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North Korea and the liberation of Southern Africa, 1960-2020

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8 TRAINING ACHIEVING POWER, 1960–80

In his autobiography, the SWAPO leader and Namibian president Sam Nujoma described his strenuous efforts to acquire the first weapons for the armed struggle in Namibia.⁶¹³ In 1963, Nujoma and his SWAPO aides travelled to Algeria to pick up two ‘pepesha’ (PPSh-41) sub-machine guns and two ‘TT’ pistols. They smuggled the weapons in four black bags from Algiers to Cairo (Egypt), then to Nairobi (Kenya), and then to Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), travelling by plane. At the airport in Tanzania, Nujoma was ‘extremely worried’ that custom officials would discover the firearms. Much to his relief, he was waved through by the airport staff ‘with my heart still pounding’. From Tanzania, the weapons were driven to Lusaka by car with the help of friendly UNIP members from Zambia.⁶¹⁴

Nujoma’s clandestine mission illustrates the ordeal that African freedom fighters faced when trying to acquire weaponry in the early days of the armed struggles in Southern Africa. It was not easy to get your hands on a rifle in those days. A single ZANU guerrilla unit could simultaneously use a Soviet sniper rifle, a NATO bazooka, a Romanian AK-47, and World War II-era machine gun from Germany.⁶¹⁵ And weapons were just one piece of the puzzle: the cadres of African liberation movements were also in need of military training. In addition, Nujoma’s story highlights the transnational dimension of the armed struggle: his dependency on friendly African governments was common among liberation movements. Again, exile was key.⁶¹⁶

African liberation was never an entirely African affair. As decolonisation occurred in parallel with the Cold War, powerful external forces sought to influence events in Africa. This provided opportunities for African nationalists, such as Nujoma and his comrades, who desired arms and training. China and the Soviet Union were well-known benefactors of liberation movements, but not the only one. North Korea emerged as another major player in the armed struggles of Southern Africa. A Korean version of Nujoma’s autobiography is also available in North Korea.⁶¹⁷

The first section of this chapter discusses exile. In the early years of African decolonisation, liberation movements flocked to places such as Algeria and Ghana for military support. These were precisely the states North Korea targeted in its African foreign policy programmes. The second section describes the rise of military mindsets within African liberation movements. The armies of liberation movements were impressed by North Korea’s achievements during the Korean War. In the decades to come, these military mindsets would determine political culture in Southern Africa. The third section uncovers the military training that North Korea provided to Southern African liberation movements. African freedom fighters received training in North Korean embassies and camps in the Frontline States, and advanced training in North Korea.

African Revolutionaries

The Algerian Revolution occupies a special place in history. Algeria was an inspiring model for most African liberation movements and the key to North Korea’s diplomatic offensive in Africa. The Algerian War for Independence lasted from 1954 to 1962 and resulted in a victory

⁶¹³ It should be noted that Nujoma’s autobiography, for a large part ghost-written by Randolph Vigne, is selective. See for a thoughtful review Saunders 2003.

⁶¹⁴ Nujoma 2001, p. 129-131.

⁶¹⁵ Moorcraft 2011.

⁶¹⁶ See also White and Larmer 2014.

⁶¹⁷ Personal correspondence with John Grobler, 23 November 2023.

over colonial France. Led by the FLN, the war became a symbol of African decolonisation. Both Koreas competed for the support of Ahmed Ben Bella, the leader of the FLN and first president of Algeria.

The United States saw it as ‘a major victory’ for North Korea when Algeria accepted a North Korean ambassador in 1963.⁶¹⁸ Ben Bella’s government did not recognise South Korea. In 1965, Algeria was set to host the Afro-Asian Conference, which was effectively ‘Bandung II’, the successor of the Bandung Conference in 1955. Evidence of North Korea’s impending attendance came in the form of a Mercedes 600 ‘Pullman’ limousine, which was ready to transport Kim Il Sung across Algiers. It was dubbed the ‘People’s Democratic Socialist limousine’ by jealous American diplomats, who secretly commented that the American ambassador drove a mere second-rate Checker Sedan.⁶¹⁹ South Korea lobbied for a formal invitation, but was apparently not invited to participate.⁶²⁰ Even though the conference was ultimately called off (because of the coup against Bella), the interest of the Koreas illustrates how they both vied for influence in Algiers.

The US found it ‘difficult to believe’ that Algeria would champion North Korea’s cause at the United Nations and warned that this would ‘seriously jeopardise’ Bella’s chance to visit America. Nevertheless, Algeria became an essential part of North Korea’s success in the UN General Assembly.⁶²¹ Within the OAU, North Korea was also ‘dependent on Algeria to sponsor its cause in corridor discussions’.⁶²² It is no surprise, therefore, that Algeria is one of the only two African countries ever visited by Kim Il Sung (in 1975), as highlighted in Chapter 3.

An important reason why North Korea invested so much political capital in Algeria was its status among African revolutionaries. Nelson Mandela, the illustrious leader of the South African struggle, was inspired by the Algerian Revolution, just as many other African nationalists. He saw it as ‘the closest model’ to South Africa.⁶²³ In 1962, he travelled to the Algerian Liberation training camps to learn how to wage an armed struggle. Later, Mandela would say that the military training he received there ‘made me a man’.⁶²⁴

One of the lessons Mandela imbibed from the FLN was the importance of discipline and unity. After meetings with Algerian revolutionaries, Mandela recorded in his notebook that: ‘A revolution cannot move with two heads ... One bad head is better than two good ones’.⁶²⁵ This quest for unity would be a recurring theme in the organisation of all victorious African liberation movements.

Mandela not only sought training for himself, but also support for the ANC. The FLN promised him weapons, money, and training.⁶²⁶ In subsequent years, MK combatants were trained in FLN camps.⁶²⁷ The ANC was not the only liberation movement that modelled itself on Algeria. Other influential visitors to the FLN training camps were Agostinho Neto (MPLA), Eduardo Mondlane (FRELIMO), and Samora Machel (FRELIMO).⁶²⁸ ZAPU’s military cadres

⁶¹⁸ [NARA] RG 59, SNF Entry# A1 1613-A, Box# 3999, POL 24 Nigeria -- POL North Korea-US: Department of State to various posts, 30 April 1963.

⁶¹⁹ [NARA] RG 59, SNF Entry# 1613-C, Box# 2398, POL 27-14 Korea, N-UN -- POL 33-4 Korea, N-UN: Algiers to Department of State, 6 May 1965; Algiers to Department of State, 10 August 1965.

⁶²⁰ [NARA] RG 59, SNF Entry# 1613-C, Box# 2400, POL 2 Korea, South -- POL 2-1 Korea, South: Seoul to Department of State, 28 May 1965.

⁶²¹ [NARA] RG 59, SNF Entry# A1 1613-A, Box# 3964, POL 17 Korea -- POL Kuwait: Paris to Secretary of State, 16 September 1963; Algiers to Secretary of State, 19 September 1963.

⁶²² RG 59, INR, Entry# P 15, Box# 10, AFRICA MISCELLANEOUS: Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Report No. 489, 16 June 1976.

⁶²³ Mandela 1995.

⁶²⁴ Youcef 2014.

⁶²⁵ Drew 2015.

⁶²⁶ Youcef 2014.

⁶²⁷ Drew 2015.

⁶²⁸ Youcef 2014.

began training in Algeria in 1965, the year that the Zimbabwean armed struggle began in earnest with small-scale bush operations. To acquire weapons, Joshua Nkomo made a journey that was as tedious as the one undertaken by Nujoma: the arms he picked up in Egypt were brought to Tanzania and then driven by car to Zimbabwe.⁶²⁹

Algeria was important, but naturally there were more places and institutions that mattered in the armed struggle for African liberation – Ghana, for example, organised the All-African Peoples' Conference in 1958.⁶³⁰ One of the speakers was Frantz Fanon, who called for the armed struggle on behalf of Algeria's FLN.⁶³¹ His book *Wretched of the Earth* would have a striking impact on African revolutionaries across the continent.⁶³² Ghana's Bureau of African Affairs and the OAU Liberation Committee in Tanzania were discussed in Chapter 5. The main takeaway from these displays of African solidarity was the profound impact of exile on the development of liberation movements.

The former SWAPO ambassador Andreas Shipanga provided a moving account of finding refuge in exile. When he arrived in Congo in the 1960s, a 'cloud of sadness settled over' him as he remembered the fate of one of Africa's greatest freedom fighters: 'the memory of Lumumba haunted me like a ghost'. In Congo, Shipanga was tasked with finding training opportunities for SWAPO's liberation army, PLAN. Visiting Western embassies 'was like knocking your head against a brick wall', but the Algerian ambassador 'became a real friend'. Soon thereafter, Namibian revolutionaries were trained in various spots around Africa, including Ghana, Egypt, and Tanzania.⁶³³

Exile equalled opportunities, but also anguish – being removed from home, the constant travelling and bartering for support, the despair that kicked in when victory seemed far away. 'The years of exile had taken a heavy toll', confessed Shipanga. Chapter 1 described his participation in the 1965 AAPSO conference in Cuba. On New Year's Eve, Fidel Castro threw a party for all delegates and invited SWAPO. There was plenty of rum and cheerfulness. But while the delegates were dancing, Shipanga and his comrades 'sat in the subdued light and cried ... homesickness swept over us at once'. Havana was one large party, but Namibia seemed far away. 'It was the first time that the reality of exile had hit me'.⁶³⁴ The experience of exile, good and bad, became hardwired into the DNA of African liberation movements.

Military Mindsets

In training camps across Africa, the armed wings of liberation movements launched revolutionary programmes to transform their rank and file into proper soldiers. In the fight for independence, political and military struggles were essentially the same. 'Our trained cadres must be imbued with political theories and ideas', wrote the ANC revolutionary Ronnie Kasrils. 'They must understand that politics guides the gun'.⁶³⁵ SWAPO's political programme was designed around the principle that 'it is politics which leads the gun'.⁶³⁶ ZANU also believed that 'the struggle we are waging is primarily a political struggle'. Hence, 'the Party should direct the gun'.⁶³⁷ This sentiment was widely shared among political elites in Southern Africa and led to the formation of military mindsets that came to define the political culture of much of the region, past and present.⁶³⁸

⁶²⁹ [NAI] PC Zimbabwe NLM ZAPU: History of the armed struggle in Zimbabwe.

⁶³⁰ Grilli 2020.

⁶³¹ Drew 2015.

⁶³² Fanon 1961.

⁶³³ Armstrong 1989, p. 68-72.

⁶³⁴ Armstrong 1989, p. 85.

⁶³⁵ [MA] ANC Lusaka Box 58: Ronnie Kasrils, Politics and the armed struggle.

⁶³⁶ SWAPO 1981, p. 262.

⁶³⁷ [NAI] PC Zimbabwe NLM ZANU: ZANU Political Programme, 1973.

⁶³⁸ Melber 2009.

The key to these military mindsets was the idea that the struggle in itself was a transformative experience. In 1972, Agostinho Neto, the leader of the Angolan MPLA, said that armed action is not only a sacrifice, but also ‘a school’. One of the lessons was that ‘the party must control the life of the country during every moment’. For Neto, it was necessary that the party constituted ‘the backbone, the base and the principal element’ of the nation.⁶³⁹ For this reason, the liberation movements and their armed wings were closely intertwined.

ZANU echoed the idea that the liberation war was a ‘school for the masses’. The first task of the revolution was to ‘establish the people’s army as a central organ of the party’. Hence, all ZANU members became automatic members of its liberation army, ZANLA. It was strongly believed that ZANLA was not ‘a militarist organisation like the regular national armies of nation states’. Rather, it was a ‘politico-military organisation’ that emphasised the political dimension of the struggle.⁶⁴⁰

However, becoming a successful guerrilla fighter requires skill and therefore training. Across Southern Africa and beyond, liberation movements established new or joined existing training camps. Here, students were educated in the art of war.

In 1964, the Angolan MPLA launched the Centre of Revolutionary Instruction, a politico-military school. From the perspective of the MPLA, the guerrilla was ‘an essentially political person’. Cadres were trained in all aspects of the struggle, from agricultural work to military training. The MPLA stated that its ‘concept of warfare embraces every aspect of the struggle’. Education was thus vital in forming the new ‘man’ that MPLA desired.⁶⁴¹ The rivalling FNLA also designed a Revolutionary Educational Programme that combined standard military courses (military history, weaponry, cartography, radio) with courses in health, agriculture, and industry. After examinations, the students received the title ‘scientist of the revolution’.⁶⁴²

SWAPO saw its freedom fighters ‘first and foremost [as] armed political militants’. The party proudly announced that every fighting unit had a political instructor who educated the guerrillas before and after battle.⁶⁴³ Upon graduation, soldiers from Umkhonto we Sizwe that were trained in Angola were inaugurated with the words: ‘You are soldiers of our revolution. You are political soldiers’.⁶⁴⁴ An MK soldier reminisced in 1978 about the impact of guerrilla training. As a civilian, S. Mokoena did not fully understand what it meant to be a freedom fighter. ‘To my surprise I realised that a guerrilla is in fact a politician who fights with gun in hand’. The lesson from MK was that politics comes first and the gun is a tool for political liberation. ‘I found myself with a gun in my hand, politics in mind and the enemy in the correct perspective’.⁶⁴⁵ The ‘Organisation Plan for the preparation of Armed Revolution’ of MK quoted Kim Il Sung’s ideas about revolutionary warfare, as did Mandela.⁶⁴⁶

The art of war is best taught through examples. Exiled African guerrilla fighters learned about past revolutions that were inspiring. In 1973, on the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Korean People’s Army, the North Korean Embassy in the Republic of Congo organised a meeting for exiled MPLA soldiers. The Angolan nationalists were taught the history of the Korean People’s Army: the long struggle against Japanese imperialism and American aggression, the wise leadership of Kim Il Sung, and its ‘decisive contribution to the

⁶³⁹ [NAI] PC Angola NLMA MPLA: speech by Neto, December 1972.

⁶⁴⁰ [NAI] PC Zimbabwe NLM ZANU: conference 23-24 February 1979; Zimbabwe News.

⁶⁴¹ [NAI] PC Angola NLM MPLA: report to the UN Committee on Decolonisation.

⁶⁴² [NAI] PC Angola NLM FNLA: The Angola Revolution and Education.

⁶⁴³ SWAPO 1981, p. 262.

⁶⁴⁴ [MA] ANC London Box 9: speech, June 16th detachment of MK.

⁶⁴⁵ [MA] Dawn: Vol. 2, No. 5, November 1978.

⁶⁴⁶ Landau 2022, p. 119; 229.

revolutionary struggle of the peoples of the world'.⁶⁴⁷ A special booklet, titled 'Victory or Death' was produced, and included photos of Kim and Neto.

SWAPO's political programme for its military cadres borrowed heavily from materials produced by countries that supported their struggle: 'a strong internationalist flavour permeates these classes'.⁶⁴⁸ A political commissar from the Zimbabwe People's Army said in 1976 that 'in the history of revolutionary struggles we find examples that closely approximate our own situation'.⁶⁴⁹ Occasionally, North Korea would feature as a model for success. Indeed, the political commissar highlighted Korea. Two years later, in a published version of the Political Commissariat Lecture Series that outlined the Zimbabwean revolutionary education, ZANU included a photograph of the North Korean army. The Korean War was seen as the 'first victory of the people' after World War II, an example of how Koreans successfully 'smashed imperialism'.⁶⁵⁰

In the years that followed, North Korea would become more than a theoretical example of a successful military revolution – it would offer practical aid for African revolutionaries that wanted to replicate North Korea's achievements as an independent state that withstood Western imperialism. Aid was made available on the African continent via outsourced military advisors and in North Korea through targeted invitations to promising soldiers. It was a chance for Kim Il Sung to show that the political and military struggle in North Korea was essentially the same.

North Korean Training

From the 1960s onwards, North Korea became militarily involved in the low-intensity guerrilla warfare that spilled across Southern Africa. A crucial aspect of Pyongyang's military programme was the support for (exiled) liberation movements. The Frontline States played a key role in facilitating interactions between African nationalists and North Korea.

Initially, North Korea dispensed military aid through ad-hoc operations that were executed via North Korean embassies in the Frontline States. For example, the North Korean embassy in Lusaka (Zambia) organised military training for ZANU forces that fought for a liberated Zimbabwe.⁶⁵¹ In 1966, North Korea had denounced Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence as a 'robberish act', a mere attempt by 'the imperialists to trample down the national sovereignty of Zimbabweans ... The Korean people stand foursquare behind the African people'.⁶⁵² North Korean training activities for ZANU were later moved to Mozambique, after tensions arose between ZANU and ZAPU members in Zambia (the resulting altercations had offended their host, Kenneth Kaunda).⁶⁵³

The North Korean embassy in Tanzania similarly provided training for ZANU members, but also helped FRELIMO, the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon, and the Eritrean Liberation Front.⁶⁵⁴ As already discussed in Chapter 5, the North Koreans invested heavily in Tanzania as they recognised that Dar es Salaam was an important hub for African liberation. The North Korean embassy, established in 1965, was the largest in Africa and the only one actually built by North Korea.⁶⁵⁵ Around half a dozen North Korean intelligence officers were stationed in

⁶⁴⁷ [NAI] PC Angola NLM MPLA: Victoria ou Morte, 14 April 1973.

⁶⁴⁸ SWAPO 1981, p. 262.

⁶⁴⁹ [NAI] PC Zimbabwe Military/Special Forces: Zimbabwe People's Army, September 1976.

⁶⁵⁰ [NAI] PC Zimbabwe NLM ZANU: conference 23-24 February 1979; Zimbabwe News.

⁶⁵¹ Bermudez 1990.

⁶⁵² The Nationalist, 8 January 1966. I wish to thank Brooks Marmon for sharing this file with me.

⁶⁵³ Bermudez 1990.

⁶⁵⁴ [NAUK] FCO 31/948.

⁶⁵⁵ Interview with an anonymous North Korean diplomat, Seoul, 19 July 2021; [NAUK] FO 371/181130; [NAUK] FO 371/170810; [NAUK] FO 371/181117.

the country.⁶⁵⁶ Tanzania is recognised as the place where North Korea enjoyed one of its ‘greatest successes’ in terms of military aid.⁶⁵⁷

In addition to ad hoc training operations through embassies in African capitals, North Korea offered training programmes at camps that were established in the Frontline States. In the early 1970s, a North Korean training camp was established in Tanzania (in Tabora, a place 740 km from Dar es Salaam). It is estimated that a thousand African soldiers were trained by North Korean advisors at Tabora – although this number is impossible to verify.⁶⁵⁸ There must have been a high level of trust between Tanzanian political elites (TANU/CCM) and the North Korean regime to make this happen. Several high-ranking members of TANU and the Tanzanian People’s Defence Force received military training in North Korea during the 1970s.⁶⁵⁹ North Korean advisors were active in the TANU Youth League and allegedly wielded ‘considerable potential political influence,’ while senior Tanzanian politicians visited Pyongyang to study the intricacies of party organisation.⁶⁶⁰

In the early 1980s, another North Korean training camp was located in Angola. Like Tanzania, Angola was a Frontline State and therefore a strategic location for North Korean investment. Moreover, the ongoing civil war in Angola – a conflict inflamed by foreign powers – was critical for the stability of Southern Africa and thus closely connected to the Namibian liberation struggle. In 1983, the MPLA government signed a military agreement with North Korea for military support. An estimated 1000 to 3000 North Korean military advisors were subsequently stationed in Quibaxi (a place 150 km from the capital Luanda) until at least 1988. MPLA forces were trained in sniper skills, hit-and-run techniques, and combat operations.⁶⁶¹ The North Korean advisors in Angola also trained fighters from PLAN, the military wing of SWAPO.⁶⁶² Pyongyang gave ‘substantial military assistance’ to the Namibian nationalist cause.⁶⁶³ Nujoma, the SWAPO leader, publicly praised North Korea’s military support during a banquet in Pyongyang, in June 1986.⁶⁶⁴ In front of Kim Il Sung, he cited the ‘material assistance’ of North Korea as the reason why SWAPO was able ‘to maintain the banner of the struggle higher and inflict casualties on the South African racist troops’.⁶⁶⁵

The North Korean operations in Africa – either through embassies or camps – were focused on basic training. Advanced training, on the other hand, was offered within North Korea.⁶⁶⁶ Promising African soldiers travelled to Pyongyang for this purpose as early as the 1960s.⁶⁶⁷ For example, American diplomatic files indicate that, between April–August 1965, 15 Zimbabwean revolutionaries were trained in the use of explosives and arms in a camp close to Pyongyang.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁵⁶ [NAUK] FCO 21/3231.

⁶⁵⁷ Bermudez 1990.

⁶⁵⁸ Bermudez 1990.

⁶⁵⁹ Temu and Tembe 2014, p. 181; 377 [Vol. 6].

⁶⁶⁰ This was not exceptional. In 1986, North Korean trainers were also involved in the Basutoland National Party Youth League, the ruling party of Lesotho. After the coup on 15 January 1986, which deposed of the government of Leabua Jonathan, the trainers were reported to hide in the North Korean embassy, and subsequently left the country. [NAUK] FCO 31/976; [NAUK] FCO 31/3263; [NAUK] FCO 105/2183; [NAUK] FCO 105/1889; [NAUK] FCO 31/3674; [DAF] 193PO/1-26.

⁶⁶¹ Temu and Temba 2014, p. 356 [Vol. 8].

⁶⁶² [NAUK] FCO 21/5260; Bermudez 1990; Bechtold 2018.

⁶⁶³ Owoeye 1991, p. 641.

⁶⁶⁴ [UNAM] PA44/1/4/115.

⁶⁶⁵ [NSS] SWAPO Information Bulletin: June 1986.

⁶⁶⁶ [NAUK] FCO 21/3231.

⁶⁶⁷ Greig 1977, p. 173.

⁶⁶⁸ [UML] MUM.00767. I wish to thank Brooks Marmon for sharing this file with me.

Towards the end of the Cold War, North Korea was reported to maintain ten training facilities in and around Pyongyang.⁶⁶⁹ Short-term courses lasted 3–6 months, but long-term courses could run up to 12–24 months. African nationalists were trained in a variety of skills by North Korean special forces, ranging from marksmanship, map reading, ambush and counter-ambush, explosives, to communications, intelligence, and medical training. It is estimated that 10,000–15,000 foreign nationals profited from this training, including trainees from Latin America and other parts of Asia, although this number is impossible to verify.⁶⁷⁰

What is certain, is that several contemporary ruling parties in Southern Africa benefited from military training in North Korea before independence. Among them are MPLA (ruling Angola since 1975), FRELIMO (ruling Mozambique since 1975), ZANU (ruling Zimbabwe since 1980), and SWAPO (ruling Namibia since 1990).

Conclusion

When, in 1985, a North Korean delegation arrived in Zambia, they were met with immense gratitude. Alexander Grey Zulu, an eminent Zambian politician who was involved in the liberation struggle, ‘lauded the Korean government for its invaluable aid to the oppressed people in Southern Africa’. Zulu (who had already met Kim Il Sung in 1975) thanked North Korea for its help ‘during times of need when the country provided a rear base to freedom fighters’.⁶⁷¹

The provision of weaponry and military instructors was a ‘key feature’ of North Korean assistance to African liberation movements, and this first occurred in places of exile on the African continent.⁶⁷² In several cases, liberation movements received arms and training for free, or at reduced prices, as this was a cornerstone of North Korean foreign policy during the Cold War.⁶⁷³ From the perspective of Pyongyang, military strategy and diplomatic strategy were closely intertwined.

Helped by North Korea, national liberation movements defeated white settler regimes and colonial governments. But liberation came at a price. The lesson that African revolutionaries learned from their experiences in exile was the importance of control. Liberation movements were guided by military mindsets that would have lasting legacies on the political culture in Southern Africa, something that is explored in more detail in the third part of this book.

The roots of authoritarian or anti-democratic behaviour that characterise so much of contemporary politics in Southern Africa can be traced to this era. Within the exile camps of numerous liberation movements, party leaders forged unity with all means necessary – even if this included violence. Paranoia quickly led to repression, as critical party members became dissidents. When, in the 1970s, Andreas Shipanga, the ‘roving ambassador of SWAPO’ criticised his party’s leadership and called for more internal democracy, he was branded a spy by Nujoma. Shipanga and his allies were arrested by the Zambian government and jailed for two years in Tanzania.⁶⁷⁴

Nujoma used this incident to strengthen his control over the party, a pattern commonly adopted by other African liberation movements. Human rights violations also occurred in ANC

⁶⁶⁹ [NAUK] FCO 31/948; [SADIRCO] 1.1191.1 (I wish to thank Stuart Doran for sharing this file with me).

⁶⁷⁰ Another guess, reported in the press and based on anonymous ‘Asian diplomatic sources’, estimated that 3800 African soldiers were trained in Pyongyang between 1971–1981. Bermudez 1990; [SADIRCO] 1.1191.1; [DARK] 18677.

⁶⁷¹ [DARK] 23571; footage of Zulu’s visit to Pyongyang can be found on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsz8NWLQxJU>.

⁶⁷² [NAUK] FCO 21/3231.

⁶⁷³ [NAUK] FCO 21/3231; [NAUK] FCO 31/3922.

⁶⁷⁴ Leys and Saul 1994.

camps in Angola, where dissident members were detained, tortured, and executed.⁶⁷⁵ These dark pages in the history of African decolonisation are a taboo in Southern Africa today, not least because, in many cases, the perpetrators remain in power. They are the excesses of a mindset that valued unity above all else – a mentality that also informed the desire to consolidate newly found political power, as is covered in the next chapter.

⁶⁷⁵ Trehela 2009.