

The Militarization of BOSS

By Andy Weir and Jonathan Bloch

The more a state is shunned by other nations and the greater its reliance on violence to maintain power, the more vital will be its intelligence services. To the South African elite then, covert action has always been a crucial ingredient in both foreign and domestic policy. Unable to operate publicly in the international arena because of censure, the South Africans have had to use the intelligence services to neutralize enemies, boost trade and prestige, and conduct diplomacy.

The Birth of BOSS

Since 1969 the organization with prime responsibility for these functions has been BOSS, the Bureau of State Security, headed by General Hendrik Van Den Bergh. Its predecessor, named "Republican Intelligence," was founded in the early 1960s as a limited intelligence organization, to work alongside the Police to fight increasingly combative black nationalists and communists who were organizing opposition to the regime with growing success. The hard-pressed Security Police, hitherto responsible for all action against "subversives," was soon to be augmented by the young organization which Van Den Bergh, then also head of the Security Police, modelled on the CIA. In the person of counter-intelligence chief James Jesus Angleton the CIA helped BOSS in its foundation, and Van Den Bergh and several lieutenants went to the U.S. to pick up advice and technology. Sources say that the nascent BOSS was given a boost by the French and British security services too, liaisons that continue now with BOSS's successor. With tutors like these BOSS got off to a good start.

The planting of informers was the main tactic BOSS used against the South African Communist Party, the African National Congress, the Pan-Africanist Congress, and the armed wings of the latter two liberation movements. The success of BOSS in driving all these movements underground and devastating their organization in 1962 and 1963 gave Van Den Bergh great prestige within the state, even though he was influential enough as a close confidant of Prime Minister Vorster. Indeed BOSS soon became a tool for the conduct of Vorster's and Van Den Bergh's personal political battles as well. BOSS's resources were deployed not only against the "subversives" of the SACP and ANC, but also against the loyal opposition. Arthur MacGiven, the BOSS defector of late 1979, gave a BOSS list of targets. They included the Progressive Reform Party (the tiny parliamentary white opposition), the extreme right-wing Herstigte Nasionale Partei, the National Union of South African Students, the Anglican,

Lutheran, and Catholic churches, the South African Council of Churches, journalists, students, academics, writers, diplomats, business persons, African states, and many others. The reasons for surveillance of these groups had as much to do with keeping tabs on Vorster's political rivals as keeping the lid on internal dissent. Indeed, an article by John Fullerton [*Now!* magazine, October 5, 1979] alleged that the present Prime Minister, P.W. Botha (then Defense Minister), once had his phone tapped by BOSS.

The consequences of Boss becoming a fiefdom of the Vorster-Van Den Bergh duumvirate will become clear later on. But for the moment it is worth describing the structure as told by Arthur MacGiven, the most convincing of a number of BOSS defectors. (Increasing doubt has been cast on MacGiven's credibility, but the account of BOSS he has given fits with other information on BOSS and, together with the fact that BOSS was virtually emasculated shortly after MacGiven left, there is no reason to disbelieve his account of its structure.)

The Structure of BOSS

Routine surveillance operations were given names: Operation Knoopsgat (buttonhole) was the interception of mail; and Operation Rystoel (wheelchair) was the planting of bugs, for instance. There were several Divisions, each named after a letter of the alphabet and responsible for different parts of society; for instance, "A" dealt with "white subversion;" "B" with "black subversion;" "F" with analysis of African states; and "G" with military evaluations in liaison with the Directorate of Military Intelligence. The Divisions, which evaluated intelligence, related to the operational sections, which were divided according to their different responsibilities, controlling agents at home and abroad, bugging, phone tapping, mail covers, and general counter-intelligence and government personnel vetting functions. MacGiven explained an organization whose intelligence functions seemed to have no limits—a sprawling bureaucracy which pervaded all corners of South African society and far across its borders.

The "Detente" Policy

BOSS was also a crucial part of South Africa's most important foreign policy initiatives, the so-called "detente" of the early 1970s and the Muldergate operations. Those involved in that "historic dialogue" with South Africa in

1970 were Zambia, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Malagasy Republic, Uganda, and South Africa's staunchest black African supporter, Hastings Banda of Malawi. Most of the groundwork for this series of meetings was laid by BOSS personnel preceding the government officials. These efforts in 1971 came to nothing, particularly when Vorster revealed secret contacts he had had with President Kaunda. But BOSS was also instrumental in opening the second line of "detente" manoeuvres when they got under way in 1974-5. This time Senegal, Ivory Coast, Zambia, and Liberia played hosts to secret visits by Vorster, most of them arranged by BOSS covert diplomacy and considerable bribery in some cases.

This was another effort to sweeten the atmosphere between black and white-ruled Africa; Vorster even told the late President Tolbert of Liberia that he was donating food aid to FRELIMO! But since the policy was based on an enormous deceit—namely that South Africa might ease *apartheid* laws—it was bound to fail, and it soon did.

More concrete intelligence gains were to be had out of the relations, however brief, with African states prepared to run the risk of censure for cooperating with South Africa. The Central African Republic (later Empire) under Bokassa and the Comoros Islands in the Indian Ocean both provided important bases from which the South Africans were able to mount aerial surveillance missions covering much of the rest of the continent. Malawi was also used in the latter capacity, as was the U.S. Embassy-owned Beechcraft light aircraft which had a spy camera in the fuselage, according to CIA sources quoted in U.S. newspapers. The airplane and some American officials, including intelligence men, were expelled from South Africa in early 1979 amidst a flurry of sanctimonious publicity which did not refer to the value to the South Africans of the aircraft. It is believed the South Africans decided to expel the Americans for trying once again to spy on South Africa's unique nuclear processing facilities. The Americans were held in contravention of an intelligence pact that the CIA would not spy in South Africa if BOSS provided intelligence on the liberation movements. The plane provided crucial intelligence about the frontline states for use in the war in Zimbabwe as back-up to the information supplied by BOSS's large agent networks in those countries. The links of UNITA in Angola and the anti-FRELIMO Mozambique Resistance Movement, for example, to South African training and logistics are well documented.

BOSS's Covert Actions

BOSS agents have been uncovered as far north in Africa as Kenya and Tanzania, not to mention Britain in Europe. No country which harbors refugees from South Africa can consider itself safe from South African infiltration. Five alleged BOSS agents were arrested in separate incidents in Lesotho, Botswana, and the Malagasy Republic in 1978 alone. Probably the best-known BOSS intervention in politics abroad was the payment to Bishop Muzorewa and Reverend Sithole of large sums to ensure their cooperation in the doomed "internal settlement" in Zimbabwe in early 1979.

BOSS went still further afield, being strongly suspected of involvement in the death in London in 1970 of Keith Wallace, a journalist allegedly being used by BOSS as an informer who was threatening to defect. Gordon Winter was another British journalist used as an informer (he claims to have been intimate with Van Den Bergh) who tried to sell the story of Jeremy Thorpe's homosexual relationship to a newspaper just before a British general election. The South Africans then regarded the British Liberal Party (of which Thorpe was Leader) as a serious threat at the time, and the head of the Young Liberals, South African-born Peter Hain, as an arch-enemy. BOSS was strongly suspected of setting up a bank robbery using a double of Hain's, for which he had to stand trial, so strong was the identification evidence. He was acquitted.

BOSS was also centrally involved in the Muldergate affair, the result of efforts of the Minister of Information, Connie Mulder, his dynamic chief civil servant Eschel Rhoodie, and Van Den Bergh and Vorster, to buy South Africa an acceptable image abroad.

Some of BOSS's operations were dramatically successful, like the agent Craig Williamson and other infiltrators; others humiliating. But what doomed BOSS in the end was its too close identification with the Van Den Bergh-Vorster axis in the National Party. The two friends eventually became isolated and embattled within the ruling elite, their positions crumbling as the ramifications of Muldergate widened. The failure to predict the Soweto uprising in 1976, the machinations of BOSS's arch-enemy P.W. Botha, and above all the Muldergate disclosures, combined to set the seal on BOSS's fate. Failures in giving agents adequate training, procedures like giving preferential promotion and recruitment to members of the Broederbond (the secret Afrikaner society) at the expense of efficiency, were further reasons.

The Shift in Intelligence Control

No sooner were the two rulers out of the way than the new regime unleashed the humiliated and frustrated generals on BOSS, which was first renamed DONS (Directorate of National Security) and now NIS (National Intelligence Service), drastically reducing its area of competence.

The change of the guard meant more stories about Van Den Bergh's despotic rule in the intelligence worlds and the bitter rivalries between BOSS and the other branches coming out. As Van Den Bergh himself later claimed, although Military Intelligence provided operational assistance to the army of Colonel Ojukwu in the Nigerian civil war in 1969, he only learned about it years later from a CIA source. An example of what good cause Prime Minister Botha has for despising Van Den Bergh was that the African Resistance Movement, active in the early 1960s, was infiltrated by Military Intelligence without Van Den Bergh's knowledge. He made Botha suffer for the resulting confusion; it was only the persuasive powers of the generals that got Botha to stay in office, even when Van Den Bergh poached officers

Staff Operations) is worth quoting: "The requirements for the application of total strategy would appear to favor a system of unified command, joint central planning, decentralized execution, and sustained vertical and horizontal coordination. Conventional organizations in democratic systems do not as a rule lend themselves to these procedures." Though that was said in 1977, its relevance is still plain.

The Role of the Military

It would seem that the appointment of two military men, a Rear Admiral and a Brigadier, to the NIS as the same time as Barnard is a step in the direction of this "unified command" as well as a typical penetration of the military into a hitherto civilian preserve. But if NIS is more streamlined and more accountable to other branches of government, it does not mean that it is not up to the same old tricks. That it continues to recruit informers in most of the areas mentioned by MacGiven is attested to by numerous articles in the press.

The Directorate of Military Intelligence is more shadowy and any recent change in its functions will be difficult to gauge. That they have expanded considerably is the only certain fact. Headed by General P.W. Van Der Westhuizen, the service has been credited by one source with engaging in sociological surveys about the image of *apartheid* in ghetto areas. The approach of trying to understand one's enemies better in order to fight them better also seems to be behind the rationale for the military "hearts and minds" campaigns being carried out not only in Namibia, but in the heartlands of South Africa also. Soldiers teach (with political education a high priority), work as doctors, agricultural advisors, and other roles ostensibly helpful to the black communities. The Natal SADF commanding officer explained the value of these programs as follows: "The purpose of this exercise is to win the loyalty and good will and cooperation of the local population as a front line for defense against insurgency."

The "hearts and minds" campaigns in Namibia are backed by much dirtier intelligence activities such as "Operation Cherry," the pseudo-SWAPO radio station for discrediting the movement. Fake SWAPO electoral material has been distributed and the authorities are believed to be behind the campaigning activities of SWAPO-D, a right-wing splinter from SWAPO.

More obvious DMI activity will be the arming, training, and funding of "bandits" in Zambia to help destabilize Kaunda, unofficial "dirty tricks" units in Namibia and Angola like the 32 Battalion (described elsewhere in this issue), supplying the Mozambican Resistance Movement, and reconnoitering the terrain and collecting information (from among others, the CIA) prior to the January raid on Matola, when a number of ANC exiles were killed or kidnapped. [See *CAIB* Number 12.] In one recent operation FRELIMO troops killed one of an invading party of 50 South African soldiers.

The Future

These sorts of operations, similar in many respects to

white Rhodesian tactics during the Zimbabwean war of independence, mark the style of South African intelligence operations for the future. Observers fear that actions like those of the 32 Battalion may only be a prelude, given the increasingly open support of the U.S. administration, for further military intervention abroad, particularly in Zimbabwe. Hundreds of black Zimbabwean troops were being trained in South Africa when the war ended and they stayed there, complemented now by the Selous Scouts, the Rhodesian SAS, and more recently the Rhodesian Light Infantry. With soldiers going on operations in mufti, proof of South African aggression will be hard to find for the frontline states.



Credit: United Nations/Contact

South African Commandos Training

While all the operations for which BOSS became notorious are likely to continue, increases in secret military activities are most probable, as well as continuations of the routine torture of political suspects, recruitment of informers, bribery abroad, and the financing of front organizations.

The format of the intelligence service may have changed dramatically, and even some of the priorities of the state, but, increasing U.S. support notwithstanding, the exigencies of having to act secretly abroad, because South Africa is a pariah state, and having to repress internal dissent brutally, because there is no semblance of democracy, have only become more pressing then before.

from Military Intelligence for BOSS. Neither were the Security Police immune from the BOSS chief's foraging for personnel. In the early 1970s the Security Police's then head Colonel Venter told a newspaper in a rare public exposure of intelligence rivalries, "Obviously one doesn't like losing one's top staff to another department."

This lengthy rivalry that dated back even to before the formation of BOSS in 1969 saw perhaps its apotheosis in the secret invasion of southern Angola by a South African armored column in 1975. Apparently, P.W. Botha planned and executed the move, informing the cabinet only when troops started crossing the border. Botha was eventually overruled when MPLA received heavy reinforcements of Cuban troops and it became clear that the U.S. administration was not going to support them militarily. But the "detente" moves so precious to Vorster and Van Den Bergh were wrecked. The "detente" policy was threatened once again when Botha and his generals planned an armored invasion of Mozambique shortly after the Angolan debacle, but Van Den Bergh stole the march on them when BOSS agents sabotaged the armored vehicles.



South African Troops Retreat from Angola; P.W. Botha Looks On

CIA coordination with BOSS at this time is well documented. [See John Stockwell, "In Search of Enemies," pp. 187-190.] While South Africa was preparing its ill-fated invasion from the south, the CIA was coordinating the FNLA actions in the north, from Zaire.

In view of Van Den Bergh's actions, it is not surprising that the accession to power of P.W. Botha, the former Minister of Defense, has brought a sea change in the style of white rule and the greatest primacy of the military ever in South African politics—some have described it as the "invisible military coup." Observers describing Botha as the man who will "reform" *apartheid* are missing the point. Botha's desire for some reforms is based not on changing the course of the ship of state, but on casting off some unnecessary ballast that could slow it down in the hard times to come. The official ideology of the state is now that South Africa is facing a "total onslaught" for which a "total strategy" is required. This strategy seems to demand the militarization of much of society and the socialization of much of the military. Anecdotes abound about the areas of society in which the military have now become involved. The consequences of all this for the intelligence world is an

extensive restructuring of the intelligence apparatus, with the Department of Military Intelligence in the driving seat.

Although the remnants of BOSS have taken on new, though not yet clear, functions, the fact that publicity on it is released through the South African Defense Force (SADF) press department indicates who is in charge. Its importance would seem to be considerably less now, given the fact that its director, Dr. Niel Barnard, is only 30 years old. He heads what is now called the National Intelligence Service. It would be fruitless to speculate about its functions, but on his appointment last year Barnard did give some clues. Referring to liaison with other Western intelligence services Barnard said, "South Africa is not such a black sheep." Indeed if the demise of BOSS did not involve the risk of leaks then there is no reason why the warm cooperation extended to BOSS by the CIA, MI-6, SDECE, and others should not continue with BOSS's successor.

Finances

With the new hierarchies has come a new financial structure for state covert action with the consolidation of the secret accounts from which the intelligence services draw their money. Prior to 1978 there were four secret funds established by acts of Parliament, with access restricted to the departments of defense, police, foreign affairs and BOSS, and plural relations. The new Secret Services Accounts Act passed in 1978 is more flexible. Parliament votes a lump sum to be paid into one secret fund. The Minister of Finance then makes drawings on the fund after consultations with ministers who need the money. No account is subject to scrutiny by the government's Auditor-General, and he will not be required to inform Parliament which departments received funds and in what proportion they were. The new Act thus increases the scope for secret spending as any government department will be able to spend secret money. Last year, for example, the normally non-clandestine Government Information Service was identified as the origin of anonymous pamphlets being circulated in the ghettos. In 1979 the amount budgeted for secret services was R29.5 million compared to R34.5 million in 1978. This fall is probably due to the fact that more intelligence work was being done by the military and incorporated into the defense budget, which continues to soar.

Whatever their true allocations of functions and areas of competence it is obvious now that the various branches of South Africa's intelligence effort are better coordinated than before, since they are all responsible to a top-level joint committee, the State Security Committee (SSC). The SSC's responsibilities for intelligence are just one part of what is rapidly becoming the nerve center of the South African state. Cabinet and Parliament have been relegated to rubber-stamping or consultative roles with the real power and discussion being vested in the SSC. One example of the extension of its power has been Botha's publicly stated aim to wield greater control over the parastatal corporations, like SASOL (the state-owned oil from coal concern) and ESCOM (the Electricity Supply Commission). The rationale for such moves under the "total strategy" doctrine as explained by Lt. Gen. J.R. Dutton (Chief of SADF

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South Africa's police crisis

South Africa's top spy, **Major Craig Williamson**, is about to leave the South African police. His resignation has drawn attention to growing dissatisfaction both in and outside the country's security establishment with the performance of the police during the present crisis. Williamson says that he is leaving in order to join the family business. But he is believed to be dismayed by the unsophisticated response of the police force to the current troubles and by the government's strategy for dealing with the African National Congress (ANC).

In the early 1970s, Williamson, an undercover agent for the security police, infiltrated the ANC and the South African Communist Party. His reports had a disastrous effect on covert international anti-South African operations. Fearing that his cover had been blown by another agent, Williamson returned to South Africa in 1980 to direct anti-ANC operations in Pretoria. He is widely regarded as South Africa's most successful intelligence agent.

The dissatisfaction of some of those concerned with internal security is reflected in a recent report to **President Botha** stating that the government was losing the propaganda war against the ANC and recommending that it adopt a different line. The report said the government should drop its censorship of ANC propaganda so that South Africans could be better informed about the organisation's aims and strategies. It urged the government not to prevent private meetings between individual South Africans and the ANC, but to turn them to its advantage by debriefing participants. Botha turned these ideas down. Discontent within the security establishment has grown.

Top security men, both in and outside the police, are also known to be concerned about the police's failure to contain the recent disorders. And they worry about the effect rough police action has had in radicalising not only young people but also their more moderate parents, according to FOREIGN REPORT's sources. The recent "Trojan Horse" action in Cape Town, in which police

ambushed a group of rioters, has been widely criticised in inner government circles. So has the use of bullwhips and buckshot. But many leaders of the ruling National Party, including some cabinet ministers, see no easy way of reforming the police force.

They say the 45,000-man force, the size of the New York City police force, has always been grossly undermanned for a country the size of South Africa. Against the western average of seven policemen per 1,000 people, South Africa barely manages two per 1,000. The result is that 20 to 50 policemen often face unruly crowds of a thousand or more.

Last week, the government announced that it would increase the force by 11,000. Our sources said, however, that an influx of raw recruits was not the answer.

The root of the problem lies in the fact that the police have for generations been recruited from the poorest and least educated white South Africans. Now, many white policemen are thought to be supporters of far-right political parties with little admiration for President Botha's reformist policies.

This is why Botha has been reluctant to oust his controversial and ailing minister of law and order, **Louis Le Grange**. The minister's dogged support for police actions, and his recent success in winning a hefty wage increase for the police, mean that he can rely on their loyalty.

Higher salaries have at last made a career in the police relatively competitive with the private sector. But better educated newcomers are not likely to win top jobs quickly. Many senior positions are held by mediocrities who entered the force at the age of 16 and worked their way up through the ranks. They will cling to their posts until retirement or until swept away by a new broom.

The old guard treat brighter and better educated officers with suspicion. The young guard oppose the seemingly indiscriminate use of force against rioters and, sometimes, against peaceful demonstrators.

This division reaches to the top. The police commissioner, **General Johan Coetzee**, is believed to support the tough approach; the deputy chief of the security police, **Brigadier Herman Stadler**, favours more sophisticated methods.

Decades of under-manning have meant that police in the townships relied heavily on apartheid legislation, mainly the pass laws, to do their policing for them. Raids by police to check that township dwellers held residence passes have transformed them, in the eyes of blacks, from law enforcement officers into agents of apartheid.

Under-manning also meant that black-on-black crimes in the townships were seldom solved. Some townships have very high crime rates. Citizens enjoy little or no police protection. Gangs rule some areas.

When disorders break out, the police, under-trained, prejudiced, young, frightened, tired after 18-hour days and outnumbered, resort quickly to maximum force. In this way, minor incidents can turn into riots.

To make matters worse, the 18,000 black policemen (who are paid the same wages as their white colleagues) have become prime targets of the rioters. Since the start of the violence, 14 black policemen have been murdered and 700 have been injured; about 400 have had their homes burnt down.

Last week's decision to expand the force to 56,000 men by 1987 may be part of a long-term solution, especially since only qualified high-school graduates are

direction from the top without alienating blacks as minister of law and order.

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Radical West

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Togo's **President Eyadéma** sabotage and subversion recent weeks. A series of the arrest of several well Togolese Democratic Movement by **Gil Olympio**, son of

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In Ivory Coast, the region by suppressing a successor to the country's French backed radical groups hoping

The move towards between Nigeria's vice and Captain **Frank** exchange of minister initialled.

direction from the top is essential if the government is to control the troubles without alienating black moderates. That means the replacement of Le Grange as minister of law and order.

Since it is a time-honoured National Party rule that ministers are never fired, and never voluntarily resign when under attack, and Le Grange has frequently and angrily denied that his departure is imminent, President Botha must find a face-saving way out. There is one. Le Grange is ill. His retirement on health grounds may be announced at a big party meeting on November 19th. When he goes, Le Grange will probably be succeeded by his deputy minister, **Adriaan Vlok**, who is thought to be more "enlightened" and amenable to new ideas. South Africa's policemen urgently need them.

Radical West Africa

The "Entente" group of French-speaking countries in West Africa is in danger of disintegrating, with serious consequences for a previously pro-western part of the continent. The group consists of Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, Niger and Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta). In the centre of these countries, geographically, is Ghana, which is suspected by the conservative members of the group to be dangerously radical under its young leader, **Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings**. Burkina Faso is already radicalised. Togo may be next.

Togo's **President Etienne Eyadema** suspects Ghana of being behind the sabotage and subversion which have become a major threat to his government in recent weeks. A series of bomb explosions in Lomé, the Togolese capital, led to the arrest of several well-known people suspected of having links with the exiled Togolese Democratic Movement—a body said to be mainly financed from Paris by **Gil Olympio**, son of Togo's first president, **Sylvanus Olympio**.

The radical president of Burkina Faso, **Captain Thomas Sankara**, who is Rawlings's strongest ally, refused to sign a statement at the end of an Entente meeting in September condemning the sabotage in Togo and unnamed foreign interests said to be inspiring it. Sankara made it clear that he did not object to opposition to Eyadema's strongman rule.

Subsequently, Sankara voiced hopes of setting up "a revolutionary Entente council". This reinforced the conviction of some of his neighbours, notably Ivory Coast, that the joint Ghana-Burkina Faso military manoeuvres held several times this year were directed against them, and were used as a training ground for armed subversives.

In Ivory Coast, the ruling Democratic Party added to the uncertainties of the region by suppressing the vice-presidency and leaving unresolved the question of a successor to the octogenarian **President Felix Houphouet-Boigny**. The country's French backers now fear that uncertainty will grow and encourage radical groups hoping to see "another Rawlings" in West Africa.

The move towards radicalism is being encouraged by the understanding between Nigeria's vigorous new military government, under **General Babangida**, and Captain Sankara and Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings. There has already been an exchange of ministerial visits, and economic co-operation deals have been initialled.