

## **South African raid on Maseru Continuing guerrilla activities Cabinet changes**

**Assassination of Minister of Works (Aug. 7, 1982). Cabinet changes (August 1982, February 1983). South African commando raid on homes of alleged.**

ANC members in Maseru (Dec. 9, 1982). Destruction of fuel storage depot in Maseru by LLA guerrillas (Feb. 13, 1983).

A series of guerrilla attacks against strategic economic and political targets in Lesotho was mounted in early 1982 by the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA), the military wing of the Basotho Congress Party (BCP). In one landmine explosion in the northern district of Berea on May 23, the mother of Mr Peete N Peete, the Minister of Agriculture and Marketing, was killed and other members of his family were injured, although Mr Peete himself was unhurt. [For LLA guerrilla activity in 1980-81, see 31303 A.]

Chief Leabua Jonathan, the Prime Minister of Lesotho, addressing the National Assembly on May 26, 1982, attributed responsibility for these attacks to Mr Ntsu Mokhehle, the BCP leader, who, he said, was operating with South African assistance. Mr Roelof F. "Pik" Botha, the South African Foreign Minister, said on the same day that Chief Jonathan was again attempting to implicate South Africa in problems which he was experiencing with dissident groups on his country's borders. Mr Botha further alleged that the Lesotho Government wished to make South Africa the scapegoat for its own inability to contain the opposition groups inside Lesotho.

Mr Koenyama Chakela, a former exiled BCP leader who had taken advantage of the September 1980 amnesty to return to Lesotho and who had in September 1981 formed a working political relationship with Mr Gerald Ramoreboli, the Minister of Justice and Prisons [ibid.], was shot dead by the LLA on July 5, 1982, near his home at Lekhetlane in the Leribe district.

Chief Jonathan's country residence near Leribe was attacked on the night of July 28-29 by mortar and small arms fire, but no casualties were inflicted.

Mr Jobo K. Rampeta, the Minister of Works, and two companions were shot dead on Aug. 7, 1982, in an ambush in northern Berea district. Following this assassination Chief Jonathan announced that steps were being taken to tighten the country's security to counter this "foreign-backed" terrorist campaign.

Mr Botha on Aug. 8 sent a message of sympathy to the Lesotho Government and also warned that "unless the governments of all countries of the sub-continent act without reserve against organizations that use force to achieve their political aims, the stability and progress of all countries will suffer as a result".

Johannesburg radio reported on Aug. 11 that Mr Charles Molapo, the Lesotho Minister of Information and Broadcasting and then acting Foreign Minister, had rejected the message of sympathy and had alleged in a letter to Mr Botha that the people responsible for Mr Rampeta's death had been trained by the South African police.

Johannesburg radio reported on Aug. 12 that the South African Government had protested to the Lesotho Government about a border incident the previous day in which one Black South African farmworker was killed and two others were kidnapped when members of Lesotho's paramilitary police allegedly crossed into the Orange Free State.

Chief Jonathan claimed on Aug. 14 at Mr Rampeta's funeral that South Africa was training, equipping and sheltering members of the LLA. Mr Botha, however, declared on Aug. 15 that the Lesotho Government regularly made such accusations "to take attention away from the precarious conditions in Lesotho and border violations carried out by Lesotho".

In other internal security developments during the latter part of 1982 (i) six LLA members died on Aug. 26 in a shooting incident in the Clarens district of the Orange Free State, when one member of the eight-man party (which was allegedly on its way to attack a Lesotho paramilitary unit) apparently shot his comrades before giving himself up to the Lesotho authorities; (ii) two members of the LLA were killed on Sept. 2 in the Butha Buthe district during a clash with a paramilitary unit; (iii) Mr Lekhooana Jonathan, a Minister of State, escaped unharmed when his car was blown up on Nov. 10 in the Leribe district, although his driver and bodyguard were seriously injured; and (iv) Chief Seeiso Majara, the son of Mr Matete Majara (Minister of Water, Energy and Mines), died on Dec. 1 after his car had hit a landmine.

An official in the Lesotho Prime Minister's Office was reported by Johannesburg radio on Nov. 23 to have strongly denied earlier allegations made by Mr Louis le Grange, the South African Minister of Law and Order, that Lesotho's capital, Maseru, was a base for the planning of "terrorist" attacks against South Africa, in particular by guerrillas of the African National Congress (ANC). The official declared that the Lesotho Government viewed Mr le Grange's statement as the prelude to direct South African action in Lesotho, on the pattern of previous actions in Angola and Mozambique. [For South African incursions into, and alleged occupation of, Angolan territory during 1982, see 31996 A. For South African raid against alleged ANC headquarters in Matola, Mozambique, in January 1981, see page 30889.]

The Lesotho official denied that South Africa had ever been attacked from Lesotho and stated that it was his Government's policy to accept genuine political refugees on the condition that they would not use Lesotho territory as a base from which to attack South Africa or other countries.

South African commandos launched a pre-dawn raid on Dec. 9, 1982, against the homes of alleged ANC members in residential areas of Maseru, which resulted in the deaths of 42 people, of whom 30 were reported to be South African refugees and 12 civilians.

Western press reports claimed that the raiding force met with little resistance from Lesotho's paramilitary police, although four members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) were later reported to have been wounded. Lesotho officials, subsequently supported by diplomatic sources, claimed that 64 South African commandos were trapped in Lesotho for a few hours and were airlifted out only after South African military commanders had warned the Lesotho security forces of massive retaliation if they interfered with the withdrawal.

Among those acknowledged by the ANC to have been killed during the raid were Mr Zola Nqini, Mr Jackson Tayo and Mr Phakamile Mpongoshe, who were all former prisoners on South Africa's Robben Island.

Gen. Constand Viljoen, the chief of the SADF, acknowledged on Dec. 9 that the raid had taken place and expressed his regret that seven women and children had been killed in "crossfire". Gen. Viljoen stated that the raid had been motivated by intelligence reports that a "number of trained terrorists" had arrived in Maseru in the past month with orders to assassinate leaders of the independent South African homelands of Ciskei and Transkei. He claimed that the 12 targets of the commando raid included the planning and control headquarters for ANC guerrilla activities against South Africa, which, he alleged, had been sited in residential areas of the city with the intention of making action against them difficult.

Chief Jonathan on Dec. 9 condemned the South African raid as an act of "naked provocation", while Mr Charles Molapo described it as an act of "murder of Basotho women, children and refugees". Mr Molapo maintained that it had been clear for some time that South Africa intended to mount an attack, particularly in view of the latter's suggestions that there were Cuban, Soviet and ANC bases in Lesotho [see 30315 A; 31303 A], suggestions which he said were designed to create the impression that Lesotho had hostile intentions towards South Africa. Mr Molapo added that Lesotho would not alter its established policy on the granting of asylum to South African political refugees [see above].

Mr Marais Steyn, the South African ambassador to the United Kingdom, stated on Dec. 9 that the South African Government "had warned Lesotho again and again, at the very highest level, that we had definite information that these terrorists were planning [infiltration] into South Africa to commit sustained acts of sabotage, wanton acts of killing [and] murders". Mr Steyn claimed that the civilians who had died "were being used deliberately as shields by the terrorists".

Mr M. Q. Molapo, the BCP representative in London, declared on the same day that the raid arose directly from Chief Jonathan's "callous disregard of the national interest when he allowed the Communist Party of South Africa to establish anti-South African military bases on the sovereign territory of the Kingdom of Lesotho".

Mr Philip Myburgh, the defence spokesman of the South African opposition Progressive Federal Party, stated on Dec. 9 that the SADF had no option but to take such action, having given the Lesotho Government repeated warnings. On the other hand, Bishop Desmond Tutu, the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, declared on the same day that the Lesotho Government had "repeatedly stated that it would not allow its territory to be used as a springboard for attacks on South Africa or any other country"; the SADF incursion into Lesotho could "therefore not be justified as either a pre-emptive strike or hot pursuit".

International reaction to the South African raid was almost wholly critical and included unanimous resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.

The UN General Assembly on Dec. 14 unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the raid and urged the Security Council to take immediate steps to deter South Africa from a repetition of such acts of aggression against neighbouring states [see page 17410]. King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho, addressing the Security Council in New York on Dec. 14, declared that Lesotho required positive action “and not another resolution that would only gather dust”. The King, who maintained that Lesotho had received no prior warning of the raid, claimed that the Government had dealt firmly with the few ANC “freedom fighters” it had found to be armed but added that it would continue to refuse to hand them over to the South African authorities. The Security Council on Dec. 15 unanimously adopted a resolution calling upon South Africa to pay full and adequate compensation to Lesotho for the damage to life and property resulting from its aggressive act. The resolution also reaffirmed Lesotho's right to receive and give sanctuary to the victims of apartheid policies and requested member states urgently to extend all necessary economic assistance to Lesotho in order to strengthen the country's capacity to receive and maintain South African refugees. In a letter to the UN Secretary-General, made public on Feb. 9, 1983, Mr Botha rejected the Security Council resolution, which he described as fundamentally flawed and one-sided. He declared that South Africa exercised restraint and patient diplomacy in the pursuit of peace but reserved the right in the final resort to take effective measures to defend the lives and property of its citizens. Mr Botha stated that South Africa wished to negotiate with its neighbours both a non-aggression pact and treaties which would bar the use of one another's territories for attacks.

Following an LLA attack on Dec. 14, 1982, on a house allegedly used as an armoury by the Lesotho paramilitary police in the Butha Buthe district, in which the LLA claimed four people were killed, no guerrilla activity was reported until the end of January 1983.

Shortly before the opening in Maseru on Jan. 27 of a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference [see 32063 B], the LLA claimed responsibility for three explosions at an abattoir development scheme near the capital.

The Lesotho Government blamed the LLA for an explosion on Feb. 13 at one of Lesotho's three main petrol storage depots which destroyed an estimated 60,000 gallons of fuel, adding that it held South Africa to be “wholly responsible”. A protest note sent to the South African Government by the Lesotho Foreign Ministry on Feb. 15 alleged that the sabotage had been aided by an aircraft circling the depot and by the dropping of a flare, and demanded compensation for the damage inflicted. The South African Foreign Ministry on the same day denied these “unfounded allegations” and declared that such claims were designed to conceal the critical domestic situation inside Lesotho.

Following persistent rumours in February-March 1983 of plans for further South African action against Lesotho, the Government on March 10 sent an urgent message to Pretoria informing the South African Government that “it had reliable information that an imminent attack on Lesotho was being organized in South Africa”. The South African Government, however, declared on the same day that the SADF had no knowledge of an attack against Lesotho being planned or organized in South Africa.

It was reported that at least 100 ANC members and supporters had been withdrawn from Maseru to Mozambique during January 1983. Previously, the home of Mr Tembi Hani, an alleged ANC member, had been bombed on Aug. 2, 1982, reportedly the second such occurrence during 1982.

Earlier, 15 members of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC, also banned in South Africa) were on May 5, 1982, unconditionally released after having been detained for about a week without charges being brought against them; it was subsequently reported that these arrests had been caused by suspected contacts between the PAC and the LLA.

In a cabinet reshuffle announced on Aug. 17, 1982, Mr John C.S Masithela, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, was appointed Minister of Public Works *vice* Mr Rampeta, who had been assassinated [see above], and Mr V. Mooki Molapo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, became Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism.

The Foreign Affairs portfolio was assumed at the time of the August 1982 reshuffle by Mr Charles Molapo (a former Foreign Minister), in addition to his responsibilities for Information and Broadcasting. However, in a subsequent cabinet change announced on Feb. 24, 1983, Mr E. R. Sekhonyana, the Minister to the Prime Minister, became Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr Charles Molapo again became solely Minister of Information and Broadcasting. [For cabinet list as of November 1981, see 31303 A.]

Following the South African raid, Mr Charles D. Mofeli, the leader of the opposition United Democratic Party (UDP), called on Dec. 22, 1982, for the removal of all South African political refugees from Lesotho in the interests of the country's national Security. Previously, on Nov. 23, 1982, Mr Mofeli had released the UDP's manifesto for the future elections (which Chief Jonathan had promised at a rally in November 1981-

ibid.), which included commitments to establish diplomatic relations with South Africa and to oppose the imposition of trade sanctions against South Africa on the grounds that Lesotho would not be able to survive economically if such restrictions were enforced.—(Cape Times—Times Guardian—Financial Times—New York Times—Daily Telegraph—Le Monde International Herald Tribune— Africa Now— Africa Research Bulletin—UN Information Centre, London—BBC Summary of World Broadcasts]  
*(Prev. rep. 31303 A)*

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