Threats of Communist expansion in Apartheid South Africa: NP claims versus CIA intelligence perspectives in the years 1960 to 1990

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Abstract

There is a popular perception that the threat of Soviet expansionism during the time of South Africa's Border War (1966-1989) was a fabrication by the National Party government to motivate young men to fight to maintain Apartheid as the main political ideology. This perception is voiced by numerous authors of "grensliteratuur", as well as some historians, e.g. Baines and Drewett. The claim of the National Party was that the Soviet Union attempted to expand its political influence in South Africa in order to obtain control over South Africa's mineral resources and the country's strategically located shipping routes and harbours. This article uses declassified CIA intelligence reports to engage with both claims, and asks: Was Soviet/Communist expansion in South Africa true or a fabrication? The finding is that the CIA shared Botha and Malan's views, and since CIA reports – unlike ministerial speeches – were not intended for wide circulation, they cannot be accused of serving propaganda purposes. The conclusion is therefore that the declassified documents indicate that the NP Goverments of Malan and his successors agreed with the CIA, and therefore the claim of a Soviet threat in Namibia and Angola cannot be labelled an NP fabrication.

Keywords: PW Botha; Border War; Cold War; USSR; Soviet Union; South Africa; Namibia; Angola; Communism.

Introduction

It has become fashionable in South Africa to claim that the threat of Communism during the time of the Border War (1966-1989) was a fabrication proposed by the National Party (NP) government to convince soldiers to fight to maintain Apartheid as the main political ideology. This is particularly clear in some soldiers' narratives of this war. In *Pionne* [Pawns], Bertie Cloete believes the NP government used young men, which he calls *pawns*, to further their selfish goals, and that the threat of Communism was

a constructed fiction: "Als was deeglik beplan en uitgewerk. [...] Maak van die Kommunis die vyand. Die een wat, net soos die Kakies, ons land wil afneem" [Everything had been planned meticulously. Make the Communist the enemy. The one that, just like the British, wanted to take our country].[1] Similarly, in Ben Viljoen's *'n Nuwe wildernis* [A new wilderness], the character Leo remarks: "Om te dink daar was 'n tyd toe ek daai 'bullshit' geglo het" [To think there was a time when I believed that bullshit],[2] and in *Kopwond* [Head wound], Feinstein believes that: "... alle oorloë boos is, laat staan nog 'n oorlog wat apartheid in stand wil hou" [... all wars are evil, let alone a war that aims at maintaining Apartheid].[3]

Many historians support the abovementioned view; for example, most of the contributors to Baines and Vale[4] do not see the war as a defence against Communism. Drewett for instance believes that despite Cold War co-operation between South Africa and the West, the war "was essentially a war in defence of the Apartheid system".[5] Baines also disputes the notion that Communism was a threat: "As a social construct [the war] encoded the views of (most) whites who believed the Apartheid regime's rhetoric that the SADF was shielding its citizens from the "rooi/swart gevaar"; the supposed coterminous threat of Communism and black nationalism".[6] These views echo the ANC's official view, as propagated by the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC): "while some acts of regional destabilization may have been a defence against Communism, the purpose of the war was also to preserve white minority rule in South Africa and was, therefore, a race war".[7]

Note, however, that this scepticism did not only come after the end of Apartheid and the Cold War; already in 1982, a classified security report to PW Botha stated: "The impression is created that the total onslaught is something that was thought up by government-advisors to draw attention

1 B Cloete, *Pionne* (Hermanus, Hemel & See, 2009), p. 128.
2 B Viljoen, *'n Nuwe wildernis* (Cape Town, Human & Rousseau, 2013), p. 71.
3 A Feinstein, *Kopwond: Vergete slagoffers van die Bosoorlog* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2011), p. 13.
4 G Baines & P Vale (eds.), *Beyond the Border War. New perspectives on South Africa's late-Cold War conflicts* (Pretoria, UNISA, 2008).
5 M Drewett, "The construction and subversion of gender stereotypes in popular cultural representations of the Border War", G Baines & P Vale (eds.), *Beyond the Border War. New perspectives on South Africa's late-Cold War conflicts* (Pretoria, UNISA, 2008), p. 94.
6 G Baines, "Coming to terms with the 'Border War' in post-apartheid South Africa" (Unpublished winter school lecture, National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, 2008), p. 2.
7 South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, 1998, pp. 43-44.

away from our country's problems".[8]

Countering this scepticism, Giliomee claims: "Die kommunistiese gevaar het geensins slegs in die verbeelding van PW Botha en Magnus Malan bestaan nie" [The threat of Communism was not simply the product of the imaginations of PW Botha and Magnus Malan].[9] Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd himself once remarked: "South Africa is unequivocally the symbol of anti-Communism in Africa. Although often abused, we are also still a bastion in Africa for Christianity and the Western world".[10] Similarly, Gen. Jannie Geldenhuys objects to a reviewer's comment that he should write that the South African Defence Force (SADF) was sent to Namibia to maintain Apartheid,[11] and PW Botha claimed:[12]

> It was not a race war! It was a war against Cuban and Russian Communism. I predicted that there would be a Total Onslaught against South Africa. I said it in parliament – there is a Total Onslaught, psychologically, politically, economically and militarily. And I said we should develop a Total Strategy against it. In the eighties, the onslaught against South Africa was greater than before. It was an onslaught that revealed itself in South Africa, Angola, the fall of the Portuguese territories, and fuelled by international powers, including Russia and Cuba who played a major role.

J-A Stemmet writes: "But for the government this [the Communist threat] was all very real".[13] Was the threat of Communism a legitimate perception or a fabrication by the National Party (NP) government? This article compares these statements and others made by politicians and generals of the SADF with documents from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), to investigate whether the threat of Communism in South Africa was a fabrication by the NP government, or a genuine perceived threat held by the West during the

8 Quoted in J-A Stemmet, "Botha's Babylon and the big brawl: Reflections on the way that the regime of PW Botha viewed the international anti-apartheid campaign", *Journal for Contemporary History* 30(3), 2005, p. 19.

9 H Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners.'n Biografie* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2004), p. 547.

10 Quoted in P Vale, "The Cold War and South Africa: Repetitions and revisions on a prolegomenon", G Baines & P Vale (eds.), *Beyond the Border War. New perspectives on Southern Africa's late-Cold War conflicts* (Pretoria, UNISA, 2008), p. 22.

11 J Geldenhuys, *Dié wat gewen het. Feite en fabels van die Bosoorlog* (Pretoria, Litera, 2007), p. 261.

12 J-A Stemmet (Personal Collection), interview, PW Botha (former President, RSA/J-A Stemmet (Researcher, UFS, History Departement), 13 October 2000. Translated from the following original interview text: "Dit was nie 'n rasse-oorlog nie! Dit was 'n oorlog teen Kubaanse en Russiese Kommunisme. Ek het voorspel dat daar 'n Totale Aanslag teen Suid-Afrika is. Ek het dit in die parlement gesê – daar is 'n Totale Aanslag, sielkundig, polities, ekonomies en militêr. En ek het gesê ons moet 'n Totale Strategie daarteen ontwikkel. In die tagtigerjare was die aanslag teen Suid-Afrika groter as te vore. Dit was 'n aanslag wat homself geopenbaar het in Suid-Afrika, in Angola, in die val van die Portugese gebiede en aangevuur deur internasionale magte, waaronder Rusland en Kuba 'n groot rol gespeel het."

13 J-A Stemmet, "Botha's Babylon and the big brawl ...", *Journal for Contemporary History* 30(3), 2005, p. 20.

Cold War. The advantage of using declassified CIA intelligence reports (most of it formerly classified as "Top Secret"), is that because these reports were not intended for general circulation, they cannot be accused of serving propaganda purposes. While PW Botha may have claimed that Communism was a threat in order to motivate soldiers to fight on the border for NP interests, Top Secret CIA reports aim at providing an accurate assessment of a situation to senior US officials, and what these officials do with these intelligence reports is a different matter. As such, declassified intelligence reports provide a window into the views of the dominant Western intelligence agency during the Cold War – the basis on which strategic decisions were made.

Background

From 1945 to 1990, global politics, particularly in the developing world, were dominated by the interaction between two contexts: that of the Cold War, and that of the liberation of former colonies.[14] The US Counterinsurgency Field Manual recognises:[15]

> The modern era of insurgencies and internal wars began after World War II. Many of the resistance movements against German and Japanese occupation continued after the Axis defeat in 1945. As nationalism rose, the imperial powers declined. Motivated by nationalism and communism, people began forming governments viewed as more responsive to their needs.

For US President Eisenhower, the French War in Indochina, the British conflict in Malaya, and the Korean War, were all part of the same conflict, in which "freedom is pitted against slavery; lightness against dark".[16] Stalin's focus on Europe after WWII motivated the US to retreat from its earlier position of supporting liberation movements in the Third World, since it needed strong allies, and a weakening of European colonies was considered detrimental to the US position. Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh was influenced by the writings of Vladimir Lenin and Karl Marx, although he did not adopt Leninist policies wholesale and clashed with Joseph Stalin during his time in the Soviet Union.[17] He initially approached the US for aid, but even if he had

14 Parts of this background are based on B Senekal, *The literary representation of identity and alienation in counterinsurgencies: Vietnam and Namibia/Angola* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of the Free State, 2013).

15 D Petraeus, *The U.S. Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency field manual* (Washington, Department of the Army and Department of the Navy, 2006), p. 1-4.

16 A Wiest, "Introduction: An American war?", A Wiest (ed.), *Rolling thunder in a gentle land. The Vietnam War revisited* (Oxford, Osprey, 2006), p. 29.

17 W LaFeber, "The United States and Vietnam: The enemies", DL Anderson & J Ernst (eds.), *The war that never*

not allied himself with Communist ideology, the US could not undermine its French allies in Indochina by helping Ho's Communist Viet Minh. By 1949, the Communist victory in the Chinese civil war, the Berlin Blockade, and the discovery that the Soviet Union had successfully built a nuclear bomb, lent credibility to US notions that Communism intended to expand, and this view was further reinforced by the outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950.[18]

The fall of China to Communism had a tremendous impact on the region: The US had decided to strengthen Japan as a buffer to Communist expansion, but Japan needed an environment to trade in. The fear was that if Indochina turned to Communism, it would seek trading partners in Communist China and the USSR rather than in Japan, and thus the US began direct military support for the French in Indochina in 1950.[19] In need of funding, Ho eventually turned to his Communist neighbours, which only strengthened US fears that a Domino Effect was taking place. China supported the Viet Minh with aid, weapons and training, their new leader, Mao Zedong, promising: "Whatever China has and Vietnam needs".[20] By 1954, the US was financing 80% of the French effort in Indochina.[21] After Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev believed that trade with emerging South East Asian nations would strengthen the Soviet economy and therefore supported Communist insurgent movements,[22] e.g. the Viet Minh in Indochina. A CIA Current Intelligence Bulletin of the time stated their fear that Communism intended to expand in the region: "The Embassy feels that after the seizure of Laos and the establishment there of a puppet government the Viet Minh may use the same strategy in Cambodia, thus splitting Southeast Asia in two".[23] These fears would only be realised after 1975.

When the French departed from Indochina, the US bolstered the regimes of Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam with financial aid, weapons, and military trainers, in order to counter the renewed interest shown in the region by China and the USSR. By 1960, China was supporting insurgencies

ends. New perspectives on the Vietnam War (Kentucky, University of Kentucky Press, 2007), p. 37.

18 MK Hall, *The Vietnam War* (Great Britain, Pearson, 2008), p. 7.

19 JA Nagl, Counterinsurgency in Vietnam: American organizational culture and learning", D Marston & C Malkasian (eds.), *Counterinsurgency in modern warfare* (New York, Osprey, 2008), p. 132.

20 CE Neu, *America's lost war: Vietnam: 1945-1975* (Illinois, Harlan Davidson, 2005), p. 9.

21 W LaFeber, "The United States and Vietnam...", DL Anderson & J Ernst (eds.), *The war that never ends...,* p. 40.

22 W LaFeber, "The United States and Vietnam...", DL Anderson & J Ernst (eds.), *The war that never ends...,* p. 42.

23 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "French general foresees Viet Minh bridgehead in Thailand", *Current Intelligence Bulletin*, 24 April 1953, p. 5.

more vigorously than the USSR, in particular the National Liberation Front (NLF), better known as the Viet Cong, in Vietnam. Khrushchev's removal from power in October 1964 initiated a more active Soviet response,[24] which contributed to the escalation of US involvement in South Vietnam.

Hall writes: "Having learned the lessons of appeasing totalitarian states from World War II, American leaders assumed the worst-case scenario. Containment was designed to avoid repeating that earlier mistake, and Americans believed that Vietnam's attempt to gain independence fitted the pattern of Communist aggression."[25] However, "no dominoes fell outside Indochina," for "the United States mistakenly attributed its local origins to international Communism." A. Codevilla and P. Seabury do not share this perspective, and argue that during the Cold War, the Soviet Union: "infiltrated anti-colonial movements [...] and used them as proxies against Western interests."[26] Martin van Creveld's view is also at odds with Hall's.[27] He believes the original goals of US involvement in Vietnam included fighting Communism and preserving a pro-Capitalist democracy in South Vietnam. Furthermore, regimes in South East Asia did fall to Communism after the Vietnam War: At the time of the North's successful takeover of South Vietnam in 1975, both Cambodia and Laos fell to Communist forces. The effects of this collapse was felt not only in material terms, but also provided hope of success to other Communist "liberation" forces. A. Wiest calls the US part of the conflict in Vietnam "a signal moment in the history of decolonization",[28] and P. Bobbit also remarks that the 1975 Communist victory was an important moment for many liberation movements.[29] Indeed most of the so-called "wars of national liberation" – a term used by Krushchev in 1961[30] – followed after the French withdrawal in 1954, and many of these movements were directly inspired by the Viet Minh and later NLF example. The Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) emulated the Viet Minh,[31] and even the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) was later inspired by the Vietnamese Tet offensive.[32]

24 MK Hall, *The Vietnam War...*, p. 24.
25 MK Hall, *The Vietnam War...*, p. 81.
26 A Codevilla & P Seabury, *War. Ends and means* (Washington, Potomac, 2006), p. 176.
27 M van Creveld, *The transformation of war* (London, The Free Press, 1991), p. 147.
28 A Wiest, "Introduction...", A Wiest (ed.), *Rolling thunder in a gentle land...*, p. 24.
29 P Bobbit, *The shield of Achilles. War, peace and the course of history* (London, Penguin, 2003), p. 59.
30 D Kilcullen, *The accidental guerilla. Fighting small wars in the midst of a big one* (London, Hurst & Co., 2009), p. 7.
31 D Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency redux", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 48(4), 2006, p. 113.
32 R Iron, "Britain's longest war: Northern Ireland 1967-2007", D Marston & C Malkasian (eds.), *Counterinsurgency in modern warfare* (New York, Osprey, 2008), p. 173.

Chinese and Soviet support for insurgents was of course not limited to South East Asia, and during Cold War insurgencies, the vast majority of insurgents had Communist ties. In Rhodesia, cadres from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) were trained in Algeria, Egypt, and the Soviet bloc, whereas the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was aided by Communist China, North Korea, Libya, and Yugoslavia.[33] The military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) [The Spear of the Nation], were trained in Odessa in the Ukraine[34] and had close Communist ties: ANC and MK leaders, including Oliver Tambo, Joe Slovo, Thabo Mbeki, Chris Hani and Joe Modise, for instance, visited General Giap in Vietnam in 1978.[35] Similarly, the conflict in Namibia was strongly tied to the Communist countries. The military wing of the South-West Africa Peoples' Organisation (SWAPO), the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), was formed in 1962, and PLAN fighters were trained in Algeria, China, Egypt, Ghana, the Soviet Union, and Tanzania from 1963.[36] By the time of the first armed clash between South African security forces and PLAN (1966), most of Southern Africa was being infiltrated by Communist-inspired and –aided insurgencies, and thus the South African government adopted Eisenhower's notion of the Domino Effect: if Angola, Mozambique, and Rhodesia fell to Communism, South Africa would remain as the last bastion of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. After Angola and Mozambique did fall in 1975, South Africa would halt Communist expansion in Ovamboland (northern Namibia).

Since the war of liberation against Portugal, the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola or MPLA) had been aligned with Communist forces, particularly the USSR and Cuba. The first Cuban military contingents arrived in Angola by mid-1975,[37] and in 1983, the Soviet Union became even more involved when it issued an official warning to South Africa that it would not tolerate the overthrow of the MPLA in Angola.[38] Cuba continued to escalate its support of the MPLA, and by 1988, Birmingham calls their involvement in Angola "far and away" the Soviet Union's "most successful forray (sic) into Africa after the disasters

33 JRT Wood, "Countering the Chimurenga: The Rhodesian counterinsurgency campaign 1962-80", D Marston & C Malkasian (eds.), *Counterinsurgency in modern warfare* (New York, Osprey, 2008), pp. 186-187.

34 E Barlow, *Executive outcomes. Against all odds* (Alberton, Galago, 2007), p. 33.

35 H Hamann, *Days of the generals* (Cape Town, Zebra, 2001), p. 123.

36 R Dale, "A comparative reconsideration of the Namibian Bush War, 1966-89", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 18(2), 2007, p. 203.

37 E Barlow, *Executive outcomes...*, p. 14.

38 R Davies & D O'Meara, "Total strategy in Southern Africa: An analysis of South African regional policy since 1978", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11(2), 1985, p. 206.

of Egypt, Guinea, Ghana, Zaire, Somalia".[39] However, Cuba was forced to supplement its military mission in 1981, 1983, and 1987 to prevent the collapse of the MPLA in the face of military opposition from UNITA.[40]

As a British colony originally founded by the Dutch, South Africa allied itself with the West during both WWI and WWII, and even sent the South African Air Force (SAAF) to Korea. Already in 1949, the new British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, drew South Africa into the Cold War on the side of the West by encouraging co-operation between the UK and South African security services.[41] After independence in 1961, this link with the West remained intact, as it did for the Rhodesians despite their Unilaterally Declared Independence (UDI) in 1965. PW Botha became minister of Defence in 1966, and saw South Africa's security threats in terms of a global East/West struggle in which South Africa would "shoulder its responsibility as an ally of the free world".[42] The Irish-born commando "Mad" Mike Hoare – one of the most notorious mercenaries operating in Africa – also saw South Africa as an ally of the West in the Cold War:[43]

> I see South Africa as the bastion of civilization in an Africa subjected to a total Communist onslaught. In the last 22 years I have watched – in many cases physically battled against – its inexorable encroachment into free Africa and its conquests by default … I see myself in the forefront of this fight (against Communism) for our very existence. I see my men as a noble band of patriots motivated by the same desires.

Even from within the Soviet Union, South Africa's value was acknowledged. Dr. Igor Glagolev, who until he defected to the West in 1976, was a foreign affairs consultant to the Soviet Politburo, appraised South Africa's value to the USSR as follows: [44]

> The Russians are determined to take South Africa and get the full benefit of its tremendous mineral wealth... They know that once they take South Africa, once they take its mineral wealth for themselves and can benefit from its strategic position, they will eventually control the world. If they can take South Africa, nothing can stop them.

39 D Birmingham, "Angola revisited", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15(1), 1988, p. 12.

40 E Dosman, "Countdown to Cuito Cuanavale: Cuba's Angolan campaign", G Baines & P Vale (eds.), *Beyond the Border War. New perspectives on South Africa's late-Cold War conflicts* (Pretoria, UNISA, 2008), p. 209.

41 H Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners...*, p. 445.

42 H Hamann, *Days of the generals...*, pp. 50, 52.

43 Quoted in F Schreier & M Caparini, "Privatising security: Law, practice and governance of private military and security companies" (Occasional Paper no. 6, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), Geneva, 2005), p. 16.

44 PW Botha, Private Collection, INCH: PV 203/PS12/6/1.

As disorder ensued throughout Africa, South Africa's relative stability attracted Western investors, and Western support only wavered after the 1976 Soweto uprisings in South Africa. However, despite official condemnation for Apartheid policies and international opposition in the public sphere, South Africa remained an economic and ideological ally of the West. When the Conservative Thatcher government came to power in Britain in 1979 and Ronald Reagan, a Republican, was sworn in as President of the US in 1980, the global political situation created "greater breathing space for the Apartheid regime internationally".[45] Whether or not Western nations approved of Apartheid policies, South Africa's military capabilities made it an ally of the West. Coker observes: "South Africa's ability... to put the Soviet Union on the defensive in the 1980s, to force it to pay a high cost indeed to maintain its clients in power in Luanda and Maputo, made it a useful Western 'proxy'".[46] As Shimon Peres, one of the Israeli leaders most intimately involved with South Africa in the 1980s, phrases the situation:[47]

> Every decision is not between two perfect situations. Every choice is between two imperfect alternatives. At that time the movement of black South Africa was with Arafat against us. Actually, we did not have much of a choice. But we never stopped denouncing Apartheid. We never agreed with it.

Similarly, in his correspondence with PW Botha, President Reagan wrote: "We recognize fully the developments in your country hold the key to long term stability, development and peace in the region. We are prepared to work with you in pursuing these shared objectives".[48]

A critical evaluation of the Total Onslaught

As the above illustrates, the Domino Theory did find support due to the historical events of the post-WWII world. There are however a few problems with the Domino Theory, as discussed in the following section.

Firstly, one could argue that Communist ties do not necessarily indicate an intention to spread Communism; as is the case in Vietnam where Ho

45 R Davies & D O'Meara, "Total strategy in Southern Africa ...", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11(2), 1985, p. 205.
46 C Coker, "'Experiencing' Southern Africa in the twenty-first century", *International Affairs*, 67(2), 1991, p. 282.
47 C Mcgreal, "Brothers in arms – Israel's secret pact with Pretoria", *The Guardian Unlimited*, 2 September 2006.
48 Quoted in J-A Stemmet, "Botha's Babylon and the big brawl...", *Journal for Contemporary History* 30(3), 2005, p. 22.

Chi Minh at first looked towards the West for aid, but only found backing in Communist China and the USSR. Communist ties may simply indicate the willingness of Communist countries to sponsor insurgencies aimed at overthrowing colonial regimes; Communist authors often emphasise that aid from the Soviet Union was in support of 'liberation', while underplaying the spread of Soviet influence. Ronnie Kasrils for instance claims in reference to the names of Cuban soldiers on the Freedom Park Memorial Wall, "Those patriots and internationalists were motivated by a single goal—the end of racial rule and genuine African independence. After thirteen years defending Angolan sovereignty, the Cubans took nothing home except the bones of their fallen and Africa's gratitude."[49] In this view, Soviet aid is purely altruistic, a view also shared by V. Shubin's[50] claim that Russia merely supported wars against oppression during the Cold War.

At a meeting between Samora Machel and Soviet officials in May 1976: "President Podgorny affirmed Moscow's record of support for African 'liberation' struggles and pledged Soviet support for revolutionary movements against Rhodesia, South Africa, and Pretoria's control of Namibia".[51] Such an affirmation of Soviet involvement in Southern Africa could be seen as not necessarily indicating the expansion of Soviet influence, but could be construed as simply aiding "liberation movements". The same applies to the sponsoring of the ANC, as noted in a CIA National Intelligence Daily Cable of 1979:[52]

> The African National Congress – South Africa's principal black insurgent group – has increased its military capabilities in the past two years but it still lacks effective leadership, organization, and trained manpower to play a significant role in destabilizing South Africa in the near future. The group is receiving military aid from the USSR, Cuba, and East Germany, and recruits are training at bases in several neighbouring black African countries, as well as in Libya and Cuba.

PW Botha, however, claimed that South Africa was attacked by a "Total Onslaught", of which Stemmet writes: "Die Totale Aanslag het daarop neergekom dat die wêreldwye anti-apartheid-veldtogte deel van 'n uitgebreide

49 R Kasrils, Cuito Cuanavale, Angola, *Monthly Review*, 64(1), April 2013 (available at: http://monthlyreview.org/2013/04/01/cuito-cuanavale-angola, as accessed on 28 February 2014).

50 V Shubin, *The hot "Cold War". The USSR in Southern Africa* (Scottsville, University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 2008), pp. 1-3.

51 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "USSR-Mozambique", *National Intelligence Daily Cable*, 20 May 1976, p. 6.

52 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "South Africa: The African National Congress", *National Intelligence Daily Cable*, 31 March 1979, p. 11.

Russiese komplot was om Suid-Afrika in te palm as deel van 'n strewe om die wêreld te annekseer" [The Total Onslaught meant that global anti-apartheid campaigns were part of an extended Russian plot to capture South Africa as part of a quest to annex the world].[53] This view is formulated clearly by General Magnus Malan in 1981:[54]

> After a hundred years the imperial motive again forms the greatest threat to our young republic's independence - in this case in the form of the Russian expansion drive. This time it is the Soviet Union that casts longing eyes at South Africa, because of this country's mineral wealth and strategic position with regard to the sea route that runs around the Cape. To satisfy the Soviet Union's expansion ideals, Black African nationalism is harnessed and manipulated with diabolical ingenuity and turned against the RSA.

During the spring of 1983, PW Botha made an almost identical claim: [55]

> South Africa is strategically important – because of its military and economic strengths as well as its strategic mineral production, its transport network and its modern harbours. Russian expansionism is threatening us and in spite of that other western countries are reluctant to acknowledge our real value.

The implication is thus that Communism, according to Botha, intended to expand – not "decolonization" – and that South Africa was on the list of countries threatened by this expansion. In particular, South Africa's mineral resources and strategic position in terms of shipping routes is emphasised by both Malan and Botha. Were these politicians being truthful, or – as the authors mentioned in the introduction claim – were they fabricating a cause to motivate young men to fight for Apartheid and NP power? Note however that both emphasise "Russian expansionism" as opposed to a monolithic "Communist" expansion; this difference suggests a further question on the issue: Were Communist countries operating in unison, or were other factors at play? These questions are addressed in the following sections.

53 J-A Stemmet, "'Skimmespel van die waarsêers': Politieke sensuur in Suid-Afrika, c.1980-1989. 'n Historiese perspektief", *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 49(1), 2009, p. 89.

54 J-A Stemmet & BA Senekal, Teeninsurgensie Privaat Argief, Dokument 10101981001, Ongepubliseerde toespraak. M Malan, Toespraak gelewer by Krugerdagviering te Bokfontein, 1981, p. 2. Translated from the following original text: "Na 'n honderd jaar vorm die imperiale motief wéér die grootste bedreiging vir ons jong republiek se onafhanklikheid – in hierdie geval in die vorm van die Russiese uitbreidingsdrang. Hierdie keer is dit die Soviëtunie wat met begerige oë na Suid-Afrika kyk, vanweë hierdie land se bronnebegaafdheid en sy strategiese ligging ten opsigte van die seeroete wat on die Kaap loop. Om sy uitbreidingsoogmerke te bevredig, word Swart Afrika-nasionalisme met diaboliese vernuf teen die RSA ingespan en gemanipuleer".

55 H Murray, "Interview, PW Botha", *Leadership SA*, 2(3), 1983, p. 20. Another part of the Total Onslaught was the political, psychological, and economic onslaught, as discussed in another article.

The threat of Soviet expansionism in Southern Africa

Throughout the Angolan conflict, the CIA estimated that the Soviet Union intended to expand its influence. For instance, on 22 November 1975 – shortly after Angola's independence – the CIA speculated in a Central Intelligence Bulletin:[56]

> Strategically, Angola may be of some interest to the Soviets if they are contemplating expansion of their naval activities in the South Atlantic. Politically, an Angola run by people well-disposed to the Soviets could provide a platform from which Soviet influence might expand into adjacent areas, particularly southern Africa.

This view is reiterated in CIA reports in later years, and a CIA National Intelligence Cable reported in March 1978 that the Communist threat influenced the independence process in Namibia:[57]

> Many South Africans believe that the US is adopting a tougher policy toward Soviet and Cuban involvement in Africa, but they draw various inferences. Some South Africans apparently think the US and other Western sponsors of the Namibian settlement talks may now tolerate a South African unilateral solution in Namibia. Others believe that heightened Western wariness of the Communist threat may make it safer for South Africa to accept the Western settlement package, arguing that the West can now be trusted not to condone truce violations by SWAPO.

Although the above report refers to South African "perceptions", the view that the Soviet Union intended to expand its sphere of influence – using Angola in particular – is reiterated in various subsequent CIA documents. Of particular importance is a CIA Interagency Intelligence Memorandum of 1982, entitled *Moscow and the Namibia peace process*, which states: "The Soviets want to protect their geopolitical interests in southern Africa. Angola is central to those interests, serving as the main Soviet entree to the region and as a point for further expansion of Moscow's influence".[58] The Soviet Union was particularly concerned over the possibility of a negotiated settlement regarding Namibian independence that would allow for the withdrawal of South Africa from Namibia on the condition that Cuban forces would be

56 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "The USSR's high profile in Angola", *Central Intelligence Bulletin*, 22 November 1975, p. A3.

57 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "Namibia: political decisions", *National Intelligence Daily Cable*, 15 March 1978, p. 4.

58 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "Moscow and the Namibia peace process", *Interagency Intelligence Memorandum*, 7 April 1982, p. 9.

withdrawn from Angola as well,[59] and aimed to derail the peace talks:[60]

> Moscow has become apprehensive about the current Contact Group initiative on Namibia, largely because of the potential repercussions on Soviet geopolitical interests in southern Africa, particularly Angola. Moscow views the US-backed initiative as an ill-disguised attempt to reverse the events of the mid-1970s. It would strongly resist a settlement that led to a major setback in Angola – particularly at the hands of a US administration that it perceives as challenging its position around the globe. [...] The Soviets have already taken steps to impede the Contact Group initiative. These steps include propaganda and disinformation campaigns, bilateral discussions, and offers of military and economic assistance designed to push the key African players to oppose the negotiations. Moscow also is encouraging the Cubans to lobby on its behalf. Such moves demonstrate Moscow's potential for influencing the Namibia talks and its willingness to use its influence in defence of Soviet interests in the region.

Namibia was the next target as part of a long-term plan to dominate the entire Southern Africa, as the Interagency Intelligence Memorandum states: "Since at least the mid-1970s, the Soviets have seen Namibian independence as an integral part of the liberation struggle that they hope will eventually lead to the establishment of black majority rule and governments favourably disposed toward the USSR throughout southern Africa".[61] South Africa was the ultimate goal. "The problem for Moscow is maintaining its influence in Angola and with the rest of the Frontline States, whatever happens in Namibia, so as to be in a position to pursue its long-term regional objective of toppling the minority regime in Pretoria".[62] It is therefore clear that the CIA believed that the Soviet Union did in fact threaten South Africa through Angola and Namibia, as PW Botha had claimed. However, Moscow's clients did not necessarily share its views, and often used the Soviet Union as much as they were being used:[63]

> While Moscow has considerable influence within SWAPO – particularly with the military commanders – there is a significant element in SWAPO that is not pro-Soviet and most likely sees relations with the USSR as a necessary evil. Nujoma himself enjoys friendly relations with the Soviets and has leaned increasingly to the left in recent years, but he is probably more an opportunist than a committed Marxist.

59 CIA, "Moscow and the Namibia ...", *Interagency Intelligence Memorandum*, 7 April 1982, p. 2.
60 CIA, "Moscow and the Namibia ...", *Interagency Intelligence Memorandum*, 7 April 1982, pp. 1-2.
61 CIA, "Moscow and the Namibia ...", *Interagency Intelligence Memorandum*, 7 April 1982, pp. 5-7.
62 CIA, "Moscow and the Namibia ...", *Interagency Intelligence Memorandum*, 7 April 1982, p. 9.
63 CIA, "Moscow and the Namibia ...", *Interagency Intelligence Memorandum*, 7 April 1982, p. 11.

At the same time, South Africa was countering Soviet efforts at expanding its influence, most notably through the effective use of the SADF:[64]

> Pretoria is motivated by a desire to preserve its preeminent position in the region and to counter Soviet influence. In pursuing those interests, its aggressive tactics have fostered an unwillingness on the part of Frontline States to engage in activity likely to provoke a strong South African reaction; the Soviets, for example, have had little success in persuading Frontline leaders to provide greater and more visible support to the ANC.

While the effectiveness of the SADF as punishment for collaboration with the NP's enemies acted as a deterrent, the Soviet Union also exploited the fears of the Frontline States (Angola, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana, and from 1980, Zimbabwe) to create a market for arms, thus providing both the problem and the solution to security concerns. In conclusion, the Interagency Intelligence Memorandum states: "the Soviets would continue their practice of exploiting the regional instability which creates a need for Soviet arms assistance, presence, and therefore influence".[65]

The view that South Africa could be the USSR's ultimate target is reiterated in a CIA Intelligence Estimate of 1984: "The Soviets also seek access to southern African landing fields and ports for their air and naval forces. Soviet long-term objectives may also include denial or obstruction of Western access to the region's strategic mineral resources".[66] Note in particular how this document affirms both Malan and Botha's abovementioned claims in detail: the Soviet Union sought to install a friendly government in South Africa to gain access to shipping routes and mineral resources.

In February 1985, the CIA reported in a National Intelligence Estimate entitled, *Soviet Policies in Southern Africa*, that the USSR's key objectives in southern Africa over the following 18 months were: [67]

- To ensure its continued influence with the governments of Angola and Mozambique;
- To preserve its access to Angolan military facilities;
- To prevent a Namibian settlement linked to a Cuban withdrawal from Angola,

64 CIA, "Moscow and the Namibia ...", *Interagency Intelligence Memorandum*, 7 April 1982, pp. 11-12.
65 CIA, "Moscow and the Namibia ...", *Interagency Intelligence Memorandum*, 7 April 1982, p. 14.
66 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *Moscow's response to the diplomatic situation in Southern Africa. An intelligence assessmen*t (Central Intelligence Agency, 1984), p. 1.
67 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "Soviet policies in Southern Africa", *National Intelligence Estimate*, 13 February 1985, p. 3.

particularly one that does not provide for a Namibia dominated by the South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO);

- To undermine South African- and US-sponsored regional initiatives with the aim of isolating the United States and South Africa from black Africa;
- To encourage black African suspicions of South African and US perfidy.

According to this intelligence estimate, much of Moscow's concern was linked to its supply of weapons to Southern African states: "A significant further diminution of tensions between South Africa and Angola or Mozambique would reduce Luanda's or Maputo's need for additional Soviet military assistance, Moscow's key instrument of influence building".[68] Again, the CIA believed Moscow attempted: "To enhance over the longer term Soviet access to the region's strategic raw materials and to create the potential to hinder Western access to those resources", and "To obtain, or deny to the West, air and naval access". Interestingly also, Moscow attempted: "To facilitate the polarization of black versus white Africans, and to seek to isolate the United States as the defender of the white South African Government".[69] The report continues:

> To achieve these aims in southern Africa, Moscow has sought to consolidate the regimes in Angola and Mozambique, to bring the South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO) to power in Namibia, and ultimately, to bring down the white minority regime in South Africa.

Hampering the USSR's efforts, were, amongst others: "South Africa's military and economic dominance of the region, including Pretoria's willingness to take military action, directly and through third parties, against black African neighbours".[70] Angola is again named as crucial to Soviet foreign policy:[71]

> Angola is central to Moscow's pursuit of its regional objectives. It affords the USSR entree and access to the region's remaining liberation movements in Namibia and South Africa, serving as a conduit for Soviet aid and training to SWAPO and African National Congress (ANC) insurgents. The Soviets also are capable of monitoring, and exploiting or creating, unrest in neighboring Zaire from Angola.

In terms of South Africa itself, the Soviet Union supplied weapons and training to the ANC, as reiterated in a Special National Intelligence Estimate of 1986: [72]

68 CIA, "Soviet policies ...", *National Intelligence Estimate*, 13 February 1985, p. 3.
69 CIA, "Soviet policies ...", *National Intelligence Estimate*, 13 February 1985, p. 9.
70 CIA, "Soviet policies ...", *National Intelligence Estimate*, 13 February 1985, p. 10.
71 CIA, "Soviet policies ...", *National Intelligence Estimate*, 13 February 1985, p. 11.
72 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "The African National Congress of South Africa: Organization, Communist

> The Soviet Bloc supplies virtually all the military equipment to the MK, and the 500 Cuban and East German instructors present in Angolan training camps provide training to MK recruits, among others. The Soviet Bloc donates all advanced military and sabotage training by means of 'scholarships' to the USSR and East Germany; attendance at such courses seems to be sine e qua non for advancement in the MK hierarchy.

However, the ANC – like SWAPO – did not offer wholesale support for the Soviet Union and Communism, and the USSR concentrated on expanding the South African Communist Party (SACP) to counter the black nationalist agenda: "Soviet support to the ANC is across the board and through multiple channels and seems designed to both enhance the influence of the SACP within the ANC as well as maintain Soviet influence over the broader [information redacted]".[73] As in Namibia, in providing this support, the Soviet Union was again attempting to avoid a peaceful transition: "One of Moscow's major concerns has been that a peaceful reform and gradual elimination of apartheid would reduce the ANC and SACP chances of seizing power".[74]

As was the case with SWAPO, the CIA's Special National Intelligence Estimate of 1986 notes dissention in the ranks of the ANC, also in terms of Communist policies, but nevertheless acknowledges a Communist influence that goes beyond a purely nationalist agenda. The report calls the ANC: "the most popular organization in South Africa, but it is an organization with considerable Communist influence and has extensive and longstanding ties to the Soviet Union, a pro-Soviet posture, and it promotes revolutionary violence".[75] The report suggests that these factors prohibit the US from supporting the ANC, despite the US's objection to the racial policies of the NP government.

This indicates that the issue was not just that insurgencies in Southern Africa were sponsored by Communist regimes, but also that the Soviet Union used the sponsorship of insurgencies in an attempt to expand its sphere of influence. Furthermore, although noting dissention over whether so-called liberation movements were to be nationalist or Communist, the CIA documents show that Communist ideology was part of the motivation of both SWAPO and the ANC. As such, these reports indicate that the narrative of the Communist

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ties, and short-term prospects", *Special National Intelligence Estimate*, July 1986, p. 22.

73 CIA, "The African National Congress ...", *Special National Intelligence Estimate*, July 1986, p. 22. This is one example of information that was redacted by the CIA before the documents were made public, and clearly suggests that there was more sensitive material here.

74 CIA, "The African National Congress...", *Special National Intelligence Estimate*, July 1986, p. 27.

75 CIA, "The African National Congress...", *Special National Intelligence Estimate*, July 1986, p. 26.

threat as proposed by the NP government – particularly by PW Botha and Magnus Malan – can be supported through CIA intelligence reports.

K O'Neill and B Munslow note the importance of Soviet involvement in eventually brokering a settlement on the Namibian and Angolan issues, for Gorbachev's internal reforms also entailed a changing Soviet foreign policy, along with a globally changing political climate.[76] By the late 1980s: "In southern Africa, then, two shibboleths of Soviet policy were finally overturned. One was that the key to change in South Africa lay through the route of armed struggle and the other was the viability of a centralized, state-planned socialist economy".[77] The CIA's intelligence assessment, *Trends in Soviet policy in the Third World under Gorbachev*, states:[78]

> Moscow's approach to regional conflicts has changed substantially. Soviet leaders have opened a dialogue with Washington on these disputes, supported settlement processes in several regions, withdrawn from Afghanistan, and urged client states such as Angola, Cambodia, and Ethiopia to move toward negotiated settlements of disputes and conflicts. The Soviets have continued to supply arms to their allies, however, suggesting that, although they want political resolutions, they are not forcing their clients to accept 'peace at any price'.

Throughout the Border War, the USSR played a major role, and changing Soviet policy was therefore a major contributing factor to the eventual peace settlement, as it had been a major factor in the preceding conflict.

A "united fight of the world's progressive forces against imperialism"

V Shubin's claim of a "united fight of the world's progressive forces against imperialism"[79] ironically supports PW Botha's claims of a Total Communist Onslaught. Luu D Huynh however notes that it would be a mistake to consider Communist China, Cuba and the Soviet Union as forming a "monolithic" opposition to Western influence in the Third World.[80] Already

76 K O'Neill & B Munslow, "Ending the Cold War in Southern Africa", *Third World Quarterly*, 12(3/4), 1990, pp. 86-90.

77 K O'Neill & B Munslow, "Ending the Cold War ...", *Third World Quarterly*, 12(3/4), 1990, p. 89.

78 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *Trends in Soviet policy in the Third World under Gorbachev. An intelligence assessment* (Langley, Central Intelligence Agency, 1989), pp. iii-iiv.

79 V Shubin, *The hot "Cold War". The USSR in Southern Africa* (Scottsville, University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 2008), p. 3.

80 LD Huynh, "The perspective of a Vietnamese witness", DL Anderson & JE Ernst (eds.), *The war that never ends. New perspectives on the Vietnam War* (Kentucky, University of Kentucky Press, 2007), p. 83.

in 1950, the USSR refused to help China build nuclear weapons, and as Peter Hough notes, the fact that the US and China found themselves fighting on the same side questions whether the conflict in Vietnam (and Angola) was wholly ideological and suggests that it should rather be seen in terms of power politics.[81]

Throughout the Cold War, China and the USSR differed on various policy issues. In November 1960, after a three-week-long meeting of world Communist leaders in Moscow, the CIA obtained a summary that: "seems to represent a tactical accord to present a facade of unity despite continuing evidence of Sino-Soviet disagreement".[82] The CIA Central Intelligence Bulletin continues:

> It denounces imperialism in general, with specific emphasis on American imperialism, and condemns Western policies everywhere as aggressive. In contrast, the world Communist movement is presented as unified behind the concept of 'peaceful coexistence,' but the summary does not indicate whether the Soviet or Chinese interpretation of this concept is to prevail. For example, the summary reiterates the long-standing Sino-Soviet agreement that general war can be averted, but it does not deal with the disagreement on the important question of whether, as the Chinese contend, local wars should be expected and even, at times, encouraged.

This suggests a relatively minor difference of opinion on policy between the two major Communist powers, but a CIA Central Intelligence Bulletin of 12 April 1965 notes an even more pronounced conflict between these two powers: [83]

> The Chinese, in their first direct attack on Brezhnev and Kosygin by name, asserted in People's Daily and Red Flag that the Soviet leaders have ulterior motives in giving aid to North Vietnam and that what the Russians have provided is in no way commensurate with Soviet capabilities. Peking claimed that the Soviets were providing assistance only to keep the situation in Vietnam 'under their control' with the object of striking a 'bargain with the US on it.' The editorial stressed the impossibility of taking 'united action' with people who behave in this way.

Throughout the Cold War, Sino-Soviet rivalries persisted. Any semblance of shared ideologies leading to shared strategic interests was shattered by the 2 March 1969 clash of Soviet and Chinese troops on the Island of Zhenbao

81 P Hough, *Understanding global security* (New York, Routledge, 2008), p. 30.

82 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "International Communism", *Central Intelligence Bulletin*, 6 December 1960, late item.

83 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "Communist China", *Central Intelligence Bulletin*, 12 November 1965, p. 5.

(Damansky); one territorial dispute of 400 that prompted Beijing to see the Soviet Union, rather than the US, as their major security threat at the time.[84] Similarly, North Vietnam's numerous conflicts with its Communist neighbours also support the argument that the ideology of Communism was not the central motivator of conflicts.

Also in Africa, there was no "united fight of the world's progressive forces against imperialism." While the Soviet Union and Cuba supported the MPLA, the Frente de Libertação de Angola (National Front for the Liberation of Angola or FNLA) and União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Liberation of Angola or UNITA) were supported by, amongst others, the US, South Africa, and China. For instance, in 1974, China sold 25 Type-59 tanks to the FNLA – the same group supported by South Africa during Operation Savannah. E. Barlow is also highly sceptical of the notion that UNITA was an ideological ally of the West during the conflict, and includes a picture taken at a building occupied by UNITA at Cacolo after its capture with the aid of the private military company Executive Outcomes, showing posters of Castro, Lenin, Marx, and Engels.[85] Savimbi of course had strong ties with China during the Cold War.

That this link between UNITA and FNLA and Communist China existed throughout the war is evident from numerous CIA reports. On 20 March 1972, Brezhnev addressed a trade union congress, of which the subsequent CIA Central Intelligence Bulletin reads: "Brezhnev listed unrequited Soviet efforts to achieve a reconciliation with the Chinese, including a proposal for a non-aggression pact".[86] On 22 November 1975, the CIA noted regarding Angola:[87]

> The spectre of China looms large in Soviet thinking, and China has, at least until recently, supported another Angolan faction. Moscow would like to put the lie to assertions from Peking that Soviet imperialists do not support the aspirations of the Third World. The message to would-be revolutionaries is that association with Moscow pays off, and that the Soviet Union does not stint in supporting its friends.

84 Lien-Hang T Nguyen, "Cold War contradictions: Toward an international history of the Second Indochina War, 1969-1973", MP Bradley & MB Young (eds.) *Making sense of the Vietnam Wars. Local, national and transnational perspectives* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 228-229.

85 E Barlow, *Executive Outcomes...*, p. 337.

86 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "USSR", *Central Intelligence Bulletin*, 21 March 1972, p. 5.

87 CIA, "The USSR's high profile...", *Central Intelligence Bulletin*, 22 November 1975, p. A3.

At the time of Augustino Neto's visit to the USSR in October 1976, a CIA National Intelligence Daily Cable reported: [88]

> The Popular Movement's [MPLA] victory in Angola was one of Moscow's most important and visible foreign policy successes in the past few years. It refurbished the Soviets' revolutionary credentials, enhanced their status among the radical black African states, and gave them an important win over their Chinese competitors in Africa.

In August 1976, the CIA reported in a National Intelligence Daily Cable that the USSR had agreed to supply SWAPO with more arms. Note, however, the CIA's speculation: [89]

> The Soviets, by increasing their military support, may also be attempting to weaken Nujoma's dependence on Chinese arms. Using their success in Angola as evidence, the Soviets may be counselling Nujoma to put himself squarely on Moscow's track in order to ensure maximum Soviet support for his efforts to expand guerrilla operations in Namibia.

As noted in the previous section, SWAPO relied more heavily on Soviet support in later years of the Namibian conflict, but this conflict between the Soviet Union and China continued into the 1980s. A 1984 CIA Intelligence Estimate notes: "Moscow's basic aims in southern Africa are to undermine or supplant Western and Chinese influence and to promote leftist change".[90] This view was reiterated in 1985, where a National Intelligence Estimate claimed that Moscow attempted: "To supplant or undermine Western and Chinese political, economic, and military influence in the region".[91] This was for instance done through military assistance and propaganda, in particular by emphasising the US and China's affilliation with South Africa, as already noted in the CIA Interagency Intelligence Memorandum of 1982, entitled *Moscow and the Namibia peace process*.

Communist powers in Southern Africa – as elsewhere during the Cold War – did therefore not present a "united front", just like "liberation movements" did not wholeheartedly adopt Communist ideology. This has important repercussions for the evaluation of the credibility of the Communist Onslaught as proposed by the NP government: from the preceding, the NP's assertion

88 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "USSR-Angola: Neto welcomed warmly", *National Intelligence Daily Cable*, 8 October 1976, p. 16.

89 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "USSR: arms to SWAPO", *National Intelligence Daily Cable*, 17 August 1976, p. 5.

90 CIA, *Moscow's response to the diplomatic situation...*, p. 1.

91 CIA, "Soviet policies in Southern Africa", *National Intelligence Estimate*, 13 February 1985, p. 9.

that Soviet Communism was a threat to South Africa can be substantiated, but Communism certainly did not present a united front against capitalist interests in the region.

Conclusion on the threat of Communism to South Africa

In both Vietnam and the wars in Namibia and Angola, Cold War rivalries played a significant role, but states looked after their own interests to a far greater extent than considering ideology. The public, and the soldiers, were told that both these wars were fought to prevent a Domino Effect whereby Communism would spread – and on the Communist side, the message was that imperialism and capitalism needed to be eradicated – but internal rivalries in both camps, along with cooperation across the East-West divide, illustrate that ideology was a secondary strategic consideration. Just as H. Münkler and M. Kaldor believe that ethnic and religious differences are not the causes of what they call "new wars" (such as Rwanda or Bosnia), but merely reinforce conflicts,[92] ideology in the Cold War served to mobilize combatants and public support, whereas state interests played a central role in the conduct of Cold War counterinsurgencies.

What does this make of Botha's claim of a Total Onslaught? From CIA reports, it can be seen that Soviet expansionism was indeed a threat at the time. Overall, therefore, the NP's Total Onslaught was an accurate assessment of the situation in Southern Africa during the Cold War in terms of the Soviet Union. Note, however, that PW Botha claimed: "Dit was 'n oorlog teen Kubaanse en Russiese Kommunisme" [it was a war against Cuban and Russian Communism][93] (as claimed by Malan as well). This statement can therefore be verified using CIA reports of the time. In addition, the claim that the Soviet Union wanted control over South Africa because of its mineral resources and control over shipping routes, as proposed by both Botha and Malan, are found in CIA reports as well. It is therefore not only the concept of Soviet expansionism, but also in the details that NP claims agree with CIA reports. It therefore cannot be said that NP claims of Soviet expansionism was propaganda – this was a much more widely held belief of the Western Powers at the time.

92 H Münkler, *The new wars* (Cambridge, Polity, 2005), p. 6; M Kaldor, *New and old wars. Organized violence in a global age* (Cambridge, Polity, 2006), pp. 7-8.

93 J-A Stemmet (Personal Collection), interview, PW Botha (former President, RSA/J-A Stemmet (Researcher, UFS, History Departement), 13 October 2000.