

The Many Truths of Tokyo Sexwale

Evelyn Groenink

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Based on the average track record of FIFA presidents so far, Tokyo Sexwale seems the perfect candidate

Mosima Gabriel 'Tokyo' Sexwale once told a South African business magazine that he achieved his present enormous wealth -estimated at over US\$ 200 million- by simply "striking it very lucky" as soon as he started operating a diamond mine in Angola : he had, he said, immediately hit a large diamond layer. For the rest, he humbly added, he was just a "struggle veteran," a close comrade of legendary anti-apartheid freedom fighter Chris Hani and more or less -that is in the words of his friend, French oil and diamond tycoon Jean Yves Ollivier- a 'spiritual son' of Nelson Mandela (1).

The words 'anti-apartheid struggle' and 'Nelson Mandela' were not predominant in my mind, however, when, one morning during the late nineties at his Mvelaphanda Diamonds head office in Rosebank, Johannesburg, Tokyo Sexwale warned me against doing any further investigations into the murder of Chris Hani, who had been assassinated several years before, in 1993. "I know many journalists," Sexwale told me at that occasion in what seemed like an attempt at a fatherly tone of voice. "And I know that journalists don't know how to protect themselves.

It is very easy to organise something like a car accident to happen to them. And I called you to tell you that there are people in the intelligence services who don't like what you are doing at all. I thought I should warn you."

As I was still reeling from what I was hearing, sitting on a plastic chair in the Mvelaphanda kitchen - since for some reason we could not have this conversation in his office-, Sexwale then proceeded to admonish me that I should never tell anybody about what he just said. "Or we will no longer be friends."

But we had never been friends

I had interviewed Sexwale in the months before that about his close friendships, post-struggle, with foreign oil-and-diamond tycoons and even arms dealers. I had asked him particularly about his friendship with Alain Guenon, a man whose name I had encountered whilst investigating the murders of ANC representative Dulcie September in Paris in 1988; Namibian liberation movement SWAPO lawyer Anton Lubowski in 1989; and now also Chris Hani (2).

Arms deals and foreign businessmen

I had no hard evidence showing that Guenon had killed anybody. But I had interviewed French foreign legion mercenaries and others who knew of him as a middleman between South African apartheid military intelligence and French arms interests. I had established that Guenon had negotiated arms deals between French businesses and representatives of both the old apartheid and the new governments in South Africa; in the case of the new ANC government, Tokyo Sexwale had played a role. I also had testimonies from close associates of French-based anti-apartheid activist and ANC representative Dulcie September that she had firmly opposed French arms deals - particularly also when it came to such deals with the ANC- before she had been murdered in 1988.

I had also published about Guenon's short-lived friendship with Anton Lubowski shortly before the latter was assassinated a year later; about Guenon's diamond interests in Namibia and Angola; his Angolan mining partnership - according to UK based investigative agency Kroll- with Italian mafia money man Vito Palazzolo; and about his close contacts with the South African military intelligence unit that in all likelihood supervised the Lubowski murder.

I had then asked Sexwale about his own friendship with Guenon, who had - posing as a French Socialist Party member and anti-apartheid supporter- infiltrated many in the ANC community in Johannesburg in the early nineties. Guenon had become a close associate of Winnie Mandela, impressing her and many around her with talk

of diamonds; he had then helped set up a few returning exiles and former prisoners in houses and businesses in Boksburg, an (as it turned out later) heavily military-intelligence monitored town to the south of Johannesburg. Chris Hani and Tokyo Sexwale had been among the ANC people thus 'helped.'

According to ANC talk at the time the two, Sexwale and Hani, had only met for the first time during these days; ANC politician Mondli Gungubele was overheard telling people that he had been the one who had introduced them to one another.

Being 'open'

When interviewing Tokyo Sexwale about these early days, I had asked him if his diamond interests had perhaps also been helped along by Guenon. Or by Vito Palazzolo, who had been involved with the diamond company Trans Hex before it was taken over by Sexwale. Or by Guenon's very senior friend oil-and-diamond-and arms tycoon Jean Yves Ollivier. Olivier was and is a kingpin of the 'Francafrique' power network in Africa, a 'person of interest' in France's arms-for-oil-for-money-for- French politicians 'Angolagate' scandal; and 'godfather' to many an African dictator presiding over rich natural resources. It was just remarkable how Ollivier's and Tokyo's friendship had developed simultaneously with Tokyo's 'luck' in striking diamonds.

In a previous interview, Sexwale had made no secret of his friendship with Ollivier and neither had he denied having been close to Alain Guenon. "I looked up to this man, he was an important advisor," he had told me. "I

am so shocked by what you are saying now. We never suspected that such a man could have links with the enemy.”

Sexwale was probably right that he wouldn't have known about the 'apartheid' side of Guenon, at least initially. But the warning I received in the Mvelaphanda kitchen meant at the very least, that he wouldn't want anybody else to know about that either, as much as he wouldn't want anybody else to know that his 'lucky wealth' might have had something to do with his remarkable friendships. Particularly not when others, who had rejected discussions with foreign businessmen in the arms and diamond sectors, had ended up dead. “Yes, there were those who refused to have any part in such discussions and those like me who were more open,” he had said to me in a previous interview, taken place just before that strange morning in Rosebank.

A million houses

As far as Sexwale's role in the anti-apartheid struggle itself, there is no doubt that he was once a firebrand, ready to fight the regime that was oppressing him as a black person. He had participated in the Black Consciousness movement and gone into exile. He had received military engineering training in the Soviet Union in 1975, after which he had returned to South Africa in 1976 with the instruction to carry out a military operation against the apartheid regime. He had however been arrested before he had been able to carry out his instructions and had then been in jail on Robben Island until he was freed in June 1990, four months after Nelson Mandela.

After the initial settling period back in Johannesburg and Boksburg,

playing a political role in the local ANC and helping to enable the acquisition of missile parts from French-led arms company Advanced Electronics and Engineering -where Guenon was a middleman- for the ANC in 1992, Tokyo Sexwale was appointed prime minister for the Gauteng province around Johannesburg in 1994, a position he held for the next four years. During that time he became most famous for his promise to build no less than a million houses at a rate of 150 000 per year in the province. The plan had been proposed to him by yet another foreign businessman : Bart Dorrestein of construction company Stocks & Stocks, which had built the 'Lost City' addition to South Africa's homeland gambling-and-entertainment Valhalla Sun City and was now building a gambling house in Namibia (where, incidentally, mafia man Vito Palazzolo had earlier applied to obtain casino rights.)

However, to build that many houses in so short a time was as impossible as it was bizarre. Additionally, -even if by some miracle these houses were going to be built in time-, to expect one million penniless people to then carry the cost in mortgage debts was asking for a credit crisis. The craziness of the endeavour gravely annoyed realistic ANC leaders like Joe Slovo, the then national housing Minister, who was trying hard to implement more practical affordable housing strategies for the countries' poor majority. The fact that it was never carried out surprised no one.

Legion d'Honneur

Tokyo Sexwale was back in the limelight in 1995, when he was given

France's prestigious 'Legion d'Honneur' medal. Observers in that country never found out for which merits for the French nation Sexwale was thus honoured, but reckoned it must have had to do with his friendship with Jean-Yves Ollivier (It was from that time the French secret service newsletter Africa Intelligence started nicknaming him 'frenchie:'). Two years later, in 1997, Sexwale -together with fellow Jean-Yves Ollivier associate Sivule Xayiya-founded Mvelaphanda Diamonds and started becoming very, very rich indeed.

Perhaps it is only apt and fitting that, in 2015, Tokyo Sexwale is a candidate to follow in the footsteps of yet another foreign businessman -Sepp Blatter- and create some positive publicity for the troubled FIFA organisation. Sexwale is certainly charismatic and charming enough to do that. He also probably needs a break from a recent acrimonious divorce, featuring a fight about a house donated to him by Jean Yves Ollivier and tales, -also reported in South Africa's Sunday Times but sadly not available online-, of Tokyo threatening household staff with guns whilst saying 'he was trained to kill in Russia.'

Tokyo Sexwale will be a great FIFA president if the job description centres

around a capacity for public presentation, charm, charisma, and deal-making. But if FIFA wants a new president to be a strong institutional manager, capable of implementing projects and practically sorting out the organisations' troubled affairs, it should maybe look elsewhere.

Evelyn Groenink is ZAM's investigations editor. During her investigations into the murders of Dulcie September, Anton Lubowski and Chris Hani, she met Tokyo Sexwale a number of times.

1. From an interview with Ollivier by Dominique Nasplezes in *Politique Internationale*, 1999

2. This article only deals with Sexwale's own foreign, mainly French, connections. However, in the case of the Hani murder, many more arms deal interests besides French ones converged. The biggest beneficiary of the South African arms deal, which Hani had opposed, was British Aerospace, which had its own links to South Africa's military intelligence services. Also read this article.

3. Though Jean-Yves Ollivier, in the same interview, would refer to him as the 'first prime minister of South Africa.'

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