, Interview 9.2.2007, p. 7; Christo Lombard, Interview 5.5.2009. Ndeikwila was one of a group of exiles known as the "Seven Comrades" or "Chinamen." After living together in Kongwa for several months in 1968, the group presented a memorandum to the camp leaders in which they expressed their frustrations with how the camp was being administered and requested a party congress at which these matters could be discussed. The commanders at Kongwa handed those who had presented the memorandum to the Tanzanians, who instead of transporting them to SWAPO leaders as the group had hoped, sent them directly to prison in Dar es Salaam. The group was eventually released from detention in 1970. For Ndeikwila's account of his experiences in exile, see Ndeikwila 9.2.2007, 16.2.2007.

⁵⁹⁴ "Breaking the Wall of Silence – A New Initiative," 10.2.1996 in "Breaking the Wall of Silence" 1996, pp 8-9. Lombard also makes mention of copies of the book "now also available in English" in his book review in the *Windhoek Observer*. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation is a German non-profit organization affiliated with the Social Democratic Party in Germany.

⁵⁹⁵ Ndeikwila 9.2.2007, p. 7; Gertze 21.2.2007, pp. 9-10; Lombard 5.5.2009.

⁵⁹⁶ BWS, "Annual Report 1996," in "Chronik einer Debatte," p. 167.

month, some attended the CCN's annual general meeting, suggesting that the Council launch the book, which would become available commercially in Namibia the following year, and thereby “initiate a process of reconciliation and healing.”⁵⁹⁷ On February 21, 1996, shortly after the CCN indicated that it would not participate in the book launch, Lombard issued a media release announcing a “Breaking the Wall of Silence Committee” and stating that the Committee would take responsibility for launching the book itself, a position reiterated in a media release by Ndeikwila the following month, announcing a “Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement” (BWS).⁵⁹⁸

On Saturday, March 30, at the Kalahari Sands Hotel in downtown Windhoek, the book and BWS were both officially launched. There, in a packed hall, Samson Ndeikwila introduced BWS as “a civil rights pressure movement promoting a democratic culture of openness, freedom, peace and human fellowship.”⁵⁹⁹ He also offered an account of the Movement's genesis, narrating it through Salatiel Ailonga, the Parents' Committee and Siegfried Groth, each of whom was presented “The BWS Award of Merit.”⁶⁰⁰ Ndeikwila was followed by seven ex-detainees, who gave accounts of their experiences in exile, and by Christo Lombard who officially launched the book. Finally, the meeting was opened for questions and BWS' future was discussed, including plans to translate Groth's book into Afrikaans and Oshiwambo, to document the experiences of Namibians during the

⁵⁹⁷ “Breaking the Wall of Silence – A New Initiative,” p. 8. On November 28, 1995 forty-two ex-detainees also addressed a letter to CCN General Secretary Ngeno Nakamhela which also requested that the Council organize a book launch although the letter was apparently not delivered to him until mid-January the following year (Letter to Ngeno Nakamhela in “Chronik einer Debatte,” p. 17 and “Statements and Clippings,” p. 5).

⁵⁹⁸ “Media Release: Breaking the Wall of Silence Committee,” 21.2.1996 in “Statements and Clippings,” p. 15; “Media Release: Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement (BWS),” 20.3.1996, in “Statements and Clippings,” pp. 51, 51a, 52.

⁵⁹⁹ “Wounds reopened,” *Tempo*, 31.3.1996; “Detainee book sparks strong public interest,” *The Namibian*, 1.4.1996; “Walls Movement wants to practise (sic) civil action,” *The Windhoek Advertiser*, 1.4.1996.

⁶⁰⁰ BWS, “Annual Report 1996,” p. 170. Ailonga's 1977 letter to Bishop Aula was also read publicly at the launch.

liberation struggle and to facilitate “national reconciliation,” possibly through a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.⁶⁰¹

In some respects BWS was very similar to organizations which had come before it. Many of those who had been most involved in the Committee of Parents, Parents' Committee, the PCC and the PUM took positions of leadership in BWS.⁶⁰² Especially, among the Lubango ex-detainees, the first meetings at the CCN rekindled relationships, bringing together many of those then living in Windhoek and connecting them through mutual friends to others who had settled in different parts of the country.⁶⁰³ There were, however, a variety of new people, who also had been detained or felt mistreated by SWAPO in exile and participated in BWS. For example, Tangeni Nuukuawo and Sheeli Shangula, both of whom fled Namibia in “the exodus” and were imprisoned with Andreas Shipanga from 1976 to 1978, were founding members as, of course, was Samson Ndeikwila, who was well known to the hundreds of Namibian exiles who had left SWAPO and migrated to Kenya in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁶⁰⁴ Nuukuawo, Shangula and Ndeikwila were, thus, part of their own social networks of exiles who had become alienated from SWAPO. Nonetheless, these networks had remained distinct from one another, due to such factors as different experiences of mistreatment by SWAPO, different places where people had lived following their expulsion from SWAPO, the

⁶⁰¹ Ndeikwila comments on these and other plans discussed at the book launch in BWS' post-launch media release (BWS, “Media Release,” 11.4.1996 in “Statements and Clippings,” p. 84). BWS also did some research before the launch compiling a “Lists of Namibia's 'Missing Persons,’” (Windhoek: BWS, 1996) . The lists name 708 people, including 554 SWAPO detainees who had not been accounted for, 93 SWAPO detainees whose deaths had been witnessed by repatriated detainees and 61 South African detainees who had not been accounted for.

⁶⁰² One might compare for example the leadership listed for the PUM, PC and PCC, (Pütz, von Egidy, Caplan 1989 pp. 216, 323, 326) with that of the first “Management Committee” of BWS (BWS, “Annual Report 1996,” p. 173).

⁶⁰³ Dempers 21.11.2007, pp. 21-22.

⁶⁰⁴ Dempers 21.11.2007, pp. 21-22; Tangeni Nuukuawo, Interview 10.3.2007; See Chapter 3 for discussions of Shangula, Nuukuawo and the 1976 conflict. Detentions in Tanzania during the 1960s are also considered briefly in Chapter 3 and at greater length in Chapter 6.

stigma attached to “SWAPO dissidents” of previous exile generations, and different ethnic and regional affiliations, which for those dissidents from the 1960s and '70s centered around an Ovambo majority from the North and for those from the 1980s, centered around a Nama/Damara majority from the South. At the meetings that precipitated BWS, participants crossed these divides, sharing their particular histories from exile and establishing solidarity around the shared aim of erasing the stigma which had been attached to all of them. In addition, some SWAPO activists who had remained inside Namibia attended the meetings as did some family and friends of exiles who had not participated in the Committee of Parents/Parents' Committee, thereby further expanding the communities involved and the perspectives considered.⁶⁰⁵

The goals and strategies pursued by BWS also differed from its predecessors in subtle but significant ways. Although from its founding BWS publicized the experiences of persons abused in SWAPO's exile camps and pushed the liberation movement for answers about the “missing persons,” it averred from denouncing or affiliating with political parties, presenting itself as an organization addressing a human rights issue from a neutral political ground.⁶⁰⁶ According to Pauline Dempers, the founding vice-chairperson and current chairperson of BWS, this shift in focus was a result of ex-detainees' experiences since their return, during which time “political parties [had] used this issue for their political gains, not really to bring this to a serious debate with the intention or aim to resolve it.” She also argued that Groth's book, which framed “the wall of silence” as a human rights issue that Namibia as a society needed to resolve, impacted

⁶⁰⁵ Dempers 21.11.2007, p. 22; Ndeikwila 9.2.2007, p. 7; BWS, “Annual Report 1996,” p. 169.

⁶⁰⁶ See for example, BWS's founding mission statement: “BWS is a movement of concerned Namibians who endeavor by PEACEFUL means to find a lasting solution for the problem of human rights violations committed and to work towards a truly democratic culture” (BWS, “Annual Report 1996,” p. 165).

on BWS's approach.⁶⁰⁷ Clearly BWS was also influenced by how similar issues were then being addressed by Namibia's South African neighbors. In the months following the formation of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Namibian papers were flooded with people expressing their support for or opposition to forming a similar commission in Namibia.⁶⁰⁸ From its opening press release BWS weighed in on this debate, indicating that following the book launch, a panel would discuss “the viability and necessity of a Namibian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (or something similar) to deal with the human rights violations inflicted on the Namibian people by both SWAPO and South Africa during the war.”⁶⁰⁹ Favorable references to the TRC are made in other BWS press releases and publications over the following year and in 1997 the movement invited a TRC commissioner, Dr. Mapule Ramashala, to address its Annual General Meeting about “the relevance of the TRC exercise to the Southern African region.”⁶¹⁰

BWS's interest in the TRC also reflected the movement's close relationship to the church. From its origins through the initiative of a theologian and church employee following their discussion of a pastor's book, BWS associated itself closely with Christian institutions, practices and teachings. This point is evident from the previously cited passage about BWS's earliest gatherings drawn from the organization's 1996 annual report, which emphasizes that meetings took place at the CCN “because [participants] felt most at home there” and that they started “with a prayer and short biblical reflection.” Similarly BWS's opening press release on March 20, 1996 cites from a letter that the

⁶⁰⁷ Dempers 21.11.2007, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁰⁸ For example, see articles cited in Dobell 1997, p. 378.

⁶⁰⁹ BWS, “Media Release,” 20.3.1996 in “Statements and Clippings,” pp. 51, 51a, 52 and “Chronik einer Debatte,” pp. 45-47.

⁶¹⁰ Leys and Saul 2003, p. 346.

organization had sent to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, chairman of the TRC: “We wish to ensure you that we are no radical group, bent on damaging SWAPO as such. We have no ulterior political agenda. The leaders of this initiative are committed Christians... We are inspired by Scripture readings and prayer and fellowship.”⁶¹¹ In addition to these professions, BWS, unlike the Committee of Parents and ex-detainees before it, also achieved some success in mobilizing Namibian church leaders to support its initiatives. Following a request from persons participating in the first meetings at the CCN, CCN General Secretary Ngeno Nakamhela began to attend them regularly.⁶¹² Although the CCN declined the request that the Namibian churches launch Groth's book, it did agree after its November 1995 meeting that it would take measures “to address the detainee issue” the following year. On February 19, 1996 the CCN issued a press statement encouraging its members and the broader public to read the book and announcing its sponsorship of a series of conferences “on issues related to the ex-detainees,” the first of which would take place between May and July of that year.⁶¹³

If there were any question as to whether Groth's book and BWS presented a threat to some Namibian leaders, this was soon answered. On March 6, 1996, Namibian President Sam Nujoma delivered a twenty-minute address on national television in which

⁶¹¹ BWS, “Media Release,” 20.3.1996; letter from Christo Lombard to Desmond Tutu, 13.3.1996 (gift to the author).

⁶¹² Ngeno Nakamhela, Interview 21.2.2007, p. 3; Gertze 21.2.2007, pp. 9-10; Kambangula 26.11.2007, p. 14; Ndeikwila 9.2.2007, p. 9.

⁶¹³ CCN, “CCN to sponsor conference on Ex-detainees,” 19.2.1996 in “Chronik einer Debatte,” p. 20 and “BWS Statements and Clippings,” p. 12. It should be noted that in BWS' account of the CCN annual general meeting, Abisai Shejavali, the former CCN General Secretary and author of the 1985 letter which had sharply criticized the Committee of Parents, is described as having been particularly supportive of the ex-detainees' proposal: “Dr. Shejavali personally admitted that the churches were misled through the 'spy videos' and other counter propaganda by SWAPO... He also stated clearly that the churches should now face up to the issue and come up with new initiatives to address it squarely.” Lombard also mentioned Shejavali in a letter which he addressed to Reverend Nakamhela, indicating that, at the AGM, Shejavali had “admitted openly that the churches had let down the people affected, and that... a public meeting for reconciliation should be organised” (letter from Christo Lombard to Ngeno Nakamhela, 21.1.1996 in BWS 1996, p. 7).

he denounced The Wall of Silence, declaring it a “false history.”⁶¹⁴ The following week SWAPO Secretary General Moses Garoeb issued a press release in which he criticized the book and people seen as promoting it in similar terms.⁶¹⁵ Later that month, during Namibia's Independence Day celebrations, SWAPO members at a rally in Oshakati called for the book to be banned and burnt.⁶¹⁶ In each instance, histories presented in The Wall of Silence were discredited based on the national standing of those rendering them and the deleterious effects that they would supposedly have on the nation. For example, in his televised speech, Nujoma began by narrating a story about his own responsibilities and accomplishments as President of SWAPO. He then contrasted this with other stories – about German wars with Nama, Herero and Ovambo people, about the German Lutheran Church in Namibia (DELK) and about the Academy before it became UNAM⁶¹⁷ – each of which associated Groth or Lombard to the colonial regime. Having made this case for who has the interests of the Namibian people at heart, Nujoma pronounced his verdict on Groth's book: “[it] is a well-calculated move to open up old wounds and bring about racial and ethnic hatred in Namibian society... It does not tell the truth.”⁶¹⁸ Moses Garoeb, who argues along similar lines, was even more direct: “SWAPO Party, more than anyone else, that is political organizations, church organisations [sic], individuals such as the Groths, Lombards, the Nakamhelas and the like, fought and sacrificed for the genuine independence of this country... SWAPO cannot allow this country to be made

⁶¹⁴ Sam Nujoma, “Response to Pastor Siegfried Groth's book, The Wall of Silence,” 6.3.1996, in “Chronik einer Debatte,” pp. 22-23 and “His Excellency President Sam Nujoma's Response to Pastor Siegfried Groth's Book: 'The Wall of Silence'” in “Statements and Clippings.”

⁶¹⁵ “Media Statement by SWAPO Party on the so-called Detainee Issue,” 12.3.1996, in “Statements and Clippings,” pp. 33-36.

⁶¹⁶ “Calls for Groth book to be burnt,” The Namibian, 26.3.1996 in “Statements and Clippings,” p. 58.

⁶¹⁷ As VEM representative to Namibia, Groth worked primarily with the ELC and the ELOC, both of which became members of the CCN and outspoken critics of apartheid, not with the DELK.

⁶¹⁸ Nujoma in “Chronik einer Debatte,” pp. 22-23.

ungovernable and to be turned into a chaotic and lawless society by irresponsible, unpatriotic elements and remnants [sic] of fascism and apartheid.”⁶¹⁹ Neither Nujoma nor Garoeb made any mention of Siegfried Groth, Christo Lombard or Ngeno Nakamhela's work opposing apartheid, let alone respond to any content of the book with which their names had become associated.⁶²⁰

These and related efforts to discredit the histories narrated in Groth's book appear only to have increased some Namibians' interest in and exposure to it. The day after Nujoma's televised address, Namibian bookstores reported that sales of the book had been brisk. The book also became the focal point for letters to the editor and editorials in Namibian newspapers and the focal point for the chat shows of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC).⁶²¹ Later in the year, in conjunction with Heroes' Day, Swapo published its own book, Their Blood Waters Our Freedom,⁶²² listing the names of 7,792 PLAN combatants who perished between the beginning of the armed conflict in 1966 and its conclusion in 1989. The timing of the publication, which had been announced by President Nujoma as early as 1990 and was expected as early as 1991,⁶²³ suggests that it was motivated as a response to the public debate about exile following the publication of Groth's book. For those who read the Their Blood looking for answers to “the missing persons,” however, it only presented more questions and material for discussion. As the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR), led by former Parents'

⁶¹⁹ “Media Statement by SWAPO Party on the so-called Detainee Issue,” p. 33.

⁶²⁰ While at the Academy in the 1980s, Lombard was part of a campaign to to allow political activity on campus. He also was a founding member of NPP 435 a civil pressure group which campaigned for the implementation of Resolution 435, the UN peace plan for Namibia supported by SWAPO. Since the 1980s Reverend Nakamhela has served as a pastor in the ELC and held several positions with the CCN.

⁶²¹ Dobell 1997, p. 379. Lauren Dobell was in Windhoek at the time when Namibia – The Wall of Silence was published and offers a detailed description of reactions to it.

⁶²² Swapo Party, Their Blood Waters Our Freedom (Windhoek: Swapo Party, 1996).

⁶²³ See “‘The supreme price' listed,” The Namibian, 27.8.1990.

Committee spokesperson Phil Ya Nangoloh, observed, only 140 of the 772 missing detainees that NSHR had listed in its records, had been registered in the government publication.⁶²⁴ Moreover, among them were some of the most widely touted “spies,” who were now listed in a book commemorating heroes without any explanation for this discrepancy or any attempt to clear their names.⁶²⁵ Such points also became objects of discussion in the Namibian media over the months that followed.

Nonetheless, even as national leaders were struggling to control the dispersal of controversial exile histories through BWS, they did ultimately maintain the allegiance of key church allies. Correspondence among representatives of the CCN member churches about whether the organization should involve itself in the launch of The Wall of Silence, suggests that opinions differed over what it would mean to “address the detainee issue” in 1996. As Bishop Kleopas Dumeni of the Lutheran Church in northern Namibia⁶²⁶ wrote in a letter to Pastor Nakamhela shortly before the CCN vote on the launch and repeated on a Namibian television program after it, the book in question was “written by an ‘outsider’” and “the contents of the book disturbs [sic] the policy of national reconciliation in our country.”⁶²⁷ In opposing the launch in this manner, Bishop Dumeni asserts arguments based on national forms of logic that not only resemble those of Nujoma and Garoeb in denouncing Groth's book, but also of Abisai Shejavali's when he discredited

⁶²⁴ NSHR 1996, p. 14.

⁶²⁵ One of the most frequently mentioned contradictions in Their Blood Waters Our Freedom involves Tauno Hatuikilipi, the former Political Commissar at SWAPO Defense Headquarters in Lubango. In July 1984 President Nujoma announced that Hatuikilipi had committed suicide by swallowing a poison capsule hidden in a gold-filled tooth (Angula 2008, pp. 95-96; PCC, “A Report to the Namibian People,” pp. 15-16). In Their Blood Waters Our Freedom Hatuikilipi is listed among other Namibian heroes and is reported to have died from bronchitis.

⁶²⁶ Since independence this church, previously named the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church (ELOC) had been renamed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN)

⁶²⁷ Leys and Saul 2003, p. 345; Breaking the Wall of Silence Committee, “Media Release,” 29.2.1996 in “Statements and Clippings,” p. 16.

the Committee of Parents ten years earlier.

Divisions among church leaders appear to have widened further after the CCN's February 19 press release, when President Nujoma invited a group of CCN representatives, excluding General Secretary Nakamhela, to a private meeting with him.⁶²⁸ Thereafter, participants in this meeting pressured Nakamhela to drop the conferences on the ex-detainees, and Nujoma applied pressure directly when a second meeting, including representatives of all CCN churches, was held with the President on August 13.⁶²⁹ Around the same time Nakamhela became the object of personal attacks and threats on NBC's Oshiwambo Radio service, and SWAPO members were told at some public events not to take part in any church-sponsored reconciliation events sponsored by the CCN.⁶³⁰ Through all this, plans for the conferences continued to be made and, after several delays, were scheduled for 1997, which the CCN declared the "Year of God's Grace." Without the participation of most CCN church representatives, let alone SWAPO or South African government officials, however, the conferences remained a far cry from the TRC that BWS desired and were disappointing to many who participated.⁶³¹ In a statement issued following its 1997 general meeting, BWS criticized the CCN "for failing to adequately address the Swapo detainee issue," stating bluntly that "the 'Year of God's Grace'... has not borne any fruit and is a fiasco."⁶³²

Looking back on these years from a more recent perspective, some BWS members see them as a turning point in the way Namibians relate to their history. Pauline Dempers,

⁶²⁸ Breaking the Wall of Silence Committee 29.2.1996; letter from Christo Lombard to Desmond Tutu, 13.3.1996; Leys and Saul 2003, p. 345; Nakamhela 21.2.2007, p. 4. Although Leys and Saul indicate that this meeting took place in March, the media release and Lombard's letter both suggest that it probably was held at the end of February.

⁶²⁹ Nakamhela 21.2.2007, p. 4

⁶³⁰ Nakamhela 21.2.2007, p. 4; Leys and Saul 2003, p. 346.

⁶³¹ Ndeikwila 9.2.2007, p. 8; Nakamhela 21.2.2007, p. 5.

⁶³² Leys & Saul 2003, p. 346, printed in The Namibian, 21.10.1997.

current BWS Chairperson recalls that the early 1990s “were very difficult. There was intimidation. There were stages when people were also followed [by state security]... There was no space in Namibia where we could openly express ourselves... We were like a plague, something that people could not associate with.”⁶³³ The latter two points appear particularly valid for those who had been detained by or fled SWAPO in exile but had not, like some who returned from the dungeons of Lubango, openly shared their experiences. Referring to himself and other Namibians detained at Mboroma in 1976, Jackson Mwalundange indicates that they did not share their experiences in exile openly until after BWS was founded, from which point some of them, especially those who had already left SWAPO, began to change their position. “Now,” Mwalundange concludes, “I do not hide that I am a detainee.”⁶³⁴ Both Dempers and Mwalundange cite BWS's efforts to inform Namibians about exile history as important to the increased acceptance of ex-detainees in Namibian society. To this point, it might be added that with the formation of BWS an increased number of people from distinct exile social networks began referring to themselves openly as ex-detainees, thereby making it more viable socially for others to identify as ex-detainees themselves.⁶³⁵

Certainly, BWS has focused attention on “the detainee issue” and fostered a community of ex-detainees over the years since its founding. The organization has held annual general meetings to discuss its concerns and organized social gatherings on July 4, the day that the first group returned from Lubango. Its members have taken various

⁶³³ Dempers 21.11.2007, p. 25.

⁶³⁴ Jackson Mwalundange, Interview 24.11.2007.

⁶³⁵ It should be noted that the terms “detainee” and “ex-detainee” are still often used in Namibia to refer to those 200-300 persons who returned from the dungeons of Lubango and embraced an ex-detainee identity to the exclusion of many others who were detained. At the same time, as some people not detained in Lubango have asserted their identity as “ex-detainees,” their experiences have often been conflated with those detained in Lubango. See, for example, Samson Ndeikwila's “A Swapo Detainee Speaks Out,” The Namibian, 17.10.2006.

events – including the deaths of other ex-detainees, threats to ex-detainees, testimony shared at the TRC, the discovery of unmarked mass graves in northern Namibia, the formation of the International Criminal Court and the formation of new non-governmental organizations and political parties – as opportunities to share their histories and raise related concerns in the Namibian media.⁶³⁶ BWS has also welcomed and/or courted people interested in its members' experiences, who have, in turn, dispersed this information more widely. For example, members worked closely with South African filmmaker Richard Pakleppa to prepare “*Nda mona*,” a documentary on the Lubango detentions, which was screened in Windhoek in October in 1999 and became part of the “Landscape of Memory” series, shown in other Southern African countries.⁶³⁷ It has collaborated with lawyers and law professors to consider how its members' concerns may be addressed through international legal instruments and to prepare related applications. And clearly this piece, like the articles by Lauren Dobell and Colin Leys and John Saul cited previously, has also been shaped by interactions with BWS members, whose perspectives are now being shared with others through it.

Despite these efforts and some accomplishments, BWS still remains far from achieving its central goal: to make histories of human rights abuses in exile, both known and unknown, accepted by all Namibians. Like the ex-detainees and the Committee of Parents before it, the organization has failed to gain support not only from SWAPO leaders, who are implicated in the histories that BWS members tell, but also from members of other institutions whose social authority remains closely tied to the ruling

⁶³⁶ In their article (2003) Leys & Saul trace the efforts of BWS to raise the detainee issue through 2001. News clippings filed on the topic “ex-detainees” at the National Archive of Namibia trace related issues through to the present.

⁶³⁷ Since the making of “*Nda mona*,” BWS has also produced another documentary, titled “Testimony” (2003). “*Nda mona*” is Oshiwambo for ‘I have seen.’

party and other national representatives in the international system. For a moment in the mid-1990s, the Namibian churches, with their widespread membership among Namibians, close ties to SWAPO, and affiliation with bodies leading truth commissions elsewhere, appeared as if they might use their position in this order to apply pressure on SWAPO to participate in a dialog with BWS about the exile past. However, without unity among the churches and under pressure from the nation's ranking leader, the opportunity was lost. And while the experiences articulated by the Committee of Parents, ex-detainees and BWS cannot, based on the evidence gathered here, be described accurately as hidden behind "a wall of silence," the boundaries dividing stigmatized and accepted histories of exile remain firmly intact.

Chapter 6

Reconciliation?: “Silences” and their “Victims”

On May 23, 1989 the SWAPO Central Committee issued a press release announcing its resolution “to adopt a policy of national reconciliation.”⁶³⁸ According to the release, the Committee had met to discuss the policy in Luanda earlier that year, from February 8 to 11, as part of “an in-depth review of the political situation within Namibia and... the diplomatic efforts aimed at the implementation of the United Nations plan for Namibia.” In turn, it had decided that a reconciliation policy was necessary “to enhance the chances of peace in Namibia” and “to heal the wounds of war.” As for what practices the policy entailed, the resolution outlines several in its concluding points:

6. The Central Committee, within the frame-work of the policy of national reconciliation, issued a general pardon to all the misguided elements who infiltrated the rank and file of SWAPO with the aim of serving the war efforts of the adversary...
9. They have been freed and are already registered with the UNHCR to return to Namibia like all other Namibians in exile who voluntarily decided to return to their motherland – Namibia.
10. The Central Committee of SWAPO calls all Namibians to return to the people's fold and work for peace, unity and national reconciliation.⁶³⁹

In the two days immediately following the policy announcement, members of UNTAG

⁶³⁸ BAB, SWAPO of Namibia Collection, 89fSLuPR1, “SWAPO Press Release on the Resolution of the Central Committee of SWAPO Luanda, May 23, 1989.”

⁶³⁹ SWAPO Press Release, 23.5.1989, pp. 2-3.

and the press visited 199 of “the misguided elements” at camps where they were being held outside Lubango. Two weeks later the South African government's Administrator General to Namibia, Louis Pienaar, announced an amnesty provision immunizing SWAPO leaders from prosecution for crimes that they might have committed prior to the implementation of UN Resolution 435. On February 9, 1990, with the adoption of Namibia's Constitution, this provision was extended to all participants in the war, and Namibian citizens were pledged to pursue “national reconciliation.”

From these beginnings, when the word was first attached to statements of policy and law by representatives of the Namibian nation, reconciliation has been associated with a particular discourse in Namibia. The term has come to entail both a commitment to legal provisions negotiated at Namibian independence⁶⁴⁰ and to a form of historical production which denies or avoids referring to histories that threaten Namibia's national narrative, especially histories of detention in SWAPO's exile camps. Certainly, there are variations in how this discourse has been articulated. To one extreme are utterances, directly in line with the 1989 Central Committee statement, which claim that there are no significant contradictions to the one true history told by SWAPO about the liberation struggle in general and about the detainees in particular. This is the position taken repeatedly by SWAPO and Namibian founding President Sam Nujoma, who writes in his autobiography, Where Others Wavered:

The “detainee” issue was the main weapon used against SWAPO in the Independence election in 1989. It is true that we detained individuals who had been detected to be South African agents, or for whom there were strong grounds for suspicion... If we are accused of ill-treating

⁶⁴⁰ In addition to offering amnesty to perpetrators of political violence, the new Namibian state, like its South African neighbors following apartheid, pledged to protect the political rights of all its inhabitants, including the property rights inherited from the previous regime.

detainees, this was very little compared to the killing, cruel torture and brutal treatment the apartheid South African regime inflicted on our people over so many years... We prefer to leave that sad story behind us and concentrate on national reconciliation, economic reconstruction, nation-building and a better future for all Namibians.⁶⁴¹

Others in SWAPO have taken a somewhat different line. In one of the more penitent public statements made to date, Namibian Prime Minister Nahas Angula opened a 2007 debate in Parliament on national reconciliation with these remarks: “It was a difficult decision that SWAPO took to detain these people... Many were caught in the crossfire... We are not saying SWAPO never made mistakes. We are human beings and in the crossfire of battle mistakes can happen.”⁶⁴² Despite this and some similar statements made by Angula and others, efforts to discuss how “mistakes” occurred and their consequences for various people have been resisted repeatedly by the ruling party in the name of a reconciliation policy that focuses on a common Namibian future, not a divided colonial past.⁶⁴³

This chapter examines social consequences of the state-sanctioned reconciliation discourse in Namibia. Some of these consequences were considered in the previous chapter, which discussed people affected by violence committed by SWAPO in exile who have tried, and largely failed, to challenge an official exile history which glosses over this violence and their experiences of it. This piece extends that analysis further to

⁶⁴¹ Sam Nujoma, Where Others Wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma (London: Panaf Books, 2001), pp. 356-357.

⁶⁴² “Some Namibians 'caught in crossfire' during struggle: PM,” The Namibian, 19.9.2007.

⁶⁴³ In our meeting Nahas Angula did suggest that there is a relationship between studying the history of Namibia's liberation struggle and facilitating reconciliation in Namibia (Nahas Angula, Interview 15.2.2008, p. 8). His remarks to me resemble others by him that were incorporated into Richard Pakleppa's film, “Nda mona” (1999) and transcribed in Colin Leys and John Saul's article “Lubango and After: ‘Forgotten History’ as Politics in Namibia,” Journal of Southern African Studies, (2003) 29,2, p. 348).

persons and communities affected by the omissions of exile history whose experiences are less easily observed because they have not articulated a counter-narrative to it in a widely accessible, public space. To this end, the chapter begins with the story of Kaufilwa Nepelilo, a man from northern Namibia whose experiences in exile have no place within the Namibian national narrative and who has, to a great extent, been abandoned by his family and government. It then considers the funeral service for Emil Appolus at Vaalgras, a community in southern Namibia, and how controversies surrounding Appolus' and other local exile histories have created tensions within this community and impaired community members' abilities to make claims on the state. This section is followed by one on "Living in Exile," an exhibition of photographs from the SWAPO camps, and how viewers' reactions to it highlighted aspects of their relationship to other Namibians, including resentment and mistrust of various groups and alienation from the national community.

Through these studies, the chapter draws attention to the impact of Namibia's reconciliation discourse beyond relatively few ex-detainees who were "caught in the crossfire" of the liberation war to a national community and the relationships among its diverse members. In so doing, the piece highlights how the government's efforts to silence controversial histories has produced social relations among Namibians which threaten, if not defy, common understandings of reconciliation.⁶⁴⁴ At the same time, the

⁶⁴⁴ "Reconciliation" has received widespread attention among social analysts through the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the field of transitional justice which developed in its wake. Most authors, however, do not define what they mean when they use this word, focusing instead on social phenomena which are thought to promote reconciliation and on reconciliation as a form of politics. Among contemporary figures who consider the meaning of reconciliation, the most prominent globally is the TRC's chairperson, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. For Tutu reconciliation is fundamentally concerned with restoring broken relationships between people made in God's image. Drawing from the Nguni word *ubuntu* defined as "a person is a person through other people," Tutu maintains that perpetrators of violence and oppression treat their victims as less than human and, by denying others'

chapter points to work which people do when they articulate controversial stories about the past and their relationships to them. As the conclusion suggests, it is precisely the production of such histories which is overlooked in much literature on reconciliation, which focuses on the “victims” of violence and the “silences” that accompany victims' stories rather than on where and how people establish social relations through national history.

Tate Nepelilo

If not for good fortune and the good will of a colleague, I would never have known that Kauwilwa Nepelilo, or anyone like him, exists. On Friday, August 3, 2007 I set out from Ovamboland, where I had been conducting interviews the previous week, for my home in Windhoek. Having gotten a late start for the journey, I decided to break up the trip by stopping for the night in Tsumeb, a town located just below the Red Line along the B1, Namibia's main tar road extending between its northern and southern borders. Upon my arrival, I contacted Abed Hauwanga, a research participant who I thought would be interested in talking about my latest interviews in the North, and once I

humanity, become dehumanized themselves. Reconciliation, therefore, requires perpetrators to acknowledge the suffering of the victims, and victims to forgive those who violated them. Through this process relationships between man and man and between God and man are restored (See, for example, Tutu's book about the TRC, No Future Without Forgiveness, (New York: Doubleday, 1999) and Michael Battle's Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1997)). Other people involved in the field of transitional justice have written about reconciliation from a secular, national perspective. For example, Priscilla Hayner of the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) in New York writes in her influential book Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity (New York: Routledge, 2001) that reconciliation may be evaluated in “a society” by responding to three questions: “How is the past dealt with in the public sphere? What are the relationships between former opponents? Is there one version of the past, or many?” (pp. 161-163). Also, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in Cape Town has conducted surveys which examine how various people perceive the term “reconciliation” (e.g. Erik Doxtader and Charles Villa-Vicencio Through Fire with Water: The Roots of Division and the Potential for Reconciliation in Africa (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003); Charles Villa-Vicencio and Fanie du Toit, Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: 10 Years On (Claremont, SA: David Philip, 2006)).

had settled in at the Tsumeb Municipal Campground, he came to meet me there. During our conversation Abed mentioned a man living in Tsumeb who had previously lived in Kongwa, the first SWAPO camp founded by the OAU Liberation Committee in Tanzania. When I expressed an interest in meeting this man, Abed offered to introduce me to him the following morning.

At 8 am Abed and I arrived at the Tsumeb Old Age Home. After entering the gate and greeting some people in the courtyard, we found Tate Nepelilo,⁶⁴⁵ who had just returned from breakfast. After exchanging greetings we accompanied him to his small room where Abed and our host assembled themselves on the floor while I was asked to sit in the only chair. There Abed began to address Tate Nepelilo in Oshikwanyama, first introducing me and then translating as I described in English my research and my interest in his experiences. I then asked Tate Nepelilo if he would be willing to be interviewed and recorded for a public record, and he indicated that he would, adding in Oshikwanyama that he had “nothing to hide.”

For the next six hours Abed Hauwanga and I sat in this room, talking with Tate Nepelilo about his past.⁶⁴⁶ Although listed on his Namibian identity card as having been born on January 16, 1922, Nepelilo does not know his day of birth. He believes, however, that he was born sometime around 1930. He grew up in Eshoke, a village in Ovamboland to the west of Oshikango, the main border crossing for Namibia and Angola. As a child he, like many boys in his community, was responsible for looking after his family's cattle, and he did not attend school. In 1954 Nepelilo traveled south of

⁶⁴⁵ Tate is the title used in Oshiwambo to refer to an older man. Abed and I both addressed Kaufilwa Nepelilo with this title.

⁶⁴⁶ Unless otherwise noted, the information that follows is drawn from Kaufilwa Nepelilo, Interview 4.8.2007 and citations are Abed Hauwanga's translation of Nepelilo's testimony.

the Red Line as a contract laborer for the first time, and in the late 1950s, while working a contract in at a fish processing plant in Walvis Bay, he encountered OPO and began to attend the organization's covert meetings. It was then, or shortly thereafter, that he first heard activists talk about “abroad.”⁶⁴⁷ According to Tate Nepelilo, “They said if you go abroad, if you get educated, your situation will automatically change... Once [the South Africans] will leave our country, then we can have the opportunity to replace their positions.” Further, he recalls thinking, “The white life, surely, is a good life. And that's what motivate[d] [me] to go abroad. [I] wanted to live comfortably as the whites.”⁶⁴⁸

In 1962 Nepelilo did travel “abroad.” Departing from Windhoek he stopped in Otjiwarongo, where he and others received information for their journey from SWAPO activists. From there the group was transported via Grootfontein to Rundu, the town in northeastern Namibia where the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WENALA) registered contract workers for the South African mines.⁶⁴⁹ After registering, they were flown to Francistown in Bechuanaland where laborers recruited by WENALA from throughout the Southern African collected. There, Nepelilo's group, like other many other Namibians who fled into exile during the early 1960s, left the camp for contract workers and found their way to Maxton Joseph, the SWAPO official then administering SWAPO's Francistown office. Nepelilo and others were then placed in a refugee camp on the edge of town where they waited for SWAPO to arrange transport to Tanzania.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁷ Here Tate Nepelilo used the English word.

⁶⁴⁸ Nepelilo 4.8.2007, p. 3.

⁶⁴⁹ WENELA recruited workers from all over Southern Africa to work on the mines. Workers were registered in various WENELA offices and flown to Francistown from where they were transported by train to the South African rand. Most of those registered at WENELA's Rundu office were Angolans, transported to Rundu from various locations inside Angola.

⁶⁵⁰ Although Tate Nepelilo did not identify the name of this camp, it may have been Dukwe, a refugee camp administered by the Botswanan government where Siegfried Groth later ministered to exiled Namibians.

After waiting for several months, Nepelilo and other SWAPO members in the camp traveled by truck from Francistown through Livingstone and Northern Rhodesia to Dar es Salaam, where the liberation movement's headquarters were located.

After spending some time at a refugee camp outside Dar es Salaam called “Tameka,”⁶⁵¹ he and others from his group were transported by truck to Kongwa, arriving at the camp, located five kilometers west of a village of the same name in central Tanzania, in early 1964. There they found more than one hundred Namibians living together alongside other liberation movement camps, which at that time included South Africa's ANC and Mozambique's FRELIMO.⁶⁵² The entire complex was overseen by a representative of the Tanzanian government and the OAU African Liberation Committee, Major Shongambe, although the various liberation movements were responsible for the day-to-day administration of their respective camps. At that time the SWAPO camp was led by the Deputy Commander of SWALA,⁶⁵³ Leonard Philemon “Castro” Nangolo, and fourteen other commanders, who were among the first Namibians to receive military training in 1962 and to establish the camp at Kongwa in that or the following year.⁶⁵⁴ The

⁶⁵¹ According to another research participant, the camp was also known as “Salvation Camp.” It was administered by a church affiliated organization, and most residents were from Southern African countries (Silas Shikongo, Interview 26.7.2007, pp. 13, 14).

⁶⁵² At various points in time other Southern African liberation movements, including the MPLA from Angola, the PAC from South Africa and ZANU and ZAPU from Zimbabwe, also administered camps in the same general area near Kongwa. Although UNITA was not recognized by the OAU and therefore could not establish a camp at Kongwa, some of its members trained in the SWAPO camp (Nepelilo 4.8.2007; Ya Toivo Ashipala, Interview 16.3.2007; Paul Helmuth, Interview 13.7.2007, 10.8.2007; Nambinga Kati, Interview 11.8.2007; Samson Ndeikwila, Interview 21.7.2007; Helao Shityuwete, Interview 24.7.2007). Tate Nepelilo thinks that there may have been 140 people living in the SWAPO camp at Kongwa when he arrived and that 10-20 of them were Angolans affiliated with UNITA.

⁶⁵³ SWALA was renamed PLAN at the Tanga Conference held by SWAPO from December 26, 1969 to January 2, 1970 (Nujoma 2001, p. 192).

⁶⁵⁴ According to then SWAPO President, Sam Nujoma, the first SWAPO members to receive military training was a group of seven men who were sent to Egypt in July 1962. He further indicates that the camp at Kongwa was established on May 27, 1963, two days after the founding of the OAU, by combatants who had been trained in Egypt, Algeria, Ghana, China and the Soviet Union (Nujoma 2001, pp. 158-159). Nujoma added in our interview that SWAPO and FRELIMO were the two liberation movements that first established camps at Kongwa (Sam Nujoma, Interview 4.3.2008). Although most

other Namibians in the camp consisted of persons from the Ovamboland region who had been recruited to travel into exile either while working on contract in Namibia or while returning to Namibia after working in the South African mines.⁶⁵⁵

Even before he arrived at Kongwa, Nepelilo seems to have been concerned about what he was and was not finding “abroad.” Shortly after his group arrived in Dar es Salaam, they were divided into two. Those with sufficient education and within certain age parameters were assigned to attend Kurasini College, a school established in Dar es Salaam by the African-American Institute to provide exiles from Namibia and elsewhere with the training necessary to attend tertiary institutions in the US and elsewhere.⁶⁵⁶ The others were assigned to Kongwa. Tate Nepelilo remembers listening to Namibians he found in Tanzania who were already studying at Kurasini, warning those who had been assigned to Kongwa: “Please, if you hear that you are going to Kongwa, don't agree! ... There's no education. It's only a bush for fighting.”⁶⁵⁷

At Kongwa, Nepelilo went through the paces of one becoming a “freedom fighter.” Every morning he woke before dawn to participate in physical training. After

sources confirm that the first combatants were trained in 1962 and that Kongwa was founded in 1963, Helao Shityuwete, who was a Secretary of SWALA and a camp commander in Kongwa in 1965, indicates that some members of SWAPO and other liberation movements were first brought to Kongwa in 1962 when, following a failed coup attempt, the then Tanganyikan government decided to remove trained combatants from the capital city (Shityuwete 24.7.2007, p. 24).

⁶⁵⁵ These two forms of recruitment were confirmed by all those former Kongwa inhabitants interviewed for this research (Ashipala 16.3.2007, 25.7.2007; Helmuth 13.7.2007, 10.8.2007; Kati 11.8.2007, 8.12.2007; Ndeikwila 9.2.2007, 16.2.2007, 2.3.2007, 21.7.2007; Shityuwete 24.7.2007, 5.6.2008, S. Shikongo 16.3.2007, 26.7.2007). In addition to those from Ovamboland, shortly after the merger of SWAPO and CANU in November 1964 (Peter Katjavivi, A History of Resistance in Namibia (London: James Currey, 1988), p. 51), a group of Caprivians also joined the camp.

⁶⁵⁶ To enter Kurasini students had to pass an aptitude test, to have sufficient English language skills and to fit within age parameters, which some remember as eighteen to twenty-five (Ashipala 25.7.2007, p. 25; Kati 11.8.2007, p. 3; Ndeikwila 2.3.2007, p. 3; Shityuwete 24.7.2007, p. 18; Shityuwete, Never Follow the Wolf (London: Kliptown Books, 1990), pp. 96-97). The African-American Institute also established a comparable school in Lusaka called Nkumbi College where some Namibians also studied during the 1960s.

⁶⁵⁷ Nepelilo 4.8.2007, pp. 5, 6.

returning to his barracks and eating at the camp kitchen, he proceeded to the parade where he learned various slogans and songs and his section or platoon was assigned tasks for the day. Activities including classes about weapon use, practice on the firing range and routine camp maintenance. In the afternoons and during the weekends combatants had free time. Occasionally leaders from SWAPO, other liberation movements and the Tanzanian government visited the camp to deliver speeches about the liberation struggle and related topics.

What impressed Tate Nepelilo more than these particular activities, at least in retrospect, was the means by which the commanders controlled them and Kongwa's inhabitants more generally. As he repeated throughout our meeting, the camp commanders were contract workers just like he had been, and few had any formal education. They were not older than many of those who were in the camp, most of whom were aged thirty and above. Rather, their authority was based on their having arrived in exile and received military training first and been given positions by the SWAPO leaders. On this basis, “they can just order you [to do] something which you really [don't want to do]” or discount questions with refrains such as “This is a military camp” or “Soldiers never speak.”⁶⁵⁸

Questions collected around several issues related to daily life in the camp. Although soldiers were restricted by their training schedules and limited resources from income generating activities,⁶⁵⁹ they did have free time during afternoons and weekends, which they often spent in the village of Kongwa. Soldiers' requests for pocket money for

⁶⁵⁸ Nepelilo 4.8.2007, pp. 7, 9.

⁶⁵⁹ Eventually, some soldiers began to cultivate a garden with maize and other crops near the Kongwa camp and to sell their harvest to a local cooperative farm, which in turn sold it at a set rate to the Tanzanian government (Ashipala 16.3.2007, pp. 8-9).

use on such trips were not well received, however. According to Tate Nepelilo, “Once you make a point of money, then the leader [says,] 'You like so much money.' Even while he's talking, his whole pocket is full of money. But you, you don't even have a single cent.”⁶⁶⁰ Apparently, such discrepancies were difficult to hide. Although the commanders slept in quarters that were separate from the other soldiers and often ate separately as well, they lived in the same camp and also spent free time in Kongwa village. Such living conditions also made it difficult for commanders to keep other aspects of their lives private. Although the commanders warned soldiers, almost all of whom were men, against having sexual relationships with women,⁶⁶¹ the soldiers thought that some commanders were having such relationships, especially when they did not report to the parade and were not found in the camp in the morning.

Other concerns, especially in later years, centered on the war. After spending several months in Kongwa, Nepelilo traveled with a group to Egypt for further military training, returning to the camp in late 1964 or early 1965.⁶⁶² He remembers being in the camp on March 4, when the first six SWALA members departed from Kongwa via Zambia to the Namibian border, which they infiltrated some months later.⁶⁶³ Although, when asked, Tate Nepelilo indicated that he did feel some excitement at the time that the first group departed for Namibia, his comments focused primarily on the problems that

⁶⁶⁰ Nepelilo 4.8.2008, p. 16.

⁶⁶¹ Another Kongwa inhabitant, Samson Ndeikwila, recalls, “It was also part of the training that you should not be drunk as a guerrilla fighter and you should not be somebody who likes women. It was part of the training that if you were going for a war, you don't sleep with a woman. It's a sign of bad luck.” Ndeikwila also mentioned during one of our interviews that he knew of only one woman who lived in SWAPO's Kongwa camp (Ndeikwila 9.2.2007, p. 5).

⁶⁶² According to Ya Toivo Ashipala, who also trained in the same group with Nepelilo in Egypt, the group departed for Egypt in May or June 1965 and returned to the camp at Kongwa after six months of military training (25.7.2007, p. 13).

⁶⁶³ For accounts of the first mission of SWALA members, known as Group 1 or G1, into Namibia see Katjavivi 1988, pp. 59-60, Nujoma 2001, pp. 159-162.

he and other combatants experienced in the years that followed. Although Group 1 (G1) managed to establish several bases in northern Namibia, most of G2, which departed from Kongwa in February 1966 was arrested by the South African Police in Namibia's Kavango Region in May 1966 as were the members of several subsequent groups.⁶⁶⁴ As Kongwa's inhabitants learned about these arrests, rumors spread that they had been picked up "like frogs," i.e. led unwittingly to their capture through the work of a South African agent or agents. Suspicions focused on the SWALA Deputy Commander, "Castro," who had participated in the G2 mission but had somehow managed to return to Tanzania and had led subsequent groups of soldiers from Kongwa to Namibia.⁶⁶⁵

In this context, Kongwa's order gradually collapsed. Groups were not sent from Kongwa to enter Namibia, and Namibians stopped traveling into exile and entering Kongwa.⁶⁶⁶ Soldiers absconded from the parade, and participation in this and other camp activities was not enforced, when such activities took place at all. Some persons were openly critical of how the camp was and was not being administered and were detained,

⁶⁶⁴ For information about G2, see the accounts of G2 member Helao Shityuwete (1990, pp. 101-130) and Sam Nujoma (2001, pp. 170-171). The arrest of subsequent groups is confirmed by former Kongwa inhabitants interviewed and by Nujoma (2001, pp. 172-173).

⁶⁶⁵ According to Castro's own version of events as written from Norway in 1994 ("My History," a gift to the author from Siegfried Groth, who was given the document by Castro directly), he was captured by the South Africans but managed to escape his captors before visiting a variety of SWAPO leaders in northern Namibia and returning to SWAPO's Tanzanian offices. Castro's version of events is widely disputed. In published literature Helao Shityuwete, who was part of the G2 mission and was captured with Castro, recounts Castro's participation in his own interrogation (1990, pp. 141-142). Sam Nujoma also offers an account of Castro's activities (Nujoma 2001, p. 172). Tate Nepelilo himself offers an account of how he accessed information that made him certain that Castro was a spy and of how he discussed this information with a Kongwa commander, Peter Hambiya (Nepelilo 4.8.2007, pp. 20-24). Among the events widely attributed to Castro are the arrest of OPO founder Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo in 1966 and his later imprisonment on Robben Island and the death of SWALA Commander Tobias Hainyeko, who was killed in a shoot out along the Zambezi River, just outside Katima Mulilo on May 18, 1967.

⁶⁶⁶ Following the first skirmish between South African and SWAPO soldiers at Omgulumbashe on August 26, 1966, South Africa began to crackdown on SWAPO, arresting thirty-seven of its members, who were tried under the Terrorism Act of 1967, made retroactive to cover SWAPO military activities since 1962. Some of those convicted in the Terrorism Trial and imprisoned on Robben Island had played leading roles in recruiting and facilitating the travel of Namibian exiles, and it is widely accepted that the flow of Namibians into exile came to a virtual standstill from then until 1974.

such as “the Seven Comrades” a group of educated persons who, after a brief stay at Kongwa, presented a critical memorandum to camp commanders in November 1968.⁶⁶⁷ Far more inhabitants moved away from the camp quietly. Some slipped into neighboring Tanzanian communities, and others made their way to other countries, above all Kenya, where some received scholarships to further their education and a community of Namibian exiles formed in Nairobi.⁶⁶⁸ According to Tate Nepelilo, those that went to Kenya were at least “a little bit educated” and spoke some English. Without this background or this skill, Nepelilo stayed in the camp where he was with others that spoke his language and where he and other inhabitants continued to receive food from the Tanzanian government. With the exception of a SWAPO sponsored trip for military training to the USSR in 1969, he remained at Kongwa until February 1971.

In that month, Nepelilo, and forty-nine other Namibians still living in Kongwa,⁶⁶⁹ received a visit from several SWAPO leaders, including Secretary of Defense, Peter Nanyemba, Administrative Secretary, Moses Garoeb, and Political Secretary, Jesaya Nyamu. The visit had been requested by the soldiers through the office of Major

⁶⁶⁷ “The Seven Comrades” or “Chinamen,” was a group of PLAN combatants who had trained in China and were sent to Kongwa in 1968. After living in the camp for several months, the group (with the exclusion of one member who was replaced by Samson Ndeikwila, who had not trained in China and had begun living in Kongwa the previous year) presented a memorandum to the camp leaders in which they expressed their frustrations and called for Castro's dismissal and a congress, in which military strategy could be discussed. From there they were handed over to the Tanzanians, who instead of transporting them to SWAPO leaders as they had hoped, sent them directly to the Central Prison in Dar es Salaam. They were eventually released from detention in 1970 (Lauren Dobell, Swapo's Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: War by Other Means (Basel, Switzerland: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1991, 2000), pp. 37-38; Colin Leys and John S. Saul, Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two Edged Sword (London: James Currey, 1995), pp. 43-44; Ndeikwila 2.9.2007, 16.9.2007, 2.3.2007; Kati 11.8.2007). Other Kongwa inhabitants were also detained after raising complaints in camp meetings. See, for example, Silas Shikongo's account of his arrest (S. Shikongo 16.3.2007).

⁶⁶⁸ For more details about the Namibian exile community in Kenya see Ashipala 16.3.2007, pp. 1-2, 25.7.2007, p. 35; Ndeikwila 21.7.2007, pp. 38-40. Kongwa inhabitants also migrated from Tanzania to other countries including Uganda and Ethiopia (Ashipala 16.3.2007, p. 2; Kati 11.8.2007, pp. 12, 15; Ndeikwila 2.9.2007, p. 3).

⁶⁶⁹ Tate Nepelilo indicates that numbers in the camp increased following his return from Egypt, and other former Kongwa residents have estimated that there were 300 or 400 Namibians living in the camp in the mid-1960s (e.g. Shityuwete 1990, pp. 99-100, Shityuwete 24.7.2007).

Shongambebe, and the leaders met with the soldiers one-by-one in the camp hall, listening to their grievances and presenting Nyamu as the new commander of the camp.⁶⁷⁰ During his turn Nepelilo recalls Peter Nanyemba explaining the leadership's choice to him: “[We] brought some new leadership, new commanders, those that are well trained and well educated...because you people don't respect us because we are not well educated.”⁶⁷¹ The course of events changed, however, when another Kongwa inhabitant, Nakale Hukuwonga, took his turn in the hall. Drawing a knife that he had concealed, Hukuwonga charged at Peter Nanyemba. Nanyemba managed to avoid the attack, but, thereafter, the SWAPO delegation stopped meeting with the soldiers and left the camp. Two days later, the remaining camp inhabitants were picked up by Tanzanian officials and transported to government prisons in Dodoma and Mbeya. Nepelilo was imprisoned in Mbeya until 1972⁶⁷² when he was transferred to Lusaka where he was again imprisoned until 1976. “Six years in prison... Who on earth is six years without doing anything? Who?... They put me innocently in prison for six years. Why? They didn't bring [me] to the court if [I] did something. Six years!”⁶⁷³

As I had learned prior to meeting Tate Nepelilo, there is considerable evidence to support details in his story and to suggest overlaps between his other Kongwa inhabitants experiences. Although printed references to Kongwa and the people who lived there are sparse,⁶⁷⁴ oral histories of Namibian former Kongwa inhabitants recorded for this thesis

⁶⁷⁰ According to Tate Nepelilo, Kongwa had no camp commander at all at the time of the February 1971 visit and had not had one since Castro was imprisoned by the Tanzanian government at SWAPO's request in 1969.

⁶⁷¹ Nepelilo 4.8.2007, p. 28. Nyamu had just returned from the United States where he had recently completed a bachelor's degree at the University of San Francisco.

⁶⁷² It seems most likely that Tate Nepelilo was transferred in 1972 in conjunction with the move of SWAPO's base of operations to Zambia in that year.

⁶⁷³ Nepelilo 4.8.2007, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁷⁴ In the Namibian secondary literature there are a few references to Kongwa, but these focus almost

offer rich accounts of the past of this community from diverse perspectives, including common soldiers and officials, current SWAPO members and dissidents.⁶⁷⁵ For example, other research participants who traveled into exile in 1963 and 1964 also indicate that they went there in pursuit of education without any knowledge that SWAPO was training combatants for an armed liberation struggle. Once in Tanzania they were assigned to Kongwa without being offered a choice or having a clear understanding of where they were going although some were warned by students at Kurasini to avoid Kongwa.⁶⁷⁶ In the camp, soldiers came into conflict with commanders who were thought to be overly interested in asserting their own authority and disinterested in addressing soldiers' needs and concerns.⁶⁷⁷ Conflict developed around matters emphasized by Tate Nepelilo, such as money, women and suspected spies, as well as other issues.⁶⁷⁸ Some research participants also offered details to support accusations made by the soldiers. For example, Helao Shityuwete indicates that, after he returned from military training and was

exclusively on the detention of “the Seven Comrades” (see previous footnote) and offer little information about the formation and development of the Namibian community there (Lauren Dobell, Swapo’s Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: War by Other Means (Basel, Switzerland: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1991, 2000), pp. 37-38; Colin Leys and John S. Saul, Namibia’s Liberation Struggle: The Two Edged Sword (London: James Currey, 1995), pp. 43-44; Hunter, Justine, Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia: Umgang mit schweren Menschenrechtsverletzungen der Ära des bewaffneten Befreiungskampfes, 1966 bis 1989 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2008), pp. 77-80). Two autobiographies have been written by Namibians who spent time in Kongwa, and, while each shares some information about the camp, details are limited to a few pages (Shityuwete 1990, pp. 99-101; Nujoma 2001, pp. 158-160, 171). Documents referring to Kongwa are stored in the Peter Katjavivi Collection at the University of Namibia, but few are available.

⁶⁷⁵ The following former Kongwa inhabitants were interviewed: (Nepelilo 4.8.2007; Ashipala 16.3.2007, 25.7.2007; Helmuth 13.7.2007, 10.8.2007; Kati 11.8.2007, 8.12.2007; Ndeikwila 9.2.2007, 16.2.2007, 2.3.2007, 21.7.2007; Shityuwete 24.7.2007, 5.6.2008, S. Shikongo 16.3.2007, 26.7.2007). In addition, Sam Nujoma and Jesaya Nyamu also offer accounts of their visits to Kongwa in the interviews I held with them (Sam Nujoma, Interview 4.3.2008; Jesaya Nyamu 2.4.2008).

⁶⁷⁶ Ashipala, 16.3.2007, p. 3; S. Shikongo, 16.3.2007 pp. 4,5; Kati, 11.8.2007, pp. 16, 17.

⁶⁷⁷ Ashipala 16.3.2007, p. 23; Shityuwete 24.7.2007, p. 5.

⁶⁷⁸ Among the most volatile issues in Kongwa were the treatment of Caprivians. Having first entered the camp after the merger between SWAPO and CANU in November 1964, conflict developed among Kongwa's Ovambo and Caprivian inhabitants during 1965 and two former CANU leaders were expelled from SWAPO. Helao Shityuwete offers detailed accounts of the 1965 conflict (Shityuwete 24.7.2007; 5.6.2008), and all former Kongwa inhabitants interviewed make some reference to it. It was also one of the concerns introduced to the SWAPO leaders in the memorandum written by the Seven Comrades in 1968 (Ndeikwila 9.2.2007; 16.2.2007; 2.3.2007).

appointed Third Secretary of SWALA in May 1965, he became aware that the long-standing commanders at Kongwa were not dispersing items intended for all its inhabitants and that some were disobeying camp rules by sleeping with women outside the camp.⁶⁷⁹ He and others also claimed to have definitive evidence that Castro was working as a South African spy.⁶⁸⁰ By 1967 camp routines, such as attendance at the parade and participation in training activities had broken down, and inhabitants had begun migrating from the camp.⁶⁸¹

Even Tate Nepelilo's account of the meeting with the SWAPO officials in February 1971 and its aftermath, about which I had not heard prior to our interview, was later corroborated in many of its details by Jesaya Nyamu, the official presented to the soldiers at the meeting as the new camp commander. Nyamu recalls:

We went into the camp. We wanted to speak to the gentlemen called one-by-one. They said if we wanted to speak to them, they wanted to be all present. And we said, 'No, when you joined, you did not join in a group. You joined one by one. So we want to hear the view of each one of you separately.' And, of course, finally, one of them spoke to us, who was very agitated. And he was literally targeting the Secretary of Defense [Peter Nanyemba]. Not so much the rest of us, who were not so much known to them you know. And then we had another discussion with a second one. That one I think pulled out... a knife. I cannot remember. I can only remember that there was chaos. Until one of us jumped out of the window and went to alert the Tanzanian Defense

⁶⁷⁹ According to Shityuwete, due to his education relative to other SWAPO commanders, upon completing his military training in Ghana, he was made responsible for keeping the camp records at Kongwa. In reviewing previous records, he discovered discrepancies between the books at SWAPO's office in Dar es Salaam, which indicated that items had been sent to Kongwa, and the books at Kongwa, which had no record of these items. He also started keeping attendance records at Kongwa, noting all persons, including commanders, who did not turn up at the parade. Within a few months of his arrival, a conflict developed which pit him and other commanders who had recently taken up positions in Kongwa against the older leadership including Castro. Eventually, Sam Nujoma, Peter Nanyemba and Tobias Hainyeko visited the camp and called a meeting, during which both sides expressed their concerns about the other and tensions were eased (Shityuwete 24.7.2007, pp. 2-6).

⁶⁸⁰ E.g. Shityuwete 1990, pp. 141-142.

⁶⁸¹ Ashipala 16.3.2007, pp. 33-35; Kati 11.8.2007, p. 2.

Force, who came promptly to our rescue.⁶⁸²

Despite these and other overlapping accounts of happenings narrated by Tate Nepelilo, such histories remain obscure. Most research participants when asked about Kongwa and particular people and events connected to that place demonstrated little knowledge of them in comparison with other sites of Namibia's exile history. This point applies not only to persons affiliated with SWAPO, whose representatives have focused on describing the exploits of the guerrillas infiltrating Namibia rather than on the places where they trained and lived,⁶⁸³ but also to the party's critics, many of whom are largely uninformed about the first SWAPO administered camp and the conflicts that developed there.

To some extent, ignorance of such histories can be attributed to the stigma attached to them prior to the time when most Namibians entered exile. Clearly, the kind of story Tate Nepelilo tells does not fit into a national narrative about “freedom fighters,” who went abroad so that they could liberate their country through arms, and “comrades,” united and equal in their commitment to “the struggle.” Any evidence that could support such a story might threaten national leaders and is, therefore, unlikely to have been discussed by exiles outside closed social networks. At the same time, those who told specific stories similar to Tate Nepelilo's became associated with stigma within the Namibian exile community. Kongwa inhabitants who moved to Kenya were labeled “deserters,” and SWAPO leaders discouraged the liberation movement's members from having any contact with them.⁶⁸⁴ Similarly, “the Seven Comrades,” who presented the

⁶⁸² Nyamu 2.4.2008, p. 5.

⁶⁸³ See, for example, Katjavivi 1988, pp. 59-64, Nujoma 2001, pp. 157-174.

⁶⁸⁴ For example, Nambinga Kati offers the following account of an encounter in 1975 between a group of Namibians who entered exile during “the exodus” (See Chapter 3) and the Namibian exile community

memorandum to camp commanders at Kongwa in 1968, were identified as an object of derision and accused of having been spies. For the majority of exiles, who traveled abroad from 1974, any critical histories of Kongwa which they heard are likely to have been associated first with the “deserters” and “the Seven Comrades,” and few exiles would have had the opportunity to hear these or other dissidents from Kongwa share their views directly.

Moreover, communities have not formed around articulating stories about Kongwa in the way that they have around other sites of controversial exile histories.⁶⁸⁵ While living in exile, there was little impetus for former Kongwa inhabitants to talk openly about their experiences in the camp. Some remained in SWAPO camps, having been relocated from Kongwa to southwestern Zambia during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁶⁸⁶ Those who were living outside SWAPO's direct administration and who may have wanted to justify their flight from Kongwa were also likely to tread cautiously. Former Kongwa inhabitants who migrated from Tanzania often avoided mentioning that they had any association with SWAPO because it might lead government officials to deny them entrance or to reject their scholarship applications on the premise that they were the responsibility of their liberation movement and should return to SWAPO

in Kenya, of which he was a part: “I remember a group that came from Lusaka for education in Kenya. We heard that they were coming and so we went to receive them at the airport [in Nairobi]. I was surprised to see that these kids were running away from us... Then later on the story came out that they were told to be careful... An officer told them, 'You are going to Nairobi, be careful there are rogues there. They will even steal your luggage. Don't talk to them at all. Don't allow them to come near you. They are not good people.' Then when we went to the airport to welcome them to shake hands with them, they had to run away from us” (Kati 11.8.2007).

⁶⁸⁵ One might consider, in comparison, groups like the Committee of Parents, the Lubango “ex-detainees” and the Breaking the Wall of Silence of Movement, all of which are the focus of analysis in Chapter 5.

⁶⁸⁶ According to Tate Nepelilo, while his group was training in the Soviet Union in 1969-1970 those living in Kongwa were relocated to camps in southwestern Zambia. Also, some of those detained with Tate Nepelilo moved to the Zambian front (Nepelilo 4.8.2007, pp. 34-35). According to Samson Ndeikwila, a group of Kongwa inhabitants were turned away from entering Kenya around 1970 and returned to SWAPO, where they eventually took up positions in PLAN (Ndeikwila 21.7.2007, p. 41).

headquarters in Dar es Salaam.⁶⁸⁷ At the same time, the relationship of former Kongwa inhabitants to SWAPO was ambiguous, and some of them wanted to retain an affiliation with the liberation movement and became actively involved in it again in later years.⁶⁸⁸ Under the circumstances, even the community of Namibians living in Kenya was cautious in making public statements about their experiences in Kongwa.⁶⁸⁹

Independence also initiated processes, which, on the whole, pulled Kongwa's former inhabitants apart. As early as the negotiations over Namibian independence during the mid-1970s, some exiles living in Kenya accepted offers of protection issued by the South African government and returned to Namibia.⁶⁹⁰ Others repatriated in 1989 with SWAPO, and still others remained in exile, having integrated themselves into communities or passed away there. Although some, especially those who accessed education in exile, held regular jobs following their return to Namibia, many have not and are highly reliant on social networks, and accepting the political allegiances of those within these networks, to meet everyday needs. In 1996 Samson Ndeikwila, one of the Seven Comrades, who had lived in Kenya for eight years before repatriating to Namibia in 1978, became the founding Chairperson of the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement. Relatively few exiles from the 1960s, however, have associated with BWS and its direct challenge to Namibia's official exile history. More have participated in the

⁶⁸⁷ Ashipala 16.3.2007, pp. 1-2; Ndeikwila 21.7.2007, p. 41.

⁶⁸⁸ Kati 11.8.2007. For example, in a public statement issued following the journey of two exiles from their site of detention in Mboroma, Zambia to Nairobi in April 1977 (see Chapter 3), the authors refer to themselves at one point as “we Namibian SWAPO members in Kenya” (UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 5, File 8, “Appeal for the Release of over 1,000 Namibians in Detentions in Zambia and in Tanzania,” p. 1).

⁶⁸⁹ “Appeal for the Release of over 1,000 Namibians in Detentions in Zambia and in Tanzania” is one controversial public statement that the Namibian exile community in Kenya did release. While highlighting the conditions and circumstances behind detentions in Mboroma, however, the document makes only passing reference to smaller groups of detainees in Zambian and Tanzanian government prisons and does not discuss how these detentions relate to Kongwa.

⁶⁹⁰ Ashipala 16.3.2007; Ndeikwila 9.2.2007; 21.7.2007; S. Shikongo 16.3.2007.

initiatives of various groups of “ex-combatants,” lobbying for support from the Namibian government on the basis of their contributions to SWAPO during the liberation struggle.⁶⁹¹ Many have not associated with any organization making claims on the state through references to exile history at all.

Even among Kongwa's former inhabitants, some do not know about Tate Nepelilo and others' experiences in Kongwa from 1969. During the late '60s as Kongwa's inhabitants began to leave the camp for other places, Nairobi became a hub for knowledge about Kongwa among those who were no longer living there. New groups would depart from Kongwa and arrive in Kenya, and correspondence was maintained between Namibians in Nairobi and Namibians in the camp through trusted third parties living in Kongwa village who received and mailed letters on their behalves.⁶⁹² Following Castro's arrest in 1969, communication appears to have broken down. Research participants who lived in Kongwa during previous years offered vague accounts of what they thought had happened to those living in Kongwa at this time, including that they had been sent to the USSR for further training, had been stationed with PLAN units in southwestern Zambia and that they had been taken to an agricultural camp in northern Tanzania.⁶⁹³ No former Kongwa inhabitants who left the camp before 1971 spoke of the meeting at Kongwa with the SWAPO officials. And even Jesaya Nyamu claims that he was not aware of what had happened to the camp's inhabitants after his 1971 visit.

⁶⁹¹ In June 2007 the Committee for the Welfare of Ex-Combatants went on strike in downtown Windhoek, demanding remuneration from the government for their participation in the armed struggle. In conjunction with this event, I gathered information about the backgrounds of some those assembled at the strike. Research participants were also asked about the demographics of the ex-combatants, including Alex Kamwi (26.2.2007), the Spokesperson for Committee for the Welfare of Ex-Combatants and Helao Shityuwete (24.7.2007), a former Kongwa inhabitant who has interfaced with groups of ex-combatants on projects over many years.

⁶⁹² Ashipala 25.7.2007, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁹³ According to Samson Ndeikwila, some tried to join others in Kenya but were refused entrance by the Kenyan government, after which they joined SWAPO at the front (Ndeikwila 21.7.2007, pp. 41-43).

Such lacunae in social awareness of Namibian exile histories have made Tate Nepelilo vulnerable. In 1976 he and others imprisoned with him in Lusaka received a visit from a SWAPO official, Richard Kapelwa, who offered him and other inmates the opportunity to join soldiers at the front in southwestern Zambia. Although some accepted the offer, Nepelilo declined, and shortly thereafter accepted an offer extended by the United Nations to become a refugee. In so doing, Nepelilo asserted his agency vis a vis SWAPO, which he felt had grossly mistreated him, but, at the same time, stepped irrevocably outside the organization and any opportunities that it might have been able to offer him in the future. In 1977 Nepelilo was transferred from Lusaka to the UN administered Maheba Refugee Camp in northwestern Zambia, where he met Abed Hauwanga, our translator, and about 200 other Namibians who had recently left SWAPO after having been released following a year's detention under severe conditions at Mboroma.⁶⁹⁴ Although many of the 200 were able to access scholarships for further training through contacts made while living at the UN camp, Nepelilo did not have the basic education that he would have needed to access these and, within a year, he and some others with whom he had been imprisoned in Lusaka, left the camp. Eventually they made their way to Ondjiva, a town 50 kilometers from the Namibian border in the predominantly Oshikwanyama speaking part of southern Angola, where they lived for several years. In the early 1980s in the context of rising violence around Ondjiva, Nepelilo reentered Namibia as an Angolan refugee. After twenty years away from home, some of his closest family members had died. Others were critical of him because he had “left” SWAPO. Nepelilo did manage to reconnect with an uncle working in a government

⁶⁹⁴ They were among the soldiers detained at the front in conjunction with the SWAPO conflict in 1976 (See Chapter 3).

office in Ohangwena who was able to give him a residential registration card that he could use to identify himself. He was not, however, recognized by the state as a citizen either before or after independence.

In 2005 Abed Hauwanga and Tate Nepelilo met one another again, this time on a street in Tsumeb. By then Abed was an employee at the Office of Home Affairs but Tate Nepelilo still did not have a Namibian ID card and was, therefore, not receiving a pension from the Namibian government despite the fact that his age should have qualified him for it. Through his professional contacts, Abed was able to issue an ID for Nepelilo and later arranged for him to enter the Tsumeb Old Age Home, where in lieu of a family, he could have a bed and receive regular meals. Since then, Abed had been making regular visits to the Home to visit him and bring him the disposable razors that he requested – so that he could shave before church services on Sundays.

After handing our host a new package of razors, Abed and I stood up to leave. As we said our good-byes, I told Tate Nepelilo that I would be transcribing our interview and that I planned to return to him and Abed with a transcript to check if I had understood all the information that he had shared with me correctly. Tate Nepelilo replied that he hoped that I would return, adding “I look forward to seeing my history.”

Vaalgras

About 80 kilometers northeast of Keetmanshoop and 50 kilometers east of the B1 highway lies a place called Vaalgras.⁶⁹⁵ Like the surrounding region, Vaalgras is dry, rocky and sparsely populated, with several hundred people living in modest homes of

⁶⁹⁵ Vaalgras is also sometimes referred to by its name in Khoekhoegowab, “/Hei- /gâseb” and German “*Fahlgras*,” meaning ‘faded grass.’

brick and corrugated iron scattered across a communal land area.⁶⁹⁶ Most of Vaalgras' inhabitants live off of a mixed-economy of small livestock herding and remittances sent by family members who reside in Namibia's urban areas or who work on land owned by white farmers outside the communal area. Vaalgras also supports a few small shops, several churches and a Catholic primary school in Koichas, one of the areas of more concentrated settlement within Vaalgras.

The community that lives in Vaalgras today traces its history to the 1830s when its ancestors moved away from other Herero pastoralists in search of grazing land for their cattle to the south.⁶⁹⁷ During the 1860s, after a few decades living among Khoekhoe-speaking communities,⁶⁹⁸ some traveled into “exile” south of the Orange River, where they worked in copper mines and farms in the northwestern part of the Cape Colony.⁶⁹⁹ In 1895 they crossed back over the Orange River into the territory which by this time had been claimed as Deutsch Südwest Afrika, and were soon recruited by the

⁶⁹⁶ In 1993 the population of Vaalgras was estimated to be 607 persons (Santos Joas, Historical and Political Background Research on Five Community Schools in Namibia, (Windhoek: Africa Groups of Sweden, 1994)). The community has remained fairly stable since then, and, if anything, has probably decreased in size as increasing numbers of people move to urban areas.

⁶⁹⁷ Jeremy Silvester, “Assembling and Resembling: Herero History in Vaalgras, Southern Namibia,” Michael Bollig and Jan-Bart Gewald, eds. People, cattle and land- Transformations of a pastoral society in southwestern Africa, (Köln: Rudiger Koppe Verlag, 2000) p. 477; Sarafina Biwa, “The History of the Vaalgras People of Namibia,” (Paper presented at “Public History, Forgotten History,” a conference at the UNAM History Department, 2000), p. 5. In addition, to these sources two other unpublished manuscripts focus on the history of the Vaalgras community and are cited below: K.F.R.H Budack “N Volkekundige studie van die Tses Reserwaat (Distrik Keetmanshoop, Suidwes Afrika) met besondere verwysing na die geskiedenis en die iner – etniese verhouding van die bewoners” (MA Thesis, University of Pretoria, 1965); Johannes Katzao, “The Armed Response to the German Attack at Koes,” (gift to the author, 2007). Dr. Katzao and others from Vaalgras have also been interviewed about various aspects of the community's history and are cited below.

⁶⁹⁸ There was considerable conflict in southern Namibia during this time, and many of those from Herero backgrounds living in Khoekhoe-speaking communities became dependents or were imprisoned. According to some accounts, the ancestors of Vaalgras' inhabitants were also mistreated during this time (Budack 1965, p. 59; Silvester 2000, p. 477; Biwa 2000, p. 5).

⁶⁹⁹ Budack 1965, pp. 60-61; Silvester 2000, pp. 478-481; Biwa 2000, pp. 6-7. In narrating their history, people from Vaalgras often evoke the idea of a community which was forced into “exile” and, after decades of hardship, managed to return “home.” It should be further noted that the trope of exile has been used among other Herero-identifying groups to refer to those who fled into Bechuanaland following the Battle of the Waterberg in 1904.

Germans to use their oxen, which they had accumulated while working in the Cape, to transport materials from the coastal town of Lüderitz to Keetmanshoop, about 300 kilometers inland.⁷⁰⁰ In May 1908 the community's leader, Jan Appolus, signed an agreement with the German government to settle at Vaalgras as a reward for their loyalty during the 1903-1908 wars which had pitted the Germans against many of Namibia's indigenous communities.⁷⁰¹ In 1923, following the League of Nations mandate, the South African government incorporated Vaalgras into a broader communal area named the Tses Reserve, where a variety of communities displaced by the 1903-1908 war were resettled.⁷⁰² Within this arrangement inhabitants of Vaalgras maintained their own communal area and retained their distinctiveness as a group by marrying primarily within the community.

During the latter half of the 20th century, Vaalgras became associated with a different exile history. In the late 1950s a group of Namibians living in Cape Town, South Africa formed the Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC), a nationalist

⁷⁰⁰ Silvester 2000, pp. 482-484; Biwa pp. 7-8. The use of the ethnic label "Oorlam" or "Oorlam Herero" to refer to people from Vaalgras may be attributed to this migration. Zedekia Ngavirue, a Namibian scholar and one of Biwa's research participants, suggests that "Oorlam" was a mispronunciation of the Afrikaans word "*oorland*" used to refer to "overland people" or "foreigners." As Biwa and Silvester also note, the group that crossed over the Orange River in 1895 was following in the footsteps of Jonker Afrikaner and others Khoekhoe speakers of mixed racial background who were referred to a century earlier as "Oorlam."

⁷⁰¹ Budack 1965, p. 64. Silvester 2000, p. 484; Biwa 2000, p. 8. In 1899 Oorlam Herero, with the support of the German government, built a well in the area of Vaalgras. During the war those who had been living in the area around Vaalgras had fled or been removed to Keetmanshoop. It was on this basis, apparently, that the land was selected for settlement by the community led by Jan Appolus (Budack 1965, pp. 62-64). Among those who settled in Vaalgras under Jan Appolus at this time were not only persons who had returned from the Cape Colony and worked as transporters for the Germans, but also people with common heritage who had settled in areas around Vaalgras, had never crossed over the Orange River and had fought alongside the *Veldschoendragers* and others against the Germans. These communities are the focal point of Dr. Katzao's manuscript and he offers a narrative of how these two branches of today's Vaalgras community reunited with one another following the 1903-1908 wars (Katzao 2007, pp. 65-66; Johannes Katzao, Interview 3.5.2007, p. 6). Members of the Vaalgras community sometimes distinguish between those who did not cross the Orange River from those that did by referring to the former as "Nama-Daman" and the latter as "Oorlams."

⁷⁰² Budack 1965, pp. 65, 76; Silvester 2000, p. 484-485.

organization focused on the plight of Ovambo workers most directly affected by the contract labor system. Among the founding members of the OPC and one of the only non-Ovambos was Emil Appolus, a young man from Vaalgras, who was studying journalism in Cape Town at that time.⁷⁰³ Following his return to Namibia, he became the founding editor of the Suidwes Nuus, Namibia's first nationalist newspaper, and he, Sam Nujoma and others were elected executive members of the South West African National Union (SWANU), an umbrella for nationalist organizations established under the auspices of the Herero Chiefs' Council.⁷⁰⁴ Following December 10, 1959, when residents from Windhoek's Old Location were shot and killed during a protest of their forced removal to the apartheid township of Katutura, Appolus and other prominent leaders of Namibian nationalist organizations fled into exile, making their way to Dar es Salaam. There, Appolus was named SWAPO's first Secretary for Information and Publicity and opened the organization's office in Cairo, where some of the first SWAPO guerrillas were trained, and in Francistown, where many of SWAPO's first guerrillas were recruited.⁷⁰⁵ On July 18, 1966 Appolus drafted the response to the International Court of Justice's verdict in favor of the status quo in Namibia, formally inaugurating Namibia's armed liberation struggle.⁷⁰⁶ Thereafter, his words were repeated as inspiration by SWAPO members committed to resisting South African oppression through armed

⁷⁰³ Katjavivi 1988, p. 20; Paul Helmuth, Interview 13.7.2007, p. 13.

⁷⁰⁴ Katjavivi 1988, p. 43; Johannes Katzao, Interview 3.5.2007, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁰⁵ Helmuth 13.7.2007, p. 8; Hildegard Pütz, Paul and Sandra Caplan and Ralph and Adeline von Egidy, eds. Namibia Handbook and Political Who's Who (Windhoek: The Magnus Company, 1989), p. 124.

⁷⁰⁶ In December 1960 the governments of Liberia and Ethiopia initiated a case against the South African government at the ICJ, challenging the legal status of South Africa's continued rule over Namibia. On July 18, 1966 the ICJ decided that it could not issue a ruling on the case, effectively supporting the status quo in Namibia. SWAPO issued a response to the ruling on the same day. The document was signed by Peter Nanyemba, then SWAPO's Chief Representative to East Africa, on behalf of the party. According to Peter Katjavivi, Deputy Representative to East Africa at that time, it was Appolus who actually wrote the document while he and Nanyemba offered some comments on it (Peter Katjavivi, "Tribute to Emil Appolus," New Era, 31.5.2005, Peter Katjavivi, Interview 23.7.2008).

struggle: “The course has been set. We have no alternative but to rise in arms and bring about our own liberation. The supreme test must be faced and we must at once begin to cross the many rivers of blood on our march towards freedom.”⁷⁰⁷

Over the coming decades Vaalgras community members' involvement in national politics expanded and intensified. In 1964 the South African government issued the Odendaal Plan, its blue-print for creating ethnic homelands in Namibia. According to the plan, people from Vaalgras were located in “Namaland,” the homeland for Namibia's “Nama people.” During the early 1970s, South African officials began to implement the Plan by moving people defined by it as Nama into Namaland and by moving those defined by it as Herero and Damara to their respective homelands, hundreds of kilometers away.⁷⁰⁸ The Vaalgras community managed to resist removal both on the basis of its members' cultural characteristics, above all the fact that they spoke Khoekhoegowab rather than Otjiherero,⁷⁰⁹ and the authority of a treaty made between Jan Appolus and the German government in 1908.⁷¹⁰ Nonetheless, the process of resisting removal and of responding to other happenings in Namibia and beyond politicized the Vaalgras community. In 1974 Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, a student from Vaalgras studying at St. Therese, a Catholic mission school on the Tses Reserve, established a chapter of the SWAPO Youth League, and he and other students began traveling to

⁷⁰⁷ UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series A, “Unregistered Correspondence 1961-1969,” “Press Release by the South West African People's Organisation, Dar es Salaam, 18th July, 1966.”

⁷⁰⁸ For a review of efforts to implement and resist the Odendaal Plan in “Namaland,” see Reinhart Köbller, “From Reserve to Homeland: Local Identities and South African Policy in Southern Namibia,” Journal of Southern African Studies, 26, 3 (2000), pp. 447-462; Christian A. Williams, “Student Political Consciousness: Lessons from a Namibian Mission School,” Journal of Southern African Studies, 30,3, (2004) pp. 548-549.

⁷⁰⁹ Khoekhoegowab is often referred to in Namibia simply as “Nama” or “Damara,” depending on the ethnic identity attributed to the speaker. There were a small number of people living in Vaalgras who spoke Otjiherero at that time, but Nama and Afrikaans, rather than Otjiherero, were the shared languages of the community (Basson 31.5.2007).

⁷¹⁰ Silvester 2000, p. 491; Williams 2004, p. 548.

neighboring communities canvassing support for SWAPO.⁷¹¹ In October 1976 Vaalgras Chief Jöel Stefanus stood alongside other traditional leaders in Namaland in opposing Turnhalle, the meetings organized by the South African government as an “internal solution” to the conflict in Namibia, and pledging his community's support for SWAPO.⁷¹² On November 5, 1976, Willem Konjore from Vaalgras and teachers from surrounding communities traveled to Gibeon to protest racial discrimination under the South African education system.⁷¹³ A few days later, on November 11, St. Therese pupils led a strike in solidarity with students in Soweto, and several, including Stephanus and others from Vaalgras, left the school to join SWAPO in exile immediately thereafter.⁷¹⁴ By the 1980s at least twenty-five persons from Vaalgras had traveled abroad to join SWAPO in exile.⁷¹⁵ These included prominent SWAPO activists such as Ben Boys, Eric

⁷¹¹ For an analysis of how political consciousness developed among St. Therese students during the mid-1970s and students' interactions with groups outside the mission, see Williams 2004 and Christian A. Williams, *Remembering St. Therese* (Windhoek: Out of Africa, 2003). More recently, Immanuel Hinda narrated to me an account of how St. Therese students' meetings were received in Vaalgras at this time (Hinda 19.9.2007, pp. 3-4).

⁷¹² Katjavivi 1988, pp. 99-100; Andries Basson, Interview 31.5.2007, pp. 4-6; Willem Konjore, Interview 22.7.2008. Pastor Hendrik Witbooi from Gibeon, Stefanus Goliath from Berseba and H. Noeteb from Hoachanas also pledged their support to SWAPO on behalf of their communities at this time. Andries Basson, Eric Biwa, Ben Boys and Lukas Stefanus, all of whom hailed from Vaalgras and had studied at St. Therese, also played a critical role in the lead up to the October 1976 meeting at which Jöel Stefanus and others pledged their support for SWAPO, by establishing a SWAPO cell in Gibeon and encouraging local leaders to take a stand on national political issues (Basson 31.5.2007, pp. 4-6).

⁷¹³ Konjore, 22.7.2008. According to Minister Konjore, who was the Vice-Chairperson of the Nama Teachers' Association, he and others traveled to Gibeon on November 5, 1976 to meet the education inspector and discuss the unequal dispensation for teachers classified by the government as “Nama” and “Coloured” under the Department for Coloured, Baster and Nama Affairs.” When the inspector did not come to the meeting, many of the teachers remained in Gibeon on strike from November until January the following year.

⁷¹⁴ Accounts of the strike and St. Therese students' flight into exile are also offered in Williams 2003 (pp. 80-82) and 2004 (pp. 555-557).

⁷¹⁵ Joesph “Pereb” Stephanus, Interview 18.9.2007, pp. 35, 40. In this interview Mr. Stephanus generated the following list of names: Emil Appolus, Dominicus Stephanus, Damianus Stephanus, Willem Rukero, Joseph Katzao, Joseph (Boetiemann) Katzao, Joseph Hange, Aaron “Hage” Stephanus, Pius Stephanus, Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Jan Stephanus, Ounooi Stephanus, Joseph Pieters, Theresia Basson, Isaack Basson, Andries Basson, Ben Boys, Eric Biwa, Richard Biwa, Elias !Goraseb, Lukas Stephanus of the Konjore family, the other Lukas Stephanus, Dominikus Appolus and Johannes Konjore. The list excludes former exiles from neighboring communities whose families have more distant connections with Vaalgras.

Biwa and Lukas Stephanus all of whom were appointed to the SWAPO Central Committee and Andries Basson, who became a high-ranking officer with PLAN.

At the same time, rifts were developing between SWAPO and people from Vaalgras associated with the liberation movement in exile. At the Tanga Conference in 1969-1970 Emil Appolus was dropped from his position as SWAPO Secretary for Information and Publicity. Thereafter he worked in New York and in London as a freelance journalist until August 1976, when, shortly after the arrest and expulsion of hundreds of Namibians in Zambia,⁷¹⁶ Appolus received a letter from SWAPO indicating that he had been expelled from the party.⁷¹⁷ In November of the same year, Appolus returned to Namibia.⁷¹⁸ No sooner had he arrived, than he was condemned by SWAPO representatives. For example, on November 27, 1976 SWAPO's Gibeon Branch issued a statement “Comrades of Vaalgras” on the topic of Emil Appolus' repatriation:

This is not the same Emil Appolus who left the country many years ago. Then he was a fighter and a person who had the interests of Namibia at heart. Today, he is an instrument of a South African government plan to confuse the Namibians, following the failure of Turnhalle... He used to be a patriot, but his weaknesses allowed the imperialist and colonial agents to buy him over... Be warned, people of Namibia: do not listen to or waste time with this mouthpiece for imperialism and colonialism.

In December 1976 this statement was published in Namibia News, the newsletter sent by SWAPO from its London office to supporters all over the world, as was a cartoon titled “Turnhalle Puppets,” which pictures Appolus and other exiles who returned to Namibia

⁷¹⁶ For more details, see Chapter 3.

⁷¹⁷ Stephanus 18.9.2007, pp. 41-42; “Returned exiles are tools of SA plot,” Namibia News, 9, 12 (December 1976) , p. 9. In his account, Stephanus recounts how Appolus described the letter and his reaction to it.

⁷¹⁸ Willem Konjore recalls encountering Appolus in Gibeon while he was on strike there with other teachers. According to Konjore, when Appolus returned from exile, Chief Jöel Stefanus drove to Windhoek to pick Appolus up from the airport. Later, the two of them stopped in Gibeon while traveling en route to Vaalgras (Konjore 22.7.2008)

in 1976 as marionettes attached by strings to South African Prime Minister B.J. Vorster. Other statements issued by SWAPO at the time and in later years also focus on Appolus, associating him with the Turnhalle Talks and denouncing him generally.⁷¹⁹ Thenceforth, relations between Appolus and people from Vaalgras were strained. Following his repatriation, Appolus avoided discussing his opinions about politics with people from his family and home community, and he rarely visited Vaalgras.⁷²⁰

During the 1980s exiles from Vaalgras were among those who were accused of spying and disappeared in the SWAPO's Lubango camps.⁷²¹ They were also some of the best known figures to become associated with these happenings. The disappearance of prominent persons from Vaalgras was widely reported in letters spread throughout a Namibian diaspora living in Europe and in Namibia itself as was the reappearance of Ben Boys who “confessed” to his spying on a film first shown in Lusaka on March 4, 1985 and later in several European capitals.⁷²² Despite efforts made by some Vaalgras leaders to glean more information from SWAPO leaders about community members living under the liberation movement in exile, their circumstances remained unclear before exiles' repatriation. In 1989 only nine from Vaalgras returned, all of them Lubango ex-detainees.⁷²³ “The missing persons” from Vaalgras have never returned.⁷²⁴

⁷¹⁹ E.g. UNAM, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 4, “Memorandum from SWAPO Department of Information to Governments, National and International Organizations, 11th January, 1977” and “Statement by Comrade Mishake Muyongo, SWAPO Vice-President, Before the Committee of 24, on 25th February, 1977.” In his autobiography Sam Nujoma offers the following assessment of Emil Appolus: “Appolus turned out to be a playboy and useless to us. He drifted away from SWAPO and years later came back to join the South African colonial administration of local bantustan political schemes” (Nujoma 2001, p. 147).

⁷²⁰ Stephanus 31.5.2005, 15.6.2005; Katzao 5.6.2007; Hinda 21.9.2007; Konjore 22.7.2008. Interestingly, in our interview Willem Konjore maintained that when Appolus returned to Namibia in 1976, he was seen as a disappointment to both SWAPO and the DTA since he was unwilling to talk openly about his experiences with SWAPO abroad.

⁷²¹ For more details, see Chapter 4.

⁷²² For more information and references, see Chapter 5.

⁷²³ Stephanus 18.9.2007, p. 40. According to Stephanus, the group that returned at this time were: Aaron

In 2005 I had an opportunity to glimpse how such exile histories shape ways in which Vaalgras inhabitants relate to the Namibian nation and one another. On Sunday, May 29, I was in Keetmanshoop visiting Joseph Stephanus, when I learned from him that Emil Appolus had died the previous day. Stephanus and others were arranging the funeral service, scheduled to take place the following weekend in Vaalgras. For me the funeral presented a chance both to commemorate the life of a person whom I knew through my studies of history and to visit people from Vaalgras with whom I had worked since first becoming a volunteer teacher on the nearby Tses Mission five years earlier. With Stephanus' encouragement, I began making arrangements to attend.

On Friday, June 3, several former St. Therese students and I made the drive out to Vaalgras. Arriving in the evening, we attended an informal service during which people sat in the open air, sharing stories and singing hymns in memory of the late Emil Appolus. For me the most striking remarks that evening were not those made about Appolus directly, but rather about visitors who were coming to his funeral. As Andries Biwa, the presiding minister, frequently repeated, people must be on their “best behavior” at the funeral because many “VIPs” would be there. He further emphasized that at the funeral the Vaalgras community's “reputation” would be at stake.

The next morning shiny Mercedes with tinted windows and donkey carts drove on the dirt road leading to Vaalgras side by side. By 9 am people had assembled at the house of a family member of the deceased and began walking towards the AME church where most of us packed into wooden pews in the church's nave. Thirty-three guests, however,

“Hage” Stephanus, Joseph “Pereb” Stephanus, Oumooi Stephanus, Theresia Basson, Andries Basson, Ben Boys, Eric Biwa, Dominikus Appolus and Johannes Konjore.

⁷²⁴ One former exile from Vaalgras, Damianus Stephanus, was sent to Nigeria as a school pupil. As he was known to be studying there, he was never seen as a “missing person.” He returned to Namibia long after most exiles repatriated (Stephanus 18.9.2007, p. 40).

entered the church through a separate door and were seated in front of the congregation in chairs on a raised stage. Three of those on the platform were pastors, two were cameramen affiliated with the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), who were covering the funeral for a national television audience, six were family members of the deceased and the rest dignitaries. The latter included OPC founder Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo, Namibia's former Prime Minister Hage Geingob and the then Chief Whip for SWAPO in Parliament, Ben Amathila.

The service proceeded around ten tributes to Emil Appolus delivered by various persons seated on stage. The first was a song performed by Namibian music legend and former exile, Jackson Kaujeua. This was followed by tributes from five family members, including Appolus' niece Maureen Hinda and his two children, Jomo Appolus and Norah Appolus. Four messages were offered by dignitaries, including one delivered by Toivo Ya Toivo, addresses read on behalf of the Namibian President Lucas Pohamba and SWAPO President Sam Nujoma and a final offering by Vaalgras Chief Jöel Stefanus. The tributes were interspersed with hymns and were followed by a sermon, offering and announcements led by Reverend Biwa.

Throughout the service speakers associated with the local community made considerable effort to engage social elites in their midst. All remarks made in Khoekhoegowab and Afrikaans, the dominant languages in the region, were translated into English, the national language. Comments welcoming and expressing appreciation to guests were made repeatedly, and particular visitors, above all Toivo Ya Toivo, Geingob and Amathila, were singled out. At the same time, speakers at the funeral with close connections to Vaalgras were evoking a reciprocal relationship between the elites and the

community. Towards the end of the service, Andries Biwa and his son announced the church's plan to build Vaalgras' first and only guest-house. According to the pastors the facilities would give dignitaries a place to stay when they returned to Vaalgras for a visit. At the very least, it was suggested that Jomo and Norah Appolus, both of whom were born in exile and have become successful professionals, would need to visit their father's grave. For such occasions the guest-house would be there for them. The most explicit appeals to leaders' social responsibilities were made in conjunction with the offering at which time Biwa spoke for several minutes about the importance of people giving gifts that were "appropriate to their place and station." Later in the service the offering count was announced to the congregation and congregants thanked repeatedly for their generosity.

It was through histories of Emil Appolus' life, however, that members of the Vaalgras community asserted reciprocal relations between themselves and elites associated with SWAPO most forcefully. In this respect, the tributes to Emil Appolus delivered by Maureen Hinda and Jöel Stefanus are particularly noteworthy. Hinda focused her comments on a narrative of Appolus' life that she claimed Appolus had told her shortly before his death. Like many other stories about Appolus reported in the media over the preceding week and those offered by Toivo Ya Tovio and on behalf of Nujoma and Pohamba at the funeral, Hinda's focused on Appolus' involvement in national politics, from his time in Cape Town during the 1950s through his leadership with SWAPO in exile during the 1960s. In contrast to other stories, however, Hinda focused primarily on the brief period during which Appolus lived in Namibia between his years in Cape Town and in exile, especially Appolus' activities in Vaalgras during this time.

According to Hinda, in 1959 Appolus had shared his political views with people in Vaalgras and established a “SWAPO cell,” the first in Namibia.⁷²⁵ Through Appolus' “cell,” Hinda associated Vaalgras with SWAPO at the very beginning of the liberation movement's rise to power, long before Vaalgras had begun to affiliate officially with SWAPO in 1976, by which time it was supported by many Namibians.

A second theme which ran through Hinda's account was the importance that Appolus placed on his relationship with Vaalgras. According to Hinda, before his death, Appolus had spoken to her specifically about the significance he placed on his ties to the community. His words were repeated as a mantra throughout Hinda's oration: “I have been to the top and I have been to the bottom. But my roots were always here in Vaalgras.” Hinda also spoke at some length about Appolus' belief in God – a point which she used to counter the alleged concern of Vaalgras inhabitants that Appolus had lost his faith because he had not attended Sunday worship services since his return from exile. By emphasizing Appolus' belonging to Vaalgras in such ways, Hinda attempted to bridge the gap that had developed between Appolus and Vaalgras, both in the minds of local residents and of visiting SWAPO leaders.

Like Hinda, Chief Stefanus offered a history of Appolus' involvement with SWAPO, including his activities in Vaalgras prior to leaving for exile. Unlike Hinda, however, Stefanus was living in Vaalgras in 1959 and therefore could lend added detail

⁷²⁵ In this and other instances, Hinda did not make distinctions between SWAPO and other nationalist organizations, including the OPC, the OPO and SWANU with which Appolus was affiliated in the late 1950s and 1960s. Although OPO was founded in Windhoek on April 19, 1959, the organization did not adopt the name SWAPO until June 1960 (Katjavivi 1988, pp. 22-23, 44-46). When asked about Emil Appolus' political activities in Vaalgras, Immanuel Hinda, who was raised in the same house with Emil, mentioned that Appolus had held some meetings with Vaalgras leaders before he went into exile and that Toivo Ya Toivo had once come to Vaalgras and participated in a meeting. He emphasized that the meetings were closed, however, and that he and others in Vaalgras were largely unaware of Appolus' perspective on politics (Hinda 19.9.2007, p. 3). Immanuel Hinda also emphasized that people in Vaalgras did not speak openly about SWAPO during the 1960s (Hinda 19.9.2007).

and credibility to Hinda's story. Remembering his encounters with Appolus at that time, Stefanus described him as a leader whose vision of politics and the future were beyond what Stefanus and his peers could see. Stefanus also discussed the decision made by Vaalgras to support SWAPO in October 1976. While acknowledging that, as Chief, he had formally taken this stand on behalf of Vaalgras, Stefanus credited Appolus for influencing his and other traditional leaders' decisions. The Chief further emphasized that the choice had not only been important for Vaalgras, but also for SWAPO, establishing it as premier political party among Khoekhoe-speaking communities living south of Windhoek. Later, Chief Stefanus referred generally to the costs of this choice: the harassment of various community members by the South African police, the closing of the school in Koichas and the exclusion of the community from various government services.⁷²⁶ He also mentioned the on-going poverty in Vaalgras and the lack of development projects in the community. In juxtaposing such remarks, Chief Stefanus suggested that SWAPO owed something to Vaalgras for the community's loyalty and sacrifices over many years.

Unlike Hinda and other speakers at the funeral, Stefanus also briefly discussed Appolus' return from exile in 1976. As the Chief explained, he was surprised when Appolus returned to Namibia only a few weeks after he had thrown Vaalgras' allegiance

⁷²⁶ In January 1977, following the Nama Teachers' Association strike at Gibeon, the South African government issued instructions that Willem Konjore, the school principal at Koichas and a staunch critic of South African policies, must transfer from Koichas to Witkrans. In response, Konjore resigned from his post, and parents pulled their children out of the school. In 1983, when the school reopened as the Ecumenical Community School Koichas, one of five community schools in Namibia to adopt an alternative to the South African syllabus and offer English medium instruction prior to independence, school teachers and pupils were subject to harassment from soldiers (Konjore 22.7.2007; Joas 1994, pp. 19, 55). In 1978 following an extensive drought, the South African government refused to offer fodder to farmers in Vaalgras unless they were willing to support the Turnhalle government. Later, the state also refused to maintain Vaalgras' windmills, the means by which people accessed water through boreholes deep in the ground although the CCN intervened to assist Vaalgras with this essential service (Konjore 22.7.2007).

behind SWAPO. Stefanus carefully skirted the issue of why Appolus had left exile, indicating that Appolus had never told him. Rather, he focused on a lesson that he had apparently learned from Appolus: “There are some things better left unsaid in politics.” The Chief further indicated that Appolus told him that he was “doing the right thing” in aligning Vaalgras with SWAPO and gave him his blessing to carry on with the party which, according to Stefanus, he has done faithfully ever since. In this manner Stefanus turned himself into Appolus' flag-bearer, eclipsing the broken relationship between Appolus and the liberation movement.

At only one point during the funeral proceedings did someone direct attention to histories that could unravel the carefully interwoven narratives binding Appolus, Vaalgras and SWAPO. At the cemetery, immediately before the internment of Appolus' body, Immanuel Hinda, a Vaalgras elder who grew up in the same house as Emil Appolus, offered a final tribute. While thanking God for the life of Emil Appolus and his contributions to the Namibian nation, Hinda made the statement that Appolus belonged “with those killed at Cassinga and those killed at Lubango.” Cassinga refers to the SWAPO camp attacked by the South African Defense Force on May 4, 1978, and is central to the national narrative told about sacrifices made by Namibians during the liberation struggle. Lubango refers to the site of SWAPO camps where accused spies were tortured, detained and disappeared which fundamentally threatens this narrative.⁷²⁷ Merely by juxtaposing the words “Cassinga” and “Lubango,” Hinda presented an alternative to histories told earlier that day, all of which were compatible with a socially accepted national narrative, suggesting instead that the nation rewrite its history so that it can incorporate people whose experiences heretofore have been excluded from it.

⁷²⁷ For more details about Cassinga and Lubango, see Chapters 2 and 4, respectively.

Although an isolated comment at Appolus' funeral, Hinda's words are deeply rooted in debates within Vaalgras about how to respond to the histories of former exiles from the community. Immediately after the ex-detainees flew from Lubango to Windhoek on July 4, 1989, Jöel Stefanus and several other elders from Vaalgras traveled to the capital. There they held a private meeting, during which exiles talked freely about their detentions and the missing persons from Vaalgras and indicated that they would speak publicly about these experiences and oppose SWAPO in the elections. In turn, Stefanus and others tried to dissuade them from this strategy, suggesting that they should support SWAPO at least until it had won the election and South Africa and the DTA had been defeated.⁷²⁸ Shortly thereafter the returned exiles were driven by the elders to Vaalgras, where a service was held at the AME Church to mark their arrival. From their seats on the raised platform, the group shared stories about what had happened to them in Lubango and about those who had not returned.⁷²⁹ People who were present remember the service as a solemn occasion. Many in the congregation wept openly, and the presiding ministers, Andries Biwa and Willem Konjore, offered words of consolation and encouragement to those who had survived.⁷³⁰ In the days following the service, people in the community spoke with the returned exiles about their and others' experiences and debated over whether the detainees should tell their stories openly before the elections.⁷³¹

⁷²⁸ Stefanus 18.9.2007, p. 88.

⁷²⁹ Stefanus 18.9.2007, p. 40; Basson 22.9.2007, pp. 28-29; Konjore 22.7.2008.

⁷³⁰ Stefanus 15.6.2007, pp. 19-20; 18.9.2007, p. 40; Basson 22.9.2007, pp. 28-29; Konjore 22.7.2008.

According to Joseph Stefanus, after the returned exiles had told their stories, Willem Konjore said that "as far as he is concerned, these guys are not spies. They are heroes." Konjore recalls telling the congregation that "these people are coming from a difficult situation. They need healing. We need to calm down these people... bring them to a normal life."

⁷³¹ Ex-detainees ultimately split over this issue. Within a few weeks of their return Eric Biwa became the President of the Patriotic Unity Movement (PUM), a political party founded by ex-detainees which aligned with the UDF; Joseph Stefanus joined SWAPO-D led by former SWAPO leader and detainee Andreas Shipanga; Ben Boys formally made amends with SWAPO and rejoined the party; others

Among those who spoke to returned exiles during those first months was Emil Appolus himself. After many years of hearing about Appolus, some of the returned exiles spoke with him directly about his experiences with SWAPO abroad and the circumstances in which he had left the party in 1976.⁷³²

Sixteen years later at Emil Appolus' funeral, controversial exile histories were harder to hear. They did not take narrative form. There was no open debate about how to react to them, and, with the exception of one passing reference, they were not mentioned during the funeral service at all. And yet, in every comment about Emil Appolus' contribution to SWAPO and every appeal to assist the community then and now, they are there. Drawing from shared knowledge of past wrongs in exile, spokespersons from Vaalgras appealed to Namibian leaders' sense of responsibility to the community of Emil Appolus, a legitimate father of the nation. But Appolus' qualifications as a national hero are questionable, Vaalgras' past of SWAPO support is undermined through the official history of exile and the electoral stakes for SWAPO in such a small community outside the ruling party's traditional support base are few. As a result, Vaalgras residents have relatively little leverage to make claims on those who govern the nation. They must rather hope that its leaders will be benevolent.

“Living in Exile”

While conducting fieldwork in 2007, I assembled a photo exhibition titled “Living in Exile.”⁷³³ As explained in a brief introduction, the exhibition examined exile

partially or totally withdrew from the political limelight.

⁷³² Stephanus 18.9.2007, pp. 40-42.

⁷³³ The exhibition is also discussed in Chapter 1 and appears in Appendix 2. Photographs of the exhibition appear in Appendix 3.

through the SWAPO camps, first, because most Namibian exiles lived in these camps and, second, because there is a rich archive of camp photos, which, together with former exiles' memories, illuminate the experiences of those who lived there. Photographs, drawn from the National Archive of Namibia and a few private donations, were collected under several sections titled: “Where were the camps?,” “Who lived in the camps?,” “What did people do in the camps?” and “How did war affect the camps?” They were accompanied by a map of Southern Africa, which marked where camps were located, captions, which offered contextual information about camps collected through my research, and questions, which invited viewers to share additional information with me for use in a public record.

The exhibition was launched in Eenhana, a town in northern Namibia, on Saturday, August 25 and Sunday, August 26, 2007 in conjunction with the Namibian government's commemoration of Heroes' Day. Despite difficulties securing approval from the ruling party to display the photographs, permission was eventually obtained to place them at the Eenhana Youth Centre, where several Heroes' Day activities were hosted. All day Saturday and part of Sunday I sat near the exhibit, observing the several hundred people who stopped to look at them and chatting with those who approached me or who seemed particularly interested in the photos.⁷³⁴ Reactions, in turn, suggested different kinds of relationships that the viewers had to the exhibit, to the exile past and to national history.

Frequently, viewers' association of the exhibit with the exile past and national

⁷³⁴ While the exhibit was on display in Eenhana, I was briefly joined by Martha Akawa and Lovisa Nampala, graduates of the UNAM History Department and native speakers of Oshiwambo, who offered to help me as research assistants. Unfortunately, they were only able to come to Eenhana during the late morning and afternoon of Sunday, August 26, at a time when no guests were visiting the Youth Centre.

history appeared undifferentiated. For example, often when I asked viewers a question about a particular place pictured in a photo, they responded by saying that they knew about this place because they had been “there” themselves. In some cases, a story followed which placed the viewer in a particular place or at a particular happening pictured in a photo, but oftentimes “there” was associated with something more general evoked in viewers' minds by the exhibit like “the camps,” “exile” or “the struggle.” On several occasions, when I asked a question about the exile past, a viewer responded by reading directly from one of the captions, all of which I had written. Such responses seemed not only to reflect confusion over my relationship to the exhibit and an eagerness to trust the authority of the written word, but also an association between this exhibition, presented at this venue, and an authoritative, national history.

Viewers did make some comments which broke the direct line of association between exhibition, past and national history. For example, some gleaned that I was associated with the exhibit and asked me why I had assembled it, why I was displaying it in Eenhana and what group I represented. Such questions suggested consciousness that I was presenting the history from a particular standpoint, if not a suspicion of some hidden political agenda that was motivating this presentation. A few persons pointed to captions which could be improved through added nuance. Others drew from the exhibit to contrast it favorably with other representations of exile. As one woman said to me after sharing information about a SWAPO camp where she had lived: “This is good. Namibians need to know these things. We're only told about the leaders, not the ordinary heroes.” Several indicated that they had never seen the particular photographs which were displayed or images of the camps which were discussed. Particularly striking were comments from

several viewers that they had not seen the pictures of people living in Cassinga, despite the significance of this camp in Namibia's national history and the frequent display of images of a mass grave where hundreds were buried following the South African attack of the camp. I did not hear any comments about what people thought had been deliberately excluded from the exhibition.

Although reactions to the exhibit were generally similar on the other occasions when I displayed it in Ovamboland in the North, they were considerably different when, a few weeks later, I took the exhibition to the South. On Monday, September 17, the same day on which Prime Minister Nahas Angula addressed Parliament on national reconciliation and made his remarks about those who had been “caught in the crossfire,” “Living in Exile” went on display on an open wall next to Bank Windhoek in Keetmanshoop. Several hundred people stopped to look at the exhibit and to chat with me and two local research assistants: Antoinette Mostert, then curator of the Keetmanshoop Museum, and Steve Swartbooi, a political activist and ex-detainee. Together the three of us amassed considerable evidence of how viewers disassociated the exhibition from the exile past. In some cases, disassociation took a form similar to that which I witnessed in Eenhana, with viewers questioning Steve, Antoinette and me about our relationship to the exhibit so as to situate our relationships to this representation of history. Particularly interesting were different ways that people who knew Steve reconciled his presence with his particular background.⁷³⁵ One local SWAPO leader asked Steve directly how he was undermining the liberation movement through the exhibit. Others, who decided that the exhibit was national history, asked Steve why he

⁷³⁵ At the time the exhibition was created, Steve Swartbooi was a member of the Congress of Democrats, a political party. More recently, he has become the Vice President for the All People's Party.

was trying to make amends with the ruling party.

Unlike in Eenhana, however, we heard many comments which focused on local histories which had been excluded from the exhibition. Remarks were sometimes made to us directly, but more often were overheard in conversations, above all in Khoekhoegowab, of which Steve is a native speaker. Comments included: “We do not see ourselves in these exhibits;” “So many people left for exile from the South but I do not see any such persons here;” “Where are our children?” “Where are our people?” “Where are the Nama people?” Some people made reference specifically to people from Keetmanshoop and the surrounding area who had been detained and/or disappeared in exile but did not appear in the exhibit. In making comments about those who had been excluded, viewers often dismissed persons and groups which had been included. For example, one person stated that “It is a good thing that Sam [Nujoma] appears because he is the root of all evils.” Others asked, “Are there only Vambos here?” “Is this a Vambo thing?”⁷³⁶ In one particularly striking instance a woman confronted me directly.

Addressing me in a loud voice so that everyone could hear, she asked me “Where is Lubango?” When I walked her to a photo of people assembling guns at the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre, a SWAPO camp near Lubango, she responded “That's not Lubango” and walked away.

There were other reactions to the exhibit in Keetmanshoop to be sure. Like in Eenhana I talked with viewers about particular photos, and people showed me those whom they recognized or the places where they had been. Some of these people were former exiles from Keetmanshoop and neighboring communal areas, all of whom had been detained in Lubango and were known to me before the exhibition. Others who

⁷³⁶ “Vambo” is a derogatory version of the ethnic label Ovambo.

spoke to me were new acquaintances and shared stories about the circumstances in which, they, since independence, had moved from the North to Keetmanshoop. Several of these persons had taken up jobs in the town in the Regional Office⁷³⁷ and in the local police force. I was speaking to one civil servant from the North when a local youth walked by the exhibit and shouted loudly “*Dit's kaak!*” (Afrikaans for 'That's shit!'). In response, the man to whom I had been speaking said to me, “The people who say '*dit's kaak*' are the same ones who left the struggle behind.”

The week before and after the display of “Living in Exile” in Keetmanshoop, Steve Swartbooi and I met with and interviewed families of people from neighboring communities who had traveled into exile, most of whom had disappeared while living abroad.⁷³⁸ Through these meetings we not only learned more about those who had been excluded from the exhibition but also about how such exclusions had affected their families. For example, several research participants talked with us about the difficulties that they had experienced personally because they did not know whether a family member who went into exile was dead or alive.⁷³⁹ Although the likelihood that he or she was living diminished with each passing year, people struggled to move on with their lives. One spouse of an exile told us about the process she went through deciding if she should remarry and of the struggles that she had, twenty-eight years after her husband's

⁷³⁷ Keetmanshoop is the capital of Namibia's Karas Region.

⁷³⁸ These visits were part of a sustained effort to conduct research with the families of former exiles in Keetmanshoop and surrounding communities. In July and August 2007 Steve Swartbooi held informal interviews with several such families, and in September 2007, he and I held interviews together, a few of which were recorded and transcribed for a public record (Maria Higoam, Sophia Kahuika and Emma Motinga 14.9.2007; Immanuel Hinda, Interview 19.9.2007; Julia Thomas, Interview 20.9.2007). Together thirteen interviews were conducted in Keetmanshoop, Vaalgras, Tses, Berseba and Gainachas. These interviews do not include those which I have held with Lubango ex-detainees, some of whom come from communities near Keetmanshoop and had close family members in exile, or my interview with Willem Konjore, whose brother, Lukas Stephanus, also lived abroad (Willem Konjore 22.7.2008).

⁷³⁹ E.g. Higoam, Kahuika and Motinga, 14.9.2007, pp. 4-5.

departure for exile, of receiving a death certificate that would make remarriage possible for her. Others talked about their wish to hold a funeral or perform a burial so that they could commemorate their family members' life and move beyond his or her death, but they felt that, under the circumstances, they could not hold such a ceremony. Knowing that the ruling party had provided information about deaths to the families of other exiles but not to them or other families who they knew personally made this lack of information difficult to accept and a source of bitterness.⁷⁴⁰

Research participants also discussed the consequences of such exclusions for their relationships with members of various communities of which they are a part. Immanuel Hinda, the man who was raised with Emil Appolus and mentioned Cassinga and Lubango at Appolus' funeral, told us about how isolated he feels when, as an elder in Vaalgras, he makes references to the community's tortured relationship to SWAPO only to be seen as “a [stalk of] wheat in the midst of grass.”⁷⁴¹ Joseph Stephanus, who not only lived in exile, but influenced many others, including his brother, to travel abroad talked about his “guilty conscience” at having returned to Namibia without being able to tell families what had happened to those who did not return.⁷⁴² Julia Thomas, the sister of Samuel, Cornelius and Wilhelmina Thomas discussed in Chapter 5, described what it has been like to be in a family of long-standing SWAPO supporters with close personal contacts to party leaders and then to be “forgotten” after Independence.⁷⁴³ Thomas and several others also referred to “the pain” that they experienced on holidays when

⁷⁴⁰ For a discussion of Their Blood Waters Our Freedom (Windhoek: Swapo Party, 1996) and other measures taken by the Namibian government to record information about persons who died in exile, see the section of Chapter 5 titled, “Breaking the Wall of Silence.”

⁷⁴¹ Hinda 19.9.2007, p. 6.

⁷⁴² Stephanus 18.9.2007, p. 39.

⁷⁴³ Thomas 20.9.2007, p. 7

participants in the liberation struggle were decorated by the nation as “heroes” while people from their own families are excluded from these ceremonies because they were labeled “spies.”

At the same time that interviewees highlighted how they had been negatively affected by their family members' exclusion from an official history, their comments suggested how, in their reactions to this exclusion, they were also perpetuating it. As many indicated, the pain which they associated with histories from exile deterred them from speaking about what they had heard or listening to what others had to say about it. As the mother of one of the missing persons explained:

“Where there is pleasure or what you derive pleasure from is something you are fond of following or you are likely to follow. But what causes pain in you, you will do anything to hide from that... If probably I had a son who had returned home and claimed his rightful place in Namibia, then probably I would be proudly referring to what has happened in exile or following what people are saying. But as a person who is... in emotional agony, there is no way.”⁷⁴⁴

Under the circumstances, remembering former exiles has become a very private activity for most of the people with whom Steve and I met. Some indicated that when they were reminded of a lost family member who had lived in exile that they kept these memories to themselves or emphasized that when they talked about their family member that they avoided any reference to exile or the circumstances of his or her possible death. Most who talked about controversial histories from exile said that they did so only among their most intimate social relations. Youth were rarely a part of these discussions because they were said to be “disinterested” or more concerned with “material things.” “Politicians” were often said to be avoided because they were seen as unreceptive to families'

⁷⁴⁴ Higoam, Kahuika and Motinga, 14.9.2007, p. 6.

questions or because they might taint the memory of loved ones by using it in public discussion for their personal gain. Some had spoken with ex-detainees, like Steve, about their family members shortly after they repatriated in 1989, but others had avoided listening to ex-detainees' stories at that time and most had not revisited this sensitive topic with ex-detainees since Independence.⁷⁴⁵ Several indicated that they did not pay attention to programs on national holidays such as Independence Day, Cassinga Day and Heroes' Day because they reminded them of people close to them whose heroism had not been acknowledged. Some emphasized that their family member is “a hero” by disassociating how they remember him or her personally from the social construction of heroism in Namibia.

Among those interviewed, there were a few who argued that their family member's exclusion from recognized histories was a lesser evil than if people were more aware of what happened to those they knew who had lived in exile. As Willem Konjore, Namibia's Minister of Youth, National Services, Culture and Sports and the brother of Lukas Stephanus from Vaalgras, maintained in our interview:

Everybody would like to know what happened to your relative or family member... But whatever you hear now, I'm not so sure whether it will heal the wounds... Even if I'm now told that my brother is killed for example and they would even tell me that it was so and so who killed him, I will not get my brother back. This in turn may only create some hate feelings personally to somebody, which will also not be helpful. For that matter, I'd say it's even better if I don't know... [My brother] has sacrificed for this country and for the freedom of its people. That is the price that he

⁷⁴⁵ Steve had spoken with some of the families that we interviewed following his 1989 repatriation and has close personal connections with many of them as well. These factors seem to have alleviated fears that research participants might otherwise have had about sharing their experiences with a “politician” or a little known foreigner like me. Nonetheless, research participants did ask us questions about how exactly we would be using our interviews and one expressed concern explicitly about Steve's “politics.”

paid and this is the price that we paid as a family.⁷⁴⁶

Perhaps for Minister Konjore and his family, the price for freedom has been paid. It is clear, however, that for some families of former exiles and for others who viewed “Living in Exile” they continue to pay this price because they remain alienated from other Namibians and the resources which the state allocates to its citizens. For them, “the sad story” of conflict in the SWAPO camps is not “behind” them, as apologists for Namibia's reconciliation policy have said that it should be, but it is alongside them and in front of them as long as they remain marginal to the narratives which are told about the nation. Although, for the time being, most remain focused on their personal survival and eschew overt political action, the public display of a few photographs on a few occasions was sufficient to highlight grievances and mistrust that exist among diverse Namibians which are mediated through their exile history. As people who live at the margins of this history are driven to assert new positions in relation to it, there may still be other prices to pay.

Reconciliation?

Clearly, the impact of the Namibian government's reconciliation discourse extends beyond those who were “caught in the crossfire” in SWAPO camps and whose exile histories remain most directly associated with stigma. They extend to the families and friends of those stigmatized, some of whom never returned from exile and whose “disappearance” has not been accounted for. They stretch further to other Namibians whose current struggles are poorly understood and are not addressed because happenings

⁷⁴⁶ Konjore 22.7.2008.

in the past that have shaped them pose a threat to *the* struggle, enshrined in national history. Ultimately, they reach to all Namibians by defining the status of histories through which its citizens relate to one another in the post-colonial nation.

One might conclude that Namibians are “victims” of the “silences” which surround their exile history. Nonetheless, to use such language, so prevalent in human rights literature and historiographies of violence, would undermine one of the main points of this chapter and dissertation: namely, that people articulate stigmatized histories and establish social relations through them regardless of whether they do so in an easily accessible form in a highly public space. To render those whose histories have been excluded from a socially accepted narrative as “victims” and to reduce the social life of these histories to “silence” divests marginalized subjects of the agency that they do have and assert through articulating such narratives. By listening to them across different social spaces, one may gain insight into how people establish their relations to others through representations of the past as well as how their possibilities for action are constrained by official discourse in particular contexts.

Such a perspective on “victims” and their “silences” should be important not only for this study of exile history in Namibia but for any inquiry into the effects or efficacy of policies aimed at reconciliation. Most literature on the topic has done little to attend to such issues, however. Dominated by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the field of transitional justice which has formed around it,⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁷ Established shortly after South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the TRC was mandated to compile a report on human rights abuses committed from March 1, 1960 to May 10, 1994, to grant amnesty to perpetrators for full disclosure of their abuses and to recommend reparations for those who were abused. Although preceded by other international truth commissions, the TRC was the first to hold public hearings, which made the stories told by victims and perpetrators widely accessible. Since the TRC hearings were completed in 1998, organizations promoting similar approaches to political transition have been formed, including the ICTJ, established in New York by the TRC's Deputy

work focuses on whether the TRC enabled those which it defined as “the victims” to voice their experiences of apartheid era violence or if it in fact imposed new “silences” on them. In turn, literature projects from the TRC to “reconciliation,” associating a social phenomenon with one or another analysis of the Commission's public hearings.⁷⁴⁸ While such debates about “silence” and “victims” may be significant for analyzing the TRC or transitional justice as an object unto itself, they privilege what participants do or do not say during a particular kind of public event at the expense of many other spaces in which people establish social relations through reference to the past wherein they do not necessarily act as “victims” and certainly are not “silent.”⁷⁴⁹

As the cases considered here suggest, reconciliation is undermined not through

Chairperson Alex Boraine. The ICTJ has been involved in establishing truth commissions in Ghana, Sierra Leone, East Timor and Peru and in asserting “the right to truth” as a basic human right.

⁷⁴⁸ From the perspective of Desmond Tutu and many other advocates of the TRC, enabling the victims of apartheid to tell their stories was critically important to the Commission's efforts to promote national reconciliation. Accordingly, Tutu and others' descriptions of the TRC highlight cases in which people's dignity was restored through stories told at the Commission and of the gestures of apology and forgiveness which were initiated through such stories. In contrast, Mahmood Mamdani criticizes the TRC for defining “victims” in relation to “perpetrators” of individual acts of violence rather than vis a vis “beneficiaries” of an oppressive social system. In so doing, he argues, the Commission had excluded most of those who would need to participate in any genuine reconciliation process (“Reconciliation without Justice,” *Southern African Review of Books* 46 (1997), pp. 3-5). Submissions to *Commissioning the Past* (Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson, eds. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press., 2002)) point to other problems with the TRC's approach to reconciliation, maintaining that it had pushed victims to suppress the expression of important emotions and that some who spoke before the TRC had become embittered by the experience because the Commission was unable to confirm the stories which they told there. Richard Wilson highlights how the TRC privileged certain subjects at the expense of others to legitimate South Africa's post-apartheid social order (“The Sizwe Will Not Go Away: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Human Rights and Nation-Building in South Africa.” *African Studies* 55, 2 (1996), pp. 1-20; *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-apartheid State*. (Cambridge University Press, 2001), a point which Claire Moon also considers in her recent work on “reconciliation politics” (*Narrating Political Reconciliation: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008)).

⁷⁴⁹ Silence, moreover, may have its own language. In her work on the TRC, Fiona Ross points to how several women communicated during the Commission's public hearings even when they did not speak (“Speech and Silence: Women's Testimony in the First Five Weeks of Public Hearings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” in Veena Das, et al. eds., *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering and Recovery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa*, (London: Pluto Press, 2003)). Ross' argument highlights the value of an approach to histories of violence which is ethnographic, illuminating contexts in which silence conveys meaning.

the silencing of history, but rather through forms of historical production in which representations of the past are highly constrained and the social relations constituted through them are very unequal. Tate Nepelilo's story remains unacknowledged by the Namibian government and his family not because Nepelilo or others have never talked about it, but rather because of the association of those like him with a story about the first “freedom fighters” which has often been told and which stifles other stories that cannot be incorporated into this narrative. Similarly, Vaalgras residents struggle to make claims on the state not because the experiences of exiles from the community have been silenced but rather because the histories which national leaders and community members discuss among closed social networks are not accepted nationally and responses to this condition have divided Vaalgras community members. Viewers of “Living in Exile” expressed their alienation from other Namibians and national history not through silence but by expressing how their experiences were or were not represented in the exhibition. Even family members of exiles who were deliberately excluded from the exhibition and who rarely or never speak of their kin who lived abroad are influenced by what others have said about exile history and may communicate their relationships to their loved ones and the nation in what they do not, as well as what they do, say.

It follows that one of the challenges in studying reconciliation is tracing how people articulate their relationships to past conflicts across a range of social spaces. Once I was introduced to Kaufilwa Nepelilo through Abed Hauwanga, the space of a formal interview was sufficient for eliciting stories whose circulation had been confined to a small number of living persons. Contextualizing exile histories in Vaalgras required moving across a range of spaces, including Emil Appolus' public funeral, archives and

libraries which have printed information about him, and formal and informal conversations with people from the community with whom I have established relationships over years. “Living in Exile” created a new space wherein people whom I did not previously know reacted to a presentation of their history even as the exhibition opened opportunities for me to speak with people in other spaces as well. In each case, effort was made to access histories which are audible to few. If such histories seem to have been silent, however, it is only due to a national history which has been projected so loudly that the many stories which contradict it have become too difficult or jarring to hear.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: “One Namibia, One Nation”

In February 2008, towards the end of my fieldwork, Nahas Angula published a series of editorials in New Era, a Namibian newspaper.⁷⁵⁰ Therein, the former administrator at the Old Farm and then current Prime Minister registered his concern with the violence which had recently engulfed Kenya and interpreted its significance for Namibia. At the root of the problem in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa, Angula argued, has been the move of leaders away from nationalist goals and towards ethnic politics, which some have mobilized to attain power and pursue narrow interests. Namibia, Angula warned, “seems to be following the same political development trajectory” particularly since the formation of the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), an opposition party launched by former SWAPO leaders Hidipo Hamutenya and Jesaya Nyamu the previous November.⁷⁵¹ Nonetheless, the Prime Minister reminded citizens that they have the “glorious history of anti-colonial struggle” to guide them through these difficult times. As Angula emphasized, national liberation “was fought on personal sacrifice, selflessness and commitment to all the people.” It is only if “material considerations and comfort interfere with the spirit of the liberation struggle” that “things

⁷⁵⁰ New Era, “Which Way African? Multi Party Democracy and Violence in Africa,” 1.2.2008; “Namibia at Political Crossroads,” 8.2.2008; “Threat Posed by Ethnic Political Entrepreneurship in Namibia: Part 2,” 15.2.2008; “Towards an Inclusive, Fair and Just Political Order in Africa” 22.2.2008. All articles were attributed to “Citizen” Nahas Angula.

⁷⁵¹ Allegedly, RDP leaders were appealing to the Ovakwanyama, the largest of the seven sub-units among the dominant Ovambo ethnic group, to divide the Ovambo and attain power.

will... fall apart.”

While the context in which Angula published his articles was unique, the kind of argument which he made about the meaning of the liberation struggle certainly was not. Since being granted political independence, citizens of Southern African nations have often appealed to their unity and idealism during the recent past as they respond to tribalism, corruption and other daunting problems facing them in the present. In Namibia the phrase “One Namibia, One Nation” is frequently used to advance such a perspective. Once a slogan chanted by those resisting South African apartheid rule, the phrase has since accrued further meaning, used to criticize divisive politics and to remember a time when the critique of apartheid united people in the pursuit of an inclusive, just social order. In this way, “One Namibia, One Nation” has come to encapsulate the meaning of Namibia's late colonial history, “the spirit of the liberation struggle” as one influential columnist writes,⁷⁵² without acknowledging any of the contradictions inherent to it and its legacy.

This dissertation offers a different perspective. While drawing attention to the most noble aspirations of those who resisted South African apartheid rule, “One Namibia, One Nation” may occlude the circumstances in which the Namibian nation was formed. One key space in this formation was the SWAPO camps. There, in the midst of war, with resources limited and possibilities for misfortune high, the liberation movement first governed Namibian citizens. Through encounters in camps, a social hierarchy emerged in which certain individuals and groups were granted power to look after their fellow Namibians. At the same time, a national history formed through which those at the nation's pinnacle legitimated their own positions of power at the expense of others with

⁷⁵² Gwen Lister, “Political Perspective,” The Namibian, 13.6.2008

competing claims. This hierarchy and this history have reproduced themselves in an independent Namibia, where citizens continue to access resources from people whose authority derives from socially accepted narratives about their contribution to, and others' subversion of, a nation. To equate “personal sacrifice, selflessness and commitment to all people” or “One Namibia, One Nation” with “the spirit of the liberation struggle” is to overlook qualities of the recent past that continue to undermine inclusive and just social relations in Namibia today.

One might conclude that if Namibia is ever to approach the dream “One Namibia, One Nation” then it will need a new national history – one which includes spaces, people and memories that have been excluded from or stigmatized by an official narrative. Indeed, authors of seminal works about Namibia's liberation struggle have seen themselves as contributing to such a history. Peter Katjavivi, who served SWAPO as its Secretary for Information before becoming a professional historian, has written histories highlighting Namibian resistance to colonial rule, a perspective which, as Katjavivi noted, was previously neglected in the literature on Namibia's past.⁷⁵³ Later, Siegfried Groth published The Wall of Silence, wherein he encouraged Namibians to remember stories like those he shared from “the dark days of the liberation struggle” to promote national reconciliation.⁷⁵⁴ In the same year Colin Leys and John Saul likened Namibia's liberation struggle to a “two-edged sword” and argued that both “sides” must be examined in order “to grasp its history as a whole.”⁷⁵⁵ And most recently, Justine Hunter

⁷⁵³ SWAPO, To Be Born A Nation: The Liberation Struggle for Namibia. (London: Zed Press, 1981); Peter Katjavivi, A History of Resistance in Namibia (London: James Currey, 1988).

⁷⁵⁴ Siegfried Groth, Namibia – The Wall of Silence (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1995), pp. 178-180, 184-189.

⁷⁵⁵ Colin Leys and John S. Saul, Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword (London: James Currey, 1995), p. 16.

has highlighted the need for a more holistic approach to remembering South African and SWAPO human rights abuses during the war in order for Namibia's democracy to flourish.⁷⁵⁶

In framing their histories, each of these authors identifies limits to others' accounts of Namibia's past. None, however, considers the tensions between identifying limits of a national history and writing the history of a nation. These tensions are significant. By selecting “Namibia” as the frame for their work and narrating this nation's past, Katjavivi, Groth, Leys, Saul and Hunter limit their narratives in particular ways. Their writings, in turn, have become part of the national community which they represent, where citizens draw from them, with their inclusions and exclusions, to make historical claims. Some texts, such as Groth's Wall of Silence, have become central to a social movement set on changing a nation's founding narrative. Others, while known to a relative few and invoked infrequently, still lend authority to those who cite them and influence national debates.⁷⁵⁷ And all national histories reinforce the idea of the nation, strengthening the legitimacy of this form of community, with its arbiters of truth and its mechanisms of power.

In preparing this dissertation I have not aimed to rewrite Namibia's recent history, but rather to assemble histories which interrogate the nation. By examining how certain people achieved the authority to speak on behalf of Namibians in camps, the piece

⁷⁵⁶ Justine Hunter, Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia: Umgang mit schweren Menschenrechtsverletzungen der Ära des bewaffneten Befreiungskampfes, 1966 bis 1989 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2008).

⁷⁵⁷ For example, as Nahas Angula's articles were appearing in New Era, Keshii Nathanael, the former SYL President and SWAPO-detainee, wrote a letter to the paper in which he defended himself against accusations made by the Prime Minister in one of his articles (“PM Angula Must Provide Proof,” New Era, 22.2.2008). In the exchange which followed both Angula and Nathanael referred to Colin Leys and John Saul's article “Liberation without Democracy” (Journal of Southern African Studies, 20,1 (1994), pp. 123-147) to support their claims (“He Should Read the Article,” New Era, 29.2.2008; “PM Angula should own up to Swapo's dark history,” Informanté, 20.3.2008).

illuminates the social structure in which the narrative is told. Although this structure constrains historical expression, it also opens possibilities for creating alternatives to national history as people engage the limits of dominant stories in their efforts to be included within a nation. Drawing from some of the spaces where Namibians engage these limits, the dissertation weaves together narratives which do not compete for attention in a nation as much as they highlight the limits of national history itself.

This approach to national history has been shaped by my view of exile. Upon crossing international borders, migrants are often compelled by the violence which threatens them and the resources which they can and cannot access abroad to represent themselves as “exiles,” people bound by their relationship to a national home. In turn, groups and persons representing exiles draw from their control over spaces like the camp, where so many transnational migrants live, to secure their social status by affirming this form of community. While national history need not support the organizations or leaders representing a particular exile group and may be used to undermine them, it does accept the nation as a social unit. In so doing, it renders “the exile” and “the refugee” as social types defined by their relationship to a given nation, thereby obscuring the various particularities of transnational migrant populations and the processes through which they form. And it strengthens nationalism's authority among people whose access to nationally administered resources is unequal, especially those living in the camps themselves.

There are risks entailed in using exile to challenge the nation as the primary frame for historical work. By focusing attention on differences within an oppressed nation whose members have fled persecution to travel abroad, such work may be seen as drawing attention away from the oppressive nation which initiated exiles' flight. This

issue should especially concern readers interested in Southern Africa, where, through racist ideology and organized violence, the apartheid state and its allies created the conditions in which exiled nationalist organizations formed. Identifying national history and exile as topics of study should not move us away from the critique of apartheid, however. On the contrary, a critical approach to nationalism is necessary for observing legacies of the apartheid past that are easily overlooked in competing narratives wherein violence is reduced to acts committed by one or another national agent. And exile, when seen through the stories and experiences of people living in camps, offers material through which these legacies, and national history's relationship to them, can be examined.

Consider, for example, Namibian histories of the purge of accused spies in Lubango, Angola. While it is inaccurate to attribute the torture and murder of Namibians in that place to the work of physical spies, it is also insufficient to attribute these acts solely to SWAPO or some collection of the liberation movement's leaders. One context that is critical for comprehending Lubango is the camp, a space in which Namibians were constantly threatened by South African violence. Another is the memory of camp inhabitants, many of whom had previously been violated by South African officials in Namibia or had encountered spies, or suspected spies, among members of their villages, schools and families. Still another is the discourse through which camp residents expressed their fears of South African spies, including the witchcraft idiom considered here. By focusing narratives of Lubango on “the South African spies” or “the SWAPO leaders,” competing histories hold national agents responsible for the purge at the expense of many contexts which are critical for comprehending it. In turn, they enhance

the power of those who draw from uncertainties about what happened at Lubango to divide people who have been affected by these happenings and to discredit those who seek recognition for their suffering there. And, most ironically, they perpetuate the tactics which the South African state first used to sow mistrust among its subjects in Namibia and to threaten its enemies in camps.

By rewriting national history, scholars may recreate the camp in other respects as well. Consider, for example, the extent to which “camp” may be used as a metaphor for Namibia and other post-liberation nations. As in the past, the camp is governed by the liberation movement, now ruling party. Party officials are the primary conduit of resources among many inhabitants, most of whom lack capital to go into business on their own and skills desired by private employers. Accusations are rife that inhabitants with connections to officials are more likely to find jobs, receive aid and access tenders while those from certain ethnic and regional backgrounds are discriminated against. Inhabitants live separated from one another, with officials and other elites able to reside in wealthy neighborhoods and private farms while others are relegated to poorly serviced townships and communal reserves. The party uses “the parade” of state-funded television stations, radio services and newspapers to privilege perspectives favored by its senior leaders and to denounce opposition, especially when it originates from those who have left the party and who have allegedly betrayed the nation.

Certainly, there is much more occurring in Namibia than the camp metaphor can encompass. Multiple parties have contested for votes in regular elections, which international observers have declared “free and fair.” An independent judiciary and civil society have made efforts to hold government accountable to processes of governing

proscribed by a Constitution. Church leaders have spoken about moral issues that face their congregations, and non-governmental organizations and media have expanded the range of those who can express their views and participate in debates about social issues. Global markets and internet technology increasingly expose Namibians to influences that are not easily controlled by a national government, as does higher education, which growing numbers of students access every year. Through the research and writing of history, we historians can conflate these communities with the nations of which they are a part. Or we may recognize and engage them, shaping forms of citizenship that do not begin and end with a nation-state.

This dissertation considers three paradoxes of exile history which may create space for recognizing trans- and intra-national communities. First, despite the fact that exile is represented as part of the history of a given nation, it is, by definition, located outside of it. Therefore, when people portray their lives in exile, their representations may be directed away from an isolated nation and towards other communities of which they are also unquestionably a part. Rather than focus on a particular trans- or intra-national community, this dissertation has touched on several: of Namibians, Angolans and Cubans who lived alongside one another at Cassinga and of the administrators who first ran that camp; of people detained by SWAPO, of detainees' relatives and friends who mobilized awareness of SWAPO abuses and of the national elites and international organizations which upheld the status quo; of Vaalgras village in Tses and of families of former exiles living in and near there. By illuminating these and other groups, it is possible to see social entities which have been left outside or collapsed into a national narrative. Moreover, it becomes easier to recognize nationally embedded language – marked by words such as

“humanitarianism,” “human rights” and “reconciliation” – through which these communities have been systematically obscured.

Second, by virtue of their common reliance on SWAPO's political leadership and vulnerability to South African violence, Namibian exiles were compelled to unite in opposition to a common enemy. At the same time, the forces pulling exiles towards unity became sources of division as those who differed with leaders asserted their interests and as leaders used suspicions of difference to consolidate their power. “Exile History” has examined a number of instances of difference and division, including the crisis that enveloped SWAPO in Zambia in 1976, the wide-scale detention of accused spies in Lubango during the 1980s and other instances which affected smaller groups of exiles. In so doing, it highlights how national leaders and citizens have become invested in asserting the unity of Namibians during the liberation struggle, even as people alienated from the nation highlight how Namibians mistreated one another in the past as they now attempt to assert their status and recover their dignity in the present. Thus, the “glorious history of anti-colonial struggle” “fought on personal sacrifice, selflessness and commitment to all the people” is inextricable from the conflicts that occurred during the struggle in exile and subsequent social divisions.

Third, due to the power which SWAPO leaders still wield over the national community which they represent, histories of exile which do not align with the former liberation movement's narrative often seem to be silent. And yet, it is precisely these “silenced” histories which Namibians voice frequently and fervently and which some were intent on sharing with me during my research. Here, I have examined many such histories, including them in narrations of happenings in exile and considering the

circumstances in which I accessed particular stories through private interviews, social encounters and the “Living in Exile” exhibit. In so doing, the dissertation exposes how the structure of the nation gives voice to these histories as people position themselves in a national community, while the threat posed by such voices compels those most invested in the national order to attempt to silence them.

These three paradoxes have not only been central to the text of “Exile History,” but also to the practice of preparing it. A growing awareness of the hidden communities, blurred divisions and silenced voices obscured by the dominant exile history pushed me to seek sources which could articulate them. It also challenged me to find ways of eliciting such perspectives from the sources which I had with their diverse relationships to a national community. To achieve this end, I often drew from my own paradoxical relationship to Namibia which made it difficult for people to associate me with a particular bias on national political issues. From the vantage of my knowledge of different Namibian histories and naiveté as a foreigner, my personal commitment to Namibia after years of volunteer service and scholarly disinterest, I presented research participants with anecdotes from others' histories of exile. In response, I hoped to hear narratives which would not defend or contest a particular “side” of the story as much as illuminate national history's paradoxes and the limits of prevailing representations.

Certainly, these research practices have not prevented my work from becoming associated with particular positions on Namibian history. As previously noted, when I presented “Living in Exile” it was, on different occasions, perceived as a threat to national history, an escape from national history and as a reflection of national history itself. More than likely, the histories I have written here about SWAPO camps will be

taken up by different groups which wish to make claims through representations of camps and events that occurred there. While these scenarios pose challenges to my future work, the paradoxes of nationalism suggest a response to them: to draw attention, once again, to views which are not encompassed by competing national histories and to encourage interlocutors, old and new, to respond to these views. For while close association with a particular position may restrict access to certain people and spaces, it is only through on-going dialogue that students of nationalism may fulfill their potential to create knowledge and promote understanding among diverse publics – especially among members of the divided communities which we often study.

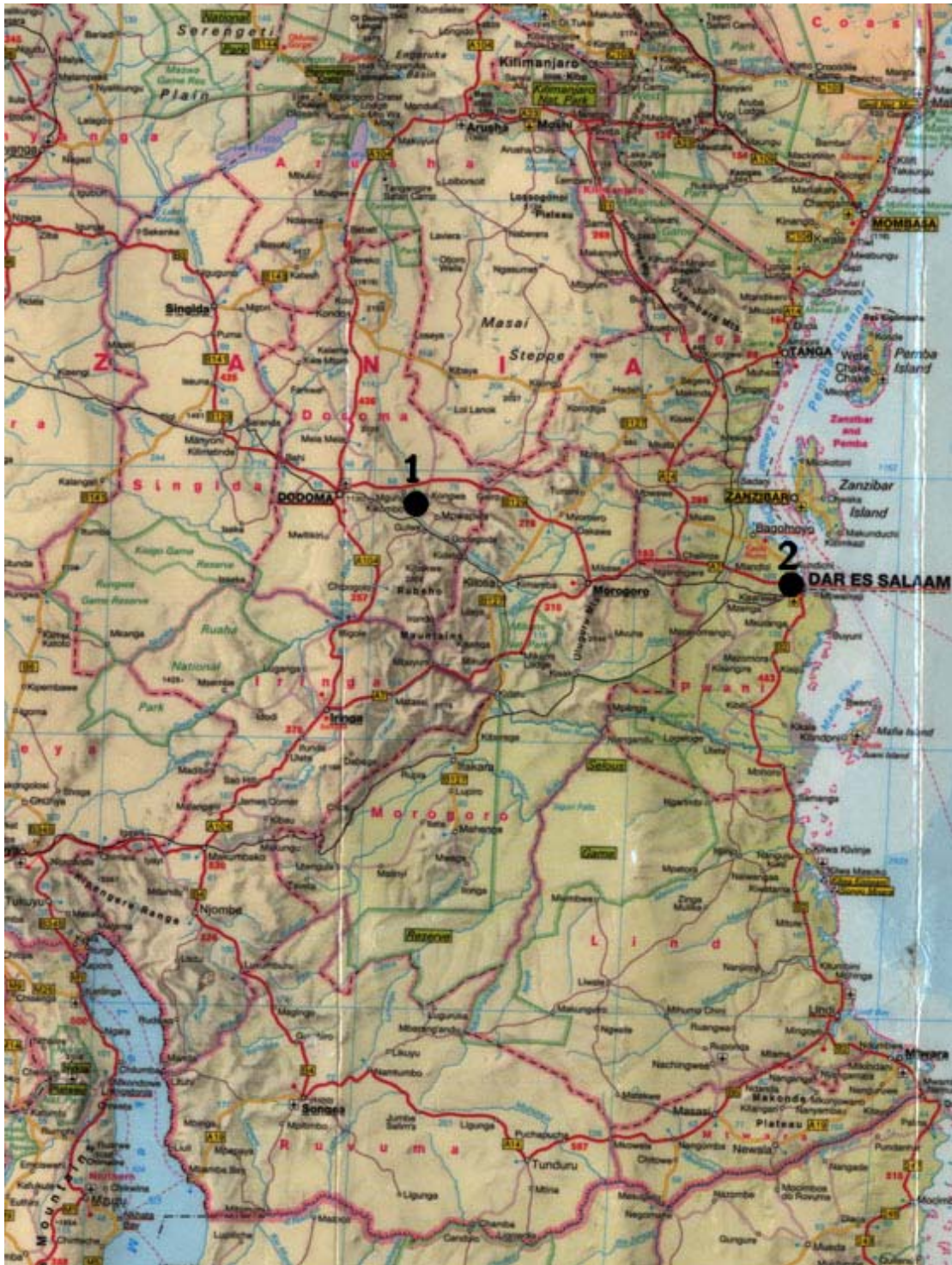
The emphasis here on deconstructing a nation should not demean those who have dedicated their lives to building one. Over the past few centuries nationalism has inspired both the worst and best in humanity, and Namibia has been the focus of some of nationalism's better moments, joining diverse individuals within that country and around the world to liberate people from oppression and to create a new community based on individual equality and social justice. Historians, and others committed to developing a critical perspective on history, must have a different vocation, however – particularly those who work in Southern Africa, where a national history, saturated in the struggle, is so often used to legitimate inequality and support injustice. In such a context, the critique of nationalism is far from nihilistic. Rather, it is prerequisite for imagining kinds of community which may pursue noble social goals that, heretofore, have been conflated with nationalism. And it is essential for breathing new life into “One Namibia” and other dreams, which otherwise may be strangled by the nation's embrace.

Appendix 1: Maps of Southern Africa, SWAPO Camps and Namibia



Southern Africa

The numbers on this map and the maps which follow mark locations where Namibian exiles lived in camps. They are not a comprehensive record of all camps where Namibians lived, but include all camps that are discussed in this dissertation. The locations are enlarged and identified below. Camps were administered by SWAPO unless otherwise noted.



Camps in Tanzania

- 1.) Kongwa
- 2.) Tameka/Salvation Camp (Church)



Camps in Botswana and Zambia

- 3.) Dukwe (Botswanan Government)
- 4.) Senanga
- 5.) Kaunga Mash
- 6.) Central Base
- 7.) Oshatotwa
- 8.) Old Farm
- 9.) Maheba (Zambian Government)
- 10.) Ruakera (Zambian Government)
- 11.) Nyango
- 12.) Mboroma (Zambian Government)



Camps in Angola

- 13.) Huambo
- 14.) Cassinga
- 15.) Jamba
- 16.) Efitu
- 17.) Lubango (includes Tobias Hainyeko, Defense, Karl Marx, “Dungeons”)
- 18.) Chatequera/Vietnam
- 19.) Kwanza Sul
- 20.) Viana



Namibia

The Caprivi Strip, which extends from northeastern Namibia, has been inserted below for ease of representation.

Appendix 2: “Living in Exile: An Exhibition of Photographs from the SWAPO Camps”*

From 1960 to 1989 many Namibians left their country of origin to live in exile. During the early years only a few hundred resided abroad, most of them studying in tertiary institutions or training as guerrilla soldiers for an armed struggle against South Africa's colonial government. But as the Portuguese empire collapsed abroad (1974) and as oppression increased at home, thousands fled across Namibia's borders and joined the liberation movement SWAPO. Only in 1989, after a ceasefire had been signed and arrangements for democratic elections made, did most Namibian exiles return to their native land.

Many know this general history of exiled Namibians' struggle to liberate their country. But how much do we know about the different experiences of those who lived abroad? And how might we learn more about exiles' diverse contributions to a history that continues to shape Namibia, Southern Africa and the world?

This exhibition, “Living in Exile,” draws from photographs taken of the Namibian camps and the knowledge of those who lived in these camps to increase understanding of Namibia's exile history. The exhibit focuses on the camps for two reasons. First, most Namibian exiles lived in camps. Even those who were not residing in the camps visited them to work on projects, to distribute materials and information, or to visit family and friends. One cannot begin to understand how Namibians were living in exile without understanding the camps. Second, there are many photographs of Namibians living in the camps that are open to the public, and many former exiles who might know the people, places and events pictured in these photographs. Camp photos, together with people's memories, are a rich, untapped source of information about Namibia's exile history.

Since January I have been using photographs, including the ones displayed below, to ask former exiles questions about their experiences abroad. By displaying these photos and captions here, I wish to share some material that I have gathered during my research. At the same time, the exhibit is an invitation for you to share any information that you may have about the camps with me. This information could, in turn, be shared with others through future photo exhibitions, publications and a doctoral dissertation that I intend to produce in the coming years.

I have several questions about every photo in this exhibit: *Do you recognize who is in the photo? Do you know where the photo was taken? Do you remember who took the photo? Do you recall the occasion on which the photo was taken?* I also have specific questions about specific photos. All questions are marked in *italics*.

If you can contribute information about any of the photographs displayed here or have any questions or comments about the exhibit, please speak with me or write me a note with your name and details and deposit it in the box provided. I look forward to learning from you!

* This appendix replicates the content of “Living in Exile” as it was displayed at several locations in Namibia between August and October 2007. Additional information about photographs discussed in this dissertation has been added to the exhibit through footnotes. The map which was originally a part of the exhibit is included in Appendix 1.

Where were the camps?

Most of the photographs in this exhibit were taken in three camps. The first is the Namibian Health and Education Centre located in the Kwanza Sul province of Angola and almost 300 km southeast of Luanda. 'Kwanza Sul', as the camp was widely known, was the largest Namibian camp in exile from its founding in 1979 until Namibian repatriation in 1989. The second is the camp at Cassinga, located in the Huila province of Angola, 260 km north of the Namibian border at Oshikango. Many Namibians passed through this camp between its founding in 1976 and the South African attack on May 4, 1978. The third is the Namibian Health and Education Centre at Nyango, located in Zambia's Western Province near Kaoma, east of Mongu. This camp was built in late 1975 and remained in operation even after most Namibian exiles moved into Angola in the late 1970s and 80s. Finally, there is one photo of the 'Old Farm,' the first SWAPO camp intended for Namibian civilians, established just outside Lusaka in the early 1970s. By 1976 the residents at Old Farm had been transferred to Nyango.

Most Namibians who lived in exile passed through Kwanza Sul, Cassinga, Nyango or Old Farm at some time. There were, however, many other camps in Southern Africa where Namibians lived, primarily in Angola and Zambia (see map). It is unlikely that photos were taken in most of these other camps. People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) combatants were often stationed in or around the camps, and there were security risks and fears associated with taking photographs wherever Namibians were living. However, some of the photos in this exhibit may picture other camps even if their location is not listed in the accompanying caption. Some also portray people moving between the camps. Being 'on the move' from one camp to another was a common feature of exile life.



(NAN Photo No. 13174, Mayibuye/IDAF)

The picture is of the road entering Kwanza Sul. The National Archive's caption reads: 'Students greet delegates of the Int[ernational] Commission of Inquiry, 1 February, 1981.'

Do you know anything about the 'International Commission of Inquiry' in 1981?



(NAN Photo No. 12369, Mayibuye/IDAF)

Supposedly, this picture is of Cassinga, taken before South Africa's attack on May 4, 1978. The National Archive's caption reads: 'Cassinga before SA massacre, group of refugees inside house around fire-tin.'

Were Cassinga residents living in accommodations like this one pictured here? Could this be one of the buildings left by the Portuguese where some Namibians lived?



(Private donation to the author)¹

The picture is of the Old Farm. It was taken after a church service held there in August 1975.

¹ The photo was taken by Pastor Siegfried Groth during his only visit to the Old Farm and was given to me by him in October 2006.



(NAN photo no. 13130, Mayibuye/IDAF, by Rita Hodgson)

The National Archive's caption to this photo reads: 'Swapo Angola, Mabviedzi Refugee Camp, 1978[.] Young mother knitting.'

Do you recognize the name listed for this camp: 'Mabviedzi'? If so, where was it located and who lived there?



(NAN photo no. 12376, Mayibuye/IDAF)

Sometimes the war forced exiles to create new camps at a moments' notice. This photo pictures an impromptu camp created by survivors of the attack on Cassinga

Where exactly was this photo taken? Next to Cassinga or far removed from it?

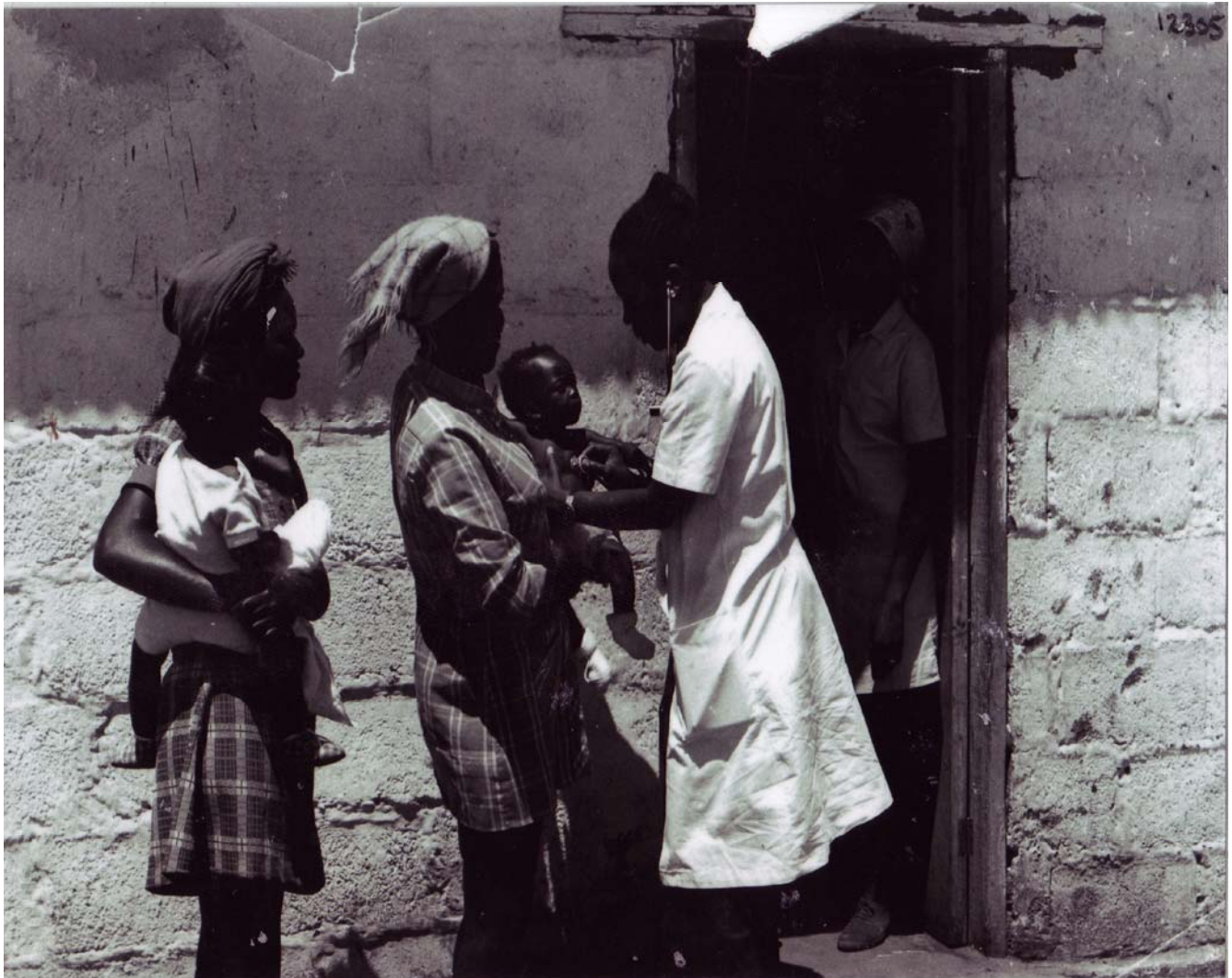


(NAN Photo No. 13199, Mayibuye/IDAF)

These are the trucks that transferred Namibians between many of the camps. The National Archive's caption reads: 'Namibian boys at Kwanza Sul, in truck to be transferred to SWAPO settlements in Zambia, February 1981.'

Who lived in the camps?

Thousands of Namibians lived in exile (at least 43,000 according to statistics recorded by the United Nations during repatriation and thousands more according to SWAPO's estimates during the struggle). Almost everyone passed through a camp at time or another; some lived all their years in exile there. Camp residents included people from different parts of Namibia, men and women, famous leaders and others.



(NAN Photo no. 12305, Mayibuye/IDAF)

Dr. Libertine Amathila treating a child at Nyango. She worked as a medical doctor at this camp. She is currently Namibia's Deputy Prime Minister.



(NAN Photo no. 13181, Mayibuye/IDAF)

Nangolo Mbumba standing on the left near a parade ground at Kwanza Sul. He served at Kwanza as school principal and as one of the centre's directors. He is currently Namibia's Minister of Education.

Who is the man standing to the right of Minister Mbumba?



(NAN Photo no. 13161, Mayibuye/IDAF)

The caption from the National Archive reads 'Nekongo, Director of Namibia Health and Education Centre, Kwanza Sul, briefing Intelligence Commission Delegates, 1 February 1981.' Nekongo refers to Max Nekongo who was the director of Kwanza Sul in 1981. Iyambo Indongo appears to be sitting next to him. He served as a medical doctor in SWAPO camps in Angola.



(NAN Photo No. 14119)

The picture is of leaders of PLAN at Cassinga. It is taken from a role of film which the South African Defense Force (SADF) claims to have captured from the camp on the day of the attack. Some people think that the man on the far left was PLAN Political Commissar Greenwell Matongo and that the man in the middle was PLAN Military Commander Dimo Hamaambo.²

Do you recognize any of the combatants here?

Do you recognize the house with white columns behind the combatants? Could that be the camp office at Cassinga?

² According to Darius "Mbolondondo" Shikongo, formerly the Commissar at Cassinga, the photo pictures PLAN commanders entering the Cassinga parade in front of the camp office (Interview 3.9.2007, pp. 71-72). He, Charles Namoloh and others identified the commanders in the first row (from left to right) as Greenwell Matongo, Dimo Hamaambo, MacNamara, Haiduwa and Pondo, all senior PLAN commanders



(NAN Photo No. 13951, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting)

SWAPO President Sam Nujoma also visited the camps. The National Archive's caption to this photo reads 'SWAPO President Sam Nujoma meets the Young Pioneers at Kwanza Sul, 1988.'



(NAN Photo No. 11220)

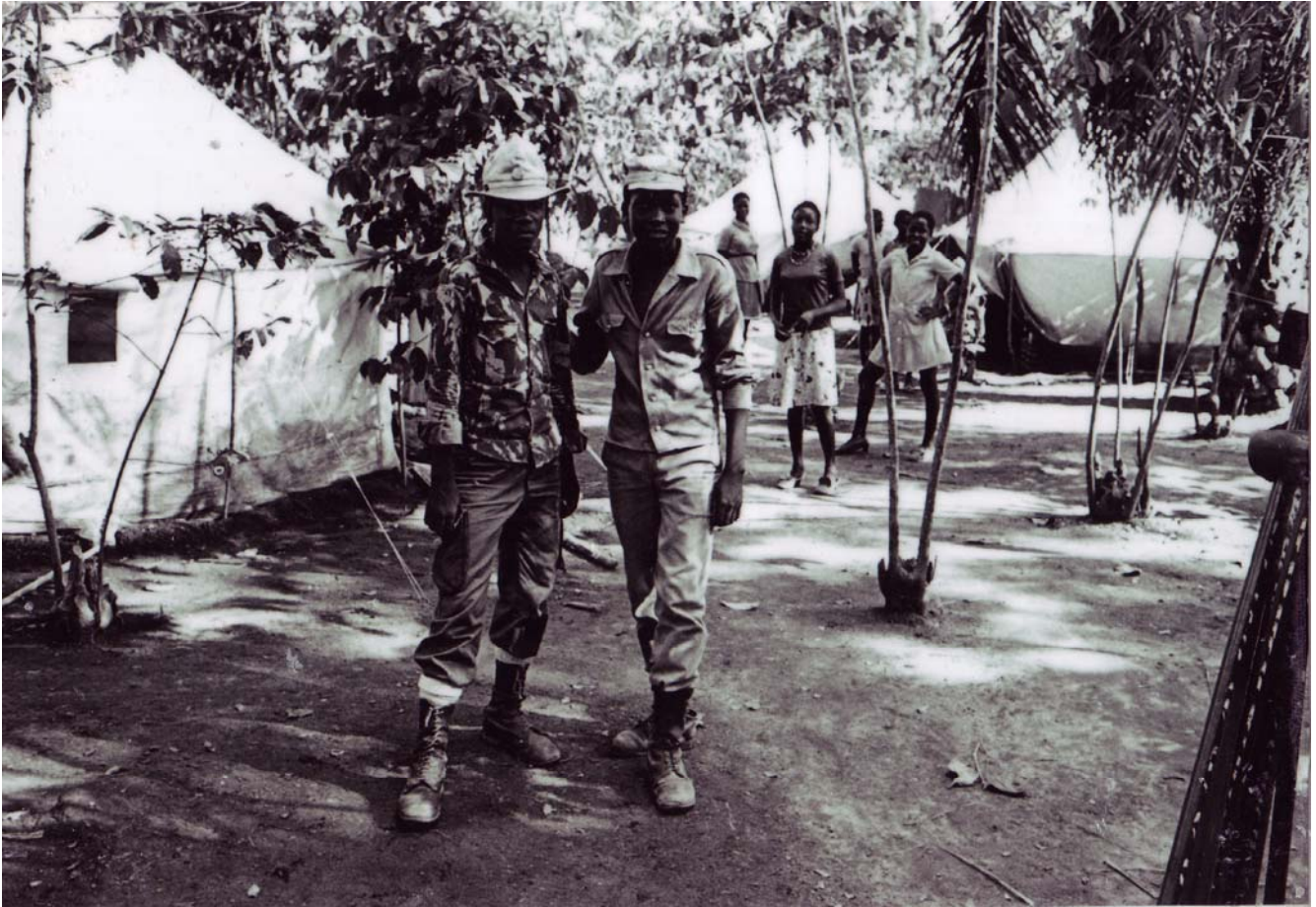
Some representatives from organizations assisting Namibian exiles could also visit the camps. The photo pictures Justin Ellis from the Namibia Refugee Project on his way to or from a visit at Nyango. He is accompanied by Canner Kalimba, who coordinated the SWAPO Literacy Program, and Erastus Haikali, a pastor to Namibian exiles.



(NAN Photo No. 12320, Mayibuye/IDAF)

This photo was taken at Kwanza Sul.

Could the girl in the middle be the daughter of Namibia's ambassador to the USA?



(NAN Photo No. 12314, Mayibuye/IDAF, by Joost Guntenaar)

The photo was taken at Kwanza Sul in 1981.

*Did boys dress up in army clothes like this often? Where did they get them?*³

Were most school children living in tents like those that can be seen behind the boys or in barracks?

³ Several research participants discussed how boys in the camps liked to dress up in military uniforms and indicated that the uniforms which the boys are wearing here are actually Cuban. For more discussion of Cuban uniforms see NAN Photo No. 14120 below.



(NAN Photo No. 11255)

This photo was taken in 1982 in Zambia, probably at Nyango.

Did many children decorate their rooms with SWAPO magazines like this? How were they distributed to people in the camps?



(NAN Photo No. 12371, Mayibuye/IDAF)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'Cassinga before SA massacre, two women outside house.'

Were Cassinga residents accommodated in shacks like the one pictured here? Were they using corrugated iron?⁴

⁴ All research participants who lived at Cassinga doubt that this photo actually depicts the camp, particularly since none remember shacks made out of corrugated iron there.

What did people do in the camps?

Despite differences between the various Namibian camps, there were similarities in the activities that people did in all of them. People went to the parade ground to communicate information and express solidarity; they attended training courses to improve their skills in different fields and worked to meet the daily food and health needs of the camp community. Some of the settlements with large civilian populations, like Kwanza Sul and Nyango, also supported other activities including church services, youth group meetings and cultural performances.



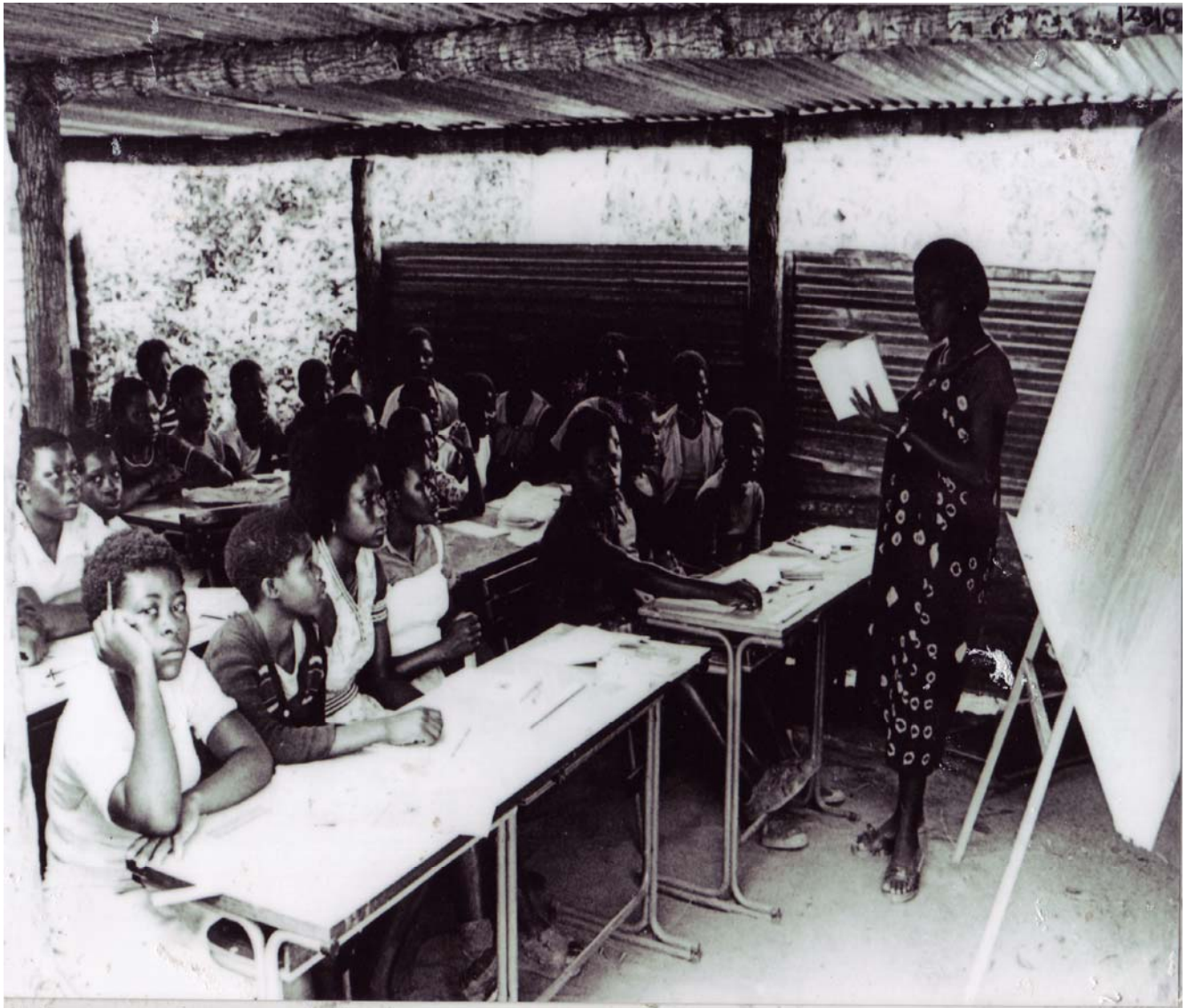
(NAN photo no. 12778, Mayibuye/IDAF)

The picture is of people assembled on the parade ground at Cassinga.

Is this photo of a daily, morning parade or does it mark a special event?

*Who do you think took this photo?*⁵

⁵ According to Per Sanden, he took this photo on May 3, 1978 during a parade at Cassinga held in honor of him and his colleague Tommy Bergh, who with Sanden had been collecting footage for a documentary film commissioned by the SWAPO leadership. The attack on Cassinga took place the day after the photo was taken, and the image was reproduced in several SWAPO publications, including on the front page of Namibia Today in the issue published immediately after the Cassinga attack (Namibia Today, 2, 2 (1978)).



(NAN Photo No. 12310, Mayibuye/IDAF by Joost Guntenaar)

The photo is of a classroom at Kwanza Sul. It was taken in 1981.



(NAN Photo No. 12396, Mayibuye/IDAF)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'Commanders of SWAPO detachments receiving political indoctrination and military training at an Angolan base near the Namibian border.'

*Where could this base be? Somewhere near Lubango?*⁶

⁶ Several research participants indicated that this photo probably depicts a building where PLAN combatants received military training outside Lubango. Hans Pieters, a former commissar at the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre, added that the hall was part of the original Hainyeko built by the Soviet Union in conjunction with SWAPO's shift of its military operations to Angola in 1976 and 1977. Pieters further stated that the hall was abandoned after South Africa attacked Hainyeko in late 1978 or 1979 and the new Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre was built (Interview, 19.11.2007). It is this photo which I showed to the woman in Keetmanshoop who, after viewing "Living in Exile," asked me "Where is Lubango?" When I directed her attention to this photo, she responded, "That's not Lubango" and walked away.



(NAN Photo No. 11227)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'In the clinic of camp A in Kwanza Sul: a nurse is cleaning malaria films in the laboratory, January 1985.' Camp A was the part of Kwanza Sul for nursing mothers and children. It was one of several camps within the settlement at Kwanza Sul. For example, in 1980, there were four 'sub-camps': a centre for education, a kindergarten camp, a camp for the elderly, disabled and war victims, and a medical centre. By the late 80s there were at least sixteen sub-camps, most of them maintaining a clinic like the one pictured here.

How many sub-camps do you remember at Kwanza Sul? What were their names?



(NAN Photo No. 11218)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'Secondary school children doing agricultural work at Nyango, Zambia.' Nyango, Kwanza Sul and Cassinga had agricultural fields that produced some of each camp's food.



(NAN Photo No. 12321, Mayibuye/IDAF)

Children cooking at Kwanza Sul. Many exiles received all of their food in the camps.

Do you remember children cooking at Kwanza? Did men also cook sometimes?



(NAN Photo No. 11248)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'Depicting the life-style of Namibian refugees in Zambia 1982.'

Is this a store where items were purchased near Nyango? In your experience, how often did camp residents leave the camp to buy food or other items? What was exchanged for these items?



(NAN Photo No. 11275)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'Congregation after Church service at Kwanza Sul.' Reverend Erastus Haikali, who served as a pastor to Namibian exiles for many years, is pictured in his clerical gown. He is located on the left side of the photo to the right of the other pastor.

Who is the other pastor?



(NAN Photo No. 11225)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'SWAPO Pioneers at a parade, 7 May, 1984.' Many youth who lived at Kwanza Sul participated in this organization.

What were the Pioneers' regular activities? Was there an age limit for the Pioneers? Was there a similar organization for older youth?



(NAN Photo No. 11210)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'Women performing traditional dances at the Namibian Health and Education Centre, Nyango.'

What other cultural groups can you remember from the camps?

How did War affect the camps?

The lives of people in the camps cannot be separated from the wars raging around them, both the liberation war fought between SWAPO and the South African government and, from 1975, the Angolan civil war fought primarily between the MPLA and UNITA. War shaped all aspects of camp life.



(NAN Photo No. 14108, by Tor Sellstrom)

The photo was taken at Cassinga shortly after the attack.

Do you recognize the building? Could that be the remains of the camp office?



(NAN Photo No. 12400, Mayibuye/IDAF)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'Swapo PLAN Combatants receive training, Angola.' It was common for men, women and children to receive a basic military training from SWAPO combatants when they entered exile in southern Angola.

Where do you think this photo was taken?



(NAN Photo No. 12360, Mayibuye/IDAF)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'SWAPO children in Angola protected by women with rifles.'

*Were these children also being given some kind of military training? Or were they posing for a photo intended for solidarity organizations overseas?*⁷

⁷ Several research participants indicated that the “rifles” in this photo are probably made of wood and that youth in the camps often shaped pieces of wood to make them appear like guns. Darius Shikongo drew from this photo to speak about children marching with wooden guns at Cassinga. (Shikongo, Interview 11.6.2007, p. 25; see NAN Photo No. 14120 below).



(NAN Photo No. 12415, Mayibuye/IDAF, donated by the Namibian Support Committee in London)

When Namibians moved between the camps they often traveled as part of a military convoy. Even ambulances had to be guarded by PLAN soldiers like these women here.



(NAN Photo No. 12383, Mayibuye/IDAF)

The National Archive's caption reads: 'PLAN combatants on patrol.' These patrols might take place around the camps to protect them. Combatants also passed through camps as they moved to and from the front.



(NAN Photo No. 14120)

This photo appears to be taken at Cassinga when a group of PLAN combatants were marching through the camp. It is also part of the role of film that SADF alleges to have captured.

*Can you remember anything about the event photographed here?*⁸

⁸ According to Darius Shikongo, this photo depicts people leaving the Cassinga parade. All groups would march past the SWAPO officials, including Shikongo himself, who are assembled on the right side of the photo. Youth at the parade were frequently wearing military uniforms, which they often received from Cuban soldiers based in Angola, and carried wooden guns (Shikongo 26.3.2007, pp. 3, 15; 11.6.2007, pp. 25, 38-39; 3.9.2007, pp. 73-74).

Appendix 3: Living in Exile: Photographs of an Exhibition*



These photographs were taken of “Living in Exile” shortly after I had assembled it in the foyer of the Eenhana Youth Centre for Namibia's Heroes' Day Commemoration on August 25 and 26, 2007.

* Here I have displayed several of my personal photographs of “Living in Exile.” All were taken by me with the exception of the last photo, which was taken by Antoinette Mostert, the then curator of the Keetmanshoop Museum.



These photographs were taken of guests viewing “Living in Exile” on August 28 in Engela, a village near the Namibian-Angolan border at Oshikango. The exhibition was displayed on the walls of a local school and people took time to look at it before and after the community's Heroes' Day program.



The first photo was taken of guests viewing “Living in Exile” on an open wall adjacent to Bank Windhoek in Keetmanshoop on September 17, 2007. The second photo pictures research assistant Steve Swartbooi, (left) and me (right) in front of the exhibition later that afternoon.

Appendix 4: Photographs of the Cassinga Mass Grave(s)



This photograph of the Cassinga mass grave was printed on the front cover of the SWAPO bulletin "Massacre at Kassinga" in June 1978. Since then, it seems to have been the most widely spread image of the grave, reproduced in many publications, including *Their Blood Waters Our Freedom*, SWAPO's official record of Namibians who died in exile during the liberation struggle (Windhoek: SWAPO, 1996, p.xvii). A copy of the photograph is available at the National Archives of Namibia (NAN, Photo Archive, No. 11194).

MASSACRE AT CASSINGA

"First we saw gaily coloured frocks, blue jeans, shirts and a few uniforms. Then there was the sight of the bodies inside them. Swollen, blood-stained, they were the bodies of young girls, young men, a few older adults, some young children, all apparently recent arrivals from Namibia." The Guardian (London) 10.5.78.



MASS GRAVE CONTAINING MORE THAN 400 BODIES OF NAMBIANS MASSACRED BY SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS. PHOTO TAKEN ON MAY 8, FOUR DAYS AFTER THE ATTACK.

3.4 - Namibia Today Volume 2 Number 2 1978

This image was printed in *Namibia Today* (2,2 1978, p. 4) and offers an example of how reporters' texts were used to frame photographs of the Cassinga mass grave. The photo itself appears identical to the one taken by Gaetano Pagano on May 6, 1978, included in "The Cassinga File" (Geneva: International University Exchange Fund, 1978).



13186



13187

13187

These two photographs are the most graphic images of bodies in the mass grave available at the National Archive of Namibia (NAN, Photo Archive, Nos. 13186, 13187). Both were printed accompanying various articles in Namibia Today.



I took these photos of the mass graves when I visited Cassinga on September 2, 2007. Above is a picture of the larger mass grave which appears in all the other mass grave photos. Below is a picture of the smaller mass grave which does not appear in any photographs that I have previously seen. According to Theophilous Kalimba, a former Cassinga inhabitant who helped to prepare the graves and Galiano Ntyanba, the Angolan government administrator for Techamutete and the surrounding region, the smaller grave was prepared for “a mixture of soldiers and civilians” whereas the larger grave was for civilians only. Kalimba also reports that the larger grave was reopened when the reporters visited Cassinga whereas the smaller grave was not. Today both graves are covered with concrete. At the far side of the larger grave there is an inscription marking the “Massacre at Cassinga, May 4, 1978” and its renovation on May 4, 1988. According to Ntyanba, people in the surrounding villages come to the graves annually on May 4 to clean them. Namibia, however, has not commemorated Cassinga Day at this site, and few Namibians have visited the mass graves.

Appendix 5: Photographs of the Detainees' Release*



This photograph appears to be one of the first photos that John Liebenberg took upon arriving at the female detainees' camp. Two weeks later the photo was printed in The Namibian alongside an article by Liebenberg. According to him, "the angry, frustrated-looking women standing with arms crossed in front of reporters, some with children and babies in their arms, were all adamant that they were innocent of any charges against them and that they had been imprisoned without reason" (John Liebenberg, "Detainees Speak of Ordeal," The Namibian, 9.6.1989).

* These photographs were all taken by John Liebenberg, a photographer for The Namibian, on the occasion of the detainees' first meeting with international journalists in Lubango, Angola on May 25, 1989.



This photo depicts several people who were present for the detainees' release to the journalists including SWAPO Secretary General Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo (center, gesturing) SWAPO Administrative Secretary Moses Garoeb (next right), another veteran SWAPO leader, Eliaser Tuhadeleni, (next right) and an Angolan government representative (far right). Some research participants indicated that the children in the photo were those of female detainees. The image, and the one on the following page of Leefa Martin speaking with an East German journalist, elicited stories from ex-detainees about how they first began to share their experiences with the journalists. Pauline Dempers narrated the unfolding scene in this way: "It [was] a lady from France... [who] said, 'Tell us, who are these?' She asked Ya Toivo. But Ya Toivo didn't want to say it. He said, 'No, you will hear from them.' And she insisted saying that you are leading this delegation, you have to tell us who these people are. And that's when he started saying that 'These are the spies.' Then the lady... asked, 'Did you also imprison children?' Then Ya Toivo just couldn't answer that. I remember he could not say anything. He just said, 'You will hear from them.' That is what he was saying. And with that the whole chaos started" (Interview 21.11.2007, p. 15).





This photograph pictures Othniel Kaakunga preparing to read a statement on behalf of the male detainees when the journalists arrived at their camp later on the same day. Upon seeing the photo, Joseph "Pereb" Stephanus, remembered how he and other detainees had learned of the journalists' pending visit and developed a strategy the night before their arrival for how to address them: "There was a group that insisted that we should not tell the truth about what happened to us until we have arrived back at home. But then [a larger] group... said that, 'No, I think this is the hour of truth.'" (Interview, 18.11.2007, p. 45).

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3.) Interviews*

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| Ailonga, Salatiel & Anita | 23.3.2007; 22.6.2007 |
| Amagulu, William | (29.5.2008) |
| Angula, Nahas | 13.2.2008 |
| Angula, Oiva | (14.7.2008) |
| Ashipala, Ya Toivo | 16.3.2007; 25.7.2007 |
| Basson, Andries | 30.5.2007; 22.9.2007 |

* The following list includes the names of people with whom I held recorded interviews for use in this dissertation and the dates of these interviews. Most people listed reviewed the transcript of their interview and agreed to donate a revised version of it to the NAN for use at a future date. Interview dates marked in brackets have not been transcribed and donated to the NAN.

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| Basson, Theresia | 1.6.2005 |
| Beukes, Erica | 10.3.2007; 13.5.2008 |
| Dempers, Pauline | 23.5.2007; 21.11.2007 |
| Engombe, Immanuel | 25.3.2007 |
| Engombe, Immanuel, Junius Ikondja, Ndamono Ndeulita & Hizipo Shikondombolo | 17.6.2007; 29.7.2007 |
| Gertze, Kala | 21.2.2007 |
| Groth, Siegfried | (24.6.2006); 26.10.2006 |
| Haihambo, Pelita Tabitha | 16.6.2007 |
| Haikali, Valde Panduleni | 27.3.2007 |
| Hamutenya, Hidipo | 2.4.2008 |
| Haundjojo, Josephine | 30.3.2007 |
| Hauwanga, Abed | 26.7.2007; 3.8.2007 |
| Helmuth, Paul | 13.7.2007; 10.8.2007 |
| Higoam, Maria, Sophia Kahuika & Emma Motinga | 14.9.2007 |
| Hinda, Immanuel | 19.9.2007 |
| Ikondja, Junius | 18.3.2007; 10.6.2007 |
| Kahuika, Michael | 16.5.2007 |
| Kahuika, Michael & Joseph "Pereb" Stephanus | 20.9.2007 |
| Kalimba, Canner | 2.4.2007; 13.6.2007 |
| Kalimba, Canner, Theopholus Kalimba & Galiano Ntyanba | (2.9.2007) |
| Kalimba, Theopholus | 2.9.2007 |
| Kambangula, Emma | 15.2.2007; 26.11.2007 |
| Kamwi, Alex | 26.2.2007 |
| Kati, Nambinga | 11.8.2007; 8.12.2007 |
| Katjavivi, Peter | (23.7.2008) |
| Katzao, Johannes | 3.5.2007 |
| Kerina, Mburumba | (31.5.2008) |
| Kober, Gudrun | 9.3.2007 |
| Konjore, Willem | (22.7.2008) |
| Kweenda, Saima | 21.3.2007 |
| Lombard, Christo | (5.5.2009) |
| Meyer, Willem | 16.6.2005; 17.6.2005 |
| Mupopiwa, Liberty | 7.3.2007 |
| Mupopiwa, Mwetufa "Cabral" | (26.7.2008) |
| Musialela, Ellen | 6.3.2007 |
| Mwalundange, Jackson | 9.2.2007; 16.2.2007; (24.11.2007; 23.4.2009) |
| Nakamhela, Ngeno | 21.2.2007 |
| Namhila, Ellen | (25.7.2008) |
| Namoloh, Charles | (18.6.2008; 19.6.2008; 9.7.2008) |
| Ndeikwila, Samson | 9.2.2007; 16.2.2007; 2.3.2007; 21.7.2007; (1.5.2009) |
| Ndeulita, Ndamono | 18.3.2007; 10.6.2007 |
| Nehova, Kandi | 7.4.2008 |
| Nekondo, Phillip | 24.3.2007 |
| Nepelilo, Kaufilwa | 4.8.2007 |
| Nghipangelwa, Lahya | 18.5.2007 |
| Nujoma, Sam | 4.3.2008 |
| Nuukuawo, Tangeni | 17.2.2007; 23.2.2007; 10.3.2007; (3.7.2008) |
| Nyamu, Jesaya | 2.4.2008; 3.4.2008 |
| Pieters, Hans | 21.5.2007; 9.9.2007; 14.11.2007; 19.11.2007; (22.7.2008) |
| Sanden, Per | 5.2.2008 |
| Schikwambi, Airah | 1.5.2007 |
| Shalli, Martin | (9.7.2008) |
| Shamena, Erastus | 1.3.2007 |

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| Shangula, Sheeli | 25.3.2007 |
| Shifidi, Hendrina | 29.3.2007 |
| Shikondombolo, Hizipo | 17.6.2007 |
| Shikongo, Darius "Mbolondondo" | 26.3.2007; 11.6.2007; 20.8.2007; 3.9.2007 |
| Shikongo, Silas | 16.3.2007; 26.7.2007 |
| Shipanga, Andreas | 20.3.2007 |
| Shityuwete, Helao | 24.7.2007; (5.6.2008) |
| Shixwameni, Ignatius | (30.5.2008) |
| Stephanus, Joseph "Pereb" | 29.5.2005; 31.5.2005; 15.6.2005; 17.6.2005; 2.7.2007; 18.9.2007; 18.11.2007 |
| Stephanus, Joseph "Pereb" & Steve Swartbooi | (25.4.2009) |
| Swartbooi, Steve | 29.1.2007; 21.9.2007 |
| Swartbooi, Willy | 12.12.2007 |
| Thomas, Julia | 20.9.2007 |
| Toivo Ya Toivo, Andimba | (3.7.2008) |
| Ulenga, Ben | (6.6.2008; 12.6.2008) |
| Ya Nangoloh, Phil | 19.2.2007 |

C. Photographs

Photographs discussed in this dissertation are referenced and displayed in the appendices.

D. Audio/Visual Programs

BWS Archives

"Nda mona," film produced by Richard Pakleppa, 1999.

"Testimony," film directed and produced by BWS, 2003.

NBC Radio Archives

News Broadcast 4.6.1996. CA96/103.

News Broadcasts 6.6.1996 and 7.6.1996. CA96/115.

News Broadcast 8.6.1996. CA96/121.

SPARC

"Here is Namibia: Inside the Liberated Areas and Beyond," unedited footage filmed by Per Sanden and Tommy Bergh in 1978.