

Trends in African Forgeries

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Danger: Con men at work!

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If the years after 1950 resounded with the noises of cold warriors thrashing about in the African bush, the last few years have been resonant with other sounds. The dedicated disinformation specialist from Moscow or Prague working the African scene has been displaced by a new and more ominous type of operator — the amateur. The less than delicate hands of the Soviets, East Germans, Czechs, and even the French if one wishes to accept the verdict of *Newsweek*,^{*} have been noted in Africa over the years.^{**}

The goals of the disinformation efforts, often involving forged documents, were usually to denigrate the image of the United States and/or its representatives, to cause a break in relations between a host country and the United States, or to cause the expulsion of effective economic or diplomatic personnel. Considering the relative level of political sophistication found in the emerging countries, it was not a task requiring great skill and exactitude.

While the Questioned Document Laboratory of the Office of Technical Services was normally able to demonstrate the forged nature of the documents, proving the identity of the perpetrator was sometimes another story. In many cases, the physical evidence was less than conclusive in proving the true origin of spurious documents. When a disinformation specialist paid attention to what he was doing, the adducible evidence was not very weighty in proving origin.

Africa has always had its share of swindlers, hustlers, and good old-fashioned con artists. Historically, they were involved in the more esoteric forms of folk medicine and in relieving tourists of excess cash. Then some of the bunco specialists realized that the new and inexperienced governments could be victimized as easily — and at least as lucratively — as individuals. It is just a short step from alleging a non-existent plot to fabricating documents to "prove" the allegations.

Looking back with the advantage of hindsight, some of the fabrications surfaced in Africa have been hilarious. At the time, however, the situations engendered were far from humorous to those involved. The great majority of African leaders were not elected democratically. Most of them came to power by a coup, and hence they feared plots, coups, and threatened invasions by others seeking power. In an atmosphere permeated by intrigue and emigre plotting, it is no wonder that there is an overreaction to claims of plots, etc. A brief summary of the activities of some, but by no means all, of the individuals in our pantheon of forgers and fabricators may be of value to the reader in trying to understand the problem.

Lemuel J. Walker, a twenty-eight-year-old Liberian, always wanted to be an "American Secret Service Agent." In the pursuit of this ideal, he managed to put a few dents in the armor of the American diplomatic stance in Africa. Starting at the age of 17, in 1963, Walker was arrested periodically for forgery and bunco operations by the Liberian police. Walker invented imaginary groups such as the "Student Imphital Program" and the "Joint Student Cooperative Superior Sciences Division" to bilk Liberian businessmen.

Some time near the end of 1971, Walker began to formulate plans to achieve his heart's desire. With the assistance of a Liberian printer, Walker was ready to face Africa as "Clifton W. C. Kent," secret agent and "Assistant Director" of "Communications in Superior Sciences Activities, N.S.C., Fairbanks, The White House, The State Dept., The Defense Dept., Washington 25, D.C." (see Figure 1) and as "Walter H. Clifford," "Assistant Director" of the "Central Security Commission — Special Interlligence (sic) Agency, National Security Counsel (sic), The White House — The State and Defense Dept." (see Figure 2). Armed with printed letterheads and fancy identification cards also identifying him as "Cheyenne K. Lark" and several other names, Walker started to put together information culled out of magazines in USIS libraries and to type up documents alleging coups, plots, and invasions by the United States against African

governments. Although any American would find a phone number such as "Ext. 20-8338-91-658886" (see Figure 1) somewhat ridiculous, the average African does not, because he is not acquainted with our telephone system.

Walker put together a series of documents on his C.I.S.S.A. (Communications in Superior Science Activities) letterheads alleging that the United States was going to spend a million dollars to assassinate President for Life General Jean Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic, and then invade the C.A.R. While the documents may appear outrageous to us, they did not seem so to Bokassa, who had come to power by a coup and assumed that others would use force in attempts to unseat him. Bokassa reacted swiftly to the documents by threatening to break relations with the United States. Technical analysis of the document eventually convinced Bokassa that the documents were indeed fabrications.

Not long afterwards, President Achmed Sekou Toure of Guinea announced in his precise, oratorical French that the throats of all Americans in Guinea would be cut if there was another invasion of Guinea. Sekou Toure also had a sheaf of C.I.S.S.A. documents which were aggravating an already serious persecution complex. At this time, Sekou Toure gave out one of his more remarkable pronouncements, "Documents can be forged, but the information is true." * A series of investigatory leads led back to Monrovia. With the cooperation of the U.S. Embassy and the Liberian government, it was determined that a "Clifton W. C. Kent" who tried to borrow money from the Embassy was identical with Lemuel J. Walker, the convicted bunco artist. Examination of Walker's prior written police confession established that he was the writer of the handwritten portions of the C.I.S.S.A. documents. Walker was finally arrested in Abidjan in December 1972, while trying to peddle fabrications to three different governments, and was extradited to Monrovia. Subsequent interrogation revealed that Walker was not in the employ of any other power. When arrested, Walker had a series of documents on him which he had prepared for passage to foreign governments. (See Figure 3.) A neurotic role-player with a desire for prestige and money almost managed to ruin U.S. relations with numerous African countries — and he wasn't really personally anti-American.



Figure 1. Samples of Walker's letterheads and rubber stamps.



The bearer of this card is an Assistant Director of the Special Branch of the Federal Intelligence Security Agency of the United State, of .America. His rank is that of any U.S. Diplomat or High Ranking Official of the U.S.

Anyone finding this card may take it to the U. S. Embassy or Information Service nearest you and collect One Hundred Dollars reward.

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Figure 2. Walker's Identification Card.

While Walker was busily promoting his misspelled documents, Herman Essoka, a Cameroonian, was trying to peddle alleged secret cables from Soviet Foreign Minister Andre Gromyko and/or U.S. Secretary of State

William Rogers. In a remarkable display of even-handedness, Essoka made the United States and the U.S.S.R. in turn the villain in his fabrications. Posing as either a translator in the code room of the U.S. Embassy in cities such as Cotonou, Lome, Libreville, etc., or as a translator in the code room of the Soviet Embassy in cities such as Lagos, Yaounde, Cotonou, etc., Essoka would claim to find evidence of a Soviet or U.S. coup plot in the form of a "secret coded telegram." Essoka had the United States plotting against the governments of Zambia, Sierra Leone, etc., and the Soviets trying to unseat the governments of Liberia and Chad. His "Andre Gromyko" appeared to have difficulties deciding whether to communicate in French or English; Essoka has the ability to write equally ungrammatically in French or English. A tense atmosphere over a period of several weeks in Sierra Leone was ultimately relieved when a friendly liaison service was able to show the president of Sierra Leone, Siaka Stevens, that Essoka had claimed to be working in the U.S. code room and the Soviet code room in letters written one week apart.

Luis Manuel Gonzalez Mata-Lledo, a forty-six-year-old Spaniard, has managed to lead an exciting life. Expelled from a Spanish seminary at nineteen, Gonzalez served five years in the Spanish Foreign Legion and then made his way to the Dominican Republic. After joining the Dominican intelligence service, he worked his way up to the position of assistant director by 1962. His career in the Dominican Republic came to an abrupt halt when he embezzled \$28,000. Since 1962, Gonzalez has been in trouble with the authorities for insufficient funds in his checking account, for possessing the wrong passport, and for bilking young ladies out of their dowries. His career as a forger and fabricator started in 1963 when he tried to sell forged evidence implicating Rafael Trujillo in a plot to assassinate Dominican President Juan Bosch. After a second try at selling forgeries to the Dominican Embassy in Paris, this time under the name "Dr. Miguel Abrantes," Gonzalez tried to approach the U.S. Embassy in Algiers as a representative of the notional "Third [Spanish] Republic Movement." By early 1967, Gonzalez was posing as a former Cuban intelligence officer and claimed to be working for another notional group called "Conferencia Vanguardia Latino-Americano" which was going to run a guerilla infiltration of Brazil from a Cuban base in Conakry, Guinea. Although rebuffed by the Brazilians, Gonzalez returned to the fray as "Captain A. L. Maedo" approaching the U.S. Embassy in Brussels with the same story but with the United States as the target. The "Vanguardia" plot was successively offered to the Venezuelans, Columbians, and Dominicans. Although slightly discommoded by an

arrest on a false passport charge, Gonzalez moved to Paris in late 1967 when he became "A. Despadrel" of the "Liberation Front for Latin America" and "Rudolfo Campos," a Colombian national traveling on an Algerian passport with information to sell the Libyans on an alleged Soviet intelligence organization. To bolster his story he manufactured his own KGB file cards which he filled out in his own curious mixture of Cyrillic and Latin characters.

Oct.5,1972.

RABAT

Col. William Moore
Special Secto-Section
(MARINE UNIT) PENTAGON
Washington, 25, DC

Dear Col. Moore:

I am herewith sending you the letter that I just received C-3A from Youssef El Ali in Tripoli stating that the Israelis are insisting on tarring out their operation at a time oppotune to them, but without instructions from either Tel-Aviv or the agency here. According to.his letter as you will see for yourself, they are acting very much disorderly and perfunctory, as a matter of fact, they have automatically refused to cooperate with either Khalil or Abdullah.

We already received a reply from Cairo but it is very discouraging, the feller do not at all work for the Egyptian War Department, he simply got his information from somewhere we still can't trace up to now, but he was intrepidity enough to colle-seven thousand dollars from the boys there and vanish; I mean the man vanished in thin air.

Did you get that personally and confidentially message I send by Director Kent? if so, please advise what you suggest I should do as I wouldn't like to get into any misunderstanding or any argument with my superiors here. We send two boys to Warna and Al Aziziya regions, they are the areas that is on Kadaffi plan for constructions by the Egyptians; according to report I received from the man at the economy and industry Ministry.

I wish you a very happy birthday and give my regards to everyone in the famaly, I hope to see you soon.

Yours faithfully,
Captain Leo Walker

(K) section

Figure 3. An unused Walker fabrication.

After a year or two trying to peddle his deck of KGB cards, Gonzalez had a change of heart and sold the Cubans a stack of self-designed CIA file cards. Gonzalez' anti-Cuban activities started again in late 1969 when he designed "Operation Lubumba" (sic), a Cuban invasion of Zaire. This time, posing as "Dr. Rogeho Garcia Castro," he also favored the Ivory Coast, Gabon, and the Cameroons with Cuban invasions via Conakry. After surviving temporary housing in a French jail, and prior to his German jail term for forgery in 1971, Gonzalez designed the fabricated U.S. invasion of Mali. This plot had the CIA and the FBI joining a joint Spanish-Portuguese group which would invade Mali by marching through Mauretania.

From the end of 1971 and through 1972, Gonzalez concocted his "Operation Amanacer" documents, which were offered and/or sold to numerous South American countries including Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Venezuela. By just changing the name of the country on his master copy, Gonzalez was able to proffer documents to all. In the "Amanacer" plots, Gonzalez used the name of "OSPAAL," an actual Cuban propaganda mill, as the sponsoring group for his Cuban invasions. In one of the more remarkable footnotes to history, Gonzalez managed to get the entire Soviet colony in Bolivia declared *persona non grata*. He passed documents to the Bolivians which claimed that Cuban guerrillas in Conakry would be loaded on Soviet ships and would sail across the Atlantic and then somehow attack Bolivia. Nobody appeared to notice that Bolivia has no coast-line.

After several more attempts to peddle anti-Cuban documents in South America and Africa, Gonzalez turned against the United States again

and is believed to have been the author of information alleging U.S. involvement in the attempted coup of 1972 against King Hassan of Morocco. When last heard from in 1973, Gonzalez was selling information to the Cameroonians in Paris, posing as a German, and selling undeveloped films of "secret bases for antigovernment plotters" to the Moroccans. The "Moroccan" films turned out to be pictures taken during carnival season in Germany.

In September 1971, an individual calling himself "Dr. G. H. D. Opal" first came to our attention with an alleged plot by the "African High Command Unit" to assassinate President Banda of Malawi. The assassination was to be carried out by a "Patricia Morley," allegedly an American citizen employed by Orbitair. The mysterious "Patricia Morley" was to carry out the plot by poisoning him with "phentic acid." It should be mentioned that phentic acid is another name for carbolic acid, the substance that gives library paste its pungent odor. In 1972, Dr. Opal was selling information to the Liberians on the plans of the "Clean Africa Committee," a notional group allegedly planning to eliminate African leaders who were not sufficiently pro-African.

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the plan to establish a government in
Mauritania which is revolutionary and which
also can give full backing to the liberation
movements in Africa has been worked out in
the ex-saloon. There are two plans and
it is hoped that one or more will succeed. The first
one is to try to organize a coup & a revolution
and the Chinese are in charge of this. The
second one is to try to get somebody who
can assassinate the death of the President
of Liberia.

- There is a lady by name Patricia Morley
Morley. She is employed by the Orbitair in
New York, America. She has travelled in many
parts of the world and is known to many
VIPs, during the course of her duties. It is planned
that she should go to Liberia and establish
some connection. The purpose would be to
approach the Government of Liberia with the
view to open an office for Orbitair.

She will then either try to bribe somebody to
poison the President of Liberia or she may do
it herself. She will find out whether the
President of Liberia has a swimming pool
and poison it with a highly dangerous
acid called phentic acid. It would
not matter how many people are affected
provided his Excellency is affected also.

When this is successful, it is
anticipated that there will be chaos and
instability.

It is also believed that the present
Government of Liberia is too western and
cannot be relied upon particularly on
Pan-African matters. It is again believed that
Liberia is not giving President Sekou Toure
enough support when Sekou Toure is
struggling with the Portuguese. The opinion
is also that West African countries are not
giving sufficient support to Black Africa.

The latter plan is scheduled to be
executed in June before the O.A.U. Conference
at Rabat.

Figure 4. The "Phentic Acid" Assassination Report.

This time "Patricia Morley" was to assassinate President Tolbert of Liberia by putting phentic acid in his swimming pool. (See Figure 4.) It has been calculated that 200 pounds of carbolic acid mixed into the water of a pool of average size would make a 5 percent solution which

would be efficacious in eliminating athlete's foot, but would be far from lethal unless ingested. Assuming that one could clandestinely slip half a ton of carbolic acid into a pool and mix it — perhaps with an outboard motor — it might be injurious to health if one swam a few laps in it. No prose could describe the prospective odor of such a mixture nor the unlikelihood that an unsuspecting victim would dive into the solution.

In August 1973, Dr. Opal managed to get documents into the hands of Sekou Toure of Guinea. This time, President Toure was to be assassinated with a .39 caliber Wembley (sic) under the direction of Patricia Morley. While Orbitair is a legitimate firm, they have never had any employee by the name of Patricia Morley. In addition to getting the mythical Patricia Morley confused with a real USIA employee who had TDY'ed to Conakry, Sekou Toure managed to combine the Patricia Morley fabrication with the gleanings from all the emigre letters available to his intelligence service and come up with a monster plot against Guinea by all her neighbors. Before the rhetoric died down, Guinea had broken relations with Senegal and the Ivory Coast.

The Senegalese were contacted in December 1973 by Opal with documentation from the "Free Africa Committee" about an alleged plot to kill President Senghor, again with that ".39 caliber Wembley." A second plot by Patricia Morley against Senghor included the use of "phentic" which by now was "like a camera and is operated like a camera."

While Lemuel Walker is still in jail, it is expected that he will be released one of these days. Hermann Essoka, Luis Manuel Gonzalez Mata-Lledo, and Dr. G. H. D. Opal and several others are still free, somewhere, busily sharpening their tools for the next sting. An educational program in some of the African countries has impaired the effectiveness of these forgers/ fabricators, but there is still work to be done in countering Walker and his ilk. With amateur mercenaries like these at work in Africa, it is no wonder that professional Bloc disinformation specialists have been able to turn their attention to other areas.

Footnotes

* "The War Over Secret Warfare," *Newsweek*, 30 September 1974, p. 39.

***Hearings Before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate: "Communist Forgeries," Testimony of Richard Helms, 2 June 1961 (GPO, 1961) and "Testimony of Lawrence Britt (Ladislav Bittman)," 5 May 1971 (GPO, 1971).*

*Meeting 30 September 1972, Toure and U.S. Ambassador Terrence Todman.

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