

# AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL

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### Not for turning

Unlike most of their Western counterparts, South African trades unions are rising to the challenge of 'liberalisation'. But in the face of demonstrations by close to 600,000 people and waves of public service strikes, Thabo Mbeki has made it clear the Tripartite Alliance is not his first priority. Instead, the former leftist and new President is responding with an iron will that must be the envy of Thatcherites everywhere.

## CONGO-BRAZZA 5

### Manège à trois

President Denis Sassou-Nguesso hasn't managed to stamp his authority on the Republic of Congo as he did during his first spell in power (1979-92). Nor has he convinced outsiders that he's in charge and his regime remains largely unrecognised abroad. The consequent power-struggles are getting more and more desperate. Now, a mysterious package of documents is circulating in Paris. It claims to look at ways in which Sassou might resign the presidency. But who is the author?

## NAMIBIA 6

### A hammer to a nut

Since Independence, ethnic strife has been almost unknown. Yet Caprivian rebels have resorted to an unexpected degree of violence in their quest for secession. And President Sam Nujoma's government has responded by cracking down on rights and freedoms throughout the country.

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### Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi

Chemical weapons claims; much ado about ADO; and no joggers, please.

## NIGERIA

### Obasanjo's one hundred days

#### President Obasanjo moves with surprising speed against patronage but the inevitable clouds loom

For now, it is no longer business as usual in Nigeria. In just three months, President **Olusegun Obasanjo**'s whisk broom of reform has swept away the notoriously parasitic middlemen from crude oil sales, last-minute oil prospecting licences farmed out to cronies of General **Abdulsalami Abubakar**'s government and a billion dollars' worth of miscellaneous contracts awarded in the last five months of military rule (AC Vol 40 No 12).

Even Abubakar - who won worldwide applause for bringing his transition programme to a successful conclusion - may face public scrutiny. The Senate is seeking an explanation for US\$2.5 bn. of spending under his authority for which there are few records at the Central Bank of Nigeria. The government has also sent an anti-corruption bill to the National Assembly, set up committees to probe political and economic misdeeds during military rule and allowed World Bank auditors into the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation.

The National Security Advisor, Gen. **Aliyu Mohammed Gusau**, leads an investigation to recover stolen billions, with the main focus so far on the debt buy-back scam under the late dictator, Gen. **Sani Abacha**. The government is seeking the equivalent of over 1.25 bn. Deutsche Mark from offshore accounts, adding its claim to that of **Swiss**-based businessman **Nessim Gaon**, who has brought a court case in London to recover his money.

The armed forces have witnessed the most dramatic regional power shift since the Biafran war thirty years ago. Out go 93 top, mainly northern, officers - including the 'Milads' or military state administrators - who held political appointments under past military regimes and were seen as a potential threat to civilian rule. In come nearly 200 new senior officers with strong representation from the centre and south, although northerners still dominate the rank and file.

The climate of change has claimed its first victim in the new political elite. **Ibrahim Salisu Buhari**, the 29-year-old Speaker of the House of Representatives, had to resign after the *Abuja Mirror* and *The News* wrote that he had lied about his age and academic records. 'Toronto', the **Canadian** university from which he had falsely claimed to have graduated, has already entered popular parlance to mean 'fraud'.

### North hurting

However popular the anti-corruption drive is among the general populace, it is not enough on its own to convince private sector economists that Obasanjo is steering Nigeria on a course of recovery (see Box). There is also grumbling in the northern elite, which can only lose as the NNPC, under new Managing Director **Jackson Gaius Obaseki**, opens up contract allocations in both upstream and downstream sectors to more transparent bidding (AC Vol 40 No 11). Obaseki has awarded 16 new crude lifting licences, more than halving the number of trading firms involved and eliminating Nigerian front companies. Under past patronage arrangements, these took as much as 17 US cents a barrel off NNPC revenues before established international commodity dealers, such as **British**-based Arcadia and Swiss Glencore took over sales.

Northerners, down to the *Yan Daba* street thugs, are feeling the old money circuits dry up. Kano's equivalent to Lagos 'area boys', the *Yan Daba*, once the last link in a black market fuel racket, are suffering now that Kano has regular petrol at the pumps for the first time in years.

These changes are all the more delicate coming on top of a regional shift in power, from the President down. Few Hausa-Fulani figured among new top army appointees because, government insiders say, most senior Hausa officers were rooted out for their perceived political ambitions. The second layer of officers and those directly benefiting from the current promotions are largely from the centre and south and were not favoured by either Abacha or Abubakar.

This explanation has failed to convince an aggrieved section of the north, who believe that Obasanjo is proving more of a Trojan horse for a perceived Yoruba agenda than the detribalised Nigerian he was thought to be. There are reports of northern opposition crystallising around a former

## Clearly confusing

Three months on, the economic policy of General **Olusegun Obasanjo's** government remains opaque. While the price of oil, which at US\$20 a barrel is nearly twice that of the beginning of the year, should be a tonic, there are fears it might undermine the impetus for economic reform. This is especially true among Obasanjo's old-style cabinet members, who spent their formative years in an era of African nationalism and state ownership.

Both Obasanjo and Finance Minister **Adamu Ciroma**, a tested northern politician and former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor, blow hot and cold on reform. A potential champion of reform is **Philip Asiodu**, ex-Petroleum Minister and now Economic Advisor at the presidency, who occupies the offices of the vacant Planning Ministry. The Minister for Economic Matters at the presidency, **Vincent Ogbulafor**, hasn't yet got an office.

A lack of delineation of these key economic positions is fostering confusion over policy and will further delay any deal with external lending institutions. An International Monetary Fund delegation left the country in July offering hope of a standby arrangement that would lead to a one-year \$1 billion loan and talks on restructuring some of the \$30 bn. external debt. While impressed with Obasanjo's commitment to fighting corruption, the IMF team was unsure who, if anyone, was driving economic policy.

Nigerian officials say there are no benchmarks for an IMF deal and serious differences remain over fuel and fertiliser subsidies, the slow pace of privatisation and the CBN's handling of monetary policy under new Governor **Joseph Sanusi**. Although an experienced banker and once CBN Deputy Governor, Sanusi is seen by many in the Lagos banking community as out of touch with today's financial realities.

The current liquidity crisis is a direct result of the collapse of

foreign reserves in the dying days of military rule. Policy since may have curbed forex demand but at a huge price. Determination to use foreign exchange controls to maintain the naira's value led to soaring interest rates, dampened a democracy dividend at the stock exchange and further damaged an already crippled manufacturing sector.

Advocates of quick privatisation are likely to be disappointed. The government appears ready to prolong rather than curtail public ownership of the spectacularly mismanaged utilities, such as power and communications. We gather proposals currently at the presidency argue against fully deregulating telecommunications and in favour of limiting GSM (global system for mobiles) licences and targeting state-sponsored development to bump up a low telephone density of around 0.4 per cent of the population.

Reform advocates are also worried about the Power and Steel Minister, Yoruba chieftain **Bola Ige**, who was coopted from the opposition Alliance for Democracy. He has talked of reviving the Ajaokuta Steel Mill, a notorious white elephant that has already soaked up over \$5 bn. without producing a single roll of steel. Continued funding of Ajaokuta is unlikely to please creditors.

A revolution in efficiency at state-run companies requires new management rather than privatisation, the thinking seems to go. Besides, Ige and other Yoruba insiders say they fear that prominent northerners will miraculously repatriate stolen billions from offshore accounts to buy up control of key utilities, the traditional reserve of northern patronage.

While oil prices remain at around \$20 a barrel, the government has the luxury of some choice. But Nigeria's terminal problem has been its reliance on oil, source of over 90 per cent of foreign exchange earnings, and unless the government attracts investment in other sectors, a stable recovery will remain a chimera.

head of state, Gen. **Ibrahim Babangida**, who was a major backer of Obasanjo's election campaign but who has since been given cause to fear the ongoing probes. He is unlikely to be cheered by the maverick lawyer **Gani Fawehinmi's** submission to the Human Rights Violations Investigation Panel on the 1986 assassination by parcel bomb of *Newswatch* journalist **Dele Giwa**. Fawehinmi maintains that Giwa was murdered because he was investigating alleged links between top people and **Gloria Okon**, an accused drug dealer who died in police custody.

Babangida-associates deny reports that he is aiming to win the chair of the majority People's Democratic Party at a forthcoming party congress but admit he could deploy his considerable financial muscle within the National Assembly.

Most Nigerians are confident that the threats of chaos and civil war will stave off any attempt to end Obasanjo's term early. The weak link in pushing through his agenda could prove to be relations with the National Assembly, which is already holding up the revised budget and a crucial bill on the development of the embittered oil producing communities of the Niger Delta.

Obasanjo alienated much of the Senate by backing the former Abacha-supporter **Evan Enwerem**, the Igbo president of the Senate, during a tough election battle. Enwerem is proving weak and unpopular and, like his counterpart in the lower house, has been dogged by press allegations. His position has also singularly failed to appease the Igbo in the east who complain they have once again been left out of key positions in the government and army.

In the meantime, the President's position can only strengthen if the National Assembly continues to appear moribund, comic and obsessed with its own privileges, such as the recent palaver over the allocation of furniture allowances to each member of up to Naira 3.5 million (\$35,500).

### Ethnic manipulation

In the real world, meanwhile, Obasanjo accused shadowy and evil forces of orchestrating the upsurge in ethnic fighting that has claimed 1,000 lives since May in different regions, ranging from the oil-producing Delta through the Middle Belt to the far-north. Crime, too, has been on the rise, particularly in Lagos, where a rash of armed robberies and assassinations forced police chief **Musiliu Smith** to relocate from Abuja to Lagos.

The surge in crime and violence in the Delta, where kidnapping of oil workers is now so commonplace as to be barely newsworthy, is causing increasing alarm within the industry. Yet the 24 August announcement of an agreement by Ijaw interests to reopen seven Royal **Dutch** Shell flow-stations raised hopes of an end to the conflict that saw dozens killed in Warri in May.

The fighting in July between the two largest ethnic groups, the Yoruba and Hausa, was even more worrying, a chilling reminder of the pogroms that sparked off the Igbo secession bid and the 1967-70 Biafra war. Around 70 people died when Yorubas accused Hausa residents of flouting Yoruba customs at the traditional Oro festival in Sagamu, outside Lagos. When fleeing victims arrived

back in Kano with tales of murder, *Yan Daba* thugs attacked Yorubas, killing over 100 and sending thousands back down to southern Nigeria. It was touch and go whether the police could get the lid back on. In the end, the violence fizzled out but the incidents dealt a blow to trust and raised questions about the police's ability to cope. Understandably, state governors are reluctant to call out an army that has just returned to barracks.

### Trimming the troops

To bring the armed forces safely under civilian authority and to cut costs, the Defence Minister, Gen. **Theophilus Danjuma**, has suggested slashing troop strength by 30,000 soldiers, with the goal of a leaner and better equipped and trained force. That would bring the total to 50,000 and would potentially threaten Nigeria's contribution to regional peacekeeping operations. Questions loom, though, over Danjuma's ability to carry out such a delicate task since last week, he checked into a private London clinic only hours after he had announced the troop reduction. Associates say that he is exhausted and depressed after overstretching himself both before and after Obasanjo's inauguration. While the presidency has sought to play down rumours of his desire to resign, Major Gen. **David Jemibewon**, current Police Affairs Minister, and **Salihu Ibrahim**, Abacha's former army Chief of Staff, are tipped as possible successors.

A key architect of the 27 February election victory, Danjuma is one of four retired generals who form the pillars of the new civilian order. The others are Obasanjo, Aliyu Mohammed Gusau and **Abdullahi Mohammed**, the presidential Chief of Staff. In addition to doubts over Danjuma's health, there are niggling hints of a power struggle within the presidency between Gusau (Babangida's former spy-master) and Abdullahi, the founder and first Director of the National Security Organisation, now the State Security Service (SSS).

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## SOUTH AFRICA

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## Trades unionists and Communists try to roll back the free market bandwagon

South Africa's trades unions chose to confront the country's new President, **Thabo Mbeki**, just after his inauguration and before he'd had time to find his feet (AC Vol 40 Nos 12 & 13). This may have been a bad idea. He is most unlikely to be thrown off balance, even by massive strikes in the million-member civil service. The unions may now learn the hard way about Mbeki's capacity to anticipate attacks and prepare counter-strategies. In every internal struggle for power since the African National Congress returned from exile in 1990, he has emerged as the eventual victor. So far, in what some are already calling his 'Mbekiavellian' way, the new President hasn't fought a pitched battle with the ANC's tripartite alliance partners, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). He may never have to do so. 'Alliance' has become little more than a convenient fiction behind which the partners have been fighting for their different agendas.

Also, though close on 600,000 public servants took to the streets this week in all main cities and many towns, the Cosatu-led demonstrations may have peaked. Cosatu may soon have to adjust

to performing its function as trades union federation rather than government partner. The fact that the wages dispute was over a meagre 1 per cent (the gap between the public service unions' demand for a 7.3 per cent increase and the government's final offer of 6.3 per cent) is proof, as far as the ANC leadership is concerned, that Cosatu's real agenda is ideological, based on outright rejection of the ANC's conservative, market-oriented economic policies. ANC leaders believe Cosatu and the SACP are fighting a losing battle on this terrain, since world trends are against them.

Mbeki had been expected to make a speech at Cosatu's special three-day congress last week but preferred to visit neighbouring **Mozambique**. Instead, **Patrick 'Terror' Lekota**, ANC National Chairman (and by no means an Mbeki placeman), flayed 'highly placed comrades' in the 1.8 million-member union federation for lacking revolutionary discipline and agitating against government policies from within and without government structures. Indiscipline, he said (using the language of the ANC's leftist critics), was 'confusing the masses' and allowing provocateurs to advance 'counter-revolutionary agendas'.

### 'Outrageous demands'

In parliament meanwhile, Public Service and Administration Minister **Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi** described some union demands as 'outrageous'. She had already rejected wage demands from the civil-service unions and unilaterally imposed the government's final offer. Now she gave warning that the government would not tolerate illegal strikes by unions pursuing narrow self-interest to the detriment of society, further infuriating Cosatu by reiterating that illegal strikers would not be paid for days not worked: 'The right of unions to withdraw their labour is matched by an equal right of the employer to withdraw wages'.

At the congress, Cosatu's outgoing President, **Peter Malepe**, accused the government of using the union-bashing methods of the apartheid regime, acting like a 'bully' and in 'bad faith' by unilaterally fixing public service wage rates, and setting a precedent for 'bloodthirsty' employers to follow.

Since it took office in 1994, the ANC has steadily veered away from socialism towards the market-oriented policies enshrined in the 1996 policy document GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution). In speeches, discussion documents and convoluted articles in official journals, left-wingers in the tripartite alliance have demonised GEAR in the name of socialism. At the Cosatu and SACP congresses in mid-1998, ex-President **Nelson Mandela** and Mbeki told their partners to play it their way or go it alone. Yet the opposition gathered momentum. A discussion document circulated at Cosatu's congress in the third week of August called on the federation to 'reposition the organisation and the entire movement to meet the challenges of the new millennium'. Cosatu should 'engage in relentless criticism of capitalism... roll back the domination of the market... introduce socialist forms of work organisation and management... Increase in depth our relationship with the SACP as a political party with a socialist vision... establish SACP units in workplaces and strengthen SACP branches where they are weak'.

The document noted that Cosatu's 1993 congress had deployed many of its leaders, and others, in the National Assembly, the nine provincial legislatures, the public service and local government, where all were bound by ANC discipline, leaving Cosatu with no power to direct their votes or censure them if they voted against its policies. More and more, said the document, parliament was being seen as a rubber stamp for the executive. Another aggressive move last week was the presentation of a memorandum to Mbeki by the

twelve public sector unions, complaining about the government's way of negotiating.

After the Mandela-Mbeki tongue-lashing last year, Cosatu and the SACP decided to give the ANC full support in the elections of 2 June this year, hoping thus to place Mbeki under an obligation to return the favour later. Mbeki, though, rebuffed them by postponing indefinitely an alliance summit set down for this month. The mass demonstrations by public servants and warnings of yet more demonstrations ahead laid the gauntlet at his feet. Cosatu left him no choice but to pick it up.

Cosatu's smartest move was to pick a fight over jobs and wages, not ideology. Mbeki's counter-move was simple: wages were a matter for employers (the government) and employees (the unionists). He would not intervene. Instead, he lined up his ministers to take on the unions.

- Finance Minister **Trevor Manuel** displayed his empty pockets before a demonstrating crowd in Pretoria to show symbolically that the Treasury's cupboard was bare.

- Fraser-Moleketi announced a small upward shift in the government's wage offer, saying so far and no further.

- The Deputy President, **Jacob Zuma**, told workers that job losses were inevitable under GEAR. Some ANC members say that he should not have spoken out so loudly and publicly. However, one member of the National Executive Committee admitted privately, 'He said what many of us have been thinking, but were too scared to say'.

- Trade and Industry Minister **Alec Erwin** implicitly acknowledged that he, too, belonged to the presidency view: 'short-term pain now, long-term gain later'.

- Finally, Fraser-Moleketi announced that the government would unilaterally implement its pay offer to civil servants.

As *Africa Confidential* went to press, Cosatu was considering whether to proceed with its grand offensive. It had served notice on Nedlac (the National Economic, Development and Labour Council, where it negotiates with government and business) that it intends to include 'socio-economic' targets in its demonstrations. Mbeki is said to want the pro-labour laws introduced by the ANC after 1994 made more 'flexible'; Cosatu wants them tightened, for example, it wants the Labour Relations Act amended to outlaw replacement labour and establish the right to strike over dismissals.

### Thin line

The dividing line between wage demands and longer-term 'socio-economic' objectives is being blurred, as Cosatu transforms itself from a liberation movement into a conventional union federation. Mbeki understands that if he buckles, the unions will have him on the run on wage demands and the SACP on ideology. Whether Cosatu can climb out of the hole it has dug for itself depends partly on the length of the rope Mbeki throws it and partly on calls for caution from some less militant union voices.

The wisdom of confrontation is vigorously debated in Cosatu and the SACP. The confrontationists argue that the sooner it takes place, the better. Mbeki is entrenching his presidency by the day; the civil service is ideal for a showdown, because it includes both militant black unions and conservative white unions; the two partners supported the ANC unstintingly in June's elections and are entitled to be treated as equals now; and abandoning the challenge to Mbeki means sacrificing the left's remaining ideological integrity.

The case against confrontation is: the more destructive the strikes become, the more moderate unionists will doubt their wisdom; there is a difference of only 1 per cent between the unions'

## Old unions, new ANC

The public servants' challenge to President **Thabo Mbeki's** government involves over twelve unions with 800,000 members from all races and all shades of political opinion. Three constituent unions from the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) lead the push for militant action in support of civil service wage demands. They are Nehawu (National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union), Popceru (Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union) and Sadtu (SA Democratic Teachers' Union).

Paradoxically, the struggle brings in public service unions from the conservative Federation of Unions of South Africa (Fedusa) which a few years ago, wouldn't even have considered joint action with Cosatu. Even leaders of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie* (SAOU, SA Teachers' Union), a conservative Afrikaner body, said many of its 27,000 members were willing to strike. 'The last straw for many of my members was the President's decision not to talk to the public service unions about our salary demands', said an SAOU leader. 'I could not have foreseen this attitude among my members'.

Teachers and health workers count as civil servants, with salaries budgeted for at central government level, even though the nine provincial governments administer most aspects of state education and health services. The government wants to 'restructure' the civil service, by which it means cutting numbers to reduce the salaries bill, which currently accounts for 52 per cent of the national budget (after interest payments) and eats up funds needed for investment in schools, hospitals and other services. Since 1994, civil service numbers have been cut by voluntary severance but officials estimate that 30,000-100,000 civil servants are grossly under-employed or draw a salary for doing no real job.

The government has not yet drawn up a legal mechanism for 'employer initiated retrenchment' in the civil service. Public Service and Administration Minister **Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi** declared that the mechanism would be in place by December, at the same time announcing that the government would unilaterally implement its latest pay offer. Ministers protest that the African National Congress is not anti-union but they are impatient with what they see as the determination of some left-wing union leaders to protect their members regardless of the effect on the country as a whole and its millions of unemployed.

The sequence of decisions made things worse. By the time government managers sat down with the unions to negotiate, Finance Minister **Trevor Manuel**, the cabinet's leading fiscal and monetary conservative, had set the limit for a pay increase in his annual budget, and parliament had approved it. The unions charged the government with bad faith, saying it had 'pre-empted' bargaining.

In the mid-year union 'conference season', ambitious union activists often strike radical postures. The presidents of the two biggest and most militant unions in the public service dispute, Sadtu's **Willie Madisha** and **Vusi Nhlapo** of Nehawu, were rivals for Cosatu's presidency, vacated by **John Gomomo**, now serving as an ANC MP. The clear winner was Madisha, a member of the SACP Central Committee. **Zwelinzima Vavi**, a militant who has been Cosatu's Acting General Secretary since **Mbhazima Shilowa** left for full-time ANC work and the premiership of Gauteng Province, was unopposed as Shilowa's formal successor. **Joseph Nkosi** is the new Deputy President, **Tony Ehrlureich** Deputy General Secretary and **Alinah Rantsolane** Treasurer.

demands and the government's offer; the strikers will receive scant support from Cosatu or SACP parliamentary members, who are all under the ANC whip. Some members of the SACP's Central Committee and Politbureau are either Mbeki fans or ANC hostages. Fraser-Moleketi herself is the SACP's Deputy Chairperson.

If there are strikes in the public sector, there will be strikes elsewhere. Forcing Mbeki to back down both on wages and on ideology would amount to taking over the government. Cosatu may have overplayed its hand, against a president who does not play long games with serious rivals but eliminates them with deadly rapidity. The unions have not, ironically, appreciated that economics, not political or trades union manoeuvring, will determine the political future, and that the government is preoccupied not by old loyalties but by the effort to create jobs, build houses, provide education and medicare. The hostilities within the alliance may simmer down but the ANC, Cosatu and SACP are still heading towards the end of a beautiful friendship.

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## CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE

# Manège à trois

## Mysterious documents are doing the rounds in Paris claiming that Sassou wants to retire

To judge by the increasing desperation of the contestants, the power struggle in Brazzaville is entering a new phase. President **Denis Sassou-Nguesso**, who overthrew the elected President, **Pascal Lissouba**, in November 1997, presides over an unpopular, shaky and brutal military regime. Although he has long had a strong base in the army, Sassou-Nguesso hasn't been able to stamp his authority on the country as he did during his first spell in power, from 1979 to 1992. Nor has he convinced outsiders that he's in charge: Sassou's regime is largely unrecognised. Only **France**, whose President **Jacques Chirac** remains convivial towards him, is prepared to give the Brazzaville strongman a regular audience. In mid-August, Sassou's ambassadors made their strongest overtures yet to all exiled oppositionists to return to the country for national dialogue; but he failed to give the guarantees of safety which they considered necessary.

However, Sassou's opponents haven't been much more successful. The efforts of deposed President Lissouba and the former Mayor of Brazzaville, **Bernard Kolélas**, backed by their Zoulou and Ninja militias, have failed to oust Sassou in almost 20 months of fierce fighting. Recent developments show Sassou still has the military edge: in July, his government forces and Cobra militias, backed by **Angolan** soldiers, retook several areas in the south of the capital and the main military bases used by Kolélas' Ninjas in Pool Region, south of the city.

Sassou got another modest boost with the mid-August announcement that Paris was giving 700 million CFA francs (US\$1.14 mn.) to the Congolese *Gendarmerie* to buy communications equipment. This follows the despatch last year of 20 French trainers for the *Gendarmerie*. Direct French assistance for Sassou's army is far more discreet, though; and despite his closeness to Chirac, support for Sassou appears to be waning among Africanists in France's business and political class.

This makes a package of documents circulating in Paris all the more intriguing. The first page is a letter dated 17 July in which

Sassou sets up a 'special commission' to look at ways he might resign the presidency. The documents, printed on the presidential letterhead, are accompanied by a note from the Presidency's strategy and analysis office, the *Cellule Etudes et Stratégies*, allegedly written by Brigadier General **Norbert Dabira**, suggesting that **Augustin Poignet** (President of the Senate Sassou dissolved on retaking power) take over and Sassou go into exile in **Morocco**.

Few Brazza-watchers give the documents much credibility - mainly because they don't believe Sassou would ever contemplate resigning. Yet much of the information points to genuine problems and schisms in the regime. It points to continuing diplomatic isolation, even by Sassou's son-in-law: 'Even President **Bongo** has started to keep his distance from us.' It then tries to undermine confidence in Sassou by 'reporting' that Elf-Aquitaine has advised Angola to withdraw its troops from Congo. Sassou, although helped to military victory two years ago by Elf, has growing money problems with the French oil company. Elf's doubts about his political durability have made it more cautious about funding his government and its war. He has retaliated by threatening an independent audit of Elf's Congo operations and has taken soundings about offering some offshore oil blocks (already awarded to Elf) to **American** and **British** companies. The document reports Sassou's hope that the proposed takeover of Elf by TotalFina (AC Vol 40 No 15) would improve his government's financial position.

It also alleges continuing problems with Sassou's most energetic foreign backer, Angolan President **José Eduardo dos Santos**, and proposes to destabilise his regime. It suggests Sassou's colleague, Brig. Gen. **Jacques Morlende**, who has contacts with the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* in Paris, should hatch such a plot. Also under suspicion, according to the document, are **Guinean** President **Lansana Conté** and **Cameroonian** President **Paul Biya** for their ambivalence towards Sassou.

If, as is likely, the document is an elaborate forgery, who would take the trouble to produce it and circulate it among influential French Africa-watchers? The most obvious culprits might be allies of Kolélas and ex-Finance Minister **Nguila Mounougoua Kombo** (depicted as the 'chouchou' of the West). The document claims Kolélas enjoys the 'moral support' of 80 per cent of Congolese and contrasts this with the 'arrogant' Lissouba. And Kolélas met leading French freemason **Philippe Gugliemi**, in the USA in June; Nguila Mounougoua is also a freemason. All this made some people suspect a masonic plot against Sassou: 'masonic plots' are a favourite theme in some Francophone countries where freemasonry is widespread. The document might, though, have come from malcontents in Sassou's own ranks. It points to growing divisions among the clans of Sassou's small Mbochi ethnic group: the first family's circle, led by Colonel **Jean-Dominique Okemba**; the Mbochi of Oyo, led by former Brazzaville Mayor **Aimé-Emmanuel Yoka**; the Mbochi of Olembo, led by Interior Minister **Pierre Oba** (whom the document refers to as Vice-President of the commission on Sassou's retirement); the Mbochi of Boundji, allied with Defence Minister **Iti Ossetomba Lekoundzou**.

Congo's oppositionists face their own problems. Lissouba has complained about the attention of someone calling himself 'Doctor **Vladimir de Rothschild**' who is demanding payment of US\$6.5 mn. for services rendered. Lissouba denies owing him anything but 'De Rothschild' is threatening to publish information that will 'destroy' the ex-President. In March, London's *Daily Mirror* reported Lissouba was buying military equipment for a coup (AC Vol 40 No 6). A repeat story would embarrass him - and his British hosts.

## NAMIBIA

# A hammer to a nut

## Caprivian rebels and the government both wield weapons to disturb the peace

The Namibian government reacted with a heavy hand in early August when Caprivian secessionists mounted an armed raid on the region's capital, Katima Mulilo. The Caprivi Strip has always been poor, neglected and ethnically complex (AC Vol 40 No 1).

**Britain** allowed **Germany** to add it to its territory of South West Africa in 1890 (in a swap for Heligoland and Zanzibar) because the Berlin government believed, absurdly, that it could start a trans-African steamship service on the Upper Zambezi. This was a response to London's dream of a railway from Cairo to the Cape (a dream **Sudan** interrupted, both then and now). The result was to divide between German and British rule the domains of the old Lozi kingdom; some people in the Strip named after Chancellor **Otto von Bismarck's** successor and a few **Zambians** still dream of reuniting the Barotse peoples.

Most people believe there is little risk of major ethnic conflict but the behaviour of President **Sam Nujoma's** South West Africa People's Organisation government in the face of a separatist threat is worrying. The severity of the crack-down confirms the anxieties of those who do not want to see Nujoma win a third, constitution-bending, five-year term at the impending elections. The violence may boost support for the new Congress of Democrats (CD) party and it casts a shadow over relations with Zambia, from where the secessionists launched their attack, with **Botswana**, which still hosts some 1,500 Caprivians who fled at the end of 1998, and with **Denmark**, which this year granted political asylum to Caprivian secessionist leader **Mishake Muyongo**.

The Caprivi incident could be useful to **Jonas Savimbi's** *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* in **Angola** (see Box). SWAPO and its **Zimbabwean** allies are trying to shore up President **Laurent-Désiré Kabila's** government in **Congo-Kinshasa** and are highly sensitive to the conflicts among their neighbours. UNITA has predictably denied helping the Caprivian secessionists, although four of those whom government forces captured at Katima Mulilo were said to be UNITA members.

The situation in Caprivi, one of Namibia's most densely populated regions with some 90,000 inhabitants, had seemed to be returning to normal after more than 2,000 Caprivians fled to Botswana at the end of last year. They had been driven from their villages by security sweeps, after the Windhoek government announced it had uncovered a training camp for armed secessionists in October. Muyongo and a small group of armed supporters crossed into Botswana, where they were arrested, then granted asylum along with the rest of the Caprivian escapees. The resulting tension between Windhoek and Gaborone was defused after Botswana agreed to the voluntary repatriation of the Caprivians. Several hundred had gone home from Dukwe refugee camp by mid-year and in May, Muyongo and Mafwe Chief **Boniface Mamili** left for Denmark, under an arrangement made by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

From Copenhagen, Muyongo claimed responsibility for the attack and warned that others would follow. He had evidently

continued to cooperate with supporters inside Caprivi and in western Zambia, where many Lozi have their own reasons for discontent with their government. Muyongo's active support is small and concentrated mainly in his Linyanti home district but the Caprivi's isolation - stretching through thick forest and marsh some 400 kilometres to the Zambezi river - favours hit-and-run attacks by small groups.

The raid on Katima on 2 August involved some 50-100 members of the shadowy Caprivi Liberation Front (CLF), dressed as civilians and armed mainly with easily obtainable Kalashnikov assault rifles. The rebels' only success was to occupy, briefly, the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation building; they tried and failed to capture Mpacha airport, 20 km. away. Although unprepared, the Namibia Defence Force repelled attacks on its barracks and the police station, and the rebels retreated to Zambia via the Wanela border post, leaving about 20 of their number captive. The dead were eight soldiers, police and private security guards, five rebels and one civilian. It came as a shock to Namibians, who have known virtually no ethnic violence since Independence in 1990.

Nujoma's immediate declaration of an indefinite state of emergency and closing of Caprivi's borders were supported by most Namibian parties, including the main opposition group, the DTA (formerly Democratic Turnhalle Alliance), of which Muyongo was President until last August. The attack was condemned by the Mafwe, who along with the pro-SWAPO Masubia are one of the region's two main ethnic communities; Muyongo is a junior member of their royal house. The new Mafwe Chief, **George Simasiku Mamili**, denies government claims that his people actively support Caprivian secession.

### Brutal clean-up

National solidarity has been damaged by the fact that in 'clean-up' operations, the security forces (particularly the NDF and Special Field Force, recruited mainly from SWAPO's former guerrilla army) committed widespread brutality against villagers and ill-treated those detained. Women and children are said to have been indiscriminately beaten up by troops and police, most of them Kwanyama or other northern Namibians who do not speak any of the Caprivi's Lozi dialects. Some 300 alleged rebel sympathisers have been detained in the past month; under the state of emergency, which suspends constitutional rights and freedoms, they do not need to be produced in court within any specified time.

A former DTA member of parliament, **Geoffrey Mwilima**, was arrested on 4 August. During the following two days, his jaw was broken and most of his teeth were knocked out. After his transfer from Katima hospital to Suiderhof military base near Windhoek in late August, he was allowed to meet a lawyer, and the independent daily *The Namibian* published graphic photographs of him. The NDF Chief of Staff, Major General **Martin Shalli**, had previously claimed that Mwilima was in good health and that the security forces had not abused anyone's human rights. The Council of Churches in Namibia called for an urgent review of the emergency powers, with clear guidelines for the security forces.

The CCN, as well as most opposition parties, fear that the state of emergency may be extended during the presidential and National Assembly elections, whose date Nujoma is due to announce next month. They are expected in December and SWAPO may use the Caprivi issue to garner support in its northern heartland. Nujoma is seeking a third five-year term of office, since SWAPO used its two-thirds majority in parliament to modify the proscription on

## On the fringe of a war

**Mishake Muyongo** leapt out of the obscurity of his **Danish** exile on 2 August when Caprivian separatists attacked Katima Mulilo. He says the raid on Caprivi's capital opens a struggle which could end if the Namibian government begins talks on Caprivian independence and he believes he can organise a wider campaign, especially in **Germany**, which ruled Namibia until 1918. When Muyongo led the main opposition party, the then Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, after Independence, he wore sharp business suits. Now he has taken to the safari suits favoured by exiled guerrilla commanders.

In 1964, Muyongo inherited the leadership of the Caprivi African National Union from **Brendan Simbaye**, who 'disappeared' while under **South African** arrest. CANU then merged with **Sam Nujoma's** South West Africa People's Organisation and Muyongo became its Vice-President. (Another CANU leader, **Greenwell Matongo**, became SWAPO's Political Commissar and was later killed, allegedly in a party feud.)

Muyongo now says Nujoma has reneged on the 1964 deal: he claims this was made only to fight against Pretoria's rule of Namibia and the Caprivi Strip; Muyongo broke with SWAPO in 1980 after refusing an order to relocate from Lusaka to Luanda. Once Independence was achieved in 1990, he became DTA leader but now says his role as opposition leader was a sham as Namibia became subject to Nujoma's autocratic whims.

Muyongo sees the government as an instrument for Ovambo domination, arguing that Caprivi has been neglected and that the government has appointed chiefs without consulting the paramount chief. He is vague about his supporters in the region but hopes to rally Lozi-speakers in **Zambia** and elsewhere, claiming 'spiritual support' from the Barotse Patriotic Front in Zambia, whose leaders have spoken in sympathy with his cause. He denies getting tangible help from **Jonas Savimbi's** *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* but is curiously familiar with details of the journey between Katima Mulilo and Jamba, Savimbi's former headquarters in south-eastern Angola.

UNITA has strongly denied involvement in the Katima raid, despite accusations by the Angolan government, which would like to involve Namibia in its war against UNITA (AC Vol 40 No 14). Since the latest upsurge of fighting, there has been constant speculation that Windhoek might allow Luanda's forces to attack UNITA-controlled territory from the south. It's understood a 'gentleman's agreement' exists whereby Nujoma confines himself to verbal attacks on UNITA, while UNITA refrains from supporting the increasingly active Caprivi secessionists.

UNITA and the separatists were in contact in the 1980s, when Pretoria still ruled and Katima Mulilo was HQ for the South West Africa Territorial Force. Muyongo says Pretoria trained many of the men in the Caprivi Liberation Army, his party's armed wing. UNITA has long controlled much of south-east Angola and Caprivi secessionists have probably worked with local UNITA commanders, who have had considerable autonomy since Savimbi stopped visiting Jamba in 1992.

People in Jamba do much of their trade in Namibia, so the secessionists could have got weapons and even training from UNITA. Savimbi would not want an all-out war with Namibia. Windhoek houses thousands of Ovimbundu refugees, many of them loyal to UNITA; if war came, Namibia would probably expel them. Even so, a threat to Nujoma's government from Caprivian separatists serves UNITA's purposes, as it keeps Namibia on the sidelines of Angola's war.

more than two successive presidential terms. Nujoma is almost certain to win, with SWAPO retaining its majority in parliament.

The recently launched CD, led by the former High Commissioner in London, **Ben Ulenga**, is picking up support from disillusioned, mainly young, SWAPO members (AC Vol 40 No 7). About 400 delegates attended its founding congress in July, when Ulenga was elected party President and the CD has established offices in most principal regions. Human rights violations in Caprivi will bolster the central plank of the CD's election campaign, expected to focus on SWAPO's economic shortcomings, on corruption and on the danger of centralising power in the presidency.

Denmark is maintaining Muyongo's refugee status while its police determine whether he could be charged for claiming responsibility for the Katima attack. Danish officials say he could be handed over for trial only for a crime committed in the country concerned: he was in Denmark during the attack. Copenhagen is one of Windhoek's five main aid donors; some Danish embassy staff and aid workers have now received death threats. However, Denmark has agreed with the UNHCR to give Muyongo political asylum and will probably stick by that.

Only further atrocities by the security forces could win most Caprivians to the secessionist cause though events will fuel existing discontent since people will lose some of the little revenue they have because tourism, which has been growing, will be affected by insecurity.

Muyongo has undoubtedly secured some backing from discontented Barotse in Zambia's Western province, where the 1.5 million Lozi-speakers are the largest group. The small Barotse Patriotic Front (BPF) has come out openly in support of the Caprivian secessionists and its leader, **Imasiku Mutangelwa**, has warned Zambian President **Frederick Chiluba** 'to take a leaf' from events in Caprivi. Chiluba's immediate response to the spectre of a secessionist movement in Zambia was to have Mutangelwa arrested on charges of belonging to an unlawful organisation and contravening the Zambian Societies Act; he remains in police custody pending a court hearing.

The Barotse Treaty, signed just after Zambian Independence in 1964, was supposed to provide the Barotse people with autonomy and control over certain local affairs, including water, fishing rights, hunting and timber. Mutangelwa claims the BPF has no intention of promoting secession but will lobby within the UN and Organisation of African Unity for the Treaty, which upheld the principle of a Zambian unitary state, to be implemented. Chiluba shows no more willingness than his predecessor, **Kenneth Kaunda**, to concede Barotse autonomy.

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# Pointers

## SUDAN

### Gas mask

Ten years after the National Islamic Front government agreed that the United Nations could carry relief to all 'war-affected populations', the UN's Operation Lifeline Sudan has taken its first steps in opposition-controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains. A five-person assessment team under **Ross Mountain** of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs arrived on 21 June. This was two days after President **Omer el Beshir** had told the South Kordofan Advisory Council he would never allow relief to reach the Nuba - and, though a four-day ceasefire had been called for the visit, the UN team was greeted by government artillery fire. It moved on safely after contacting Khartoum.

The UN team had been negotiating the visit with the NIF for over a year. It didn't mention the shelling in its report, which also didn't mention human rights abuses in the Mountains. It said it could not confirm reports of abductions by government forces but did acknowledge that the area was 'clearly under the control of the Sudan People's Liberation Army'. The report identified 'substantive needs in all areas', especially in water, health and primary education, and said 'the risks of famine and starvation are greater than ever'. Food aid should not be excluded, it said, while noting the traditional Nuba preference for longer-term assistance in increasing productivity of farms and livestock. ('Food aid is the poison of the community' is a dictum of local SPLA Commander **Yousif Kuwa**). Nonetheless, UN mechanisms appear to dictate that food aid is a more likely option than development assistance for rebel-held areas: the next stage is therefore another assessment mission, this time by the World Food Programme.

Elsewhere, the WFP found itself embroiled in a controversy over chemical weapons (CW). After repeated government air raids in the Lainya and Kaya areas of Ekuatoria in late July, there was a rush of media reports that Khartoum might have used CW after aid workers visited the areas. Staff from the WFP and **Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)** reported suffering unusual symptoms after visiting the areas and also quoted local people as reporting symptoms including miscarriages, vomiting blood and disorientation; large numbers of animals and birds reportedly dropped dead.

The UN and NPA sent teams to investigate. Then silence fell. As usual, Khartoum accused the NPA of siding with the SPLA, which had previously reported the apparent use of CW in the south, Nuba and east, where it captured government gas-masks. Details had always been sketchy and this seemed an opportunity for serious investigation. Yet a month after the bombing, the relevant international body, the

**Netherlands**-based Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, had not been approached. One OPCW official told us it could react 'immediately' to a request from any of the 126 member states of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Sudan acceded in May. But we hear that Norway, **Sweden** and the **United States** have discreetly sent teams to take soil samples. All have kept quiet. Norway is keen to mediate between the NIF and the opposition; the USA is now the NIF's only vocal non-Sudanese critic, apart from **Uganda**. As the NIF adds a peace offensive (headed by hardliner **Ghazi Salah el Din el Atabani**) to its charm offensive (AC Vol 40 No 13), European governments don't want to rock the boat.

A WFP spokesperson said investigators had 'not been able to confirm' the reported sickness among local people, saying it had found only 'eye infections, vomiting, diarrhoea, runny nose, coughs and colds', and suggested tear gas had been used. Asked if investigators had taken soil samples, he said it was 'not a military operation; our aim is humanitarian'. Other UN sources say the word is that 'chemical weapons' are not to be mentioned.

## CÔTE D'IVOIRE

### ADO ado

The normally placid holiday season is the scene of frantic government activity. The reasons are ADO and IMF. The scandal over the embezzlement of over 18 billion CFA francs of European Union aid money (AC Vol 40 No 14) has helped reduce the government's cash to fight off **Alassane Dramane Ouattara**'s presidential challenge.

The response of President **Henri Konan Bédié**'s government is to sack three ministers in charge of visibly failed policies where the World Bank and International Monetary Fund insist on reform. **Maurice Guikahue** was sacked because most of the EU aid swindle was in his Health Ministry. Opposition pundits say he was always at Madame **Bédié**'s side when she appeared for her personal 'non-governmental organisation', *Servir*, to open clinics and other goodies in poor rural areas. Guikahue was the ruling *Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*'s main vote-winner in the opposition *Front Populaire Ivoirien* heartland in the Bete-speaking west.

Education's **Pierre Kipre** had presided over sliding school standards (70 per cent failed this year's *baccalauréat*) and rampant examination fraud. Employment's **Atsin Achi** had to deal with a civil service strike over unpaid arrears and a pay-freeze. Interior's **Emile-Constant Bombet**, a north-wester, kept his job, although his Ministry was also involved in the aid scam. He'd masterminded the 1995 elections, taking control of the security forces when violence seemed to be getting out of hand, and is seen as indispensable to Bédié.

A greater surprise was the closure of the Cocoa Stabilisation Board from which the PCDI-RDA has for decades derived its main funds. 'Liberalisation' hadn't been expected to start until 1 October but the surplus in Caistab's account was falling steadily as it paid out subsidies - FF CFA33 bn. this season - to exporters, theoretically to maintain the farm-gate price. The move caught exporters on the hop and upset trade in **Ghana**, too.

The IMF's \$384 million, 3-year standby credit has been suspended all year, jeopardising other aid. The World Bank will continue with most current projects, worth some \$800 mn., but hold back a promised \$350 mn. structural adjustment grant unless the IMF gives its seal of approval. The Fund demands an external audit, which could expose high-level collusion in recent cocoa and coffee export scams.

All this cheers ADO, formerly IMF joint deputy Managing Director and now Bédié's main opponent. The government still claims the constitution forbids Alassane Ouattara to stand for the presidency or lead a political party but his campaign has started well; and bereft of income from traditional sources, the PCDI may have more problems swinging the vote.

## BURUNDI

### No jogging

Even Bujumbura's early-morning groups of joggers are being stopped and searched by *gendarmes* posted around the city by order of Burundi's ruler, Major **Pierre Buyoya** (AC Vol 40 No 24). He has banned 'collective sport' in order to prevent gatherings by a Tutsi private militia, *Puissance d'Autodéfense-Amasekyana*. The President of PA-*Amasekyana* ('Power'), **Diomède Rutamucero**, was arrested and gaoled on 26 July. Rutamucero had written to the authorities claiming that the civilian population needed to defend itself, because security was deteriorating.

On 12 August, Iteka, a human rights organisation, complained of 'increasingly incisive' attacks by Hutu rebels, noting that raids and killings had spread into previously peaceful provinces such as Rutana and Ruyigi. On 5 August, the Minister of Defence, Colonel **Alfred Nkurunziza**, acknowledged there had been a revival of violence. He said the trouble had been started in preparation for the next peace negotiations, due in Arusha in September.

The Minister in charge of the Peace Process, **Ambroise Niyonsaba**, said no progress was made at the last round of talks, in Arusha on 6-18 July. That round began badly, when the Arusha commission on genocide suspended its work after massacres in Bugarama. Tutsi parties blamed Hutu rebels; **Joseph Karumba**, leader of the *Front de Libération Nationale* (Frolina), one of the three main Hutu guerrilla groups, blamed the army. In this climate, with Rutamucero a new hero for some Tutsi, not much is expected from the next round in Arusha.