VISION AND VIOLENCE:
PHOTOGRAPHIES OF WAR IN
SOUTHERN ANGOLA AND NORTHERN NAMIBIA*

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> *How life nowadays is so very different*
> *You no longer possess the beauty*
> *That you once possessed.*[Transl.]
> (Waldemar Bastos, 'Morro do Kussava')[1]

During a tour around Ondjiva in southern Angola in July 1999, the town's official Administrator took me to the building that now occupies the site of the former SWAPO headquarters in the early 1970s. Not far from the reconstructed church and still-devastated block of offices in the central square of Ondjiva, the Administrator explained that it was here, in the street outside the SWAPO office, that his brother had been killed during a bombing raid by the South Africans. The office had been completely destroyed and, after reckoning the death-toll, SWAPO moved its official operations elsewhere. I asked him how both those Namibians and Angolans present were affected by the bombing raid, and how they explained its occurrence. How did they account for the accuracy of South Africa's knowledge of the target, which enabled them to inflict so much damage? The Administrator's reply was unequivocal: people believed that it must have been spies who told the *Boers* where the office was located. Spies, betrayal and the leakage of information had caused the destruction in Ondjiva and the death of his brother.

Many accounts from the areas involved in what South Africans referred to as the 'Border War' are replete with a sense of intimacy about the causes and effects of violence, and not only on the Angolan side. The extension of infrastructure and militarisation of the Namibian Owambo region from the 1960s, with informal settlements sprouting up around the military bases, were accompanied by the growth of a culture of distrust and uncertainty.[2] Hangula has traced these local processes in the Ohangwena region, a predominantly-Kwanyama-

speaking area which abuts Cunene Province to the north in Angola. By the 1970s residents of Ohangwena began to polarise into rural and 'urban', the latter mainly squatter camps along the military roads which harboured not only employees and beneficiaries of the SADF and the Ovambo Administration ('puppets') but also 'criminals' who escaped headmen's jurisdiction. Hangula stresses the strains that were put on family life when children joined either SWAPO or the security forces, which caused huge divisions within communities. Deaths - whether explained or not - divided people further, but worst of all in fostering distrust were the disappearances:

> it was better [if] you have seen the corpse and knew where the grave of your beloved one was. The problem was about the ones who disappeared. It was difficult for them because they did not know what happened to their family members. Concerning social relations it changed to the extent that neighbours never trusted each other as before. They could no longer sit around and discuss issues pertaining to life or the situation in the country because they did not know whom was supporting whom. The culture was killed by the war. The interaction between villagers was very rare because of lack of mutual trust.[3]

The curfews which radically curtailed movement fed this process of turning inwards, of social introversion. One 'neighbour' commented philosophically, 'Peace is food because a person could be hungry with peace of mind'.[4] As Akawa puts it, the bodies were buried, but the questions still remained.[5]

But there is a second kind of intimacy and localism of culture I want to put at the center of enquiry here. This kind of intimacy is between men and their machines and apparatuses. Not the 'tools of empire', but the conglomerations and relationships that develop from the incorporation of technologies which act in a prosthetic relation with the human body. I am interested here in taking the gun-camera connection out of its nineteenth century historiographical hubris,[6] and to acknowledge its full destructive heights in the latter part of the twentieth century. I wish to examine aerial photography in particular as one such tool. Indeed, there is a stage when the gun and camera are no longer simply parallel in the field as Landau and Sontag would argue, but are fused together as one tool on the same machine: the aeroplane.[7]

Aerial photography is a technical and cultural by-product of warfare, which was applied in the Namibia-Angola war zone in ways which seemingly

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3   Hangula, 'Impact', 10.
4   *Ibid.*, 11.
5   Akawa, 'My uncle'.
6   Paul Landau, 'With camera and gun in South Africa: Inventing the Image of Bushmen, ca 1880-1940' in Pippa Skotnes, ed., *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen* (Cape Town, 1996); idem, 'Hunting with gun and camera: a commentary' in Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes, eds., *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town, 1998). See also Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Harmondsworth, 1978).
7   One of the earlier striking examples was the gun-camera placement on the wings of the Mosquito aircraft in World War 2.

have not yet filtered down into the popular imaginary. 'Spying' remains the easiest way of explaining destruction and death; with its up-close and personal visual connotations, it continues to produce a very localised form of blaming. The effects of military 'remote sensing' - as distinct from close-up snooping - were enormous, especially in conjunction with other military techniques and measures. The resulting optical circuit is situated in this paper alongside other cultures of war which also used photography. The burgeoning of different kinds of visualisation in war includes political documentary or 'struggle' photography, whose *raison d'être* was not the camera's *synergy* with the gun like aerial work, but its deployment as *metaphor* of the gun. This article therefore attempts to historicise these two forms of photography in war. From this basis, it then explores the tensions between them and the ways in which vision and violence work together in southern African conflicts.

From expeditionary to aerial photography

> *Nas margims da minha terra*
> *Ai ai ai*
> *Nas margims do rio congo ...*
> [On the outskirts of my land
> On the banks of the river Congo]
> (Waldemar Bastos, 'Rainha Ginga')

The approach adopted here is derived from the history of photography more broadly, and from the study of certain colonial photographic applications in Namibian history.[8] The latter necessitates treating South Africa as a colonial power: entering its archive through the back door as it were, only when it is germane to the Namibian and Angolan material to hand. If this seems like a shrinking down of the colonial centre in favour of peripheries, then this article might succeed in unsettling the self-absorption and myopia of South African historiography - and in foregrounding those African thresholds which have been on the receiving end of colonial and postcolonial violence for decades.

The war photographies at play over nearly a century of colonial rule (1890s to 1980s) emerge from a number of paradigms in the history of vision. At a time when expeditionary photographs were being taken from the mid-19th century, the European horizon was being transcended or 'pricked' by the first hot air balloons which then made their way into Africa's military history between the 1890s and 1910s.[9] Intriguing connections might be drawn between genres of landscape photography and the representation of topographical knowledge, which was then extended administratively into full-blown forms of repression as aeroplanes scaled new heights to survey and take aerial photographs.

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8   See Hartmann *et al*, eds., *Colonising Camera*.
9   Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama. History of a Mass Medium* (New York, 1997); on Africa see Squadron Leader N.V. Phillips, *Bush horizons. The story of aviation in Southern Rhodesia 1896-1940* (Harare, 1998), 3; and AVEM (Archiv der Vereinte Evangelische Mission), c/i 20. Rückblick auf 25 Jahre und auf 100 Jahre Arbeit im Ovamboland 1917 (Wulfhorst).

Photographies of the land slipped away here from the affective and subjective potential of the landscape genre into a more objective tone of sheer facticity. The latter's function was to serve the needs of 'reconnaissance', requiring a deadly exactitude and purporting to represent the 'truth' about landscape. Aerial photography enabled forms of spatial domination reminiscent of the earliest maps of Africa, in which sections of the continent were represented as a *terra nullis*, and where 'time and space had been emptied of experience'.[10]

An officer based at JARIC (Joint Air Reconnaissance Centre) in Pretoria recently stated that 'ever since prehistoric man realized the advantage of an elevated or unobstructed view of his enemy, the concept of reconnaissance has been part of physical combat'. Art historians and cultural theorists would no doubt require more nuance, but Colonel Botha is very instructive on the subject of aerial photography:

> An aircraft can reconnoiter [sic] hundreds of miles within a few hours. Space vehicles can do the same over thousands of miles within minutes. Significantly, with this vast increase in coverage, there is also an increase in the minuteness of detail [from] which can be observed or detected. Through the use of one or more tactical sensors, it is possible to detect virtually any move of a potential enemy provided the sensor can be brought within range. No longer is it possible to hide behind a hill, under cover of darkness or poor weather.[11]

Reconnaissance in fact translates as recognition, to go into battle with foreknowledge, with a preparatory map, so to speak, so that the ground is not unfamiliar. Photography had been branching into many industrial applications since the late nineteenth century, testifying to the 'medium's remarkable plasticity and diversity'.[12] Aerial photography was one of a cluster of new industrial applications that grew rapidly after World War 1, which also included news and micro photography.

Before any consideration of aerial photography in southern Africa however, I wish to take some of the earlier forms of 'war photography' in the Owambo region as a basis for understanding the shift to aerial photography and its radical methods of visual abstraction. One could start, for example, with the published and album photograph entitled 'Auto de vassalagem' from the Portuguese expedition to Cuamato Pequeno (Ombandja) in 1907 (see Figure 1). This was the first Portuguese military expedition to take a war correspondent and

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10 Bernd Hüppauf, 'Modernism and the Photographic Representation of War and Destruction' in Leslie Devereaux and Roger Hillman (eds), *Fields of Vision. Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology, and Photography* (Berkeley, 1995), 100. How differently landscape and aerial photographies treat changes in land and light is suggestive. Aerial photography must fix a scene, and if necessary return repeatedly to record the slightest changes; landscape however frequently depends for its mood effects on slippage of light and transitions between times of day.

11 Lt.-Colonel John Botha, '60 Squadron and the art of aerial reconnaissance and interpretation' (unpublished speech at the opening of the exhibition *Evidence in Camera*, curated by Chris Teale, at the South African Air Force Museum, Ysterplaat, 1999).

12 Maria Hambourg, Jeff L. Rosenheim, Douglas Eklund and Mia Fineman, *Walker Evans* (New York, 2000), 21.

Figure 1. 'Auto de vassalagem'. Mbandja surrender to Portuguese, 1907, southern Angola.
Album photograph, Centro Nacional de Documentação e Investigação Histórico, Luanda.

photographer to the battlefield, and to lay down telegraph wires in newly-occupied territory from Forte Roçadas as far as the coast so that they keep up their communication with Lisbon. This expedition's purpose was to avenge the 1904 slaughter of a large Portuguese expedition that had sought to occupy Owambo, which Velloso de Castro described as 'the most disastrous reverse to figure in the annals of our colonial military history'.[13] The Ovambo in general were termed 'warlike and bloodthirsty, submitting with difficulty to civilising influence'.[14] Pacification was the discourse of the day.

The newspapers and publication which followed the Cuamato campaign included many photographs in phototype, so that the pictures could accompany text and enable metropolitan and colonial readers to visualise the terrain, the people, the burial of recovered Portuguese bones, and the recovery of dignity from national disgrace. This photograph of the 'act of vassallage' was taken after the defeat and flight of the king Sheetekela and other Mbandja leaders, and during the dictation of Portuguese terms to Sheetekela's remaining subjects.

Vassalagem (vassalage) figured in a growing genre of administrative representations of 'pacification' which took on various dimensions elsewhere. This was cathartic and therapeutic for Portuguese audiences and military because, Pélissier argues, their national pride had been so devastated by the massacre of the 1904 expedition.[15] Moreover, when the next large military expedition made its way to southern Angola in 1915 to secure the boundary against German

13   Alferes Velloso de Castro, *A Campanha do Cuamato* (Luanda, 1908), 17 (my translation).
14   Castro, *Campanha*, 14 (my translation).
15   See René Pélissier, *Les Guerres Grises. Résistance et Révoltes en Angola (1845-1941)* (Orgeval, 1977).

attack and to occupy Oukwanyama, such textual and visual closure and satisfaction was unobtainable because the Kwanyama king Mandume ya Ndemufayo moved across the border into South West Africa and put his capital, Ondjiva, to the torch. Famine and war in 1915 drove so many Kwanyama south that no significant *auto de vassalagem* was staged. It was left to South African administrators and military to 'pacify' the Kwanyama, and within time, persuasively demonstrate this with photographs published in the *Annual Reports to the League of Nations* in the mid-1930s.[16]

In the meantime, the First World War had brought together photography and the aeroplane which initiated 'one of the most powerful innovations of war technology'.[17] Before long, this new agglomeration of tools and tactics was deployed in imperial settings for ongoing 'pacificatory' purposes, and then traveled from one theatre of colonial war to another. Prior to his service and photographic work in the Caprivi region of South West Africa, J.P. Hutchinson was a surveyor with the Royal Air Force on the northern frontier of India. Hutchinson was eloquent on the new subject of aerial policing in a region bedevilled by the insubordination of the so-called 'hill tribes'. Recalling air force procedures against the Afridis outside Peshawar between 1923-27, he wrote:

> When conditions permit, the machines dive and open fire with machine guns from the front and rear cockpits on any natives who are still visible. In their dirty white robes, which soon come to match the uniform drabness of the ground, the enemy look like little crawling ants, scattering for cover in the hillsides and ravines, with the bombs bursting among them.[18]

In Figure 2 the British military camp is scattered across the lower hill, but at its top is the parley taking place between locals and officers. What should also be taken into account is that the photograph was taken from an aircraft, with whose menace the locals negotiating on the hilltop were familiar. Aerial photography was happening at the same time as aerial intimidation, people were caught 'visible' and parleying, rather than defiant and disappeared - tactics the Mahsuds habitually relied upon to escape British control.

The photograph opens up several issues. It marks the onset of serious aerial policing and photography with the latter's radical reconstruction of colonial space into functional space. Such ramifications were only beginning to be articulated, though they had been speedily grasped, especially by the newly-formed South African Air Force (SAAF). Smuts' participation in the British War Cabinet during World War 1 was influential in procuring aircraft and even personnel for the SAAF from the RAF, and the relationship remained a very close one for decades. While a small aviation corps had existed during World War 1,

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16   See Patricia Hayes, 'Northern exposures: the photography of C.H.L. Hahn, 1915-1946,' in Hartmann *et al*, eds., *Colonising Camera*.
17   Hüppauf, 'Modernism', 104.
18   J.P. Hutchinson, 'How We Fight the Frontier Tribes From the Air', *Evening Chronicle* August 12, 1930 (thanks to Chris Teale for this reference).
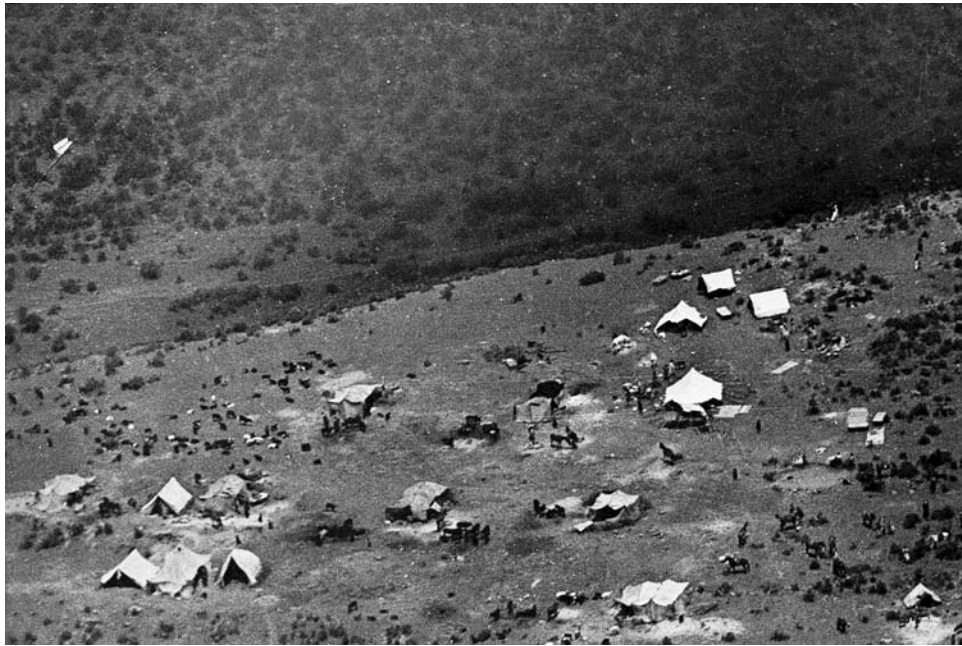
Figure 2. 'Aerial. Jirga, ie making peace with Mahsuds; in right hand top corner.'
Hutchinson collection, courtesy of Chris Teale.

the SAAF was officially founded almost at the same time as the granting of the League of Nations mandate of South West Africa (SWA) to the Union of South Africa in late 1920. The 'father' of the SAAF was South African air ace Sir Pierre van Ryneveld.

The refusal of many Bondelswarts in southern Namibia to comply with new taxation measures under South Africa rule in 1922 led to the first incident of aerial bombing in the territory, provoking some international criticism and slightly more cautious forays in future. Oral history suggests that one plane was downed by the Bondelswarts.[19] Van Ryneveld's planes also harried and intimidated striking mineworkers on the Rand in 1924. Further intimidatory flyovers and strikes in SWA took place in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the latter destroying the residence of the recalcitrant Kwambi king, Iipumbu ya Tshilongo, who fled toward the Angolan border but was captured, fined, deposed and exiled. His ignominious exit in 1932, in which he was carted off in an aircraft to Ondangwa and thence by road to Okavango, was performed to a local public in such a way as to emphasise the symbolic power of aircraft, an *auto de vassalagem* (see Figure 3) which combined high modern (air power) with the precolonial (ivory tribute), a sophisticated fusion of cultural codes that far outstripped the feudal-like assembly of the Portuguese in Cuamato twenty-five years earlier.

What did aerial photography offer South African colonialism in Namibia

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19   These accounts emerged during research by Jeremy Silvester in southern Namibia in the early 1990s.

Figure 3. The deposition of Iipumbu ya Tshilongo and the installation of the new Council of Headmen in Uukwambi, carried out after Air Force bombings, 1932. Photograph Hahn Collection, National Archives of Namibia.

from the 1920s? One would assume that it opened up possibilities for increased topographical survey, the closure of huge distances, greater policing possibilities, and the opening up of the furthest frontiers like Kaokoland which soon had its own airfield. It marked a new form of covering and mapping terrain - the creation of 'barren functional space' which avoided obstacles and difficulties on the ground.[20] Oddly enough however, South African officials on government missions - such as veterinary exercises in the Kaokoveld in 1939 - continued to depend on German maps.[21] For decades very little aerial surveying was carried out in the territory.

In the Union of South Africa itself, the government was fairly slow to make new investments and uses of aerial photography. Those aerial survey activities which were initiated gave a sense of new amalgamations of knowledge, technology and policy that seemed to push development discourse to new levels. For example, the entire strategic area of the northern Kalahari was subject to SAAF reconnaissance photography in 1925. This was to facilitate the viability study for Professor Schwartz's over-ambitious proposed irrigation scheme to deflect the great waters of the Okavango and Zambezi rivers to feed that monster of consumption, the Johannesburg area. The reconnaissance flights resulted in two thousand black and white prints from 355 ten by eight inch negatives which

20   Hüppauf, 'Modernism', 105.
21   J.S. Watt, 'Flights into the Unknown', *South West Africa Annual* 1978, 69-70.

together constituted a mosaic of the northern Kalahari region. The colonial governments in Northern and Southern Rhodesia were both drawn into support roles for this significant exercise and received copies of the mosaic in acknowledgement of their assistance on the ground.

More intriguing is the sense in which aerial survey constituted an internal process of 'colonisation' for South Africa itself. Irrigation projects in Zululand in 1932 and 1933 made extensive use of aerial reconnaissance and surveying, mainly to assist in finding the easiest ways for the Irrigation Department to make its way through dense bush country. Archaeological finds were also made possible through aerial reconnaissance: this was allegedly how Mapungubwe and its gold artifacts came under institutional and academic scrutiny. Anecdotes by airmen recalled in 1946 that a new Dakota was pressed into service to find the lost city of the Kalahari, with a group of local farmers on board claiming to know its whereabouts.[22]

Serious research concerning the aerial photography and surveying of SWA remains to be done, but on the evidence publicly available to date,[23] a substantial aerial reconnaissance of the Nossob and Aub rivers in eastern SWA took place after heavy rains and floods in 1933-34. The mapping of what David Bunn has called 'water works' was obviously key to the early development of aerial photography and collaborative techniques in South Africa and SWA, for the Photographic Reconnaissance group also photographed newly-constructed dams in the Union in the 1930s.[24]

The increasing density of the incorporation of aerial photography into state activities is indicated by the presence of the following department heads at the 1939 meeting of the Air Survey Committee in Pretoria: Defence, Agriculture and Forestry, Native Affairs, Mines, Posts and Telegraphs, Provincial Roads, Public Health, Irrigation, Mines.[25] The Air Survey Director had submitted a proposal for the topographical mapping of the country to be carried out over the next two decades. He stated that 'investigations in various parts of the world had shown that for several reasons air photographs were essential for topographical mapping under modern conditions ... Furthermore it had been found that apart from their value for mapping, aerial photographs assisted greatly in the field work of such departments as Geological Survey, Agriculture and Forestry, National Roads, Irrigation.' The Air Survey Committee was further told that ideally the resulting maps should be accompanied by the original aerial photographs, 'the photo giving detail and the map true positions and heights.' This was only one variant of the extremely close relationship between photography and cartography.

In the interwar years these aerial surveys were outsourced to the Aircraft

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22 SAAF Museum Ysterplaat, Item 54-55 Sept-Oct 1946.
23 Thanks are due to Chris Teale of the SAAF Museum at Ysterplaat for bringing much of this material to the attention of the History Department at UWC.
24 David Bunn, 'Waterhole Work: Drought, Photography, and Politics in the Kruger National Park, 1926-1950' (unpublished seminar paper, University of the Western Cape, 1999); SAAF Museum Ysterplaat, 'A personal history of photography in the South African Air Force prior to World War 2. Col. Q.E.W. McGlashman' (unpublished manuscript). The Kruger National Park was also photographed before World War 2.
25 SAAF Museum Ysterplaat, Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Air Survey Committee held in the Conference Room, Union Buildings, on 26th June 1939 at 10 a.m.

Operating Company, which also compiled all maps. The company operated with some assistance from the SAAF, benefitting from its 'experience', and the entity was later completely absorbed into the SAAF during World War 2. At the onset of this war, the Royal Air Force (RAF) berated the SAAF for its neglect of photographic reconnaissance - aside from its part in survey work. During wartime, SAAF airmen were told, this had to change because the 'value of air photographs for intelligence purposes has become fully appreciated.' Hale of the RAF stressed the need to concentrate photographic survey work 'in furtherance of the Empire war effort ... e.g. geological surveys for the detection of oil and mineral deposits and the selection of new sites for aerodromes, bombing and gunnery ranges.' Kodak was approached to store photographic supplies in Africa until needed, as they did in India.[26]

Hale sought to bring SAAF photographic reconnaissance during World War 2 in line with RAF operating standards. He was horrified that Squadron 60 in 1941 was taking so few intelligence photographs in East Africa, and that there was no Photographic Interpretation Unit in the field extracting information from photographs. 'This is probably due to the fact that it is not appreciated that the camera can be just as lethal as the bomb in the long run and if the latter is to be placed at the decisive place, then the camera is complementary to it.'[27]

It is not only space, but time, which becomes a manipulable, calculable object with the aeroplane camera. Speed and distance throw time itself into a spin: it is a challenge to freeze it in the desired space when an aeroplane is moving so fast. Amongst the skills expected of air photographers in World War 2 and into the 1950s was the ability, even without the aid of camera aiming sights, to obtain the drift and time interval readings for any type of camera used for vertical photography.[28]

Aerial photography, with its simultaneous distancing and probing, penetrating as close as possible from as far away as possible, suggests some latter-day apogee of enlightenment ideals. The strangeness of the new optical inventories taking place had been remarked in the early years of aerial photography:

> the inert world presents itself in its independence from human beings ... all spatial configurations are incorporated into the central archive in unsual combinations that distance them from human proximity.[29]

On a practical level it offered new ways of knowing the land through its abstraction of detailed form. Sheer distance makes rivers stand out like veins and arteries, reminiscent of the medical view of tissue through a micro-lens.[30] The contours of the land - its forests and hills - are laid bare, new and unfamiliar patterns emerge which only become familiar with the emergence of new disciplines.

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26   SAAF Museum Ysterplaat, Report on Photographic Organisation in SAAF, Wing Commander Hale, Defence HQ, March 1941.
27   *Ibid.*
28   SAAF Museum Ysterplaat, Items 54-55, Section 1950-1959.
29   Kracauer, 'Photography', 435.
30   Thanks to Lorena Rizzo for this observation.

Colonel Botha of JARIC, veteran of the 'Border War' on the threshold of southern Angola, describes the aerial photograph as 'a foreign image' which requires what the experts term *interpretation*: a highly sophisticated specialisation. As Botha puts it, 'To translate this foreign image into a familiar frame of reference and intelligence requires sophisticated equipment and highly skilled technicians'.[31] 'The reconnaissance photograph', adds Szarkowski, 'was of use only after it had been interpreted'.[32] Botha explains further:

> The sole object of photographic reconnaissance is to obtain intelligence information of the enemy (or potential enemy). The finished photograph is not completed intelligence; it must be interpreted and information extracted from it. This intelligence information, presented in logical, readable form, is the final goal or objective or tactical photographic reconnaissance. The extracting of information, identifying of objects on photographs, and deducing their significance, is the science of photographic interpretation. Between the aerial photograph and the intelligence report stands the photo interpreter.[33]

During World War 2, General Eisenhower advocated a 'high priority on the acquisition of tactical air intelligence, and aerial cameras to build comprehensive information banks on almost all potential war zones'. The trend to emerge was to have one aircraft with minimum armament which would make a 'sortie' to photograph and then get back to base as soon as possible to produce the photographs. It was vital to take 'two sets of photography - one set prior to the attack in order to determine the location of the target and its defenses and the second sortie to determine the bomb damage caused onto the target'.[34] The allies used the SAAF photographic reconnaissance unit, 60 Squadron, to photograph and map Sicily and southern Italy, besides their activities in East and North Africa. In 1944 the SAAF moved north from the Mediterranean and photographed Ploesti refineries in Roumania. They also flew 17 sorties over Auschwitz, whose rubber factory was an allied target, without the information legible from the latter photographs on the neighbouring concentration camp being made use of by the USAAF which was pooling all aerial information.[35]

After the war, the SAAF reorganised its photographic activities with different squadrons taking over 'tactical reconnaissance'and a specific squadron (35) responsible for mapping. Botha argues that the lessons from World War 2 were crucial and, apparently, studies have shown that 80 percent of 'useful military intelligence' came from aerial reconnaissance photographs. The Colonel

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31   Botha, '60 Squadron'.
32   John Szarkowski, *Looking at Photographs* (New York, 1978), 70.
33   Botha, '60 Squadron', 7.
34   *Ibid*., 6.
35   Chris Teale, '"Evidence in Camera". Aerial and other photography of the SAAF' (unpublished curator's report, South African Air Force Museum, Ysterplaat, June 1999); Botha, '60 Squadron', 6.

indicated that because of this, a massive investment was made in post-war photographic reconnaissance.[36] No doubt new lessons were also learned from the USA and its allies during the Korean War.

Vision and violence

Jonathan Crary argues that new optical devices in the 19th century represented 'points of intersection where philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic discourses overlap with mechanical techniques, institutional requirements, and socioeconomic forces.' A similar argument might be made for the 20th century with aerial and satellite photography in particular, though military and environmental factors obviously shifted the nature of the forces at work. Crary's approach emphasises that each new visual device should be understood

> not simply as the material object in question, or as part of a history of technology, but for the way in which it is embedded in a much larger assemblage of events and powers. Clearly, this is to counter many influential accounts of the history of photography and cinema that are characterized by a latent or explicit technological determinism, in which an independent dynamic of mechanical invention, modification, and perfection imposes itself onto a social field, transforming it from the outside. On the contrary, technology is always a concomitant or subordinate part of other forces.[37]

For Gilles Deleuze, 'A society is defined by its amalgamations, not by its tools ... tools exist only in relation to the interminglings they make possible or that make them possible'.[38]

It is the intermingling between the forms of visualisation taken up by the SAAF and colonial and local violence in southern Africa that I wish to take up with now. The bluntest statements on vision and violence have come from Allen Feldman's work on Northern Ireland. He states that 'compulsory visibility is the rationality of state counterinsurgency', and speaks of the visual staging and technological penetration of the body by cameras, bullets and bombs which 'unite both seeing and killing, surveillance and violence, in a unified scopic regime'.[39] Though Feldman's analysis often makes state activity appear totally effective and does not allow for error, his framework is accurate insofar as aerial photography during the 'Border War' in southern Angola represents the possibility of a gaze that channels and materialises violence. Such photography implies that 'exposure' is an endowment of power to the aggressor. Vision is in complicity with violence.

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36   Botha, '60 Squadron'.
37   Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge MA, 1995), 8.
38   Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A thousand plateaus. Capitalism and schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, 1987), 90.
39   Allen Feldman, 'Violence and Vision: The Prosthetics and Aesthetics of Terror,' *Public Culture* 24/1997, 29-30.
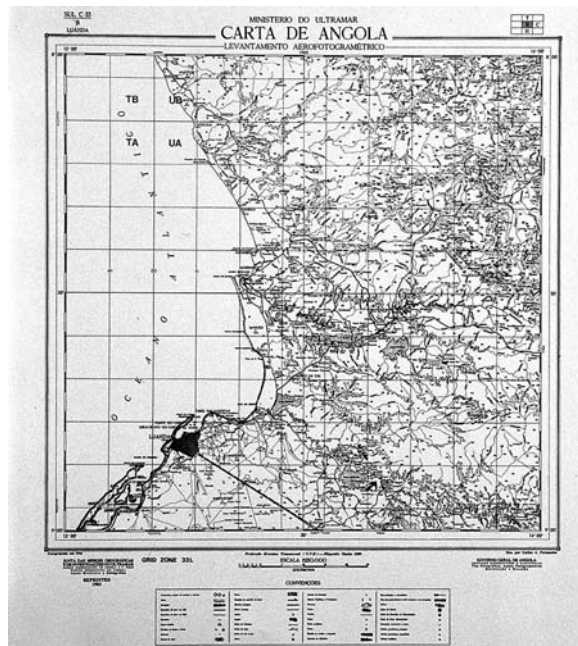
Figure 4. Carta de Angola (Map of Angola), B - Luanda, photographed 1956.
South African Air Force Museum, Ysterplaat.

It was in the sensitive mid-1970s that the SAAF began a systematic photographic reconnaissance of southern Angola to 'supplement the old and inadequate Portuguese maps of that territory'.[40] For a considerable time the police and administration in SWA had relied on maps such as this one of Luanda (see Figure 4), photographed in 1956 by the Serviços Geográphicos e Cadastrais in Luanda, and reprinted in 1983 by South African agencies. This reliance on Portuguese maps changed as Angola gained independence and SWAPO began to draw large numbers of adherents across the border from Owambo. Emphasis in the new South African cartography appears to be on the Zambezi and Kavango regions, especially the photographic reconnaissance 'sketchmaps' based on aerial photographs during 'Operation Picnic' (see Figures 5-6), as well as on the Cunene region and Owambo.

The date of much of the SAAF photography and map-work along the whole northern frontier tells its own tale: the mid-1970s saw an intensification of Namibia's liberation war. As Paul Virilio points out, historical and social processes become highly condensed during war.[41] The more conventional maps produced through these processes include the location of 'ethnic' entities such as Diriko, Kwangali along the Kavango (Cubango) River - but on the northern side of the river (Figure 6). Many of these groups had in fact shifted bases to south of the river during the 1970s. Thus SAAF intelligence was still relying on outdated

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40   Dick Lord, *Vlamgat. The Story of the Mirage F1 in the South African Air Force* (Weltevreden Park, 2000), 59 and 61.
41   Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema. The Logistics of Perception* (New York and London, 1989). Thanks to Paul Landau, Gary Minkley and Robert Gordon for bringing *War and Cinema* to my attention.
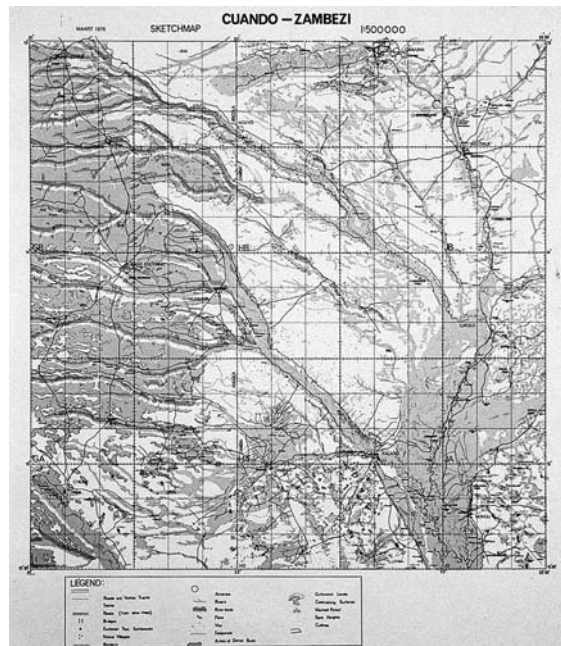
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Figure 5. Sketchmap Cuando-Zambezi, 1976.
South African Air Force Museum, Ysterplaat.

Portuguese ethnographic information to compose its maps.

The Cassinga Massacre of 1978 happened because, it is argued, aerial reconnaissance interpreted the camp as a military base, not a refugee camp. In fact a combination of reconnaissance activities should have been used for Cassinga which would have been applied to other SWAPO camps in Angola (and no doubt Ondjiva as well). This involved intensive photographing and rephotographing to monitor the slightest changes in group size and movement of people at any one point. At best, apologists concede that Cassinga was not suffi-ciently rephotographed. Large numbers of people were spotted and photographed while pilots were on retraining exercises during the dry season; these were inter-preted from the 'heart of darkrooms',[42] and the order to attack was given.

Since World War 1, which has been classified as the first technological war, historians have signalled the 'disproportion between political ends and the technological innovations for destruction'.[43] Thus in this late colonial theatre, these effects come out in the overblown carnage, the ripping apart of bodies and the scale of death in the mass graves at Cassinga. But perhaps Cassinga is not the best example, given its sequel: ground troops arrived soon after the bombings to 'mop up' in face-to-face killing and wounding, also taking a number of survivors prisoner. The point however remains that with aerial warfare, as Hüppauf argues in the case of industrialised war, 'the concept of man had changed, time and space had been emptied of experience, and photography itself had become func-

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42   Lord, *Vlamgat*; the phrase comes from Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 81.
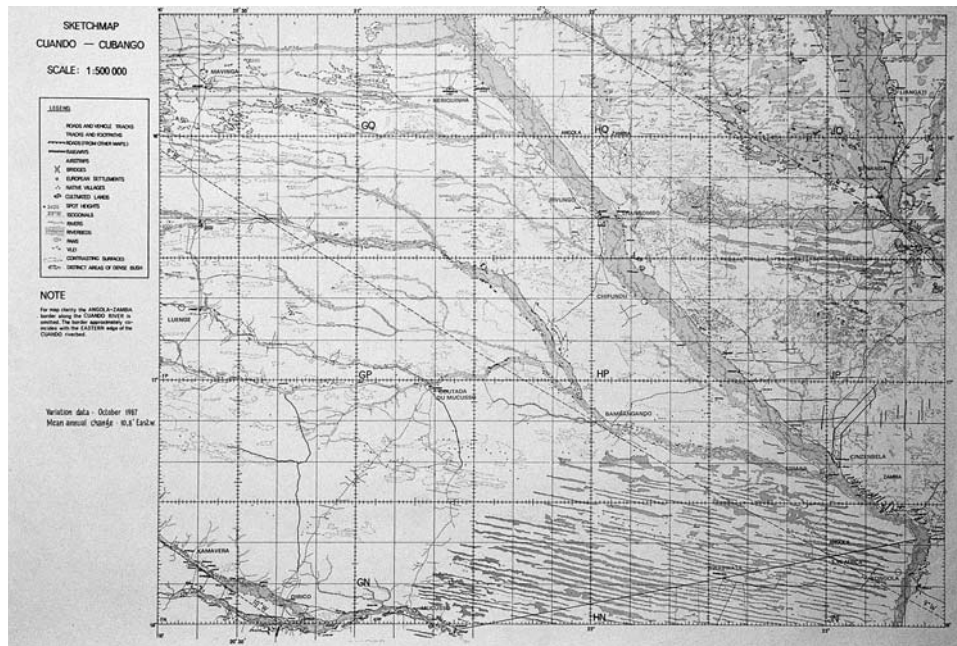43   Hüppauf, 'Modernism', 99.

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Figure 6. Sketchmap Cuando-Cubango (Kavango), 1987.
South African Air Force Museum, Ysterplaat.

tional in creating a technological perception'.[44] For those operating the weapons of destruction (which are also tools of perception), Feldman's analysis of the construction of the modern political subject, entailing 'the stratification and specialization of the senses, and the consequent repression of manifold perceptual dispositions', is taken to its furthest extreme.[45] This is in contrast to people on the ground at a place like Cassinga in 1978, whose senses experienced the fullest overload - blinding, deafening, disorienting, fragmenting - through the massive violence taken in directly through the body.

For South African pilots and their command centres, Southern Angola became the 'structurally inhuman battlefield of modern warfare',[46] inured from 'realizing the human-material consequences of the war'.[47] Virilio outlines the cumulative sealing off of the pilot in the tiny space of the cockpit:

> In 1914 it was still up to the pilot whether he wore a helmet, and his only means of 'insulation' were protective goggles and pieces of cotton-wool in the ears to muffle wind and engine noise. Some thirty years later, towards the end of the Second World War, the pressurized cockpits of the US Superfortress bombers had become artificial synthesizers that shut out the world of the senses to a quite extraordinary degree.[48]

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44   *Ibid.*, 100-1.
45   Feldman, 'Violence and Vision', 406.
46   Hüppauf, 'Modernism', 111.
47   Feldman, 'Violence and Vision', 408.
48   Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 24.

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In this sealed-off capsule of the aircraft, the pilot is locked in a tiny space with only electronic audio-visual signals to respond to, while adrenaline rushes headily through the body as he goes through the 'derealization' of time and space. Thirteen years after one combat engagement which ended in a crash landing, one SAAF pilot provided this narrative of a sortie against Angolan Air Force Migs:

> The letter home I was writing went flying as I scrambled to get into the cockpit. In a matter of minutes we were screaming down the runway … After take-off we remained low level and set heading for the combat zone … The order came to pitch about 10 minutes after take-off and up we soared like homesick angels. We leveled off at about 30 000' and the mission controller sounded like a horse racing commentator with all the instructions he was giving us to intercept the targets … Next came the order to jettison the drop tanks … It was serious. The adrenaline was flowing.
>
> The next thing I saw was a Mig 23 … My first reaction was WOW what a great looking aircraft. This was the first time I had seen one in the flesh so to speak … I was doing Mach 1.3 (about 1600 km per hour) and he was going like hell so the turn was so wide I almost lost sight of him.
>
> This is where I get a little frustrated. For 10 years I have trained for this day and the majority of the fight I cannot recall. WHY! Anyway the next thing I remember is this Mig coming head on at me from about my one, two o'clock position. Still turning towards him I remember flicking the trigger safety over to the cannon position. If he was going to fly through my sights I was going to squeeze off a few rounds. Unfortunately for me he got off the first shot.
>
> There was a bright orange flash from his left wing and then this incredibly fast telephone pole came hurtling towards me trailing a solid white smoke trail …
>
> With hindsight it appeared that the whole fight lasted no more than 60 seconds from the time we pitched until I got the 'go home' command.[49]

Not only are the implications of speed present in this narrative, with the pilot losing recall in the compression of time and falling back on metaphors as language fails him (horse racing commentary; a telephone pole for a missile), but the cultural milieu from which other metaphors come are suggestive. The pilot invokes the 'crazy' Disney character of the Road-Runner who churns up cartoon dust at

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49   This narrative, which comes with accompanying photographs, is quoted from the website http://www.piercy.co.za/accpicture8.htm, 3 February 2000. Thanks to John Liebenberg for this reference.

one point, to convey the sensation he feels at seeing his low aircraft producing a similar effect fifty feet above the Angolan scrub. There is also something of the sublime - familiar territory in Virilio's work on speed, war and cinema - which comes out in his image of jets rising like 'homesick angels', as the narrator appears to anthropomorphise machines into heavenly bodies. Elsewhere they appear, 'in the flesh'; or their speed screams, human-like, sounds never heard from humans in these encapsulated war episodes.

In the final count this dogfight, however narrated, remains a contest over visibilities with the emplotment of human beings as coded objects. This is the hierarchy of those 'who entertain social and perceptual distance from the body'.[50] In the history of war in southern Africa, it is as Virilio observes: this is a far cry from the days when firepower referred to firearms - with the *Vlamgat* of the SAAF[51] firepower refers to the jet-pipes of the fighter aircraft. Moreover, as the narrative above attests, 'nothing now distinguishes the functions of the weapon and the eye; the projectile's image and the image's projectile form a single composite'. As Virilio concludes, 'The fusion is complete, the confusion perfect'.[52]

Documentary photography and war in southern Africa

Other fusions and confusions exist. When the fighter pilot abandoned his letter-writing, his affective ties that kept him linked with a social normality, he 'scrambled' plane-like into war. It would seem that bodies and machines could be spoken of interchangeably. The one is the extension of the other. In such transfers, the machine is romanticised and the body dehumanised. This raises two issues about the components of this 'Border War'. One is that unlike the soldiers in the trenches of World War 1, who experienced an 'inseparable and all-encompassing combination of technology and war, hopelessness and destruction',[53] technology in the 1980s 'Border War' enabled privileged fighter-pilots to slip in and out of their different worlds with relative ease, remote from their targets which were pinpointed through aerial photography which was cast as objective, universal knowledge - despite photographic interpretation sometimes resulting in 'mistakes'.

The second issue to arise from the dehumanisations of technological war was the determined attempt to document the 'human cost' by progressive photographers and journalists in Namibia and confront an international public with the resulting images. Thus a different form of photography emerged which was deeply implicated in representing and forging the cultures of war in northern Namibia and southern Angola: social documentary, 'struggle' or war photography. Such genres drew on the long tradition of documentary photography to produce exposés of social and political injustice, or in this case, military oppression of civilian populations and the latter's resistance. Integrally related to this,

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50   Feldman, 'Violence and Vision', 414.
51   *Vlamgat* refers to the French Mirage jets purchased by the South African Air Force in 1976 (see Lord, *Vlamgat*). It translates literally as *Flame-Hole* from the Afrikaans.
52   Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 83.
53   Hüppauf, 'Modernism', 112.

Farzanah Badsha explains that along with political mobilisation back in South Africa of the 1980s there also came:

> the parallel development of documentary photography which was conscripted into service as part of the anti-apartheid struggle. The genre flourished as part of the broader role that culture played in making people within South Africa and in the rest of the world aware of the political struggle and social conditions in the country.[54]

Badsha marks the organisation of the Afrapix collective as signalling 'a different and more systematic use of documentary photography in South Africa, which had up to this point been used by individual photographers such as Eli Weinberg and Ernest Cole'.[55] Badsha's study takes up Weinberg's pinpointing of the 'fundamental contradictions that are inherent in the tradition of documentary photography',[56] namely the power imbalance between the privileged photographer documenting the 'underprivileged', heightened of course in South Africa by the radical asymmetries of race.

The problems include the notion that 'the technical process of photography which produces a deceptively simple product, the photograph, can claim to depict an objective "reality"'.[57] Solomon-Godeau points out that it is photography's very realism which 'determines both its instrumentality and its persuasive capacities'.[58] South African photographers in the 1980s described their role as documenting and exposing the injustice of apartheid. Photographers unashamedly described their photographs as 'tools or even weapons to be used in resistance against apartheid.' The camera was a 'witness to apartheid'. In this, Badsha argues, South African photographers seemed to be placing themselves 'outside the changing thought around photography which had begun at the turn of the century, when people had begun to question the widely held belief that photographs are able to record reality or truth'.[59]

Photographers justified this by arguing the political context, which they described as a war. 'The aberrations of present South African society commits him or her to take a stand against inequality, inhumanity and injustice.' However, the critique of documentary photography for its tendency to create victims for a second time by reinforcing the power imbalances and social division, which created the poverty (and violence) in the first place, dogs almost all documentary practice. According to Badsha it is even more acute in the South African context where photographers 'find themselves recreating the economic and racial inequality created by apartheid, when their stated aim is to help to break these inequalities down'.[60]

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54   Farzanah Badsha, 'Aspects of South African documentary photography in the 1980s,' (unpublished Visual History postgraduate research paper, June 1999), 1.
55   *Ibid.*
56   Paul Weinberg cited in Badsha, 'Aspects'.
57   Badsha, 'Aspects', 2.
58   Abigail Solomon Godeau, *Photography at the Dock* (Minneapolis, 1991), 170.
59   Badsha, 'Aspects'.
60   *Ibid.*, 4.

Badsha refers to Paul Weinberg's argument that some photographers had been documenting 'the unrecognised culture of South Africa. Not from a negative perspective but from an inside perspective.' Omar Badsha's work in Inanda is cited as an example of close participation in the life and politics of a community. Weinberg claimed that even if he was of a different race, a photographer could be accepted if he or she was known to share a community's political beliefs, or alternatively if a community wanted police violence and poverty exposed. Thus Afrapix photographers were accepted because most were pro-UDF. The situation forced 'photographers to interact with the people who they were photographing on a more equal basis because they were dependent on these people for access to the areas and often for protection in violent situations'.[61]

Here, the key is *proximity* between photographer and subject. This is unlike aerial photography which feeds on distance: the further away it is the more productive it is.[62] The American critic Grundberg argues that overcoming the distance between photographer and photographed is certainly one of the ways of 'curing the documentary's blues', but a second way is by 'centering itself on what the photographers' life is rather than what it is not, and acknowledging the crucial presence of the photographer on the scene'.[63] But these problems and possible solutions played themselves out with particular force in southern Africa of the 1980s, with an especially vigorous rebirth of 'the real' in such representation.

In Namibia the main forum for exposé photography was *The Namibian*, edited by the redoubtable Gwen Lister. She explained that the newspaper challenged the military and its control of the media, because it 'started graphically showing the images of what they actually did ... I think that *The Namibian* was very successful in convincing the international community, by showing that things were really bad in Namibia'.[64] The main photographer working for *The Namibian* at this time was John Liebenberg. It is impossible to do real justice to the complexity and significance of Liebenberg's photographic *oeuvre* in a short space here, but my intention here is to examine striking samples of his work in relation to the problematics raised about documentary photography mentioned above. In resolving some of these issues, I wish to touch on a sea change perceptible in Liebenberg's representations of war, as he moved on from the Namibian struggle for independence in order to photograph the political and military processes underway in neighbouring Angola.

The photograph in Figure 7 was taken in Namibia by Liebenberg during 1989 at the height of the military standoff between the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), before the implementation of UN Resolution 435 laid the groundwork for decolonisation.[65]

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61   *Ibid.*, 5.
62   In aerial photography, the challenges thrown up by distance have technical compensations - solutions not available to the documentary photographer. For example by 1969 innovations included the 'automatic iris' and Image Movement Compensation cameras. SAAF Section 6 1960-1969, Memo on the Upgrading of Photographers (Air) from Artisan to Technician 1969.
63   Andy Grundberg, *Crisis of the Real. Writings on Photography since 1974* (New York, 1999), 196 and 198.
64   Cited in Erichsen, this volume.
65   Revue Noire, *Namibia. Photographies* (Paris, 1994), 30-31.

The photograph is not the first of its kind in that war to show the South African practice of draping the bodies of dead guerrillas on the ramparts of its hallmark armoured vehicle, the casspir.[66] But it reiterated the ongoing display of death on the bulwarks of the machine in which white and black soldiers in the SADF were carried safely and invisibly to their destinations in a hostile rural environment. It is a mechanical triumph of the machine over the intractable nature of the resisting population. The visibility of the words Wolf Turbo Pol 2545 denotes the vehicle belonged to a Koevoet unit, which was a specialised counter-insurgency unit of the police. More than this, it spells out a semantic appropriation of a signifier of the wild into harness with engine power, a design which contrasts with the lifeless being whose body is curved over the spare wheel, the arm hanging down in its own natural curve of rest. The guerrilla's uniform and kit point to the business he was engaged in, the seriousness of it, and his determination to fight for his country and meet his fate. Up above his prone body, the impenetrable windows of the armoured casspir show nothing except the tip of a rifle or a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG). Koevoet is in fact shown in a relationship of invisibility to the population looking on, through Liebenberg's lens as it were. The only human presence here is the guerrilla - and the photograph is relaying the way his body was put on show by Koevoet to indicate that he had, as it were, met his match and is now a trophy. He is subject, ideally as rebellious insurgent populations should be, to Koevoet's practice of compulsory visibility.

Like the Koevoet unit, Liebenberg's presence and the run of the road, bystanders - in short, the fullness of the performance - are framed out of the picture which only hugs the body and the bulk of the machine (unlike the first picture published in 1987). Photographs of course conceal as well as reveal, this is a medium of 'fractured space and stilled time'[67] - this is the 'shell of the event'.[68] But the difficulty of getting such images was legendary - a situation in which Liebenberg certainly ran a very high risk of being killed himself. The region where the photograph was taken, Ombalantu, was in the western parts of Owambo where military bases were even more isolated and savage in their relations with their neighbours, both combatant and non-combatant, than they were possibly in the eastern parts of Owambo where bases came to be surrounded by squatter camps of 'friendlies' or those under close surveillance. What is elided in this picture is the risk and the cost to Liebenberg himself and, perhaps, to those who assisted or supported him in the situation.[69] Apparently it was worth it. For Liebenberg at this stage of his photographic career, and for *The Namibian* newspaper which splashed it on their front page, there were definitely some days when it was possible to divide the world into good and evil, and concrete political and moral benefits accrued from exposing this image to the world.[70]

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66 The practice of displaying bodies strapped on casspirs was first caught on camera in 1987 by a young bystander with a camera, which was sent to *The Namibian* and published on the front page to considerable effect. Liebenberg says of this first photograph: 'It became the symbol of the ruthlessness the forces operated in. No words could ever describe this scene of the body flung carelessly over the Casspirs' (cited in Erichsen, this volume). Liebenberg was thus photographing a similar scene himself two years later. Koevoet members also took photographs for personal purposes.

67 Elizabeth Edwards, 'Essay' in Jorma Puranen, *Imaginary Homecoming* (Oulu, 1999), 60.

68 Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography', *Critical Inquiry* 19, Spring 1993, 431.

69 Liebenberg was accompanied by fellow Afrapix photographer Guy Tillim, who also took pictures of the PLAN fighter on the wheel of the casspir. Thanks to South photo archive for this information.

70 In this particular case, funds were raised for SWAPO as a result of its publication.

Figure 7. SWAPO fighter's body transported back to base on the spare wheel of a Kasspir armoured vehicle, Ombalantu, Namibia, 1989. Photograph courtesy of John Liebenberg.

Where do the problematics of documentary come in with this picture? Context is framed out to give greater compositional force to the dead body and the anti-mine vehicle, and possibly, the destructive relationship between men and machines in this case. The atrocious and frequently hidden nature of Koevoet's activities is highlighted by their absence behind the metal and bullet-proof glass of the casspir. The display of the corpse for the benefit of local people gathered on roads through which the casspir drove is contextually missing - the audience for whom the terror is designed. Instead, the audience is constructed as the 'international community' who will view it unmediated through Namibian eyes in the local and international press. This sleight of hand is effected by the photographer who is to all intents and purposes absent himself. Unlike local press-men or the teacher with the cheap camera who took the first picture of such a display,[71] this is not an attempt to document the impact on the population: it is placed in an altogether different visual economy where it 'exposes' and makes war on the economy of the casspir and Koevoet itself.

Over a decade later, Namibian audiences viewing this picture might feel more ambiguous. It speaks to the seemingly total power of South African colonialism, and discomfort is felt at the dehumanising treatment of the guerrilla caught so closely in the lens - who is put on parade again, and again.[72] Its dichotomy of inhuman demonisation and victimisation speaks to the horror of certain kinds of memory of South Africa's rule in Namibia, about which people mostly remain silent.

The second Liebenberg photograph comes from a period some years later, when the photographer had shifted his focus into Angola. After Namibian independence in 1990, Liebenberg went on to photograph the phases leading up to elections in 1992, and the situation in the capital during and after the MPLA electoral victory when peace and even 'reconciliation' seemed possible. As the

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71   See Erichsen this volume.
72   These remarks are based on audience responses to my discussion of this photograph at a conference held in Windhoek in August 2000, entitled 'Public histories: forgotten histories'.

world knows, things fell apart. Liebenberg pursued numerous assignments with press agencies from his new base in Johannesburg to photograph and also film the renewed civil war in several different regions of Angola. He coined his own term for the ongoing Angolan conflict: it was and is 'the war of madness'. This is not the place to discuss Liebenberg's Angolan work in detail, nor his epic experiences as a full-blown war photographer (and at times film-maker) travelling with the FAPLA (Forças Armadas Popular da Libertação de Angola) or entering towns just liberated from UNITA. But there are some intimations of his particular new involvements and of his replenished but saddened photographic sensibilities which emerge from the picture of Captain Neves (see Figure 8) and Liebenberg's text/s around it.

The captioned text in the published version of this picture in *Tribute* magazine[73] places initial emphasis on Neves as suspicious of 'church people'. The narrative-caption then proceeds to the part which contrasts most strikingly with the sense conveyed by the shot of the tank commander: that some time after this photograph was taken, Neves' tank unit hit an anti-tank mine which killed the crew ('always kind to me') and cost Neves both his legs. The tank commander was, Liebenberg tells us, 'reduced to the life of a street beggar' in his home town of Benguela. Before I spoke to Liebenberg about this picture and gained further insights into where and how it was taken, what pierced me as the viewer was the temporal shock, the similitude in time of a visualised man sitting atop his tank, his rifle at the ready, authority if not force in his bearing - virile, strong, physically perfect, purposeful, dangerous - reduced textually the next moment to a legless street beggar whose closest comrades are dead. The humiliation of meeting the photographer in that changed condition. But what tears a hole in the usual method of dealing photographically with the maimed and the physically destroyed - pure helpless victims being the norm for most photography of 'war-torn' Angolans - was Liebenberg's mercy-shooting of Neves as a tank commander, body intact. He does not publish a picture of him in his new condition, but the way he was.

A haunting thread between photo and text, though, is the way the tank already hides Neves' legs when he is still constitutes (we know) a human body that is whole and (retrospectively) beautiful: we never see them. With all the other things going on in the photograph, and given our knowledge of where his legs used to be, this is complete and unexpected delicacy on Liebenberg's part: a poignant, even if accidental erasure that makes Neves' image hold some quality of mercy while carrying all the consciousness of loss.

But each re-examination of the photograph suggests new angles. Unlike the PLAN fighter killed by Koevoet in the other picture, the very live body of Neves fills out the centre of the frame with a force and a presence. It is full, not empty like the corpse on the casspir. There were other photographs of the church and the tank crew rolling into this village on Liebenberg's contact sheet, but this is the single shot which he has published and repeatedly exhibited. As Neves' body is poised against the rough grainy texture of the mud brick wall, which

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73   *Tribute*, April 1995, 93.

Figure 8. Captain Jesus Neves, commander of the armoured brigade, distrusted church people, implying they were loyal to Unita. Here he was looking for food. Later, in November '94, I visited his home in Benguela. He was recuperating after both of his legs had been amputated. His crew, always kind to me, had been killed by an anti-tank mine; the tank commander reduced to the life of a street beggar (caption cited in Tribute *April 1995). Photograph courtesy of John Liebenberg.*

reinforces his bodiliness in the skin-like T-shirt, the AK cartridge pockets like additional muscles on his abdomen and the AK an extension of his arm. Neves has a light falling on him which makes his skin gleam like the well-oiled AK barrel. And in fact his lower body *is* the tank. His upper body is a transition between church and tank - it is what is hidden that gets most painfully damaged when the annihilation which we know of from the text passes through his tank.

There is also the irony of Neves' first name 'Jesus', combined with the notorious even stereotypical anti-clericalism of the MPLA made up of coastal

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cadres (Benguela, Luanda) with lighter skin than most Angolans of the interior, where this photograph was taken. In this picture with its text, the atonal voice of the individual who can no longer distinguish good or bad, rational or irrational in the war of madness has already come out in Liebenberg. In Angola, unlike Namibia fighting an independence war, there is no audience to affirm the exposure of needless brutality and death, and to the rest of world on the receiving end of AP (Associated Press), this war is old, tired and far away. The photographer is fully in what Bao Ninh has called 'the sorrow of war', in a country which appears to circle unremittingly around the mutual infliction of death and pain, physical, social, infrastructural.[74] The slugging bouts are seemingly endless. Liebenberg has moved from portraying the suffering or dead guerrilla or civilian or child as the victim of war in his Namibian photography, to 'exposing the structure of violence and presenting soldiers as elements in it' in Angola.[75]

In this space of collective madness, on the frontline of tank war waged on UNITA through villages and plains, other narratives gather around the photograph of Jesus Neves and his tank arriving at the church. In 1999, Liebenberg looked again at the caption he had written and offered further contextualisation. We were poring through the contact sheets of the series of photographs of the tank's arrival at the church, when Liebenberg volunteered that it was here that the group were trying to score, not so much food, but marijuana. Implicit in the unfolding of the history and production of Neves' photograph is a marked shift in the position of the photographer. In Namibia, Liebenberg never travelled with an army, he only had encounters with them. In Angola he was attached to mobile FAPLA units, depending upon the permission of their commanders. One of the implications for Liebenberg of being closer to his subjects here is that he joins them in an altered state on the battlefield. In that year, food drops by UN planes meant that peasants had ceased to grow maize but were engaged in the more profitable exercise of growing dagga for both MPLA and UNITA. Thus we are talking not just of the cultures of war, but of whole agricultures of war which provided a narcotic release, defusing or heightening the sensory experience of war for both warriors in their machines and the man who photographed alongside them.

Far as it may seem from aerial photography, and contrary as his intention is to that of the Air Reconnaissance Intelligence experts, Liebenberg's war photographs are yet based on the same discourse of realism and truth in the medium. Is it as simple as who aims the camera? In both cases the different subjectivities involved in interpreting images, both aerial and documentary, produce countervailing responses: destruction of war and resistance to war. But both need a radical critique of the realist bases of their photographic truth claims and transparencies to understand how they work.

And yet there is more to all this than simply a problem of genres of photography in war. Another narrative unfolded recently when I talked about Neves' picture to an audience which included the Angolan poet and writer, Arlindo

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74   Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (London, 1994).
75   Hüppauf, 'Modernism', 111.

Barbeitos, formerly an MPLA militant and soldier but currently living in disillusioned exile in Paris. Neves' photograph brought him unwelcome visions of his own past. He recalled riding victoriously in a tank in the 1970s into a small town which turned out to be his own. It had been levelled by tanks, and among the debris in the mud he could see the contents of the archives of the local municipality. Lying among the flattened files were ID photographs of himself and family members - his whole history, he said, lost under the wheels of the tanks. What visibilities does violence create? What visibilities does violence destroy?[76]

Conclusion

The complexity of violence and its effects on people's lives forms the central core of war photography in the work of Liebenberg. Such photography is driven by the need to show war on a recognizably human scale, in a documentary mode which is circulated and can thereby influence people not present at the scene. This is one visibility that violence creates. A different visibility emerges through the techniques of aerial photography, which generates further violence and obliteration on a scale which is difficult to fathom. While military apologists fall back on the fetishised nature of specialist knowledge needed to 'interpret' reconnaissance photographs, obscuring debate on who is to blame with an exclusionary discourse, the destruction at places such as Ondjiva, Cassinga and elsewhere raise the problem with which this article began. That is, what explanations for violence feature in the popular imaginary and on the ground?

Feldman's argument is suggestive: 'There is a frission here between the precision optics of the state - the rationalisation of political subjects by visual grids and archives - and the imprecise, out-of-focus, and floating quality of rumour'.[77] One thinks unavoidably of the rumours and spy accusations by SWAPO and its allies in southern Angola with which this article opened. Understanding the part played by aerial photography in this war is a local and regional necessity. People in southern Angola and northern Namibia must increasingly appreciate that large-scale violence - such as the South African bombings in the war zone - originated not from some traitor's heart of darkness, but from the SAAF's heart of darkrooms.

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76   Feldman, 'Violence and Vision', 31.
77   *Ibid.*, 29.