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**A forgotten Corner of Namibia: Aspects of the History of the
Caprivi Strip, c1939-1980.**

By

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**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment for the requirements of
the Master of Arts Degree in the Department of Historical
Studies at the University of Cape Town.**

Submitted on 10 August 2000

Supervisor: Prof. Chris Saunders

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

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Preface and acknowledgements

A major theme in this study Strip is South Africa's administration of the Eastern Caprivi Strip from 1939 to 1980, a period of 41 years. This general study of aspects of the history of the Caprivi Strip deals with a variety of themes. A good number of them could comprise separate studies. These include migrant labour, mission or Christian education, subsistence economy, medical history, traditional institutions and contested chieftaincies, cross border history, landscape perceptions. Instead of specificity, a researcher on a area such as the Caprivi Strip where there is poverty of research will always run the risk of engaging in general research, a drive to present just anything untold about the place. This is why this study emphasises a historical period, rather than a specific theme, because the researcher is able to touch on a multiplicity of topics relevant to the period under review. The aim is to present introductory research that will hopefully ignite further enquiry into the different themes raised.

But as one is usually asked to be more specific, the question addressed here is why did South Africa agree to transfer this 'useless' piece of land, and an administrative burden, from SWA/Namibia, and, most importantly, why in 1939? Was it a 'useless' territory and was it administered as such? What was the nature of South Africa's administration of the area, which could not be executed from Windhoek, and how did it evolve over time? The study ends in 1980 because the Eastern Caprivi Strip was then reincorporated into South West Africa administratively, with the establishment of a three-tier system of administration.

My reasons for choosing the area, period and topic are two-fold: firstly it afforded me the pleasure of self-enquiry, writing an own history. This raises the question of not being 'objective', but 'objectivity' remains an ideal towards which we work. Secondly and most importantly, the transfer of the territory to Pretoria's rule sums up the history of the Caprivi Strip, that of being transferred from one colonial master to the other. This is in short the making of Namibia's 'other'. This image or identity of uncertainty still lingers even after Namibia's independence: are the people of the area 'Caprivians' or Namibians or both, or neither. Are they Western Zambians or Northern Batswanas? It seems that the reason why Caprivi is 'problematic' is that it was not supposed to be part of Namibia in the first place. But who was part of who in the scramble for Africa? Are 'nation' states not just constructions? At least South Africa saw in the Caprivi Strip a useful corridor strategically located for military purposes.

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Special thanks go to my supervisor, Prof. Chris Saunders, for his attentive and undivided support rendered during the entire period of writing this thesis. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the History Department of the University of Namibia for sacrificing to work under pressure though understaffed to afford me the opportunity to further my studies at the University of Cape Town, the result of which is the writing of this thesis. Special thanks also go to Mike Nefale, my fellow student in the History Coursework Masters programme here at UCT, of which we are the first intake, for being good company under these trying conditions and particularly for allowing me to test some of my thesis ideas on him. Thanks to the staff of the National and Military Archives in Pretoria and the National Archives in Windhoek for your help in locating materials relevant to my topic. Last but not least, my gratitude to my family and friends; your phone calls and emails kept me going through the process of writing this thesis.

Introduction

A major theme of this thesis is the creation of the Eastern Caprivi 'Bantustan' and how it was administered. It will be argued that the genealogy of the Caprivi Strip's image revolved around a dichotomy of 'uselessness' on one hand and usefulness on the other. This dichotomous image varied from one colonial master to the next and determined the perception and relationship of the former to the territory. While the image of 'uselessness' dominated until 1939, it will be argued that the strategic geographical location of the Caprivi Strip within Southern Africa was paramount in Pretoria's decision to transfer its administration from South West Africa. This refutes the generally accepted argument that the transfer was necessitated by administrative difficulties, particularly considering that the transfer was made in 1939. It was not coincidental that the Second World War broke out in the same year and as shown in the use the Pretoria regime made of the Caprivi Strip over the years. The question to be examined is whether or not administrative difficulties due to geographical remoteness of the Caprivi Strip from the rest of South West Africa can adequately account for the transfer of the Eastern Caprivi Strip to Pretoria's rule. This will be done by examining the nature and evolution of Pretoria's administration in the Eastern Caprivi Strip particularly whether such administration could not be executed from Windhoek. The western part of the Caprivi Strip is not covered sufficiently in this thesis. This is because it was not transferred to the Pretoria Administration in 1939 which is the main focus of this paper and not much took place administratively in the Western Caprivi as it was both a Nature Park and a military zone. What developed in Western Caprivi was a militarised economy, on which the people of the area heavily depended.

The study is divided into four chapters. Chapter one will first give a brief historical background of the Caprivi Strip up to 1939, looking at the land, the people and the different colonial masters and periods. It will then focus on the core issue of the creation of the Caprivi 'homeland' and how its administration evolved during the period under discussion and the kind of services that were rendered in the territory. Chapter two will analyse the idea that the Caprivi Strip was of the utmost importance to the Pretoria regime. This will place the territory within a Southern African context, particularly the fight for independence and more specifically the war against SWAPO. This leads into Chapter three, which concerns political repression and the formation of the Caprivi African National Union (CANU). Why was this movement formed? Was it because the South African regime in the area was repressive, or was it from a desire for self-determination and independence, or by influence from outside? What became of CANU after it was formed will also be examined in this chapter.

If the Eastern Caprivi was indeed such an important Bantustan to South Africa, then what accounts for the underdevelopment of its economy during this period? This question will form the focus of chapter four. It will be shown that the economy of the Eastern Caprivi during this period remained largely rural and subsistence and a settler economy was discouraged by the authorities. It might be argued that Bantustans were generally neglected and that indeed underdevelopment was primarily one of the reasons for their creation. For the Eastern Caprivi, it will be shown, another factor was crucial for Pretoria, and that is the desire to keep it isolated. This was because of its use for military purposes, as this was to be hidden from public view. As part of a mandated territory, the Caprivi Strip was not supposed to be used for military purposes, and South Africa was aware of this provision.

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FIG 1: Map showing Eastern + western Caprivi



Chapter One

An administrative nightmare: The making of a 'Homeland'.

1. Introduction

It took Germany nearly 19 years after the signing of the Anglo-Germany Treaty to decide to set up an administration in what came to be known as the Caprivi Strip. This was because its creation turned to be 'a dream frustrated'¹ when it became apparent that ships could not sail on the Zambezi through to the east because of its many rapids. Therefore as Fisch rightly observes " ...the acquisition of the land lost its actual purpose and meaning."² This realisation marked the beginning of a painful history to which the Caprivi Strip was subjected, being transferred from one colonial authority to the other. The cause of this was two-fold, firstly because it was perceived as a " white elephant...the poorest districts that have come under my notice"³ and secondly because of its geographical remoteness from the rest of South West Africa that made it difficult to administer. It was that therefore in 1939 South Africa took over the administration of the Eastern Caprivi Strip citing administrative difficulties.

This chapter will however argue that this is a limited theory to explain and justify the transfer and will try to show that other important factors lay behind Pretoria's move. This would be argued against the background of the strategic role the Caprivi Strip played in Pretoria's affairs especially in military terms, a role which could at least have been anticipated before or when considering the transfer. The chapter will also examine the nature of Pretoria's administration of the territory, how it changed or evolved over time towards the installation of a Caprivi Government. This will include the services that were offered in the territory such as education, health and agriculture and how other institutions like missions played a role in these programmes.

1.1 A 'useless' corridor: The Caprivi Strip up to 1939, a brief history.

1.1.1 Mystery of a name

¹ Louw, in S. Davis & Sey Davis (eds.), *SWA ANNUAL 1979*, p. 155.

² Fisch, *The Caprivi Strip during the German colonial period*, 1999, p. 13.

³ Gibbons, in Fisch, *Ibid.*, p. 17.

As with other historical aspects of the Caprivi Strip, research into what the area was called before the arrival of colonial rule remains scant and the issue is unresolved in historical discourse. The Caprivi Strip was known to its inhabitants by different names, the Masubiya called it Itenge, to the Mayeyi it was Diyeyi (Diyeyi) while to the Mafwe it was known as Linyanti and the BaMashi called it Mashi. The different names were applied to different localities in which the different groups lived. The contention however arises when the name of the territory is linked to the issues of dominance, identity and migration. The Masubiya claim that Itenge applied to the whole area and not just the part which was under their control and by implication that they have supreme sovereignty over the whole territory of Caprivi Strip.

According to them, the boundaries of Itenge were as follows:⁴ On the south bank it was Sakapani (e), which lies to the south of Goha Hills in Botswana where they once lived. In the Southeast the boundary ended at Nsunga also in Botswana while Chungwe-Namutitima (Victoria Falls) formed the eastern boundary of Itenge. In the north the boundary ended at Sioma in Zambia and in the west it went as far as Kaunga and Singalamwe. Other groups in the area of course deny the existence of such an extensive Kingdom. This claim is also refuted by Maria Fisch who holds that Itenge was actually not in Caprivi but denoted an area raided and possibly controlled by Nsundano, a Subiya Chief and was situated in the territory of the stock-farming Tonga and Toka-Leya tribes in present Zambia.⁵ The latter actually states that the earliest mention of Itenge was made by Shamukuni in 1972 in his essay on the Masubiya and was since then incorrectly used by them to justify their claim to the whole Caprivi Strip. What Fisch omits however is to shed some light on what the area was then called before it became Caprivi.

It is actually also incorrect to deny the existence of the name Itenge, at least in the oral history of the area regardless of its use or misuse today. It is known that the Masubiya refers to their chiefs as Munitenge, meaning one who rules over Itenge. Fisch would agree that this title did not start with Shamukuni's publication and therefore it is only thorough research that would shed light on the actual area to which Itenge applied than just references of "very old and respected experts on tribal history"⁶ that keep assuring her without mentioning them. Ironically she accuses Shamukuni⁷ of being 'unreliable'. The opinion here is that though the name Itenge might not have covered the whole Caprivi Strip as the Masubiya claim, at least

⁴ Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989, pp. 30-31. (History, Dept., Unam)

⁵ Fisch, *The Secessionist movement in the Caprivi*, 1999, p. 46.

⁶ Fisch, *The secessionist movement in the Caprivi*, 1999, pp. 46-47.

⁷ Shamukuni, 1972, 'The BaSubiya', *Botswana Notes and Records*, Vol. 4.

it applied to the area under their control. It is indeed doubtful whether they would have exercised control over the whole Caprivi Strip given their numerical strength at the time and their social organisation, which was not more centralised. What is interesting is that with the now secessionist movement in the Caprivi, the so-called secessionists claim to be fighting for an 'independent' Itenge. These people are not Masubiyas but Mafwes who have contested the existence of such a name for a long time now. Why they want their 'independent' Caprivi to be named Itenge is a question for further enquiry. Another question would be what the Lozis and Kololos of Zambia called the place when it was under their control, issues that published material authorities on the Caprivi avoids. With the 1890 treaty, the territory became known as the Caprivi Zipfel⁸, named after German Chancellor Graf Leo von Caprivi di MONTECUCOLI, who succeeded Prince Bismark in 1890.

1.1.2 Land and people

a) Land

The Anglo-German Treaty of 1890 laid down the boundaries of the Caprivi Strip. It is a long panhandle enclosed by permanent water and stretching eastwards from the Kavango River to and along the Zambezi ending at the border junction of Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia. It was divided into two parts for administrative purposes, these being the Eastern Caprivi Zipfel and the Western Caprivi Zipfel. The eastern Caprivi Zipfel is the eastern part of the Caprivi Strip and covers an area of 11 533 km² with a topography that is almost flat at around 930 m above sea level.⁹ This lush savannah area is bounded by the Kwando, Linyanti and Chobe River system on the southern border with Botswana and with the Zambezi River forming part of its northern boundary with Zambia. The eastern Caprivi Strip has three distinct regions, an upland region, a lowland region and a swamp and marsh region.

The western Caprivi Zipfel is the narrow corridor that stretches eastward from Bagani on the Kavango River to Kongola on the Kwando River. This area, which was sparsely populated by the Kwe and Kung San and the Mbukushu, is rich in game that it was declared a Game reserve in 1968. It did not form part of the area that was transferred to Pretoria in 1939 but remained of military importance to the South African Defence Force. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, the area was declared a military zone for the exclusive use by SADF

⁸ Zipfel means tassel, it became referred to as Strip in English.

⁹ Fosse, *Negotiating the Nation in Local Terms*, 1996, pp. 74-5. (MA Thesis, Univ. of Oslo).

and therefore closed to civilians. Most of the Mbukushu in the area were evicted and the San population forced to live in military bases.

b) People

The population of the Eastern Caprivi Strip comprise various groups of people who live mainly in the eastern part of the territory. However, colonial administrators divided these people into two political groups for administrative purposes, namely the Masubiya and the Mafwe. The Masubiya were and are the largest ethnic group in the area and therefore were not merged with other groups, leaving them to be a single and homogenous group both ethnically and linguistically. The other smaller groups such as the Mayeyi, the Matotela, the Mbukushu, the Mbalangwe, the Malozi, the BaMashi and smaller bands of San living in eastern Caprivi were grouped together with the Mafwe proper. They therefore lost their individual group identities and henceforth became identified as Mafwe. This group was initially identified as Bafwe/Bayeyi but with the passage of time, the name Bayeyi was dropped and they remained just as Mafwe.

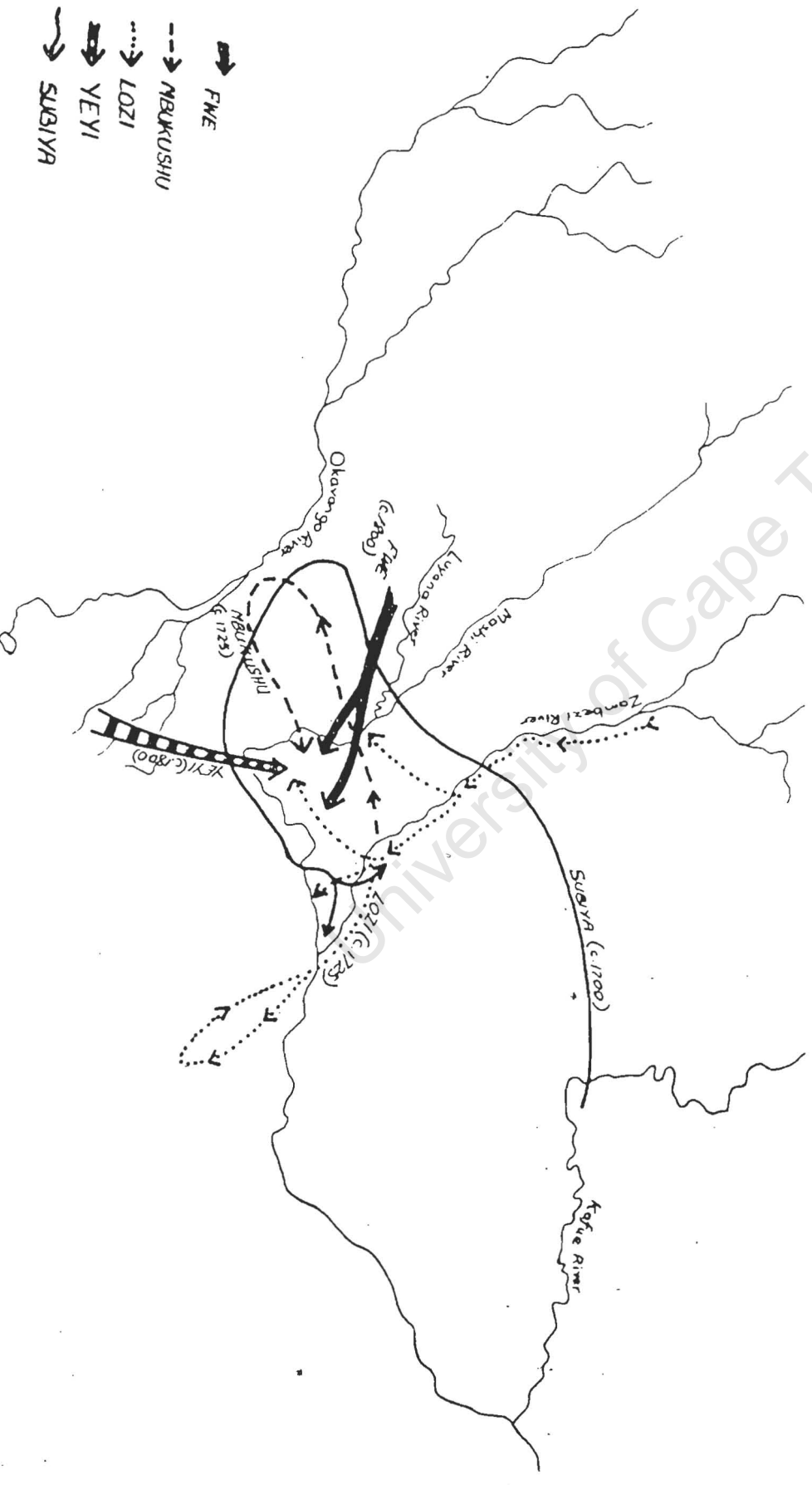
After Namibia's independence, some of these smaller groups started to break away from this ethnic alliance and sought to establish and consolidate their separate identities by electing their own chiefs. This move was perceived as political interference on the part of the SWAPO government aimed at weakening the opposition, which once had a stronghold in the Caprivi Strip. This increased the political as well as ethnic tensions that have been in the area for some time especially between the two main groups, the Masubiya and the Mafwe. From a historical perspective however what one sees here is a disintegration of an identity, which its construction can just, be traced as far back as Streitwolf's rule in the Caprivi Strip.

The languages spoken in Eastern Caprivi Strip are Cisubiya, Chifwe, Chiyeyi, Chitotela, Chimbalangwe, Lozi, Chimbukushu and Chikwengo. Anton Bredell considers Chimbalangwe to be a "sociolectal variety of Cisubiya and that 'Mbalangwe' is the name applied to Cisubiya speakers residing in the Mafwe area."¹⁰ These people do not however consider themselves as part of the Masubiya and indeed have remained and identified themselves as Mafwe. Lozi is the lingua franca in and around Katima Mulilo, the administrative centre of the Caprivi Strip. This is because it was adopted and used in schools as the medium of instruction in lower primary grades. The people however revert to their own languages when they are back in their homes. Indeed Lozi is common mostly to the younger generation with some of

¹⁰ Bredell, in Maho, Few People, Many Tongues, 1998, p. 51.

Fig 2: Movement of the people of Caprivi before 1830

Source: Pretorius 1975



the older generation not knowing how to speak the language at all but could understand when spoken to. This is particularly true of those who were not privileged enough to see the light of education. This is in sharp contrast to what Pretorius maintains, that "the majority of the adult Caprivi population has a fairly good knowledge of Lozi."¹¹ The family remains the most important cultural unit, and while the Mafwe are more matrilineal, the Masubiya are patrilineal. The chief is the head of the people and is assisted by a Ngambela (Chief Councillor) and a number of councillors who constitute the Kuta or traditional council. Apart from these, there are also district heads and village headmen who act as a link between the Kuta and the people in their localities. The people depend to a large extent on agriculture, fishing and cattle rearing.

1.1.3 Foreign rule

The Caprivi Strip was under Lozi domination for more than 100 years according to Fisch.¹² During this time the area was administered as part of Barotseland or Zambia's western province. Administration was through the appointment of regional headmen to watch over affairs in the Caprivi Strip and the people of Caprivi were subservient to the Lozi. This Lozi rule was only interrupted by a period of makololo rule led by Sebitwane in the 1820s. Sebitwane came from the south heading a powerful army and was assisted by Liswani, a Masubiya chief recognised by the Lozi to cross the Zambezi, possibly indicating that the relationship between the Lozi and their subjects was not rosy. He conquered tribes to the north and northwest that included the Lozi and subsequently asserted himself as the power in the land, in the process replacing Lozi regional representatives with his men. It is reported that Liswani, the Masubiya chief, became annoyed with Sebitwane's rule that he invited and assisted a Matebele army from Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia to attack him but failed to conquer the land.¹³ When Sebitwane died, he was succeeded by his son Sekeletu but by this time weakness in the Makololo rule led to the downfall of their reign and the re-assertion of the Lozi to power. Lozi rule was ended by the arrival of Europeans in the Caprivi Strip.

In 1908, 18 years after the signing of the Anglo-German Treaty, Kurt Streitwolf, representative of the German colonial authority, established a German administration of the territory. He decided to experiment with the British system of 'Indirect Rule' that had impressed him during his journey to the Caprivi Strip. Such a policy was vital given the bad German record in South West Africa particularly their suppression of the Herero, Nama and

¹¹ Pretorius, *The fwe of E.C.Z.*, 1975, p. 16. (MA Thesis, Univ. of Stellenbosch).

¹² Fisch, *The secessionist movement in the Caprivi*, 1999, p. 7.

¹³ NAN P/B0139: Kruger, *The E.C.Z.*, 1963, p. 3.

Damara during the 1904-7 war. This bad news preceded his arrival in the Caprivi Strip and indeed he found a territory that has been deserted. He therefore reconstructed tribal rule in the area. The German's administration of the Caprivi Strip was short-lived and did not leave any recognisable impact on the territory. It was ended by the outbreak of the First World War when the last German Resident in the Caprivi Strip was dramatically removed from office while enjoying a cup of tea with his counterpart, Southern Rhodesia Commissioner, at Sesheke.¹⁴ The Caprivi Strip was seized by Southern Rhodesia troops in a take over that was bloodless thereby making it the first enemy territory to fall into the hands of the allied forces.¹⁵

As a war measure, the Bechuanaland Protectorate Police occupied the Caprivi Strip in 1915 and thereafter between 1922 and 1929 when it was formally administered as part of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. It was during this period that the two parts of the Caprivi Strip, east and west, became distinct. It is not known why the division between west and east became of necessity. The eastern part fell under the immediate control of the District Commissioner at Kasane while the District Commissioner at Maun controlled the western portion of the strip. In 1929 the Caprivi Strip was handed over to the South West African Administration until 1939 and onwards when it was administered by the Department of Bantu Affairs in Pretoria.

1.2 The Eastern Caprivi Native Reserve: A Place of natural beauty, 1939-1964.

By Union Government Notice 1210 of 1940, the area of Eastern Caprivi Strip was formally declared as a Native Reserve. This meant that it was to be for the exclusive use by the inhabitants of the territory. Apart from the reason of the area being malarial and therefore not suitable for European settlement, the authorities feared that opening it to outsiders would spoil the natural beauty of the area, its fauna and flora. This section will show that the motive behind declaring the territory a native reserve was to justify its neglect by the authorities in terms of economic development as indeed nothing significant took place in the area during this period. It will also be shown that the administration of the area during this time could still be executed from Windhoek with the same ease as nothing changed and therefore nullify the usual argument that the transfer of the area was due to administrative difficulties. Already during this period, South Africa had started to use the area for military purposes. Therefore the strategic location and hence importance of the Caprivi Strip to

¹⁴ Curson, in *SA Journal of Science*, vol. XLIII: 124-157, July 1947.

¹⁵ NAN A503/1-7: Trollope, Report on E.C.Z, 1940, p. 7.

South Africa was anticipated and therefore accounts for the transfer more than mere administrative difficulties, at least they are secondary.

1.2.1 The politics of transfer

a) The transfer

The transfer of the Eastern Caprivi Strip to the Union was viewed by the international community as a mystery and was described by the Italian newspaper Giornale d'Italia of 2 August 1939 as an 'annexation' while the Rand Daily Mail of the same date saw it as 'illegal'. The Star (2 August 1939), in an article headlined " Caprivi Strip mystery", argued that the official explanation that the take over was a matter of administrative expediency was not convincing but added that there was no satisfactory reason which could be visualised at the time. The official British attitude was that the issue was entirely a matter for the Union Government and indication is that Britain, on whose behalf the Union was administering the mandated territory, was not informed of the planned transfer.

This perception was not shared by other countries, which believed Britain had a hand in the matter. Giornale d'Italia reported that "after the heinous barter concluded by France to the disadvantage of Syria, a new audacious change to the disadvantage of the territories under mandate has been decided...in the frame of the British Commonwealth."¹⁶ In Germany the transfer was seen as "another serious violation by Great Britain of international rights and mandatory treaties" adding that "it is worse than the bartering away of the Sanjak of Alexandretta by France, which was also done at the request of Great Britain."¹⁷ In fact Germany interpreted the transfer as a challenge to her colonial rights and the demand to return the colonies that she considered were robbed from her following her defeat in the First World War.

The Permanent Mandates Commission was informed in early 1939 of the proposed transfer and replied in the affirmative, deciding that:¹⁸

"...The administrative arrangement contemplated calls for no observation on its part provided all the provisions of the mandate are properly applied in the eastern portion of the Caprivi Zipfel."

¹⁶ Giornale d'Italia, 2 August 1939.

¹⁷ Rand Daily Mail, 2 August 1939.

¹⁸ Permanent mandates Commission, Session XXXVI, pp. 280-281, in Pretorius, *The Fwe of E.C.Z.*, 1975, p. 46. (MA Thesis, Univ. of Stellenbosch).

It was hoped that with the transfer the government would comply more fully with the terms of the mandate by devoting more attention to the welfare of the indigenous population. By Union Proclamation no. 147 of 1939 the Eastern Caprivi Strip was transferred to the Department of Native Affairs while Proclamation no. 243 of 1939 constituted the area as a magisterial district of the Transvaal. Another Union Government Notice 1607 of 1939 made provision for the establishment of a gaol at Katima Mulilo while Government Notice 1210 declared the territory of Eastern Caprivi Strip as a Native Reserve.

b) Reasons for the transfer

It is generally accepted that the Eastern Caprivi Strip was transferred to Pretoria because of its remoteness from the rest of South West Africa due to its location and lack of infrastructure. This is confirmed by the Proclamation (147, 1939) that effected the transfer, which states the following:

"And whereas experience has shown that the geographical position of that portion of the Caprivi Zipfel... makes it expedient that it should be administered by the Minister of Native Affairs of the Union or by another Minister of State of the Union acting on his behalf."

However, in terms of distance the Eastern Caprivi Strip was even more remote from the Union than it was from Windhoek. The distance from Windhoek to the strip was probably 350 miles if one counted from Grootfontein, then the next settlement close to the Caprivi Strip in South west Africa with improved communication facilities. From Pretoria there were two routes open. The first one was from Pretoria to Palapye road by rail, then 400 miles along a heavy sand road through the desert in extra Union territory, the Bechuanaland Protectorate. This brought travellers to Maun, and then there would be another 350 miles via Lake Ngami, which was mostly an unreliable road especially during wet weather.

The second route was via Livingstone by rail in Northern Rhodesia, a much greater distance than route one and which would be about double the distance from Windhoek in addition to which one would have to travel several days by barge, water transport. This is the route most officials from South West Africa chose to reach the strip, by first going through the Union. The obstacle in the short distance between Windhoek and the Eastern Caprivi Strip was to get across the Kwando River, which runs through the middle of the strip. This obstacle could have been bypassed by introducing a barge on the river for officials to use when going to the Eastern Caprivi Strip.

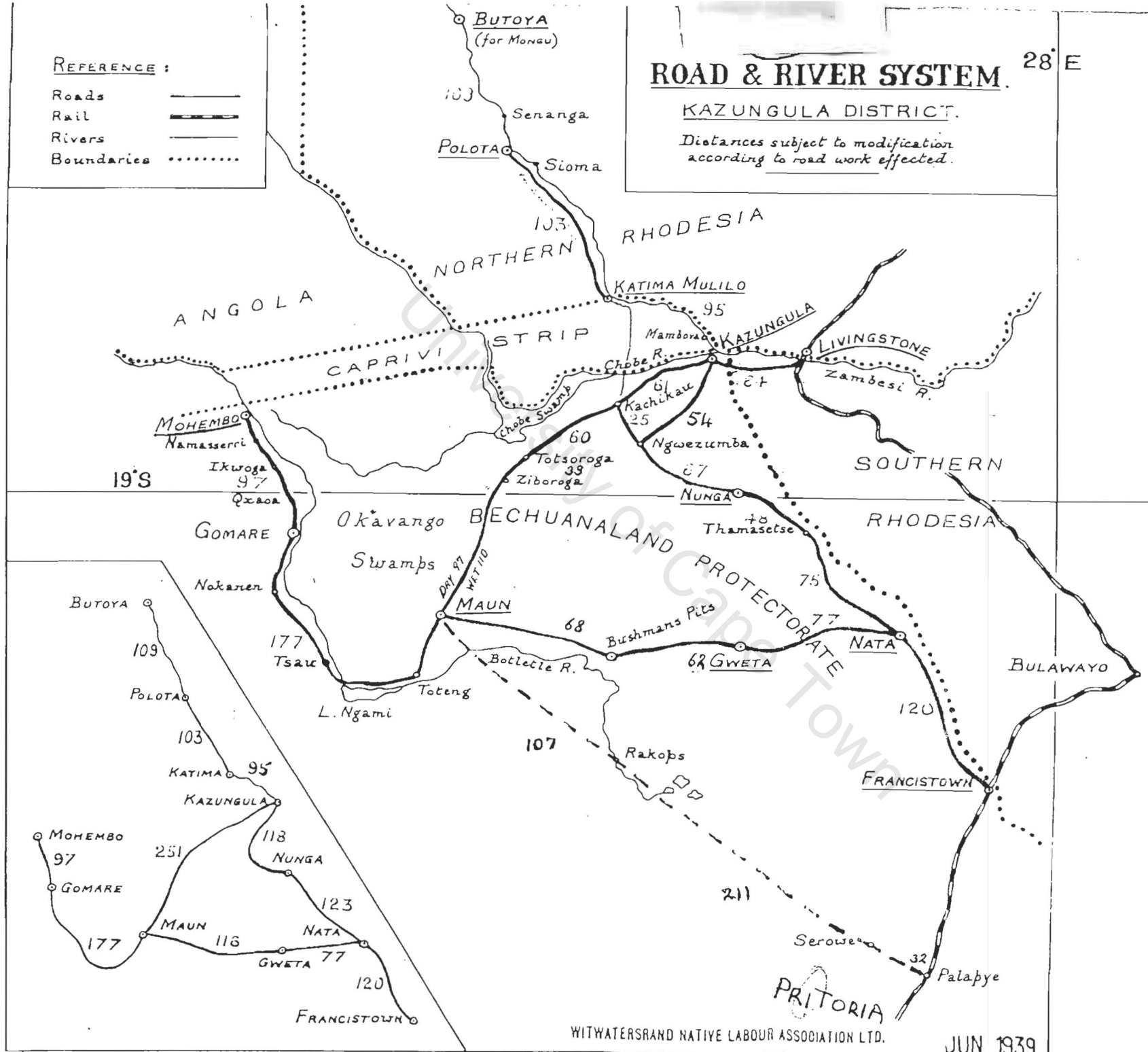
REFERENCE :

- Roads
- Rail
- Rivers
- Boundaries

ROAD & RIVER SYSTEM. 28° E

KAZUNGULA DISTRICT.

Distances subject to modification according to road work effected.



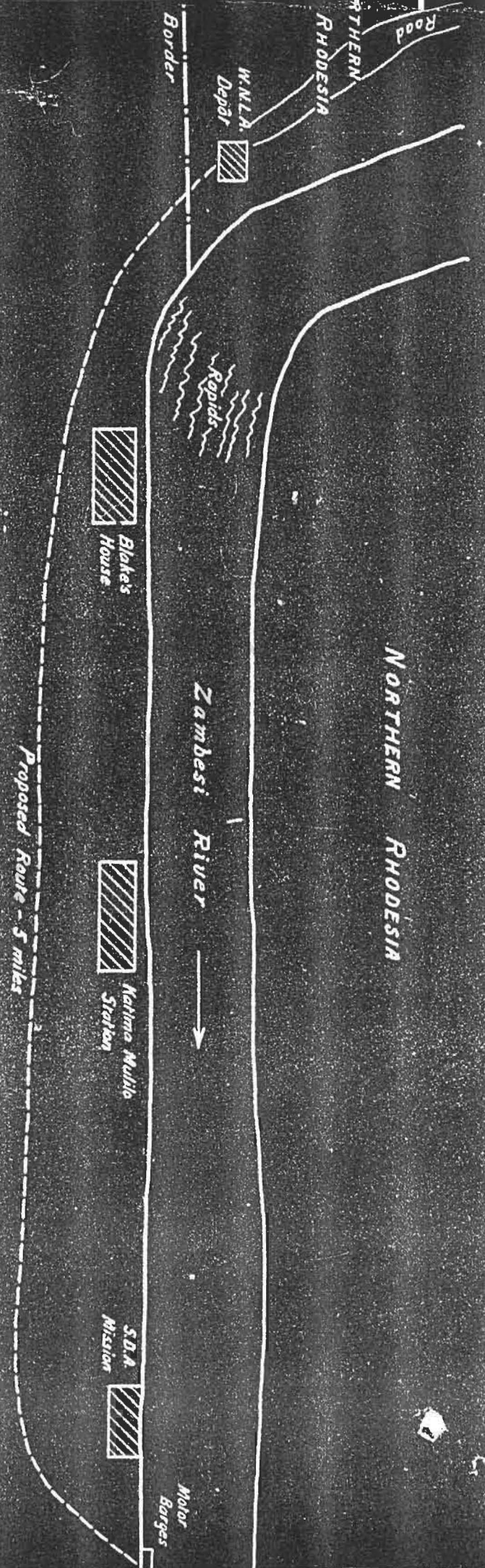
WITWATERSRAND NATIVE LABOUR ASSOCIATION LTD.

JUN 1939

F194

FIG 11 : SBA Mission, Katima Mulilo + WNLA source: NTS 2/430

CAPRIVI



The timing of the transfer stand out to be crucial in discussing the issue. On the South West African side, the request to be relieved of the administration of the area came after the first official visit in 1937 to the Eastern Caprivi Strip paid by the Additional Native Commissioner for the territory. His resultant report suggested the necessity for considerable expenditure of money on a lung-sickness inoculation campaign.¹⁹ The strip was periodically infested with such like diseases and therefore required considerable and systematic control. This would place a heavy strain on the limited South West African financial resources and therefore view the transfer as a passing of a financial burden over to the Union.

The report also strongly criticised the way the territory was administered declaring that "the blunt fact is that our control of this small territory... is wholly artificially."²⁰ It suggested that in order to avoid the taunt of the Constitution Commission's criticism of the administration's general native policy, it was advisable to establish a permanent minimum staff. This would include an administrative official (Native or Assistant Native Commissioner), a veterinary officer (or stock inspector) and a doctor plus a complementary native staff. The report however cast doubt on the justification of such enormous expenditure for only about 9000 people adding, "the expenditure involved in such administration would be irrecoverable directly or indirectly."²¹ The area was therefore a financial liability to the administration than an asset particularly because it was perceived as neither a labour source nor an outlet of products from South West Africa on top of being unsuitable for European habitation.

The transfer of the Eastern Caprivi Strip to the Union also coincided with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. The Caprivi Strip was to resume a new status in the affairs of the Union. In August 1940 a Special Company of Native Soldiers was formed by the Union in the strip and was commanded by Trollope with Kruger in second command. This military unit formed part of a general Southern Africa military scheme in regard to the protection of the Victoria Falls Bridge which was feared would be the first target of the enemy in this part of the region.²² The Special Company, which had its headquarters in Pretoria, also included a number of European personnel within its ranks. Both the European and Caprivian members of the Special Company were periodically sent to the Union to receive military training. As nothing significant took place in those parts during the war, the Special Company was disbanded in September 1943.

¹⁹ NAN A503/1-7:Trollope, Report on E.C.Z., 1940, p. 9.

²⁰ NAN A503/1-7: Trollope, Inspection Report: E.C.Z, 1938, p.

²¹ Ibid.

²² NAN A503/1-7: Trollope, Report on E.C.Z., 1940, p. 10.

The military importance of the Caprivi Strip to the Union however continued. As early as 1940 the Union had utilised the Caprivi Strip for periodic military air training exercises and indeed a military airfield had existed in the strip since the beginning of the Second World War. The Rand Daily Mail reported on 6 August 1959 that the Caprivi Strip was the only area under South African control where soldiers could exercise in tropical conditions. This report and another in the Die Transvaler newspaper of 11 August 1959, revealed that the Minister of Defence, accompanied by senior officials of the department, had left Pretoria for the Caprivi Strip in connection with the choice of a suitable terrain for a tropical training school in the area.

His visit coincided with an air training exercise that was conducted by the South African Air Force in the Caprivi Strip from 3 to 24 August 1959. During the exercise every pilot was required to carry out a two hour sortie each day in the following operations: border patrol with full reports on all movements and accurate pin points, low level navigation, rendezvous with border patrol aircraft and escort back to base. There was also a simulated rescue by helicopter and a survival walk back to camp with kit. The operation involved 6 harvards, 2 helicopters and a dakota totalling to 327 landings. Although official records²³ confirm the planned establishment of a tropical military training school, evidence could not be found on whether it ever established. The SADF however continued to utilise the Caprivi Strip for military purposes as will be shown in chapter two, which will argue that the territory became one of the heavily militarised in the region.

1.2.2 Administering the Native Reserve

Major Leslie French Trollope officially assumed duty as magistrate and native commissioner of the Eastern Caprivi Zipfel in October 1939 with Kruger as his assistant in both capacities. It was clear from the instructions they were given that administration of the area was to be based on tribal institutions and indeed to make them "an effective instrument of administration."²⁴ Unlike in other reserves, there was no Reserve Board constituted for the Eastern Caprivi Strip because the two tribal authorities in the area were considered suitable replacement. Kruger best described the administrative system that operated in the area:

" The tribal set up and its chieftainships were accepted and confirmed as the basis for local government and arrangement, interference with that order having been insignificant (except for elimination of features against

²³ NAP, TES F11/243: Correspondence from the Department of Defence to that of Bantu Administration and Development dated 18 July 1959.

natural justice or morality) and development taking a natural, even and accepted course, under the local supervision, lightly applied, of one government officer."²⁵

The Eastern Caprivi Strip thus had a dual system of administration that was complementary. During this period (1939-1964), the native commissioner worked through the two tribal authorities in the area, a system of indirect rule dating back to the German period in the area. Streitwolf grouped the people of the Eastern Caprivi Strip into two, the Masubiya and the Mafwe, with the latter including other smaller groups within its ranks (discussed above). The tribal authorities of the two groups had exactly the same powers and equal status, this being vital to maintain good relations in the area. At the head of each of the two groups was its chief, who ruled the people with the help of a Ngambela (Prime Minister) who presides over the Kuta (tribal council). There is a Royal Council, known to the Masubiya as 'Kaziba ko busimwine', which is an important institution comprising of members of the royal house. This council gives advice to the chief and plays an important role in the process of electing a new chief. The tribal council is composed of silalo indunas (district heads) who represents the different area under the jurisdiction of a particular chief.

The conduct of cases followed customary law where litigants were required first to go to the headman in their district who may listen to the case. The headman would give a decision on the matter and if the parties agree to adopt it, the dispute is regarded as solved. In the event where the headman's decision is not accepted, to which there was no legal sanction, the case was brought before the chief who tried it together with the tribal council and offered a binding judgement. In such event the magistrate would grant assistance in carrying it out. A new provision for appeal was introduced in tribal law at this stage because if a party was not satisfied with the chief's judgement, an appeal could be lodged with the office of the magistrate. The magistrate had the powers to enquire into such cases and confirm or upset the chief's judgement. In some instances parties chose to bypass their chiefs and take their dispute to the magistrate who would summarily deal with it and therefore assume "...powers of a chief-in-council".²⁶ The magistrate also had the powers to inspect on intervals, the judgement records kept by each council and in the process, even without appeal, confirm the judgements or give instructions for any matter to be reopened or to be brought before him for re-hearing. The magistrate had judicial powers over the following matters, which

²⁴ NAP, NTS 107/276: Letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to Major Trollope numbered 110/276 and dated 12 October 1939.

²⁵ NAN P/B0139: Kruger, *The E.C.Z.*, 1963, p. 4.

²⁶ Pretorius, *The Fwe of E.C.Z.*, 1975, p. 72. (MA Thesis, Univ. of Stellenbosch).

were considered to be important to be dealt with by the tribal courts and was brought to him in the first instance.²⁷

- | | |
|------|--|
| i) | Persons killed or who had died from unnatural causes, such as murder, as a result of drowning or fighting, killed by lions, etc. |
| ii) | Serious assault cases |
| iii) | Rape |
| iv) | Witchcraft |
| v) | All cases in which parties belong to different tribes |
| vi) | All cases between council members |
| vii) | All cases involving the chief himself. |

What emerges from the above discussion is that there was stagnation and continuity in Pretoria's administration of the Eastern Caprivi Strip from 1939 to 1964 with one person serving as the government representative for more than 15 years. Due to the less number of administrative staff, there was no economic development taking place in the area during this period, what Kruger terms 'development taking a natural, even and accepted course' (see above). The economy of the area remained highly rural and subsistence. During this period, the provision of services such as education and health was left in the hands of private institutions particularly missionaries, to which we shall now turn.

i) Education

The Seventh Day Adventist missionaries started the provision of education in the Eastern Caprivi Strip. The earliest recorded reference to education in the territory is found in Schwarz's The Kalahari and its Native Races. He reported in 1925 that the American missionary and his wife at Katima Mulilo were "busy teaching the Masubeia young ladies and gentlemen the elements of arithmetic and such-like accomplishments."²⁸ At the assumption of administration by the Union, these missionaries had been operating in the area for fifteen years and by this time they were retrogressing. They had their main station at Katima Mulilo and two out-schools and a number of what was referred to as 'Bush schools'. The village in which the school was situated was required to contribute communally £3 per annum to the mission funds. At the mission itself the scholars were required to spend their afternoons working in the mission grounds as part of what was called 'industrial education'.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Schwarz, The Kalahari and its Native Races, 1928, p. 32.

In 1940 the mission applied for a grant-in-aid from the government but this was refused on the grounds that the work being done did not justify such a grant. Trollope described the syllabus and educational scheme of the mission as impressive on paper while in practice the reverse was true.²⁹ Indeed the number of their schools dwindled from nine to three and eventually the whole educational project was withdrawn by the mission. The native teachers were poorly educated and in 1939 about eight of them were dismissed because of misconduct. When the educational project of the Seventh Day Adventists was withdrawn, there were no education facilities in the Eastern Caprivi Strip and therefore learners from the territory went to the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Northern Rhodesia for schooling. It was then that the Union officials decided to introduce primary schools but still using Christian missions. This was entrusted in the hands of the Roman catholic Mission that were already operating at Sesheke across the river in Northern Rhodesia.

When the Roman Catholics moved across the river into the Eastern Caprivi Strip, the school on the Northern Rhodesian bank of the river ceased to operate and consequently a steady flow of Northern Rhodesian pupils to schools in the strip increased. By 1952 about twenty-four pupils from across the river were known to be attending school in the strip and the Northern Rhodesian Government subsidised the schooling of these pupils by reimbursing the Department of Native affairs the cost of the schools.³⁰ From 1945 onwards the Northern Rhodesian school curriculum was used in the Eastern Caprivi and regular inspection of schools was carried out by the provincial education officer of Barotseland. The Northern Rhodesian examinations were taken in the strip and marked by officials of Northern Rhodesia and then pass certificates were issued by the mission on their instruction. By 1962 the Roman Catholic Mission had established 18 primary schools in the Eastern Caprivi Strip that were financed by the Pretoria Government, all except five, were situated in the Masubiya areas.³¹

i) Health

Records show that smallpox, leprosy, eye trouble, and chest complaints are some of the illnesses that were prevalent in the area during this period. Other endemic illnesses included goitre, which the government countered by distributing free iodised salt, malaria especially among children and dysentery. By Proclamation 213 of 1940, provision was made for the

²⁹ NAN A503/1-7: Trollope, Report on E.C.Z., 1940, p. 11.

³⁰ NAP, NTS 110/276: Correspondence from the Native Commissioner of Eastern Caprivi to the Secretary for Native Affairs dated 19 March 1955.

³¹ Pretorius, The few of E.C.Z., 1975, p. 49. (MA Thesis, Univ. of Stellenbosch).

removal of mentally disturbed persons to receive treatment at mental hospitals in the Union. Indeed two patients were accordingly removed in 1940 to mental hospitals in the union. A clinic was established at Katima Mulilo in 1940 where minor ailments were treated while cases of serious illnesses were referred to the Parish Mission Hospital across the river in Northern Rhodesia, the financial burden of such services being the responsibility of the Union government. During the Second World War period a military unit that had the services of an army medical officer was stationed in the Eastern Caprivi Strip. The officer rendered medical services to the people of Caprivi who sought his assistance. It was only in 1946 that a state-subsidised mission run hospital was built at Katima Mulilo, consisting of 105 beds. The hospital also attended to a leper colony in the Eastern Caprivi Strip.

In a nutshell, during the first phase (1939-1964) of Pretoria's rule in the Eastern Caprivi Strip, administration was executed through one government officer who worked in conjunction with the tribal authorities. There was no economic development taking place and the provision of services was largely left in the hands of missionaries even though the government subsidised these services. Generally, the provision of services in the area was very poor and Kruger, while admitting this, quickly attributes the situation to the policy of indirect rule that was operating in the area. He argues that the notion of indirect rule, leaving the inhabitants largely to their own devices, under protection, implied slow evolutionary and natural processes.³² Such a system of administration could still be executed by the South West African administration involving little inconvenience. This state of affairs changed after the formation of a Planning Committee on Eastern Caprivi and the recommendations of the South African Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs hereinafter referred as the Odendaal Commission. The Eastern Caprivi Strip was now to be transformed into an 'independent Homeland'.

1.2 Towards self-government, 1964-1980: Inaugurating a 'Homeland'.

This section will examine phase two and three of South Africa's administration of the Eastern Caprivi Strip. Focus will mainly be on the Planning Committee, the Odendaal recommendations for the administration of the territory, and the establishment of the Caprivi Legislative Council that transformed into the Caprivi Government. Phase two of South Africa's administration of the Caprivi Strip start in 1964 and ends in 1972 when the legislative council was inaugurated and which marks the beginning of phase three which ends in 1980.

³² NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, chapt. 12, p. 2.

1.2.1 The Planning Committee

It is not clear why the Minister of Native Affairs decided to appoint a planning committee to apply itself to the various aspects of economic development in the Eastern Caprivi Strip and particularly why this was done in 1964 to coincide with the Odendaal report. Nonetheless the committee was appointed at the right time to fuel the much needed economic development in the area because even though the Odendaal Commission recommended the establishment of a legislative council, it was not until 1972 that this was inaugurated. The Planning Committee therefore became the executive body empowered to take decisions on the course of events in the Eastern Caprivi Strip. It consisted of senior officials from the Department of Native Affairs, these being the head of the engineering branch, a senior member of the agricultural branch and the accountant of the department. There were two senior members of the Forestry Department who were also attached to the committee in advisory capacities. The magistrate of the Eastern Caprivi Strip chaired the committee. It is important to note that the composition of the committee excluded the two chiefs in the area and indeed their role in the affairs of the Eastern Caprivi Strip dwindled during this period except in advisory capacities. This was a shift from the earlier phase where administration centred on them and their tribal councils. Therefore from 1964 a committee appointed by the Minister of Native affairs until 1972 when the legislative council took over administered the Eastern Caprivi Strip.

The committee made a comprehensive tour of the territory in June and July 1964, making formal calls on the two chiefs and compiled a report that was approved by the Minister in October 1964. The committee had wide-ranging terms of reference and therefore its report included a wide range of recommendations in the fields of agriculture and animal husbandry, road making, improvement of water supply to inland villages and schools, and the construction of modern structures at each of the tribal headquarters. The committee also recommended the building of a new hospital at Katima Mulilo and the introduction of a bus service in the area. The developments that followed the recommendations of the planning committee are dealt with in detail in chapter four.

1.3.2 Constitutional developments in the Eastern Caprivi Strip

It has been shown that during the period 1939 to 1964, administration of the Caprivi Strip consisted of only one government officer who worked through the two tribal chiefs and that from 1964 to 1972 the affairs of the area fell into the hands of a Planning Committee. During

the latter stage, the powers of the chiefs waned and they remained in advisory capacities only. As far as legislation was concerned, from 1939 onwards the legislative powers in respect of the area were reserved to the governor-general of the Union and the parliament of South Africa. In 1962 South Africa appointed a commission to enquire into the affairs of South West Africa probably in preparation for the case against it before the International Court of Justice that was put by Ethiopia and Liberia. The two countries sought the opinion of the court on whether South Africa had violated the terms of the mandate on Namibia that would lead to its termination. The commission's report, released in December 1963, made wide ranging recommendations for the Eastern Caprivi Strip and indeed relative development started to take shape in the territory during this period.

During the proceedings³³ of the Commission at Katima Mulilo that took place on 5 and 6 February 1963, the people of Eastern Caprivi expressed their disappointment in the administration of South Africa. They felt that they have been neglected by the administration and actually demanded that they should be entrusted into the hands of another government that will be sympathetic to their needs particularly the 'Queen's Government'. The more radical voices called for self-rule of the Eastern Caprivi Strip. They generally expressed anger about government's prohibition on hunting wild game and the restriction on the sale of ammunition and rifles. They felt that the government was more interested in the conservation of wild animals than the survival of the people even in the instances where animals such as lions were killing people and elephants destroying their fields. It is interesting to note the difference between what the people wanted and what the commission recommended.

a) The Odendaal Commission's recommendations

The recommendations that are dealt with here are those pertaining to the general administration of the area. Those dealing with economic development and health are discussed in detail in chapter four. The commission made the following eleven recommendations in regard to the East Caprivi Strip:³⁴

- | | |
|----|---|
| i) | That a homeland, known as the Eastern Caprivi, be established for the sole use and occupation of the population groups known as the Masubia and the Mafwe, together with the smaller groups such as the Mayeyi, Matotela, Mashe and Mbukushu; |
|----|---|

³³ NAP, SWA/KC/7E/35: Transcript of the proceedings of the Commission at Katima Mulilo, 5-6 February 1963.

³⁴ SA, Report of the Commission into SWA Affairs, 1962-3, pp. 97-99.

- ii) That the present boundaries of the Eastern Caprivi Strip should also be the boundaries of the proposed homeland. That the Kwando River should be determined as the western boundary;
- iii) That, for the Eastern Caprivi, a Legislative Council be statutorily instituted, consisting initially of the two hereditary chiefs, the two Ngambela and the twenty elected councillors of the Masubia and Mafwe population groups;
- iv) That the Legislative Council should gradually take over from the Department of Bantu Administration and Development the legislative authority and administrative functions, excluding Defence, Foreign Affairs, Internal Security and Border Control, Posts, Water Affairs, Transport and Power Generation, and that all legislation be subject to the approval and signature of the State President of the Republic of South Africa;
- v) That the executive powers of the Legislative Council be vested in an Executive Committee consisting of the two chiefs and Ngambela ex officio and three members to be elected by the Legislative Council which shall designate one of the chiefs or Ngambela as chairman, provided that the three elected members need not necessarily be members of the Legislative Council;
- vi) That, subject to the approval of the State President of the Republic of South Africa, the Legislative Council determine the remuneration of the members of the Legislative Council, the Executive Committee, the High Court and of the community authorities;
- vii) That, in the case of the Masubia and Mafwe population groups, the Legislative Council institute in their respective areas community authorities consisting of as many members and with such functions, powers and remuneration as it may determine;
- viii) That, for the purposes of the administration of justice, the Legislative Council by legislation institute an inferior court for the hearing of civil and criminal cases of minor import, and a superior court for the hearing of civil and criminal cases of major import: Provided that all decisions of the inferior court shall be subject to appeal to the superior court and that the latter's decisions shall in turn be subject to appeal to the Supreme Court of South Africa (Transvaal Provincial Division) and thereafter to the Appeal Court of the Republic of South Africa;
- ix) That the Legislative Council by legislation institute for the homeland a citizenship of its own and that every East Caprivian born in or outside Eastern Caprivi but within South West Africa, as well as Eastern Caprivian born outside South West Africa but now permanently resident in Eastern Caprivi and not declared a prohibited immigrant in South West Africa, shall be entitled to such citizenship: Provided that such a person shall forfeit his citizenship if he assumes the citizenship of another homeland;
- x) That the franchise, which may be exercised only within the homeland, be granted to all citizens, both male and female, over the age of 18 years, provided they register as voters in the homeland;
- xi) That, when the Legislative Council has been instituted, the land within the boundaries of the homeland be transferred to the Legislative Council in trust for the population of the Eastern Caprivi.

b) The Caprivi Legislative Council and Caprivi Government

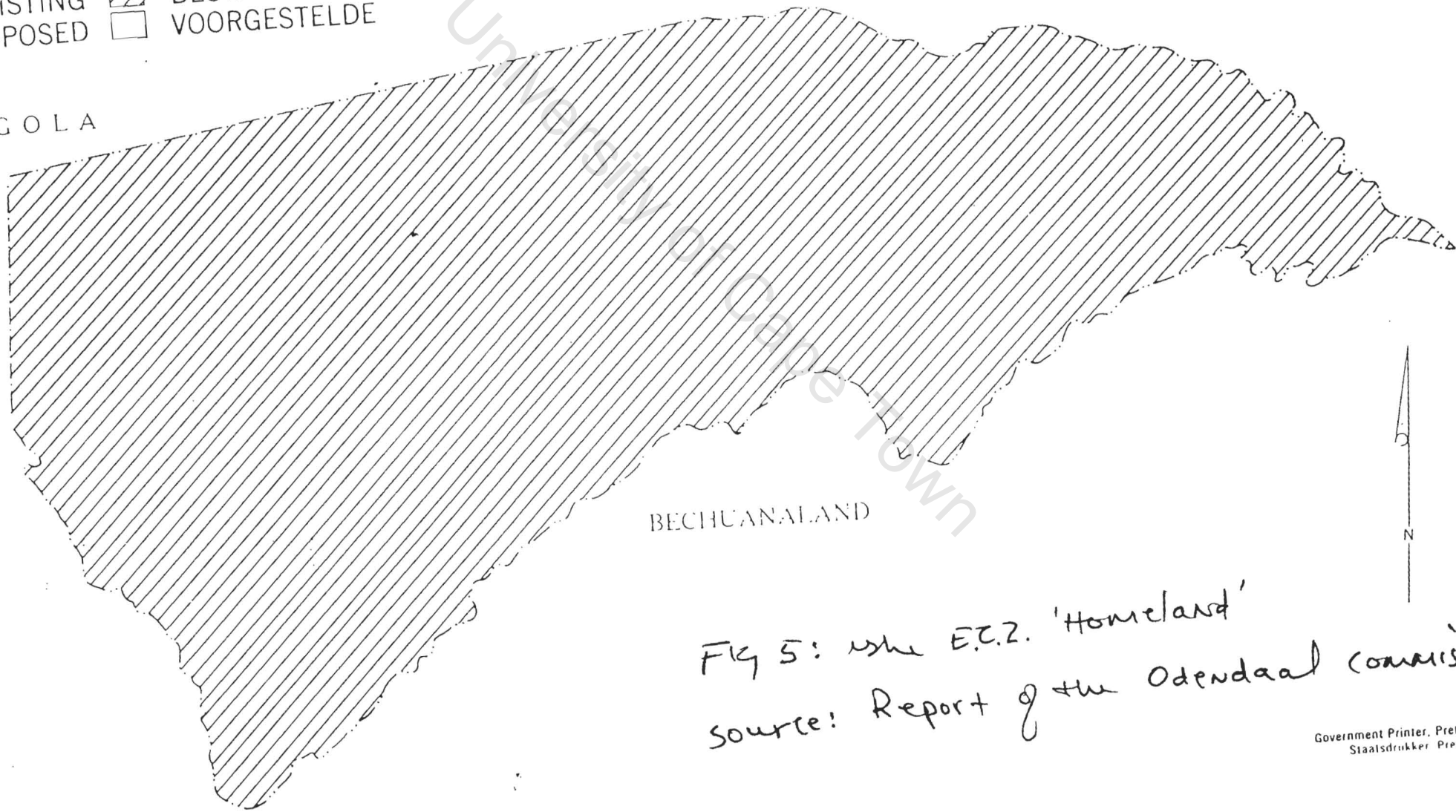
The Minister of Native Affairs inaugurated the Caprivi Legislative Council on 15 March 1972 that consisted of two chiefs and representatives from the two main tribes, the Masubiya and the Mafwe, together with the smaller groups incorporated into the Mafwe ethnic alliance. The two chiefs alternated in the chairmanship position of the Executive Committee of the Legislative Council. The following departments formed the executive branch and a Minister

EASTERN CAPRIVI
OOS-CAPRIVI

EXISTING  BESTAANDE
PROPOSED  VOORGESTELDE

NORTHERN RHODESIA

ANGOLA

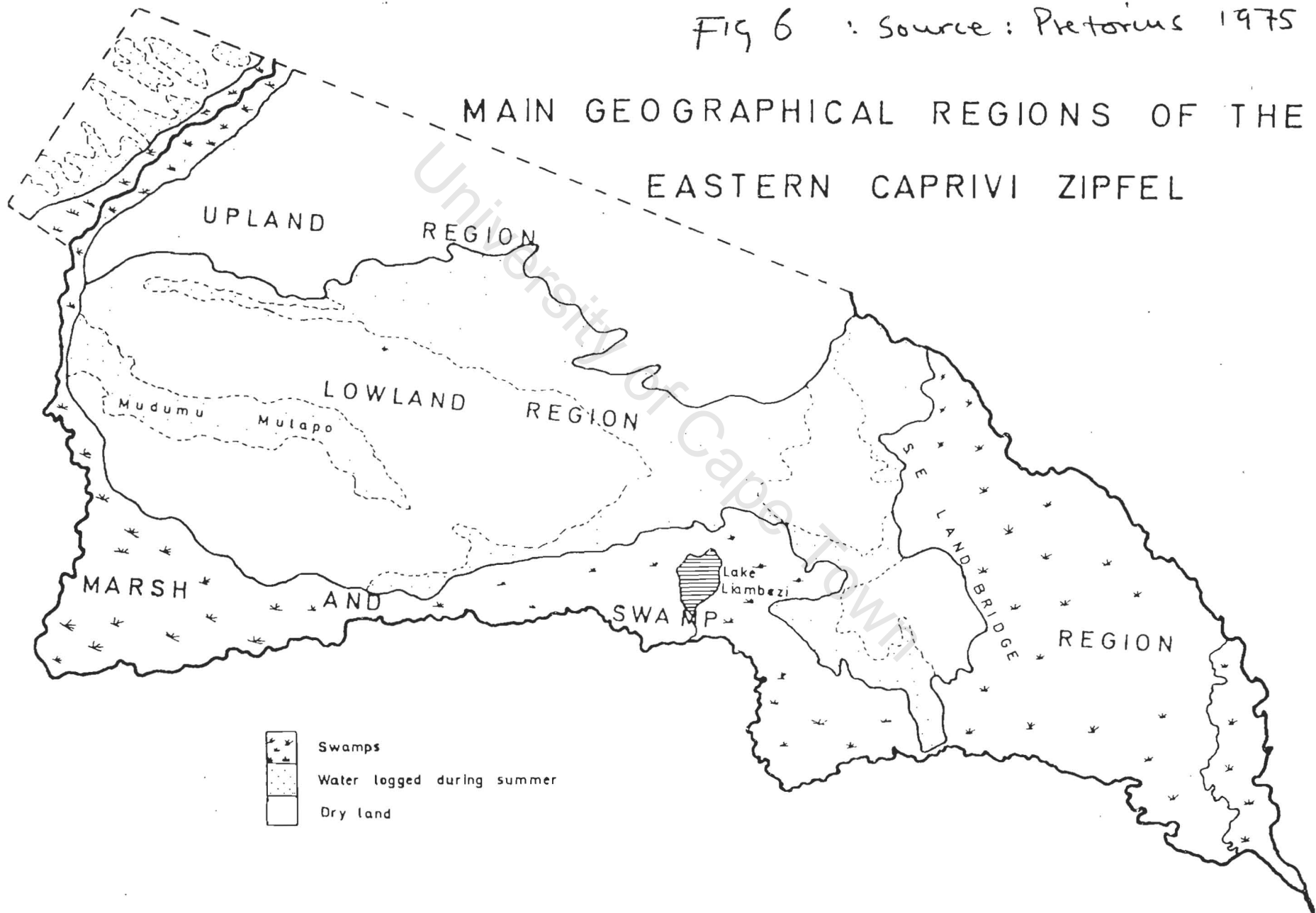


BECHUANALAND

Fig 5: the E.C.Z. 'Homeland'
source: Report of the Odendaal Commission

FIG 6 : Source : Pretorius 1975

MAIN GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS OF THE EASTERN CAPRIVI ZIPFEL



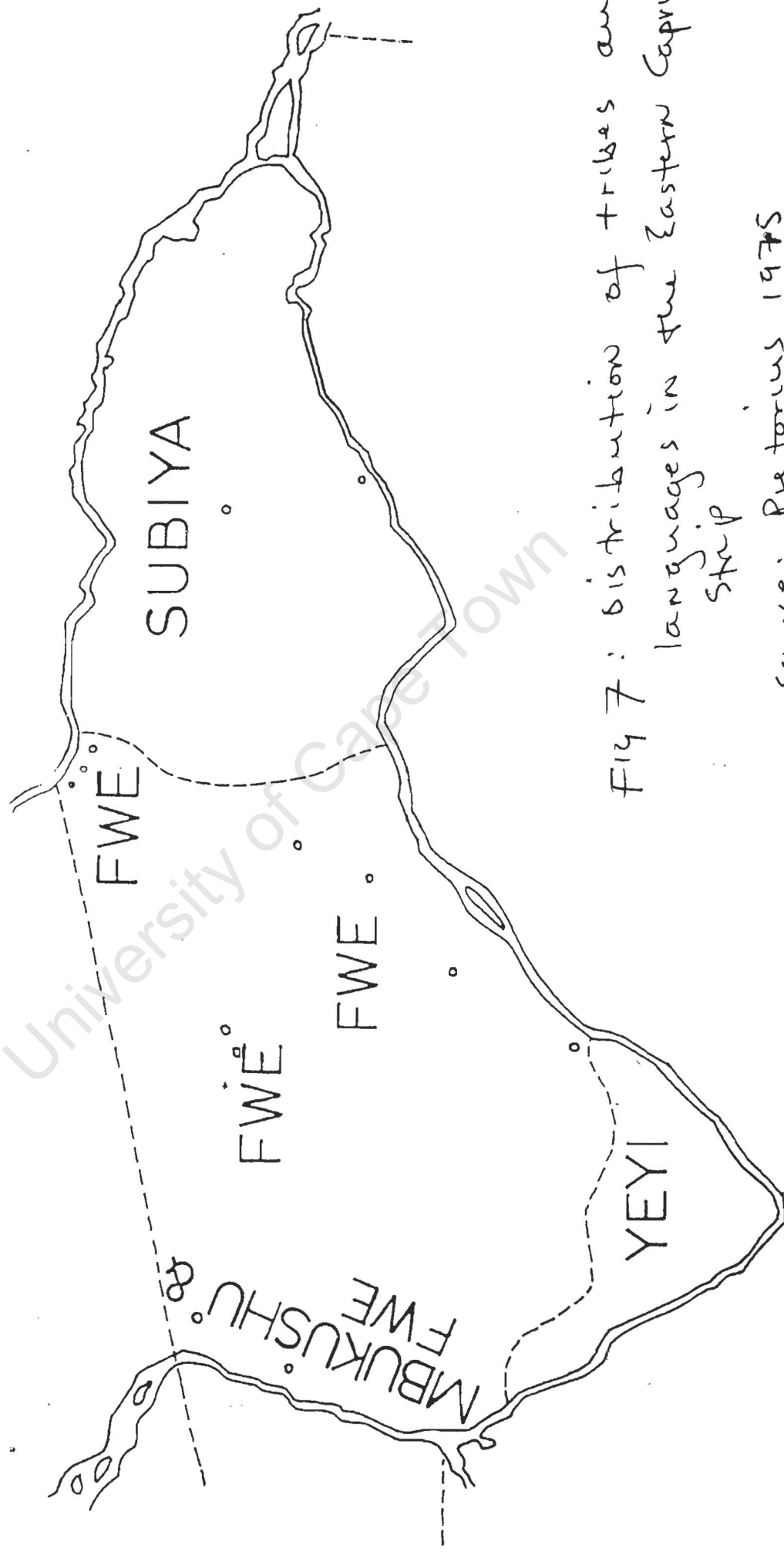
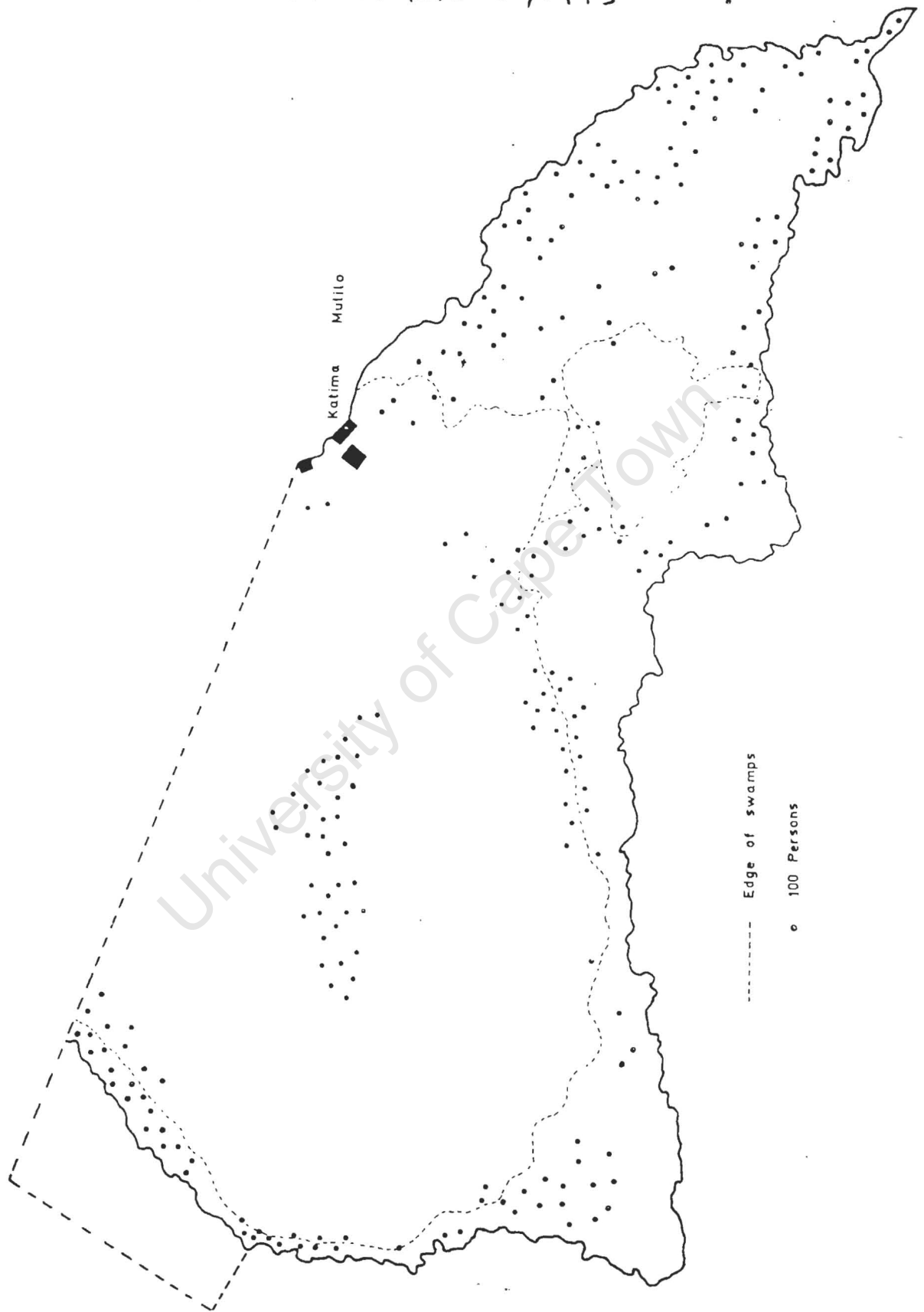


FIG 7: distribution of tribes and languages in the Eastern Caprius Strip

source: Pretorius 1975

Fig 8: Population density and distribution in the Eastern Caprivi Strip = 1975

Source: Pretorius, 1975



headed each: Authority Affairs and Finance, Justice and Community Affairs, Agriculture and works, and lastly, Education and Culture. The Legislative Council was a transitional body to prepare the people of Eastern Caprivi for self-governance and officials who were overseeing this process all came from Pretoria. The Eastern Caprivi Strip eventually attained the status of self-government on 01 April 1976 through Proclamation R42 of 1976. It acquired a constitution, a national anthem and a national flag. From this time, as Fosse rightly puts it, Caprivi was administered just "...as another South African bantustan all the way up to 1980."³⁵ In 1980, the Eastern Caprivi Strip was administratively brought back to South West Africa through AG 8, a legislation that established a three tier ethnic system of local, regional and central government.

When the elections for the Caprivi Second Tier Legislative Assembly were held in 1980, the only party standing unopposed was the Caprivi Alliance Party. The twenty seats in the Assembly were divided as follows:³⁶

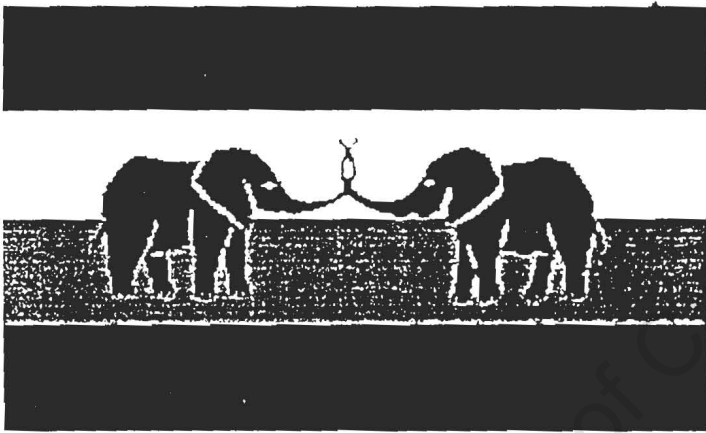
- i) Eight elected seats – divided equally among the Mafwe and Masubiya.
- ii) Six nominated seats for each ethnic category, nominations made by the Kutas (tribal councils). The two chiefs automatically getting a seat each.
- iii) Executive Council composed of the two chiefs as rotating Chairman and with representation for each category.

The Caprivi Alliance Party was founded in 1977 by both tribal authorities under the leadership of the two chiefs. Its predecessor was the Caprivi Alliance, the name given to the Caprivi Delegation that attended the South African sponsored Turnhalle Constitutional Conference of 1975-77. Under the leadership of Chief Mamili, the Caprivi Alliance Party joined the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance in 1977. The Caprivi Second Tier Representative Authority was for most part of its existence paralysed by ethnic differences between the Masubiya and Mafwe stemming primarily from contested histories and identities particularly the issue of which group arrived first in the area. This would in turn determine which chief in the area should be declared paramount. The government has since maintained that the chiefs carry equal status. Disagreements in 1984 over a proposed constitution resulted in a walkout staged by the Masubiya representatives except the two elected members. An interim constitution (AG 20, 1984) was promulgated that provided for the appointment of a Commissioner-General to act as chairman of the Executive Committee, a post which was the borne of contention. The Administrator-General re-appointed the two-elected Masubiya representatives but they were denied voting rights. When the Masubiya returned to the

³⁵ Fosse, *Negotiating the Nation in Local Terms*, 1996, p. 71. (MA Thesis, Univ. of Oslo).

Fig 9: The Caprivi Flag

source: <http://www.fotw.stm.it/flags/na-capri.html>



assembly, they nominated three Caprivi African National Union (CANU) members to the house but still tension continued. This led to the formulation of a proposed amendment to AG 29 in 1985, which aimed to change from tribal formula to representation by elected political parties. This amendment was still being considered in the National Assembly in Windhoek when the dawn of independence set on Namibia. The Caprivi Alliance Party was disbanded in 1985, splitting into two groups, one joining CANU and the other forming the United Democratic Party under Mishake Muyongo.

1.4 Conclusion

The establishment of the Legislative Council and the creation of the Caprivi Second Tier Representative Authority brought the chiefs back into the administration of the Eastern Caprivi Strip. Only that this time they assumed the status of politicians as opposed to just being government officers they were in the period 1939 to 1964. This chapter has shown that the generally accepted reason of administrative difficulties cannot alone account for the transfer of the administration of the Eastern Caprivi Strip to Pretoria. It was argued that the strategic importance and location of the territory were important, particularly during a time when state security was vital for Pretoria. The South West African Administration was happy to be relieved of a financial burden.

³⁶ Ibid., 154.

Chapter two

A useful Corridor: The Caprivi Strip and the war against SWAPO, 1966-80.

Introduction

This chapter attempts to trace the development of the liberation war in the Caprivi Strip waged by SWAPO and the role the area played in this war. This is particularly during the early stages of the war when SWAPO employed what Susan Brown³⁷ terms the 'hit and run' tactics and before the war or SWAPO's frontline shifted to Angola when that country achieved independence. During this period, SWAPO's guerrilla activities were limited to sabotage of military installations and equipment and the laying of landmines. In response to the war in the Caprivi Strip, South Africa entrusted the task of patrolling the border area into the hands of its Defence Force, a task previously carried out by the South African Police.

The Caprivi Strip became of utmost strategic importance to South Africa during this time, being dubbed "...our frontline..."³⁸ and the "...most sensitive point of South Africa's finger in Africa."³⁹ This was because of its location, giving Namibia a wide frontage with Zambia, Botswana, Angola and almost touching Zimbabwe. Apart from being South Africa's first line of defence against the advance of black Africa, the Caprivi Strip served both as a training base for South Africa's military forces and as a springboard for attacks on neighbouring countries in order to discourage them from giving rear bases to SWAPO. In a nutshell, what the chapter intends to prove is that during this period, the Caprivi Strip changed from being a 'useless' piece of land to being valuable in military terms. The chapter will also examine the effect of this war on the local population, particularly the San community in West Caprivi, an area that was declared a military zone.

2.1 Rising in arms: Launching the armed struggle

The decision to embark on an armed struggle was made in the early 1960s and SWAPO had begun training its guerrillas as early as 1962.⁴⁰ The decision however could not be executed immediately and SWAPO continued to pursue a peaceful political struggle with the

³⁷ Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means: SWAPO's Liberation War', in Leys & Saul, Namibia's Liberation Struggle, 1995, p. 21.

³⁸ The Johannesburg Star, in Vigne, A dwelling place of our own, 1973, p. 32.

³⁹ UNIFORM: Newspaper of the SA Army, no. 91, March/April 1983, p.

⁴⁰ Shityuwete, Never follow the wolf, 1990, p. 96.

military option held in reserve and only to be used when the need arose. This was pending the case at the International Court of Justice brought against South Africa by Ethiopia and Liberia, which SWAPO believed, would be decided in its favour. It was hoped that South Africa's occupation would be declared illegal and that the international community would bring about Namibian independence. The court's announcement of 18 July 1966 that it had no power to decide on the matter was a source of gross disappointment to many particularly to SWAPO so much that the armed struggle was launched almost immediately in August 1966. In a statement released the same day, SWAPO announced its preparedness to take up arms, "we have no alternative but to rise in arms and bring about our own liberation. The supreme test must be faced and we must at once begin to cross the many rivers of blood on our march towards freedom..."⁴¹ The launch of the armed struggle is therefore perceived by many as having its immediate origins in the negative judgement of the International Court of Justice.⁴² This is strongly supported by a SWAPO publication of 1968 where it is observed:

"As long as we waited for the judgement at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the training of fighters was a precaution rather than a direct preparation for immediate action... We hoped the outcome of the case would be in our favour. As long as we had that hope, we did not want to resort to violent methods. However, the judgement let us down, and what we had prepared for as a kind of unreality, suddenly became the cold and hard reality for us. We took to arms, we had no other choice."⁴³

While the judgement or the failure to deliver it by the International Court of Justice should be accepted as the major reason for the decision to launch an armed struggle, there was general disillusionment towards the United Nations within the top SWAPO leadership. This was particularly on the failure of the World Body to take some form of immediate and positive action against South Africa than mere talks of it and indeed SWAPO was moving away from its profession of petitioning the United Nations as a political tool. As early as 1963 the movement's president, Sam Nujoma, had written to Herman Ja Toivo in Windhoek expressing discontent about the United Nations and the failure of petitioning. He said, "...During my stay ...in Dar-es-Salaam I petitioned the United Nations many times. When nothing happened it dawned on me that the freedom of our country will never come about through peaceful means..."⁴⁴.

⁴¹ Quoted in Vigne, *A dwelling place of our own*, 1973, p. 29.

⁴² See for example Katjavivi, P. *The rise of nationalism in Namibia*, D. PHIL, University of Oxford, 1986, 1986, p. 263. (Copy held by the African Studies Library, University of Cape Town).

⁴³ *Namibia News* (London, SWAPO), (6-7) (1968), p. 1., cited in Katjavivi, *The rise of nationalism in Namibia*, D.PHIL, University of Oxford, 1986, p. 263.

⁴⁴ Shay, R. & Vermaak, C., *The Silent War*, 1971, p. 160.

The Caprivi Strip served as the main infiltration route for PLAN combatants from their training and rear bases in East Africa in the early years of the armed struggle. This was made easier by the 'merger' between SWAPO and the Caprivi African National Union (CANU) and indeed Shityuwete mentions in his book that there was a SWAPO contact person in the Caprivi, a one Joseph Nawa, who met them at the border and whom they briefed on their mission.⁴⁵ Thus the first groups of guerrillas, armed with light weapons, mainly Russian made sub-machine-guns and automatic pistols, entered Owamboland secretly and established underground hideouts in the dense forests. They immediately set about recruiting local people to their cause as correctly observed by Katjavivi who writes, "before they launched any operations in a particular area, the SWAPO fighters would campaign politically in that area."⁴⁶

This close working relationship with the local people held many advantages for the movement. Firstly, it helped the fighters to acquaint themselves with the terrain before an attack and indeed obtain information on the concentration areas of the enemy. Secondly, the launch of the armed struggle brought about a logistical nightmare for the movement. Most parts of the operational area except the Eastern Caprivi Strip were miles away from the movement's training and rear bases. PLAN fighters went into the field equipped only with what they could carry on foot such as light arms, bazookas and landmines. They depended on the active support of the local people amongst whom they were operating, help which SWAPO acknowledges was 'forthcoming'.⁴⁷ It was therefore most advantageous to combine the military and political arms of the struggle in the operational areas. In fact the stated principle of the movement in this regard was that "it is politics that leads the gun"⁴⁸ thereby rendering every PLAN fighter to be first and foremost an armed political militant.

2.2 Early PLAN guerrilla activities in the Caprivi Strip

The Caprivi Strip was the only part of the operational zone that was easily accessible from Zambia and therefore served as the 'main theatre of war'⁴⁹ in the early years of the armed struggle. This was because the route through Angola was blocked by the presence of the Portuguese occupying forces that were sympathetic to the South African colonial regime. PLAN forces had been targeting the Caprivi Strip for systematic infiltration from Zambia as

⁴⁵ Shityuwete, *Never follow the wolf*, 1990, p. 106.

⁴⁶ Katjavivi, *The rise of nationalism in Namibia*, D.PHIL, University of Oxford, 1986, p. 264.

⁴⁷ SWAPO Department of information and Publicity, *SWAPO Information on SWAPO: An Historical Profile*, Lusaka, July 1978, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means', in Leys & Saul, *Namibia's liberation struggle*, 1995, p. 21.

early as 1968 to carry out both politicisation and sabotage activities aimed mainly at military installations and police patrols and convoys. These tactics which Brown terms 'hit and run'⁵⁰ were mainly carried out during the rainy season to render enemy trackers ineffective. The 'hit and run' guerrilla tactics were more effective because they involved smaller groups that were highly mobile and could stay in the territory for longer periods without their presence being detected by the authorities. The choice of such a military strategy should be understood from the point of the logistical problems that the launching of the armed struggle brought for the movement. It was not until 1972 that SWAPO moved its political headquarters from Dar es Salaam to Lusaka. Therefore it was difficult to supply and communicate with the frontline in the Caprivi Strip. The other important factor to note also is the set back the movement suffered at Omgulumbashe where a number of freedom fighters were captured. This exposed the unsuitability and vulnerability of large and permanent bases or camps in the operational zones. It was henceforth decided that the fighters would begin locating arms caches separately, make temporary transit camps and change the sites of both at frequent intervals.

The war in the Caprivi Strip dealt SWAPO a heavy blow when the first Commander of its armed forces met his death on the Zambezi River in May 1967. Tobias Hainyeko lost his life while drawing the fire of the South African Police in the process of enabling the guerrilla party he was conducting to cross the river into the Caprivi Strip in safety. According to Katjavivi, Hainyeko was leading a mission that was investigating conditions in the Caprivi Strip in order to determine how to improve communications between his operational headquarters in Tanzania and SWAPO's fighting units in Namibia.⁵¹ He was engaged against two South African police officers, Warrant-Officer P. Grobler and Constable A. Jacobs, who were accompanied by an African Constable K.L. Chaka. Warrant Officer Grobler and Constable Chaka were badly wounded from Hainyeko's bullets and were immediately removed by helicopter and later taken to the Military Hospital near Pretoria. They were presented with the South African Police Star for Distinguished Service, which was the South African Police's second highest decoration.

SWAPO reported that the local manager of the Caltex Company that ran the badges transporting people and goods along the river betrayed Hainyeko to the South African Police.⁵² Shityuwete's account is however different from the one given by SWAPO. He holds that his deputy Leonard Philemon, otherwise known by the combat name Castro betrayed

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Katjavivi, *A history of resistance in Namibia*, 1988, p. 60.

⁵² Ibid.

Hainyeko to the South Africans. Castro was apparently detained by the South Africans in February 1966 and then planted back to SWAPO as an agent.⁵³ Castro briefly succeeded Hainyeko as PLAN Commander only to be removed and detained in a Tanzanian prison for 17 years following a number of captures of SWAPO guerrillas entering Namibia on different missions. Dimo Hamaambo who held the position until independence and now heads the army in an independent Namibia replaced Castro. The news of Hainyeko's death was received with distress two days later in Dar es Salaam. SWAPO retaliated in October 1968 by sending two large groups into the Caprivi Strip and carried out what its publication calls '...a successful SWAPO attack on a South African military camp in Eastern Caprivi.'⁵⁴ Of these two SWAPO groups that entered the Caprivi Strip, Brown writes that a total of 178 had been killed or captured by the end of the year, the remaining having withdrawn to Zambia.⁵⁵ Following the SWAPO attack, the South African troops "took savage reprisals on nearby villages, killing sixty-three people and rounding up hundreds for interrogation and torture."⁵⁶ This resulted in about 4000 Caprivians seeking refuge in Botswana and Zambia in late 1968.⁵⁷

After a period of relative quietness in 1969 and 1970 in the Caprivi Strip, SWAPO bounced back into action in 1971 this time with widespread bomb blasts. The first incidence was on 22 May 1971 when a South African Police vehicle detonated a landmine near Katima Mulilo killing two constables, Henning and Dobbin, and wounding about nine others and two trackers.⁵⁸ This was followed by another detonation of a landmine by a police vehicle on the evening of 4 October 1971 again near Katima Mulilo also seriously injuring four constables. The next day an investigation team led by Captain van Eeden stepped on an anti-personnel and he was killed.⁵⁹ A follow-up team tracking the culprits found that they have crossed back into Zambia which leaves no doubt that the landmines were planted by SWAPO freedom fighters. The follow-up team made safe four other mines in their pursuit of the culprits. Brown states that during 1971 and 1972 alone, about five policemen were killed and 35 wounded in land-mine explosions in the Caprivi Strip.⁶⁰ In 1973 a number of other land-mine

⁵³ Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means', in Leys & Saul, Namibia's liberation struggle, 1995, p. 22.

⁵⁴ SWAPO Department of Information, SWAPO Information on SWAPO: An Historical Profile, July 1978, p. 16.

⁵⁵ Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means', in Leys & Saul, Namibia's liberation struggle, 1995, p. 21.

⁵⁶ SWAPO Dept. of Information, SWAPO Information on SWAPO: An Historical Profile, 1995, July 1978, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Discussed in detail in chapter four below.

⁵⁸ Stiff, The Silent war, 1999, p. 42, see also Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means', in Leys & Saul, Namibia's liberation struggle, 1995, p. 21.

⁵⁹ Stiff, The silent war, 1999, p. 42.

⁶⁰ Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means', in Leys & Saul, Namibia's liberation struggle, 1995, p. 21.

incidents, ambushes of police patrol and an attack on a police camp was reported in the area. Die Vaderland, a government mouthpiece observed in 1971 about these incidents:

"The death of two South African policemen on the border between Caprivi and Zambia must bring to every thinking person in this economically prosperous country the shocking realisation that the Republic is involved in a titanic struggle. The next few years may prove to be decisive for our country's future..."⁶¹

During this period the Caprivi Strip became heavily militarised in terms of military installations and personnel consisting of both a large police force and troops. As shall be seen in the subsequent sections, a secret decision was taken as early as 1973 to hand over command of counter-insurgency to the South African Defence force from⁶² the South African Police (SAP). It was therefore that the South African Defence Force officially resumed the task of controlling or patrolling the operational zone on 1 April 1974. The coming of the South African Defence Force on the stage coincided with the coup in Portugal and the ensued civil war in Angola. The ascendancy to power of the MPLA opened Angola as an alternative front for SWAPO and the significance of the Caprivi Strip as the 'main theatre of war' waned. The war in South West Africa and Angola was soon to be placed in the context of the 'East-West' Cold War in international as well as regional discourse⁶³ even though it was about decolonisation. The Caprivi Strip particularly the Western Caprivi assumed a new role of being turned into a training ground for the South African Defence Force Recce operatives and also as a springboard for attacks in Angola and Western Zambia.

2.3 South Africa's response to the escalating war against SWAPO

South Africa responded in varied ways to the threat that SWAPO posed ranging from complete denial of losses on the battlefield to militarization of the operational zone and attempts at nationalising the war through the creation of the South West Africa Territorial force (SWATF). As stated above, the other reaction was to attempt to destabilise the neighbouring countries that were perceived as aiding the liberation movements. The Vorster administration also embarked on a détente campaign to try to win some African governments to Pretoria's side and therefore to discourage them from offering rear bases to the liberation movements. This was particularly after South Africa's military intervention in Angola was dealt a humiliating blow by combined forces of the MPLA and Cuba.

⁶¹ Quoted in Vigne, A dwelling place of our own, 1973, p. 32., see also Katjavivi, The rise of nationalism in Namibia, P.HD Thesis, University of Oxford, 1986, p.268.

⁶² Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means', in Leys & Saul, Namibia's liberation struggle, 1995, p. 23.

2.4 Intervention in Angola: Operation Savannah

The year 1974 marked the dramatic end of Portuguese colonialism in Africa that came to an abrupt finish with the Portuguese coup d'etat of April 25, 1974. As Moleah rightly puts it, "The fascist regime in Portugal had collapsed under the determined resistance of the peoples of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique."⁶⁴ Moleah portrays the year 1975 as a 'watershed' in the world-wide struggle against imperialism citing revolutionary victories in other parts of the world such as Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea. "Imperialism found itself not only on the defensive but on the run"⁶⁵, he concludes. This sent shock waves in the minority regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia who found themselves engulfed by revolutionary advances around them. The solution was to intervene and install some neo-colonial states. The testing ground was to be Angola, which was large, rich in oil and mineral deposits and had a sizeable Portuguese settler population. The other advantage this held for South Africa was that Angola shared a very long border with Namibia. The amicable settling of the Angolan situation will also determine the future effectiveness of SWAPO forces. For South Africa therefore, the most immediate enemy became an eminent threat of a take over by a communist MPLA government in Angola than SWAPO, at least for the time being. The National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) were induced to accept the apartheid government's offers.

This was the birth of 'operation savannah', the code name for South Africa's intervention in Angola. It was in 1975 when Jan Breytenbach was summoned to Rundu to meet Colonel Koos van Heerden, a mobile war expert from Pretoria. Van Heerden ordered him to launch an immediate attack into Southern Angola within a week and "clear the MPLA from the area."⁶⁶ One other thing was important though, UNITA was no longer the enemy, but an ally. His force would be code-named Task Force Zulu and would comprise of his four companies of FNLA henceforth to be known as Bravo Group and Commandant Delville Linford's two companies of San soldiers, to be known as Alpha Group. As Breytenbach recalls about this mission and the secrecy surrounding it, he writes:

"I had no idea how the campaign came about or what the political motives behind it were. It was obvious, however, that something had to be done in Angola, and in Mozambique, when the wheels finally came off the Portuguese African empire, to prevent these territories from going into the communist camp."⁶⁷

⁶³ Fosse, *Negotiating the nation in local terms*, 1996, p. 31. (MA Thesis, University of Oslo).

⁶⁴ Moleah, A.T., *Namibia: The struggle for liberation*, 1983, p. 154.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Stiff, *The silent war*, 1999, p.113.

⁶⁷ Breytenbach, *They live by the sword*, 1990, p. 11.

It was these two forces that carried out South Africa's attempted invasion of Angola in 1975/76. When the fateful date of November 11, 1975 came, the withdrawing Portuguese colonisers deliberately decided to hand over power to the Angolan people without a receiving organ because they lacked the courage to hand over to an MPLA government. Fierce fighting broke out in the race to grab the spoils of power with the MPLA facing the forces of racist South Africa, UNITA, the Zairois and other mercenaries aided mostly by the Americans. The two groups, with South Africa's withdrawal from Angola, changed into 31 and 32 Battalions respectively and remained in Namibia thereby adding to the already high number of South African troops in the country. Breytenbach's group, 32 Battalion, was the biggest of South Africa's special units.⁶⁸ Its main base was at Buffalo, also known as Bagani, in Western Caprivi but also had smaller bases at Rundu and Eenhana. The existence of the unit was kept secret by the SADF until in February 1981 when a number of its deserters gave public accounts of its operations. It was this unit that was given the task of carrying out cross border attacks on SWAPO after South Africa's involvement in the Angolan war. The 32 Battalion was composed of soldiers whom Steenkamp best describes as "...orphans of the ongoing Angolan civil war's 1975/76 phase."⁶⁹ They were in fact more or less stateless persons who were mostly ethnic Angolans fleeing from the civil war and were offered shelter by the SADF as it was retreating from Angola and taken into its special units. This unit also comprised, apart from European mercenaries, of a few former members of the Rhodesian Selous Scouts.⁷⁰

Perhaps the most sinister part of the South African involvement in Angola was the effect this had on the San population both in Angola and in Western Caprivi. At the end of the war against the Portuguese many of the San (Kxoe) who were involved in that war escaped to Western Caprivi in Namibia where the South African Army received them with open hands and had built up a retention camp for them.⁷¹ West Caprivi was proclaimed as a Nature Park in 1963 and upgraded to a Game Reserve in 1968.⁷² The area was however declared a South African military zone and closed to civilians before any activities could start.⁷³ The Kxoe of West Caprivi and those arriving from Angola were therefore placed and concentrated in army camps. In fact a number of them were removed forcibly by the South African Defence Force from the Angolan border area where a one kilometre wide strip was

⁶⁸ Moleah, Namibia, The Struggle for liberation, 1983, p. 266.

⁶⁹ Steenkamp, Borderstrike, 1983, p. 135.

⁷⁰ Moleah, Namibia, The Struggle for Liberation, 1983, p. 267.

⁷¹ Brenzinger, 'Moving to survive', in KHOISAN FORUM, 1997, p. 30.

⁷² Brown, & Jones, Results of a Socio-ecological Survey of the West Caprivi Strip, 1994, p.85.

⁷³ Brenzinger, 'Moving to survive', in KHOISAN FORUM, 1997, p. 30.

In the final assessment therefore, it can be concluded that the San were reduced to an appendage of the South African Army that was required to perform specialised services. Cash payments and medical facilities induced them after wars and restrictions on their movements ruined their traditional economy. Indeed the Omega base had modern facilities that included a school, a clinic, a shop and a clothing factory all run by the South African Defence Force. The official language of west Caprivi was Afrikaans as opposed to English used in Eastern Caprivi and the Kxoe children were taught to sing the apartheid anthem, 'Die Stem'.⁸¹ Omega was however not the only military base in west Caprivi in which the San were forced to depend on the SADF for their employment and livelihood. Diemer reported that while half of the population of West Caprivi lived near the Omega base by 1981, most of the remainder were resettled near Fort Doppies army base near the Botswana border and the Chetto army base where dependency structures were established with the SADF distributing food.⁸² All these were South African military bases found in West Caprivi pointing to the extent to which the Caprivi Strip was heavily militarised. These excludes the major base at Mpacha that included an airfield and the Katima base right in the centre of the town, thereby again making humans as shields in the war. The Chetto Army Base was also used by UNITA. In fact the SADF only used the base from 1976 to 1983 and UNITA started using it then until just before Namibian independence.⁸³

The programme of militarising West Caprivi and using Kxoe people as soldiers by the South African Defence Force continue to bring immeasurable suffering to these people and the Namibian government that should continue to sustain them in the neighbourhood of the former bases through rations and other rehabilitation programmes. Most of them were said to be dependent on salaries and services provided by the SADF and SWA Territorial Forces for which they worked as professional soldiers.⁸⁴ Official figures released by the South African Army in 1989 showed about 4, 800 Kxoe which were affected by the withdrawal of the SA-Army.⁸⁵ A survey in 1994 by the Namibian Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism found that the South African Defence Force had promised to pay these ex-combatants reduced wages of R 450 a month for married men and R350 a month for single

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Committee on South African War Resistance, 'The South African Military occupation of Namibia', in Wood, (ed.), Namibia 1884-1984, 1984, p. 532.

⁸² Diemer, J. (1996), The Barakwena of the Chetto Area, in World Wildlife Fund, Report on Mbukushu Migration to Kxoe Use Areas to the East of the Okavango River, June 1997, p. 11.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Sindano, J. et al, 1989, "Factfinding Mission to Western Caprivi and Bushmenland – to Evaluate the Human- the Socio-economical Impact on the Bushmen Society when the SA-Army Leaves SWA/Namibia." Oniipa, 20.09.1989., in World Wildlife Fund, Report on Mbukushu Migration to Kxoe Use Areas to the East of the Okavango River, June 1997, p. 30.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

men until March 1991.⁸⁶ The survey also found that the South African Defence Force had left a large stockpile of food, which was rationed out a week to the people in the camp. Fearing revenge probably from SWAPO after independence, many Kxoe families are said to have moved to Botswana while about 1, 600 others accepted the offer by the South African Defence Force that they withdraw with them to South Africa. The militarisation of the Caprivi Strip and West Caprivi in particular was heavy and cost the South African government a lot in financial terms. For example, the military air base at Mpacha near Katima Mulilo had been built for £8 million in 1965.⁸⁷ But the war also cost South Africa immensely in human terms, as can be deduced from the writing of Breytenbach, long time serving South African army officer in West Caprivi. He writes;

It is difficult to cast my mind's eye back to the Caprivi, where I see rows and rows of white crosses, many of them marking the graves of men I had known intimately. There are hundreds of them, all identical, at the heads of little heaps of earth on which wives, children, mothers and friends used to lay bunches of indigenous flowers and personal relics from the daily lives of the fallen heroes. Apart from those buried at Buffalo, there are many other unmarked graves in Angola...⁸⁸

2.5 West Caprivi as training ground for SADF

West Caprivi also served as an important, hidden and isolated training spot for the South African Defence Force during the entire period of South Africa's occupation of Namibia particularly for its special units which came to be known as Recces, a shortened version of Reconnaissance Commandos. In fact Stiff maintains that there were two training camps in West Caprivi, Fort Doppies and another training camp named Hippo.⁸⁹ These two camps were used as guerrilla training camps for various groups, the most common being the Barotse surrogates, the Koevoet and the Inkatha supporters from Kwazulu Natal in South Africa as late as 1986. Koevoet was the most feared of all South African Special units. It was established in 1978 but its existence was kept secret until 1980 when a secret list of assassination targets drawn up for the unit was discovered. It consisted of at least a thousand men mostly Owambos commanded by South African Police Officers and also included ex-Rhodesian Selous Scouts. The unit was responsible for interrogation and pursuit in the war zones, as well as carrying out specialised operations such as assassinations and bombings of civilian buildings. It was this group that was taken to West Caprivi to be trained in guerrilla activities to learn how SWAPO fighters operated and how they dressed. They then would carry out among others rape, murder and assaults,

⁸⁶ Brown & Jones, Results of a Socio-ecological survey of the West Caprivi Strip, 1994, p. 45.

⁸⁷ Moleah, Namibia. The Struggle for liberation, 1983, p. 261.

⁸⁸ Breytenbach, They live by the sword, 1990, p. 263.

assassinations and sabotage while dressed or disguised in PLAN uniforms to discredit SWAPO. They were not even using South African weapons but those mainly used by PLAN fighters.

2.6 Attempts at destabilising Zambia: Operation Dingo, 1971-1977.

South Africa involved itself in training a group of dissidents from Zambia's western province, formerly known as 'Barotseland'. This programme, code-named 'Operation Dingo', started in 1971 and ended in 1977. The dissidents were trained at Fort Doppies in the Caprivi Strip. The Barotes or people of western Zambia historically regarded their area to be a separate state but this wish was ignored by British imperial rule. This state of affairs was to be upheld by the nationalist government of President Kenneth Kaunda's UNIP party. A tough stance on protesters led many to cross into Angola as refugees. Among them was one Adamson Mushala who was to lead the group that started training in guerrilla warfare in the Caprivi Strip. The Mushala group, as they became known, was flown from Angola to the Caprivi Strip by PIDE, the Portuguese security police at the beginning of 1971. This arrangement was done in conjunction with the Bureau for State Security (BOSS) in South Africa under General Hendrik van den Bergh.⁹⁰ The motive behind the training was to plough back these dissidents into Zambia with the intent of destabilising Kaunda's position in a bid to take his mind off from offering rear bases to SWAPO and the ANC in Zambia. Even though the dissidents were under BOSS, training was entrusted in the hands of the Recces. The group went through basic training principally weapon handling and other minor tactics.

This first group however was to meet its fate even before their training was completed. They were one day loaded in a truck by four operatives of the Bureau for State Security and headed for the border between Zambia and Namibia at the Zambezi River where it was claimed they were to be deployed into Zambia for an urgent operation. This happened while Mushala himself was away in Angola and Jan Breytenbach, their chief instructor, was also away. It was later discovered that they were put into boats, which headed across the river into the hands of waiting Zambian Defence Force members who opened fire on them. Stiff links this incident with the détente talks between South African Prime Minister Vorster and President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. He alleges that some concessions might have been reached during the negotiations, which might have led to the brutal sacrifice of this group.⁹¹ The group however re-organised and was back at Fort Doppies in November 1974 but

⁸⁹ Stiff, *The silent war*, 1999, p. 40.

⁹⁰ Stiff, *The silent war*, 1999, p. 39.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

reportedly South Africa cut ties with this group in 1977⁹² and Mushala was killed in contact against Zambian soldiers in November 1982.

South Africa's involvement in Zambia also involved cross border attacks carried from the Caprivi Strip in what was taken as 'hot-pursuits' of SWAPO fighters. Perhaps the best known of such was the attack on the Shatotwa SWAPO camp in Zambia. Shatotwa lay north of the Caprivi Strip in Zambia's western province and was attacked in August 1976 by South African Armed forces stationed at Fort Doppies in the Caprivi Strip. After the attack on this camp which SWAPO maintained housed refugees mainly women and children, the South African Forces retreated back to Fort Doppies by helicopters where they were congratulated by General Constand Viljoen, then Task Force 101 Commander. Likando links this attack with what came to be known as the Shipanga crisis in SWAPO. He contends that some members of this group reported themselves to the SADF and then led them to this camp.⁹³ Minor attacks on Zambian soil were also carried out in the years that followed particularly after the 1978 SWAPO attack on Katima Mulilo.

2.7 Operation Reindeer and Operation Revenge: Kassinga and SWAPO attack on Katima Mulilo

Operation Reindeer was the code-name of South Africa's attack on Kassinga, a SWAPO base in Southern Angola. This was the largest attack on Angola since its failed invasion of 1975/76.⁹⁴ The Kassinga massacre was closely followed by a SWAPO attack on Katima Mulilo in August 1978 termed by many as 'Operation Revenge'.⁹⁵ The implication being that the attack was meant to avenge the death of many SWAPO followers mainly women and children who had fallen in the May 1978 attack on Kassinga. Kassinga was a SWAPO transit centre and refugee resettlement camp that was 156 miles inside Angola. The South Africans have since maintained that it was a military camp. The camp accommodated over 4, 000 people in disused mine buildings and tents with facilities such as a school, a library, a kindergarten, a sewing factory, food stores, etc. On May 4, 1978, the South African Army and airforce launched attacks on Kassinga and another camp named Vietnam. At least about 608 SWAPO refugees in this camp are known to have been killed in this attack with about 270 taken back to Namibia as prisoners. The attack involved 12 mirage jets, 4 Hercules troop carriers and five helicopters. It has been described as the largest air borne

⁹² Ibid., p. 42.

⁹³ Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989, p. 144.(History Dept., Unam)

⁹⁴ Moleah, *Namibia: The struggle for liberation*, 1983, p. 286.

⁹⁵ See for example Steenkamp, *Borderstrike*, 1983 and Stiff, *The silent war*, 1999.

operation since World War Two.⁹⁶ It also involved a considerable number of ground troops using approximately 60 armoured cars and in total the attack involved about 1,500 South African troops according to SWAPO.⁹⁷ The South African casualties were recorded as four dead and eleven wounded.⁹⁸

It was then that the attack on Katima Mulilo followed barely three months after the Kassinga attack. Evidence suggests that both sides had been preparing themselves for some time before the attack took place. Around Katima Mulilo the South Africans initiated a programme to construct a considerable number of bomb-shelters in which the local people could seek refuge in the case of an attack. These structures are still visible in the town even today even though most of them are now dilapidated. South African intelligence reported heavy SWAPO military build-up across the border and a significant visit by Sam Nujoma, the President of SWAPO to western Zambia shortly before the attack in a move which was seen in South African circles as aimed at boosting the morale of the soldiers.⁹⁹ The other theory linked the tour to the upcoming visit by the newly appointed United Nations Commissioner for South West Africa, Martti Ahtisaari, who was due to visit those parts. In any event, an attack on Katima Mulilo during a time when a United Nations envoy was visiting would have given it the necessary publicity. The attack also came at a time when the Security Council was about to meet and discuss the question of Namibian independence.

The much anticipated attack finally came on 23 August 1978 at about 01:15, fifteen minutes after a routine broadcast by Radio Zambia carried a news report stating that the war against South Africa was about to intensify. This shows that SWAPO might have planned the attack in liaison with the Zambian authorities that should have been alerted in case of a South African retaliation, which indeed took place. One rocket fired by SWAPO landed directly in Katima military base killing ten and wounding ten others according to Steenkamp¹⁰⁰ and Stiff.¹⁰¹ While Moleah also puts the number of dead South African soldiers at ten, he contends that many others were wounded which might mean more than ten.¹⁰² The three agree however that South Africa suffered its worst casualties during the Katima attack since the armed struggle against it started and indeed it remains SWAPO's major attack in the area.

⁹⁶ Stiff, *The Silent war*, 1999, p. 205.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Moleah, *Namibia, The struggle for liberation*, 1983, pp. 286-287.

⁹⁸ Stiff, *The Silent war*, 1999, p. 205.

⁹⁹ Steenkamp, *Borderstrike*, 1983, p. 149.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 153.

¹⁰¹ Stiff, *The Silent war*, 1999, p. 231.

The seriousness in which the Pretoria regime took the attack is shown in the fact that the following day, high government officials flew to Katima Mulilo, these being General Viljoen, General Gleeson, General Geldenhuys and the Administrator for South West Africa, Judge Marthinus Steyn. The Super Frelon, which was carrying them, was nearly struck by an anti-craft shell and two mortar bombs which were fired from Sesheke.¹⁰³ Reinforcement was called from South Africa and Grootfontein and SADF pursued SWAPO fighters inside Zambia for up to 100 kilometres north of the cutline. There was no civilian casualties reported in Caprivi Strip during this operation even though some missiles were reported to have landed in the civilian part of Katima Mulilo. This caused panic in the civilian population forcing some to flee the town on foot to their villages as far as the Ngoma border post, the boundary between Namibia and Botswana. Damage was also caused to a local school at Ngwezi, a Black residential area where Steenkamp states that disgruntled residents "...promptly blamed the SADF for inviting the SWAPO attack."¹⁰⁴ On SWAPO 's part, Likando writes that there were some disagreements as to the best strategy that was to be employed in the attack on Katima Mulilo. He states that others wanted to shell indiscriminately in all directions without selecting enemy targets while others particularly those coming from the Caprivi Strip argued that this would obviously endanger civilian life. Thereby bringing to the fore the charges of tribalism levelled at mainly Owambos against the minority 'Caprivians' within SWAPO.¹⁰⁵ This is however not confirmed by any other source.

2.8 Nationalisation of the war

When negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Namibian independence question were going on between Pretoria, the Western group of five and SWAPO, the issue of the phased withdrawal of the South African Forces in Namibia became a major one. Pretoria had been reluctant to agree to a partial and phased withdrawal of its troops. But realising that this might prove inevitable, it embarked upon a programme to establish an indigenous defence force for the entire territory – one that would become the nucleus of a future Namibian national army. This was the conception of the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF), comprising of some 20,000 troops when it was formed. The SWATF was supposed to be an 'independent' force even though still resorting under SADF overall command. It had its own uniforms and a command structure that was slightly different from the one of the SADF. Major General J.J. Geldenhuys was appointed officer commanding South West Africa with

¹⁰² Moleah, Namibia, *The struggle for liberation*, 1983, p. 287.

¹⁰³ Steenkamp, *Borderstrike*, 1983, p. 158.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁵ Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989, p. 149. (History Dept., Unam).

the assignment to "build and develop an independent and complete defence force for South West Africa involving all elements of its population."¹⁰⁶

The SWATF was further divided into ethnically based Battalions and indeed the operational zone was also divided into three. Sector 10 incorporated Owamboland and Kaokoland while sector 20 incorporated Kavango, parts of Caprivi and what was called 'Bushmanland'. Sector 70 covered the remaining parts of the Caprivi Strip and housed two full Battalions, 201 Battalion at Omega and 33 Battalion later named 701 Battalion at Mpacha near Katima Mulilo. The medium of instruction in the Mpacha battalion was English as opposed to Afrikaans used by the Omega one. The creation of these Battalions turned Black directly against Black on the battleground thereby turning the war of liberation into a kind of civil war.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The importance of the Caprivi Strip during this war lay in two ways as far as South Africa was concerned. Firstly it acted as a line of first defence against SWAPO fighters and as a springboard to launch counter attacks in Angola and Zambia in what was taken as pursuits of SWAPO guerrillas. The Caprivi Strip was designated as 'Sector 70' of what came to be known as the 'operational zone'. Secondly, it acted as a hub of the South African Army for both its military training purposes and military installations. Apart from being proclaimed a Game Reserve, west Caprivi was declared a military zone and therefore being off limit to civilians. The San population who lived there was forced to live in bases and heavily depended on the SADF. The place was ideally suited for such purposes because it was remote and isolated therefore hidden from the prying eyes of both friends and foes.

¹⁰⁶ Grundy, Soldiers without politics, c1983, p. 262.

CHAPTER THREE

The formation of the Caprivi African National Union (CANU).

The rise of nationalism in Namibia emerged largely out of the inhumane contract labour system¹⁰⁷ and systematic land dispossession. Neither of these conditions was prevalent in the Caprivi Strip. The adoption of the policy of 'Indirect Rule', where local administration was largely through traditional leaders, made the regime in the area to be relatively less rigid. Nonetheless by the early 1960s there were calls for the overthrow of the white man's rule and CANU was formed. What are the conditions that led to this sudden rise of nationalism and drive for self-determination? Could it be that the 'winds of change'¹⁰⁸ were influenced from outside, possibly across the border in the then Northern Rhodesia where Kenneth Kaunda's UNIP party was about to come to power. Indeed, Kruger maintains that "the attempt to inflict on the Caprivi a new order, [was] generated from outside, with appreciable internal activity by agents and their tentative converts, having as its aim the supplanting of the South African government."¹⁰⁹ This chapter will examine political repression in the Caprivi Strip and the formation and demise of CANU, which started with its merger with SWAPO.

3.1 The Caprivi African National Union (CANU).

The first mention of CANU seem to be in 1961 when in Lusaka, the African Mail of 17 October 1961, reported that a nationalist organisation was about to be launched in the Caprivi Strip. The report mentioned that the chief architect behind this move was Mr. George Liswaniso Mutwa. Seven months later, on 19 May 1962, the Senior Information Officer for South West Africa sent a copy of a letter he had written to Albert M. Muyongo to the commissioner in Caprivi. This letter was in reply to one wherein the latter, then a young man of about 20 years old and a teacher at Kanono school in the Caprivi Strip, had put certain questions of a political nature.¹¹⁰

Early in January 1964, there appeared without warning, at Native Commissioner Kruger's office, two young men who identified themselves as Vernet 'Mussolini' Maswahu and

¹⁰⁷ Saunders and Kangumu, 'Nationalism in Namibia', 1999, p. 140 (review of Tony Emmett 's book: Popular resistance and the Roots of Nationalism in Namibia, 1915 – 1966). Social Dynamics, Vol. 25. No. 2. Summer 1999.

¹⁰⁸ Borrowed from Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, Ch. 12, p.1 (NAN A.472). Kruger served as Magistrate and Native Commissioner of the Caprivi for three terms.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Simasiku Mulonda. Kruger describes the two as disrespectful, had the sort of beard, and both the look in the eye, 'that one learned to associate with young political upstarts', for they both put themselves on the only chair in the office without waiting to be offered it. During their discussion, it transpired that they had been out of the Caprivi for some years in Rhodesia, one of them in the army. The two were bearing a constitution for a political organisation called the Caprivi African National Union (CANU). Kruger describes this constitution 'as fluent, typewritten and having being drawn by elements outside the Caprivi'. Their mission was twofold: firstly, to ask that the constitution be registered and secondly, that the office bearers named in it be allowed to propagate the stated objectives. The main objective was in the direction of the formation of an independent government for the Caprivi, which was supposed to come into being by way of some United Nations formula.¹¹¹

The Commissioner told them that there was no such thing as registration of a constitution of that kind but continued that it would take time to study the document and the implications of the move upon which they will be called in a month's time to make a statement. They were in the meantime not supposed to engage in any activity in the line of furthering their scheme, which included a ban on holding meetings, and duly warned that "...they and their associates were to be particularly careful about disrespect towards constituted authority."¹¹² The holding of meetings was already at this stage prohibited by regulation and by tribal law unless specially permitted. Sergeant Hartman of the Police was informed of this development to take note and especially to keep track of these men. A Police post was established at Katima Mulilo in 1961 and consisted of a dwelling house, office with single quarters under the same roof, store, garage, and one or two cells for detaining wrongdoers, or those suspected of it. Two White personnel, a sergeant and a constable and four or five Black units manned it. The two gentlemen seem not to have obeyed this order as subsequent events proved. Before the month was up, they were back demanding an answer and Kruger recalls how they more than once refused to leave his office.

Different writers put the formation of CANU at different dates. Mbuende writes that it was formed in 1962¹¹³ while Katjavivi provides two different accounts in separate publications, 1963¹¹⁴ and 1964¹¹⁵ and Likando opts for early 1963.¹¹⁶ What is clear however is that the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹¹ NAN A.472: Kruger, *History of the Caprivi*, 1984, Ch.12 p. 4

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Mbuende, *Namibia, the Broken Shield*, 1986, p. 154.

¹¹⁴ Katjavivi, *A history of resistance in Namibia*, 1988, p. 51.

¹¹⁵ Katjavivi, in Brian Wood (ed.), *Namibia 1884 – 1984*, 1984, p. 575.

¹¹⁶ Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989: p. 139. (History Dept., Unam)

party was formally launched in April 1964¹¹⁷ with Brandon Simbwaye, a teacher at a local mission, as its founding president. The stated policy was "national independence now" but its constitution, according to Katjavivi, "...spoke only of 'liberation' of the Caprivi Strip."¹¹⁸ The 1964 constitution of the party, according to Fosse, talk about the promotion of independence for South West Africa and Caprivi, establish democracy and ensure an equitable distribution of land and wealth.¹¹⁹ In the absence of a copy of the CANU constitution, it is difficult to verify whether CANU leaders would have, at this stage, included South West Africa in their programme. The Northern News of Northern Rhodesia, in its issue of 8 May 1964, reported that a new political party had been formed in the Caprivi and that it had offices in Lusaka. Indeed CANU leaders seem to have had sound and constant contact with their counterparts in Northern Rhodesia. Likando reports that at the end of 1963, Brendan Simbwaye, J.M. Sinvula and Thomas Muyunda took a journey to Zambia to consult UNIP for necessary assistance particularly the printing of membership cards.¹²⁰ Subsequently, CANU membership cards numbering ten thousand were reportedly printed and the first one sold to President Kenneth Kaunda of UNIP. The membership card, according to Kruger, was issued upon payment of a fee of three shillings and sixpence.¹²¹

In Caprivi itself, CANU had its headquarters at a place called Mafulo, meaning an encampment, where they built what Likando calls "a freedom house"¹²² (thatched) for administrative purposes. Originally, Mafulo was the site chosen for the 'rest camp' for the two chiefs and their councillors when paying visits to the headquarters and still served this purpose at this time. Mafulo attracted, apart from those named, many others in its surrounding and adjacent places, as according to Kruger, for 'doing a bit of trading by way of "tea – rooms", others selling fish, produce or wares brought from the country, and others doing nothing in particular'. There was absolutely no control in this area. This situation of lawlessness was particularly suitable to CANU for its propaganda and conducting its business of spreading ill will towards the administration and Kruger writes that they made the most out of it. He recalls some placards on trees written "Down with Verwoed",¹²³ "Go Home Boers"¹²⁴ which were at Mafulo.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.140.

¹¹⁸ Katjavivi, *A history of resistance in Namibia*, 1988, p. 51.

¹¹⁹ Fosse, *NISER Discussion Paper No. 14*, 1992, p. 34.

¹²⁰ Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989, p. 140. (History Dept., Unam)

¹²¹ NAN A. 472: Kruger, *History of Caprivi*, 1984, Ch. p. 5.

¹²² Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989, p. 140. (History Dept., Unam)

¹²³ Verwoed, Hendrik was Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa.

¹²⁴ 'Boer' translated as farmer, refers to Afrikaners.

CANU immediately started surreptitiously canvassing members throughout the Caprivi, establishing branches and appointing secretaries. The recruitment of members systematically targeted schoolboys who were taken to Zambia and were probably induced thereto by some promises. Complaints from school headmasters about missing children became the order of the day. In a letter addressed to the District Officer dated 27 March 1965 and another dated 29 March 1965, Mr. A. Kasu, head of Nakabolelwa Community School reported that two scholars ran away from his school with CANU members to Zambia. Their leader was identified as Godfrey Kawana Mwananawa who resided at Ikaba. The names of the two boys were given as Boniface Chandu Sekelo and Sinvula Shantambwa [Satambwa]. The report named six other boys who were planning to follow and identified them as Robson Musialike, Alfred Simataa Kabajani, Kangumu Nechenge, Milinga Munguni, Shoni Musipili and Nkonkwena Mukena Musialike. The headmaster wanted to know what action to be taken to those who have left and especially whether to discharge those still planning to leave.¹²⁵

The influence of CANU spread quickly to the rural areas. Kruger writes that it was not uncommon when travelling outside Katima Mulilo to hear small children shouting "Kwacha", a Bemba or Nyanja¹²⁶ word denoting 'freedom', or 'waking' up from colonialism, as one passed by the villages and especially with no one doing anything to restrain them.¹²⁷ Although the aim and activities of CANU were perceived as subversive in character towards constituted authority, action against the movement was limited to what the current laws provided, being those of South West Africa up to 1939, with nothing relevant to the new situation added since. There was, therefore, no legal provision for such a thing. The South West Africa Administration Proclamation of 1928 did, however, provide for removal under ministerial order to another part of the territory where behaviour amounted to serious undermining of constituted authority. This however, was to be a last resort. Indeed, this provision was later applied, by ministerial order, when Simbwaye and Maswahu were ordered to remove themselves from the Caprivi.

Several incidents marked the change of attitude of the people towards the administration and undoubtedly this showed the authorities that they were losing the battle against CANU. One was in 1962 when Minister de Wet Nel and other senior government officers visited the territory. Kruger, without recounting what transpired during the visit, merely records that they were not well received, even though no follow-up seems to have been made to investigate

¹²⁵ NAP, NTS 523/400: Letters to the District Officer, possibly the Native Commissioner.

¹²⁶ Bemba and Nyanja are languages spoken in Zambia.

¹²⁷ NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, Ch. p. 7.

the matter. This was followed, in April 1964 and coinciding with the official launch of CANU, by an official and formal complaint from both Khutas (tribal councils) against the administration. In a similar move, employees of the administration also complained about their conditions of service. Even though it's difficult to determine the roots of these complaints, Kruger's admission of the shortcomings in the administration is more revealing. He writes, "...criticism about the lack of services applied by government in certain directions may have been justified..."¹²⁸.

The year 1964 brought yet another shocking revelation for the administration. A letter came from the Department of Bantu Affairs in Pretoria with papers sent from Pretoria's representative at the United Nations. These papers included a petition addressed to the United Nations and signed by both chiefs and one or two of their Khuta members (councillors) asking that the South African government be replaced by a United Nations body, a move which Kruger blames on CANU and its associates. Upon investigation it came out that the petition had indeed been 'signed' on behalf of the two chiefs (who themselves could not read or write English) in their presence by one or two of their councillors. Kruger however questions the validity of the petition on the grounds that it did not enjoy majority support of the people. He maintains that traditional law provides that such an important affair could not have any validity unless approved at fully representative meetings with all heads of villages, each accompanied by one or two senior men, assembled, and after thorough explanation and clear understanding of the implications¹²⁹. This is withstanding the fact that he earlier mentions that the Ngambela¹³⁰ of the Masubiya Khuta assured him that he called villages in the neighbourhood of the tribal headquarters at Kabbe for a consideration of the matter and that they and the Khuta had supported the petition. They wished, however, first to find out the attitude of the other chief, Mamili, to which end messengers had been sent to Linyanti who brought back an assurance of support. Chief Mamili reportedly signed the petition at Mafulo in the presence of one of his councillors, was subjected to harassment when he protested signing the petition and only did so when he had come to the end of his resistance. This was also after having been assured that his counterpart, Moraliswani of the Masubiya, had already signed. Considering the respect Caprivians accord to their traditional leaders, it is highly unlikely that commoners could subject a chief to harassment in those days therefore leaving Kruger's assertion in doubt. Efforts to locate a copy of this petition, which Likando also mentions in his work,¹³¹ has so far, proved fruitless.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

¹³⁰ Chief Councillor or 'Prime Minister'.

¹³¹ Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989, p. 140. (History Dept., Unam)

CANU 's subversive actions against the administration did not end with the petition but continued in other spheres. It will be discussed in another chapter how cattle were an integral part of the lives of the indigenous people and the local economy. Therefore, a market for surplus cattle had always been a priority for the administration. To this end, negotiations were started in 1963 with the Northern Rhodesian Cold Storage Commission and when arrangements were finalised, a weighbridge was installed at Katima Mulilo, with necessary kraals and races, so that the transaction was one of a fixed rate by exact weight. The Commission related their offer to what they paid across in Northern Rhodesia making allowances for additional costs in the Caprivi such as the putting of cattle in quarantine and the risk involved in driving them to Livingstone through the Impalila Island.

Kruger describes the atmosphere during the day of the buying of cattle as 'oppressive' because of the way CANU agents 'were mingling with the crowd in a way that suggested they were up to no good'.¹³² Indeed, when prices for the first few cattle were announced, they were flatly rejected and since then no single beast was offered. Upon investigation, the leading men stated that they were not satisfied with the price offered which, they said, was far below that paid across the river in Barotseland. A few days later, someone brought a Northern Rhodesia newspaper to Kruger wherein prices paid by the Cold Storage Commission in Northern Rhodesia were published and was astonished to find that they were considerably higher than what they offered in Caprivi. This led him to remark that "I don't believe the CANU agents, in their ignorance, knew the difference – if they did so much the worse. But their scheming had all the appearance of getting the better of the administration, leading the people generally, in their confused state, to a belief that I myself was not to be trusted."¹³³ Following this incident, CANU decided to bypass the administration and took the initiative of negotiating with the Northern Rhodesia Cold Storage Commission on behalf of the people, to which end two men were sent to Livingstone to see what they could find out. This was only revealed to Kruger in a letter from the representative of the Cold Storage there.

It is stated above that local administration was based on a formula of indirect rule, which relied heavily on the consent of the two chiefs. CANU, having realised this, not only influenced the two chiefs to be the first ones to buy CANU membership cards in Caprivi, which they did,¹³⁴ but also resorted to making these traditional institutions ungovernable for the colonial administration. A case in point is the trouble that enveloped the Mafwe khuta

¹³² NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, CH. 12, p. 7.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Likando, The Caprivi Strip, 1989, p. 140. (History Dept., Unam).

and led to the dismay of the Ngambela, David Siukuta, and an issue in which Kruger concludes that CANU again took a leading part.¹³⁵ This incidence took place in May 1964 at Mafulo where the Ngambela was called to an irregular hearing, what Kruger terms 'a sort of a mob trial', attended by at least one of the regular Khuta members. He was allegedly subjected to threats, thrown out of office and warned not to go near the tribal headquarters at Linyanti. Fearing for his life, the Ngambela resorted to spending nights in hiding in the forest. As an interim measure, Kruger arranged with the police to take into custody two CANU members who had taken a prominent part in the affair, these being Jackson Lizazi and Alfred Lukonga, pending a trial by the whole khuta.

A meeting of the whole khuta having been arranged with the chief, Kruger went to the tribal headquarters the day before, accompanied by Constable Bosman in whose care the two prisoners were and the Ngambela. In the late afternoon, they were astonished to see a 3-ton lorry put in transporting a score or more shouting and singing CANU members duly organised for the occasion, to join those living thereby. It was put to the gathered Khuta members by Kruger whether they were prepared to see justice done by, firstly, upholding the Ngambela and then proceeding to the trial of the two men. To his disappointment, "not one of the khuta members present was prepared to agree."¹³⁶ The exception was the chief, who agreed with Commissioner Kruger, this however, being of no help. Consequently, the only option left was withdrawal at which point Constable Bosman released the two men from his custody who were immediately and heroically surrounded by their CANU supporters in jubilation. This, Kruger recalls, was obviously "another gain, if shallow, for the CANU upstarts."¹³⁷ These successes by CANU were however short-lived as is its existence in the Caprivi as a political movement. The movement existed practically from April 1964 when it was launched to August 1964 when its leadership was clamped down by the authorities by way of detentions, deportations and forcing many into exile.

3.2 Political repression

From the preceding section, two vital things emerged, firstly, that the holding of meetings in the Caprivi were prohibited by regulation and tribal law, unless specially permitted, even before the formation of the Caprivi African National Union (CANU). Secondly, that the Administration (South West Africa) Proclamation of 1928, still by this time applicable to the Caprivi, provided for removal under ministerial order to another part of the territory where

¹³⁵ NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, Ch.12, p. 8.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

behaviour amounted to a serious undermining of constituted authority. This, however, was to be a last resort. As with many colonial laws, this was an open-ended proclamation in that the discretion was left entirely to the authorities on the ground to judge whether an action amounted to serious undermining of constituted authority thereby increasing the chances of victimisation of political opponents. It is in these two provisions that political repression in the Caprivi found expression.

CANU's campaign of recruiting members to its cause was carried vigorously and as Fosse rightly points out, this active but initially peaceful campaign proved "too successful" for the South African authorities.¹³⁸ Kruger reports that by the second half of August 1964, barely four months after the launch of the movement in April, quite a large number of supporters had gathered at Mafulo. This was supposed to be CANU's first public meeting in the Caprivi that was supposed to be addressed by its president, Branden Simbwaye. Sergeant Hartman of the police told Kruger that they had information about the meeting and that he and a handful of his men were about to leave to the place and find out what was afoot. He made it clear that they were determined to make some arrests if he indeed found a meeting in progress, since no permission was given as required both by tribal law and regulation.¹³⁹ Indeed, Simbwaye and two others, Vernet Maswahu¹⁴⁰ and Tongo Nalishuwa, were arrested by the police and taken into custody. There are several accounts on the casualties that followed these arrests resulting from violent clashes with the police. Fosse¹⁴¹ records the death of one person, UNIP¹⁴² published two killed while Likando states that the violent clashes claimed the lives of "...almost nine black militants and two Boers."¹⁴³ Kruger reports that only one of the CANU men was found to have suffered injury but of no great consequence. It is difficult to find any supporting evidence to these conflicting reports.

The trial against the three of holding a meeting without permission was held in an open court and a large number of their supporters attended. Bezuidenhout, assistant Native Commissioner, was on the bench with Sergeant Hartman prosecuting and Kruger there to give evidence that the meeting was illegal. The accused refused to plead with Simbwaye ignoring the presiding magistrate and declaring in a loud voice that he did not recognise the court and would submit only to the United Nations, this being echoed by his co-accused. On this account alone, they were promptly sentenced to one-month imprisonment for contempt

¹³⁸ Fosse, *NISER Discussion Paper No. 14*, 1992, p. 34.

¹³⁹ NAN A.472: Kruger, *History of Caprivi*, 1984, Ch.12, p. 18.

¹⁴⁰ Likando uses Vernet and Vincent interchangeably.

¹⁴¹ Fosse, *NISER Discussion Paper No. 14*, 1992, p. 34.

¹⁴² Quoted in Kruger, *History of Caprivi*, 1984, CH.12, p. 20. (NAN A.472)

¹⁴³ Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989, p.140. (History Dept., Unam)

of the court. At the end of the case for the prosecution they declined to offer any statements repeating their recognition only of the United Nations, upon which they were found guilty and sentenced. In a press statement announcing their merger in Lusaka, CANU and SWAPO give the sentences as follows:

"They were sentenced to one month imprisonment without the option of a fine. On the second case he was (Simbwaye) fined £2.00 for having left the country without a permit, on the third case he was fined £2.00 for holding an illegal meeting."¹⁴⁴

Immediately after the trial and following what he terms 'open defiance of constituted authority', Kruger made an impromptu trip to Pretoria with two objectives, firstly to give a detailed report of what has happened. And secondly, to request for the removals of the leaders of the movement by ministerial order to some other part of South West Africa. This was duly reported to the Secretary, Mr. Bruce Young, who met with other senior officers before a recommendation was made to the Minister. It was at this meeting where it was also decided and agreed that it would be unwise for the three men to serve their sentences at Katima Mulilo where the facilities might be found wanting in the out-of-the-ordinary circumstances prevailing at the time. Constable Bosman escorted indeed the three men to Mashi River at night where they were taken over by Police from Rundu to serve out their sentences at a gaol elsewhere in South West Africa. The ministerial order of removal was served on Simbwaye and Maswahu as they were released from gaol, whilst the third man, Tongo Nalishuwa, was brought back under escort to the Caprivi, which he immediately left for Zambia. The following is the Order of Restriction issued by the Hon. Michael Daniel Christian De Wet Nel, Minister of Bantu Administration of the Union of South Africa to Branden Simbwaye:¹⁴⁵

"To Branden Kangongolo Simbwaye, a Native of the Masubia in the district of Eastern Caprivi Zipfel in the territory of South West Africa;

WhEREAS I am satisfied that you are engaged in activities likely to undermine duly established authority and the maintenance of law and order in the district of Eastern Caprivi Zipfel in the territory of South West Africa, and to cause dissension, unrest, violence and lawlessness in the said district;

AND WHEREAS your said activities have resulted in a request from the Masubia tribal authority for your removal from the said district of Eastern Caprivi Zipfel;

¹⁴⁴ CANU and SWAPO, Press Statement announcing the merger, Lusaka: 5 Nov. 1964, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ Adapted from a Press Statement issued jointly by CANU and SWAPO announcing their merger in Lusaka on 5 November 1964. (Archive & Manuscripts, Uct).

AND WHEREAS I am satisfied that your presence in, or at any place within easy access of the said district of Eastern Caprivi Zipfel in the territory of South West Africa is inimical to the peace, order and good government of the Natives in the said district;

AND WHEREAS I deem it expedient in the general public interest that you be removed from your present place of residence in the said district of Eastern Caprivi Zipfel;

NOW, THEREFORE, under and by virtue of the powers vested in me by paragraph (d) of section one of the Native Administration Proclamation, 1928 (Proclamation NO. 15 of 1928) (South West Africa) read with section three of Eastern Caprivi Zipfel Administration Proclamation, 1939 (Proclamation No. 147 of 1939) (South West Africa), I do hereby order you, the said Branden Kangongolo Simbwaye, that within two days of the service of this order on you, remove yourself from your place of residence in the said district of Eastern Caprivi Zipfel to Ohopoho in the district of Kaokoveld in the territory of South West Africa, subject to the following terms, conditions, and arrangements:-

a) At Ohopoho you shall reside at a place to be indicated to you by the senior officials of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development of Ohopoho.

b) Until such time as this order is withdrawn you may not return to the Eastern Caprivi Zipfel except with written permission of the Secretary for the Bantu Administration and Development.

Given under my hand at Pretoria on the 24th day of September One Thousand Nine Hundred and Sixty Four.

MINISTER OF BANTU ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

There is no corroborative evidence to suggest, support and confirm that the Masubia Tribal Authority indeed requested the removal of Simbwaye from the Eastern Caprivi Zipfel to some other place in the territory of South West Africa as alleged by this ministerial order. This is highly unlikely as it is mentioned above that immediately after the trial (after a day or two), Kruger flew to Pretoria with the next available flight to report and request the ministerial removal order¹⁴⁶. He does not report getting in contact with the tribal authority on this matter. Meanwhile, Simbwaye's whereabouts are not known. He is appearing in an exhibition by the Robben Island Museum dedicated to the Namibian Political Prisoners who served time on the island. This should be strongly refuted, as there is no evidence to suggest that he ever set foot in the Robben Island prison. Katjavivi writes that there have been some reports that the South Africans killed him in the late 1970s.¹⁴⁷

Violent clashes erupted at Mafulo during the night of 28 August 1964, following the trial, this time between native employees of the administration and CANU supporters. The employees had apparently reached the end of their patience with CANU supporters who were continuously taunting them for working for the White man. Many CANU supporters,

¹⁴⁶ NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, Ch.12, p. 19.

¹⁴⁷ Katjavivi. A history of resistance in Namibia, 1988, p. 51.

according to Kruger, fled into the night mainly across the river into Northern Rhodesia and some to their villages. The CANU office at Mafulo and some dwellings belonging to its supporters were set on fire.¹⁴⁸ This marked the start of a harsh clampdown on CANU supporters, its activities and eventually the banning of the party¹⁴⁹ although it originally pursued a policy of non-violence. In a letter dated 8 September 1964 addressed to Chief Moraliswani Maiba of the Masubiya, the Magistrate and Native Commissioner stated that he had sent some policemen to Schuckmansburg with orders to arrest CANU members if they cross back from Northern Rhodesia. This is where they were taking refuge after the above mentioned clashes. Likando writes that the regime became so rigid that even listening to external news was closely controlled while reading external newspapers and magazines was not allowed.¹⁵⁰

Interpreting the above incidences as a threat to the peace and security of South Africa specially orchestrated from outside, it was decided that security personnel watching over the northern border be strengthened. In the Caprivi the local police representation was increased and upgraded and later a detachment of Police under a senior officer was sent for field service. With CANU leadership and most supporters dispersed, the anger of the police was now directed at the general public, who were supposed to provide information about CANU. This was followed by the much publicised 1968 'massacre' in Caprivi. Information about this massacre was first made known to the world in a testimony presented to the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts of the Commission of Human Rights by Peter Katjavivi, then SWAPO Representative in the United Kingdom and Western Europe. According to Katjavivi, the massacre took place in October 1968 and claimed the lives of 63 people, killed by the South African troops in Caprivi. In the process, 350 people were arrested and 2000 were forced to flee the area. Of the 100 small babies that accompanied their parents in the flight to Zambia, 53 died of starvation and disease on the way.¹⁵¹

The massacre happened as follows: first the headman of the village was dropped from a helicopter as a warning of what would happen to anyone who withheld information about SWAPO freedom fighters or who gave support to the liberation struggle. Next the area was strafed and bombed, and then troops moved in, using fixed bayonets on anyone still alive in

¹⁴⁸ NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, Ch.12 p. 19.

¹⁴⁹ Fosse, NISER Discussion Paper No. 14, 1992, p. 34.

¹⁵⁰ Likando, The Caprivi Strip, 1989, p. 146. (History Dept., Unam).

¹⁵¹ NAP, KGO cN1/15/2: Testimony presented to the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts of the Commission on Human Rights by Peter H. Katjavivi, SWAPO Representative in the UK and Western Europe, London, July 16, 1974.

the village.¹⁵² Likando who record casualties slightly different from those provided by Katjavivi also reports on this massacre. In his account, this operation by the South African security police claimed the lives of Mr. Muyongo, Mishake s' father, Mr. Benjamin Bebi, Mr. Maxwell Kulibabika, Mr. Judea Lyaboloma, about sixty unknown adults and sixty three children who died in the flight to Zambia. He continues that the operation left about hundred families homeless after their homes were burnt down.¹⁵³ Mr. Solomon Puzeli lost his right arm during this operation. It should be noted that Kruger left out this episode entirely in his history of the Caprivi. Probably it is because he was not in the Caprivi by the time it happened. The Magistrate and Bantu Affairs Commissioner at this time was Mr. P.N. Hansmeyer, who was there from April 1968 to the middle of 1971.

Following reports of this massacre, a Swedish television team from Sveriges Radio visited the Caprivi allegedly at the invitation of SWAPO. It consisted of two reporters, Per Sanden and Rudolf Spee of TV2.¹⁵⁴ The two offered an interview to a staff reporter from the Argus Group office in London who travelled to Stockholm to attempt to establish the veracity of the report. The two indeed claimed to have been in the Caprivi Strip during January/February 1974. One night they were taken by the SWAPO "Minister of Defence" whom they identified as one Peter Nanyemba, escorted by a band of armed SWAPO guerrillas, to the site of the massacre near Kalonga where they saw 'about 30 skeletons lying around. They refused to be drawn on whether there were any shallow graves, signs of violence or anything else that might point to unnatural death. However, a telegram from the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria to the same in Cape Town of 30/7/1974 reveals that the reporters said at the scene of the alleged massacre they found the remains of huts, cooking utensils and skeletal remains above the ground. Some remains, the telegram continues, showed signs of having been burnt, as did the surrounding bushes and vegetation. They did say, however, that Nanyemba had claimed that the massacre had taken place during September 1973, and not October 1968 as alleged by Katjavivi. Katjavivi explains the confusion about the dates by averring that there had in fact been two massacres, one in 1968 and the other in 1973.¹⁵⁵

This alleged massacre did not escape the attention of the United Nations. In 1972 when Dr. Fischer visited South West Africa, part of his mission was to visit the Caprivi Strip and establish the truth about this massacre. Most people were however prevented by the

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989, p. 146. (History Dept., Unam).

¹⁵⁴ NAP, KGO cN1/15/2: Correspondence from the South African Legation in Stockholm to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Pretoria, dated 24 July 1974.

¹⁵⁵ NAP, NTS 523/400: Telegram from the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria to the same in Cape Town, despatched on 30 July 1974.

authorities from meeting him. Likando writes that he only managed to interview the late Mr. P. Imbuwa Sibungo and Mr. Solomon Puzeli, reported above to have lost his arm during the operation.¹⁵⁶ Besides the two, Gilbert Mutwa also managed to hand in secretly, a document explaining the 1968 massacre and the political situation in the territory in general. Dr. Fischer's report was to be rejected by the United Nations.

3.3 CANU: The politics of exile, a brief look.

It became clear that the legality and CANU's existence in the Caprivi Strip did not go beyond the holding of its first public meeting which resulted in its leadership and supporters being either detained or forced into exile. With the arrest and detention of Simbwaye, Mishake Muyongo inherited the leadership of the party, cemented the negotiations with SWAPO that were started by Simbwaye and formed an alliance with SWAPO. "According to later CANU leaderships, this alliance was rejected by a large majority in the party."¹⁵⁷ This alliance was announced in a press statement issued jointly by CANU and SWAPO in Lusaka on the 5 November 1964 and jointly signed by Albert Muyongo, Vice President of CANU and Sam Nujoma, National President of SWAPO. The two movements declared in the press statement that "...for the interest of our people and freedom and independence of our Fatherland South West Africa, CANU and SWAPO cease to exist as separate organisations. We further resolve that CANU and SWAPO merge and unite as one Organisation..."¹⁵⁸ They stated the following as their aims and objectives:

- i) To fight relentlessly for the total liberation of South West Africa from the yoke of South African Imperialism;
- ii) To foster the ideal of Pan-Africanism and to rally the African masses into a cohesive national organisation; and
- iii) To strive for the creation of a true democratic government in South West Africa, a government that would serve the interest of all the people of the country irrespective of their colour, race, ethnic origin, religion or creed.

Following the merger, Simbwaye was appointed Vice President of SWAPO and Albert Muyongo as SWAPO Chief Representative in Lusaka, Zambia, where Lucas Pohamba was his deputy. It should be noted that these appointments were made by the Central Committee of SWAPO and therefore could be unconstitutional, as it did not have the constitutional

¹⁵⁶ Likando, *The Caprivi Strip*, 1989, p.148. (History Dept., Unam).

¹⁵⁷ Fosse, *NISER Discussion Paper No. 14*, 1992, p. 34.

¹⁵⁸ Press statement made by Sam Nujoma, President of South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and Albert Muyongo, Vice President of Caprivi African National Union (CANU), announcing the merger of the two movements in Lusaka, 5 November 1964. (Archives & Manuscripts, Uct).

powers to appoint or elect a vice president. These positions were however confirmed at the Tanga Consultative Conference, where Simbwaye, was elected Vice President of SWAPO in absentia and Muyongo appointed to be Acting Vice President of SWAPO in the absence of Simbwaye. There is no available evidence to suggest that he was ever elected SWAPO vice president. In actual fact SWAPO did not have another congress apart from the one at Tanga where he could have been elected.

This Alliance was however destined to collapse and indeed it didn't work out from the very beginning. There was a difference of opinion as to how the merger would operate. CANU was of the opinion that it existed in its own right and was working in alliance with SWAPO while the latter believed that, and indeed in practice, CANU dissolved and its members were absorbed into SWAPO. This issue was never resolved and continued to cause trouble through the 1960s and 70s and resulting in the expulsion from SWAPO in 1980, of Muyongo and seven others. These were Lemmy Matengu, Ernest Likando, Benjamin Mabuku, Ignatius Mazambani, Dennis Kachilombwa, Jackson Mazazi and Calvis Songa. Katjavivi writes that the group was expelled from the organisation for re-activating CANU as a splinter group and campaigning for a separate independence for Caprivi.¹⁵⁹

A different opinion is held by Pütz, Von Edigy & Caplan, who argue that repeated charges of discrimination within SWAPO against CANU and charges of Ovambo tribalism led to the increasing tension between Muyongo and the SWAPO leadership, and eventually to the collapse of the alliance.¹⁶⁰ In an interview with Fosse, Muyongo holds that it was largely because of the suppressed role of CANU in SWAPO and disagreements with the SWAPO leadership over strategies in the negotiations between the Western Contact Group, SWAPO and South Africa after the passing of UNSCR 435 in 1978.¹⁶¹ The expulsion was reported in the Zambian Daily Mail of 23 July 1980 in Lusaka after letters of expulsion had been served on the above members. It is not known whether SWAPO expelled Muyongo and his colleagues as individuals or whether it was calling off the agreement between itself and CANU. What is known however is that the majority of CANU members remained in SWAPO and only came back in 1989 with the implementation of UNSCR 435 that provided for the repatriation of all exiles as a pre-condition to the holding of free and fair elections. In a counter move, Muyongo announced in Lusaka, on 7 August 1980, the revival of CANU but no leadership was elected. In fact at this time Muyongo was the only member of the

¹⁵⁹ Katjavivi, in B. Wood (ed.), Namibia 1884 - 1984, 1984, p. 575.

¹⁶⁰ Pütz, Von Edigy & Caplan, Namibia Handbook and Political Who's Who, 1989, p. 90.

¹⁶¹ Muyongo, interviewed by and quoted in Fosse, NISER Discussion Paper No. 14, 1992. Date of interview, 24.6.1992, Windhoek.

Executive Committee of CANU. The movement was again revived in the Caprivi but internal power struggles caused a split in the party. Muyongo broke away and formed a new party, the United Democratic Party (UDP) which he led into alliance with the DTA.

3.4 Conclusion

Nationalism in the Caprivi Strip developed under a regime that was less rigid because of the system of indirect rule and the absence of the inhumane contract labour system and systematic land dispossession. Therefore the formation of CANU is largely attributed to outside influence. Its existence in the area was however short-lived when it was formed because of the threat it posed to the administration. Its leadership and supporters were continuously harassed and many of them were either detained or forced into exile. In exile the movement joined hands with SWAPO in an ill-fated merger that marked the start of its demise. When SWAPO expelled its leadership in 1980, CANU regrouped in Caprivi again to face further troubles, which caused a split in the party. In 1989 CANU divided into factions which joined the NPF and UDF in Namibia's first independence elections.

Chapter Four

Aspects of the Political Economy

Introduction

Owing to its peculiar geographical position in South West Africa, the economy of the Caprivi Strip was isolated from the rest of the territory and thus did not benefit from the diversified economic resources of the rest of the country. As a result the economy of the strip remained highly rural and purely subsistence for most and first part of South Africa's administration of the territory. The people of the area were established tillers and headsmen who cultivated land under a system of individual right of occupation, which was allocated by the chiefs or district heads. However, such resources as grazing pastures, water holes and veld products were used on a communal basis. Field crops were produced mainly for subsistence use, the principal ones being maize, corn, millet, pumpkins and watermelons. Surplus products were usually sold both on the local market and in Northern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland. This included largely dried fish, which also formed an important part of the population's staple food. Although draught-animals were used to cultivate the land, tilling the land with picks or hoes was a common practice.

Another important activity integral to the economy of the Caprivi Strip was cattle rearing mostly of the sanga type. Apart from providing meat, milk and used as draught-animals, cattle also served as a source of income and were used for bride price or lobola, as it was locally known. The cattle trade was already flourishing as early as 1944 in which year alone about 2098 cattle valued at £10, 493.13. 6d were disposed of by the tribesmen and exported from the strip.¹⁶² These were exported mainly to Barotseland in Northern Rhodesia where companies such as the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) and the Zambezi Sawmills limited bought cattle in bulk. The Northern Rhodesia Cold Storage Commission also bought cattle from the Caprivi Strip. It was estimated that this trade brought some £11, 000 into the territory annually. The market was however closed due to continuous outbreak of infectious and contagious cattle diseases such as lung-sickness, foot and mouth disease, anthrax and nagana in the whole area covering Barotseland, Caprivi, Southern Angola and Northern Bechuanaland. The reason for refusing cattle from the strip was that there was

¹⁶² NAN A503/1-7: Trollope, Report on E.C.Z., 1944, p. 3.

insufficient veterinary control in the area to conduct proper control and inoculation of stock. During heavy rains and the flooding season, several areas got cut off by large pans, which reduced the productivity of the economy although it brought abundant fish stocks.

The economy that is discussed in this chapter is mainly of the Eastern Caprivi Strip, West Caprivi being covered in only minor detail. This is mainly because not much took place in the area in the way of economic activities apart from nature conservation and military activities and that it was in any case not under South African administration. In fact the better description would be that Western Caprivi had a militarised economy during this time. As shown in chapter three, the area was proclaimed as a Nature Park in 1963 and upgraded to a Game Reserve in 1968. But before any activities could start, the area was declared as a South African military zone and therefore closed to civilians. The South African Defence Force had at least four bases in the area, these being, Buffalo also known as Bagani, Fort Doppies, Chetto and the infamous Omega Base where about half of the San population were forced to reside. Some of them were forcibly removed by the SADF from the Angolan border area where a one kilometre wide strip was proclaimed as a free-fire zone. They were concentrated in army bases and their movement was highly restricted thereby destroying their traditional lifestyle of hunting and gathering and forcing them into economic dependence on the SADF.

4.1 A Malarial Economy

This economy was however highly malarial which was endemic plus other diseases such as sleeping sickness, goitre (which was also endemic), respiratory diseases, tuberculosis, skin diseases and leprosy. Apart from the fact that the area was a Bantu reserve for exclusive use by its population, the government often discouraged Europeans from settling in the Caprivi Strip arguing that it was not suitable for European settlement. This prevented the development of a settler economy in the area. A comprehensive survey of the prevalence of endemic goitre was undertaken in 1951 by a research team that was subsidised by the C.S.I.R. (Pretoria). The research results found that this condition occurred in from 50% to 65% of the population in the area.¹⁶³ It recommended that iodised salt be used for its prevention. Subsequently, the government freely distributed 3 lb. iodised salt per head twice a year to combat this endemic disease.¹⁶⁴ The following table shows the main diseases and their prevalence in the area in 1961 and 1962:¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ S.A., Report of the Commission into SWA Affairs, 1962-1963, p. 165.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

¹⁶⁵ Adapted from the SA Report of the Commission into SWA Affairs 1962-1963, p. 165.

Disease	In – Patients		out - patients	
	1961	1962	1961	1962
Conjunctivitis	333	338	192	354
Malaria	261	208	382	303
Respiratory diseases	55	106	130	168
Diseases of the skin	105	25	262	96
Gonorrhoea	65	65	227	196
Scabies	56	23	66	90
Ancylostomiasis	37	57	29	88
Trypanosomiasis	54	47	—	—
Leprosy	25	0	4	37
Tuberculosis	19	11	7	10
Total	1,032	1,191	1,265	1,428

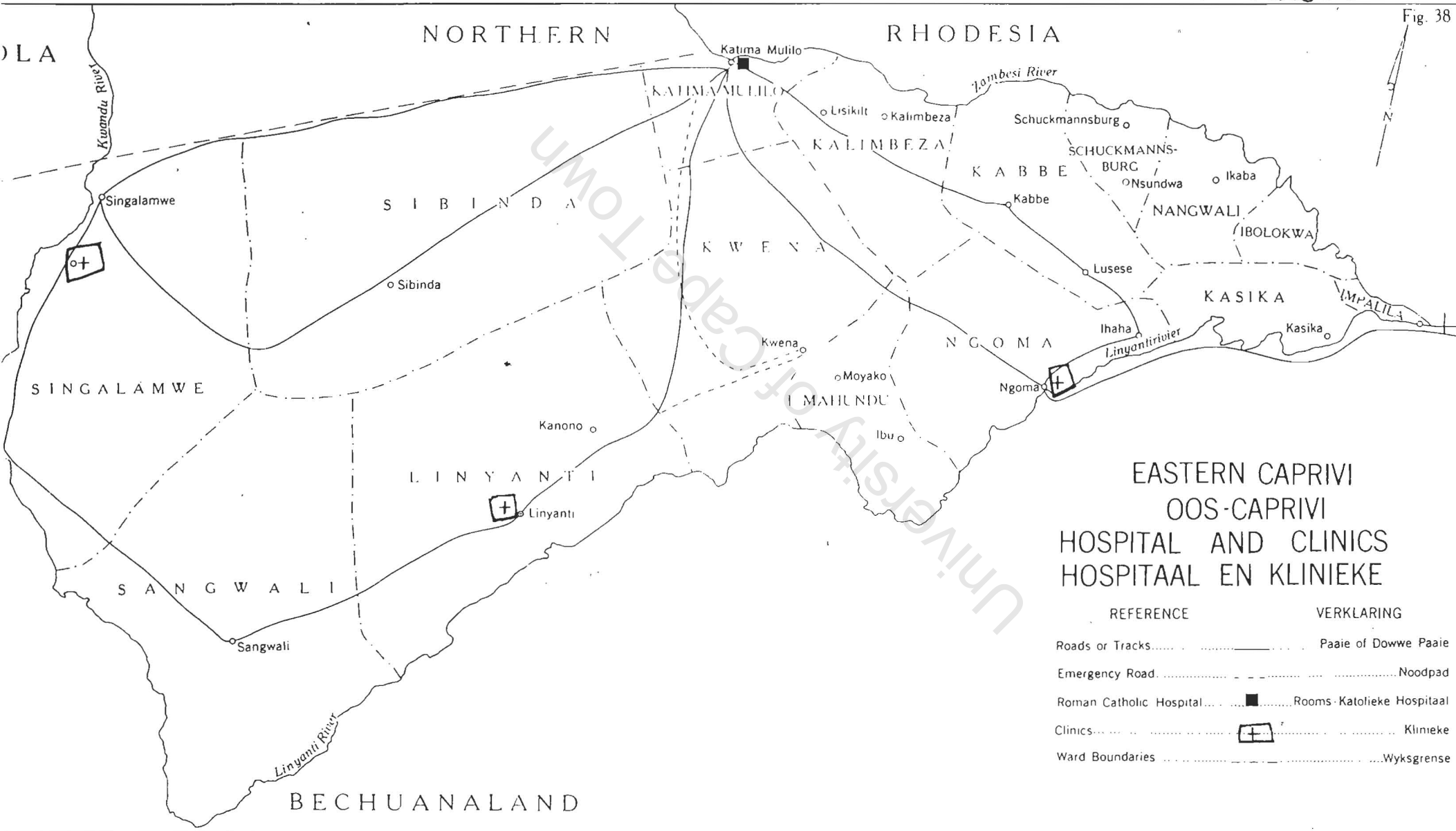
The above figures exclude the statistics that were recorded at the three outlying clinics in the area. The clinics treated about 6,927 (1961) and 9,285 (1962) cases with the number of attendances being put at 44,662 and 52,929, respectively.¹⁶⁶ These numbers may include patients from the adjoining territory of Northern Rhodesia who also sought medical assistance in the strip. The Government of Northern Rhodesia subsidised the medical expenses by contributing R300 per annum for Northern Rhodesians served as out-patients in the area and a further 25c a day for in-patients.¹⁶⁷ There was only one mission hospital with 102 beds that was established in 1946 apart from 3 clinics at various centres in the area. Pretorius puts the number of beds at 110¹⁶⁸, an increase of 8, which might have been effected up to 1975 at the time when he was writing. Only one government medical practitioner in the area who was attached to the mission hospital served both the hospital and the three clinics. He acted both as the medical officer of health and district surgeon for the area. Apart from his government duties, the medical practitioner screened mine labourers from Northern Rhodesia and Angola before they took up work with the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association on the Rand mines. He also paid a monthly visit to a Northern Rhodesian Leper Hospital and a fortnightly visit to a prison and a clinic there apart from providing free treatment to the administrative staff of that government. Only three trained White nurses also attached to the mission hospital and a few Black women who were trained as aids assisted him in all this work.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 167.

Fig 10: Clinics in the E.C.Z. in 1962

source: Report of the Odenstad Commission



In its recommendations regarding the expansion of medical services in the Eastern Caprivi Strip, the Odendaal¹⁶⁹ Commission stated the following:¹⁷⁰

- a) That the official services of the available full-time Government medical officers should be confined to the inhabitants of the Caprivi Strip;
- b) That ways and means should be found of obtaining three medical practitioners for the area with two stationed at the hospital for its daily needs and one travelling in turn to the outlying clinics;
- c) That scholarships should be made available in good time for matriculants from the area to be trained as doctors;
- d) That the hospital in the area be recognised as a training hospital for auxiliary nurses or male nurses and for the training of 'Caprivians' as assistants for the field services under the supervision of medical practitioners;
- e) That at least four additional clinics should be established at scattered strategic points in the area as part of the Government's health services.

From Pretorius' account, it appears that some of the above recommendations were carried out. For example by 1975 there were additional nine Government clinics on top of the three that existed in 1962, these being built at a capital cost of R102 000.¹⁷¹ The hospital itself, which had already been approved as a training centre for assistant nurses by 1975, had undergone extensive improvements totalling about R90 000 and an increased staff of five European sisters and seventeen African assistant nurses.¹⁷² In addition a free ambulance service was now in operation in the territory.

The above discussion has illustrated that the provision of health services in the Caprivi Strip was very costly. And mostly importantly, that the highly rural and subsistence economy of the time would not have been able to meet such high expenses if medicine were not supplied free of charge by the Department of Health of South Africa. Indeed one may conclude that health consumed the biggest slice of the developmental monies allocated to the Caprivi Strip. The expenses for the provision of health in the area in 1962-4 were as follows¹⁷³ with the mission paying the remaining expenses.

- a) Salary and transport of the medical officer;
- b) 75% of the salaries of qualified nurses;
- c) 75% of the salaries of auxiliary nurses;
- d) 28c and 25c a day for each ordinary in-patient and each leper patient, respectively;

¹⁶⁸ Pretorius, *The five of E.C.Z.*, 1975, p. 51. (MA Thesis, Univ. of Stellenbosch).

¹⁶⁹ Odendaal, F. H. was the Chairman of the SA Commission that enquired into SWA Affairs.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-187.

¹⁷¹ Pretorius, *The five of E.C.S.*, 1975, p. 51. (MA Thesis, Univ., of Stellenbosch).

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ S.A., *Report of the Commission into SWA Affairs, 1962-1963*, p. 167.

- e) 100% subsidy for medicines and 75% of capital expenditure;
- f) R240 per annum to the Sesheke Hospital of the Paris Missionary Society in Barotseland for Caprivians attended to there;
- g) Local costs of the campaigns against malaria and sleeping sickness; and
- h) The provision of 3 lb. iodised salt per head twice a year to combat endemic goitre and eye ointment twice a year;

It was this rural and subsistence economy that the South African government inherited from the South West African Administration at the time of the transfer of the Caprivi Strip to Pretoria. Most importantly, it was this economy which South Africa also maintained until 1964 following the appointment of a Planning Committee on Caprivi and the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into South West African Affairs hereinafter referred to as the Odendaal Commission. As will be shown, these recommendations were never fully implemented which would have given a new direction to the development of the economy of the territory and will be discussed below together with the Planning Committee. It is important to state here that most of the economic developments in the territory occurred in and around Katima Mulilo, which is the administrative centre of the Caprivi Strip. This left most parts of the territory largely rural and hence a centralised economy developed. When one speaks about economic development during this period, it is basically about the development of Katima Mulilo as a town and an economic centre.

4.2 Katima Mulilo: the growth of a town

When Steitwolf arrived in the Caprivi Strip as the first Imperial Resident, he chose a place on the banks of the Zambezi River in the north eastern part of the territory locally known as Luhonono as his administrative headquarters and which he named Schuckmannsburg. Schuckmannsburg, named after the German Imperial Governor of South West Africa at the time, Bruno von Schuckmann, was ideally located because it was adjacent across the Zambezi to Sesheke, which was the administrative headquarters of the British in Northern Rhodesia. It was therefore in close proximity to a post office and the Paris Mission hospital. After the defeat of Germany in the First World War, the Bechuanaland Protectorate continued to use this place as their headquarters during their brief rule of the Caprivi Strip.

It was not until 1935 that the headquarters moved to Katima Mulilo from Schuckmannsburg during Superintendent Brittz's time, who was the only direct representative of the South West African administration in the territory. The locals called him Brittz 'Namatama' owing to his big cheeks. The Schuckmannsburg area was found to be too far to the east and that it got inundated with water during rainy and flooding times hence it was difficult to reach. The

new administrative headquarters was sited at Katima Mulilo, about 45 miles up the river from Schuckmannsburg and near the Katima Mulilo Rapids, these being just 3½ miles away. The actual spot is easily identified by the prominent Baobab tree which Trollope hollowed its trunk and had a toilet built inside, this remaining a tourist attraction to this day.¹⁷⁴ The place was known to the Masubiya as Nakabunze, who assert that it has been the residence of one of their earliest chiefs whom they identify as Nsundano the warrior.¹⁷⁵

Nsundano is reported to have lived for some time at the royal residence at Luchindo a few miles from Ngoma but then moved to Nakabunze where he stayed with a Mutoka named Chete. They lived there until when the Lozi chief Mwanambinyi attacked them and causing Nsundano to seek refuge on the Impalila Island in the extreme east of the Caprivi. Oral tradition in the Caprivi Strip has it that the name Katima Mulilo (which translates as the dim of fire or quench the fire – tima mulilo) originated in the following manner. That it applied long ago to the experiences of canoe men negotiating the fast flowing rapids on the Zambezi River bearing the same name. There was a rock to which canoes were inclined to be swept by the powerful waters and then capsized thereby extinguishing the firebrand they always carried to get fires lighted at going ashore in the absence of matches. And then the rapids bore the name Katima Mulilo since then.

Superintendent Brittz's new administrative centre at Katima Mulilo consisted of a rectangular dwelling of red brick and thatch with a square quest room similarly made, a two-roomed office, a stable, a storeroom and a gaol. There were also a group of seven or eight houses of local design, which served as living quarters for the local staff, and not far away there was a cattle kraal. The above was what has been built of Katima Mulilo at the time of South Africa's take over. Two miles down the river was the Seventh Day Adventist mission station (the oldest and the only mission station at the time) and a school plus two elsewhere in the territory. The total enrolment was put at 162 with an average attendance of less than 50%.¹⁷⁶ The transport available to the officials included, on land, a scotch-cart drawn by oxen and two mules for riding and by river, a barge paddled by a crew of 12 to 14 men and a small outboard-motor boat that was mostly used for occasional nearby trips. There were no roads at this stage apart from sledge tracks and footpaths and indeed no motor vehicles, these being introduced only in 1940 by the Special Company of Native Military Corps that was formed in the Caprivi Strip after the outbreak of the Second World War. The arrival of

¹⁷⁴ Louw, W., 'Caprivi: A Dream Frustrated', in S. Davis and Sey Davis (eds.), SWA ANNUAL 1979, p. 155.

¹⁷⁵ NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, Ch. 7, p. 5.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

the army added to the headquarters some stores, a garage, a clinic (all semi-permanent structures made of timber and iron roof) and a group of four or five large rondavels made of local materials which served as White N.C.O's quarters. All the 1935 buildings were demolished in 1945 and replaced by new ones. These were the Native Commissioner's residence, an office, a gaol, a water-borne sewage and an electric lighting plant. These were followed by dwelling houses built for the medical officer and an agricultural officer. It was also in 1945 that the Roman Catholic Mission came to Katima Mulilo from Northern Rhodesia and took over the provision of education and other services from the Seventh Day Adventists who were found inadequate. The Catholics, according to Kruger, improved the schools and opened a hospital and started other health services.¹⁷⁷

The year 1964 was marked by new developments that were to accelerate the growth of Katima Mulilo and actually marks a turning point in the history of the area, both on the political, economic and social fronts. As stated earlier, it was in this year when CANU was formed and when the Planning Committee was appointed by the Minister of Native Affairs to look into a wide range of developmental issues related to the Caprivi. And lastly, the Odendaal Commission tabled its report nearly (December 1963) in the same year and recommended among others for the establishment of a Legislative Council in Caprivi. In November 1964, arrangements were begun for the layout of the town in all its new dimensions. This was necessitated by two factors, firstly, the increased number of government officials in the town who obviously needed space both for accommodation and offices. This included among others the arrival of the additional Magistrate and Native Commissioner, the agricultural officer, the senior superintendent of works and his two assistants for roads and services such as water supply and general maintenance.

Secondly, the increased movement of people from the rural parts of Caprivi to the urban centre in search of work opportunities which may be attributed to a shift from a subsistence to a cash economy. Kruger adds another factor, "...the rapid multiplication of its (Caprivi) population without there being any sign of concern that its holding capacity will be exceeded..."¹⁷⁸. The population of the Caprivi Strip is said to be the fastest growing in Namibia according to the 1991 population census with an annual population growth of more than 6% between 1981 and 1991.¹⁷⁹ In 1992, Töttemeyer estimated the following population

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Ch.12, p. 49.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁷⁹ Rep. of Namibia, 1991, National Census 1991 Figures, in Fosse, *Negotiating the Nation in Local Terms*, 1996, p. 74. (MA Thesis, Univ. of Oslo).

figures for the Caprivi Strip: 25 000 (1971), 29 000 (1976), 38 000 (1981), 55 000 (1989) and as much as 92 000 in recent years.¹⁸⁰

The layout of the town or its new dimensions was just 7 or 8 miles in length with a width varying from 1 to 3 miles. It included the administrative headquarters and the area set aside for White settlement, the Ngweze village, a residential area set aside for Blacks, the trading post at the Katima Mulilo Rapids that belonged to Finaughty, the mission with its hospital and schools plus the Namwi Island. Before any proposed constructions were undertaken, the consent of Old Chief Mamili in whose area Katima Mulilo belonged was sought and granted to declare Katima Mulilo and its environment as a nature reserve. No people were allowed to reside, cultivate or keep stock in the nature reserve except those living either at Ngweze village, at the mission, at headquarters or at Finaughty. Dogs were also not allowed to be in the nature reserve except on permit embodying strict conditions on control. Another prohibition was of cutting live trees without permission and hunting was not allowed at all. Two villages that were within the boundaries of the town were moved to localities outside. Therefore as the town began defining itself, it was pushing the ordinary people more and more to its margins.

Indeed the idea of declaring the town a nature reserve was not purely for conservation purposes but also an attempt to prevent the establishment of what was perceived as loose settlements within the town itself. It was then that in March 1965 a construction company from Rhodesia, Lewis Construction, arrived to start work on the Ngweze village and then the headquarters plus the BOMA (British Overseas Military Administration), as the area set aside for White settlement became known. Another team also arrived from the Transvaal Provincial Administration to carry out the work of building the Mpacha aerodrome.

4.2.1 Ngweze Village: First residential area for Blacks

As stated above the work on the Ngweze village was entrusted into the hands of Lewis Construction. Apart from workers who came with the company, locals were recruited as learner-artisans and others in lesser capacities. Work on the houses proceeded very fast that by January 1966, about 50 houses were ready for occupation. To maintain health standards in the village, some kind of supervision and control was needed. It was then decided to recall John Matali Milinga from retirement to be the first 'superintendent' and disciplinarian. He had entered government service in the Caprivi at Schuckmansburg in

¹⁸⁰ Töttemeyer, Gerhard, 'Taking Government to the People', Namibia Review, vol.1 (1) 1992: 12-14.

1930 under Superintendent Brittz's time. Part of his work was to ensure that rules were adhered to, these being that no structural additions were to be made, no nails in the walls and that all visitors were to be reported.

Each house was provided in its grounds at the back with an open-sided and neatly made thatched hut. The occupants used these huts for cooking, relaxing and as places where they received visitors. By 1976, Ngweze had grown considerably from being a residential area with one primary school in 1965-68 to one with all the amenities of a township. There were more houses, more advanced schools, teacher-training and vocational institutions with boarding establishments and a number of churches – Seventh Day Adventists, Roman Catholic and Dutch Reformed. The Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC) had also started operating in the area, introducing their wholesale business, bakery, butchery, bottle-store, shops, restaurants and an open market place run by local licensees.

Despite attempts at preventing the establishment of 'shanty' towns, there developed just outside Ngweze an informal settlement that was called 'Lewis', which I think was named after the Lewis Construction Company. This informal settlement was demolished shortly after independence and its dwellers moved to a place called Choto Compound. Some moved to an already existing compound also unceremoniously called 'Piggery'. Indeed, as it will be shown later, this place was initially used as a Piggery following the recommendations of the Planning Committee that pigs be raised in the area to provide pork meat to the inhabitants. Another settlement called 'Dairy' sprung up and still exists today in the locality of a site that was earmarked for dairy breeds to provide for dairy products in the area, also one of the ambitious projects of the Planning Committee. Other informal settlements named in a similar pattern included Finaughty, Wenela and Mission, all denoting what they were used for before the settlements around them were built.

4.2.2 BOMA: Katima headquarters and White settlement area

When Lewis Construction Company finished work on the Ngwezi Village, it immediately began work on Katima Mulilo proper, that is, that part of it set aside for administrative headquarters and White settlement. The first to be built were four houses for two doctors, an inspector of education and an additional commissioner. Houses of other officials including the senior inspector of works, forester, technical officer of the health department, two superintendents of works, the latter including a guesthouse and houses for nurses and the police, followed. During the visit to the Caprivi trip by the Prime Minister from 3 to 7 August

1967, a police station was opened in the area and a foundation for comprehensive administrative offices was laid, to be followed by the building of a government hospital.

4.2.3 The Mpacha Aerodrome

An air strip made by Superintendent Brittz had existed at Katima Mulilo even before the beginning of World War II and a second one was added by Jack Ashwin of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association. The airstrips played an important role in the development of the Caprivi Strip by serving as a vital link between the Union and the former. In the absence of established communication systems in the area, both goods and people travelled to and from Pretoria by air. In the latter years, even migrant labourers to the Rand mines were transported by air. In 1940, Major Schoeman of the South African Defence Force's Intelligence Section described the Caprivi Zipfel Aerodrome "...as one of great strategic importance..."¹⁸¹ As stated in Chapter two, the SADF had since then used the air strip in the area particularly for border patrols and small scale air training exercises.

Attempts were even made in 1959 by the Defence Department when the Air Force was conducting its training exercises in the Caprivi Strip to bring the Aerodrome under its control by terminating the contract with the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association. This decision was not implemented and instead gave way to one of building a military airbase at Mpacha which South Africa continued to deny its existence and maintained that it was just an air strip for possible emergency use by the South African Airways' commercial jets. On 19 December 1965, The Washington Post carried an article with the headline 'South Africa Speeds Work On Its New Military Air Base'. According to this report, the air base at Mpacha was intended to be South Africa's first line of defence against the advance of black Africa.

The report further stated that the facility could transform the balance of military power in central Africa when completed. President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia claimed that contrary to South Africa's denials, the airstrip was upgraded to a major air base capable of handling heavy transport aircraft as well as jet reconnaissance aircraft. He maintained that the base was intended for attacks on his country and of Rhodesian warplanes having the use of it to the same end.¹⁸² Work on the Mpacha Aerodrome started in 1965 and was entrusted in the hands of the Roads Department of the Transvaal Provincial Administration. It reportedly brought about sixty White South Africans from Transvaal to work on the strip, which was

¹⁸¹ MAP, DC GP2 962/8: Memorandum from Defence Headquarters in Pretoria to the Director of Air Organization dated 31.10.40 with reference no. D.G.A.S. (C) 824/416.

¹⁸² NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, Ch.12, p.61.

reported to be three quarters of a mile long and 50 feet wide.¹⁸³ This military air base was reportedly built at a cost of £8 million.¹⁸⁴ The air base was about 15 miles out of Katima Mulilo and was connected to the town by a road which was the smoothest and widest in the Caprivi Strip at the time.

4.3 The Odendaal Recommendations and the Planning Committee

The South African Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs made a number of ambitious recommendations for the economic development of the Caprivi Strip. As argued above, these recommendations were only partially implemented and some of them never implemented at all. It is difficult to establish why the recommendations were not implemented in full. Probably the political and constitutional developments both within the Caprivi Strip and greater South West Africa might have delayed any serious consideration of these proposals. The Commission's economic recommendations included the following.¹⁸⁵

- a) That the possibility of a dried fish industry be investigated;
- b) That with the provision of necessary transport facilities, the economic exploitation of indigenous timber species be started;
- c) That the production of food be considerably increased;
- d) That the cattle population be greatly improved through the use of better bulls and effective control of diseases;
- e) That irrigation projects for crops such as rice and jute be introduced; and most importantly
- f) That the possibilities of utilising the northern rivers together with canal links for east-west water traffic on a large scale which could possibly bring ores and coal together economically for smelting and casting should be considered. That serious consideration should also be given to the possibility of bringing coal from Wankie to the iron deposits at Ongaba in the Kaokoveld for eventual export from Rocky Point. This could be done partly by pipeline and partly by water transport.

It is a fact that the Caprivi Strip has little to offer in terms of natural resources other than its agricultural land and grazing, timber from the forests and water of the rivers with abundant fish stocks, this being a condensed summary of the Odendaal recommendations. But with proper development and integration with the economies of adjacent territories, the economy could be self-sustaining. As shown earlier, the market for some of the products such as dried fish, cattle and timber already existed in Northern Rhodesia where companies like the Northern Rhodesia Cold Storage Commission, W.N.L.A., Zambezi Sawmills limited and Zambezi Timber Concessions, ltd, were operating. The most important of the

¹⁸³ The Washington Post, 19 December 1965.

¹⁸⁴ Moleah, Namibia, 1983, p. 261.

¹⁸⁵ S.A., Report of the Commission into SWA Affairs, 1961-1962, pp. 293-5, 453-455.

recommendations is number six because it would have provided infrastructure that could link the local economy with South West Africa and both Rhodesias including Northern Botswana.

The biggest handicap of the Caprivi economy at this stage was its isolation. Though the area was administered as part of South Africa, attempts were not made to integrate its economy into that of South Africa neither were attempts made to make it self reliant. As Kruger shows, only about 5 % came from the area itself to pay for the expenditure incurred in its administration and economic development.¹⁸⁶ As will be shown later, this money was raised through the lease of land to individuals and institutions such as missions, traders and associations. The little that was implemented of the Odendaal recommendations was through the efforts of the Planning Committee. In actual fact the Planning Committee made its own proposals independent of the Odendaal Commission, therefore any similarities are purely coincidental.

4.3.1 The Planning Committee's Proposals

The appointment by the Minister of Native Affairs in 1964 of a Planning Committee to apply itself to the various aspects of developmental issues in Caprivi was discussed in chapter two. It included a subcommittee that was dealing with health services and livestock. The developments that followed its proposals in the fields of agriculture and animal husbandry are discussed below together with the irrigation project.

a) Animal Husbandry

The Planning Committee proposed the improvement of livestock in the Caprivi Strip aimed at indigenous cattle to the exclusion of exotic breeds. This was to be achieved in two ways. Firstly there was to be an annual inspection carried out by experts from the Department in Pretoria that would cover the whole area and aimed principally at selecting suitable bulls and immediate castration of all others with the consent of the owners. This inspection also looked at other factors that could affect the wellbeing of cattle such as the disposal of animals for slaughter before old age reduced them to a condition of little value. Although this programme was carried out, it is difficult to establish whether it produced the required results. Secondly, a programme was to be started of buying a number of cows and heifers assessed to be of good indigenous standard and the required number of like bulls to form a

¹⁸⁶ NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, Ch.12, p. 50.

breeding herd. In due time young bulls would then be distributed at a fair price to improve the territory's stock.

An area was chosen between the headquarters and the mission for the grazing and control of these cattle and was fenced off. Although there was some improvement, the scheme did not work well on the whole. A number of Nguni heifers and two bulls were even imported from the breeding scheme in Zululand to improve the herd.¹⁸⁷ The other recommendation that was made regarding stock improvement was concerned with the training of six persons from the Caprivi Strip in the Republic of South Africa as Stock Inspectors. The work of these trained stock inspectors was supplemented by cattle guards that carried out mainly fieldwork.

b) The Irrigation Project

The Caprivi has approximately 100 miles of frontage on the Zambezi and about 150 miles on the Mashi/Linyanti/Chobe, these being names of the same river that changes as it passes through different localities and communities. There is therefore a very high potential for large-scale irrigation in the area. The Planning Committee was cautious of embarking and supporting large scale irrigation projects in the area expressing the concern that this should only be undertaken if profit was assured from intensive farming. It therefore recommended establishing a pilot or experimental irrigation scheme initially involving about ten morgen near Katima Mulilo. The objective, apart from experimentation, was the provision of vegetables and fruits to the expanding population of the area. The other was the apprenticing of a number of Caprivians in farming so that in time portions of the experimental farm would be allocated to those promising to farm on their own. These were to be workers on the project who have shown considerable interest in farming. A variety of fruits were also produced here, the common ones being citrus, mangoes, guavas, and papaws.

In 1974 an ambitious irrigation project was set in motion by the agricultural branch of the Bantu Investment Corporation. This farming enterprise was about 50 morgen in extent and was established near the Katima Mulilo Rapids. Pumping installations of considerable capacity and cost were installed below the rapids with irrigation distributed by piping. Maize was the principal crop that the corporation planted probably because of the costs involved in importing mealie meal from far afield to satisfy the requirements of the population. In due

¹⁸⁷ NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, 1984, Ch.12, p. 55.

course, other crops such as tobacco and wheat were also grown, the latter being milled locally by the corporation. A dairy herd and a piggery were also introduced and the corporation even ventured into poultry farming. Another concern the Planning Committee had was the maintenance of the fertility of the soil. It therefore recommended that for dry land farming, one-fourth of whatever piece of land was cultivated should annually in rotation be left to revegetate itself in a natural way and that crop rotation should be practised.

4.4 Land Concessions and early trading in the Caprivi Strip

The Eastern Caprivi Strip was proclaimed a Bantu Reserve in 1940 and therefore was for the exclusive use of its inhabitants. There was no crown land or land reserved for official or private use other than the inhabitants of the area. However, the Government gave various land concessions to companies, churches and private individuals for a lease rent of £1 p.a. These fees were either paid to the local Magistrate/Native Commissioner or directly to the Department of Native Affairs in Pretoria. For some years a certain R. da Costa Blake of Cape Town had leased an area of three acres of land at Katima Mulilo as a pleasure resort even though the actual site which has been developed was found to be considerably in excess of the three acres leased.¹⁸⁸ Mr. Blake was however not paying the lease rent which led to the cancellation of the of the lease without payment of improvements made on the site and in actual fact he was making very little use of the area, not visiting it at all between 1936 and 1939.

A permit for the use of a landing site at Katima Mulilo was granted to the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association in September 1939¹⁸⁹ and the association obtained further sites in due course. By an agreement of lease dated 1 March 1953, W.N.L.A. acquired the use of land measuring 3,000 yards near Katima Mulilo for the construction and maintenance of a runway primarily for the transport of labourers to and from the Witwatersrand. The lease rent was £1 p.a. and the lessor accepted, according to the agreement, no responsibility for compensation for improvements. The agreement provided for any aircraft to use the landing ground in case of emergency without charge but at the aircraft's sole responsibility but that the lessee may charge a refuelling fee equivalent to the lease rent together with the cost of the fuel taken. Either party subject to six-month notice being given could cancel this lease. The same company was also authorised to occupy 35 acres at the Katima Mulilo rapids for purposes connected with recruiting and repatriation of Native labourers. The rental was £12

¹⁸⁸ NAN A503/1-7: Trollope, Report on E.C.Z., 1940, p.25.

¹⁸⁹ NAP, NTS 2/430: Memo from the Secretary for Native Affairs to W.N.L.A. dated 9 March 1940, reference no. A.394/280.

p.a. and the conditions attached were similar to the above. This is the site where the border between Namibia and Zambia stands today which is still known as the Wenela Border Post. Another site hired by the W.N.L.A. was a landing and embarkation site on the banks of the Zambezi River, which was measuring 100 ft. by 532 ft. A number of rest camp sites at Ihaha, Ngoma, Singalamwe, Masida and Musukubili's village were also hired by the company.

Apart from the W.N.L.A., the Roman Catholic occupied 13 sites as mission stations, churches and schools apart from the main hospital at Katima Mulilo and the Seventh Adventists occupied 20 sites. The Chief Hydrological Officer of Southern Rhodesia also occupied a quarter of an acre in order to take river level readings. Trading sites were occupied as follows: three sites at Ngoma, one belonging to Europeans William and Oscar Finaughty and a third to F.A. Smit. The W.N.L.A. had a trading licence at its Katima Mulilo site. Tommy Harris (Coloured) occupied a trading site at Lisikili. In addition, eleven sites had been given to Caprivians in 1944 at the following places: Singalamwe, Linyanti, Kabbe, Katima Mulilo, Kabulabula, Luhofu, Sibinda (2) Nabulongwe Motonga and Kalimbeza. In 1959 alone, trading licences were issued for three general dealer businesses, 7 restaurants and 17 hawkers.¹⁹⁰ The people who were living near the borders were able to buy from shops in neighbouring territories without restriction. The main sources of cash income in the area were cattle, crocodile skins, dried fish, and deferred pay from the mines and maize.

4.5 An Economy of Migrancy

The above discussion has shown that the economy of the Caprivi Strip was not able to support the needs of its growing population which forced many able bodied men from the area to seek work opportunities outside the territory. A fair number of men went away periodically to Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia, the Copper Belt mines, Southern Rhodesia and others to the Rand mines in the Union. Apart from working on the mines, they were mainly employed as domestic servants and as farm labourers especially in Southern Rhodesia.¹⁹¹ The few work opportunities that were available in the area were offered to outsiders, these receiving preference over the Caprivians whom employers complained against their inability to remain at work for any length of time. As shown in chapter two, the 1955 figures shows that there were 114 Northern Rhodesians, 5 Nyasa (now Malawi), 4 Angolans and 4 others from Bechuanaland employed in the strip compared to a very few number of Caprivians.

¹⁹⁰ NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, Ch. 9, p.10.

The earliest recorded formal request to recruit labourers for mine work from the Caprivi Strip was made by the Northern Labour Organization in March 1928. This request was made in a letter to the Government of the Bechuanaland Protectorate under whose administration the Caprivi Strip fell. The company, according to the letter, intended to recruit labourers from the area for mine work and other industries in South West Africa and was already recruiting from the Batawana Reserve in Bechuanaland. This letter was supported by one from the Secretary for South West Africa who requested the Bechuanaland Authorities to grant such permission as the organisation represented a variety of companies in South West Africa such as the Otavi Minen Gesellschaft at Tsumeb and the South West Africa Company at Grootfontein.¹⁹² Though permission to recruit was granted, there are no available records to show that the Northern Labour Association recruited labourers in the Caprivi Strip.

The Caprivi Strip had served as a labour reservoir for the Union over a long period but mostly as a recruitment depot by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association. On the Eastern Caprivi side, the main W.N.L.A receiving stations were established before the territory was taken over by the Union Government. These were placed at Katima Mulilo in Northern Rhodesia across the border at the place of the same name in Eastern Caprivi and at Kazungula in Bechuanaland at the junction of the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers. The existence of these stations depended on the goodwill of Northern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland and in the case of interference, a station in Eastern Caprivi could still serve the same purpose. Indeed the Government of Northern Rhodesia suspended W.N.L.A's recruiting of people from Barotseland around 1942, forcing the association to open another outlet in Eastern Caprivi. By 1944, the total output of labourers from this area was about 6,000 per annum, which was steadily increasing.¹⁹³ From the Eastern Caprivi itself, Kruger gives a figure with an average of 30 per month in 1962.¹⁹⁴ With the establishment of a landing strip in Eastern Caprivi Strip, labourers were transported by air from the strip to the railway at Francistown or Mafeking or even all the way to Johannesburg.

On the Western Caprivi side, the flow of Angolan labourers through the strip to Mohembo, the W.N.L.A. station in Northern Bechuanaland, which was situated at the point where the

¹⁹¹ NAN A503/1-7: Trollope, Report on E.C.Z, 1940, p. 24.

¹⁹² NAP, TES F11/243: Letter from the Secretary for South West Africa to the Government Secretary of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, dated 2 March 1928 and one from the Managing Secretary of the Northern Labour Association to the Government Secretary of Bechuanaland dated 9 March 1928.

¹⁹³ NAP, NTS 612/400: Letter from Mr. Germil of the W.N.L.A to the Secretary for Native Affairs dated 19 October 1944.

¹⁹⁴ NAN A.472: Kruger, History of Caprivi, Ch. 9, p. 10.

Okavango River enters Bechuanaland, had increased to 1000 per month in 1944.¹⁹⁵ The total population of Angola at the time was well over three million and the area, which was tapped directly from the Caprivi Strip, was 1, 600, 000 or about 400, 000 male adults.¹⁹⁶ The Portuguese authorities had no objection to Angolans proceeding across the border for engagement by the W.N.L.A., demanding only that there should be compulsory repatriation at the completion of their period of service and compulsory deferred pay. Every labourer returned from the Rand mines with about £10 cash besides goods.¹⁹⁷ The W.N.L.A. envisaged a total output from this area of 40, 000 per annum.

The strategic location of the Caprivi Strip as an area suitable for tapping mostly Angolan labourers was also realised by the Government of Southern Rhodesia. The latter requested the Union Government in 1945 to be granted a lease of land in the Eastern Caprivi Strip for the purpose of establishing a labourer's Rest Camp despite the fact that it was already running a similar site in Northern Rhodesia. The site that was requested was about 7 acres, the initial request was a site of 1 acre.¹⁹⁸ The W.N.L.A and the Gold Producer's Committee were against the granting of a site to the Government of Southern Rhodesia in the Caprivi Strip. They argued that the Government of Southern Rhodesia wanted to preserve the labour resources of the Northern Territories for its exclusive use and that therefore the attempt to lease a site in the Caprivi Strip was another link in the chain to prevent such labour reaching the Union.¹⁹⁹

Even though a site was eventually granted to the Government of Southern Rhodesia, there are no records to show that it was taken. This might probably be due to the labour stand off that existed during the time between the Portuguese Government and the Southern Rhodesian Government. In 1934 the Southern Rhodesian Government came to an agreement with the Portuguese Government to recruit 15, 000 labourers from Portuguese East Africa.²⁰⁰ Clandestinely about 75, 000 were recruited from the area.²⁰¹ When the Government of Southern Rhodesia asked the Portuguese Government for a recruiting

¹⁹⁵ NAP, NTS 612/400: Letter from Mr. Germil of W.N.L.A. to the Secretary for Native Affairs dated 19 October 1944.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

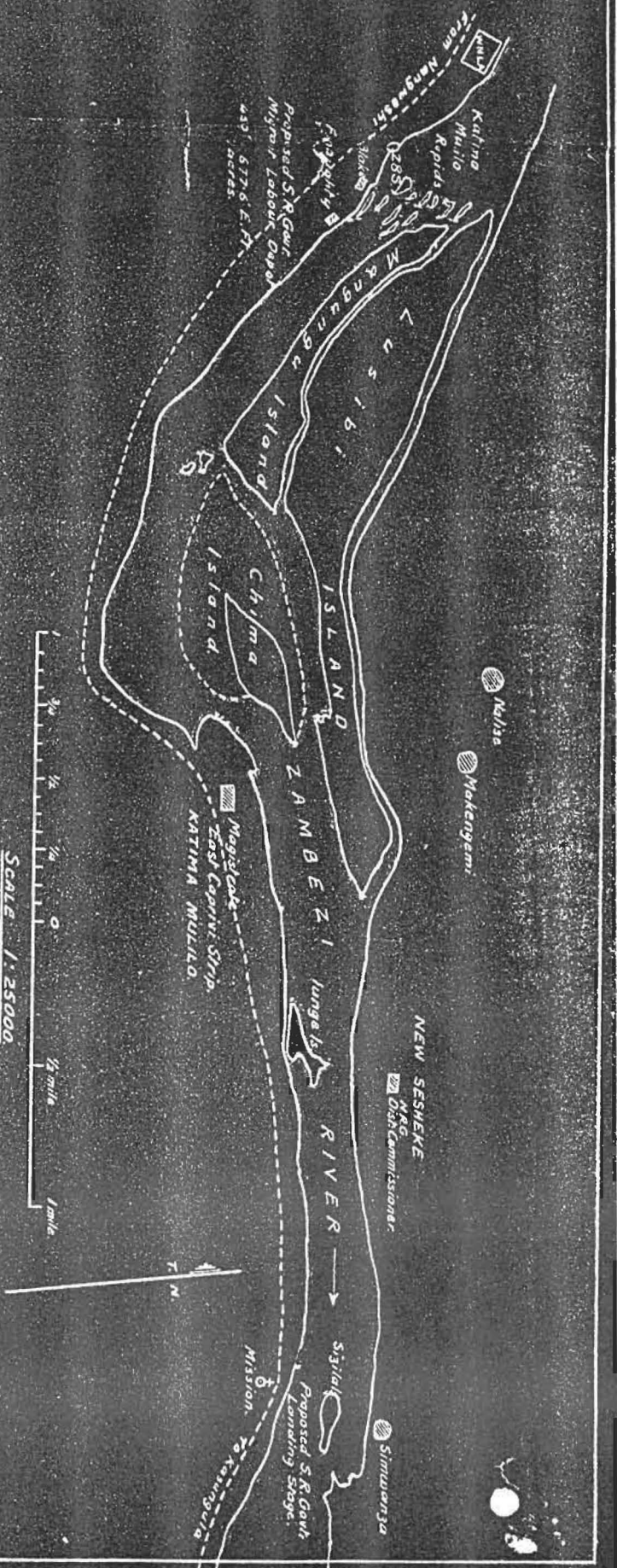
¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ NAP, TES F11/243: Memo prepared by the Department for External Affairs, Pretoria and dated 9 December 1946.

¹⁹⁹ NAP, TES F11/243: Letter from the General Manager of W.N.L.A. to the Secretary for Native Affairs dated 28 April 1947.

²⁰⁰ NAP, NTS 1/429: Correspondence from the Department of Native Affairs to the Secretary to the Prime Minister, dated 7 May 1947.

²⁰¹ Ibid.



Engineering Branch
Native Affairs
Salisbury

SOUTHERN RHODESIA GOVERNMENT
APPLICATION FOR SITE AT KATIMO MULILO
FOR USE AS A MIGRANT LABOUR DEPOT BY
THE SOUTHERN RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT.

Commissioner of Native Labour
 25th Nov. 1946

W. J. ...

Fig 12

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station in Portuguese East Africa, the request was refused unless the clandestine recruits were returned.

4.6 Conclusion

The economy of the Caprivi Strip remained largely rural and subsistence for most part of South Africa's administration of the area. The inhabitants of the territory engaged themselves in economic activities such as fishing, ploughing and cattle rearing mostly for domestic use. In the instances where surpluses occurred especially in dried fish, these were exported to neighbouring territories. The South African authorities discouraged the development of a settler economy in the area arguing that the place was not suitable for European settlement because it was highly malarial. Secondly, they argued that because it was a 'Bantu Reserve', it should be used exclusively by the inhabitants of Caprivi except for few outsiders carrying out mission work and limited trading activities. The economy of the area was found to be isolated during this period, a factor that contributed to its underdevelopment and that it could not sustain itself, being heavily depended on the income from South Africa. As a result, a considerable number of Caprivians chose to engage in migrant work in Northern and Southern Rhodesia and also on the Rand mines. Could the authorities have worked on the recommendations of the Odendaal Commission, the economy of the area could have been greatly improved.

Conclusion

The Caprivi Strip has gone through a painful history during the colonial period, being transferred from one colonial master to the next. Indeed its creation owes much to its strategic location, Germany's desire to have access to the East Coast through the Zambezi River. When this became a frustrated dream because the Zambezi is not navigable in some parts due to many rapids, the importance of the Caprivi Strip to the Germans waned. Since then, it was depicted by both administrators and travellers as a 'useless' piece of land that should be amalgamated either with Northern Rhodesia or the Bechuanaland Protectorate. It became more of a liability than an asset because the area does not offer much in terms of mineral resources and due to its sparse population, it was neither a labour source nor was it an outlet for products from other parts of South West Africa. The area was also perceived as being unsuitable for European settlement. Most importantly, its geographical remoteness from the rest of South West Africa presented an administrative nightmare.

But these ideas do not adequately account for why the Pretoria Government decided to take over the administration of the Eastern Caprivi Strip. The timing of the transfer sheds light on this issue both on the South African and South West African side. On the South West African side, it was found that the request to be relieved of the administration of the area came after the first official visit in 1937 paid by the Additional Native Commissioner to the Eastern Caprivi Strip. His report suggested the necessity for considerable expenditure of money on a lung-sickness inoculation campaign and strongly criticised the way the area was being administered. The report suggested the establishment of a permanent minimum staff in the area consisting at least of a Native or Assistant Native Commissioner, a veterinary officer or stock inspector and a doctor plus a complementary native staff. Such enormous expenditure was however not justifiable for a small population of about 9000 at the time and most importantly it could not be recovered directly or indirectly. Therefore the transfer shifted a financial burden to South Africa. For South Africa, the Caprivi Strip became strategically important from the outbreak of the Second World War, which coincided with the transfer, and again in the war against SWAPO and the confrontation with the frontline states. The Caprivi Strip served as South Africa's first line of defence and indeed became one of the most heavily militarised areas in the sub-continent.

It was argued that the South African administrative set up in the Eastern Caprivi Strip could still be executed from Windhoek with the same ease and can be divided in three phases, 1939 – 1964, 1964 – 1972 and 1972 – 1980. The first phase was characterised by indirect

rule, administering through the local chiefs and leaving the inhabitants of the area to their own devices with the help of one government officer. There was continuity in the administration with one officer serving continuously for more than ten years in the same area and capacity. The provision of services such as education and health were left in the hands of missionaries, firstly the Seventh Day Adventists and then the Roman Catholic Missionaries. The government however subsidised such services. The economy of the area during this period remained largely rural and subsistence, forcing many able bodied men from the area to seek work in Northern and Southern Rhodesia and also on the Rand mines.

The second phase marked a new beginning, first with the appointment of a Planning Committee on Eastern Caprivi by the Minister of Native Affairs and also the release of the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs. The recommendations of the two bodies brought developments to the Eastern Caprivi Strip even though it was shown that the Odendaal recommendations were not implemented in full. During this period, the powers of the chiefs in planning the affairs of the area were taken by the Planning Committee, which was chaired by the Native Commissioner and included high ranking officials from the Department. It was during this period when a political grouping was formed in the Caprivi Strip to fight for the 'independence' of the territory. CANU's existence in the Eastern Caprivi Strip was however short-lived and joined forces with SWAPO in exile, a move which I argue, herald its demise. It's top leadership was expelled from SWAPO in 1980 apparently for reviving CANU as a splinter group within SWAPO aiming to fight for a separate Caprivi. CANU officials advance charges of Owambo tribalism and the suppressed role of CANU within SWAPO. The movement was revived in Caprivi only to run into further divisions.

The final phase began in 1972 with the establishment of the Caprivi Legislative Assembly following the recommendations of the Odendaal Commission. This was transformed into the Caprivi Government in 1976 and in this way the area was administered as a South African Bantustan to 1980 when regulation AG 8 brought it back administratively to South West Africa. AG 8 established a three-tier system of administration, local, regional and central government. The people of Eastern Caprivi Strip participated in the multi party conference under the umbrella of the Caprivi Alliance, which transformed itself into the Caprivi Alliance Party and joined the DTA. The Caprivi Strip was a South African Bantustan that was purposely kept remote and closed to outsiders unless specially permitted because South Africa wanted to hide its military activities in the area from the prying eyes of both friends and foes.

Appendix: Notes on Sources

Secondary literature

The period that covers South Africa's presence in the Caprivi Strip is remotely researched which is hardly surprising because the Caprivi Strip is generally a virgin space as far as research is concerned. The little that is written on the area covers the earlier period, which is before and during German's rule of the Caprivi Strip. This being largely inaccessible due in large part to language, many of them being in the German language. These include works such as Schönfelder's *Der Caprivizipfel*, Seiner's *Der Caprivizipfel, Erlebnisse mit den Eingeborenen*, Streitwolf's *Der Caprivizipfel*, Von Frankenberg's *Vom Sambesi zum Okavango durch das deutsche Hukwefeld*, Rothe's *Der Caprivizipfel und seine wirtschaftliche Bedeutung für die Erschließung Südwestafrikas* and Ambronn's *Resultate der astronomischen Beobachtungen des Hauptmanns Streitwolf bei Gelegenheit seiner Erkundungsreise im Caprivizipfel, 1908-1910*. The few works in English during this early period are traveller's accounts, which are very useful. These include Reid's *Journey's in the Linyanti region*, Schwarz and Hammar's *The New Africa: A journey up the Chobe and down the Okavango River*, White's *The ethnology of the Upper Zambezi* and Schapera's *Livingstone's Private Journals 1851-1853*. Included here also is Schwarz's *The Kalahari and its native races* which was published in 1928. Probably the most useful work in English is Maria Fisch's *The Caprivi Strip during the German colonial period 1890 to 1914* (1999) which details German colonialism in the area.

Perhaps owing to the fact that the Namibian case was mainly played in the international theatre particularly at the United Nations, the themes of resistance, nationalism and liberation struggle are probably the most researched and documented in Namibian historiography. These works, which will not be singled out here, unfortunately covers little of what was happening in the Caprivi Strip during this period. This is despite the fact that SWAPO utilised the Caprivi Strip as the first operational front in the initial stages of the liberation war and the fact that South Africa heavily militarised the area, declaring West Caprivi a military zone. The formation of the Caprivi African National Union (CANU) and what happened to it in SWAPO leading to the expulsion of its leadership but leaving the majority of its supporters in SWAPO remains a silent story in these publications. Even SWAPO's official narrative of its history, *To be Born a Nation*, does not shed light on this issue. Many a times, CANU is only mentioned to invoke SWAPO's 'authentic' representation of the Namibian people, which it badly needed to secure funds from the international

community especially when it was in direct competition with the Herero dominated South West Africa National Union (SWANU).

A few studies however have attempted to touch on the role of the Caprivi Strip in the liberation struggle period. Notable among these are Susan Brown's *'Diplomacy by other means: SWAPO's liberation war'* which chronicles the 'hit and run' tactics used by SWAPO in the Caprivi, the Committee on South African War Resistance's work published in Wood's *Namibia 1884-1984*, and Moleah's *Namibia: The struggle for liberation*. Also useful in this regard is Diemer's *The Barakwena of the Chetto Area: 'Living in a Game Reserve'* and Grundy's *Soldiers without politics: Blacks in the South African Armed Forces*. These two publications examine the issue of South African militarisation of the Caprivi Strip particularly the use of San soldiers. One should not fail to mention the following mostly partisan publications, written from a South African perspective but nonetheless still useful: Breytenbach's *They live by the sword*, Shay and Vermaak's *The Silent war: The fight for Southern Africa*. Included in this category is Steenkamp's *Borderstrike: South Africa into Angola* and Stiff's *The Silent war: South African Recce Operations 1969-1994*. They provide a useful insight into the dirty tricks of the South African Defence Force during the period under review.

Unpublished secondary materials which deserve mention are Fosse's *Negotiating the Nation in Local Terms: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Eastern Caprivi, Namibia* (MA Thesis, University of Oslo) and Pretorius' *The Fwe of Eastern Caprivi Zipfel* (MA Thesis, University of Stellenbosch). Likando's *The Caprivi: A historical perspective* is also a very useful source though a bit too patriotic, particularly in its treatment of the early history of the Caprivi Strip which has a strong bias towards the Masubiya of Eastern Caprivi. This manuscript was written in 1989 in Lusaka for the United Nations Institute for Namibia. It is in its sweep, a detailed narrative of the history of the Caprivi Strip from pre-colonial period to independence. Its account of the sour relation between SWAPO and CANU is interesting, albeit being limited to tribalism, particularly as it is told from first hand experience. The author was actively involved in politics, which forced him to flee the country into exile in 1975, only to be expelled by SWAPO in 1980 together with Albert Mishake Muyongo. Lastly, writing this thesis would have a nightmare without Kruger's *History of the Caprivi Strip*. Written in 1984, this manuscript was compiled with no pretence of publication. The writer relied more on personal experience, particularly in dealing with the South African administration of the Eastern Caprivi, but also quotes from official reports compiled by officials in the area. He does not mention the whereabouts of some of these sources. Kruger

was the longest serving South African official in the Caprivi Strip, being there in 1939 and at the last phase in 1974-76.

Primary sources

As can be expected, the National Archives in Pretoria holds the largest collection of materials on the Caprivi Strip concerning this period because the area was administered from Pretoria and because with the transfer of the administration, most files on the area were taken to Pretoria. Unfortunately some of the file folders are now empty, probably some researchers or even officials might have taken their contents. These mainly administrative reports, reports on official visits and official correspondence were most helpful. While officials in the Caprivi Strip preferred to communicate in English for some reason, the correspondences from their Pretoria counterparts is mainly in Afrikaans, which made it difficult for me to access them even though some of them have accompanying English texts.

Most materials at the Military Archives in Pretoria related to this period are still classified despite the fact that the 20-year period had elapsed. I received a letter from them permitting me to access some materials when I had finished writing this paper. These materials would have been very helpful on the militarisation aspect of this thesis. Other useful primary sources were accessed in the National Archives of Namibia. For a topic and area where there is little research, one would have liked to carry out oral interviews. Unfortunately this is not the case here because the conditions currently in the area are not conducive to carry out such a programme. Last year a history student from the University of Namibia who was conducting interviews on an oral history project was detained by the security forces in the area.

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Abbreviations

BOMA	British Overseas Military Administration
BIC	Bantu Investment Corporation
CANU	Caprivi African National Union
CA	Caprivi Alliance
CAP	Caprivi Alliance Party
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
E.C.Z.	Eastern Caprivi Zipfel
E.C.S.	Eastern Caprivi Strip
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertacao de Angola
ICJ	International Court of Justice
MANUS	Manuscript
MAP	Military Archives Pretoria
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola
NAP	National Archives Pretoria
NAN	National Archives of Namibia
NPF	National Patriotic Front
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
SAAF	South African Air Force
SADF	South African Defence Force
SWA	South West Africa
SWAA	South West Africa Administration
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
SWATF	South West Africa Territorial Force
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDP	United Democratic Party
Unam	University of Namibia
UNIP	United Independence Party
UNITA	Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola
WNLA	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association