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from Ted Lockwood
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As AFSC's Southern Africa International Affairs Representative, Edgar (Ted) Lockwood carries responsibility for writing reports, initiating conferences, seminars, and personal contacts that support the work of the member nations of the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in fostering greater regional development and economic cooperation. To be included on the mailing list, write to AFSC, Africa Programs at 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Contributions to defray mailing and duplicating costs are welcome.

Dear Friends:

"It was a tectonic event", said Jonathan Larson.

That sounded pretty fancy to me. What did my good Mennonite friend mean?

"A shaking of the foundations. After June 14th things will never be the same around here. It's like the plates of the earth have shifted".

Gaborone, Botswana, was still in a state of after-shock when I visited the end of July. For the world, the June 14th South African raid on Gaborone had been worth a day or two on the tube. But for Botswana the dust was still in the air:

Who was killed?

They were "defenseless persons sleeping in their beds", said President Masire.

South Africa has alleged that eight of them were activists for the African National Congress (ANC) deeply involved in military training, logistics, intelligence and transport. Another was a PLO sympathizer. The rest were unfortunate accidents.

Where does the truth lie?

Peter Mafoka was a six-year-old Mosotho boy. SADF gunned him down as he cried out in terror when the troops stormed into his uncle's house (Duke Machobane).

Gladys Kelope Kesupile and Eugenia Kakale Koble were young Batswana, domestic servants. Their bodies were blown to pieces by a bomb that blew up their quarters. The South Africans claimed they had killed Rona Segale, a Motswana engaged in a "crash course" in hand grenades and they displayed two grenades to prove it. How two grenades could have survived a blast that levelled the house was demonstrably impossible.

Ahmer Geer had rented a house from Mike Hamlyn two weeks before. A Somali, he looked like Uriel Abrahamse, a "Coloured" who had lived with Hamlyn in what had been called the "Boys house" because it had been a haven for South African conscription evaders. Uriel was a target. The South Africans thought they had hit him. Instead, they got Geer. So they made up a story about Geer being a PLO sympathizer.

Joseph Malaza, a resident of South Africa, had come to get his car. He was killed in the Phahle's home (see below).

So much for the unfortunate "accidents" of what was supposed to be a "clean, surgical operation". Half of those killed were "accidents". But the accidents were in fact the result of the "true savagery and murderousness" of the South African attackers to use my friend, Mike Appleby's words. Mike and Monica are Church World Service representatives. They live a hundred yards away from Pudulogo Circle where Hamlyn and Geer were killed.

But what of the others? The ones said to be the center of ANC military operations training and logistics.

George and Lindi Phahle were openly members of the ANC. They had been in Botswana since 1976. They were sociable and friendly people, well-known and liked.

Lindi, a senior community development worker in the Ministry of Local Government and Lands, was an advocate for the young. She had argued for juvenile courts and reformatories. She set up creches. On behalf of Botswana

she attended international conferences. She had helped Hugh Masekela make his latest release, "Waiting for the Rain."

George ran a bus service which was operated by Batswana. His friends say there is no way it could have carried military hardware the way the South Africans claim.

Dick Mtsweni was 71 years old. He was called affectionately Mkhulu, the "Elder". He was semi-literate but still anxious to learn, to go to night school. He did errands for ANC. Its hardly likely that he would be the finance and logistics chief for ANC in Gaborone as the South Africans claimed.

Duke Machobane had escaped South Africa after the Soweto uprisings in 1976. He had studied for a B.A. in Nigeria and was teaching English at Matlala Secondary School in Tlokweng. Duke's crime was supposed to be giving people transport for "terrorist training", but this seems not very likely for a public school teacher.

Mike Hamlyn's "crime" was to be a pacifist. A friend who knew him when he arrived in Botswana recalled, "He was staying with the Quakers. He was 18, 19; and very confused. Just a kid really. He just knew he didn't want to kill people. Botswana gave him a sense of organization. He was a pacifist basically. He was an ANC supporter but I am really sure he was not heavily involved. He had agonies over any kind of military stuff".

Mike did odd jobs to earn money to pay for his university studies: part-time typing, electrical and mechanical repairs. He could fix anything. He had no support from his parents.

He was the best science student at the University of Botswana. He won a "first class" (summa cum laude) in his finals, one of only two awarded to a UB student. He died the day his grade was announced. Fellow students in their academic robes laid him to rest.

He had hoped to get a job in computer sciences but he had little experience with them. He had asked Monica if he could use the Appleby's new Apple Computer to learn.

Henry Unrau, a Mennonite neighbor, found Mike's body. "It was a ghastly sight. All you could see was bullet holes".

Thami Mnyele had headed the MEDU Art Ensemble, a group of exiled South African artists, musicians and writers.

He had been the chairman of a Festival of Culture and Resistance held in Gaborone in July of 1982. Dollar Brand, Hugh Masekela, Nadine Gordimer -- all the big names --- were there. Thousands had come from inside South Africa. A colleague said, "It had a tremendous impact inside South Africa."

In a major speech Mnyeale told of his own struggle to find a way to integrating his work as a graphic artist with the struggles of his people for liberation.

"For me, as craftsman, the act of creating art should complement the act of creating shelter for my family or liberating the country for my people. This is culture".

Monica and Michael remembered him as "very dignified, very sensitive, quiet and observant." He never drank. He had seen what drink did to his fellow artists.

In 1980 the Gaborone museum had shown his work, work full of brooding on the tragedy of apartheid's victims. A naked body sprawls on the ground, its head a skull. Overhead there are helicopters. A headless crucified prisoner hangs by its fetters. In 1982 he had illustrated Mongane Serote's poems, The Night Keeps Winking, with scenes of African township life. More recently he had become bolder, his pictures explicitly portraying the defiance of workers and the strength of resistance. He had done a sticker for Hero's Day showing a guerrilla fighter reaching for a child's hand.

"We make posters to help popularize those events the people hold dear. We make postcards, calendars and we also organize gatherings to help explain the content of some dates of commemoration...."

I found no one in Gaborone who believed that these victims had been involved in clandestine military activities.

"They were too young or too old." One person said.

"Mike was too busy with his studies", his brother said.

And ANC sources say that ANC simply doesn't ask above-ground people to do clandestine work. For obvious reasons, they are kept separate.

The Ground Rumbles before the Shaking starts.

One has a sense of deja vu. We have seen this before in the case of Mozambique and Lesotho. The bullyboy diplomacy, the spurious "intelligence" and the mailed fist. Maputo and Maseru were both preceded by diplomacy. So too Gaborone.

On April 21, 1983, South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha had met his Botswana counterpart, Archie Mogwe, at Jan Smuts airport and presented him with a list of ANC "terrorists" in Botswana.

"Most of the people on it had already left Botswana", the current Foreign Minister, Dr. Gaotsitwe Chiepe said on June 24th. "Those who remained were genuine refugees." Yet the accusations continued and so did the diplomacy.

In February this year Botha had met Chiepe in Pretoria demanding that Botswana stop the infiltration of ANC through its territory. He demanded a non-aggression pact like the Nkomati Accord.

Chiepe argued that it would be sheer madness for Botswana, with an army of 3,000, to think of attacking the South African behemoth. "The whole world knows our policy of not allowing refugees to use our country as a launching pad."

Botha claimed that terrorist attacks are planned in Botswana. Dr. Chiepe denied it. Botha said, "There are ANC bases here." Dr. Chiepe said, "Show us where". And, of course, they could not. The South Africans claimed AK 47s were being handed over in the President Hotel and demanded that all ANC people must leave. Botswana said, "These people have committed no crimes. They are just refugees."

As to infiltration, Botswana asked how South Africa expected it to stop infiltration through its eastern border of approximately a thousand kilometers with a 3,000-man army when South Africa, with an army many times larger, had been unable to do so.

After a lengthy argument Botha declared himself satisfied that a non-aggression pact was not necessary. Botswana's intentions seemed honorable. But the pressure continued, the screw tightened.

On February 13th, two South African exiles narrowly escaped death when their house in Jinja, 3 km out of town, was blown up. One of the two was Nat Serache, Rand Daily Mail reporter and BBC stringer.

In March there was a firefight between ANC and Bophuthatswana forces. South Africa threatened an invasion of Botswana in "hot pursuit". Rumors began to spread that South Africa had given Botswana a list of people it wanted out. It alone had the right to decide who was a genuine refugee and who was not.

On April 22nd, the Botswana police raided 31 houses in Gaborone (including two that were subsequently bombed). They took four hours, went over the contents of each house item by item, and took away documents. At the same time the Botswana Guardian reported that "a big group" (some say 17) had been asked to leave for "their own safety". Among them were leading members of MEDU:

- . Mongane Serote, leading poet and novelist.
- . Bachane Merafhe, a teacher.
- . Thami Mnyele, the artist (now dead).
- . Tim Williams, a film maker (his house was blown up June 14th).

Then in the course of looking for someone on the list, the police found an arms cache in a trailer in Mogoditshane. The trailer had a foreign license plate and had been there only a day. The official Daily News said the arms

cache might have been a South African plant "creating conditions for which they would find excuses to use our territory as a battlefield".

A week before the raid, two strange men had been seen photographing the Phahles' house. Travelers from Zeerust had seen armor and personnel carriers near the Botswana border. The ground was clearly rumbling. But then it had rumbled before. The Botswana Defense Force was not on the alert. The President was in the west of the country.

On the night of the raid, Tim Williams smelled trouble. Strange people were asking strange questions. He hid his family and waited for trouble to arrive. When it did, he skinned over the back fence. Four days later he was out of the country.

Why Did South Africa Do It?

"Official sources have indicated that the raid was authorized only after the Cabinet had assessed diplomatic damage that might result."
(STAR, June 18th).

A. Pretexts

1. It was said by the Security Branch that Gaborone was ANC's operations and training center for the urban and rural Transvaal as well as for its suicide squads.

There is no evidence whatsoever to support such a statement. Gaborone is a small town abounding in gossip. If such a thing had been going on, not only the Botswana authorities but the whole town would have known it. Nor did the South Africans produce any quantity arms allegedly found until a week had passed, a week of mounting international outcry. A Botswana government spokesman told me of the arms story, "It is a complete lie."

2. Gaborone ANC was responsible for the attempted assassination on two coloured MPs in the Western Cape. It had to be avenged.

ANC people I talked to said that ANC is totally opposed to the use of violence against internal enemies. They are trying to heal splits between AZAPO, UDF and others. They were highly critical of the attack and disclaimed any participation in it. Furthermore, Western Cape is 1,000 miles from Gaborone.

Neil Parsons at the University of Botswana wrote at the time: "They must think we don't even have access to an atlas here. And certainly that you in the rest of the world must be daft".

3. Infiltration from Botswana was reaching alarming proportions.

It is not clear whether infiltration from Botswana has increased since Nkomati. To be sure, acts of sabotage and armed attacks by ANC in South Africa had risen to 40 in 1985 by the time of the raid. The Institute for Strategic Studies claimed in June that there were "as many as 30 insurgents" in the country. The Sunday Times said there were 23 ANC guerillas in Botswana, Bophuthatswana and South Africa. Seven were said to have been infiltrated into South Africa from Botswana. Comparing these figures with the 300 South African-backed "dissidents" in Zimbabwe, the perhaps 10,000 MNR in Mozambique or the 20,000 or so UNITA bandits in Angola, it does not seem probable that South Africa's concern is proportionate to that threat.

B. The real reasons:

1. To prove to South Africa's whites that the government has control over an internal situation which is out of hand.

Internal forces of rebellion and resistance, armed with little more than passion and anger, have reached unparalleled intensity, strength and militancy, "even in Bloemfontein", as an ANC cadre pointed out. A western diplomat told me that the raid had to do with "internal politics and less with ANC. They have to be seen to be doing something." NUSAS (National Union of South African Students) President Brendan Barry called it "bloodlust for a scapegoat beyond South Africa's borders."

2. To prove that South Africa is a regional super-power.

Allister Sparks put it this way:

"South Africa wants to demonstrate to the world that it is a regional superpower, which in its subcontinent has the strength and the will to do whatever it likes and nobody -- not the West nor the Soviet Union nor the whole goddamn world -- is going to stop it" (Weekly Mail, June 21).

When it is embarrassed or under attack, Sparks pointed out, counterattack is South Africa's standard procedure.

On May 22d two South African commandos had been killed and another captured in an abortive attempt to sabotage U.S.-operated oil facilities in the Cabinda region of northern Angola. The United States was furious that the South Africans had sabotaged their shaky peace initiative with Angola and increased the possibility that Congress would dispatch the Reagan policy of constructive engagement by enacting sanctions. The Conservative Party of South Africa accused Botha of bungling and giving the Defense Force a bad name. The Liberals accused Botha of flat-out lying in claiming it was looking for guerrilla bases.

So they did it again. This time there would be no South African casualties. The parallel that springs to mind is Reagan's attack on Grenada following the Beirut disasters.

Beeld, an Afrikaans paper said to echo the prime minister, had this to say after the raid on Gaborone:

"Well, now they know if they needed demonstrations. South Africa will not let itself be intimidated, not by the Security Council, the world's agitation over the Cabinda incident or the threat of sanctions from the United States".

And in this attempt to establish who is boss South Africa is quite prepared to humiliate a most prudent neighbor.

"To tangle with us is to bring the whole region into turmoil", Beeld said.

3. To drive a wedge between the Botswana people, their government and the South African liberation movements, particularly ANC. The Nkomati Accord reduced ANC's presence in Mozambique from 1,000 to ten. In Lesotho there was a reduction after the Maseru raid. In Swaziland there is no ANC presence except a shadowy clandestine one.

All of this is part of a larger South African plan to achieve a buffer zone in which ANC is neutralized, unable to operate.

The irony is that this strategy has served to infuriate and mobilize the internal forces inside South Africa. ANC is stronger politically inside the country than it has ever been and it enjoys an open loyalty which it never enjoyed before. Even militarily. ANC seems to have increased its actions in spite of Nkomati.

Aftershocks, Dust-Settling and the New Desertscape.

Botswana's official reaction to the raid was unified, dignified and strong. Dr. Masire called the raid a "blood-curdling, brutal and premeditated act". Botswana rejected "with contempt" South Africa's claims that the raid was directed against the ANC. The victims were defenseless civilians. Botswana would "neither weaken nor compromise" its principles of safeguarding innocent refugees.

Botswana's refugee policy, which goes back to its first President, Seretse Khama, is based on international human rights agreements. Refugees of whatever political persuasion will be admitted and protected so long as they do not engage in crime or armed struggle with Botswana's neighbors. Refugees must understand that they cannot use Botswana to carry out war.

But is there an emergency gap between policy and practice?

When I asked Mr. Kokorwe of the President's office whether making war included political activism, I got the clear impression that any kind of high-profile activism including publications was now regarded as "making war". The facts seem to bear out this interpretation.

On August 2d, the Botswana Guardian reported that the Government had asked 24 people to leave "for their own safety". The list included:

- a senior university lecturer;
- an exiled South African lawyer, now teaching;
- a survivor of the June 14th raid;
- a development economist working for the government.

Some of them had had no liberation movement connection at all.

"Ace" Mxolisi, a reporter for the Botswana Guardian who had asked searching questions about the Botswana Defense Forces' slow reaction to the raid, has been declared a prohibited immigrant and will be deported in late September. "Muff" Andersson, a white South African in exile, who had worked as a sub-editor for Patrick van Rensburg's new community paper, has been told she will need a visa to get back from home leave. She had been featured in a sensationalist story about van Rensburg by the South African Sunday Times entitled Blonde Activist in Hiding.

Botswana is also concerned to tighten up on South African spies. Obviously, they couldn't have attacked ten houses in look-alike neighborhoods in the dead of night without inside confederates. Mr. Kokorwe told me he believes the movements are infiltrated. One suspect was declared a prohibited immigrant: Solly Essack, reputed to be the owner of the Oasis Motel, where the South Africans rendezvoused.

I was told of numerous instances of ANC people being shadowed or kept under surveillance. One man said a car had followed him round a traffic circle three times. A stranger had called at the house. "Does X live here"? Another ANC couple, since left, said they hadn't eaten with their children since the raid.

One friend told me:

"The raid has broken the ability of people to entertain visitors or to talk about political issues easily. It has had a ripple effect. It has created fear. We have to be much more careful".

In the wake of the raid, there were accusations that the Botswana Defense Force and police were warned not to interfere, that they were slow to respond and that though they had reason to be prepared and on the alert, they had been caught flat-footed. ANC sources allege that Botswana had been warned in advance not to intervene Gaborone would be attacked by armor. A Botswana official dismissed this as "mere rumors". Botswana hotly denies that it was tardy and argues that given the fact that there was no advance warning, they mobilized as fast as they could and tried to seal off the town, which was the only logical response.

Whatever the merits or demerits of this argument, Botswana is not able to provide security and protection to South African refugees whom South Africa doesn't want in Botswana. An ANC representative told me:

"The Botswana authorities put it this way: 'We recommend for your own safety that you leave'. This is difficult to ignore. They say: 'Bear with us. We have no power to defend you.'"

Landlords add their own pressure. "As soon as they find out you are from South Africa, they say we are not prepared to take the risk".

There are some who argue that the government needs to mobilize the population into a Civilian Army to defend against such attacks. Some argue that the Security Branch needs to be under Parliament. Some say that a regional force needs to be introduced, perhaps with elements of the Nigerian Army. None of these proposals is likely to be carried out any time soon.

The fact is that if South Africa aimed to drive a wedge between the Botswana and the liberation movements, it seems to have succeeded. Jonathan Larson told me he was shocked to hear Botswana people at the bomb sites. "They were not angry at South Africa." "They were angry at ANC." Mike Appleby said much the same thing.

MEDU, the creative art group, is finished. It might rise from the ashes but somewhere else. Serote and Williams have left. Mnyele is dead.

Solidarity News Service had been an inanimate victim of the attack. It had put out the liveliest and most informative summary of liberation struggles inside South Africa that there was. The South Africans shot up the SNS photocopier, a computer, a printing outfit, a typewriter and a telephone. They made off with a computer, a radio and a telex, as well as a checkbook, correspondence and some computer discs. They declared they had a "treasure trove" of intelligence linking SNS to ANC -- a claim that is untrue. SNS exchanged information with ANC information department as any news service would. The computer discs had old news stories, some SNS accounts, a Setswana-English word list and a booklist of the Botswana Orientation Centre and apparently not much else.

Major Craig Williamson, the Security Branch major who claimed the "treasure trove" had reason to know SNS. It was the continuation of SANA, a similar information newsletter that he helped fund when as a South African spy he had served as director of the International University Exchange Fund. He had tried to wheedle information about the ANC out of Heinz Klug and Patrick Fitzgerald, the founders of the newsletter. When they refused to play his game, he threatened to set up a rival in Swaziland. Klug and Fitzgerald have now left Botswana. SNS may set up a trust and appear in a somewhat different form, possibly somewhere else.

What Is to Be Done?

A diplomat told me, "South Africa cares about what the West thinks. They are acutely conscious that they are pariahs now."

An ANC leader told me, "A lot depends on the western countries. Violence can only bring a response of violence. This is not in the interests of the West. Western interests will suffer. It is important for the West to come in right away. A climax could be reached in the next six months or a year... Western countries are supposed to be defenders of freedom. We are human beings that must be treated as equals. We don't have access to the western press so we appeal to you to tell our story in your country".

Mike Appleby expressed the fear that the anti-apartheid movement would let its guard and slack off its efforts because Reagan had come up with changes in constructive engagement. He felt that it is important to press for a real ban on investment and for cultural and sports boycotts.

I would add that it is important to expose the nature of South Africa's continued aggressive intentions toward the frontline states. There are real fears here that South Africa might retaliate against sanctions by cutting off Zimbabwe's transportation system which at this moment sends up to 90% of its traffic and almost all its transit traffic through South African ports. Beira is not yet a real alternative. Its harbor is still too shallow, the rail line has steep gradients and the locomotive power is still inadequate.

Zimbabwe's recent joint capture with Mozambique of the MNR camp on Gorongosa Mountain demonstrates its determination and that of the frontline states to counter South Africa's attacks on their sovereignty. (The heavy equipment and intelligence found prove beyond a shadow of doubt that Nkomati was a fraud. South Africa has kept on supplying MNR right along. Mozambique got rid of ANC for almost nothing.

The security of the frontline states is a matter of regional concern, and can only be solved by regional action.

A final thought: The attack on Gaborone was an attack on people who embodied ideas: conscientious objection to military service, art in the service of liberation, a liberation-oriented news service, a free South Africa. Some are dead. MEDU and SNS are struggling to remain in existence. But no one can kill an idea whose time has come. Hundreds and thousands will spring up to replace those who have been martyred.