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Transnational Corporations Involvement in South Africa's Electronic Industry

by Max Vuyisile Sisulu

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DR. GOVAN MBEKI FUND
UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM
THE NETHERLANDS

Transnational Corporations Involvement in South Africa's Electronic Industry

by Max Vuyisile Sisulu

*To my parents,
Walter Xhamela
and
Albertina Nontsikelelo*

Govan Mbeki, honorary doctorate of the University of Amsterdam is a South African revolutionary scientist and patriot serving life sentence under the apartheid regime for his commitment to a democratic, unitary and non-racial South Africa, based on the will of the people.

In 1980, the Board of Directors of the University of Amsterdam founded the Dr Govan Mbeki Fund in order to:

- a) give financial support to students from South Africa who, as a result of the policy of apartheid, are unable to complete their studies;
- b) stimulate scientific activities in the spirit of Dr. Govan Mbeki and to publish the results of such research;
- c) involve the university community in the work of the Fund.

To this end the Dr. Govan Mbeki Fund Series of research papers is published in the spirit of support and solidarity with the people of South Africa in their just struggle for liberation.

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Preface

Through their determined struggle and heroic efforts, the oppressed people of South Africa are, as never before, asserting their right to live as free people in the land of their birth. The ongoing uprisings, and the almost daily massacres of unarmed blacks by the Pretoria regime, have sharply focused world attention not only on the brutalities of the system of apartheid, but also on those Western governments and companies, who through various and devious business links and economic ties continue to support and sustain the system of minority racist domination in South Africa.

This study, carried out under the auspices of the Dr. Govan Mbeki Fellowship Fund of the University of Amsterdam, seeks to isolate and examine in some detail just one of these links, viz, the 'technological link', which has been responsible both for the transfer of high technology from the West to South Africa and for the setting up of strategic industries, such as the electronics industry.

A number of people and organisations helped me in the preparation and writing of this study. I learned much and benefited from the work done by others, especially in the field of electronics and on computer exports to South Africa, and this will be clear from the detailed references to sources.

I am particularly indebted to Prof.Dr. Gerd Junne, the head of the section of International Relations of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Amsterdam, who not only introduced me to the fascinating world of hi-tech, but also guided my work and has continued to provide highly valued advice and encouragement.

Special thanks are due to: Drs. Annemiek Roobeek and Rob van Tulder of the University of Amsterdam for their critical comments and invaluable contributions;

Drs. Janny Akkerman, the secretary of the Dr. Govan Mbeki Fund, was most helpful, no problem seemed too big to solve;

Janny Oei typeset the entire work, with amazing speed, accuracy and humour;

and to Elinor Batezat, who in her calm manner, refused to let me get too carried away with my occasional flights of imagination.

The Anti-Apartheid Beweging Nederland (AABN), Boycot Outspan Aktie (BOA), the Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika, (KZA) and Werkgroep Kairos provided their facilities and readily made available the material they had on South Africa, to which this work is indebted.

Finally, I am most grateful to the University of Amsterdam Dr. Govan Mbeki Fellowship, through which this study was undertaken. The Bureau Buitenland section of the University provided me with a home during my stay in Amsterdam and also made me feel at home.

Max Vuyisile Sisulu
Amsterdam, November 1985



WORLD CAMPAIGN

against military and nuclear collaboration with South Africa

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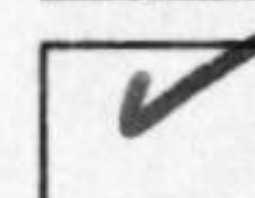
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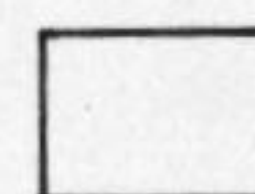
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Enclosed copy of text which we have also released to the press - and copy telexed to ANC HQ.

Also enclosed is copy of message for you from HQ.
With best wishes,

Abdullah -

24 JANUARY 1987

URGENT ATT: H.E.CHANCELLOR KOHL, BONN, FRG.

FROM: ABDUL S. MINTY, DIRECTOR, WORLD CAMPAIGN AGAINST MILITARY AND NUCLEAR COLLABORATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA, OSLO.

RE: ILLEGAL SUBMARINE PLANS SUPPLIED TO SOUTH AFRICA

WE WERE SHOCKED TO LEARN IN NOVEMBER 1986 THAT BLUE-PRINTS FOR SUBMARINES HAD BEEN ILLEGALLY SUPPLIED BY TWO FIRMS, HDW AND IKL, BASED IN KIEL, TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN REGIME.

WE CABLED YOUR FOREIGN MINISTER ON 27 NOVEMBER 1986 WHEN WE DISCOVERED FACTS ABOUT THE DEAL AND AGAIN ON 1 DEC 1986 EXPRESSING OUR CONCERN AND CALLING FOR THE PROSECUTION OF THE OFFENDERS. ON 5 DEC 1986 WE RECEIVED AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF OUR CABLES AND WERE INFORMED THAT INVESTIGATIONS ARE IN PROGRESS BUT HAVE HEARD NOTHING FURTHER FROM YOUR GOVERNMENT.

WE HAVE SINCE TRIED TO FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS ABOUT THIS CASE AND ARE DEEPLY SHOCKED TO LEARN THAT IT WAS DURING YOUR MEETING WITH APARTHEID PRESIDENT BOTHA ON 5 JUNE 1984 THAT HE MADE PERSONAL REQUEST FOR EXPORT PERMISSION TO BE GRANTED FOR THE SUBMARINE BLUE-PRINTS - AND THAT TEN DAYS LATER THE TWO FIRMS SIGNED THE ILLEGAL CONTRACT AND SUBSEQUENTLY ILLEGALLY EXPORTED THE BLUE-PRINTS VIA THE DIPLOMATIC POUCH OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY IN BONN.

WE ARE AMAZED THAT THE ILLEGAL TRANSACTION WAS NEGOTIATED AND COMPLETED BY HDW, A STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISE, AND THAT THE BLUE-PRINTS ARE APPARENTLY A MODIFICATION OF ONES WHICH WERE ORIGINALLY PREPARED AND PAID FOR BY ANOTHER GOVERNMENT, WHICH, IF IT WAS AWARE, WOULD HAVE OPPOSED AND CONDEMNED ITS SUBSEQUENT ILLEGAL TRANSFER TO THE APARTHEID REGIME.

WE ARE SENDING THIS URGENT CABLE TO REQUEST:

A) THAT THE OFFENDERS BE PROSECUTED FOR BREACHING THE SOLEMN AND MANDATORY ARMS EMBARGO DECISION OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL, ADOPTED WITH THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE FRG WHICH WAS THEN A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL,

B) THAT THE COMPANIES INVOLVED, HDW AND IKL, BE REQUIRED TO MAKE PUBLIC ALL THEIR AGREEMENTS AND ARRANGMENTS WITH SOUTH AFRICA SO THAT IT BE KNOWN WHETHER THE DEAL ONLY INVOLVES BLUE-PRINTS OR INCLUDES, AS WE SUSPECT, THE PROVISION OF KNOW-HOW, EXPERTS, COMPONENTS AND EQUIPMENT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SUBMARINES,

C) THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHES AND MAKES PUBLIC WHY THERE WAS SUCH A LONG DELAY IN INSTITUTING AN OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION ABOUT THE ILLEGAL DEAL WHEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WERE AWARE OF IT IN 1983 AND WHEN BOTHA ACTUALLY RAISED IT WITH YOU PERSONALLY ON 5 JUNE 1984,

D) THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT BE SO KIND AS TO PROVIDE THE WORLD CAMPAIGN AND THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S ARMS EMBARGO COMMITTEE WITH ALL THE AVAILABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS MATTER NOW AND KEEP US INFORMED OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS,

E) THAT APPROPRIATE ACTION BE TAKEN AGAINST THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY FOR PARTICIPATING IN AND ASSISTING THE PERFORMANCE OF A CRIMINAL OFFENCE IN BREACH OF THE LAWS OF THE FRG.

WE SHOULD CONVEY TO YOUR EXCELLENCY THE DEEP SHOCK AND CONCERN OF THE WORLD CAMPAIGN AT LEARNING OF THE CLAIM BY THE COMPANIES CONCERNED OF EXTENSIVE COLLABORATION WITH THEM BY HIGH GOVERNMENT MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS IN HELPING THE APARTHEID REGIME AND ITS AGENTS TO BREACH THE THE UN MANDATORY EMBARGO AS WELL AS VIOLATING FRG REGULATIONS. WE KNOW TOO THAT MANY GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING THE HEADS OF STATE OF SEVERAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHO ARE PATRONS OF THE WORLD CAMPAIGN, ARE DEEPLY SHOCKED ABOUT THIS CASE.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU SOON AND HOPE THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT WILL EXTEND ITS FULL CO-OPERATION TO US.

FINALLY, IN VIEW OF THE GRAVITY AND URGENCY OF THIS CASE I SHOULD LIKE TO REQUEST AN URGENT MEETING WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT, AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SO THAT WE MAY BE FULLY APPRISED OF ALL THE FACTS. I AM READY TO COME TO BONN AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE.

HIGHEST CONSIDERATION,

ABDUL S. MINTY

DIRECTOR, WORLD CAMPAIGN,
PO BOX 2, 1007 OSLO 10
TELEPHONE: (47-2) 301345
TELEX 72314 AAM N
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