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The French-Namibian Connection:

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Section I: France and Namibian Uranium

1) The French Government and Namibian Uranium: Recent Information

Since Autumn 1981 well-informed official sources have indicated that the French Government considers the question of Namibian uranium settled, a position which apparently satisfies the Socialist Party. The Minister of Cooperation and Development stated on August 16, 1981 that, "there is no longer any French public investment in Namibia" and added on March 31, 1982 that:

"Paris is applying the United Nations resolutions on Namibia and has ended all financing of trade guarantees with Namibia. As for Namibian uranium, if it continues to arrive in France, it is not in the form of direct imports. France imports uranium only from South Africa under the terms of an intergovernmental agreement."

Since the end of air shipments of Namibian uranium to France by UTA because of the threatened seizure of shipments by French and British trade unionists, we have very little information on the new route of Namibian uranium to the Malvesi and Pierrelatte COMURHEX refining facilities. Such imports are shrouded by absolute secrecy.

The Socialist Party and the French Government were stating in 1981 that the question of Namibian uranium imports would soon be resolved, and we believed this to be true. Now, we believe the opposite. We are persuaded that Namibian uranium is still arriving in France, probably under a South African label. Unfortunately, the French Government appears disinterested in this supposedly resolved matter of Namibian uranium imports. The current Minister of Planning when he was in the Opposition had called for a commission of inquiry into the illegal importation of Namibian uranium into France. Today, the Socialist deputies who have become ministers no longer seem to attach much importance to the participation of French companies in the plundering of uranium and other Namibian resources.

Even more tellingly, today it remains as difficult to obtain information about contracts concerning Namibian uranium as under the Government of Giscard d'Estaing. The Atomic Energy Commission which is under state control jealously withholds the information it has on this question. And, finally, the French Government still does not recognize either the United Nations Council for Namibia, SWAPO as the sole authentic representative of the Namibian people, or Decree Number One for the protection of Namibia's resources.
2) Questions about the route, contracts and transportation of Namibian Uranium

In terms of the information we do have on uranium contracts, we definitely know that COGEMA (a subsidiary of the French Atomic Energy Commission) in 1977 had in effect a ten-year contract with South Africa at very cheap prices for 1000 tons of uranium per year from the South African Randfontein Mines. We do not know exactly how long the contract will run, but it is obvious that it continues today. In addition, according to French Customs statistics, purchases of uranium from South Africa and Namibia totalled:

- 1977: 2399 tons
- 1978: 2016 tons
- 1981: 3045 tons

Finally, we know that one-fourth of all French uranium imports in 1981 came from South Africa and Namibia, but we cannot determine the proportion of imports from Namibia.

Other mines located in Gabon and Niger in which MINATOME has a big stake could easily produce 3000 more tons of uranium which could replace what France imports from South Africa. However, because of insufficient orders, these Gabon and Niger mines have in fact been forced to cut back their production.

The delivery of Namibian uranium to the French enrichment facilities can be reasonably estimated at between 500 and 2000 tons out of the 7000 total tons which were sent through French airports during 1978 and 1979. The French refining facility COMURHEX only acknowledges having received uranium from NUFCOR, the South African company. No document available from COMURHEX mentions the not-negligible amount of uranium originating in Namibia which is refined at its Malvesi plant.

These then are the principal questions that remain to be addressed in connection with Namibian uranium:
1) What agreements exist between MINATOME and ROSSING URANIUM LTD (a 1973 document mentioned the existence of a contract between RTZ, the largest shareholder in ROSSING, and CFP, a subsidiary of MINATOME, for 15,000 short tons of uranium between 1981 and 1990; this contract has not been confirmed since)?

2) Who currently transports Namibian uranium? Can we confirm the South African correspondent of Le Monde who reports that one company involved is CHARGEURS REUNIS which belongs to the same private group as UTA? Two ships belonging to this group are reported to be involved in regular transport between Walvis Bay, South African harbours, and Europe. Are other ships involved? No one knows.

3) What contracts exist between MINATOME and COMURHEX for the refining of raw uranium into tetra and hexafluorure?

4) What is the precise role of the Atomic Energy Commission within the "uranium cartel" in connection with Namibian uranium?

THE DEMANDS OF THE FRENCH ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

For Mouvement Anti-Apartheid it is clear that the French Government has not fulfilled its responsibilities concerning the pillage of Namibian uranium. The Government claims to have taken a significant step by stopping State financing of trade with Namibia through COFACE. Yet this was a policy already implemented by the Government of Giscard d'Estaing in 1977!

This is why we are first of all demanding that the French Government recognize the United Nations Council For Namibia, Decree Number One, and also SWAPO as the authentic representative of the Namibian people. We also demand the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry that will be charged with:

a) Determining the exact amounts of Namibian uranium transported and refined in France.

b) Determining the other Namibian products imported into France (such as wool, meat, and diamonds).

c) Listing all French companies (public, private and mixed) involved in transactions with Namibia.

Based on the information provided by this Commission we demand that the Government apply a strict policy of disengagement, without exceptions, including the breaking of all contracts involving French state and parastatal companies as well as the introduction of a parliamentary proposal outlining a plan for sanctions against all other French enterprises operating in Namibia.
LIST OF FRENCH COMPANIES OPERATING IN NAMIBIA

1) Parastatals (some created since the 1981 nationalizations)

a) In the 1960's the French Bank of South Africa opened a branch in Windhoek. It has been reported to have been closed very recently.

b) The Bureau of Research and Mining Geology (BRGM) which is controlled by the State, is establishing geological surveys for its own records and for the South African Government as well.

c) The PARIBAS banking group is associated with DE BEERS in diamond production.

d) ELF AQUITAINE holds a concession of 50,000 square kilometers in northern Namibia in association with the South African firm, DE BEERS OIL EXPLORATION. 
   - ELF also owns 50% of LE NICKEL whose wholly owned subsidiary, VENDRON SOUTH AFRICA, prospects in Namibia notably for copper and silver.
   - ELF is associated with another company in the planned exploitation of a uranium mine to the northwest of ROSSING between Arandis and Hanties.
   - However, in May 1981 ELF decided to "halt" its activities in Namibia. We do not know whether this company has pursued its prospecting activities since then.

2) Private Companies

a) According to the South African correspondent of Le Monde, ships owned by the Chargeurs Reunis group stop at the port of Walvis Bay and transport Namibian uranium to Europe.

b) INTERAGRA, run by J.B. Doumeng, exports meat from Namibia to France. This company is involved in the construction of piers and also cold storage facilities at Walvis Bay.

3) Mixed Public and Private Enterprises

a) MTNATOME, which is half owned by Compagnie Francaise de Petrole (CFP) and P.U.K., has accounted for 10% of all purchases from ROSSING URANIUM LIMITED since June 1976—a mine we should note which exported 3960 tons of uranium oxide in 1981.

b) CFP TOTAL distributes refined oil throughout Namibia and runs service stations as well. It is reasonable to think that the South African occupation army is one of its principal clients.

c) COMURHEX processes Namibian uranium in its Malvesi and Pierrelatte plants in southern France.

4) General Information

a) French companies export to Namibia: machines, engines, and cars.

b) France imports three products from Namibia: diamonds, uranium and askakarwool (SWAKARA advertises extensively in French fashion magazines.)
Section II: The French Government and Namibia

May 10, 1981 raised many hopes for those fighting for the independence and liberation of Namibia. The ascension of François Mitterand to power and the formation of a Socialist Government had been hailed by SWAPO, "as the opening of a new chapter in the relations between France and Africa.” Hadn’t François Mitterand on the eve of his election declared:

"A new policy towards South Africa must consist of two parts: On the one hand, economic sanctions against this regime, notably a total cessation of all State and parastatal French investment and of all support for private investment. On the other hand, developmental and security aid to the Front Line states and political support to the liberation movements, as well as assistance in the economic and training sectors."

(April 23, 1981, Le Continent)

The appearance of Claude Cheysson, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Africa Day event held during the 1981 Paris Conference on Sanctions Against South Africa, and especially the proposals of Llionel Jospin, First Secretary of the Socialist Party, at the inaugural plenary session of the Sanctions Conference had concretized the change and heralded a much tougher attitude towards Pretoria. Let us recall the words of Llionel Jospin on May 20, 1981 at the Sanctions Conference:

"The Socialist Party has always been in favor of applying sanctions against South Africa, and I remind you in particular that we support:

- The total halt of all trade with Namibia and notably the importation of uranium.
- The reduction, taking into account technical constraints, of French raw material imports under South African label.
- The cessation of all public investment and all support of private investment.
- With, needless to say, a total arms embargo."

Where are we today 18 months later?

Certainly, the French diplomatic attitude towards the Contact Group of five Western nations has been positive. Jean-François Llionnet, advisor on African Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Relations declared to the Mouvement Anti-Apartheid:
"Priority is now being given to the Namibian question and to efforts to quickly resolve it on the basis of a rigorous timetable. We in the Government firmly believe that there will be an independent Namibia by December 31, 1982."

In fact, several Presidential advisors have travelled to Angola, French ministers have gone to southern Africa and Francois Mitterand has met with several southern African heads of state either in Paris or at the French-African summit of Kinsasha. All these things indicate that French diplomacy is more conscious of southern African problems.

France had finally chosen to remain in the Contact Group of five Western nations during Summer 1981. We hoped that Paris would be able to effectively counteract the United States within the group. But since November 1981 Francois Mitterand has been saying that: "France considers that its presence in the Contact Group should not be used as an alibi for unending negotiation."

And in October 1982 in Dar Es Salam, Claude Cheysson stated that all the probable technical problems for a ceasefire and the organization of the election in Namibia had been resolved. What everyone understood was that the French Government was pointing out the fact that only the Americans and the South Africans were responsible for delaying an agreement:

- The Americans by their exorbitant demand for the departure of the Cubans from Angola, the famous "linkage".

- The South Africans by their determination to prevent the almost certain political victory of SWAPO if the elections were held.

Despite these French "efforts" to achieve an agreement on Namibia, one has to wonder whether the French Government has really been consistent in its handling of the Namibian question.

One thing is clear about the attitude of the French Government and of Socialist officials: In their analysis of the situation in Namibia they always underestimate South Africa's determination to indefinitely block the process leading to Namibian elections, until an alternative to SWAPO is in place. This attitude continues to place France in what I will call a pious role in the negotiations. In effect: In the absence of tougher talk and sanction measures against South Africa, France has not given itself the means to apply its own policy. How can the Government have been so naive as to underestimate South African hypocrisy in the Namibian negotiations?
Even more seriously, the absence of any move to apply sanctions only indicates that the Socialist Government is not willing to take a stronger stand against the racist South African Government than its conservative predecessor.

In terms of sanctions against South Africa on April 2, 1982 Minister Jean Pierre (COT) declared before the EurAfrican Press Association that:

"...We are reorganizing our relations with the South African Republic. We are strictly applying the arms embargo, and in terms of other measures I will say that we are involved in reexamining all aspects of our relations. We have on occasion stated that we do not believe in the effectiveness of a blockade in such a situation. But we are seeking on our own to be less involved in these exchanges with South Africa. This is a long-term problem which must take into account the dependence of the French economy on its trade with South Africa, notably imports of certain raw materials."

In fact, outside of this beautiful but very careful declaration, everything makes it appear that French governmental authorisation of the ANC and SWAPO offices in Paris, was used as a cover for its total abandonment of a policy of sanctions against Pretoria. In effect, the counterpart of some recognition of the ANC and SWAPO seems to have been maintenance of the status quo in the nuclear, banking and oil sectors. The South Africans know how to adapt to the situation and already five years ago they declared:

"It is always necessary to distinguish between what France says and what she does."

(The Star, April 1977)

In this connection, the following facts must be noted:

1) In 1982 the economic expansion section of the French Embassy in Johannesburg organized approximately 20 trade missions to South Africa for French industrialists. This Economic Expansion section was the most active of any equivalent section attached to French embassies worldwide. It plays a key role in arranging any contract between South Africa and French businesses.

2) A subsidiary of CCE-ALSTHOM, STEIN-INDUSTRIES, signed a contract with the German firm EVT for 6.5 billion Francs to provide six furnaces for the projected giant MATIMBA central power plant in the Transvaal.

3) CCE-ALSTON itself is going to furnish a reactor for MATIMBA under a contract worth 1.75 billion Francs.

4) On July 22, 1981 the nationalized RENAULT firm signed a new contract for the production and sale of R5 automobiles in South Africa. This company had already sold 8000 R5 automobiles in South Africa during 1981.
5) In October 1982 the Paris Chamber of Commerce (a consular entity legally under state control) signed the largest contract of any western Chamber of Commerce to date with the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce.

6) In August 1982 a French delegation representing several public French institutions (GAZ DE FRANCE, THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH) participated in a conference on the conversion of coal into oil organized by the South African Council For Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

7) French banks all of which are nationalized continue to provide loans backing trade with Pretoria.

8) In November 1982 we were stupified to learn that the French representative to the IMF had voted in favor of a $1.1 billion loan to the South African Government.

9) CFP-TOTAL, which is 40% state-owned continues to transport crude oil to South Africa despite the embargo decreed by the OPEC countries, and also refines and distributes oil throughout South Africa. With 12% of the South African market, CFP-TOTAL was reported in 1976 to have a monopoly on oil sales to the South African police.

10) COFACE, the French Insurance Company For Foreign Trade which is controlled by the State, continues to insure the entire range of commercial transactions with South Africa. The only change is that now guaranties can last no longer than five years instead of seven. This represents, of course, a major change certain to discourage trade with South Africa!

11) The state-controlled ATIC ASSOCIATION which is importing more than 8 million tons of South African coal—available at 30% below the price of coal from other sources because of the cheap wages paid to African workers—confirmed in February 1982 that "it still had not received any government order to halt contracts with South Africa." Yet a study by Mouvement Anti-Apartheid proved that alternative suppliers exist at almost the same prices because of the international economic recession.

12) Finally to end this overview of new contracts entered into under the Mitterand Government, there is the shocking news that appeared in the French press of November 16, 1982:

France, having sold and constructed two nuclear reactors of 900 MW at Koeberg and then defied international pressure by selling the processed fuel for these reactors, is now contemplating the sale of two other nuclear reactors to South Africa.

Contacts and discussions have been taking place for weeks within the Government. It appears that three powerful ministers are backing the deal (those of Finance, Commerce and Industry). Although no decision has yet been made there is every reason to be extremely worried when one is aware both of the business and Pro-South African lobby in Paris and of the outlook of the French Government which says that it is technically impossible to use the nuclear reactors for military purposes.

At this very moment a general mobilization against what could soon be a new nuclear contract is being organized in France. Such a deal if carried out would totally discredit the Socialist Government in the eyes of Africa and the international community.
The South Africans already felt reassured about the Mitterand Government several months ago. They sense that there is nothing to fear. On January 19, 1982 the South African Broadcasting Corporation commented very favorably about Francois Mitterand: "He is a man with whom it is quite possible to deal. He is seeking constructive relations with Pretoria."

This review of French policy towards South Africa leads us to a very clear and troubling conclusion. There has been almost no change from the Giscard d'Estaing Government: Business continues as usual.

This French business remains concentrated in the large South African State Projects designed to reinforce the infrastructure of apartheid and to reduce the effectiveness of international pressures and campaigns for sanctions against South Africa.

Such is the privileged but criminal role of French collaboration with South Africa:

When the first contract for the sale of nuclear reactor was signed with South Africa, the African National Congress had declared:

"France has become the most dangerous enemy of the African Continent."

We reaffirm that today France remains the most dangerous enemy of the African continent.

To end our analysis let us examine the only area in which the French Socialist Government had committed itself: The total embargo on arms sales to South Africa. On October 6, 1981 the French Secretary of Defense had reaffirmed to the Mouvement Anti-Apartheid that the arms embargo was being applied with extreme rigor.

We have reason to doubt this rigor, given the following facts:

1) In October 1981 the London Times revealed that Israeli technicians in South Africa regularly service French-built airplanes, using spare parts sold by France to Israel for its Mirages.

2) The Government has taken no action to stop the fabrication of French arms under license in South Africa. It has always refused to give us the details of license contracts, notably if these contracts still involve the sale of certain essential materials by France.

3) SWAPO has numerous times emphasized the use of French arms (Mirages, tanks, and helicopters) against the Namibian people and remains persuaded that South Africa receives French spare parts via third countries.
Finally, among the markets that the French Embassy in Johannesburg suggests for French industrial investment is the South African market in electronic television surveillance equipment which is developing, "because of the resurgence of sabotage actions during the last months", according to the report of the Economic Expansion section of the French Embassy.

Such is the reality of French policy towards South Africa: Absence of a well-defined interministerial policy on South Africa, refusal to impose sanctions, and continuation of the dichotomy of the Giscard d’Estaing Government in which French diplomats make angry gestures against apartheid while French businessmen remain free to sign contracts with South Africa.

In effect, we notice within the French Government and within the Socialist Party a struggle between those who feel that the French foreign trade deficit comes before any other consideration (The Ministers of Finance, Commerce, and Research and Industry) and those who are conscious of the serious threat to French-African relations posed by continued French economic and nuclear collaboration with South Africa. The activity of the pro-South African lobby, which is now extremely active in Paris and Brussels, combined with the pressures from the business sector have been enough to tilt the balance in favor of continued collaboration with apartheid.
Section III: Solidarity With SWAPO in France

A) Solidarity Activity by the Mouvement Anti-Apartheid (MAA)

1) Since its founding in 1975, the top priority of Mouvement Anti-Apartheid (MAA) in relation to Namibia has been to arrange meetings between SWAPO representatives and French political groups, trade unions, churches and other organizations which were not well-informed about Namibia.

2) The MAA has also published several analyses of the history of Namibia, the liberation struggle led by SWAPO, and the progression of the negotiations. Attempts are being made to widely circulate this material.

3) The MAA has been very actively participating in the investigation by CANUC (Campaign Against Namibian Uranium Contracts, initiated by the Namibia Support Committee based in the United Kingdom) into the route of Namibian Uranium to Europe. Mouvement Anti-Apartheid mobilized several trade union organizations whose strategic position at airports enabled them to precisely identify shipments of Namibian uranium.

4) In fact, the MAA with CANUC had organized an action to seize a shipment of Namibian uranium which had to be called off when several newspapers tipped off UTA about the probability of protest action, leading UTA to halt its air shipments.

5) In September 1980 the Mouvement Anti-Apartheid helped do the political and technical organization of a Conference In Solidarity With The Namibian Liberation Struggle.

6) From November 16-20, 1982 the MAA organized a SWAPO speaking tour in 7 key municipalities: Arras, St. Etienne, Rennes, Toulouse, La Rochelle, Poitiers, and Montpelier. This informational tour allowed us to inform and get the support of the Municipal Councils and to discuss with them the material needs of the Namibian refugee camps.

7) In January 1982 we launched a campaign to finance medical equipment for the Kwanza-Sul refugee camp. The aim is to send 100 medical kits to SWAPO and already 70 kits have been financed. This campaign is being run in conjunction with eight other organizations and is the first of its kind in France. The fact is that few people in France know about the situation in Namibia; so as part of the campaign the MAA had to produce a wide range of material including portable information exhibitions.
B) The Opening of the SWAPO and ANC Offices in Paris

In Autumn 1981 the opening of offices by the ANC and SWAPO constituted a critical step for solidarity organizing. Unified action between the parties of the Left (the Socialist and Communist Parties), the major trade union confederations (CGT and CFDT), and Christian organizations made possible the rental and furnishing of the SWAPO and ANC offices.

The two liberation movement representatives are now able to explain their position directly to the French Government, political organizations and trade unions—direct contact which has been extremely productive. In November 1982 Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh became the first SWAPO representative to ever appear before the Foreign Affairs Commission of the French National Assembly where he spoke for two hours. This followed SWAPO participation in a demonstration organized by the French Ministry For Women's Rights to mark South African Women's Day on August 9. As a result an association linked to the Ministry decided to support certain projects for the Kwanza-Sul refugee camp.

However, access to the major newspapers, radio, and television is still not open to SWAPO. This makes it more difficult to counteract the 18-month old South African offensive in the main conservative French newspapers which have been publishing favorable reports of South African operations in southern Angola.
C) Trade Union Action

1) For a long time the CGT and CFDT, the two largest French trade union confederations have condemned the pillage of Namibian uranium and demanded the halt of all trade with South Africa.

2) Since the election of Francois Mitterand, these organizations have asked the Government several times what it planned to do about Namibian uranium imports.

3) The CGT and CFDT have actively participated in the investigation by CANUC into the French portion of the Namibian Uranium route. Several articles in the trade union press have clearly and forcefully denounced the pillage of Namibian uranium. The participation of the CGT and CFDT in the June 1981 Trade Union Seminar on Namibian Uranium was very productive.

4) Certain unions within the CGT and CFDT confederations are extremely motivated and ready to take direct militant actions against the shipment of Namibian uranium. On a number of occasions the French union UFFA (which is within the CFDT) has delayed the departure of planes to Johannesburg for hours and sometimes overnight. At present, still other trade unionists are participating in the uranium investigation that Mouvement Anti-Apartheid has launched.

5) However, one cannot speak of a true campaign led by these trade union organizations. One can not speak of active participation by these organizations in their entirety. We have stated that even in 1982 certain major branches of these unions (for example workers at the COMURHEX uranium refining plant) were not even aware of the existence of Namibia! We certainly hoped that 18 months after Mitterand's election, these organizations would be engaged in more energetic solidarity actions.

6) It should be noted that the CGT has participated in material aid work for SWAPO, and that the Bank Federation of the CFDT does participate officially in the Mouvement Anti-Apartheid's material aid campaign. These two labor confederations also contribute financially to the running of the SWAPO and ANC offices in Paris.
The Mouvement Anti-Apartheid is currently bringing together numerous organizations around a plan of action for the total isolation of South Africa. This plan underlines the need for immediate implementation of sanctions by the French Government and emphasizes State involvement with South Africa and Namibia. It includes several items concerning Namibia:


2) Recognition of Decree Number One for the protection of Namibian resources.

3) The total halt of trade with Namibia, particularly of uranium imports.

We believe that only a united group of powerful organizations can force the French Government to take these actions. So far church groups and trade unions working with the Mouvement Anti-Apartheid have affirmed that they will directly pressure the Prime Minister. In addition, a number of organizations have made southern Africa their major international focus.

So slowly, the wave of support for SWAPO is spreading into many sectors of French society—an evolution that can only have a positive effect on French policy. We feel that it is critical to achieve the maximum effect during the remaining five years of the Mitterand Government which we feel can be pressured to back its rhetorical support for liberation in southern Africa with concrete measures.