Deaths In Detention

The murder of Steven Biko has focused world attention on one hideous aspect of the South African regime—the deaths of scores of people while in the hands of the security branch of the South African Police. No one outside the SA Police and other Pretorian high circles knows for sure how many people have died in detention. Those admitted to have died between 1963 and 1971 total 22—their deaths have been officially attributed to 'suicide,' 'natural causes,' 'slipped in shower,' 'fell down stairs,' 'natural causes,' 'fell — floors' from police buildings.

The grisly toll is far greater. South Africa's Minister of Police, Justice and Prisons James T. Kruger acknowledged in Parliament that 117 people detained under laws other than security laws had died during 1976. Official death figures in this category for 1975 are 92.

There are no recorded deaths of detainees under security legislation from 1971 until 1976. Since March 1976 known deaths of men held under terms of security laws amount to 24. Included are two from South Africa's puppet Transkei. The following list is compiled from United Nations, South African press and South African human rights organization sources. Names, ages, dates of death and official reasons are recorded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masobiya Joseph Mdluli</td>
<td>19 Mar 76</td>
<td>application of force to neck (photos of body show severe beating; four policemen acquitted of blame)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapetla Mohapi</td>
<td>5 Aug 76</td>
<td>'suicide by hanging'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke Story Mazwembe</td>
<td>3 Sep 76</td>
<td>'suicide by hanging' (trade unionist dead two hours after arrest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumisani Isaac Mbatha</td>
<td>25 Sep 76</td>
<td>'natural causes'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feneul Mogatusi</td>
<td>28 Sep 76</td>
<td>'natural causes'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zungwane Jacob</td>
<td>5 Oct 76</td>
<td>'suicide by hanging' (university student at whose funeral attended by 5,000 people the police shot 7 dead and wounded 51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mashabane, 22</td>
<td>9 Oct 76</td>
<td>not given (badly beaten)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Angola

MPLA Examines May Coup

In a report that reads rather like a taut espionage mystery, the Political Bureau of the MPLA has released its version of the events leading up to the May 27 attempted coup in Angola. The 30-page report, published recently, is the most detailed account yet of what the MPLA has called the factionalist activities of the coup's leaders, Nito Alves and Jose Van Dunen.

While the document asserts that the coup attempt failed because it received little or no support from the Angola's workers and peasants, it does give some indication of the depth of the factionalism that had divided the MPLA itself. It is extraordinarily frank for a document of its kind in assessing the weaknesses within MPLA that provided the plotters with fertile soil in which to spread their divisiveness.

The report also charges that Western intelligence agencies were involved with the plot although it fails to
William Namodi Tshwane 26 Jul 76
Ernest Mamasila, 35 17 Nov 76
Thabo Mosala 30 Nov 76
Joyi Twasifene 11 Dec 76
Wellington Mlungusi 15 Dec 76
Tshazibane, 30
George Botha, 30 8 Jan 77
Dr. Nanaoth Ntshuntsha, 43 8 Jan 77
Lawrence Ndzanga, 52 20 Jan 77
Elmon Malele, 52
Matthews Mabelane, 22 15 Feb 77
Aaron Khoza, 45 29 Mar 77
Phakamile Mabija, 27 7 Jul 77
Elijah Nkwenke Loza, 59 1 Aug 77
Dr. Hoosen Haffejee, 27 3 Aug 77
Bayempin Mzizi, 62 14 Aug 77
Steven Biko, 30 12 Sep 77

provide any specific details. "The coming months will bring to the surface the concrete facts of imperialist intervention in this conspiracy in which pseudo-leftism served as a screen for imperialist participation," the report states.

Early Moves

The coup leaders began their activities inside MPLA almost as soon as the Portuguese dictatorship fell on April 25, 1974. "It was a time of ideological indecision among some of the youth," the report relates, "who had access to a flow of revolutionary literature which they avidly devoured and immediately applied to the Angolan context as the cure-all for every political problem."

As various "committees" sprang up within the now legal MPLA, Alves and Van Dunen formed a study group basing their analysis initially on the writings of Enver Hoxha, the Albanian Communist leader, but quickly mov-}

ing on, by early 1975, to an analysis inspired by Mao-Tse-Tung—an "inherently 'analysis of classes of Angola,'" according to the report, "nothing more than a simplistic transposition" of Mao's theory.

Reflecting what appears to be long repressed frustration on the part of MPLA's leaders, the report says the group quoted the writings of Lenin and other Marxist writers "to justify this or that position of the factionalist group."

Facing a threatening military situation that the report says "took precedence over MPLA's organizational problems and the need for ideological clarification," the Political Bureau admits to "a certain passivity" towards the factionalists, who attacked the caution of MPLA's leadership in issuing analysis "not based on a serious study of Angolan social realities" as "rightist," "social democratic," and later as "Maoist," after the Chinese position became clearly one of support for FNLA and UNITA, "anti-Soviet," and "anti-communist." The report admits that these charges affected both "honest militants" and diplomats from friendly countries, not identified specifically, who were often besieged by the group.

The report relates repeated attempts on the part of the coup leaders to gain control of MPLA over the past three years—from the Lusaka Conference of MPLA in Zambia in September 1974, through the constant placing of loyal factionalists within the civil service, the MPLA's Revolutionary Instruction Committees (the cadre training groups), and ultimately to the attempts to control the movement's Mass Organization Department and the army, FAPLA. These efforts are related in detail in the report, tracing the precise moves of many of the individuals involved as the strength of the factionalists grew.

Extending Tentacles

Ultimately, the report admits, the plot reached high into the upper echelons of the movement to include Provincial Commissioners, the top government officials, in five of sixteen provinces, as well as a significant number of military commanders.

After the end of the 1976 Second War of Liberation, and especially after the Central Committee’s October 1976 decision to curb Alves’ growing strength by abolishing his major power base, his Ministry of Internal Administration, from the new government [see Southern Africa, June/July 1977], the factionalists turned to sabotage. The Provincial Commissioners prohibited the free movement of goods and hampered the distribution of imported consumer goods on which the government had spent precious foreign currency to alleviate some of the food shortages in the country. The report says that the commissioners even, at times, prevented the marketing of peasants’ produce.

By late 1976, MPLA leaders realized increasingly that factionalism would be a problem that they would have to confront directly. The report asserts that in its fight against factionalism, “the movement’s leadership always tried to win back the factionalists,” a tactic used in past factional disputes. “It therefore always avoided administrative measures, preferring the method of discussing the problem through MPLA bodies.”

Fanatical Phraseology

Mistaken by the factionalists for softness or even weakness on the part of the leadership, the method failed. “When honest militants tried to promote ideological debate, they were faced with the same hollow and increasingly fanatical phraseology, which could not stand up to the slightest to militant analysis but which confused people and undermined any possibility of drawing benefit from meetings designed to clarify matters.”

Above all, the report charges that the factionalists avoided at all times a discussion of concrete Angolan reality. “In their speeches, their writings, their statements at meetings,” the report continues, “never was there the slightest indication of their economic concepts, or any reference to the acute problems of Angola’s economy.” The factionalists instead “misled people with vague and wordy promises of a bookish socialism which did not demand any sacrifice and which was ‘easy’ to build with quotations from the great classics.”

As the tension mounted during the early months of 1977, MPLA decided to undertake an investigation of Alves and Van Dunen. With the date approaching in late May when the report was to be issued, the factionalists decided to attempt to take power.