

Apartheid Under Siege, 1984-1988: Actions and Reactions

by

JAN-ADRIAAN STEMMET

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by

JAN-ADRIAAN STEMMET

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This study is dedicated to
My Parents
Dr Jan & Annette Stemmet
and
Susna
and
To the Loving Memory
of
Julena Stemmet
-1971-2001-

“...my suster, my eie comrade-in-arms en, vir altyd, my beste pal...”

PROLOGUE

The birth of the New South Africa had its roots in the turbulent 1980s. The study analyses the political violence that beset South Africa during the 1980s and examines, critically, the impact that violence had on enhancing or impeding South Africa's transition from white minority rule to black majority rule.

Although much has been written on the violence of the 1980s by social scientists and historians alike, a fresh systematic and holistic assessment of the impact of the abovementioned violence on South African society, from a scientifically researched historical viewpoint, is crucial to the historiography of South Africa. A holistic and historical understanding of the central theme of the political violence of the time is crucial to the understanding the decade as a whole.

The impact of the violence can only be satisfactorily assessed by reviewing the actions and reactions of the major role-players of the time, the African National Congress and the Government of PW Botha to the political violence of their day. The study of the changes that political violence helped to induce; the historical impact of the upheavals and its ripple effect on the country need to be described, analysed and assessed.

The study covers the period 1984-1988. The political violence of the 1980s only really gained momentum by 1984. The ensuing four years witnessed successive states of emergencies and a National Party administration besieged by the African National Congress's total onslaught, mass struggle politics, and international pressure. The political situation that emerged is crucial to the understanding of the processes that were to follow and were to lead to the acceptance of majority rule. By 1989, the Botha era was over and under FW de Klerk it quickly became apparent that apartheid was not to last much longer – bringing with it new leaders and altogether new political processes.

This study focuses on the continual interplay between action and reaction that arose between the main protagonists during the political upheavals of 1984-1988 and attempts to explain how these

actions and reactions interlocked to forge a political catharsis, thus paving the way for a negotiated settlement.

More specifically, the study will illustrate that the Botha Government was never in real danger of suffering a violent overthrow by internal forces. This was mainly due to the militarization of South African society through the implementation of the Total National Strategy and the National Management System. The Botha Government succeeded in stamping out any internal opposition through suppression, albeit only temporarily – following every clampdown, violence erupted anew.

The contention of the study is that in a military sense, the Botha Government, could have crushed any internal dissent and maintained minority rule for much longer than it did, but the negative international attention the Botha Government received as a result of its maintenance of white rule, increasingly manifested itself in insurmountable economic repercussions i.e. disinvestment and sanctions.

Thus, although the minority Government could have continued their suppression of opposition, it could not in the same way curb the detrimental international reaction invoked by their security campaigns. This repetitive spiral of outburst and suppression, action and reaction – with economic disaster looming ever closer – formed a logjam which forced the main protagonists, the African National Congress and minority Government, to reexamine their respective political stances and hence the political catharsis.

Both groups, the ANC and the minority Government, realised that there was no unilateral solution, which led them to accept the feasibility of negotiations. This study proposes to examine the process that formented the aforementioned political catharsis, to wit, the process of action and reaction, dissent and suppression, between the main protagonists.

Under the rubric of the Botha Government's Total National Strategy and the ANC campaigns of People's Power and Render the Country Ungovernable, each group set about implementing a chain of campaigns, strategies and tactics to violently disrupt the other and the other's power bases.

The study will outline these two doctrines, which shaped the strategic foundation from where the opposing sides enforced their respective campaigns. Furthermore it will illustrate how, as these doctrines were implemented and the political violence became endemic, a psychosis of brutality, fear and secrecy besieged the country as the issues of security and violence became the overriding issues throughout South African society.

The campaigns executed as part of the above strategies are examined. On the side of the government these included, among others, consecutive States of Emergency and the banning of certain organisations, whereas on the side of the ANC, it included the mass movement, bombings, mobilization of the youth, the emergence of community-based political militias and street courts.

As the violent political conflict in the country escalated, the media formed an important link between the South African crisis and the international community. The study examines this aspect in addition to the Botha Government's relationship with the media. The international community's reaction to the violence was expressed in a number of ways. As noted, the economic sphere formed an intricate part of the processes of this period. Consequently, the study will include a section on the role the international community played in the South African situation and illustrate how their reaction to the upheavals manifested itself in various forms i.e. sanctions.

An analysis will follow of how, why and when the major role-players, implemented and or changed their methods, strategies and tactics, as well as what these changes, subtle or sometimes dramatic, historically signified in political terms. As already explained, these actions and reactions acted as a catalyst for political catharsis; gradually forcing the main protagonists to realise that there were no unilateral solutions; leading them to re-examine their political stances and to accept negotiations as a feasible solution. The focus will thus fall on an analysis, interpretation and reconstruction of these actions and counteractions.

The study was conducted thematically and chronologically. Research focused on primary and secondary sources, including private archival collections, reports, newspapers, magazines and

journals, books and audio-visual material, as well as private interviews with key-figures of the relevant period.

The writer conducted interviews with:

Mr. PW Botha. 3 October 2000.

Prof. JP de Lange. 28 June 2000.

Mr. Kobie Coetsee. 26 June 2000.*

Gen. Magnus Malan. 12 August 2000.

Dr. Beyers Naudé. 27 June 2000.

Mr. Clem Sunter. 13 November 2000.

The contemporary nature of this study makes it at once fascinating and problematic. While researching this study, the writer encountered numerous obstacles brought about by the latter. Firstly, individual role-players, approached by the writer for interviews, were reluctant to discuss their perceptions of the period. This was in no small way brought about by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The threat of retribution is still very real for many of the main individual role-players. Although this might have been the case regardless, after the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the main individual role-players are found to be very uneasy about discussing the period and or groups that were involved with the processes of the 1980s.

The interviewees were skeptic about academics who wanted to discuss the period with them. All made it clear that under no circumstances did they want these interviews do degenerate into some sort of public exposé. They all feel that they have said enough about the period and mostly want to disappear from the limelight. Although the writer is very grateful to have been able to interview the people he did, be assured that it was no easy task to convince the interviewees to allow the writer to hold discussions with them. Each had a set of preconditions that had to be met before an interview was granted.

* Due to Mr. Coetsee's untimely demise there was no opportunity for further follow-up interviews.

As the reader will note when examining this study, the interviews held were conducted in broad terms. The interviewees were specifically reluctant to discuss specific persons and or incidents. Instead of scrutinizing intricacies, they discussed topics in the broadest of contexts. Furthermore, this study touches on a particularly large and varied number of individuals and events, if the interviewees were to have commented on each and every one of those, the interviews would have taken an inordinate amount of time. Nonetheless, as noted, the interviewees made it clear that they would not discuss specific persons and incidents – on the record. In addition, the private collections of documents of the interviewees and main individual role-players are still in their possession for safekeeping and as such were not available for scrutiny by the writer.

It must be noted that most of the interviewees were previously part of the political establishment and although the writer tried, for months on end, to organise interviews with members of the liberation movements, every request was turned down. Unfortunately, those perspectives and versions of events are lost to this study. Fortunately, the writer did gain access to the ANC's archives.

The ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, held at the University of Fort Hare, are an invaluable source of information containing an overabundance of historically important information dealing with almost every aspect of the organisation and its strategies. Thanks to research conducted at that archival facility, the writer gained insights that would otherwise have been lost or, at best, misconceived. Indeed without access to the ANC Archives, attempts at writing a comprehensive historical account dealing, albeit only in part, with this organisation would have been particularly difficult.*

Compared to the plethora of published information on the National Party, relatively little exists on the ANC. The reason is simple enough – the ANC was a banned organisation, which seriously prevented many authoritative works on the organisation from appearing in South Africa. It is also important to note that the existing sources on the history of the ANC-in exile are being stolen from

* The boxes in the ANC archives, referred to in the List of Sources, all contain a number of files – i.e. each box contained a large amount of information. The reason for reference to boxes and not files is that the archive is catalogued according to box numbers, thus reference to specific file details would be redundant.

public libraries at an alarming rate. For the historian this illustrates the desire of the people to obtain information on the subject.

Because of the topical nature of newspapers, compared to the broad and holistic approach of this study, although used, newspapers proved not to be the most effective source. What is more, in the period this study examines newspaper reports, dealing with the violence and extra-parliamentary political upheavals, had been heavily censored which further impeded the possible value of newspapers as an historic source.

Valuable information was also obtained at the archives of the Institute for Contemporary History, in Bloemfontein. There the writer gained access to the private archival collections of, amongst others, PW Botha, Louis le Grange and Chris Heunis. The writer also gained valuable information from the Office of Dr Anton Rupert and through private correspondence with Gen Magnus Malan.

The Botha Government was predominantly an Afrikaans-speaking group, hence most of its communication was conducted in Afrikaans. Subsequently, although this study has been conducted in English, there are a number of Afrikaans quotes throughout. It was difficult to directly translate some of the Afrikaans, as many of it was idiomatic or colloquial. To have given only a directly translated English version, in many cases, would have meant that the original meaning or intent would either have been lost or misunderstood.

Possible racially insensitive terms and classifications should be seen within the thematic context of the study.

Returning to the problematic nature of conducting a contemporary study like this it needs to be emphasized that this study is not a history of the ANC or National Party per se. It is, instead, the history of a political process, as found in the period 1984-1988, in which these two groupings were the main role-players. The political process examined in this study was by no means the only political process of the period. One problematic aspect related to this, is that it was difficult to make a distinction between what was part of the process and what was part of the period. For example, the so-called Allan Hendrickse Swimming Incident and the accompanying Riaan

Ecksteen Affair was part of a different political process in this the period and not the process examined by this study.

Another problem with writing such a thematically broad history is that it has the very real possibility of evolving into a never-ending story. There was simply not enough time to even attempt to encapsulate every single political entity or event that had an effect on the process examined in this study. Some events and developments, which did have a direct effect on the process of actions and reactions, were simply too vast or too complicated to try and combine into this study. There are many examples and these include, South Africa's military involvement in Namibia/Angola as well as the crisis in black education. Although references are made to different events and processes that are important to the topic of this study, many were simply too complicated or extensive to discuss in full within the parameters of this study. This is why the following needs to be emphasized.

At no stage does this study propose to be the quintessential last word on the 1980s. Far from it, this study will, hopefully, act as a springboard for further study and continuous reinterpretation of the 1980s and its accompanying political processes. This study must be understood as a fresh, scientifically researched, historical examination of the main political processes of the period, 1984-1988. It is a broad, holistic synopsis of the main political processes of the period 1984-1988 and does not propose to be an all-inclusive evaluation or chronicle of the 1980s as a whole.

Only if and when one understands the history of the 1980s as a broader political process, can one begin to try and fathom the political changes of the 1990s and those aspects that acted as catalysts for it. As such, the study will contribute to our understanding of a complex period that paved the way for the birth of a completely new political dispensation.

The most apparent value of the research is that it is a topical and fresh appraisal of a subject around which debate has still not nearly subsided. The political violence of the period in question became a political tool, commodity, and curse – almost all at once – and influenced almost every sector of the South African society. Understanding the historic context and nature of the phenomenon and

the reasons for the violent political conflict in the past equips citizens and society with the means to deal with it more effectively in the present.

The writer needs to express his deepest and most sincere thanks to the following people:

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- Prof & Mrs. JP de Lange
- Gen. & Mrs. Magnus Malan
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Jan-Ad Stemmet
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SUMMARY

The birth of the 'New' South Africa had its roots in the turbulent 1980s. The study analyses the political violence that beset South Africa during the 1980s and examines critically the impact that the violence had on enhancing or impeding South Africa's transition from white minority rule to black majority rule.

The socio-economic impact of the violence can only be satisfactorily assessed by reviewing the actions and reactions of the major role-players of the time – the African National Congress and Government of PW Botha – to the political violence of their day. This study focuses on the continual interplay between actions and reactions that arose between the main protagonists during the political upheavals of 1984-1988 and explains how these actions and reactions interacted to forge a political catharsis, thus paving the way for a negotiated settlement.

The contention of the study is that in a military sense, the Botha Government could have crushed any internal dissent and maintained minority rule for much longer than it did. However, the negative international attention the Botha Government received for the way in which it maintained white rule increasingly manifested itself in insurmountable economic campaigns, i.e. disinvestment and sanctions. This repetitive spiral of outbursts and suppression, actions and reactions – while all along economic disaster loomed closer – created a logjam, which forced the main protagonists, the African National Congress and minority Government, to reexamine their respective political stances, hence the political catharsis.

Both groups, the ANC and the minority Government, realised that there was no unilateral solution – moving them to accept the feasibility of negotiations. This study examines the process that fomented the aforementioned process of political catharsis – the process of action and reaction, dissent and suppression, between the main protagonists. Under the rubric of the Botha Government's Total National Strategy and the ANC campaigns of People's Power and Render the Country Ungovernable, both groups implemented a chain

of campaigns, strategies and tactics to violently disrupt the other and their respective power bases.

As violent political conflict in the country escalated, the media formed an important link between the South African crisis and the international community. The study examines the latter aspect and the Botha Government's relationship with the media. The international community's reaction to the violence was expressed in different ways. As noted, the economic sphere formed an intricate part of the processes of the period. Consequently, the study includes a section on the role the international community played with regards to the South African situation and illustrates how their reaction to the upheavals manifested itself in different forms, such as sanctions.

The actions and reactions of the ANC and Botha Government were a catalyst for political catharsis; gradually forcing the main protagonists to realize that there were no unilateral solutions.

KEY TERMS:

- Apartheid-violence, 1980s
- Government of PW Botha
- Total Onslaught / Total Strategy
- State security forces
- State of Emergency
- African National Congress
- Umkhonto we Sizwe
- Campaign to 'Render the Country Ungovernable'
- People's Power
- Armed struggle

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APARTHEID UNDER SIEGE

SECTION 1

TOTAL ONSLAUGHT AND THE POLITICS OF TOTAL STRATEGY

CHAPTER 1

TOTAL ONSLAUGHT AND THE TOTAL NATIONAL STRATEGY

“Dit was nie ‘n rasse-oorlog nie! Dit was ‘n oorlog teen Kubaanse en Russiese kommunisme. Daar’s nie ‘n ding soos haat tussen die Afrikaner en die swartmense nie...”¹ said the former State President PW Botha, during a private discussion with the writer during 2000. More than a decade after the Berlin Wall crumbled, bringing the whole Russian empire crashing down with it; and more than ten years after his tenure as State President of South Africa came to an equally dramatic end, PW Botha is still steadfastly rigid when discussing the concept of Total Onslaught. “Ek het voorspel dat daar ‘n Totale Aanslag teen Suid-Afrika is. En ek het dit gesê daai Totale Aanslag – 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. 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”²

The genesis of the total onslaught, as perceived by the Nationalists and the motivation for the formulation of a national total strategy both lies in the political changes of the 1960s and ‘70s. During 1960, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan delivered his ‘winds of change’ speech, urging the minority Government to move with the times and away from its racial policies.³ The speech, and the fundamental cleft it implied in Pretoria and London’s political reasoning, bewildered the Nationalists. A year later South Africa also dramatically gave up its membership of the Commonwealth, after the country came under attack in that forum as a result of its racial policies.⁴

During the same year as Macmillan’s speech, 1960, the growing contemptuousness for the South African system of apartheid was intensified after a number of blacks taking part in a protest march were shot dead by South African police. The incident became known as the Sharpeville Shooting

¹ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PW BOTHA. 13 October 2000.

² *Ibid.*

³ Cameron, T. (ed.), *Nuwe geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, p. 286, 288.

⁴ *Ibid.*

and resulted in the adoption of various resolutions by the UN.⁵ Two years later, the organisation went further with the formation of a Special Committee on Apartheid and urged its members to isolate the Republic. 1963 saw the Security Council of the UN implement a voluntary arms embargo against Pretoria.⁶

Apart from apartheid, the Nationalists were also embroiled in an international controversy over Namibia, which South Africa had controlled since the First World War. Initially the saga took the form of a legalistic debate, culminating in the International Court of Justice refusing to accept Pretoria's trustee claims in 1966 and ruling, in 1971, that South Africa's occupation of Namibia was illegal.⁷

By the mid-1970s the Portuguese were evacuating their colonies in Africa, leaving a volatile power vacuum in Angola, which three opposing factions fought frantically to fill. After being prompted to do so by the United States, South African Prime Minister B.J. Vorster sent South African troops to Angola to support the National Front for the Liberation of Angola [FNLA]. In pure military terms the exercise was a tremendous success for the South African Defence Force [SADF], which succeeded in moving and striking far and fast, and finally halted just twenty kilometers outside the Angolan capital, Luanda. It was there that Pretoria received news that the White House had reassessed its position on Angola, with the side effects of the Vietnam war still being felt, the Oval Office did not want to sit with an *African Saigon*. The South African forces were left twisting in the wind and without American assistance there was really no point in Pretoria keeping its forces in Angola.⁸

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Alden, C., *Apartheid's last stand*, p.33

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Van Vuuren, DJ (et al), *South Africa: the challenge of reform*, p.410.

⁸ This study is not an analysis of the so-called *border war* or *bush war*, but it is important to refer to South Africa's military position and actions, to describe the broader context within which the Total Strategy was conceptualized and implemented. There are many sources on South Africa's military involvement in Namibia / Angola. For example: *High Noon in Southern Africa* by Chester Crocker or *Days of the generals* by H. Hammann.

⁸ Joyce, P., *The rise and fall of apartheid: the chronicle of a divided society as told through South Africa's newspapers*, p. 72-73, 108.

the military exercise, Prime Minister Vorster had painstakingly tried to improve the apartheid state's diplomatic position in so-called 'black Africa'. The Angolan operation proved to be detrimental to his initiatives. Once again the minority Government was regarded as Africa's biggest bully and the continent's disdain for South Africa deepened.⁹

On June 16th 1976, what would become known as the Soweto Riots broke out in the immense Transvaal township near Johannesburg. The rioting spread like wildfire to other townships and would eventually only subside after almost eight months. Vorster was adamant in his attempt to stamp out the unrest. Hundreds of people, many of which were children, died. Throughout this process the world was shocked by the savageness and apparent chaos in South Africa. In the aftermath of the rioting many young blacks fled South Africa to join the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe [MK], the military wing of the banned organisation. By the end of the decade they would return to South Africa, trained.¹⁰

In 1977, following the Soweto riots, the UN finally banned the sale of weapons to South Africa. The US also, officially, stopped supplying South Africa with any equipment that could be used during security operations. And then on the 11th of September 1977, popular black activist leader, Steve Biko became immortalised when he died at the hands of South African security personnel whilst in Police custody. As the details of his brutal death spread, it sent shock waves across the world. Once more reverberating in international condemnation of the white minority government and their system.

During this period, while the minority Government's actions were increasingly being questioned by the international community and South Africa was evolving into a pariah state, Russian-backed Cuban troops were starting to become an increasingly prominent presence in Angola. On the other border, to the East, and making no secret of his Marxist inclinations, Samora Machel became Mozambique's president.¹¹

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

During the 1960s and 1970s, while being ostracized to an ever-increasing degree by the world, the strategic value of the sea routes over which Pretoria presided, was highlighted by upheavals in the Middle East. In 1967, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdal Nasser closed the Suez Canal as part of the approaching Six Day War. This prompted Western leaders to again realize the value of the Cape route. While at the same time the West, and Pretoria, witnessed the introduction of the Soviet Navy into the Indian Ocean.¹²

To further exasperate the overall sociopolitical climate, by the latter half of the 1970s South Africa's economy was stuck in the most severe recession in the country's history. The real growth rate for 1978 being zero, furthermore during the time of the Soweto riots there were 2 000 000 unemployed blacks in South Africa, with labour unrest flaring up. To aggravate the situation there were also a number of attacks by MK.¹³

It should be pointed out that although different interpretations of the concept of total war / total strategy existed, understood in the post-World War II and Cold War contexts, the basic idea was not peculiar or unique to South Africa.¹⁴ After 1945 especially, in many states the military lost sole dominance as protectors of the state, during the twentieth century it became general practice for states to set up special security structures to coordinate the resources of the state in defence of the country.¹⁵

One of the earliest thinkers on total war was Sun Tzu, who as far ago as 2400 BC, coined the following definition of what this type of onslaught meant: "Fighting is the most primitive way of making war on your enemies. Therefore you must cover with ridicule all of the valid traditions in your opponent's country; two you must implicate their leaders in criminal affairs and then, at the right time, turn them over to the scorn of their fellow countrymen; three, you must aggravate by every means at your command all of the existing differences in your opponent's country; four, you must agitate the young against the old; because the supreme excellence is not to win a hundred victories in a hundred battles – the supreme excellence is to subdue the armies of your enemies

¹² Alden, p.33.

¹³ See the chapter on Umkhonto we Sizwe.

¹⁴ Frankel, P. (et al.), *State, resistance and change in South Africa*, p.53.

¹⁴ Wiehahn, NE (et al), *South Africa: the challenge of reform*, p. 408.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

without ever having to fight them.”¹⁶ In its theoretical basis, Gen. Malan’s definition concurs, in a 1996 interview with *Playboy Magazine* he defined a total onslaught as follows: “A total onslaught is where you use all your power together to obtain your objective. For instance if you want to conquer a country you do it through physical power, through economic means, political means, all the means you have to achieve your objective.”¹⁷

Although the understanding of the premise of a total war was thus not unique to the minority Government, what was unique was their finer conceptualization of the total war with respect to the groups the Government reasoned were involved and its motivation for waging the Total Onslaught. The crux of Total Onslaught, as perceived by the minority Government, was that the anti-apartheid campaign and struggle was part of an international conspiracy, lead by the USSR, to take control of South Africa as part of a Kremlin-engineered plot to conquer and rule the world. This onslaught was not only focused on a military level and manifested itself in all possible spheres. To muster support for the campaign against South Africa, the country’s internal situation was exaggerated and exploited under the anti-apartheid banner.¹⁸

In this regard the government thrived on statements like the ones made by dr. Igor Glagolev, who until he defected to the West in 1976, was a foreign affairs consultant to the Soviet Politburo, when he gave a somewhat enthusiastic appraisal of South Africa’s value to the USSR: “The Russians are determined to take South Africa and to 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.”¹⁹

During 1984, analysts at the American John F. Kennedy special warfare centre, alleged that Gen. Malan issued a secret directive to the SADF, prompting them to tone down their references to the ‘total onslaught’. Apparently, the General reasoned that an over emphasis of the concept could too

¹⁶ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 203 / PS 12/6/1

¹⁷ Carter, S., “Magnus Malan: 20 questions” in *Playboy*, vol. 3, no. 2, March 1996.

¹⁸ Scholtz, JJJ, *Fighter and reformer – extracts from the speeches by PW Botha*, p. 33.

¹⁹ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 203 / PS 12/6/1

easily have led to uproar and distorted assessments of the South African situation.²⁰ Nonetheless, the 1980s did nothing to diminish the Nationalists' perception of a conspiracy that was waging total war against them. If anything the violent political upheavals and dramatics of the mid to latter half of the decade with the coming of age of the mass movement; township violence reaching 'all time high' proportions and the ANC blurring the distinction between hard and soft targets attracted attention to apartheid and South Africa on a more extensive global scale than ever before.

An example of how the Nationalists' views stayed basically the same, and how even the West were seen by them as part of the problem, can be found during the spring of 1983, PW Botha said: "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."²¹

One insightful example of how some commentators, who were susceptible to the concept of a total war being waged against the Republic, reasoned and regarded the threat of the Total Onslaught during the 1980s, can be found in an article published by KJ de Beer, under the heading: "The Total Onslaught On The Republic Of South Africa As Bastion Of The Free Western World".²² According to his 1987 article, South Africa found itself "in a war of ideas against everything" and under total attack on the following fronts, he identified fifteen:

1. Convictional.
2. Ethical – breach of international morals
3. Juridical – breach of international law
4. Aesthetic – boycott of cultural relations
5. Economic – disinvestment
6. Social – banning of diplomatic relations
7. Linguistic – breakdown of communications²³
8. Historical – colonialism

²⁰ Cooper, C. (et al.), "Security" in *Race Relations Survey 1984*, 1985, p.772.

²¹ Murray, H., "Interview: PW Botha" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 2, no. 3, Spring 1983, p. 20.

²² De Beer, KJ, "The total onslaught against the Republic of South Africa as bastion of the free Western world" in the *Journal For Contemporary History*, vol. 12, no. 1, April 1987, p. 28

²³ *Ibid.* p.29.

9. Analytical – illogical attacks
10. Emotional – psychological warfare
11. Biological – population explosion
12. Physical – energy crisis
13. Kinematic – technological inferiority
14. Spatial – communistic expansion
15. Numerical – threat of one man one vote²⁴

In this article, he refers to how the World Council of Churches is being used to propagate violence in South Africa and to spread propaganda against the Republic in order to “question the authority of God and thus the given authority of the Government”.²⁵

An underlying theme of the article, and indeed of South Africa’s concept of the Total Onslaught, was that the West was also not to be counted on for support in this struggle and that their anti-apartheid sentiments were misplaced and being exploited. Already in the 1970s, the then Prime Minister, BJ Vorster, drew a comparison between American pressure on Pretoria to communist subversion, saying “In the one case (the pressure on South Africa) will come about as a result of brute force. In the other case, it will be strangulation with finesse”.²⁶

Keeping in mind the world opinion on South Africa during the 1980s, it not surprisingly castigated the West for its, so-called double standards when dealing with South Africa. For example, on the question of sanctions against the apartheid-state, according to De Beer, the United States “the prime upholders of the system of free trade” are curbing American investment in South Africa and thus “actually prescribing to entrepreneurs as to what they should do with their money!”²⁷

On the issue of the armed struggle waged against South Africa and the government’s reaction to it, he wrote that the world should know that South Africa would “fight terrorism without considering

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁶ Alden, p. 40.

²⁷ De Beer, p. 36.

the diplomatic consequences.”²⁸ Calling on the West to change their attitudes towards South Africa, he wrote: “For the sake of the democratic and true Christian freedom of this bastion of the Free West, let us not divide ourselves but cooperate for coalition through peace.”²⁹

In 1982, a document compiled for the State President broken down the objectives of the perceived Total Onslaught against South Africa into six phases:

1. Create a revolutionary climate in your target country.
2. Unleash a terrorist struggle.
3. Isolate the target country internationally.
4. Destroy your target country’s will to fight.
5. Neutralise your target country’s Armed Forces.
6. A military seizure of power.³⁰

It would be shortsighted and ignorant to assume that the abovementioned were the only processes and rationalizing that stimulated the conception of a National Total Strategy [NTS], but they most certainly formed an integral part of the train of security thought the Nationalist debate followed when they came to the conclusion that a National Total Strategy was necessary. By the time PW Botha took control of the National Party and the executive seat of power in the country in 1978, South Africa, its political system, governmental leaders, economy and diplomacy was in a state of sporadic internal turbulence, as well as at the same time slithering into increasingly ill repute in the eyes of the world.³¹ Different commentators in South Africa analyzing the internal situation, regarded against the backdrop of African and world politics, viewed the future of the country, and specifically that of its ruling class, with growing alarm. As Grundy summed up: “South Africa’s government officials live in a world that they perceive to be fundamentally and increasingly hostile, to be encapsulated under the rubric ‘total onslaught’ ”.³²

The idea for an extensive all encompassing security plan of action, as the above should have indicated, had its origins in the 1960s. Already then the Nationalist prime minister Dr HF Verwoerd,

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³⁰ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PS 12/6/1:1980-1982

³¹ Liebenberg, I., *Ideologie in konflik*, p. 19.

³² *Ibid.*

made his Minister of Defence PW Botha attentive to the calamities the future might hold for the country, according to Botha, Verwoerd expected South Africa to come under the pressure and warned him to be vigilant in safeguarding the Republic.³³

The country's uniquely difficult position during the 1960s and 70s made the need for an all-enveloping security strategy, seen from the perspective of the minority Government, obvious. In an interview with the writer, Gen. Magnus Malan, onetime Head of the South African Defense Forces and later Minister of Defense in PW Botha's cabinet, said that he viewed such a Total National Strategy as crucial and said it was "lewensbelangrik" because plainly "as jy nie 'n strategie het nie is jy in jou donner."³⁴

In this regard the South African military studied insurgency and counter-insurgency doctrines, Mao Zedong, Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh and paid attention to the upheavals in Rhodesia, Vietnam, Algeria and Malaya.³⁵ Furthermore, since 1945, more than one writer and strategist across the world had pondered upon the strategic theory of Total War and a corresponding Total Strategy. More than one attracted the attention and imagination of Pretoria's security establishment. One such writer had a tremendous influence on how the Nationalists reasoned, he was retired French Gen. Andre Beaufre, who based his writings on the violent French colonial experiences in Algeria and Indochina.³⁶

In essence Beaufre attempted to formulate a strategy that could successfully counter Leninist strategies. To do so he argued that the political leaders of a state must become strategic in their governance and specifically enclose and coordinate politics, economics, diplomacy and the military sectors.³⁷

Beaufre dubbed this approach 'total strategy': "Below the level of total strategy there must in each field (military, political, economic or diplomatic) be an overall strategy, the function of which is to allot tasks and coordinate the various forms of activity within the field concerned. It should be noted

³³ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PW BOTHA. 13 October 2000.

³⁴ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

³⁵ Pottinger, p. 339.

³⁶ Alden, p. 42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

that in the military field the notion of overall strategy already exists; its object is to coordinate action on land, in the air and on the sea. There is however no such thing as overall strategy in the political field... Within each main field each branch of activity will have its own distinct category of strategy. This is the level at which concept and implementation meet... its purpose is not only to harmonize the objectives laid down by overall strategy with the capabilities of the tactics and techniques in use in the branch concerned, but also to ensue that those tactics and techniques are developed in the directions which will best fit them to meet future strategic requirements... ”³⁸

Beaufre argued strongly in favor of so-called ‘indirect mode’ form of counter-insurgency warfare, this being a war fought on a much broader social sphere, than just armies doing battle. This war then was a ‘total war’ in which ideas were to be more important than weapons and that modern warfare was all enveloping, including both physical as well as psychological forms of conflict.³⁹ By 1968, Beaufre’s work formed the basis of a series of lectures given at SADF Headquarters.⁴⁰

The first real concrete steps towards a Total National Strategy came in 1971 in the form of the Potgieter Commission Report on national security, the report stated that the enemies of Pretoria could be found in the military sector, as well as in the spheres of the economic, social, educational and psychological, and in various subversive, terrorist, sabotage and espionage manifestations. Following in the same vein as the Potgieter Report, two years later in 1973, a governmental White Paper on Defense and Armament Production, written by PW Botha appeared, which firmly placed the concept of a Total Onslaught at the centre of the SADF’s security threat assessment.⁴¹

The 1977 White Paper on Defence serves as the most explicit summing up of the concept of Total Strategy.⁴² The Paper spells out the need for comprehensive interdepartmental coordination: “There are few, if any government departments which are not concerned with one or other aspect of national security, or which do not contribute to the realization of national security”⁴³ the paper then goes on to set out the different types of action to be coordinated on an extensive interdepartmental basis:

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Cawthra, G., *Brutal force: the apartheid war machine*, p. 29.

⁴⁰ Pottinger, p. 339.

⁴¹ Alden, p. 38.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.47.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

- Political action
- Military / paramilitary action
- Economic action
- Psychological action⁴⁴
- Scientific and technological action
- Religious-cultural action
- Manpower services
- Intelligence services
- Security services
- National supplies, resources and production services
- Transport and distribution services
- Financial services
- Community services
- Telecommunication services⁴⁵

1977 saw the concept of Total Onslaught being articulated as a political challenge, which could only be met by means of extensive coordination of all of the Republic's combined resources. The implementation of a national strategy also implied a grand managerial and administrative reorganisation.⁴⁶

Another of the myriad of influences on Pretoria regarding the formulation of its Total National Strategy were the writings of American strategist, Col. J.J. McCuen, who also worked on the premise that a unification is required of the military, administrative, judicial and legislative powers.⁴⁷ According to the Colonel, it is here where a critical dilemma lies, because a democracy is based on the separation of these powers. Therefore the challenge is how to "achieve unification of these efforts without destroying the very freedom that the government should be seeking to preserve". To

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴⁶ Crawford, N., "The domestic sources and consequences of aggressive foreign policies: the folly of South Africa's 'total strategy'" in *Southern African Perspective*, no 41, 1995, p.8.

⁴⁷ Sarakinsky, I., "State, security and extra-parliamentary opposition in South Africa, 1983-1988" in *Politikon*, 1989, [p.4.]

a very great extent, it was the minority Government's efforts to unite these powers, or rather the ways it used to try and achieve "unification", that formed the focal point of the criticism on the its TNS.⁴⁸

The practical accomplishment and execution of Total National Strategy implied tremendously far reaching organisational changes, as Lt General JR Dutton, Chief of Staff Operations commented: "The requirements for the application of Total Strategy would appear to favour a system of unified command" and "Conventional organisation in democratic systems do not as a rule lend themselves to those procedures. Therefore organisational changes or adaptations would appear to be imperative."⁴⁹

These changes, and to large extent the whole Total National Strategy, would be administered through a National Security Management System [NSMS] which was set in motion during 1979.⁵⁰ On March 4th 1980, according to Botha's authorized biographer, the cabinet accepted and endorsed various arguments on the state of South Africa's national security – including that South Africa had become immersed in an "oorlewingstryd".⁵¹

The stage was set for a managerial circumvolution, which was reflected in a 1984 interview with the then Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange. "The President has developed a state security system which is very sophisticated and provides for modern needs," giving assurance of transparency, he said that the "system provides for discussion and advice on a very broad basis".⁵² Le Grange made it explicitly clear that "the system developed provides for as few mistakes as possible" and "Our state security system provides that basis, working up through the pyramid system to the President".⁵³

The security system the Minister was praising was the Total National Strategy's grandiose National Management System. During 1980, the former Minister of Defence and now the new Prime

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Harrison, D., *The white tribe of Africa*, p.268.

⁵⁰ Kotze, H., "Regering agter die skerm: burokrasie het hef in die hande" in *Insig*, Maart 1989.

⁵¹ Prinsloo, p. 133.

⁵² Murray, H., "Louis le Grange" in *Leadership SA*, 3rd quarter, vol. 3, no. 3, p. 31.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Minister, PW Botha appointed the former Head of the Armed Forces, Gen. Magnus Malan to the political post of Defence Minister.⁵⁴ Malan, who was not renowned for his patience when it came to drawn out political processes, trusted much more in the military doctrine of discipline and order. Whereas Vorster attempted to calm and reason with the international community when it came to apartheid, PW Botha decided to take the bull by the horns. Both Botha and Malan believing that a steeled military backbone would have given the country the strength to thwart what they perceived to be a Total Onslaught. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence became the final architects of the Total National Strategy and its accompanying National Management System.⁵⁵

Traditionally a country's policymaking structures rest on three elements: Internal policy, External policy and Defence policy – the latter being determined by the other two. The organisational goal of the Total National Strategy was that these three components should integrate and in an attempt to bring this about, Botha had to reorganize South Africa's management structures *in toto*.⁵⁶

After taking over from Vorster in 1978, the new head of state, PW Botha, undertook the above reorganisation with gusto, he set about strengthening the powers of the Prime Minister, and later State President, and created an office of the Prime Minister with its own staff, as well as a Cabinet secretariat.⁵⁷ He also replaced the twenty ad hoc committees that had existed under Vorster with five permanent Cabinet committees, but the most far reaching changes related to the State Security Council.⁵⁸

The National Security Management System operated on nine separate levels. At the very top was the full cabinet, which still officially had the final say in matters of national security. Below them and inferior in terms of executive stature, was the State Security Council – though some analysts have remarked that because the Prime Minister (later State President) presided over both the Cabinet and the State Security Council, what the Council decided was a done deal.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Slabbert, FVZ., *The system and the struggle*, p. 125 & Roherty, p. 42.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Slabbert, p. 117.

⁵⁷ Jaster, R., *The defence of white power*, p. 29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Ebersohn, W., "The headmen" in *Leadership S.A.*, vol. 7, no. 5, 1985, p. 16.

The State Security Council was one of the most important components the minority Government utilized in order to manage the Total National Strategy. The latter had already been conceived during BJ Vorster's term of office. The State Security Council was initially formed in 1972 and although it played an advisory role under Vorster, it had no real prominence, only meeting half a dozen times. There were also a certain amount of rivalry between the South African Defence Force's members serving on the State Security Council and members of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS). Allegations even surfaced that BOSS was spying on State Security Council members.⁶⁰

Only under Botha's tutelage would the State Security Council evolve into the powerful security apparatus that it indeed became during the 1980s.⁶¹ The most powerful security management structure that would emanate from Botha's implementation of the National Management System was this State Security Council, which had its own secretariat. Throughout the Botha-era, this position was filled by the equivalent of a 'three star' General.⁶²

Apart from Botha, who as Prime Minister, and later State President, chaired the meetings of the State Security Council, other members included the Ministers of: Defence, Foreign Affairs, Law and Order, Justice, other senior cabinet members, the Directors of: National Intelligence, Foreign Affairs, Justice, as well as the Heads of the: South African Police, Defence Forces, and Department of Justice. Over the years other senior ministers, deputy-ministers, and different senior executives served from time to time on the State Security Council.⁶³ According to some commentators, during the late 1980s, the following executives also served on the State Security Council: The Head of the Army, The Head of the Air Force, The Head of the Navy, The Head of the Security Police, The Head of Military Intelligence, The Director-General of the Office of the State President and the Director-General of National Intelligence.⁶⁴

The State Security Council became the predominating feature of the government's administration of the country. Gradually the Council was responsible for most of the major governmental decisions, in some cases impeding wider cabinet input. Brian Pottinger wrote that this "limiting of participation"

⁶⁰ Dugard, J. (ed.), *Update South Africa: the last years of apartheid: civil liberties in South Africa*, p.58.

⁶¹ Harrison, p. 267.

⁶² Kenney, H., *Power, pride and prejudice*, p.296 & Roherty, J., *State security in South Africa*, p. 96.

⁶³ Kotze, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

became the Botha's normal management style in the country. He goes on to say that the only political role-players of any influence consisted of "an ever-narrowing circle of ministers briefed by an elite group of security-orientated officials within the government".⁶⁵ Analyst Barry Dean concurs and reasons that as a result of the 1983 constitution, which allowed other races into parliament the cabinet, in effect, became a multi-cultural institution and could no longer effectively act as a whites-only decision-making body.⁶⁶ Rather, the all white State Security Council, containing some of the most influential powerbrokers in South Africa, as its own influence evolved, increasingly eroded the significance of cabinet.⁶⁷

During 2000 Gen. Malan explained to the writer that a Total National Strategy operates within set parameters: "By ons moet hierdie aanwending en optredes aan die vereistes van die Grondwet voldoen en regsgeldig verantwoordbaar wees en in die howe getoets kan word".⁶⁸ But that is where the problem, according to many critics and commentators, came. In other words those parameters blurred as the Total National Strategy was developed – the managerial checks and balances did not even out anymore. What it boils down to was a lack of transparency at the highest levels of operation. Explaining his very real concern about this, the former leader of the Progressive Federal Party [PFP], the NP's official parliamentary opposition, Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, wrote that parliament as a whole became increasingly excluded from government's military decisions as the Total National Strategy evolved.⁶⁹

Pondering the increasing role of securocrats, Slabbert wrote about his concern that the military did not turn into a "modernizing oligarchy" and that this would lead to a suspension of "even the limited form of accountable Government we have now".⁷⁰

The growing influence of securocrats and the military complex on Botha and his government not only came under fire from leftist opposition, but also from within the highest ranks of

⁶⁵ Pottinger, p. 43.

⁶⁶ Dean, B., "Control by cabal" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1986, p. 60.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Correspondence received from GEN. M. MALAN. 8 August 2000.

⁶⁹ Slabbert, FVZ, *The last white parliament*, p. 169.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Afrikanerdom.⁷¹ In an interview with the writer, Prof. JP de Lange, an academic who served as head of the secretive Afrikaner Broederbond for most of the Botha-era, said that he and his organisation viewed this with concern. “Daar was iets in PW Botha wat sterk na die militêre kant geleen het en na die sekuriteitskant toe. Sy persoonlikheid het sulke mense ‘n ruimte gegee wat, sê ‘n president met ‘n teologiese agtergrond soos Malan, nooit vir hulle sou gegee het nie of ‘n regs agtergrond soos Vorster of ‘n sosiologiese agtergrond soos Verwoerd, sou gegee het nie. By PW Botha was daar groter ruimte en ek dink dit was die grondrede waarom die sekuriteitsmense ‘n groter rol kon speel”. De Lange then goes on to say that he does not think that the securocrats made policy without his knowledge, but that they “soms van sy kabinetslede se standpunte genegeer het, daaraan twyfel ek nie – maar met PW se wete”.⁷²

Directly subordinate to the State Security Council was the Working Committee of the State Security Council. Made up of senior officials and bureaucrats, the Working Committee had to ensure that the decisions of the Council were implemented. Next on the ladder was the Secretariat of the State Security Council, with some eighty members. Their purpose was to handle, evaluate and process raw intelligence as it reached them from below; as well as the coordination of strategy and public relations. Initially members of the Defence Force dominated here, but later National Intelligence staff became a more prevailing feature of the Secretariat. Subordinate to the Secretariat were thirteen inter-departmental committees. Each focusing on a specific component, for example manpower or transport, the committees were to ensure and regulate cooperation between the various government departments.⁷³

The lowest tier of the National Management System was completed by the Joint Management Centres (JMC), which basically formed a localized grassroots level extension of the State Security Council. According to Gen. Malan, the JMCs only really reached fruition by 1986 after getting through their initial teething problems.⁷⁴ To effectively complete the structural organisation for the National Management System the country was divided roughly along the lines of today’s provincial borders. Where the military’s Command HQ and the South African Police HQ were situated in these

⁷¹ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PROF. JP DE LANGE. 28 June 2000.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Ebersohn, p. 16.

⁷⁴ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

areas, a Joint Management Centre [JMC] was formed. A JMC was, in the broadest sense, responsible for the security in its area. The security involved here was closely related to welfare and social upliftment, and therefore local representatives of various other state departments, authorities, bodies and organisations also served on the Joint Management Centres.⁷⁵

The Joint Management Centres [JMC], depending on circumstances in the designated areas, were again subdivided into smaller sub-JMCs. In some cases these sub-JMCs were yet again separated into even smaller mini-JMCs. Responsibility for the implementation of decisions by Joint Management Centres on regional and local levels was taken by the relevant departments, authorities, organisations or bodies, who fell under the territorial jurisdiction of the relevant Joint Management Centre.⁷⁶

The Joint Management Centres had to coordinate the functions and the approved needs or requirements that were identified as being vitally important by the security management and ensure that they were implemented. Each Joint Management Centre consisted of a Security Committee [Veikom], Communications Committee [Komkom], a Joint Intelligence Committee [Geikom] as well as a further Constitutional, Economic and Social Committee [Semkom].⁷⁷

As far as funding was concerned, if the relevant department or organisation did not have the funding to implement what was required, then funding could be lobbied for through the State Security Council. The matter could be presented to the State Security Council for final arbitration should a Minister or Director-General not approve the implementation of a decision or requirement by the JMC.⁷⁸

The chairpersons were annually chosen by the members, who included senior officers, bureaucrats, both black and white local government officials and the odd private citizen. When choosing a chairperson, keeping in mind that the Joint Management Centres dealt with the primary subject of

⁷⁵ J-A STTEMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Correspondence received from GEN. M. MALAN. 8 August 2000

⁷⁶ Ebersohn, p. 16 & J-A STTEMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Correspondence received from GEN. M. MALAN. 8 August 2000 & Seegers, A., *The military in the making of modern South Africa*, p. 166.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

security, the executives usually stepped aside for the military or police representatives to take control.⁷⁹ By 1985 there were 12 Joint Management Centres situated in South Africa's major centres, a year later there were 60 and a further 448 mini-JMCs⁸⁰.

These committees, councils, secretariats and centres, formed an integrated intelligence web that blanketed the whole Republic. The motivational theory behind the National Management Strategy was that an intelligence conduit now existed that carried intelligence information vertically from the highest executive levels to the grassroots tiers and horizontally between the various government departments and agencies.⁸¹ As Gen. Malan explains: "Hierdie stelsel [the NMS] het goed gefunksioneer en as vroeë waarskuwing gedien wat proaktief probleemgebiede geïdentifiseer en terselfdertyd aangespreek het."⁸²

With a former Minister of Defence – and longtime comrade of the military – and a former Defence Force head occupying the executive seats of power, it is not surprising that under cover of the Total National Strategy the military played an increasingly prominent role during the Botha-era. Where the military had previously executed orders passed down from the civilian government, South Africa's security chieftains could now get a direct say in the drawing up of those orders.⁸³

As noted in the above passage, Col. MacCuen expressed his concern that the unification of the different executive powers of a country fighting a revolutionary war, would not lead to the eventual sacrificing of the very democratic values that the said government was attempting to protect. Many scholars and analysts examining the Total National Strategy came to the conclusion that this was exactly what happened in South Africa, albeit to varying degrees. According to their reasoning, a prolonged state of emergency, the expansion of the role and influence of the security forces and the centralization of state power created doubts about the status of parliamentary democracy.⁸⁴

Various commentators reasoned that due to the inception of the Total National Strategy and because of the political dramatics of the 1980s, the minority Government had to diminish some of the values

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Seegers, p. 166.

⁸¹ CORRESPONDENCE received from GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 8 August 2000.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Grundy, K., *The militarization of South African politics*, p.37.

⁸⁴ Garnett, JC, "National security and threat perception" in *The strategic review for Southern Africa*, vol. 10, 1989, p. 11.

and norms it had originally sought to protect. In other words, democracy and the administration of the South African Total National Strategy were not compatible.⁸⁵

As already noted, a growing concern developed among many role players and commentators with regard to the increasing role of securocrats. More than one scenario planner pondered a futurist South Africa under overt and direct military rule. Scenario planners, Peter L. Berger and Bobby Godsell wrote in September 1987 of the feasibility of a futurist junta-controlled South Africa, pointing out that, apart from the very unlikely scenario of external forces attacking the country, Pretoria did not realistically have to fear a full out military onslaught.⁸⁶

They then went on to argue that military might was not all that was necessary for the whites to stay in control, arguing that the Nationalist government “could maintain itself, probably for a long time, by brute force alone – but only if it were converted to a fully articulated totalitarian system”.⁸⁷

Prof. JP de Lange said that he and his organisation shared these views and was concerned for the evolution of, what boiled down to, a fully fledged military junta running the country, saying: “Ons het tot dieselfde gevolgtrekking gekom dat dit moontlik was om blanke gesag te handhaaf vir nog ‘n hele dekade of twee, tot hier sê die draai van die millenium, maar teen daai tyd sou ‘n outokratiese bewind nommer een moet wees en nommer twee ons sal so uitgemergel wees, en dat wat dan oorbly nie die moeite werd sou wees nie”.⁸⁸ Asked whether he thought if proponents of such a system existed, he said that he could only speculate but that “ek kan myself voorstel dat omstandighede so gewelddadig kan word, dat mense so onveilig voel, dat hulle ‘n hardhandige regime wat outokraties optree tot ‘n hoë mate sal aanvaar”.⁸⁹

Rev. Beyers Naudé, internationally acclaimed anti-apartheid activist and former Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, in an interview with the writer, concurred with the above, saying that during the 1980s, he believed South Africa was on the verge of becoming a police state.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Berger, P.L. & Godsell, B., “Fantasies about South Africa” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 35, no. 3, September 1987, p. 129.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PROF JP DE LANGE. 28 June 2000.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

“Ek sal nie verbaas gewees het” said Naudé “as hulle besef het van hulle kant af, as die ding nie anders kan nie, dan moet ons ‘n totalitêre sisteem maak. Dan onderdruk ons eenvoudig alle regte.” Basing his reasoning that a junta-styled government was possible, if understood in context of Afrikaner fears of loosing their country of birth and becoming a boundless people of refugees “en vir die blanke, by name die Afrikaners, was ‘voortbestaan’ nog altyd ‘n sleutelwoord. Jou Engelssprekende Suid-Arikaner het nog altyd gevoel ‘ons is deel van ‘n wêreldgemeenskap. Ons kan teruggaan; ons kan weggaan, ons kan die land verlaat, ons kan Engeland toe gaan of Kanada’. Maar die Afrikaner nie. Waarheen moes die Afrikaner gaan? Die meerderheid Afrikaners het besef: of ons moet hier lewe, ‘n bestaan voer – of dis met ons klaar”.⁹⁰

Clem Sunter, influential scenario-planner, author of *The world and South Africa in the 1990s* and the Anglo-American Corporation’s Head of Corporate Affairs, said about the junta-option, that he never thought that to be a very likely possibility.⁹¹ “I never got that feeling, I never ever had that feeling that there would be a military junta. I always thought that PW Botha was strong enough to carry the Afrikaans community, so I never worried about a sort of rightwing or military-type takeover.”⁹²

Even Gen. Malan himself admitted that this scenario did exist, saying that there were “baie ouens wat na my gekom het en gevra het, kan ons nie ‘n coup d’état kry nie. Dan het ek vir hulle gesê, boys ek kan ‘n coup d’état môre vir julle reël as julle wil. Maar hoekom wil julle dit hê? Julle wil dit hê omdat die situasie julle nou pas. Maar, gaan dit julle môre pas as ek ‘n coup d’état uitgeroep het en ek begin met diktatoriale magte teenoor julle? Dan gaan julle sê, nee hel dis verkeerd – ons het dit nie so bedoel nie”.⁹³ The General made clear his belief that only a political settlement was the solution to the type of revolutionary warfare found in South Africa. Calling the junta-option “die pad van die swakkeling,” he said that he chastised the advocates of this type of conduct by saying to them: “Julle probeer uitvlug uit ‘n situasie, pleks daarvan dat julle die politieke situasie aanspreek”.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with DR BEYERS NAUDE. 27 June 2000.

⁹¹ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with CLEM SUNTER. 13 November 2000.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 2

ARMING APARTHEID: THE SADF, ARMSCOR AND WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Although not a topic for discussion in this study, it is important to point out that throughout the 1980s South African defence forces were involved in Namibia. The then Minister of Defence Gen. Magnus Malan, remarked on various occasions that although the army could counter a high level of aggression, it could not be used to the full, in both Namibia and South Africa to quell internal unrest. The most logical solution was to draw other races into the defence forces. By the late 1970s, more than ever the military high command realised that more manpower would be required in the years ahead, therefore it did not take them long to throw open their doors to the black population.¹

Between 1979 and 1982, the number of black and coloured members of the South African Defence Force [SADF] almost doubled and by 1986 they accounted for almost a quarter of the army. During this period, the military desegregated their primary facilities on an unprecedented level. The special forces – specifically the elite Reconnaissance Commandos – were the most integrated of all. According to the military, the Total National Strategy was not about protecting white superiority, but about the defense of South Africa; the South African way of life and its national identity, against communism.²

By 1979, it was estimated by the London based Institute For Strategic Studies that the total military might of the South African armed forces overshadowed the combined power of Mozambique, Tanzania, Angola, Zambia and Botswana and Malawi and Zimbabwe.³

¹ Harrison, D., *The White Tribe of Africa: South Africa in Perspective*, p. 270.

² Crawford, N., "The Domestic Sources and Consequences of Aggressive Foreign Policies: The Folly of South Africa's 'Total Strategy'" in *Southern African Perspective*, No. 41, February 1995, pp. 6-33.

, p. 11.

³ Harrison, p.264.

ARMSCOR, the state controlled weapons producer was put together during the 1960s, in order to circumvent the United Nations' armaments boycott. In an ever increasing drive to make South Africa an independent weapons developer and in the process also make the military forces less sensitive to South Africa's frail international standing, successive Nationalist governments pumped billions into the expansion of ARMSCOR.⁴

By 1968 PW Botha, then still Minister of Defence, told parliament that the Republic was now producing its own smoke bombs, aerial bombs, two variations of shrapnel mines and an anti-armour mine. Under Botha's guidance the country would also become self-sufficient in terms of helicopters, armed vehicles, artillery and missiles and delivered its own standard automatic rifle, the R4 in addition to the accompanying ammunition.⁵

During the 1980s, Botha allocated roughly 20% of the country's budget to defence and by 1989, it was estimated that the South African weapons industry employed 100 000 people. By the early 1980s ARMSCOR boasted openly that they had reached self-sufficiency in the production of ammunition, missiles and small armaments.⁶ The role of ARMSCOR should not be underestimated, especially in the context of the Total National Strategy. Independent and self-sufficient arms production gave Pretoria and its white citizens an even greater sense of self-confidence, achievement and control.⁷

Of all the different weapon development programs the Government conducted, the one that must have given the securocrats the greatest sense of achievement, the pinnacle of the Nationalists' drive to become militarily independent was the successfully completed program for development of weapons of mass destruction – particularly the development of nuclear capability. In joining the so-called 'nuclear club' of countries, as those states which possess nuclear weapons are informally known, South Africa became a military entity to take note and keep track, of.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Lamb, D., *The Africans*, p. 317; Anon, *Apartheid: the facts*, p. 81.

⁷ *Ibid.*

“We developed the process to enrich uranium,” said Prime Minister BJ Vorster in 1978, “and we built a pilot plant; and it rather amuses me that when I announced it a couple of years ago there were those who laughed at us and said we were talking big, we haven’t got it. Now they are accusing me that we have got it. They then said we couldn’t do it, now they say we want to do it.”⁸ By using insinuation and innuendo or as PW Botha described it “deterrence by uncertainty”, Pretoria kept the world guessing about South Africa’s nuclear capability.⁹

On February 21st 1980, the American television company CBS, reported that a year before, in September 1979, South Africa had detonated a nuclear bomb off the South African coast in cooperation with Israel. This revelation came after the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in January 1980, reported to a congressional committee that, a year before in 1979, a fleet of South Africa’s warships had been conducting night time maneuvers near the site of the blast. The blast in question, being picked up by monitoring devices for nuclear explosions was apparently a nuclear device being tested on September 22nd 1979 at exactly 3:00am.¹⁰

The American State Department issued a statement saying: “The United States Government has an indication suggesting the possibility that a low-yield nuclear explosion occurred on September 22nd in an area of the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic including portions of the Antarctic Continent, and the southern part of Africa.” After South African authorities denied this the New Zealand Institute of Nuclear Science studied samples of rainwater, collected between August and October 1979, and reported that they had measured an increase in radioactive fallout. By January 1980 the Puerto Rican based Arecibo Ionospheric Observatory revealed that they had picked up a ripple in the ionosphere, moving from south to north, and that this could indeed have been the result of a nuclear detonation.¹¹

Since the early seventies South Africa had, in the strictest secrecy, been attempting to develop a nuclear capability for defence purposes and by 1979 the minority Government had completed its

⁸ Harrison, p. 266.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Walters, R. W., *South Africa and the bomb*, pp. 42-45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

first atomic bomb. A further six bombs were built, each capable of delivering an explosive power of between 10 and 18 kilotons.¹²

Although Pretoria wanted the international community to believe that they were capable of developing these weapons on their own steam, it was an open secret that the country received varying levels of direct and indirect support from the so-called Troika states, Israel and Taiwan, as well as help from the USA, Britain, Portugal, Italy, France, West Germany and even Iraq and Iran.¹³

Although South Africa did have these weapons it did not have the *deliverers* that, for example, the US possessed, in which case certain adjustments were made.¹⁴ The South African arsenal could be delivered in more than one form. One variant could be dropped from a Boeing 707, in the form of a Hento glide-bomb. Furthermore, it was believed that the Skua target drone, built by the Kentron group, could deliver a warhead over a distance of 800 km and even the army's 155mm howitzer, the powerful G5, could have been adjusted to discharge a nuclear bomb of sorts.¹⁵

During 1990 it came to light that Pretoria's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction also included a potent batch of chemical and biochemical weapons. The Atlanta based American Centre for Disease Control couriered a number of deadly diseases to various countries throughout the world during the 1980s. The motivation was that the recipients could do their own medical research in finding cures for these plagues.¹⁶ As early as 1984 South Africa received shipments of Ebola, Rift Valley microbes and Marburg. It was also during that year that the UN accused the country of developing biochemical weapons.¹⁷ Gen. Malan acknowledged that the production of biochemical weapons was highly developed and that particularly the United States was very concerned by South Africa's biochemical capability.¹⁸

¹² *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹³ Houtman, P. & McQuillan, S., *The mini-nuke conspiracy*, p. 146, 211.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Burrows, W. & Windren, R., *Critical mass*, p. 185.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN: 12 August 2000.

The South African program for the development of Chemical and Biological Warfare (CBW), also known as Operation Coast, was conducted by and through a wide array of scientists, doctors, professors, dentists, veterinarians, universities and front-companies.¹⁹

The CBW arsenal included weapons armed with Cholera, botulism and anthrax, different deadly chemicals as well as micro-organisms. One of the most powerful individuals in the CBW was Dr. Wouter Basson who acted as project manager. During investigations into the CBW program in the 1990s it became apparent that Dr. Basson was an exceptionally intelligent man while at the same time being a very peculiar individual as well. The cost of developing these biological weapons has been estimated at anywhere between tens and hundreds of millions of rands.²⁰

Pretoria's development of weapons of mass destruction formed part of the South African securocrats' take on not only the Total National Strategy, but East-West Cold War politics. In 1991 after the minority Government came clean on their arsenal, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Pik Botha said: "We were isolated. There was an arms embargo against us. There was a potential deterrent inherent in the capacity to produce a nuclear device in those circumstances."²¹

The immediate question arises: Against who did the Botha Government think they would use this newfound military power? Even without weapons of mass destruction, South Africa was already the region's military superpower. Detonation of nuclear weapons to neutralize internal upheavals would not only have been incredulous, but practically speaking, impossible and would have amounted to genocide. To put it plainly, South Africa was geographically too small and the bombs too destructive to be used inside South Africa or anywhere near it.²²

Therefore, it would appear that the Botha Government saw a possible military-diplomatic deterrent in their nuclear capability within the realm of the Total National Strategy. It should be made clear that not all high ranking Nationalists fervently supported South Africa's development of a defensive nuclear capability. One such person was the Minister of Finance, Barend du Plessis, who

¹⁹ De Villiers, S. (et. al) (ed.), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: vol. 2*, pp. 504-523.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Crawford, p. 13.

²² Jaster, R. (et al), *Changing fortunes*, p. 52.

by the late 1980s, opposed anymore funds being allocated towards such programs because he simply could not see the need for such costly devices, saying “we can hardly drop them on Lusaka or Soweto”.²³

Gen. Malan on the other hand believed the inherent value of these weapons to be self-evident, saying: “As jy ‘n vyand aan die anderkant het met daardie wapentuig, is jy ‘n *bloody fool* as jy dit nie ontwikkel hierdie kant nie,”²⁴ he went on to say that apart from being used as deterrent devices, they were, of course, powerful weapons and: “Die mense sal jou nooit vergewe as hulle daai goed gebruik en jy’t niks voorsorg getref nie.”²⁵

This deterrent possibly functioned on two levels: Should the USSR suddenly have decided to flood their allies in southern Africa with huge quantities of weaponry and South Africa’s armed forces subsequently lost their regional military superpower status, the Botha Government could always have played their atomic and biochemical trump cards to keep their enemies at bay.²⁶

The other, possibly less apparent value of these weapons is more diplomatic in nature. The crux of the strategy being to lure the western superpowers into a diplomatic Catch 22 of sorts: What did the White House find more appalling: A white, anticommunist, South African minority oppressing a black majority? Or a futurist South Africa being run by a black pro-Marxist government with a nuclear arsenal and some biochemical weapons to boot? The Nationalists obviously believed that the US’ global security concerns would override their moralistic objections to apartheid.²⁷

This ultimatum-styled reasoning was explicitly described by, among others, KJ de Beer, in his aforementioned 1987 article entitled *The total onslaught on the Republic of South Africa as bastion of the free Western World*, writing that the West should forego its “cold and neutral” stance regarding South Africa which he argued was brought about by “naïve questions surrounding apartheid.” He goes on to colour in the apocalyptic scenario, “it should be remembered that in case

²³ Renwick, R., *Unconventional diplomacy in Southern Africa*, p. 140.

²⁴ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN: 12 August 2000.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Jaster, R. (et al.), *Changing Fortunes: War, Diplomacy and Economics in Southern Africa*, p. 53.

²⁷ De Beer, KJ, “The total onslaught against the Republic of South Africa as bastion of the free Western world” in the *Journal for Contemporary History*, vol. 12, no. 1, April 1987, pp. 28-48.p. 45 & Burrows, W. & Windren, R., *Critical mass – the dangerous race for super weapons in a fragmented world*, p. 257.

of a final collapse of Southern Africa in the end, nuclear material and know-how could very easily fall into the lap of the communist inspired African National Congress (ANC) who will most certainly become a Russian satellite to occupy vulnerable and strategic Western trenches. The ultimate question is whether the Free West can allow the cold psychological warfare of the global threat to escalate in favour of Russia.”²⁸

CHAPTER 3

THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (NIS)

The establishment of the National Intelligence Service (NIS) formed an important part of Botha's reorganisation of the South African bureaucratic and security complex. During the Vorster era, Gen. 'Lang' Hendrik van der Berg was in charge of the secretive and infamous Bureau of State Security (BOSS). Van der Berg was generally regarded as a Rasputin-like figure lurking behind the political throne, having annexed the ear of the Prime Minister. PW Botha, then still Minister of Defence did not warm to Van der Berg, thus not surprisingly when Vorster left the corridors of power, Van der Berg was trailing not far behind.¹

As Van der Berg relinquished control of BOSS, it was systematically phased out and by 1981 was known as the Department of National Security [DONS]. Botha trimmed its executive branch, rerouted aspects of its functions to Military Intelligence and renamed it the National Intelligence Service (NIS).²

Botha also gave the newly created NIS a directorate. To head the newly formed National Intelligence Service, Botha appointed a young, albeit highly respected political scientist from the University of the Free State, Dr. Niël Barnard. Apart from studying nuclear strategy in America, during his academic career Barnard wrote or edited various security related publications, including: *Konflik en Orde in Internasionale Verhoudinge*, *Total Onslaught Against South Africa*, *International Terror and Urban Terrorism*, *Tricks in Modern Diplomacy* and also *Angola in the International Power Constellations*.³

The brash *boer-met-sy-roer* atmosphere that prevailed in Van der Berg's BOSS had no room in the cultured Free State academic's new intelligence centre. The intellectual Barnard placed a high premium on sophisticated professionalism and quiet discretion. Whereas BOSS members consisted

¹ Grundy, K., *The Militarization of South African Politics*, London, p. 43.

² Dugard, J. (ed.), *The last years of apartheid: civil liberties in South Africa*, p.58.

³ Seegers, A., *The military in the making of modern South Africa*, p. 250; Gastrow, S., *Who's who in South African politics*, no. 3, p. 12.

mostly of former security officers, in the new NIS the academic qualifications of its personnel carried more weight. Professional evaluations of operatives included assessments of the relevant books they read and seminars given at the Service were based on university styled practices.⁴

Furthermore the NIS brainstorming sessions better known as *dinkskrums* were held regularly. If budgetary spending was anything to go by, the NIS' main objective was conducting relevant strategic research. In this regard the NIS specifically recognised the strategic studies performed at the Universities of Pretoria and the Free State.⁵

The National Intelligence Service developed into one of the most effective structures in the Total National Strategy and National Management System. The Service specifically had to evaluate strategic information as well as having a counter-information directive. The NIS also played an intricate role in the collecting of strategic foreign information, specifically with regards to the Middle East and South America. Dr Barnard played a direct and decisive role within the State Security Council and in the overall co-ordination of the country's different intelligence units. The NIS, therefore played a leading role in the administration of the Total National Strategy and its creation formed a vital part of the inception of the NMS and its objectives.⁶

Having said that, the impression should not be made that the NIS was a dour secretive band of hardliner Afrikaner spies whose sole purpose was to guard the white *laager*. Dr. Barnard and NIS also played an intricate, albeit covert, progressive role during the 1980s. Chester Crocker, the American diplomat, wrote that Barnard "cultivated an image of inscrutability." He wrote that he and his American colleagues "learned over that time to respect Barnard, finding him to be a far more frank and forthright proponent of top-level hopes and rears than most of his colleagues. Like most other nationalist Afrikaners of his generation, he found the 1980's to be a crucible."⁷

Early in 1986 Dr. Frederik van Zyl Slabbert held a meeting with Dr. Barnard to discuss the country's "deteriorating domestic and external situation" with him. He told the latter that what

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Roherty, J., *State security in South Africa: civil-military relations under PW Botha*, p. 76-78.

⁷ Crocker, C., *High Noon in Southern Africa*, p. 116.

South Africa needed was to find an original new initiative to end the violence by getting “ahead of the game.” He also discussed police brutality with the Dr. Barnard.⁸

The fact that the liberal former leader of the PFP and outspoken critic of PW Botha and his administration, went specifically to Dr. Barnard to discuss these sensitive matters and not to, for example, police or military bosses, could serve as indicator of Dr. Barnard’s stature as a clear headed thinker and sober intellectual. As Director of NIS, Dr. Barnard was automatically one of the most powerful intelligence strategists in the Government’s whole security complex, but he was not dogmatic about it. It is important to again note that unlike many of the other highest ranking securocrats in South Africa, Dr. Barnard had an academic background and did not evolve through the ranks of the police or army before heading the NIS.

During mid 1987, history was made when former PFP leader Dr. Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, who now headed the Institute for a Democratic South Africa (IDASA), organised a party of 62 prominent Afrikaners and took them to Dakar to meet with 18 prominent ANC leaders.⁹ The motivation was that these open-minded and influential Afrikaners could meet with the outlawed organisation face to face once and for all, cutting through the rhetoric to hear for themselves what these people really stood for.⁹

Not surprisingly PW Botha was openly outraged at the impertinence of Slabbert and his band of liberals. He publicly denounced them quoting Lenin he called them “useful idiots”. He lambasted them further, saying that the ANC did not take them seriously, but was instead “laughing up their sleeves at the naivety” of the Dakar group. Only stopping short of calling them traitors, Botha said that Slabbert’s group did not go to Dakar to hold “penetrating discussions” with the ANC, but went subserviently “to co-ordinate strategies and to find out what the ANC expects of ‘democratic patriots.’” He again said that the ANC and SACP did not want to negotiate, but were only interested in one thing “the revolutionary takeover of power.”¹⁰

⁸ Cooper, C. (et al.), *South African Institute of Race Relations Survey 1984*, Johannesburg, 1985, pp. 750-805., p. 464.

⁹ Alden, C., *Apartheid’s last stand – the rise and fall of the South African security state*, p. 266-268.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

In spite of Botha's expected public tirade, behind the scenes an altogether different reality existed. Most South Africans would have been bewildered and most Nationalists would have been aghast if they knew the true state of affairs. State President PW Botha who had repeatedly renewed his vow that he would never have anything to do with the violent ANC, not only knew about the planned excursion to Dakar long before it happened, but did nothing to stop it.¹¹

The reason for this was that the quasi-diplomatic mission to Dakar was in reality facilitated by Dr. Barnard's NIS and executed by means of Slabbert's authentic liberalist IDASA. Years later when questioned about NIS' involvement in the DAKAR venture, Dr. Barnard watered down his institution's involvement simply saying that the intelligence service was "not opposed to meeting in Dakar and we believed that there could be no political solution without the ANC." Indeed, as early as 1984, officials from Pretoria met with high-ranking ANC personnel in the utmost secrecy.¹²

Although Dr. Barnard was a committed Nationalist he was also a balanced intellectual and as was the case with Prof. JP de Lange, he proved to be more a pragmatic realist than a Verwoerdian ideologue. "The Afrikaner people are much more pragmatic than people think," the spy master said, "The typical idea of an Afrikaner being a dour, Old Testament, Calvinistic type of person, I don't think it's true deep down... We are capable of adjusting to what is happening."¹³

And so during the 1980s the influential Director of the NIS came to the conclusion that South Africa and its government's ideology as found under Botha, was becoming increasingly less viable. Dr. Barnard's second in charge, Mike Louw, explained: "The whole idea on which South Africa was built was crumbling... Apartheid couldn't work because it was not tackled with gusto, and implemented with vision."¹⁴

According to Louw it became apparent to the NIS that PW Botha was only tinkering around with "pragmatic constitutional maneuverings," but that he did not have the foresight to actually lead the

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Waldmeir, P., *Anatomy of a miracle: the end of apartheid and the birth of the new South Africa*, p. 49-51.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

country to a new dispensation. Comparing the state president to an “elastic band” Louw said that although Botha could go along way with regards to reformist power sharing, he could not “stretch anymore than that.” Dr. Barnard’s deputy pondered as to whether Botha truly believed “that the whites still had to maintain power. Yes, bring the black increasingly into government, but to hand over power to the majority – that was a bridge he wouldn’t have been able to cross.” Staying with that idea, he said that the NIS knew the “days were over when a little group of white Afrikaners could sit down and plan for an entire nation as diverse as ours.”¹⁵

The result of these histrionic conclusions was that during the mid to late 1980s, NIS operatives, working in the utmost secrecy, met with various ANC officials at secret locations around the globe. One such impromptu operative acting on behalf of the NIS was the progressive philosophy professor Willie Esterhuyse.¹⁶

During late 1987 he met with a high-ranking ANC executive, Thabo Mbeki. It is important to note that these were very cautious exploratory talks where the two sides basically and carefully tested the political waters as it were, to toe each other’s ideological lines. They were trying to sense whether the remote possibility could exist, in the not too distant future, for the opening of more overt direct lines of communication between the opposing groups, which, of course, at that stage were locked in a severe and all-out struggle.¹⁷

The heads of the National Intelligence Service had been meeting with Nelson Mandela since the early 1980s and during 1988 Dr. Barnard and his deputy spy boss Mike Louw renewed the acquaintance once again. They wanted to find out where the influential political prisoner’s ideological priorities lay; whether he was a communist and whether he would be susceptible to the protection of minority group rights in a future dispensation.¹⁸ Having come to the conclusion, by the late 1980s, that the time for negotiations was very close, Dr. Barnard said that he and the NIS wanted to act “before our backs were against the wall.”¹⁹

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.77.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁸ Alden, p. 268.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.267.

Why, if Botha was avidly opposed to negotiate with the ANC, did he allow and tolerate the NIS' sensitive contacts with the enemy? Indeed, to many commentators his possible reasoning was not so much politically realist as Barnard and Louw's. Patty Waldmeir, American journalist and political commentator, gave a plausible explanation: "Find the enemy faultlines and plant dynamite beneath them. PW Botha believed, to the end of his reign, that he could divide the moderate nationalist wing of the ANC from the Communists, failing to realize that the gap between the two was far narrower than rhetoric would suggest. So he sent Niël Barnard and his men from NIS to discover where the rival camp divided."²⁰

Exactly who met with whom and where and when and exactly who in Pretoria and Lusaka knew about it has never been completely revealed. Indeed, the man who brought intellectual finesse to South Africa's spying game placed such an emphasis on confidentiality that it stood out in comparison with his intelligence counterparts around the world. Therefore, information on the detailed particulars of the NIS' extensive covert initiatives varies from scarce to nonexistent. The implication is that it is difficult to ascertain exactly where the parameters of this obviously powerful man's influence lay.

²⁰ Waldmeir, p. 75.

CHAPTER 4

THE CARROT AND STICK OF REFORM

Another aspect of Beaufre's Total National Strategy philosophy is that of political reform acting in unison with the security dimension. Accordingly he stated that by means of "thorough-going reforms we must cut the ground from under the feet of the malcontents". The Nationalists were attentive.¹

In a speech at an NP meeting in Upington on July 28th, 1979, Botha said: "Good neighbourliness in this country can be developed to the full only if we do justice to every population group. And we can keep the peace in this country and ensure the safety of our children only if the right relations are built up between Black and White in this country, and I am going to dedicate my life to this..." and "The National Party has a programme or policy to adapt to changing circumstances. One cannot keep one's policy the same year in and year out, because the world does not remain the same year in and year out."² And then some years later, in 1982 (the reader keeping Beaufre in mind) Botha said: "Now that we are in power, we have to be prepared to follow the road of justice in our relations with other population groups. If we do not succeed in this way the powers of radicalism and even revolution will disfigure the national life of our country."³

As the Total National Strategy and its National Management Strategy were revitalised by the new National Party leader, Botha also started on his campaign of reform. In a speech he gave at the NP Congress in Durban, on September 15th, 1979, that would become known as the 12 Point Plan speech, Botha set out what was in fact the culmination of his search for a reform process. According to Botha: "It is to strive for the recognition of the following policy within the framework of multinational Southern Africa that this is the only solution to our problems".⁴

The 12 Point Plan was:

¹ Alden, C., *Apartheid's last stand – the rise and fall of the South African security state*, p. 44.

² Scholtz, J.J.J., *Fighter and reformer: extracts from the speeches of PW Botha*, pp.17-18

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 203, 4/2/181.

1. The recognition and acceptance of the existence of multinationalism and of minorities in the Republic of South Africa. Said Botha: "You cannot wish them away."
2. The acceptance of vertical differentiation with a built-in principle of self-determination at as many levels as possible.
3. The establishment of constitutional structures by the Black peoples to make the highest degree of self-government possible for them in states that are consolidated as far as practicable. "We believe that part of the right to self-determination of these Black states is to allow them to grow towards independence according to their own judgement" said Botha.
4. The division of powers between South African Whites, South African Coloureds and South African Indians with a system of consultation and co-responsibility so far as common interests are concerned.⁵
5. The acceptance of the principle that, where at all possible, each population group should have its schools and live in its own community as being fundamental to social contentment. "In my view," explained the NP leader, "this is not discrimination, it is the recognition of each other's rights".
6. The preparedness to consult as equals on matters of common interest with a sound balance between the rights of the individual and those of the community. Botha then said that he was in favor of removing petty-apartheid, "hurtful and unnecessary discriminatory measures". And then curbing the possibility of being branded a liberal, made the following adamantly clear: "But I am not in favour of a system of compulsory integration in South Africa, and I am not in favour of endangering my own people's right to self-determination".
7. The recognition of economic-interdependence and the properly planned utilisation of manpower.
8. Striving for a peaceful constellation of Southern African states with respect for each other's cultures, traditions and ideals.
9. South Africa's firm determination to defend itself against interference from outside in every possible way. Again the reader should keep in mind Beaufre's thought on developing a TNS and a process of reform. Saying that the Republic was militarily stronger than ever before, Botha said that his will to reform should not be misunderstood as having been born out of a sense of desperation or fragility: "I want to warn those who think that we practice our politics

⁵ *Ibid.*

from a position of weakness: We are not speaking from a position of weakness, we are speaking from a position of decency. If they want to test us, our strength, we will hit back for the sake of South Africa's self-respect.”

10. “As far as possible” a policy of neutrality in the conflict between super powers, “with priority given to Southern African interests”.
11. Maintenance of effective decision making by the State, which rests on a strong Defence Force and Police Force to guarantee orderly government as well as sufficient clean administration. And strong security forces, with contented members, are of the “utmost importance in today's dangerous world”.
12. Maintenance of free enterprise as the basis of our economic and financial policy.⁶

Drafted in conjunction with Chris Heunis, later to become Minister of Constitutional Development, the 12 Point Plan, according to Chris Alden, was Botha's “effort to transform the administrative, security and reform imperatives that characterized the SADF's Total National Strategy into a national reform strategy.”⁷

One of the major influences on the Botha government's assessment of how reform should be administered was the Harvard professor, Samuel Huntington. As early as 1981, Huntington visited South Africa and gave a talk on the subject at the Political Science Association. It was there that the academic explained his reform theory, which in essence was a formula for a top-to-bottom styled reform strategy. Also during this talk, Huntington made a famous statement, saying that a reformer should be a master of deception. “The politics of reform is basically a tripartite process with the reform leader fighting a two front war,” said Huntington, “against both stand patters and revolutionaries while at the same time attempting to divide and confuse his enemies”.⁸

He reasoned that with the black liberation movement to the left of Botha and the Afrikaner conservatives to the right, the Botha government was in a “classic reform position”, but that this did not imply that the government was necessarily a reform government. According to Huntington, this only implied that the opportunity for reform existed: “Whether efforts are made to utilize that

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Alden, p. 80.

⁸ Kenney, H., *Power Pride & Prejudice: The Years of Nationalist Rule in South Africa*, p. 304.

opportunity only history can tell for sure because it is of the essence of the reformer that he must employ ambiguity, concealment, and deception concerning his goals".⁹

It ought to be mentioned that although a large number of leading scholars and commentators debated Huntington's influence on the regime as a reform pedagogue of sorts, Botha himself denied this. Botha's biographer Daan Prinsloo, wrote in the former state president's authorised biography *Stem in die Wilderness*, that Huntington's perceived influence is imaginary. "Volgens PW Botha het hy Huntington nooit ontmoet nie en het Huntington geen invloed op hom uitgeoefen nie."¹⁰

During 1986 President Botha released a memorandum to a visiting mission of US Congressmen, under the leadership of Chairman William H. Gray, in which he reviewed his government's reform process up until that point.¹¹ One of Botha's first reform steps was the abolition of so-called 'petty apartheid,' for example the 'whites only' signs internationally recognised as symbols of apartheid South Africa. The noted reform initiatives mentioned in the memo included the opening of sport to all races, the opening of a "modern, sophisticated trade union system", the repealing of job reservation, the revocation of the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the repealing of "racial provisions" in the Immorality Act and the opening of public amenities to all races, for example hotels, restaurants, park benches, trains and buses.¹²

The list of reforms is concluded with this positive, if rather vague, thought: "The door is thus wide-open, for the first time in South Africa's history, to the achievement through negotiation of a political dispensation in South Africa which could satisfy the political aspirations of all the country's communities. Negotiation is the key to the solution of South Africa's problems."¹³

One of the most robust moves of Botha's reform campaign was the inception of a so-called Tricameral Parliament. One of the first acts Botha focused after taking over from Vorster, was to

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Prinsloo, D., *Stem uit die wildernis*, p. 102.

¹¹ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION at INCH: PV 203, PS 12/74/1.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

appoint a parliamentarily selected committee to investigate the possibility of opening parliament to coloureds and Indians.¹⁴ By 1979, the committee's recommendations resulted in the dissolution of the Senate, empowerment of the State President by party leaders to appoint twenty members to the House of Assembly and the creation of a President's Council with no legislative powers, but advisory capabilities. In this President's Council whites as well as coloureds and Indians were to serve but very explicitly, no blacks. Botha said: "Swartmense sal nie in die Presidentsraad verteenwoordiging kry nie; my opvolger kan dit eendag doen as hy wil". According to Botha such a move would spell disaster, because it would imply an acceptance of "die kiem" of black majority rule.¹⁵

This President's Council had the responsibility to write a new constitution. On November 2nd 1983 a white referendum was held during which whites' overwhelming support for Botha's new Tricameral parliament was made abundantly clear. The State President walked away from the polls with a two-thirds majority stamp of approval for his new constitution and multi-cultural parliament.¹⁶

Botha spoke about the referendum and why most whites supported it: "Die blankes wou 'n goeie verhouding met ander bevolkingsgroepe hê. Afrikaans- en Engelssprekendes, hulle was almal welwillend in hul hart teenoor ander bevolkingsgroepe. En daarom het hulle in die referendum, wat ek bewerkstellig het, JA gestem, omdat hulle daarin gesien het dat die voorstelle, aanbevelings van die destydse Presidentsraad, het hulle gesien as 'n positiewe wyse om in SA 'n mate van stabiliteit en veiligheid te help verseker."¹⁷

The country's government would thus be representative of whites, coloureds and Indians, yet not of the majority of South Africans, the black population. Samuel Hunting had said in 1981, that "narrowing the scope of political participation may be indispensable to eventually broadening that participation".¹⁸

¹⁴ De Villiers, D. & De Villiers, J., *PW*, p. 213.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Maree, B., "'n Maand van geskiedenis" in *Suid-Afrikaanse Panorama*, pp. 1, 2 & Cameron, T. (ed.), *Nuwe geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, p.318; De Villiers, D. & De Villiers, J., *PW*, p. 213.

¹⁷ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PW BOTHA. 13 October 2000.

¹⁸ Kenney, p. 304.

Blacks would get special structures, separate from the Tricameral Parliament. Explaining his aims towards the black people, Botha said in 1983, that he accepted that urban blacks are a feature of his country citing the “economic necessities” that forced him to accept it. “That is why we are developing third tier government systems and structures for blacks” and that these low leveled structures “would be allowed to develop to a higher level than ordinary municipalities”. These local black councils, as they would later be known, would to a certain extent be in control of matters such as law and order and health services.¹⁹

During August of 1984, the coloureds and Indians held elections to vote for their tricameral parliamentary representatives. The Coloured and Indian turnouts were very low and it is estimated that not even 20% of the registered voters bothered to vote.²⁰

Nonetheless, the Government continued to usher in the new dispensation. The new parliamentary system would function with the House of Assembly staying exclusively white, with 178 seats. A House of Representatives would accommodate 85 coloured seats and a House of Delegates would house the Indian representatives with 45 seats.²¹ The objective of the new constitution was, described by the then Minister of Constitutional Affairs, Chris Heunis, as being to “accommodate the coloured people and Indians without detracting from the self-determination of the whites”.²²

Keeping with Heunis’ train of thought, legislation was divided into “general affairs” and “own affairs”. The former included matters such as defence, foreign affairs and justice, with the latter dealing with matters relating to specific race groups, such as culture, education, local government and health. “Own affairs” legislation could be enacted by whichever one House was involved, whereas “General Affairs” had to have the support of all three the Houses. If the Houses could not achieve consensus, then it was submitted to the President’s Council, which in these cases had the final say. This Council consisted of 60 members: 35 members came from all three Houses; a

¹⁹ Murray, H., “Interview: PW Botha” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 2, no. 3, Spring 1983, p. 17.

* See also, the chapter on the United Democratic Front.

²⁰ Thomashausen, AEAM, *The dismantling of apartheid*, p. 10.

²¹ Maree, B., “’n Maand van geskiedenis” in *Suid-Afrikaanse Panorama*, pp. 1, 2 & Cameron, T. (ed.), *Nuwe geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, p. 318.

²² Oakes, D. (ed.), *Illustrated history of South Africa*, p.473.

further 25 members were appointed by the State President, of which 10 had to come from the ranks of the opposition.²³

As can be ascertained from the above figures, where Indians and so-called coloureds, had indeed been made part of the central governmental process and it was done in a way that ensured they could never force the white executive hand. There is no way in which coloured and Indian parliamentary power could be translated into any real final political authority or influence; the predominately white House of Assembly, was ultimately responsible for electing and removing the State President. Also, no institutionalised basis existed for the coloured and Indian houses to prevent, or even delay legislation.²⁴

State President PW Botha had, according to many commentators, acquired some exorbitant new powers through his 1983 constitution. In 1985 Deon Geldenhuys and Hennie Kotzé wrote on the subject of the powerful office of State President, as found in the 1983 constitution, noting that the new constitutional dispensation “revolves” around the person of the State President: “Some politicians wonder, indeed, whether the new constitutional system could continue functioning without Botha.”²⁵

Afrikaner journalist and historian At van Wyk observed that Botha steadily took on the persona of a high handed “anointed emperor” and became an increasingly domineering, elusive enigma, shielded by “a military-like line of officials”.²⁶ In contrast to the enthusiasm that Botha had inspired during his first years as Head of State, Van Wyk felt he had deteriorated into a power hungry egomaniac “playing the imperialist role himself, aiming to remain at the top for a long time”.²⁷

The new Constitution effectively made PW Botha the formal and executive head of state, as well as the commander-in-chief of the South African Defence Force. The new State President enjoyed

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Dean, B., “Control by cabal” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 5, no.4, 1986, pp.58-60.

²⁵ Geldenhuys, D. & Kotzé, H., “Man of action” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1985, p.12.

²⁶ Van Wyk, A., *The birth of a new Afrikaner*, p. 34.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

far greater security of tenure than his Prime Minister-predecessors who had served under the 1961 constitution. The Republic of South Africa Act of 1983, invested the Executive with vast new command, that apart from getting authorisation from parliament with regards to spending money, the executive could, technically, govern without parliamentary checks and balances. Some analysts have also commented that it seem whenever the opposition got too strenuous, the executive would revert back to special extra-parliamentary regulations, for example Emergency laws, to push through the parliamentary legislation it wanted.²⁸

According to C. Heymans, the apparent broadening of democracy, cannot be seen separately from the concentration and centralisation of power: "It reinforces such trends as the shift towards executive rule at the expense of parliament and the enhanced role of security in the decision-making process".²⁹

Veteran liberal politician, Helen Suzman of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), regarded the expansion of the State President's powers one of the main motivations for not supporting his new Tricameral Parliament. In *In No Uncertain Terms*, her autobiography, she wrote: "We objected to the absence of checks and balances to curb the very wide powers the President would exercise: no court could override any decision he made."³⁰

Probably the most clear-cut example of the wielding of this kind of power came about in 1986. The NP wanted to pass two controversial security bills, the Internal Security Amendment Bill and the Public Safety Amendment Bill, but both the House of Delegates and the House of Representatives rejected the pieces of legislation. According to the new constitution when this type of divide arose the matter were to be referred to the President's Council, which would have the final say. The Council, not surprisingly, approved both the bills without a hitch. Both the contested bills were then officially regarded as having been approved by parliament. This type of brusque circumvention lead to much outspoken criticism from the Coloured and Indian parliamentary groups, the PFP and a wide spectrum of commentators.³¹

²⁸ Dean, pp. 58, 59.

²⁹ Liebenberg, I., *Ideologie in Konflik*, p. 109.

³⁰ Suzman, H., *In no uncertain terms*, p. 232.

³¹ Cooper, C. (et. al) "Security" in *South African Survey of Race Relations 1986*, Cape Town, 1987, p. 816.

As can possibly be ascertained from the above, the new constitution was severely criticised for its centralisation of authority. Although considerable powers were indeed delegated, no real devolution of power took place.³²

The reform initiatives were initially met with excitement, but after the initial hubbub had died down, one very logical question soon cracked the cautious esteem the reform campaign was held in by Botha's liberal opponents: What was the NP's final intent with reform? Where was it going, was it the first step in a process to finally dismantle apartheid, or an inconsequential constitutional window dressing? – the key word there being 'intent'. Botha came under a lot of pressure to issue a statement of intent or a time limit of sorts with regards to the future and ultimate goals of the reform process and the possibility of negotiations.

During his so-called *Rubicon Speech*, of August 15th 1985, Botha said that the view of South Africa as being made up of a black majority and white minority was "simplistic" and a "racist approach" to the country's situation. Then taking on the question of issuing a statement of intent he said: "I am not prepared to make it, not now and not tomorrow".

And if his global audience still had any misconceptions about where he stood on this issue, in no uncertain terms he said: "It would also be wrong to place a time limit on negotiations. I am not going to walk into this trap – I am responsible for South Africa's future".³³ Botha then continued, saying that he knew for a fact that most of the country's leaders and "reasonable" South Africans rejected the concept of one-man-one-vote, because they agreed that it could only "lead to domination of one over the other and it would lead to chaos. Consequently I reject it as a solution." He then also stopped the conjecture and speculation that had started around the introduction of a fourth black house of parliament, Botha said he did not regard it as a "practical" solution.³⁴

It would thus seem that Botha's short-term aims were to sustain white minority power by desegregating so-called 'unnecessary apartheid' and implementing economic upliftment and

³² Shlemmer, L., "South Africa in mid-1986" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 4, no. 1, winter, 1986, p. 6.

³³ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: ADDRESS: 15 AUGUST 1985 PV 203: 4 / 2 / 133

³⁴ *Ibid.*

development programs specifically aimed at the black communities, but after all was said and done, racial segregation would remain.³⁵

The reason why most white South Africans supported Botha's reforms, was exactly why most blacks rejected it. Although the reforms might have trimmed some of apartheid's thorns, it left the bark and roots of the system untouched. In his popular book, *Moderne Afrika*, APJ van Rensburg explained Botha's reforms in somewhat lofty terms, making it clear that reform was an attempt to ensure white survival on a black continent, while protecting group interests in the process.³⁶ Botha also made this point clear throughout his reform campaigns, saying in August 1985, that a "simplistic 'winner-takes-all' political system" will "diminish and not increase the freedom of our people".³⁷

While addressing an NP Youth gathering in the Transvaal during the same period, Botha assured the teenagers that, "We shall not be stamped into a situation of panic by irresponsible elements for opportunistic reasons. We shall not be forced to sell out our proud heritage we built up over the decades". The State President then said that the NP government would continue with "the process of peaceful deliberations and consultations".³⁸

Beyers Naudé, said that he initially attached merit to Botha's reform policy, saying, "I – in the beginning – really thought that it would be reformed," but he went on to say that the more he came into contact with black South Africa "I realised more and more that Apartheid couldn't be reformed. Apartheid was, in its nature, a rape of human values and it was simply not going to work."³⁹ He said that especially after hearing the views of young blacks "I realised, sorry, but there is no way that apartheid can be truly reformed."⁴⁰

³⁵ Shlemmer, L., "Change – South Africa's split personality" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1984, p.7.

³⁶ Van Rensburg, APJ, *Moderne Afrika*, p.144.

³⁷ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: ADDRESS: 15 AUGUST 1985 PV 203 4 / 2 / 133.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with BEYERS NAUDE. 27 JUNE 2000.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Naudé, in his capacity as Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, in a 1985 article, explained why reforms were not far reaching enough: “Increasingly, the democratic people of South Africa are using the Freedom Charter as a yardstick against which to measure the “reforms” in South Africa. The reality is that now, 25 years since the drawing up of the Freedom Charter by 3, 000 representatives of the people from all walks of life, none of the demands have been met” he then conceded that some might have been addressed by Pretoria under Botha, but “none of the fundamental demands have been met and there is no prospect of them being met”.⁴¹

Although, for exactly opposite reasons, both the rightwing Conservative Party*, as well as the liberal Progressive Federal Party opposed Botha’s tricameral parliament. Helen Suzman, in explaining why her PFP was against the new system, said that she believed, in effect, that Botha’s new deal “lacked legitimacy” because “it was created without proper consultation with all sections of the population,” specifically South Africa’s black majority. She also criticised the new constitution for its lack of a Bill of Rights.⁴²

Focussing on the question of legitimacy and the Botha Government, political scientist Prof. JC Garnett, commented, during 1989, on the Nationalists’ reform policies, which in his view, could easily be understood as “merely tinkering cosmetically with the Constitution”.⁴³ He sounded a warning that the Botha Government stood a chance of loosing all legitimacy if it did not reassess its security orientation. He argued that South Africa’s executive should not make the mistake of looking at their biggest security threat as a Reds-under-the-beds conspiracy, but rather the legitimacy tightrope it was walking – trying to pacify the blacks with constitutional tinkering and reform: “The most dangerous threat to the security of South Africa is the distinct possibility that the government will fall off its tightrope, and will not be able to resolve the crisis of legitimacy” which is what “undermines its moral authority”.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Naudé, B., “Where is South Africa going?” in *Africa Report*, vol. 30, no. 3, May-June 1985, p. 5.

* As already noted, the Conservatives reasoned that the reforms were jeopardizing separate development and would ultimately culminate in black majority rule.

⁴² Suzman, H., *In no uncertain terms*, p. 231.

⁴³ Garnett, JC, “National security and threat perception” in *The strategic review for Southern Africa*, vol. 10, 1989.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The legitimacy issue was not only a point of contention during the 1980s. During the late 1970s the noted Afrikaner philosopher, Willie Esterhuyse, in his *Afskeid van Apartheid*, wrote that if the Government introduced and executed a campaign, which the target group did not accept, but regarded with suspicion, then such a program will never succeed.⁴⁵ Esterhuyse argued that the moral quality and safety of the Afrikaner's "volksbestaan" depended on how successful they were in cutting away the "tumour of racism" and the "moral cancer" of racial discrimination.⁴⁶

Seen from the perspective of a white minority and in the context of apartheid party politics, Botha's reforms were monumental and ground breaking. Seen from the perspective of the black majority, in the context of liberation politics, these reforms were an overrated storm in a small teacup. White and black South Africans had a completely different view of what 'change' meant. Blacks did not want political fringe *benefits*, they wanted the same political *rights* as the whites.⁴⁷

Ismail Omar, who served in Botha's Indian House of Delegates and President's Council, wrote: "The lack of a natural exchange of ideas and thinking has resulted in a perception gap of frightening magnitude in a society with a common destiny. A giant leap in political terms from the White point of view is not a giant leap from the Black point of view," then specifically focusing on the Tricameral system, he wrote that by 1987 Coloureds and Indians regarded it as "irrelevant."⁴⁸ This was the case, according to Omar, because, "Its actions are so totally incompatible with its declared policy of 'power-sharing between groups' and 'non-domination', that it has created a credibility void for itself as well as for participation politics."⁴⁹

Prof. Lawrence Shlemmer concurred, writing that although Botha's unprecedented reforms "seen in the light of nearly 40 years of highly institutionalised apartheid and over three centuries of racial segregation" should not be summarily belittled as meaningless. But, there should be no mistake that in effect, very little changed for the black people of South Africa, irrespective of how profound the acceptance of these reforms might have been for the whites.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Esterhuyse, WP, *Afskeid van apartheid*, p.63.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Lamb, D., *The Africans*, p. 320.

⁴⁸ Omar, I., *Reform in crisis*, p. 33, 89.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Shlemmer, p. 6

The criticism of the Tricameral Parliament revolved chiefly around:

- The exclusion of blacks at central government level
- Differentiation between groups, on the basis of their race, was proof that discrimination was not fundamentally changed or addressed
- The failure of the co-option of Coloureds and Indians, as illustrated by their low voter turnout in 1984⁵¹

To try and put the relationship that existed between the Total National Strategy and the reform process into perspective it is important to note that by the time Botha took control of the NP, South Africa was experiencing, as shown in broad terms above, a legitimacy crisis, both in the eyes of the world as well as internally.⁵² Instead of trying to diplomatically explain the apartheid-situation to the world, Botha sternly attempted to keep South Africa and the politics of apartheid under control by means of the Total National Strategy and National Management Strategy.⁵³

Reform was the link between how Botha tried to appease the black population and the world community, while at the same time keeping control of the system. These two considerations then form the carrot and stick of Botha's political approach.

Botha never considered the concept of one-man-one-vote power sharing, saying in a speech in 1986, "Daar is geen manier waarop dit tot bilike magsdeling kan lei nie. As daaraan voldoen sou word, sou dit suiwer neerkom op 'n magsoorname en meerderheidsregering".⁵⁴

On various occasions the State President explained his view on the majority rule-principle. Following an ethnic train of thought, he said that the country was made up of minorities, white and black minorities. Botha said that the future of the constitutional position of black South Africans

⁵¹ Thomashausen, AEAM, *The dismantling of apartheid*, p. 10.

⁵² Geldenhuys, D., *The diplomacy of isolation*, p.235.

⁵³ Slabbert, FVZ., *The System and the Struggle: Reform, Revolt & Reaction in South Africa*, p. 125.

⁵⁴ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: 'Staatkundige Hervorming': PV 203 PS 12 / 75: 1986.

would be determined through lengthy “consultation” with various black communities.⁵⁵ PW Botha reaffirmed, in 2000, that he had never supported the creation of a fourth black House as part of the Tricameral system. He envisaged some type of National Council outside parliament, where talks and consultation could take place.⁵⁶

According to JP Landman, Botha Government’s take on consultation implied the façade of negotiations without the Government actually having to negotiate. Via the so-called process of consultation the Botha-lead NP could gain as many insights from as many different black groupings as it wanted, while all along propagating its own views and programs.⁵⁷ These parties could then debate these convictions as vigorously as they wanted, without the government being bound or under any obligation to accept or act upon any of the insights or recommendations. Therefore just because consultation and talks were taking place, it did not mean negotiations were taking place. Consultations could not be regarded as a substitute for negotiations.⁵⁸ Logically, the much-debated concept of co-option again came into play here.

According to F. Van Zyl Slabbert by the mid-1980s, the country was engrossed in siege politics. Siege was made up of two strategies he said – repression and co-option. The former must control dissent and latter “must manage political domination”. Writing that both strategies are irreconcilable with “popular democratic politics” and “the ideological justification for opposing it, is the overriding need for stability”. According to Slabbert, in these circumstances “the politics of stability becomes an end in itself, even though the stability that is achieved through repression and co-option will be presented as a means to an end”. Cutting through to the crux, he wrote that: “At the heart of such justifications, however, lies the determination and the will of the white minority Government not to lose control over the machinery of state”.⁵⁹

Slabbert then explained that it was because of Botha’s reform policies – which refused the relinquishing of white minority power – that the people who were “subjected to repression and co-

⁵⁵ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: ADDRESS: PV 203 4/2 / 133: 1985

⁵⁶ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PW BOTHA. 13 October 2000. .

⁵⁷ Landman, J.P. (et. al), *Wat kom na apartheid?*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Slabbert, FVZ, *The last white parliament*, p. 197.

option” were demanding “freedom”, the freedom to organise, choose and participate as they saw fit. According to Slabbert, Botha could not allow this because this would eventually have led to the majority deciding who should govern them. “And so the ‘politics of freedom’ and the ‘politics of stability’ will feed off and oppose one another. The demand for ‘stability’ will be seen as a threat to ‘freedom’, and the demand for ‘freedom’ a ‘threat’ to ‘stability’”. He then again stressed, that “co-option” was an attempt from Pretoria to sustain white minority power.⁶⁰

According to Webster and Erwin co-option was a procedure whereby the leaders of an opposing group are absorbed by the governing group – “in such a way that no shift in the balance of power takes place.”⁶¹ During 2000, Clem Sunter, explained the view which he held during the 1980s, that co-option could only lead “downhill, because the majority of the black people in the country won’t buy the co-option scenario.”⁶² And therefore you have to negotiate with the real guys”. According to Sunter, Botha did not really go as far down the co-option route as he could have, “they understood that the co-option scenario wouldn’t work.” Sunter did add, though, that he thought Botha “would have liked to have made that mistake”.⁶³

By neglecting to incorporate Black South Africa in the Tricameral system, the government reinforced a sense of unity among Blacks, a sense of common grievance.⁶⁴ Through the Tricameral system the Government tried to co-opt blacks, coloureds and Indians into their whites only system. By doing so, in the eyes of the non-collaborators, Pretoria discredited those groups who bought into the new system and simultaneously heightened the status of those who boycotted it.⁶⁵ As Denis Beckett put it: “Thus, the government’s attempt to gradually ‘broaden democracy’ is hopeless. All that its broadening is rejection”.⁶⁶

Following this line of reasoning, that which various commentators felt the Tricameral system did achieve was the polarisation of co-opted and the non-participants. Omar writes that this is because

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁶¹ Liebenberg, p. 110.

⁶² J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with CLEM SUNTER. 13 November 2000.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Matthews, T., “Political violence in South Africa” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 3, no. 3, third quarter, 1984, p. 22.

⁶⁵ Beckett, D., “Still the fears to raise the hopes” in *Frontline*, vol. 6, no. 6, November 1986, p. 45.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

the “non-participation forces have succeeded in creating a credibility crisis for participation politics by the successful propagation of the political cliché that those participating in the system support apartheid, and those outside oppose it”. In other words, those associated with the system, irrespective of colour, were immediately seen as proponents of its wrongs.⁶⁷

A condition of being either for us or against us, had set in. The result was, according to Slabbert, that the Botha Government regarded anyone opposed to its system as its enemy and a proponent of its violent overthrow; similarly those that had been co-opted, irrespective of their “sincerity”, would be typecast as working to further the aims of the system: “There is nothing new in this and it is typical of the mutual stereotyping that takes place in a polarisation situation.”⁶⁸

The polarisation and typecasting that Slabbert refers to were not entirely new to the South African landscape. During the 1970s Willie Esterhuyse had warned, in his 1979 book *Afkseid van Apartheid*, of a growing sense of paranoia and distrust among coloureds towards Afrikaners. As one coloured community leader told him: “Jy is vir my in ‘n sekere sin ‘n veiligheidsrisiko. Ek kan dit nie waag om te openlik oor ons assosiasie te wees nie. My mense sal my daarvan beskuldig dat ek met die Boere heul.”⁶⁹ Typecasting also came into play when Botha said, without specifying who he was referring to, that those who are demanding greater and vaster change are “radical elements” and that these radicals “want revolutionary and not evolutionary change. We will not surrender to that.”⁷⁰

Leon Wessels, high ranking Nationalist, said in an interview in 1988, that those who said the Total National Strategy was a government ploy to try and stay in power indefinitely are those to whom the “system was a threat” and by this he meant “those who seek to make South Africa ungovernable”. He then juxtaposed these non-collaborators with the “responsible black citizens” who “appreciate the important role of the Joint Management System in providing stability, normality and development”.⁷¹ According to rev. Allan Boesak, the prominent anti-apartheid

⁶⁷ Omar, I., p. 24.

⁶⁸ Slabbert, p. 201.

⁶⁹ Esterhuyse, p. 84.

⁷⁰ De Villiers & De Villiers, p. 217.

⁷¹ Ebersohn, W., “The headmen” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 7, no. 5, 1988, pp. 16-25., p. 22.

activist and head of the powerful mass organisation, the United Democratic Front, there was a certain cathartic value to radicalization and the accompanying polarisation. The Reverend creatively argued that the Afrikaners had turned politics into “modder” and thus: “The people can’t see the politics clearly. There is only one way to purify politics, and that is through radicalisation.”⁷²

After delivering his much publicised address in 1981 about the route and virtues of reformist politics, Samuel Huntington returned to South Africa during 1986 to evaluate Pretoria’s five year reform track-record. Not hiding his disappointment the Harvard professor’s assessment was in effect a scathing critique of the Botha Government’s entire reform program and the implementation thereof.

Huntington’s criticism received almost as much publicity as his original 1981 talk and boiled down to expressing doubts about how serious Botha was about reform and therefore questioning his legitimacy as a reformer.⁷³

Huntington felt Botha enjoyed talking the reformist talk without walking the reformist walk. It is important to look at his main points of criticism, as many of these also directly or indirectly relate to the main causes of the violent political upheavals that were to follow.

Expectations

The American reform expert blamed Botha for raising expectations to inproportionate levels. He reminded Pretoria “not to make big promises”. He felt Botha had promised much, but ended up “delivering much less than [he] seemed to promise”. On many occasions Botha complained that his government did not receive the credit for its reformist initiatives, which according to Huntington was because they had delivered too little after promising too much. “As a result,” he explained, “when it does do something worthwhile as in the case of the pass laws, it does not perhaps get the credit it deserves”⁷⁴.

⁷² Wessels, L., *Die einde van 'n era*, p. 9.

⁷³ Huntington, S., “Whatever has gone wrong with reform?” in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, Winter, 1986, no. 8, pp.19-22.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

“Fabian strategy”

In 1981 Huntington argued in favor of his so-called Fabian strategy, whereby it was best to move as fast as possible with reforms after having announced them. In this way the government's opposition would be taken by surprise and not have enough time to mobilize resistance. Huntington said that the Botha government clearly did not follow that advice. “Almost every major issue in South Africa is studied first by one commission and then by another... There is an elaborate process of analysis and consideration, and it takes a year and often longer for the changes to go through Parliament. It thus seems to take several years after something is announced as a goal of the government before it can be put into operation”.⁷⁵

Position of strength

This is related to the above strategy of surprising the opposition by introducing reforms before the opposition demands them. This was very important because “no government is happy about introducing reforms under pressure, and seeming to give in.” “Once again,” Huntington wrote, “the South African government has generally failed to follow this prescription”.

Security

Huntington stated that every reform process would encounter “some violence,” but that it was vitally important for a government to keep it under control. The American stated that it had become clear to him that since his first visit to the country, the Government “has been unable to control these types of violence” and not only did the government seem inept in controlling the violence “it appears that the government has even encouraged backlash violence...” and “the government has also lost control over a certain amount of revolutionary violence...”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Changed constituency

According to Huntington, a reformist government should try and change, or rather broaden its constituency. He felt that Botha should have drawn together various groups over a large spectrum to support his reform programs. But returning after five years, Huntington said that one of the most significant developments was the great extent to which Pres. Botha “has actually alienated many of these groups... In general, the government has totally failed to rally new coalition partners to its cause”.⁷⁷

Unilateral reform

Under this heading Huntington noted the forceful level of politicisation that had developed amongst all South African people and groups. He noted that when he visited the country in 1981 the people “were obviously concerned with politics” but by 1986 they were “obsessively preoccupied with politics”. And also that not only were “individuals and groups becoming politicised, but issues also”.

Decreased authority of government

Here Huntington argued that there seemed to have been “an alienation of the government.” “It seems to me that the government is much weaker, by and large, than it was in 1981. It does not command the authority, respect and legitimacy of major groups in South African society”. He explained that by 1986 the government was no longer the only predominant political actor and that this would surely hamper its reformist programs, adding rather skeptically “even if it wanted to, to carry out a programme of substantial reform”.⁷⁸

Back burner

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Here Huntington criticized the Government for putting reform on the back burner, giving other issues greater emphasis – notably security. Huntington took Botha’s reasoning that before reform could continue Pretoria first had to quell the violence at face value, but was again skeptic about exactly how serious Botha was about reform. He asked: “If they do re-establish their control, will they then move on with some meaningful reform? ... I don’t know whether they will.” He also cautioned Pretoria on their vast security outfit, noting that, “They may find that having created a massive policing apparatus, they have created something which is policing them”.⁷⁹

Preconditions

Here the political scientist argued that South Africa lacked certain preconditions for real change to materialize, specifically “pre-conditions for successful negotiation are missing”. If one thought had to be singled out to define Huntington’s 1986 assessment, it might be this one: “In a sense, South Africa today has a government too weak to impose reform from above – assuming it wanted to – and opposition groups which are too weak to compel reform from below through negotiation”.⁸⁰

*

Through the Total National Strategy and National Management System, the Botha Government conclusively showed that it would not jeopardize white minority power and that the greatest supreme political force in South Africa was still the Nationalist Government. This was an endeavor to compel its opposition, irrespective racial or political orientation, to accept that the only practical option left to them was to accept Pres. Botha’s policies.⁸¹

According to Van Vuuren, the ideology of apartheid, as re-edited during the Botha-era, consisted of two para-ideologies: *Total Onslaught* and the *New Dispensation*. Reform was brought about in reaction to the ever-growing legitimacy crisis and the ideology was amended without real submission of political power. The effect of these two para-ideologies was that the Botha

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Shearing, C.D., “The shifting alliances of reform & resistance” in *Indicator SA*, vol. 4, no. 1, winter, 1986, p. 20.

Government now wore two political masks. The hawkish rhetoric of “Total Onslaught” which bellicosely guaranteed hell on earth to all the enemies of the state, when at the same time there was the peace dove of reform, which Botha dangled in front of moderates if they accepted his New Dispensation.⁸²

Botha himself explained this during his Rubicon speech, saying that his Government was determined to continue with reforms and then, reading the other side of the proverbial coin, issued this dire warning “to those who prefer revolution to reform, I say they will not succeed. If necessary we will use stronger measures but they will not succeed”⁸³ – hence the political carrot and stick. The stick being the threat of the vast and severe striking power of the Total National Strategy and National Management System to be used against the enemies of the Government and the carrot being co-option into accepting and supporting Botha’s reforms and promises of a new dispensation.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, called reform “poor plastic surgery” in an attempt to mollify black South Africa, and said: “Of course apartheid cannot be reformed. It must be dismantled. You don’t reform a Frankenstein – you destroy it”.⁸⁴

The Total National Strategy and National Management System comprised a broad strategy to protect and serve the status quo. Particularly the reform aspects, and then specifically the exclusions of blacks, solicited an unprecedented wave of dissent from the majority of non-white South Africans. The endurance and strength of the Total National Strategy was to be tested in the furnace of political frustration.

⁸² Liebenberg, pp. 106, 107.

⁸³ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 203 4 / 2 / 133: 1985.

⁸⁴ Allen, J. (ed.), *Desmond Tutu – The rainbow people of God*, pp. 97, 101.

CHAPTER 5

GUNS, GAUNTLETS AND GRASSROOTS: THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE ANC AND ITS FOUR-PILLAR STRATEGY

“Prospects of a bloodbath and the reduction of South Africa to a wasteland will not stop the struggle. We would much rather that no blood was lost, that the country was left intact. But not at the expense of our continued enslavement,” the President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo said in 1986.¹ “The central question of South African politics is the overthrow of the white minority regime, the seizure of power by the people and the uprooting by these victorious masses of the entire apartheid system of colonial and racist domination, fascist tyranny, the super exploitation of the black majority and imperialist aggression and expansionism,” read an official 1984 statement by the ANC’s Secretary General, Alfred Nzo.² The ANC would attempt to do this by *Rendering South Africa Ungovernable*.³

For many analysts and commentators this phrase encapsulated the essence of the total onslaught against the apartheid-regime and the ANC’s drive to take control of South Africa. To a large degree this assumption was correct, but it is very important to remember that behind that simplistic-sounding call to the people was an intricate political strategy and organisational machinery.

The ANC’s political master plan for the 1980s had its genesis in the aftermath of the Soweto Riots of 1976, which forced them to rethink their strategies as well as the organisation’s structural

¹ Tambo, O., “Address of the President of the African National Congress” in *Survival*, vol. xxviii, no. 6, November / December, 1986, p. 547.

² Oliver Tambo Private Collection. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: Box 38: Office of the President / Secretary General.

³ Oliver Tambo Private Collection. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: A 17.22: Box 18.

efficiency. By the ANC's own accord, the youth riots of 1976 had "created a situation which the ANC had not planned for."⁴

In many ways the Soweto Riots of 1976 represent a watershed in the history of the ANC. Those upheavals illustrated that black South Africa, specifically the youth, was becoming more discontent and frustrated with the apartheid-system than they were afraid of white minority power. Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert noted: "The Soweto disturbances of 1976 and their aftermath may prove to have been a watershed in the hardening of black resistance to separate development, because those events showed the existence of young blacks whose alienation had gone so far that they were unafraid of dying for the cause of ending racial oppression."⁵

But the riots also had a galvanizing effect on the older black people, especially parents. "What really got the parents into action was the brutal police killings," said one ANC veteran, "Though the police had always been ruthless with peaceful demonstrators, nobody expected they would immediately and cold-bloodedly murder young children."⁶

The Soweto Upheavals of 1976 pushed black resentment of apartheid over the edge and right into the arms of the ANC. In his study on the ANC, Leon De Beer aptly described the situation: "The impact of the Soweto uprising heralded a period when mass struggle and political awareness inside South Africa was once more ascendant. Black political protest movements in South Africa had, by the end of the 1970's, grown into a fully-fledged nationalist movement, striving towards national freedom and national sovereignty for Black South Africans. Afrikaner nationalism was placed on the receiving end of an adamant drive to eliminate all traces of White supremacy. The ferocity of the internal explosion in the late 1970s generated new life into the activities of the movements in exile."⁷

⁴ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX 75: Organisational Report.

⁵ Du Preez, F.A., "Die rol en betekenis van die African National Congress (ANC) as rewolusionere organisasie in die aanslag teen die Republiek van Suid-Afrika." Unpublished MA thesis, UFS, Bloemfontein, 1985, p. 112.

⁶ Holland, H., *The struggle – a history of the African National Congress*, p. 185.

⁷ De Beer, L., *A political analysis of the African National Congress as an extra-parliamentary movement*. Unpublished MA thesis, UFS, Bloemfontein, 1990, p. 134.

Two basic consequences of the Riots are important here. Firstly, an exodus of young black people occurred, leaving the country to go and join the ANC-in exile, the latter being the prime choice to join as most of the other anti-apartheid organisations were in disarray. Secondly, inside South Africa the tense political atmosphere was fertile ground for exploitation by the ANC. Almost overnight black support for the ANC grew with quantum leaps.⁸ Some 14 000 angry young blacks left the apartheid-state to apply for training by the ANC.⁹

With the suddenly swelling ranks came an increase in the responsibilities of the ANC. In order for the organisation to utilize this promising situation they had to ensure that they were geared to accommodate the upsurge in support as well as the structural demands it placed on the leadership.¹⁰

To try and meet the demands of the new situation, the National Executive Committee of the ANC discussed the movement's existing structures with its Revolutionary Council and the executive of its ally-in-exile, the South African Congress of Trade Unions. Subsequently a commission was put together to examine the ANC's structures and to table proposals on how to improve them.¹¹

During 1982 the recommendations of the commission were accepted and implemented and during the 1980s other changes were also made to the structures of the ANC. The reasons for these changes are varied and do not fall within the scope of this study.* From the mid-80s, the ANC structure was as follows:

⁸ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX 75: Organisational Report.

⁹ Hadland, A. & Rantao, J., *The life and times of Thabo Mbeki*, p.46.

¹⁰ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX 75: Organisational Report.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

* It is important to see how the ANC was structurally organised before discussing it further. Furthermore, it is important to view the ANC's structural organisation against the backdrop of the Botha Government's own structural reorganisation under the rubric of Total National Strategy / National Management System. Therefore instead of adding this in the form of an supplement, the reader must take note thereof to understand other aspects of the organisation that will be discussed.

□ **The National Conference:**

- This was the uppermost body of the ANC and acted as its governing institution.
- Decisions taken during these Conferences were binding on all members of the ANC.
- The National Conference appointed the National Executive Committee.¹²
- A National Conference was supposed to take place every year,¹³ but before the Kabwe Conference of 1985, for a variety of reasons, the preceding National Conference had been convened in 1969.¹⁴

□ **The National Executive Committee:**

- This was the supreme executive body of the ANC and was elected every three years.
- This Committee oversaw the ANC in between National Conferences.¹⁵

□ **The National Working Committee:**

- This was a substructure of the National Executive Committee.
- It had to execute the decisions and orders of the National Conference and National Executive Committee.
- “Shall direct and supervise the political life of the organisation,” was how the ANC defined the responsibility of the Working Committee.¹⁶
- In practice then, the National Working Committee managed the ANC in between the assemblies of the National Executive Committee, which met only once a year.
- All members of the National Executive Committee who were present wherever and whenever the Working Committee met, attended meetings, as well as anyone else who the Working Committee invited.

¹² Du Preez, p. 165.

¹³ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX5: ANC report of Commission of National Structures, Constitutional Guidelines and Codes of Conduct – 1985.

¹⁴ Du Preez, p. 165.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX5: ANC report of Commission of National Structures, Constitutional Guidelines and Codes of Conduct – 1985.

- The ANC's President, Oliver Tambo, chaired meetings of the Working Committee.¹⁷
- There were three main offices that had jurisdiction over all departments:
 - Office of the President
 - Office of the Secretary General
 - Office of the Treasurer General
- These three offices were headed by the three chief executive officers of the ANC:
 - The President General
 - The Secretary General
 - The Treasurer General¹⁸
- The President General:**
 - He was the head and chief directing officer of the ANC and leader of the house during a National Conference.
 - He had to present the ANC's top governing bodies with a extensive statement about the situation of the ANC's state and the struggle
 - He had to make statements on behalf of the National Executive Committee as well as explaining ANC policy on any matter
 - He was Commander-in-Chief of Umkhonto we Sizwe.¹⁹
- Secretary General:**
 - He was the ANC's Chief Administrative Officer
 - He kept records of the movement

¹⁷ Du Preez, p. 166.

¹⁸ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX5: ANC report of Commission of National Structures, Constitutional Guidelines and Codes of Conduct – 1985

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

- He had to channel decisions and orders of the National Conference, the National Executive Committee and National Working Committee to the lower ranks.
- He had to Compile reports on the work of the ANC's top executive bodies.²⁰

- **Treasurer General:**

- He kept the ANC's financial records.
- He had to submit an annual financial report to National Executive Committee.
- He, together with the President General and Secretary General, formed the ANC's Supreme Finance Committee.²¹

- **Control Commission:**

- "The Control Commission shall act as a supervisory Inspectorate and its members shall have access to all organs and structures of the Movement. It shall make such reports and recommendations as it deems fit and in appropriate cases may make proposals to the structures and personnel concerned."²²

- **Coordinating Councils: Politico-Military Council & External-Coordinating Council:**

- Oversaw the programs of the departments that fell under them.
- Had to "consider, approve or amend and ensure the implementation of plans submitted to them" by the departments which fell under them.²³
- Had to table fresh political initiatives to the executive of the ANC.
- Had to ensure that the orders of the Working Committee were being executed.²⁴

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

□ **The Politico-Military Council:**

- Replaced the Revolutionary Council.
- Created to better coordinate military operations with the political objectives.
- The Politico-Military Council administered the functions of its two sub-structures: the Political Committee and Military Headquarters.
- The executive committees of these two sub-structures formed the Politico-Military Council.²⁵

□ **The Political Committee:**

- “Shall mobilise the masses of our people inside the country into struggle subject to plans approved by the PMC/ NWC/ NEC.”
- “Shall establish underground political units of the ANC throughout South Africa.”
- “Shall in conjunction with the Military Headquarters, establish underground units of MK throughout South Africa.”²⁶
- Had to befriend existing South African organisations and attempt to steer them to support the ANC’s principles, strategy and tactics.
- Create “legal organisations within South Africa for the purpose of mass mobilisation and mass action.”
- Had to report regularly to the Politico-Military Council regarding internal dimensions of the ANC and the state of the struggle.²⁷
- There were also Regional Political Committees. These had to ensure that all members were “integrated in functioning branches” and that all members were “actively involved in the work of the Movement.” It had to make sure that all members, in its regional jurisdiction, clearly understood the ANC’s present strategies and tactics and also that they had a broad understanding of the current internal and international

²⁵ Du Preez, p. 166.

²⁶ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX5: ANC report of Commission of National Structures, Constitutional Guidelines and Codes of Conduct – 1985.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

situation the struggle found itself in. It also had to assist the security section in maintaining the safety and security of their areas.²⁸

- Military Headquarters:**
- Formed the military's centre of operations.
- Had to direct the armed struggle.
- Had control over all the ANC's military installations both within and outside South Africa.²⁹
- Had to, in conjunction with the Political Committee, create underground units of Umkhonto we Sizwe inside South Africa.
- Had to see to it that the armed wing was "a disciplined and politically conscious army of the people."
- Had to report regularly on the state of the armed struggle.³⁰

- The External Coordinating Council:**
- Whereas the Politico-Military Council was created to focus on internal work, the External Coordinating Council was formed to focus on external initiatives, in other words this was the ANC's foreign affairs section.
- Different departments flowed from this Council and the heads of these departments served on the External Coordinating Council.³¹

- Department of Intelligence and Security**
- Primary tasks included: internal security, creating cells in South Africa, distribution of propaganda material, gathering of intelligence, analysis of targets, the infiltration of South African organisations as well as the recruiting and selecting of new personnel.
- The Department had representatives in Zambia and Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Swaziland and Lesotho.³²

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Du Preez, p. 167.

□ **The Department of Information and Publicity:**

- Focussed on research, the distribution of information and internal and external propaganda.
- The research conducted by the Department focussed on so-called problem areas, for example, the black labour movement.
- After the analysis was completed, the research was published in an ANC publication, for example *Sechaba* or broadcast on its *Radio Freedom*.
- The Department was situated in Lusaka and headed by Thabo Mbeki.³³

□ **The International Department:**

- Focussed on the world community and worked closely with the United Nations.
- The Department was headed by Johnny Makathini, who as a former representative of the ANC at the United Nations, had a whole range of contacts across the world.³⁴

□ **The Department of Education:**

- Handled all affairs that had to do with education, for example different school projects and the tertiary education of ANC members abroad.
- There were a number of ANC schools in neighbouring countries, for example in Zambia and Tanzania, where mathematics, English, science and geography were taught. Particular emphasis was also placed on political education. Here the ANC's ideological orientation was drilled into the students.
- The Department, in conjunction with the Treasury Department, was responsible for allocating bursaries to promising students to go and study at universities in the USA, across Africa, Europe and the East Bloc.

³² *Ibid.* p. 168.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 169.

- The Department also managed the ANC's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania.³⁵
- **Department of Manpower Development:**
 - First implemented in 1983.
 - Was responsible for training and deployment personnel.³⁶
- **Projects Department:**
 - Responsible for the socio-economic upliftment of ANC members in neighbouring countries.
 - These projects included the erection of schools, medical facilities, transit houses, bakeries, crèches as well as farming projects in Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania.
 - The Department received funding from Swedish International Development Authority, the Oxford Famine Relief Fund and Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace.³⁷
- **The Department of Health:**
 - Was responsible for running the ANC's medical clinics.
 - Trained medical personnel.
 - Attended medical conferences abroad to also further the ANC's influence on this terrain.
- **The Department of Cultural Development:**
 - The ANC argued that the apartheid-system estranged blacks from their cultures.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

- Through the Department the ANC tried to counter the above and to promote their anti-apartheid struggle by means of music and plays.
- The Department's *Amandla Cultural Group* held performances across the world.
- Famous South African musicians like Hugh Masekela and Dollar Brand also promoted the goals of the Department.
- The Department also organized cultural anti-apartheid boycotts.³⁸

- The Treasury Department:**
 - Responsible for all the ANC's finances.
 - Lobbied for and supervise foreign funding.

- The Youth League:**
 - The youth section focussed on persons younger than 30.
 - Was responsible for the political mobilization of South Africa's black youth: "Shall mobilise the masses of Youth and Students in South Africa into the struggle."³⁹
 - The circulating of ANC policies and conference decisions.
 - Was responsible for propagating politically orientated cultural and social initiatives.
 - During 1982 the Youth League complained to the ANC's executive that they did not have enough say in the organisation's decision-making processes. It was resolved that in future they would be allotted a greater influence.⁴⁰

- The Women's League:**
 - Was responsible for attracting and organizing women into organisations.
 - Was responsible for focussing on specific problem areas and to counter discriminatory and chauvinistic measures.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

³⁹ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX5: ANC report of Commission of National Structures, Constitutional Guidelines and Codes of Conduct – 1985

⁴⁰ Du Preez, p. 1172.

- Was responsible for building contacts with other women's organisations and to attend meetings abroad as well as organizing initiatives to commemorate *South African Women's Day*.
- Was responsible for other projects, including the Charlotte Maxeke Child Care Centre in Tanzania.
- In South Africa the League was also responsible for organizing political mobilization.⁴¹

- **National People's Tribunal:**
- Described as a "disciplinary organ of the ANC..."
- Consisted of 5 members, appointed by the National Executive Committee to act as judges, who served for a period of 3 years.
- The Tribunal had to make its decisions "on the basis of the collective wisdom of its members, who, in the performance of their judicial function, shall be answerable only to their revolutionary conscience, free of any undue pressures."⁴²
- An Officer of Justice was appointed by the National Executive Committee. He had to ensure the "legality" of the proceedings and also had to supervise the investigation of members when charges were brought against them. Appoint a Presenter to act as prosecution and an Advisor to act as defence. He also had to make sure that those who were kept in custody were not treated in a "cruel, degrading or inhuman way" and had to see to it that these people were treated in a way that furthered "the processes of re-education rather than vengeance." Very importantly, it was also Officer of Justice's responsibility to ensure that the "principles of justice and revolutionary legality" were maintained throughout the organisation.⁴³
- Investigations were conducted by the Security Department and during these investigations "torture" was forbidden.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 173.

⁴² ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, University of Fort Hare. ANC National Consultation Conference: BOX 5.

⁴³ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, University of Fort Hare. ANC National Consultation Conference: BOX 5.

- Furthermore, Regional Disciplinary Committees also existed, which consisted of 5 members.⁴⁴

With the pressures exercised on it by the consequences of the Soweto Riots, the ANC finally realized that the strategies it had subscribed to up until that point were simply not enough to bring about marked change. The strategies it had accepted years earlier at its Morogoro Conference in Tanzania during 1969, were ineffective.⁴⁵

Subsequently during the same meeting where the ANC's structures were discussed, the organisation's strategies and tactics were also discussed. The ANC concluded that the time was ripe for the launch of an intensive mass mobilization inside South Africa. A Commission was constructed to examine the ANC's strategies in this regard. The latter also emphasized that mass mobilization should form the core of the ANC's political strategy: "The conclusion was that the stronger the political foundation, the stronger also will be the armed offensive."⁴⁶

This assessment was confirmed in 1978 when an ANC group, headed by its president Oliver Tambo, went on a fact-finding mission to Hanoi, North Vietnam, where they studied the revolutionary strategies successfully used by the Viet-Cong to fight the Americans and French. They learned first hand from revolutionary strategists such as General Vo Nguyen Giap and General Van Tien Dung how to outmanoeuvre a superior military force. These strategists taught the ANC delegation the important lesson that a revolutionary takeover cannot easily come from armed struggle alone. The latter had to be accompanied by mass political support and encompass as many different groups as possible. The Vietnamese Generals' advice on strategy boiled down to the ANC having to wage a Total Onslaught against the white minority regime. Political mobilisation, organisation and resistance were the primary weapons with which to drain the enemy's political, social, economic and military resources and their willpower.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Booyse, W., "The united front strategy – the liberal dilemma" in *Southern Africa Freedom Review*, vol. 2, no. 4, autumn, 1989, p. 33-45., p. 34.

⁴⁶ ANC-Lusaka Mission at the ANC Archives, Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX 75: Organisational Report.

⁴⁷ Venter, A.J. (ed.), *Challenge*, p. 282.

The revolutionary strategists also taught the South Africans that their armed struggle had to sprout from mass political support and, very importantly, that patience was of the essence and cutting corners would be fatal. This revolutionary recipe had layers and people needed to be developed and guided to organically grow from one level to the next.⁴⁸

Once the group got back from Vietnam, in 1978, the National Executive Committee compiled a Politico Military Strategy Commission to consider and compile new strategies for the ANC. Although all the members of this Commission were senior leaders of Umkhonto we Sizwe, Thabo Mbeki persuaded them that a strategy centred on politics was far more effective than one with a solely military focus.⁴⁹ The strategy adopted by the ANC was described as a strategy for People's War and rested on four pillars:

- Mass Mobilization.
- Organisation of a Political Underground.
- Armed Struggle.
- Internationalisation of the apartheid-issue and isolation of the minority regime⁵⁰

To implement this, the ANC decided that for the following four years they would focus on intensive mass mobilisation.⁵¹ A fundamental key element of this type of total onslaught was something the anti-apartheid strategists had within their grasp – numbers. It was quite simple, there were many times more blacks than whites, logically then the majority – blacks – would be able to subdue the minority – whites – if the ANC could get the ordinary people, the masses, involved in their strategies. Of importance here was to get the ordinary people to realize that the vigorous support of the majority was more important than the work of the armed guerrillas. Failing this, that the two components, armed resistance and mass political action, worked hand-in-glove.

⁴⁸ De Beer, p. 133.

⁴⁹ Hadland & Rantao, p. 47.

⁵⁰ Norval, M., *Inside the ANC*, p. 121.

⁵¹ ANC-Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX 75: Organisational Report.

The academic Wim Booyse described the ANC's drive to foment a mass united front as "a policy of class alliances that seeks to bring together and unify all potential social forces in the struggle against the enemy." According to him the ANC's drive to create such a broad front clearly shows elements of the strategies used by the Chinese revolutionary Mao Zedong.⁵² According to Booyse's interpretation of Mao's thoughts on this subject, opposition groupings are mobilized into organisations where alliances are formed against the common enemy. The participation and commitment of the masses is vitally important.⁵³

As such, children, youths, adults, peasants, urbanites and intellectuals are politically accommodated and organisationally catered within these structures. These different groups are successfully united into one broad movement by concentrating their demands into basic claims, for example, the demand for political liberty.⁵⁴

Another way of achieving mass unification was, according to the Vietnamese strategists, to unite social forces around specific pressing issues of concern, for example, rent increases and the lack of improvement of living conditions. Analysts in Moscow argued that the success of mass mobilization into a united front depended squarely on the abilities of the central revolutionary group or vanguard party to coordinate a cohesive program of action.⁵⁵

This vitally important shift in focus, away from the military sphere as the primary means of liberation and towards the realm of mass political activity, was continuously being explained to the ANC's supporters. In 1985 the ANC explained that although its struggle was one of confrontation, the military side thereof was but one aspect. It pointed out that it was engaged in a "political struggle by means that include the use of military force." The ANC went so far as to state that it shunned all forms of military action and militarism that were removed from the political sphere.⁵⁶ It made clear that the organisation's executive leadership was political and that this "political

⁵² Booyse, p. 33.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 34.

⁵⁶ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. BOX 101: ANC Struggle Update, 1985

leadership is unchallenged and supreme and all revolutionary formations and levels (whether armed or not) are subordinate to this leadership.”⁵⁷

It explained that in most cases throughout history where a revolutionary group was set against a power with considerable material strength, victory was not gained through military resistance. The ANC explained to its followers that mass mobilization was the key to success; that armed initiatives were only of value as long as they were backed by the masses: “Without this lifeblood it is doomed.” Calling for “educational and agitational work” the ANC stated explicitly that for it to liberate South Africa “all-round political mobilization which must accompany the military activities” was of the essence.⁵⁸

It made clear that liberation would simply not come about if only a small group of armed fighters were expected to confront the minority regime in addition to controlling mass political organisation. In other words then, it was important for everybody that controlled the ANC as well as its members and supporters to realize that the armed struggle was but only one element in the anti-apartheid struggle and certainly not necessarily the most important one. The active political cooperation of ordinary people and not only trained guerrillas was vital for victory over minority power. Ordinary people’s support for political actions was just as important to the struggle, if not even more so, than armed struggle. “The masses of the peasants, workers and youth, beleaguered for a long time by the enemy’s military occupation, have to be activated in a multitude of ways not only to ensure a growing stream of recruits for the fighting units but to harass the enemy politically so that his forces are dispersed and therefore weakened. This calls for all-round political leadership.”⁵⁹

Why did the ANC need mass organisation if it simply wanted to dump the country into unmanageable chaos? The ANC wanted to destroy the status quo and in doing so, the Botha Government’s authority, while establishing itself as an alternative power; it wanted to create and then fill a political power vacuum. The ANC wanted to prove itself the greater power inside the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. BOX 101: ANC Struggle Update, 1985

country, albeit outside parliament. To establish itself as an alternative power to minority rule, that had an equal, if not greater, organized power base than the minority regime.⁶⁰

Oliver Tambo explained that by making the country ungovernable and the system unworkable the ANC was “creating conditions in which the alternative must be sued for. The alternative is what the ANC puts forward in its Freedom Charter...”⁶¹

Tambo said that the minority power would only relinquish the apartheid-system if they were forced to do so, “when the regime is unable to run the country in all sorts of ways, when the country is in a serious crisis.”⁶² It was during this crisis that the ANC, as the prime organiser of the masses, needed to be regarded as “such a powerful presence that everyone recognizes that there is no way out without involving the ANC.”⁶³ – in other words, an alternative power strong enough to deal with the minority Government on an equal footing, in terms of power.

It wanted to establish itself within the country in such strength that as an extra-parliamentary force, it could influence the establishment just as much as the white government could. To do this the ANC needed to strengthen its power base, while also draining the Botha Government’s resources. It needed to prove itself as a multi-faceted power controlling a rolling mass attack – an undivided force that could oppose and attack the authorities on any level, anywhere in the country. “Our mass democratic and revolutionary movement should emerge ever more forcefully as the alternative power in our country,” was Oliver Tambo’s annual New Year message on behalf of the National Executive Committee.⁶⁴ It connected this with the idea of a people’s war, implying that the people, the masses, get involved with the struggle against the apartheid establishment. Violent armed conflict formed a vital part of this, but wasn’t the defining factor.

⁶⁰ Oliver Tambo Private Collection. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: A 17.22: Box 18.

⁶¹ Novicki, M., “Oliver Tambo” in *Africa Report*, vol. 30, no. 4, July-August, 1985, p.32.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.36.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.33.

⁶⁴ Oliver Tambo Private Collection. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: A 17 22: Box 18

The ANC endeavoured to wage a total onslaught against the minority regime and to be able attack the Botha Government on all sides, socio-economically and politically and militarily, it needed the cooperation of the masses. It needed to attack the apartheid-system and defend itself, simultaneously in all spheres, and in doing so, not concentrate on a single area. "We must use our organized mass strength and by attacking, consolidate our victorious emergence as the alternative power," the ANC's National Executive Committee pronounced in January 1985.⁶⁵

In South Africa during the 1980s there were competing programs for political mobilization, that of the ANC as part of its four pillar strategy and that of the Botha Government as part of its Total Strategy. One logical implication and consequence of the competing drives for the political mobilization of the South African society was the necessary polarisation thereof. It was implied in these strategies that in South Africa one either had to be for the one or the other. The success of both the multi-faceted strategies of the ANC and the Botha Government largely depended on the committed support of the majority of people. Neither these two groups could afford a sideline section or a passive middle ground – aspects which could ultimately lead to the failure of their strategies.⁶⁶

As illustrated throughout this study, both groups, in some form or another, demanded full, vigorous and active support of the people and per implication forced the people to choose between the ANC and the Botha Government. There wasn't really room for a passive middle-ground majority that sat on the fence while a small group slugged it out in the political arena. The competing power blocs demanded that the people make a choice. The ANC was quite explicit in this regard. Both camps were waging a total onslaught on the other not for an isolated issue, but for full political power; the national executive political power of a country and there were no second prizes in this fight.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Fourie, S.M. & Tempelhoff, J.W.N. , "Die era van Suid-Afrika se militêre hoogbloei (1974-1994) met die Vaaldriehoekse samelewing as konsentrasieveld" in *Historia*, vol. 46, no. 2, November 2001, p. 514.

⁶⁷ Berger, P. & Godsell, B., "Fantasies about South Africa" in *Optima*, vol. 35, no. 3, September, 1987, p. 128.

Mixed with a good dose of bombastic rhetoric, the ANC continuously stated that they were not fighting the apartheid-system to get the minority regime to negotiate, but to seize political power. According to the ANC they would only talk with the minority Government about the “modalities of the transfer of power” and nothing more.⁶⁸

Inherent in the ANC’s strategic blueprint, particularly concerning mobilization, was that apparent non-political issues, especially the grievances of the masses, had to be politicised. Problems with, for example, education, rent and evictions were placed in context of their suffering due to apartheid.⁶⁹

Black problems with the education system unsurprisingly led to the apartheid-issue when the questions arose around the management and exclusivity of the system. The one thing that actually united all the protests and grievances was the Botha Government’s response thereto. No matter what the protest, the same response would be produced by the minority regime – repression. As a result, the protesters were made aware that before their respective grievances could be effectively dealt with, the status quo would have to undergo a change. They were made acutely aware that the apartheid-system prevented their problems from being dealt with fairly or at all, for that matter. So, the logic stated that the system first had to be destroyed and then the people’s grievances would be dealt with⁷⁰.

The Government’s stern behaviour thus helped the ANC gain support for mass-mobilization. “Heightened repression, as an overtly political response to discontent, tied all the issues together through developing the explicit political content in the moral economy or political cultures of township residents,” Jeremy Seekings noted, “The experience of repression eroded any lingering legitimacy of the local state, polarized the townships between the supporters of the local state and the mass of more discontented residents, and broadened the latter group’s demands. Rents and educational grievances could not be challenged without provoking a repressive response, and so mobilization over these grievances led to mobilization over the more fundamental issue of the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 129.

⁶⁹ Frankel, P. & Pines, N. (eds.), *State, resistance and change in South Africa*, p. 216.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

power of the local state – i.e. who should control township administration and the instruments of repression.”⁷¹

“There is no middle course,” the ANC stated explicitly in 1985, excluding those who proposed some type of moderate middle between the ANC and the Botha Government, saying that they could forget it as it was “too late in the day to pose that kind of alternative. There is no middle ground.”⁷² Instead the ANC said that if those groups wanted to actually make any kind of remarkable contribution they should join the ANC.

The ANC also made clear that it could not be softened up and that as long as it didn’t have political power over South Africa it would not stop fighting. It also said that if people wanted to support it then that was excellent, but if they didn’t then they were, knowingly or otherwise, collaborators with the apartheid-system. It stated clearly that if groups wanted to come to Lusaka and speak with its leaders, then that was commendable but reaffirmed that they could not be co-opted or subdued as “the primary objective continues to be the intensification of our liberation struggle with the armed offensive playing an increasingly decisive role in the process of bringing about a truly democratic change in our country.”⁷³

With the climate created by the turmoil of 1976, the ANC tried increasingly to move into the limelight in order to generate support by being perceived as the popular leaders in the struggle against apartheid. According to an official ANC document: “We undertook an extensive review of our internal work, our structures handling this sphere, and our strategy and tactics. As a result of this review, we were better prepared to enter the Decade of Liberation, to build on the achievements we had scored and to help create the situation in which we can sense victory is not far away.”⁷⁴ *Unity and Action* became the rallying call of the ANC. It embarked on a program to mobilize its followers into organisations and called on black South Africa to join those

⁷¹ *Ibid*

⁷² ANC Lusaka Office ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: BOX 90: SA Government 1984-1986.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

⁷⁴ De Beer, p. 129.

organisations.⁷⁵ In this regard there were many projects that will be referred to throughout the sections dealing with the ANC.

During the late 1970s the ANC found itself unprepared and the general atmosphere too haphazard to attempt the full implementation of its four-pillar strategy.⁷⁶ The ANC's drive to mass mobilize the public during the beginning of the decade was somewhat uncoordinated and in fact the organisation struggled overall to gain balanced synergy between the different levels of its strategy.⁷⁷

As far as the armed struggle was concerned, things weren't going any better. From 1978 onwards, Umkhonto we Sizwe had attempted to build up so-called 'forward areas' in South Africa's neighbouring states. The idea was that they would infiltrate the apartheid-state from these border areas, execute an attack, recruit new members, infiltrate South African organisations or gather intelligence, and then slip back across the border again.⁷⁸

Although Umkhonto we Sizwe gained spectacular successes with sabotage attacks during the first few years of the 1980s, this strategy was quickly reduced to a shambles. Different factors played a role in impeding its success and included the fact that their security was shoddy and their ranks infiltrated by the South African security forces. Members of Umkhonto we Sizwe were continuously being caught and the ANC's plan to build an extensive underground within South Africa's borders were seriously compromised.⁷⁹ While the armed struggle did not really get into full swing, the ANC focussed on political mobilization inside the country.

Between 1980 and 1984 the ANC focussed on creating the right conditions within South Africa to successfully activate its multi-faceted strategy. Each of these years served as a foundation year.⁸⁰ In 1980 it tried to popularise its basic political programme, which was encapsulated by its main manifesto, the *Freedom Charter*. If it wanted to mobilize the masses it would be done according to

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁷⁶ Booyse, p. 34.

⁷⁷ De Beer, p. 129.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Booyse, p. 34.

this document, which explained what the ANC was fighting for and the post-apartheid South Africa they wanted to create. This document was propagated as an ideal alternative to the apartheid status quo. In other words the masses were given a choice. They had to choose between the establishment, upheld and promoted by the minority regime, or they could accept the alternative described in the *Freedom Charter*, and actively support the ANC in bringing about the alternative post-apartheid ideal. As such 1980 became the *Year of the Charter*.⁸¹

In the following year, 1981, the ANC focussed explicitly on the political activation and mobilization of the youth. The ANC proclaimed it the *Year of the Youth* and referred to them as “young lions” that would go and revolutionize the other sections of society.⁸²

In 1982, the ANC tried to politically mobilize as many previously politically inactive sections of society as possible. They called 1982 the *Year of Unity in Action* and called on everybody that supported the anti-apartheid struggle to fulfil their duty in the struggle.⁸³

1983 was the fourth foundation year and marked the deadline for the ANC’s drive to create a favourable climate for the activation of its grand four-pillar policy. In this year a mass united front had to be consolidated against the Botha Government and the apartheid-system in general. The ANC wanted to create an organisational springboard, uniting all sections of society on all levels within the country to allow it to launch its total onslaught against apartheid. The year was called the *Year of United Action* and saw the formation of the mass-based United Democratic Front.⁸⁴

By 1984 the ANC felt self-assured enough to embark on its most daring and ambitious total strategy yet. The ANC enacted its political program encapsulated under the rubric of *People’s Power*. In the process the ANC would fan the flames of violent political conflict and help to polarise the South African society. Through this program of action, the ANC would take its struggle to the people; get the masses to empower themselves and confront the apartheid-system head-on.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

The ANC's objectives and strategy with People's Power can best be understood by examining the historic 1984 New Year's Statement of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, as delivered by Oliver Tambo. This communiqué represented both a call to arms and a strategic blueprint for waging that struggle. It was at once explicit in its outline of strategic objectives and vague in political rhetoric. It was a crucial document and it is vital to grasp it in its totality so as to understand the ANC's own total onslaught *against* the Botha Government and the total strategy with which it would *defend* itself against the latter.

Tambo, on behalf of the ANC's National Executive Committee, started by ridiculing PW Botha's new reform policies. "Apartheid cannot be reformed," he said, "The only real solution lies in the victory of the revolutionary forces, the dismantling of the apartheid machinery and the transfer of political and economic power to the democratic majority."⁸⁵

Tambo said that the "Pretoria racist clique" now knew that their system's days were numbered and that was why Pres. Botha had called on his constituents to adapt or die. According to Tambo, that political statement, along with the South African Government's reformist programs were "public admission that there is a crisis" in the apartheid-system.⁸⁶ The ANC leader pronounced that it was because of intensive mass struggle against minority rule that the Botha Government was forced to try and reform apartheid in a desperate attempt to avert a total collapse of the apartheid system. He said that it was the absolute duty of the radicals and democrats to "further deepen this crisis by ever intensifying the struggle for national and social emancipation."⁸⁷

Calling on the masses to strike while the iron was hot, Tambo said that the only real question facing the struggle was how to respond to the situation in the country. Tambo explained that the struggle's strategy was based on four pillars:

1. "... the all-round vanguard activity of the underground structures of the ANC..."

⁸⁵ Oliver Tambo Private Collection. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library at Fort Hare University. Statement 8 January 1984: A 17.16: Box 17.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

2. "... united mass action of the peoples..."
3. "... our armed offensive spearheaded by Umkhonto we Sizwe..."
4. "... the international drive to isolate the apartheid regime and win world-wide moral, political and material support for the struggle."⁸⁸

"All revolutions are about state power. Ours is no exception," declared Tambo, "The slogan – 'Power to the People,' means one thing and one thing only. It means we seek to destroy the power of apartheid tyranny and replace it with popular power, with a government whose authority derives from the will of all our people: both black and white."⁸⁹

The ANC President then pointed out what objectives should be outlined to physically bring these aims about. In the history of the violent and conflict-torn 1980s, Tambo's next sentence and its practical implications, surely represented an historic moment: "We must begin to use our accumulated strength to destroy the organs of government of the apartheid regime."⁹⁰

He said that the masses should utilize their "collective might to render the enemy's instruments of authority *unworkable*." To march forward must mean that we advance against the regime's organs of state-power, creating conditions in which the country becomes increasingly *ungovernable*."⁹¹ This call to make apartheid unworkable and South Africa ungovernable formed the crux of the ANC's drive to takeover the country during the 1980s.

Tambo then went on to explain in some detail what was meant by the '*organs of power*' that his organisation wanted the masses to destroy. Referring to apartheid's "extensive administrative system" he said that the masses should focus on the central and provincial state authorities, including the security forces, the homeland authorities, the judiciary, the Government's community councils as well as any local management or local affairs bodies. He said the people should "attack and demolish" these institutions, but should be cautious and selective when

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

* Emphasis added by the writer.

** Emphasis added by the writer.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

choosing a target, singling out only those which the masses “have the power to destroy as a result of our united and determined offensive. We must hit the enemy where it is weakest.”⁹²

As will be discussed in more detail, Tambo singled out the black local community councils for the focus of his supporters’ violent wrath. Boycotting these institutions was not enough, the ANC President said that the people should make sure these structures “cease to exist.”⁹³

For the ANC leader, few deeds were as traitorous as being the leader of a homeland. The ANC thought one such leader particularly treacherous, Chief Lennox Sebe of the Ciskei. Subsequently, in this 1984 address, Tambo not only singled him out by name and referred to Sebe as the “instrument of oppression”, but called on his cadres and supporters to “... take the battle further. In the conflict of will between ourselves and the murderous Sebe regime, our will must prevail.” He said that the conflict in the Ciskei over bus-fare increases must be exploited into a nationwide offensive against the homelands. Tambo did call on his followers to make sure that this included the “destruction” of Sebe and his homeland government.⁹⁴

Tambo said that these homeland leaders were responsible for the “murders of patriots and democrats” and it was the people’s patriotic duty to structure themselves in the homelands into “fighting organisations” and to destroy the homelands and their sell-out governments.⁹⁵

According to the message, as long as the people remain determined and united, their victory over minority power was certain.⁹⁶ The address emphasized that the blacks’ victory was guaranteed by their majority status and that this formed the core of the ANC’s strategy. The blacks had strength of numbers and as long as they stuck together and fought together, the whites could not win. What was, of course, cardinal to this reasoning was that the ANC had to ensure that the black masses, the majority of South Africans, actually got involved in the struggle and didn’t go astray. It was also necessary to ensure that blacks accepted the ANC’s rationale that the only solution for black

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

people was to fight under the guidance of the ANC. The ANC had to ensure that under no circumstances did blacks accept the structures created by the reformist Botha Government that had tried to accommodate them politically or economically.⁹⁷

One way in which the ANC tried to prevent their followers of possibly being co-opted by the Botha Government was to present anyone who cooperated with or partook in Government structures, as sell-outs and traitors and as being apartheid's willing collaborators. Tambo also said explicitly that the masses should turn on these collaborators and punish them severely. "Those who elect to serve in these apartheid institutions," he said, "must expect to face the wrath of the people."⁹⁸

The statement also called on the masses to move from the defensive to the offensive. Tambo stated that although the Government knew that it could never succeed in destroying the anti-apartheid struggle "invincibility is not enough. It is in the attack that we shall find victory. Nor should we wait for the enemy to take the initiative and then react to its plans and schemes." Tambo then called on the people to launch a *total onslaught* against the minority power. He called for the people to "organize the unorganised" and then to "engage the racist enemy in united actions on all fronts."⁹⁹

Singling out the creation of the United Democratic Front^{*}, the growth of the trade unions, the militancy of the black youth and the bomb attack on the South African Defence Force's Air Force Headquarters in Pretoria^{**}, Tambo said that these represented the attitude and initiatives that would win the struggle against apartheid.¹⁰⁰ "We are talking of a spirit of rebellion and frame of mind which puts to the force the politics of revolutionary change." He said that the ANC and "the most advanced members of our broad democratic movement" had a responsibility to act as revolutionaries.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

^{*} See the chapter on the UDF

^{**} See the chapter dealing with Umkhonto we Sizwe.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

He made a special call to the leaders of the trade unions to form a single entity. He said that those in the labour movement who argued that labour and politics shouldn't mix were wrong and that the political and economic struggles could not be fought separately: "The struggle of the working class is... an integral part of the national liberation struggle."¹⁰²

Just as the statement focussed on the labour section, it also noted that the mobilization of rural blacks was not at all sufficient. Tambo called on its internal supporters to "mobilize the rural masses around the question of land." He said that only when the rural parts have been successfully mobilized could the masses there act on the ANC's call to "seize the land."¹⁰³ He also said the religious and church community, irrespective of faith, should become fighters in the anti-apartheid struggle and that the place of women in South Africa was "in the battlefield of the struggle."¹⁰⁴

The address also called on his supporters to reject service in South Africa's security forces, saying that the white commanders used these non-whites as "cannon fodder". He noted that it was wrong to serve in a security system that formed a key element in the oppression of South Africa's majority.¹⁰⁵

Tambo said that true patriots supported and served in Umkhonto we Sizwe. Saying that the armed struggle was a fundamental component of the anti-apartheid struggle, he promised that its "rising sophistication will yet compound the survival problems of the apartheid system."¹⁰⁶

Still, Tambo acknowledged that the ANC's armed wing faced serious dilemmas*. Keeping in mind the lessons the Vietnamese strategists taught them, Tambo explained that it was cardinal that Umkhonto we Sizwe and the armed struggle grew from the masses. Armed struggle wasn't only the responsibility of a selected few, but the duty of the mobilized masses. "Umkhonto we Sizwe must deepen its roots and grow inextricably among the popular masses: among us – the workers,

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

* These obstacles will be explained in the chapter dealing with Umkhonto we Sizwe.

the peasants, the youth, the women; we, the unemployed, the landless, the homeless, and the starving millions. Umkhonto we Sizwe must grow in size, in the spread and quality of its operations, and in the weight of every blow delivered," encapsulating the Vietnamese lesson, Tambo stated, "We shall achieve victory through a combination of mass political action and organized revolutionary violence."¹⁰⁷

Tambo then again focussed on the role of the military and turned to the white South African youth. He said that the revolutionaries and politically mobilized masses in South Africa were aiming to build a better new order and that the whites' "proper place is among the these builders of a new order in our country. " "Refuse to join an army whose sole function is to murder, murder, murder African people everywhere," the address stated. Tambo then also again emphasized that under no circumstances should young black people be allowed to join the SADF and that the democratic movement inside the country should take up this issue with the black youngsters.¹⁰⁸

The statement then explained the contemporary position of the ANC and the apartheid-state within a global context. Tambo explained the ANC's struggle against apartheid was "part of a multi-million strong world alliance of forces which fights for national independence, democracy, social progress and peace."¹⁰⁹

The statement emphasized the ANC's view of the United States as being imperialistic and dangerous. It spoke out against the USA's role in Nicaragua and El Salvador; the ANC condemned Pres. Reagan for waging "a reign of terror against the people of Palestine" and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO); the ANC also criticized the American involvement in Lebanon and Morocco. He condemned American involvement in Angola and saluted the Cuban forces fighting the South African Defence Force, saying he hoped they succeed in their attempt to "wipe out the UNITA* bandits".

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

* The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, UNITA, was lead by Jonas Savimbi.

Tambo said that it was because of these American policies that the Botha Government was itself conducting a policy of military destabilization of Southern Africa.¹¹⁰ Noting and condemning the Botha Government's military actions in parts of the region, Tambo said that it was clear how the apartheid-system was in fact a threat to the whole region, therefore it was the responsibility of the whole region to help the ANC destroy apartheid and white minority rule.

Tambo said that throughout the history of the ANC, the organisation had always embraced all the peoples of Southern Africa as "allies and comrades-in-arms."¹¹¹ He again said that as the black majority of South Africa could not be eliminated so too could the ANC never be liquidated, but then Tambo, swiftly, noted one of the most sensitive issues confronting the ANC – members' "temptation to work as enemy agents."¹¹² Although he only briskly touched on it, as will be noted elsewhere, this was in reality a grave problem facing the ANC and its whole anti-apartheid struggle.

After recognizing friends and supporters in South Africa and across the world, Tambo spoke to the parents who had to raise families facing "genocidal apartheid policies." The ANC President said that the deaths resulting from apartheid were immensely disturbing and pledged that once the ANC had freed the country, they would stop. He then made an altruistic plea, saying that "we need to address the problem of a lack of respect for human life which is manifest in the growing number of deaths from unnatural causes in the ghettos of our country."¹¹³ When observing the violent conflict of the 1980s, it is fair to say that this humanitarian call fell, mostly, on deaf ears. Instead, the one feature which most people seemed to take to heart was the call to spread chaos in the apartheid-state – to make South Africa *ungovernable*.

This latter concept was really not that original in ANC strategizing. In the 1950s Nelson Mandela called on ANC supporters to go out and fight "to ensure that we remove the enemy's organs of

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

government.” But only in the 1980s did that become a core element in the total onslaught of the ANC.¹¹⁴

The man generally credited with revitalizing Mandela’s call, as being the one who really explicitly called for it, was a future President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki. In September 1984, after Oliver Tambo had mentioned these phrases in his New Year’s address, Thabo Mbeki gave a speech on *Radio Freedom*: “We must answer the question, without seeking to create illusion among ourselves: Are we – as a democratic organisation which the people have accepted as their authentic representatives – doing all that is necessary to move the organized, conscious and active army of liberation into a continuing all-round offensive for the seizure of power by the people?” Answering his own question, Mbeki called on the masses to go out and render South Africa *ungovernable*.¹¹⁵ In contrast to Mandela’s time, the masses listened. In September 1984 violence erupted and spread like wildfire throughout the country.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Hadland & Rantao, p.50.

CHAPTER 6

STRATEGISING SECURITY AND THE SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE BOTHAS GOVERNMENT

“Every responsible South African has, with growing concern, taken note of conditions of violence and lawlessness which, in recent times, have increased and have become more severe and more cruel in certain parts of the country, especially in Black townships... This state of affairs can no longer be tolerated,” was the prologue state president, PW Botha, used to announce to parliament and rest of the country that earlier that day, on the morning of July 20th 1985, he had signed a proclamation for the implementation of a partial state of emergency.¹ He said that as state president he believed this to be a necessary inevitability because he could no longer “ignore the insistence of all responsible South Africans, especially of the majority of the Black communities, who ask that conditions be normalized and that they are granted the full protection of the law to continue their normal way of life”.²

The implementation of a state of emergency in 1985, which would eventually develop into a permanent state of emergency, signaled a dramatic watershed in South Africa’s history. In his autobiography, *Die Laaste Trek ‘n Nuwe Begin*, Botha’s successor FW de Klerk wrote that by the mid-1980s, Botha’s original fiery reformist enthusiasm started to dawdle as the government’s predominant concern became the suppression of the “ernstige revolusionêre gevaar” which had gripped the country.³

As one commentator wrote: “In short, the paper maché construction which was the reform initiative of the earlier 1980s had come unstuck” and by the mid-1980s a “new counter-revolutionary strategy” had come into operation.⁴ As explained in the above section, during the mid-1980s the Botha Government had put reform on hold, because according to the government

¹ Botha, PW, “State President announces State of Emergency” in *Paratus*, vol. 36, August 1985, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*

³ De Klerk, FW, *Die laaste trek – ‘n nuwe begin*, p.129.

⁴ Du Toit, A. & Manganyi, N., (eds.), *Political violence and the struggle in South Africa*, p. 316.

reform could only be a success if stability was restored. Thus, the government's first priority was stability, then reform. In other words the carrot of reform did not disappear but was no longer the government's predominant focal point, instead the carrot of reform got shorter as the stick of repression got longer. Whereas early in the decade the Nats started off by arguing that 'there can be no security without reform', they now argued that there could be no reform without security.⁵

An easy way to see how security matters had started to dominate party politics – becoming a rallying point by the mid-1980s – is by rereading the election posters used during the 1985 by-elections. Rather soberly, the NP's read: "Don't Shoot – Think". Those of the small but hard-liner Herstigte Nasionale Party stated: "Shoot – Don't Think". Conservative Party leader, Treurnicht, blamed unrest on watered down security repression and dramatically demanded that the Government's security forces be "unleashed" on the black malcontents. Another more melodramatic rightwing poster had a young blond girl on it with these ominous words: "Don't Repeat Rhodesia – For Her Sake".⁶ This political shift of priorities could clearly be seen in the results of the 1987 elections.

The two main points parties rallied around were firstly security and then reform – in that order. The parties who came out the strongest on the issue of security, notably the NP and Treurnicht's Conservative Party, gained the most support. It is also important to note that it was mainly due to the Nationalist candidates strong stance on security matters that the majority of English voters' shifted away from the liberal PFP towards Botha. The 1987 'security election' gave Botha approximately 57% of the English vote. Never before since 1910, had any single political party in the country, enjoyed such a cross-section of the white electorate. Botha used security matters to make his party look like the sensible centre. The NP represented itself as being at the middle of the security road, tougher than the liberals, but more responsible than the rightwing. Botha exaggerated the rightwing threat to allow him to slow down on delivering promised reforms.⁷

⁵ Cock, J. & Nathan, L.(reds.), *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa*, p. 147.

⁶ Adam, H., "The ultra-right in South Africa" in *Optima*, vol. 35, no. 1, March, 1987, p. 40.

⁷ Breytenbach, W., "Election signals... all-right, all-white, alright?" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1987, p. 19.

A great proponent of Pretoria's original Counter-Insurgency (COIN) strategy was a former police commissioner, Gen. Johan Coetzee, who reasoned that COIN was based on two pillars: "information or intelligence".⁸

In 1981 the General identified five basic elements required for any Counter-Insurgency [COIN] strategy to be a success:

- "A dynamic policy for change" he argued, would make the country a continually shifting target for assault, thus not easily pinned down.
- "A clear political objective" which would serve to unify the country and ensure and strengthen its freedom and independence.
- Indoctrination targeted at "the counter-insurgents, the population and the insurgent".
- "Explosive situations" must be neutralized and conflict must be averted.
- Emphasis on intelligence and an effective "spy network"⁹

By the mid-1980s many securocrats reassessed their strategic stance as the Counter-Insurgency (COIN) plan did not seem to be delivering the security goods. Reform, or Coetzee's "dynamic policy for change", did not succeed in the diffusion of conflict, but proved to be more of a catalyst for it. As for Coetzee's trust in good intelligence, brutal attacks on collaborators and state informers by radicals started to erode the security's intelligence network. Thus the more determined securocrats favored a new approach, with the emphasis rerouted away from COIN's favoring of reformist and political notions to a more robust campaign to crush opposition and reorganize communities, combined with a program of socio-economic upliftment.¹⁰

Gen. Malan said in 1986 that it was crucial to address the underlying socio-economic and political causes of the unrest. He also said that it was crucial to remove that which offended the people. "Dit is uiters noodsaaklik om die redes vir griewe wat mag ontstaan, te verwyder. Die terroris teer op griewe," said Gen. Malan during a 1986-interview. "By ons in Suid-Afrika beteken dit 'n

⁸ Moss, G. & Obery, I. (eds.), *South African review* 5, p. 75.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Moss & Oberley, p. 81.

volgehoue program van ewolusionêre hervorminge. Ons moet verwyder dit wat ons medelandburgers kwets – hul menswaardigheid aftakel. Ons moet ons land se menepotensiaal ontwikkel,” He then added that it was vital to paint a clear picture of where the country was headed by creating “a clear perspective for the future” and to inspire the country’s youth to “build towards a new South Africa”.¹¹

Whereas, until 1985 Botha’s security advisers had been strategizing from a counter-insurgency perspective, they now adopted a counter-revolutionary outlook. Accordingly, this strategy was managed from the viewpoint that resistance was the product of exploited socio-economic grievances, which were blown out of proportion by revolutionary political instigators.¹²

It should be made clear, that the change from a counter insurgency concept to a counter revolutionary warfare strategy, did not imply a mere shift in terminology. Following the authorities’ train of thought, the solution was a combination of the following:

- destroy the revolutionaries
- address the most fundamental social grievances and economic complaints
- promote reliable community leaders and reorganize the communities¹³
- the restoration of law and order took priority over political reform
- social-economic reform took priority over political reform
- constitutional development should be initiated at ground level and evolve upwards¹⁴

In accordance with the counter-revolutionary approach, Botha’s securocrats went from a defensive to an offensive strategy. To understand the Government’s take on revolutionary warfare and the basic conceptual framework within which the Government devised their counter-strategy, the

¹¹ Anon., “Die rewolusionêre aanslag teen Suid-Afrika” in *Paratus*, vol. 37, November 1986, p.12.

¹² Cock & Nathan, (eds.), *War and society*, p.147.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Moss, G. (ed.) *South African review* 5, p. 81.

following is of importance.¹⁵ The strategists divided the South African society into three broad security groupings:

- A small, but fearlessly committed political group who opposed the government and status quo
- The masses, the majority of people who were politically neutral or ambivalent either way
- For a violent situation to become a revolutionary, the small anti-government group must oppose the status quo and attempt, through violent means, to overthrow the government it opposes.
- As its highest priority, the small anti-government group must try to involve and mobilize the large non-partisan masses. The goal is to get the non-partisan majority to get out from their neutral corners and force them to choose sides; either for or against the government.¹⁶
- The opposing groups thus struggle to sway the pendulum of political support in their favor by gaining the majority's trust and by discrediting their opponents, and eventually destroying their opponents politically or physically.
- The revolutionary climate is one saturated with strategies of violence and intimidation. The whole struggle is aimed at winning the support of the masses.
- A revolutionary war is a political war. The goal is to win the support of the majority and to keep it; to get the masses involved, to get them to take part in your strategy and to maintain and expand on the momentum of that active involvement.
- The revolutionary struggle, wrote Gen. Malan, is thus about winning "the soul, the heart, the favour and the support" of the population.¹⁷ This echoes the reasoning of the American counter-revolution expert Lt.Col. John J. McCuen, who, as has already been pointed out, the authorities greatly subscribed to. McCuen wrote that the main objective of a counterrevolutionary campaign was to "regain control of the population and not just to occupy terrain". The strategist made clear that this was a very extensive process that

¹⁵ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Correspondence received from GEN. MAGNUS MALAN. 8 August 2000.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

included “more than mere persuasion, it requires intimidation, and most important of all organisation”.¹⁸

The last point represented the government’s biggest challenge in winning the revolutionary onslaught, as perceived by their securocrats. Even a decade after the period in question, Gen. Malan is still unbending in his insistence that the authorities’ attempts at gaining the trust; the struggle to win over the hearts-and-minds of the black population, formed the most important component of the counterrevolutionary war as a whole. During 2000, the General said: “Ons het daarin geglo – ‘winning the-hearts-and-minds of people’. ‘n Revolusionêre oorlog gaan oor die hart en die siel van mense ... Dis die dinge wat die mense nie verstaan nie, as jy praat oor revolusionêre oorlog nie. Hulle dink net dis skiet-en-donner, nee vergeet dit! ‘n Revolusionêre oorlog gaan oor hierdie binneste vanjou. Dit gaan nie oor skiet-en-donner nie.”¹⁹

In 1986 the Government outlined some of the broader socio-economic grievances that made the non-whites susceptible to violence and they included:

- the legitimacy crisis of the local black councils and their failure to tend to the expectations of moderate blacks
- a general rise in living costs amidst unemployment
- a lack of participation in the political processes of the country
- inequality in education²⁰

The army’s hierarchy repeatedly stated that the revolutionary war was only 20% military and 80% psychological. Studying other revolutionary and counter-revolutionary strategies – among others, the military campaigns embarked upon by the USA in Vietnam – the securocrats fully appreciated the importance of winning the local communities’ trust and removing their paranoia.²¹ “The basic aim of civic action”, said Major-General Lloyd, “apart from assisting the black man in various

¹⁸ Sarakinsky, I., “State, strategy and extra-parliamentary opposition in South Africa, 1983-1988” in *Politikon*, 1989, [pp.2-15]

¹⁹ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with Gen Magnus Malan. 12 August 2000.

²⁰ *Die Volksblad*. 19 February 1986.

²¹ Cock & Nathan, p. 180.

fields, is to project an image of the soldier as a man of action who is nevertheless a friend of the black man and who is prepared to defend him".²²

According to the strategists, radicals exploited the black population's apolitical socio-economic grievances in order to muster support for their own, very political, ends.²³ These rallying points could include almost anything. According to Gen. Malan, the poor sewerage system and lack of toilets at Queenstown was an example of how nonpolitical complaints could be politically utilized to incite violence. Accordingly, Queenstown's black population's complaints and requests to the relevant authorities did not receive any attention, and so was driven to frustration and rage and thus became susceptible to radical instigators. Gen Malan said that the white authorities did not respect the blacks' needs. ["Ons dink nie aan die behoeftes van die ander mense nie – dit was bloot ons probleem".]²⁴

Echoing the same reasoning, Major General Bert Wandrag of the South African Police Riot Control forces said: "The outcome of this struggle will not be determined by weapons alone... School boycotts in black townships in Pietermaritzburg were brought to an end merely by paying attention to the grievances of schoolchildren. A major grievance was lack of textbooks. A small capital outlay in good time could have saved the department and state millions of rands".²⁵

The civil action program the security forces embarked upon to win the trust and respect of black township dwellers and black South Africa as a whole was given the self-explanatory epithet of the Winning Hearts and Minds Campaign, it was also popularly known by its unfortunate acronym WHAM. Based on similar campaigns by the military whilst still in Namibia, the border war version commonly known as *ploeg-en-plant* and included a variety of different civic programs, most directed at the youth. The majority of the Namibian WHAM exercises received a great deal of publicity, and according to Kenneth Grundy were an attempt to "ingratiate the SADF to the people and thereby parlay support into military and of course, political advantage".²⁶

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Die Volksblad*. 28 October 1985.

²⁴ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN, 12 August 2000.

²⁵ Hochschild, A., *The mirror at midnight*, p. 199.

²⁶ Grundy, K.W., *Soldiers without politics – blacks in the South African armed forces*, p. 270.

Managed on the same premise, the local version of WHAM included so-called “supportive projects” which were undertaken with the cooperation of the local black township councils and ranged from the lending of assistance in hospitals and schools to sinking of boreholes to the setting up of recreational facilities.²⁷

In the township of Alexandra, the government published the *Newsletter to the people of Alexandra* describing security operations in positive and simplistic terms, roadblocks according to the newsletter were necessary to “keep all trouble-makers out”. On a more creative note and focussing on the township youth, Pretoria had a comic strip developed entitled *Alex and Friends*. ‘Alex’ being a spirited and upright citizen who always won arguments with the brutish and ungrateful ‘Comrade Rat’.²⁸ Not all townships received this kind of government interest, Alexandra was designated as a so-called ‘oilspot’.

During this period, the authorities embarked on a large scale program of socio-economic upgrading, specifically singling out the 34 most volatile townships. Those townships were known as ‘oilspots’. In 1986 the Government had spent R126 million on the bettering of black residential areas. By 1987 more than 1 700 such urban renewal projects were underway throughout the country. Apart from funding received from the Development Bank, the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning, the Provincial Administrations, the South African Development Trust, the South African Housing Trust, the Urban Foundation, as well as different groups from the private sector, further funding for the various upliftment programs was also channeled from the army’s budgets.²⁹ Of the estimated R 2 billion the Botha government spent in just four years, Alexandra received roughly R 80 million.³⁰

The strategic reasoning behind oilspots was that once the socio-economic conditions in the townships were revamped, those once disgruntled people would become content to pave the way for peace and calm to transcend, which would then spread to other townships, like oil over water.

²⁷ Alden, C., *Apartheid's last stand – the rise and fall of the South African security state*, p. 173.

²⁸ Hochschild, p. 200.

²⁹ Moss & Obery (eds.), p. 81-82.

³⁰ Hochschild, p. 200 & *Die Volksblad* 19 February 1986.

The understanding was that the government did not have to upgrade every single South African township, rather just a few carefully selected ones. And then from there the socio-economic contentment would spread to other oilspots, finally covering the whole of South Africa.³¹

Welfare, as understood by the Government and defined by their securocrats, entailed satisfying basic needs, specifically revamping township infrastructures, as well as a completely upgraded new approach to housing, health, education and training. This then formed the basis of a plan for economic reform.³² The stick of security strategies and the carrot of socio-economic planning now formed the cornerstones of Botha's new dispensation.

Another central part of the securocrats' long term strategizing, which was intertwined with the above, was the formation of a black middle class. The Government reasoned that a middle class could be a neutral buffer to the ANC, specifically its brand of Marxism, and as such a counter-weight to discontent and unrest. In its drive to create such a social order, the Government followed the recommendations of the Wiehahn and Riekert commissions and scrapped Pass laws, got rid of job reservations, paid attention to industrial labour issues, and since 1986 promoted small business development among blacks, introduced all-black municipalities and regional councils.³³ British journalist Graham Leach wrote: "The government hoped black revolution could be bought off if a prosperous black middle class could be created which poorer blacks could aspire to".³⁴

Winning Hearts And Minds [WHAM] and Civic Actions Programme [CAP] was thus a program for social and economic upliftment, specifically aimed at addressing neglected apolitical grievances of township-dwellers for good public relations and image building.

According to Gen Malan, it all came back to conflict-management. He said that the communists were particularly apt at this and it was vital to win the people's trust because it was then that they would give valuable intelligence and information. "Dit gaan terug na konflikhantering – die

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Roherty, J., *State security in South Africa: civil-military relations under PW Botha*, p. 135.

* There are many sources on these Commission. For a basic summary see, for example, the *Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1987-1988*.

³³ Oakes, D. (ed.), *Readers' Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story*, p. 461.

³⁴ Leach, G., *South Africa – no easy path to peace*, p. 162.

kommuniste was baie goed daarmee gewees. Die kommuniste hanteer mense perfek in 'n oorlogsituasie. Dis waar hulle hul gesindheid wen. ,” said Gen Malan. “You must break tension,” and according to the General this was vital because: “Then they give us information. We win their trust”.³⁵

For the army, WHAM and CAPS had a dual purpose. The military chiefs hoped that it would primarily serve as a psychological objective: eroding hostility towards the military presence in the townships by demonstrating to the black population that the army was there to protect and not to harm them. Coupled with this was the intelligence objective. Military personnel involved with CAP projects were expected to use their positions and the trust they were supposed to inspire among township residents to gather intelligence.³⁶

In a 1985 interview the then Head of the SADF, Gen. Jannie Geldenhuys, defended the WHAM programs that were initiated in the townships and explained that they were successful but that the army’s critics did not want to admit as much: “Die gemoedelikheid wat daar tussen die troepe en die swartes was – ‘n gemoedelikheid, ‘n vriendskap en selfs ‘n gesamentlike deelname aan sport – dis tog ook feite, maar niemand wil dit erken nie, niemand wil dit tog fotografeer en daaroor skryf nie”.³⁷

In practice, WHAM and the intelligence angle of CAPS appeared to be a trickier endeavor than expected. During 1984 the SADF and SAP took part in a joint crackdown on the simmering Sebokeng township, during which they conducted a massive door-to-door search of the whole township. Afterwards, the same security force members who had just turned their homes inside out randomly, handed out fliers and badges to Sebokeng citizens, that read: “I am your friend, trust me” and “Cooperation for peace and security”.³⁸

One resident’s recollection of the operation, clearly illustrates the disparages between the brash attitude of the security forces and the aims of their confidence building campaign: “They knocked

³⁵ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with Gen Magnus Malan. 12 August 2000.

³⁶ Frankel, P. (et al) (ed.), *State, resistance and change in South Africa*, p. 124.

³⁷ Giliomee, H., “In gesprek met Genl. Jannie Geldenhuys” in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, Herfs, 1985, no. 3, p. 18.

³⁸ Cock & Nathan (eds.), p. 68; Murray, p. 254.

on the door as if they wanted to kick it in. When I opened the door they didn't greet me or ask if they could search – they just asked for a house permit, switched on the light and demanded to know who [the sleeping occupants] were. Before they left they stuck a sticker on the cupboard, saying: 'Trust me – I am your friend'".³⁹ Some of the WHAM initiatives seemed to have been rather superficial. For example, in the Cape Peninsula, after a renewed bout of unrest the police decided to do some public relations damage control in the strife torn areas. The police's remedy was to organize a cargo of sweets that were handed out to township children by the riot police – the same riot squads who had clashed with those people on a daily basis.⁴⁰

Although, as already explained, securocrats hoped that WHAM would serve as a tension breaker in the townships, in order for the security forces to gain the trust of the local communities to expand and develop their intelligence networks. As a whole, the image building and icebreaker stunts of the security forces were not the apex of WHAM or CAP reasoning. The predominant belief among the Government's main strategists, was that the majority of black South Africans, the masses or in strategic terms the neutral 'third group', were more concerned about their immediate socio-economic needs, in other words, bread and butter issues, than they were about getting involved with the epic struggle against apartheid. Beyers Naudé said that to a certain extent this line of thought contained a large degree of truth but that, at the same time, the Government greatly underestimated the increasing resistance and political dissent in the black communities.⁴¹

Irrespective of the underlying security motivations, the Civil Action Programmes [CAP] and Winning Hearts And Minds [WHAM] sections of the counter-revolutionary strategy did attempt to address seriously needed socio-economic township upliftment and the rectifying of welfare neglect in part due to the authorities' bureaucratic ignorance of the seriousness of black grievances.

It was the underlying security theory motivating these programs that drew criticism from a broad spectrum. A statement made by Gen. Malan in a 1986 interview, in which he stated that the majority of the masses were not concerned about democracy but much rather about their immediate socio-economic needs, illustrated the type of reasoning that drew widespread criticism

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Cooper, (et. al), *Race Relations Survey 1985*, p. 488.

⁴¹ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with BEYERS NAUDE. 27 June 2000.

and which led to various groups viewing the CAP programs with utter contempt. He said: “Ek dink vir die massas in Suid-Afrika is die demokrasie nie ‘n relevante faktor nie. Vir hulle gaan dit oor die bevrediging van hul eie behoeftes”.⁴²

Many critics and commentators denounced these programs, not necessarily because they attempted to redress socio-economic issues, but due to both the way the authorities approached these issues and what they expected to achieve through their inception. Patty Waldmeir slammed Gen. Malan and his reasoning behind the CAP / WHAM strategies when she wrote: “Hearts and minds would be wooed in the townships through socio-economic development, on the principle, stated by Defence Minister Magnus Malan, that once blacks had toilets, they would not want democracy”.⁴³

Various reasons existed for the dilution of the impact of these initiatives. CAP initiatives sometimes failed because of communication gaps, which led to severe differences between what the authorities intended and the end result. Such an example can be found in an Alexandra based CAP enterprise. South Africa’s Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM) endeavored to lay electric cables throughout the sprawling township. To do this ESCOM had to link houses with certain main points, thus cables had to go through streets, houses and backyards. This operation required for the unpaved streets to be dug up, forcing residents to move on foot only. For the same reason rubbish could also not be collected⁴⁴ and the state of affairs remained for nearly a year, the reason was simple enough. Alexandra’s residents did not want ESCOM digging around in their backyard because many had taken in renters there, in a makeshift township system of subletting known as shackfarming. This meant that ESCOM had to negotiate with individuals, which again delayed the whole project. The residents were bewildered by ESCOM’s work and, in the suspicion-filled air of the time, many assumed that this was yet another plot by the Government to agitate them.⁴⁵

According to many commentators, this blend of security and welfare strategies was not enough to bring about the successful or permanent de-escalation and neutralization of the simmering South

⁴² Giliomee, H., “In gesprek met Genl. Magnus Malan” in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, no. 8, Winter, 1986, p.13.

⁴³ Waldmeir, P., *Anatomy of a miracle: the end of apartheid and the birth of the new South Africa*, p. 44.

⁴⁴ Seegers, A., *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, p.182.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

African situation. When discussing this question of socio-economic and welfare grievances as catalyst for violence Prof. JP de Lange agreed that an element of the violence sprang from socio-economic grievances, but he thought that it was exactly the point that the government failed to grasp. Where violence did in fact erupt over socio-economic issues, it was not always a case of exploitation of grievances, but maybe more a case of political unrest being channeled through protests over welfare issues. In other words, where local problems evolved into protests against the system as a whole.⁴⁶

Prof. De Lange said the fact that people would go to such drastic lengths over bread and butter issues, irrespective of their socio-economic importance or pettiness, for example rents and sewerage, should have clearly indicated to the Government that there were greater underlying issues than just pure socio-economic dilemmas. Saying that he agreed that certain aspects of the socio-economic question were exploited: “Natuurlik het die leiding van die ANC, binnelands en buitelands, so situasie aangegryp, maar hoekom ontstaan daar soveel woede oor iets soos huurgeld? Daar is ‘n grondliggende ontevredenheid”.⁴⁷

Prof. De Lange then went on to argue that it was exactly because people were so susceptible to mobilization around so-called neutral welfare issues that should have indicated that there were bigger issues at stake – a more comprehensive state of discontent than bread and butter issues. On the exploitation outlook he said: “Jy gaan dit nie met ‘n oor die algemeen tevrede groep mense regkry nie, om tot daai fase van geweld oor te gaan as gevolg van iets soos Afrikaans in skole of huurgeld en sulke goed nie, daar moet ‘n groter ontevredenheid basis wees”.⁴⁸

Tony Matthews, professor of law at the University of Natal, wrote about this during 1984: “The irrational nature of the trigger mechanisms [of the violence] should not delude us into dismissing the accompanying violence as irrational since it is generally the expression of deep resentments

⁴⁶ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PROF JP DE LANGE. 28 June 2000.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

and frustrations that arise out of relative but real hardship and impoverishment – in short, out of the basic inequality of the social system”⁴⁹

As can be deduced by the comprehensiveness of the CAP programs, the whole outlook had the support of the State President. He explained, during 2000, that he believed that the deteriorating black urban infrastructures exercised a great catalytic influence for the eruption of violence, and that per implication upliftment could rectify those feelings of malcontent. Asked whether he believed socio-economic or political issues bolstered more violent discontent, the former State President replied that the urbanization around cities created problematic social conditions which needed attention. Botha said that, unfortunately, his Government did not receive the international and financial support to address these problems.⁵⁰ Botha said: “Nee, ek dink die verstedeliking wat oor die jare plaasgevind het in Suid-Afrika het meegehelp om sosiale toestande rondom ons stedelike gebiede te skep wat aandag moes verdien, maar ek dink die destydse Nasionale Regering het nie die hulp gekry van die internasionale wêreld en die kapitalistiese magte in Suid-Afrika, om daai sosiale probleme op te kon los het nie.”⁵¹

Asked whether he thought these violent upheavals were due to socio-economic factors or whether he thought it was more politically inspired, Clem Sunter said that as far as he was concerned these arguments only disguised the “tit-for-tat” situation that underlined the situation.⁵² “You could say apartheid was violence against human beings – good enough. And then you have a ‘just’ war on the other side. Then of course, what people in government of the time was saying, was ‘Ja but their can be no justification for putting bombs in bars and killing innocent people’. To be quite honest, when I see a situation like that, when you have a real conflict of interest; you end-up with an interdependency almost – its just tit-for-tat stuff”.⁵³

After all was said and done, the military’s Namibian success with *ploeg en plant* was not to be repeated locally with WHAM and CAP. Gen. Malan admitted this in 2000, saying that, the security

⁴⁹ Matthews, T., “Political violence in South Africa” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 3, no. 3, 3rd Quarter 1984, pp. 20-27., p. 20.

⁵⁰ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PW BOTHA. 3 October 2000.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with CLEM SUNTER. 13 November 2000.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

forces here had to work under “a totally different climate” as was the case in Namibia. The masses were too volatile, polarized, mobilized and scared for CAP and WHAM to really have succeeded.⁵⁴

Furthermore, certain sections in the white minority scoffed at these strategies and did not give them their full support. Subsequently these programs could never really develop. Irrespective of how much money the Government threw at the problem, the required effect did not sink in. According to the General, this was in no small part due to the half-heartedness of the certain non-military state departments and ignorance on the side of the police.⁵⁵ “Die grootste uitdaging wat die land gehad het in die revolusionêre oorlog, was om al die saakmakende rolspelers bewus te maak dat hulle verantwoordelik was, nes ons – indien nie meer nie – vir die nasionale veiligheid van Suid-Afrika”.⁵⁶

Indeed, not all non-military state departments were enthusiastic about working with the security forces, irrespective of the capacity or level. FW de Klerk, later to succeed PW Botha, but during the period in question still a senior minister, commented on this in his autobiography. He wrote that he agreed with the hearts-and-minds strategy and also wholeheartedly felt that socio-economic upliftment was vital in order to control the South African situation of the period.⁵⁷ He nonetheless also noted that the secrecy surrounding the strategies of the State Security Council was, sometimes, melodramatic and infantile. He wrote that many was the time senior ministers, himself included, had to sit back and watch the securocrats pry in their departmental affairs. Simply having to be content with the explanation that it was in the interest of national security.⁵⁸

Gen Malan explained, state departments did not always grasp the security value of their non-military departments and on the other hand, were not over-excited to get involved with the security forces. Giving one example of when the military wanted to infiltrate student communities, they approached the Department of Education to handle that intelligence maneuver only to be turned down, because “die ouens sien nie kans nie”.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ De Klerk, p. 137.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

As for the role of the police, Gen Malan said, that as a whole, the police did not completely comprehend the objectives. Saying that he did not blame them either, because they lacked sufficient training. He said “die polisie het dit nie geleer nie, want hul was nie konflik-geöriënteerd nie, hy was nie daarin opgelei nie. Ek blameer hul nie. Hul het ‘n gebrek aan kundigheid gehad, as gevolg van topstrukture wat nie vir hul gesê het nie.”⁶⁰

Malan felt so strongly about getting the WHAM / CAP message across that at one stage in the 1980s he organized a conference with journalists, to show and explain to them the socio-economic situation in Alexandria and how important it was, especially on a security level, to upgrade the deteriorating situation. Trying to get the point across of how socio-economic influences acted as a catalyst for the fomentation of radicalism, Malan, the then Minister of Defence, said to them: ‘But I just want to say this, if I was a black man and I was born in Alexandria, then I would have been the biggest terrorist – I would have been the leader’.⁶¹

Nonetheless as with the other reforms, economic and welfare upliftment programs were positive moves in that they addressed, albeit it to a limited extent, long neglected black grievances, but still made no difference to their political position in relation to apartheid. In other words, socio-economic development was again belittled as a governmental device for buying time and was seen as part of the reformist carrot to appease the black population. Socio-economic change on its own was thus not as vital as socio-economic development intertwined with real far-reaching political change.⁶²

During the latter part of the 1980s, Prof. Willie Breytenbach wrote that South Africa’s economic growth would lead to “much of the basic needs required for an improvement in the physical and social quality of black life (e.g. housing, education and jobs),” becoming affordable, but then stressed that this was, “... no substitute for real reform because without sociopolitical change there can be no lasting security in South Africa”.⁶³

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Breytenbach, p. 21

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Irrespective of whether it was the NMS or reform and the Tricameral system, counterrevolutionary warfare or CAP and WHAM, the greatest test for PW Botha's political philosophies and strategic theories, lay in the political violence of the 1980s and its diverse and far-reaching implications. Although the decade was interspersed with sporadic incidents of violence, the political violence of the 1980s only really started to gain its momentum a year before the Government instituted the first State of Emergency (SOE).

CHAPTER 7

EMERGENCY IN THE MAKING

1984 was not a tranquil year for the State President and his minority government with economic factors proving especially taxing. The Eastern part of the country was hit by floods and droughts; the creation of the new development bank, a floundering gold price, a recession, low tax revenue, the government's budgetary overrun and the failure of development initiatives in black rural areas; black, coloured and Indian education and housing backlogs; as well as the huge bills taped to implementing and running the new Tricameral system and the planned local government structures.* Then there was South Africa's Namibian foray, draining further billions.¹ To rectify the situation and jumpstart the economy, Botha needed a significant inflow of foreign capital, which was being increasingly prohibited by anti-apartheid sanction campaigns.**² Indeed, probably the last thing the government needed was a sudden increase in unrest. And that was exactly what it got.

The upheavals and resistance that started in 1984 had some distinct characteristics. With regards to the main role-players and certain protest developments: There was the emergence of the mass movement that took on the Government on constitutional and political fronts. It is very important to point out that the homelands, specifically Lebowa and Kwandebele, were in a state of violent conflict, as was the rest of the country. The non-white education sector lay in tatters as a result of being constantly disrupted. Lastly, liberation leaders realized that although non-white South Africans were generally poor as individuals, combined they had a mammoth financial and economic power and because of that, political weight. This gave rise to South Africa's powerful unionist movement in the 1980s.***³

* See the chapters on the ANC for more information about the Local Black Councils.

¹ Schlemmer, L, "South Africa's split personality" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 6-7.

** See Section 4 which deals with the country's economic / international position.

² Schlemmer, p. 6-7.

*** See the chapters on the ANC for more information.

³ Seegers, A., *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, p.173.

1984's unrest could be divided into two categories: coordinated violence and uncoordinated violence. The latter is deeply rooted in the socio-economic situation of the black population and was easily triggered by apparently insignificant incidents. The former was revolutionary violence i.e. terrorist attacks. Of course, the eruption of the one easily led to an eruption of the other.⁴

Holistically seen, three broad motivating factors could be identified as being instrumental in the eruption of violence in the period that led up to the declaration of the first State of Emergency: the unabated rejection of so-called Bantu education, the hatred of influx control and the homeland policy, all of which were perceived by the majority of blacks as being a hindrance to their socio-economic and political development. This frustration resulted in an upsurge of guerrilla and sabotage campaigns, a growing youth militancy coupled with the resuscitation of black nationalism and the growth of black urban political confidence which was expressed through the formation of various civic, community, student movements and labour organisations.⁵

The year's upheavals and subsequent violence revolved around the familiar issues of education, social services and rent increases. Government exacerbated matters as follows: during September 1984 an across-the-board municipal rent increase of 15% was announced, which coincided with a 10% increase in general sales tax; throughout the year unemployment rose, as did food prices and public transport fares. Furthermore, local municipal services in black areas deteriorated.⁶

Another immediate trigger of violence during the period 1984 / 85 was harsh police and army conduct in the townships, as well as the mass arrests of community and union leaders, and protesters.⁷ Factional fighting and community based power-plays, so-called black-on-black violence, born from rivalries between different black groups fighting over organisational loyalties and tactics also fanned the flames. Furthermore as will be seen below, in many cases violence was also a result of the oppression of peaceful protest actions. This, as Graham Howe argued, led to township fighters venting their anger on governmental authority structures, "the legislative and de

⁴ Matthews, T., "Political violence in South Africa" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 3, no. 3, 3rd Quarter 1984, pp. 20-27, p. 20.

⁵ See the chapters on the ANC for more information.

⁶ Howe, G., "Cycles of civil unrest 1976 / 84" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 3, no. 1, winter, 1985, p. 7.

⁷ Murray, H., "Editorial: To die separately or live together?" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1985, pp. 30-35, p. 247.

⁸ Howe, p.8. See also the chapters on the ANC.

facto suppression of initially peaceful demonstrations can be linked to the later manifestation of anti-authority tendencies by township dissidents, in the form of attacks on perceived collaborators".⁸ A new catalyst for unrest was Botha's new Tricameral parliament.* The following can be regarded as basic examples of the violence that typified the unrest of 1984.

Feeling disgruntled about what they saw as inferior education a nonwhite student boycott started on August 22nd 1984, the day of the Tricameral elections, when 80% of all coloured pupils boycotted classes, 11 of South Africa's 14 teacher-training colleges were also closed down due to the stayaway. The tense situation reached a dangerous climax when a girl of fourteen was run-over by a police Land Rover during protests near Pretoria.⁹ Free State students near Parys destroyed a school and in the Tembisa township near Johannesburg, students tried to burn down their school.¹⁰

One analyst commentated on the student movement during 1984, "Student leaders apparently have come to view themselves as the cutting edge of community protest against the policies of racial compartmentalization called apartheid". The government eventually closed more than 20 universities and schools because of the students steadfast refusal to return to their institutions.¹¹ It was estimated that a million students took part in either the boycott and or other protest actions.¹²

Near Johannesburg, by the time the polls closed in the coloured township of Eldorado Park, a housing board office was firebombed. Six days later protesters at Lenasia near Johannesburg, tried to deter Indians from voting for the Tricameral system, but police made sure they kept a safe distance. A policeman was stoned but crawled away to safety. From there on the situation spiraled into chaos. The policemen went on a sjambok rampage and fired about 150 rubber bullets, the protesters fought back with rocks and petrol bombs.¹³ "Central Lenasia was transformed into the frontline of a battle zone last night" reported one journalist, "Hundreds of people were hurt, many seriously, when police fired teargas into homes, shops, crowds".¹⁴

⁸ *Ibid.*

* See the chapters on the ANC for more information.

⁹ Oakes, D. (ed.), *Readers' Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story*, p. 480.

¹⁰ Leach, G., *South Africa - no easy path to peace*, p. 135.

¹¹ Murray, p. 247.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 248.

¹³ Leach, p. 135.

¹⁴ Murray, p. 245.

By the beginning of September, a massive stayaway was organized to protest rent increases by the Lekoa Town Council. In the following seven days, as police and protestors clashed, 31 people lost their lives. By September 17, a strike was called in protest of the SAP's reactions. It resulted in confusion and uncoordinated township actions, which lead to further clashes with the security forces. As news of the uprising spread, crowds vented their anger and frustration on the authorities' structures.¹⁵ The offices of six black administration boards, one teachers' training college and a whole block that housed single black security force members were wrecked. Three liquor stores and more than one beer hall were ransacked, forty-six shops were looted, and bus depots and post offices were wrecked. Sixteen houses were also destroyed.¹⁶

Protests and unrest quickly spilled over to numerous Transvaal townships where, between August and October 1984, 65 people died there.¹⁷ During October, 800 000 employees of parastatal industries, including the SASOL and ISCOR giants, took part in a huge stayaway.¹⁸

By October the police had taken responsibility for killing 65 people and injuring a further 126 during the unrest in August and September of 1984. All in all, during 1984, they killed 268 adults and wounded 850; killed 19 youths and wounded 78. During September / November 1984, 137 people died in the unrest and more than 600 were injured. Furthermore, 1 129 people were detained during 1984. During the year the security forces detained scores of people, including: 575 pupils, teachers and students, 225 community and political activists, 51 labour leaders, 11 church workers and 263 unspecified people.¹⁹

Many of PW Botha's initiatives regarding the unrest passed through the office of the Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange. On October 5th 1984, in a speech held at the NP Transvaal Congress, he placed the unrest in perspective. Watering down controversy, Le Grange broke the situation down into three points. He was adamant that the unrest was not a struggle between white

¹⁵ Alden, C., *Apartheid's last stand – the rise and fall of the South African security state*, p. 188.

¹⁶ Murray, p. 249.

¹⁷ Alden, p. 161.

¹⁸ Oakes, p. 480.

¹⁹ Cooper, C. (et al.), "Security" in *South African Race Relations Survey 1984*, 1985, p. 760, 789; Howe, G., "Deadlock in emergent states 1960 / 61 & 1984 / 85" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 3, no. 2, spring 1985, p. 1.

and black. Rather, the Minister said that “a small black minority and individual coloureds, Indians and whites,” were the instigators.²⁰ He also said that people should not fool themselves and that the instigators of the unrest simply wanted to violently overthrow the Government. They also wanted to destroy “all democratic structures in the RSA”. The Minister then made it very clear that the government, in “its struggle against this militant threat” had the support of the “vast majority of our total population”.²¹ With this attitude, did the Minister of Law and Order view the year.

“The recent violent situation that we had in certain areas in our country arose basically because of the new constitutional system being applied” said the Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange, when he summed up 1984.²² Furthermore, “Certain people wanted to cause a situation of unrest, they wanted to show the world that the constitution is very unpopular with sections of the population. They wanted to get across a message of uncertainty within South Africa.” According to Le Grange people had nothing to fear, as this was most certainly not a permanent feature: “I firmly believe that there will be a decrease in violence as the new constitution develops”.²³

1984’s unrest did not end with the year. By May of 1985, 100 people had already killed in incidents of unrest – 79 in March alone.²⁴ Commentators generally defined two cycles of unrest that formed the run-up to the first State of Emergency. The 1984 cycle really reached its climax between September and November and was mainly confined to the Pretoria/Witwatersrand/Vereniging [PWV] region. The second cycle of violence, which lead up to the implementation of the 1985 State of Emergency, was mainly focussed on the Eastern Cape and started in January of that year and did not subside for the remainder of 1985.²⁵

Describing the buildup to the proclamation of the State of Emergency, the *Annual Survey of South African Law 1985*, described the country’s turbulent state of affairs as follows: “Hundreds of people throughout were killed during the first seven months of the year by mindless mobs bent on eliminating, by any means, any black person who was either vaguely sympathetic to the

²⁰ LOUIS LE GRANGE PRIVATE COLLECTION: AT INCH: PV 778: PLEG 6 / 257 1984

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Murray, H., “Louis Le Grange” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 3, no. 3, p. 28-31.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Baynham, S., “Protest, the police and public order” in *Reality*, vol. 17, no. 3, May 1985, p. 4.

²⁵ Howe, p. 9.

'system' or who chose to operate within the system by either being elected to the various black town or city councils or by joining the police or working for them. Action by the police in an apparently vain effort to restore and maintain law and order in the black residential areas also resulted in the deaths of hundreds. Each action by the one seemed to invite a more severe and more harsh counteraction".²⁶

As illustrated above, the 1984 violence could be directly coupled with the student movements and particularly with the stayaway drives. During 1985 many students returned to their studies and it seemed initially that the new year's violence was directed and fought by the unemployed and unemployable, also known as the 'lumpenproletariat'.²⁷

Basic reasons for the 1985 violence include:

- Black unemployment
- Disgruntledness over poor educational levels
- The economic slump and accompanying high inflation with its restriction on spending
- UDF-led mobilization²⁸
- Blacks continued exclusion from the Tricameral system, feeding a sense of malcontent
- Poor township housing
- Criminal activity created by the devil-may-care attitude of the unrest
- The corruption and inadequacy of Local Black Councils
- The complete lack of respected and legitimate township leaders
- The conduct of the security forces
- Boredom and stress, seen in conjunction with the already mentioned high levels of unemployment and criminal activities, made for very fertile ground, as regards the unrest
- Reform expectations and promises blown out of proportion, either by black or government leaders²⁹

²⁶ Cameron, E. & Marcus, G., "The administration of justice, law reform and jurisprudence" in *Annual survey of South African law 1985*, 1986, p. 15.

²⁷ Howe, p. 9.

²⁸ Schlemmer, L., "South Africa's urban crisis" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 3, no. 1, winter, 1985, p.3-4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

On 1st and 3rd of January, 1985, youth riots broke out in Grahamstown and Port Alfred, with sporadic incidents in the Transvaal. On the 9th, PWV students returned to school in spite of calls from the Congress Of South African Students [COSAS] to continue with the 1984 boycott, in the Eastern Cape the boycott continued. The 17th saw rioting youths destroy the homes of three black policemen. On the 23rd riots broke out in the East Rand. At the end of the month the violence spread to the Free State, with rioters in the Bothaville township attacking teachers and policemen and destroying their vehicles and homes while near Virginia 600 students stoned police vehicles and school buildings.³⁰

In the first half of February 27 businesses were wrecked near Kroonstad. In only four days, February 18th – 21st, more than 200 people were injured and 18 people killed when police and blacks clashed in the Cape settlement of Crossroads. From March 2nd – 4th one person was killed, 5 houses were destroyed along with 3 vehicles following unrest in Uitenhage. Six days later and also in the Eastern Cape, after clashing with police, 10 people were killed and 83 arrested. From the 6th – 8th March, 20 schools were temporarily closed down in the East Rand and Free State. From March 15th – 18th nine people died, 20 were injured and 30 arrests were made following unrest.³¹

The 1985 battle lines were drawn early in the Eastern Cape, when the UDF-affiliated Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO) declared war on the local black authorities, rents, housing, the increase in bus fares and the rise in the price of petrol. Early in March, PEBCO called for a 'black weekend' consumer boycott and received monumental support. As the boycott increased in support so the scope of general support for Eastern Cape protest actions gained thrust and momentum.³²

On March 28th of 1985, more than R500 000 worth of damage was inflicted by arsonists at 6 Port Elizabeth schools. By the first half of April 1985 the Eastern Cape based violence had not subsided, when 8 people died between the 11th – 17th and then between April 28th – 30th 1985

³⁰ Bennett, M., "Countdown to emergency" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 3, no. 2, spring, 1985, pp. 6-8.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Alden, p. 162.

another 5 people died and 200 were arrested as violence flared up again in the Eastern Cape, Free State and Transvaal.³³

On April 18th 1985, a bomb exploded at a Durban supermarket, another on the 25th, yet another on the 29th and two more on the 30th. During May of 1985 bombs exploded at a police station, at the SADF's Johannesburg offices and on the 30th a bomb caused damages to the offices of the Southern Cross Defence Fund. By May of 1985, with new boycott actions springing up across the country, firebomb attacks commonplace, constant mass protest actions being initiated and the odd bomb exploding, the violence had not abated nor shown any sign that it would.³⁴

A very vivid illustration of the escalation of the violent unrest can be found in the government statistics of the period. During September of 1984 the security forces recorded 982 incidents of violence and/or protest. This included 108 cases of arson, 31 petrol bomb attacks, 164 cases of looting and/or robberies and 6 mine attacks. Constantly fluctuating, the number of violent incidents dropped to 156 by December of 1984, but January of 1985 saw it rise to 341.³⁵ The pattern went on to show a dramatic jump during February of 1985 to 1024 incidents of violence, which included 737 cases of stone throwing. During March of 1985, the unrest escalated to a recorded 1097 unrest cases, and rose further during April 1985 with 1350 recorded incidents of violence. The figures for April of 1985 included 835 incidents of stone throwing, 267 cases of arson, 116 petrol bomb attacks, 27 incidents of looting, 3 mine attacks and 1 hand grenade attack as well as 101 unrest related marches and/or gatherings.³⁶ These actions, specifically those that took place from September of 1984 to July of 1985, were accompanied by the deaths of 455 people in political violence and a further 1747 people were left injured. In addition to this 14 000 unrest related arrests were made.³⁷

Whereas the Minister for Law and Order was very confident about the security forces' ability to contain the violence of 1984, his mood had changed considerably by the beginning of 1985.

³³ Bennett, M., "Countdown to state of emergency" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 3, no. 2, spring, 1985, pp. 8-9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ LOUIS LE GRANGE Private Collection at INCH: PV 778 / PLEG 18 (vol. 4), 1985-1986.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Howe, G., "Deadlock in emergent states 1960 / 61 & 1984 / 85" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 3, no.2, spring, 1985, p.2.

Speaking at a conference on April 29th 1985, held by the Institute for Strategic Studies at the University of Pretoria, he spoke of the country's violent internal situation. Apart from vividly describing the severity of the situation, he argued in favor of more stringent security measures.³⁸ He identified five far-reaching measures that he thought were necessary:

- The defining of an area of unrest as an 'affected area'
- Regulations for exercising control over access to certain areas i.e. the cordoning off of certain areas and the removal of certain persons from specific areas
- Effective legislation regarding door-to-door searches
- The banning of certain publications
- Guaranteeing of official indemnity for the State against civil actions which might result from security operations.³⁹

In effect, Le Grange was pleading for the security freedoms inherent in an official State of Emergency. He argued in favor of these tough measures, because he said that during the past months it had become apparent that "the current legislation is unable to handle the totality of the revolutionary onslaught."⁴⁰

³⁸ LOUIS LE GRANGE Private Collection: INCH: PV 778 / PLEG 6 / 272: 1985.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 8

STATES OF EMERGENCY: SYNOPSIS AND CHRONOLOGY

“Every responsible South African has, with growing concern, taken note of conditions of violence and lawlessness which, in recent times, have increased and have become more severe and more cruel in certain parts of the country, especially in Black townships... This state of affairs can no longer be tolerated,” was the prologue state president PW Botha, used when he announced to parliament and the country on July 20th 1985, that he had signed a proclamation for the implementation of a partial state of emergency. He said that as state president he believed this to be a necessary inevitability, because he could no longer “ignore the insistence of all responsible South Africans, especially of the majority of the Black community, who ask that conditions be normalized and that they are granted the full protection of the law to continue their normal way of life”.¹

Initially, the 1985 State of Emergency was imposed on only 36 magisterial districts. PWV and Eastern Cape areas were the main focal points of the original decree, but when the security forces struck, sparks would almost literally fly and where they fell new flames of unrest would be ignited and in this fashion the violent unrest spread across South Africa. Although it is almost impossible to even only list all violent incidents, as a rudimentary abridgment, the following examples will be noted.

On July 21st 1985, the State of Emergency was proclaimed and the next day 113 people were quickly detained. Three people also died near Parys when a policeman’s home was attacked as violence flared up throughout all the provinces. During the next two days, the 23rd and 24th of July 1985, fifteen people died. On the East Rand, in Daveyton, 4 were killed and a further 17 people later died when funeral goers clashed with the SAP. Celebrations to honour the birthday of jailed

¹ Botha, PW, “State President announces State of Emergency” in *Paratus*, vol. 36, August 1985, p. 2.

ANC leader, Nelson Mandela, were banned. By the end of the month, the State of Emergency only some ten days old, 1 259 people had already been detained.²

By the middle of August 1985, some 1 482 people had been detained, including Rev Allan Boesak, the influential leader of the powerful UDF. On the 15th of August 1985, 31 people were killed in another bout of national unrest, in Duncan Village rioting killed 19 people and injured 138. The security forces imposed a 6-hour curfew on Soweto and the Eastern Cape townships. On the same day 2 people died and many were injured when Witbank residents clashed with the police. Between the 16th and 18th of August the Cape and Transvaal experienced renewed violence. During the next few days 6 died and 26 were wounded as Aliwal-North crowds clashed with police.³ By August of 1985, an average of 4 people were dying every day in the violent political unrest.⁴ By this stage, the unrest had cost black, coloured and Indian communities around R90 million.⁵

Five days later 500 Soweto students were arrested for "loitering." By the end of the month rioting flared up on the Cape Peninsula, killing 17 people and intensive rioting broke out in five PWV townships. During the early days of September 1985, the unrest spread to seven Cape Peninsula areas. During one week in the Western Cape, 27 died as a result of political violence and by September 5th 1985, the violence had spread into Natal. By the middle of September 1985 the Minister of Law and Order said that in the past 15 months 660 people had been killed as a result of political unrest and a further 2 400 injured.⁶

On September 11th 1985, the police arrested 746 Soweto students. By the end of the month the death toll since the unrest had broken out in 1984, stood at 740 people killed, 4 126 injured and 19 033 political arrests. By the end of the month the Ministry of Law and Order placed a 6 month ban on all meetings that promoted stayaways. By the middle of October the first soldier was killed while doing township duty. In the Cape Muslims rioted and called for a holy war or 'Jihad.'

² Bennett, M., "Resurgent rebellion" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 3, no. 3, Summer 1986, pp.13-15.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Die Volksblad*. 22 September 1985.

⁵ *Die Volksblad*. 19 September 1985.

⁶ Bennett, M., "Resurgent rebellion" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 3, no. 3, Summer 1986, pp.13-15

Between the 26th and 27th 18 people died. During the same time a massive security contingent struck the Cape Peninsula and arrested 66 people.⁷

Wherever dissident groupings sprung up in the Republic the authorities tried to cut them down. By the end of 1985, Louis le Grange had prohibited the holding of any indoor gathering in 30 different districts if that gathering was organized by any one of more than 70 'subversive' organisations.⁸ These included the: Adelaide Youth Congress, Alexandria School Committee, Alexandria Students Council, Azanian Peoples Organisation, Azanian Students Movement, Black Students Movement, Black Students Movement's Women's Group Crisis Committee, Cookhouse Youth Organisation, Cradock Residents Association, Cradock Students Council, Detainee's Parents Support Committee, Fort Beaufort Organ of Peace, Graaff-Reinet Community Organisation, Grahamstown Burial Action Committee, Jansenville Students Committee Karoo Youth Congress Port Alfred Black Civic Association, Pro-Humanism Organisation, Tembisa Civic Association, Thabong Civic Association, Uitenhage Health, Safety and Cultural Association, Zanolkhanyo Civic Committee and the United Democratic Front.⁹

Reactions to the State of Emergency were as expected. The PFP said the fact that the need for a State of Emergency existed only underlined the disaster that was the Tricameral Parliament. Instead of heralding a new period of openness and negotiation it turned out to be the beginning of "a state of siege". Andries Treurnicht applauded the State of Emergency saying that: "Blackmail by violence to impose political change should not be allowed at all." The UDF said that the State of Emergency again proved that apartheid was inherently violent and could only be "maintained by sheer brute force." The black hardliners of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) said that the violence was a result of the "cosmetic changes that were brought about in a bid to buy a certain section of the black community have failed dismally."¹⁰

The leader of the South African Council of Churches, Bishop Manas Buthelezi said that the president "should know better" than to think that a State of Emergency was a permanent solution.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Cameron, T., (ed.), *Nuwe geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, pp.14-15.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Cooper, *SAIRR 1985*, p. 462-463 & *Die Volksblad*. 22 July 1985.

The American White House called it “counter-productive” and the Dutch government said that it was “seriously worried” about the minority Government’s handling of the situation.¹¹ In 2000, Prof. JP de Lange said that the successive States of Emergency created a very violent counter-reaction.¹² “Die Noodtoestand,” said De Lange, “het ‘n teenreaksie ontlok wat waarskynlik nie daar sou gewees het nie – as dit nie was vir die Noodtoestand nie.”¹³

On the other hand, at grassroots level, there were groupings, irrespective of political orientation, in the black communities that welcomed the State of Emergency. They were tired of the youth gangs and said that it was the only way that they could survive amidst the carnage that was going on in the townships.¹⁴

After being declared on July 21st 1985, the State of Emergency was lifted in 8 districts on October 24th 1985, but on October 26th 1985 another 8 districts were added. By December 3rd 1985, seven districts were scrapped from the State of Emergency’s scope. After a total of 156 days the State of Emergency was finally lifted on March 7th 1986.¹⁵

The new year, 1986, which included the tenth anniversary of the Soweto riots, proved to be no less tumultuous than 1985. During March of 1986 alone, 179 people were killed – the most deaths in a single month since the violence had broken out in 1984. May of 1986 broke that record, however, when 213 people died violently in renewed political upheavals.¹⁶

During May 1986, in what sounded much like a throwing down of the gauntlet and the paving of the way to another State of Emergency, PW Botha delivered a speech to the President’s Council. He highlighted the necessity of a strong security force to combat “internationally organized terrorism” launched against South Africa. Calling for a strongman security stance he said that “nobody should underestimate our determination” to maintain order.¹⁷ As South Africa was the

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PROF JP DE LANGE. 28 June 2000.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Die Volksblad*. 6 September 1985

¹⁵ Cameron, p. 543.

¹⁶ Quin, D., “From one emergency to another” in *Indicator SA*, vol.4, no.1, winter 1986, pp.24-27.

¹⁷ PW BOTHA Private Collection at INCH: PV 203: 4 /2/ 141

region's main powerhouse, this was the Government's "indisputable duty." He went on to say that it was his undertaking to protect South Africans' liberty through "civilized" means of security, switching to Afrikaans he said, "Radikalisme van geen kant af kan 'n bydrae lewer nie." In a foreboding warning of things to come, the State President informed "perpetrators" not to try his patience as they would face the full power of the state "which has not nearly been fully engaged."¹⁸

During 1986 the State President took a decision that had been a long time in the making – he would not try to appease the outside world anymore.* As described in Section 4 of this study, the States of Emergency solicited intense negative reaction from across the globe. The Botha Government had decided that they were going to quell the unrest first and then tend to the international situation. Botha was finished trying to persuade a judgmental world that his changes were indeed fundamentally enlightened and epic.¹⁹

PW Botha was tired of foreign critics trying to tell him what to do with – and in – his own country. The Government was going to smash violent opposition and restore stability no matter the cost and if the outside world did not condone the Government's measures, then so be it. When Botha lifted the first State of Emergency early in 1986 diplomatic and economic considerations played no small part in that decision. The local corporate sector was increasingly concerned by the intensifying international calls for sanctions, but when Botha had to decide whether to declare a new State of Emergency in 1986 or not, he wholeheartedly subscribed to the securocrats' reasoning.²⁰

Unlike the 1985 State of Emergency, which was only partially instated throughout South Africa, the 1986 State of Emergency was a national one. With it, the government introduced a new and far more comprehensive package of regulations to effectively suppress internal upheavals. Lt.-Gen. Pieter van der Westhuizen, who at the time was the Secretary of the State Security Council, called the 1985 State of Emergency "half measures."²¹ In the 1986 regulations the authorities placed

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

* The role of the international community / economic factors is described in much more detail in Section 4. This reference is simply to give a basic context.

¹⁹ Kenney, H., *Power Pride & Prejudice: The Years of Nationalist Rule in South Africa*, p. 364-365.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Alden, C., *Apartheid's last stand – the rise and fall of the South African security state*, p. 222.

extensive restrictions on the media and its freedom to report unrest.”²² Also because the 1986 State of Emergency was instituted on a national basis, anti-apartheid activists could not *flee* from the comprehensive security force presence of an emergency area to a non-emergency area, as was the case with the 1985 State of Emergency.²²

The Government cited a variety of reasons for instating a new, much more draconian, State of Emergency so soon after having lifted the previous one. The ANC had made calls for black South Africans to escalate the existing conflict into a fully-fledged “People’s War.”²³ Botha also pointed at so-called black-on-black violence and argued that radicals in the resistance movement were necklacing moderate ‘collaborators’ because they wanted to maintain the status quo. This did not hold water with many critics, as by 1986 it seemed that many of the dead were ‘radicals’ who were killed by those conservative black groups who wanted to maintain the status quo. Botha’s securocrats also informed him that the liberation organisations were planning a range of activities to coincide with the tenth anniversary, on June 12th, of the Soweto riots. Irrespective of these reasons, a question that the Government was continually confronted with was whether it was of critical importance not only to reintroduce the State of Emergency – but a much more extensive one at that.²⁴

Many analysts argued that the Government’s security forces had enough extraordinary judicial powers, not to mention willpower, to tackle the situation without the introduction of another State of Emergency. Botha realised that diplomatically, his country was at a loss for words, with various governments becoming aggressive or turning their back on his Government. Resistance and repression was eroding the momentum of reform. Black South Africa was becoming increasingly polarized and whites were becoming more and more disillusioned, irrespective of their political leanings and the international community had become increasingly anti-apartheid.²⁵

²² See Section 2.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See the Chapters dealing with the ANC.

²³ Pottinger, B., *The imperial presidency: PW Botha the first 10 years*, pp. 327-329.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Botha's security leaders explained that it was natural that Botha's reform successes were being belittled. Their reasoning was quite simple: Moscow was to blame and the Russians were behind the SACP and the SACP pulled the ANC's strings and the ANC controlled the UDF. Also the security people warned the Government that it should not even consider negotiating with the ANC. Negotiations, they warned, would only be part of a classic Leninist ploy to gain final control of South Africa.

Another key angle of the securocrats' national security assessment was the importance of maintaining the Government's monolithic strongman image in Africa. It was important that the country's neighbours did not make the mistake of seeing the minority Government as having gone soft in the middle. It was important to keep the vultures at bay and to remind everyone who still cracked the whip down South.^{26*}

"Omdat ek, dus van mening is dat die gewone landswette onvoldoende is om die Regering in staat te stel om die veiligheid van die publiek te verseker of die openbare orde te handhaaf, het ek besluit om 'n noodtoestand oor die hele land in te stel...". On June 12th 1986, PW Botha announced this to all three houses of parliament. He began by saying that in order to spare South Africans the *discomfort* of a State of Emergency his government had decided to introduce yet more intensive security legislation. But, because these types of acts were not applicable at that point in time, something else will have to be done. He said that sporadic incidents of violence had increased exponentially since the lifting of the State of Emergency and, because of that he was of the opinion that the ordinary laws of the land was insufficient to combat the violence. He continued by pointing out that Pretoria had information that the government's opponents were planning to violently disrupt the country in the near future.²⁸

²⁶ *Ibid.*

* Shortly before he decreed the 1986 State of Emergency, Botha had the armed forces flex its military muscle in a very controversial succession of cross-border blitzkriegs. The Government was adamant not to seem intimidated by its enemies and also to restore total control over the turmoil. Destabilization, as these raids became known, is not the focal point of this study. But it is important to mention these. For further reading, see for example, *High noon in Southern Africa* by C. Crocker.

²⁸ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION at INCH: PV 203: 4 /2/ 143

Next, Botha pounced on so-called “black-on-black” faction fighting and violence – thus actually distancing apartheid politics from the renewed bouts of violence. He tried to convey the idea that his security forces were in fact protecting ordinary black citizens from themselves. He singled out the many particularly gruesome necklace murders. “It is clear that Black revolutionaries do enjoy the spontaneous support of the majority of Blacks,” the State President reasoned, “and that they consequently resort to these methods of intimidation in order to gain control.” These ‘revolutionaries’, as Botha repeated for the umpteenth time, were controlled by a Marxist ‘power clique’ and after giving serious thought to all economic, political and security matters the time had come to take “certain security measures.”²⁹

The President said that he was well aware that a renewed State of Emergency would elicit “strong criticism and even punitive measures” but that that was not going to deter the government from doing what it thought best. Going further, Botha took the international community head-on by saying that everyone was aware of what had happened in Angola, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Iran, Afghanistan and Kampuchea and so why could they not understand that that was what he was trying to prevent in South Africa. “Ons sal voorkom,” bellowed President Botha, “dat ons beskawingserfenis... op die altare van wanorde en verval geplaas word.” He reiterated that no responsible government could tolerate extra-parliamentary actions which would disrupt the normal political and economic flow of the country. After that he called upon international tolerance for his government’s decision and in the same sentence added that he was bound to the broadening of democracy.³⁰

Embroidering on the bona fide seriousness of the internal situation the President said that his safety and security experts had convinced him that the whole country was a target. He said that ordinary South Africans had nothing to fear as the State of Emergency was a device to protect law abiding citizens and to neutralise [“neutraliseer”] anarchists. Botha, spoke too about the economic and corporate implications and tried to water down possible repercussions. He ended by saying: “Kom ons maak ons land vry van geweld.”³¹

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

On Soweto Day, as June 16th* is popularly known, the tenth anniversary of which had made the securocrats anxious, security forces took control of the huge township of Soweto and declared a media blackout of the area. Soweto might have seemed quiet but altogether 11 people died on June 16th of 1986 and 43 more during the following seven days – some in clashes with the police, others in so-called black-on-black violence. 3 000 people were detained and black workers brought Johannesburg to a 90% standstill through a work stoppage. Boycotts and stayaways followed in several cities.³²

As meetings scheduled around Soweto Day were banned, black religious leaders urged their followers to go to church. The Government said that it would allow church gatherings as long as they did not have a political undercurrent. The authorities acted sternly wherever they thought religion was only a pretext for politics.³³ Near Cape Town a whole church congregation was arrested, 200 men, women and children and the same night the police teargassed a Muslim mosque in Athlone containing some 1000 worshippers at the time. On June 17th most people went back to work, but others had learned of what had happened the previous day to, among others, their union leaders and organised protest actions.³⁴

Later, Botha decided to state his case directly to the people and particularly the black people of the country. On July 1st 1986 he spoke on radio and opened by telling the black population of South Africa that “the Government is aware of your problems and your aspirations.” He reminded them firstly of how he kept his promises about reform, or was going to in the near future. Taking a graver tone he said “we would never hand this country over to those who want to it destroyed or to... those who mistakenly believe that freedom lies in violence.”³⁵

He then expressed his sadness that black South Africans were being “murdered by radicals” or have “died in inhuman terrorist attacks by murderers,” not surprisingly there was not even a sublime reference to those who had died in clashes with the security forces. To stop these deaths

* The day on which the Soweto Riots of 1976 broke out.

³² Smith, W. (et al), “See no evil hear no evil” in *Time*, vol. 127, no.26, 30 June 1986, pp.6-7.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ PW BOTHA PRIVATE OLLECTION at INCH: PV 203: 4 /2/ 144.

from escalating, he said, was why he declared another State of Emergency.³⁶ He then made a risqué, statement when he asked his nationwide black audience: “Are not the voices who cry the loudest for the state of emergency to be lifted the voices of those who seek the destruction of our common future?” He again warned his listeners against “outside forces” that wanted to “dictate our future.”³⁷

During the first eight months of the new State of Emergency some 13 194 people were detained for some thirty days or more. The Detainees’ Parents Support Committee estimated the number of detainees from June 1986 to the end of the year to be around 25 000. The PFP had also put the number at between 20 000 and 25 000. The authorities did not give the total number of detainees because they felt that radical groups like the ANC and UDF misused information on detainees “in the most dreadful way, to the detriment of South Africa.”³⁸

In the 1986 court case heard before the Court of Appeals of *Bloem v State President of South Africa* the judicial validity of Botha’s proclamation of a State of Emergency was tested. The case was presided over by a full bench lead by Judge MT Steyn, whom some commentators would later criticise for being partisan with regards to the Botha administration. According to Judge Steyn the country’s internal calamity was the result of liberal radicals who were not satisfied by the government’s tempo of change. The resistance was not only aimed at the government but also “at certain sections of the private sector, at members of the security forces and other individuals, and also indiscriminately at the general public”.³⁹

According to the Judge the violent resistance to Botha’s reform process had taken on the form of “mob action” and included “widespread damage to property and acts of gruesome cruelty”. Judge Steyn embellished: “The mob violence is usually instigated by agitators and accompanied by widespread intimidation... the violent resistance also consists of acts of organized terror such as assassinations and the planting of landmines or placing of bombs whereby many private

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute for Race Relations 1986*, p537.

³⁹ Cameron, E. (et al), “The administration of justice, law reform and jurisprudence” in the *Annual Survey of South African Law 1986*, Cape Town, 1987, pp. 577-578.

individuals, and members of the security forces are killed and maimed and otherwise injured and private property or public installations destroyed or damaged”.⁴⁰

Steyn then widened the scope of resistance to the State President’s reform policies by including “a socio-economic dimension” to the spectrum that the internal crisis encompassed. This he said included “boycotts of classes” and “trade boycotts”. Going global the Judge broadened the effect of the internal unrest by correctly saying that “for many a month this domestic turbulence has been accompanied and intensified by a mounting political, psychological, socio-economic and terror onslaught upon the Republic of South Africa from beyond its borders”.⁴¹

Steyn then noted that the country’s state of internal unrest boiled down to “a power struggle” which had as its goal “making the Republic ungovernable, subverting by violence the existing dispensation and substituting an entirely different one therefore”. Furthermore because of all this, the South African community as whole “has been gravely hurt” for example, the Judge noted, the unrest lead “to the weakening of its unit of currency and the economic distress it is enduring”. It was, the Judge reasoned, because of all these and still other factors that the State President was not unjust in having proclaimed a State of Emergency.⁴²

Seen from the President’s perspective, the State of Emergency was primarily a success. He got the media off his security forces’ back.^{*} Sweeping mass arrests, specifically of prominent activists, left protest organisations without collective management or direction. Black vigilante groups and mysterious death squads had brutally dispersed the so-called “Comrade” gangs.^{**} Those stone throwing mobs were thrown into detention and ANC operatives were mercilessly hunted down.⁴³ Whereas in May of 1986 more than 150 had died – a year later that number had dropped to 8. From January 1st 1986 to the June 11th 1986 some 339 people were killed. But in the ten month

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

^{*} See Section 2.

^{**} See the chapters dealing with the ANC.

⁴³ Pottinger, p. 348.

period from June 1986 to April 1987 the numbers were down to 147. Incidents of violence had dropped with 76% by 1987.⁴⁴

Henry Kenney wrote about the 1986 State of Emergency: "Radical anticipations of the impending collapse of the racist regime subsided quickly. PW Botha achieved his overriding purpose, but at the cost of a state of emergency which it seemed would be renewed every year."⁴⁵ Although Botha succeeded in crushing internal political resistance and forcefully bringing about stability, it was a loose-jointed stability with a very sensitive veneer of calm.

On September 3rd 1986, Louis Nel held a media briefing to discuss the country's violent situation. In his opening remarks he said, "Let there be no misunderstanding regarding the real issue at stake. It is not the rent issue, it is not presence of the Security Forces in Black residential areas, it is not certain remembrance days, it is not school programmes – the violent overthrow of the South African state is the issue."⁴⁶ In that case then, nobody could have expected a short lived State of Emergency, irrespective of how harsh, to have permanently solved the national political unrest.

In December 1986, Pres. Botha exposed the ANC's general plan for 1987. He said the ANC was planning to expand its campaigns of murder, arson and sabotage to the white urban areas. He said the ANC was also planning to attack white farmers and to further strengthen the united mass movement.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the ANC was planning to wage an intensive campaign of unrest in the homelands, to create discord amongst whites and to further intensify its armed struggle from the frontline states. Pres. Botha stated that the ANC wanted to bring about a fullscale revolution in South Africa by December 1987. Pres. Botha stated that the Government would act strongly against terrorism and unrest.^{48*}

"Nademaal dit na my mening blyk dat omstandighede in die Republiek ontstaan het wat die veiligheid van die publiek en die handhawing van die openbare orde ernstig bedreig, en dat die

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Kenney, p.366.

⁴⁶ LOUIS LE GRANGE PRIVATE COLLECTION at INCH: PV 778: pleg 6 /326.

⁴⁷ *Die Volksblad*. 13 December 1986.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

* See also the chapters on the ANC.

gewone landswette onvoldoende is om die veiligheid van die publiek te verseker en die openbare orde te handhaaf,” said PW Botha on June 11th 1987, “Verklaar ek derhalwe... dat daar ‘n noodtoestand binne die Republiek bestaan...”⁴⁹ Legally a State of Emergency could only be instituted for a period of one year and therefore could not continue ad infinitum. The Government explained that it could not chance a lifting of the State of Emergency as it could too easily lead to renewed political violence, general unrest and the total collapse of community services.⁵⁰

In general, the 1987 State of Emergency was a repeat of the 1986 regulations, although some extra powers were introduced with regards to security control of black schools as well as certain aspects of detention. With the new 1987 State of Emergency, the Botha Government also tried to circumvent certain problems with the technical aspects of the regulations of the previous State of Emergencies, which had resulted in the authorities’ set of State of Emergency regulations being frustrated by court findings.⁵¹

The 1987 State of Emergency was, from Botha’s side of the political divide, a significant success. The violence had been subdued and most townships were again under the firm control of the authorities. In most areas the so-called alternative structures that were created by the radicals in an attempt to challenge the government’s new black local bodies were destroyed.⁵² The bellicose belief of activists and anti-apartheid fighters that revolution was in the air was replaced by a chaste realisation that Botha’s Government was far more powerful and ruthless than they had initially thought.⁵³

Early in 1988, the Government got rid of more of its opponents. The Government barred the UDF, the Detainees’ Parents Support Committee, the Free Mandela Campaign and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) from doing anything besides mundane and insignificant

⁴⁹ Du Plessis, W. & Olivier, N., “11 Junie 1987 – tweede algemene noodtoestand” in *SA Publiekreg*, vol. 2, no. 2, November 1987, p. 197.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

* See the chapters on the ANC.

⁵² Van Niekerk, P. “Middle ground laid to waste” in *New Statesman*, vol. 114, no. 2941, August 7th 1987, p. 10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

organisational tasks.⁵⁴ As for the State of Emergency, the minority Government was firm in its resolve that it could certainly not chance lifting it, as the situation could too easily regress again. Therefore, on June 10th 1988, State President PW Botha announced the third consecutive State of Emergency.⁵⁵

The revamped 1988 State of Emergency focused more restrictions on specific organisations and significantly tightened the screws on media rights. Commentators also noted that the authority of the high court was seriously damaged by these regulations. Botha's Government now had almost complete and total control over freedom of speech and association.⁵⁶

During 1988, the Government, having reinstated the State of Emergency, had some explaining to do as to why the intensive security measures of the past three years had not yet yielded the desired results and why it was necessary to prolong the State of Emergency – which at the time was steadily becoming a permanent part of the South African landscape under Botha. The Government had to explain or reconfirm why this was the soundest solution for the political unrest. In 1985, the state's Bureau of Information released a booklet to justify and officially put the matter in perspective. Entitled, *Die Nasionale Noodtoestand*, it referred to the five basic goals of the State of Emergency.⁵⁷

It stated that by means of the State of Emergency, the government wanted to:

- Ensure that a “peaceful, stable and orderly climate” prevailed.
- Restore law and order and to ensure “peaceful co-existence.”
- Effectively diffuse foreign pressure
- Ensure and protect the safety of the individual.⁵⁸

⁵⁴Oakes, D. (ed.), *Readers' Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story*, p. 488.

⁵⁵Du Plessis, W & Olivier, N., “10 Junie 1988 – derde algemene noodtoestand” in *SA Publiekreg*, vol 3, no. 2,

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷“Die nasionale noodtoestand” booklet compiled by the *Bureau for Information*. June 1988.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

IN terms of the last objective, before anyone could get vocal about human rights and so forth, the booklet clearly stated that human rights should not be absolutized. When national safety is jeopardized, it is justifiable to limit certain rights of the individual: “Dit is ‘n internasionaal aanvaarde feit dat mense regte nie verabsoluteer moet word nie. Die regte van die individu word deurentyd teen die nasionale belang opgeweeg. Wanneer die nasionale belang swaarder weeg as individuele belange moet sekere regte van die individu beperk, word.”⁵⁹

Of course a great point of debate at the time was if these consecutive States of Emergency actually worked, why did the violence repeatedly flare up? Surely PW Botha should have realised by then that simply declaring a State of Emergency was not a substitute for a long term political solution. The booklet’s compilers had that point covered, arguing: “Die Regering is, veral sedert 1983, besig met daadwerklike hervormingsinisiatiewe... Met die aanvang van onrus in 1984 het dit duidelik geblyk dat die hervormingsproses in Suid-Afrika gestrem sou word en dat die nodige dienste en hervormingsaksies nie onverhinderd sou kon voortgaan nie. Teen hierdie agtergrond is die Nasionale Noodtoestand afgekondig en is verstommende resultate op die terrein van voortgesette sosiaal-ekonomiese en politieke hervorming te weeg gering...”⁶⁰

The single most important section of the booklet with regards to the Government’s overall, albeit simplified, justification of their, increasingly drawn out and stringent security measures, was on the last page where it was explained why the reinstating of the State of Emergency was necessary. The Government stated that should the existing emergency regulations be done away with, the expectations were that: “especially in the light of recent acts of terror, unrest will increase sharply.”⁶¹ According to the booklet, the underlying reasons for the unrest still existed. To some degree the latter is then a submission that the last three States of Emergency did nothing to remove the primary reasons for the violence. In other words, the emergency security measures could contain the unrest, but did not address the fundamental political reasons for its existence.

Furthermore, it was the absolute duty of the government to protect the “individual whose security is threatened.” The government viewed the right to life as the most important and basic of human

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

rights and as such the Botha Government was not going to permit 'radicals' to maim and kill innocent people in their undifferentiated lust for political power.⁶²

After their harshness during the previous two States of Emergency, the security forces had gained a firmer grip on the townships. Although the mass-movements still functioned, they had largely been forced underground. Importantly – for the securocrats – so-called alternative structures, including street courts, were basically eliminated. The police adopted a much more pro-active stance. They decided to ban or restrict people and organisations; ban gatherings outright and or seal off venues and areas instead of trying to break gatherings up while they were in progress. But no mistake should be made, the police still maintained a high prominence in the townships with day-to-day patrols, patrolling in armored vehicles and seal-and-search raids.⁶³

For PW Botha, it seemed as if the whole South African situation simply boiled down to one word – *self-discipline*.⁶⁴ “There is too little self-discipline in South Africa,” PW Botha explained in 1988, “We cannot live in this country as though we were the only people living here. We cannot live in this country as though the White First World group can possess everything, do everything, demand everything; that is not self-discipline, that is selfishness. On the other hand self-discipline is also needed in our other population groups, in our Black population groups and in our Coloured population groups, for the more agitation arises in South Africa, the greater the reaction will be in South Africa.”⁶⁵

During the second half of Botha's roughly decade-long term as head of state, he received increasing criticism for his lack of bold direction and political vision. Many political commentators and critics of the Botha administration argued that it had become clear that the President was a tactician and not a visionary strategist and that his political aim was to buy time. He was attacked for not having a master plan for the future – implying that all his reformist tinkering and securocratic strategizing were attempts to buy time. In other words, he was blamed for dragging his feet – for having stalled his underlying political strategy. So too, as already pointed out above,

⁶² *Ibid*

⁶³ Cawthra, G., *Policing South Africa: the South African police and the transition from apartheid*, p. 113.

⁶⁴ Scholtz, J.J.J., *Fighter and reformer: extracts from the speeches of PW Botha*, p.90.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

his reform gusto with which he entered the presidency had dwindled by the latter half of the decade, as the violence spread and intensified. It would seem that during this period, the second half of the 1980s, his reform program was put on ice and that he only used bursts of reform to subdue internal and external outcries.⁶⁶

A case of one step forward – one step back. “Each step down the path of reform... is not part of a coherent ideological programme,” wrote Simon Jenkins, “It is conceded only under force of circumstances to meet what appears the line of least resistance. Each year a new ‘bottom line’ is drawn, only to be abandoned the next.”⁶⁷

During the 1987 election campaign, PW Botha asked the voters to unite against the spirit of revolution that had gripped the country. He pleaded for a mandate to continue his reforms but reiterated that he would not allow foreigners to dictate what he should and should not do and at what pace. Botha said that he could only thwart the negative campaign being waged against the country if voters empowered him to do so. The Nationalists again made it clear to the white electorate that their reforms would not lead to a multiracial democracy – more black faces in higher places would not mean less white ones. That was basically the crux of the Government’s message. Again one step forward and one step back, Botha would not only retain his middle-of-the-road policy but stay in one spot politically while implementing it.⁶⁸

And therefore the implication was also that the States of Emergency were a political attempt to retain the status quo of white minority rule and allow PW Botha to refrain from doing something fundamentally profound, which of course further motivated commentators to say that Botha was not visionary enough to move progressively forward, but instead when all had been said and done was simply standing immovably in the middle of the political road buying time.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Jenkins, S., “Looking back on 1986” in *Optima*, vol. 34, no. 4, December 1986, pp. 170-177., p. 176.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Muller, AJG, *Die Hervormingsinisiatiewe van die Nasionale Party, 1978-1989*, en die redes daarvoor. Unpublished Masters Thesis, UOFS, Bloemfontein, 1993, p. 219.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

One of most poignant descriptions of this type of criticism came from the leader of the Zulu orientated IFP, Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi: "I do not believe that President Botha has any intention of going to the electorate with a bold plan to establish a true democracy here. He is going into the election to buy additional time, hoping somehow that the extra time will make it possible for him to secure political dreams. His policies, his Government, and his approach to reform are designed first and primarily to secure Afrikaner dreams, which are not South Afrikaner dreams, because this is a multiracial country."⁷⁰

The main difference between previous NP governments and that of PW Botha was that by the mid-1980s his administration had finally reached the conclusion that it did not need simple black subservience but rather black co-operation. Therefore, throughout and especially during the State of Emergency periods, in an attempt to undercut the influence of the more radical groupings, Botha searched for black moderates he could cajole into joining him in his reformist maneuverings. But, to achieve collaboration of 'acceptable' black groups, the Government would have had to make certain political concessions, which would have greatly disheartened Botha's take on apartheid policy and indeed, disarmed the Government's security strategies.⁷¹ Steven Friedman wrote: "But the search for black co-operation is not simply a policy option – it is a strategic necessity, for stability cannot be imposed indefinitely by coercion alone."⁷²

By the end of the period under discussion here, a few broad security and political trends can be distinguished. It was clear that although the NP did loose some supporters to both the left and right, they could still get the majority of the white electorate on their side. The NP still called the shots in Pretoria and would keep on doing so for a long time, but try as they might they just could not get the moderate black masses to support Botha's sociopolitical reformist schemes.⁷³ It was also becoming quite apparent that although the harshness of the security forces did indeed crush resistance, it only suppressed it in the short run and could not succeed in permanently overpowering violent black political discontent. Instead it only exacerbated it. Thus, political-cum-

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 233.

⁷¹ Friedman, S., "Shifting strategies in black politics" in *Optima*, vol. 36, no. 3, September 1986, p.155.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Muller, p. 279.

socio-economic reform did not seem to be getting off the ground and neither did the security option promise any long term solutions for the political crisis.⁷⁴

In a interview with dr. Beyers Naude in 2000, the prominent anti-apartheid fighter was asked whether he reckoned that all the reinstatements of the States of Emergency were justified: “Nee. Uit hulle standpunt kon ek verstaan dat hulle dit gedoen het, maar ek het vir myself gesê hulle kan probeer, maar op die lange duur gaan dit nie werk nie.”⁷⁵

In a section of the NP’s 1988 publication entitled *NP Altyd Nuut*, State President PW Botha wrote that from the start, the Government had to do with communist-inspired agitators and that in this intensive struggle the state had never hesitated to act firmly and that it is still opposed to negotiation with terrorists: “Op binnelandse terrein het die Nasionale regering van kort na sy bewindsaanvaarding met ‘n verfynde kommunisties-geïnspireerde aanslag te kampe. Dit is ‘n felle stryd, en nooit het die regering gehuiwer... om ferm op te tree nie, selfs al het dit met internasionale kwaai-vriendskap gepaard gegaan... Hierbenewens weier die Regering konsekwent om met terroristiese geweldenaars te onderhandel.”⁷⁶

When reading this it does indeed seem as if the crux of the NP’s official, politics and policy although somewhat restyled in some ways, remained as a whole unmoved. As the successive States of Emergency were made declared, the violent political conflict would not simply vanish, nor could the government succeed in permanently and unilaterally ending it.

Asked why he thought the Government’s States of Emergency did not succeed in permanently stamping out the anti-government upheavals, dr. Beyers Naudé explained that it revolved around three points: the tremendous upsurge in dissent amongst blacks; security measures could not resolve fundamental political issues and international anti-apartheid pressure.⁷⁷ He said: “Ek dink daar was drie redes, hoekom hul dit nie kon regkry nie. Die eerste rede was... die opwelling van verzet, aan die kant van die swartgemeenskap het soveel sterker en sterker geword as van te vore,

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: BEYERS NAUDE INTERVIEW. 27 June 2000.

⁷⁶ Van Rooyen, JJ (ed.), *NP Altyd Nuut Nasionale Party regeer al 40 jaar*, p. 6.

⁷⁷ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: BEYERS NAUDE INTERVIEW. 27 June 2000.

dat hulle besef het ons sal nie op die lang duur dit kan bly onderdruk nie. Die tweede rede was dat hulle van hulle kant af besef het al kan ons dit ook met een of ander magsoptrede onderdruk, dan gaan dit op die lange duur net eenvoudig nie werk nie. En ook omdat hulle besef het die verset aan die kant van die wêreld buitekant, teen apartheid besig was om sterker en sterker te word. Met byvoorbeeld sanksies... Hulle het in hul harte besef... tydelik kan ons dit onderdruk, maar op die lange duur gaan, in alle waarskynlikheid hier 'n ontploffing kom. As die ontploffing kom dan is die gevaar daar dat dit vir almal van ons hier, daar geen toekoms is nie... ”⁷⁸

Where it is almost impossible to give a basic, but at the same time, in-depth summary of the period's unrest, it is equally difficult to single out any one specific incident which could be regarded as having had a profound watershed influence. Nonetheless two of the most important events during the decade occurred in the latter half of 1984 and during the early days of 1985. One involved the South African Defence Force and signaled a turning point in the Government's handling of the unrest situation. The second involved the South African Police and stood out amongst the violence of the decade as one of the most controversial incidents. Both formed cardinal parts of the violent prologue to the 1985 State of Emergency.

To better understand the run up to the State of Emergency and the two noted incidents, indeed to comprehend the role of the security forces during the decade and particularly during the different States of Emergency as a whole, it is important to first examine the forces' main judicial power bases.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 9

THE 1982 INTERNAL SECURITY ACT^{*}: NO. 74

“To provide for the security of the State and the maintenance of law and order; and to provide for matters therewith,”¹ read the preamble to the infamous 1982 Internal Security Act. It had been drafted some years before the violence of the decade had started to gain momentum. Just because the Government only proclaimed a State of Emergency in 1985 did not imply that it had not already gone a very long way towards expanding its legislative powers so as to curtail dissent.

When declaring a State of Emergency the State President was had to be of the opinion that the maintenance of public order could no longer be carried out by the “ordinary law of the land”.² As will be seen, during the 1980s the clear-cut distinctions between so-called ordinary or regular security laws and the special powers endorsed by the States of Emergency began to erode as the regime increasingly had to rely on stringent laws to combat internal unrest and dissent.

The NP’s first security law was the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 and by the time Botha took over security legislation had multiplied. Law expert Prof. Tony Matthews wrote in a 1986 article: “The security authorities in South Africa have a truly mindless belief in the effectiveness of crude repression,” he then went on to say, “These laws are in fact ranged behind the policies of apartheid and white privilege and they are used against all effective opponents of racial segregation and white control, whether or not their opposition is of a subversive nature”.³

Thus, the 1982 Internal Security Act was by no means the first internal security law or the only tough piece of legislation designed to suppress internal dissent. The noted Suppression of Communism Act was the first, followed by a barrage of Internal Security Acts and General Law Amendment Acts, as well as Riotous Assemblies Acts. The Unlawful Organisation Act was further

^{*} Also referred to as ISA 1982.

¹ “Internal Security Act, 1982” in *Government Gazette*, vol. 204, no. 8232, 9 June 1982, p.1.

² Cameron, E. & Markus, G., “The administration of justice, law reform and jurisprudence” in the *Annual survey of South African law 1985, 1986*, p. 544.

³ Matthews, T., “Crossing the threshold” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1986, pp. 49-58., p. 58.

strengthened by the Terrorism Act. One commentator described the 1982 Internal Security Act as having been the “last word in security legislation” and “a monument to the way in which loopholes and avenues of expression could be closed down one by one, until space for legitimate opposition vanished altogether”.⁴

The Internal Security Act [ISA] of 1982 was actually the culmination of recommendations made by the Rabie Commission, which had been appointed in 1979 to examine the country’s security laws. Different analysts have argued that the ISA was a device to criminalize the Government’s opponents and its opposition through the courts and police. According to the commission “activities which threatened the internal security of the Republic should, as far as circumstances permit, be combated as crimes. Such a line of action is, so long as it can be maintained, preferable to a situation where subversive activities are controlled by military measures”.⁵

Critics argued that the ISA was written in very general terms and lacked clear-cut definitions. The ISA defined terms and crimes like ‘terrorist’ and ‘subversive’ in very vague terms. It was therefore much easier for the authorities to prosecute under ISA stipulations and much more difficult for the defence to make its case. The result of which according to different law experts was to impair the meaning of guilt and innocence. One of the most controversial arguments of the Rabie Commission related to one of the harshest features of the Internal Security Act of 1982. The Commission found that the ISA should give the security forces the right to detain suspects without trial.⁶

Furthermore the Rabie Commission also argued in favour of a greater influence by the Executive in judicial affairs “since it is the duty of the Executive to watch over the security of the State, the final decision as to what must be regarded as a threat to the security of the State and as to what steps should be taken to ensure the security of the State, should also rest with the executive authority”.⁷

⁴ Coleman, M., *A crime against humanity*, p. 29.

⁵ Cawthra, G., *Policing South Africa*, pp. 24-25.

⁶ Cawthra, pp. 24-25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

This proved to be a controversial line of reasoning which received just criticism, Denis Davis of the University of Cape Town's Law Faculty wrote: "The failure of reformist politics to resolve the legitimisation crisis that confronted the State ... gave rise to a parallel system of law initiated, interpreted and executed by the executive unfettered by the constraints of judicial supervision" and "As a result of the Internal Security Act of 1982 ... the procedures and onus of proof and definitions of crime which had given considerable flexibility to the judiciary, the legal system per se tilted the scale of justice firmly in favor of the executive".⁸

Of all the conventional security legislation drafted during the apartheid-era the Botha regime's 1982 Internal Security Act [ISA] was probably the toughest and, not surprisingly, also one of the most controversial. This piece of conventional legislation gave the security forces a unique form of what critics claimed was restrained *carte blanche*. The *Official Yearbook of the Republic of South African 1988/89*, published by the government's Bureau of Information, described the 1982 Internal Security Act as simply having "streamlined" the country's security legislation.⁹

In effect the 1982 ISA was an amalgamation of the Internal Security Act of 1950, Riotous Assembly Act of 1956, the Unlawful Organisations Act of 1960 and the Terrorism Act of 1967 consolidated into one all-embracing piece of legislation.¹⁰ This single piece of legislation gave the security forces the right to detain people for interrogation, ban newspapers, to keep persons in so-called preventative detention, ban organisations, restrict individuals' movements and to control or restrict gatherings.¹¹

South Africa was a violent country during this period. From the Government's point of view, the compilation of such a tough piece of legislation was justified. When looking at the Government's position it was correct in constructing this law, but the danger lay in that it was vague in its wording and far-reaching in its scope. The latter always creates loopholes for misuse of power. If such a tough and powerful piece of legislation is created it is necessary to enforce an equally strict

⁸ Swilling, M. (ed.), *Views on the South African state*, p. 243.

⁹ Van Pletzen, D. (ed.), *The official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1988/89*, p. 262.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Cameron, T., (ed.), *Nuwe geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, p. 543.

and tough set of checks-and-balances to ensure that it is not exploited, whether that was done is debatable.

Significant stipulations included:

□ Organisations:

If the Minister of Law and Order came to the conclusion that “any” organisation engaged in activities which threatened or were “calculated to endanger the security of the State” or aimed to “propagate the principles of communism”. Or if an organisation had as goal the attainment of “any of the objects” of communism or if an organisation was in any way “controlled, directly or indirectly” by such an organisation, then the Minister “without notice to the organisation in question” could declare it as illegal. If the Minister suspects an organisation of being connected to an illegal organisation or that it should be declared as one then the Minister could appoint “any person” to “investigate the activities, purposes or identity of that organisation or the manner in which it is controlled”.¹²

Immediately after an organisation had been declared unlawful, nobody was allowed to “perform any act” as a member of the organisation nor “carry, be in possession of or display anything whatsoever indicating that he or is or was at any time...an office-bearer, officer or member of or in any way associated with the unlawful organisation”. Furthermore no one could “advocate, advise, defend or encourage” the attainment of any of the unlawful organisation’s objectives “or objects similar to the objects of such organisation”.¹³

□ Restrictions on people: areas / meetings

Any person could be restricted for a determined period from being “within or absent from any area specified”. If a person who was restricted or banished in this way “is at or in or elsewhere that at or in that place or area” then such a person will “be arrested without warrant by any police officer” and could then be “detained in custody”.¹⁴

¹² “Internal Security Act, 1982” in *Government Gazette*, vol. 204, no. 8232, 9 June 1982, pp. 9-11.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 25-27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp.37-39.

If the Minister was certain that a person “engages in activities which endanger or are calculated to endanger” state security or “the maintenance of law and order” or “propagates or promotes or is likely to propagate or promote such activities”. Or if a person promoted “feelings of hostility” between the “different population groups or parts of population groups” then the Minister could restrict any person from attending “any” gatherings “at any place or in any area during any period or on any day or during specified times”.¹⁵

□ Detention

Should the Minister have “reason to believe” that anyone anywhere in the country has “committed or intended to commit any offence” or is withholding information from the SAP in connection with any offence or “any person who has committed or who intends to commit such offence” then police may “without warrant” arrest the person in question and “detain such person... for interrogation”. The person will remain in police detention until the security forces were “satisfied” that said person had “satisfactorily replied to all questions”. The security forces could detain a person for longer than thirty days “under written authority for his further detention from the Minister”.^{16*}

A group of South African law experts, Supreme Court Advocates Edwin Cameron, Gilbert Marcus and Supreme Court Advocate and Criminology Professor at UCT Dirk van Zyl Smit wrote: “Scrupulous adherence to procedural formalities does not necessarily constitute a fair trial”

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 45-47.

* This stipulation caused controversy and criticism from the very inception of the law. In this regard it is important to note the following point in time. One of the most controversial political trials of the decade was that of Belgian national Hélène Pastoors. Pastoors was accused and successfully convicted of high treason in 1986 and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Much of the controversy surrounding the Pastoors case was that prior to her trial she was detained and held in solitary confinement – for a period of eight months. During Pastoors’ solitary confinement she suffered a nervous break down and had to be hospitalized for some four weeks. Pastoors’ detention was made possible by the 1982 ISA. The Pastoors trial and her drawn out detention by the South African security forces generated a lot of interest abroad which again focused attention on the 1982 ISA. A group of European judiciary experts attended the trial. A Dutch lawyer, sent to the country as an observer for the International Commission of Jurists, Willem C. van Manen commented: “The law and the way in which it is administered and developed by the courts cannot be isolated from the underlying politics and social circumstances... That context is apartheid. The system of apartheid is unfair. To maintain it naturally requires unfair laws...” A Professor of Criminal Law at the University of Antwerp, Christine van den Wyngaert found that the trial was fair when regarded within its South African judiciary context but stated firmly “that the high, undisputed status of the superior courts in South Africa to a certain extent contributes to the legitimation of the injustice which underlines its statutes”. See the *Annual Survey of SA Law, 1986*.

because "... persons are forced to endure pre-trial detention in solitary confinement, which is recognized as a form of torture in most civilized countries, though not in South Africa." Moving to the subject of the 1982 ISA which "embody devices designed to assist the prosecution and which are very often prejudicial to the accused." The Advocates then sighted the reversal of the onus of proof and the permission to introduce evidence which would not have been permitted at common law. In conclusion they wrote: "Even those persons charged with common-law offences like high treason invariably face alternative charges under the Internal Security Act."¹⁷

□ Restrictions on gatherings

A magistrate could prohibit "any gathering" in his district for a time span "not exceeding forty-eight hours". A magistrate could also prescribe the "route to be taken by the procession" as well as prohibit the group or "any person forming part thereof" from going into "any place specified" and obligate the people to "travel in vehicles". The Minister had the same powers as the magistrates in these cases, the only difference being that his powers stretched to prohibiting gatherings "in any area... in the Republic".¹⁸

Should he have reason to believe that a prohibited gathering was to take place then a "police officer of or above the rank of warrant officer" had the authority to close such an area or "make it inaccessible to the public".¹⁹

□ Manner of dispersal of prohibited gatherings

Where "any members attending a gathering" attempt to kill or injure anyone or to do damage to any property a police officer "of or above the rank of warrant officer may call upon the persons attending the gathering to disperse". He should try to get the attention of the people at the gathering "by such lawful means as he deems most suitable" following that he should "in a loud voice" command them "in both official languages" to disperse "within the time specified by him".

¹⁷ Cameron, E. (et al), "The administration of justice, law reform and jurisprudence" in the *Annual Survey of South African Law 1986, 1987*, Cape Town, pp. 557-558.

¹⁸ "Internal Security Act, 1982" in *Government Gazette*, vol. 204, no. 8232, 9 June 1982, pp. 63-65.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

If they did not heed his calls to disperse he may order the security members with him “to disperse the gathering” during which he “may” order “the use of force, including... the use of firearms”. But the force used by the security force should not “be greater than is necessary”.²⁰

When forcefully dispersing gatherings guns or weapons “likely to cause serious bodily injury or death” should not be the first option of the security forces, not “until weapons less likely to cause such injury or death have been used”. Except where any of the people attending the gathering either “kill...or show a manifest intention of killing” or “destroy or do serious damage to... or show a manifest intention of destroying... any valuable property”.²¹

When the point had been reached where firearms were to be used the security forces should use them with “all reasonable caution” and without “recklessness or negligence” and do so carefully to “produce no further injury... than is necessary”.²²

□ ‘Action to combat state of unrest’

When a warrant officer or an officer of higher rank “is of the opinion” that the actions of anyone motivated “a state of public disorder” and that detaining that person would contribute towards the maintaining of order then “he may without warrant arrest that person”.²³ Initially a person could only be detained for a period not exceeding 48 hours (2 days) but through the 1986 Internal Security Amendment Act this period was extended to 180 days (about 3 months). After the three months the Commissioner of Police must have furnished a board of review with reasons why the detainee in question should be detained still longer.²⁴

□ Offences and penalties

One would have been guilty of “the offence of terrorism” if one helped: “achieve, bring about or promote any constitutional, political, industrial, social or economic aim or change” or if one tried to “induce the Government... to do or to abstain from doing any act or to adopt or to abandon a particular standpoint” or “put in fear or demoralize the general public” or if one committed “an act

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Marcus, p. 19.

of violence” or conspired “with any other person” to perform acts of violence or “incites, instigates, commands, aids, advises, encourages or procures any other person to commit, bring about or perform such an act”.²⁵

Furthermore, one would have been guilty of subversion if one was to “cause or promote... disorder” or “cripples, prejudices or interrupts... any industry or undertaking” or obstructed the manufacturing or storage of “fuel petroleum products, energy, light, power or water, or of sanitary, medical, health, educational, police, fire-fighting, ambulance, postal or telecommunication services or radio or television transmitting, broadcasting or receiving services or any other public service or attempts to do so”. Also subversive was to “prevent or hampers... any person from assisting in the maintenance of law and order” or if someone “impedes... any traffic” and if any person encouraged “feelings of hostility between different population groups”. Water pollution was also a subversive act.²⁶

For committing the crime of subversion one could have been imprisoned “for a period not exceeding twenty years” and if the subversion lead to violence then the maximum sentence was stretched to a jail term of 25 years.²⁷

□ Restrictions on funding for political campaigns

Anyone who received money for “assisting any campaign... against any law” or “enabling... any person to commit any offence by way of protest against any law or in support of any campaign”.²⁸

Understanding the powers the Botha government had already furnished the Security Forces with, it is important to now examine the State of Emergency regulations.

²⁵ “Internal Security Act, 1982” in *Government Gazette*, vol. 204, no. 8232, 9 June 1982, p. 73.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.83.

CHAPTER 10

'THE EMERGENCY LAW': THE 1953 PUBLIC SAFETY ACT

“By virtue of the powers vested in me...I hereby make with effect...the regulations contained in the Schedule” was the tone of the proclamation of Botha’s second State of Emergency.¹

The State President’s power to proclaim a State of Emergency was vested in the 1953 Public Safety Act. Some of the more important and or controversial regulations included:

Definitions:

An infamous aspect of the emergency regulations was the definition of the term ‘Force’. “ ‘Force’” according to the Act, meant “the South African Police... the South African Railways Police... the South African Defence Force... or the Prisons Service”.²

Maintenance of Order:

Whenever any member of the Force was of the opinion that a person was a threat to the maintenance of order “he shall in a loud voice... order such a person... to proceed to a place indicated... or to desist from such conduct” furthermore the member of the Force should also warn the persons that should they not heed his warning that force shall be used. If indeed the member of the Force’s warning is ignored the members of the Force “may apply or order the application of such force as he under the circumstances may deem necessary in order to ward off or prevent the suspected danger.”³

Arrest and Detention

Any member of the Force “without warrant of arrest” was empowered to arrest “any person” if that person “in the opinion” of the member of the Force poses a threat to the maintenance of order. In such a case “under a written order signed by any member of a Force” could detain anyone they

¹ *Government Gazette*, no. 3964, 12 June 1986, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp.1-9.

wished. Although the Act then states that no one could be detained in this fashion for more than 14 days. To be detained in police custody for two weeks is already no walk in the park, but it did not end there.⁴

The Act immediately stated next that the Minister could “without notice to any person and without hearing any person” give notice only to the “head of a prison” that anyone in detention “be further detained... for the period mentioned in the notice” or simply “for as long as these Regulations remain in force.” In other words a person could be detained almost indefinitely and without any one being told. Another controversial clause here was that any member of the Force, in other words the police, South African Railway Police, South African Defence Force or Prison Services, was empowered to “interrogate any person” that was detained or jailed.⁵

Although any member of basically any of the country’s security forces had easy access to any person detained under a State of Emergency, the outside was blocked out. Outside the Minister or members acting on behalf of the state “no person” had access to a detainee except in those cases where the ministry actually granted access. And just to ensure everyone understood that a detainee was a nonentity the Act stated that nobody was “entitled to any official information” regarding a detainee. As already noted the police conducted wide sweeping arrests.⁶

During 1986 between the declaration of the SOE and early July the SAP arrested some 3 000 people. Helen Suzman spoke out against the almost mysterious confidentiality surrounding detainees, the liberal politician said: “South Africa has become like El Salvador and Argentina, where thousands of people going missing and the governments won’t acknowledge where they are or whether they are dead or a live.”⁷

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Smith, W. (et al), ‘The debate over sanctions’ in *Time*, vol. 128, no. 1, July 7th 1986, p. 22.

□ Threats

Anyone who “threatens” anyone or their families or property either verbally or “prepares, compiles, prints, publish...or assists” in delivering the threat “shall be guilty of an offence.”⁸

□ Power of Entry, Search, Seizure

Thanks to the fifth section of the Act, the mere status of being a member of a security force under a State of Emergency made security personnel walking talking master keys. Any member of the Force could “without a warrant enter any premises or building” and once inside take any “steps as such member may deem necessary” to maintain “public order.”⁹

Any member of the Force could then also “search any person, building, premises, vehicle, vessel, aircraft or receptacle”. Apart from guaranteed unprohibited entry, any member of the Force could also with warrant “seize any vehicle, vessel, aircraft receptacle” which could be used to instigate “disorder, riot or public violence” and if those categories seemed a bit too stringent section 2(b) empowered the Force to simply seize “any object or article” the Force members deemed suspect. Section 13 of the Act made it illegal for anyone to make known the identity of anyone detained.¹⁰

□ Request Names and Addresses

When a Force member asked someone his or her name and full address they had to comply immediately.

□ Orders

Section 7 dealt with the powers of the South African Police Commissioner “or any person authorized thereto by him.” Accountability here as elsewhere in the Act was jeopardized and some would argue negated, because the Commissioner could exercised these powers “without furnishing reasons and without hearing any person.”¹¹

The Commissioner’s impressive extended powers included:

⁸ *Government Gazette*, no. 3964, 12 June 1986, p. 1-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

- The demarcation of areas.
- Closing off specific areas “to control entrance to or departure from” these places.
- Controlling traffic.
- “Temporary” closing of “any public or private place or any business undertaking or industrial undertaking.”¹²
- The control of “essential services” and the security of any related installations or building.
- Prohibiting any person from:
 - “bringing into any area any object... specified in the order or being in possession thereof”
 - “promoting any act... specified in the order”
 - “being outside the boundaries of his residential premises... in any area, at any time”
 - “putting in motion or driving being in or upon any vehicle... at any time”
 - “entering any particular area or part thereof if he is not normally resident in that area”¹³

□ Subversive Statements

Here the issue of freedom of speech was redressed as it was a serious offence for any person to “makes, writes, prints or records or causes to be made, written, printed or recorded any subversive statement” or “possesses” such statement or “disseminates, distributes or circulates... dispatches, supplies or offers... any subversive statement to any person”. Furthermore if a person “displays” such a statement “in such a position that it is visible from any place to which the public has access.” And not surprisingly no one was allowed to “utters, or... plays” such statement “within the hearing of any other person.”¹⁴

□ Limitation of Liability

This section seriously challenged the whole system of checks-and-balances in South Africa. Some could argue that this section elevated the authorities above and beyond its own judicious system. In effect these regulations were an indemnity clause which protected the authorities and its Force from judicial accountability with regards to its State of Emergency regulations and operations.¹⁵

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

The section states very clearly: “No civil or criminal proceedings” could be brought against:

- The State
- The State President
- Any member of the Cabinet
- Any member of a Force
- Any person of the State
- Any person acting by direction of the above¹⁶

To further underline the authorities powers and the overriding stature of its State of Emergency powers, the Act stated that: “If in any proceedings instituted against any member or person... or the State, the question arises whether any act... by any person was advised... or performed by him in good faith, it shall be presumed, until the contrary is proved, that such act was... performed by him in good faith.”¹⁷

When regarding the vast powers, rights and privileges bestowed upon ordinary, grassroots level security personnel as well as the judicial safety net spread out for their protection, it is important to view it within the volatile and paranoid context of an already politically polarized South Africa as found in the 1980s. It can then arguably come as no surprise that a milieu evolved where irregularities and excesses could easily abound. Although a system of checks and balances still determined the Government’s control of the country in general, as will become apparent, the left hand so to speak did not always know exactly what the right was up to. These checks-and-balances were not always thoroughly enforced or adhered to.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 11

MOBILISATION THROUGH ORGANISATION: THE ROLE OF MASS ORGANISATIONS

“The ANC... had to take one step back in the conduct of armed operations if it was eventually to be able to mount a sustained armed struggle,” stated Philip Bonner, summarising the ANC’s approach during the late 1970s, “Its strategic emphasis should temporarily fall on organising by political means inside South Africa. This would enable it to create an organised domestic political base with two components: one, a front of popular organisations operating in the legal and semi-legal spheres; the other an underground organisation operating clandestinely but relating to, recruiting within and maintaining a presence inside public bodies... The ANC hoped that the political base so created would serve as the foundation for a sustained armed struggle (interspersed with popular insurrectionary activity) for the seizure of power.”¹

In a 1989 article, Wim Booyse, outlined the ANC’s so-called united front strategy. The ANC’s need to create a united anti-apartheid mass front in order to eradicate minority power was straightforward enough. Writing of a “fraternal relationship between the ANC and the mass democratic movement,” he argued that it was important for the ANC to form alliances with particular prominent groupings in the mass movement, namely the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the National Education Crisis Committee (NEEC), the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the South African Youth Congress. Booyse explained that these alliances formed a type of fraternity as all the groups had a common political goal, as enshrined in the Freedom Charter of the ANC.²

In the next tier there was the relationship between the abovementioned fraternal alliances and “people’s organisations outside the mass democratic movement.” The groups included here were

¹ Seekings, J., *The UDF*, p. 34.

² Booyse, W., “The united front strategy – the liberal dilemma” in *Southern Africa Freedom Review*, vol. 2, no. 4, autumn, 1989, p. 33-45.

those within South Africa which sought some kind of democracy or socialism but which were not totally in line with the policies of the ANC.³

These were organisations that still puritanically adhered to Black Consciousness; that subscribed to a Maoist interpretation of the theories of Marx and Lenin and those groups that upheld Trotskyism. The most prominent of these included the radical Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), the National Forum which was a similar type of organisation as the UDF but was strongly opposed to it, and the Cape Action League. Booyse described the type of association that existed between these and the "fraternal alliance" as a "patriotic alliance", because these opposing groups did share at least one, albeit underlying, unifying objective – the destruction of apartheid.⁴

Booyse also distinguished another, fourth, type of alliance. He divided this, "fourth force," into two sections. The first comprised blacks who were either apolitical or who operated within the system, while the second was made up of those institutions that were administered by whites and were opposed to the apartheid status quo.⁵ The black apolitical or conservative section comprised a range of groupings, i.e. certain youth, women's, teachers' and church bodies; some Hindu and Moslem organisations; the National Federated Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC) and the ruling party in Kangwane, Inyandza.⁶

The white groupings which opposed the Government included the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS); the End Conscription Campaign (ECC); the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA); the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee (JODAC); the Detainees' Parents Support Committee (DPSC); the Black Sash; the Progressive Federal Party (PFP); Jews for Social Justice (JS) and also some sport bodies, Afrikaner intellectuals and artists and some labour and union bodies.⁷

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.37.

⁷ *Ibid.*

According to Booyse this “fourth force, however, is not regarded as part of the broader revolutionary movement, but as a useful instrument that could be used to politically isolate and weaken the South African Government internally.” Co-operation between the fourth force and the revolutionary alliance occurred around specific issues and cases “rather than on a programmatically based united front, thus excluding the fourth force from the revolutionary movement.”⁸

The reason why the ANC detached themselves from too much open contact with the internal mass movement was that it wanted this group to be able to rally support not on the basis of being pro-ANC, but by virtue of being anti-apartheid. In this way the mass front would be able to attract a much broader variety of supporters.⁹

Because the ANC was a banned group, anything they did within the borders of South Africa was illegal. The organisations, which operated within the country as part of the mass democratic movement, on the other hand, engaged in both in legal and illegal operations. Because open structural contact with the banned ANC or South African Communist Party (SACP) could immediately jeopardize the internal organisation’s legality, no official joint management bodies existed between the ANC and organisations such as the UDF or COSATU. Instead, they covertly – sometimes openly – consulted with the banned organisation on issues such as strategy and at all times, logically, had to accept the overriding authority of the ANC-in exile.¹⁰

With the introduction of a mass united front, the ANC attempted to cohere and integrate its military operations with its drive to politically mobilise the masses. Subsequently, the ANC also had to try and set up underground structures within South Africa to coordinate its politico-military programs. “The purpose of implementing the united front strategy in this way was to enable the ANC to have its finger on the pulse of the changing mood” Booyse argued.¹¹ He added that in this way the ANC tried to have its underground political activities develop hand-in-hand with

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.38.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Umkhonto We Sizwe's work in South Africa during the implementation of the united front approach.¹²

Ultimately, the Politico-Military Council guided Politico-military initiatives from the ANC's headquarters in Lusaka. There were also so-called Regional Politico-Military Councils that were established in South Africa's neighboring countries in an attempt to shorten and streamline lines of command and communication. As part of its grand strategy, the ANC wanted to create Area Politico-Military Councils within South Africa, but the Government's States of Emergency effectively frustrated those plans.¹³ Be that as it may, the ANC's plan to see to the creation of a mass united front opposing the South African minority regime remained a decisive component of the total onslaught waged against the apartheid establishment.

Therefore, it is important to look again at how these alliances, forming the mass front, were constructed. Firstly, they were to be based on broad issues instead of general or narrowly defined principles.¹⁴ These issues, acting as rallying points for alliances, included the group areas acts; a save the children campaign, an anti-capital punishment campaign, an anti-censorship campaign and a campaign for the propagation of freedom of association. These were a few of the many possible social, economic, political and cultural issues that could act as catalysts for united action.¹⁵

Irrespective of the issues, the underlying crux, as far as the ANC was concerned, was that all these initiatives, brought about by means of united mass action, and the alliances that had to be formed to make it possible, served to further isolate the white minority Government of PW Botha.¹⁶ As the latter was already suffering from a legitimacy crisis, the ANC attempted, by means of its extensive alliance building and united mass action, to further weaken the Government's position within the country. At the same time, the united mass front was put forward as the only legitimate voice of

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the people. As such, those leaders and groupings which opposed or ignored the front, were immediately viewed with suspicion and considered undemocratic collaborators.¹⁷

Two central questions that surrounded the UDF during this period were whether or not the UDF was created under orders from the ANC and whether the UDF was a clear-cut front for the ANC or not. In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela wrote that the UDF had “firm links with the ANC” and in the creation of the UDF, the ANC experienced “a new birth of popularity.”¹⁸

Vali Moosa, an executive member of the UDF, said that the UDF was not simply a front for the ANC. He said that although the UDF was certainly aligned with the ANC and “part of an ANC-led liberation movement” membership or support of the ANC wasn’t a prerequisite for joining the UDF and as such, the latter wasn’t a simple front organisation.¹⁹

Govan Mbeki, a veteran activist of the ANC and father of Thabo Mbeki, concurred and pointed out that the UDF had “a life of its own” separate from that of the ANC. But, he also pointed out that the UDF bore the imprint of ANC traditions on its management corps and in the way it ran its campaigns. Overall, Mbeki wrote, it was the UDF’s close relationship with the ANC that attracted many people to it.²⁰

How then did the ANC-in exile, at the time, see the formation of the UDF? As explained, the ANC regarded any anti-apartheid organisation as a potential partner, yet, the formation of an organisation the size of the UDF demanded closer attention. As already noted, the ANC wanted such a broad united mass front to be created, but as Govan Mbeki wrote, the ANC strategists in Lusaka argued that such a front could only be fomented once the people themselves felt the need for it. This was why, when anti-apartheid organisations mushroomed during the early 1980s, the ANC cautioned its internal followers not to rush through with the formation of a mass front. They

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Mandela, *Long walk to freedom*, p. 507.

¹⁹ Mbeki, G., *Sunset at midday*, p. 53.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

explained that these organisations first needed to mature and come into their own. Then once the bases of these various new groups were cemented, a united front could be constructed.²¹

From 1982 onwards there were numerous protest actions against varying aspects of apartheid – chiefly revolving around the new Tricameral dispensation. The ANC knew that these initiatives were spontaneous and informal in nature and were executed on an ad hoc basis. The ANC strategists believed that the masses now had the will and desire for the formation of a unified mass front to co-ordinate and spearhead their collective attempts to remove the minority government.²² In Lusaka and within South Africa, the ANC started to propagate and help the practical implementation of the long awaited united mass front.

On the one hand, the creation of a united mass anti-apartheid front within the country represented an integral part of the total war the ANC had been waging against the minority Government. On the other hand, the ANC-in exile had many ideas – and questions – on the political base, as well as the practical and structural makeup of such a front. Although the UDF would officially be an independent body separate from the ANC, if the latter did not have a decisive guiding role in the UDF it could not be sure that the mass front could be counted on to further the ANC's goals. As such, it was imperative that the ANC was clear on how it regarded the UDF and also what role it would play in the ANC's total strategy.

These questions were dealt with in an ANC document compiled in 1983 by the ANC-in exile, the UDF's founding year. Entitled "The Constitutional Proposals and the UDF" the document clearly stated that the ANC should not assume control of the front outright. Instead "it is by the calibre of the leadership that we offer, that we shall come to occupy the leadership of the united front."²³

This document explained that because the mass front operated within the legal framework of the apartheid-state, it had to contend with the various limitations imposed on it by the minority Government and could not act as freely and unconstrained as the "development of revolutionary

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²³ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. "The constitutional proposals and the UDF": Box 75.

consciousness requires.”²⁴ As such then the ANC could not expect the mass front to take responsibility for all of its internal campaigns.

ANC executives in Zambia proposed a two-pronged solution. Firstly the ANC should try and bolster the self-confidence of the mass front’s leaders in dealing with immediate problems.²⁵ Secondly, the ANC-in exile had to ensure that the leadership of the mass front “increasingly recognises the need to consult with us on the major strategic and tactical problems that confront it. To put the matter crudely, we must avoid a situation where we become simply a fund-raising mechanism for those involved in mass mobilisation.”²⁶

The compilers of the document also referred to the question of the Freedom Charter and the mass front. The ANC explained, as it did when the UDF was being conceptualised, that it was opposed to the idea held by some activists that acceptance of the Freedom Charter should be made a prerequisite for membership of the UDF.²⁷ Instead of getting the UDF to stringently and explicitly uphold the Freedom Charter as a matter of policy, the ANC wanted to get individual affiliates to endorse the Charter of their own volition and not as a prerequisite to being part of the mass alliance.²⁸

“The formation of the UDF decisively turned the tide against the advances being made by the [National Party] regime... The formation of the UDF captured the imagination of the masses, and structures of the UDF literally mushroomed all over the country... The UDF struck great success in rendering the structures of apartheid unworkable. Moreover, it succeeded in placing the central question of political power on the agenda... Its achievements and its role must occupy a prominent place in the annals of our heroic history,” the veteran ANC activist, Walter Sisulu, was later to say.²⁹

While Pres. Botha was busy conceptualizing and promoting his Tricameral Parliament amongst whites, coloureds and Indians, the extra-parliamentary anti-apartheid organisations were busy fomenting a united multiracial mass movement. Between 1980 and 1983 a whole range of anti-

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

apartheid groups had sprung up across South Africa, although these differed in many ways, they all had the same basic ideal, the elimination of the system of apartheid.³⁰

The minority Government's reforms made the activists' logical political goal a necessity – namely, the formation of a powerful united anti-apartheid front. Prominent leaders in the anti-apartheid movement inside the country feared that the Tricameral Parliament might attract many coloureds and Indians and in so doing, polarise non-whites into two camps – coloureds and Indians on the one side and the black masses on the other. It was therefore imperative that a broad front be formed to unite these two groups and ward off the possibility of the minority powers turning the masses against each other politically.³¹

Popo Molefe, a prominent powerbroker in the UDF, said: "The idea of a united front made simple political sense. The real difficulty was how to overcome obstacles to that unity. It seemed to me that there were a number of organisations, which shared the common goal of ridding South Africa of apartheid. Although they differed in political outlook, they nevertheless shared their common goal. The bringing together of these organisations under one umbrella of a front with a common goal offered a way of overcoming obstacles to unity."³²

What the organisers of such an organised united front needed was to base the organisation on very broad, even vague, principles so as to avoid the specifics that could scare off potential supporters. The congress of the Transvaal Anti-South African Indian Council took the initiative and set up a commission to examine the practical feasibility of such a broad front. Complicated and at times heated discussion followed, but eventually conclusions were drawn regarding the form of the front and the process of physically bringing it about.

The commission found that it needed to be a very broad front; it would not be an exclusively political organisation so as to attract other bodies – provided that these were based on non-racism

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ *Ibid*

²⁹ Seekings, J., *Heroes or villains? Youth politics in the 1980s*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 45.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 44.

³² *Ibid*, p. 45.

and non-collaboration regarding the Government's reform policies. Furthermore the commission pointed out that the front should not, explicitly, proclaim the ANC's Freedom Charter as its ideological flagstaff so to avoid being regarded as its internal branch.³³

The findings were incorporated in the principles of the proposed front, as compiled by the commission. They were:

- A belief in democracy
- An unshakable belief in the creation of a non-racial, unitary state in South Africa undiluted by racial or ethnic considerations as formulated in the bantustan policy
- An adherence to the need for unity in struggle which all democrats, regardless of race, religion or colour, shall take part.
- Recognition of the necessity to work in consultation with, and reflect accurately the demands of, democratic people wherever they may be in progressive worker, community and student organisations.³⁴

When the launch of the new front was finalised, the founders set about compiling a declaration of intent for the front, which been christened the United Democratic Front. The UDF's Working Principles stated clearly that those organisations that would make up the front would remain structurally independent. It explained that the UDF would have to be regarded as the name of an organisational umbrella under which affiliates would remain autonomous – as long as these organisational members remained in line with the aims and basic principles of the UDF.³⁵ These principles were described as general opposition to the Botha Government's reformist initiatives.

Keeping things broad and general was fundamentally important to the UDF's membership drive. Affiliates needed to feel secure that their organisational identity would not be diluted when joining the mass front. Observers correctly noted that this was fundamental to the existence of such a front, as member groups would not tolerate interference in their internal affairs by the umbrella organisation.³⁶

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

One important question that was constantly being posed by members of the establishment, as well as groupings within the anti-apartheid movement, was what exactly was the UDF? From the outset the Botha Government accused the UDF of being a tight-knit institution that tailored its affiliates' programs to further the ANC's total onslaught against the authorities. On the other hand, many of the UDF's member organisations regarded it as being a tool for coordination only and sought to hold on to their executive independence.³⁷ Tom Lodge pointed out that: "Any analysis of the UDF should not be limited to the bureaucratic boundaries of its often patchy organisation, for the UDF functions more in the fashion of a social movement than a deliberately contrived political machine."³⁸

About the relationship between the UDF and its affiliates certain points need to be emphasised. According to Jeremy Seekings' history of the Front, the UDF was structured as a "federation of regionally based fronts" which meant that the UDF looked different in different parts of the country, because the composition of its affiliates varied throughout South Africa.³⁹

The UDF never had a narrowly defined constitution. Instead it had a general and unspecific document known as the 'Declaration and Working Principles'. The implication was that the UDF was quite flexible and that its leadership could mould it into anything they needed it to be in order to attract a certain sector or cement a new alliance.⁴⁰

With this constitutional fluidity the UDF attempted to be everything to everyone. Affiliates of the UDF were united on basic issues – not ideological orientation – while also maintaining their own organisational identity.⁴¹ By not having to subscribe to an intricate manifesto as a prerequisite for joining the mass front, many groupings easily aligned themselves with the UDF while otherwise in direct conflict with each other over their ideological differences, aims, tactics and strategies.⁴²

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

This 'free form' was an attempt by the founders of the UDF to accommodate the country's diverse and complicated extra-parliamentary sector. Admittedly, this somewhat undefined flexibility led to constant strain and conflict amongst the many diverse affiliates over the best strategy and tactics, management style and organisational identity. These ongoing tensions were never resolved and remained a nuisance to the UDF throughout its existence.⁴³

Affiliates also felt that the UDF had to fulfill a role above and beyond that of its member organisations. As such, its leadership was under permanent pressure to develop the UDF's own unique structures as separate from those of its affiliates. Of course, as the UDF increasingly developed into an organisation in its own right and not merely an umbrella for affiliates, questions about the UDF's accountability to its affiliates arose.⁴⁴

Taking into account the far-reaching implications of these points, trying to give a simple clear cut outline of what the UDF actually was is particularly difficult. The UDF represented different things to different people in different situations and its relationships with affiliates varied from one to the other and changed from region to region, sub-region to sub-region and were constantly in flux as the politics of the day demanded.⁴⁵

The UDF was finally, and officially, formed on August 20th 1983. The assembly took place in a hall in the coloured suburb of Rocklands, near Cape Town. More than 12 000 people were crammed into and around the hall, included representatives of more than 500 organisations which had pledged their support for the united mass front.⁴⁶ Hundreds of youth orientated organisations, more than 30 different women's groups, almost 50 student organisations and more than 80 civic organisations were represented.⁴⁷

The man eventually chosen to lead the UDF was a youthful, zealous and charismatic coloured preacher and was also head of the Swiss based World Alliance of Churches, Dr Allan Boesak.⁴⁸

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 59.

⁴⁷ Liebenberg, I. & Nel, B. & Lortan, F. & Van der Westhuizen, G. (eds.), *The long march*, p. 189.

⁴⁸ Holland, H., *The struggle – a history of the African National Congress*, p. 198.

Boesak, generally regarded as an enthralling orator, delivered an historic address. "We have arrived at an historic moment. We have brought together under the aegis of the United Democratic Front the broadest and most significant coalition of groups and organizations struggling against apartheid, racism and injustice since the early 1950s. We have been able to create a unity among freedom-loving people this country has not seen for many years," Boesak told his huge audience, adding this much-quoted phrase, "We want all our rights, we want them here, and we want them now... Now is the time!"⁴⁹

Veteran ANC officials and renowned anti-apartheid activists attended the founding meeting in support of its aims and also addressed the assembly. Archibald Gumede, whose father was a founding member of the ANC, was elected president of the UDF. Jailed Nelson Mandela was made an honorary patron of the UDF, as were ANC veterans Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, his wife Albertina Sisulu and another veteran anti-apartheid fighter, Helen Joseph. Many other famed veterans of the anti-apartheid struggle also attended.⁵⁰

One after the other prominent anti-apartheid activist took to the stage and pledged their support for the mass front. Aubrey Mokoena, secretary of the Transvaal Branch of the Release Mandela Campaign, called on the assembly to pray for their jailed leaders, but said that "... when we pray we must not do so like the missionaries who said that we must close our eyes while they pulled the land from under our feet. I would like to call upon you to pray like revolutionaries with your eyes open..."⁵¹

Many of the speakers at the meeting made positive references to the Freedom Charter and proclaimed its ideals as the basis of the united front. Still, the keynote speakers all accentuated that the UDF should not be understood as being a Charterist organisation, Archibald Gumede emphasized that affiliates did not need to agree on finer political standpoints.⁵² The overriding factor was that all members were united in their desire for the destruction of apartheid, that was the only point that members had to be agreed upon. He reaffirmed that member organisations certainly

⁴⁹ Seekings, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Holland, p. 199.

⁵¹ Oakes, D. (ed.), *Readers' Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story*. p. 477.

⁵² Seekings, p. 57.

would maintain their organisational identities and that the UDF had only one goal and that was to oppose the Government's new constitutional system.⁵³

At the founding assembly, the UDF's leadership outlined a set of tasks:

- To establish the United Democratic Front as the only representative front representing all sections of our people
- To popularise the UDF within the country and internationally
- To mobilise all organisations and communities into the UDF
- To establish UDF branches throughout the country⁵⁴
- To implement door-to-door campaigns throughout the country
- To encourage the strengthening of all grassroots democratic organisations
- To promote meaningful co-operation and united action across all community and other barriers
- To ensure democratic participation and consultation in all aspects of the campaign.⁵⁵

Furthermore, the organisational tasks of the UDF's individual members more or less mirrored that of the ANC and included:

- "To strengthen links between urban areas to frustrate state strategy"⁵⁶ – which boiled down to rendering the country ungovernable⁵⁷
- To oppose and belittle the new reformist constitution
- To popularise an anti-apartheid national convention
- To destroy the apartheid-system and its structures
- To create alternative structures in opposition to the above⁵⁸

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ PW Botha Private Collection at INCH, Bloemfontein. PV 203 / PS 12/ 48/ 1. 1986.

⁵⁷ Engelbrecht, E. & Geldenhuys, S., "Onrusverwante misdaad en bepaalde organisasies" in *Acta Criminologica*, vol. 2, no.1, 1989, p. 62.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Calling on South Africans, in 1984, to mobilise themselves and “engage the racist enemy in united action on all fronts,” the President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, explicitly singled out the UDF and applauded its creation and what it stood for. Tambo said that the founding of the UDF was an “historic achievement in our people’s efforts to unite in the broadest possible front for the struggle against the inhuman apartheid system”, and that the structuring of a mass front illustrated the masses’ “determination to be their own liberators.”⁵⁹

Taking into account the above, coupled with released veteran ANC members attendance at the founding meeting, the many references to the Freedom Charter and the fact that Nelson Mandela was openly honoured by the front, it is not surprising that Government voices calling the front a puppet of the ANC, grew.⁶⁰

Although defining the UDF as nothing more than an ANC front would be superficial, the Government’s suspicion wasn’t misplaced (the same went for many of the other anti-apartheid organisations that had sprung up in the country, during the 1980s). Govan Mbeki explained that although the ANC didn’t oversee the creation of all these bodies, they viewed all anti-apartheid groups as potential allies. As such, “the ANC underground was active in most of the emerging mass political formations.”⁶¹ According to the Government, during the front’s early existence, some 90% of all UDF officials were former members of the ANC/SACP and related groups.⁶²

While politicians debated the threat posed by the UDF, the Government’s security forces had no doubt as to what the UDF actually was. As far as they were concerned the mass front was a creation of the ANC and aimed to render the country ungovernable and thereby negate the minority establishment. During the 1990s, an unnamed senior policeman said that he had believed the UDF was “a legalized front for the ANC and that their aim was to destabilise and to make the country ungovernable...”⁶³ According to the security officer, irrespective of whether or not the UDF was itself directly involved with the execution of violence, it certainly played an antagonistic

⁵⁹ Oliver Tambo Private Collection. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. A17.16. 1984. BOX17.

⁶⁰ Alden, C., *Apartheid’s last stand – the rise and fall of the South African security state*, p. 159.

⁶¹ Mbeki, p.55.

⁶² Heyns, R. (ed.), *Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1987-1988*, p. 202.

⁶³ Jeffery, A., *Riot policing in perspective*, p. 685.

and polarisitional role. Furthermore, through its hundreds of affiliate organisations the UDF stirred up hostilities and encouraged their supporters to become violent.⁶⁴

As the UDF's drive to continuously form new alliances with almost any type of group or body bore fruit, its size and prominence grew. By 1984 the UDF boasted an estimated following of 1, 300 000 members.⁶⁵

One important difference between earlier anti-apartheid groups and the UDF was that a sizeable financial base boosted their campaigns and gave them access to marketing know-how and developments in the field of communications. The UDF had offices throughout the country, a conscientious secretarial staff, specialist organisers, its own fleet of vehicles and the newest communications tools: word processors and computers.⁶⁶

This meant that the UDF had the human and financial resources to set up its own print media and distributed a range of publications. Another example of how the UDF utilised the means of the modern era could be seen in its million signatures campaign. This drive was launched by holding a rock concert – the tickets for which could be bought through Computicket, South Africa's prime booking agent. Although not a match for the resources commanded by the Government, the UDF was one of the most organised and sophisticated mass organisations the minority authorities had ever had to deal with. The UDF was not going to be a quick flash in the pan.⁶⁷

After its formation, the UDF went on a nationwide petition drive and initiated a door-to-door campaign to get a million signatories who were opposed to apartheid and although they didn't get their million signatures, the campaign was a clever way of introducing and propagating the UDF amongst the ordinary people at grassroots level. As a result of this program, especially in the Eastern Cape, a strong sense of community organisation and cohesion emerged. Later during the upheavals in the townships, this was the platform for the forming of alternative structures.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Oakes, p. 477.

⁶⁶ Lodge, T., " 'Freedom in our lifetime': popular resistance politics in the 1950s and the 1980s": Text of a College Lecture, delivered at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, August 1986.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Alden, p. 158.

The UDF's real debut program was to ensure that the first elections for Pres. Botha's new reformist constitution were unsuccessful. The UDF focused on mobilising the people to boycott not only the Tricameral elections, but also to get blacks to shun the newly unveiled Black Local Councils. Under the latter, the Government had given elected local black councilors power to collect their own taxes and rates and run their own local amenities. The Government made it clear that these Councils would have to be self-financing. These bodies quickly ran into financial problems as a result of the depressed economy and their lack of managerial skill and subsequently started to raise rents, which alienated and infuriated black residents.⁶⁹

The UDF seized on these conditions and in 1984, under the slogan 'Apartheid Divides UDF Unites',⁷⁰ the organisation, organised mass meetings and implored people to boycott the elections totally in the months preceding the elections for the creation of local black authorities and coloured and Indian participation in the new Parliament. The Government prohibited some of these gatherings; security forces broke up assemblies and detained more than 200 activists, but the campaign proved successful as the majority of blacks steered clear of the elections, only 17,5% of the coloured and 16,6% of the Indian electorate went to the polls.⁷¹

Although Pres. Botha's Tricameral Parliament failed to attract the majority of coloureds and Indians, Government's reformist constitutional order was underway. Therefore, although the UDF did succeed in its founding objective, namely: thwarting the Tricameral and Black Local Council elections, it could not stop the Government from implementing the new dispensation. So then what were the mass front's objectives to be after the Tricameral elections? Having opposed a single election, the mass front went on to summarily oppose everything about the new dispensation – the good and the bad.⁷²

All Botha's reforms and not just the Tricameral Parliament were targeted. The UDF argued that "the various attempts at 'reform' are all attempts by the racist regime to deflect our resistance and

⁶⁹ Holland, p. 201.

⁷⁰ Alden, p. 158.

⁷¹ Pampallis, J., *Foundations of the New South Africa*, p. 276.

⁷² Pottinger, B., *The imperial presidency: PW Botha the first 10 years*, p. 303.

to facilitate the continued oppression of our people.”⁷³ Brian Pottinger aptly noted that having “once boycotted the tricameral Parliament as an instrument for change, the radical lobbies were obliged to boycott all advances seen to arise as a part of that process of change. Thus, substantial changes in social and economic policy were to be condemned indiscriminately as merely cosmetic.”⁷⁴

According to the political commentator and former politician, Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, the UDF had an “all-or-nothing” response to the Tricameral Parliament and all that came with it. According to him the Government wanted to contain the UDF, irrespective of its relationship with the ANC, because it was eroding the support and legitimacy of its new reformist parliament and constitution “in the hope of channeling protest back to its own constitutionally created instruments, i.e. management committees, community councils, tricameral legislatures, homeland governments.” The more the Government tried to do this, the more radical the opposition became.⁷⁵

One powerful tactic used by the UDF to show opposition to the Government was stay-aways. Remembering that the UDF commanded the support of almost two million people, a series of successful nationwide stay-aways could, and did, effectively frustrate the South African economy and the Botha Government. But, a stay-away wasn’t a simple thing to bring about.

The UDF’s tacticians believed that a stay-away needed intense and disciplined organisation because under no circumstances could a stay-away be allowed to simply fade away. A stay-away could not be continued for longer than three days at a time, because the breadwinners involved had to meet financial obligations – bills and insurance had to be paid. Also determining the length of these initiatives was the fact that most of the black people’s income was such that food and other necessities couldn’t be stockpiled for a very long time, a day or three at the most.⁷⁶

In November 1984, the UDF succeeded in pulling off a national stay-away of truly historic proportions. It is important to note that by the end of September 1984, the most intense period of

⁷³ PW Botha Private Collection at INCH, Bloemfontein. PV 203 / PS 12/ 48/ 1. 1986.

⁷⁴ Pottinger, p. 303.

⁷⁵ Slabbert, F.v.Z, “South Africa beyond 1984” in *Indicator SA*, vol.3, no.4, Autumn 1986, p. 6.

⁷⁶ Mbeki, p. 62.

political violence in the history of apartheid had begun and that it would continue, on and off, for nearly the next ten years. The Government immediately blamed the UDF for having masterminded the violent chaos on behalf of the ANC. As described more extensively elsewhere in this study, the Government's security services quickly swooped down on the mass front.⁷⁷

The Government had sixteen of the UDF's leaders arrested and charged them with treason, although international focus on South Africa deterred them from summarily banning the organisation – this would come later. Two major trials were held, one in Pietermaritzburg in Natal and the other in Delmas in the Transvaal. The leaders were charged with, through the UDF, and its affiliates, conspiring to bring about violent revolt in South Africa.⁷⁸

Although the Government charged the UDF for being responsible for South Africa's violent upheavals and although many would like to have believed that the UDF had the capacity to do so, the organisation's direct role was surprisingly limited. In his history of the UDF, Jeremy Seekings gave some reasons for this:

- Many of the UDF's most important executives were in detention when the violence erupted
- Many of the UDF's leaders were often cut off from the townships where the violence was focussed⁷⁹
- The UDF's focus was on national initiatives and was thus ill-equipped for dealing with local protests on grassroots level
- Many activists on grassroots level in the townships thought that the UDF was largely only interested in coloured and Indian affairs and wasn't really involved with the mass front⁸⁰
- The decision-making procedures of the UDF were quite tedious and too cumbersome to make the quick resolutions that a revolt required.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Seekings, p. 120.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

But, that the UDF indirectly helped prepare the ground was undeniable.

- Between its inception and the outbreak of violence the UDF made the masses aware of the possibility for political change that was far more comprehensive than that offered by the Government
- The UDF, through its various programs and propaganda, bolstered the idea of resistance throughout the country⁸²
- Although the new dispensation, which the UDF was originally formed to oppose, had been implemented, the outbreak of the revolt emphasised the need for the existence of the UDF and its role in the struggle
- The UDF taught people the importance of strategic conceptualisation, political education and strengthened organisational skills that would prevent the fading of revolutionary momentum, as had happened with the 1976 upheavals.⁸³

The violence that erupted in September 1984 was chiefly centred around specific local issues, as opposed to explicitly political factors, which included bus fare increases and the increasing of rent. These local issues were, however, nestled within a national political context.

Seen holistically, as did the activists, these community complaints were directly tied to the Government's new dispensation for urban blacks. For example, under PW Botha's new dispensation local councils for blacks were created that had to get blacks to pay for the upgrading of their own townships, this they did by dramatically raising rents and infuriating already disgruntled communities. Furthermore the effect of the UDF's protest drives; the growth in the popularity of the ANC; the increasingly growing accessibility of ANC literature and the Tricameral elections all combined to stoke the flames of discontent and radicalisation in South Africa.⁸⁴

Therefore, to suggest, as the Government did, that the upheavals broke out because of the work of a single entity was both superficial and ignorant. "Whilst township activists may have been

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

inspired by national political factors, there is little evidence of any organized co-ordination of their local protests. On the contrary, documentary and other evidence points to a remarkable lack of involvement on the UDF's part in township politics in 1984," wrote Jeremy Seekings.⁸⁵ In fact, the UDF completely misjudged the gravity of the many protests that swept across townships during 1984.⁸⁶

In October 1984, in protest of the new constitution, some 800 000 workers at parastatal industries, including the petroleum corporation SASOL and the steel giant ISCOR, went on strike.⁸⁷

Next, in protest of the Government's security clampdown following the outbreak of township violence, the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) organised a stay-away in Springs in the Transvaal. It proved such a success that plans quickly got underway to organise similar actions on a regional level.⁸⁸

Mass organisations met to discuss the finer details. Although the UDF was present at these meetings, as already noted, at this time the organisation's leadership was dilapidated, and as such did not play a domineering role in the planning sessions. It was concluded that a regional stay-away would be organised in the Transvaal. The Release Mandela Committee, the South African Youth Congress (SAYC) and the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) took the lead and successfully approached the labour unions for their support.⁸⁹

The stay-away was scheduled for the 5th and 6th of November 1984.⁹⁰ Although the security forces detained important ringleaders just before the stay-away was to be held, it failed to disrupt plans for the initiative and hundreds of thousands of workers stayed away from work and some 400 000 students stayed away from class⁹¹, leading to the temporary closing of hundreds of schools.⁹²

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁸⁷ Oakes (ed.), p. 481.

⁸⁸ Mbeki, p. 62.

⁸⁹ Seekings, p. 128.

⁹⁰ Mbeki, p. 62.

⁹¹ Seekings, p. 128.

⁹² Oakes, p. 481.

Following the success of these first mass stay-aways, strikes and stay-aways would become a permanent feature of the struggle throughout the rest of the decade.⁹³

What made the November stay-away so important wasn't so much the large number of people that partook in the mass action, but rather that – even though their co-operation was centred on this particular campaign and not an unqualified alliance – the labour unions had become involved. This important feature occurred at the same time as the UDF was busy with an internal reassessment of its strategies.⁹⁴ The outcome of the latter was that from then on:

- The UDF would involve itself in the existing political struggles waged in the townships.
- The UDF would pay less attention to luring the moderate middle-ground and would shift its focus to attracting the radicals and revolutionary groupings.
- The UDF would pay more attention to the black communities and less to the coloureds and Indians.
- The UDF would put great emphasis on organisation-building.
- The UDF would not so much attempt to co-ordinate protests, but would try and co-ordinate those organisations “which sought to direct resistance”⁹⁵

With the UDF's new aggressiveness and more offensive programs and with the country's townships in violent disarray, the Botha Government soon tightened the screws. During 1984 the security establishment was moving against the mass front, by the end of 1984 the state had detained 8 national UDF leaders. Why didn't the Government simply ban the organisation?

The Government had hoped that by allowing the UDF to operate, it could elicit some semblance of a democratic authority that allowed dissent. Furthermore, when the authorities initially moved against the UDF, they were met with quite a wave of criticism from the left and moderates. Jan Brand, columnist for the *Volksblad*, was quoted as arguing that if Government did ban the UDF it

⁹³ Mbeki, p. 63.

⁹⁴ Seekings, p. 128.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

should know that it could “not extinguish the organisation’s aims or the ideals it stands for.”⁹⁶

Percy Qoboza warned that “to ban the UDF would be most stupid – especially in today’s volatile climate.”⁹⁷

In April 1985, Pres. Botha spoke of the UDF and said that its aim was “not peaceful socio-economic and political change. Their end is the destruction of our system of government and civilized values. The immediate aim of the UDF is to mobilise the masses and incite them towards confrontation with the authorities. They hope to this way to create a spiral of increasing violence which will culminate in revolution.”⁹⁸

Indeed when examining the rhetoric of the UDF it ought not to have been too difficult for the state to convince the public that the mass front was bent on creating chaos. For example, in a statement made by the UDF National General Council in April 1985, the organisation pronounced: “Finally we pledge to organise the masses of our people to effectively challenge the apartheid state by frustrating its efforts, preventing its advance, forcing its retreat and if possible to cut off all lines of retreat.”⁹⁹

Still, irrespective of these fiery pronouncements and what the President had said, no single organisation could claim sole responsibility for having started the nationwide violent conflict that had erupted in South Africa during the 1980s. Both the ANC and the UDF were more or less caught off guard and misread the levels of frustration in the townships. Yet when it did erupt, it presented both opportunities and dilemmas for those groups representing the masses.

The UDF and most of its executive leaders were, officially, committed to non-violent means of protest. Patrick Lekota, a prominent leader in the UDF, explained that the UDF favoured non-violence, because in the long run, it would make reconciliation easier and that the UDF was essentially there to show people that they could live together peacefully. However, irrespective of the official line, in practice the issue of violence was a tricky one. The UDF, for example, was,

⁹⁶ *Natal Mercury*, 19 November 1984.

⁹⁷ *Daily News*, 17 October 1984.

⁹⁸ Pottinger, p. 298.

⁹⁹ PW Botha Private Collection at INCH, Bloemfontein. PV 203 / PS 12/ 48/ 1. 1986.

officially, opposed to violent means, yet it did not disassociate itself from the ANC over its use of violence.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, when the Government's security actions progressively intensified during the successive states of emergency, it became increasingly difficult for the UDF to maintain its official public peaceful stance.¹⁰¹ Early in 1985 while the security forces were active in violent township unrest, it sounded this serious warning: "We therefore wish to caution those who encourage or perpetrate this violence against our people... that their actions are driving the country into a bloodbath."¹⁰²

The UDF was flexible on the issue of popular violence, as long as it was in self-defence, yet not all the targets of their supporters' brutality were always themselves perpetrators of violence. The UDF were also slow to condemn certain totally unwarranted killings. In private, certain clergy in the UDF, such as Boesak and Tutu, were criticised for their opposition to violence.

It was difficult for an organisation the size of the UDF to ensure that their official line was being maintained by their many representatives on the ground. At one funeral (funerals had become important legal platforms for the UDF to disseminate its politics amongst the masses) the UDF leader present told the crowd: "When the youth die they do not die, but fall in battle. We... must take over their, their AKs and go forward... We say enough is enough. Now is the time to hit back... They must be mobilised to hit more and most effectively."¹⁰³

When the UDF hierarchy was questioned about the issue of violence and control over it, they simply related it to the apartheid-issue. Their rationale was simple: the people are expressing their discontent over the system, remove apartheid and the violence will disappear; keep it in place and the violence will escalate. "Everything that happens here in our country today – that is negative and violent – is a response to the negativeness and violence of the system that now controls our

¹⁰⁰ Seekings, p. 158.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁰² PW Botha Private Collection at INCH, Bloemfontein. PV 203 / PS 12/ 48/ 1. 1986.

¹⁰³ Seekings, p. 159.

lives,” said Allan Boesak.¹⁰⁴ The UDF made sure that the masses remained fundamentally aware of their unjust situation and that they should not simply have taken it lying down, but should have fought injustice with everything at their disposal, violence being a natural consequence thereof.¹⁰⁵

Because the UDF consisted of hundreds of diverse affiliates, some moderate and others very militarised, it was difficult, as it still is today, to ascertain whether violence was perpetrated solely by the affiliates and/or at the behest of the UDF itself. Through its various campaigns and propaganda the UDF certainly must have known that it was creating a climate wherein violence could erupt or intensify, while also knowing that it didn't have the disciplinary abilities to control or stop it. Years later at the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the former leaders of the UDF admitted as much. They admitted that their mass campaigns had “unintended consequences [which] could in some instances fall within the definition of gross violations of human rights such as the assaults, loss of life and causing extreme fear among perceived and real opponents of the struggle for freedom and democracy.”¹⁰⁶

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission charged the UDF that although they didn't have an explicit policy espousing violence and while they might not have given the actual orders, some of the organisation's members and leaders were responsible for acts of violence.¹⁰⁷

The UDF was also responsible for creating a climate that promoted violence and in which violence could spread. It pronounced that its “leaders, office-bearers and members acted in a manner, through their campaigns, public statements and speeches that helped create a climate in which members of organisations affiliated to the UDF believed they were morally justified in taking unlawful action against state structures, individual members of state organisations and persons perceived as supporters of the state and its structures.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Albadas, M. & Fischer, A., *A question of survival*, p. 160.

¹⁰⁵ Engelbrecht, E., “Onrusverwante misdaad en bepaalde organisasies” in *Acta Criminologica*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1989, pp.61-65.

¹⁰⁶ De Villiers, S. (ed.), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report*: vol.2, p. 382.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.378.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

The UDF, although officially opposed to violence played a decisive role in legitimising the use of violence; and although the UDF, as an organised entity, was officially opposed to the use of violence, its members were indeed involved in the perpetration of gross abuses of human rights.¹⁰⁹

Although the organisation was officially opposed to the use of political violence, the UDF certainly spoke with a revolutionary tongue. Its pronouncements, and that of its affiliates, smacked of the same revolutionary rhetoric used across the world. Expressions such as “the people’s struggle” and “liberation struggle,” “liberated areas,” “destruction of the system,” “alternative structures,” “people’s power” and “ungovernability” were employed by revolutionaries across the world, including the ANC.¹¹⁰

The leadership of the UDF, as an organised collective managerial body, might never have given official or explicit orders to kill, but they certainly roused their supporters enough for them to act in general as facilitators of violent chaos. In 1984, UDF leaders told a group of its supporters at a rally that they should make the townships unmanageable and that they should frustrate the Government’s tools of oppression, while heightening all forms of resistance possible.¹¹¹

They were told to confront the state and ensure that they were uncontrollable by the authorities. Although the UDF didn’t spark or manage the heightened levels of violence that swept across the country in the mid-1980s, their campaigns greatly contributed to rendering some townships ungovernable and sustaining the momentum of violent chaos.¹¹² At some of their rallies, crowds would get so worked up by the speakers’ inflammatory addresses that violence followed almost automatically after the meetings were concluded.¹¹³

As already noted in the above section, the place of the UDF within the grand master plan of the ANC was to facilitate the erection of an alternative power structure inside the country in opposition to the Government – part of so-called people’s power. Therefore, the UDF needed to erect alternative structures to those of the Government.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Swilling, M, (ed), *Views on the South African state*, p. 43.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Die Burger*. 27 December 1984.

It did this through its civic affiliates at grassroots level, which were subdivided into street, block and area committees. These civic bodies were often attached to bigger student organisations and shop steward groups¹¹⁴ as well as the UDF's regional committees, which formed the link between the grassroots level and the national body.¹¹⁵

The ANC mapped out this interconnected organisational network. It stated, in 1985, that these civic bodies "have immense potential for galvanizing a whole community" and that their "mass base... offers a tremendous potential for converting them into militant organisations."¹¹⁶ The ANC instructed its cadres in the country to pay particular attention to these civic bodies and to "transforming them into truly mass organisations." It also proposed that the civic organisations, as part of the ANC's "process of radicalisation," should hook up their campaigns with those of the unions.¹¹⁷

These structures were fundamental to rendering the townships ungovernable and wresting authority from the Government. In 1986 the UDF referred to these as its "shield" and "spear".¹¹⁸ It used these alternative structures to uproot "the puppets in the tricameral parliament, Bantustans and other Apartheid Structures [which] are enemies of the people."¹¹⁹

One of the UDF slogans stated: *Forward Towards People's Power* and referred to these alternative structures as eliminating the state's authority in the townships. As described in more detail elsewhere in this study, the erection and maintenance of these alternative structures, which included people's courts, was accompanied, in many cases, by tremendous violence.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Mbeki, p. 97.

¹¹⁵ Swilling (ed.), p. 41.

¹¹⁶ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. ANC National Consultative Conferences – 1985. BOX 5.

¹¹⁷ ANC Lusaka Mission, D/A. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. ANC National Consultative Conferences – 1985. BOX 5.

¹¹⁸ Swilling (ed.), p. 41.

¹¹⁹ PW Botha Private Collection at INCH, Bloemfontein. PV 203 / PS 12/48/ 1. 1986.

¹²⁰ Swilling (ed.), p. 41.

These alternative structures, especially the so-called people's courts where the dreaded necklace method of killing was often meted out against so-called collaborators, stained the image of the UDF as a non-violent organisation and estranged a number of people, particularly amongst whites, from giving credence to its cause.¹²¹

And although, in many cases, violent outbursts occurred in conjunction with UDF campaigns, the organisation's leadership did very little to try and curb the violence. Specifically regarding necklacing, the UDF was conspicuous in its silence even though it knew that its members were responsible for many necklace murders. Although the UDF must have known, to some extent, whether or not an affiliate was engaged in political violence, the organisation did very little to get these affiliates to desist.¹²²

Of course, the UDF had hoped that, although it didn't instigate nationwide violent chaos, it could possibly utilise it for its own political purposes. One aspect of the UDF that seriously hindered it from exploiting the violent chaos of the early 1980s and building a political base in its wake was that it didn't have a clear and cohesive overall strategy.

It knew what it wanted to bring about, but had no strategy with which to facilitate it. One definite reason for this was the partial State of Emergency of 1985. This seriously impeded the UDF's capacity for effective strategising, as many members of its top, as well as second-level leadership were detained or driven into hiding by the security forces. In general, the 1985 State of Emergency served to cripple the UDF in the Transvaal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Natal and Border areas.¹²³

Whereas the UDF was, initially, only on the periphery of the upheavals, by the middle of 1986, it seemed as if it was on the verge of leading one of the greatest protest campaigns against the minority Government. Early in 1986, Pres. Botha lifted the partial state of emergency. Freed from the constrictions of the emergency regulations and with many of its leaders released from detention

¹²¹ *Die Burger*, 2 October 1985.

¹²² De Villiers, S.(ed.), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, p.279.

¹²³ *The Sunday Star*, 8 September 1985.

and emerging from hiding, the UDF immediately began strategising as to how to confront the Government.¹²⁴

The UDF had planned to intensify the struggle in the homelands. It planned extensive boycotts and it would introduce a variety of programs to demand the release of all political prisoners as well as the legalization of the ANC, coupled with orders for the ever-increasing strengthening of the organised mobilisation of the masses.¹²⁵ Many overzealous activists were certain that revolution was at hand and that minority rule would soon be toppled.¹²⁶

Although the South African Government was indeed under tremendous strain, it still had a powerful security-military complex and, as many in the liberation movement were to find to their dismay, was far from being overthrown. From the imposition of the 1986 state of emergency onwards, it was clear that minority rule was much stronger than many had believed.¹²⁷

Trevor Manuel, a senior executive of the UDF, said that “the UDF finds itself bearing the full brunt of the government’s onslaught. Two-thirds of our national and regional executive members are out of action through death, detention or trial. At least 2,000 rank and file members of the UDF are in detention.”¹²⁸

Under the stringent regulations of the states of emergency, the UDF faced immense difficulties in the effective continuance of operations. It was forced to decentralise its operations, for example, it focused on mobilising the youth in rural areas and sending groups of activists to the homelands to try and stimulate action there.¹²⁹

One survivalist tactic the UDF used during this time was to shift its focus away from operating on an exclusively national level and filter its programs down to community level where it spread through societies and drew large numbers in support of its initiatives. This operational

¹²⁴ Alden, p. 211.

¹²⁵ Seekings, p. 195.

¹²⁶ Seekings, p. 195.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Herbst, J., “Prospects for revolution in South Africa” in *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 103, no. 4, winter, 1988-1989, pp. 665-686.

¹²⁹ Mbeki, p. 96.

decentralisation made it very difficult for the security services to isolate or trap the organisation,¹³⁰ helped to keep the mass organisation from disintegrating, but also prevented the UDF from initiating any kind of national strategy.¹³¹

The UDF could do little more than engage in a holding action – projects and structures already in place would be simply maintained and protected from floundering under the repression of the Government, without creating any new strategic offensives against the state.¹³²

The UDF did, however, succeed in keeping a public profile by forging new and promising alliances, i.e. with different labour unions and in enticing some whites away from the establishment. It succeeded in keeping the issue of apartheid and violence in the South African and international spotlight and, maybe most importantly, through its operations it helped emphasise the fact that the Government could not succeed in unilaterally ending the political turmoil. This further underlined the unworkability of the apartheid-system and the legitimacy crisis of the minority Government.¹³³

On the other hand, the Government's strong response to the political upheavals also illustrated the UDF's inability to effectively bring about fundamental change in the country. Its promotion and building of so-called people's power and the setting up of so-called alternative structures could not be maintained under the effective repression of the Government's security network. When the UDF turned to the ANC for guidance it was given no really viable answers.¹³⁴ The result was that, by 1987, compared to the distinct openness and grassroots democracy that had characterised its formative stages, the UDF had become increasingly secretive in its politics.¹³⁵

Furthermore – the UDF had originally refrained from adopting the Freedom Charter in order to try and gain a broader support base. It reneged on this undertaking and adopted the charter. This heightened strain and opposition between itself and other groups – particularly the radical Azanian

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Seekings, p. 227.

¹³³ Seekings, p. 227.

¹³⁴ Seekings, p. 227.

¹³⁵ Alden, p. 214.

People's Organisation (AZAPO). The UDF argued that in the current atmosphere it could simply not tolerate opposing mass groups any longer, it argued that this only served to confuse people and when the UDF should be accepted by the masses as their sole representative.¹³⁶

When violence clashes between these groups were laid at the feet of the UDF as examples of so-called black-on-black violence, supporters quickly shifted the blame to the broader issue of apartheid. In a 1985 editorial the *Sowetan* stated in regard to the chaos that arose in the Eastern Cape as a result of fighting between the UDF and AZAPO: "The blame must go straight to the heart of the matter... The reason for this madness is apartheid."¹³⁷

Another factor detrimental to the mass front was the tremendous blow the organisation's finances suffered as a result of Government restrictions on funding to the UDF. Subsequently, the organisation's annual income dropped from R2 000 000 to R200 000.¹³⁸

Another impediment to the strength of the UDF was that it was never able to form an official, general, long-term alliance with the country's prime labour body, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). From the outset the ANC was concerned about problems in this regard and pressed the leadership of the mass front to try and involve as many unions as possible.¹³⁹

COSATU* was officially formed on December 1st 1985 and was the culmination of negotiations and talks between various unions, which had taken place over a period of four years. The unions that were involved with the initial creation of COSATU included, the Council of Unions of South Africa, the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions, the Food and Canning Workers Union, the

¹³⁶ Alden, p. 214.

¹³⁷ *Sowetan*, 8 July 1985.

¹³⁸ Alden, p. 214.

¹³⁹ Lusaka Papers. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Constitutional proposals and the UDF: BOX 75.

* At its launch COSATU had 33 affiliates and a collective support base of nearly half a million workers. From the start COSATU didn't try to hide its radical orientation. Its leadership, included Elijah Barayi, Jay Naidoo, Sydney Mufamadi and Chris Dlamini and, at the founding ceremony, the new union body called for the nationalization of South Africa's mining and industrial sectors.

Federation of South African Trade Unions, the General Workers Union, the South African Allied Workers Union.¹⁴¹

The moment that talks began between the unions on the formation of a mass umbrella labour body, divisions between the groups involved caused problems.¹⁴² When the UDF was launched some unions formed alliances with it, while others remained apprehensive about the UDF and paranoid that the newly formed mass front would exploit its support base for its own political agenda. Because of this, the unions that supported the UDF refrained from pushing the political angle with the unions that were suspicious of the UDF. By not making explicit political orientation a prerequisite, the creation of COSATU was made much easier, but forging an official alliance with the UDF was made much more complicated.¹⁴³ It is important to look at why the UDF needed the support of COSATU as well as note the similarities and differences between the two groups.

Calling for “one union in one industry” COSATU wanted to monopolise South Africa’s labour movement, while at the same time cultivating a politicised, revolutionary spirit amongst its membership. COSATU had planned to merge its affiliates into 12 super labour bodies, representing basically every sector of the country’s business and labour sectors. The sectors ranged across the spectrum, from food and drink; textile; leather and clothing; paper; wood and printing to mining and electrical energy; transport and local government; domestic work; agriculture and construction. COSATU went so far in its drive to mobilise the people that it even considered the formation of a labour union for unemployed people to fight for the “workers right to have employment.”¹⁴⁴ All this is important when trying to understand why the UDF desperately needed to forge a permanent merger with COSATU.

As for the revolutionary orientation of COSATU, Sydney Mufamadi, Assistant General Secretary of COSATU, stated in 1986 that their strategy aimed “to isolate the enemy in the struggle for power – thereby making preparations for the enemy to lose power and vest power into the hands of the democratic majority. Such, we believe, is the revolutionary approach to the movement for

¹⁴¹ Davies-Webb, W., “COSATU: an institutional analysis” in the Southern African Freedom Review, vol. 1, no. 2, spring, 1987, p. 47.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

liberation.” He went on to, more or less, echo the call of the ANC and the pronouncements of the UDF, when he stated that in the South African political crisis “our task is to make that crisis much more substantial by harnessing the insurrectionary mood of our people and moulding it into an effective weapon for the seizure of power.”¹⁴⁵

Although at the launch of COSATU, eighteen¹⁴⁶ of its member organisations were affiliated to the UDF, and although some executive members of COSATU were also part of the UDF’s leadership, COSATU itself refrained from forming an official alliance with the UDF. COSATU would pledge support for campaigns launched by the UDF, but as an organisation refrained from officially joining the organisation. By 1983, the ANC had already examined this with some disdain. According to the ANC it seemed that the unions were apprehensive about an official merger with the UDF, because they were afraid that such a move might “jeopardise the parallel process that is going on of uniting the trade unions.” Later, when COSATU united the unions, the labour bodies were afraid that an official alliance with the UDF would cause disruptions within the union umbrella.¹⁴⁷

It needs to be pointed out that not all affiliates of COSATU were necessarily pro-ANC or even pro-UDF. In fact some of COSATU’s affiliates wanted to remain totally independent and wanted to forge their own autonomous, dominant position in the struggle for liberation.¹⁴⁸

Even after the executive of the labour body met with the ANC’s hierarchy in Lusaka, in March 1988, and resolved in a press release that the ANC was “the overall leader and genuine representative” of the people, many unionists were still apprehensive about officially merging with the UDF.¹⁴⁹

It is only logical that the merging of two mass organisations, both made up of many politically diverse affiliates, ought to have proven exceptionally difficult. Even when alliances for specific

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁴⁷ Lusaka Papers. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Constitutional proposals and the UDF: BOX 75.

¹⁴⁸ Davies-Webb, W., “COSATU: an institutional analysis” in *The Southern African Freedom Review*, vol. 1, no. 2, spring, 1987, p. 47-67.

¹⁴⁹ ANC Web Page: <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/1980/pr860307.html>

campaigns were constructed, it was very difficult to make sure that the agreements reached between the top executives were implemented at regional and local levels as well. When the UDF, as part of its Campaign for National Action, tried to create a secure and more long-term alliance with COSATU it was met with obstacles and the UDF complained that: "While unity is being forged at a national level, it is not being built adequately at the regional and local levels. This campaign will be ineffective unless we are able to reap its benefits at a local level. It is also an observable fact that not all regions and affiliates are participating evenly in the campaign. The campaign must take on a truly national character..."¹⁵⁰

On top of all the above factors, and as a result thereof, the UDF's supporters, having had to come to grips with the fact that the minority Government wasn't going to be toppled, suffered from disillusionment. "We will never see change in our lifetime. The UDF tried and failed," one member remarked in 1988.¹⁵¹

With that sense of political demoralisation in mind, it should come as no surprise that by the end of the 1980s, sections within the UDF proposed that it redefined its commitment to non-participation and start to get involved with certain Government structures, so as to try and bring about change from *within the system*.¹⁵²

This debate over qualified participation during the late 1980s within the mass united front, concerned both tactical options while also reflecting a certain strategic disillusionment with the strategies that had been used up until then. Steven Friedman wrote that it "reflects a growing stress on more patient, long-term, organisation rather than the 'quick-fix' of mass mobilisation which the government is well able to counter."¹⁵³

Those in favour of tactical participation argued that because the UDF had such a strong support base, they could participate in the Government structures such as the community councils without being co-opted by the minority regime – and that by joining in, the UDF could turn the system in

¹⁵⁰ Seekings, p. 209.

¹⁵¹ Alden, p. 214.

¹⁵² Swilling, p. 46.

¹⁵³ Friedman, S., "Shifting strategies in black politics" in *Optima*, vol. 36, no. 3, September 1986, p. 151.

on itself and exploit these structures to organise and mobilise even greater opposition to the Government within the legal parameters created by the authorities themselves.¹⁵⁴

“We must ask ourselves,” said Archibald Gumede, “whether the tactic of total boycott has worked; it would seem so far that it has not, so we must explore other options.”¹⁵⁵ The fact was that elements in the UDF had come to realize that the strategies they had used up till then were not sufficient to actually bring about significant change or powerful enough to break the intensifying stalemate with the minority regime.¹⁵⁶

As early as 1987 Murphy Morobe, a high-ranking official in the UDF, said: “Looking at the present scenario here, one could easily come to the mistaken belief that there is no prospect that the democratic forces will come to power. The struggle could take another 10 or 15 years – for the pessimistic, 20.”¹⁵⁷

Eventually the Government, unable to unilaterally end the turmoil in the country, became fed-up with the UDF and its debilitating anti-establishment operations and during 1988, Pres. Botha finally banned the organisation outright. Thereafter, UDF projects continued under the banner of the Mass Democratic Movement. Officially the latter was created by labour unions, but in fact it was the UDF under another name.¹⁵⁸

During the late 1980s, prominent churchmen, specifically those who were members of the South African Council of Churches, played a prolific role in mass opposition politics. Rev. Frank Chikane, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, explained their more aggressive role: “[T]here has been the adoption of a new position within the Council of Churches, moving away from condemning those who resort to violence to saying we understand why you have resorted to violence... The churches are moving away from moral pronouncements to committing themselves to action.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Bell, P., “Empty chairs,” *Leadership SA*, vol.6, no.3, 1987, p. 55.

¹⁵⁶ Friedman, S., “Shifting strategies in black politics” in *Optima*, vol. 36, no. 3, September 1986, p. 151.

¹⁵⁷ Bell, P., “Empty chairs” in *Leadership South Africa*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1987, pp. 55-65.

¹⁵⁸ Liebenberg & Lortan & Nel & Van der Westhuizen (eds.), p. 188.

¹⁵⁹ Novicki, M., “Interview with Frank Chikane” in *Africa Report*, vol. 33, no. 2, March-April 1988, p.15.

In 1989 the UDF declared itself unbanned and, with its allies, stepped up its onslaught against the white minority regime.¹⁶⁰ In the end, just like the Government, the UDF, with all its allies and programs of action, could not unilaterally end the stalemate that had evolved between the Government of PW Botha and the anti-apartheid movement.¹⁶¹

In the final analysis, did the UDF succeed in the role that the ANC strategists had envisaged for it? Holistically seen, it did. It mobilized the masses and kept up the momentum of volatile discontent that the ANC needed as a breeding ground for its own strategies and for isolating the minority regime. Fanie Cloete, of the University of the Witwatersrand, concluded: "In stimulating, initiating, promoting and/or approving the strategies followed by the UDF, the ANC and the SACP's tasks were largely facilitated by the important conducive factor of a mood of dissatisfaction, frustration and resistance in black communities against the Government's constitutional reform programme. This led to spontaneous and easy mobilisation on a large scale and outbursts of protest against Government policies aggravated by alleged and/or justifiable grievances against local authorities about living conditions in the townships."¹⁶²

Patti Waldmeir concurred with this finding when she evaluated the period, writing that the "enduring victory went to the UDF. It created realities that could not be suppressed along with dissidence; it threatened white prosperity and undermined white morale. In the end, the revolt did not have to shake the state; it only had to shake the confidence and unity of whites. In that it succeeded, creating the first acknowledged crisis of Afrikaner power."¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Liebenberg & Lortan & Nel & Van der Westhuizen (eds.), p. 188.

* See the chapters dealing with the Botha Government.

¹⁶¹ Seekings, p. 227.

¹⁶² Swilling (ed.), p. 44.

¹⁶³ Waldmeir, P., *Anatomy of a miracle: the end of apartheid and the birth of the new South Africa*, p. 49.

CHAPTER 12

SADF INVOLVEMENT IN TOWNSHIP UNREST: OPERATION PALMIET

Although it is easy and correct to speak of the South African security forces as a collective entity, in reality the army and police were of course, not the same thing. The South African Defence Force and South African Police were trained differently to perform different tasks. It is important then to view their roles in the country's internal unrest separately. The importance of the army's involvement *in addition* to that of the police, is that the two different security forces were forced to act together. Their style and action differed and furthermore, the fact that the army was called in to help the police with internal unrest, although not a unique occurrence, signified how widespread and intense the unrest had become.

'Bloody Monday' was how September 3rd 1984 would eventually be known in South Africa. A one-day stayaway was organised in the Vaal Triangle to protest an announced service cost increase by the black Lekoa community council. The protests, initially revolving around the Sharpeville and Sebokeng townships near Vereeniging exploded into violence. 31 people died in the days that followed and 300 were injured.¹ By 23:30 hours on the day of the stayaway, Sharpeville lay in ruins and 9 people had been killed. Boulders and rocks blocked entrances to the township and burning vehicles were strewn about. Of the dead, most were killed in clashes with the police but some died as a result of black anger vented on community councilmen, some of whom were literally hacked into pieces. Looting and arson was the order of the day as shops, homes and businesses were destroyed.

The following day the death toll rose as more corpses were found. Four strangled bodies were found behind a garage; another was discovered having been stabbed to death and the burnt body of another victim was discovered in a liquor store. As the townships started to burn, the death toll, by the end of the 4th, rose to 26. On September 5th 1984, an office building was set on fire in addition

¹ Du Toit, A. & Manganyi, N. (eds.), *Political violence and the struggle in South Africa*, p.1; Brewer, J.D., *Black and blue: policing in SA*, p. 298.

to a private house and a hostel housing migrant workers. The home of a murdered councilman was destroyed and others were pelted with petrol bombs.²

The unrest then took a new route and spread to the East Rand townships, stone throwing started at Thembisa – initial targets included a primary school, a beer hall, a bus and a delivery van. Vosloosrus experienced incidents not unlike these. The violence was terrifying and the cost was running into millions of rands.³

Clearly the situation was critical and it seemed that the police were not doing the trick. As had been done earlier in the month in Grahamstown when sporadic violent incidents occurred, it was time to call in the army.

At 02:00 hours on October 23rd OPERATION PALMIET commenced. To execute this 'seal and search' operation, a mixed batch of no less than 7000 soldiers and policemen moved through Vereeniging to Sebokeng, Sharpville and Boipatong. The thousands of soldiers formed a cordon around the townships – in the streets of Sebokeng there was an armed soldier every 10 meters.⁴ This left the police free to conduct an immense door-to-door search of every single one of the 19 500 houses and shacks.

Inside Sebokeng on the afternoon of the same day, police and army commanders briefed selected politicians and security personnel on the success of PALMIET. They told the group that the operation was an "unqualified success" and that the army had already left the township's streets, furthermore that the operation had been conducted with the strictest discipline; citing as proof the fact that not a single shot was fired nor had any stones been thrown.

The Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange, said that OPERATION PALMIET was necessary to "effectively rid the areas of criminal and revolutionary elements". The operation was a success as far as discipline was concerned but if the security chiefs hoped to crack open a terrorist cell they must have been very disappointed. Between 350 and 400 arrests were made, but

² Leach, G., *South Africa – no easy path to peace*, p. 137.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Cock, J. & Nathan, L.(eds.), *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa*, p. 68.

on non-terrorist charges only. The charges varied from contravention of pass and influx laws to the illegal possession of dagga, small firearms, stolen goods and pornography.⁵

On November 15th 1984, the army again backed the police, this time the army was brought in to help the Orange/Vaal Development Board in another crackdown on Sebokeng. The hundreds of policemen and soldiers, with the special board police tagging alongside, entered the huge Sebokeng Hostel which housed 10 000 migrant workers. Unlike PALMIET 2 300 arrests were made. During the next two months the army moved in on Daveyton, Atteridgeville, Tembisa, Fingo Village, Evaton and Vosloorus.⁶

Irrespective of how disciplined the operation was and of whether a single shot was fired or not, the internal use of the army sparked widespread criticism. "We needed 7000 soldiers and police, apparently to restore law and order," said Beyers Naudé in 1984, "Tomorrow if we continue to act that way without looking at the root cause, we will need 20 000... But at the end we are still going to lose."⁷

The political editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*, Patrick Laurence, wrote: "The use of so many soldiers so openly served to indicate the severity of the crisis generated by township rebellion. The advantages of deploying troops appear to have been outweighed by the disadvantages... If the aim was to eradicate the spirit of rebellion, to eliminate the influence of 'radicals' and restore the confidence of the 'large majority of peace-loving people' in the government it was not fulfilled".⁸

A group of lawyers specialising in human rights warned that OPERATION PALMIET could cause blacks to regard the army as an "instrument of white political oppression" and could even

⁵ Frankel, P. & Pines, N. (eds.), *State, resistance and change in South Africa*, p. 117; Cooper, C. (et al.), *Race Relations Survey 1984*, p. 752; Baynham, S., "Protest, the police and public order" in *Reality*, vol. 17, no 3, May 1985, p. 4..

⁶ Frankel, P. & Pines, N. (ed.), p.117.

⁷ Naudé, B. & Paton, A., "Beyers Naudé in conversation with Alan Paton" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 3, no. 4, fourth quarter, 1984, p. 83.

⁸ Laurence, P., "The collapse of indirect rule" in *Indicator SA*, vol. 2, no. 4, January 1985, pp. 13-14.

“encourage resistance to military call-up amongst whites who do not wish to participate [in] the enforcement of discriminatory laws”.⁹

Certain police spokesmen said that the mere presence of uniformed and armed soldiers had a marked effect and it was “often all that was necessary to disperse an angry crowd”, which of course had dire consequences for the army’s ambitious hearts-and-minds campaign.¹⁰

“Palmiet kan nie anders as om die beeld van die politieke neutraliteit te ondermyn nie,” wrote Simon Baynham, “Dit ondermyn ook die weermag se harde werk in sy burgerlike aksieprogram om die goedgesindheid van swartmense te win ... Direkte of indirekte militêre betrokkenheid by binnelandse oproerbeheer kan die groeiende persepsie van ‘n militarisering van die Suid-Afrikaanse staat alleen maar versterk”¹¹.

The increasingly powerful UDF successfully brokered backing from a potent alliance of trade unions to support a call for a two-day November stayaway. Black South Africa was outraged by the deployment of the army inside townships and through this protest stayaway, demanded the withdrawal of all police and army personnel from the townships. The result was the largest stayaway yet seen in South Africa.¹² Ironically the stayaway that protested army and police presence in the townships was met by exactly that, as policemen and soldiers were deployed in the townships to patrol *locations* in effected areas and manage roadblocks. The Government also decided to ban all further information relating to the army’s supportive role in township operations. Following the blanket secrecy that was draped over the army’s internal position, the *Cape Times* placed townships “in the same category as war zones or battlegrounds”.¹³

As is the case in most countries, the notion of cooperation between the military and police sectors was nothing new. Between April 1983 – March 1984 more than 40 000 troops were used to support various police operations, although it should be pointed out that most of the soldiers, some

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Baynham, S., “Oproerbeheer en die veiligheidsmagte” in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, autumn, no. 3, 1985, p. 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Cock & Nathan (eds.), p. 68-69.

¹³ *Ibid.*

27 000, helped with such mundane tasks as manning roadblocks.¹⁴ But, many army personnel were also involved in more serious police operations such as the demolishing of squatter camps, the forced removal of whole black communities and also the army also assisted in pass raids and in the breakup of strikes.¹⁵ During 1985, 35 372 soldiers were used to back the police up in their operations in some 96 townships.¹⁶

1984 became something of a watershed year with regard to the relationship that existed between the police and the military. Until roundabout the time of OPERATION PALMIET, the supportive relationship that existed between the military and police was somewhat patchy. But, from 1984 onwards, and in successive States of Emergency, the army would come to play a direct role on a national basis in actively helping to suppress township upheavals and destroy black resistance.¹⁷

Louis le Grange explained that the army was called in for the simple reason that the police did not have enough manpower and that there was nothing sinister about it. "Die regering is tans van mening dat ons nie met 'n situasie te make het wat net polisiehantering noodsaak nie," explained Louis le Grange in 1984, "Ons het veiligheidsmagte wat bestaan uit die Polisie, die Weermag en ander departemente – waarom moet ons dan aanhou sukkel met 'n gebrekkige getal manne... as daar ander dele van die veiligheidsmagte in Suid-Afrika beskikbaar is om gebruik te word daarvoor?"¹⁸ The Minister then added: "Die regering het besluit dat ons moet wegkom van die ou idee dat die Weermag net ingeroep word in 'n noodtoestand. Die beleid is nou dat die Weermag ook betrokke kan wees by die handhawing van die binnelandse veiligheid van die land".¹⁹

In the face of mounting criticism of the use of troops in the townships, the Government had to explain its decision to utilise the army internally somewhat more elaborately. To a large extent this duty rested squarely on Le Grange and in a speech he gave during November 1984 he said that it

¹⁴ Frankel (ed), p. 128-129.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Prior, A., "The South African police and the counter-revolution of 1985-1987" in *Acta Juridica* 1989, p. 199.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Giliomee, H., "Louis le Grange", p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

was unfortunate that there was criticism from across the board of the Government's decision to use troops.²⁰ He said that the government could not ignore its responsibility to ensure peace and order and as such the state had to perform effectively in order to quell the unrest. Furthermore, he reminded his audience that the Government had warned people that urban violence would increase because of the ANC's strategies.²¹

The Minister also explained the legality of using the troops inside the country to stamp out unrest, as made legally possible by the Defence Act of 1957.²² Section 3 of the Act set out the basic tasks of the South African Defence Force:

"The South African Defence Force or any portion or member thereof may at all times be employed:

- a) on service in defence of the Republic;
- b) on service for the prevention or suppression of terrorism;
- c) on service in the prevention or suppression of internal disorder in the Republic;
- d) on service in the preservation of life, health or property or the maintenance of essential services; and
- e) on such police duties as may be prescribed."²³

Le Grange played down the significance of the Botha-government's decision to use the army by pointing to various examples in the past where the Government had used the troops to quell internal unrest. He cited many examples, starting in 1914 when the armed forces had to help the police in breaking up a riot by mineworkers on the Rand. He then moved on to 1922 when 14 000 members of the 'Aktiewe Burgermag' were used to break up another strike on the Rand. In the aftermath of the Sharpeville shootings the army was also used to assist the police in various townships. Le Grange then also pointed to the work the army had already done during the decade in helping the police, such as the already mentioned example of manning roadblocks.²⁴

²⁰ LOUIS LE GRANGE PRIVATE COLLECTION: INCH: PV 778 PLEG 6 / 261 (1984-11-05)

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ De Villiers, S. (ed.), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, vol. 4, p. 247.

²⁴ LOUIS LE GRANGE PRIVATE COLLECTION: INCH: PV 778 PLEG 6 / 261 (1984-11-05)

The Minister then also tried to water down the significance of the South African situation by pointing to various other countries where troops assisted police forces. He said that in France the military police was under the command of the civilian police force; in Italy the *Corpo di Carabinieri* was a military-as well as police force. He also drew comparisons with West Germany and Northern Ireland. Rather interestingly was that the Minister also likened South Africa's internal use of troops to that of Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe who also frequently sent his army to assist the police.²⁵

Although it is an undisputed and logical fact that the army has always had a backup capacity with regard to the police i.e. in certain crime fighting ventures; helping out with relief during natural disasters and manning the police's roadblocks - it is also true that the army has always been very different to, and markedly distinguishable from the police – different in appearance, attitude and method. After OPERATION PALMIET this changed drastically as the difference between police and army methods and mentality started to disappear. The general viewpoint in the townships was that the police and army were the same basic entity. Seen as a single oppressive force the army and police became derogatively known among township dwellers as “die boere”.²⁶

When asked how the Botha-government reached their decision to send troops to the townships, Gen. Magnus Malan said, in 2000, that he could not recall whether such a decision had ever formally debated²⁷: “Ek weet nie of daar ooit ‘n formele besluit geneem is nie”. He also said that when the practical security matters surrounding the first State of Emergency were discussed i.e. exactly which areas were to be affected, the Government did not consult the army.²⁸

Le Grange's explanation not only seemed a too lightweight for many non-governmental commentators, but also irked some military heads. One military man who discussed his disdain, albeit diplomatically, for sending troops to the townships was the head of the army, Gen. Jannie Geldenhuys. In a 1985 interview the General said that the army's primary role was not to operate

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Frankel (et al) (ed), p. 132.

²⁷ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

internally and he admitted that it was not a task the army was primarily trained for: “Ek kan dit nie wegedeneer nie: dit is nie die primêre taak van ‘n leër of ‘n weermag nie. Dit is nie ‘n taak waarvoor ons ons primêr toerus nie.”²⁹

He continued by saying that the army preferred to remain a deterrent. The General also said that the army was used to conventional military weaponry and not police equipment: “Wanneer ons moet baklei, wil ons tenks, kanonne en skepe gebruik eerder as om in binnelandse oproer waterkanonne en skilde van plastiek te gebruik”.³⁰ The General then stated quite frankly that: “‘n Man sluit nie daarvoor by die Leër aan nie en ons lei nie mense op daarvoor nie.” He explained that as far as he and the army were concerned, the police had to take responsibility for that which they specialised in and that the army would only get involved where additional manpower was necessary.³¹

The army repeatedly underlined and highlighted the fact that their soldiers were only going to give backup support to the police and not take control or responsibility for the internal situation. The army’s hierarchy therefore attempted to downplay their involvement internally – not only to quell criticism, but probably also to ensure that army personnel (and the police) understood that this was not going to become a permanent situation and that the townships were still, ultimately, the police’s problem. Gen. Malan, at the time, said that the army was only supporting the police in an unrest situation, nothing more. “Ek verkies om te sê dat die Weermag is besig om die Polisie in ‘n onlus-situasie of ‘n onrus-situasie te ondersteun” said Gen. Magnus Malan in 1986.³²

Spokesmen of the Botha Government and the army repeatedly said that the army was only going to be used in such basic tasks as cordoning off townships, protecting important points, aiding in logistical support, helping with communications and conducting some reconnaissance flights, and that the police were still going to do their own work – searching premises and interrogating suspects.³³

²⁹ Giliomee, H., “In gesprek met Genl. Jannie Geldenhuys” in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, no. 3, autumn, 1985, pp. 18-19.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Giliomee, H., “In gesprek met Genl. Magnus Malan” in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, no. 8, winter, 1986, p. 12.

³³ Cooper, C. (et al), *South African Institute of Race Relations Survey*, 1987, p. 752.

Whenever there is talk of the South African security forces it is important not to picture the South African Defence Force and South African Police as one entity – the only distinction being the colour of their uniforms. Of course, the police and the army made up most of the South African government's overall security umbrella, but these two institutions were created to fulfill two completely different tasks. The military and the police operated from within two different philosophical schools of thought. This implied completely differing strategic reasoning and tactical approaches. Therefore, not only does it come as no surprise, it is in fact only logical that in the handling of the internal South African situation the army and police did not always see eye to eye.³⁴

Over a period of decades, a sometimes subtle and at other times, more overt animosity had developed between South Africa's two lines of defence. The police looked down on the army as being high handed and domineering, but generally ineffective. The soldiers, for their part, regarded the police as being undisciplined, crude and boorish. These attitudes culminated in varying underlying levels of petty friction and sometimes more open managerial conflict.³⁵

As already indicated, the police chiefs complained that they did not have enough manpower to successfully deal with the internal situation and therefore the army had to be called in. When asked whether this was really the only reason why the police turned to the army, Gen Magnus Malan said in 2000 that manpower was but one reason. The General said that the police also had a shortage of expertise: "Hulle het mannekrag probleme gehad. Ek sou nie sê net mannekrag nie. Nie net mannekrag en getal nie, maar ook kundigheid."³⁶

Gen Malan said that although manpower was the predominating factor there was also the more serious underlying consideration that the police had a managerial deficiency and that the army, on the other hand, had a very specific managerial philosophy.³⁷ According to the General many of the

³⁴ Seegers, A., *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, p. 178; J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

police's dilemmas were born from their own managerial ineptness. He said that when the police did indeed experience a manpower shortage the army sent them the needed enforcements, which they did not utilise correctly. He said that "gee ons vir hulle dienspligtes. Dan roep hulle daai kêrels nooit weer vir 'n kamp nie".³⁸

The General was annoyed by the way the police handled the men, because he reasoned that the army could utilise them more effectively.³⁹ The General said that the police were more interested in whether the men from the army could play rugby than how to use them professionally. "Hulle gebruik hom [the soldiers]," said the General, "hulle wou veral weet of hy kan rugby speel. Ek's jammer dis 'n feit." "Ek het hulle gestop dat hulle nie meer by ons kampe kon kom werf nie en ons vir hulle mense gee."⁴⁰

When discussing the internal introduction of the South African Defence Force it is important to point out that the Namibia-Angola war was still in full swing. This is important as a guide to understanding why many a militarist was apprehensive of the new internal role. The army had to divide its attention and resources between its longstanding military engagement up north as well as on the home front.

The latter involvement was not by choice, but because the country's first line of defence, the police, had failed to get the situation under control and now the army had to go and help them to do their job. Although harshly or simplistically put, this was how more than one soldier saw the army's new policing role.

Some analysts have noted that due to the military's new, although not unique, internal role, a polarised view of the army might evolve. Trusted to ensure the safety and protection of liberty, but at the same time a possible threat to the very liberties it was protecting.⁴¹ In this regard the head of the South African Defence Force, at the time, Gen. Jannie Geldenhuys, assured that the army would remain "within constitutional boundaries" and that the army was definitely not going to

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Baynham, S., "Protest, police and public order" in *Reality*, vol. 17, no. 3, May 1985, p. 5.

“resort to extraconstitutional means – as our ‘enemies’ hope”. He then stated emphatically that: “What we are seeking at all costs is to avoid a hardening of positions”. He further underlined the point that because of the army’s internal role it should not be regarded as some sort of violent and vengeful political equaliser. “There must be no question as to the political leadership of the Republic” said the General, “and no question that ‘bloody-mindedness’ is any part of it”.⁴²

Dr. F. Van Zyl Slabbert, former PFP leader and academic noted in 1986 that OPERATION PALMIET epitomised a “crucial shift” in the strategic reasoning of the authorities. According to him by having sent in troops, there could not be any questions as to the army’s impartialness as that “immediately politicised the role of the defence force” and even more importantly “militarised the nature of the domestic unrest.”⁴³ Slabbert noted that “bringing the troops ‘from the border to the townships’” was a symbolic act that “greatly polarised the internal debate into... liberation vs. oppression or law and order vs. revolution.” Expanding on the theme of polarisation he stated that the internal involvement of the army “fundamentally eroded the middle ground of South African politics.” This was because those who tried to stay out of the scope of the political turmoil were increasingly forced to take sides. “If they do not, moderates are branded as sell-outs by either extremes of the spectrum.”⁴⁴

“The police and the military are not seen as neutral observers and agents for change, for they themselves have a stake in the outcome of the conflict,” concurred another analyst Cynthia Enloe, “Because of this they become targets for opposition, and so serve to intensify already existing conflicts.”⁴⁵ Accordingly, she reasoned that Botha’s seeming readiness to send troops to the townships created “the impression that a state of civil war exists in South Africa.”⁴⁶

The strenuous complexities were vividly clear to both the supporters and opponents of the government’s decision to call in the army. A practical dilemma was that the army was not a peace force, some would argue a force for peace, but definitely not a peace force. For some decades the

⁴² Roherty, J., *State security in South Africa*, p. 147.

⁴³ Slabbert, F.V.Z., “South Africa beyond 1984” in *Indicator SA*, vol. 3, no. 4, Autumn, 1986, pp.8-9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Prior, pp. 199-200.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

army had been trained for and gained experience in the Namibia-Angola border or bush war. Most soldiers' experience of how to act in violent conflict situations was gained in that theatre. Now the Government had decided to send troops into the urban chaos of black townships. Soldiers were intensively trained to act in a highly disciplined fashion, but being an army, also aggressively. The military heads had to send these men to be something they were not, an auxiliary police force.

Highly conscious of the good name that they had cultivated over the years, the army tried to ensure that soldiers conducted themselves accordingly and were more disciplined than they were aggressive. The heads of the army realised that a single indiscretion on the part a single soldier in the townships during these tense times could do immense damage to the army's image and have a catalysing effect on anti-government violence.

Gen. Geldenhuys issued a pocket-sized card to all his soldiers that performed township duty in an attempt to ensure that his men behaved themselves and refrained from giving in to any spur-of-the-moment recklessness – and to make clear to them that he understood their disdain at doing police duty in the townships; and to explain why this service was crucial. The card also served to ensure that his soldiers and as his critics understood that he was serious when it came to army conduct in the black areas. Importantly, it also set out how he viewed the soldiers' internal role.⁴⁷

He had composed the card personally and it would later become known as the 'I Trust You'-message, it read:

“Dear Fellow Soldier,
Your presence in the unrest areas,
in these times
is vital
for our country and all its peoples.
You must do your share
to return your country to normal.
This we do amongst others,
by protecting the majority of people
from a small element
of murderers, arsonists and those

⁴⁷ Geldenhuys, J., “Message from Gen. Geldenhuys” in *Paratus*, Vol. 37, July 1986, p. 33.

seeking violence.⁴⁸

So that those who want to go to school can go,
those who want to go to work can go,
and those who want to travel on buses can travel.

Be firm and decisive

but courteous and just.

Carry out our superiors' orders
and respect people and property

Stay calm. Set the example.

It is not easy, but I know you can – I trust you
Lekker wees.

Jan Geldenhuys

Chief, SADF.

Pretoria 10 Jun 86⁴⁹

A fundamental issue between the army and the police was which of the two groups had the final operational authority. Officially, the army was called upon to help and assist the police and therefore the police would logically call the shots. But, it is rather unlikely that the military commanders would relinquish authority over their men so that a policeman could come and order their soldiers about. Although not impossible, it does seem rather improbable.⁵⁰ Gen. Magnus Malan said, in 2000, that it was a dilemma, because two totally different departments now had to work closely together and that he had tried to get these groups to bridge their differences. He then noted that during the States of Emergency a much greater sense of unity [“samehorigheid”] was to be found between the army and police.⁵¹ The 1985 police-military relationship was managed by the so-called Joint Operational Centres (JOCs).⁵²

These Joint Operational Centres were corresponded with army territorial command levels and below. Police and military units were under the direct control of their respective officers. Overall command was situated with the divisional command system of the police. In most of the areas where soldiers were stationed for long periods, the local army Commando would exercise direct control over all troops in the relevant zone.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² *Die Volksblad*. 22 July 1985.

⁵³ Cawthra, G., *Brutal Force: The Apartheid War Machine*, p.250 & Cooper, p. 754.

One such Joint Operational Centre was erected in Manenberg in the Western Cape. There, 250 policemen, together with the South African Defence Force, as well as the South African Railway Police (SARP), worked together.⁵⁴ JOC'S aside, it still seemed as if the chain of command was not always clear and that, in fact, the police and army were regularly at loggerheads. For example, in 1986 during joint security action taken in the Cape townships, serious differences between the police and South African Defence Force surfaced. The Deputy Minister of Defence said that a confidential agreement between the two prescribed management of joint operations.⁵⁵ The police and army also clashed over who should take control of the gathering of intelligence. Both the hierarchies of the police and the army thought they were better equipped for intelligence work.⁵⁶

During 1985 the police remained in their frontline position regarding the township unrest, while the use of troops developed continuously. By the end of 1985, troops were moved to the northern border areas of the country. The reason for this was to try and increase the number of policemen with combat experience in the metropolitan areas while at the same not only reducing their dependence on military officers but also stepping up the military presence in the border areas.⁵⁷

After new strategic and security appraisals were made and increasing numbers of ANC guerrillas were entering the country during the early 1980s, the Government announced that more resources were going to be diverted to the northern and north-western Transvaal border regions. Millions of rands were allocated to this undertaking. The 1982 Defence Amendment Act empowered the army to utilise extra manpower on a selective basis. This gave the commandos a greater geographical coverage. The army could call-up men who had completed their national military service, who would then be made part of the controlled reserve. Those men who had no military training were allocated to the national reserve. Both these types of reserves could be used in so-called priority areas. Priority areas were basically the country's national borders and included northern Natal and various districts in the Transvaal among others Piet Retief, Nylstroom, Messina and Pietersburg.

⁵⁴ LOUIS LE GRANGE Private Collection at INCH: PV 778: PLEG 18 (vol. 4), 1985-1986.

⁵⁵ Cooper, SAIRR 1986, p. 810.

⁵⁶ Seegers, p. 247.

⁵⁷ Cawthra, p.250; Cooper, p. 754.

So the army would concentrate on borders while the police took care of the internal situation – this, however, did not imply that their township presence was dramatically scaled down.⁵⁸

Troops sent into the townships received basic courses in the policing activities they were going to be involved in. These included patrolling townships, riot-control, road-blocks, searches and vehicle and foot patrolling⁵⁹ - the army's day-to-day activities included patrolling streets. After intensive bouts of violence, so-called pacification operations would follow. This meant that large numbers of troops would cordon-off areas while the police would move in and conduct searches.⁶⁰

The army regarded itself as less inclined to give over to unscrupulous brutality and busied itself with the more sophisticated long term hearts-and-minds war. The army also thought itself to be more answerable to the public, because of its reliance on conscription. The Defence Force's auxiliary role, which involved cordoning off townships and staying out of the action, while the police got down to the nitty-gritty, suited the soldiers just fine. And so, not surprisingly, during 1985 most of the complaints against security personnel were aimed at the police.

“Initially the police thought they could just crush the resistance, while the army had a more thought-out programme,” said one Grahamstown resident, “But as the violence increased so the army became more and more brutal. Any distinction the townships residents had made between the army and the police collapsed completely.” A Cape Town teacher at a coloured school said that: “The army is seen no differently from the police and the students with whom I have contact certainly do not differentiate between the two. In fact the only difference I have heard expressed is that the army are the ones who wear brown uniforms ‘and who carry those big guns’.”⁶¹

The army did not want to be perceived as part of the police, because they correctly feared that by becoming entangled in the internal situation alongside the police, the South African Defence Force's image as an apolitical force operating above and beyond politics would be lost. The army

⁵⁸ Cawthra, p.250; Cooper, p. 754; *Die Volksblad*. 6 November 1985.

⁵⁹ Brewer, J., p. 296.

⁶⁰ Cawthra, p.252

⁶¹ Frankel, p. 131.

chiefs also reasoned that the police did not have the strategic finesse to develop a hearts-and-minds strategy and would therefore only destroy theirs.⁶²

Major Brits, head of the army's Civil Actions Programme in Cape Town during the early 1980s, drew the following anecdotal distinction: "In 1981... we went out there in the townships unarmed and soon the people began to see us as protectors whereas the cops are seen as prosecutors – and sometimes by the way they behave towards black people, I'm not surprised." He continued to say that in the rural areas the police had hampered the situation for the army by creating the impression that anything connected to the security or defence forces should be feared.⁶³

It is important to note that in many cases when the police and army acted together, joint groups were formed where a mixed batch of policemen and soldiers functioned as one unit. Soldiers were trained and disciplined to act in groups. Separated from their fellow soldiers and their superiors' supervision the possibility existed that some of them could get carried away, disregard their military discipline and follow the police's example. One National Serviceman's recollection of his time spent in Port Elizabeth can serve as example. He told how the army was "mixed in with the police, with a couple policemen in each Buffel". "So for the black population, there has never been an opportunity to differentiate between the two forces, and the South African Defence Force almost immediately inherited the lack of credibility and bad reputation of the police. Not that there is always that much to choose between the forces, discipline and things like communication control are greatly superior in the army, but the separation of troops in small allocated units has often allowed South African Defence Force members to get into the spirit of being a law unto themselves, and mirror the behaviour of the police, not only their attitudes."⁶⁴

Only two weeks after the official inception of the 1985 State of Emergency complaints of army misconduct in the townships began accumulating. This caused enough concern for the army that they announced a program whereby indiscretion by soldiers in townships could be investigated. The result was the setting up of complaints centres where complaints could be lodged against

⁶² Cawthra, p. 28.

⁶³ Frankel, p. 133.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

defence force members operating in townships.⁶⁵ By 1986 some 500 complaints had been lodged regarding misconduct by security personnel – 40 of which concerned national servicemen.⁶⁶

When asked, during 2000, about soldiers' sporadic misconduct in the townships, Gen. Malan said that he could not remember any "big incidents".⁶⁷ He did add that the group the army experienced problems with were some of the men who were transferred from the operational areas in the bush war. He said that, some of them subconsciously saw blacks as being the enemy, "... hulle het eintlik, onbewustelik, die swarte as die vyand ge-etikeer." The General said that this type of attitude was an appalling mindset for any soldier to have had and that it blemished the name of the army and that which the army had tried to accomplish.⁶⁸

On the other hand, it needs to be emphasised that the army, like the police, was under tremendous pressure in the unrest areas. These men had been earmarked as targets by the ANC.* One example of the intense the violence facing these soldiers can be seen in the murder of the 19 year old soldier, Johan 'Vaattjie' Schoeman, during October 1985. While finishing his patrolling of a Port Elizabeth township, Schoeman was confronted by a group of men. After beating him, the group hacked and stabbed him more than 70 times. After that, the group, poured fuel over him, but before they could set him alight they were dispersed by security officers.⁶⁹

In general though, many communities preferred the army's disciplined presence to that of the police. "Community members often prefer the army," wrote Khaba Mkhize in 1988, "who they say are impartial and make efforts to befriend the population. It is common that people call for the army to be dispatched in force and take control. Women of Ashdown have formally petitioned the government to send in the army."⁷⁰ During the 1980s the army was also involved in other non-security actions in the townships, which also complimented their image and earlier noted hearts-and-minds campaigns. For example, in November 1985, the staff at Baragwanath Hospital went on

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

* See chapter on People's Courts

⁶⁹ *Die Volksblad*. 15 October 1985.

⁷⁰ Mkhize, K., "Blood River at Sleepy Hollow" in *Frontline*, vol. 17, no. 7, Feb. 1988, p. 15.

the rampage and abandoned the hospital and their patients. Soldiers from the army's medical services tended to the patients in the hospital.⁷¹

Just as important as this and other security laws, were the people who enforced them. In that regard the South African Police formed the government's first line of defence. The political upheavals of the period in question formed a smorgasbord of violent outbursts and it is difficult to highlight a single incident in terms of the profound impact it had on the period. None-the-less, one case that did stand out both in its tragedy and repercussions it caused occurred in the first few months of 1985.

CHAPTER 13

COMMITTEES, TYRES AND TEENAGERS: PEOPLE'S POWER AND ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES

"[T]hey brought with them another man... We all took the man across the veld... The four men started stabbing the... man in the back with large jungle knives. Jabo and Pogiso also stabbed the man with jungle knives... Impi poured petrol over the man from a one-litre Coke bottle. Impi then set the man alight with a match. The man then went mad and fell to the ground. He tried to roll on the ground to put the fire out but then Impi stopped him from rolling on the ground by putting a pitchfork in the man's side and the man screamed and died. Impi took the pitchfork out and we all went home..." one 17-year old teenager recollected.¹

"My husband came out... It was a group of boys, I don't know their age, I don't know what was their aim... they were just chasing him around the yard, beating him with the sjamboks and he fell down, and as he was falling down he surrendered... Then one person came and said that they must take out a tyre and put it on my husband's neck... As they were taking two tyres, he said to them: 'If you want to kill me, kill me.' And then he took the tyre himself and said to them, 'Do whatever you want to do to me.' And the other person had a five-litre can of petrol. He poured petrol. And then they took a match and they lit it... And then they dispersed... and he remained there... and he was burning. After that I took water, trying to pour the water on top of him... I could see nothing happened... I took some soil and was pouring soil on top of him... I covered him with a blanket... But one could see that he was tired... he actually did not reach the next day," was how Anna Mtimkulu described the necklace murder of her husband, in June 1986.²

"We call on our communities in the black ghettos to replace the collapsing government stooge councils with people's committees in every block which could become the embryos of people's power. We call on our people and, more specifically, our fighting youth in every black community... to find ways of organizing themselves into small mobile units which will protect the

¹ The Young Revolutionaries. Booklet issued by the Bureau for Information, June 1988.

² Krog, A., *Country of my skull*, p.213.

people against anti-social elements and act in an organised way in both white and black areas against the enemy and its gents.

Every black area must become a 'no-go area' for any isolated individuals or pockets of the enemy's police or armed personnel. The people must find ways to obtain arms by whatever means from the enemy and from any other source. Appropriate forms of combat tactics must be developed for situations in which the enemy is on the rampage against the people. The proliferation of such units and their functioning in accordance with all the rules of underground secrecy will add inestimable power and strength to the armed wing of our liberation movement – Umkhonto We Sizwe," stated a general directive of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, in April 1985.³

An ANC document dealing exclusively with the so-called Organs of People's Power, stated: "The people shall govern. But in this regard we are talking about a qualitatively different level of struggle. To implement this demand we have to do more than apply pressure and force a concession from the powers-that-be. We have to use all our power to weaken the control of the regime over us, destroy its organs of government and overthrow its administration in the localities. Briefly, this means that we have to bring about a revolutionary transfer of power in these areas. This is what the emergence of people's committees in the streets, areas, blocks, townships and villages amounts to. To reach this level we had to use all forms of struggle... we marched and waged street battles. In time we made it more and more difficult for the racist government to rule us. We rendered its local structures unworkable and used our accumulated strength to destroy them. Thus, our people's committees emerged in the process of struggle, in a united all-round offensive against the racist government."⁴

The reasons why violence erupted in South Africa are outlined elsewhere in this study. Although the history of the black local councils is not imperative to this study, it is important to briefly look at these so as to understand whose authority the street committees replaced. The black local

³ Oliver Tambo Private Collection: Office of the President. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University: ANC Call to the Nation: BOX 34.

⁴ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Broad Guidelines on Organs Of People's Power: BOX 6.

councils were official structures sanctioned by the Government, whereas the street committees represented the alternative structures sanctioned by an alternative power, the ANC. A central motivation for the anger and political violence, in the townships, in the period under review can be traced to the failure of the black town councils.⁵

Lawrence Schlemmer made interesting comments on why these councils failed:

- Poor funding.
- These councils were, generally, dominated by black businessmen whose financial interests outweighed their political convictions, at least this was the general perception amongst those who opposed these bodies.
- All-round lack of training in administrative procedure.
- These councils, as substitutes for parliamentary representation, emphasised to black elites, their inability to aspire beyond the township milieu, socio-economically and politically.⁶

Percy Qoboza, a prominent black newspaperman, wrote about the councils and Soweto: "One of the problems of President Botha's reform programs is the failure to recognize the frustration of the people of the Diepkloof Extension in Soweto who spend up to R300 000 on mansions, but are not allowed to break out of Soweto and spend that money in more more acceptable and serene surroundings... a multiplicity of... laws decree that they must live and die in Soweto in spite of their financial ability to break out of that ghetto."⁷ According to Schlemmer these frustrated elites would never had have allowed opportunistic local councillors any credence or legitimacy while their social headway was prohibited by the status quo.⁸

The councils were created by the Black Local Authorities Act of 1982. According to the bill, the many Community Councils were to be replaced by town or village councils. These were to have been elective bodies with some level of defined independence and some of the executive powers

⁵ Alden, C., *Apartheid's last stand – the rise and fall of the South African security state*, p. 132.

⁶ Schlemmer, L., "South Africa's urban crisis: the need for fundamental solutions" in *Political Monitor Indicator South Africa*, vol. 3, no. 1, winter, 1985, p.5.

⁷ *Sunday Times*. 26 May 1985.

⁸ Schlemmer, p.6.

that up until then had been wielded by the Administration Boards. This formed part of the Government's overall reformist game plan. The Government had hoped that by creating these structures for blacks, they could elicit legitimacy for their broader plan of decentralising authoritative political structures. The Black Communities Development Act of 1984 operated in concert with the above legislation. The latter envisaged that, with time, increasingly more power would be vested in the black town councils and away from the Development Boards that oversaw their management. The whole concept was a failure. It flopped because although these new structures had greater independence, they had no sound fiscal platform.⁹

Almost over night these new local bodies ran into bankruptcy. Their main source of revenue was from raising housing rents and levies for services. When, during 1984, radicals started to target these councils with rent boycotts, the councils finally degenerated in to total collapse. By the mid-1980s, those residents that had dutifully paid their rent had become angry and impatient.¹⁰ They refused to pay any further rent before services were not upgraded. Furthermore, it quickly became clear that many of the councillors were corrupt and were enriching themselves via their positions on the councils.¹¹

It must be understood that this happened within a broader context of discontent. High inflation, widespread unemployment, a crisis in black schools and rejection of the Tricameral Parliament all combined to make the country a volatile place – just waiting to explode.¹²

The 1984 rent increases on the Witwatersrand, were the straw that broke the camel's back. With violence flaring up, civic groups called for the resignation of councillors. One after the other, councils ceased to exist, as councillors, fearing for their lives, resigned. The Government appointed white administrators to take over the management of these bodies. Competing with them were the 'street committees.'¹³

⁹ Alden, p. 132.

¹⁰ Pottinger, B., *The imperial presidency: PW Botha the first 10 years*, p. 255.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 258.

¹² Frankel, P. & Pines, N. (eds.), *State, resistance and change in South Africa*, p. 105.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 106.

The black councils were PW Botha's substitute for black representation in the Tricameral Parliament. A poll conducted during 1983, showed that blacks were more opposed to being ruled by a coloured, Indian and white Tricameral Parliament than to undiluted white minority rule. These councils were regarded as being part of the Government's new reformist establishment and were viewed by blacks with the same hostility as the Tricameral system. When these councils turned out to be a fiasco and many of their members corrupt, hostility easily boiled over and became open and violent dissent. Councillors were condemned as 'collaborators' and ostracized – and in many cases, murdered. The same applied to coloureds and Indians who served in the Tricameral Parliament.¹⁴

The system of councils meant that the Government had tried to govern black communities by means of a type of so-called, indirect rule. The success of which was dependent on whether the Government could attract enough political auxiliaries to run the councils or not. When these councils floundered, because of financial ineptitude and violent opposition, the Government had to resort back to direct rule, through white administrators and the security forces.¹⁵

The best example of exactly how much the people detested these councillors was the violence itself. Only hours after violence had erupted in the Transvaal, in September 1984, one councillor after the other was attacked. Before the first day of violence was over 3 councillors had been brutally murdered by roving mobs. As the weeks followed more and more councillors were pressured to resign. Councillors' homes were firebombed and many were killed – having been seen as collaborators. The extent of the people's hatred of these men and women was so great, that when councillors were murdered, some ministers refused to conduct their funerals for fear of being regarded as an acquaintance of the deceased.¹⁶

By the middle of 1985, some 240 councillors had resigned – one hundred having been attacked. Interestingly enough, some researchers claim that during this period intimidation did not play a

¹⁴ Laurence, P., "The collapse of indirect rule" in Indicator SA, vol.2, no. 4, January 1985, p. 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 12.

¹⁶ Laurence, p. 11.

large role, the people were quite willing to take part in creating urban chaos. Furthermore, unlike 1976's upheavals, children, together with adults, were participating.¹⁷

The aforementioned ANC document, *Organs for People's Power*, is crucial to this chapter as it details the whole concept of alternative structures as part of the ANC's strategy to cement itself as the alternative power inside the apartheid-state, within its total strategy of Render the Country Ungovernable.

This was a conceptual document outlining the ANC's whole total onslaught against the minority establishment's authority. The document stated: "we are able to use the combined strength of all forms of the struggle to crush the regime's institutions and set up our own." It set out four basic conditions which "revolution" required:

- "the people should reject the government of the day and all it stands for, and clamour for a government of their own. They should not want to be ruled in the old way"
- "the existing government should be unable to rule in the old way: thrown into crisis by the active revolt of the people and differences among sections of those who wield political and economic power "
- "the system in its totality should have become ungovernable for the masses: political, social and economic hardships should be at their worst"
- "this presupposes also that the actions of the people against the system should be at their most intense"¹⁸

The document also stated that the ANC leaders had to remember that not all the groups in the country moved as one or at once, instead in different parts of South Africa different types of progress would have been made. The document also stated that although the forces of the ANC were strong enough to "smash the organs of government in 'black South Africa,'" they were still not strong enough to "destroy the organs of racist power in the 'white areas' where the seat of

¹⁷ Schlemmer, p.3.

¹⁸ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Broad Guidelines on Organs Of People's Power: BOX 6.

apartheid power is to be found.”¹⁹ The latter comment, and the realisation inherent therein, was relevant throughout the 1980s and was eventually a major factor in bringing the ANC to the negotiating table.

The ANC stated, with this in mind, that in order to render the country immobile a cohesive total onslaught was demanded: “mass democratic organisation, a relatively strong underground network and an active and developed military force of the people.” The ANC argued that defying and/or opposing the establishment and the system through boycotts, strikes and defiance campaigns, was not enough. Rendering the country ungovernable was but one part of the strategy – and useless if the people didn’t seize power in the vacuums created by the destruction of the Government’s structures. They wanted the people to not only nullify these structures but also to seize authority through political self-empowerment, because “the central demand is that the people must govern.”²⁰

The creation of alternative structures was not simply a method of defying the minority power, but directly related to the crux of the ANC’s struggle: the destruction of the system and the political empowerment of the people. “Where organs of the regime have been destroyed we have to create new ones which represent the people and serve their interests.” It stated that these organs had to be of an elective nature, the people themselves had to elect representatives onto these bodies and these bodies had to consult with and report back to, the people. “With the people they work out ways and means of self-defence and other actions. They also deal with some administrative and social tasks. It emerges therefore that we are talking of a government in the making with corresponding substructures.”²¹

This included:

- “parliament in the form of Street Committees”
- “army and police in the form of self-defence units and combat groups”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

□ “its courts: the people’s courts”²²

According to the ANC these were, “organs of people’s power: a new, democratic government.”²³

The ANC referred to the possibility of a stalemate between the Government and the masses, where a situation of so-called dual power would emerge: The Government is unable to crush the revolutionary masses and the masses are unable to overthrow the Government, so the two parties are locked in an impasse. To dislodge such a situation, according to the ANC theoreticians, people’s power needed to be developed. The ANC stated that their struggle was a “protracted people’s war” combining the various means available to them, (i.e. mass action and armed struggle) and not a uniface assault on minority power.²⁴

“We have to do this because we do not have the capacity – in particular the military capacity – to topple the racist regime.” Instead of being able to count on mutineers in the Government’s security forces to turn their weapons on their masters, the ANC had to make use of a much more holistic onslaught.²⁵

The ANC decreed that “the day-to-day manifestations of oppression and exploitation have to result in mass protest action.” The ANC bargained on some of these mass protests to “build up into revolts of varying scales.” These crises, according to the ANC, would directly affect and frustrate the minority power, because unlike colonial struggles for liberation, the Government and ruling class weren’t in Europe – they were in the same country. This could stimulate “a high point in the struggle” where revolution really starts. The creation of alternative structures, Organs of People’s Power, were essential in bringing this about. In the realisation these alternative structures, all forms of struggle were needed, including the components of the armed struggle.²⁶

The importance of alternative structures, within the context of the overall strategy for the seizure of political power, ought to be clear. For the ANC, these alternative structures were not merely

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

tools for rendering the apartheid system unmanageable – the strategists had far more grandiose ideas than that. The ANC wanted these Organs of People’s Power to oversee the “running of people’s lives in a revolutionary way.” These committees and makeshift courts had to begin implementing the principles of the Freedom Charter and, collectively, act as an alternative “government for the whole of SA,” but in order to be able to do that, the document explained, “means to fight to get rid of the regime everywhere.”

In the strategic opinion of the ANC these alternative structures were microcosmic representations of the overall ANC strategy: “They have to lead in the all-round offensive against the regime employing all forms of struggle.” Operating as individual cells, but with a collective target – the destruction of minority rule – these alternative structures were to sow the seeds for revolution.²⁷

In terms of structural stipulations, the ANC wasn’t specific, because they accepted that in different places these committees would take different forms. But, it did emphasise, irrespective of what shape and size the structures took, that:

- The management of these structures was responsible for overseeing all aspects of work, including the combat groups, people’s courts and political education
- The management had to ensure that they represented all their people and also that they were all involved in the struggle
- The management had to ensure that the best and brightest activists were elevated into position of authority and that the best cadres “reproduce themselves”
- The management had to ensure that the committee was aligned with the mass democratic movements
- “Representation in higher structures serves the intended purpose and operates on the basis of democratic principles...”²⁸

In practice, the committees were formed on a street basis. Members had to be elected from amongst the local people. Preliminary meetings were to be held to establish what the people’s

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

needs were and to identify the issues around which programs of action could be instituted. These were to be generalised and merged into a so-called 'Program of Action' for the whole locality. These issues had to be of a broad nature and be connected with corresponding issues in the other townships and villages. Therefore, although operating at a very local level these structures had to be aware of what was going on in the other townships.²⁹

According to the document, the most prominent issues in these Programs of Action, had to, or ought to have, included:

- The rent boycott
- The education endeavours
- The workers struggles
- Campaigns for a higher standard of living, i.e. struggles for cheaper transport fares
- Ensuring that all the people in the area, children, males, females, the elderly, the workers and unemployed, were all members of some kind of democratic organisation. Furthermore, there should be "permanent and viable mechanisms of liaison" between these organisations and the street committees³⁰
- The street, block and area committees had to be involved with the civic organisations: "revive and strengthen the civics in all areas and link them up at national level; ensure that they are representative of all the people and operate on the basis of democracy; involve them intimately in the people's power movement with the aim of turning them into all-township organs of people's power."
- Organising a program for political education "and propaganda"
- "Administrative tasks" had to be delegated, including, the cleaning of the streets and refuse disposal
- "[K]now the individuals in its areas, their profile and activity and *identify the network of informers and deal with it effectively*."
- "[F]orm and supervise the work of Self-Defence Units and combat groups."
- "People's Courts" had to be organised to dispense "popular legality".³¹

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

* Emphasis added by the writer.

It is important to note how the document outlined the last three points, which surely were the most controversial of the tasks performed by these alternative structures. Regarding Self-Defence Units and combat groups, the document stated: "The forms of armed actions and self-defence activity vary: the mass revolutionary violence of the people; units to protect leaders of people's committees and democratic organisations; a system of patrolling the streets and warning signals; units to harass enemy patrols; attacks on enemy encampments; elimination of agents; procurement of weapons and so on."³²

The document warned those involved to be intensely confidential when creating these groups and that the members had to be selected carefully. It warned that the security agents of the Government were everywhere and would not hesitate to eliminate people exposed as members of these Self-Defence Units.³³

As for "combat actions," the document suggested that smaller units had to be formed for this. Those involved with this had to be the best members of the Self-Defence Units. These groups were to be divided into: commanders, reconnaissance, logistics, combat squads, hiding places and communications. They were again warned to operate in a tightly controlled clandestine way and were to link up with the local representative of Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK). The idea was that the MK representatives could develop these local combat units into "combat formations of MK."³⁴

These groups were to use initiative in everything they did, which seem was another way of telling them that the ANC wasn't going to assist or help them out in any way. For example, the document stated explicitly that these combat groups were to use their own initiative in obtaining weapons and ammunition. In logistical terms they were on their own, but the document stated emphatically that the groups should at all times remember that they were not free agents but "above everything else,

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

political units.” They had to be sure that everything they did was in line with the broad democratic movement and in particular the “the vanguard formation, the ANC.”³⁵

The guidelines in the document also informed the units that they should, at all times:

- “have a thorough knowledge of the area”
- “know the enemy’s bases, plans and movements”
- “undertake actions suitable for the political moment and their capacity”
- “Plan, Plan and Act according to Plan!”³⁶

“People’s Courts” were there to “ensure healthy, revolutionary and democratic interrelations within society... groups, family units and individuals.” It emphasised that the sole reason for the existence of these structures was political and the basic guiding purpose of these courts was to “thwart the enemy’s plans and actions. To ensure this, they dealt with cases such as anti-social behaviour, conflicts and political crimes against the people. All this is important: *the primary cause of these problems is apartheid.*”³⁷

The document stated that the composition of these courts could differ from community to community, but all should operate on the same basic principles:

- These had to be “popular and community-based”
- Their “approach should be political and educational.” The authority of these courts had to stem from the respect the people had for these structures and not from fear.
- “Punishment should serve educational purposes, e.g., useful work for the community. For serious crimes against the people, even more seriousness and dignity is required. *And where the death sentence is decided upon, ways should be found not endangering the Court. To carry it out, appropriate structures should be used, and the forms should serve as a deterrent while not exceeding the limits of revolutionary decency.*”^{**}

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

^{**} Emphasis added by the writer.

- Because these courts were vested with the power to execute people, the document stated that the parties involved should “conduct proper investigations and ensure that we are not merely skimming at the surface of the enemy’s network.”
- Where possible the people should involve legal professionals to make the processes more sophisticated: “However, we should consciously avoid turning the whole popular experience into an elitist exercise negating the very concept of people’s democracy.”³⁸

Giving attention to the practical aspects of these alternative structures, the document noted that these street committees had to be accountable for everything they did, not only to their constituencies but also to the Area and Block Committees. It stated that members of street committees were not elected for an indefinite period, but usually for a specified time, for example a year. But should these committee members disappoint, it was then the right of their constituents to impeach them. The document also made it clear that, because of the Government’s stringent security regulations, whenever street committees met, they had to be quick. Coupled with that, no matter where the street committees were or what they were doing, the document warned that they should expect security agents to be everywhere and always. “Where we continue to hold meetings and to consult at various levels we should not lower our guard: the enemy is permanently on the lookout.”³⁹

It restated its earlier comment that the people should remember that the ANC were in charge. The ANC “gives overall guidance and leadership... its network should operate where the people are. Operatives of the underground are to be found in the ‘legal’ democratic movement. They have to operate at all levels of the people’s committees too... Through the underground, we are able to carry out many functions that the ‘legal’ structures cannot undertake.”⁴⁰

The ANC compilers of the document demanded that the underground “give a professional shape to the Self-Defence Units,” while the street committees gave shelter for the underground to flourish in. Under the protective cover of the communities and their alternative structures, the underground cadres would use these conditions to set up reception facilities for incoming cadres, obtain and

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

disseminate intelligence, provide so-called safe houses for military operatives, provide hiding places to stash diverse material, including military and propaganda materials.

The document made it clear that, according to their strategy, this interwoven web of structures and links between the underground and those on grassroots level – the street committees – and with the area and regional and national groups – the civic and mass organisations – was the ANC's guarantee for victory.⁴¹

Although bombastic at times, the document was not written with delusions of grandeur and paid attention to the “Enemy’s Counter Offensive.” In ominous wording, the ANC warned that PW Botha had become “ruthless” and had opted for “open terror” in dealing with the revolt. According to the document, these alternative structures were the number one target of the security forces. It warned that the Government, through a state of emergency, was trying to isolate one region from the other and making it easier to crush the upheavals in these contained areas. “It seeks to recruit activists who are in detention, to brainwash the youth and other sectors of the community. By means of its propaganda it creates the false impression that it is in control.” It stated that the Government was recruiting “all types” to “butcher activists and paralyse the democratic movement,” specifically singling out the so-called kitskonstabels, who are described elsewhere in this study^{*}. It explained that the Government was recruiting from the ranks of the “unemployed, the rural population, common criminals and the bandits from the neighbouring countries.” The Government was “exploiting” these groups and “falsified ‘traditional’ sentiments” to activate these groups “against their own interests.”

It accused the Government of unleashing “campaigns of bloody terror,” through contracting its dirty work to vigilante gangs.⁴² These were ordered to destroy the alternative structures, while the Government pretended that it had nothing to do with the so-called black-on-black violence.⁴³

⁴¹ ANC Lusaka Mission D/A. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Broad Guidelines on Organs Of People’s Power: BOX 6.

^{*} See the chapter dealing with the police.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

The document stated that the Government's "so-called counter revolutionary scheme, total strategy" was bound to fail eventually, but that the Botha Government's securocratic network had made it exceptionally difficult to fully execute the ANC's strategy. As such, the document made an appeal for people to pay attention to some specific "urgent tasks."

These included:

- Everybody involved in the anti-apartheid struggle had to ensure that where alternative structures had collapsed, they were revived and strengthened.
- "Mass action, ungovernability and people's power should spread to other areas of the country." In this regard, special attention had to be paid to the situation in coloured and Indian communities. These communities also had to form their own alternative structures and had to link these with those of the black people.
- Mobilisation of the rural population had to be intensified and "action must be directed against the bantustan and other apartheid structures."
- More attention had to be paid to the cohesive defence of areas that had been hit particularly hard by the security forces. The document singled out the role of the "democratic media" in highlighting the plight of these communities.
- Civic organisations had to be cemented and national cohesion had to be administered between these bodies.
- Everybody should engage in defending the united mass front.
- "We need to put into effect a systematic strategy to deal with the vigilante gangs."* The document stated that the people had to nullify the Government's "social base from which to

* Vigilante Gangs were black groups that were covertly organised and/or sponsored by the Government to oppose and disrupt alternative structures and so-called Self-Defence Units. While the youth were getting out of hand and rejected any type of discipline and respect for older people, some groupings in the townships could stand no more. Some groups of conservative, older males refused to accept that they were now subordinate to teenagers, irrespective of the possible greater political strategy. These men forged their own, rough, gangs to reassert their seniority and patriarchal rank over the volatile youth. Generally referred to as the *Fathers*, these groups of older men took the youth head on, and often proved to be just as brutal as the young ones. The *Fathers* were also nothing new to the social order of townships. Since the 1940s, for the lack of better Government-controlled policing services, vigilante groups of men were spontaneously formed in townships to dispense their own kind of community-based, rough justice. These 'tribal' gangs of vigilantes were known as *maghotla* and were accepted by their local communities as rendering a kind of social discipline in the locations and villages. In the latter part of the 1980s, allegations arose that these conservative groups were being manipulated by the Government to do its dirty work for it; to eliminate activists and to violently exploit divisions in the black anti-apartheid mass movement. By November 1988, according to the *Star*, about 90% of South Africa's political

recruit” and as such political programs had to be intensified in the rural areas. “On the other hand, *we must physically deal with those who cannot be reformed, especially the leadership of the vigilante gangs.*”⁴⁵

- “We have to frustrate efforts of the regime to re-establish its informer network.” And regarding so-called collaborators: “*Those who have committed serious crimes against the people should be dealt with accordingly.*”⁴⁶

violence came from clashes between vigilante and counter-vigilante activity.⁴⁴ Due to its sheer brutality, the country’s political gangsterism was making headlines throughout the world.

When the Eminent Persons Group^{**} visited the country in 1986, they made particular reference to political gangsterism. “From what we heard and saw, there appeared to be a pattern of vigilante violence directed against blacks agitating for change in the status quo by some of those who have a stake of sorts in ‘the system,’ and are being encouraged by the authorities to preserve it in this way... these elements tend to comprise town councillors... and the ‘leaders’ in squatter camps...” The Eminent Persons Group went on to say that these conservative blacks “felt threatened” by the united mass movement because they feared that they might lose their position and/or financial income due to these forces. They made special reference to the violent situation in Crossroads, where “black vigilantes with active backing of the security forces were attacking supporters of the UDF, including women and children and setting fire to their shanties.”

The volatile history of Crossroads, the immense squatter camp near Cape Town, is a complicated and extensive story that will not be dealt with here. Nonetheless, aspects of the developments there during the 1980s are of importance for this chapter. Crossroads, with more inhabitants than some cities in the country, was divided into different areas. People spoke of Old Crossroads and New Crossroads. After much debate and tension, the Government announced that it was planning to uplift the squatter camp: Old Crossroads. But, it also stated, that it was going to remove many of the inhabitants to the Khayelitsha township. This gave rise to tension amongst the inhabitants and about how to handle the situation.

Until 1985, Crossroads was affiliated to the UDF and supportive of the ANC. Many of the surrounding localities and squatter areas, provided safe havens for underground operatives of Umkhonto We Sizwe. A man unknown to most South Africans, but an infamous figure in the country’s history of political gangsterism, wielded power in the huge squatter camp. Generally known only by his surname, Ngxbongwana, was the chairperson of the Western Cape Civic Association, which was an affiliate of the UDF. In 1985 a combination of factors all merged to create dangerous discord within Crossroads. It started with local youth groupings in conjunction with groups of the bordering squatter camps that started to question and even challenge the authority of Ngxbongwana and his lackeys. This happened while these youth groups were implementing a consumer boycott.

These teenagers and youth groups were dangerous and subjected anybody breaking the boycott, or people they suspected of doing so, to humiliating and even brutal punishment. They, for example, forced these people to unpack their groceries and to consume whatever they had bought on the spot, so people were forced to drink a whole bottle of fish oil or eat a whole box of washing powder. Sections of the community were outraged by this, which strengthened the hand of Ngxbongwana who was totally opposed to undisciplined young people wielding power. The state seized upon these inner-tensions and wooed Ngxbongwana to work with, or rather on behalf of, the security forces. By eliminating his enemies, Ngxbongwana was also taking care of those of the Government. What erupted that was so violent and brutal that it shocked the country and made international headlines. The *witdoeke* – Ngxbongwana’s gang, being covertly and openly backed by the security forces – moved in on the radicals. In the end 100 people were killed and about 70 000 left homeless. See: Manganyi & Du Toit, “Political violence and the struggle in South Africa” and Seekings, “The UDF” and the 1986-report of the Commonwealth’s Eminent Persons Group.

* Emphasis added by the writer.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

** Emphasis added by the writer.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The strategic motivations behind the call to make the country ungovernable must, firstly, be understood in terms of the ANC's holistic onslaught against the minority power and its sophisticated military-security complex specifically. Apart from rendering the apartheid system unworkable and getting the masses to politically empower themselves through Organ's of People's Power, the ANC's call on the masses was also part of a military strategy. It must be understood in terms of numbers. Whereas the ANC's support base was found amongst the majority of South Africans, the support base of the Government's military-security establishment was the minority. If the ANC had managed to make all of South Africa ungovernable, the Government's security forces would have needed to patrol the whole country.

Subsequently the Government's security forces would have been forced to spread their already strained, albeit sophisticated, resources very thinly; dividing the Government's security resources and its stronghold on the upheavals. This would have made it easier for ANC cadres to enter and operate throughout the country, undetected. For this strategy to have succeeded the ANC needed the upheavals to spread from the radicalised urban townships to the quieter rural areas.⁴⁷

That was why in the document outlining the strategy for creating an alternative power through alternative structures, the ANC correctly explained that the Government "relies on isolating areas of revolt from the rest of the country." To prevent that, the ANC needed the whole country to be in constant turmoil, at the same time, and specifically for the more passive rural areas to become politically active. Apart from its general call on the masses to render the country ungovernable, the ANC explicitly called for more intensive "[r]ural mobilisation and organisation."⁴⁸

One point around which the ANC thought it could get the rural areas to rally was the question of land.⁴⁹ Unsurprisingly, Oliver Tambo, in his annual New Year's address to the people said: "Millions of our people in the rural areas are brutally exploited as agricultural workers on farms carved out of their ancestral lands. Their daily lives are dominated by the dictates of the racist White farmers and agricultural companies against whom they have absolutely no redress, because

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ ANC Lusaka Mission D/A: ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. ANC National Consultation Conferences, 1985: BOX 5.

they are the least organised and mobilised. *The land question must be resolved, if needs be, the hard way* ... we must place the perspective of seizing the land from the dispossessor in front of our rural masses and educate them to understand that this is a task that calls for dedication, determination and sacrifice."⁵⁰ The ANC never fully succeeded, during the 1980s, to draw the general rural population of South Africa into active support of its political strategy. The main focal point of its strategies to render the country ungovernable remained concentrated in the urban areas.

By drawing the general populace into its violent opposition to the status quo, the ANC at once boosted its own power base, but also opened up a Pandora's Box of brutality and chaos. A very thin line separates people's power and out-and-out mob violence. In South Africa that thin line was ignored and at times non-existent.

In the first four months of 1985, the homes of more than 50 non-white policemen were attacked and another 20 were levelled. The police expressed concern about the increasingly sophisticated weaponry used by attackers. For example, in the huge squatter camp of Crossroads in the Cape, gunmen using live ammunition fired on the police. The radicals were also exhorting to homemade inventions, i.e. acid bombs.⁵¹

Another popular tactic of the rioters was to carry railroad ties on to railroad bridges, when an open security personnel carrier past underneath, they would drop the tie onto them.⁵² The police was also alarmed at the aggressive daring of rioters. By April 1985, more than 5000 vehicles of the security forces had been attacked with stones or petrol bombs. It was clear that rioters were becoming more confident.⁵³

By the end of the year things got so bad in some areas that some policemen had to take their families and flee the townships altogether. For example, near Nigel, 120 black policemen and their

* Emphasis added by the writer.

⁵⁰ Oliver Tambo Papers: A 17.22: ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Speeches and statements – published: 1985-1990: BOX 18.

⁵¹ Cooper, (et al.), *South African Institute for Race Relations 1985*, p. 484.

⁵² Toups, T.H., "Inside South Africa's burning townships (with the SA Police)" in *Servamus*, November 1985, p. 10.

⁵³ *Cape Times*. 15 May 1985.

families were evacuated from the Deduza township. In the northern Transvaal town of Phalaborwa, during August 1985, township groups warned local shop owners that, for their own sake, they should not sell any goods to black security officers. A letter was sent to all shop owners in the townships of the eastern Transvaal not to do business with black security officers "or something else might happen to your businesses." By November 1985, the homes of about 500 black policemen had been attacked or completely destroyed.⁵⁴

Between 1984 and April 1986, 508 people had died in so-called black-black violence (while a further 731 people were killed by security forces in the States of Emergency).⁵⁵ By 1987, the violence aimed at so-called 'collaborators' had reached such heights that the Government stated that it was clear that the black security officers had become the main target of the radical groups. During the year a number of non-white security officers were murdered by their communities, many were stoned to death.⁵⁶

For councillors the situation wasn't any better. Many were murdered and/or had their homes destroyed. The house belonging to a certain councillor (and the 5 people in it), was attacked by machinegun fire and grenades for the seventh time in two years. During this time, in Soweto, the councillors were in such constant danger of losing their lives that they had to flee their homes and settle in a formerly 'whites-only' suburb on the outskirts of the township.⁵⁷

During 1988 some 1 149 people had died as a result of political violence. Between September 1984 and 1988, the violence had cost the country more than R285 000 000 and had injured 880 security officers and killed 71 policemen.⁵⁸ By 1988, being a black security officer, councillor or a non-white member of the Tricameral Parliament, or even just being related to one, was a very dangerous position to hold. Here follows a summary of certain incidents, take note that these are but a sample of the incidents that took place in the period between January and December 1988:

⁵⁴ Cooper, p. 484.

⁵⁵ Quin, D., "From one emergency to another," in *Indicator SA*, vol. 4, no. 1, winter, 1986p.24.

⁵⁶ Cooper, (et al.), *South African Institute for Race Relations* 1987/88, p. 37.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Cooper, C., (et al.), *South African Institute for Race Relations* 1988/89, p.597.

- In January 1988, after a kitskonstabel* had been charged with assaulting residents of a township near Oudtshoorn, the father of one of his victims stabbed him to death.⁵⁹
- In March, three policemen were shot dead with AK47s. In the same month, 9 security officers were injured when men, armed with AK47s and grenades, attacked a municipal hall in Soweto and a bomb exploded at a hotel in the northern Transvaal, which was frequented by soldiers.⁶⁰
- In April, municipal security officers and a civilian were injured when a gunman opened fire on their patrol. And in the Ciskei two policemen were shot dead. Near Newcastle, a black police sergeant was murdered on his way home from work.⁶¹
- In May the member of the House of Representatives for Alra Park, was shot dead. In May, a meeting of a Soweto-based party of the town council, was attacked with grenades and AK47s. Four people were killed.⁶² While, at a township near Krugersdorp, a bomb wrecked a police station. A one-year old baby was killed when her father's house came under grenade attack. In Emdeni, two kitskonstabels were attacked and stabbed by an angry mob. Later another kitskonstabel was murdered near Cape Town.⁶³
- In July a bomb exploded in the garden of an Indian member of the Tricameral Parliament. In July, in various parts of the country, councillors' houses were firebombed. In July, gunmen driving past the house of a coloured Parliamentarian, opened fire on the home.⁶⁴ In July, a bomb exploded at the meeting of a council party in Soweto. Two detectives, from Johannesburg, and an alleged spy for the security services, were murdered in Soweto.⁶⁵
- In August, grenades were thrown into the house of a council leader in East London, wrecking the house. In the same night three other bombs exploded at Government

* see chapter on Police

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 597.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 597.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

institutions in the townships and at the homes of members of councillors and the Tricameral Parliament. In Soweto, a member of the town council was shot dead.⁶⁶

- In September, going to a hostel to campaign for the upcoming municipal elections, two candidates were assaulted by the residents; while in Uitenhage a grenade was thrown at the home of a Tricameral Parliamentarian. In September, a candidate for the local council in Crossroads was murdered.⁶⁷ Near Uitenhage, a kitskonstabel was murdered, while a nine-year old girl was injured when her father's house came under grenade attack.⁶⁸
- In October, children at a secondary school wrecked the car of a teacher who was a candidate for the municipal elections. On the weekend before the municipal elections, in Port Elizabeth, the houses of five candidates were firebombed. An 8-year old died in these attacks, along with 10 other people.⁶⁹ During the same period, in Benoni and Alberton, grenades were thrown at the homes of candidates. Two limpet mines were detonated at the houses of councillors in Parys and the house of a deputy mayor near East London was wrecked by grenades.⁷⁰
- In Ciskei, during November, a policeman's house burnt to the ground after it was firebombed.
- In December, four civilians and a policeman were murdered in Soweto.⁷¹

Following the calls from the ANC leadership in Lusaka to form alternative structures and Self-Defence Units, and further promoted by the groupings inside the united mass front, throughout the country, during the mid-to-latter part of the 1980s, political youth gangs sprouted. There are various theories why the black and coloured youth were so eager to form these gangs. Commentators seem to agree that socio-economic factors played just as important a role as political considerations. In fact, at their core these groups were nothing new to the South African landscape and, in one form or another, had existed from the start of the 20th century.^{*73}

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 597.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 597.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 597.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 602.

* Some of these were criminally inclined but not all. Those in rural areas were set up for purposes of control and control over courting. In towns, these groups gave its members a sense of belonging and of coming into

Poverty, the destruction of cultural and family values and moral norms ensured that, in one way or another, by the 1980s there was no shortage of gangs that could foreseeably turn political or could exploit the political turbulence that prevailed in their communities. By the mid-1980s the youth, having boycotted school under the slogan *No Education Before Liberation*, were undisciplined and culturally dispossessed. The South African, black youth, had become so uncontrollable that by the beginning of 1986, concerned parents and community activists erected the National Education Crisis Committee to try and get the kids back to school. This body, which was backed by the ANC, tried to persuade the youth that poor education was better than none at all. The body promised the youth that, if they returned to class, they would demand better schooling from the minority regime.⁷⁴

The shooting at Uitenhage, described elsewhere in this study, greatly intensified the already volatile situation and further facilitated the forming of alternative structures and the murdering of councilors. As the violence of the mid-1980s escalated and took on a national level, the workload of the security forces, whose resources were already strapped, became particularly taxing.

The effect, especially in the townships, was that normal policing slowed down and lesser criminal cases were of secondary importance to the prevailing, violent, national crisis. Suddenly the townships, already locked in political turmoil, became a breeding ground for hooligan criminality. Not surprising the people in these townships decided to do something about it themselves.⁷⁵

On the other hand there was the, already noted, political drive to create so-called Organs of People's Power. The latter drive focussed in particular, but not exclusively, on the scores of black youths who, although not always affiliated to an organisation, saw themselves as fighters in the struggle against apartheid. These militant youths were recruited to help set up and run street committees and other alternative structures. With apolitical crime soaring, many of these street

their own right. As jobs became scarce these and the number of unemployed young blacks rose, the culture of youth gangsterism increased. Many of these gangs originated in prisons and when the members were released they took what they had learned about such groups with them to the outside world. By the 1940s a distinct feature of townships were the existence of shady *tsotsi* gangs. (Manganyi & Du Toit)

⁷³ Du Toit, A. & Manganyi, N. (eds.), *Political violence and the struggle in South Africa*, p. 52.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

committees, although formed as part of a grander political strategy were promoted as bodies that would also help to combat crime in the communities.⁷⁶

In Nyanga, a township in the Cape, such a group of youths was sent out on nightly patrols to look out for criminals, where if found, would be dealt with on the spot. As word spread of these young crime fighters, cases were brought to them. In order to examine these cases, it wasn't long before 'people's courts' were held. The difference between this court and the many others throughout the country was that this one wasn't politically inclined but rather served the interests of the community on an exclusively community-based level.

Although its members were all aligned with some political organisation, this body was an exclusive community affair, politics didn't come into the scenario. Therefore, during the 1980s and especially from 1985 onwards, when examining the emergence of alternative structures like street committees and people's courts, it is very important, albeit sometimes difficult, to distinguish between criminal, political and community-based alternative structures.⁷⁷ As will be illustrated, by the end of the decade this distinction had all but disappeared.

Although the ANC claimed that these alternative structures were created at their bidding, it wasn't quite as simple as that. In many townships where violence had broken out and councillors were targeted and/or executed, black local government ceased to exist. As a result, the communities formed these structures to help themselves restore some type of order. "The people in Lusaka can say what they want," said one township resident, "We know that the purpose is to enable people to take their lives in hand. Local government has collapsed... The street committees fill the vacuum."⁷⁸

In Soweto the Soweto Civic Associations saw to it that the township's people were organised into street committees. As noted earlier, these debating forums went back to an older African community tradition. One resident of Soweto said about these street committees: "It's wonderful to see. It's a revival of the old African tradition of the indaba – talking, and disagreeing, even

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 348.

⁷⁸ Anon, "The rocky rise of people's power" in *Frontline*, vol. 6, no. 7, Christmas, 1986, p. 13.

angrily, instead of fighting.” Many black people were really very impressed by these street committees as they strengthened community ties; the people felt empowered and in charge of their own environments.⁷⁹

But, at the same time, many people were scared of these youths demanding that they take part in some political programs. Some felt that the street committees were dominated by the UDF and that the latter had taken over their, initially, community structures; people were annoyed by know-it-all politicised teenagers shunting them around; the political side of street committees started to overshadow community-based structures. People were afraid of being physically assaulted by the teenagers who checked up on these committees and their members.⁸⁰

Although street committees and so-called people’s courts might have emerged for different, political and community-based reasons, they would in due course certainly come to fall, in one way or another, under the influence of political activists, or those claiming to be political activists. Because the ANC was quite clear in its directive to the people, these structures were not to be erected solely to meet the socio-economic needs of the community; these structures were to be political at their core. At the ANC’s National Conference, in 1985, it was again made clear that these alternative structures had to primarily be “to represent the people politically and to lead them in struggles to enforce municipal and broader demands.”⁸¹

As seen throughout this section, the role of the youth was a predominant feature in the creation of alternative structures and all the positive and negative consequences thereof. As the Government strengthened its attempts to squash the upheavals and the youth increasingly moved to the forefront of the struggle against apartheid, and were caught in the crossfire, the ANC was unperturbed about this section of society.

The youth weren’t mobilised as an implied result of the ANC’s drive to render the country ungovernable. They continuously and explicitly focussed on spurring them on to action. In 1987

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸¹ ANC Lusaka Mission: ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Commission on Strategies and Tactics: BOX5.

the President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, called on the people “in particular the youth, to form and engage in Self-Defence Units and combat groups in action against the fascist army, police and death squads – the vigilantes.”⁸²

Why the ANC utilised, if not exploited, the youth is easy enough to understand. They represented a large section of the population and, more importantly, were easily motivated to political action – it was a case of simply directing their energies towards chaos. The ANC knew that these young people were more easily incited than their cautious parents. Over the years, after many failed campaigns against the system, many adult blacks had lost the will and the zealous passion to fight apartheid. They had grown politically weary, relatively speaking, come to accept their frustrating social and political position – in any case this was the perception held by the youth.⁸³ “You look at your parent and see a worn-out, hopeless, person,” said one 26-year old, “And those memories lay the groundwork for revolution.”⁸⁴

Therefore the ANC moved through their militant children to spur communities to action. These children led drawn out school boycotts; they played a central part in the enforcement of consumer boycotts and they were united in their hatred of the South African Police.⁸⁵ “Whenever I see a white policeman, my immediate thought is, ‘This man is my oppressor,’” said one youth. Together with this, a sizeable section of the youth were also staunchly loathsome of whites, who they perceived as their violent oppressors. “Reconciliation with the whites is too late now,” said one black youth in 1985, “We are the majority and they will be taught that.”⁸⁶

Older black people, as already noted, not only lost control of the youth but, in many cases, were terrified of the roaming politicised teenagers and children.⁸⁷ “I have a 13-year old daughter,” said one parent, “She goes to secret meetings. She won’t tell me where she goes or what she does. I do

⁸² Oliver Tambo Papers: ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Speeches and Statements, 1987: BOX 17.

⁸³ Motau, S., “South Africa’s troubled townships” in *Optima*, vol. 33, no. 4, December, 1985, p. 201.

⁸⁴ Cullen, R. & Wilkinson, R., “The young lions” in *Newsweek*, vol. 106, no. 12, 16 September 1985, p. 13.

⁸⁵ Motau, p. 201.

⁸⁶ Cullen & Wilkinson, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Motau, p. 203.

know she is a good rock-thrower.” Another said: “Before, it was the security police we were afraid of. Now it is our children.”⁸⁸

The young people increasingly refused to obey their seniors, as best seen in the school boycotts. When older people tried to resolve the situation, the teenagers would listen to the adults, but as soon as the adults said something they didn't like they would ignore them. Furthermore, by the mid and late 1980s, youths were not only unafraid of being arrested, on the contrary, it became a status symbol.⁸⁹

With time, as the security forces and conservative black gangs moved in against youth gangsterism, some sections of the black youth increasingly lost patience with the situation and their political elders. Some even started to become increasingly disillusioned with the ANC. The young people wanted fast action and quick results, when this didn't happen, or at least not on the grand political scene, some young blacks grew not only more militant but also impatient and blamed the ANC for not doing enough.⁹⁰

One such black youth said that people like Bishop Tutu were too moderate and that his “moderation serves Botha's ends. We will not stand for it any longer.” Another young militant black teenager said: “We blacks are dying in the streets of Cape Town and the ANC is doing nothing except sitting back in Lusaka twiddling their thumbs.”⁹¹

It is important to remember that the ANC's call to render the country ungovernable implied a definite level of uncoordinated violence. Tambo admitted that the ANC wasn't controlling the upheavals of the country on a “hour-to-hour or day-to-day” basis. He said that the children, and the other militant black people, were doing what he had asked and as such: “We can't tell our children that what they are doing is very dangerous. They are sustained by a hatred of the system.”⁹²

⁸⁸ Cullen & Wilkinson, p. 13.

⁸⁹ Motau, p. 203.

⁹⁰ Cullen & Wilkinson, p. 14.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Clifton, T., “‘We will expect a blood bath’ – A warning from exile” in *Newsweek*, Vol. 106, Nr. 12, 16 September 1985, pp. 16.

The ANC's simplistic appraisals of the, apparently, uncontrolled barbarity that was sweeping across the country – in no small way a direct result of the organisation's call on the people to make the country ungovernable – were fast becoming insufficient to satisfy the many analysts and journalists wanting to know where the ANC stood on the topic of violence.

People, inside South Africa and across the world, increasingly wanted to know from the ANC how much of the violence they condoned. To a growing extent, the ANC seemed to have had a split personality. On the one hand the ANC tried to hold higher moral ground than the prime anti-apartheid body and on the other, it was waging a violent strategy against South Africa's political establishment. The necklace-issue soon emphasised the tightrope the ANC walked.

On April 13th 1986, Winnie Mandela, wife of jailed Nelson Mandela, made one of the most controversial statements in the history of the ANC. Speaking at a rally at Munsieville, near Krugersdorp,⁹³ Winnie, as always, covered by local and foreign journalists, told the large crowd: "With our boxes of matches and our necklaces we shall liberate this country."⁹⁴

Her pronouncement sent shock waves throughout South Africa and the world. Nelson Mandela's wife was not only openly condoning these brutal killings, she was in fact telling the people that it would give them their political freedom. The Government gained a lot of propaganda mileage from her statement. As far as they were concerned this proved that the radical blacks were in fact barbaric killers. Some in the Government believed that the statement confirmed their reasons for oppressing the ANC.⁹⁵

Meanwhile the ANC was totally caught off guard and stunned by Winnie's statement. In fact her pronouncement served to throw the ANC-leadership into a diplomatic calamity. They immediately sent word to her that she should remain quiet and refrain from making public statements. But the damage to the international image of the ANC had already been done. Winnie's pronouncement was widely reported in Europe and the United States where, as Nelson Mandela's wife, she was

⁹³ Bridgland, F., *Katiza's journey – beneath the surface of South Africa's shame*, p. 19.

⁹⁴ "Suffer the Children – child abuse for revolutionary end in South Africa." A report by the International Freedom Foundation. Washington. 1987.

⁹⁵ Gilbey, E., *The lady – the life and times of Winnie Mandela*, p. 146.

quite famous and, as was the case in South Africa, the Americans and Europeans, knowing what a necklace was thanks to the media, reeled back in shocked.⁹⁶

Suddenly the world community and international media started to examine the ANC's stance on the use of necklacing, realising that the ANC had never really, openly, discussed the issue. What was the ANC's policy on the use of necklaces; did the ANC condone their use? Was it in fact an ANC method of fighting apartheid or did they not care that their supporters were murdering people in this way?⁹⁷

The ANC-leadership in Lusaka was caught in a Catch 22. After having called on the masses to render the country ungovernable, the ANC couldn't now start criticising the means the people used to attain that end. If they criticised the necklacing, their supporters in South Africa might understand it as being a condemnation of them and of what they were doing to help the ANC destroy apartheid and consequently might even turn their backs on the organisation. On the other hand, if they condoned it or simply said nothing, the ANC could lose a lot of its international status, and of course the South African Government would have a field day. As already pointed out, a section of the militant youth was becoming increasingly disgruntled with the ANC-in exile, which they felt were not doing enough to end apartheid. So if the ANC condemned what the young radicals did, the youth might become even more disillusioned with their faraway political leaders.

As such Oliver Tambo didn't condemn the necklacing murders too wholeheartedly. He argued that it was difficult to criticise the brutality of his own supporters while that of the minority regime was so much worse.⁹⁸

Not everybody in the ANC was against the necklace-method. One editor of *Sechaba*, the ANC's official publication, said that "necklacing is part and parcel of that process that is cleansing the black residential areas of black informers..."⁹⁹ Years later, Chris Hani, who had been a senior executive in the ANC leadership, spoke about the necklace killings: "People are saying that the

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Bridgland, p. 19.

⁹⁹ Video-documentary: "South Africa: a face seldom seen / a voice seldom heard – in search of moderation." Produced by UCOM. [No further information available.]

ANC didn't make its voice heard at the time to condemn the necklace murders, I can't recall, but it was never our method... And later on we joined in condemning the method of necklacing – I mean as an organisation.”¹⁰⁰

Because the ANC could neither, fully, condemn nor condone necklacing, their explanations on the subject were usually long. In 1986 Chris Hani explained the organisation's rationale. He said that because pro-establishment blacks, like policemen, lived in the same township as the radical blacks, these *collaborators* acted as “conduit through which information about our activities, about our plans [have] been passed to the enemy.”

Hani said that this greatly frustrated the programs and goals of the liberation movement, hence: “The necklace was a weapon devised by the oppressed themselves to remove this cancer from our society, the cancer of collaboration of the puppets. It is not a weapon of the ANC. It is a weapon of the masses themselves to cleanse the townships from the very disruptive and even lethal activities of the puppets and collaborators. We do understand our people when they use the necklace because it is an attempt to render our areas and country ungovernable, to make the enemy's access to information very difficult. But we are saying here our people must be careful... But I refuse to condemn our people when they mete out their own traditional forms of justice to those who collaborate. I understand their anger. Why should they be as cool as icebergs, when they are being killed every day?... As I say we understand why the necklace has been used. We know even the negative and positive aspects of the necklace... The necklace has been used against those who have been actively collaborating with the enemy. We say the movement should be vigilant to ensure that whatever sentence is passed on anybody, it is a result of participation by the revolutionary elements of our struggle.”¹⁰¹

Hani also said that when people's courts dealt with cases involving collaborators “some of our best cadres” had to be present so as to prevent these proceedings to “degenerate into kangaroo

¹⁰⁰ Video-documentary: “Ulibambe Lingashoni – hold up the sun – the ANC and popular power in the making.” Episode 5: ‘Not the kings and generals – 1983-1990.’ Director: M. Molete. Distributor: Ster-Kinekor. 1993.

¹⁰¹ *Further Submission and responses by the ANC to questions raised by the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, 12 May 1997*, p.11.

justice.”¹⁰² But even when these so-called people’s courts were presided over by, supposedly, experienced cadres their barbarity was shocking. In Port Elizabeth, during 1985, a group of youths formed a street committee under the banner of *people’s power* and unleashed a reign of fear throughout the area. They were so brutal that the ANC-in exile specially ordered a group to infiltrate the country and to bring the situation under control. The ANC group found the five firebrands and necklaced them all together, at the same time, in a mass execution.¹⁰³

The necklace-murders, and the organisation’s reluctant condemnation of it, threw a shadow over the ANC’s standing. It haunted the ANC into the late 1990s. In its, second, submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission the ANC argued that it did not approve of all the methods employed by its supporters during the 1980s and that already during that decade it made its disapproval clear. “But the ANC leadership refused, and will always, refuse to condemn those who believed that they were part of the struggle for liberation led by the ANC and the UDF, and were making their contribution by ridding communities of informers and those amongst them who directly collaborated in apartheid violence.”¹⁰⁴

The growing image of the uncontrollable black youth was made abundantly clear, in 1985, at a funeral of four men who had died while rigging a bomb to use on the homes of so-called collaborators. As the large crowd of people was leaving the funeral, one group grabbed a curious onlooker and, without any reason, claimed that he was a spy for the security services. The group beat the man with whips and clubs and then poured petrol over him. Then, while they were trying to set him alight, Bishop Tutu, who was attending the funeral, intervened.

He shouted at the group that they should desist and that this uncontrolled behaviour was detrimental to the struggle. Tutu then literally dragged the injured man into a car, which took him to safety. The youths were angry and disappointed by Tutu’s intervention. They demanded to know if the Bishop didn’t believe in the fairness of an eye-for-an-eye. Tutu said he would never condone the murder of anybody and wanted to know if these young people didn’t respect them as

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰³ Pottinger, p. 320.

¹⁰⁴ *Further Submission and responses by the ANC to questions raised by the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, 12 May 1997*, p.10.

their leaders. The group, unwillingly, said that they did.¹⁰⁵ Although this was a dramatic incident, underlying it was a far more serious situation. Young black people were becoming increasingly disillusioned with their leaders and the struggle as waged by the ANC-in exile.

When keeping in mind that the general populace was responsible for the management of alternative structures and that these were settled in unstable township-communities coupled with an atmosphere of uncertainty and social insecurity, the alternative structures lent themselves to exploitation by opportunistic individuals for personal gain. As already noted, this scenario, where Organs of People's Power degenerated into common criminality and gangsterism, occurred throughout the existence of the strategy.

But, a series of events in Soweto, which eventually grew into a public scandal and ultimately a crisis for the executive leadership of the ANC, dramatically emphasised the long-term danger inherent in the ANC's incitement of the masses. For a number of reasons this scandal made international headlines and was not the result of a secret Government plan or a set up by the security agencies to discredit the ANC.

Because of her marriage to Nelson Mandela, arguably the most famous prisoner of the 20th century and because of her own political abilities, Winnie Mandela was a particularly influential individual in the political context of the 1980s. Specifically Winnie Mandela, or as she was generally known in the country, Winnie, had a large following among the politically active black youth. The black masses that supported the ANC regarded Mrs. Mandela as the country's matriarch, she was usually referred to by her supporters as the *Mother of the Nation*. But her icon-status was to be seriously blemished.

When, in 1986, she resettled in Soweto, the youth steadily flocked to her. Specifically young black men would go to her home and many spent nights in the rooms at the back of her house. Many of these youths needed a place to hide from the security forces or were destitute and had no money. She fed them and even sent some to school. Her home quickly became a shelter for the Soweto youth. Winnie, realizing how politically active and militant the youth in Soweto were, and of

¹⁰⁵ Whitmore (et al). "A new test for Tutu" in Newsweek. vol. CVI. no. 4. 22 July 1985. p. 30

how excited these notoriously aggressive youngsters were about the street committees and how desperately they wanted to be organised, saw an opportunity to strengthen her own local power base.¹⁰⁶

Winnie suggested to the young men that they organise a club, a soccer club. It was called the Mandela United Football Club. Her girls in her entourage formed a netball team and called themselves the Mandela Sisters. They all wore gold tracksuits, with green and black trimmings – the colours of the ANC.¹⁰⁷ The young men, some still very much boys, adored her, calling her ‘Mummy.’¹⁰⁸ She was a strict matriarch and if a boy neglected to follow her house rules he would be whipped by the other youths, and by Winnie herself.¹⁰⁹

The local youth were ecstatic about the soccer club and that Winnie was involved in it. The parents of the children slowly became concerned as their children spent more and more time with the club and at Winnie’s house. Eventually parents became downright suspicious as many children started to spend days and nights there. When parents went to see Mrs. Mandela to tell her that she should send their children home and that there was no reason why their children should stay with her, Winnie explained that she was better equipped to care for them financially. So the parents would return home without their children.¹¹⁰

The group of children, specifically the boys, became increasingly elusive. They roamed the streets of Soweto recruiting new members for Winnie’s club. They warned those that didn’t want to join that they would spread rumours about them, that they would say they were police-informers and that that was why they couldn’t join Winnie’s group.¹¹¹ When it became known that the boys could only leave Winnie’s home with express permission, rumours, innuendo and gossip started to spread about what was going on behind the walls at Winnie’s house.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Gilbey, p. 150.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

Some boys did leave her home and told stories of what was really going on. They spoke of Winnie's drinking bouts; there were stories that people were being beaten, whipped and even hacked to pieces there; innuendo abounded of a car going from Winnie's house stashed with corpses; there were rumours that club members' first chore for the day was to scrub the blood off the walls where the nightly atrocities took place; then there were macabre rumours about witchcraft, stories that Winnie kept body parts in her refrigerator to use in bizarre rituals. According to the stories, Winnie not only knew about everything, she ordered these things to be done and personally oversaw that her orders were being carried out.¹¹³

These supposed football-players were also used by Winnie as an active combat group and street committee. They assaulted people and were seen flaunting and using AK47s. Winnie's street committee proved to be extremely aggressive. They would storm into the home of a victim, grab him or her, shove the victim into a vehicle and drive to Winnie's house where the actual interrogation took place. There they would kick, punch, slap or whip their victim; they would shove the victim's head into a plastic bag or a bucket of water; hang them from the ceiling; carve wounds in the victim's flesh and then rub battery acid into their wounds. Another popular method of torture was the so-called 'breakdown,' where the group would throw a victim into the air and leave them to hit the floor. Finally, the supposed victim would usually confess to whatever the group accused him or her of.¹¹⁴

The Mandela United Football Club finally became entwined in a violent feud with pupils from the local Daliwanga School and the two groups clashed violently. Finally, the whole affair was brought to a climax in the middle of 1988, when teenagers from the Daliwanga side, slipped into Winnie's house, nobody being home at the time, and set it alight.¹¹⁵

More important than the actual fire was that nobody did anything to put it out. Neither her neighbours nor anyone in the crowd that gathered to watch the house burn did anything to save it. The people, standing alongside the dispatched firemen and paramedics, just watched as Winnie's

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.157.

¹¹⁵ Bridgland, p.46.

house burnt down. The message was clear – the powerful Soweto-society had lost their respect for Winnie Mandela.¹¹⁶

However, Winnie's violent mob kept spreading their reign of terror, but things finally came to a head during December 1988 when four young black boys, who had once been members of Winnie's group, were abducted by the Mandela United Football Club from a vicarage in Soweto.¹¹⁷

One of the boys was Stompie Sepei, a 14-year old, around whom the eventual crisis centred. The vicarage was that of Paul Verryn, a white Methodist priest, who was involved in a long lasting feud with Winnie.¹¹⁸ These boys were then taken to her house¹¹⁹ where they were accused of having had sex with Verryn and of being informers for the security forces.¹²⁰

They denied these allegations and were tortured. The boys were slapped, punched, kicked and hit with bottles and shoes, when they fell they were kicked. Stompie Sepei was tossed into the air again and again and left to drop to the floor.¹²¹ The four boys, badly bleeding by now, were ordered to clean up their blood from the room. Someone poured water over Sepei and he was beaten some more. He finally confessed and said that he was a mole for the security services. Later that night the youths again fell on Stompie and beat him some more.¹²² A few days later Stompie had still not recovered from these beatings, he couldn't hold his food down and was constantly vomiting. A doctor was brought in to examine him. The physician found that he was brain damaged. It was then that a decision was taken to murder Stompie. He was told to collect his clothes and then tied up, gagged and thrown into the boot of a car.¹²³

Eventually Stompie's badly decomposed body was found where it had been dumped in the veld. Bruises covered his whole body and some of his bones were broken. Although the injuries to his

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.47.

¹¹⁷ *Sunday Times*, 19 May 1991.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Gilbey, p.185.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.186.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.187.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

skull were severe enough to have killed him – they didn't. Stompie's whole body was covered in the blood oozing from his neck. His throat had been slit repeatedly; the slashes were so deep that the blade had penetrated his chest cavity. He had bled to death.¹²⁴

Winnie Mandela's township endeavours were becoming increasingly erratic and volatile. So much so that it became apparent to various liberation leaders that the movement could no longer be associated with her without losing support both inside the country and abroad. After her Orlando West house was torched a Mandela Crisis Committee was formed at the behest of Tambo. Officially their task was to assist in restoring her home, unofficially but more importantly to the ANC, they had to try and tame her and her infamous Mandela United Football Club.¹²⁵ The group comprised of such powerful figures as the unionist Cyril Ramaphosa and the Rev. Frank Chikane.¹²⁶

In Soweto a secret meeting was held, attended by 150 representatives of the many different organised bodies in Soweto, to discuss Winnie's case. The assembly resolved that she was no longer worthy of sharing her husband's surname and decreed that from then on everyone had to refer to her by her maiden name, Winnie Madikizela. And that from then on everybody had to refer to her so-called football club as the "Winnie Football Club."¹²⁷

Winnie cared little for this disciplinary Committee and did not even attend the assembly instead she sent some of her boys who showed up with guns. The general consensus reached at the assembly was that the Soweto community, and the progressive movement at large, had to ostracise the *Mother of the Nation*.¹²⁸ As news of Winnie Mandela's worsening behaviour reached Tambo, he was reportedly aghast and exclaimed: "What must I do? We can't control her. The ANC can't control her. We tried to control her..."¹²⁹

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹²⁵ Bridgland, p. 80.

¹²⁶ Seekings, J., *The UDF – A history of the United Democratic Front in South Africa: 1983-1991*, p. 242.

¹²⁷ Bridgland, p. 88.

¹²⁸ Gilbey, p. 198.

Eventually, the Mass Democratic Movement released a statement. In it they expressed their “outrage [for] the reign of terror that the team [Mandela United Football Club] has been associated with.”¹³⁰ Not stopping there, the statement went on to say: “We are of the view that Mrs Mandela has abused the trust and confidence which she has enjoyed over the years... Numerous efforts have been made to reconcile the conflict between Mrs Mandela and the community... On every occasion, Mrs Mandela has chosen to disregard the sentiments of the community.”¹³¹

Eventually after their internal branch disassociated themselves openly from Mrs. Mandela, the ANC leadership in Lusaka followed suit. Oliver Tambo said in a statement: “It is with a feeling of terrible sadness that we consider it necessary to express our reservations about Winnie Mandela’s judgement.”¹³²

The Winnie-saga tested the disciplinary channel of control and communication between Lusaka and South Africa.¹³³ As the Winnie-crisis exemplified, the ANC had a problem when it came to controlling the internal situation. Although the masses reacted to the ANC’s call to render the country ungovernable, the long term risk of the people becoming totally uncontrollable, irrespective of who governed in Pretoria, was now becoming all too feasible – a situation where people, without clear political direction or organisational discipline, were ungovernable for the sake of being ungovernable. If the people were simply destroying the country without any real political direction or discipline, in time, the ANC could eventually lose control of its followers – in the long run its own strategy could implode on itself. As this crisis emphasised, the ANC lacked able and sound leadership for the management of the practical implication of its strategies.

Furthermore, if someone like Winnie Mandela, being a famous ANC-supporter, could defy Lusaka and her revered jailed husband, then what about those groupings over which the ANC had even less influence? “The heavy-handed behaviour of the notorious Mandela Football Club, Winnie Mandela’s team of personal bodyguards in Soweto,” wrote Martin J. Murray, “perhaps best

¹³⁰ De Villiers, (ed.), *Truth and Reconciliation Report*, vol. 2, p. 556.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 577.

¹³² Bridgland, p. 120.

¹³³ Seekings, p. 242.

epitomised the grave danger that overlooking and even condoning questionable actions in the name of the 'freedom struggle' could easily degenerate into petty gangsterism."¹³⁴

"But it was the activities of the later waves of young, unconstrained 'Comrades' that ultimately caused the most problems to both the security forces and the African National Congress," Brian Pottinger pointed out, "The Comrades – no matter the talk about 'Young Lions' – were becoming increasingly undisciplined, traumatized, non-ideological and racist. They were just too independent and febrile."¹³⁵

Chris Alden wrote: "The utilisation of the expedient of calling for a 'people's war,' which presented the insurrection within the townships as directly attributed to ANC actions, was a double-edged sword for the organisation.¹³⁶ Only partially in control of events, the status of the revolutionary struggle became tied to the conduct of township rebellion in all its manifestations. Attempts by the ANC and the UDF to reel-in the township youth met with only partial success... the impetus for violence continued to foster militancy within the ranks of the 'comrades.'"¹³⁷

In his book *The Revolution Deferred*, Martin J. Murray, summarized: "In a tragic sense, the popular movement reaped what it had sowed. The bittersweet legacy of years of political upheaval produced what some called a 'lost generation' stranded in social limbo caused by the social disintegration of black communities. Cut loose from their ideological moorings, some... militants drifted toward a precarious existence on the margins of politics. To the extent that the experienced political leadership lost the capacity to instil discipline into the swelled ranks of the 'comrades,' the distinction between political activism and indiscriminate thuggery sometimes became blurred... political analysts... blamed a growing 'culture of intolerance' for internecine bloodletting..."¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Murray, M.J., *The revolution deferred*, p.54.

¹³⁵ Pottinger, p. 320.

¹³⁶ Alden, p. 215.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 216.

¹³⁸ Murray, p.54.

By having dragged the general populace into its strategy of destroying the apartheid establishment, the ANC had, to a growing extent during the late 1980s, lost control over the violent chaos that had beset the country. There was a possibility that, in the long run, when the ANC finally was to tell its supporters to stop spreading chaos that after having done it for so long, they would not listen. Although the ANC has never admitted as much, many analysts agree with each other in this appraisal. Furthermore, Dr Beyers Naude, admitted as much to the writer.¹³⁹

Dr Naude said that although the upheavals were partially orchestrated by the ANC with time the wave of upheavals developed their own momentum. He said that because the ANC had its own internal front, the UDF, it was understandable that the wave of dissent in South Africa kept on growing and intensifying, but “as time passed the forces and the upwelling were so violent that there was no stopping it.”¹⁴⁰

He said that that he along with the other leaders of the mass movement started to realise that the situation was becoming uncontrollable and that the chaos was growing increasingly beyond the stabilising influence of any group. “Kyk die momentum was so geweldig gewees,” said Dr Naude, “onself was nie daardeur verras nie, maar ons het besef dat ons dit net nie meer kan beheer nie.” Asked whether this realisation was a factor in prompting the ANC to talk with the Government, Dr Naude said: “I have no doubt that it was a deciding factor...”¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with DR BEYERS NAUDE. 27 June 2000.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 14

POLICE CONDUCT AND THE STATES OF EMERGENCY

Uitenhage, the factory-city near Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape, being the hub of the country's automotive industry can probably best be described as the Detroit of South Africa. On March 21st 1985 some 4000 black people marched off from the old Uitenhage township of Langa to the new KwaNobuhle township to attend a funeral there. The funeral would have taken place the previous day, had the local magistrate not banned it.

There was only one road connecting the two townships and this single route led the procession straight through the white part of town. According to the police the funeral goers were rowdy and had grown increasingly hostile. The police also observed that the large crowd was armed and openly brandished their makeshift weapons of stones, sticks, knobkieries, pipes and knives. The police also noted that the funeral goers were baiting them while spurring each other on by chanting Xhosa slogans of how they were going to "kill the whites". Two police Casspirs with about 20 policemen drew in a vee in front of the marches.¹ When they got only a couple of paces from the police the leader of the large crowd apparently produced a petrol bomb. The police officer in charge discharged a warning shot, which was met by a rain of stones. It was then that the police opened fire. In a few minutes the police, who were not even equipped with non-lethal weapons, fired 41 rounds of lethal SSG buckshot shotgun ammunition, 2 rounds of R1 ammunition and an unknown amount of 9mm rounds. Moments later 20 marchers lay dead and another 23 were wounded. The deceased included five women, nine children who were 16 or younger and one victim who was only 11 years old. At least 15 of the killed people were shot through the back.²

News of the Uitenhage shooting, which had taken place on the same date as the Sharpeville massacre 25 years before, spread like wildfire and made headlines in South Africa and throughout

¹ Du Toit, A. & Manganyi, N. (eds.), *Political violence and the struggle in South Africa*, p.136

² *Ibid.*

the world. Shortly after the massacre the minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange, stated that he condoned the action taken by the police and that they had acted correctly. He even visited Uitenhage three days later and again repeated that the police had not acted unjustly.

Three PFP members of parliament, including Helen Suzman, also went to Uitenhage to do their own fact-finding. The PFP group discovered serious disparities between the government condoned official story and eye-witness accounts of what happened. For example, they asked why the armed police in their armoured vehicles were scared of the crowd, irrespective of its size, when they were only armed with sticks and pipes. And even if someone had thrown a petrol bomb, it would not even have dented the police Casspirs.³

The PFP noted that the funeral goers were initially traveling by minibus, but that the police stopped them and ordered them to get out and walk. When they complied, they were again prevented from going any further by the police. Suzman noted that it seemed strange to her that people who allegedly wanted to invade a town “would take a taxi” to do so. It seemed to the PFP that, by the police’s own admission they used maximum force as their first option when they broke up the crowd. If so what about all the police’s riot control training and non-lethal gear as well as assurances given by the police chief that minimum force would be used to disperse crowds. Suzman wrote that she was astonished that after the shooting the police did not even inform the relatives of those killed of what had happened.⁴

Under mounting pressure from different corners at home and abroad PW Botha appointed a one-man commission of inquiry in the person of Judge Donald Kannemeyer, to investigate the shooting. Captain André Alfonso Goosen said to the Judge that from the start of the year violence in the region had escalated and that it worsened during black funerals. The funeral in question was originally to be held on Saturday the 20th, but he had asked the local magistrate to ban it and move it to the next day. This followed a magisterial order that specifically prohibited the holding of funerals on Saturdays and Sundays. This order was still effective when the second was determined. The result was that confusion was eminent and almost unavoidable. The authorities had the SABC

³ Suzman, H., *In no uncertain terms*, p. 236-237.

⁴ *Ibid.*

broadcast the funeral order to try and clear up the confusion – but for some reason they only had it broadcast on the ‘white’ radio services and not also on the Xhosa-service – and not in Xhosa, for that matter.

Even though funerals were permitted there were some definite rules and regulations to be adhered to. These included that the hearse had to follow the shortest route from the funeral parlour to the church and from there to the cemetery. The body of the deceased could only be carried by a mechanically powered vehicle.⁵ No march on foot was allowed to precede or follow the funeral procession and the funeral goers were only allowed to travel in vehicles. No placards were allowed at the funeral. At no time was the funeral service to turn into a political meeting. A funeral could be banned under Article 64 of the above noted 1982 ISA. Capt. Goosen used these stipulations to ban the funeral in question because a work stoppage was scheduled for the same day as the funeral. Goosen said that a funeral and work stoppage would have disturbed the delivering of “noodsaaklike dienste, asook nywerhede.”⁶

After he heard more than 70 testimonies over 4 weeks which filled some 2000 pages, Judge Kannemeyer compiled his findings.⁷ In the final report, generally known as the Kannemeyer Report, the Judge drew some of the following conclusions:

- There was “no reason to believe that, when people originally gathered... their intention was to attack the White inhabitants of Uitenhage”.

Because:

- “... no evidence” existed of “any organisation or arrangement to carry out an attack” and furthermore the people had “gathered at random” and although some marchers knew the funeral was banned others did not. Furthermore, the composition of the groups led the Judge to conclude that the funeral goers were not planning to attack Whites. He reasoned that “the ages and sexes” of those killed made it “difficult to

⁵ Anon, “Naskrif oor Kannemeyer” in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, winter, 1985, no. 4, p.18.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Anon, “Naskrif oor Kannemeyer” in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, winter, 1985, no. 4, p. 19.

accept that they were part of an organised body going to attack the White population". Kannemeyer also did not attach much merit to the above noted chant about murdering Whites. The Commission also noted that the murderous chant started only after Warrant Officer Pentz and policemen on his Casspir made provocative remarks to the crowd.⁸ The police shouted at the ensuing crowd: "Waar is die klippe, waar is die klippe? Ginisela! Gibisela!". And: "Ons gaan julle wys vandag!"⁹

Kannemeyer also noted that if the experienced police took the chant that followed seriously as a war cry then it was because Capt. Fouché "subjectively believed" it to be so.¹⁰

- As for the threat of petrol bombs, the Judge found that no bombs were thrown "or even set alight," but he did note that these weapons were indeed there. He based this on the fact that the necks of two bottles were discovered at the scene and that "the paper spills in the necks came from the same sheet of newspaper, petrol was present on both spills". As such, he found that those funeral goers who carried these two bottles "anticipated violence or resistance of some sort and were ready for it".¹¹
- According to Law and Order Minister Le Grange's findings the police were "suddenly surrounded and pelted with stones, sticks, and other missiles including petrol bombs". The police could not succeed in giving any evidence of this and therefore Judge Kannemeyer dismissed this explanation by the police. According to eyewitness accounts of the incident immediately after the shooting the police started to scatter stones among the dead and injured to create the false impression that they had come under attack. Although the Judge did not accept the police's story that they had been attacked by stone-throwers, but he accepted that some stones must have been thrown. He also, however, dismissed the view that the police tried to cover-up

⁸ Kannemeyer, D., "Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the incident which occurred on the 21 March 1985 at Uitenhage", RP 74, 1985., pp. 149-150. (Hereafter referred to only as The Kannemeyer Report)

⁹ Anon, "Naskrif oor Kannemeyer" in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, winter, 1985, no. 4, p.19.

¹⁰ Kannemeyer, D., "Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the incident which occurred on the 21 March 1985 at Uitenhage", RP 74, 1985., pp. 149-150.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-153.

by strewing stones among the bodies.¹² In his testimony before the commission, Lt. Fouché initially could not recall whether he decided to open fire before or after the stone throwing started. He could also not explain why, if the crowd did indeed pelt the Casspirs with stones why there were none within an 18m radius of the vehicle, nor could he explain why there were no stones on or inside the Casspirs. Fouché did suggest that maybe some of the stones might have bounced off the Casspir. The Judge was not impressed with that type of explanation. Later, Lt. Fouché admitted that the Casspirs were under no stone throwing attack whatsoever.¹³ Discussing the carrying of weapons by the crowd, Kannemeyer found that the police's story that the crowd was brandishing vast arrays of weapons was "exaggerated" – also that there was "no suggestion that dangerous weapons... were found on any of the dead or wounded" underlining this reasoning added "Nor can the evidence of a rain of stones be accepted..."

- Keeping the above in mind, the Judge also found that the crowd was not totally without blame, as they were not as "quiet and peaceful" as the funeral goers alleged. This is based on testimonies of policemen, who told how petrified they were of the large crowd. "They were clearly deeply disturbed and frightened," noted Kannemeyer, "by what they saw". Mentioning the testimony of one policeman who told that he was so scared that he cowered on the floor of Casspir, the Judge said that, "No man would admit to cowardice of this sort were it not true".¹⁴ One policeman, Sgt. Gerhard Thomas 'GT' Stumke who had 13 years experience, testified: "I was frightened when I saw that crowd coming, your Worship. I shouted to Adjutant Pentz when were we getting the command to shoot?"¹⁵
- The Judge stated that when he investigated the actions of the police he tried not to "adopt an armchair critic attitude," but rather tried to place himself in their shoes. He then went on to note that the "crowd here was big enough to have overwhelmed the

¹² Du Toit & Manganyi, p. 137.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ The Kannemeyer Report, p. 151-153.

¹⁵ Anon, "Naskrif oor Kannemeyer" in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, winter, 1985, no. 4, p.19.

Casspirs and their crews, if the police had adopted a passive attitude". He therefore stated that although many have suggested that policemen traveling in armoured vehicles had nothing to fear "this is not so" and that a "determined crowd" could greatly damage these vehicles even without any "conventional weapons".¹⁶

- Kannemeyer found that the police did indeed try to stop and disperse the crowd before opening fire. On the question of whether Capt. Fouché had given the order to open fire, was justified the Judge noted: "He, of course, knew that the only ammunition he and his men had was lethal. The order to fire would lead to fatalities". But the one-man Commission then added that Fouché had not only to consider the safety of Uitenhage's residents but also of his fellow policemen and that this consideration had led to the incident: "the persons of policemen had been the targets of attack".¹⁷ On this subject the Judge found that Fouché's "decision to make a stand where he did and his subsequent order to open fire were understandable and that he cannot be criticised therefore".
- In his final conclusions, the Judge found that if the funerals as they were originally planned, had "not been prohibited the incident would not have occurred". What was more, the Judge found that the order banning the funeral was "obtained on an improper basis".¹⁸
- On the issue of why the police did not use any non-lethal gear before shooting at the crowd, the Judge found that the Uitenhage police "had no teargas, rubber bullets or birdshot which are the three standard types of equipment used in riot control". "No birdshot was issued either in Uitenhage or in Port Elizabeth and none had been issued for about a week prior to the incident".¹⁹ The investigation into this aspect uncovered a small but confusing maze-like chain of command. Apparently Deputy-Officer Meyer issued the *hard* weapons, but said to the Commission that he only did so after

¹⁶ The Kannemeyer Report, pp. 149-164.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ The Kannemeyer Report, pp. 149-164.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

being ordered a week before by the Station Chief, Maj. Kühn. The latter said that he only passed down a directive sent by Lt.-Col. Frederik Pretorius, the district commandant. Pretorius stressed that Kühn must have misunderstood. He testified that he told Kühn that the Casspirs should be equipped with *hard* weapons and ammunition, but that that should not have been understood as a ban on non-lethal gear.²⁰ The Judge, sensing a runaround was not impressed. “For riot control police to be in a position where, if they are compelled to take action,” Kannemeyer noted, “the death of rioters was all but inevitable, is one which never should have been allowed to occur”. But in the end the question of who was to blame for issuing only SSG and no birdshot to the Uitenhage police could not be determined.²¹

- The Judge concluded that blame for the deaths of the people “cannot be attributed... to any one person” but added nonetheless that if the funerals had not been banned to start with “the procession would have passed through Uitenhage without incident” and “Had proper equipment been available the gathering may well have been dispersed with little or no harm to the persons involved”. Kannemeyer stated as an afterthought that incidents like the one at Uitenhage could only be prevented in the future if the police were “fully and properly equipped for their task”.²²

Although the Kannemeyer Report was greatly awaited it proved to be something of an anticlimax. Kannemeyer did not succeed in pointing his judicial finger of blame at any specific person or group nor did he successfully uncover answers to important questions such as clearing up the dispute as to who was actually responsible for withdrawing the Uitenhage police’s non-lethal riot gear and why it was permitted. One anonymous journalist wrote of disappointment with the Commission: “I mean... your worship. The goal of your investigation was to find out if someone transgressed and who... I am left with the impression that the bureaucracy of a state department confounded you.”²³ Helen Suzman, who actively spearheaded her own investigations into the

²⁰ Anon, “Naskrif oor Kannemeyer”, p. 19.

²¹ The Kannemeyer Report, pp. 149-164.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Anon, “Naskrif oor Kannemeyer”, p. 19.p. 19.

shootings, wrote that she was “very disappointed” with the Kannemeyer Report as it was “inconclusive”.²⁴

Evidence rejected by the Judge, included the large number of wounds on the dead and wounded as evidence that the shooting continued for longer than it should have. Kannemeyer found that that was due to “reaction time” in other words the time between seeing the crowd retreating and giving the order to cease firing. He also reminded people that a single cartridge of SSG could inflict a great deal of harm.²⁵

After the incident and the publishing of the Kannemeyer Report about 70 summonses were served on the Minister of Law and Order and the police involved, claiming a total of R2 000 000. The plaintiffs included dependants of the deceased and the injured survivors.²⁶

As for the white community of Uitenhage it would seem that the shooting and, not surprisingly, the fabricated official doomsday story of how the black crowd of funeral goers was marching to exterminate the whites, bolstered white feelings of suspicion for the local black people. After the shooting, teachers at the local school noted how the children started to speak of “kaffirs” after they were taught not to do so. When a journalist asked a teacher what the school was doing about it, she said: “Nothing, we feel just like that.”²⁷ Undoubtedly, Uitenhage whites were shocked at what had happened, but they immediately accepted the police’s version of events.

Although the incident did not form part, on either side, of a political conspiracy and although it did not disrupt white party politics, it did have grave and far-reaching repercussions. The Government and most white South Africans might have thought that thanks to Kannemeyer, justice had been more or less done and that the whole unfortunate incident was now safely wrapped up. But, that was not the way black Eastern Cape residents viewed the situation. The tragedy at Uitenhage, which was over in a few minutes, was the spark that ignited the volatile province.

²⁴ Suzman, p. 239.

²⁵ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute of Race Relations 1985*, p. 491-492.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Anon, “Naskrif oor Kannemeyer”, p. 18.

The black community met the news of the Uitenhage shooting with a sense of helplessness, injustice, fury and outrage, which boiled over into the violence of retribution and reprisal. As news of the tragedy spread throughout the region so too did a frenzy of spontaneous violence. For two days after the killing Uitenhage, the country's automotive production centre, was dead silent with the black workforce staying away from their jobs. The weekend following the police shooting, the homes of 17 Uitenhage policemen were firebombed. Police vehicles and armoured personnel carriers crisscrossed the townships and formed roadblocks at all the entrances. Nonetheless, outraged black groups killed any black policeman and town councilors they could find. All meetings in Uitenhage were summarily banned and the security police warned residents not to assemble in groups of more than four. After some shop owners did not want to support a makeshift stayaway their shops were looted. In Tunis, a nearby township, 18 houses were burnt down.²⁸

By September 1985 a poll conducted amongst blacks in the Eastern Cape showed that 70% of blacks were against the police. 61% believed that the police was against all blacks. Almost 50% of them believed that violence was a justified way to demonstrate their discontent with the status quo.²⁹

After accusing them of being Botha-collaborators and sellouts, angry black mobs burnt seven. On March 24th some 35 000 people attended the mass funeral of the victims of the Uitenhage shooting. The police and army threw a narrow cordon around the whole of Uitenhage and the funeral remained peaceful. After just three days of rioting the local townships were ablaze. Petrol bombs had blackened the streets, blockades barricaded thoroughfares and billows of smoke still went up from the smouldering cars, lorries, houses and shops, which had been set alight because they belonged to suspected *collaborators*. Armed white civilians could be seen standing guard in the residential suburbs that were closest to the townships.³⁰

One journalist called for Le Grange's immediate dismissal. He sited three reasons: One, that the Minister apparently could not control the police. Secondly that he did nothing to control certain

²⁸ Cawthra, G., *Brutal Force: The Apartheid War Machine*, p. 103; Murray, M. (ed.), *South Africa: Time of Agony, Time of Destiny*, p. 280-281.

²⁹ *Die Volksblad*. 5 September 1985.

³⁰ Cawthra, p. 103; Murray (ed), p. 280-281.

“underlying approaches” of the police to riot control. Thirdly, that Le Grange gave false information to parliament.³¹ Whereas the Minister of Law and Order was initially quick and very public in his endorsement of and support for the Uitenhage police and the way they handled the whole incident, the Kannemeyer investigations proved his unwavering trust in the force to be misplaced. The Commissioner of Police, Gen. PJ Coetzee, defended what turned out to be Le Grange’s erroneous statements, by saying that the police were to blame for any inaccurate information relayed by the Minister. The General explained that the police tried to give as fair an account as possible to Le Grange in the limited time available to them. Furthermore, Coetzee said that it should have been clear to any “objective listener” that there would be “shortcomings”.³²

Referring to the fact that he was misinformed, Le Grange said to the journalist and academic, Herman Giliomee that it was upsetting [“onstellend om dit moet verneem”]. He said that there were definitely aspects of the incident with which he was not at all pleased. [“Daar is aspekte rakende die departementele optrede by Uitenhage,” said the Minister, “wat my verontrus, waaroor ek glad nie gelukkig is nie”].³³

What ought to have upset the Minister most was that only two weeks before the shooting, he had travelled to the area to see for himself that the police had the right equipment and that everything was as it should have been. But, some fourteen days later the Uitenhage incident took place. He said it represented a flagrant defiance of orders and that he was very upset about it. [“Dit was ‘n flagrante verontagsaming van baie duidelike instruksies... Ek is onsteld daaroor. Ek is werklik onsteld daaroor”].] But the Minister added rather mildly that it was important to remember that the policemen were only people and that it was therefore understandable that “such an isolated incident had taken place.”³⁴ This was good enough for Kannemeyer who accepted that Le Grange did not have an “improper motive” when he made those initial statements but had just misinformed by subordinates.³⁵

³¹ Anon, “Naskrif oor Kannemeyer”, p. 18.

³² Cooper (et al), “Security” in the *South African Race Relations Survey 1985*, p.490.

³³ Giliomee, H., “Onderhoud met Louis le Grange, 16 April 1985” in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, Herfs, 1985, no. 3, p. 16

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Cooper (et al), p. 490.

As for members of the Uitenhage police, there was little remorse to be found. “Man, we know we did the right thing,” said a local policeman to a journalist during the investigation, “whatever the judge says.”³⁶ Indeed, it would seem that the policeman’s self-assurance was not misplaced, nor, it would seem, did the Minister have to be as upset as he said he was. Although Kannemeyer did direct some stern words towards the police and although Le Grange repeatedly said how upset he was about having his instructions disregarded, there were no dismissals, nor did anyone involved resign from the police. Le Grange remained in office.³⁷

Diplomatically, the Uitenhage shooting was a catastrophe and further blemished South Africa’s image, never mind the police’s international reputation.*

Not too long after the Uitenhage shooting the American journalist Ted Koppel asked President Botha to comment on the shooting. The NP leader tossed the matter back in to the realm of the Total Onslaught, telling Koppel and his global television audience that: “You have a fight between the superpowers of the world, the United States and Soviet Russia. And they are both trying to influence Africa and also South Africa.” Embellishing the familiar rhetoric he explained how the banned South African Communist Party (SACP) was controlling the ANC. “And these people get their instructions from the Communist party... They want to make the country ungovernable, and we’re not going to allow it.” Botha’s rather evasive if not curious remarks would make it seem, according to the president, that far from being an accidental incident as Judge Kannemeyer had found, it was a calculated clash between state forces and communist zealots. According to the president, more of the same could be expected, as this was the way he was prepared to deal with such incidents.³⁸

“As far as we are concerned it is war, plain and simple.” said Louis le Grange.³⁹ Although these fire and brimstone statements should not receive too much undue attention, as it was most of them were made in moments of aggravation or political metaphor. The fact is that this statement and

³⁶ Anon, p. 18.

³⁷ Leach, G., *South Africa – no easy path to peace*, p. 169.

* See Section 3.

³⁸ Koppel, T. & Gibson, K., *Nightline – history in the making of television*, p. 88.

³⁹ Murray, H., “Louis le Grange” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1984, pp.28-31.

many similar statements were made and that these sort of statements typified the Government's actual view and handling of the internal upheavals for many commentators.⁴⁰

The actions of the Government's security forces during the States of Emergency were an important example of the above, and specifically the conduct of the police. Internally, the police force was the Nationalists' most important pillar of strength – in essence, the police was the white minority government's first line of defence against those who threatened the system that kept it in power. It was also the police force that had to physically implement their policies and indeed, without the police to physically enforce it, States of Emergency or any other such measures would not have been worth the paper they were written on.⁴¹

When one mentions the police, most people will automatically conjure up the familiar image of the blue uniformed bobby-on-the-beat. It is important to note that the police during this period was an extensive organisation. Founded in 1913, by 1987 there were 951 police stations and border posts and some 60 950 police personnel, racially broken up into 32 754 whites and 28 196 non-whites. The SAP was made up of 24 sections:

⁴⁰ Prior, p. 189.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The Uniform Branch	Security Branch
Radio Control and Patrol Services	Special Units
Detective Branch	Quartermaster
Diamond and Gold Branch	Building Branch
Commercial Branch	Police Band
SA Narcotics Branch	Museum
Murder and Robbery Units	Chaplain and Social Services
Stock Theft Units ⁴²	Reserve Police Force (civilian volunteers)
Criminal Branch	Police Reserve (ex-policemen)
Forensic Science Laboratory	Junior Reservists (schoolboys trained in police duties and issued with firearms who served during holidays) ⁴³
Financial Section	
SA Criminal Bureau	
Horses and Dogs	

Although all sections were involved and affected by the violent political turmoil of the period, those most intensely involved with political violence were the Security Branch and Special Units.

By the 1970s, which saw SOWETO explode into chaos, police heads realised the need for a specialised capability for the control of unrest and rioting. During the 1970s the police were not effectively prepared to handle uprisings such as those it had faced in 1976.⁴⁴ The police officers who were drawn to help suppress the uprisings were ordinary rank and file constables who, without the necessary special training, were prone to fall back on brute force. By the 1980s, as mass political upheavals flared up, unrest policing was separated from ordinary police training. As riot and unrest control became an increasingly central aspect of police duty, growing amounts of funding were allocated to the riot police segment of the police. According to the report of the Truth And Reconciliation Commission (TRC) during the era in question, police riot control “was in line

⁴² Van Pletzen, D. (ed.), *The official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1988/89*, p.260.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ De Villiers, S.(ed.), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, p. 175.

with the state's highly militarised and coordinated approach" to the ANC's so-called people's war.⁴⁵

Contrary to popular belief, not all police headmen clamoured for a State of Emergency. Police Commissioner, Gen. Coetzee, opposed the institution of the first 1985 State of Emergency, favoring the more traditional tried and tested policing methods of infiltration, detention and arrest in dealing with unrest.⁴⁶ But, he was outweighed by other police powerbrokers such as Security Branch head, Maj.Gen. Johan van der Merwe. On the Government's side, in terms of the unrest, one of the most powerful policemen was Maj.Gen. Bert Wandrag, who was in charge of the police's counter-insurgency scheme and strategised in terms of the total onslaught. Shortly before the 1985 State of Emergency came into effect, he argued in favour of "firm action" by police, which practically speaking would somewhat curtail the concept of "minimum force".⁴⁷

Practical and longstanding dilemmas cited by the police themselves and outside analysts surrounding the difficulties of riot control included:

- Severe lack of manpower
- The layout of the townships, with houses and shacks stacked cheek-by-jowl, necessitating penetration on foot and in single file only
- A hot climate, making the wearing of riot gear and visors very uncomfortable, South Africa's warm climate also makes the use of water cannons much less effective
- South African riots were more violent and more dangerous compared to those in Europe
- The fear experienced by young 18 year old policemen – operating in units of 20 or 30 – confronting huge crowds of up to and more than 50 000 people easily led to violent overreaction⁴⁸
- Aggression and agitation from the side of the protestors or rioters
- The racially prejudiced attitudes of the police which entailed a very real right-wing element within police circles

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Cawthra, p. 30.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Jeffery, A., *Riot policing in perspective*, pp. 3-5.

- The abovementioned SOE indemnity clause protecting policemen from any court proceedings brought against them
- Alleged magisterial judicial bias in favour of police officers
- Alleged reluctance of attorney-generals at prosecuting police officers
- An alleged conspiracy-of-silence among the brotherhood of policemen concerning the misconduct of their colleagues⁴⁹

At the end of 1985, an article appeared in the police force's official periodical *Servamus*, which was clearly intended to give an *objective*, and also positive, account of police activities in townships during the States of Emergency. Entitled "Inside South Africa's burning townships (with the SA Police)," TH Troups, a foreign journalist, went on patrol with some riot policemen. After emphasising how South Africa's internal upheavals were triggered by socio-economic calamities and then exploited by radicals who intimidate "ordinary residents" to take part, he moved on to explain the police's bad press. Accordingly the police role as protectors in township violence was "widely ignored."⁵⁰

Subtly working on how non-political the police were, he referred to policemen who had sacrificed their lives in order to save black people, basically from themselves. He quoted an unnamed resident who said: "The police appeared as knights in shining armour, to stop Black destroying Black." Moving on, he explained how black people endured the vast security presence for the greater good, he stated that although Black people did not enjoy "living in a police atmosphere" they also "don't like having their homes and shops burned." Troups then went on to write how disciplined and conscientious the riot police were, noting that they started off with verbal warnings, which according to him were futile, as the crowd didn't listen.⁵¹

Since "minimum force" was the watchword, the police will use firepower "as a last resort". The writer then went on to explain that too much was made of the police's supposed armoured safety. He pointed out that Casspirs were open and "made a tempting target for the bomb-thrower." After

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Troups, T., "Riot – inside South Africa's burning townships (with the South Africa police)," in *Servamus*, November 1985, pp. 10-11.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

this brief reference to the dangers of police work in the townships, he compared Sebokeng to World War II scenes “of bombed-out European cities.” According to him this carnage was the sole responsibility of anti-capitalist radicals. The latter he reasoned destroyed black-shops because these prosperous people were considered to be “capitalist sellouts.” He ended his article by listing all the special talents a riot policeman must have and: “Fortunately for most township residents there are men who have mastered these skills... the lads who will be on riot duty in Tembisa.”⁵² The article was clearly intended to boost police moral and exemplified how the police wanted to be seen. Generally, this differed almost completely from the imagery used by Toups.

During the turbulent 1980s, the police’s image was very bad amongst blacks. This perception was in no small way due to the laws the police enforced. Because, the people regarded the laws made by the politicians in Pretoria to be harsh, unfair and prejudiced, it stands to reason that the people would regard the government’s law enforcers in the same way. In other words as far as the majority of the people were concerned the police force, in effect, became the agents of apartheid.⁵³

The Government vehemently denied that its security forces were used to further political goals. But, as explained in the previous sections, during the mid-1980s, the lines between political security and the law and order were certainly blurred. “The South African Police... are not being used by this government to further their political aims as such,” Minister Louis le Grange explained, “We are there to protect the security of South Africa and to maintain law and order.”⁵⁴ Years after the Botha-era, along with its accompanying rhetoric, had ended, during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings of the 1990s, former SAP General Johan van der Merwe cleared up the issue when he said: “The politicians prostituted the police.”⁵⁵

Because the police were the state’s primary enforcers of apartheid laws and first line of defence against internal dissent, they became the primary symbol of apartheid’s oppression. As the most recognised face of apartheid domination and severity the police also received the brunt of violent outrage which was directed at apartheid. The ANC had specifically earmarked the police for

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Prior, p. 195.

⁵⁴ LOUIS LE GRANGE PRIVATE COLLECTION at INCH: PV 778: pleg 262.

⁵⁵ Krog, A., *Country of my skull*, p. 4.

attack.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the police's work was greatly frustrated in the mid- to late 1980s, when black people could easily get killed if they were seen being too friendly with the police. If blacks were regarded as being *collaborators*, they were harassed and killed by necklacing.⁵⁷ During 1985 the anti-police feelings amongst radicals grew so intense that before they killed policemen, they would first hack chunks of flesh from their bodies. In some cases, after a policeman was killed and buried, radicals would dig up the corpse and mutilate it. Policemen, in townships, were indeed in grave danger.⁵⁷

When assessing the role of the police, it is important to look at the sphere the police worked in and, more importantly, the mode of thought the Government had helped to foment within the police milieu as to what was expected of them during these tough times.

In a 1986 speech delivered to young policemen who had completed their training, PW Botha, said that apart from their normal policing duties they were also expected to defeat an evil campaign of terror ["bose veldtog van terreur"]. And that they, the police, were South Africa's first line of defence against the powers of Communist enslavement. ["voorste linie teen die magte van die Kommunistiese slawerny."]⁵⁸

To ensure that they unequivocally grasped the serious implication of this, Botha assured them that the state had a good understanding of the international terrorist onslaught and that leftist radicalism ["links-radikale konkelry"] was at the root of this global plot. He emphasized that this fatherland struggle was severe, because South Africa could not expect any help or understanding from the rest of the world, because they all bought into the "Great Lie."⁵⁹

This, according to Botha, was an international "propaganda game" which caused many "normally rational and logical people" to "lose perspective". As for the idea that negotiations would solve everything, Botha said that was simply a "false impression" of a "mythical heaven on earth" and

⁵⁶ See the chapters dealing with the ANC for more information about how the policemen were explicitly targeted by the ANC and their followers.

⁵⁶ *Die Volksblad*. 30 April 1985.

⁵⁷ See the chapters on the ANC for more detail about the necklace murders of collaborators.

⁵⁷ *Die Volksblad*. 27 October 1985.

⁵⁸ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION at INCH: PV 203: 4/2/144.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

part of the “great lie”. Botha said that when people spoke of negotiations what they actually meant was “a final transfer of power to the South African Communist party and its front, the ANC.” He repeated that South Africa could not even state its case as “the world is not allowed to believe it.”^{*} Making the police officers even more attentive to the sinister political climate they were about to work in, the State President implored the policemen that this “sly interference for the benefit of radicals” should be “exposed to public contempt”.⁶⁰

This speech, on the one hand, underlined the great responsibility that went along with wearing the police uniform, but as can clearly be noted, there was a broader political undercurrent. Botha’s speech – and indeed many other similar messages to the police from various authority figures – conveyed the impression that only the police could protect South Africa from a lurking Armageddon. It could be argued that these and many similar sentiments served to strengthen an over zealousness, an anything-goes mentality on the side of many policemen.^{**} On the other hand, as illustrated in the chapters dealing with the ANC, the anti-establishment groups attacked the Government with stringent war cries that furthered the idea that a full-out civil war was imminent. For example, in 1986 Allan Boesak told a rally that the people should keep on fighting until PW Botha has to flee the country in the middle of the night.⁶¹

With the above in mind, it is again necessary to point out the great powers and privileges Pretoria had bestowed on the police – a police force, which was encouraged to believe that the barbarians were at the gate and that only they could rescue the country. By the mid-1980s, by means of its extensive laws and regulations, the Botha Government covered every possible aspect of protest politics and popular dissent. Wielding such explicit, and at the same time, vague laws as the 1982 Internal Security Act and State of Emergency regulations, the Government had intensified its political grip and expanded its draconian control to new frontiers. Through its intertwined judicial web the Government prescribed who could do and say what, when, where and for how long and in

* See Section 3 for more information about the Botha Government’s relations with the international community.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

^{**} The ANC also made use of this type of propaganda. During the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the issue of what was propaganda and what was broad directives was intensely debated by both the ANC and former Government officials.

⁶¹ *Die Volksblad*. 22 February 1986.

which way.⁶² The Government thus inspired a sense of desperate-times-call-for-desperate-measures and then went a long way in legally condoning those desperate measures. In doing so the government freed the police force's hand to a great extent and encouraged them to push the limits. After all, as the police's Minister of Law and Order had said: this was a war.

When the Government told their undermanned, overworked police force - after showing them through the extraordinary legislation – that these were desperate times, where the end definitely justified the means: brute excesses could have been expected. Of course, this hampered the government's position when trying to reign in the police. Because, after enforcing the idea that South Africa's physical survival depended on the police's efforts, the Botha administration could not simply step back and tell the police that they had taken their words too literally.

The fact that the police were tremendously undermanned and had to cope with immense pressure from the Government to deliver; as well as physical pressure from within the violent townships and all round criticism from both inside and outside South Africa; should not be belittled. That this acted as a catalyst for the police's inordinate severity should also not be underestimated. "During my term in office in Cape Town, extreme pressure was placed by the Joint Security Management System on the Security Branch, in particular to stem the tide of murder and violence," Major General Griebenaauw of the police explained, "And obviously I gave members under my command instructions to do everything in their power to apprehend people who were guilty of these things to extract as much information as possible from the detainees... I was... very much aware of the fact that members' success could be ascribed to the use of unconventional questioning or interrogation methods."⁶³

Being arrested by the police was a traumatic and shameful prospect for most white South Africans and as such, possibly an effective deterrent – much less so for black South Africans. During the 48 apartheid years hundreds of thousands of South Africans were arrested under the large range of apartheid laws and regulations. At the risk of generalizing, it could be argued that for non-white South Africans, arrest became a relatively normal part of life in apartheid South Africa and during

⁶² Brewer, J.D., *Black and blue: policing in SA*, p. 300.

⁶³ De Villiers (ed.), *TRC Report Vol. 2*, p. 218.

the 1980s being arrested for your political defiance was something of a status symbol and identified one as having been part of the struggle*, therefore losing much of its inherent use as deterrent. Nonetheless, during the State of Emergency one aspect of being held by the police that posed a chilling prospect was being detained without trial. This was so because there was a very real chance that once detained, one might disappear. A fair amount of the police brutality that took place during the 1980s, took place within the seclusion of police interrogation cells.

“I know people so easily refer to detention without trial as if we detain people and forget about them. But I’m talking about people who are being detained for questioning,” said Louis le Grange in 1985, “The purpose of the detention is to get information from these people...” and “We try to make it as comfortable as possible... I want to assure you that we are certainly trying to detain these people under the most humane circumstances.” About the much debated and criticised fact that the detainees are kept in solitary confinement, the Minister explained that was simply “the best secure accommodation available.”⁶⁴

The poet and painter, Breyten Breytenbach, published a book entitled *True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*. Breytenbach, who was jailed on charges of terrorism from 1975 to 1982 wrote that the police and other security forces made extensive use of torture and that the police adhered to absolutely “no ethics, no moral or religious code” in their “absolute power to do with and to detainees what they want to.” The SAP, not surprisingly, said that his accusations were “derived from... fantasy” and were “far-fetched, malicious, and unsubstantiated”. Furthermore the police said that they were “totally opposed to any illegal, cruel, or inhuman treatment of prisoners.”⁶⁵

One of the most infamous cases of 1980s police brutality took place in 1983. On the 6th of July 1983, Mr. Paris Malatji was interrogated while in police detention. His interrogation came to an abrupt end when Sgt. Jan Harm van As, shot Mr. Malatji through the head.⁶⁶ During 1984, Mr. Abel Ngwenya died a few hours after being detained by police. A private pathologist said violence was the cause of death. The police as they would do many more times, cited epilepsy as having

* See the chapters on the ANC.

⁶⁴ LOUIS LE GRANGE PRIVATE COLLECTION at INCH: PV 778: pleg 262

⁶⁵ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute of Race Relations 1984*, pp. 768-769.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

been responsible.⁶⁷ Louis le Grange said that no one died in police custody during 1985, but it would seem that he had again been misinformed. On May 6th 1985, a shop-steward of the Chemical Workers' Industrial Trade Unions Mr. Andries Lazarus Raditsela died in Soweto hospital. Two days before, Mr. Raditsela, then still in good health, had been detained by police. Later that same day he was admitted to hospital. A post mortem found that he had died of subdural haemorrhaging. His death caused an outcry and his funeral was attended by 25 000 mourners.⁶⁸ In 1986, the new Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok said that 83 people had died while in police custody.⁶⁹

In 1988, the Human Rights Commission reported that 13 people had gone missing while having been detained by the police.⁷⁰ During 1988, information came to light about Mr. Ngwako Ramalepe who had died in 1985 while in police custody. His family's lawyer alleged that the police had tortured him and then dumped his body by the roadside. Dr. David Loubser, a pathologist found that Mr. Ramalepe's stomach had blood in it meaning that he had swallowed his own blood and had died after his veins ruptured and thus bled to death. His veins had ruptured after police had beaten him more than 40 times with a sjambok.⁷¹

In 1987, according to the police, Mr. Benedict Mashoke, had hanged himself while in custody. His mother said that he had told her, while he was in custody, that the security police were torturing him. She also said that when she went to identify her son's body his face was extremely swollen and his right eye was protruding from its socket, but she said that there were strangely no marks around his neck. The pathologist concurred. During 1988, the death while in police custody of Mr. Simon Murale, a former vice chairmen of the Congress of South African Students also received attention. Mr. Murale died after he was transferred from the Modderbee Prison to the Boksburg/Benoni Hospital.⁷²

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute of Race Relations 1985*, pp. 454-455.

⁶⁹ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute of Race Relations 1986*, p. 769.

⁷⁰ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute of Race Relations 1988 / 89*, p. 555.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.568-569.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp.568-569.

“This study provides very strong evidence that torture is commonly practiced in South Africa,” stated the conclusion read of a 1985 report by the University of Cape Town’s institute for criminology.⁷³ “However firm the old type of policemen were,” said former SACP chieftain Joe Slovo, “they were not torturers.” He said that up until about 1960 the “underground struggle was fought on a gentlemanly terrain.”

Anyone that researches modern torture methods from around the world will certainly note that many of the methods used by the Government’s security personnel are more than similar to those used in other countries.⁷⁴ During the 1960s a group of South African security officers received special training in France and Algeria on interrogation and torture techniques. And during the 1980s, some of the country’s security personnel received training in interrogation and torture methods from the security forces of other pariah states, including those of Argentina, Chile and Taiwan. The security partnership between South Africa and Argentina was an open fact and during the late 1970s the South African security police and their Argentinean counterparts exchanged ideas on interrogation and even held seminars on the subject. Alfredo Astiz, one of Argentina’s torturers was even posted to the Argentinean embassy in Pretoria during this period.⁷⁵

“You don’t have to make physical contact with someone to assault them, you can make it unpleasant for someone on lots of different levels,” [“Jy hoef nie noodwendig iemand direk aan te tas om hom aan te rand nie, jy kan op baie verskillende maniere dit vir ‘n mens uiters onplesierig maak”] said Louis le Grange in 1985 and then added, “None of those methods are permitted.” [“Geen van daardie metodes word toegelaat nie.”]⁷⁶ Many commentators have argued that detention without trial and the subsequent solitary confinement that accompanied it was in itself a form of torture. But, in more practical or physical terms the police devised a whole range of torture methods. There was an extensive menu of methods, varying from the more traditional, like beatings to intricate psychological torture.⁷⁷ The most ‘popular’ methods of torture included,

⁷³ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute of Race Relations 1985*, p. 453.

⁷⁴ De Villiers (ed.), TRC Report, vol 2, pp. 195-196.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Giliomee, H., “Onderhoud met Louis le Grange” in *Die Suid Afrikaan*, no.3, autumn, 1985, p. 16.

⁷⁷ Cawthra, p. 116; Coleman, M. (ed.), *A crime against humanity: Analysing the repression of the apartheid state*, pp. 54-55.

- beatings and assaults with fists, hosepipes or whips and a further array of implements
- electric shocks administered to various sensitive places on the body
- choking and/or strangulation
- suffocation with a wet bag or hood made of cloth
- breaking or crushing of toes or fingers or other parts of the body
- burning
- defilement of sexual organs
- animals such as snakes, dogs and even spiders were also used to torture people
- the use of drugs⁷⁸

During the second half of 1985 the SAP arrested almost 900 schoolchildren who were taking part in a school boycott, some of them as young as seven. "We are cracking down," warned the police Gen. Johann Coetzee, "We will not allow 5000 stupid students to disregard law and order."⁷⁹

During 1985 to 1989 some 48 000 detainees were under the age of 25. Torture methods used on children by the police range from food and sleep deprivation to beating and kicking, being kept naked during interrogation, electric shocks and cigarette burns.⁸⁰ The police, during the period in question, explained over and over that their men were up against large mobs, which sometimes, unfortunately, contained children.* They also asked the responsible organisations to refrain from using children in their ranks. The police added that they would not allow stone throwers and arsonists to go free and unpunished just because they were underage⁸¹

In 1985 Dr. Wendy Orr, a district surgeon, stated that her daily work had brought her into contact with many detainees and that overwhelming physical evidence existed that many of these people were deliberately being tortured and assaulted. Some of the more macabre complaints she received from the stream of new detainees, included that they were forced to eat their own hair and drink petrol. She said that what distressed her most was that many of the detainees in her care were taken

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Younghusband (et al.), "The friends of Mr. Botha" in *Newsweek*, vol. CVI, no.10, September 2, 1985, p.40.

⁸⁰ De Villiers (ed.), *TRC Report II*, pp. 261-262.

* The ANC explicitly called on the youth to participate in the struggle and to fight the security forces. See the chapters on the ANC.

⁸¹ Cooper, *South African Institute of Race Relations 1985*, p.442-443.

away for the sole purpose of being tortured. Dr. Orr also said that it had become clear to her that because of their special powers under the SOE many security officers “were unrestrained in the abuses they inflict upon the detainees.”⁸² The police firmly denied her allegations and stated that her findings were based on hearsay. Brig. Ernest Schnetler also stated that the people had to remember that the country was in a state of violent unrest and that the police were under immense pressure. Furthermore, the Brigadier noted that the police themselves were under constant violent attack.⁸³

In some cases, where detainees died under interrogation, the police got rid of the body. In many cases where detainees died, instead of going to this type of trouble the police simply lied about cause of death.⁸⁴

These official stories varied greatly – more common excuses being that the detainee died of natural causes; that the detainee voluntarily committed suicide and, finally, that the detainee fatally slipped on a bar of soap while showering. Many of these cover stories were so flimsy and became so commonplace that they were eventually ridiculed. A joke at the time was about the police’s head quarters at John Vorster Square, it said that you entered through the doors – and left through the windows.⁸⁵ Not merely witty, it served to illustrate how the police’s image had further regressed, due to their misconduct. These cover stories inspired black poet Christopher van Wyk to write his well-known satirical poem “In Detention”:

He fell from the ninth floor
 He hanged himself
 He slipped on a piece of soap while washing
 He hanged himself
 He slipped on a piece of soap while washing
 He hanged himself while washing
 He slipped from the ninth floor

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 450.

^{*} See the chapters on the ANC.

⁸³ *Die Volksblad*. 6 February 1986.

⁸⁴ De Villiers, *TRC Report II*, p. 213.

⁸⁵ See the Reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, volumes 1-4.

He hung from the ninth floor
 He slipped on the ninth floor while washing
 He fell from a piece of soap while washing
 He hung from the ninth floor
 He washed from the ninth floor while slipping
 He hung from a piece of soap while washing⁸⁶

The PFP, especially Helen Suzman, constantly attacked the Government over the deaths of detainees. In May 1985, Peter Soal of the PFP charged that the police were instigators of violence and that they murdered detainees. Adriaan Vlok, Deputy Minister of Law and Order, said that the PFP wanted to exploit this issue for political mileage. Louis le Grange pointed out that people should not condemn the entire police service for the misconduct of certain individuals. He also said that the police had to do with brutal killers and not “naughty children” [“stout kinders”] and that the police, in some cases, had to act severely in order to protect innocent lives.⁸⁷

A relevant question would be whether the authorities condoned or knew about this? Exactly which individuals in the Botha government knew exactly what, is not of crucial importance to this study. The mere fact that there were such an overabundance of either allegations or proven cases of police torture during this period and that it continued unabated, irrespective of public outcry and inquest, should serve as an answer. In his testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Leon Wessels said that it would be naïve for anyone to deny knowledge of police torture of detainees because “everybody in this country knew people were tortured.”⁸⁸ He also testified that he spoke about this with Louis le Grange. “Leon,” the latter apparently replied, “but you have such a fantastic image amongst the Police and other people, why are you... spoiling all of this by getting involved in this.”⁸⁹

Although this aspect of police brutality did blemish the police’s public image especially among black South Africans, their harsh image was fomented in the open in townships, and it is important

⁸⁶ Ulliyatt, T. *The lonely art*, p. 1.

⁸⁷ *Die Volksblad*. 1 May 1985.

⁸⁸ De Villiers (ed.), *TRC Report 2*, p. 219.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

to look at aspects of their actions there. The police methods and mechanisms used in townships during this period were indeed thorough, to say the least. At one stage, army searchlights on hills outside townships were experimented with. The so-called sneeze machine was also used, a large teargas dispersant mounted on a vehicle. Smoke generators as well as the ever-popular water cannon were all used at some time. Traditional riot equipment included rifles fitted with teargas cap discharges, shotguns and the Stopper 37mm gun, which could shoot teargas canisters or rubber bullets. In 1985 a new weapon was demonstrated – a weapon, almost like a Gatling gun, that could shoot a continuous stream of rubber bullets. In 1985 the SAP for the first time shot teargas from helicopters.⁹⁰

A standard weapon during riots was the notorious sjambok, a type of elastic cane or whip. Abroad, the sjambok became a symbol of police oppression in South Africa. When questioned about this by a foreign correspondent, Le Grange said that the police received almost no complaints from people who had been hit with it. The Minister then said - in a manner must have upset a few people who had been sjambokked: "They are not really hurt by it – it's just a sting."⁹¹

In a highly confidential 1985 document compiled for the Minister of Law and Order by Commissioner PJ de Wit, the methods used at that time to police the troubled townships were summarised. Apart from the ordinary or those already mentioned, these methods and policing apparatuses included police journalists of the Security Units who photographed or videotaped activists and troublemakers ["belhamels"].⁹²

The police headquarters in Cape Town also compiled a name list of troublemakers and ringleaders ["belhamels en voorbokke"] at the University of the Western Cape and other places of higher education. One of the most controversial tactics mentioned in the report was the use of so-called *fake vehicles* ["fopvoertuie"]. According to the Commissioner these trick vehicles were used to demoralise those who perpetuated violence, arson and intimidation.⁹³ In a 1985 case that would

⁹⁰ Cawthra, p. 254.

⁹¹ LOUIS LE GRANGE PRIVATE COLLECTION at INCH: PV 778: pleg 262.

⁹² LOUIS LE GRANGE PRIVATE COLLECTION at INCH: PV 778: pleg 18.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

become known as the so-called Trojan Horse incident, one of these *fake vehicles* ["fopvoertuie"] did a lot more than demoralizing.*

The immediate effect of the Trojan Horse maneuver did not subdue the community as the police had hoped it would, instead it outraged them to the point of hysteria. 1000 people stormed a field where policemen and armored vehicles were stationed, but were deterred from going further when the police fired teargas.⁹⁵

An inquest followed the international outcry during which magistrate G. Hoffman found the police to have been negligent. He also stated that there was not "a shred of evidence" of the three deceased youths having thrown any stones. He reprimanded the police by saying that they could not simply "hide behind a state of emergency." Nonetheless the police did not need to lose too much sleep, as the Cape's attorney general declined to prosecute anyone involved.⁹⁶

The other incident that will be noted took place on November 11th 1985 in Mamelodi near Pretoria. According to an official document of the Ministry of Law and Order the security forces received information about a stayaway and the police sent a riot squad as well as a platoon of policemen to "protect the local inhabitants against intimidation and violence." As early as 05h00 the situation had turned violent. At about 08h30 a black procession moved to the local stadium. The group's spokesperson listed their grievances, including: the Mamelodi mayor was not building houses for the community; tariffs were raised without any improvements having been made, poor roads, and the restrictions on funerals.⁹⁷

* Details of this incident remain sketchy to this day. This summary must not be understood as, nor does it pretend to be, an in-depth account. In October of 1985, in the coloured Cape township of Athlone, as part of a Special Task Force operation of the railway police, a railways truck cruised slowly up and down the streets. When someone finally did flung stones at it policemen, who had all along hidden in the back of the truck under wooden crates, jumped up and starting shooting. The 12 policemen and one soldier were armed with pump-action shotguns from which they fired 39 rounds. They killed 1 adult and 3 youths. The youngest of the three was only 11 years old. Unbeknownst to the security men, an American television crew was filming not far from there and captured the whole sequence on tape. Within hours the killing was broadcast around the globe and shocked the world. See RH Du Preez's *Separate but unequal*.

⁹⁵ Younghusband (et al), "South Africa on the boil" in *Newsweek*, vol. CVI, no. 18, October 28, 1985, p.27.

⁹⁶ Cooper, *SAIRR 1988 / 89*, p. 566.

⁹⁷ LOUIS LE GRANGE PRIVATE COLLECTION at INCH: PV 778: 11 November 1985.

They requested that the mayor personally and immediately appear before them and explain himself, but later the crowd of protestors refused to enter the stadium where he would have spoken to them. According to the official explanation by this time the group had developed into a crowd of 25 000 people. The official story had it that the police had ordered the crowd “on two occasions to disperse” but, the crowd not reacting favorably resulted in the police firing teargas.⁹⁸

According to the summarised government account, stoning of the offices of the Development Board followed. Next, the houses of five black policemen and one black councilor were firebombed and stoned; and in a further 12 incidents police vehicles were attacked in a similar fashion. The local police barracks was also stoned. In various incidents the police opened fire with shotguns and smaller arms “to protect lives and property.” The police officially took responsibility for killing 10 black adults (4 women and 6 men). They also wounded 25 more people, including 7 children.⁹⁹

The chaos and death toll drew outrage from across South Africa and made headlines abroad. The Mamelodi residents adamantly claimed that the protest was peaceful and that the police instigated the violence. The PFP demanded a judicial inquest and said that the police were ill-equipped to deal with the situation, when they knew of the march and its inherent dangers beforehand. The police maintained that their equipment was sufficient.¹⁰⁰

It cannot be underlined enough, that the reader must remember that, during the 1980s, the country was beset by violent unrest and the policemen had been marked by the ANC for attack.* The policemen in the townships were under intense pressure. A *Newsweek* article of 1985, argued that South Africa’s internal violence would “tax the skill and discipline” of any police force on earth, but as the situation steadily degenerated, the SAP had become “undermanned, overtired and quick on the trigger.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* & *Die Volksblad*. 22 November 1985.

¹⁰⁰ Cooper (et al), *SAIRR 1985*, p. 494.

* See the chapters on the ANC.

¹⁰¹ Cullen, R. & Wilkinson, R., “Hair-trigger justice” in *Newsweek*, vol. 106, no. 12, Sept. 16, 1985, p. 15.

The police decided on a way to boost the numbers of policemen. “An effective physical counter to the tyranny of the ‘comrades’ should be established from the ranks of the blacks themselves...” read a police paper by Major General FMA Steenkamp. As the Black Local Authorities (BLAs) started to fall apart during the mid 1980s*, the Government decided to follow the Malaysian counterrevolutionary model. They created special constables and municipal police forces to protect the moderate black councils and to expand the security forces’ presence in the black townships.¹⁰² Apart from calling in the army to back them up in order to inflate their numbers, the SAP also created what became known as *kitskonstabels*, literally meaning ‘instant cops.’ They were also known as ‘bloupakke’ and ‘blue lines.’ Many, if not most, of these men were unemployed and some were even recruited off unemployment lines. Educational qualifications were few and hard to find among these special constables, many were completely illiterate. Many also had criminal records.

Kitskonstabels were employed under the Police Act and basically had the same fundamental purpose as the ordinary police. During the States of Emergency they were deemed to be part of the Force and therefore gained the same extraordinary powers and privileges pertaining to ordinary policemen. Once their short training was completed, these men were given blue overalls to wear, batons, whips, handcuffs – in addition to guns – and were sent on patrol.

It quickly clear that these men had almost no regard for the powers they had been given, including their firearms. *Kitskonstabels* were known for being hard and, at times, very undisciplined.¹⁰³

Apart from, but similar to *kitskonstabels*, were the infamous Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEO) popularly known as “greenflies” or “greenbeans” and “blackjacks” because of their green and khaki uniforms. Their deployment formed part of the police’s strategy for black areas to be policed by black policemen. The basic criteria were that a volunteer should have a Standard 6 school qualification, be between the ages of 18 and 35 and be physically fit. To make it more attractive, the job came with benefits like residence rights, a relatively good salary, medical and

* See the chapters on the ANC.

¹⁰² De Villiers (ed.), *TRC Report II*, p. 182.

¹⁰³ Cock, J. & Nathan, L. (eds.), *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa*, p. 77. See also: A. Jeffery’s *The Natal Story – 16 years of conflict*.

other insurance. They were trained for about three months, uniformed and armed. In only a couple of weeks it became apparent what a dismal disaster these Municipal Law Enforcement Officers [MLEOs] in fact turned out to be. As soon as they were deployed they gained a reputation for being quick on the draw.¹⁰⁴

During June 1986 reports surfaced of Municipal Law Enforcement Officers [MLEOs] who had taken two schoolboys, sprinkled their hands and feet with petrol and then had set them on fire. During August 1986 Municipal Law Enforcement Officers [MLEOs] killed almost 30 people for resisting eviction. On April 9th 1987 a Municipal Law Enforcement Officer [MLEO] became annoyed with a 13 year old boy who cheered too loudly at an athletics meet, so he simply shot the boy dead on the spot.¹⁰⁵

“The special constables were the biggest nonsense introduced by the state,” policemen told the TRC, “They shot people unnecessarily. They were drunk on duty and rude most of the time. The problem was that they had not received enough training... they were wild. The problem was that they were uneducated, but given guns and a high position.”¹⁰⁶ Gen. Magnus Malan viewed these special constables with a certain sense of contempt. The General said that the problem was that the police did not really plan how they were going to accommodate these men organisationally and on top of that, he felt they were badly trained.¹⁰⁷

Gen. Malan said that there was no point in just having more men if these men did not have the right experience and training. “Jy kan nie sommer mense inbring as jy nie ‘n milieu geskep het nie. ‘n Milieu van hoe hanteer ek sulke mense... Dit gaan nie om voete op die grond te hê nie,” explained Gen. Malan, “dit gaan om kundigheid op die grond te hê.”¹⁰⁸ When asked whether he thought that the special constables joined up for the wrong reasons, he said that these men were after the power that went along with the position.: “Hy sien dit as ‘n gesagsituasie; sy geskiedenis vertel hom die polisieman het baie gesag, baie mag – dis wat hy wil hê.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Brewer, p. 302.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ De Villiers (ed.), *TRC Report II*, p. 184.

¹⁰⁷ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

One township resident described these special policemen as “the dogs of the South African Police doing all their hunting and watching.”¹¹⁰ As for the terrorised communities these kitskonstabels and Municipal Law Enforcement Officers [MLEOs] were supposed to be protecting – after the initial fear subsided or maybe because of it, the outraged communities turned on the special constables with a brutal vengeance. Of all the *collaborators* victimised during the period, special constables stand out. They were ostracised, bombarded from their homes, literally hunted down and killed.¹¹¹ This should not create the impression that these special constables were quick to call it quits. The more pressure they were under, the more brutal their retributions until by 1988 they had become a permanent feature of township life.¹¹² Warning of the chaos these special policemen could create; Helen Suzman called *kitskonstabels* “amateurs of law and order.”¹¹³

Although an outcry surrounded the brutality of certain elements of the police and other security forces operating in the public eye, there was an altogether different element at work that could not be scrutinised in the same way. Separate from the established security forces, this covert security apparatus became known as the so-called Third Force.”

Since the beginning of the 1980s, and specifically by the mid-1980s, when the violence and mass liberation movement really gained momentum, certain individual anti-apartheid activists started to simply disappear. Some were later found dead, but others would quite literally seem to have vanished into thin air. There were also numerous incidents of shootings, bombings and violent aggravation and many other cases of violence which nobody took responsibility for. These crimes would remain largely unsolved. Unsurprisingly, during these tense times, rumours started to surface that one or more sinister third forces were responsible and that Pretoria had begun to

¹¹⁰ Swilling, M, (ed), *Views on the South African state*, p. 90.

* See the chapters dealing with the ANC.

¹¹¹ De Villiers, *TRC Report II*, p. 184.

¹¹² Prior, p. 198.

¹¹³ Cooper, *South African Institute of Race Relations 1986*, p. 861.

” It is of the utmost importance that the reader should note that as far as the scope of this study is concerned, it would be an insurmountable task to give a full and complete in-depth historic account of the third force and the various forms it took and the scores of operations involved. Also for the aim and purposes of this study it is not important here to speculate who in Pretoria knew what about which third force activities.

systematically remove its opponents permanently. These stories were shrugged off as political paranoia.

In 1989, only one day before 32 year-old Butana Almond Nofomela was to have been hanged for a non-political crime he made a last ditch attempt to buy himself some time. He revealed the small tip of an iceberg. In the process he sent shock waves throughout the country and made world news by coming clean about his involvement with government orchestrated political hit-squads. His affidavit read:

“I am a 32-year old male presently under sentence of death. My execution is scheduled for tomorrow morning... I wish to hereby reveal facts about my past... I was a member of the Security Branch stationed at headquarters in Pretoria from 1981 until my sentence of death on 21 September 1987. During the period of my service... I was appointed a member of the Security Branch’ assassination squad, and I served under Captain Johannes Dirk Coetzee, who was my commanding officer in the field... I now wish to explain why I have only revealed all this information at this stage, Major (later colonel) De Kock visited me... after my sentence of death. De Kock told me that... I was not to reveal anything about my activities as a member of the assassination squad, and he further promised that they will help me out of this problem... Thereafter other members of the security branch visited me at various intervals... Then on 12 October 1989, I received my notice of execution, and on 17 October 1989... members of the Security Branch visited me and informed me that the instruction from Major De Kock was that I should take the blame. I then realised that I had been betrayed by my superior officers, who had promised to assist me in getting out of the Maximum Prison.”¹¹⁴

In 1980 the State Security Council approved a program called ‘Institutions and Functions of Special Forces’. This bureaucratic sounding outline was, in fact, the top-secret creation of a defense capacity to wage ultra sensitive operations against state enemies employing operations and techniques that fell outside the conventional scope of the security forces. In other words, the Government wanted to create a structured capability to execute covert operations against its

¹¹⁴ Coleman, M. (ed.), *A crime against humanity: Analysing the repression of the apartheid state*, p. 121-123.

enemies. "Covert operations are associated with a psycho-political condition of frustration among decision-makers," wrote academic Annette Seegers, "These methods may co-exist with the rule of law but, in some cases, the rule of law withers to a point where covert operations are the rule and the law is the exception."¹¹⁵ Structures were to be established to recruit secretly manage and secretly fund special clandestine units. Initially, their targets were to be exclusively outside the Republic, but as the country's internal situation deteriorated during the mid-1980s this geographical distinction blurred and eventually they operated against enemies of the state within the country itself.

At first this program came to fruition in the form of the army's elite Delta 40 unit, which later evolved into the Civil Cooperation Bureau.¹¹⁶

During 1986, Adriaan Vlok, who was then the Deputy Minister of Law and Order convened a special committee to discuss the country's internal security situation and to ascertain what counter-insurgency options were open to the government. An interim report was compiled which proposed that a third force was needed – a special security structure, which would exist outside the police force and army. This special force was to have been "specifically organised, equipped and trained to plan, co-ordinate and execute counter-revolutionary actions" in an attempt to counter internal unrest.¹¹⁷

The idea of a third force per se is not sinister. Indeed, a third security force is a legitimate concept. In most countries, as was the case in South Africa, the two main security forces are the police and army. But, many times, as already pointed out in the above sections, situations evolve where actions need to be taken but consensus can not be found as to which of the two forces are to be responsible, the police or the army. In South Africa a simple example was the patrolling of borders. The army did not want to do it, because they argued they were there to protect borders and not to police them. The police pointed out that their manpower was so limited that they could not manage the internal situation and patrol the borders as well. So, a third force that existed independently from these two forces was necessary to take charge of those tasks that fell outside

¹¹⁵ Schutte, C. & Liebenberg, I. (eds. et al), *The hidden hand*, p. 80.

¹¹⁶ Alden, C., *Apartheid's last stand – the rise and fall of the South African security state*, p. 95.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

the scope of the two dominant security services. The American State Police and Border Patrols are examples of legitimate third forces.

In 2000, Gen. Magnus Malan spoke about the inception of the third force and how livid he was when it was suggested to him. He said that Adriaan Vlok led an investigation of the creation of a third force. He said that this was an attempt to lighten the load of the police, particularly regarding the border areas. "Ons word baie aangeval oor die derde mag, sogenaamde derde mag. Daar was besprekings daaroor gewees, daar was 'n ondersoek gewees, Adriaan Vlok het dit gelei. Dit het eintlik daaroor gegaan om te kyk of ons nie die polisie se taak kan verlig nie, byvoorbeeld by die grense."¹¹⁸

It was then suggested that a third force should be created. "Ek het gesê 'like hell'," said Gen. Malan. He said that he would let the army take care of the border areas but that a third force should not be created.¹¹⁹ "Ek stel nie daarin belang nie. Ek sal die grense doen vir die polisie. Maar moenie nog 'n derde mag bybring nie. Want wat julle gaan doen is julle gaan my burgermag, my kommandos vat om daai taak te doen en julle weet nie hoe om met hulle te werk nie..."¹²⁰

Apparently Gen. Malan's opposition to the idea of a third force was not strong enough, because only two months after Vlok's committee handed in their report, the Civil Cooperation Bureau was formally created.¹²¹

During the 1980s these groups exterminated an average of 10 people a year.¹²² "In some cases it was necessary to eliminate activists by killing them," said Major-General 'Sakkie' Crawford, "This was the only way in which effective action could be taken against activists in a war situation... to charge someone in the normal court structure and go through the whole process was cumbersome and occasionally totally inadequate and impossible."¹²³ Technically the term 'death squad' is not completely fitting, because these groups' activities not only included killings, but

¹¹⁸ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with GEN MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Alden, p. 176.

¹²² Schutte, & Liebenberg (eds., et al), p. 159.

¹²³ De Villiers, *TRC Report vol.2*, p. 221.

also threatening and intimidating individuals; destabilising political organisations' facilities and the spreading of disinformation to cause trouble, confusion, fear and paranoia in the ranks of the opposition.¹²⁴

The army's Military Intelligence (MI) had created a unit known as the Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB.) The CCB used operatives who were drawn from both the SAP and SADF. The latter had set up front organisations through which they interpreted information, identified targets, ran safe houses, cultivated sources and set priorities.¹²⁵

The police's most notorious third force group was the C-10 unit, stationed at a farm called Vlakplaas. The commander of Vlakplaas was Col. Eugene de Kock. During the mid-1990s the Colonel, dubbed 'Prime Evil' by his subordinates at Vlakplaas, was charged on 121 counts ranging from and including scores of murders, attempted murders and incidents of torture of anti-apartheid activists, police double agents (also known as 'askaris') and even other policemen who he feared would spill the beans on Vlakplaas; further charges included the bombing of the ANC's bases in Lusaka and London as well as more than 50 counts of fraud and gun running. The weapons De Kock and Vlakplaas smuggled were distributed to pro-status quo groups. De Kock moved the weapons from Ovamboland to Vlakplaas where they were stored in three strong rooms. The arsenal literally filled the rooms to the absolute brim and included thousands of AK-47 rifles, RPG-7 rocket launchers, mines, hand grenades, plastic explosives and other weapons confiscated by the army in Namibia.¹²⁶

"This was my work," De Kock retorted adamantly, "The enemy was the ANC, PAC and SACP... My loyalty was to the government and the police. It was absolute." After he came clean, De Dock warned that the country should know that Vlakplaas was only a single unit and that many more similar units existed. Eventually following a mammoth trial the former Vlakplaas commander was sentenced to 212 years imprisonment.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Schutte, & Liebenberg, (eds. et al), p. 158.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 61.

¹²⁶ Jeffery, A., *The Natal violence: 16 years of conflict*, p. 755-766.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

The Vlakplaas men were vicious. Later, Capt. Dirk Coetzee and Nofemela described their murder of activist Griffiths Mxenge in graphic detail. Recalling how Mxenge fought back while they killed him, they said: "He fought back and did not fall after we had stabbed him several times. I then fetched a wheel spanner and hit him on the head till he fell" another of their colleagues said that they then "slit his throat while he was going on the ground." Already stabbed several times and badly beaten, with his throat cut, bloodied and trying to crawl away on the ground, the group did not let him be. They held him down and cut his stomach open.¹²⁸

Indeed, it would seem that many of these men were completely desensitised to the point where killing made no impression on them whatsoever. Coetzee recalled their murder of activist Sizwe Kondile. After having killed him, the group decided they had to get rid of the body. They would burn his body: "The buttocks and upper parts of the legs had to be turned frequently to ensure that they were reduced to ashes... We were drinking and having a braai next to the fire."¹²⁹

The relevant security operatives justified their targeted killings of guerrillas as well as non-combatant anti-apartheid activists by arguing that it was something that had to be done in reaction to the ANC's stepping up of its people's war. As well as, and probably in no way less important, was the intense pressure put on them by the Government to crush, by any means possible, internal dissent and to protect the status quo. In many cases security personnel whose loyalty to Pretoria was questioned became targets themselves.¹³⁰

The number of politically motivated assassinations by these special task forces increased after 1985 and coincided with the shift to counter-revolutionary strategies. The securocrats no longer regarded the most important threats to state security as being of an external nature, but rather as a growing interior hazard. State Security Council documents of the period reflect a certain anxiety among securocrats at the security forces' inability to permanently and quickly quell internal unrest.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Boraine, A., *A country unmasked*, p. 127.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ De Villiers (ed.), *TRC Report vol. 2*, p. 273.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

South African journalist, Antjie Krog, wrote poignantly on the Vlakplaas set up: “Even though the official task description for Vlakplaas was simply to track down and arrest guerrillas, in the eighteen months of Coetzee’s stay, there was only one arrest. Nevertheless, and in spite of spending millions of rands at the taxpayer’s expense, the unit was never criticised or accused of wasting money. The reason is obvious: the unofficial task, namely to train hit squads that could be called out to take care of activists, was carried out perfectly. The orders were given orally, one-to-one. No diaries, no written reports. ‘Amongst ourselves’, says Coetzee, ‘we developed our own body language. The wink of an eye, the nod of a head could spell someone’s end.’”¹³²

¹³² Krog., p.90.

CHAPTER 15

SPEARING THE NATION: UMKHONTO WE SIZWE [MK]

“Up to now our dedication to the avoidance of racial confrontation has often prevented us from dealing telling blows against the enemy and his installations for fear that white civilians would be caught in the cross-fire or be killed or injured in the vicinity of an enemy installation. We have inhibited ourselves from inflicting direct blows against whites who are ostensibly civilian but are in fact part of the military, para-military and security machine. *We can no longer allow our armed activities to be determined solely by the risk of such civilian casualties. We believe that the time has come when those who stand in solid support of the race tyranny and who are its direct or indirect instruments, must themselves begin to feel the agony of our counter-blows,*” stated a 1985 ANC document that outlined decisions taken by the organisation at its National Consultation Conferences.^{*1}

“The false sense of trust in the SADF and the SAP by most whites must be shattered once and for all. We must move deeper into the white areas – and shatter the myth of peace that prevails there... While black mothers and their children of even less than ten years of age, already know the sounds of explosions and gunfire aimed at them there is no corresponding knowledge on the part of the whites... Blinded by the hope that our struggle will not reach their ‘safe’ white areas! *It is our task, the oppressed and democratic whites, to take it there where they think they are safe!*,”^{**} stated a 1985 edition of the ANC publication *Mayibuye*.

Umkhonto we Sizwe, meaning Spear of the Nation, was the armed wing of the ANC. Its credo was simple:

- “Umkhonto we Sizwe fights to liberate our people from racial discrimination, national oppression and exploitation.”

* Emphasis added by the writer.

¹ ANC Lusaka Mission: ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. ANC National Consultation Conferences, 1985: BOX 5.

** Emphasis added by the writer.

- “The common enemy is the racist minority which identifies with and gives aid to the National Party regime, the creator and driving force of apartheid.”
- “Our programme is the Freedom Charter...”
- “The interest of the people and the demands of the revolution is inseparable...”
- “[I]n Umkhonto language, the army is the Spear of the Nation.”
- Members had to:
 - “behave correctly to the people”
 - “respect their persons and property”
 - “refrain from molesting or interfering with their legitimate activities”
 - “assist them to solve their problems and where possible give material aid in their labour”
 - “demonstrate high moral qualities in word and deed”²

When examining the role that Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) played in the period 1984-1988, one must look at South Africa in the mid-1970s. During the middle and latter parts of the 1970s, certain factors combined to create favorable operational circumstances for MK. Between 1975 and 1976 certain imprisoned MK commanders were released from South African jails. Apart from the fact that these men were now again in circulation, their release also helped to popularise MK amongst black South Africans.

More importantly, during this time both Angola and Mozambique gained independence and subsequently, the minority Government lost their, white, Portuguese allies. These newly independent, black ruled, states gave the ANC the opportunity to erect training facilities and operational bases close to South African borders. Most importantly, as already noted elsewhere in the study, the Soweto Riots of 1976 took place. The upheavals were followed by an exodus of militant young blacks who left the country to join the ANC in order to be trained for military service against the minority regime. These thousands of young black people hoped to be accepted into MK and became known as the so-called June 16th Detachment. MK’s suddenly swollen ranks heralded a new era for the ANC’s armed wing.³

² ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. ANC National Consultative Conference, June 1985: Report of Commission on National Structures, Constitutional Guidelines and Codes of Conduct. BOX5.

³ Liebenberg, I. & Nel, B. (et. al), *The long march: the story of the struggle for liberation in SA*, p. 27.

Soon after the exodus that followed the 1976-riots, training camps were established in Angola. Basic courses included drill, musketry, typography, tactics and political education. There were also more specialised training courses, which included instruction in communications, intelligence, engineering and other basic courses.⁴ At the Angolan camps, the cadres were trained by East Germans, Russians and Cubans.⁵

Select members were also sent abroad to receive more intensive expert training.⁶ Those trainees who show the most promise were sent to the Provlnye military camp in the Ukraine where they received specialist infantry and platoon commander training and courses on tactics and artillery. Some were also sent to Centre 26, at Odessa, where similar courses were given. These cadres were trained in the use of missile launchers, mortars, anti-aircraft guns and instructed on the finer points of sabotage, communications and map reading.⁷ Throughout all these courses, political education was emphasised and the cadres were continuously made aware that the political dimension of armed action overrode everything else.⁸

The ANC also had contact and friendly relations with other revolutionary groups and governments that were sympathetic to the revolutionary cause. In his correspondence with the leader of the ANC, the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), Yasser Arafat, referred to Oliver Tambo as "Dear Comrade." In 1988 Arafat wrote to Tambo: "[I]n the name of our Arab Palestinian people, in the name of my brothers the Palestinian Liberation Organisation Executive Committee and in my own name, our confirmed solidarity and deep support to your struggle... Our struggle is one, our enemy is one, our victory is one and we will be together my Dear Comrade until the final victory."⁹

The Libyan leader, Muammer Qaddafi, was also very friendly with the ANC. In 1986 Qaddafi invited "The Freedom Fighter Brother Oliver Tambo" to send a delegation to a meeting of the

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 28.

⁵ *The Star*. 17 May 1984

⁶ Liebenberg (et al), p. 28.

⁷ *The Star*. 17 May 1984.

⁸ Liebenberg, (et al), p. 28.

⁹ Oliver Tambo Private Collection: C 2.54. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. PLO-Tambo Correspondence: BOX65.

“African Revolutionary Forces, which includes progressive parties and states as well as revolutionary organisations that suffer from racial discrimination...”¹⁰

From 1977 onwards, the young people who had left South Africa were beginning to be smuggled back into the country as trained members of MK. For the first few years, acting on orders from the ANC, these newly infiltrated cadres focussed mainly on carrying out political work in the black communities. Those who were ordered to execute actual military actions were instructed to focus on what was known as ‘armed propaganda’. Armed propaganda comprised operations where the country’s infrastructure was to be damaged or disrupted without explicitly targeting civilians; these operations were executed more for symbolic value and had to compliment the other anti-apartheid campaigns of the ANC, such as mass-action and boycotts. In other words, these operations were aimed at promoting the image of a country in turmoil.¹¹

In the late 1970s, the ANC had decided that MK should maintain a strategy of armed propaganda for a period of three years – thereafter, People’s War would commence. By the end of the early 1980s, thanks to their spectacular sabotage operations, most people in South Africa were well aware of what MK was and that they were active. Another objective of MK during the early 1980s was to recruit new members inside the country and in this too they succeeded. After the 1984 upheavals, MK watered-down its recruitment drive. From then on volunteers were told to stay inside South Africa and to facilitate the outbreak of a People’s War.¹²

Between 1977 and 1980 MK conducted a number of assaults, which included attacks on police stations and even physical clashes with the police. From 1980 onwards, MK at first continued with operations aimed at armed propaganda.¹³

* To what extent these friendly relations translated into actual material or physical support is difficult to tell.

¹⁰ Oliver Tambo Private Collection: C2.42. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Libya-Tambo Correspondence: BOX 64.

¹¹ Liebenberg (et al), p. 28.

¹² Ellis, S. & Sechaba, T., *Comrades against apartheid: The ANC & the South African Communist Party in exile*, p. 101.

¹³ Liebenberg (et al), p. 28.

In June 1980 MK successfully executed an attack on the SASOL oil refinery and caused damage of more than R60, 000, 000. The following year, 1981, while the whites were celebrating Republic Day, MK launched a spate of attacks on power plants in the Transvaal; security bases in the rural areas, government buildings and they attacked the police. On August 9th 1981, MK launched a particularly daring assault on the army's Voortrekkerhoogte base. They fired 122mm rockets and struck a number of targets in the base, but what made the attack so exceptional was that it was launched from within the base itself. It was also the first time that MK had used this caliber of weaponry inside South Africa.¹⁴ During 1982, MK detonated a series of bombs at the Koeberg nuclear power plant near Cape Town.¹⁵

During the early 1980s, the commanders of MK decided that it was time to enact the next phase of their military strategy. Firstly, the focus would shift away from high-profile sabotage attacks. The high command of MK wanted to stockpile weaponry and ammunition in South Africa's neighboring states. Cadres, and weaponry, would be smuggled across the border into South Africa, where cadres would stay and locally plan and execute attacks. These cadres would remain in the country to create a support network for the next wave of cadres who entered the country. After an attack, so the plan went, cadres would not need to flee the country, but instead could simply dissolve into the townships where they would be protected by supportive communities.¹⁶

A logical plan, but with many weak links:

- For a fully-fledged People's War, the ANC would need a more extensive supply of weaponry. The ANC did not bargain on the moderation of Mikhail Gorbachev and neither that, by the end of the decade, the USSR would disintegrate. The ANC was heavily dependent on the arms that the Russians channeled to them, because the ANC didn't have the resources to acquire arms themselves.
- Although most of the states in southern Africa, like all the other countries on the continent, were staunchly anti-apartheid, they were, nonetheless, reluctant to actually

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁶ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 124.

physically accommodate the ANC, because they feared that they would be hit by retaliatory actions by the South African Government and or its Defence Force

- Government spies – the South African Government had an extensive and well funded security network and spy ring which were continuously infiltrating the organisation.¹⁷

During the early 1980s, MK was hit by a spy scare, followed by internal problems and cross border military raids by the South African Defence Force. All these factors combined to emphasise MK's inability to launch a People's War, which they had planned to do in 1982.¹⁸

Cadres criticised the MK leadership, saying that not enough was being done on the battlefield in South Africa. The ANC decided that, for the lack of a People's War, they would execute another daring high-profile attack, like the one on the SASOL refinery.¹⁹

The security forces had recorded 55 acts of terrorism in 1981; 39 in 1982 and 55 in 1983.²⁰

Between 1978 and 1984 there were 217 attacks, which killed 48 people and caused damage to the value of R600, 000, 000.²¹

Although these were, as was the idea behind armed propaganda, highly prolific attacks, few people were injured. But the restriction on civilian targets being hit was finally blurred by the above noted MK attack. It shocked South Africa and stood out as one of the most infamous of MK attacks and, more importantly, it was an important watershed in the armed struggle regarding civilian targets.

On May 20th 1983, the ANC detonated a car bomb outside the headquarters of the South African Air Force and Military Intelligence in Church Street, Pretoria. The bomb, which would be known as the Church Street Bomb, consisted of 50 kilograms of explosives and was enclosed by hundreds of metal balls, each weighed about 250 grams. It was to be detonated by radio, but because the frequency used was such a common one, the bomb exploded prematurely.²²

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 125.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 127.

²⁰ "The ANC in perspective" in *Servamus*, July 1984, p. 11.

²¹ *Ibid*

²² *Ibid*, p. 10.

The ANC later explained: "Had the bomb gone off at 16h30... the overwhelming majority [of victims] would have been from [the Air Force]. But it went off prematurely... in war, in conflict, of course, one can't always be 100 percent efficient, effective in an operation..."²³ Because the bomb exploded prematurely, some of the cadres involved did not escape. One of the terrorists was actually still in the vehicle when the bomb exploded and another, standing too close, was killed by pieces of flying glass.²⁴

19 people were killed and 200 more injured, some of these included military officers but many were civilians. The media showed the ravished building; smoldering pieces of wreckage interspersed with puddles of blood.²⁵ But apart from the immediate shock, the significance of this attack was that it showed how the cadres could successfully operate deep in the country's urban areas. More importantly, it showed a marked shift away from armed propaganda and the ANC's view of civilian casualties.²⁶

After the Church Street Bomb, the ANC publicly stated that it could no longer guarantee that civilians would not get caught in the "crossfire" of its armed struggle.²⁷ Aboobaker Ismail, who was physically involved with the execution of the attack, later said: "There were large numbers of military personnel at the target at the time. We accepted that civilian casualties would result, but we felt that we had to strike at military personnel... It was not callous... They were military people there... One regrets the loss of innocent lives of civilians, but... we do not think it was terrorism. In fact, the ANC in all its statements lauded the operation..."²⁸

Later Chris Hani, a senior top executive of MK, explained: "We further accepted that some civilians might be caught in the crossfire. Apartheid was definitely at war with our people and we

²³ De Villiers, S.(ed.), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, p.329.

²⁴ "The ANC in perspective" in *Servamus*, July 1984, p. 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Liebenberg (et al), p. 29.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁸ De Villiers, p.329.

understood that in a situation of war some casualties, though unintended, might be unavoidable. But we remained emphatic that we would not deliberately close on white civilians.”²⁹

During 1984, the ANC struggled with various external challenges and internal dilemmas – much of this centered around its armed wing and military strategy.³⁰ Coupled with this was the detrimental effect of the Nkomati Accord, a non-aggression agreement between the South African Government and Mozambique, on the ANC. A consequence of the Nkomati Accord was that Mozambique had to desist from accommodating ANC bases or members of MK.³¹

Publicly the ANC boasted that the Nkomati Accord, contrary to popular belief, did not frustrate its strategies or projects; privately they despaired. In a confidential Report of the Regional Commissar, compiled in 1984, the ANC not only admitted the detrimental affect of the Nkomati Accord, but also linked it to its other major problems: the inactiveness of its armed wing and friction amongst MK cadres. The secret Report stated: “An army has to be active... The nature of our revolution has made it very difficult to deploy on the fighting front the majority of the men we have trained.”³²

This means that we have in our hands cadres who finished their military-politico training eight or six years ago... we should have enacted programmes to prevent the inevitable idleness of an army which would not in the foreseeable future be deployed in bigger formations against the enemy due to the absence of contiguous borders. Before the signing of the Nkomati Accord, deployment of cadres though slow and halting at times, continued. Most cadres knew that whatever the delay they stood good chances of being deployed. The Accord therefore brought about a sharp decline in the number of cadres going to the Front. This had a serious effect on the morale of the men and created favorable conditions for rumourmongers to spread their destructive propaganda. The number of prophets of doom and jeremiads of all ilk grew sowing their poisonous propaganda

²⁹ Liebenberg, (et al), p. 29.

³⁰ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 137.

³¹ Heyns, R., (ed.) *Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1987-1988*, p. 218.

³² ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Report of the Regional Commissar. BOX 75.

against both the political and military leadership... The escalation of military operations inside our country has always been a useful tonic in boosting the morale of our cadres in the camps."³³

Further frustrating the strategy of the ANC was that MK was still a rather underdeveloped group and, in spite of propaganda to the contrary, it lacked any real significant military support. The activation of the Government's National Security Management Strategy and the States of Emergency also greatly hampered the ANC's military strategy and the work of MK.³⁴

Another very important shortcoming of the ANC, for which its military leaders were criticised, was that MK had achieved very little in the way of building an underground within South Africa. This had far-reaching implications for the overall strategy of the ANC³⁵

To discuss these and other pressing issues, the ANC convened its second National Consultative Conference, in June 1985, at Kabwe, Zambia.³⁶ This was a historic gathering for the ANC, because it was only the second such assembly held since 1969. Some 250 delegates from 21 countries attended the gathering under the title: *From the venue of conference to victory*.³⁷

Heated debates and emotive discussions marked the Conference, which laid bare the simmering discord and factionalism that had beset the top hierarchy of the ANC. The ANC was torn between hawks and doves, militarists and conciliators. These two sides centered, mainly, around Thabo Mbeki – the ANC's moderate top executive in charge of international affairs and a close confidant of Oliver Tambo – and Chris Hani, a senior leader of Chief of Staff of Umkhonto We Sizwe. Whereas Mbeki was in favor of a more conciliatory strategy regarding the minority power and ANC strategy in general, Hani, on the other hand, wanted to overcome the enemy the hard way, by striking fear into whites. In fact, the discord within the leadership of the ANC-in-exile was so

³³ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Report of the Regional Commissar. BOX 75.

³⁴ De Beer, L., *A political analysis of the African National Congress as an extra-parliamentary movement*, p. 138.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

³⁶ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 148.

³⁷ De Beer. p. 139.

apparent, that the organisation's hierarchy admitted to itself that this factionalism was quickly becoming a serious issue that was impeding the overall success of the ANC.³⁸

The essence of the disunity stretched deeper than simple disagreement over matters of strategy and interpretation of policy. It was a complicated mixture of issues that touched on a variety of factors. These many factors and their point of origin are too extensive to discuss here and warrant their own study. What is important, is that the leadership had to admit, even if only to themselves, that the ANC was so wracked by "favouritism, regionalism and even tribalism" that it was seriously negating the prospects for an ANC-led liberation of South Africa.³⁹

During the Conference, the military leadership of Umkhonto We Sizwe came under intense attack from different quarters. They were criticised and blamed for the fact that, up until that point, there was still no extensive MK underground in South Africa and for the armed wing's poor performance against the so-called Botha-Malan military machine. Joe Slovo, who was then the Chief of Staff of MK, defended himself by arguing that the success of a revolutionary strategy depended on the level of support found in the community and that in this case it was lacking. He said the delegates should not expect to win this struggle through military actions alone.⁴⁰

During the Kabwe Conference, it became clear, although very subtly, albeit it if only to an informed few, that the ANC was, slowly, beginning to change its attitude towards the idea of negotiations with the minority power.⁴¹ Furthermore, it was also clear, in no small way due to the disunity in its upper echelons, that the ANC had a severe deficiency in terms of a cohesive strategic vision. According to various commentators, by the time the Conference had been concluded, it was difficult to tell what the strategy of the ANC actually was and what was worse, some of its top leaders did not seem to know either. The Conference, in more than one sense, failed to draw up a new, clear, strategy and in fact only highlighted the disunity that already existed in the organisation. One commentator, Howard Barrell, noted: "At the most crucial moment in its history, in the midst of the most serious uprisings in South Africa in which its name was being

³⁸ Hadland, A. & Rantao, J., *The life and times of Thabo Mbeki*, p. 52.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴⁰ De Beer, p. 140.

⁴¹ Hadland & Rantao, p. 52.

widely proclaimed as a leader of a revolution, the ANC had held a conference and concluded it with no generally-agreed formulation of strategy.”⁴²

Although it had no new cohesive strategy, the Conference did agree that the armed struggle had to be intensified and expanded.⁴³ Thabo Mbeki, who was convinced that the ANC had to try and lure the white minority away from their belief in apartheid through constructive diplomatic overtures, voiced strong concerns about expanding the bombing campaign. He went against ANC policy, saying that he was “concerned about the impact on white South Africans of attacks against whites. Our aim is to win them away from apartheid, even if they don’t come to us. So, attacks hurt us.”⁴⁴

The Conference reached broad consensus on basic points:

- That the Government was nowhere near considering negotiations. “Accordingly, [the Conference] agreed that there was no reason for us to change our broad strategy, which pursues the aim of seizure of power by the people through a combination of mass political action and armed struggle.”⁴⁵
- “[T]hat the possibility of victory was greater now than at any other time in our history. This requires that we step up our all-round political and military offensive sharply and without delay.” The delegates also agreed that the ANC must “take all necessary measures” to strengthen the liberation movement and to build MK’s underground network inside South Africa.
- That the ANC “cannot even consider” negotiations at that time.⁴⁶

Oliver Tambo told the Conference that considerable success had been achieved in rendering the country ungovernable, but that the absence of “a large contingent of units of Umkhonto we Sizwe” inside South Africa constituted a “weakness” in the overall strategy of the ANC. It must be pointed out what the ANC meant by an underground. This was not simply a network of informers

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. ANC Communiqué of 2nd Consultative Conference. 1985: BOX4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

or supporters giving refuge and assistance. The ANC never had a permanent border base; a permanent base of operations in a country closely neighboring South Africa*, from where to launch its armed attacks on the country. The Nkomati Accord worsened this problem and the cross border attacks on suspected ANC bases in neighboring countries by the South African Defence Force further discouraged southern African states from accommodating ANC bases.⁴⁷

Subsequently, the ANC had to try and create small camps and substructures within South Africa itself, where aspiring cadres could be trained and MK operations executed from. By 1985 this had not fully materialised. Tambo said that MK needed to train people inside the country and that those cadres outside South Africa made up the officers corps.

The ideal was for the latter to train new cadres inside South Africa and then to lead them in an armed uprising. The idea was not for these *officers* to execute all of MK's operations, they had to train people inside the country to do that. Tambo told the assembly: "We have to bear in mind the fact that the comrades we are training outside constitute the core of our army. They are the organisers and the leaders of the mass army that we have to build inside the country. They are the officers corps. We cannot deploy them forever as combat units... we want to reduce our dependence on external structures by organising and leading the struggle from within the country. We must, however, accept the reality that we shall always need these areas."⁴⁸

Apart from this broader strategic imperative, the Conference also made more immediate recommendations to the armed wing:

- "It is imperative that our army take urgent measures to strike at army personnel. In the face of the current offensive by the regime to ruthlessly murder our people at home and carry out brutal raids beyond the borders of South Africa aimed at physically eliminating our Movement, we must take counter-measures which would effectively demonstrate to our people that our army shall no longer allow such acts to

* The ANC cells in Lesotho were destroyed in 1986 by the South African Government. This will be discussed later on.

⁴⁷ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 166.

⁴⁸ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. ANC National Consultative Conference, June 1985: Commission on cadre policy, political and ideological work. BOX5.

go unpunished. Let us implement the call in the MK Charter: 'An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth.' *Our actions must also ensure that we shift the focus from within the black ghettos into the enemy camp.*"*

- They stressed the need to rapidly develop the necessary measures to be able to train cadres with the country and that those trained outside were "capable of serving as a true 'officer corps' – able to attend to the training of cadres inside the country as well as leading them into battle."⁴⁹
- The Commission on Cadre Policy, Political and Ideological Work also made more precise recommendations:
 - That more whites, Indians and coloureds be recruited by MK.
 - That "urban-based sabotage units" be installed in white, Indian and coloured areas. As noted earlier, the ANC wanted to create a situation throughout South Africa that would force the security forces to divide their attention and scatter their forces, instead of being able to focus their resources on singular spots. The creation of these sabotage units in all of the country's communities was one attempt at this: "Their actions should aim to disperse the enemy forces geographically and functionally."⁵⁰
 - The Commission wanted to see the labour movement become involved in the armed struggle. As such, it was recommended that the working class should have formed the majority of the desired "People's Army."
 - That so-called armed propaganda attacks had to be launched against the "economic nerve centres" of the country.
 - That cadres focus on stealing weaponry from the security forces in South Africa.
 - "Since many of the armaments factories are manned by blacks, especially women, we must infiltrate these institutions."⁵¹
 - That more women be recruited into MK.
 - The security forces had to be infiltrated.
- Their last point touched on the strategy of dividing the attention of the security forces, but also on the ANC's problem of maintaining a base of operations in the nearby

* Emphasis added by the writer.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

neighboring countries and on South Africa's borders. South Africa's borders, although not completely impregnable, were tightly controlled by the security forces, which contributed to all the ANC's problems in terms of the armed offensive. As such, the ANC wanted MK to focus on disrupting these borders. "Carry out armed activity in the rural areas in order to unleash the energy of our people in those areas; create conditions for their political mobilisation, disperse the enemy forces from their present concentration in our black communities in the urban areas, as well as increase conditions which would facilitate infiltration of our cadres in large numbers into the country."⁵²

After the Government declared the 1985 State of Emergency, shortly after the ANC concluded its conference, Oliver Tambo addressed the masses on Radio Freedom. Speaking about the State of Emergency, Tambo said: "These hidebound white supremacists see this act of desperation on the part of the apartheid regime as a demonstration of firmness and determination to protect white privilege at all costs. They are convinced that Botha will succeed to suppress our struggle and save the apartheid system from collapse. *White South Africa will not awaken from this dream world while our struggle is concentrated in the black areas of our country. We cannot and shall not allow a situation of relative peace and tranquility to maintain in the white areas of our country while black townships are in flames. We must take the struggle to the white areas of South Africa...*

...No longer should white South Africa live with the idea that it can continue with its business as usual while our people are perishing in their hundreds, out of sight of white families that have sent their sons into our townships, armed to the teeth and with one intention only, to kill, kill and kill... White South Africa must be made to realise that Botha cannot guarantee its security..." The alternative that Botha offers them – that of pitting themselves against the overwhelming majority of the people of our country – is nothing but a deathtrap. Nothing will come of it except grief for the whole of white South Africa... Therefore the order of the day to all units of Umkhonto we Sizwe is that they must strengthen their links with the people... They must take the battle to the enemy and, side by side with the heroic masses of our country, defeat the

⁵² *Ibid.*

* Emphasis added by the writer.

enemy's efforts to rule in a new way, seize the initiative from the enemy and drive them into retreat."⁵³

Shortly after the Kabwe Conference, on June 25th 1985, Oliver Tambo held a press conference where he discussed some sensitive topics. "*The distinction between 'soft' and 'hard' is going to disappear in an escalating conflict.*" We did not complain when the regime send its army across the borders to kill people (referring to the attack by the SADF on Gaborone, Botswana two days before the conference started) and hitting soft targets – very soft, and not even in our own country."⁵⁴ Tambo's dour statements about fighting whites and hitting them where they were weakest created a stir. Commentators wanted to know what the ANC actually meant. Was the ANC declaring war on whites?

In November 1985, some time after the Kabwe Conference, Oliver Tambo was interviewed by Anthony Heard, editor of the South African newspaper, *Cape Times*. During the interview, Heard explicitly asked Tambo to state the policy of the ANC regarding so-called soft targets. Tambo said that, firstly, the ANC had only decided on "stepping up" the armed struggle after 20 years of sabotage.⁵⁵ "We knew what terrorism was, and we thought that the people of South Africa are being misled about what terrorism was. We could have been terrorists if we had wanted to, but we chose not be. So even that has been an exaggeration," said Tambo.⁵⁶

Referring to the 1983 Church Street Bomb, he said without trying to make any excuses that people should just remember for how long the ANC had refrained from these type of actions. The crux of Tambo's argument was that after fighting clean for so long, without results, people surely could understand that at some point things had to turn dirty.

He said that for about two decades the ANC had refrained from these sorts of operations because they wanted to apply pressure without being regarded as terrorists. "And we have been notoriously

⁵³ Internet: ANC web page: <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdos/speeches/1980s/or85-10.html>

⁵⁴ Emphasis added by the writer.

⁵⁴ De Beer, p. 143.

⁵⁵ Oliver Tambo Private Collection. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Interview transcripts: BOX 14.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

restrained in our armed actions – notoriously,” said Tambo, and added later in the interview, “And it is not conceivable that we could go on like that indefinitely without anything changing. But one must see in this holding back the reluctance of the ANC on questions of violence. But when, once of course, we have decided we have got to fight, then we must fight.”⁵⁷

When Heard questioned him further on the issue of soft targets, Tambo said that “soft targets has been exaggerated out of all proportion.” Tambo being characteristically vague when it came to this topic explained that the ANC was simply mimicking the Government’s tactics. That the security forces were indiscriminately “hitting soft targets” in the townships under the rubric of restoring order and that “even children are being killed.” He said that the ANC wasn’t going to go out of its way to kill civilians but that it was “going to intensify our struggle” and that it had accepted the possibility of civilians getting caught in the crossfire.⁵⁸ Whenever the ANC had to clarify what it meant by calling on the masses to take the struggle to the white areas or defend its policy on civilian targets it quickly became vague and nebulous.

Still steering clear from the actual issue, Tambo did say that: “If we stop, we stop. But if we are in a struggle and we feel the demand of the situation is that we struggle, then we must intensify that struggle. We have held back for too long.” Heard again, explicitly, asked Tambo whether or not the ANC would target civilians. “No, we will not go for civilians as such,” answered Tambo but then added a qualification, “We think that civilians will be hit as they are hit always... A crossfire situation, in any war situation.”⁵⁹

The ANC leader said that “we are not fighting against people, we are fighting against a system and we can’t kill people. Why? Why would we kill them? We cannot even kill whites because we are not fighting whites at all. We are fighting a system.” In the discussion about the selection of targets, Tambo stated, explicitly, that: “We will not go into cinemas and bars and places like that. We won’t do that.” One month after he said so – the ANC did exactly that.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Amanzimtoti, on the Natal South Coast, has always been one of the most popular summer holiday spots in the country. At 11:00 am, on December 23rd 1985, a bomb inside a rubbish bin near an ice cream shop inside the SANLAM Centre, which was packed with tourists and Christmas-shoppers, exploded.⁶¹

The bomb killed six people and injured more than 50. Those killed included: a 2-year-old white baby boy, 7-year-old white girl, an 8-year-old white boy, a 16-year-old white girl and two white women of 40 and 48. Survivors and eyewitnesses told of how loud the explosion was, of flames and falling pieces of metal, of people screaming, of billows of smoke, of blown-off body parts scattered around, of flying fragments of glass, of chunks of flesh smeared into puddles of blood, of parents screaming the names of their children, of how the injured sat, dazed, with gaping wounds – and of terror.⁶² White South Africans were shocked and infuriated. The bomb made headlines across the world and drew worldwide attention to the policies of the ANC concerning their armed struggle.⁶³

Following the Amanzimtoti Bomb, as it was popularly known, the organisation came under growing international pressure to clarify and justify its policy on civilian casualties. The ANC seemed uncertain whether or not the attack had indeed been carried out by its armed wing, and initially denied it.

On January 9th 1986, only a few days after the Amanzimtoti Bomb the President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo held a press conference. On January 9th 1986, Oliver Tambo publicly announced that the ANC had declared 1986 as *The Year Of Umkhonto We Sizwe*. Tambo explained that the ANC had "called for the rapid escalation of our military offensive. In this regard we would like to reiterate that our military operations will continue to be directed against armed enemy personnel as

⁶¹ *The Citizen*. 23 December 1985 & *Die Volksblad*. 23 December 1985. .

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Although the bomb was the work of a MK cadre, Andrew Sibusiso Zondo, the ANC denied responsibility for the attack. It stated that although Zondo was an MK operative, he executed the bomb attack on his own authority and not on the orders of the ANC. They stated that he had executed the bomb attack out of frustration over the cross border raids of the South African army, in which ANC personnel were targeted. The ANC stated that although Zondo had acted in direct defiance to their official policy, they could understand his frustration.⁶³ Irrespective of the statements, South African and foreign commentators wanted a more thorough explanation of what happened at Amanzimtoti but also about the ANC's policies concerning its armed struggle. See TRC Report, vol. 2, p. 329.

well as strategic installations. We would also like to repeat that in the course of the spread of the People's War civilians will be caught in the crossfire. We do not derive any pleasure from this, but we have to except it as an inevitable consequence of any war."⁶⁴

Having said that, the foreign journalists grilled Tambo about the Amanzimtoti Bomb, which had clearly targeted civilians. The more the ANC President tried to downplay it, the more the reporters pounced, making Tambo, known for his soft-spoken calmness, clearly uncomfortable. Tambo told the journalists that the ANC would only bomb traditionally civilian installations, like cinemas and restaurants, if there was some way these places could be "regarded as military installations or establishments." He also said that the armed wing would never, deliberately, kill children "even if they were in the military zone or establishment. Therefore there could have been no orders from above certain levels of the ANC for the Amanzimtoti-attack. I think I have made the statement to the effect that we will not attack supermarkets."⁶⁵

Tambo explained that the bombing of supermarkets constituted "going for civilian targets" and that such attacks were not part of the ANC's armed struggle: "But having said that I want to remind you that the South African situation is one of violence. There is war going on there." Tambo then adopted an-eye-for-an-eye rationale, reverting to the ANC's usual rhetoric. He said that the armed struggle was an attempt at self-defence against a violent racist oppressor; stating that the world should remember that the army was in the townships and that they were doing much more merciless things to black civilians than the bombs of the ANC did to white civilians. He said that the security forces were responsible for killing hundreds of civilians, for "fighting, shooting, killing every day... scores of civilians..."⁶⁶

In the same way that Pres. PW Botha and his Government would claim the international community was applying double standards in its criticism; the ANC too cried double standards. Tambo said that it was unfair that the world should criticise the ANC for unintentionally killing a

⁶⁴ Oliver Tambo Papers. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Interview transcripts: BOX 14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

handful of white civilians while the security forces of the *enemy* were, according to him, deliberately murdering droves of innocent blacks on a daily basis.⁶⁷

It was clear that although the ANC maybe did not give a direct order for the bomb, it had been carried out by MK cadres. Tambo said that these cadres had reached a point where they, apparently, took authority in their own hands out of frustration at the situation in South Africa. He said that although he didn't give the order and although he would never condone the killing of civilians he did understand how the frustration of the South African situation could prompt cadres, desperate for change, to embark on such operations. He warned that it was, probably, not the last such incident either.⁶⁸

In other words, irrespective of their motivation, the ANC admitted that it had irresponsible and uncontrollable MK cadres who acted on their own authority and did not mind defying official ANC policy.

The ANC leadership had compiled "Recommendations for 1986" in which it instructed its different departments to focus their campaigns around certain important dates, anniversaries and issues. 1986 marked the 25th anniversary of the creation of MK and subsequently became the ANC's *Year of Umkhonto we Sizwe*. As such, the ANC-in exile expected the armed wing to be really vigorous during that year. "Taking into account the level of struggle today and the growing need for the intensification of armed struggle, the 25th anniversary of MK becomes that much more significant. It provides the basis for mobilisation for people's war, expansion of combat groups, emphasising the role of all the people in armed struggle etc. These two anniversaries* can dovetail in a splendid manner all in the direction of emphasising mass action, armed struggle and general people's war... Whilst MK should continue to pursue the objective of armed propaganda and the crippling of the economy of the regime, it should at the same time emphasise the question of attacks on enemy personnel..."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

* The other being the 10th anniversary of the Soweto Riots.

⁶⁹ Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Recommendations for 1986: BOX 83.

1986, the *Year of Umkhonto We Sizwe*, saw an intensification of MK attacks and some of these, like the Amanzimtoti Bomb, appeared to be targeted against civilians. As the ANC leadership recommended, its armed wing orchestrated many of its attacks to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the Soweto Riots, as such there were a number of incidents during June and July 1986.

These included:

- 17 June 1986: A day after the 10th anniversary of the Soweto Riots, of 1976, a car bomb was detonated in Durban, which killed 3 people and injured about 70.
- 21 June 1986: Another bomb in Durban, this time at the beachfront, exploded. On the same day, a Brigadier, in Bophuthatswana, who had been responsible for a shooting in which 26 people were killed, was murdered by MK assassins.
- 24 June 1986: Two bombs exploded in the city centre of Johannesburg, injuring 19 people.
- 29 June 1986: Three people were injured when a bomb, planted in a shopping centre in Queenstown, exploded.
- 1 July 1986: Ten people died when a car bomb, in Bophuthatswana, exploded and eight people were injured when a bomb in Johannesburg exploded.
- 3 July 1986: A bomb, at a police station in Cape Town, exploded.
- 10 July 1986: A bomb, outside the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, exploded.⁷⁰

Also forming part of these attacks were two bombs that stood out particularly for their terror impact.

On June 14th 1986, two days before the 10th anniversary of the Soweto Riots, Robert McBride detonated a car bomb at the Durban beachfront, in front of a pub called the Magoo's Bar. Three people were killed and 69 others injured, the victims were civilians. The actual target was the Why Not Bar, near the Magoo's Bar. McBride said that the Why Not Bar was a popular spot amongst security officers. McBride's reconnaissance of the area and whether or not the pub actually

⁷⁰ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 173.

contained any security people – as well as whether or not the bomb would actually strike the intended target was, according to most commentators, particularly amateurish. Subsequently, the Magoo's Bar was hit, instead of the Why Not Bar and the victims were civilians and not security personnel.⁷¹

July 4th 1986. 17:00 pm. A bomb, covered in a plastic bag and stashed in a dustbin between two cars in the parking area of a busy Checkers shopping centre in the Pretoria suburb of Silverton, exploded as people were going home. Some 20 people were injured, including a 7-year-old white girl, seven white women, 8 black men and 3 black women.⁷²

Two white schoolgirls, who had been sitting at a nearby bus stop, were seriously injured. One of the girls' feet and face were particularly seriously injured. An injured black man tried to take off his shoe – not realising that his foot had been severed from his leg. Elsewhere in the parking area, a black woman lay in a pool of blood with both her legs blown off; an elderly man had his arm blown off and his face seriously injured. The bomb had totally wrecked the entrance of the centre and had blown out most of its display windows; pieces of cars, which had been parked close to the bomb, were found on the roof of the centre and in the street behind the complex; pieces of the dustbin, in which the bomb had been planted, were found some two street blocks away.⁷³

These successful hits – irrespective of whether or not they were aimed at civilians – together with the aggression of the mass movement, the turmoil in the townships and the intensifying international and economic pressures aimed against the minority Government, led many ANC members to become overconfident about the destruction of the apartheid-regime. Members of the ANC hierarchy and many grassroots groupings were convinced that the end of apartheid was very much at hand.⁷⁴

During the first few months of the 1986 State of Emergency, the Botha Government stamped out such positive estimations. Although it could not succeed in permanently removing them, through

⁷¹ De Villiers, p. 331.

⁷² *Beeld*, 5 July 1986.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 173.

its severe security measures, sophisticated strategies, ruthlessness and sheer brutality, the Botha Government successfully opposed the violent uprising. In fact, by the end of 1986, it had proved itself to be firmly in control of the South African situation and that it was more powerful and determined than many in the ANC had believed.⁷⁵

On January 1st 1986, the Botha Government barricaded the South Africa-Lesotho borders. Economic chaos broke out in Lesotho – because the economy was nearly completely dependent on South Africa – and a coup d'état followed. The new regime in Lesotho was pro-Pretoria. The Botha Government demanded that the ANC bases in Lesotho had to be closed and all members expelled from the country, before it would reopen the borders. As the MK operatives left Lesotho many were arrested by the South African security forces, but more importantly, the armed wing of the ANC had yet again lost a valuable centre of operations.⁷⁶

Later in the same year, South Africa's security forces staged successful operations against ANC bases in Swaziland, wiping out MK's existence in that country. The leadership of MK and the ANC headquarters now realised that their operations in Swaziland had been riddled with South African spies. While moving in on Swaziland, the South African security forces had also focussed on Mozambique, which led to a further clampdown on undercover MK operatives.⁷⁷ The ANC still executed important campaigns from Botswana, but the large number of South Africans spies there seriously impeded its work.⁷⁸

As already noted, by the end of 1986, both the ANC and the united mass movement were in disunion and disillusioned. The ANC-in exile and its satellite-organisations within the country were beset with problems. On the one hand, the Government had executed a broad and successful counterstrike against the liberation movement and on the other hand, the ANC and its satellite-organisations had internal problems of their own. Both in the ANC-in exile, as well as in its internal movement, severe disunity had set in, centred on politics, strategy and powerful individual personalities. Furthermore, the ANC-in exile and its internal support base, were becoming

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 166.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 169.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 171.

increasingly paranoid regarding Government spies. The Political-Military Council delivered a “Message to the Progressive Forces of South Africa,” which touched on these issues. The communiqué first congratulated all anti-apartheid forces on having “forced the enemy into retreat” – few people could have taken this congratulatory self-denial seriously.⁷⁹

Touching on the disunity that had plagued the ANC and the mass united movement, the message stated: “As we should have expected, the advances we have made have thrown up new challenges. In the process of confronting these, differences of opinion have emerged among us.” It called on everyone involved in the struggle to resolve these internal differences in the knowledge that everybody was working towards the same objective. The message stated that the resolution of disunity “must be carried out as a contention of ideas and not a conflict among personalities.”⁸⁰

“It is clear to us that the enemy is studying us closely. It welcomes and encourages any divisions that might emerge among us. This emphasises both the urgent necessity for us to enhance and reinforce our unity and the need to conduct the debate among ourselves in a manner that does not play into the hands of the enemy”.⁸¹ This camouflaged reference to the spy-paranoia is of importance. The fact that the compilers of the document even referred to it in this subtle way, in a message for general distribution, ought to have given a good indication of the severity of the situation.

It also warned people, who might have become disillusioned with the struggle and the movement, not to trust the Botha Government. They warned them not to think that the Botha Government would allow them to pressure it through legal means; that there was no other option but to fight. “The very fact that we pursue revolutionary objectives means that the enemy will always treat us as deadly outlaws to be exterminated or vanquished with all means available to the fascist clique... We should not entertain false hopes that the apartheid regime will allow us to defeat it through mass legal pressure.”⁸²

⁷⁹ ANC Lusaka Mission: ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. PMC Message 1986: BOX 29.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

In terms of statistics and numbers, the number of bomb explosions, assassinations and sabotage operations, 1986 was the most successful year for MK in the armed struggle.⁸³ However, a finer examination of the broad strategy of the ANC and the role that MK was supposed to have fulfilled therein told a completely different story. 1986 proved that MK was failing in its broad revolutionary goals and that the Government was more powerful than many had originally thought. In their history of the ANC, Peter Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba summarised the situation as it was at the end of 1986: "Soon after the nationwide State of Emergency in June 1986, it became clear that the government had gained the military initiative, even if it was bereft of political ideas after the failure of PW Botha's attempt at installing a tri-cameral parliament. The mobilisation of the entire resources of the state in a counter-revolutionary strategy in South Africa... and the effectiveness of Pretoria's espionage system added up to a comprehensive defeat for Umkhonto we Sizwe and the strategy adopted by the ANC and the Communist Party since the 1960s."⁸⁴

Ellis and Sechaba argued that be this as it may, in all likelihood, if FW de Klerk had not unbanned the ANC, a new wave of violent political dissent even more intense than those of 1976 or 1984, might very well have erupted. "But what was also clear after Umkhonto we Sizwe had been beaten back from the Frontline States was that the ANC's long-term military strategy was in need of complete rethinking. There was to be no People's War in the sense that the High Command had conceived of it."⁸⁵

This was not to say that the ANC, or its armed struggle had been overwhelmed by the Government. Gerald Shaw gave an interesting appraisal of the situation. He wrote, in May 1987, that it was clear that the Government would not succeed in completely blocking MK cadres from entering South Africa and spreading terror, but on the other hand the ANC also had no realistic chance of ever toppling the minority Government by force.

He stated that: "This is a war that neither side can win," because the ANC would not stop its armed struggle thereby urging the white minority to tougher security action and hawkish political stances.

⁸³ ANC Lusaka Mission: ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Umkhonto We Sizwe – Activities 1987: BOX9.

⁸⁴ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 173.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

And of course, the harder the minority Government reacted, the more ardent the ANC became in its armed strikes. Summing up the stalemate that was being forged, he wrote: "The Nationalist Government sees no need to negotiate with the ANC, which it believes it can crush, while the ANC has no wish to negotiate now from a position of weakness."⁸⁶

On May 28th 1987, Oliver Tambo gave an address at the Institute of Education, in London, during which he explained and defended the ANC's stance on the South African situation. Among other topics, Tambo dealt with the issue of negotiations, specifically with what the ANC regarded as prerequisites for negotiations. As noted throughout this study, on countless occasions throughout this period the Botha Government stated that it would only consider negotiations if the ANC agreed to a cease-fire. The ANC thus was continuously being asked if that was the Government's main concern, why did they not suspend the armed struggle.

Every time the ANC stated that it was the Government's responsibility to declare a cease-fire and not the other way round. "Nor indeed will it do to put the onus on the ANC to take such initiatives as it might be claimed would enable negotiations to take place; and neither will it do to fish around for such initiatives. If the key to negotiations were in our hands, we would long have used it to open the door. Such measures as have been proposed for us to adopt, namely the cessation or suspension of our armed struggle or the unilateral proclamation of a moratorium, will do nothing to bring about negotiations," said Tambo, "The Pretoria regime is refusing to negotiate not because there is an armed struggle, but because it is unwilling to give up white minority domination."⁸⁷

Tambo also stated for the umpteenth time that, "the source of violence in South Africa... is the apartheid system and the racist regime. What must cease is... the violence that arises from the administration of apartheid." Arguing that apartheid was inherently violent, the President of the ANC said that the Government would only stop carrying out violence when the system of apartheid was abolished.

⁸⁶ *The Natal Witness*. 25 May 1987.

⁸⁷ Oliver Tambo Papers: A 17. 22: At the ANC Archives, Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Speeches and statements published, 1985-1990: BOX 18.

“It seems to us strange reasoning that we, the victims of violence, should be asked to respond to the continued terror of the Pretoria regime against the peoples of Southern Africa by committing ourselves to cease our armed resistance, whether temporarily or permanently. The Pretoria regime has blocked the path to negotiations,” said Tambo.⁸⁸

In conclusion, Tambo made apocalyptic-sounding forecasts. “A terrible collision between ourselves and our opponents is inevitable. Many battles will be fought and many lives will be lost throughout our region... Yet the outcome is in no doubt,” stated Tambo, “Having reached the crossroads, the masses of our people have decided that our country must advance as rapidly as possible to the situation where they, black and white, will govern themselves together as equals. *Whatever the cost, there is no doubt that we will win.*”⁸⁹

Having made that pledge and with that state of mind, MK executed some 200 operations across South Africa. Almost every second day of 1987 cadres performed some kind of armed action. Operations, for which MK took responsibility, included:

□ January 1987:

- 3 /01/ 87: A bomb explosion at a shopping mall in Johannesburg. 3 people were injured.
- 9 /01/ 98: Limpet mines exploded at an OK Bazaar Shopping Centre, in Johannesburg.

□ February 1987:

- 5 /02/ 87: Mini limpet mine exploded near the official Rondebosch residence of Min. Dawie de Villiers.
- 12 /02/ 87: A limpet mine wrecked a high tension pylon, near Goodwood.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

* Emphasis added by the writer.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

* Take note that these exclude the many grenade attacks and assassination of security forces.

- 21 /02/ 87: Three bombs exploded at a car dealership, a railway station and a supermarket in the East Griqualand town of Matatiele.

□ March:

- 16 /03/ 87: A limpet mine, stuck to the engine of bakkie, exploded in Sandton.
- 17 /03/ 87: Three bombs exploded on the railway tracks between Newcastle and Johannesburg.
- 17 /03/ 87: A bomb exploded and damaged railway lines near the Dube Station, Soweto.
- 28 /03/ 87: Four people died when a bakkie triggered a landmine in the East Transvaal.⁹⁰

□ April:

- 03 /04/ 87: Three people were wounded when a bomb exploded in the car park of a shopping mall in Newcastle, Natal.
- 08 /04/ 87: A bomb wrecked railway lines between Soweto and Johannesburg.
- 16 /04/ 87: Two school boys were wounded, a microbus was completely wrecked and five other cars smashed when a bomb exploded in the parking area of a Pick`n`Pay Supermarket in Newcastle, Natal.
- 21 /04/ 87: A bomb exploded at a station in Johannesburg and damaged a nearby car dealership.

□ May:

- 4 /05/ 87: A truck drove over a landmine on a farm road near Messina, killing the driver. Later when security forces scouted the area for other such devices a soldier stepped on an anti-personnel mine and was killed. Another such device was also found.

⁹⁰ ANC Lusaka Mission: ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. ANC National Consultation Conferences, 1985: BOX 5.

- 5 /05/ 87: A bomb exploded at 0045 hrs and another one at 0120 hrs at the Johannesburg Civic Centre. In the Eastern Transvaal a landmine exploded when a tractor drove over it. A bomb exploded at a railway station in Mannenberg, Western Province.
- 9 /05/ 87: A bomb exploded in Johannesburg, causing R20 000 worth of damage to nearby shops.
- 10 /05/ 87: Two men were wounded when a bomb exploded outside the ticket office of the Roodepoort Station.
- 13 /05/ 87: A bomb exploded at a technical school in Johannesburg.
- 17 /05/ 87: A bomb exploded at a Newcastle railway station. The explosion damaged the buildings of the station, although it did not injure anybody. While policemen were investigating the scene of the blast a second bomb was detonated, injuring a policeman.
- 20 /05/ 87: Four policemen were killed and 12 other people were injured when two bombs exploded, minutes apart, at the Johannesburg Magistrates Court.
- 24 /05/ 87: A bomb blew up a bakkie in Selby near Johannesburg.

□ June

- 12 /06/ 87: A bomb went off at the Athlone Magistrates Court.
- 23 /06/ 87: Five limpet mines, stashed in dustbins, exploded in the central business district of Malelane, Eastern Transvaal.⁹¹

□ July:

- 08 /07/ 87: 4 barmen were wounded when a bomb exploded at a pub of the Village Main Hotel, Johannesburg.
- 17 /07/ 87: 3 people died when a landmine exploded in Odi, Western Transvaal.
- 20 /07/ 87: A bomb exploded at the Palm Tyre Service Station. Later another bomb was discovered there and was defused.
- 21 /07/ 87: A bomb exploded in the toilets of the DF Malan Airport.
- 23 /07/ 87: A bomb exploded on a railway crossing, Lynedoch, Western Province.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

- 24 / 07/ 87: A bomb exploded near Stellenbosch, but nobody was injured. On the same day another bomb exploded on railway lines, near Stellenbosch.
- 30 /07/ 87: 3 people were wounded when a landmine exploded on a farm in the Far Northern Transvaal. On the same day, Johannesburg was brought to a virtual standstill when a huge car bomb exploded. The bomb was placed close to the Wits Command and tore off a sizeable section of its roof. Extensive damage was also done to the Ster City Complex; wreckage, broken pieces of glass and debris were blown across four street blocks. 75 people were wounded.⁹²

□ September:

- 13 /09/ 87: An electric sub-station was damaged when a bomb exploded in Soweto.
- 23 /09/ 87: For the first time in the 1980s a bomb exploded in a white residential area. The bomb exploded at the Johannesburg home of Mrs Del Keyan, Director of Housing in the Soweto City Council.
- 28 /09/ 87: A bomb exploded in the parking lot of the Standard Bank Arena, while a boxing match was taking place inside the complex.

□ October:

- 14 /10/ 87: 5 people were wounded and 3 vehicles destroyed when a bomb exploded outside a post office in Empangeni, Natal
- 16 /10/ 87: A bomb exploded at the SANLAM Centre, Empangeni, Natal

□ November:

- 14 /11/ 87: One soldier was injured when a bomb, which had been stashed in a dustbin, exploded in Cape Town.
- 21 /11/ 87: Municipal buildings in Soweto were damaged when two bombs exploded.
- 26 /11/ 87: A bomb explosion completely destroyed a radio pylon near Johannesburg.

⁹² *Ibid.*

- 30 /11/ 87: Hundreds of policemen narrowly escaped injury or death, when three bombs exploded at the Dube barracks, Soweto.⁹³

During the middle to latter part of the 1980s, landmine attacks became an increasingly common feature of MK's armed offensive. During the last decades of the 20th century, the use of landmines in armed conflict had become a contentious issue. Landmines, like napalm bombings, had become politically incorrect. The landmine was an important ANC weapon and the organisation continuously came under fire for their use. These weapons were specifically used to attack white farmers who lived on the northern borders of the country. At the 1985 Kabwe Conference, the ANC rationalised attacks on white farmers and gave an explicit order for the use of landmines. The ANC wanted to *clear* these border farms, to drive the whites off these strategically important areas to ease the in- and exfiltration of cadres across the country's borders. It was also important, as part of the ANC's strategy, to force the Government to disperse its security forces as thinly as possible across the country, so as to prevent the security forces from containing the internal turmoil.⁹⁴

The rural areas, particularly those desolate spots, were also important to the ANC. The ANC had hoped to substitute rear bases for makeshift bases in the countryside. The ANC acknowledged that it would most probably never succeed in establishing truly liberated areas anywhere in South Africa, but at least "it is realistic to work for the creation of a combat presence which will begin contesting for control of the area with the enemy."⁹⁵

As explained elsewhere in this study, the security forces had patrolled these areas and had also created a security network, which included the help of farmers in securing these border areas. That is why, in 1985, the ANC called on MK to make a "comprehensive study" of the "borderlands and the regime's defence infra-structure in these."⁹⁶

Because the security forces had helped the farmers to protect themselves and secure the farms on the borders of the country, the ANC argued that these white farmers were in fact part of the

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

securocratic Total Strategy and therefore part of the so-called Botha-Malan military machine. As such, the ANC argued, these farmers were not soft targets and killing them would not constitute killing civilians.⁹⁷

“We have always gone out of our way to avoid a confrontation along racial lines and we will continue to do so. But those among the white community who constitute the core of its social base for race domination are increasingly being mobilised in support of brutal repression. *In particular the enemy has begun to transform almost every farm into a military outpost. Certainly in the countryside they are more and more blurring the distinction between what is civilian and what is military*”.⁹⁸

“In the rural areas it is necessary to create underground and mass political bases as a foundation for the armed struggle. In areas where suitable conditions exist units must be sent to be based in the terrain to make contact with and train the local population for action against the enemy. *We must undertake a sustained drive to clear the white farms and harass the enemy with mine warfare.*”⁹⁹ From a purely strategic point of view, this directive made sense, but in practice it was a dangerous tactic, full of moral potholes, which damaged the image of the ANC.

Tambo said that landmine attacks on white farmers in the border areas did not mean that the ANC was attacking civilians. He argued that the South African Government treated these border farms as a militarised zone and as such, these farmers were part of the Government's military-security complex and per implication regarded by the ANC not as civilian farmers, but as security personnel.

“The use of landmines in the white farming areas does not constitute a change of policy,” Tambo rationalised, “We have just stated, these areas along the borders of our country have long been proclaimed and treated by the Pretoria regime as military zones. There are laws on the South African statute books which obliged the white farmers in these areas to be part of South Africa's

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

* Emphasis added by the writer.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

** Emphasis added by the writer.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

so-called security system... It puzzles us that today we are being criticised for carrying out armed action in areas that have been declared and turned into military zones by the racist regime.”¹⁰⁰

Why the ANC came under international criticism for its use of landmines is simple enough. Farmers, militarised or not, also had children and wives and the indiscriminate terror of landmines would also affect them. It is important to note the practical effect of the ANC’s drive to clear the farms.

Johannes Roos was a farmer during the 1980s, he told of what happened to him in August 1986: “My wife and our three children attended church on Sunday. We drove to church in two vehicles, because I had to be there earlier. We left that evening around ten past eight. My wife and three children drove in front of me in our car. We came to the farm turn-off on the gravel road. We drove until the road splits to the house. Here, where my wife came to the fork, you could already see the lights in the house burning. All three children sat in the back seat. My young boy sat behind his mother, my baby of fifteen months lay on his sister’s lap on the left – she was five years old. My wife gave the keys to my son [Jaco]... He stood up in the seat and leant over to take the keys. At that moment she hit the landmine.”¹⁰¹

I who was behind them saw the whole event. I saw how the flames boiled out under the car. I saw how the car shot up into the air. Right out of the road, ninety degrees, into the bush next to the road, pieces of metal, dust, earth flew through the air. I pulled up, jumped out... I went closer, I looked at my wife. She sat in her seat, crushed. Pieces of her feet were gone, her body was bloody, full of cuts, she moaned and asked, ‘Where are my legs?’ My son... was sitting on the back seat, head askew and unconscious... My wife was taken out of the operating theatre around three o’clock the next morning¹⁰².

They amputated her right leg under the knee. Her left leg was crushed at the ankle... She had several open wounds and her throat was cut open... her whole face was singed and her arms were

¹⁰⁰ Oliver Tambo Papers. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Interview transcripts: BOX 14.

¹⁰¹ Krog, A., *Country of my skull*, p. 213.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 214.

torn...I knew a piece of my wife's leg from the shin down was still in the wreckage. We went to look if we couldn't find the limb in order to bury it... What we did find was a piece of my son's skull in which he had a hole... Some of his... brains were also on the seat... How can you be human after such an experience? Three days later my wife died... Jaco died on 5 March 1987."¹⁰³

By the latter half of 1987, it became increasingly clear to even the most optimistic anti-apartheid fighter that the Government had successfully countered the uprising. Through the imposition of the tough, nationwide, 1986 State of Emergency and its other covert and clandestine security measures, the Government had dealt the united mass anti-apartheid movement a severe blow. Coupled with the Defence Force's cross-border raids targeting ANC bases and the growing international pressure on the ANC to reconsider its revolutionary strategies caused the ANC to reassess its total onslaught against apartheid.¹⁰⁴

In fact, the more farsighted moderates within the top management of the movement had been touching on the issue for some time. Already in 1985, a subcommittee, consisting of among others, Pallo Jordan and Thabo Mbeki, of the National Executive Committee, of the ANC had compiled an *Internal Submission on the Question of Negotiations*.¹⁰⁵

This document stated that talks with the minority power are "of themselves not harmful. If negotiations are viewed as yet one more terrain of struggle, rather than as a means of drawing the struggle to close, we have no reason to shun them." It went on to say that, in possible future negotiations, the ANC's strategic objective would remain people's power, as outlined in their Freedom Charter, "though the means we employ to arrive at it may have to change."¹⁰⁶

According to this document, the subcommittee was "to learn negotiating tactics and pick up tips on specific situations." It is important to note that the subcommittee stated that: "When we reach the conference table we should have our own set of concrete constitutional proposals (not merely the Freedom Charter) otherwise we will be forced to react to the other side's proposals. The

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁰⁴ Alden, C., *Apartheid's last stand – the rise and fall of the South African security state*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁵ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. "Submission on the question of negotiations - 1985": BOX 83.

NEC must therefore immediately set up a constitutional think-tank...¹⁰⁷ Further debate and developments followed and which led to a *Workshop on Future South Africa*, held in August 1987, in Stockholm.¹⁰⁸

In October 1987, the National Executive Council of the ANC released a statement about its views on negotiations. Although subtle, the notice represented a definite watershed. Reading between the lines, it was clear that the ANC was undergoing a serious change in perspective regarding talks with the minority Government.

The statement, albeit far from tame, was distinctly more moderate in its wording, and the usual bombastic rhetoric made way for a more sober tone. Although still assuredly aggressive in its anti-apartheid manner, there was an unmistakable change of perspective. Instead of hyperbolically demanding that the Government hand them the country, the ANC now declared that it had never been opposed to “a negotiated settlement.” Instead of simply demanding an outright seizure of power, this communiqué stated that the ANC was “ready and willing to enter into genuine negotiations.”¹⁰⁹

The notice stated that if the minority Government was serious about negotiations it had to “demonstrate its seriousness by implementing various measures to create a climate conducive to such negotiations:”

- Unconditional release of all political prisoners and an immediate termination of political trials.
- An end to the State of Emergency and the withdrawal of the security forces from the townships.
- The Government would have to scrap all laws impeding freedom of speech, the media and assembly.
- The unbanning of the ANC

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. “Post apartheid South Africa – 1987-1990”: BOX 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

- Regarding the question of violence, the document stated that instead of the Government demanding that the ANC renounced the armed struggle: “Any cessation of hostilities would have to be negotiated and entail agreed action on both sides as part of the process of the creation of a democratic South Africa.” Again, one notices the emphasis on negotiations.
- The ANC would accept that a post-apartheid constitution that included a Bill of Rights, but this should protect only the rights of the individual – they would not accept constitutional clauses specifically protecting minority rights. Important here is the mere fact that the ANC even mentioned the idea of a new and negotiated constitution. This, again, serves to emphasise the subtle, but distinct, change in the ANC and that the organisation was, evidently, seriously debating talks with the minority rulers.
- All negotiations had to take place in public.¹¹⁰

The document created a furor on all levels within the ANC. Intense debates followed. The militarists who still clung to the hope that the ANC could destroy minority rule through a two-staged revolution was very upset by the tone of the statement, irrespective of the stringent prerequisites laid down before negotiations could commence. Nonetheless, these debates within the leadership of the ANC were markedly more moderate and went so far as to question the idea of a revolutionary seizure of power.¹¹¹

Overall, at that stage in 1987, the Botha Government refused to even consider these preconditions. Furthermore, the ANC did not make it clear what it was prepared to do to draw the minority to the negotiating tables nor that it was prepared to accept the Government’s precondition that the ANC end its armed struggle – it made no effort to sell the concept of negotiation to the Government. The fact of the matter was that there was no realistic chance that either of the two groups were prepared to negotiate at that stage. The importance of the statement was that from then on the question of negotiations was ardently debated within the ANC. Increasingly, emphasis fell on negotiations, instead of revolution, as a feasible means to end apartheid.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*; Esterhuysen, W. & Nel, P., *The ANC and its leaders*, p. 130..

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

It must be stressed that the mere fact that negotiations were thereafter debated with sobriety and vigour was very important. Although the question of negotiations was now seriously debated by both groups, neither was prepared for it to actually come to fruition at that stage. The debate had started, but both groups were internally split on the issue. Neither of the two parties was wholeheartedly convinced of the folly of trying to end the conflict unilaterally.

In December 1987, Oliver Tambo spoke at a special conference entitled "Peoples of the World Unite Against Apartheid for a Democratic South Africa", convened in Tanzania. Tambo spoke in the same language as the abovementioned statement, made in October 1987. The President of the ANC didn't say a word about creating a revolution, but instead debated the ANC's viewpoint on negotiations. Although Tambo rejected the Government's demand that the ANC renounce violence, he did say that if other options existed to bring about fundamental change in South Africa, the ANC would not deliberately continue using violent means.¹¹³

During the same time, at the end of 1987, Tambo assembled all the leaders of MK and expressed his concern about the number of operations aimed at civilians. He was particularly distressed about the use of landmines, specifically anti-tank mines. The ANC President ordered his military leaders to ensure that MK cadres knew and understood that targeting civilians was against ANC policy and he furthermore ordered MK to immediately stop using anti-tank mines.¹¹⁴

Senior cadres were dispatched to MK bases to relate Tambo's orders. According to the ANC, in many cases, cadres that executed operations against soft targets did not do so to spite the ANC, but because they misunderstood ANC policies and directives. In other words, they did not always distinguish between propaganda and commands.¹¹⁵

Although the ANC had apparently become more moderate, it was not going to end its struggle any time soon. In November 1987, MK announced that in the coming year it would focus more on targeting the security forces and stay out of the urban areas. But also warned that in 1988 it was

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

¹¹⁴ *Further submissions and responses by the ANC to questions raised by the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

going to do something “sensational which will rock Botha and make the world sit up and take note.”¹¹⁶

While the ANC’s military commanders warned of what they had in store for 1988, the debate on negotiations was gaining momentum. As noted earlier, in a 1985 document, the ANC’s strategists stated that it was imperative to have “concrete constitutional proposals (not merely the Freedom Charter)”¹¹⁷ before negotiations could commence. Finally, by the beginning of 1988, the ANC distributed a document that was regarded by many analysts as the organisation’s most important document since the draft of the Freedom Charter.

The document, which in the context of liberation politics, proved to be historically important was entitled *Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa*. The document stated the “stage is now approaching where the Freedom Charter must be converted from a vision for the future into a constitutional reality.”¹¹⁸

The message conveyed was that the ANC was not planning to fight a never-ending struggle and that the organisation was truly becoming increasingly moderate – and it was very clear that the ANC was becoming increasingly serious about negotiation. What was the point in drawing-up proposals for a future constitution if they sincerely believed that they would remain in exile indefinitely. This document was an open signal to the minority Government.

The compilers of the statement described the document as being “our basic guidelines for the foundations of government in a post-apartheid South Africa.” The document stated that it was enough to merely abolish all discriminatory legislation, “the structures and institutions of apartheid must be dismantled and replaced by democratic ones. Steps must be taken to ensure that apartheid ideas and practices are not permitted to reappear in new forms.” Furthermore, the document stated

¹¹⁶ Cooper (et al), *South African Race Relations Survey 1987/88*, p. 701.

¹¹⁷ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. “Submission on the question of negotiations - 1985”: BOX 83.

¹¹⁸ ANC Lusaka Mission. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Post-Apartheid South Africa, 1987-1990. BOX8.

that the effects of apartheid had to be rectified by “constitutional provisions for... a rapid and irreversible redistribution of wealth and opening up of facilities to all.”¹¹⁹

It demanded the “entrenching of the principle of non-discrimination... it means equal cultural and linguistic rights for all.” The document argued against “constitutional protection for group rights” as it would mean a prolonging of the unfairness of apartheid.¹²⁰

The document went on to address a range of topics, among others it voiced support for a one-man-one-vote dispensation and the non-alignment of a post-apartheid South African state. Regarding the economy, the ANC supported the idea of a “mixed one, with a public sector, a private sector, a cooperative sector and a small-scale family sector.” The whole economy of a post-apartheid South Africa, according to the ANC, should be “under democratic control and direction.” The document also stated that: “Property for personal use and consumption shall be constitutionally protected.”¹²¹

It is important to emphasise that just because the ANC was debating negotiation and Tambo had rebuked MK for its attacks on soft targets, it did not mean that the ANC was planning to end the armed struggle in the near future. As already noted, neither the ANC nor the Botha Government were then prepared to enter into negotiations.

The stalemate had not yet set in deep enough to convince both parties of the futility of trying to end the conflict unilaterally. In retrospect, we now know that the end was near, but at the beginning of 1988 both the Government and the ANC were still confident enough about their respective positions to continue fighting each other. Furthermore, even if both groups knew that negotiations were very close, they would certainly have opted for a last show of force before talking to each other, so as to remind the opposition of their strength. Subsequently, at the beginning of 1988, Tambo called on the armed wing and the masses to keep on fighting.¹²²

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Oliver Tambo Papers, A17.22. ANC Archives at the Howard Pim Library, Fort Hare University. Speeches and Statements – published, 1985-1990:BOX 18.

In his address, in January 1988, Tambo publicly acknowledged that the ANC and whole united mass movement were under overwhelming pressure. He noted that the National Security Management System, Joint Management Centres and State Security Council were a truly formidable security network, which successfully threatened the whole liberation movement.

He also acknowledged that MK had suffered serious losses and that disunity in the united mass movement was detrimental to the liberation of South Africa. But he also called on the people and all sectors of the ANC to intensify the struggle. He called on blacks serving in the security forces to stop acting like traitors: "You must turn your guns against the common enemy."¹²³

"We must remain on the attack, maintain our offensive posture and, in struggle, win new ground in our advance towards people's power," said Tambo, "To achieve a further advance to people's power, these must be our watchwords – plan, organise, attack!"¹²⁴ The ANC was going to implement a type of carrot-and-stick approach. The carrot being increased moderation regarding negotiations and the stick being an intensified wave of armed operations in an attempt to get whites to realise the futility of clinging to apartheid.¹²⁵ The police estimated that the armed wing executed 262 attacks during January-November 1988.¹²⁶

Some of MK's bigger attacks, during 1988, included:

□ January 1988:

- A mini-limpet mine exploded in Kokstad.¹²⁷

□ February 1988:

- A group of cadres attacked a white family on their farm near the Limpopo River with RPG-7 rockets, grenades and machine guns¹²⁸

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Thomas, S., *The diplomacy of liberation – the foreign relations of the ANC since 1960*, p. 212.

¹²⁶ Cooper (et al), *SA Race Relations Survey 1988/89*, p. 611.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

□ March 1988:

- At Benoni, on the east Rand, a bomb exploded, targeting a bus that carrying members of the South African Air Force
- Three people were killed and more than 20 injured when a car bomb exploded at the Krugersdorp magistrate's court
- A mini-limpet mine exploded at Pietersburg
- Three limpet mines exploded at an electrical station in the Ciskei¹²⁹

□ April 1988:

- A bomb exploded in the canteen of the offices of the Atteridgeville Development Board, Pretoria
- A bomb exploded on railway lines between Johannesburg and Randfontein
- A bomb exploded at the Johannesburg City Hall
- A man was killed and another wounded when two bombs exploded at a Pretoria cinema
- A bomb wrecked a building near Parliament¹³⁰
- Three people were killed when a bomb exploded on a farm near Standerton, eastern Transvaal¹³¹

□ May 1988:

- A bomb exploded at the police's male single quarters in Kagiso, near Krugersdorp
- A bomb explosion injured five people in Mitchell's Plain, western Cape
- Four people were injured when a bomb exploded in the city centre of Pretoria
- A man was injured when a bomb exploded in the back of a refuse truck
- Three people were injured when a bomb exploded at the Johannesburg station
- Four people were injured when a lunchtime bomb exploded in central Pretoria¹³²

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 612.

□ June 1988:

- Four people were killed and 19 others injured when a bomb exploded outside a bank in Roodepoort
- A bomb exploded outside a meeting of the Conservative Party in Cape Town
- A bomb exploded at a station near Soweto
- A man was blown up while holding a bomb, near Hillcrest, Natal
- Two people were killed and ten others injured when a bomb exploded at an amusement arcade in Johannesburg
- A bomb exploded in East London
- Eighteen people were wounded when a bomb exploded at a snack-bar in Pretoria
- A man was when the bomb he was carrying detonated in Johannesburg
- Eighteen people were wounded when a bomb exploded at a crowded fast-food shop in Pretoria. Four of the injured were members of the SADF¹³³

□ July 1988:

- A man was blown up while trying to plant a limpet mine, in Soweto
- Two people were killed and 35 injured when a bomb exploded at the Ellis Park Rugby Stadium, Johannesburg.
- One person was killed and 57 others injured when a bomb exploded at a crowded Wimpy Bar, a popular family restaurant, in Benoni, east Rand
- A mini-limpet mine exploded at a hockey club in Turffontein, near Johannesburg
- Police discovered and diffused a mini-limpet mine at a school in Soweto
- A bomb exploded in the Kruger National Park when a vehicle drove over it
- Four cars were wrecked when a bomb exploded in Cape Town¹³⁴

□ August 1988:

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 613.

- A bomb exploded next to the Witwatersrand Command, Johannesburg and police later discovered another bomb in the vicinity
- A bomb exploded at a casino in Bophuthatswana
- Three people were injured when a bomb exploded at Hyde Park shopping mall, Johannesburg
- A bomb exploded at the Castle, Cape Town
- A post office near Durban was damaged in a bomb explosion
- Three persons were injured when a bomb exploded at a post office in Pinetown, Natal
- A bomb exploded at a bust terminal near the Witwatersrand Command¹³⁵

□ September 1988:

- Nineteen people were injured when a bomb exploded at a nightclub in Hillbrow, Johannesburg
- Nineteen people were injured when a bomb exploded at a bus terminal at Vanderbijl Park, Johannesburg
- Bombs exploded at a magistrate's court in King William's Town and at a library in Fort Beaufort, in the eastern Cape
- Two bombs exploded at a post office in Durban
- In Cape Town, bombs exploded at three different local government office buildings in one night
- One person was injured and shops were damaged when a bomb exploded in a street in Durban
- On three separate occasions, bombs exploded in Lenasia
- Two people were injured and a block of flats were extensively damaged when a car bomb exploded near police quarters in Benoni
- Bombs exploded at a railway siding, Krugersdorp
- A bomb exploded at the Woodstock Police Station, Cape Town
- A bomb exploded in the parking lot of a hotel, East London

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Altogether 28 bombs exploded across the country during September 1988, almost one every day – the most for a single month, in the history of South Africa.¹³⁶

□ October 1988:

- A bomb exploded at a post office in Durban
- In Durban the election campaign headquarters of a municipal candidate were damaged by a bomb explosion
- Bombs exploded at magistrate's courts in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Stellenbosch
- Another bomb exploded at the Woodstock Police Station, Cape Town
- Six people were injured when a bomb exploded at municipal offices in Tembisa, Kempton Park. Four policemen were injured when a bomb exploded at police barracks in Tembisa.
- Two bombs exploded in Nigel, eastern Transvaal: Three people were injured when the first one exploded outside a post office and the second bomb exploded at the home of a municipal candidate.
- Four people were injured when a bomb exploded at a Johannesburg bus terminal.¹³⁷
- A bomb exploded outside the municipal police's offices in Wynberg, Johannesburg.
- A bomb exploded at the barracks of the municipal police in Katlehong, Germiston.
- A baby was killed and four other persons injured when a bomb exploded at the civic centre in KwaThema, Springs.
- A policemen was injured when a bomb exploded in the building that housed the security police in Potchefstroom. The building was seriously damaged.
- Two people were killed and 42 injured when a car bomb exploded outside a shopping mall in Witbank
- Another bomb exploded at the buildings of the security police in Potchefstroom.

According to the security forces, between October 1st and October 27th 1988, there were some 34 terrorist attacks.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 614.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 615.

□ November 1988:

- A bomb exploded at municipal offices at Diepmeadow, Johannesburg.
- A bomb exploded outside a post office in Port Elizabeth.
- A bomb exploded at the civic centre in Lenasia.
- A bomb damaged a railway station near Durban¹³⁹

□ December 1988:

- A bomb exploded at the Receiver of Revenue, Boksburg.
- A bomb exploded at the Department of Home Affairs, Brakpan.
- Two bombs exploded at municipal buildings in Cape Town and another at a magistrate's court in Paarl.
- A person was injured and buildings seriously damaged when bombs exploded near a garage and shop in Bisho, Ciskei.
- A bomb exploded at an ESKOM power station in Sandton.
- A section of railway was destroyed by a bomb explosion in Soweto.¹⁴⁰

Although MK succeeded in carrying out an impressive number of operations, they were not the stuff revolutions were made of. Wrecking deserted buildings, disrupting railway traffic and blowing apart private citizens in takeaway shops was not going to topple the so-called Botha-Malan military machine. It only stands to reason that these soft targets made white parents fear for the safety of their children, but as a collective whites got angry instead of becoming fearful and were thus more susceptible to the Government's use of tougher security actions. MK's bombs, targeting civilians or soldiers, were not going to usher in a post-apartheid South Africa.

During 1988 the ANC came under renewed pressure to reduce civilian casualties and it seemed that, in spite of Tambo's instructions, MK had followed their own minds and kept on bombing

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 615.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 616.

civilians. The internal split and resultant tension within the ANC between the hawks and moderates was made public and apparent during the year. As the soft target bombings seemed to confirm, Tambo's hold on the armed wing was not absolute.

In June 1988, Chris Hani, a hawkish member of MK's executive command, with his friend and colleague, Steve Tshwete, gave a series of interviews to the *New York Times*. They spoke, on the record, with marked bombast of how MK was going to take the struggle into white suburbs and how they were going to burn South Africa to the ground. Later, these seemingly outrageous statements, were confirmed when bombs exploded at the Ellisras Stadium and at various restaurants.

These statements and the attacks on civilian targets that followed them shocked the international community. Even the Swedish Government, an ardent supporter of the ANC, spoke out against these apparently indiscriminate killings of civilians. It seemed as if the ANC had embarked on a totally new approach to civilian deaths. It was, in fact, a case of MK militarists ignoring the policies laid down by the ANC's top leadership. Apparently, the left hand of the ANC did not know what the right hand was doing. Hani and Tshwete were bluntly ignoring policy and doing what they wanted to. Tambo publicly distanced the ANC from Hani and Tshwete's statements and declared that they had, certainly, been speaking in their personal capacities and that it was definitely not the policy of the ANC. He then convened a meeting with them, disciplined them and went so far as to fire Tshwete from his post.¹⁴¹

In August 1988, the National Executive Committee of the ANC released a statement on the armed struggle. According to the statement the ANC reaffirmed the "centrality of the armed struggle in the national democratic revolution" and regarded the escalation of armed operations as "significant and welcome." "However, the National Executive Committee also expressed concern at the recent spate of attacks on civilian targets... The ANC hereby underscores that it is contrary to our policy to select targets whose objective is to strike at civilians. Our morality as revolutionaries dictates

¹⁴¹ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 181.

that we respect the values underpinning the humane conduct of war. Any other course of action would play into the hands of the enemy.”¹⁴²

The issue surrounding soft targets would dog the ANC into the formation *New South Africa*. In the 1990s, as it had done in the 1980s, the ANC rationalised the number of civilian casualties in terms of practical imprecision, arguing that many of these attacks were not a result of either ANC policy or directives from the ANC-in exile.¹⁴³ According to them many of these attacks were the result of:

- Anger: Cadres feeling frustrated by the lack of fundamental change in South Africa decided to launch indiscriminate terror attacks
- Technical difficulties: The equipment used by the cadres was often faulty. Defective timers led to bombs exploding at the wrong time, causing civilian casualties
- Irresponsible planning at grassroots level: ANC headquarters did not *clear* operations. Initiative, planning and execution came from within the MK groups on the ground themselves; they had to decide on targets themselves. Apparently they made the wrong choices in many cases¹⁴⁴
- Defective communications: There was no secure system for communication, command and control between the ANC-in exile and their MK operatives inside the country. Many of these cadres proved to be immature and/or irresponsible when it came to taking own initiative regarding armed operations
- Lack of discipline: Cut off from their superiors, some cadres followed their own objectives – regardless of stated ANC policies
- Undeveloped volunteers: Cadres, inside South Africa, sometimes gave local volunteers shoddy crash courses. These volunteers did not have the same understanding and discipline of the armed struggle, as those cadres that had been trained in exile. This subsequently led to operations that conflicted with ANC policies on civilian casualties¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Internet: <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/1980s/pr880800.html>. Statement of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress, Lusaka, 17 August 1988.

¹⁴³ Further submissions and responses by the ANC to questions raised by the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

While the ANC top leadership was beset with dangerous disunity and factionalism – as the above issue regarding MK illustrates – an altogether different crisis was looming. The ANC was about to suffer its greatest blow. It had its origin not in the halls of the Union Buildings, neither for that matter, anywhere in Africa, but in faraway Moscow. The ANC's longest and most intimate ally was about to pull the carpet from under its feet and not even directly with regard to the apartheid issue, but as a byproduct of a wholly different process.

After Mikhail Gorbachev had been elected leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, he embarked on an immense campaign to reform the decaying USSR. Moderation, realism and pragmatism were the watchwords as Gorbachev tried to breathe new life into the Soviet Union. In terms of the Soviet Union's global positioning, the Russians were going to scale down their aggressive participation and involvement in international military conflicts. In particular, Moscow wanted to downsize its costly involvement in far-off regional struggles. Implied here was that the USSR was not going to vigorously support the ANC in their armed struggle and instead would push for a negotiated settlement.¹⁴⁶

At the top of the list of military struggles that Russia wanted to disengage itself from was the Angolan war. The USA and USSR facilitated a series of talks between the Angolans, Cubans and South Africans. Finally, the parties involved signed a peace treaty in New York in December 1988. The treaty became known as the New York Accords. To sweeten the deal for the South Africans, the Angolans agreed to close down the ANC training bases in Angola and to expel ANC personnel from the country.¹⁴⁷ This effectively destroyed any hopes the ANC had of a *South African Revolution*.

The cadres were now literally further away from South Africa than before 1976 and the ANC was now under pressure from both the East and the West to negotiate with the white minority rulers. Furthermore, although the masses still opposed the authorities on every level, the united mass movement was disillusioned and in disarray. Internally, the ANC was beset with factionalism and in-fighting. And with the doors now closed to them in Angola, the so-called Botha-Malan military

¹⁴⁶ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 181.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

machine had succeeded in purging the ANC from the frontline states. Reality stared the ANC in the face. They had no other realistic, albeit previously unthinkable option than to negotiate a peace settlement with the enemy.

Although the ANC had always tried to downplay the significance of the shutdown of its Angolan bases, an extensive variety of analysts agree that this was the definitive last straw that pushed the ANC to the negotiating table.

Chris Alden wrote that the closing of the Angolan bases had “effectively put the South African state beyond the reach of the ANC’s military wing, as thousands of Umkhonto we Sizwe guerrillas were shifted north to camps in Tanzania, Zambia and Uganda.”¹⁴⁸

Patti Waldmeir wrote that when Gorbachev’s people facilitated an end to the Angolan war they did not have apartheid in mind but “from the moment Gorbachev declared war on regional conflicts, revolution was out of favour internationally. The ANC knew it could not afford to remain on the wrong side of the new world politics, so it fell in with the trend toward negotiation.”¹⁴⁹

In a book on the ANC – dedicated to Oliver Tambo – Scott Thomas gave a poignant summary: “Although the Soviets de-emphasised the armed struggle, the ANC thought their backing of the armed struggle continued. The ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement inside South Africa, however, were unprepared for the extent to which the Soviet Union was willing to back away from the armed struggle¹⁵⁰...An armed struggle that depended on external support was no longer feasible in South Africa. The ANC’s attempts to create an internal armed force had floundered in the past...because of logistical difficulties of getting cadres and weapons into the country. The liberation movement was objective enough to recognise that Umkhonto was still too externally-based to lead a combined guerrilla war and popular uprising... Now, with the New York Principles, armed struggle was impossible.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Alden, p. 237.

¹⁴⁹ Waldmeir, P., *Anatomy of a miracle: the end of apartheid and the birth of the new South Africa*, p. 71.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas, S., *The diplomacy of liberation – the foreign relations of the ANC since 1960*, p. 200.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 201.

Martin Murray concurred and wrote that the developments surrounding Angola led to a “major revision of the ANC’s guerrilla strategy. The departure of the estimated 6, 000 guerillas from Angola extinguished the possibility of the ANC mounting significant armed incursions into South Africa of the sort required to initiate full-scale guerrilla warfare.”¹⁵²

Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, a former cadre, wrote: “For the ANC and the SACP, the New York accords were a bitter pill indeed... For the Soweto generation, teenagers who had left South Africa in 1976 determined to come home with guns to fight for their freedom, it was a heavy blow. They were now further from South Africa than they had been ten years earlier... If negotiations were offered, there could be no realistic option of continuing the armed struggle since the conditions for doing so successfully were gone.”¹⁵³

In their biography of Thabo Mbeki, Adrian Hadland and Jovial Rantao, commentated about the impact the Russian shift in policy had on the ANC: “Within the ANC, a growing number of its leaders knew that armed insurrection leading to the seizure of power by force was a pipe dream... With military victory looking increasingly unlikely, the ANC began looking more formally at conditions under which negotiations could begin with the apartheid state.”¹⁵⁴

By the end of the 1980s, the armed wing faced serious obstacles, some new ones and others that they simply could not ignore any longer:

- Even if the ANC had succeeded in setting up MK bases within the country, South Africa’s topography does not lend itself to the establishment of large internal guerilla bases
- Cross-border raids by the SADF greatly deterred the establishment of ANC guerilla bases near South African borders. In the 1980s, there was always at least one country between the ANC and South Africa. Subsequently the ANC was forced to forget about creating rear bases on

¹⁵² Murray, M. (ed.), *South Africa: Time of Agony, Time of Destiny*. p.120.

¹⁵³ Ellis & Sechaba, p. 191.

¹⁵⁴ Hadland & Rantao, p. 61.

South African borders that could serve as springboards from where MK could launch operations¹⁵⁵

- The Government's military-security complex was far vaster than MK. The ANC's armed wing had a budget of between \$8 million to \$25 million – the SADF had an annual budget of about \$2 800, 000, 000. MK had about 10 000 trained cadres – the SADF commanded over 80 000 soldiers. Remember that this was only the army, one could also add the South African Police¹⁵⁶
- Cadres had to take on a kamikaze attitude when deployed in South Africa, as many were caught or killed by the security forces, for example: between July 1985 and June 1986, MK had executed operations which killed 54 people and injured about 350 – but at the cost of losing about 489 cadres who either died during the execution of the operations or were captured and or killed by the security forces.¹⁵⁷

By the end of 1988, had become clear to most competent analysts that the ANC's dream of ushering in the great *South African Revolution* was out of the question. In fact, the general idea of destroying minority power through violence had been proven highly unlikely, if not, impossible. The fact that the ANC was starting to de-emphasise its armed strategy was further underlined, between 1988 and 1989, by its accentuation of diplomatic anti-apartheid initiatives.

As it realised that a violent overthrow of the minority Government was out of the question, the ANC stepped-up its international operations. It tried to intensify worldwide attention on the apartheid-state and lobbied for tougher sanctions and the all-round isolation of South Africa. As already noted, by the last quarter of the 1980s, the ANC came under increased international pressure to abandon their revolutionary strategies and to concentrate on bringing about a negotiated settlement with the minority leadership. The USA, Soviet Union and Western Europe all pressured the ANC to talk with the minority Government and to abandon violence.¹⁵⁸

In 1989, a panel of South African academics examined the ANC. According to them it was quite clear why the ANC had downsized its armed strategy:

¹⁵⁵ Herbst, J., "Prospects for revolution in South Africa" in *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 103, no. 4, winter, 1988-1989, p. 680.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 682.

¹⁵⁸ Breytenbach, W., *The ANC – Future prognosis*, p. 12.

- A drawn out and expensive guerrilla war, supported by the frontline states, was implausible and unlikely to topple the minority Government
- Most analysts agreed that in the South African context, in the late 1980s, the possibility of a successful South African revolution was slight¹⁵⁹
- The minority Government's diplomatic and economic pressure on those Frontline States that knowingly housed ANC bases; and the cross-border military operations of the Government's security forces against ANC bases and individual leaders were seriously impeding the organisation
- The ANC's strategies regarding the united mass movement had been frustrated. By 1988, the UDF and other groupings within the internal mass movement, were battered and bruised. Disillusioned and angry at the lack of political progress, the movement was apparently suffering from battle fatigue at it seemed it was fighting a never-ending struggle
- A growing number of moderates within the ANC were pushing the organisation towards negotiation¹⁶⁰

The USSR, the ANC's ideological and material custodian, was crumbling away. At the same time, the legitimacy crisis of the minority Government was under intensive pressure from all quarters as apartheid had proved to be an unsound solution to the country's problems. Furthermore, the South African economy, although not destroyed, was being deprived of much needed growth because of political instability. At the same time, the international community was exercising pressure on **both** the minority Government and the ANC to abandon violence and negotiate. In the townships, neither the Government nor the ANC was really in complete control. Although the ANC's followers in the townships made sure that the Government could not successfully nullify their dissent and that at best could only contain the turbulence, the ANC's attempts to govern the townships as an alternative power, was also a failure.¹⁶¹ The final stalemate had set in.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Waldmeir, p. 132.

APARTHEID UNDER SIEGE

SECTION 2

THE NATIONALISATION OF INFORMATION 1984-1988

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL
THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE POLITICAL CRISIS**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“I have a specific question I would like to put to the media in South Africa: How do they explain the fact that they are always present, with cameras et cetera, at places where violence takes place? Are there people from the revolutionary elements who inform them to be ready? Or are there perhaps representatives of the reactionary groups in the ranks of certain of the media?” State President PW Botha asked during his so-called Rubicon Speech in 1985, “My question to you is this: Whose interest do you serve – those of South Africa or those of the revolutionary elements? South Africa must know, our life is at stake.”¹

Two years later, PW Botha said in Parliament: “Rather than assisting the Government in the spirit of my commitment to increased co-operation in this House... some sections of the newspaper industry in South Africa have continued as if their aim were to urge the spirit of revolution along. Through their actions, a large part of the Press has brought South Africa into disrepute... As long as this negativism and this spirit indicative of destruction is unleashed in South Africa, our country will not be able to deal with its problems.”²

“Mass communication [was] seen as one element in an interacting system of forces, all of which taken together determine the capability of the nation to meet threats to its security,” was how Graeme Addison described the role the government reasoned the media should fulfill in its Total Strategy.³ Not everyone in the South African press agreed with this scenario and tensions arose between the authorities and segments of the press. In 1980, the Government appointed Judge Steyn to lead a commission of enquiry into the mass media. Apart from inquiring whether “the conduct of, and the handling of, matters by the mass media meet the needs and interests of the South

¹ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 203: 4/2/133:1985

² HANSARD: 17-08-1985, col. 3951.

³ Jackson, G.S., *Breaking Story – the South African press*, p.23.

African community and the demands of the times, and, if not, how these can be improved” the Commission also had to recommend legislation to enact its findings.⁴

The Steyn Commission found that the press wasn't up to meeting these standards and subsequently made its recommendations to rectify the situation. These were controversial and included procedures for “news management” in conjunction with the Government, which included the registration of journalists. In doing so authorities would have a say in who could serve as a journalist.⁵ The other proposal was for the creation of a press council to administer the press' activities in South Africa. This council would have had the back up of legislation and all newspapers would necessarily have to join the body.⁶

As could be expected, the report drew fierce criticism from across the media spectrum. The fundamental issue at stake here were the opposing manners in which the press and the government interpreted the role of the media. Christopher Merrett summed up: “The conflict between the Commission and even relatively moderate sections of the commercial press was in essence a struggle over the right to reflect perceived reality.” In the end the Government did not implement the Steyn Commission's recommendations.⁷ The State President did say that: “The Steyn Commission emphasises with conclusive evidence the full-scale communist-inspired onslaught on the Republic of South Africa.”⁸ But, with or without the Commission's proposals being implemented, it is obvious that the mainline newspapers did not want to clash with the authorities. The press undertook agreements with the security forces that they would not publish uncorroborated stories or leaks before the security people had a chance to look at them, in return the army and police agreed to supply them with defence and security information.⁹

All in all, during the first few years of the decade, 1980-1984, the press and media had relative freedom and although South Africa had anything but liberal media rights, the sector wasn't subjected to the extraordinary constrictions that were to be instituted later. It is of course important

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Merrett, C., *A culture of censorship – secrecy and intellectual repression in South Africa*, p. 85.

⁶ Jackson, p.23.

⁷ Merrett, C., p. 85.

⁸ Jackson, p.23.

⁹ Merrett, p.86.

to remember that during this period South Africa suffered only sporadic incidents of violence and was still quite an international non-story.¹⁰ This is not to say that the Government was not keeping an eye on the media.

In a 1982 Governmental outline of the Total Onslaught/Total Strategy, special reference was made of the media. According to the report the dangers for the country lurking, specifically in the foreign, media was part of the psychological onslaught [“aanslag op die sielkundige terrein.”] It noted how the people were bombarded by propaganda and how the media was responsible for the discrediting of any positive steps taken by the apartheid-state – as well as the international misrepresentation thereof [“wanvoorstelling van toestande in die RSA op buitelandse verhoë en media”.]¹¹

The report also made a pronouncement that was used countless of times by the authorities in the years to come and formed an important part of the Government’s rationale when dealing with the media. It stated that certain segments of the printed media were deliberately trying to foment a revolutionary climate in the country. [“Dit is veral deur middel van sekere gedrukte media dat ‘n berekende poging aangewend word om ‘n rewolusionêre klimaat in Suid-Afrika te skep.”]¹²

The Report acknowledged that the country was vulnerable to the propaganda onslaught because in the South African society differences existed that could easily have been exploited. [“‘verskille’ wat uitgebuit kan word.”] Another part of the Report that became an integral part of the Government’s approach when it later curbed the media was that it could not allow the people of South Africa and the country’s mass media to become an extension of the hostile propaganda-machine. [“Ons mag nie toelaat dat die inwoners en die massamedia van die RSA ‘n verlengstuk van die vyandelike propaganda-masjien word nie.”]¹³ On the list of radio stations it had identified as antagonistic propagandists were the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Voice of America.¹⁴

¹⁰ Cohen, L. & Giffard, C., “South African TV and censorship: Does it reduce negative coverage?” in *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 66, nr. 1, Lente 1989, p.4.

¹¹ PW BOTHA PRIVATECOLLECTION AT INCH: PV203 / PS 12/ 6/ 1.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

With the above perspectives in mind, and remembering that this was still some time before the States of Emergency, it is not surprising that the Government made provisions for the media in its new security measures – the controversial Internal Security Act of 1982, which also included a section on media regulations. According to the law, if the authorities were satisfied that “any periodical or other publication” carried a story which aimed “to endanger the security of the State or the maintenance of law and order” or was pro-communism or was connected with an unlawful organisation or would “foment feelings of hostility between different population groups” they could “prohibit” such a publication from being produced.¹⁵ Even if the relevant Minister “suspect[ed]” that the production of a publication “ought to be prohibited” he could appoint someone to investigate the publication.¹⁶

Reading over the above extracts, one notes that the Government did not regard press and media freedom as an inherent right, it was rather a conditional freedom qualified by the Government. As early as 1975, PW Botha had said that he didn’t want to see a restricted media, but then said that the media should not interpret freedoms differently from ordinary people [“dan moet die pers darem ook nie vryheid anders vertolk as wat die gewone mens doen nie.”]¹⁷

Later, in the early 1980s, when Botha’s new parliamentary dispensation was being instituted, the Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, Chris Heunis, said that he hoped that in the future the South African press would be more tolerant and understanding.¹⁸ Although he did not expect the media to ignore conflict in the country he wished that when the media reported this they would do so in an amiable fashion as to promote consensus and not strife.¹⁹ Although the media and the authorities had clashed more than once in the preceding years, there was relative calm. What it boiled down to was that as long as the media *knew their place* the Government would leave them alone. Again, as noted earlier, the violence of the 1980s and everything that went with it had not yet erupted.

¹⁵ Internal Security Act, Act no 74 of 1982 in Government Gazette, 9 June 1982, no.8232, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.12.

¹⁷ Meiring, P, *Waagmoed beloon*, p.140.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.140.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.141.

When the political violence of the decade finally got going in 1984, the international media descended on the country from across the globe. Both the foreign and local media played an important part in the South African crisis during the latter part of the 1980s. It only stands to reason that the media coverage – particularly that of the foreign media – of the country's violent political conflict served to internationalise the South African crisis. The media essentially formed a link between the South African situation and the international community. It can be said that the mass media took the apartheid-crisis to the global mass audience. If it hadn't been for the media's coverage of the South African crisis, the international community would not have learnt of what was happening in the country.

With this in mind, it can be argued that knowingly or unknowingly, both directly and indirectly, the media acted as catalyst for mounting anti-apartheid pressure against the South African government. Because, it was in no small way due to the media that the international anti-apartheid campaign gained unprecedented momentum during the 1980s. The international community was shocked at what they learnt from the media as to what was happening in South Africa. In time they came to express this outrage through political, economic and diplomatic anti-apartheid initiatives. For the same reasons, from the South African government's perspective, it made sense to have tried to regulate and curb the media's coverage of the upheavals.

As explained in the preceding section, the Botha Government's power base and authority was under immense pressure during the 1980s – from the left and the right, from within the country and from abroad. The undercurrent here was that the Government was essentially struggling with a legitimacy crisis. The Government needed, and tried very hard to, reinforce control over the situation. One obstacle here was the media's intense coverage of the volatile South African situation and its negative interpretation and presentation thereof. The media's negative coverage of the situation served to underline the Government's legitimacy crisis, the harshness of the apartheid-system and Botha's failure to reform it. By underlining its crisis the media also accidentally helped to undermine its attempts at enforcing its policies and strategies.²⁰

²⁰ Mathews, T., "Crossing the threshold" in *Leadership SA*, vol.5, nu.4., 1986, p.4.

More than ever before, the minority Government was dependent on a nation united behind its policies. It needed favourable national unity for the success both its reform policies and its Total Strategy. The Government's legitimacy was already in the crossfire and it could not tolerate a media that portrayed it as harsh, racist and defiantly ignorant. For it to gain legitimacy, the Government needed people, inside and outside South Africa, to accept its policies as the most sensible and sound.²¹

Instead, the media portrayed the Government and its policies as the root cause of the unrest. Therefore, in order to try and gain legitimacy, or the image thereof, the regime needed people to *think differently* about the South African crisis and the South African Government, in order for it and its policies to be accepted as legitimate. The authorities needed to be seen in a different light – they needed to alter and regulate the people's perspectives in order to change people's opinions about the regime and its policies. In light of the above, the Government needed to control that which, to a great extent, shaped the people's outlooks – information supplied by the media. If the flow of information could be controlled, the all-important public debate could be completely controlled.²²

The Government needed to control the *perception* and *image* the media had created of South Africa's violent crisis and the political and ideological crisis facing the Government. They also needed to favorably adjust the image of the Botha Government as an administration struggling to gain control and inept at handling the crisis, except by means of brute force. The Government needed to gain control over the *flow of information* and how it was being presented and perceived – i.e. the flow of information between the crisis and the media on the one hand, and the media and the people on the other hand. What was implied was that the authorities needed control over the media's access to information, gathering of information and the distribution, presentation and interpretation of that information.

Controlling access to and gathering of information implied control over journalists' movements, control over what they were witness to and where they were allowed to be present. Controlling

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

distribution implied control over the publishing and broadcasting of information. Controlling presentation implied control over the interpretation of information, the content and angles of reports and editorial stance.

The South African Government needed control and cohesion in order for its strategies to succeed and to defuse the crisis facing it. It could not afford the splintering of its power base or the further deterioration of its legitimacy and authority due to the flow of information from the media, irrespective of whether the media's information was correct or otherwise. The Government could not afford to be seen in a bad light anymore.

This is an important factor. To the Government the question of whether the media coverage was factual and neutral, or distorted and biased was of secondary concern, their problem was that in most cases the Government looked bad and came out as the aggressor. In a report titled Foreign Press Review compiled by the Foreign Affairs Department, this issue is spelled out: "Although most of the reportage on security matters are factual/neutral they do create an overall impression of uncontrolled unrest, rioting and violence in South Africa, thereby establishing a negative impact in the minds of the people."²³

In 1986 the authorities pronounced that the struggle in South Africa was primarily about perceptions and therefore one not fought with conventional weapons. It stated that the target in this struggle was the heart and soul of the people. Furthermore, the media, as an important processor of perceptions, fulfilled a key-role in this process.²⁴ Dave Steward, head of the Bureau of Information, said that an important facet of the South African crisis was the "battleground of perceptions."²⁵

The problem was that there were different perceptions of reality. "In the struggle for South Africa's future, this word 'image' is all important. Image is a public relations word that means how something appears to be, what it looks like to the public. It has little to do with reality... Those who wish to defend South Africa present it as a country moving towards multi-racial democracy, where

²³ LOUIS LE GRANGE. Private Collection at INCH, PV778. PLEG24 (vol7).

²⁴ Du Plessis, W. & Olivier, N., "Persvryheid – quo vadis" in *Equid Novi*, 1988, vol. 9, no. (1): 3, p. 46.

²⁵ Anon, "Bureau defends restrictions on news media" in *Paratus*, July 1986, vol. 37, p. 30.

human dignity for everyone can be guaranteed if there is no interference from the outside world,” the documentary maker Peter Davis argued, “That is the semblance, the image, and the struggle for control of that image is vital to the future of South Africa in ways that are absolutely concrete... The attempt to impose its image on the world has involved the government of South Africa in a multi-dimensional propaganda and disinformation campaign...”²⁶

The *Sowetan's* perceived reality of the South African situation was worlds apart from *Die Volksblad's* perceived reality of the country, although both covered and interpreted the same crises. The Government needed to dilute and where possible remove, the perceived realities that conflicted with its own, while ensuring that its own perception of reality gained prominence. It tried to do this in three ways:

- Restrictions
- Authorative bureaucratic bodies and the moderate and or pro-government press, especially the Afrikaans press
- The SABC.²⁷

By removing independent versions and interpretations that conflicted with its own, the authorities wanted to ensure that their prescribed official state-approved story became the generally accepted version.²⁸ They felt that the foreign media particularly was not reporting a fair picture of the South African reality; that it was one-sided. Essentially, this was what the Deputy Minister of Information in the Office of the State President, Louis Nel, explained to foreign journalists in 1986 when he told them why the Government did not approve of their portrayal of the South African situation. According to Nel they never showed “the great normality in our country” and when something bad happened “the whole international media” only focussed on that particular incident while ignoring the “positive events” that also took place. He also said that the foreign media did not appreciate or emphasise that “we are experiencing in South Africa a revolutionary onslaught.”²⁹

²⁶ Sperling, G. & McKenzie, J. (eds.), *Getting the real story*, p. 126.

²⁷ Pottinger, B., *The imperial presidency: PW Botha the first 10 years*, p. 415.

²⁸ Mathews, p.9.

²⁹ LOUIS LE GRANGE: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 778: PLEG 6/ 326.

A simplified assessment would be that for the Government all bad publicity was the result of what they regarded as bad journalism. Time and again the Government argued that the world did not understand the South African situation because international propaganda prevented them from getting the full picture and distorted the Government's well-intentioned progressive policies. They argued that if the world only got to know both sides of the story and if the Government would only be given a free chance to explain itself, the world would come around to their viewpoint. In 1986, PW Botha said that this propaganda campaign had been active for four decades, but had intensified due to the fact that the Government was finding a solution for the country's political problems.³⁰

The National Party did not see these restrictive measures as an attempt to protect its political position a cover up of the country's crisis, instead, it saw them as essential to the national security of the country.

It reasoned that negative media coverage threatened the economy, for one, because it contributed to support for foreign disinvestments. The presence of the media in unrest situations motivated further violence, because the radicals craved media exposure to create the impression that the authorities had lost control. As already noted, the media and the supply of information were key elements in the Government's Total Onslaught/Total Strategy. Bad publicity, from the authorities perspective, formed part of the psychological propaganda attack on the country, which was part of the Total Onslaught

Apart from the curbs imposed on the media, the Government used other structures to try and manage the flow of information and/or to espouse its side of the story. These included the SABC, the Media Council and the mainstream press – specifically the Afrikaans press*

³⁰ PW BOTHA Private Collection at INCH, PV 203, PS 12/75: Staatkundige Hervorming (1986).

* The mainstream and alternative English press were, traditionally, opposition-minded, anti-apartheid and at odds with the National Party. This role did not change during the 1980s. The role of the Afrikaans press is important for this study as their traditional position changed. The Afrikaans press, traditionally, were pro-establishment and supported both the National Party and apartheid. However, during the South African crisis of the 1980s, although in general still supportive of the National Party, the Afrikaans press became more independent and less susceptible to the Botha Government's attempts to utilise its influence. The slowly changing role of the Afrikaans press is therefore important.

This section will not attempt to describe the long history of the media in South Africa nor is this section a general history of the measures that affected the media throughout apartheid's existence. The measures that this section will focus on are directly connected with the States of Emergency. By 1980 there were already a variety of governmental measures affecting the media, but compared to what was to follow later in the decade, the media experienced a qualified freedom. Most of the measures that this section will deal with were exceptional measures that were specifically enacted and/or compiled only during, and due to, the States of Emergency. These were special measures for special times and therefore the timeframe of this section stretches only between 1984 and 1988.

CHAPTER 2

SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL, SPEAK AND PUBLISH NO EVIL: THE RESTRICTIONS

In South Africa during the 1980s, whenever the media and journalism were discussed, a debate on the media restrictions would soon follow. The basic arguments for and against censorship were quite straightforward. This study is more interested in the Government's actions and decisions regarding the restrictions than the general debate that surrounded it, yet it is important to note certain key features of that debate. The arguments in favour generally centered on the same basic points:¹

- Violent radicals exploit media coverage for propagandistic purposes and to attract new followers
- Violent radicals crave publicity for their acts of terror, censorship would make violence less sensational and is therefore a desirable tactic
- Detailed media coverage of the exact courses of events act as a blueprint for potential followers to copy
- Violent radicals who care little for human life should not be turned into celebrities for the mere reason that they are violent
- Media coverage of violent acts of terror could cause mass hysteria and lead to uncontrolled vigilantism and acts of violent revenge²
- The main arguments against censorship revolved around:
- Without media coverage a dangerous atmosphere of rumour and paranoia could take hold of society

¹ De Wet, J.C., "Mass media and political upheaval: the need for rational discourse" in *Equid Novi*, 1986, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 36.

² *Ibid.*; *Die Volksblad*, 27 November 1985.

- During security operations, media coverage could check on the actions of the security forces and prevent the army and police from indulging in action unbecoming an officer
- Censorship could lead to a dramatic fall in the general credibility of the media in the eyes of the public
- Impeded media coverage of the violence could lead to uninformed people developing a false sense of security and total misunderstanding of the political situation and authorities³

Interestingly, when the violence erupted in 1984, the Government at first refrained from immediately suppressing the media. Pik Botha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs had persuaded the State President to allow full media coverage of the violence, specifically what they called black-on-black violence.⁴

He hoped that by allowing the international media to cover the violence the world would see how barbaric these radicals were and would realise that the Government was in reality an arbitrary third party trying to keep warring black groups from killing each other. The world saw how a necklace murder worked and was shocked by the barbarity of the black mobs they saw. So, for a couple of months the Government allowed a relative free flow of information. And then it backfired.⁵

It boomeranged when the world started to ignore and reject the Government's explanations of the upheavals being a result of black-on-black hostility and rather focussed on the forcefulness of the Government's security forces. The Government reacted by reverting to suppression.⁶ In the Government's Official Yearbook of South Africa the curbs on the media were explained in terms of security considerations. It argued that the "very presence of TV teams in the troubled Black townships often prompted more or greater violence... Moreover, many scenes of violence were specially staged for the benefit of the TV crews, often at their bidding and bribing."⁷ It further charged the media with "exploitative coverage" and being one sided and claimed that this lead to

³ *Ibid.* p. 37 & *Die Volksblad*. 27 November 1985.

⁴ Venter (ed.), *Challenge: South Africa Within the African Revolutionary Context*, p.298.

⁵ *Ibid.* p.299.

⁶ *Ibid.* p.300.

⁷ Heyns, R. (ed.), *Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1987-1988*, p.652.

“an unprecedented outcry against South Africa and did much to fuel the demand for economic sanctions against the RSA.”⁸

In July 1985, after hundreds of people had died, and the media had showed in vivid detail what South Africa’s political violence entailed, the State President declared a State of Emergency in certain magisterial districts. With the State of Emergency came special emergency measures affecting the media. In essence, these regulations made it possible for the police to block any comments and/or information about the State of Emergency in the media as well as prohibited the media from making public who the security forces were holding in detention.⁹

When the State of Emergency was proclaimed, the media people were assured that no new curbs would be introduced, but the police and press did hold a meeting during which the journalists were asked to “tone down” their coverage of the unrest. The security forces also put together a committee to monitor media coverage on a daily basis. It wasn’t long before they charged the media with distortion and the spreading of untruths.¹⁰

Police Commissioner, Johan Coetzee, warned the media people that if they didn’t abide by the Government’s rules the authorities would take action.¹¹ In August 1985, the State President tackled the media on their objectivity – implying that they were deliberately lying to their audiences and readers about the South African situation.¹² Still, the media went about freely in those areas not affected by the State of Emergency. In September the authorities booted the *Newsweek* bureau chief out of the country for a story he did on South Africa.¹³ The Minister of the Interior, Stoffel Botha, said that the country’s international image was being smeared “resulting amongst others in sanctions.”¹⁴ In November 1985, the State President warned the foreign reporters “not to go too far.”¹⁵

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Giffard, A. & Cohen, L., “South African TV and censorship: does it reduce negative coverage?” in *Journalism Quarterly*, spring, 1989, p. 6.

¹⁰ Cameron, E. & Marcus, G., “The administration of justice, law reform and jurisprudence” in *Annual Survey of South African Law 1985*, 1986, p.546.

¹¹ Youngusband, P. (et al), South Africa’s state of siege in *Newsweek*, 5 August 1985, vol.cvi, no6, p. 10.

¹² PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 203: 4/2/133:1985

¹³ Giffard, & Cohen, p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Tomaselli, R., “A pressing emergency” in *Indicator SA*, vol.4, no.3, Summer, 1987, p. 20.

It was clear that the Government was contemplating further action against the media. Later in the year measures became more stringent. It suddenly became illegal to take pictures of, videotape, draw, or make a sound recording – broadcast and distribution of the aforementioned was also prohibited – of any public disturbance, riot, strike, boycott, fight, killing and/or of the actions of a security officer – without the permission of the police Commissioner or his appointed deputies.¹⁶

Louis le Grange, Minister of Law and Order, said that the Government was troubled by the “presence of television and other camera crews in unrest situations which proved to be a catalyst to further violence.” He also noted that only reporters that were accredited with the department of Foreign Affairs or the police, would be allowed into unrest areas.¹⁷ In a 1985 overview of coverage by foreign correspondence it was noted that “little cognisance is given to many of the violent deaths being a result of black versus black confrontations.”¹⁸

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said that these intensified regulations were necessary in order to stop the “vicious and venomous coverage by foreign TV crews.”¹⁹ Critics said that the Government was deliberately trying to keep the world from knowing what was going on in South Africa. Pik Botha pointed out that “accredited” journalists could still cover the unrest situation but also stated that the “mere presence of TV cameras has served as stimulus for violence...”²⁰ He also said that there were cases where violence only broke out after “a sufficient number of crews [had] arrived.” Abroad, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, because of a “distorted picture of South Africa” people had the idea that the country was ablaze, “exactly the perception which the instigators of violence desires overseas viewers to obtain.” He said the media’s “over-concentration” of the violence had lead to more violence.²¹

¹⁶ Cooper, C.(et al), “Restrictions on the media” in *South African Race Relations Survey 1985*, Johannesburg, 1986, p.460.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ LOUIS LE GRANGE. Private Collection at INCH, PV778. PLEG24(vol7).

¹⁹ Giffard, & Cohen, p. 4.

²⁰ Botha, P, “The sacking of the South” in *Leadership SA*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1985, p.17.

²¹ *Ibid.*

In October 1985 while breaking up a crowd at the University of the Western Cape, the police arrested CBS and WTN television news teams.²² In November 1985, the authorities spread a blanket ban on all film and audio recordings of anything that they considered to be connected with the unrest. The Government's viewpoint was that the mere presence of the media in unrest areas was enough to cause the outbreak of violence.²³ Time and again the Government would blame its diplomatic woes on the foreign media.

When the political violence in the apartheid-state erupted in 1984 and kept surging on thereafter, the international news organisations believed that it was indeed the great South African revolution they had been predicting since Sharpeville, since the Soweto riots of 1976. News agencies from across the globe excitedly sent news teams to the country so as not to miss out on the beginning of the long expected civil war they were sure was going to break out. All the big news organisations across the world sent news staffers while news agencies expanded their South African bureaus and the television networks sent one or two reporters along with camera crews to the apartheid-state.²⁴ At one stage, when the violence really got intense, there were some 170 accredited foreign reporters from around the planet based in the country – all sent here to cover the violent conflict.²⁵

On the whole, the South African authorities were apprehensive and distrustful of foreign reporters. They did not try very hard to make a distinction between those superficial hacks who mercilessly exploited the country's political crises to further their own careers, and those experienced foreign reporters who did actually grasp the complexity of the political situation and attempted to give an unbiased account.²⁶

The seasoned journalist, Holger Jensen believed that the Government's inborn disdain of foreign journalists was responsible for much of its trouble with the international media: "Its treatment of the press is often as stupid and short-sighted as the treatment of South Africa by the press."²⁷

²² Heyns, R., *Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1987-1988*, p.739.

²³ *Ibid.* p.740.

²⁴ Munnion, C., *Banana Sunday – Datelines from Africa*, p. 449.

²⁵ Sperling, G. & McKenzie, J. (eds.), *Getting the real story – censorship and propaganda in South Africa*, p. 85.

²⁶ Munnion, p. 425.

²⁷ Venter, (ed.), p. 303.

When the Government hampered journalistic freedom and foreign correspondents could not go about their jobs, many overseas news agencies withdrew their more senior reporters from South Africa and sent them to cover other hot spots. In many cases those newsmen the agencies left behind were exactly the type the Government found least desirable, they were young inexperienced journalists who had little knowledge of the South African political landscape and simply used the apartheid-crisis to make a professional name for themselves.²⁸

Some of the overseas reporters that left South Africa directly or indirectly because of the Government's measures, were seasoned journalists – Africa specialists who had travelled extensively throughout the continent and had taken the trouble to understand the dilemmas facing South Africa.²⁹

Some of the authorities' harshest critics amongst the foreign journalists were not even particularly liberal, but objective. They were sympathetic towards the whites, but not their Government and that brought them into trouble with the latter.³⁰ Seasoned foreign correspondent, Holger Jansen, also wanted to remind the Government that much about the apartheid-state was simply too weird for the rest of the world without overseas journalists having to distort anything: "No correspondent in his right mind can ignore the Race Classification Board which, with a perfectly straight face, issues an annual report listing the numbers of blacks who have become coloured and coloureds who have become white. It would take a very thick South African not to imagine how bizarre this sounds to American readers."³¹

Nonetheless, the authorities held that one of the reasons the violence took so long to subside was due to the media. The Government argued that, knowingly or unknowingly, the media was greatly influenced and intimidated by the ANC and its supporters.³² As pressure on the Government intensified during 1985 on account of its handling of the violent political conflict, it stated that South Africa was not the country that the world believed it was. It argued that the image of South

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 304.

³² *Die Volksblad*, 27 October 1985.

Africa as a country in flames was a deliberate distortion by those who meant the country harm.³³

The Government also claimed that the curbs on the media had a direct effect in the decline in violence, during the last part of 1985.³⁴

After lifting the State of Emergency in March of 1986, the media experienced a short spate of freedom, but violence again escalated, prompting the Government to declare a State of Emergency again on 12th June 1986. This time it was declared nationwide and the restrictions it placed on the media were even more intense than the previous time.

In January 1986, the Government had warned that during the year the country was going to bear the brunt of an unprecedented wave of propaganda, which would be met with more intensive media restrictions by the authorities. Louis Nel said that *the enemy*, without defining who they might be, was specifically going to focus on 5 areas:

- The image of the police
- The standing of the South African judiciary
- The instigation of the country's black youth
- The further isolation of South Africa³⁵

In section 7 of the June 1986 regulations, the Commissioner of police was empowered to “[close] off of any particular area... in order to control entrance to or departure from such area...” in these demarcated areas the Commissioner could prohibit anyone from “bringing into any particular area any object...” and “performing any act”.³⁶

The authorities' powers now extended over “the control, regulation or prohibition of the announcement, dissemination, distribution, taking or sending of any comment on or news in connection with any conduct” of any security officer. The Commissioner's powers also included

³³ *Die Volksblad*. 9 August 1985.

³⁴ *Die Volksblad*. 20 November 1985.

³⁵ *Die Volksblad*. 16 January 1986.

³⁶ Proclamation num. 10280 in Government Gazette, no.3964, Pretoria, 12 June 1986.

“any other matter the regulating, control or prohibition of which in his opinion is necessary or expedient with a view to the safety of any member or members of the public...”³⁷

With these measures alone, the Government could have gone a long way in dealing with and restricting the media. As mentioned above, it was now illegal to make any recording, audio or visual, and or illustration of “any public unrest, disorder, riot, public violence, strike or boycott; or any damage to property or assault or killing of a person” as well as of “any person” involved with it or of “any conduct” of a security officer.³⁸

The Government’s definition of publications included newspapers, books, magazines, pamphlets, leaflets, communiqués, captions or pictures, drawings, paintings, photos, reproductions, lithography and “other similar representation, any record or other object within which or upon which sound can be recorded, in addition to any film...”³⁹

Newsmen could get into trouble with the law if they “makes, writes, prints or records or causes to be made, written, printed or recorded any subversive statement” or if they even “possesses” or “disseminates, distributes or circulates... dispatches, supplies or offers... any subversive statement to any person”. It was also illegal to “displays” such a statement “in such a position that it is visible from any place to which the public has access” or “utters, or by means of any apparatus plays... any subversive statement within the hearing of any person.”⁴⁰

The relevant Minister could “authorise the seizure of one or more or all copies of any publication” if he believed that the publication “contains a subversive statement or any other information which is or may be detrimental to the safety of the public...” If the authorities believed that a publication or anything contained in it was “of a subversive nature” the authorities could, after announcing it in the government *Gazette* confiscate the publication.⁴¹ The authorities could prohibit the

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

publishing or importation of the publication for up to three months.⁴² Even if one possessed such a publication, one would be guilty of an offense.⁴³

A key issue for the media was what the Government meant by *subversive statement*. According to the regulations it meant a statement which included anything aimed at, or which could possibly have the effect of:

- Furthering the goals of any banned organisation
- Encouraging someone to take part in an illegal strike or any type of boycott or illegal protest or civil unrest or to discredit or undermine military conscription⁴⁴
- Encouraging someone to resist any official from the Government
- Encouraging a feeling of hostility against any South African
- Jeopardising the public's trust that the State of Emergency would be ended
- Encouraging the public to take action or neglect to take an action which could jeopardise the safety of the public or public order.⁴⁵

In September 1986, the Police Commissioner issued restrictions on reporters covering unrest scenes preventing them from being at the place where unrest occurs. Furthermore, journalists were prohibited from receiving or issuing any news about the unrest without prior written permission from the authorities. Local and foreign journalists – including photographers, camera crews and sound operators – were banned from being “within sight” of any unrest, prohibited gathering or security operation.⁴⁶ The latter was described as:

- “any action to terminate... any unrest”
- “any action to protect life or property”
- “any follow-up action”
- “any action involving the arrest of a person”

⁴² Cameron, & Marcus, p. 549.

⁴³ Proclamation num. 10280 in Government Gazette, no.3964, Pretoria, 12 June 1986.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Proclamation num. 10280 in Government Gazette, no.3964, Pretoria, 12 June 1986.

⁴⁶ Cooper, C, (et al) “Emergency regulations” in South African Race Relations Survey 1986, 1987, p. 841.

- “any action... which on reasonable grounds appeared to be action” referred to in the above
- “any deployment of a force... vehicles, armaments, equipment, or any other accessories”⁴⁷

The Police Commissioner also issued regulations which prohibited the publishing/broadcasting/recording of news or comments about:

- any security action
- any deployment of the security forces
- any restricted gathering, including any speeches or pronouncements or comments made by any speakers there as well as the time, date and place of the gathering
- anything do with a boycott
- any restricted person’s quotes or pronouncements
- the circumstances of a person being held in detention
- the release of a detainee⁴⁸

The regulations prohibiting media coverage of security force members and security actions and operations must be understood in conjunction with the stipulations granting indemnity for security personnel.^{*} Not only did the Government protect its men from legal liability, but also from public scrutiny and accountability.⁴⁹

Early in 1986, publications that had been censored used blank spaces to indicate where stories had been pulled by the authorities. These open spaces, and any indications or references to where news had been censored, were also banned.⁵⁰

Shortly after these regulations were enacted, copies of some newspapers and publications were confiscated and in some cases had their offices raided. Within a month of these regulations being enforced more than 20 foreign reporters were thrown out of the country.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

^{*} See Section 1.

⁴⁹ Matthews, p.49.

⁵⁰ Cooper (et al), *South African Race Relations Survey 1986*, p. 841.

⁵¹ Corrigan, J., *Subverting apartheid – education, information and culture under emergency rule*, p.13.

The wording of this large range of media regulations varied from exact and specific to vague and dim i.e. open for conveniently different interpretations by the authorities. While frustrating editors and newsmen, it made these regulations very flexible for the authorities, who could apply the same regulation for an assortment of different situations it wanted to deal with.⁵² Journalists and editors had to be very careful that their articles were at no time “conspiring, procuring, inciting, instigating, commanding, aiding, advising or encouraging political violence.” And if they were accused on one of these charges the onus was upon the accused to prove his/her innocence; it wasn’t the authorities’ responsibility to prove guilt.⁵³

Foreign TV crews were pressed into a particularly tight spot. They could still compile news reports but were responsible for its content. After putting a segment together, the news groups had to determine whether, according to the dimly worded regulations, they were not transgressing any laws. The news groups had to weigh the effect of a story against the very real possibility that their correspondents might not get thrown out of the country if they did so. The TV groups contracted lawyers for their South African representatives to examine and determine the possible legal consequences of their pieces before broadcasting.⁵⁴

The Government saw a direct link between South Africa’s international position and the negative perceptions of the country’s crises spread by the foreign media – particularly the overseas TV reporters.⁵⁵ “The white rulers so fear the power of the medium that they have taken severe measures to banish the image of rebellion and the terror they utilise to suppress it,” wrote the television producer Brian McKenna, “They have seen the statistics that the vast majority of our citizenry in the Western world get most of their news from television.”⁵⁶ The authorities wanted to restrict and control media coverage by the foreign TV newsmen in such a way that it would not impede foreign policies and the country’s standing abroad.⁵⁷

⁵² De Wet, J., “Mass media and political upheaval: the need for rational discourse” in *Ecquid Novi*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1986, p.39.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Giffard & Cohen, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Tomaselli, K. & Tomaselli, R., “Change and continuity at the SABC” in *Indicator SA*, vol.3, no.3, Summer 1986, p. 20.

⁵⁶ Sperling & McKenzie, p. 111.

⁵⁷ Tomaselli K. & Tomaselli, R., *Indicator SA*, vol.3, no.3, Summer 1986, p. 20.

For a period some TV groups found a potential loophole. When interviewing people, the signal was beamed live to the United States or Europe, so when the interviewees said something contravening any regulations the reporters claimed that they couldn't prevent it because it was a live broadcast. In reaction the Government simply banned the TV journalists' live satellite broadcasts from South Africa. The effect was that if a reporter compiled and edited a segment here and then transmitted it, they had to take legal responsibility for everything that was said or shown in it because, unlike live broadcasts, they had control over all content.⁵⁸

In the same month that the State of Emergency was enacted, and the Government's intricate web of regulations and restrictions restraining the media was further strengthened, the Deputy Minister of Information in the Office of the State President, Louis Nel, got the representatives of the foreign media together and told them that the Government was not at all pleased with their work. That they would, "not hesitate to take whatever steps we deem necessary to ensure compliance with the state of emergency regulations."⁵⁹

In September 1986, he explained the Government's reservations concerning the coverage of the country's turmoil to a group of foreign reporters. Nel said that "the great normality in our country is not portrayed" and that "positive events are being ignored." Furthermore, he said that when an incident took place "which can create a negative impression" the "whole international media" focussed only that, not also emphasising that, "we are experiencing in South Africa a revolutionary onslaught."⁶⁰

Editions of the *Sowetan* and *Weekly Mail* were seized by the Government. The South African editions of a number of foreign publications, such as *Time* and *Newsweek* appeared heavily censored, with stories and pictures literally blacked out. A number of foreign reporters were thrown out of the country and certain local ones detained by the security forces.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Giffard & Cohen, p. 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ LOUIS LE GRANGE: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 778: PLEG 6/ 326.

⁶¹ Heyns (ed), p.652.

Criticism of the way the Government had increased their clamp down on the media during 1986 came from diverse quarters. Jaap Marais, leader of the small rightwing party, the Herstigte Nasionale Party, said the authorities had gone too far.⁶² Lawyers for Human Rights said the Government was destroying press freedom. The Foreign Correspondents Association, representing more than 100 foreign reporters, said these measures were undemocratic. The Associated Chamber of Commerce said that the regulations further motivated a sense of uncertainty about South Africa's future and as such would impact negatively on business confidence.⁶³

It seems that the Government, in spite of its web of regulations and restrictions, still regarded the media as a menace and responsible for much of its problems. The Botha administration was reaching a point where it simply did not want to tolerate any more coverage of anything connected with the upheavals. During 1987 the Government again tightened its already close-fisted hold on the flow of information. After the proclamation of yet another State of Emergency in June 1987, the authorities further toughened up media restrictions by amending previous proclamations.⁶⁴

With these increasingly stricter measures, even the authority of the courts was undermined. Willem du Plessis and Nic Olivier, law experts, commented on the regulations. They wrote that these regulations clearly indicated that the Government was trying to intensify its media restrictions and also, impede the authority of the High Court: "Sedert die afkondiging van die 1987-noodtoestand was daar 'n doelbewuste en voortgesette poging van owerheidweë om beheer oor die pers te verskerp en om die ~~geneen~~ ~~regtelike~~ ~~herstellers~~ ~~bevoegdheid~~ van die Hooggeregshof totaal uit te sluit."⁶⁵

On August 28th 1987, Proclamation no. R.123 was enacted.⁶⁶ Accordingly, if the Minister, in this case the Minister of Home Affairs, Stoffel Botha, was "of the opinion, solely on examination of any series of a periodical" that a publication was guilty of "fanning revolution" or "promoting... 'unrest' " or of "motivating... the breaking down of the public order" or

⁶² *Die Volksblad*, 12 December 1986.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Cooper, C. (et al) "The Media" in *South African Institute of Race Relations Survey 1987/88*, Johannesburg, 1988, p.826.

⁶⁵ Du Plessis, W. & Olivier, N., "Nuwe verwikkelinge: Noodtoestand 1987-88" in *SA Publikereg*, vol3, no.1, June 1988, p.117.

⁶⁶ Proclamation No. R.123 1987 in the Government Gazette, vol.266, no.10880, 28 August 1987

“stirring... feelings of hatred or hostility” towards the authorities and/or any sector of the population or possibly “promoting the public image or esteem” of a banned organisation or “promoting... boycott actions, acts of civil-disobedience, stay-aways or strikes” he could take very strong action.⁶⁷ He could warn and or ban a issue of a publication for a certain period of time and or he could appoint a censor to review the publication.⁶⁸

Firstly the Minister could, by notice in the *Government Gazette*, issue a warning to a publication that either the material they dealt with or “the way in which matter is published” was “causing a threat” to public safety and order, or was undermining the possible ending of the State of Emergency.⁶⁹

Secondly, if the warnings did not succeed in subduing the publication, then the Minister could issue another notice in the *Gazette* which forbade publication, for not longer than three months at a time, “unless the matter to be published... and the way in which it is to be published... has previously been approved for publication” by a Government official. Using the same method the Minister could also ban the importation foreign publications.⁷⁰

The Minister was compelled to supply the publication with a list of whatever he found offensive or dangerous regarding the particular issue, article, comments or pictures. He simply had to chronicle the offensive material and note the regulation under which he prohibited it.⁷¹

In other words the Minister did not have to give in depth explanations and motivations for his actions against a publication. Some analysts reasoned that through the practical implementation of this measure, knowingly or unknowingly, the Government impeded judicial verdicts regarding media restrictions.⁷²

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Cooper, (et al), p.826.

⁶⁹ Proclamation No. R.123 1987 in the *Government Gazette*, vol.266, no.10880, 28 August 1987.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Du Plessis, W. & Olivier, N., “Persvryheid – quo vadis” in *Ecquid Novi*, vol. 9, no. (1): 3, 1988, p.112.

Should Government action against a publication, under these restrictions be fought in court, the parties would only have a list to examine and would not be able to debate the Minister's reasoning behind his decision or determine the soundness of the factual basis of his ruling. In other words, it had now become particularly difficult to determine the Minister's objectivity in terms of his decision-making.⁷³

Minister Stoffel Botha, was not compelled to explain to the publishers what type of action he was contemplating; the publishers did not always know whether the Minister was going to close their operations down, warn them or was going to subject them to censorship.⁷⁴ The Minister was also under no obligation to give anybody a hearing when he was involved in deciding which of his powers to enact.⁷⁵ Again, this impeded the court's ability to determine the unbiased soundness of the Minister's rulings.⁷⁶ There was a slim chance that a particular publication could escape government action after the Minister had singled it out. After having decided that a publication had gone too far, the Minister would write a letter to the publishers of the periodical informing them that he was considering taking action and explaining his reasons. The publishers or importers then had two weeks to make written "representations" to the Minister to explain and defend themselves and to try and get the authorities to refrain from following up on their threat.⁷⁷

To keep an eye on publications, Minister Stoffel Botha could also order publishers to supply the Director-General of his Home Affairs Department with "one copy of each issue of that periodical which is published in the Republic during a period specified in the order."⁷⁸ Anybody who violated these regulations was guilty of an offence and faced a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment or a fine of up to R20 000.⁷⁹ Remember – those were 1980s Rands.

The head of Times Media Limited, Pat Retief, like many other newspapermen, said that he thought these restrictions "unnecessary", as the Government already presided over a "panoply of existing

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Cooper, (et al), p.827.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Du Plessis & Olivier, p.111.

⁷⁷ Proclamation No. R.123 1987 in the Government Gazette, vol.266, no.10880, 28 August 1987.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Heyns, (ed.), p.652.

laws” with which to deal with “alleged transgressors.”⁸⁰ Even without the State of Emergency the authorities could seriously have restricted and threatened the existence of a publication through the powers encapsulated in the Internal Security Act of 1982. But, there are also serious differences in the procedures the authorities had to follow to tackle a publication under the latter Act and those to be followed according to the new measures. According to the 1982 legislation, before a publication could be prohibited, President Botha had to appoint a committee, which had to include legal experts, to examine the case. They had to write a report, which again had to be studied by the Minister of Law and Order only then could action be taken.⁸¹

The authorities wanted to streamline and strengthen these measures while circumventing the drawn out process of intensive legal investigations. In the August 1987 measures there would be no special investigative body examining the case before the Minister could take action. Minister Stoffel Botha only had to be “of the opinion” that a periodical was spreading material of a subversive nature in order to restrict it or shut it down. The Minister was neither obligated to listen to anyone’s advice nor to deliberate with anyone on the matter. It would not be melodramatic to argue that, to a large extent in 1987, the Government had turned the control of the press in South Africa into a one-man show. In South Africa, publications could now be banned solely on the basis of one man’s *opinion*.⁸²

The question quickly arose of how objective can an *opinion* actually be, especially when it came to making decisions regarding the nature political subversiveness. Judge Curlewis noted: “Many utterances or articles will be considered by one person as being legitimate matter of public debate, matter that requires to be brought to public attention... The minister of course will see things from a different perspective and will have different priorities. It is unlikely thus that their opinions will agree.”⁸³ The head of Times Media Limited, Pat Retief, said in 1988 that the fact that these measures were executed on the basis of one man’s opinion “[threatened] the freedom of expression

⁸⁰ Cooper, (et al), *Race Relations Survey 1988/ 89*, p.550.

⁸¹ Dison, D., “The tightening of the screw” in *Leadership SA*, vol 6, no. 5., 1987, p. 15.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Cameron, E. & Marcus, G. (et al), “The administration of justice, law reform and jurisprudence” in *Annual Survey of South African Law 1988*, Johannesburg, 1989, p.503.

of every inhabitant of our country.”⁸⁴ The Government was quite frank about their favouring these decisions and procedures.

In 1987 Stoffel Botha was asked whether he didn't think that if the Government used the courts more instead of bypassing them, stability would return more speedily. “In normal circumstances, yes...” replied the Minister, “But we are not living in normal circumstances in South Africa at the present time.” He said that the authorities really tried hard to follow “the normal procedures of courts”.⁸⁵ “But in considering the realities, our courts will be overcrowded if we follow this particular procedure,” he said and explained that court cases take very long and “that will not meet the situation which the government has to face.”⁸⁶

The day before these new supplementary regulations were proclaimed, Minister Stoffel Botha told parliament that those measures enacted as part of the State of Emergency were not sufficient as they did not “give the Government sufficient powers to act effectively against the revolutionary supportive propaganda.”⁸⁷ He explained that the Emergency Regulations only dealt with “controlling and prohibiting certain defined offences” and did little to “restrict propaganda” and that these new measures would focus on that.⁸⁸

In his parliamentary oratory explaining the new additional regulations, Minister Stoffel Botha also made specific reference to the alternative press or as he called it the “revolution-supportive Press”.⁸⁹ He said that these groups are immoral and are “easily recognised by their total contempt for the high Press norms that have been laid down over the centuries” and use “deplorable methods” to further their “dubious objectives.”⁹⁰ He singled out the ANC's publication *Sechaba* and the leftist periodical *Forward*.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Cooper, C. (et al), “Media regulations” in *Race Relations Survey 1988/ 89*, Johannesburg, 1989, p.550.

⁸⁵ Tyson, H. (ed.), *The Star centennial conference – conflict and the press*, 1987, Johannesburg, p.145.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Hansard, 27 August 1987, col. 4680-4684..

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

He concluded by warning these groups that the Botha administration would “not allow this sector of the media, which promotes revolution with its ostensibly non-violent, support-generating activities, to continue unchecked.”⁹²

This particularly threatening emphasis on the alternative press created the impression, amongst many media people, that the Government was planning to direct its new restrictions towards that sector. But, as they soon learned, the authorities’ restrictions made no distinction between the alternative press and the traditional mainstream media.⁹³

Like much of the terminology the Government used, it never actually explained what exactly it meant by *alternative press*. In general it seemed that the only real defining characteristics were that they were all anti-apartheid periodicals. By using this vague description the Government could label almost any of its opponents in the press, on the left and the right, as being *pro-revolutionary*.⁹⁴ On closer examination it seemed as if the Government actually implied those press people that did not adhere to Governmental restrictions – those that did not report the *official story*.⁹⁵

By moving in on the so-called alternative press the authorities wanted to close independent channels of information, while also impeding communication, and thereby organisation for mobilisation amongst the mass democratic groupings.⁹⁶

Minister Stoffel Botha didn’t waste time with execution his new powers and soon various publications were required to supply him with copies of their issues. Between September and November a number of publications were investigated. *Cosatu News* was charged with spreading “subversive propaganda” and *South*, *New Nation* and *City Press* were all warned that they might be closed down.⁹⁷ Early in 1988 the Government temporarily banned *New Nation – South*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Du Plessis, & Olivier, p.111.

⁹⁴ Tomaselli, K. & Louw, E., “The South African progressive press under emergency, 1986-1988” in *Equid Novi*, 1989, vol. 10, no. 1&2, p.80

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.81.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁹⁷ Corrigan, p.20.

followed shortly. By May 1988 the Minister had used his new powers on 14 different publications.⁹⁸

The existing State of Emergency measures combined with the auxiliary regulations enacted during 1987, made it clear that the Government wanted only its official story to be distributed by reporters. Growing numbers of topics were simply becoming out-of-bounds for journalistic coverage and comment.⁹⁹

In January 1988, Minister Stoffel Botha's restrictions of August 1987 were further intensified. The Minister now had not to give any prior warning to publications that he was considering action against them. The implication was straightforward enough, newspapermen would no longer have the opportunity to defend themselves against the charges of the Minister.¹⁰⁰

After having lifted the State of Emergency at the end of 1987, the Government yet again reinstated it during June of 1988. In the same month that they enacted a State of Emergency, the authorities distributed a booklet in which they explained, in general terms, their reasons for the renewed State of Emergency. In the section about the media they stated that South Africa was a country where freedom of speech applied, but because news is about people, vindictive reportage can adversely affect the freedoms of the individual. Therefore, misrepresentation of events could not be condoned.¹⁰¹

The Government explained that to prevent innocent people being killed or maimed as a result of propaganda, they deemed it necessary place further restrictions the media.¹⁰² As was the case with the previous States of Emergencies, with the enactment of the 1988 version, not only were all the existing media controls re-enacted, but new ones were added.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁹⁹ Dison, p. 16.

¹⁰⁰ Van Pletzen, D. (ed), *Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1988-1989*, p.640.

¹⁰¹ "Die Nasionale Noodtoestand" published by the *Bureau of Information*, June, 1988.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Cameron, e. & Marcus, G. (et al), "The administration of justice, law reform and jurisprudence" in *Annual Survey of South African Law 1988*, Johannesburg, 1989, p.508

In 1988 great emphasis was also placed on the compulsory registration of publications.¹⁰⁴ For decades all publications had to register with the Director-General of Home Affairs. Usually the registration fee was a mere R10.¹⁰⁵ But in 1988 the Government found in this basic and normal requirement, a way to deal with undesirable publications. *Vrye Weekblad* was an Afrikaans newspaper and formed part of the leftist section of the alternative press. After only three editions Kobie Coetsee, Minister of Law and Order, threatened the publication with closure. The Minister then refused to let the publication register. Max du Preez, the publication's outspoken editor, was allowed to make representations to the authorities. In December 1988, Minister Coetsee announced that *Vrye Weekblad* could register after all – but instead of the normal R10 registration fee, they would have to pay R30 000.¹⁰⁶

With the media regulations accompanying the June 1988 State of Emergency, the Government shocked and alarmed the media community. It wanted to implement a system of compulsory registration for any news agency and all journalists. Only registered people and organisations would be allowed to go about their business.¹⁰⁷

If the authorities regarded a certain journalist as a threat to public safety and security, his license to operate as reporter could be summarily revoked. If the Government revoked the registrations of enough members of a news agency, that agency would be forced to shut its operations down. Furthermore, deregistered journalists or news agencies could be prohibited from re-registering. The proposed system was met with a wave of outcry and criticism from all sectors in the media and at the last moment the authorities backed down, the system was not enacted – but the message to the news people was clear.¹⁰⁸

By the end of 1988, the Government's regulations were so densely intertwined that it had become particularly tricky to either initiate or continue with any type of publication. Not only did the authorities' restrictions and measures cover almost every aspect of journalism and publishing, the

¹⁰⁴ Du Plessis, W. & Olivier, N., "10 Junie – derde algemene noodtoestand 1988" in *SA Publiekreg*, vol3, no.2, November 1988, p.111.

¹⁰⁵ Heyns, R., *Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1987-1988*, p.650.

¹⁰⁶ Cooper, C. (et al), "Media regulations" in *Race Relations Survey 1988/89*, Johannesburg, 1989, p.552.

¹⁰⁷ Jackson, G.S., *Breaking Story – the South African press*, p.132.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

regulations were made applicable to almost every form of the print medium. The Government's rules affected almost everything used to convey information in print form, from newspapers to pamphlets to newsletters and even stickers.¹⁰⁹ Government's ability to ban or close down any publication intimidated anyone thinking about starting any kind of newspaper and of course made possible financial backers very anxious.¹¹⁰

Basically then, by 1988 the authorities' legal regulations affected:

- Foundation rights of publications¹¹¹
- Editorial autonomy¹¹²

The authorities had prohibited the media from covering:

Security action

Deployment of security forces and their vehicles and equipment

Restricted gatherings

Boycotts or strikes

'Alternative' structures of local government (for example 'street committees' or 'people's courts')

Statements of restricted persons

Detention of individuals

Release of detainees

Restricted organisations

Blank spaces to indicate where news material had been censored¹¹³

Anything proscribed by the Commissioner of Police

Television/sound/film/any "other depiction" of unrest and security action was illegal¹¹⁴

Making or spreading subversive statements

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.130.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p.131.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.133.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p.135.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.136.

Access rights: Special notice must be made of the media's access to unrest situations or areas. Journalists were prohibited, not only, from being at the scene of unrest, restricted gatherings or security action – but also from being at a place where these were *within sight*. If a journalist was somewhere peaceful and suddenly violence broke out or somebody started making subversive pronouncements, the journalist was expected to quickly go somewhere where “that unrest, gathering or action is out of sight.”¹¹⁵

After having reviewed the media restrictions, two observations can be made about the authorities' objectives. Regarding the local media community it ought to be clear that the Government had tried to tame and control it, to prevent the spread of unrest and to install the appearance of normality. Regarding the foreign media, the Government tried to pull South Africa off the world's front pages and television screens.¹¹⁶

Both had a security side to them. Media coverage of violent apartheid conflict served to stoke the fires of the international anti-apartheid campaign, which in many cases was translated into greater support and fame for the ANC and its campaign. On the other hand, internally, the Government's oppositions and enemies were also effected by these measures. “The near-total dominance of one version of South African affairs had a psychological impact upon the anti-apartheid movement,” wrote Christopher Merrett, “including a sense of despair and frustration, as it depended upon communication for inspiration and strategy, and for overcoming artificial social and racial barriers.”¹¹⁷

Some commentators noted that the media restrictions, having barred journalists from unrest areas and situations, actually forced many, specifically, foreign reporters to do more in-depth analysis of the underlying causes of the unrest instead of merely reporting on the visually dramatic outbreak of violent incidents.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.137.

¹¹⁶ Giffard, & Cohen, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Merrett, C., *A culture of censorship: secrecy and intellectual repression in South Africa*, p. 115.

¹¹⁸ Ferdon, D. & Harle, B.T., “The 1985 media controls have improved American news coverage about South Africa” in *Equid Novi*, 1989, vol. 10, 1&2, p.222.

American academics, Doug Ferdon Jr. and Blair Harle, noted that the South African media restrictions had the effect of reducing reports about singular incidents of political violence, but led to an increase in the number of in-depth analyses of the South African situation. This of course, was not to say that the more intensive analysis pleased the Government more or less than the foreign reporters' coverage of the violence.¹¹⁹ It should also be noted that with or without access to the actual unrest areas, the focus of foreign news coverage stayed on South Africa's violent political conflict, with or without fresh images.¹²⁰ Apartheid was simply too big an issue to allow it to disappear from the world's agendas.

It needs to be pointed out that as the Botha administration enacted and continuously strengthened its comprehensive web of regulations many newsmen, locally and foreign, backed off from covering the apartheid-crises too intensely.

As will be illustrated in the following chapter, the interfering role of the Bureau of Information severely slowed the flow of information, to such an extent that certain editors rather just watered down their coverage. Some editors also refrained from covering South Africa's violent political conflict for financial reasons.

Apart from all its social virtues and duties, a newspaper or publication is still a business with shareholders and corporate holding companies. The financial threat of having its editions confiscated or being shut down, even if only temporarily, was a daunting financial prospect for the business powers behind the publications, if not for the reporters themselves.¹²¹

With all the rules and regulations, and the constant threat of confiscation, publications needed the almost full time legal expertise of lawyers. Before being published, issues of the controversially liberal *Weekly Mail & Guardian* had to be scrutinised by the paper's lawyers.¹²² They went through the newspaper with a legalistic microscope and a red pen, at one stage there was basically not a single page they hadn't altered in one way or another, crossing out words such as 'apartheid',

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Giffard & Cohen, p. 10.

¹²¹ Mazwai, T., "The black press in South Africa: censorship from all sides" in *Equid Novi*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1990, p.208.

¹²² Manoim, I. (ed.), '*...you have been warned*', p. 63.

'disinvestment' and 'emergency'. When the editor, Anthony Harber, expressed his frustration at this, his lawyer explained: "The problem is, I've got to be able to read the mind of any police colonel who comes to have a look. If it looks provocative to him, then you're finished."¹²³

Everything and anything remotely related to the unrest had to be checked by the publications' legal teams. This tiresome schlep also put editors off covering the conflict.¹²⁴ Coverage of the violence was logically an extremely dangerous endeavour. During the violence a black South African journalist, George De' Ath, recording the turmoil in the Cape, mistakenly greeted a street gang as if they were part of the *comrade* groups. They grabbed him, stabbed him to death and then literally cut him into pieces. The sheer danger involved also served to scare many newsmen off.¹²⁵

Another daunting fact newsmen had to keep in mind was that most publications that covered the violence, were infiltrated or watched by the intelligence and security forces. At the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, during the 1990s, the Government spy Craig Williamson described the situation: "Foreign journalists were recruited and paid to represent the SA government line. Selected editors were briefed to get them to play down the effect of the ANC/UDF. The state relationship with the media was a continuum from owners to editors to journalists to the chap who cleaned their dustbins at night and would give you documents."¹²⁶

At the end of 1988, in the context of the above rules and regulations, it is clear that the Botha Government only tolerated freedom of speech as long as it did not oppose or conflict with its own viewpoint. Either way, irrespective of whether it was friendly or antagonistic reportage, the South African Government clearly wanted to control the media; the media both inside South Africa and media coverage about South Africa. Glenn Moss wrote, "any government which has as much to hide as South Africa's rulers must fear all but the most tame sections of the media... the government... justified in fearing what a competent media might publish."¹²⁷

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Mazwai, p. 208.

¹²⁵ Munnion, p. 415.

¹²⁶ Garman, A., "The media and the TRC" in the *Rhodes Journalism Review*, November 1997, p. 30.

¹²⁷ Merrett, p. 137.

The Government clearly did not hesitate in circumscribing the freedom and flow of information when, to many, these elements constituted the very essence of a democratic society. The moral and philosophical undercurrents of that issue is not the basis of this study, although it is interesting to note what the European Court of Human Rights stated in 1975: "Freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of such a society, one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every man... it is applicable not only as 'information' or 'ideas' that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but also to those that offend, shock or disturb the state or any sector of the population, such are the demands of that pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness without which there is no 'democratic' society."¹²⁸

As with most sections of South African society the decade in question, freedom of information and expression – including the freedom of its purveyors – was subjected to the dominance of the securocratic Total Onslaught/Total Strategy doctrine of the Botha Government. These liberties were not regarded as inherent or boundless, they were qualified by and weighed against the requirements for the successful execution of the Total Strategy.

As already argued in the first section, for the holistic Total Strategy to have succeeded the Government needed a subdued and tightly controlled cohesion of all sectors of society. This included control of the media, the freedom of speech and ultimately freedom of information. The regulations reviewed here, ought to prove that freedom of information – a key principle of any democracy – and Total Strategy, were not compatible. They underlined the fact that in the same way that apartheid and one-man one vote were incompatible, so too were freedom of information and the Total Strategy. As the first section of this study has illustrated, from the mid-1980s the Government's primary concern was with security and defence issues.

The authorities were much more concerned with combating the violent opposition that it faced, than it was with debating abstract concepts of freedom of speech.¹²⁹ Therefore when the need arose to muzzle the media, it did so quickly and severely. As part of Total Strategy the authorities

¹²⁸ Tyson, H., *Editors under fire*, p. 418.

¹²⁹ Giffard & Cohen, p. 3.

exercised control over all sectors of the South African society to combat its enemies, this necessarily included the media and information services.¹³⁰

In the first section of this study, the attempts of the Government to win the hearts-and-minds of the masses, was discussed. It was an impossible task as long as the Government was constantly being criticised, its forceful attempts to crush its enemies exposed and its self-professed image of reform being smudged by a free media. Thami Mazwai, an editor of the *Sowetan*, admitted that his publication made sure the Government's attempts at political image control did not succeed amongst its readers. He stated that the Government has "never been tolerant" of black reporters.¹³¹ "One of the reasons is that the government has failed to win its fight for the control of the hearts-and-minds of our people. The media saw to this, and black journalists were at the forefront. In addition, they wielded the written word and what they said carried more credibility with the black community," Mazwai wrote.¹³²

In a free democracy it is of course the right of a newspaper to do that, to take an inherent pro- or anti-government stance, but in South Africa being fundamentally antigovernment was pretty tricky under the Total Strategy doctrine. Dr Stoffel van der Merwe, during his time as Deputy Minister of Information and Constitutional Planning, explained this in terms of strategy said that opposing sides logically using all means at their disposal to attack each other. "It is a common fact that it is part of the known and accepted doctrine of revolutionaries to use, and to abuse, the instruments of democracy, such as the freedom of speech and due process of law and others, in order to undermine and eventually overthrow the existing system," Dr Van der Merwe said, "If one side has to play the game according to the Queensberry rules of democracy, while the other side plays according to the philosophy of no-holds barred, it becomes a rather one-sided affair. This has been the death of more than one democracy, or emergent democracy, in history."¹³³

After Anthony Heard, the liberal editor of *The Cape Times*, was fired for publishing an interview with ANC leader Oliver Tambo in 1985 he said: "My dismissal as editor coincided with

¹³⁰ Merrett, p. 117.

¹³¹ Mazwai, , p. 210.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Tyson, H. (ed.), p.145.

convulsive newspaper events, notably the most savage measures ever taken against the South African Press. Pictures of rugby teams and beauty queens have replaced township unrest on many front pages."¹³⁴

Through these measures, the Government made clear that in Botha's South Africa, freedom of speech was not an inherent, fundamental, liberty, but rather a gift the Government bestowed upon those it deemed fit to be trusted with it. Stoffel Botha said as much in 1987: "Democracy cannot thrive without a responsible Press. However, press freedom must be earned by an honest Press."¹³⁵ Although the Government might have impeded the flow of information and purveyed its own official stories about the state of affairs in the country, the upheavals did not stop and black people did not stop protesting. One commentator noted: "Security systems could outlaw organisations, but they could not control the experience of organisation. They could inhibit communication, but they could not control thought."¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Ferdon, D. & Harle, B., "The 1985 media controls have improved American news coverage about South Africa" in *Equid Novi*, vol.10, no.1, 1989, p.222.

¹³⁵ Schneider, M., "The last word" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 6, no. 5, 1987, p. 26.

¹³⁶ Merrett, p. 147.

CHAPTER 3

THE BUREAU OF (DIS)INFORMATION: CONTROL OF THE MEDIA THROUGH BUREAUCRATIC BODIES

The Bureau of Information was set up on 17 September 1985 with the aim of fostering a positive attitude towards the Republic of South Africa.¹

Its functions were:

- Enlightening the community on government policy, national achievements and problems with the aim of fostering positive attitudes amongst all population groups
- Promoting the image of the RSA via internal as well as foreign media representatives in the RSA
- Promoting the RSA's general image locally and overseas by means of audio-visual material, own publications and distribution publications acquired by purchase
- Promoting and co-ordinating effective communication on a national level"²

This was how the Bureau of Information described its functions in the Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa, which incidentally was one of the Bureau's publications. As the media discovered, this compact synopsis did not fully explain the duties or powers the Bureau was eventually assigned with. The Bureau's inception was a direct result of strained relations between the authorities and the news media.

After President Botha's disastrous Rubicon Speech of August 1985^{*} and by the second State of Emergency, proclaimed in 1986, the Government's relations with the media, both local and foreign, were precarious. Although the President's attacks on the media made in his Rubicon

¹ Tomaselli, K. & Louw, E., "The South African progressive press under emergency, 1986-1988" in *Equid Novi*, vol. 10, no. 1&2, 1989, p.84.

² Van Pletzen, D. (ed.), *The official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1988/89*, p.145.

* See Section 3

Speech certainly emphasised the troubled relationship between the authorities and the media, by 1986 routine media coverage proved problematic.³

The Star summarised the press' dilemmas when dealing with the authorities: "Some of the things pressmen have to contend with from the more incompetent officials are unreturned telephone calls, written copies of speeches with no indication of who is making them, statements issued long after embargo has expired, and the old faithful, 'I don't think the Minister would like to comment on that.' The reason for the last one usually being that they are too scared to put a rough question to the Minister."⁴ While segments of the media complained about the authorities' lack of sophistication when dealing with them, the Government was alarmed at the far-reaching negative exposure it was receiving in the media.

As already pointed out above, the authorities at first believed the situation would be brought under control and didn't put too much emphasis on the media. But soon after the first State of Emergency commenced, the security forces spoke with the main stakeholders in the media and asked them to "tone down" their intense news coverage of the violent political crisis; the security forces also constructed a special committee to constantly review press coverage of the turmoil.⁵

The foreign newsmen quickly became prime scapegoats for the Government. They were blamed for inciting and/or worsening violence and for distributing distorted or biased news. As already noted, apart from reporters being barred from unrest areas, a number of foreign journalists were also expelled from the country.⁶ The communication gap between the Botha Government and the media had three key features:

- the inability of the media to convey the Government's reform successes
- the uncooperativeness of the authorities, specifically Ministers, regarding the media, particularly the local press

³ Tomaselli, K., "Die 'duiwel van verwoesting'" in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, no. 13, February 1988, p. 36.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

- the Government's belief that the mere presence of news crews lead to the outbreak or intensification of violence as radicals *played for the cameras*; the media sensationalised violence and also further smeared South Africa's international image⁷

The groundwork for the creation of the Bureau lay in the Forum. The idea was that the Forum would coordinate the relationship between the Government's media liaison and the newsmen. This body functioned on an ad hoc basis and had little success in managing the flow of information or bettering the relationship between the authorities and the media.⁸

By the last half of 1985 there were calls from various sections in the media for the Government to put into place sufficient organisational machinery to handle its relations with the media and to streamline the flow of information. In the middle of 1985, the Government unveiled the Bureau of Information. The new institution fell under the authority of the Deputy Minister of Information in the Office of the State President, Louis Nel, who until then had been a senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Bureau was headed by a former South African ambassador to the UN, Dave Steward, who, it was believed, had relevant experience and a flair for dealing with the foreign media.⁹

Deputy Minister Nel promptly announced that the aim of the newly created Bureau was to ensure the free flow of information.¹⁰ The mainstream media hailed the Bureau as a practical and sensible step by the authorities.¹¹ The seasoned journalist Brian Pottinger interpreted the creation of the Bureau for Information within the context, of what he described as, the "politics of deception".¹² "Pro-active deception," he argued, "included active steps taken by the State propaganda services – either covertly or openly – to disseminate information either complimentary to the Government or critical of its opponents."¹³

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Tomaselli, R., "A pressing emergency" in *Political Monitor Indicator SA*, vol. 4, no. 3, summer, 1987, p. 19.

⁹ Tomaselli, K., p. 55.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Pottinger, B., *The imperial presidency: PW Botha the first 10 years*, p. 415.

¹³ *Ibid.*

James Roherty concurred and argued that, “the State President, as part of his [National State of Emergency] and as part of his all-out effort to smash armed insurrection, sends ‘information’ to war.”¹⁴ PW Botha mobilised the State’s powers to control information regarding the crisis through the creation of the Bureau of Information.

The attempts of the authority at curbing the media and the flow of information have been linked with the Government’s Total Strategy above. The Bureau of Information could also be understood in the context of the structures that were created as part of Total Strategy’s total national management system. The Bureau conducted media research, the generation of Government propaganda and coordinated the information and announcements that came from the various state departments. According to the academics Dr Keyan Tomasselli and Eric Louw, at base level the Bureau dealt with “intelligence, strategy and communication” – exactly same as the National Management System did and this “suggests at least some sort of close tie-up between the Bureau and the state’s ‘total strategy’ machinery...”¹⁵

The creation of the Bureau also coincided with the Government’s final decision to clamp down on the media to avoid negative exposure – even if critics did say that it was eroding one of the cornerstones of democracy – and must be seen in this context. The Nationalist Governments had always argued that it was part of the democratic tradition of the West, but its stern restrictions on the media severely jeopardised that image.¹⁶

These measures must be understood in conjunction with the authorities’ view that they were not going to try and appease the international community anymore. The Botha government had realised that it was more important to try and halt the flow of bad publicity and negative imagery emanating from the apartheid-state, than it was to tolerate a totally unrestricted media and try and appear democratic in the eyes of the world. “Evidently it prefers a reputation for press censorship

¹⁴ Roherty, J., *State security in South Africa: civil-military relations under PW Botha*, p. 139.

¹⁵ Tomasselli, K. & Louw, P.E. (eds.), *The alternative press in South Africa*, p.85.

¹⁶ Sperling, G. & McKenzie, J. (eds.), *Getting the real story – censorship and propaganda in South Africa*, p. 129.

to having nightly scenes of violence on the world's television screens or news spread across page one of the major newspapers," commented the American media specialist Anthony Giffard.¹⁷

The Botha Government realised that its overseas critics were not going to be more lenient in their condemnation of apartheid because the authorities allowed explicit coverage of its internal crisis. The British political scientist, JE Spence, argued that the "state's willingness... to accept the consequences of media exposure cannot be translated into political capital in its contest with the outside world: the bleak and disturbing message, however selective, carried by the world's media prevents any acknowledgement of virtue for permitting it to be conveyed at all."¹⁸ The Government did not hide the fact that they subscribed to this view, Dave Steward concurred: "What we are determined upon is to keep emphasising that the terrorists are not going to win, that the process which we have articulated will go forward. This is a process which serves the interests of South Africans; it does not make an attempt to satisfy international demands. We tried that and found it a losing business."¹⁹

The media soon discovered that the creation of the Bureau did not imply that the authorities were now more tolerant of the news people. Louis le Grange, Minister of the Police, warned journalists shortly after the Bureau was launched that in future the police would not hesitate to act sternly against reporters who did not act "correctly" in their coverage of the unrest. Minister Le Grange, like many Government people, accused the foreign journalists of distorting facts and of setting scenes.²⁰

When journalists were found at unrest scenes, the police would take them away, usually to the nearest police station where the security officers would seize their films, notes or recordings. The reporters would be kept there until the turmoil at the scene had calmed down and in some cases they were also arrested under the emergency regulations.²¹

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 86.

¹⁸ Collins, P.(ed.), *Thinking about South Africa*, p. 182.

¹⁹ Roherty, J., *State security in South Africa: civil-military relations under PW Botha*, p. 140.

²⁰ Tomaselli & Louw, p. 54.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Initially, the Bureau acted as the primary propagandist of Government policies. It launched information campaigns to propagate the authorities' reform programs and, during 1986, ensured that Rubicon II* received good publicity, it also publicised the moratorium on influx control prosecutions.²² The Bureau also compiled a series of pamphlets and publications setting out the Government's arguments and policies.²³

One of the Bureau's projects to boost the image of the authorities resulted in a public outcry against the institution and the Minister who oversaw the body – Deputy Minister Nel. In 1986 the Bureau produced and distributed a so-called peace song. The Deputy Minister of Information said the song: "Is a human message of hope and peace."²⁴

Entitled "Together We Will Build A Better Future" the song was sung by a multicultural variety of South African artists and the Bureau splashed between R1 500, 000 and R4 000, 000 on its recording, production and on ensuring the SABC played it more than 1200 times.²⁵ People from across the political spectrum were outraged at how the Bureau was apparently throwing around taxpayers' money on public relations gimmicks.²⁶

Apart from the financial implications, the *peace song* led to violence. Some of the black artists who took part in the song were labelled as collaborators and their communities mocked and shunned them.²⁷ With this label around their necks the artists' lives were threatened. The home of one artist, Abigail Kubheka, was firebombed and others had to flee not only their homes, but the townships altogether and live under the protection of the security forces.²⁸ Some tried to save face. Through a series of interviews the artist Steve Kekane, tried to get the collaborator stigma removed by saying that it was a mistake to have taken part in the song.²⁹

* See Section Three

²² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Hansard: 3 February 1987, coll. 176.

²⁵ Pottinger, p. 422.

²⁶ Masekela, B., "The ANC and the cultural boycott" in *Africa Report*, August 1987, vol. 32, no. 4, p. 20.

²⁷ Masekela, B., "The ANC and the cultural boycott" in *Africa Report*, August 1987, vol. 32, no. 4, p. 20.

²⁸ Cooper, (et al), *South African Race Relations Survey 1987 / 88*, p.42.

²⁹ Masekela, B., "The ANC and the cultural boycott" in *Africa Report*, vol. 32, no. 4, July-August 1987, p. 20.

In a Parliamentary debate, early in 1987, opposition MPs made a point of attacking the Bureau's misappropriation of funds and charged that the project was dangerous. The Deputy Minister said the media was responsible for trashing the song project because they "did not like the author of the project".³⁰ The Deputy Minister said that this peace song just proved again how the enemies of the state do not want peace: "This is a peace song but the opposition answers with petrol bombs and intimidation." He said that instead of criticising the authorities for not abandoning the song, the opposition should rather condemn those who are threatening the artists.³¹

The enactment of the 1986 State of Emergency brought with it a watershed regarding the functions of the Bureau. Thereafter, the Bureau acted both as the Government's main promoter and as its executive censor. The Bureau became both the pacemaker of the flow of information and its sterilizer.³²

For a reporter to be allowed to cover the unrest at all, they had to be accredited with either the police or the Bureau.³³ In the beginning the Bureau managed the flow of information, but it would now seek to control it. The Bureau was responsible for writing and distributing sterile official stories about the unrest. Furthermore all the news that appeared on the unrest either had to be based on the Bureau's daily media briefings or had to be supplied to, checked, edited and approved by them prior to being published. The Bureau also prosecuted those journalists that had strayed from the regulations.³⁴ Therefore, technically, the Bureau became virtually the sole source of information on the unrest, as the media was basically banned from covering it themselves.³⁵

The way the Bureau distributed its *official stories* about the unrest was by means of its "daily unrest reports". These described the security operations in a sterile matter-of-fact way.³⁶ Its daily briefings were ended within two weeks of the national State of Emergency of 1986 being enacted,

³⁰ Hansard: 3 February 1987, coll. 176.

³¹ Hansard: 3 February 1987, coll. 177.

³² Tomaselli, K., pp. 36-37

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Tomaselli, K., pp. 36-37

³⁵ Tyson, H., *Editors under fire*, 250.

³⁶ Tomaselli, K., pp. 36-37

as in the opinion of the Bureau there was “very little worthwhile information emanating from unrest related incidents”.³⁷

The media was stunned by this announcement; editors met with Louis Nel and he agreed that the Bureau would continue with these media briefings.³⁸ These briefings were often only given to journalists long after events had taken place.³⁹ What was more, these news summaries proved to be factually so deformed that even the pro-government Afrikaans press criticised some of the material for being totally untrue.⁴⁰ A newsman from *Newsweek* described these briefings as being little else than “government minions denying eyewitness reports of police violence.”⁴¹

Another source of frustration was that more often than not, the Bureau officials who conducted these briefing sessions were inept at what they were doing. At one such briefing session the Bureau official in charge was obviously under severe stress and in a nervous outburst told bewildered newsmen: “I will not allow this news briefing to degenerate into a briefing for the dissemination of information.”⁴² Finally, in September 1986 the Bureau announced that, “in the interest of accuracy,” these reports were to be scrapped altogether.⁴³

Furthermore, the Bureau, as the centre of unrest information, had to deal with many queries from the media about the turmoil. Although journalists were free to ask, the Bureau did not always answer. Many questions received the standard response: “the Bureau cannot be expected to comment on each and every incident.”⁴⁴ By the middle of 1986 the Bureau refused to handle queries about stories whose sources were not Government officials and even then they would only handle the query if it was presented in writing and only “when in possession of all the salient and verified facts.”⁴⁵

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Jackson, G.S., *Breaking Story – the South African press*, p. 146.

⁴⁰ Merrett, C., *A culture of censorship: secrecy and intellectual repression in South Africa*, p. 115.

⁴¹ Jackson, p. 146.

⁴² Jackson, p. 146.

⁴³ Tomaselli, R., “A pressing emergency” in *Political Monitor Indicator SA*, vol. 4, no. 3, summer, 1987, p. 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Apart from exceptional cases, such as a bomb explosion, the Bureau would not handle queries over the phone. Reporters also learned that the Bureau was not rushed easily and had to wait quite some time for a response. The news people also complained that the Bureau was very inaccurate.⁴⁶

It was not only inaccurate but slow too, by the time the Bureau had finally compiled the official stories, the news items concerned were already dated. Even the mainstream pro-establishment Afrikaans press was annoyed by this tendency. *Die Volksblad* complained in 1986 that adhering to the emergency regulations and going through the Bureau, implied that a newspaper had to publish dated information: “By abiding with the emergency regulations, in situations like these the media is restricted to information that comes through the Bureau’s official channels. An unbearable situation results when those who adhere to the regulations, in so doing, must dish up old news, as has been the case for the last two days.” [“Ingevolge die noodregulasies word media in situasies soos hierdie beperk tot inligting wat amptelik deur die Buro se kanale kom. Dit wek egter ‘n onhoudbare toestand as die wat hulle by daardie regulasies hou, so sigbaar ou nuus moet opdis soos die laaste twee dae.”]⁴⁷

The media was also frustrated by the lack of coordination that existed between the police and the Bureau. When wanting to have a story corroborated or cleared for publication, the reporters were sent to the Bureau by the police who said that it was not the security forces’ job, but the Bureau’s.⁴⁸ The Bureau would then tell the reporters that their job was to compile and spread information – not to censor stories. When reporters asked the Bureau for guidance in understanding the complex media restrictions, the Bureau curtly informed them that it wasn’t there to give legal advice and that the press people should ask their lawyers for that type of help.⁴⁹ This was in spite of the fact that the police had appointed the Bureau to authorise reports for publication.⁵⁰

To try and clear this up, the Bureau created a Press Liaison Centre. This body was open 24 hours a day and authorised to check and prohibit stories that could transgress the media regulations. The

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Van Deventer, H., *Kroniek van ‘n koerantman*, p.83.

⁴⁸ Jackson, p. 145.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Press Liaison Centre did not quicken the flow of information. In December 1986, in the space of ten days, the Centre received 201 enquiries for the possible publication of stories – 19 were approved. The rest were either rejected or, as the Centre explained fell, “outside the ambit of the IPLC and should be referred to other government departments.”⁵¹

Although the Bureau was unenthusiastic about reporters’ queries, they did warn journalists to think before they called on the Bureau for advice, as even the type of question, “could land them in trouble with the emergency regulations.”⁵² At the end of the process, in many cases when a story was finally approved, it was too old to be published or broadcast.⁵³ A number of editors found it much more convenient to simply drop risky stories altogether than go through the tedious motions and red tape of the Bureau.⁵⁴

On top of all the regulations prescribing to the media what they could and could not report, the Bureau also looked at how they reported the news. As already noted, the Government, in its attempts to better its local and international image, wanted to control not only the information the media distributed about the South African crisis, but also the way in which the crisis and the authorities were presented. Academics, Willem du Plessis and Nic Olivier, argued in 1988 that facts did not create a psychological climate, but rather the way they were presented: “It is not the facts themselves that create a psychological climate, but the way they are selected and presented” [“Dit is nie soseer die feite wat ‘n sielkundige klimaat skep nie as die manier waarop die feite geselekteer en aangebied word.”]⁵⁵

In other words, the Government needed control over both content and style. Language and presentation counted just as much as the facts. Dave Steward warned reporters that, irrespective of the factual content of their stories, action would be taken against them if they did not refrain from using loaded and risque terms such as “white minority regime” or “riot torn” and “draconian.”⁵⁶ “[D]it is duidelik dat gebeure in Suid-Afrika beoordeel word aan die hand van persepsies en nie

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Jackson, p. 146.

⁵³ Tomaselli, p. 22.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Du Plessis, W. & Olivier, N., “Persvryheid – quo vadis” in *Equid Novi*, 1988, vol. 9, no. (1): 3, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Merrett, p. 115.

werklikhede en feite nie,” PW Botha pronounced in a 1988 speech at the Transvaal Congress of the National Party, “Drogbeelde word opgetower. Denkbeeldige gesigte word beskrywe en die werklikhede word verdoesel en die feite onderdruk.”⁵⁷

Commenting on the distorted perceptions of the crisis in South Africa, PW Botha stated, in a 1988 speech, that reporters from South Africa were responsible for sending misperceptions about the South African situation into the world. [“Hoe gebeur dit dat hierdie verkeerde persepsies in die Verenigde State en in Brittanje en in Europa so dikwels hulle weg vind? Ek sal vir u sê die meeste van daardie verkeerde persepsies het hulle geboorte hier in die Republiek van Suid-Afrika.”] Calling journalists little jackals [“klein jakkalsies,”] President Botha said they were the originators of the distorted perceptions [“hulle wat hierdie stories die wêreld instuur.”]⁵⁸

The President did not call them liars, but rather said that they presented the facts in a deceitful manner in order to create a false impression.⁵⁹ He had a problem with their approach and interpretation of the facts. In other words, the President had a problem with the content of journalistic coverage and now he criticised style as well.⁶⁰

The authorities’ concept of changing perceptions through forcefully interfering with the presentation and distribution of information relates to their earlier idea about *consensus journalism*. In 1984, Minister Chris Heunis defined the latter as follows: “This means that more emphasis must be placed on commonalties and co-operation than on differences and conflict.”⁶¹

He added that the media was not expected to merely ignore the conflict: “But in its presentation the conflict must always be balanced with the existing potential and opportunities for consensus and co-operation.”⁶²

⁵⁷ PW BOTHA Private Collection at INCH: PV 203. 4 / 2 / 176.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ De Wet, J., “Mass media and political upheaval: the need for rational discourse” in *Ecquid Novi*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1986, p. 40.

⁶² *Ibid.*

As relations between the authorities and media grew increasingly tense, the Government would repeatedly criticise the media for not also reporting the good news about the country along with the bad.⁶³ In a fiery 1988 speech, during which Pres. Botha controversially attacked the media, he amongst other things criticised newsmen for not having an interest in reporting the pretty things in South Africa.⁶⁴

This wasn't simply political bravado, PW Botha was steadily becoming fed up with the way the media regarded his Government's handling of the South African crisis. Certainly one reason for all the Governmental restrictions and interference with media was that the State President and his administration were getting increasingly thinned skinned when it came to media criticism. To a growing extent, the Government made little distinction between factually based criticism and negative propaganda. In a 1986 meeting between the State President, his cabinet and the representatives of the main press houses he said that the press should continue with its criticism of the authorities but, "they mustn't only be negative."⁶⁵

Seasoned political journalist, Holger Jensen, wrote: "Successive Nationalist governments have always adopted the Chinese Communist approach to the press: i.e. "if you are not for us, you're against us." Afrikaner leaders have never been able to distinguish between balanced coverage and hostile coverage. They are extremely thin-skinned, excessively defensive about apartheid... and intolerant of criticism."⁶⁶

Regarding the latter the Government, in particular the President, stubbornly refused to make a distinction between negative criticism of the Government and being unpatriotically anti-South African. At the 1986 meeting with the top executives of the main press houses, Pres. Botha asked whether the newspapers were representing South African interests or whether they wanted to represent those of communist-controlled organisations. He said that the time for a final decision had arrived. Botha also said that it wasn't whether a paper was pro-Botha or not, it was about whether a newspaper was pro-South African or not: "Either the newspaper is pro-South African or

⁶³ Van Deventer, p. 77.

⁶⁴ PW Botha: Private Collection at INCH, PV 203: 4/ 2/ 176.

⁶⁵ PW Botha: Private Collection at INCH, PV 203: PS12/ 93 / 2.

⁶⁶ Venter, A.J. (ed.), *Challenge: South Africa Within the African Revolutionary Context*, p. 303.

not. Not pro-Botha. South Africa is the issue. If newspapers want to stay reasonable newspapers then they must declare for South Africa and stand by their decision.”⁶⁷ A senior Government official told Hennie van Deventer, editor of the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Volksblad*, that the Government was increasingly seeing the media and communism as equal threats.⁶⁸

Irrespective of whether the media was factually correct or not, the Government wanted to look good, it desperately needed to look sensible and therefore it needed to control not only the gathering of information but also the presentation thereof. The Government did not nationalise the flow of information outright, instead it allowed a qualified type of media freedom, as defined by the restrictions and then tried to mould that flow of information through, among other structures, the Bureau, into something that could further its aims.

As shown above, controlling the flow of information, without nationalising it completely, involved not only intricate regulations, but also a web of bureaucratic institutions, which placed a tremendous burden on the Government and its resources. Because, as the authorities clearly learnt, trying to control the flow of information was a never-ending endeavour. In spite of these institutions and the plethora of regulations, State President Botha and his Government were never content with their control of the media. Although the Government increasingly tabled new regulations and structures it constantly wanted more control over information – not only over information pertaining to violence, but over anything they deemed sensitive.⁶⁹

Anthony Giffard and Lisa Cohen wrote that “if a country wishes to black out news about its internal affairs it needs to... exclude foreign correspondents completely. Allowing correspondents in, then trying to control what they report, clearly is doomed to failure.”⁷⁰

The Government was never content with its level of control over the spread information because it never succeeded in completely annexing that flow. Trying to control something as fluid as information is an immensely complicated – and almost impossible – task. *Die Volksblad*, like

⁶⁷ PW Botha: Private Collection at INCH, PV 203: PS12/93 / 2.

⁶⁸ Van Deventer, p. 123.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁷⁰ Giffard, A. & Cohen, L., “South African TV and censorship: does it reduce negative coverage?” in *Journalism Quarterly*, spring, 1989, p. 10.

many other publications, pointed out to the authorities that although the Government could silence the messenger they would not be able to silence the message as well.⁷¹

Many commentators, when looking at the regulations, the Bureau of Information and the various other direct and indirect measures the authorities used to effect the media, thought that by 1988, Botha's South Africa was steadily on its way to becoming George Orwell's *1984*. society where freedom of thought, expression and speech is tightly controlled in order to protect the political system.

And as already noted, under the Total Strategy control over perception implied that freedom of information, speech, expression and thought did indeed needed to be utilised by the Government and controlled. "The authorities create an intellectual environment. Actually it's an anti-intellectual environment, one that discourages thinking and inquiry. It's censorship of the mind... correspondents entering with fresh thoughts and fresh views on this landscape are not welcomed," argued the seasoned foreign correspondent Nigel Wrench.⁷² He concluded: "It's as if South Africa is voluntarily becoming another Albania, applying intellectual sanctions and putting up barriers against the world beyond its borders."⁷³

⁷¹ Van Deventer, p. 81.

⁷² Sperling & McKenzie, p. 97.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

CHAPTER 4

THE PARTY'S PALS IN THE PRESS: THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRO-ESTABLISHMENT AFRIKAANS PRESS

“Ons koerante is deur Nasionaliste opgerig vir NP doeleindes en word veronderstel die stryd vir ‘n groot volksaak te voer in ooreenstemming met die beleid neergelê deur die verteenwoordigende en offisiële liggame van die Party.” This was how the NP demagogue dr. DF Malan described his party’s relationship with its press in 1936¹ and as far as many NP politicians were concerned this description still ought to have applied fifty years later – and in many ways it did.

Traditionally, the political positioning of the South African mainstream press was overtly and plainly divided according to language. The English press, in general, supported the liberal opposition parties and was anti-Nationalist. The Afrikaans newspapers were pro-NP and had a long history of supporting successive Nationalist Governments.² The most powerful Afrikaans press house was Nasionale Pers [NasPers]. Their three provincial flagships dominated the Afrikaans newspaper market:

- *Die Volksblad*, which was based in the Free State.
- *Die Burger*, which serviced the Cape.
- *Beeld*, which covered the Transvaal.
- *Oosterlig* in the Eastern Cape³

These three dailies, owned by the massive Nasionale Pers, were the dominant Afrikaans newspapers. Their focus and influence fell inside the white party political landscape and they serviced predominantly Afrikaans whites. Most Afrikaans speaking whites supported the National

¹ Muller, CFJ, *Sonop in die Suide*, p. 665.

² Van Pletzen, D. (ed.), *The official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1988/89*, p. 641.

^{*} *Die Oosterlig* was also an influential newspaper, in the Eastern Cape, but for the purposes of this study, focus will fall on the abovementioned three newspapers.

³ Van Pletzen (ed.), p. 644.

Party, as did these newspapers.⁴ As such, these newspapers had a far-reaching influence on the Afrikaans electorate.⁵

Traditionally, and holistically regarded, these papers had a very cosy relationship with successive NP governments. It is important to understand that the snug relationship between the NP and the Afrikaans newspapers was never a secret. The mainstream Afrikaans press was proudly associated with the NP and its policies.⁶

However, since the 1970s, and particularly during the 1980s, the Afrikaans press became increasingly sober in its critique of the National Party and the National Party Governments. This is not to suggest that the Afrikaans press abandoned their allegiance to the party.⁷ They still supported the basic tenets of the National Party policy and the majority of the Government's plans and decisions. The Afrikaans press energetically propagated the Botha Government's more progressive – and also conservative – steps, including the demolishing of petty apartheid, the creation of the Tricameral parliament, Botha's firm handling of the split with the right-wingers in the Party and the Government's stance towards the international community.⁸ The Afrikaans press didn't blindly applaud all the authorities did, it must be noted.⁹ It can best be described, as the *Sunday Times* did, that during the 1980s the Afrikaans press turned from "lapdog into watchdog".¹⁰

The new tendency of the Afrikaans press' was not to espouse everything the NP did as gospel, but rather to accompany its still vigorous support of the Party with sober and defined critique. This wasn't always a pleasant experience for either the Afrikaans newspapers or the Botha Government, which took some time to get used to their traditional mouthpieces slowly becoming, at times, relatively inquisitive. Although the Afrikaans press still supported the Party – the Government and particularly PW Botha, still expected an undying loyalty from the Afrikaans press.¹¹

⁴ Beukes, WD (ed.), *Oor grense heen – op pad na 'n nasionale pers 1948-1990*, p. 538.

⁵ Jackson, G.S., *Breaking Story – the South African press*, p. 17.

⁶ Jackson, p. 33.

⁷ McClurg, J., "Toeing the line" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 5, no. 6, 1986, p. 79.

⁸ Beukes, p. 483.

⁹ McClurg, p. 79.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹¹ Van Deventer, H., *Kroniek van 'n koerantman*, p. 86.

The one-time editor of *Die Volksblad*, Hennie van Deventer, explained the difficult position of Afrikaans newsmen in the 1980s. He noted that the Government expected special treatment from the Afrikaans newspapers. He wrote that as long as the newspapers agreed with the politicians the relationship between them was tremendous, but when the newspapers differed from the Party, things got sour: “Noem dit maar die spesiale kruis van die Afrikaanse koerant. Wat daardie kruis behels het, was ‘n buitensporige verwagting onder politici van ‘n spesiale binnebaan, ‘n voorkeurstatus om eise te kan stel. En die vrymoedigheid om wense uit ‘n posisie van gesag te kommunikeer, taamlik bot ook as dit nodig is. Solank saamgestem is, was dit ‘n tyd vir omhelsing. Namate die politieke druk opgebou het, het die tye egter meer geword om, volgens die Bybelse woord, ver van omhelsing te wees.”¹²

One criticism that the Afrikaans press flung at the English press on various occasions was that they had no sense of patriotic journalism and that they were deliberately always negative – that they intentionally presented the state of affairs as being worse than they were.¹³ On the other hand, the Afrikaans press was accused of always and deliberately presenting the state of affairs in a much better light than was necessary and that it was disgracefully biased in its protection and support of the Government.¹⁴

The newspaperman and academic, Willem de Klerk, wrote dramatically about what the Afrikaans press felt was inherently wrong with the mainstream liberal English press: “In over-emphasising the negative aspects of South Africa, with under-emphasis of the positive, I feel that they are often guilty in this respect. There is often a fanatical wilfulness, even a wantonness, to be found in their columns, a one-sidedness and venom that looks suspiciously like an internationally orientated attempt to destroy South Africa’s balance...”¹⁵

When the Botha Government started its clampdown on the liberties of the media, the Afrikaans press didn’t attack the authorities, but instead reserved its harshest blame for the liberal English

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Tomaselli, K. & Tomaselli, R. & Muller, J., *Narrating the crisis*, p. 96.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

press. In March 1986, the Managing Director of Nasionale Pers, Ton Vosloo, gave a talk at the Pretoria Technikon about how he regarded the role of the press in times of social unrest. He started off by pronouncing how valuable constructive journalism ["opbouende joernalistiek"] was for developing the moral fibre of a nation.¹⁶ Referring to the liberal press, he spoke of how they were no longer simply messengers, but had become involved with the events they covered. He said that these newspapermen placed more emphasis on their own commentary than the facts, using the newspapers to propagate their own distorted viewpoints.¹⁷

Vosloo said that those liberal reporters who were so ardently opposed to the status quo should remember that Oliver Tambo, who they regarded as a freedom fighter, would not allow a free press. He said that it was upsetting how many reporters wanted to be part of the revolutionary cause.¹⁸

Using some loaded language Vosloo beseeched newspapermen to follow the Government and support its approach to change. He said that if journalists did not adhere to objectivity and support the Government's reformist policies, the media would in no small way be responsible for pulling the country into a hellish dictatorship. Vosloo put it to the press people that, as the Government was busily working on evolutionary reforms, journalists had to make a choice: "[they] must join the tedious road to an evolutionary, open community with increasing good for all, or [they] must be swept into the depths of hell and repression where the press will be a total workhorse of the political dictatorship's guard against opposition, open debate." ["... hy moet inval op die moeisame pad na 'n evolusionêre, ope gemeenskap met toenemende welvaart vir almal, of hy moet op sleptou geneem word die afgronde van hel en verdrukking in waar die pers die absolute werktuig van die politieke diktatuur wag teen teenspraak, ope gesprek of ope beskawingsproses ken nie."]¹⁹ He added that overseas media people might not approve of his viewpoints, but that it was because their eyes were "dik geplak is met die was van naïwiteit."²⁰

¹⁶ Vosloo, T., "Robert Goldtron en die rol van die pers in krisistye" in *Equid Novi*, 1986, vol. 7, no. 2, p. 78.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

The Afrikaans press blamed the English newspapers' coverage of the South African crisis for having prompted the Botha Government's clampdown on the media.²¹ The Afrikaans press clearly saw itself as the only really respectful press and it therefore condoned the Government's steps, because it agreed with the authorities that not everybody could be trusted with something as precious as press freedom.²² The Afrikaans press argued that although no one wanted the restrictions on the press, they thought it to be necessary to ward off the terrorist onslaught of the immediate future. The Afrikaans press explained that in order to protect democratic freedoms, the Government sometimes needed to curtail them temporarily in order to guarantee its own long-term survival.²³

The English press scoffed at this and proclaimed itself the last bastion of press freedom in the apartheid-state. The Afrikaans-press hit back by restating that it was because of the English press' irresponsibility that the Government had been forced to take steps and only when the English press proved that it could be trusted to act responsibly with these liberties – as the Afrikaans press regarded itself as being 'responsible' – could they claim to be fighters for freedom of speech.²⁴

Not only did the Afrikaans press support and propagate their basic policies – they even went so far as to try and rationalise the NP's media restrictions. It could not then have been too much of a surprise when the State President, speaking at the opening of the 1986 Cape Congress of the NP, warmly applauded the support of Nasionale Pers [NasPers].²⁵ Although at first glance the relationship between the NP Government of PW Botha and the Afrikaans press might have seemed like one happy family, it wasn't. In fact, tensions were mounting.

A number of thorny issues threatened to jeopardise the traditionally cordial relations between these two groups. The editor of *Die Volksblad*, for most of the Botha-era, Hennie van Deventer, summarised the main points of contention, which included:

²¹ Buekes (ed.), p. 155.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Buekes (ed.), p. 155.

²⁵ Chris Heunis Private Collection at INCH. PV895: 4/2, vol. 26.

- The authorities' collective view of the various newspapers and publications as: *the press*. The Afrikaans press' problem was that they felt that although they supported the Government and subscribed to its web of rules and regulations, when it came to dishing out punishment the authorities did not differentiate between them and the liberal and/or anti-government press.²⁶
- The mesh of regulations, some of which were important and others "simply daft," that prescribed the scope of media activity. Even this vigorous supporter of the NP noted that the publishing of a newspaper in South Africa, irrespective of its political tendencies, was exceptionally risky.²⁷ Van Deventer noted that the Afrikaans press became systematically fed-up with the Botha Government's cavalier attitude regarding press freedom and its endless attempts to silence the media. Included in this list of grievances was the Government's highhanded expectation of "respekvolle onderdanigheid" from the Afrikaans press.²⁸
- The constant threat of Government interference. Van Deventer stated that different Nationalist Governments had a tendency to handle the Afrikaans-press as if they were childish.
- There was little consensus over what was meant by the term, 'freedom of the press.'
- The press was blamed for the existence of bad news.
- Too many different role players wanted to use the newspapers to propagate their goals and viewpoints.²⁹
- Television – specifically the South African Broadcasting Corporation's television service. The problems here were twofold. On the one hand, the Afrikaans press was losing advertising revenue to SABC TV and the Afrikaans press bosses blamed the Government for not intervening.³⁰ Secondly the Afrikaans press was losing out on stories because of the SABC. Because of their longstanding relationship with the NP Governments, the Afrikaans press were treated to scoops from Government circles and they were usually the first to report big Government announcements. But, SABC TV proved to be a far

²⁶ Hennie van Deventer .Private Collection at INCH: PV677. 1/ 24/ 29. Speech no. 52.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Van Deventer, p.76.

²⁹ Hennie van Deventer .Private Collection at INCH: PV677. 1/ 24/ 29. Speech no. 52.

³⁰ Hennie van Deventer .Private Collection at INCH: PV677. 1/ 24/ 2/ 14. Speech no. 83.

more alluring, not to mention glamorous, medium for Government officials.³¹ He described NP officials' egotistical love for the medium and went so far as to say that they would sell their souls if it meant that they could get onto TV.³² He noted, rather bitterly, how politicians refused to give more emphasis to their dealings with the newspapers instead of jockeying for time on TV: "Maar pure verniet. Koerant was genoeg om verkiesings te veg. Maar vir die ego was TV die wonderekstrak."³³ Van Deventer implored the NP authorities to be more accommodating regarding their advertising support of the Afrikaans press and promulgation of their announcements in order to help the Afrikaans compete with TV.³⁴ This service included, for example at *Die Volksblad*, that those journalists that were not supporters of the NP cordially requested to refrain from covering elections.³⁵

- Obtaining important press releases, speeches and comments from inept or elusive Government officials. Van Deventer noted how some Government officials and departments became increasingly removed from the press inside a cocoon of inaccessibility ["kokon van ontoeganklikheid"] although they still expected favours from the Afrikaans newspapers.³⁶ Another problem here was that public relations officers of Government officials fended the press away from the officials.³⁷
- Not all the Afrikaans press' journalists were generally Nationalists anymore. [Van Deventer's cryptic notes read: "Van hulle staan al verder weg van NP en hul gebrekkige lojaliteit word gevoel as party van sy kant koerante nie reg behandel nie."]³⁸

Although the Afrikaans press initially rationalised the Government's media curbs as necessary short-term measures, as the Botha Government kept on weaving an increasingly tighter web of media restrictions even the Afrikaans press was prompted to speak out – if only in a rather muffled voice. In August 1987, the editor of *Die Burger* expressed his reservations about the sensibility of the intensifying the restrictions. The newspaperman argued that people shouldn't receive the good

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Van Deventer, p. 90.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁴ Hennie van Deventer .Private Collection at INCH: PV677. 1/24/ 2/ 14. Speech no. 83.

³⁵ Van Deventer, p. 79.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.78.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Hennie van Deventer .Private Collection at INCH: PV677. 1/24/ 2/ 14. Speech no. 83.

news without being informed of the bad. He warned that if people were not given all the facts, South Africans might very well lose touch with reality: "Nie net positiewe nuus [moet] by die publiek uitkom nie... Ook negatiewe ontwikkelinge mag nie verswyg word nie, anders kan 'n situasie ontstaan soos die in die ou Rhodesië [currently Zimbabwe] waar 'n deel van die bevolking geheel en al uit voeling met die werklike toestand in die land geraak het."³⁹

As already noted, during the middle and latter part of the decade, as the South African crisis reached climax after climax, the President and his Government were prone to take an either-for-or-against-us stance when it came to dealing with criticism. When the Afrikaans press eventually did speak out against the authorities' handling of the media, irrespective of how subtly, the Government instinctively lobbed the Afrikaans newspapers into the same category as its opponents in the media sector. This only served to further sour the attitude of many stakeholders in the Afrikaans press against the Botha Government - stakeholders who up until that time had supported the Government.⁴⁰ One particular Government official was particularly oversensitive and extremely easily offended if even the slightest criticism of him appeared in the Afrikaans press – State President PW Botha.⁴¹

In a parliamentary debate in August 1987, it was argued that the Government and State President's desire to curb the media under the rubric of Emergency conditions, was born out of an egotistical and paranoid intolerance of criticism. An MP of the PFP [Progressive Federal Party], stated: "There is a political paranoia prevailing in the minds of the Government about any kind of criticism. The hon. State President has shown very clear and dangerous signs of that." He singled out the President's attitude, saying that PW Botha "has shown signs of having reached the stage at which he can actually no longer stand criticism, of whatever nature... He has reached a degree of intolerance which makes it impossible for him to function sensibly within a democratic system."⁴²

PW Botha demanded, and usually got, special treatment from the Afrikaans press. When stories about the Government appeared in the Afrikaans press that annoyed the State President, the editor

³⁹ Beukes (ed.), p. 156.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 483.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² HANSARD. 27 August 1987, col. 4699.

could expect a personal phone call from a fuming PW Botha, demanding an explanation and an apology. PW Botha even told Ton Vosloo that if Nasionale Pers' newspapers were going to place negative stories about him, he expected them to inform him beforehand.⁴³

The journalists Alf Reis and Ebbe Dommissie, each a doyen of the Afrikaans press, described how during the latter half of the decade, pressmen noticed a growing change in Botha's attitude towards the media in general. How he became increasingly reclusive and avoided contact with journalists irrespective of their political inclination.⁴⁴ These seasoned reporters noted that on top of this, the State President also clashed with friendly journalists.⁴⁵ The President's highhanded attitude, regarding the Afrikaans press and criticism, soured many relationships between the President and Afrikaans editors. "Ons van Die Burger het meer as 'n dekade met sy vulkaniese styl saamgeleef deur dit van ons rug te laat rol. Dit is vir ons makliker gemaak omdat ons geweet het die direksie staan by ons," commented Wiets Beukes, former editor of *Die Burger*.⁴⁶

Apparently it wasn't always as simple as that. In March 1987, Willem de Klerk sensationally resigned as editor of *Rapport*. This was after his *verligte* political commentary in the popular Sunday newspaper had become just too liberal for the powers that be. In 1985, De Klerk wrote that the apartheid-system had no basis on which to build South Africa's future and not long afterwards he wrote that blacks had to be given a political say in South Africa. Willem De Klerk also made waves by writing that South Africa's military ventures in Namibia/Angola had reached a point of saturation and that it was high time to negotiate the country out of that particular scenario; that Botha should scrap all and any discriminatory legislation; that the security acts must be reviewed and watered-down as they threatened democracy and that the ANC should be unbanned so that the Government could negotiate with them.⁴⁷

Pres. Botha and his Government were not at all pleased by *Rapport's* outspoken liberal tendencies. At one point De Klerk was visited to by a Cabinet delegation and when this proved unsuccessful, the President took action himself. Botha attended the board meetings of *Rapport* as well as those

⁴³ Van Deventer, p. 87.

⁴⁴ Reis & Dommissie, *Leierstryd*, p. 73.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Beukes (ed.), p. 484.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

of two of the holding companies controlling the newspaper and demanded that De Klerk be fired.⁴⁸ On top of that, NP politicians also attacked the newspaper's political inclinations. Eventually, De Klerk left *Rapport* and explained publicly that he was forced to do so, by among others, members of the newspaper and high-ranking Nationalists.⁴⁹

Most of the time when the State President and the Afrikaans press clashed, it was taken care of outside the public glare. But, by the closing years of the decade, PW Botha – whose increasingly erratic style was becoming worrisome to many of the Government's supporters – dramatically made his displeasure with the Afrikaans press very public. The climax came in 1988. The Afrikaans paper that drove Pres. Botha to publicly throw down the gauntlet was *Beeld*. They had published a collection of standpoints that differed from Botha's.⁵⁰ Never one to back away from confrontation, Botha publicly blasted the Afrikaans press in August 1988, during a speech he delivered at the NP's Natal Congress.

Referring to *Beeld* not by name, instead calling it the Johannesburg morning paper, he said it was with sadness that he now had to deal with the paper's content. Pres. Botha portrayed himself as having been betrayed by the Afrikaans press. He said that those who knew his history would know that, throughout his political career he had lobbied on behalf of Nasionale Pers.⁵¹

Pres. Botha then presented himself as the protector of the Afrikaans newspapers, saying that whenever the Afrikaans press had come under attack he had gotten into the trenches and fought on their behalf. He said that he had always believed that a certain camaraderie existed between the NP and Nasionale Pers; that these two South African institutions were like twin brothers which would never try and dominate each other, nor would they try to embarrass one another. He said that he hoped to continue with that positive attitude throughout the rest of his political career.⁵² Having portrayed himself as the champion of the Afrikaans press, he returned to *Beeld*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 484.

⁵¹ PW Botha. Private Collection at INCH. PV 203. 4/ 2/ 170.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Pres. Botha said that the newspaper had now made a point of constantly embarrassing the Government by focusing on certain burning questions facing the country and that he couldn't believe that this represented the standpoint of Nasionale Pers' board of directors. Pres. Botha expressed his strongest displeasure at the way *Beeld* was behaving, which he said was totally irresponsible. He said *Beeld's* behaviour, "recently, has played into the hands of our political opponents and I condemn it." ["in die afgelope tyd... [het dit] in die hande [gespeel] van ons politieke opponente en ek verwerp dit." He said that the editor should have listened to Cabinet members who had telephoned him to sort out the problem – and the way the editor refused to budge was unacceptable.⁵³

If Botha's strict language was meant to scare the Afrikaans press from questioning the Government, it did not have the desired effect. Although when compared to the English press, the Afrikaans newspapers were still very much pro-establishment, they grew more independent in their evaluation of South Africa's political situation, although not abandoning their support of the NP. As for the Government, their disdain for the media increasingly included the Afrikaans press. Only three months after the Natal Congress, Botha delivered his coarsest condemnation of the media – including the Afrikaans groups – of his tenure as State President. In November 1988, he spoke at the NP's Transvaal Congress. It was in this speech, as already noted in the above section, that the President called journalists "klein jakkelsies" and spoke of how they refused to tell their readers about the pretty things that were happening in the country.⁵⁴

But, he went much further than that. Botha singled out the weekend press – specifically NasPers' popular and influential Afrikaans Sunday paper *Rapport*.

Pres. Botha spoke of the false representation of the country's crisis and said that the distribution of these wrong perceptions was especially rampant over the weekend. He said that these newsmen who got so hung up with these stories over weekends were on heat. He added that they were plainly lascivious ["hulle is orig."]⁵⁵ Expanding on this theme, the State President remarked that

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ PW Botha. Private collection at INCH. PV 203. Speech delivered on 14 August 1988.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

the weekend papers started to get aroused around Thursday so that by Saturday night they were really hot and on Sunday morning they dumped their lies [“versinsels”] on the public.

As in August, Botha backtracked and restated that he had always been a supporter of NasPers and some of his closest friends were newspaper people. He then went on to deliver one of his most famous pronouncements. He said that in spite of the esteem he held the country’s newspapermen in, there were too many bad apples; too many dirty bounders [“te veel lunsriems.”] Too many scoundrels, who just wanted to spread mean stories about ministers.⁵⁶

NasPers’ Sunday newspapers were particularly full of *lunsriems*, according to Botha. He said that *Rapport* had become a poor edition of the *Sunday Times*^{*} and that he was going to talk to the Press Union and Media Council and have them take care of the matter – to get *Rapport* back in line. Pres. Botha said that he expected them to correct the situation and added threateningly that if they wouldn’t the Government would: “As hulle nie kan nie, sal ons hulle help.”⁵⁷

He placed his problems with the newspaper in the context of Total Onslaught/Total Strategy. As already noted, the Government increasingly took a narrow either-for-or-against-us view and saw those who did not graciously accept its management of the crisis, as enemies of the state. Anyone who disagreed with the government, irrespective of on what point or to what extent, the authorities simply painted as being irresponsible or an enemy. The reader is reminded of the official who told Hennie Van Deventer that the Government was beginning to see communists and the media as equal threats to its authority.

It is then not surprising that the President would see *Rapport’s* criticism as dissident agitation. He said that during these tense times, South Africa could not allow itself to be torn apart by irresponsible people. [“Maar u sien, Suid-Afrika kan in hierdie tyd van wêreldwoelinge, in hierdie tyd van ondermynende magte in die wêreld, kan Suid-Afrika nie bekostig om homself aan flarde te laat skeur deur onverantwoordelike mense nie”].⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

^{*} *Rapport’s* English competitor.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Botha also threatened South Africa's news media by saying that he believed the authorities should tend to the problems with the press. He said that the Government should ensure that the responsible papers ["ordentlike koerante,"] in other words, those that didn't make waves, could continue with their work while the scoundrels ["lunsriems"] dropped out.⁵⁹

He also pronounced, that to be too horny too often, always led to a miscarriage. ["Want om te veel op hitte te wees, beteken net 'n miskraam."]⁶⁰ After this speech, which left many loyal Afrikaans pressmen speechless and furious, groupings of senior members of the National Party became somewhat distressed about the State President's constantly deteriorating relationship with the media and the effect it could have had on the Government and the Party.⁶¹

After all the dramatic clashes between the Government and Afrikaans press, and in spite of the Afrikaans newspapers' denials that they were Government lackeys, some believed that it was a storm in a teacup. "They can protest as much as they like," the outspoken alternative pressman Max du Preez would say during the 1990s, "but one truth remains: until the very last few months of PW Botha's term as State President, Afrikaans newspapers never opposed the NP or their security forces on any important issue."⁶²

A valid point in many respects, but it should also be pointed out that the Afrikaans press never saw its role or biggest political contribution to be the opposition of the status quo, its political beliefs lay too deep for that. While the Conservative Party was gaining ground, the Afrikaans press energetically prevented the whites, particularly their Afrikaner readers, from political and ideological regression. The Afrikaans press' interest and influence was to be found in white party political politics. From their pro-establishment platform, the Afrikaans press rationalised, moralised and justified Botha's reform policies to their Afrikaner readers and also enforced the sensibility of progressive political change away from Verwoerdian-apartheid.⁶³

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Reis & Dommissie, p. 74.

⁶² De Villiers (ed.), *TRC Report*, vol. 4, p. 178.

⁶³ Van Deventer, p. 31.

While at a conference of newsmen in England, during 1988, Hennie van Deventer said that those accusators of the Afrikaans press who criticised NasPers for being Government stooges and for not being more outspokenly anti-apartheid, should remember the divisions that existed in white South Africa. He said that should the NP be ousted it would be replaced not by liberal whites, but by rightwingers who will “tear up the constitution” and take the country back into the dark ages of apartheid. According to Van Deventer, the Afrikaans press’ biggest contribution was to fight the spread of right wing radicalism amongst whites and to “strive for the biggest coalition of moderates.” While at the same time, subtly pressuring the Government to continuously move faster and further with reform.⁶⁴

With regards to the latter point, one easily and usually overlooked contribution of the Afrikaans journalists was their personal pacifying influence in the NP. This contribution usually took place behind the scenes and was not chronicled. Harvey Tyson, the hard-hitting liberal English editor of *The Star*, wrote that particularly during the last stages of apartheid Afrikaans newsmen played a valuable role. He argued that just as the English press defended the so-called alternative press, so “did the Afrikaans press sometimes fight in later years to keep the windows open for the media in general. Their editors and managers might have done it mainly behind closed doors... but often that was the best place from which to reach the window... Newspaper people, with their penchant for stereotypes, often forget that the ‘good guys’ and the ‘bad guys’ are found in all camps.”⁶⁵

In his speech, Botha referred to the Media Council and Press Union. The South African Media Council was described by the Official Yearbook of South Africa as a “voluntary self-disciplinary tribunal for all media.”⁶⁶ The Council was certainly not excited about the prospect of dealing with the President.

⁶⁴ Hennie van Deventer. Private Collection at INCH. PV 677. 1/24/2/13. Speech 73.

⁶⁵ Tyson, H., *Editors under fire*, p.404.

⁶⁶ Van Pletzen (ed.), p. 638.

CHAPTER 5

DISUNION IN THE UNION AND COUNSELLING THE COUNCIL: THE PRESS UNION AND THE MEDIA COUNCIL

The Media Council was jointly created by the Conference of Editors and the Newspaper Press Union.¹ The latter comprised all the biggest South African publications. Since its formation in 1882, the Newspaper Press Union had endeavoured to promote a uniform approach regarding labour and industrial questions. Apart from those aspects, the Union also consulted the authorities on legislation and such matters that affected the media.²

Already by 1986 and 1987 the Media Council expressed its concern about the way the Botha Government was restraining the media.³ The Government applied significant pressure on the Media Council to act as the enforcer of its media measures. The authorities wanted the Council, as disciplinary body, to review the South African press on its behalf “for what the Government terms ‘negative,’ ‘biased,’ ‘subversive,’ ‘revolutionary promoting’ and ‘climate-creating’ reporting.” The Council on the other hand did not want to do the Government’s dirty work and scorned this idea as it “cannot be expected to play the role of both policemen and judge and also, that it cannot apply subjective party political criteria in its assessments.”⁴

Not only did it not want to be seen as the enforcer of the Government’s restrictions, the Media Council was also vocal in their disapproval of the restrictions themselves. Early in 1986, the Council stated that it absolutely appreciated the immensely difficult task the security forces had to fulfil, but that the restrictions were not in the best interests of “the public, whose right to know is affected [by] the police.” It argued that the restrictions “undermine public confidence in the accountability and responsibility of law enforcement agencies.”⁵ Later, the chairman of the Media Council, retired appeal court judge, Mr. L de V van Winsen stated that through the web of

¹ *Ibid.* p.1.

² Van Pletzen, D. (ed.), *The official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1988/89*, p. 547.

³ *The South African Media Council – Second periodical report: 1986 / 1987*, p.3.

⁴ *Ibid.* p.4.

⁵ *Ibid.* n 9

restrictions “the Government is denying access to information the public has a right to know” and “South Africans now know less about some happenings in their own country than people elsewhere.”⁶

As already noted, the Botha Government wanted the Media Council to enforce the regulations on its behalf. Prior to a meeting between prominent representatives of the Union and the State President and senior members of his Cabinet, the Government sent the Union a request. The Government asked the Union, in order to facilitate the ending of the State of Emergency, to voluntarily accept certain disciplinary guidelines. These guidelines were nothing less than the Emergency Regulations.⁷

If the Government had convinced the Union to voluntarily accept these regulations, then the authorities would not have had to be seen as those officially oppressing the media, because the media would have agreed to these regulations of their own free will. In exchange for that, the Government would undertake to exempt members of the Union from the current regulations and too exempt them from further emergency regulations.⁸

The actual meeting took place on November 11th 1986. The Government contingent, which was led by the State President, included Ministers FW de Klerk, Stoffel Botha, Adriaan Vlok, Gen. Magnus Malan and Dave Steward of the Bureau of Information. Representatives from the Union included managing directors of the Argus Publishing Company and Nasionale Pers. Pres. Botha told the pressmen that he respected the responsible members of the Union and that the authorities did not want to clash with members of the Press Union. But, in return, they had to voluntarily accept the proposed guidelines.⁹

The State President said that he wanted to lift the State of Emergency as soon as possible, but that the Union had to discipline its members in order to help make that possible. Steve Mulholland, whose press house, South African Associated Press (SAAN), printed such publications as the

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ PW Botha. Private collection at INCH: PV203 PS 12/ 93/ 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ .. .

Sunday Times and *Business Day*, warned the President of the dangers of having an uninformed public. He made a valid point by also saying that the Union couldn't agree to the Government's wishes, as the managerial executives of the press houses didn't dictate the editorial policies of their publications. The representatives of the powerful Argus Publishing Company said that these guidelines, in effect, would turn their newspapers into State newspapers.¹⁰

This meeting was shortly followed by another important – albeit unsuccessful – meeting, on December 6th 1986. The State President and senior members of his cabinet were present, as well as the leading members of the Press Union, as represented by senior executives of the biggest press houses including NasPers, the Argus Group and the South African Associated Press (SAAN.) The Government not only wanted the Press Union and its Media Council to voluntarily accept the regulations, but failing that, at least wanted an undertaking from the mainstream press and their organised bodies that they would not defend the highly politicised alternative press when the Government clamped down on them.¹¹

Chris Heunis said that this was a key-issue, whether or not the mainstream press would speak up for the alternative press when the authorities singled them out for punishment. The State President concurred and said that in his experience when the authorities acted against any specific sector of the media, the rest of the press sector would blame and accuse the Government and that was what he feared would happen if the Government went after the radical alternative press.¹²

Steve Mulholland, of South African Associated Newspapers, told the President that if the editors of the mainstream press spoke out in defence of the alternative press when the authorities attacked that sector, it was their right, because the press houses didn't dictate editorial policies. This type of editorial autonomy was unacceptable to the President; he said that if the press houses didn't prescribe editorial policy then maybe they should start doing it now. He argued that management owned the newspapers and therefore they could – and should – start laying down rules.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

The President warned that the Government was planning to act in order to protect the country and that included the press. He said that if they did not want cooperate the press houses would pay the price. ["Die Regering is van plan om op te tree en die land te beskerm – beskerming," stated the President, "beskerming van die persgroepe ingesluit. So nie moet hulle die prys betaal."]¹³

He said that the newspapers had to make a final choice as to whether they wanted to represent South Africa or newspapers that had chosen to further Communism. Mr. Miller of the powerful Argus Group told the President and his Ministers that if the authorities acted against the alternative press, there would definitely be editors who would condemn such a move and if the press houses moved against those editors it would be totally counterproductive.¹⁴

After kicking around the same arguments for some time longer, it became clear that no new agreement would be reached at this meeting between the authorities and the pressmen. It was brought to an abrupt halt when the President forewarned the press bosses that he had tried to be reasonable with them, because he wanted to take them with him. He said that he wasn't a dictator but that the time of toying with each other was over. He said that neither he nor South Africa was going to take it any longer. ["die tyd is verby dat daar met mekaar gespeel word. Suid-Afrika gaan dit nie meer vat nie en die Staatspresident gaan dit nie verder vat nie. Daar moet nie misverstand wees nie."]¹⁵

In the end, the Union accepted the President's standpoint, but it noted that the Media Council wasn't designed for what the Government had in mind. The Union accepted that the authorities' media regulations would be made applicable not only to the alternative media, but to themselves as well.¹⁶

In August 1987, the State President stated in parliament that these pressmen had "refused" to cooperate with the Government to help them "avert a threat against the entire community."¹⁷

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ HANSARD. 17 August 1987. Col.3951.

The Government and the Union did, however, meet on different occasions to discuss whether its Media Council couldn't be used to enforce the regulations on its members or not. These talks finally reached a deadlock in 1987. Judge Van Winsen, chairman of the Council, told Min. Stoffel Botha that the Council was simply not organisationally or financially structured to oversee the type of disciplinary action the Government desired. Stoffel Botha reacted by saying that the attitude of the Council greatly disappointed the authorities.¹⁸

Judge Van Winsen explained to the Minister that the Government's ideas of what to monitor were problematic. For example, so-called negative journalism, was extremely difficult to define and the Council couldn't be expected to write a code of conduct for the regulation of such vague concepts.¹⁹ Apart from this, the members of the Union, as well as the Media Council and the editorial staff of the various newspapers could not agree on how to handle the Government's requests and proposals. The split was between the Afrikaans press houses, which supported the Government, and the liberal anti-Government English press who vigorously refused to even consider the possibility.²⁰

Later, at the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, during the 1990s, the Union would defend themselves against accusations that they didn't do enough to fight state interference in the media: "The NPU did not speak loudly enough about apartheid, but half of our members supported the National Party."²¹

Although the Government discovered that it couldn't lull the mainstream press into collectively accepting and overseeing its rules and regulations, as far as the types of South African media were concerned, Pres. Botha did have his thumb firmly on one of the most valuable institutions in the country: The South African Broadcasting Corporation. Also known as *his master's voice*.

¹⁸ PW Botha. Private Collection at INCH. PV203. PS12/93/2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ PW Botha. Private Collection at INCH. PV203. PS12/93/3.

²¹ Garman, A., "The media and the TRC" in the *Rhodes Journalism Review*, November 1997, p. 30.

CHAPTER 6

BOTHA'S BROADCASTER: THE SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

If the Afrikaans press and Government described themselves as being twin brothers, then the South African Broadcasting Corporation [SABC] and the Government were Siamese twins. Unlike the Afrikaans press, the SABC, being the public broadcaster was a semi-government institution.

Where the press houses could still differ and even question the Government, the SABC was too dependent on the authorities to realistically contemplate taking on PW Botha and his Government.

When keeping in mind the vigour that the Government displayed when interfering with the independent press houses as well as how powerful the broadcast medium was, it will come as no surprise that the Government kept a very tight hold on the SABC.¹ A single, and probably the most important, example of the authorities' influence on the broadcaster was the structure of its top executive management. All of the broadcaster's executive policies were compiled by the SABC Board, which consisted of between 5 and 15 members. All the members of the SABC Board were approved and appointed by the State President.²

The state-controlled SABC was probably the most powerful medium in the country and there was no way that the Government would allow this institution to stray from its fold. The Botha Government's unabashed dominance and exploitation of the SABC was such that it was noted and criticised by political commentators from right across the political spectrum. At the beginning of the De Klerk-era, Hennie van Deventer spoke of how the SABC was part of the political weaponry of one group, the NP Government.³

¹ Jackson, G.S., *Breaking Story – the South African press*, p. 5.

² Van Pletzen, D. (ed.), *The official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1988/89*, p. 655.

³ Hennie van Deventer. Private Collection at INCH. PV 667. 1/ 24/ 2/ 16. Speech no. 93.

In 1988 Pieter Mulder, MP for the rightwing Conservative Party and himself a former academic specialising in media affairs, criticised the authorities' unashamed exploitation of the SABC. Mulder said that if the Government exploited the broadcasting services, such as the SABC to distribute its own party political propaganda, the very nature of democracy in South Africa was jeopardised. ["As die regering misbruik maak van uitsaaidienste soos die SAUK en as die regering die staatsinligtingsdiens aanwend om partypolitieke propaganda te versprei, word die wese van die demokrasie aangetas," Mulder argued, "Die SAUK is by uitnemendheid 'n voorbeeld hiervan – veral die laaste tien jaar."]⁴

He stated that during the previous two decades the SABC had gone about its business in relative calm and that delicate interference from the Government probably had taken place, but at least the SABC had retained a semblance of autonomy. But the *sturm und drang* of Total Strategy changed all that. He wrote that when PW Botha became leader of South Africa, all subtlety was done away with.⁵

The SABC's biased support of the NP was so open that the Government's opposition rarely let a chance go by to ridicule the authorities over it. During a parliamentary debate in February 1987, the President spoke of how parties should have the opportunity to inform the voters on their standpoints during elections. Harry Schwarz, the veteran liberal politician, mocked Botha and asked whether SABC TV would be allowed to give the opposition parties coverage. The State President wasn't amused and said that opposition parties were already given that opportunity. He added: "Indeed, I have reason to complain that television devotes far too much attention to those little parties..."⁶

Not only did the SABC never try to hide its subservience, it went a long way to ensure that its relationship with the authorities stayed positive. For example, in 1985 word got around that the SABC TV's primetime news program *Network/Netwerk* had liberal tendencies. The SABC's executive head editor promptly compiled a report that was supplied to the President, explaining

⁴ Mulder, P., "Die SAUK en die regering se kommunikasiefilosofie" in *Communicare*, vol. 7, no. 2, November 1988, p. 62.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ HANSARD: 4 February 1987. Col.260.

that these allegations were certainly not the case and that the television show was still very loyal to the Government and the NP.⁷

The responsible SABC executive was proud to point out that, for example, between September 1985 and December 1985 the NP's points of view were espoused some 50 times – compared to rightwing viewpoints which were discussed only 4 times and viewpoints of the liberal Progressive Federal Party, which were reflected on only 7 occasions.⁸ The report also explained how the program had carried some 40 “positive” inserts about what was going on in the country.⁹

In 1986 the SABC compiled a far more extensive report about how the broadcaster propagated the Government's outlooks and had merged them into its general news programming. This report unashamedly guaranteed the Government the SABC's unwavering support. The report explicitly stated that the SABC, and especially the Heads of Editorial Staff and Public Affairs, had never regarded their task as a mere reflection of events. It stated that for some years the SABC felt that neutral journalism could not make a real contribution to solving South Africa's troubles. [“Die SAUK – en die Hoofredaksie van Nuus en Openbare Aangeleenthede (radio en televisie) in die besonder – het sy taak nog nooit beskou as ‘n blote weerspieëling van gebeure nie... Jare lank reeds word besef dat ‘neutrale’ berriggewing – vir so verre so iets moontlik is – nie ‘n rigtinggewende bydrae lewer tot die oplossing van Suid-Afrika se vraagstukke nie.”]

It stated that the safety of the country and the fight against the revolutionary onslaught was its first priority. The SABC's 1986 Broadcast Policy stated that it was well aware of the revolution's aims and reported news in such a fashion that in no way could radicals find a platform or propaganda-mouthpiece in the reportage of the SABC.¹⁰

The Head Editorial Staff of the SABC stated that it had identified a counter-revolutionary role for itself and as such refused to give any airtime to agitators, radicals and nor would it give a platform to those who demanded sanctions and disinvestment. It also stated that it attempted to win the

⁷ PW Botha. Private collection at INCH. PV 203. PS 15 / 23/ 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

people's hearts and minds and to make them strong in the counter-revolutionary struggle being waged by the Government. ["Die oogmerk is om luisteraars en kykers van die verskillende bevolkingsgroepe weerbaar te maak teen aanstigting en misleidend – om hulle harte te verower in die anti-revolusionêre stryd warby Suid-Afrika teen wil en dank betrek is."]¹¹

Although the press had a problem with enacting some of the authorities' sketchier prescriptions, the broadcaster on the other hand experienced no such dilemmas. For example, as already noted, the Government wanted to control the way in which the media presented the South African crisis. Whereas the press explained that they could not be expected to enforce such blurry requirements, the SABC had no reservations. The report stated that although it was practically impossible to ignore the pronouncements of foreign organisations and Western governments, the SABC made a point of neutralising threats concerning sanctions and other pieces of negative news material.¹²

Furthermore, through the SABC's national black radio stations the broadcaster emphasised the undermining motives of the ANC and UDF and in no uncertain terms explained to their listeners how the country would collapse if these radicals were to come to power. Accompanying this the SABC, through all its mediums that catered for blacks, made a point of putting great emphasis on the successes of the Security Forces. The black audience was also made well aware of the adverse consequences of civil disobedience and how the latter would always automatically lead to a confrontation with the security forces, which according to the SABC, would always win.¹³

The report outlined how the SABC was putting great emphasis on the success of the Security Forces while at the same time emphasising black-black violence and the ANC's attacks on soft targets. One might say that in the context of propaganda this was the stick – the broadcaster trying to impress upon blacks the evils of the ANC and the strength of the Security Forces.¹⁴

The carrot was reform – to get the blacks to accept that only PW Botha's peaceful reform could bring them liberty and prosperity. Resistance was futile and the Government knew what was best

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

for everybody. The broadcaster also tried to make sure that the blacks knew that outside powers would not help the country either. This related to the sanctions drive, the report stated how the SABC was continuously pointing out how people who called for sanctions, like Desmond Tutu, were not actually interested in the needs of blacks. ["Daar is by herhaling daarop gewys dat mense soos Biskop Tutu, wat in weelde lewe en sanksies bepleit, nie die belange van die Swart gemeenskappe dien nie."]¹⁵

The report explained how the SABC was clearly informing blacks that under sanctions they would be the most to suffer and that the country could easily survive the sanctions drive.¹⁶

According to the report the SABC was explicitly boosting the apartheid-state's strongman image ["sterkmansbeeld"] and focussed on the country's mineral, military and strategic importance and stressed that it would be able to thwart any onslaught.¹⁷

Not even religious programs were left out. In this regard, the SABC used programs to explain how the Bible's teachings on law and order justified the authorities' actions; what the Church's role ought to be in time of social unrest and how it questioned the morality of sanctions and disinvestment.¹⁸

After apartheid, the controversial Truth and Reconciliation Commission found: "With the notable exception of certain individuals, the mainstream newspapers and the SABC failed to report adequately on gross human rights violations. In so doing, they helped sustain and prolong the existence of apartheid."¹⁹

In 1987 Helen Suzman, the virtuoso liberal politician, said in parliament: "The hon. State President can tell us till the cows come home that everything is quiet in the Black townships now. How does anybody in the public know whether that is a true reflection of what is going on throughout the length and breath of South Africa, when the media are not permitted to report unrest related incidents and can only publish the meagre reports which are given to them by the Bureau for

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ De Villiers (ed.), *TRC Report*, vol. 4, p. 189.

Information? Nobody is going to buy that one, I would like to tell the hon. State President.”²⁰

Unfortunately, many people – particularly many white people – did.

Blacks lived in the middle of the violent political conflict. To a great extent if blacks wanted to know what the true state of affairs was, they simply had to look around them. On the one hand, blacks had free access to white views, they simply had to read a white newspaper or tune in to the SABC for that, but unlike whites and in spite of the media regulations, they also knew what was going on in the black communities. Through word of mouth and a vigorous grapevine, blacks knew how serious and dangerous the situation actually was – irrespective of what the sanitised media told them.²¹ In fact, by the latter part of the decade, blacks seemed to prefer word-of-mouth information to the newspapers, as they increasingly started to doubt the press’ ability to accurately inform them.²²

The whites’ situation was totally different. Although obviously a central part of the apartheid-crisis, whites as a whole, lived on the physically and psychologically sheltered periphery of the turmoil and experienced it as something faraway. Collectively seen, very few whites actually experienced the political violence of the 1980s firsthand. As a whole, white suburbia didn’t have access to what was going on in the black communities. Whites were heavily reliant on their Government and, even more so, dependent on the media to know what was going on in their country.

The Government didn’t inform them sufficiently, nor did it allow the media to do so. Whites believed their Government when it said things were under control; they believed the SABC and their press to have given them an honest picture of the situation and so were blissfully unaware of the situation in townships across the country. The result was that white South Africans experienced the 1980s in a fools paradise, as Pottinger noted: “In many ways, then, Botha’s policies of deception merely weakened whites’ ability to understand their society and undercut their ability to plan intelligently for its future.”²³

²⁰ HANSARD. 4 February 1987. Col. 262.

²¹ Pottinger, B., *The imperial presidency: PW Botha the first 10 years*, p. 435.

²² Novicki, M., “Joe Thlobe” in *Africa Report*, November-December 1986, vol. 31, no. 6, p. 65.

²³ Pottinger, p. 435.

APARTHEID UNDER SIEGE

SECTION 3*

APARTHEID, DOLLARS AND DIPLOMATS

1984-1988

DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

* In this section, South Africa's international relations and its economic positioning is discussed chronologically according to year. It illustrates how the same political developments, inside South Africa, effected both the economy and international standing of the country. To orientate the reader and give a general context, so as to avoid the reader from getting confused as the topics intertwine and rotate, there are separate orientational chapters dealing with the economic and diplomatic spheres, from the early 1980s to June 1985. From there on, these two themes intertwine throughout the rest of the section.

CHAPTER 1

ISOLATION & PRESSURE: CONTEXT & ORIENTATION, 1980 TO MID-1985

“Hierdie was die bes geôrkestreerde [aanslag] van die hele internasionale gemeenskap teen Suid-Afrika, want almal het nie dieselfde oogmerke gehad nie,” Gen. Malan explained to the writer, “Die Amerikaners was nie ingestel op ‘n rewolusionêre oorlog nie – maar hulle het wapensanksies teen ons gehad, hulle het ons lenings gevries; sekere mense was nie toegelaat om Amerika toe te gaan nie, ensovoorts, ensovoorts. So kan ek oor die hele spektrum van die Weste gaan. Wat die Ooste betref – hulle was hier gewees, hulle het toegepas wat hulle graag wou toegepas het.”¹

During the Anglo-Boer War, Afrikaners gained some measure of fame in the US and Europe, as fighters of imperialism. Two Boer Generals eventually proved themselves to also have been remarkable diplomats. Even before he became Prime Minister in 1919, Jan Smuts had earned prominence as a diplomat of considerable standing. He was a member of the British War Cabinet and served on the Imperial government in domestic and war matters. From there he went on to play a leading role in the formation of the League of Nations. While Prime Minister, he led South Africa into the Second World War. The other General, Hertzog, gained his own stature through his contributions to the 1926 Balfour Declaration that cleared up South Africa’s constitutional – and those of the other British Dominions.²

Back then South Africa was one of only a few African states that had gained independence. It was also by far the strongest economic force among these. That South Africa was governed by a white minority was of little importance – these were the heydays of Western colonialism. There was nothing new or strange about South Africa’s racial-cum-political setup. Whites ruling blacks was quite *de rigeur* in the colonies. In the League of Nations, the South Africa’s mandate over South

¹ INTERVIEW WITH GEN. MAGNUS MALAN. 12 August 2000: JA STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION.

² Geldenhuys, D., *Isolated states – a comparative analysis*, pp. 111.

West Africa did receive some attention, but by and large the League of Nations was most congenial in its attitude to South Africa.³

The end of the Second World War marked the end of South Africa's outstanding diplomatic position in the world community. The new emphasis on human rights as espoused by the newly created United Nations began to seal South Africa's fate and the apartheid-state was to enjoy its elevated status for much longer.⁴

As human rights became a rallying point for the world and one of the most basic requirements for any country's admittance into the international community, South Africa's take on racial-cum-political issues was slowly but surely becoming dangerously outdated.⁵ During the following decades South Africa became increasingly isolated as its political system became known to the international community.

By 1980 Les de Villiers wrote that: "Apartheid... was the one word which popped into people's minds most frequently when questioned about South Africa. In most countries, the word and the general concept of what it signified made South Africa the most unpopular nation barring one – Idi Amin's Uganda."⁶ Nonetheless, the country's main trading partners – the UK, USA, Japan and the EEC – still had not begun to apply seriously detrimental packages of anti-apartheid sanctions.⁷

Keep your friends close to you and your enemies closer – so the old adage goes – but because of South Africa's pariah status, the Government had to pay particularly close attention to its unstable position in the world. The survival of minority power was at stake. In August 1982 the Government had a confidential list compiled for the Prime Minister. The list ranked and described Pretoria's most prominent enemies, both at home and abroad.⁸

³ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

⁶ Mostert, JPC (ed.), *Die Suid-Afrikaanse Krisis*, p.314.

⁷ Anon, *Reader's Digest library of modern knowledge no 3*, p.1277.

⁸ PW Botha Private Collection at INCH: PV 203: PS 12/6/1:1980-1982: Die totale aanslag teen die RSA.

Those that were situated abroad, included and ranged from the World Council of Churches to the British Council of Churches, the United Nations; the American-based South African Military Refugee Fund, the Committee on South African War Resistance in the Netherlands, the French Campaign Anti-Outspan and a whole variety of other American and European anti-apartheid groups, as well as the American and British embassies in South Africa.⁹

When examining the list of those groupings – internal and external – that the Government perceived as threatening it is understandable that the Government desperately needed to establish some breathing space for itself regarding its relations with the world community. An enlightened political act that would take the world by surprise and silence the Government's foreign critics was needed. At the beginning of the 1980s, South Africa's white minority government was generally pressured by the world community on three basic points:

Pretoria's internal political system, collectively known as apartheid

Pretoria's control of Namibia

Pretoria's maneuvers in Southern Africa (particularly what would eventually become known as 'destabilisation')¹⁰

If Pretoria wanted to impress the international community so that they would give South Africa some breathing space, it would have to implement a dramatic shift in these areas. The Tricameral Parliament, as will be illustrated, was not only an attempt by the Government to address the internal political situation, but also its external positioning. Furthermore, the Government also entered into a non-aggression agreement, known as the Nkomati Accord*, with the Mozambican Government.¹¹

⁹ PW Botha Private Collection at INCH: PV 203: PS 12/6/1:1980-1982: Die totale aanslag teen die RSA.

¹⁰ Mostert, JPC (ed.), *Die Suid-Afrikaanse Krisis – perspektiewe op die grondwetlike bestel*, p. 314.

* See: Oakes, D. (ed.), *South Africa – the real story*, for a basic summary of what the Nkomati Accord entailed.

¹¹ Chan, S., *Exporting apartheid – foreign policies in Southern Africa, 1978-1988*, p.244.

The Government also made positive overtures regarding its involvement with the Angolan-Namibian^{**} situation. During the early days of February 1984, South African and Angolan delegates signed the Lusaka Compromise in Zambia, which called for the withdrawal of forces from certain areas. The US excitedly started to spread the word that this was the first step in the overall removal of Cuban troops from the region – and the granting of Namibian independence.¹²

For the purpose of this study, the focus is of course particularly turned on the Tricameral System.^{***} As already explained in Section 1, the Tricameral Parliament was instituted with great fanfare. It was vital for Pretoria that the world realise how momentous it was. The west met the news of PW's multiracial parliament, and his reformist tendencies, with friendly approval.¹³

For the moment, Pretoria's Tricameral reforms seemed to have paid off. The United States, Western Europe and, even Egypt bestowed qualified praise on Pres. Botha. Although his new parliamentary system did not give representation to blacks, it was a progressive move in the right direction. And if the West had to go on what they had seen so far, it seemed that the Botha Government was serious about rethinking apartheid. South Africa's Western allies – who endured much criticism for not having already implemented more stringent anti-apartheid measures – could now point to Botha's moves with contentment. These were the type of bold signals they needed from Pretoria in order to justify their limited approach to sanctions to their critics.¹⁴

Clearly, white South Africans were starting to be more susceptible to change. Unfortunately, South Africa's newly found diplomatic calm passed quickly, as the shallowness of Botha's reform policies became apparent and eroded the country's improved international image. While the international community was still pondering how fast and far Pres. Botha was prepared to go, the Minister of Community Development, Pen Kotze, reminded Parliament in 1984, that some 7 128

^{**} For a period of three decades, South Africa was involved in military conflict in these regions over its control of Namibia. See: Oakes, D. (ed.) *South Africa – the real story*.

¹² Chan, p. 244.

^{***} Whereby Coloureds and Indians received direct parliamentary representation. See the first section of this study for an outline of what the Tricameral Parliament was and how it came about. Also see: Pottinger, B., *The imperial presidency*.

¹³ Schlemmer, L., "South Africa's split personality" in *Political Monitor Indicator South Africa*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1st 1984, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

coloured and Indian families still had to be moved under the Group Areas Act and also that 1, 750 000 blacks still had to be relocated.¹⁵

While the international community applauded the basic idea of the new parliamentary system, they were expecting true democracy to sprout from this system, rather than just the Tricameral Parliament. If this new system was the first phase in an evolutionary political process that would eventually get blacks into parliament as well – good. The possible pitfalls and inadequacies of the new parliamentary system were not lost on the international community.¹⁶

The influential *Washington Post* wrote that this new system could very easily be discarded as political fraud, but that the White House believed it must be read as a plan to eventually phase in a truly non-racial South African system of government. *The New York Times* openly criticised Pretoria for not allowing black participation in the new parliamentary system and further stated that it ought to be clear now that only more decisive anti-apartheid pressure would bring about real change in South Africa.¹⁷

England's *The Guardian* explained that the new system was cemented with political domination. The West German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* argued that the Tricameral Parliament elevated apartheid from being a political party's policy to being a constitutionally enforced doctrine.¹⁸ The UN wasted no time in condemning the new parliamentary system. During November 1983, the General Assembly stated that the South African referendum had "no validity whatsoever" and that the implementation of the new constitution would "inevitably aggravate tension and conflict in South Africa and in Southern Africa as a whole." Early in 1984, a spokesperson for the African group at the General Assembly commented on Botha's new system: "South Africa had embarked on a gigantic hoax designed to prolong its life and its criminal policies and practices of apartheid."¹⁹ The international community, specifically the USA and Western Europe, were split over the issue and many governments believed that the Botha Government should not be criticised, but be encouraged to further what it had done.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 4.

¹⁶ Mostert, p. 316.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

And after all was said and done, the Lusaka Compromise, the Nkomati Accord and the Tricameral Parliament were, in essence, the type of moves Pretoria's friends in the west needed to justify their lack of action against South Africa by means of harsher economic and diplomatic measures. Indeed, these were the positive signs they were waiting for.

In 1984, PW Botha, after having embarked on a succession of bold political moves, was the man of the hour. Whether Pres. Botha was planning to eventually lead South Africa to one-man-one-vote was still to be seen, but at last a step forward had been taken. Remember, in Afrikaner politics this was really an historic leap, so the general consensus in the west was to give Pres. Botha a chance.²⁰

Therefore, in the early 1980s, the South African Government, through its new reformist policies, had bought itself some breathing space. The opportunity now presented itself for Pres. Botha to travel to Europe in his official capacity, because although the European government's did not abandon their anti-apartheid views, some thought it agreeable to meet with the South African president. The European leaders wanted to be seen to be making a positive contribution to the South African situation.²¹

During May 1984, Pres. Botha traveled to Portugal where he spoke with the Portuguese Prime Minister about the state of the thousands of Portuguese in South Africa.²² In Switzerland he spoke to bankers on South Africa's economic position.²³ Pres. Botha traveled to England and spoke with the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, about his reforms, the new parliamentary system, South Africa's isolation, sanctions and other apartheid issues.²⁴

"I did not particularly warm to President Botha..." Margaret Thatcher wrote in her memoirs, "but to do him justice he listened carefully to what I said." According to Thatcher, the most important

²⁰ Schrire, R., "Botha in Europe - and interim appraisal" in *Leadership SA*, 2nd quarter, vol. 3, no. 2, 1984, p. 82.

²¹ *Ibid* p. 83.

²² Meiring, P., *Waagmoed beloon*, p.44.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 45.

²⁴ Prinsloo, *Stem in die Wilderness*, p. 154.

result of their controversial meeting was that it opened up a conduit for her to communicate with the South African President via private messages.²⁵ Thatcher felt that the best way to approach Pretoria was not to pressurize President Botha or further isolate his country. Instead, she reasoned that keeping British/South Africa channels open could have a moderating effect on the white minority Government. "As I told the Cabinet afterwards," Thatcher explained her approach with Botha, "it must be right to expose as him as much as possible to our views. The arguments in favour of dialogue with the Soviet Union applied with at least as much force to the need to maintain contacts of this kind with South Africa."²⁶ Pres. Botha also traveled to West Germany where he spoke with Chancellor Helmut Kohl about southern Africa and apartheid.²⁷ The President concluded his trip in Rome where he met with the Pope and explained his policies and discussed apartheid.²⁸

Commentators agreed that the overseas excursion and the fact that European leaders agreed to officially meet with him was a personal success for Pres. Botha. But if the Government wanted to build on this, it needed to move faster and further with its reforms.²⁹

By meeting with the leader of the apartheid regime, the European leaders automatically and implicitly gave him a certain measure of respectability – what Botha was going to do with it now depended on him. The ball was in the Government's court. It seems fair to argue that the European trip served as a message to the South African Government. If it boldly continued upon the road of reformist change, with the ultimate goal being a non-racial democratic South Africa, then the West would back it all the way. But Botha had to set the pace, it was Botha who had to be bold not the west. It was up to his government to take the initiative. Through the promise of bold reforms yet to come, Botha bought his white minority some diplomatic time and conditional access to the European seats of power. But, in this process the South Africans had also raised expectations and if Pretoria could not or would not deliver the political goods, severe consequences would follow.³⁰

²⁵ Thatcher, M., *The Downing Street years*, p. 515.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Meiring, p. 52.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 53.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 56.

³⁰ Shire, p.87.

Prof. Robert Shrire, then Head of the University of Cape Town's Department of Political Studies, wrote in a 1984 assessment of Botha's European trip: "If the opportunities are grasped, the Prime Minister's European visit will be seen as having constituted an important signpost along the road. If however, Botha seeks to maintain the regional and internal status quo, then yet another opportunity will have been lost."³¹ The door to the West was now opened, albeit only slightly, but the Government's internal actions would determine whether it stayed that way or not.

PW Botha himself rightly cautioned his followers not to get carried away. He knew that the Europeans and the world at large, would never be content until his country had a black president, and of course that was not his goal.³² When questioned about the success of his tour abroad, Botha said, "Moenie dat ons onself 'n rat voor die oë draai nie ... Dis my oortuiging dat jy die huidige wêreldmening nooit heeltemal sal bevredig terwyl blankes die bewind voer nie. Mense oorsee wil eenvoudig geen blanke party in Suid-Afrika aan bewind hê nie. Hulle sal nie aarsel om ons op te offer nie."³³

While Europe was cautiously assessing the South African Government's new policies, the United States, governed by the conservative Ronald Reagan, was unveiling a new policy towards South Africa. "Strategically, this is one of the most vital regions in the world. Around the Cape of Good Hope passes the oil of the Persian Gulf... Southern Africa and South Africa are repositories of the many vital minerals... for which the West has no other secure source ... If this rising hostility in Southern Africa between Pretoria and the frontline states explodes, the Soviet Union will be the main beneficiary and the critical ocean corridor around South Africa and the strategic minerals of the region would be at risk," is how American president Ronald Reagan explained his administration's view of the apartheid-state and why his Constructive Engagement should be upheld. To his fiery critics in Congress the conservative Republican spoke of South Africa as "a country that is strategically essential to the free world."³⁴

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Meiring, p. 29.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Fenwick, J & Rosenheim, C., *South Africa: From settlement to self-determination*, p. 141; De Villiers, D & De Villiers, J. *PW*, p. 347.

Ronald Reagan, dubbed 'the great communicator' by his fans, was a conservative Republican and resolutely anti-communist, he even went so far as to refer to the USSR as the "evil empire".

Reagan's image exemplified family values and was that of an amiable *father of the nation*, albeit a conservative patriarch. Steadily, the new Republican president created something of a conservative gyration in America.³⁵ How this translated to Pretoria's position could be captured in two words – breathing space.

Constructive Engagement was the creation of an American diplomat and political scientist – Chester Crocker. After Reagan won the presidential election, Crocker was appointed as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Crocker argued that Southern Africa had an important strategic location in the Cold War context and that thus far the US had neglected to cement its influence in the region. Crocker's answer to this state of affairs was the policy of Constructive Engagement, which he believed could advance American interests throughout the region.³⁶

Crocker called his policy of constructive engagement "a forceful assertion of leadership in support of American values and interests." In 1981 he conceptualized constructive engagement by saying that America "cannot and will not be forced to align ourselves with one side or another in these disputes. Our task ... is to maintain communication with all parties ... Neither will we align ourselves with apartheid policies that are abhorrent to our own multiracial democracy."³⁷

With regards to Pretoria, the policy worked on a gentle stick-and-carrot premise: Reagan would not economically isolate or diplomatically harass South Africa – if Pretoria diligently started off on a sustained program of reforms to ultimately end apartheid and give Namibia its independence. As the quaint sounding title of this diplomatic policy indicated the process of change it envisaged was to be evolutionary. The White House would help this process through so-called quiet diplomacy while periodically damning apartheid in public.³⁸

³⁵ Noonan, P, "Ronald Reagan" in *Time*, 13 April 1998, p.101.

³⁶ Leach, *South Africa*, p. 234.

³⁷ Crocker, C., *High Noon in Southern Africa*, p.79.

³⁸ Thomson, A. "Incomplete engagement – Reagan's South African policy revisited" in *The Journal of African studies*, vol. 33, no. 1, March 1995, p. 86.

Although the Reagan administration was openly adverse to apartheid and all it stood for, Botha's staunch anti-communist rhetoric appealed to the Republican White House. In his correspondence with Botha, Pres. 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."³⁹

When PW Botha was asked to comment on constructive engagement, he said: "We are always prepared to listen to good advice, but we are not prepared to allow any country to dictate to us how we should run our own affairs."⁴⁰ Apparently, Botha did not have too much to worry about, as constructive engagement translated into some peace of mind for the Nationalists, because the Reagan White House's policy was not going to try and force Botha's reformist hand.⁴¹

The Reagan administration, through its policy of constructive engagement, was also not going to prescribe a time schedule for Pretoria – nor was the US going to force Botha into delivering a declaration of intent. According to Chester Crocker, America didn't think it was effective diplomacy to give deadlines and threats to foreign sovereign governments. America's reaching out to the Nationalists did not end there either. The Republican White House somewhat diluted the more strenuous anti-apartheid legislation already in place and even persuaded the International Monetary Fund to help the country.⁴²

Initially, the Reagan government was tremendously popular, especially compared to his Democratic predecessor, Jimmy Carter, and in the beginning of Reagan's first term there were much more pressing issues in the White House than South Africa. Reagan scored so many points with his management of America's internal questions that his political opponents had to look somewhere else in his political armour for his Achilles' heel. As far as Reagan's foreign affairs programs were concerned, apartheid became a handy tool to pressure the Reagan administration with.⁴³ Many American critics viewed the White House's constructive engagement policy as an outrage, on the one hand Reagan called the Russian communists the 'evil empire', but what about

³⁹ De Villiers, & De Villiers, p. 334.

⁴⁰ Murray, H., "Interview: PW Botha" in *Leadership SA*, Spring 1983, vol. 2, no. 3, p.12.

⁴¹ Thomson, p.97.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Kapp, P. & Olivier, G. (eds.), *United States-South African relations – past present and future*, p. 115.

the racist white minority government? Why did he not also attack the minority Government with the same zeal? Was that not a foreign policy double standard? Many critics and commentators in America thought the Republican White House was deliberately pussyfooting about with constructive engagement to protect white power in South Africa. And so, throughout his two terms as President, Reagan's policy on South Africa was used to try and poke holes in his administration.⁴⁴

South Africa, like almost any other country in the world, was economically dependant on American dollars. By the early 1980s, America was one of South Africa's most important trading partners – again emphasising the importance that constructive engagement held for Pretoria.⁴⁵

In February 1984, George Shultz, Reagan's secretary of state, commented on developments in South Africa and said that although these were moves in the right direction, it was not enough to solve the country's crises. According to him, these political changes were "unilateral moves" and negotiations were necessary. He said that although the USA did not have all the answers for South Africa's problems, change was of paramount importance and the White House would give help to whoever aspired for peaceful change.⁴⁶

Shultz explained that to try and destroy apartheid by strong arming Pretoria by means of measures such as disinvestment, would only prove to be detrimental to the positive changes that had already taken place.⁴⁷ "Those who advocate disinvestment and economic sanctions would pull the rug out from those South Africans who have taken the first concrete steps towards a more equal and equitable society," said Shultz.⁴⁸

In the same year (1984) that the world leaders discreetly applauded Botha's bold progressive steps, and America was implementing its new moderate approach to South Africa – those very same steps sparked greater and more violent protest than anything that had preceded them. The violence

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Cooper, C. (et al) "International relations" in *South African Institute for Race Relations Survey 1984*, Johannesburg, 1985, p. 859.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

and the South African Government's handling thereof, shocked the world. The result was that Pretoria was hit with an unprecedented wave of worldwide anti-apartheid pressure – the intensity of which would surprise even the Total Onslaught-minded* Botha government. As will be shown, as the townships started to burn, PW Botha and his Government's diplomatic credibility went up in flames with them.

In February 1984, it was reported that Ghana had emerged as a prominent lobbyist for unified military action against Pretoria.⁴⁹ The country's youth brigade was apparently trying to put together an "interim volunteer African force" to eventually go and do battle in South Africa. At the same time an ever-growing number of skilled Ghanaian workers were traveling to the apartheid state to go and work in the Transkei.⁵⁰ The Ghanaians weren't the only ones wanting to fight the South Africans. In East Germany, Gerd Koenig, foreign affairs minister responsible for Africa, said that his country was preparing to "intervene to make the South African white regime disappear and that unconditional support was given to the African National Congress..."⁵¹

Neil Kinnock, Thatcher's Labour Party opponent, said in March 1984, that were his party to come to power in England, his government would strengthen ties with the ANC and give financial and material support to southern African liberation movements. He also called for the immediate end to all British economic and military collaboration with Pretoria.⁵²

During March 1984, Kurt von Schirnding, Pretoria's ambassador to the UN, reported that the reaction to Botha's southern African initiatives were generally positive. Nonetheless, in that year the UN drew up a list of 260 South African individuals who the organisation had identified as being guilty of – 'the crime of apartheid.' People such as former Minister of Justice and Prisons, Jimmy Kruger and security police chief, Maj-Gen. Frans Steenkamp appeared on the list. The 260 people could be prosecuted for this UN designated crime if they ever set foot in those countries that had signed the international convention on the oppression of apartheid.⁵³ During the same

* The first section of this study deals with the Total Onslaught/Total Strategy.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 858.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 865.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 868.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 821.

month the Australian government refused two South African MPs entrance into their country on the grounds that the two politicians were planning to conduct a series of seminars organised by the South African embassy, during which, according to the Australians, they were going to promote Nationalist policies.⁵⁴

Jaime Gama, the Portuguese minister of Foreign Affairs, visited South Africa in May 1984. During his visit he emphasised that his country could not ignore the South African situation because of the roughly 700 000 Portuguese nationals living in the country.⁵⁵

In spite of his public confidence in his State Department's constructive engagement program, it seemed as though Pres. Reagan had some doubts. During the middle of the year, before the violence in South Africa had even really been given its full impetus, Pres. Reagan wrote a tactful letter to his Nationalist counterpart in Pretoria.⁵⁶ In the letter Reagan beseeched Botha to remember that when he acted to suppress the violent dissent, the very real possibility existed that the moderate American policy towards South Africa could be seriously compromised by negative reactions – in the US Congress and amongst the American public – to Botha's handling of the violence. In other words, Reagan was telling Pres. Botha that the continuation of moderate American policies towards South Africa were greatly determined by the Botha Government's handling of the violence.⁵⁷ In June, David Lange, leader of New Zealand's Labour Party was criticised for saying that playing rugby with South Africans was "like having a beer with the man who raped your sister".⁵⁸

In the same month, the influential African-American politician and candidate for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, the Rev Jesse Jackson told a UN anti-apartheid conference that because the USA and Israel had been supplying Pretoria with nuclear technology – Pretoria now

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 863.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 867.

⁵⁶ Prinsloo, p. 320.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.320.

⁵⁸ Cooper(et al), p. 864.

threatened the sovereignty of every country in Africa.⁵⁹ Also speaking at the conference, Senator Edward Kennedy called for tighter export controls with regards to US-RSA trading.⁶⁰

On September 26th 1984, Pres. Reagan addressed the UN, and brought up the South African-issue. He told his international audience that it was morally crucial that the apartheid state's "racial policies evolved peacefully but decisively towards a system compatible with the norms of justice, liberty and human dignity."⁶¹ As already pointed out, not all the politicians in the American senate approved of Reagan's carrot and stick approach to South Africa – these even included high ranking members of his own Republican Party.⁶² This divide among Reaganites about America's stance on apartheid was underlined at the end of 1984, when 35 Republicans in the House of Representatives issued a direct challenge to Pretoria – either Botha sped up reform or faced sanctions. Senator Richard Lugar, chairperson of the Senate foreign relations committee, criticised constructive engagement.⁶³

In the same month, September 1984, Bishop Desmond Tutu who had won the Nobel Peace Prize earlier that year, met with Pres. Reagan and told him how things in South Africa had worsened. Reagan did not agree and added that his administration had made "solid progress" in its constructive engagement drive to end apartheid.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, Reagan seriously expressed distress at apartheid and Pretoria's continuation of forced removals. Speaking at a function marking the 36th anniversary of the adoption of the universal declaration of human rights, the American president came out strongly in condemnation of apartheid in an attempt to quell his local critics and convince them that he and his administration were not soft on South African racism.⁶⁵

As political violence erupted in South Africa during 1984, the fight against apartheid became an exceedingly prominent issue in domestic American politics. Among American Civil Rights groups, the anti-apartheid struggle roused feelings and memories of their own struggle for liberty, which

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.860.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.861.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

they had fought in the not too distant past. And so, during 1984, the apartheid issue truly became an American issue.⁶⁶

If a point of departure had to be singled out where the American anti-apartheid groundswell really started, it would probably be the sit-ins. During 1984, members of Randall Robson's TransAfrica group organised a protest sit-in in front of South Africa's Washington embassy. After that, daily anti-apartheid protests were held at all South Africa's embassies in America. The demonstrations continued undeterred for fifty three consecutive weeks, revitalising the anti-apartheid struggle throughout the US. The protestors included Congressmen, mayors, activists and various celebrities.⁶⁷

One of these high profile protestors was Eleanor Holmes Norton – the first female to chair the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Professor of Law.⁶⁸ Asked why she took part, she basically summarised why the apartheid issue had become such a hot and emotional political issue in America: "Struggle does not begin or end at the borders of the United States. To be sure, I have some level of identification with the people who are oppressed in South Africa. There is a kind of logical extension of the civil rights struggle... Our freedom is precious and important, but in the end what it gives our movement its majesty is the example it set throughout the world for people of colour and for people who in any way were oppressed and found in that example a reason to hope and strive for a different life."⁶⁹

Since the world media had descended upon South Africa, the American anti-apartheid movement, whose ranks included various celebrities, also gained media prominence. From this period onwards, South Africa's apartheid had become a domestic American issue.

Along with the attention grabbing success of the protests, anti-apartheid sanctions and disinvestment campaigns became points of serious debate waged simultaneously on national, state

⁶⁶ Hampton, H. & Fayer, S., *Voices of Freedom*, p.662.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

and local levels across the USA.⁷⁰ Various types of governmental bodies debated on economic anti-apartheid measures. Boston, Newark and New York's largest pension fund decided to divest the pension funds of South African associated securities. The mayor of Boston, Raymond Flynn, called upon 100 mayors across America to follow his city's example and also divest. In response, the US conference of mayors agreed to investigate methods cities could use to draw up their own divestment policies.⁷¹

It was estimated that in August, some 53 of Britain's local authorities, including those of such major cities as Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and Dundee had all decided not to buy any products from South Africa anymore.⁷²

A seemingly strange situation revealed itself in relations with Japan, when it was reported that from March to September 1984 Japan had bought nearly a ton of South African blood plasma at \$1,5 million. A spokesperson of the Socialist Party in Japan said that to buy blood from the apartheid state "violated every moral law." The blood was, allegedly, extracted from African mineworkers who did not receive any compensation and who were forced to donate their blood.⁷³

During the last quarter of 1984, Malcolm Rifkind, Margaret Thatcher's Minister of State at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office was interviewed on his views regarding Britain's stance towards South Africa. He said that his government was well aware of the historic implications of the introduction of the new Tricameral system; of how coloureds and Indians had been included in South Africa's political structures for the first time. He also remarked that the mere fact that whites now sat next to Asians and coloureds in parliament would automatically have a progressive impact on South Africa's white population.⁷⁴

Having said that, the British diplomat made skeptic remarks pertaining to the possible reasons the Nationalists might have had for introducing reform, saying that if Botha's critics were correct and his reforms were indeed only constitutional window dressing, they would not stand the test of time.

⁷⁰ Cooper, (et al), p. 862.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* pp. 862-863.

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 872.

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 873.

⁷⁴ Murray, H., "Interview: Malcolm Rifkind," in *Leadership SA*, 4th Quarter, vol. 3, no. 4, 1984, pp.10.

“We hope that the changes taking place will not be presented as a final solution,” Rifkind said, “If they are presented in that fashion they are frankly not credible. If they are the first steps of much more substantial reform, in particular reform that will offer power sharing to the whole South African adult public, that will certainly be a significant step forward.”⁷⁵

Rifkind stressed that his government did not have a blueprint that Pretoria could follow for democratising the country, but stressed the obvious. “Any political system that does not meet the aspirations of the black majority,” he emphasised, “cannot provide the degree of stability and harmony for which all South Africans must yearn.”⁷⁶

Rifkind also expressed the same reservations when it came to Pres. Botha’s diplomatic initiatives with Mozambique. Implying that if Pretoria was upholding the Nkomati Accord, simply to buy diplomatic breathing space and even to try and break out of its isolation instead of being serious about the implications of these diplomatic maneuverings and the accompanying expectations, it could lead to some serious problems.⁷⁷

“The sense of disillusion and frustration would be highly damaging,” said Rifkind. Asked to comment on the premiership of PW Botha, the overriding issue of reform again quickly emerged. “One has seen over the last few years of his premiership there have been a number of important changes made to the South African constitution... What one always wonders is whether reforms that are being perceived by the white community as being major... may not sometimes be perceived with equal sincerity by the black community as of being relatively trivial compared to the political questions that have yet to be resolved.”⁷⁸

Staying with UK-RSA relations, during the second half of 1984, David Willers, Director of the South African Foundation, based in London, gave an overview of relations between the two countries.⁷⁹ He wrote of how during this period, largely due to the media and political violence, the

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Willers, D., “Shadow Dancing” in *Leadership SA*, fourth quarter, vol. 3, no 4, p. 18.

English appeared to have had a “strange preoccupation” with, as well as a “perverse attraction” to South African affairs. “South Africa is ‘unfinished business’ as far as Britain is concerned, not only a troubling focus of instability that threatens British regional interests and even the conduct of great power politics, but also a source of moral disquiet, a country capable of behaviour not expected,” wrote Willers, “from a distant cousin professing to share Western Values.”⁸⁰

Furthermore, Pretoria was quite correct in feeling diplomatically quarantined. According to Willers, there was a paranoia that South Africa’s race crises would “somehow prove infectious and contaminate race relations in Britain itself...” He also wrote that there was certainly a severe judgmental outlook of guilt-by-association when it came to how white South Africans were perceived in England; the mere fact that a white person was from South Africa apparently automatically implied that the person also supported and condoned the apartheid system.⁸¹

But, wrote Willers, this apparent stereotyping cut both ways: “This incongruity of perception finds its most perfect expression in the bellicose postures sometimes struck up by some South African politicians and writers on the one hand towards Britain, and a certain kind of holier-than-thou high-handedness by certain British politicians towards South Africa...” Singling out certain Afrikaans pressmen for inciting the stereotyping of the British, he noted that they “feel that Britain has become a toothless old tiger...” while some Englishmen on the other hand simply ignore the “sovereign identity” of the Afrikaner people.⁸²

It is noteworthy that Willers also pointed out how the Brits saw the South African sociopolitical emergency – through a narrow-minded, one-dimensional, black-versus-white lens. Willers then speculated how this downplaying of the Afrikaners’ intricate importance in their own country was surely one of the main reasons for their embittered and antagonistic stance towards the British.⁸³

The idea of Britain as a distant amiable political patriarch of South Africa – based on the two countries’ shared kith-and-kin values and political norms – was steadily being eroded. “The

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

adoption of a tone of advice towards South Africa by Britain,” Willers explained, “while generally promoting isolation at every level except that likely to disadvantage the trade connection, has eroded the historic ‘special relationship’ between the two countries and irritated Pretoria.”⁸⁴

Willers also wrote of the “appalling press” coverage South Africa had received in Britain because of the violent political conflict and as far as the broader English public was concerned, Pres. Botha’s entire reform program was seriously at risk of losing its credibility. Nonetheless, he noted that the experienced diplomats in the foreign service appreciated what Pres. Botha was trying to do, “but the opposition parties and large numbers of the British voters do not share this view. To them it appears to be the beginning of the volcano”.⁸⁵ Furthermore, in some quarters of Thatcher’s Conservative Party, there were those who started to seriously doubt the Prime Minister’s stance on South Africa. Willers quoted Francis Pym, once a British Foreign Secretary of State who had remained influential after retiring and who wrote on the South African situation in somewhat brusque terms. “The experience of history is that undemocratic governments... are eventually overthrown, and that this process is not inhibited by the fact that those who were previously oppressed seldom become less oppressed in consequence,” wrote Pym, “In that event I will shed no tears for the leaders of South Africa, but we may all need to fear for her people and the global effects of such upheaval.”⁸⁶ It is only logical that this cannot be understood as a reflection of all Britons, yet it is insightful to note that these views belonged to a growing portion of the British.

On September 7th 1984, the Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court ordered the release of 7 UDF members, who had been held by the police, on the eve of the Indian and Coloured Tricameral elections, in an attempt to stem the mass organisation from organising a boycott of the elections. They were duly released. Louis le Grange ordered that they be re-detained immediately, but the police were not quick enough.⁸⁷ On September 13th, 5 of those who avoided the police sought refuge, at the British consulate in Durban. The consequences were very serious. Quite literally, the moment these men set foot inside the consulate they started a diplomatic crisis.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p.20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.26.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p.28.

⁸⁷ Oakes, D, (ed), *Reader's Digest South Africa the real story*, p. 478.

* The six men were: Archie Gumede, Mewa Ramgobin, George Sewpersadh, MJ Naidoo, Billy Nair and Paul David

It was no coincidence that this group fled to the British consulate. They wanted to put the seemingly pro-Pretoria Conservative Government of Thatcher under pressure.⁸⁹ The English made clear that the fugitives were uninvited and unwelcome, the last thing the British wanted was to set a precedent with the result that anyone fleeing from a government would simply step into the nearest British consulate. However, with all the media attention that was focused on the incident, they could not evict them either. With the consulate being protected by diplomatic immunity, the security forces could not burst into the consulate and remove them.⁹⁰

The British, not wanting the uninvited *refugees* to settle in permanently, refused to let them have contact with the media, although they did give interviews through two-way radios and by shouting from windows at journalists down below.⁹¹ The British also did not make sleeping arrangements, they were assigned to a room and kept there; the group had to sleep on the bare floor without pillows or mattresses. Once a day for half an hour they were escorted to a bathroom and otherwise had to make do with a chemical toilet in their room. At all costs the English had to get this group to leave of their own accord.⁹²

They held conversations with them and tried to scare them out of the building. Apparently, one security guard even threatened to throw them out of the window if they did not leave on their own accord. But the *refugees* refused to move.⁹³

Tensions remained high and nothing changed until December 10th 1984, when Pretoria withdrew its preventative detention notices, some were to be detained but were guaranteed that they would have a fair trial. Six thousands people gathered outside the consulate to cheer the last of the activists to leave the consulate. The whole affair brought these activists, the UDF and their campaign international recognition. Following the episode, members of the group even succeeded

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 479.

⁸⁹ Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 117.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

in meeting with the General Secretary of the United Nations. As well as reminding the Tories of exactly how precarious South African politics were – and how tricky their own position was.⁹⁴

During September 1984, ten ministers of the European Economic Community condemned the “negative developments” which had evolved in South Africa, when compared to the more positive regional initiatives.⁹⁵ During October 1984, Oxford University decided to withdraw their R100 000 000 indirect investment from South African businesses, as well as to prohibit any possible future investment.⁹⁶

By October 1984, with the violence still flaring up, some of South Africa’s British trade partners were getting very concerned. One local exporter said that three of his English customers were canceling their orders because they were too embarrassed to market South African products. Other South African businesses complained that Pretoria had not given enough consideration to the adverse effects their political moves would have on the economy and the business community.⁹⁷

Yet another occasion with far-reaching consequences for the position of the Nationalist government was Bishop Desmond Tutu’s Nobel Peace Prize, awarded in December 1984. Overnight, the South African clergyman became an international celebrity. Unfortunately for the white government Tutu used his newly found worldwide stage to boost the anti-apartheid movement and much of the world listened to the black Bishop. In his acceptance speech, Tutu likened the homelands to Hitler’s *final solution*.⁹⁸

He said that these “bantustans” were “apartheid’s ideological racist dream” and were nothing more than “dumping grounds” for black people to go and starve to death: “This happens to them not accidentally, but by deliberate government policy.”⁹⁹ “Unrest is endemic and will remain an unchanging feature of the South African scene until apartheid, the root cause of it all, is finally

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Cooper, (et al), p. 821.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 200.

⁹⁸ Allen, J. (ed.), *Archbishop Desmond Tutu: the rainbow people of God – South Africa’s victory over apartheid* p. 86.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

dismantled,” Tutu told his international audience, “At this time the army is being quartered on the civilian population. There is a civil war being waged.”¹⁰⁰

From 1985, onwards apartheid became *the* international topic; *the* internationally fashionable cause to debate – and this was but the beginning. Read in context of apartheid history, 1985 can be viewed as an omen of what was to come. The end of white minority rule was not nearly or clearly in sight, but from 1985 onwards it became more and more apparent that there was going to be an end, irrespective of whether it would be violent or negotiated.

In a world with an insatiable hunger for news and an international media with a craving for headlines, from 1985 onwards, the worldwide anti-apartheid campaign gained unprecedented impetus and an altogether renewed intensity.

There were two basic reasons. On the one hand there was the South African Defence Force’s (SADF) cross-border blitzkriegs, which were an attempt at purging its neighbours of ANC bases and to discourage other African countries from aiding and abetting the organisation. The Nationalist Government said that they would fight terrorists wherever they were, while the world denounced Pretoria’s brand of offensive military diplomacy as *destabilisation*.¹⁰¹

The indirect and longer term effect of this heavy handed approach was two-pronged: Pretoria’s neighbours did evict the ANC, but that resulted in the ANC focusing its energies more intensely on the diplomatic and economic fronts where it stood a much better chance of battling or at least demoralising the South African white minority.¹⁰² In other words, these attacks eventually contributed to the ANC’s change of focus from the battlefield to the boardroom. It then focused more intensely on lobbying as a means to isolate and pressure the white minority Government.¹⁰³

From 1985 onwards, while the ANC’s diplomats toured the globe lobbying for increased anti-apartheid pressure, their internal branch kept frustrating the Government’s plans to maintain the

¹⁰⁰ Allen, J. (ed.), p. 90.

¹⁰¹ Alden, C., *Apartheid’s last stand*, p. 117.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

status quo. The security forces and black masses clashed throughout South Africa. As the violence refused to die down, instead escalating, the international community, shocked by what they saw and read about the turmoil, focussed more intently on the country.

1985 also marked a turning point, or at least the beginning of a watershed, with regards to USA-RSA relations. 1985 marked the end of Ronald Reagan's first five years in office. During his first term, relations between the two countries had improved because of a relatively progressive reformist orientated Nationalist government in Pretoria and a conservative Republican administration in Washington.¹⁰⁴

The conservative Americans did not condone any aspect of apartheid, but they did have a measure of sympathetic patience with Pretoria whose country they believed was undergoing intricate constructive changes. Therefore the American foreign policy towards apartheid South Africa, entitled constructive engagement, was promoted as a diplomatic program whereby relations with Pretoria would be kept up while the Nationalists and White House demonstrated how Pretoria was boldly reforming apartheid into non-existence.¹⁰⁵

During Reagan's second term [1985-1989] constructive engagement would eventually collapse, as international anti-apartheid pressure reached new levels of intensity. Nonetheless, although American confidence in constructive engagement had dwindled, Reagan's men endeavored to preempt the imposition of severe American sanctions against South Africa by imposing watered down versions of thereof themselves.¹⁰⁶

An American ambassador to South Africa during this period, Herman Nickle, explained that the failure of constructive engagement and the imposition of American sanctions were results of America's internal political workings. With Reagan having won his second presidential election, the defeated Democratic Party needed a cause that would act as a unifying political umbrella under which it could regroup and make a stand against the Reagan.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Venter, DJ, *South Africa, sanctions and the multinationals*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 31.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Reagan's handling of apartheid, served the Democrat's cause. There were no pro-South Africa lobbies in Washington and so the apartheid issue became something to be easily exploited by political groupings for their own gain. The anti-apartheid inclined Democratic Party could be seen as the moral champions, while the Republicans lagged behind with their unsuccessful constructive engagement. To counter the Democrats' anti-apartheid verve, the Reagan-administration had to also be seen as being anti-apartheid.¹⁰⁸

At the start of 1985, Pres. Reagan sent PW Botha a summary of his South African policy as well as a list of what he expected from Botha's side in the near future:

- Reagan firstly restated his committed engagement with regards to South Africa
- Secondly, he noted that the American debate on apartheid did have a degree of "internal and partisan" reasons behind it, but that Pres. Botha should not mistake the seriousness of the whole affair, as the debate also did "reflect genuine public feelings about sensitive issues deeply embedded in the political fabric of American society".¹⁰⁹
- Thirdly, he told Pres. Botha that he foresaw that the Congress was going to try and bring about much more severe anti-apartheid legislation but that he would again "work as we did last year, to defeat initiatives contrary to United States interests."¹¹⁰

In answering Reagan's letter on January 25th 1985 Botha, reiterated his Total Onslaught-views by explaining how his country was unique and what they did here should not be judged according to the standards of Americans or Europeans.¹¹¹ As for the violence, Botha said he realised full well the frustrations of the black communities but that he would do whatever it took to move in and remove those troublemakers whom his people assured him was the cause of the upheavals. And of course he also again committed himself to finding peaceful solutions to southern Africa's problems.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Prinsloo, p. 320.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Early in 1985, amidst a media furor, Democrat Senator Edward Kennedy, visited South Africa for some ten days at the invitation of UDF leader Allan Boesak and Bishop Tutu, who at the time had become something of a celebrity in America. During his short visit he met with a large variety of South Africans. In an article entitled *A Call For Justice* he wrote of his experiences in the apartheid state.¹¹³

Kennedy wrote of how many, if not most, white South Africans really had no idea what was going on in their own country. “Because of the fears and insecurities that afflict white South African society, millions of young whites will be forced to live out their lives in an unreal, unnatural garrison-state existence.”¹¹⁴ On how Botha’s reformist new deal effected black South Africans, he wrote that for the majority the situation had either “remained unchanged and in many ways the situation has worsened,” arguing that at the end of the day, black South Africans were still obstructed from having any real say in economic, political and social affairs of the country.¹¹⁵

“Colour is the single most powerful organising principle in their lives. Where they live, where and how they travel, whom they see, how they are educated, what they do for a living, how much money they earn, what property they own, what they read or hear or see, what kind of medical care is available, where they worship, what they can hope to achieve for themselves and for the members of their families – all of these fundamental issues in the life of any human being are sharply circumscribed and carefully controlled by the system of apartheid,” he wrote.¹¹⁶

The Democratic politician then went on to criticise the Botha government’s reformist moves and per implication also Reagan’s constructive engagement by writing: “Racism is the overwhelming fact of life for a black person in South Africa today. In this fundamental respect, there has been no change and certainly no improvement in the lives of most black South Africans over the past 40 years.”¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Kennedy, E., “A call for justice” in *Africa Report*, May-June 1985, vol. 30, no3, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Kennedy's commentary continued even further in the opposite direction of the Reaganites who were so confident that constructive engagement was getting results. Kennedy explained that not only was apartheid far from being dismantled, it was actually growing uglier. "In fact, the structures of apartheid have increased in recent years," wrote Kennedy, "The policies and institutions of apartheid have become more sophisticated and more entrenched... Politically, apartheid is no part of the constitutional structure of the South African state."¹¹⁸

Senator Kennedy concurred that some blacks' living conditions had gotten a bit better due to reform, but he then argued that these reforms had conditions and qualifications attached which still kept apartheid's head high. And so in the end: "In contrast to the comfortable lives of whites in South Africa, blacks live in squalor." As for any softening up of whites' racial attitudes, he found: "Ironically, the apparent willingness of white South Africans to accept reform in areas is accompanied by a continued, if not hardened, resistance to change in the most important area for all black South Africans – political rights."¹¹⁹

As for America's constructive engagement outlook, Kennedy attacked it with some grave findings: "One of the saddest discoveries of my trip was to learn of the low standing of the US amongst most politically aware blacks in South Africa... the US is now widely perceived among South African blacks as a collaborator in their oppression, an apologist for the racist minority regime and the only friend that the apartheid government has in the world community."¹²⁰

Concluding his findings, Senator Kennedy wrote that the White House should immediately cease its current form of moderate anti-apartheid resistance. Furthermore it should stop trying to be seen as everyone in South Africa's impartial friend and rather get explicitly and forcefully behind the drive to destroy apartheid.¹²¹ He said that it was in America's interest to throw its muscle behind the anti-apartheid drive, when considering its relations with the other African countries and South Africa's black majority.¹²²

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.12.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.* p.13

¹²² *Ibid.*

A clear cut, no-nonsense anti-apartheid policy would, according to the Senator, be in sync with feelings back home: “Active opposition is also consistent with the most profound feelings of the American people that apartheid is immoral and that racism must be ended wherever it exists.” He felt that the White House should not only make anti-apartheid statements but should also “take concrete steps to distance our country, politically and economically, from the apartheid system.”¹²³

He argued strongly against the premise that sanctions were wrong, because economic advancement in South Africa would lead to political breakthroughs. The idea that a better South African economy would evolve into political change was nonsense according to him.¹²⁴

An interesting point made by Kennedy, and echoed by other commentators, like Patti Waldmeir, was Pretoria’s apparent attitude of defiance and ignorance as to what Americans thought of them. Although Pres. Botha and many of his high ranking officials, said again-and-again that they were indifferent to what the west, and particularly America, thought about them, there was certainly a deeper craving for acceptance by just those forces – particularly America.¹²⁵

“White South Africans,” Kennedy remarked, “want Americans to accept and respect them. They believe that they share our values and our ideals, and that they want to be recognised as defenders of Western civilization and members of the Western community of nations... But as long as South Africa persists in its policy of apartheid, its racist regime will continue to be a pariah in the Western community.”¹²⁶

Kennedy then went on to explain how he and Senator Lowell Weicker would have introduced the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985. If successfully implemented it would:

- Prohibit Americans from extending credit to Pretoria, including any governmental body
- Prohibit the sale of American computers to Pretoria, “... thereby eliminating the complicity of US industry in the administration and enforcement of the apartheid laws”

¹²³ *Ibid*

¹²⁴ *Ibid*

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

¹²⁶ *Ibid*

- Prohibit any new investment/bank loans to any South African group, "... thereby terminating additional contributions to the economic structure of apartheid "
- Ban the importation of Krugerrands¹²⁷

The Botha Government could prevent it, if it satisfied the following basic requirements:

- Release all political prisoners
- End all forced removals
- End the denationalisation of blacks
- Negotiate with the authentic black leaders of South Africa¹²⁸

Not long after Kennedy left South Africa, in March 1985, the police opened fire on marches at Langa, near Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape.

As explained in the first section, this led to a renewed explosion of media attention explicitly focussed on the apartheid state with, of course, an accompanying worldwide outcry condemning the Botha Government. In America, the Senate demanded that the Reagan White House compile a report on the Uitenhage shootings.¹²⁹ The Democrat Senate, also unanimously decided that more intensive pressure had to be aimed at the South African government. The Democrats also said that because of constructive engagement, the USA was being regarded as an ally of apartheid. The Democrats also argued that Reagan could not condemn oppression in third world countries or totalitarian states but remain quiet on the apartheid-state.¹³⁰

Furthermore, there were also anti-apartheid demonstrations at universities across America and the Washington Office on Africa implemented a 24-hour hotline for people to call regarding the anti-apartheid sanctions issue.¹³¹ This group was also mailing thousand of letters to Americans to prompt them to support the anti-apartheid disinvestment and sanctions drives.¹³² On April 12th

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Die Volksblad*. 4 April 1985.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Die Volksblad*. 11 April 1985.

1985, the Republican Congress was also moving closer to agreeing with the Democrats in the Senate that tougher anti-apartheid measures were necessary.¹³³

In England during the same month – March 1985 – 121 local authorities embarked on an anti-apartheid campaign. About 30 publicly denounced apartheid, with 70 more banning all South African products in their areas.¹³⁴

38 more local authorities compiled disinvestment policies; 22 discouraged economic links with the country; 14 withdrew their money from English banks which had South African ties; 11 prohibited the advertisement of South African products in their areas; 12 decided to diligently promote teaching against apartheid; 21 organised anti-apartheid exhibitions in libraries and undertook to prevent apartheid *propaganda*; 28 decided to support cultural boycotts; 41 supported sports boycotts; 12 resolved to have direct contact with either African towns in South Africa and/or direct contact with exiled South African organisations; 26 undertook to honour anti-apartheid leaders; 26 local authorities decided that they would henceforth not allow anymore official visits from South Africa and 21 wished to promote a wider *understanding* of apartheid and South Africa among the British public.¹³⁵

Early in 1985, PW Botha, in parliament, surprised everybody by making an offer of conditional release to Nelson Mandela. Obviously this move received international attention. In essence, he said that he would release the famous political prisoner – if Mandela retracted his support for the armed struggle.¹³⁶ Mandela called Botha's bluff by saying that he would reject the armed struggle just as soon as Botha rejected apartheid. "Botha wanted the onus of violence to rest on my shoulders," Mandela later explained, "and I wanted to reaffirm to the world that we were only responding to the violence done to us."¹³⁷

¹³³ *Die Volksblad*. 12 April 1985.

¹³⁴ Cooper, C. (et al), "International links" in *South African Institute for Race Relations Annual Survey 1985, Johannesburg, 1986*, p. 121.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Mandela, N., *Long walk to freedom*, 509.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

In a way this encapsulated the political impasse of the 1980s, as explained throughout this study. The Government implicitly saying that if the other side rejected violence, Pres. Botha would negotiate with them and Mandela implicitly saying that if the minority Government dismantled apartheid there would be no need for the armed struggle. The black liberation movement argued that apartheid inherently carried the seeds of violence and therefore the government should reject violence by rejecting apartheid. The South African Government argued that the violence was the result of radical instigators and therefore the liberation movement should abandon violence. The Government arguing that first the violence should stop then the negotiations will start. The liberation movement replying: we should negotiate to stop the violence; give blacks the vote and the ANC will give up violence, because then there will be no need for violence.

In Mandela's response to Botha's conditional offer, he again restated his absolute commitment to the ANC and all it stood for. "Let Botha show that he is different to Malan, Strijdom and Verwoerd. Let him renounce violence. Let him say that he will dismantle apartheid... Let him guarantee free political activity so that people may decide who will govern them. I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom... I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free... Only a free man can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts... I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return."¹³⁸

During this period, following what became internationally known as the *Uitenhage Massacre*, tackling Chester Crocker's constructive engagement as well as his Pres. Reagan's stance on apartheid and South Africa, the internationally respected anti-apartheid activist dr. Beyers Naudé wrote of the American policy's inability to actually make a difference, as well as the great animosity America's South African policy fomented among blacks.¹³⁹ "A word of serious warning has to be sounded to the American government and people," wrote Naudé, "Do not be surprised if the anger of black South Africans eventually turns to hatred or to rejection of American policy and presence in Africa."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* p.510.

¹³⁹ Naudé, B., "Where is South Africa going?" in *Africa Report*, May-June 1985, vol. 30, no. 3, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.8.

He drew up a list of suggestions for the US to follow if they wanted to actually make any difference at all to South Africa's oppressed blacks.

These points included:

- That the US should once and for all forget "the bogus concept" that the underlying causes of South Africa's upheavals were Russian inspired. Instead, the White House should "recognise the policy of apartheid as the real threat to peace..."¹⁴¹
- That America should give much more value to what the authentic and long standing anti-apartheid organisations within South Africa were saying and arguing for
- The complete termination of constructive engagement and the initiation of "more meaningful pressures"
- That the White House should unequivocally demand: the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners; the unbanning of all political organisations; the release of all political detainees; the unbanning of the banned and banished and the freedom of all people to elect their own leaders to initiate negotiations¹⁴²
- "The situation in South Africa can... become so ungovernable that the government may be forced to declare a state of emergency... If the US is sincere in its concern to prevent further violence, it should take effective steps to prevent... military rule..."
- Reassessment of the American policies towards Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. An acceptance by the Americans that a political change in South Africa would also imply "a change of the present capitalist system of free enterprise toward some form of socialism"¹⁴³

By the middle of the year, with the violence flaring up, there were three main pieces of anti-apartheid legislation floating around the Democratic Party dominated Congress in the USA.¹⁴⁴

These included:

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.* p. 9.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Strodes, J., "Sanctions Legislation" in *Disinvestment – a Leadership Publication*, p.51.

- In the House of Representatives, there was the proposed Grey-Wolpe-Solarz Bill. This included four main sanctions:
 - Banning of all new bank loans to Pretoria
 - Banning of all new investments to the South African private sector/South African agencies/South African authorities
 - Prohibiting the sale of Krugerrands
 - Banning the sale of computers to Pretoria and all governmental offshoots¹⁴⁵

- The Lugar-Dole-Mathias Bill was also a contender to be enacted. It proposed:
 - To provide \$15 million in the form of scholarships to black South Africans as well as almost \$1,5 million to human rights programs
 - Edict all US companies in South Africa to subscribe to the code of conduct as described in the Sullivan Principles; demand the Export-Import Bank encourage black South African business
 - Within a two year framework – ban Krugerrands; ban any new commercial loans; end all existing commercial investment in South Africa
 - Ban all loans to Pretoria
 - Ban all computer sales to Pretoria¹⁴⁶

- The third proposed law, really packed a wallop and was introduced by the Republicans.
 - Give scholarships worth \$20 million to black South Africans as well as a further \$1,5 million to human rights programs
 - Close a South African consulate in America
 - End South African Airways' landing rights in the US
 - Prohibit US banks from lending any more money to Pretoria or any of its agencies

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

- Prohibit the sale of computers to the South African authorities
- End all nuclear trade between the US and South Africa
- Advise the Export-Import Bank to extend loans to black-owned enterprises
- Direct the Overseas Private Investment Corporation to pledge loans to black-owned enterprises and to promote investment in black-owned South African companies.¹⁴⁷

During June 1985 a senior official in Reagan's State Department explained that they opposed sanctions because it would almost assuredly "hurt the intended beneficiaries – the black workers" and furthermore that by withdrawing from South Africa the United States would be narrowing its sphere of influence inside South Africa.¹⁴⁸ And also, according to the official, American companies operating in South Africa were very much involved with black career advancement and community upliftment, an American withdrawal would mean an end to that.¹⁴⁹

Taking a broader viewpoint the official also brought Pretoria's controversial cross-border military excursions into play. Connecting that to the country's internal setup he said that the White House regarded them as "parts of the same whole" and "you must have movement on both fronts in order to have success on either one."¹⁵⁰

In other words, internal reform was the key to ending what the world referred to as *destabilisation* by the South African government. As far as this official was concerned, the Nationalist Government would under all circumstances have to move forward with reform faster if they wanted to have any prosperity.¹⁵¹ Pretoria's whole idea of being *vry teen die wêreld* had become an impractical ideal.

"South Africans are making a big mistake if they dream of someday being left alone. There are not any votes inside the United States for apartheid and that system of government," the official made clear, "We are agreed on the apartheid issue: we abhor it. The vast majority of Americans do not except apartheid as a system... So no one is going to speak in this country for continuing apartheid

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Anon, "The chill winds blow" in *Financial Mail*, vol. 96, no. 11, June 14th, 1985, p. 36.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

for whatever reason.” Rather, the American debate was about *how* to end apartheid and certainly not on whether it had any merits. As the State Department official remarked: “The disagreement you are witnessing right now is over tactics, not over objectives or goals.”¹⁵²

A very important factor at this point in time and one that became increasingly more important during the years ahead was that inside the Reagan White House, more and more Republicans started to view the white South African authorities with apprehension and disdain. Once regarded as one of the United States’ dearest African allies, they had now come to see the minority Government as the prime instigators of turmoil throughout the region.¹⁵³

These groupings in the White House had also come to resent the Botha Government’s exploitation of Reagan’s goodwill, which served only to embarrass him later. The moral of the story is that by the middle of the decade, Pretoria could no longer automatically expect their *ally*, Pres. Reagan to habitually veto any economic attacks against the apartheid regime. “‘Constructive engagement’ may not be dead, but it has certainly been altered,” the Financial Mail reasoned, “the broad regional policy objectives remain in place – but there is a much harder and far less sympathetic attitude toward SA and its internal problems.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

CHAPTER 2

THE POSITION OF THE CORPORATE COMMUNITY: CONTEXT & ORIENTATION, 1980 TO MID-1985

Dr. Anton Rupert, the wealthy Afrikaner industrialist and founder of the Rembrant Group, like many other South African business leaders, was opposed to apartheid, while at the same time being deeply patriotic, both in a business and cultural sense. The dilemma facing Rupert and other businessmen was how to oppose apartheid without causing an anti-South African effect – especially on the economic front.¹ After apartheid had ended, he commented that as early as the 1960s, “I had come to the conclusion that there was nothing left... to do but to follow a policy of ‘loyal resistance’. By this I mean that as loyal South Africans we would defend our country overseas but would oppose ill-judged policies at home.”²

Pres. Botha knew very well how important it was to be supported by the business community. When PW Botha first came to power, he tried to better the Government’s relationship with the corporate community. During the summer of 1979, PW Botha and his cabinet invited 299 of the country’s top business leaders to the posh Carlton Centre for a business-government conference, where he explained his reformist plans for the future.³

Oppenheimer said that it gave him renewed hope for the country’s future, but at the same time also made his deep seated uneasiness about what Botha was trying to bring about in South Africa clear. He criticised Pretoria for wanting sophisticated economic growth, while at the same time politically segregating the peoples who were supposed to bring it about.⁴ Botha’s display of reaching-out towards the business sector was indeed groundbreaking within the context of NP-Big Business history, but at the end of the day it was probably nothing more than a superficial gesture of goodwill.

¹ JA STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM THE OFFICE OF DR ANTON RUPERT: “Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” October 1997.

² *Ibid.*

³ De Villiers, D. en De Villiers, J., *PW*, p. 160.

⁴ *Ibid.*

PW Botha did not warm to these people and neither to many of South Africa's other prominent business leaders. He thought that South Africa's big business could have done a lot more to help him and his government to achieve their goals.⁵ He is also convinced that they conspired to ruin his career. "Hulle kon baie meer gedoen het," Botha told the writer during 2000, "Hulle het meegehelp om 'n veldtog teen my te voer. Toe hulle sien ek het begin om sukses te behaal... toe hulle daardie suksesse begin bespied, toe het die veldtog van haat teen my losgebars." Botha also felt that they were too politicised and that they deliberately tried to torpedo his government's aims.⁶

With the creation of Botha's Tricameral parliament, the billionaire head of De Beers and the Anglo American Corporation, Harry Oppenheimer, experienced a souring of his relationship with the NP leader. Oppenheimer did not support Botha's *new deal* and could not see how this system would produce any substantial long-term solutions to the country's political dilemmas. Speaking at New York's Foreign Policy Association he said that, "the divisions of parliament into separate racially constituted chambers is a clumsy device which reflects the prejudices of the past."⁷

It should be noted that Gavin Relly, Oppenheimer's chief-in-charge, was more in favour of what Botha was, at least, trying to do. The powerful Relly was also president of a pro-government group, known as the South African Foundation and in 1980 he sat on the president's Defence Advisory Council. In 1984, he wrote that Botha should be given a chance, that "if Mr. Botha can maintain the thrust of his policy to embrace the urban black population and then move to some federal system to embrace the country as a whole, we may have reason to hope that these initiatives will evoke the vitality and optimism to bring about a new era, with profound implications for southern Africa as a whole." Although optimistic at first, during 1985, Relly was involved in a major public clash with Botha of truly historic importance.⁸ Raymond Ackerman, the rich and powerful founder of retailing giant, Pick'n'Pay, viewed Botha's tricameral system and what it represented with more immediate appreciation and so during the 1983 referendum,

⁵ PW BOTHA ONDERHOUD: 3 October 2000. JA STEMMET PRIVAAT VERSAMELING

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Kenney, *Power Pride & Prejudice: The Years of Nationalist Rule in South Africa* p. 341.

⁸ Pallister, D. & Stewart, S. & Lepper, I., *South Africa Inc. – the Oppenheimer empire*, p.77.

endorsed the government's new route. "The tricameral system proved to be unwieldy and patronising," Ackerman wrote years later, "But it was an attempt to reach beyond an oppressive heritage of prejudice and fear, and it did eventually see two men of colour included in the Cabinet for the first time in the history of South Africa."⁹

During April of 1985, Harry Oppenheimer addressed the South African Club in London. Outlining his country's chaotic violent unrest, as well as socio-economic strain, he said: "Let us never forget that violent means and peaceful means cannot be looked upon as just two alternative ways of reaching the same objective. They always lead to quite different final results." He also bestowed some qualified applause on PW Botha who was making a "genuine though slow" reformist effort, "But time for South Africa is running out..."¹⁰

Oppenheimer gave a short comparison between what South Africa looked like in 1976 and how it had changed by 1985, asking the question why, after all these progressive changes was it that black South Africa was feeling more discontent under a reformist Botha government than it had under a more stalwart hardliner Vorster government. "When people are suffering under a great burden of injustice they are not likely to feel happy or grateful because of some comparatively slight amelioration in their lot," said Oppenheimer, laying bare the shortcomings of Botha's whole reformist program, "The will on the contrary tend to feel still more resentful of the justices that remain."¹¹

During the 1980s many of the CEOs of the largest South African companies called for the end to apartheid, irrespective of whether it was for moral, political or economic reasons or all three. Many in big business in South Africa found themselves embroiled in a dilemma. Although they supported the speedy end of apartheid they could not very well endorse the international anti-apartheid campaign, which of course included punitive economic measures – it would have meant corporate suicide.¹²

⁹ Ackerman, R. & Prichard, D., *Hearing grasshoppers jump*, p. 195.

¹⁰ Oppenheimer, H., "Recent changes in South Africa" in *South Africa International*, Vol. 16, Nr. 1, July 1985, pp. 24-28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Jameson, B., *Goldstrike – the Oppenheimer empire in crisis*, p. 48.

Furthermore, they could not very well have endorsed the ANC, which at that stage viewed South Africa's big business as exploitative capitalists and wanted to nationalise some of the companies if it were ever to rule. Many leaders of big business also came to the conclusion that South Africa would quite possibly have a black majority government one day, so they could not very well just ignore the liberation movements. They could not wholeheartedly associate themselves with the devil they knew nor the devil they didn't.¹³

The result was that the business community walked a very precarious tightrope. They made increasingly bold anti-apartheid pronouncements and even called for the release of Nelson Mandela, while also remaining cautious about what they said about the ANC; they lobbied for greater change and supported certain well-chosen programs for socio-economic upliftment in the black communities, while arguing against disinvestment and sanctions; but at the same time they criticised Pretoria.

Although many business leaders called for the scrapping of apartheid, this certainly did not automatically imply an endorsement of one-man-one vote. During this period, there was a lot of talk of a South Africanised version of federalism – to note but one political idea for a future post-apartheid South Africa. Harry Oppenheimer thought that universal suffrage would lead to universal suffering.¹⁴ Instead, he said that if it was up to him he would give the right to vote to “all those, both black and white, who had reached a certain level of education. It might even be feasible to restrict the vote to those who owned their own home”.¹⁵ But, irrespective of future electoral systems, the one South Africa had at the time was not working out.

During the early months of 1985 a high-powered delegation from the South African Federated Chamber of Industries met with Pres. Botha to discuss the country's looming economic calamity. The group included the groups' president JR Wilson, who was also head of Shell South Africa; CJW Ball, the head of Barclays Bank; and the head of the giant para-statal iron and steel industry ISCOR; the Managing Director of Volkswagen South Africa, PM Searle and the head of General Mining, T Pavitt. The last member of this group was the Afrikaner multi-millionaire motor mogul,

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Pallister & Stewart & Lepper, p. 52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Dr. Albert Wessels.¹⁶ Prior to their audience with the state president, Wilson had sent him a confidential memorandum setting out the country's dangerous economic situation as seen by the group.¹⁷

He noted that American companies doing business in South Africa were "now openly worried" that unless the South African situation did not change, and anti-apartheid lobbies did not lay off, they would have "no alternative but to disinvest," elaborating, Wilson put it to Botha that unless a distinct change occurred in the way American policy makers were debating the situation "trade with the US could also be severely curtailed." According to Wilson, the American anti-apartheid disinvestment crusade was mainly the result of "moral indignation" and that the anti-apartheid activists in America "are having unprecedented success... They appear to have captured American public opinion as never before."¹⁸

Wilson also highlighted the adverse view the American public had of South Africa in the mid-1980s. According to him they saw the country as being more or less in the midst of a fully-fledged civil war. Wilson then implicitly reminded Botha that his political decisions had direct economic consequences, he wrote "of the fact that in the disinvestment debate, economics and politics have become intertwined."¹⁹ He also explained that because economics and politics were two sides of the same coin, if business in South Africa wanted to make a contribution to the disinvestment debate, per implication, it would have to start getting more involved in political matters: "The inevitable conclusion is that if the South African business community wishes to get involved in this debate, it cannot avoid 'talking politics'."²⁰

The president of the Federated Chamber of Industries then continued to explain to Botha that because of the country's political state of affairs and its dire effect on the South African economy, the private sector had no choice but to increasingly lobby, and to an extent, pressure Pretoria for faster and further change.²¹ "The South African business community must set itself up as an agent

¹⁶ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 203: A1/15/1/23/1985

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

for change,” Wilson explained, “and be willing to add its not insignificant voice to the calls on Government to accelerate the process of change.” He also explained that although the private sector realised that “economic sanctions of this nature [disinvestment] will not cripple the economy of this country,” however “the potential for harm is considerable,” – stressing the country’s required growth rate, the high number of unemployment and living standards.²² When reading Wilson’s next observation it is not surprising that many business leaders called for faster change: “It would appear that unconditional interaction between the South African and American business communities will become a thing of the past.”²³

Wilson concluded his memorandum by informing the president of the cardinal questions the business community was now addressing with regards to the South African situation and their role therein. One of the issues Wilson raised here signaled a further worsening of business-state relations: “Is the business community, in adopting a pro-active stance on political issues, prepared to risk alienating Government?”²⁴

During the 1980s, the more prosperous South African corporations increasingly endeavored to expand abroad. Apart from the normal financial rewards of such a process, during this particular period, such expansionism was certainly also motivated by the political state of affairs, in particular, the growing wave of international anti-apartheid economic attacks on South Africa and its business community. Local companies wanted to shed their South African image.²⁵

The result was a unique form of local disinvestment – an attempt by local companies to try rid themselves of their nationality without actually physically doing so. Homegrown multinationals tried to put corporate smokescreens between their international operations and their home office in the apartheid-state. In practice, this meant that companies erected foreign subsidiaries.²⁶

Working through these, the South African multinationals tried to camouflage their ultimate connection with the apartheid-state. In practice the easiest way was to install so-called *dummy*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Hanlon, J., *South Africa – the sanctions report*, p. 318.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

corporations. Some of these dummy corporations, with rather nondescript names, were registered in Luxembourg, but really only existed on paper and were controlled by a South African business. These dummy corporations were owned by dummy corporations in other countries, which were owned by dummy corporations being run from South Africa.²⁷

The result was a dizzying labyrinth of paper trails connected to bigger labyrinths consisting of even more complicated webs of different tiers of dummy corporations. As the paper trail got longer a local multinational would lose its South African scent. For anti-apartheid sleuths wanting to expose a South African company doing business where it shouldn't have – proving the South African connection was a laborious job.²⁸

South African groups who operated outside Africa included the Anglo American Corporation, which used Minorco as its main artery leading to foreign markets; the insurance giant SANLAM, which used holding companies in Hong Kong and Luxembourg; and Barlow Rand, which bought and used the British animal feed group J Bibby to venture abroad. During the latter part of the 1980s, the Rembrandt Group created *Compaigne Financiere Ritchemont* and *Richemont*, through which the Rupert clan commanded their extensive worldwide business operations. Donny Gordon's insurance company, *Liberty Life*, owned and utilised *Transatlantic Holdings*, as well as *Fugit*, to channel its international ambitions.²⁹ The large construction company *Murray and Roberts* also had offshoots, including some in America, the UK, Malaysia and Australia.³⁰

When discussing the role big business played, it is important to highlight the fact, that the private sector wasn't a homogeneously organised community or organisational body per se. There were organised industry and commerce, private sector foundations and also large corporations. Each of these broad groupings were divided and sub-divided into specific domains. Furthermore, during this period there was an extensive variety of industry-specific bodies. It would be fair to say that the South African business community was simultaneously intensively organised as well as being

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 318

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 320.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

fragmented.³¹ When the local business sector was described, or when they described themselves, as being a *force for change*, four main strategies utilised by big business can be set apart.

Firstly, the business community sought to influence and ultimately change Pretoria's policies through discreet and direct behind-the-scenes lobbying. In the days of Prime Minister Vorster, Pretoria scrapped the so-called Masters and Servants Acts, apparently after the coal mogul, Graham Beck, impressed upon them the dire effect an American anti-apartheid boycott of South African coal would have on the economy.³²

Later, the business community was unrelenting in its urging of the Nationalists to drop their racial job reservation measures and recognise black unions. Later, when PW scrapped the dreaded influx control, big business was accredited with having had a decisive role in his historic decision. In urging Pretoria to do away with the influx system, the business community utilised a much more extensive and coordinated strategy than before. This included extensive research on the subject; organising and delivering seminars; visits to certain cities and informal settlements; media briefings and lobbying a wide array of the principal political actors involved. Another central element of their all-out lobbying was the business sponsored, Urban Foundation.³³

Secondly, during the decade big business played a role in creating a post-apartheid society. Ann Bernstein and Bobby Godsell explained that although management and labour forces have indeed clashed many times it is important to realise that "in important ways the factory, mine and office have emerged as beachheads of apartheid-free South Africa, where racism has been banished, power shared, and a new normative order and set of decision making processes and institutions have emerged."³⁴ They also noted that as this developed, the labour relations process bridged the factory walls and began to cover a wider spectrum – including issues such as the sanctions/disinvestment debate and the State of Emergency.

³¹ Godsell, B., & Berger, P., (eds.), *A future South Africa*, p. 168.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 171.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 173

Thirdly, by utilising its vast economic resources, big business was also directly involved in social change, for example the Urban Foundation's housing schemes influenced Pretoria's take on urban housing.³⁵

"The business community can play an enormous role by setting an example in the way its own operations are run," explained the Chairman of the Anglo American Corporation, Gavin Relly, "While businessmen are quite clearly not politicians, business has an absolute concern with regard to the future of its activities, and it is only natural that we have an interest in the nature of the society in which we invest and in which we operate."³⁶

Fourthly, during the period under review big business played an important role in facilitating the political process of change in South Africa and in getting people to talk to each other, particularly across the racial divide. The private sector also worked diligently, albeit unsuccessfully, to thwart anti-apartheid sanctions and the disinvestment campaign. They also acted as intermediaries between Pretoria and the authorities of neighboring states. All in all, during the latter years of the decade, big business increasingly and openly ventured into the realm of politics, to the exasperation and annoyance of Pretoria, while it seemed to have had very little effect on the ANC.³⁷

Of course, there were many cases where the business community's most diligent lobbying did not succeed, i.e. although big business had become quite adamant that Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners be released, the State of Emergency lifted and negotiations initiated, Botha's government remained unmoved.³⁸

Their influence, although far-reaching, was not limitless. On certain occasions the government reckoned that the private sector had overstepped their boundaries and was in fact challenging their authority and the Government could not allow that. PW Botha did not warm to these business-types' meddling with politics. Many was the time that the State President would summon

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Albedas, M. & Fischer, A., *A question of survival*, p. 369.

³⁷ Godsell & Berger (eds.), p. 173.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Oppenheimer's powerful top executives, Gavin Relly or Julian Ogilvy Thompson, to his office and say: "We my friend have over a million votes. How many votes have Anglo American?"³⁹ Harry Oppenheimer's ex-chief executive at Johannesburg Consolidated Investments, Gordon Waddell, when commenting on the limits of what big business could do to end apartheid, said "The chairman of Anglo American cannot declare war on South Africa. There are limits to how we can oppose."⁴⁰

Years after apartheid ended, the retail tycoon Raymond Ackerman evaluated big business' role in dismantling apartheid, drawing attention to the more gradual and holistic influence of the private sector. He stated that the business community had not received the praise or respect for its contribution to bringing about change.⁴¹

He also wrote of how his company worked and lobbied behind the scenes "at winning the winks and the nods that allowed us to chip away at the institution of apartheid – changing things de facto rather than de jure... The business community as a whole worked persistently at peeling away apartheid." He wrote that although the major and spectacular breakthroughs were of course important, "so was the slow erosion of apartheid through the influence of commerce. By establishing that pattern of steady change, working quietly and steadily, commerce was an unrecognised architect of change."⁴²

FW de Klerk, who succeeded PW Botha as State President, seemed to agree with Ackerman's assertion that it was the broad macro development of the economy that finally tipped the scales in favour of the dismantling of apartheid. "It was thousands and millions of people moving to the cities where the real job opportunities were, where the economic growth was, where investment continued to take place..." explained De Klerk, "that created the demographic and economic realities that made separate development impossible." He summed up: "It was the feet walking into our cities and into our factories which played the major concrete role."⁴³

³⁹ Jamieson, p. 41.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 43.

⁴¹ Ackerman & Prichard, p. 240.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ De Klerk, *Die laaste rek – 'n tweede begin*, p.25.

Prof. JP de Lange, former head of the Afrikaner Broederbond, also felt that the economy played an important role in bringing about change. When the writer asked him what he thought had played a more decisive role, the brittle economic implications of apartheid or the political violence, he said that they were two sides of the same blade. He did make a slight distinction in that he thought that the long-term effects of the economic problems were greater than that of the violence per se. As far as he reasoned they were the two main factors in the long and gradual drive to the final dismantling of apartheid, together with what he called a *third momentum* – “’n gewetensprobleem.” “Baie Afrikaners het begin om ‘n gewetensprobleem te ontwikkel oor die bestaande situasie. Die effek van apartheid en of ons daarmee kan saamleef, aangevuur deur die ekonomiese, aangevuur deur die onluste.”⁴⁴ According to Prof. De Lange, as Afrikaners became more economically sophisticated they also became more cosmopolitan. And as they became worldlier they started to increasingly question the logic of their sociopolitical situation and the logic of the powers that be. “Hy het in ‘n sekere sin ‘n breë blootstelling gehad van die wêreld... Met ander woorde ‘n beleid van weerhouding: jy-mag-dit-nie-doen-nie, jy-mag-dat-nie-doen-nie, het al minder aanvaarbaar geword.”⁴⁵

According to the acclaimed scenario planner, Clem Sunter – then head of Anglo American’s gold and uranium operations, both the English and Afrikaans sections of big business wanted change.⁴⁶ “Look, big business obviously wanted things to change because [apartheid] was constricting the international possibilities,” Sunter explained the pragmatic logic to the writer: “When South Africa was isolated from the rest of the world you had to pursue a sort of conglomerate approach – which actually is not the smart approach. The smart approach is to be focused. And so big business wanted government to change... I think there were individuals in big business who, in their own way, were actually pushing for change. That included myself.”⁴⁷ One way in which business wanted to state their case came to light when they sponsored a special 1985 edition of *Leadership SA*.

⁴⁴ INTERVIEW WITH PROF. JP DE LANGE, 28 JUNE 2000. JA STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ INTERVIEW WITH CLEM SUNTER, 13 November 2000. JA STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3

JUNE – DECEMBER 1985: SANCTIONS AND DISINVESTMENT

In June 1985, as South Africa was burning on television screens across the world, the threat of disinvestment loomed so much so that the South African magazine *Leadership SA* compiled a special edition of the magazine with the self-explanatory title, *Disinvestment*. In the magazine some of the major role players, both locally and from abroad, debated the pros, cons and implications of the economic side of the anti-apartheid campaign – specifically the detrimental effect that it could have on the country's economy. Not surprisingly, most of the major league business groups in South Africa sponsored this special publication, including AECI, the Anglo American Corporation, the Premier Group, Sun International, Sage Holdings, SAPPI and SA Breweries. This special edition is of particular importance, as it gives a unique insight into the reasoning on the subject at that specific time.

Rob Abrahamsen, the Chairman of the magazine's Editorial Advisory Board (which also included such academic and business heavyweights as Anton Rupert, Ian Sims and Prof. Jan Lombard) wrote, in his opening piece, how PW Botha should receive the respect he deserves for having traveled further than any other South African leader in enlightening South Africa's political landscape.¹

He also pointed out how South Africa's hardliners were becoming disillusioned with the world and were again "emerging with an attitude of grim smugness", which was directed at those who promoted "reasonableness" and a greater sensitivity for Western calls for political change in South Africa. "Having just broken out of the laager, the Afrikaner is being pushed straight back by the very people who coaxed him forth," wrote Abrahamsen and warned, "If this trend infects Afrikaner businessmen, along with their political leaders, South Africa will find itself in a confrontational spiral from which there may be no reasonable escape."²

¹ Abrahamsen, R., "From the chair" in *Disinvestment – a Leadership SA Publication*, June, 1985., p.4.

² *Ibid.*

Around this time, Herman Nickle, Reagan's ambassador to the apartheid state, wrote that although the final transfer of full political participation in South Africa was still some time off "the old paradigm of a white power monopoly is most decidedly dead" and that to simply dismiss the changes brought about by PW Botha as being cosmetic was a complete misunderstanding of the "dynamic that is at work here."³ Nickle also broadly set out the reasons why his country's executive was opposed to economic anti-apartheid measures:

- Economic growth in South Africa had proved itself to be detrimental to apartheid, because it gave black South Africans greater economic leverage. He wrote of how "the consequences of economic growth and the practical requirements of an industrial society have dictated the agenda for political change". In his opinion punitive economic measures would impede this dynamic from accelerating further.⁴
- Political reform is executed with much more ease if set against a background of economic growth. Economic prosperity was also needed to close gaps in education and other areas. Economic regression would lead to the Nationalists protecting the living standards of their white folk first and intensifying socio-economic and political tension, which would motivate protest and violent unrest.
- South Africa's economy was the main artery of the whole sub-Saharan region – drag the South African economy down and its neighbours' fragile economic positions would be seriously affected as well, possibly even more so than Pretoria's.
- Future South African generations will have to pay for the disinvestment of the 1980s, irrespective of the colour of the president. "The notion that the investment tap can be turned off and on at will is illusionary. **Investment diverted elsewhere now will not return.**"⁵

Positing what South Africa could do to avoid further punitive measures, Nickle wrote that it would all depend on what happened inside South Africa itself. Obviously the first priority should be to break the spiral of violence, but that the Government should remember that heavy-handed police action would not be enough. Pretoria should realise that it should stop transparent structural

³ Nickle, H., "American Realities" in *Disinvestment – a Leadership publication*, p. 22.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 23.

⁵ Emphasis added by the writer.

tomfoolery designed to politically pay off or cajole blacks, if those measures are not actually a prologue to further top level negotiations. "To repeat: images of repression are seen as the negation of reform. The creation of conditions in which a genuine dialogue on black political participation becomes possible is not just a matter of appeasing foreign critics, it must ultimately be in the interest of all South Africans."⁶

The head of the Premier Group of Companies, Tony Bloom, wrote of the "great paradox" that the disinvestment campaign seemed to reach a climax only when Pretoria's reformist policies started to gain momentum. Calling apartheid "evil" he argued in favour of greater international investment and involvement, not less: "To use the carrot instead of always the stick " He wrote that international anti-apartheid policies should be "directed not towards isolating South Africa further, but to bringing it into harmony with the twentieth century and providing social values that are espoused by other non-communist democratic nations."⁷

Another prominent figure to contribute to this special publication was Helen Suzman. Helen Suzman was not only against the disinvestment drive, but in fact actively opposed it. During the height of the international disinvestment debate she addressed thousands of students and academics at universities throughout the world as well as in her articles, such as in the influential *The New York Times Magazine*, in which she strongly came out against anti-apartheid economic legislation.⁸

She stressed, as did most in the South African business community, that although apartheid was wrong and should be ended, there were different ways of achieving that goal – disinvestment was not a wise option, because although the South African political system might have been discriminatory, economic suffering was not. If the economic carpet was pulled out from under South Africa, whites would certainly find life a little more difficult, but blacks would suffer more acutely. Whether the prospect of economic collapse would persuade or force the stubborn Nationalists to abandon apartheid completely was a very dangerous gamble.⁹

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 24-26.

⁷ Bloom, T., "The great paradox" in *Disinvestment – a Leadership publication*, pp. 60-65.

⁸ Suzman, *In no uncertain terms*, p.260.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Suzman argued against punitive economic measures that would only “cause the economy to shrink and unemployment to increase” and also stated that any economic attack against South Africa’s economy would most assuredly have an equally detrimental effect on the poorer neighboring black states. In the same way, Ambassador Nickle stressed the long-term implications of sanctions and disinvestments. Suzman also argued that the supporters of the disinvestment cause should remember that there was absolutely no guarantee that the money that was now being withdrawn from apartheid South Africa would one day return to a democratic South Africa.¹⁰

Although the general American attitude towards South Africa became increasingly aggressive during 1984, trade between the two countries increased – a trend that made an abrupt turnaround during the following year. This happened because in America, during June 1985, the same month that the special *Leadership* edition appeared, the American House of Representatives accepted the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985, but only after Pres. Reagan had pulled its sting out.¹¹ It did still have numerous detrimental provisions, including a ban on new bank loans and computer sales to Pretoria, but it did not provide for any action to be taken against American companies with South African ties. American politician, Richard Lugar, wrote that: “It is not a step that we would take lightly... but our hand is being forced.” More importantly though, was the mere fact that the American government actually gave weight to the disinvestment debate.¹²

Furthermore, American businesses operating in South Africa were constantly attacked by US anti-apartheid groups for being reluctant to implement the Sullivan Principles, a business code of conduct for companies doing business in the apartheid-state. It is also important to remember that in America it was not only Capitol Hill that could, and did, implement punitive economic measures against Pretoria. Various American cities and states also enacted their own localised set of anti-apartheid measures.¹³

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Du Pisani, JA, “Disinvestment – threatening reactionary backlash in South Africa” in *Journal for contemporary History*, vol. 10, no. 2, August 1985, p.112

¹² Van Eden, ES, “South Africa in the minds and operations of the SA-American business world, 1980-1993 – a preliminary survey” in *Journal for Contemporary History*, vol 20, no1, June 1995, p. 75..

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

For example, the local authorities of Pittsburg and New York prohibited most city agencies from contracting American companies that did business with Pretoria as well as those groups who provided goods and services to such companies. At the same time, states including Chicago, Minnesota, Washington DC, New York and Philadelphia all contemplated similar legislative steps against US-RSA business dealings.¹⁴

In Washington, John Chettle, a foreign correspondent for *South Africa International*, wrote that to have witnessed the debate on the 'Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985' "was a depressing experience".¹⁵ According to Chettle, the American politicians spared no thought for the reforms that Pretoria was implementing; nor the guts it took for the Botha administration to have embarked on this road; nor the opinion of the moderate black masses with regards to the punitive economic measures; nor the possible inflammatory reaction these measures might provoke on the side of the government; nor the possibility, albeit remote, that Botha might refuse to sell South Africa's strategic minerals to the US¹⁶.

Although these points of criticism on the disinvestment debate have been stated and restated by Pretoria and other opponents of punitive anti-apartheid measures to the point of becoming rhetoric, there was some truth to them. As already noted, no one could have known for sure how and when Pretoria was going to react to the wave of international anti-apartheid economic measures.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Chettle, J., "Foreign Reports – Washington" in *South Africa International Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 1, July 1985, p. 53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

CHAPTER 4

INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE 1985 STATE OF EMERGENCY

While the disinvestment debate was intensifying abroad, the unrest on the local front was starting to reach a dangerous point. On July 21st 1985, the President announced a State of Emergency.

In Washington, the State Department – which had been reviewing its policy of constructive engagement – was discreet and reserved in its reaction to the announced State of Emergency. They expressed their hope that the violence would subside quickly and that the regulations would be removed as speedily as possible.¹

Covering German reaction to Pretoria's proclamation of a State of Emergency, Rudolf Gruber reported from Bonn that although the disinvestment campaign had at that stage not yet become a national point of debate – although it could easily become one depending on two basic factors. Firstly, whether the political violence would subside or not, and secondly, what events in America, which to a greater or lesser degree would author the international political agenda. If the US really got absorbed in the anti-apartheid disinvestment debate, that momentum would eventually also spread to Europe as well.²

At that moment in time, issues such as disinvestment were not at the order of the day in Germany. Furthermore, although South Africa was only Germany's fourteenth most valuable trading partner, Chancellor Helmut Kohl had some two million unemployed to get jobs for³. Not surprisingly, the German government was not too keen on cutting ties with South Africa, irrespective of the size of its market. In a nutshell then, as long as business was good in South Africa, disinvestment was not going to manifest itself from German sources soon. But, as was the case with many of Pretoria's

¹ Whitaker, M & Younghusband, P., "Pretoria's 'mailed fist'" in *Newsweek*, July 29th 1985, pp.12-13.

² Gruber, R., "Foreign reports - Bonn" in *South Africa International Quarterly*, vol. 16, no 1, July 1985, p.51.

³ *Ibid*

so-called allies, they could curtail or play down punitive measures only as long as Pretoria was seen as being committed to moving along a positive political route.⁴

If the Nationalists were to embark on a controversial course of action – a course of action that would make it even more disreputable than it already was, then the situation would alter and their allies would be forced to act against them. “The key to the situation, in short,” commented Gruber, “is more the responsibility of Pretoria than of Bonn.”⁵

During the first few days of the State of Emergency, the world was shocked at the images they saw of South Africa. The internationally popular news magazine *Newsweek* covered the first week of the emergency under the heading “South Africa’s state of siege – police impose a tense calm over black townships, but the iron fist will not prevent more violence” accompanied of course with graphic photos of black-on-black violence, white security men armed to the teeth patrolling dusty townships and huge emotional mass funerals.⁶

The *Newsweek* team dramatically informed their millions of readers worldwide: “Once again, the crackdown demonstrated that in the battle for power in South Africa, the whites have the force of arms and formidable system of repression on their side. But the recent unrest has also shown that blacks are growing increasingly impatient... many will not flinch at armed struggle to win their freedom.” The world was outraged by the bloody racial chaos in the apartheid-state.⁷

Although the Germans initially appeared rather indifferent to the South African topic, PW Botha’s State of Emergency caused an uproar in that country. Combined with graphic media coverage of the political violence and doomsday statements made by such high-profile anti-apartheid leaders as Bishop Tutu and Rev. Allan Boesak, Europeans expected South Africa to be on its last legs. The German public interpreted Pretoria’s introduction of emergency powers as “the last attempt by a politically doomed and morally bankrupt regime to stave off the retribution that awaited it” reported Rudolf Gruber from Bonn. In other words, the Germans did not see the State of

⁴ *Ibid* p. 52.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp.51-52.

⁶ Whitaker, M. & Youngusband, P (et al), ., “South Africa’s state of siege” in *Newsweek*, Vol. 106, Nr. 6, 5 August 1985, *Newsweek*, p. 8.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 9.

Emergency as just a harsh attempt by the government to restore law and order, but rather as the preamble to war.⁸

Bavarian leader, Frans Josef Strauss, wrote an article on the subject in a popular German magazine. He pointed out Botha's grossly under appreciated reformist virtues; the inappropriateness of sanctions and the ANC's communist underbelly. The West German Social Democrats carefully called for selected sanctions to be imposed that would have a political effect, rather than economic consequences. The Germans wanted political change in South Africa – and not simply Pretoria's abdication. Kohl was also attentive to his superpower allies. If Reagan and Thatcher changed their stance on sanctions he would follow, but as of yet both the Americans and the British were still holding out.⁹

“It is difficult to imagine South Africa ever accorded more public prominence than is being accorded her this year in the US,” John Montgomery reported from Washington, “The tragedy and violence of thousands of miles away permeates every living room, and in a real way the camouflage gear of riot squads in Uitenhage and the uniforms of truncheon-wielding members of the South African Police have become the entrees on the offended menu of international injustice, catering to voracious palates. Campus activists have not been so well fed since Vietnam...”¹⁰

The South African Government's ambassador to Washington, Herbert Beukes, complained of the emotional “one-dimensional” view of the South African situation. “There's a stereotyped perception of South Africa that's more firmly set than I can recall in years,” Beukes continued, “There's been an emotional outpouring in the US, based only on one issue, the race issue, and it's over-simplification that's led to the advocacy of disinvestment.”¹¹

He argued that Pretoria and Washington shared certain basic goals, but that the divide sets in where the difference in considerations comes in to play i.e. the security issue. Beukes pointed out

⁸ Gruber, R., “Foreign Reports – Bonn” in *South Africa International Quarterly*, October 1985, vol. 16, no. 2 pp. 110.

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 110-112.

¹⁰ Montgomery, J., “Foreign Reports – Washington” in *South Africa International Quarterly*, October 1985, vol. 16, no. 2, p. 117.

¹¹ Anon, “People – Herbert Beukes” in *Financial Mail*, vol.97, no.2, July 12th 1985, p.77.

that his Government could not wait until all their “policy objectives” had been realised, they had to deal with them immediately.¹² Even if it came at a very high cost, as was indeed the case with the State of Emergency. “Our government,” said Beukes, “has made it clear that they have one overriding interest – the security and protection of the South African people.” He remarked that he didn’t “see how anyone can blame us. After all they aren’t subjected to the same physical problems we’ve been subjected to.”¹³

With these descriptions of the American attitude towards South Africa in mind, it is not surprising then that the Reagan White House delivered its strongest criticism yet of apartheid. Initially, having to save face regarding its constructive engagement policy, the White House abstained from condemning Botha’s special measures, but the general outrage among the American public at what they saw, read and heard from South Africa, as well as the heightened high pitched anti-apartheid furor that swept over the United States, compelled Reagan to speak out.¹⁴

The White House publicly stated that PW Botha should lift the Emergency forthwith. White House officials quickly reiterated that the fact that they were condemning the State of Emergency under no circumstances implied that the White House was quitting constructive engagement.¹⁵

“This is a classic example where basically for internal US political reasons punishment is meted out to another country, irrespective of the views of the people whose interests they are supposed to serve,” said Pik Botha, the South African Foreign Affairs Minister, “It is clear that they are not interested in the views of the black leadership of this country.”¹⁶ The usually amiable Pik Botha then restated what most opponents of sanctions had spelled out ad infinitum, that poverty would not make whites more liberal. “South Africa seeks friendship with all democratic countries,” said the powerful Nationalist diplomat, “But not at all costs. Not at the price of its own interests and survival.”¹⁷

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Whitaker, M. & Youngusband, P (et al), *Newsweek*, 5 August 1985., p. 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

¹⁶ Anon. “Face to face – Pik Botha,” in *Financial Mail*, June 14th, 1985, vol.96, no. 11, p.38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The European Economic Community condemned the State of Emergency outright and demanded that Pres. Botha release all political prisoners. France's government went even further by recalling their ambassador and suspending any new French investments in the apartheid-state, while their representatives in the United Nations' Security Council tabled a resolution denouncing apartheid.¹⁸ The Security Council voted on the proposal (without the constructive engagement-minded USA and Britain who decided to abstain) and finally came out in favour of calling on all members to voluntarily impose sanctions against Pretoria. "The South African government has a responsibility towards its people," the agitated State President declared, "and cannot be prescribed to by foreign countries."¹⁹

Irrespective of foreign pressures, at the end of the day the minority Government was not only still in power, it was standing tall. Although violence had beset the country, it had not impeded the power of the authorities. The government's position in, and its power over, South Africa had not been fundamentally changed. The Nationalists and the white minority as a whole were still more than just surviving. The rand, although hurt, still had buying power and the Government's security-military complex was far from being intimidated. The question was, for how much longer this would be the case.

At the time of the proclamation of the 1985 State of Emergency, the Government was looking more downwards and inwards at its internal position and priorities than at the wider political-cum-economic horizon. And it was there, in the sphere of the economic and diplomatic, where the Government was weakest.

During those positive early days of the 1980s, businessmen and the government were so taken by the general atmosphere of economic wellness that they took on huge foreign loans. A large part of those foreign debts were in the form of short-term loans.²⁰

During the second half of 1984, the South African authorities had taken steps to harmonise fiscal and monetary policies to see to it that the economy did not overheat, while tackling the deficit at

¹⁸ Whitaker, M. & Youngusband, P (et al), *Newsweek*, 5 August 1985., p. 8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.9.

²⁰ Kenney, H., *Power Pride & Prejudice: The Years of Nationalist Rule in South Africa*, p. 355.

the same time. The Reserve Bank had tremendous success in addressing these issues. In fact, almost every single requirement of the International Monetary Fund had been met and the Reserve Bank was feeling confident that finally, at last, they were succeeding in managing the economy in a rational and open way. Things were slowly, going right for the South African economy. However, that economic prosperity was in jeopardy.²¹

By the middle of 1985 the country's economy had slowed down and those foreign loans proved to be a burden. The balance of payment was in deficit; local interest rates were rising and foreign ones were falling; inflation was bloated while profits and dividends were sagging. Since 1984, the rand had depreciated by some 40% against the US dollar. The bottom line was that by 1985, Pretoria sat with a short-term debt of \$14 000, 000, 000 which accounted for 60% of the country's total foreign debt.²²

Neither South Africa's foreign exchange, nor its gold reserves, nor its 1985-trade surplus was enough to cover it. Therefore, even without the pressures of the international disinvestment crusaders, in purely economic-cum-business terms, South Africa was no longer as strong economically as it had been. Purely conventional non-political economic reasons were quite enough to make foreign investors pull out of the country. Many were just waiting for a final decisive straw.²³ One such business reviewing its relationship with South Africa was one of the most powerful financial institutions in the world.

Back in 1981 when the appointment was made, probably no one guessed that four years later, David Rockefeller's successor, as the chairperson of the powerful Chase Manhattan Bank, David Butcher, would become the banking arch-nemesis of apartheid. South Africa's business with Chase Manhattan accounted for less than one percent of the colossal bank's global multi-billion dollar assets. Yet for all the pressure the bank had to endure for its South African connection from anti-apartheid lobbies, one would have imagined that Pretoria was one of their biggest clients.²⁴

²¹ Bethlehem, R., *Economics in a revolutionary society – sanctions and the transformation of South Africa*, Craighall, 1988, p. 70.

²² Kenney, p. 355.

²³ Kenney, p. 355.

²⁴ Sampson, A., *Black & Gold – tycoons revolutionaries and apartheid*, 1987, London, p.38.

Ever since the powerful American banking institution lent Pretoria money in the sixties, the anti-apartheid lobbies had pressured them, lambasting them with such stinging slogans as: 'Pretoria has a friend in Chase Manhattan.'²⁵ These groups had not let up since, but neither did Chase Manhattan stop doing business with South Africa. But, in the mid-1980s, with the world's attention more focussed on apartheid than ever before, the pressure on the bank from the anti-apartheid groupings also intensified.²⁶

Time and again, the bank would explain to these lobbies that it did not approve of apartheid but would not interfere in a client's internal affairs. Withdrawing from South Africa because the bank did not agree with its politics would create a precedent the bank wanted to avoid. But, when the Government decreed a State of Emergency in 1985, the bank was seriously concerned. So much so that they started to question the value of staying on in South Africa, while downplaying their ties with the minority Government.²⁷

Ever since 1984, when the political violence really got going, Chase Manhattan had started to limit its exposure to the apartheid state. However, watering down was one thing, withdrawing was quite another. As far as David Butcher was concerned, the State of Emergency was the final straw.²⁸

On July 31st 1985, the New York bankers formally took the decision. Willard Butcher and his chief executive Thomas Lebrecque decided that Chase Manhattan was not going to roll over on South African loans anymore. The bank was going to recall credits as they came due, for South Africa it was payback time on a possibly disastrous scale. The South Africans would have to pay a few hundred million dollars over the next year or so and furthermore, most of South Africa's American loans were short term. In practice this meant that South Africa would have to pay 85% of all American loans basically at once. For a country to repay all its short-term debts at once was almost impossible.²⁹

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.39.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.* p.40.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.* p.41.

Butcher made it clear that his decision was based on apolitical technical considerations. It was very important for the bank to ensure that people believed their withdrawal had nothing to do with moral or political considerations.

The bank did not want to set a precedent where there were business reactions to their clients' internal political orientations; of basing business considerations on moral values. Chase Manhattan Bank, like many other multinational businesses, had other controversial clients apart from the apartheid-state. There were some South American clients, Middle Eastern ones and East Bloc clients who could become nervous if they saw that they might be refused services if the multinationals did not approve of their way of thinking.³⁰ Simply put, the bank did not want it to seem that they were mixing politics, morals and business or yielding to pressure groups.

Butcher was steadfast about his apolitical technical explanation for pulling out of the apartheid state. Nonetheless, some time after he started severing his ties with the white minority a black South African political prisoner sent him a letter from prison – written on toilet paper, the letter thanked the New York bank for quitting their support of the apartheid government. In spite of Butcher's apolitical explanations, he photocopied the letter of thanks and made sure everyone in the bank read it.

So why did the bank leave, was it as some banks explained in dreary technical terms, because of South Africa's non-political economic set up? Or were they scared by the unrest; by the possibility, irrespective of how real, that their investments could quite literally go up in flames; or of what sanctions would do to their South African profits? Or were they simply tired of having taken the anti-apartheid knocks for so long and being harassed by anti-apartheid lobbies viewing them as the apartheid piggy-in-the-middle – with groups in their own countries threatening to sell their stock and close their accounts in these *financiers of South African racism*.³¹

It seems that in the case of the American banks, politics outweighed profits. Anthony Sampson wrote: "It was not the simple calculations of profit or loss, risk and reward, which had finally

³⁰ *Ibid* p.42.

³¹ *Ibid*.

warned off the banks. It was the careful intervention of churches, foundations and shareholders' pressure groups which insisted, not that apartheid was unprofitable, but that it was morally intolerable. It may well have been in the banks' long-term commercial interest to withdraw: but it was the hassle, more than the numbers, which forced their decisions."³² Whether or not the bank would have withdrawn from South Africa, irrespective of the political climate, will probably never be known for sure, but the internationalised apartheid-issue surely motivated the bank's decision, even if only to a limited degree.

Chase Manhattan's new approach to South Africa was big news, yet the bank remained straight faced, not confirming nor denying that, according to what were still rumours, they were getting out of South Africa. Even when the Wall Street Journal reported the bank's withdrawal, the New Yorkers kept quiet. As soon as Chase threw their switch though, the rand started to stumble downwards.³³

When foreign chain stores closed up their South African shops, there were enough local conglomerates to step in and take over; with some help from unnamed friends and covert accounts the Government could still obtain oil, albeit at very high prices; a thriving black market existed for computers and armaments – but bank loans could not be smuggled. Furthermore, to have a bank loan cancelled is a big enough embarrassment for any individual, never mind what it could do to the image of a whole country.

"Chase Manhattan's decision was widely and correctly seen as an ultimate expression of no-confidence in the South African economy," wrote the economist and academic Henry Kenney.³⁴ When giants stir, dwarfs start to run. When Chase ditched Pretoria other overseas banks fell over each in a slapdash stampede of withdrawals. In one single month alone, August 1985, foreign banks extracted \$400 million out of the country.³⁵

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Kenney, p. 355.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

The Security Pacific bank copied Chase, as did other banks. Bankers Trust, Manufacturers Hanover and Bank of America started shifting in their chairs and announced a planned “phased reduction” of their South African ventures; another large bank in the US with South African accounts summarily bumped Pretoria’s credit-rating down from B to D, not stopping at C with E being the bottom of the barrel.³⁶ The Japanese took over some of South Africa’s short-term loans, but the fact that the Americans withdrew led to a devastating loss of confidence in the country.³⁷ Chase Manhattan eventually formally announced its decision, but only in August and only after Botha had given his so-called Rubicon Speech in Durban.

In 1983, PW Botha had established a Special Cabinet Committee after it had become increasingly clear that apartheid had painted the white minority into a corner and that in the not too distant future Pretoria would have to accommodate the political aspirations of the black population either within the homeland system or within the context of the white areas.³⁸ This Committee had become the centre of the government’s assessing of possible future constitutional developments.³⁹

During the period under discussion, the Committee realised that South Africa, and in particular the white minority, had reached a fork in the political road, because separate development had proved itself to be an impractical and unattainable dream.⁴⁰

During the opening of parliament in 1985, State President Botha announced that the Nationalists had finally come to accept the permanency of the black population in white cities and that the Government would not force the remaining homelands to accept independence. These pronouncements had implications extending deep into the very heart of Verwoerdian grand apartheid.⁴¹

The problem was bringing about the changes implied in the above acknowledgements. The Special Cabinet Committee was supposed to find a way out of this impasse and in August 1985, the

³⁶ Sampson, p.42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ De Klerk, F.W., *Die laaste trek – 'n nuwe begin*, p.117

³⁹ *Ibid.* p.118

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p.119.

Cabinet organised a special planning meeting to discuss and assess the Committee's newest proposals. The Cabinet decided that the President should announce some of these accepted new constitutional approaches. In essence these were basically a reconfirmation of what Botha had told parliament and how the Nationalists had decided to interpret its implication, in other words how to turn realisation into reality.⁴²

The State President was reportedly pleased with these proposals. In fact so much so that he wrote identical letters to German Chancellor Kohl and Prime Minister Thatcher – in addition to conveying a message to Pres. Reagan – informing them that the Special Cabinet Committee had made breakthrough proposals to him.⁴³ He also informed them that something phenomenal was about to happen in this regard: “I am at present giving serious consideration to these proposals and intend to make an announcement on my Government's decision in the very near future. I must stress that my Government's decision will be taken on the basis of what we consider to be in the best interests of South Africa and Southern Africa.”⁴⁴

Not only did Pres. Botha write those letters to the American and British leaders, he also instructed Pik Botha to make sure the country's allies knew what was coming. The Minister of Foreign affairs was over enthusiastic and on PW Botha's orders, Pik Botha summoned western diplomats to an urgent meeting in Vienna on August 9th and 10th 1985. During a five-hour briefing session Pik Botha discussed the Special Cabinet Committee's proposals and the types of changes that the President was going to announce.⁴⁵

Reagan had sent his Security Advisor Robert McFarlane, Chester Crocker and Herman Nickel to meet with Pik Botha, while Thatcher sent one of her top senior diplomats, Ewen Fergusson; other officials from West Germany were also present. Apparently, Pik's briefing session was a bit vague and reaction to it varied.⁴⁶ One sceptical American official said: “From bitter experience we know

⁴² Prinsloo, D., *Stem uit die wildernis*, p. 309.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Younghusband & Watson & Kondracke & Warner, “Can South Africa save itself?” in *Newsweek*, vol. CVI, no. 8, 19 August 1985, p. 6.

that South African officials will talk about their plans, then return home and back away at the last moment because of second thoughts or fear.”⁴⁷

The South African and international media quickly got buzzing with the news of PW Botha’s bold leap forward, and as the Afrikaans saying goes ‘*tussen die hand en die mond val die pap op die grond*’ because somewhere between Pik Botha’s briefing of foreign diplomats and leaks to the media, embellishments were added. A wave of speculation, followed by conjecture and assumptions about what Pres. Botha was going to say, spread like wildfire.

Ever since Botha had announced his State of Emergency, some inquiring minds had looked at the tense situation and started to wonder whether the government’s heavy-handed security approach to the country’s problems was not possibly part of a grander political master plan – remind everyone exactly how powerful the white minority still was through a massive display of force and then usher in a new dispensation.⁴⁸

“The longer it is delayed, the weaker government’s hand,” *Finance Week’s* Alan Greenblo wrote in July 1985, “That is why the present emergency creates a watershed. Does SA have a government which, having lost control over parts of the country, is in panic? Or is the proclaimed emergency... a respite opportunity for government to spell out and direct the exit from the impasse?”⁴⁹

The reporter argued that Pretoria’s reformist babble and pledges had lead to dangerously high expectations among the black population. “If the State President has a strategy and a time scale, he alone can offer hope or despair by spelling it out. If not, SA can settle in for a protracted state of emergency and be tainted by the most undesirable characteristics of banana republics which is rule by military junta.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁴⁸ Greenblo, A., “Reform emergency,” in *Finance Week*, July 25-31, 1985, vol. 26, no. 4, p.221

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 223.

With one surprise swoop, PW Botha was expected to pull the carpet from under the ANC and call the world's bluff. While making the world's head spin, the Nationalists were also going to catch the ANC with their pants down. Shortly before the speech, the leader of the ANC Oliver Tambo, hastily flew to Zambia to watch the speech live. Tambo was decidedly unnerved by what Botha was possibly going to announce, because he knew very well that if Pretoria suddenly threw open the way to negotiations, his movement was in no way geared or ready for such a new political climate.⁵¹

Pres. Botha could turn the whole international anti-apartheid campaign on its head while at the same time dramatically and unexpectedly turning the tables on the liberation movement. The fact was that if PW Botha moved fast, far and hard enough, backed by America and Britain, the Nationalists could maybe rock the liberation movement's boat so hard that the ANC just might capsize.

A week before the speech was to be delivered, *Newsweek* reported: "White South Africa remains awesomely powerful, and some segments of Afrikaner society are as stubborn as ever. But now some cracks are beginning to show... The reforms that Botha is expected to announce this week may represent the best, if not the last, chance for eventual harmony among the races of South Africa."⁵²

Just a few days before the speech *Time* stated: "As the week ended, the country was alive with speculation that the white minority government of State President PW Botha was on the verge of making concessions that might, for the first time, affect the essential framework of apartheid. The entire country, and many other governments as well, was caught up in the rumours that Botha may announce a package of unprecedented reforms when he addresses the Natal provincial congress of his ruling National Party. Rumours were circulating throughout South Africa that the Botha government was ready at last to consider constitutional changes concerning the political status of blacks. Now the Botha government is saying that all this may be negotiable and that the country

⁵¹ Ebrahim, H., *Soul of a nation*, p. 269.

⁵² Younghusband & Watson & Kondracke & Warner, *Newsweek*, 19 August 1985, p.12.

should be prepared for the ‘most important’ announcement since Dutch settlers arrived at the Cape 300 years ago.”⁵³

In London, *The Times* quoted minister Gerrit Viljoen, as having said that the country should brace itself for “radical changes”. Even the generally conservative Afrikaans press got carried away in the frenzied speculation. “‘Gesamentlike besluitneming’ en ‘medeverantwoordelikheid’ sal die sluetelwoorde wees in die toespraak wat die Staatspresident ... Donderdagaand in Durban gaan hou,” reported *Die Vaderland*, “Alle aanduidings is dat mnr. Botha se toespraak ‘n bevestiging sal wees van vroeëre regeringsuitsprake asook ‘n klimaatskepping vir verdere onderhandeling met Swart leiers...”⁵⁴

The crux of the spin surrounding the anticipated speech was the Special Cabinet Committee’s supposedly groundbreaking proposals.⁵⁵ These proposals were:

- The six remaining homelands would not be forced to accept independence
- The black population in the homelands and so-called white areas would be officially regarded as South African citizens
- Constitutional accommodation for black South Africans would have to be worked out, this included giving them a say on all government levels where matters relevant to them were discussed, possibly including the President’s Council
- In order to succeed in the latter, the Nationalists were prepared to embark on negotiations with black leaders – albeit not necessarily the ANC – to workout how and when to constitutionally accommodate them⁵⁶

To put the above in the form of a speech, Botha instructed the Committee members to formulate drafts for him. Minister of Constitutional Development Chris Heunis and his team worked around the clock for two whole days, polishing various draft options; FW de Klerk with other Committee members also worked on a different option entitled a *Program of Principles of the NP*; the minister

⁵³ Prinsloo, p. 347; Coetzee, JH, “Die Durbanse toespraak” in *Oenskou*, vol. 3, no. 8, September 1985, p. 294..

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ De Klerk, p. 120.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

in charge of the economy, Barend du Plessis assembled his own draft; and Pik Botha also offered the Foreign Ministry's version, which was called *The State President's Durban Manifesto* written by one of his senior officials Carl von Hirschberg.⁵⁷

The original draft by Chris Heunis and Justice Minister Kobie Coetsee, cautiously implied that the government accepted that without negotiating with the ANC there could be no lasting political compromise in South Africa.⁵⁸ When PW Botha learnt that Pik Botha had contracted the famed advertising company Saatchi & Saatchi to market the Heunis-Coetsee speech internationally, he erupted. The furious Botha denied that he had accepted that particular draft – apparently he rejected Heunis' speech by literally tearing it to pieces.⁵⁹ Three days before the planned speech, Pres. Botha had a difficult meeting with an American anti-apartheid fighter.

US Congressman, Stephen Solarz – a prominent anti-apartheid campaigner – was known to many South Africans. He was one of the most energetic anti-apartheid fighters in Washington and a great supporter of anti-apartheid economic measures. He came to South Africa during August and spoke to various South African role players at different levels. Congressman Solarz even managed to be granted an audience with the State President himself. Before Solarz met with the State President he had talks with various other role-players including Pik Botha, who informed him of the fundamentally far reaching changes PW was planning to announce on August 15th. So, when the American visited the State President, on August 12th 1985, he was under the impression he was going to meet with the man who was going to end apartheid within the next three days.⁶⁰

Pres. Botha told Solarz that he would discuss South Africa with him, but only if he realised that it was on account of his interest in the country and “not because you have a right to interfere in our affairs. Because that I cannot except.”⁶¹

When Solarz asked Botha if he would be prepared to release Mandela, the President compared Mandela to Hess and the ANC to the Nazis.⁶² He also said: “I do not think that Mr. Mandela can

⁵⁷ Prinsloo, p. 342.

⁵⁸ Waldmeir, P., *Anatomy of a miracle: the end of apartheid and the birth of the new South Africa*, p. 55.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 55.

⁶⁰ Prinsloo, p. 343.

⁶¹ PW Botha Private Collection at INCH: PV 203: PS12/ 50/ 1/ 1985, August.

...speak for the Black people of South Africa... I do not think he will compare well with the other leaders we have. So I do not agree with you that Mr. Mandela can really make a contribution."⁶³ During the discussion, Pres. Botha made it clear to Solarz that his policies were preventing a rightwing upheaval: "I am leading White South Africa, and I am leading them on a road to peace, and negotiation, and reasonableness. But if I let loose White South Africa, God help the Blacks."⁶⁴

Regarding how far he was prepared to go with the democratization of South Africa through reform, PW Botha told Solarz: "Listen to me now, I am telling you what my bottom line is. I am not prepared, under no conditions, to accept one-man-one-vote in a unitary state... I am not prepared to undertake anything that will make my own people and White South Africa abdicate from their position..."⁶⁵

As noted above, Solarz had been told that PW Botha was more or less going to announce the end of apartheid within three days. Solarz repeated to Pres. Botha what Pik Botha had told him and asked Botha about the changes the President, according to his Foreign Minister, was supposedly going to announce. "No, no he could not have said it because that is not so. He could not have said it... He could not have said it, and I will not accept that he did," replied Botha, "No, he is a friend of mine... He would not have said it."⁶⁶ Solarz emerged from the meeting dumbfounded. He told journalists that the meeting with Botha would have made "a hot shower seem cold."⁶⁷

Slowly the strain of the furor about the speech was beginning show on PW Botha. According to Patti Waldmeir, Pres. Botha summoned his cabinet and handed them copies of a speech he had written himself and informed them that this copy "was what I'm prepared to say, who's agreeing with me, who not."⁶⁸ "I read my speech, which I wrote myself," Botha recalled later, "to the cabinet, and all of them agreed with what I was going to say."⁶⁹

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Prinsloo, p. 344.

⁶⁷ Reis & Dommissie, *Leierstryd*, p. 60.

⁶⁸ Waldmeir, p. 55.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Amidst the great furor, Dr. Anton Rupert, speaking at the Rembrandt Group's annual board meeting in 1985, said: "South Africa awaits us. If we succeed we will win the world's respect and attract the necessary capital like a magnet. Does this sound like wishful thinking? May I reiterate, 'those that do not believe in miracles are not realists.'" ["Suid-Afrika wag op ons. Slaag ons in ons taak, sal ons die wêreld se respek afdwing en die nodige kapitaal soos 'n magneet aantrek. Lyk dit miskien na verbeeldingsvlugte? Mag ek dan daaraan herinner dat 'wie nie in wonderwerke glo nie, nie 'n realis is nie.'"]⁷⁰ Many South Africans had hoped that Pres. Botha's speech would be that miracle.

On August 15th 1985, the large Durban city hall was packed to absolute capacity; more than a thousand Nationalists, interested commentators and curious members of the public were stacked in like sardines. Across the Republic millions sat and waited in front of their radios and TVs in tense anticipation. At the city hall a special media area was set up by the government for the large press and media contingent. Apart from the many locals, news teams from some 33 countries were also present to cover this momentous occasion. What many thought was going to be South Africa's greatest political event was going to be broadcast live to some 300 000 000 people across the world.⁷¹

Newsweek reporters also watched the speech on television with Desmond Tutu to catch his reactions. So great was the build-up that apparently Pres. Ronald Reagan watched it live in the White House and in England Prime Minister Thatcher was also glued to her television screen. PW literally had the eye and the ear of the world.⁷²

He noted that prior to the speech he had received "a great deal of advice" and that most of the *advisors* meant well but that he also received the advise of some who wanted to "help me from the frying pan into the fire. To those people I would like to say that I grew up on a farm and I recognise the smell of a mongoose" ["my van die wal in die sloot te help. Aan sulke mense wil ek sê – ek het op 'n plaas groot geword en ek ken 'n muishond aan sy reuk."]⁷³

⁷⁰ Esterhuyse, *Anton Rupert – pleitbesorger vir hoop*, p.133.

⁷¹ Joyce, P., *The rise and fall of apartheid*, p.124.

⁷² Youngusband, (et al), "Botha goes slow" in *Newsweek*, vol.06, no. 9, August 26th 1985, p. 7.

⁷³ PW Botha Private Collection at INCH. PV 203: 4/2/133: 1985: "Rubicon Speech"

Botha said that: "We are not prepared to accept the antiquated, simplistic and racist approach that South Africa consists of a White minority and a Black majority."⁷⁴ In his view South Africa was a country of minorities both among the White and Black communities. Furthermore, although his party accepted that South Africa was a multiracial country it rejected any possible system "of horizontal differentiation which amounts to one nation or group in our country dominating another or others."⁷⁵

The State President also reminded everyone who tried to disrupt the economy that if the apartheid-state suffers the "whole of Southern Africa will pay a heavy price."⁷⁶

He said that the country really needed so much positive upliftment that "we can ill afford the irresponsibilities and destructive actions of barbaric Communist agitators and even murderers who perpetrate the most cruel deeds against fellow South Africans, because they are on the payroll of their masters far from this lovely land of ours. I have the knowledge because I have the facts."⁷⁷

Dwelling on the socio-economic needs of the country, the State President reached the touchy subject of giving a statement of intent with an accompanying time frame for what he actually wanted to do with his country. Botha said that he was pressured by those with good intentions to give such a statement – as well as by "those who wish to destroy orderly government in this country." and: "I am not prepared to make it, not now and not tomorrow."⁷⁸

Of considerable importance, Botha said that although he believed that homelands could be part of the country's political solution he wanted to "restate my Government's position in this regard, namely that independence cannot be forced upon any community." Therefore if these homelands did not want to accept independence they "will remain a part of the South Africa nation, are South

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

African citizens and should be accommodated within political institutions within the boundaries of the Republic of South Africa.”⁷⁹

PW even said that this could possibly include “participation in institutions on a regional and/or group basis. We must be practical in this regard.”⁸⁰ This was profoundly *verligte* stuff, but lost because it was underplayed and tucked away behind a pompous delivery. Almost in the same sentence, Botha tackled one-man-one vote – his rejection of which he once again forcefully reconfirmed, because as he saw it, it would lead only “to domination of one over the other and it would lead to chaos. Consequently, I reject it as a solution.” He added: “I am not prepared to lead White South Africans and other minority groups on a road to abdication and suicide.”⁸¹

Next, he referred to the issue of freeing Nelson Mandela and said that he wouldn’t. Botha said that the violence of the country’s enemies should be a warning to South Africa, but that he also had a warning to give them, that his “readiness to negotiate should not be mistaken for weakness.”⁸²

He said that during the turbulent past few weeks and months, he had “applied much self-discipline” and that he had tried to be most “lenient and patient” but, taking a dramatic pause to leer at the audience, said – “*Don’t push us too far...*”⁸³

State President Botha repeated that South Africans would solve their own problems: “We have never given in to outside demands and we are not going to do so now. South Africa’s problems will be solved by South Africans and not by foreigners... we will not be forced into doing what we don’t want to do.” The State President said that “hostile pressure and agitation from abroad” had motivated the violent radical enemies of the state. “They have derived comfort and succour from this pressure.”⁸⁴

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

* Emphasis added by author.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Botha was adamant that his government would retain power and that nobody should doubt its determination to stay on top, warning the Government's enemies that they would be crushed. "If necessary," Botha said rather ominously, "we will use stronger measures but they will not succeed."⁸⁵

In conclusion, the State President said that the "principles" he announced there could have "far-reaching effects on us all." "*I believe we are today crossing the Rubicon*. There can be no turning back. We now have a manifesto for the future of our country..." said Botha at the end of his 18 page typed speech.⁸⁶

It would not be an overstatement to reason that in apartheid's political, diplomatic and economic history the Rubicon Speech is a clear and undeniable watershed. That is not to imply that the botched Rubicon affair was the ultimate catalyst for all the political-cum-economic developments in the latter half of the 1980s. Nevertheless, an unmistakable distinction can be made between the *pre-Rubicon* era and the *post-Rubicon* era.

"Die miljoene internasionale kykers was heeltemal verbysterd... Pleks van hulle toe te spreek in terme en op 'n manier wat hulle kon verstaan, het president Botha sy toespraak gemik op die onmiddellike gehoor bestaande uit Nasionale Party-ondersteuners in die Durbanse stadsaal. Hy het in terme gepraat waarmee hulle vertrouwd was, in die idioom van tradisionele Suid-Afrikaanse politieke vergaderings," recounted FW de Klerk, who later succeeded PW Botha as State President, "Die gevolg was 'n wesenlike ineenstorting van internasionale vertroue in die Suid-Afrikaanse regering se vermoë om die toenemende krisis van oral af te hanteer... Enige vertroue wat hulle dalk voorheen gehad het in president Botha se vermoë om die krisis te hanteer, het oomag verdwyn."⁸⁷

"They've jerked him around," said one White House official about the way Botha's speech had humiliated Pres. Reagan, "Those Afrikaners are a conniving bunch of bastards, and they've taken

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ PW Botha Private Collection at INCH. PV 203: 4/ 2/ 133: 1985: "Rubicon Speech"

⁸⁷ De Klerk, p. 122.

advantage of his general good feelings for that country.”⁸⁸ PW Botha received a letter from Thatcher.⁸⁹ “It seems to me,” the Prime Minister wrote, “that you will need an eye to the international repercussions of the timing and presentation of your decisions. What was eventually said in your speech in August did not match the expectations, which had been created nor indeed the reality of the decisions which were then considering. I should like to see you present the sort of proposals you mentioned to me as a major initiative by the South African Government, at the... appropriate moment.” “I am firmly convinced,” Chancellor Helmut Kohl wrote from Germany, “that the complete elimination of apartheid has to be the nucleus of any political and social system in South Africa if that system is to ensure peaceful inter-community relations”⁹⁰

Chester Crocker referred to Botha’s speech as ‘visceral xenophobia.’ He described Botha as “an angry man who appeared on television sets around the world. Reacting against the demands of his critics and distant foreigners. Instead of sending a healing message as the leader of all South Africans, he used the code language of an embattled minority in a polarised conflict.”⁹¹

The powerful administrators at the UN also watched Botha’s speech and they too were outraged. Ten days after the Rubicon Speech, the President of the United Nations’ Security Council released a statement on behalf of the Council, because of his division’s growing concern over the South African situation.⁹² “The members of the [Security] Council condemn the Pretoria regime for its continued failure to heed the repeated appeals made by the international community... in particular the demand... for the immediate lifting of the state of emergency.” All the Security Council’s members also damned the “continuation of killings and the arbitrary mass arrests and detentions” at the hands of the Botha government.⁹³

The Security Council also called, “once again, upon the South African government to set free immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners and detainees, first of all Mr. Nelson

⁸⁸ Watson, R. & Walcott, J. & De Frank, T. en Willenson, K. & Wilkinson, R. en Youngusband, P., “Special Report – South Africa: what can be done?” in *Newsweek*, vol. CVI, no. 12, September 16th 1985, p. 12.

⁸⁹ Prinsloo, p. 310.

⁹⁰ Prinsloo, p. 310.

⁹¹ Crocker, C., *High Noon in South Africa*, p.275.

⁹² Anon, *The United Nations and apartheid 1948 – 1994*, p. 393.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Mandela...⁹⁴ Furthermore, the statement put it emphatically that a “just and lasting solution” to the South African crisis “must be based on the total eradication of the system of apartheid...”⁹⁵ As long as the Government did not work quickly and diligently towards the creation of such a desegregated political dispensation “any pronouncements of the Pretoria regime can represent nothing more than a reaffirmation of its attachment to apartheid... In this context, they [the Security Council] express their grave concern at the latest pronouncement of the President of the Pretoria regime.”⁹⁶

Botha’s Rubicon speech had markedly soured the political climate even further. The South African *Sunday Times*’ biting editorialist Ken Owen wrote that the Rubicon speech made him realise that: “We live in a cloud-cuckoo-land.”⁹⁷ He also wrote of PW’s “bellicose” attitude before his global audience and how everything the State President said was “larded with gobbledegook from the lexicon of Nationalist ideology... The misperception is total.”⁹⁸ Owen argued that although Botha did make more promises he fell far short of actually announcing that he was to do something profound: “He has offered enough to risk by-elections, not enough to create a new political dispensation. So we do it the hard way. The recession will linger, and joblessness will recruit a new army of rebellious youngsters; emergency powers will be extended and used with diminishing restraint.”⁹⁹

If the *Sunday Times*’ assessment was negative, the *Financial Mail*’s was nothing less than a condemnation of the Nationalist State President and his government. Entitled “Leave now” the prominent South African economic magazine’s editorial article covering the speech began: “We are all under the admonitory finger of President PW Botha, people and markets alike. It’s like watching a bad magician at work – the kind who embarrasses even the children at birthday parties.”¹⁰⁰ The magazine said that the Rubicon debacle made it abundantly clear that PW Botha had gone as far as he could in leading South Africa into transformation and as such he would “pay

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Owen, K., *These times*, p. 37.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 38.

¹⁰⁰ Anon, “PW Botha – Leave now” in *Financial Mail*, September 6th, 1985, vol.97, no.10, p. 36.

the appropriate penalty... The man is hopelessly out of his depth and should, forthwith, go into well-earned retirement.”¹⁰¹

The author of the article continued to make clear that Botha had displayed courage once, leading the country into a new dispensation and even splitting his own party – so strong was his conviction in the new political route he had embarked upon. But, the magazine pointed out, that man, that PW Botha, was now something of the past, “a man at the end of his tether.” Far from keeping up morale, according to the article, Botha had made his countrymen and the world “uneasy and disturbed” about what the future held for South Africa.¹⁰²

The moral of the story was that Verwoerd’s apartheid had failed and now Botha’s own qualified multiracial system had broken-down too. Implicit there, according to the reporter, was that only one option was left, negotiations with black groups, including the ANC and Botha had told his country and the world that he would never allow that.¹⁰³ “The world,” noted the brash article, “is also frightened of the Nationalists’ *götterdämmerung* stance...” The article ended by calling for Botha’s immediate removal from office: “So all we have to say is: do it and go. And if you can’t bring yourself to do it, go anyway.”¹⁰⁴

Another popular South African financial magazine, *Finance Week*, also gave a blunt assessment of PW’s Durban address. “There is a frightening sense of unreality permeating the present SA political debate,” Allan Greenblo wrote and sharply added that when Botha referred to unrealistic expectations in the reform process he was absolutely right only “it is his expectations which are unrealistic.”¹⁰⁵ The magazine urged Botha to speedily set about enlarging the process of political participation, otherwise “SA’s political spectrum” would be too scant to produce anything lasting: “Stability won’t come through platitudes and reform won’t come cheap.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* pp. 36,38

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Greenblo, A., “Now or never” in *Finance Week*, vol.26, no.8, August 22-28, 1985, p.507.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

In England, *The Economist*, wrote that PW Botha seemed unstable and without a clear idea of where he was taking South Africa.¹⁰⁷ The newspaper stated that although Botha was moving further and faster with reforms than any of his predecessors, he was intimidated by the prospect of losing the support of conservative Nationalists and that made him unpredictable regarding his future plans for South Africa.¹⁰⁸

Many commentators agreed that the whole incident was a failure, yet some like a Prof. JH Coetzee, believed that the criticism on Botha's approach was unfair. In the October 1985 edition of the academic periodical of the Institute for Political and African Studies, *Oënskou* Coetzee tried to shift the blame away from the Nationalists. He argued that Botha's performance in Durban was aimed at his immediate Natal audience and that he wasn't necessarily aiming to address the international audience.¹⁰⁹ In fact, this was the crux of the whole debacle. The moment the Special Cabinet Committee decided that the President should announce the – then still thought to be an enormous – change at the Natal congress, the government effectively turned the party meeting into an announcement to the international community.

Coetzee's comment thus defined the axis of the fiasco – the fact that the State President decided to defiantly ignore the international implications of the whole episode. The Natal Congress of the National Party was an international event – an international event of the government's very own making.

The Rubicon Speech's global audience was not formed by impromptu interest, the Government had deliberately, albeit rashly, turned it into a world event. Had PW himself not written to the western leaders and explicitly wetted their appetites? Did Pik Botha not personally brief foreign diplomats? Had Pik Botha not lobbied overseas TV networks to broadcast the speech live? And had the authorities not taken great care in setting up technical electronic accommodation inside the city hall for the foreign media teams?

¹⁰⁷ *Die Volksblad*. 27 August 1985.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Coetzee, JH, "Die Durbanse toespraak" in *Oënskou*, vol. 3, no. 8, September 1985, p.296.

Whether delivered in parliament, his office, an SABC studio or at a National Party provincial congress did not matter, the fact remained that it was an international event – made so by the Botha government themselves.

Coetzee also noted that: “The impression that the criticism of the speech creates is that the critics reacted angrily and emotionally, because their predictions were not realised.” [“Die indruk wat die kritiek op die toespraak wek, is dat die kritici eintlik skaam kwaad en emosioneel gereageer het omdat hulle voorspellings nie bewaarheid is nie.”]¹¹⁰ And rightly so, because the media and the world community might have fed the snowball of expectation, but they did not create or dislodge it, the Government did that.

As FW de Klerk noted, the problem was not so much about *what* PW Botha said, but rather *how* he chose to say it. Knowing full well that hundreds of millions of people across the world were going to watch him, the President did nothing to adapt his style or content accordingly when he delivered the address. Here lie the seeds of fiasco. Although the planned speech was turned into an international event – the President did not also internationalise his speech or delivery. He simply defiantly ignored the global factor.¹¹¹

PW Botha approached this monumental opportunity as he did any National Party congress. He spoke in the idiom of Afrikaner power politics, to which his foreign audience was unaccustomed. Thus, the important enlightened strands of his speech were lost behind the strongman dramatics and bombastic hyperbole.¹¹²

Apart from bad publicity, the Rubicon Speech also had far reaching economic implications. Years later, Dr. Gerhard De Kock, then head of the South African Reserve Bank, estimated that the Rubicon speech had cost the country about R1 million – per word.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ De Klerk, p. 122.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.* p.123.

The South African business community realised what the economic implications would be and were understandably upset. The Chamber of Commerce and the Federated Chamber of Industries, in conjunction with the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce in combination with the Urban Foundation released a joint statement.¹¹⁴ It explicitly called for the lifting of the State of Emergency “as soon as circumstances permit.” “Equally essential is a commitment by government that it will deal even-handedly with the accepted leaders of the black community, even if some of those are currently in detention,” the statement read.¹¹⁵

Furthermore: “Our survival depends on making the necessary structural changes to uphold the political, social and economic values pursued by our major trading partners which represent, in essence, the great democracies of the world.” Accordingly, the statement explained, this was of cardinal importance because: “Should we fail to do so, the investors and traders will increasingly shy away from South Africa without any formal laws forcing them to do so.”¹¹⁶ Henri de Villiers, head of the banking giant Stanbic, said that it was “imperative that there should be a rapid shift in the alignment of political interests, and I support the call for serious negotiations between partners of equal status...”¹¹⁷

The wealthy casino boss, real estate developer and head of Sun International, Sol Kerzner, said that it was “time to be bold” and that the whites should get rid of apartheid “in one swoop.”¹¹⁸ He said that Government should be assured that the business community will be patient and understanding but should at the same time realise that “we do expect the speed of reform be increased and that apartheid be scrapped...”¹¹⁹

Pierre Steyn, the managing director of the Afrikaner dominated insurance giant SANLAM, said that “political stability” was now the most crucial political endeavour and “to achieve this,

¹¹⁴ “Business and reform – action now!” in *Financial Mail*, vol. 97, no. 10, September 6th, 1985, p. 64

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 65

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

provision will have to be made for blacks to be part of the decision-making process” as well as intricate changes to the influx control system.¹²⁰

Stanley Kubheka, the director of the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce, said that PW Botha’s government should “declare its intent to dismantle apartheid” and unconditionally release all its political prisoners. He also said that negotiations for a new dispensation should be conducted with “accepted black leaders”.¹²¹ Omar Motani, of Motani Lounge and Furniture, said that apart from the political emergency, “Billions could be saved and redirected to useful, viable investment if it did not have to be squandered on apartheid ideology.”¹²²

Gavin Relly, Harry Oppenheimer’s top man at the powerful Anglo American Corporation, said that because the causes for the monetary and economic crisis were political factors “any economic measures that the authorities may introduce will have no more than a short- to medium-effect unless they are also accompanied by a new political dispensation.”¹²³

Anton Rupert said that he thought there were “many good thoughts but not one single penetrating message... We need greater clarity from leadership clearer expression of what I think he wants to say.”¹²⁴ Still, Rupert thought that Botha had found himself in an “impossible” situation, and that if he really wanted to he could defuse the situation, but “timing is becoming increasingly urgent.”¹²⁵

Rupert also said that South Africa cannot “live with the position as it is now” and added, “we have many friends” who wanted to invest in and trade with the country, but “they want stability here. We must defuse the situation.” Implicitly he said that the only way to really remedy the economic crisis was to permanently do away with apartheid: “We have to set the people free to trade, to offer their services. The regulations of apartheid must go.”¹²⁶

¹²⁰ *Ibid*

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 64

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 65

¹²³ *Ibid*.

¹²⁴ “Rupert on reform – The will is the way” in *Financial Mail*, vol. 97, no. 10, September 6th, 1985, p. 64.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 65.

The business sector had reason for concern. *Die Volksblad* commented: "The campaign of disinvestments and the isolation of South Africa is increasing fast." ["Die veldtog om disinvestering en die isolasie van Suid-Afrika neem snel toe."] It reported how, in the wake of the Rubicon Speech, American, European and Scandinavian politicians were examining ways to implement tougher anti-apartheid sanctions.¹²⁷

By the time Botha's speech was over the rand had dropped from 44,5 cents, to the US dollar, to 38,5 cents.¹²⁸ Less than two weeks after the Durban speech, on August 27th 1985, or *Black Tuesday* as economists referred to it, it had fallen further to \$0.34. Context is important: in January 1983 R1 was worth US 0.95 cents. On the day of the speech, but before PW Botha delivered it, the currency had already shrunk to US 0.45 cents, all in all, a fall of about 53% in value in only two and a half years.¹²⁹

Reserve Bank Governor, Dr. Gerhard de Kock, and Finance Minister, Barend du Plessis, realised that the currency's bottom was beginning to wane. The writing was on the wall. Soon R1 would only be worth US 0.10 cents. Truly frightening, the South African rand would only be able to buy an American dime. Or other way around, ten American cents would buy one rand.¹³⁰ With that prospect the authorities had decided to throw the switch.

On the dreaded day, Tuesday August 27th 1985, there was a gold trading frenzy on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange as locals were buying up gold shares to cover themselves against the deteriorating rand. Gold shares were soaring and the rand was flooring.¹³¹ One stockbroker summed-up: "The share values reflect what South Africans are thinking: that everything is OK. The rand reflects what the world thinks, and it's saying God Help You."¹³²

On the same day, while PW Botha's speech had torn a possibly terminal hole in the hull of the country's currency, Dr De Kock, as chief of the Reserve Bank, had to deliver his annual

¹²⁷ *Die Volksblad*, 1 August 1985.

¹²⁸ Kenney, p.357.

¹²⁹ Bruce, N., "The rand and the cash crisis" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 4, no.3, 4th quarter, 1985, p. 42.

¹³⁰ Bruce, N., "The rand and the cash crisis" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 4, no.3, 4th quarter, 1985, p. 44.

¹³¹ Sampson, p.44.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Governor's report. He expressed concern about the fact that overseas bankers made no distinction between the country's economy and its politics when assessing its economic viability, interestingly, he did not mention what was going to happen right after he delivered his report.¹³³

On the evening of Tuesday August 27th 1985, after trading had ceased for the day, Minister Barend du Plessis announced the temporary closure of South Africa's financial markets. Many economists understood this as the prologue to a suspension of South Africa's payments of its foreign debts.¹³⁴ For Pretoria's economic gatekeepers the light at the end of the tunnel was not in sight anymore, the bottom of the barrel, however, was.

"We had to protect our banks... They did not know how many loans they would have to repay," Dr. De Kock explained, "The Germans and the Swiss banks were loyally standing by us, but did not want to be the last in queue for repayment."¹³⁵

After closing the markets for five days, the Finance Minister, Barend du Plessis, announced what many a concerned economist expected and feared, the Government was suspending repayment of all foreign debt until the end of 1985.¹³⁶

Having done that, Gerhard de Kock, over the next 13 days, flew to the loci of foreign capital to try and negotiate a rescheduling of Pretoria's foreign debt repayments. Explaining Pretoria's position, the Reserve Bank Governor begged for fiscal clemency at the most powerful banking institutions in the world. He went to banks in Frankfurt, New York, Zurich, Washington and London. In less than two weeks he met with 19 bankers, conferred with the executives of 4 central banks, gathered with the comptrollers at the International Monetary Fund and held talks with the State Department in Washington, all to no avail.¹³⁷ Although Dr. De Kock, the person, was well known throughout the western banking society and respected in the top echelons of the international banking

¹³³ Bethlehem, p.74.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* p.75.

¹³⁵ Sampson, p.44.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* p.45.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* p.46

community, on this trip, he got an icy shoulder. Sentence had been passed on the apartheid-state.¹³⁸ Pretoria would no longer succeed in separating its economic and political status.

With the political violence in South Africa reaching new and appalling highs, PW Botha's Rubicon speech and the ensuing economic scramble in the apartheid-state, Pres. Reagan held his ground. He came out strongly against the American Congress' sanctions drive. "I think," he said, "in this particular case, South Africa, they would hurt the very people we are trying to help."¹³⁹ It seemed that not everyone in the President's Republican Party agreed with him.

Although the President maintained his relatively moderate stance, Chester Crocker was not as assured as always of his policy's soundness. Even Crocker admitted that State President Botha and his so-called reformist government weren't all that the Americans had hoped them to be, "the changes we have seen to date are not adequate." Crocker also stated: "They don't satisfy us." and added: "More importantly, they don't satisfy the black majority in South Africa."¹⁴⁰

Some Republicans on Capital Hill downplayed the seriousness of the apartheid-issue to the American people and supported their president. But there were also others, like the Conservative Opposition Society who again strongly came out in support of sanctions and favoured much stronger anti-apartheid measures than their president was apparently prepared to enforce.¹⁴¹

In the meantime the Botha Government finally decided on a range of emergency economic measures to try and quell the monetary crisis. These were:

- To instate a 4-month freeze of foreign debt repayment
- To revive the dual exchange rate (which it had only abolished in 1983)¹⁴²
- To reinstate the system (used prior to 1983) whereby the government would pay gold mines in rands – not dollars – for output delivered at the Rand Refinery

¹³⁸ Bethlehem, p.75.

¹³⁹ Watson (et al), "Time has run out" in *Newsweek*, September 9th, 1985, p.17.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.20.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Bethlehem, p.76.

- To retain the services of a “reputable and independent international financial expert” to act as go-between in Pretoria’s negotiations with its foreign creditors¹⁴³

With these emergency regulations, South Africa’s proud and distinguished banking track record was shattered. In banking circles the country was in the company of the Third World from then on.¹⁴⁴

During September 1985, PW Botha received a letter from Pres. Reagan. The White House had decided to send their ambassador back to the apartheid-state, Ambassador Nickle had been temporarily recalled to the US, “to convey to you the deep concern and the compassion with which I have been following the difficult times the people of South Africa and your government are experiencing.”¹⁴⁵

He made Botha attentive to the fact that the apartheid-issue had gripped America’s attention “as never before.” He said that he had decided to oppose the Senate’s anti-apartheid sanctions legislation, and instead to impose his own measures “which signal the deep distress Americans share about the need for an end of repression and injustice in your country.”¹⁴⁶

The American President also urged Botha to be bold and daring and to initiate creatively progressive steps. He implored Botha to set about negotiating with blacks. In this regard he stressed that these black leaders had to include “key leaders now in jail.”¹⁴⁷ In his reply Botha told Reagan not to call for the release of the Government’s prisoners who refused to reject violence. And also criticised the American President’s decision to impose anti-apartheid measures.¹⁴⁸

As a counter to the American implementation of sanctions, at the end of August 1985, an interesting development took place. The very conservative American preacher Rev. Jerry Falwell,

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Watson (et al), *Newsweek*, September 9th, 1985, p. 20.

¹⁴⁵ Prinsloo, p. 322.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

whose Moral Majority organisation had quite a following among America's rightwing conservatives, visited PW Botha and came out strongly in support of his minority Government.¹⁴⁹

He said that he was going to implore "millions of Christians to buy Krugerrands" and to reinvest in the apartheid-state.¹⁵⁰

The American preacher called Bishop Tutu a "phony" and appointed himself the spokesperson for black South Africa.¹⁵¹ Furthermore he also planned to broadcast two programs about South Africa on his "Old Time Gospel Hour" radio-show, entitled "South Africa: The True Story."¹⁵²

Falwell's trip to the apartheid-state and his lobbying against sanctions, was made possible by hardliners in the White House and South African comptrollers and businessmen who were trying to counter the sanctions drive.¹⁵³ The head of the Methodist Church of South Africa slammed the American loudmouth, saying that he did not have the "slightest idea of what is happening in the hearts and minds of South Africa's people."¹⁵⁴

Irrespective of the feelings he aroused in South Africa, not even everyone in America's rightwing agreed with Falwell. One prominent conservative Republican politician, Vin Weber said that Falwell "runs a real risk of damaging his reputation" and that the Republicans could not back "a fundamentally racist government."¹⁵⁵

One of Reagan's more moderate officials opposed what Falwell was doing, saying that what "Falwell is doing is not helpful" and that now was the time "to be quite and apply constructive pressure, not to whip things into a frenzy in this country."¹⁵⁶ If Falwell was supposed to reverse America's disdain for the white minority government, he failed.

¹⁴⁹ Watson & Wilkinson, "The friends of Mr. Botha" in *Newsweek* in September 2nd 1985, p. 38.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 39.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 38.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

On September 9th 1985, Ronald Reagan's hand had been steadily forced. The conservative White House reluctantly enforced sanctions against the apartheid-state.¹⁵⁷ According to the regulations, the United States prohibited the following transactions:

- Loaning Pretoria money, with certain specified exceptions
- The exportation of computer technology and goods to Pretoria and any of its agencies involved in enforcing apartheid
- All nuclear trade – albeit with certain explicitly defined exceptions
- The American importation of South African manufactured armaments, ammunition and military vehicles¹⁵⁸

Reagan also announced that he had instructed his Secretary of State that he should assess the possible ban on the importation of Krugerrands.¹⁵⁹ “Recent developments in South Africa have serious implications for the prospects of peaceful change and stability of the region as a whole, a region of strategic importance to the US. The recent declaration of a state of emergency... the mass arrests and detentions, and ensuing financial crisis are of direct concern to the foreign policy and economy of the US. The pace of reform in South Africa has not fulfilled the expectations of the world community nor the people of South Africa. Recent government actions regarding negotiations on the participation of all South Africans in the government of that country have not sufficiently defused tensions and may have indeed exacerbated the situation,” explained the US president. Reagan then openly questioned the soundness of his constructive engagement approach to South Africa, saying that “our foreign policy of seeking change through peaceful means is seriously threatened.”¹⁶⁰

He said that for America to successfully influence the apartheid-state, it was important for the US to speak with one united voice and to show its contempt for the system by measures aimed “at key apartheid policies and agencies.” By November 1985, these measures were bolstered further with

¹⁵⁷ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute for Race Relations Survey 1985*, p. 122.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

some new and unparalleled restrictions on computer sales as well as a ban on the sale of any American product to the South African arms industry, police and or military agencies.¹⁶¹

In the meantime, Gavin Relly, the head of the Anglo American Corporation, was embarking on a daring diplomatic initiative. The mere fact that he and a small group of white South African powerbrokers were going on this trip made it an historic event.¹⁶²

The powerful top executive of the Anglo American Corporation along with Tony Bloom of the Premier Group; Zach de Beer, an Anglo American executive director; the editor of the *Sunday Times*, Tertius Myburgh; Peter de Sorour, the South African Foundation's top director; and Harold Parkendorf, the editor of *Die Vaderland* were going to do the unthinkable.¹⁶³ They were going to fly north to meet the ANC.

Initially, Harry Oppenheimer had sent Anglo American executives to meet informally with the ANC in London. They met at the end of 1984 and again in January 1985.¹⁶⁴ Hugh Murray, editor of the glossy *Leadership SA*, was asked to use his network of contacts in Zambia where the ANC had its headquarters. In July 1985, Relly flew to Zambia to discuss the planned meeting with Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda. Kaunda also chaired the eventual meeting, which was held at the Mfuwe hunting and game lodge.¹⁶⁵

Originally, Fred du Plessis, president of the South African Foundation and Dr. Anton Rupert, were also involved, but when news of the planned get-together reached PW Botha – who was enraged – they backed out. Even Harry Oppenheimer was not all that enthusiastic about the meeting and its possible repercussions.¹⁶⁶ Nonetheless, on September 13th 1985, the South African moguls met the Marxists.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Kanfer, S., *The last empire*, p. 252

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 252-253; Pallister, D. & Stewart, S. & Lepper, I., *South Africa Inc. – the Oppenheimer empire*, p. 195

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

The ANC's top officials were all there, Oliver Tambo, Thabo Mbeki, Pallo Jordan, Chris Hani and Mac Maharaj. The whites were told that if the ANC got to power, some of their businesses would be nationalised, the whites spoke of the need to constitutionally protect the white minority, the ANC opposed any racial qualifications.¹⁶⁸

Relly said he wanted the release of Mandela and integrated education. On the big issue about universal suffrage the two groups did not agree. But then again, talk as they might, neither side had the power to change Pretoria's laws. The two sides, with Kenneth Kaunda in the middle, chatted for some six hours and did not see eye-to-eye, but that was not the point. They had not expected too. What was historically important was the mere fact that they were actually talking to each other.¹⁶⁹

Afterwards, Tony Bloom's basic assessment of the meeting was published. He got the impression that the ANC was going through a "schizophrenic period." On the one hand its "tail is clearly up" about what was going on inside South Africa with Pretoria scurrying about with political violence, diplomatic pressures and an economic crisis. But on the other hand it was starting to dawn upon them that the minority authorities were still very much in control and that their liberation struggle would probably continue for a considerably long period. The implication was that they would have to stay in exile indefinitely.¹⁷⁰

Bloom felt that this was a serious factor inside the top ranks of the ANC, as they did not particularly enjoy waging their struggle in exile and neither did their underlings. He noted that they were exceptionally cordial and that there was a complete "lack of aggression, animosity or hostility towards us." He said that although the two sides differed completely on many issues, the debates never became volatile. Furthermore, he noted the "absence of traditional Marxist-Leninist jargon and dogma" on the side of the ANC and that even when they discussed the nationalisation of business they argued more within a socialist context than a Marxist backdrop. He also found it interesting that they referred to Sweden as their ideal, rather than the USSR.¹⁷¹ Bloom added: "I

¹⁶⁸ Pallister & Stewart & Lepper, p.195

¹⁶⁹ Kanfer, S., p. 252-253; Pallister & Stewart & Lepper, p.195.

¹⁷⁰ Murray, H., "A moment in history" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1985, p.30.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

believe that they are people with whom serious negotiations can be undertaken and with whom a certain amount of common ground could be found". Although there were "fixed positions on either side that are diametrically opposed" he believed that there was "room for compromise."¹⁷²

Of course as already pointed out, the government and other parties criticised Relly's quasi-diplomatic excursion as being "naïve" and "treacherous."¹⁷³ They, and big business as a whole, were told to follow Pretoria's lead in these matters or better yet, to stay out of them altogether. Benjamin Trisk, executive general manager of Tony Bloom's Premier Group, said that to expect South Africa's corporate community to ignore the blustery political atmosphere was "just so much nonsense."¹⁷⁴ He wrote that the Nationalists' "own creativity and vision is in doubt..."¹⁷⁵

Although he kept very quiet after the meeting, Gavin Relly eventually discussed the gathering. "My interest in the thing was entirely in order to develop a judgement about the importance of this crummy Marxism which they purported to advocate. I'm less concerned about who runs South Africa than I am about the form of economic system which prevails. My judgement is that the leadership of the ANC would be more interested in a viable and vibrant South African economy than they would be in a Marxian form of economy," the realistic Relly added, "It didn't alter their view that they would nationalize everything in sight but they were people who can be talked to and I am not so rigid about my own point of view that I am not capable of being talked too either."¹⁷⁶

Later during the year any real open and positive progress that could have grown from this quasi-diplomatic meeting were dramatically repressed, if not shattered.*

As international interest in the apartheid issue kept on escalating, the internationally popular American current affairs magazine, *Newsweek*, published a special edition covering the South African affair.¹⁷⁷ In their September 16th issue, Mark Whitaker suggested six steps which the

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Trisk, B., "Business and politics" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 4, no.4, 1985, p. 85.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁷⁶ Pallister & Stewart & Lepper, p. 196.

* A bomb, planted by an ANC cadre exploded at a shopping centre, on 23 December 1985, killing civilians. See Section I.

¹⁷⁷ Whitaker, M., "Agenda for change" in *Newsweek*, vol. 106, no.12, September 16th, 1985, pp. 20-21.

White House and other world powers should implement if they were really serious about ending white minority rule in South Africa.¹⁷⁸

These proposals are interesting and important, as they encapsulate many anti-apartheid activists' basic ideas of how Reagan should have gone about ending apartheid. Furthermore they should have served as a warning of things to come to the Nationalists – of what would happen if they didn't speedily implement more dramatic changes.

1. Abandon Constructive Engagement:

"Rightly or wrongly, constructive engagement... encouraged many white South Africans to believe that the United States was secretly on their side," as a result, wrote Whitaker, many black South Africans, especially among the radical youth, have grown antagonistic and aggressively suspicious of anything emanating from the west and particularly America.¹⁷⁹

2. Push Harder For Negotiations With All The Country's Black Leaders:

Washington ought to strongly encourage the Nationalists to talk to Oliver Tambo, Allan Boesak et al, and without preconditions.¹⁸⁰

3. Step Up Pressure To Release Nelson Mandela:

4. Support One Man One Vote:

Majority-rule and nothing else was what mattered, but wrote Whitaker, "Washington should try if possible to support a system that might also be acceptable to the white minority."¹⁸¹

5. Create And Press Tougher Sanctions:

The implication was that Reagan should get a sharper stick and a stopwatch to goad the Nationalists to move forward. The White House ought to impose more stringent sanctions and

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

pledge tougher ones if the Botha Government did not make appropriate concessions.¹⁸²

Furthermore, although Botha was reluctant to announce a timeframe for his supposed reform strategy, it did not mean that Reagan couldn't. Accordingly, if the white minority government had not moved forward with reforms at a respectable pace, i.e. for a year, then America should pressure them with increasingly harsh punitive measures.¹⁸³

6. Seek Protection For The White Minority And Western Interests:

In return for backing them, the US should obtain guarantees from the black leaders that they will handle the whites fairly and even handedly. Washington should also educate the blacks about the importance of white know-how and the value of western business ties and investment.¹⁸⁴

While international anti-apartheid activists criticised Reagan for not acting more aggressively and anti-apartheid commentators urged him to implement tougher sanctions, PW Botha organised a huge, but failed, conference between big business and Government.¹⁸⁵ It was now clear that the business community and Government were drifting further apart. The private sector, which had to bear the brunt of the country's political failures, was no longer interested in the government's grand promises, it wanted action.¹⁸⁶

"In my view," commented the head of the powerful Barlow Rand group, Mike Rosholt, "private-sector sentiment will no longer be affected by announced general intentions. It will look for implementation of proposals and then action."¹⁸⁷ Big business had realised that something had to be done and irrespective of their actual limited political force, they had to make the seriousness of the situation clear to the Nationalists – and the earnestness with which the private sector approached it.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁸⁵ "Business and government – Good Hope no more" in *Financial Mail*, October 18th 1985, vol.98, no.3, p. 41.

¹⁸⁶ Ackerman, R. & Prichard, D., *Hearing grasshoppers jump – the story of Raymond Ackerman*, p. 203

¹⁸⁷ "Business and government – Good Hope no more" in *Financial Mail*, October 18th 1985, vol.98, no.3, p. 41.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Because not all business leaders wanted to meet the ANC, they followed other routes in their attempts to head off the impasse. Therefore, amidst the economic distress, during October 1985, the retail mogul, Raymond Ackerman, organised what he called the Business Initiative. The head of Pick'n'Pay lobbied 92 South African business barons to back the endeavour.¹⁸⁹

The mere fact that 92 of the country's leading businessmen actually got together to produce a joint statement was no small accomplishment in itself. Although politically they were united, in business they were opponents. Indeed, there was some pettiness and bickering over the what, where, when, who and how; not every *enlightened* business baron was equally keen on the idea either.¹⁹⁰

Eventually they did produce a collective statement which was published as a full-page advertisement throughout South Africa and also abroad.¹⁹¹ The 4 most important points were the signatories' appeal to Pretoria that the government:

- Scrap all and any racially based legislation.
- Negotiate with legitimate black leaders about power-sharing.
- Give all South Africans South African citizenship.
- Restore and enshrine the rule of law.¹⁹²

When the advertisement was published in *The Times* of London, South Africa's liberal ambassador in London, Dennis Worrell, gave Ackerman a call. Worrell was arguably one of Botha's most important diplomats, but he also believed in the value of Ackerman's Business Initiative and its standpoints. Nonetheless he believed the timing was off.¹⁹³ This was not the right time to anger PW Botha. Suddenly, some of Ackerman's group withdrew from the project,

¹⁸⁹ Ackerman & Prichard, p. 203

¹⁹⁰ "Business and government – Good Hope no more" in *Financial Mail*, October 18th 1985, vol.98, no.3, p. 41.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 42.

¹⁹² *Ibid.* p. 41.

¹⁹³ Ackerman & Prichard, p. 203.

including Tongaat head Chris Saunders, Tertius Myburgh editor of the *Sunday Times* and Anglo America's head Gavin Relly.¹⁹⁴

Ackerman's group initiative was by no means the only incentive. In fact, by the last part of the year there were a whole array of groups calling for change and greater understanding of the political situation. Some of the smaller ones included Cape Town's Let South Africa Speak, set up by business and professional people to promote greater communication and understanding across the country's racial divide. "We want to meet each other in the street, not be dragged into the gutter..." they said.¹⁹⁵

Then there was the petition signed by hundreds of women, including Harry Oppenheimer's wife Bridgette Oppenheimer and Jane Raphaely, editor of the popular women's magazine *Cosmopolitan*, which called for the end of apartheid and the beginning of a just society.¹⁹⁶

Then five of the biggest business associations, including the Urban Foundation and the Afrikaanse Handels Instituut, sent a joint submission to the United Nations' hearings on multinational corporations in South Africa. The statement outlined how they were promoting change and were working for an end to apartheid.¹⁹⁷ Then there was Frederik van Zyl Slabbert and Mangosuthu Buthelezi's National Alliance Convention, which also aimed at promoting change and the end of apartheid.¹⁹⁸

These constructive political communications and calls for change occurred across the country. In September 1985, Dr. Anton Rupert, gave a candid interview to the *Sunday Star*.¹⁹⁹ The interview is relevant because it gives insight into how one of the country's leading Afrikaners and businessmen viewed the state of South Africa.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ "All for change" in *Financial Mail*, October 18th 1985, vol.98, no.3, p. 43.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *The Sunday Star*, September 29th 1985.

For Rupert, the writing wasn't just on the wall for separate development, its end was a fact. "Economic pressure and the acceptance of change by thinking youth means only one thing: Apartheid is dead," said Rupert, "But the corpse stinks and it must be buried, not embalmed." He stressed how Johannesburg and the southern African community was "more inter-linked and inter-dependent than Europe..."²⁰⁰ This geopolitical socio-economic mesh formed a key-factor in Rupert's reasoning why apartheid was redundant.²⁰¹

Talking of South Africa's prospects for change, Rupert said that many African leaders had finally "begun to understand that socialist dogma has failed" and that the white minority too "had seen that "our flirting with sociology has failed." He felt that in the light of these revelations, the time had arrived for all parties to repent and to "talk together."²⁰²

Quoting the Afrikaans saying, he said: "Dis nie nou tyd vir hoogmoed nie, dis tyd vir deemoed." The tycoon said that all South Africans should begin emphasising their common ground. As far as he was concerned this included the common area they all shared and their shared common needs, including: foreign investment, technological know-how, Western confidence in the country; other mutual interests including a banking system, transport system, common law, even shared medical and veterinary needs.²⁰³

He also said that there was no use in only letting some groupings speak. The implication was that there should be no co-option and no domination. Rupert said that the Afrikaner couldn't be regarded as "the sole spokesman for whites" and neither could the Xhosa be accepted as the only voice of black South Africans. Everyone should speak, every group should be accounted for.²⁰⁴

Asked what he thought about corporate executives talking to the ANC, Rupert said that he "certainly did not object" but that he was wary of not being "forced into making a choice

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

between... Mandela and Buthelezi." He said that he had had no "personal contact" with the ANC and that he "objects to the dogma of violence..."²⁰⁵

He expressed the sober awareness that bringing about the fundamental change that South Africa needed was almost impossible without taking risks, but added: "I believe that one has to preempt problems but that is awfully difficult in a democracy, like a crocodile any dogma has a long tail." For Anton Rupert, the unknown was more an opportunity than a blind risk. To give thrust to his argument and plea for PW Botha to enforce fundamental change he quoted the Swiss theologian and soldier Huldrych Zwingli: "For God's sake, do something brave."²⁰⁶

While Rupert expressed his viewpoints, the Botha Government's handling of the violent unrest was examined in Switzerland. After their conference, the International Commission of Jurists in Switzerland sent PW Botha a letter detailing their views.²⁰⁷ The Commission claimed that the South African security forces were guilty of murdering innocent women and children. The Commission also claimed that the Government was responsible for inciting the security forces to kill protestors.²⁰⁸

In the immediate wake of the Rubicon Speech, the banking crisis and renewed waves of political violence, the internationally popular American finance magazine *Fortune* did a special cover story on South Africa.²⁰⁹

Entitled "Time To Quit South Africa?" the article, with accompanying colour photos of police brutality, began by describing the difficult position of a business operating in the apartheid-state: "If you're head of an American company doing business in South Africa these days, you've got to be feeling harassed. You are convinced your company is an effective force for peaceful change in a country shaken by a... wave of violent protests against the hateful system of apartheid. But anti-apartheid activists are organising boycotts of your products and demonstrating outside your headquarters... Congress is racing to impose economic sanctions. As repugnant scenes of whites

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Die Volksblad*, 26 September 1985.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Nielson, J., "Time to quit South Africa?" in *Fortune International*, September 30th 1985, pp. 61-21.

beating blacks in South Africa fill the TV screen each evening, you begin to think: It's a small market. Who needs the hassle? How big would the write-off be and who would get the business?"²¹⁰

And that was just the political factors, the country had been in a deep recession for three years, a drought gripped the country, gold prices were falling and inflation was in the double digits, interest rates were high and, of course, there was that banking crisis. Not surprisingly then, by September 1985, some 13 American business had closed up shop and many more of the bigger ones were quietly reducing their South African operations.²¹¹

The article went on to note the pros and cons of leaving South Africa. The pros being that it might force the Government to change and if not the companies don't have to endure being harassed by anti-apartheid campaigners and if racial war did break out it was better leave while you still could.²¹²

On the cons list of pulling out, there was the fact that American politicians, businessmen and anti-apartheid fighters loose their conduit for motivating change in South Africa and of course whether pulling out of the apartheid-state would actually make any difference. "For US companies in South Africa, the most worrisome signal of what lies ahead may have come not from the picket lines in America but from the black townships in South Africa."²¹³

The article concluded by citing a London *Sunday Times* poll which found that 43% of young blacks supported the violent option to end apartheid, "Says a US businessman: 'It seems that among young blacks death is preferable to life under apartheid.' Most American companies want to work for peaceful change in South Africa, but they might not have the time."²¹⁴ Still, one of the biggest American business institutions, the giant tyre manufacturer Goodyear had decided to stay in the country for the time being.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 16.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.* pp. 16-21.

²¹³ *Ibid.* p. 21.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Although Goodyear's South African business accounted for only a tiny percentage of their global operations, profit margins were good. William R. Miller, a Goodyear vice-president was adamant that staying in South Africa was assuredly not an expression of support for apartheid or its minority government. Instead the powerful executive argued: "Long before any pressure was applied, Goodyear was doing things contra to the apartheid laws because it thought it was the right thing to do."²¹⁵

During this time Goodyear had operations in some 28 countries, including some unstable third world ones like Argentina and Zaire, and, said Goodyear International's executive vice president, should the company withdraw from the apartheid-state it "would send a message to other countries that Goodyear is a company that folds its tent when things get hot."²¹⁶ The president of Goodyear International, Jacques Sardas, explained: "Things would really have to deteriorate a lot more for us even to consider the possibility of selling out. But if there's a total collapse or revolution, we could make such a decision in a half-hour."²¹⁷

In light of the prevailing atmosphere surrounding South Africa, as put forward in the *Fortune* article and scores of others, it isn't strange that it seemed as if everyone in South Africa worth their salt belonged or subscribed to some forum, group, committee, organisation or enterprise calling for change and the promotion of better understanding of each other – particularly each other's colour politics. South Africa was talking, debating, arguing and discussing like never before. Although these probably did not directly lead to grand fundamental changes, these private economic-cum-political-cum-diplomatic cultural/communicative enterprises lead to greater understanding of the situation and of each other's groups in general and did contribute to a more open society. What effect this had on the Botha Government can only be guessed, surely though, it is unlikely that these discussion forums had any great influence on the President.

PW Botha addressed the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, on September 9th 1985, and lamented all the *unfair* pressures aligned against Pretoria and the country.²¹⁸ He said that South

²¹⁵ Kessler, F., "Goodyear toughs it out" in *Fortune International*, September 30th, 1985, p. 23.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Scholtz, JJJ, *Fighter and reformer*, p.78.

Africa was a microcosm of the world and that it was here that “emotions of hatred and guilt are discharged by the international world. South Africa is caught in the collision between the First and the Third World, with the Soviet Union and its clients as catalysts in the struggle against this country.”²¹⁹

At Delareyville on October 10th 1985 he spoke of the “international lie and pharisaic hypocrisy” and that the international leaders preferred to ignore “realities” and rather acted upon “perceptions.”²²⁰ “The critics of South Africa will not act when we present them with the realities of this country; they want to talk to you about perceptions, impressions.” Eleven days later he told Free State Nationalists that there was “an international lie directed against this country in an organised manner.”²²¹ Botha might have quite possibly had a planned Commonwealth meeting in the Bahamas in mind, where South Africa and the Botha Government was high on the agenda. .

At the Bahamas conference of Commonwealth heads of state held in October 1985, the overriding issue was what the organisation should do about the situation in South Africa. Surrounded by the luxury of Lyford Clay, the politicians conceived the Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa. It acknowledged that thus far they had not at all been successful in eradicating apartheid and that “the situation calls for urgent practical steps.”²²²

The group called on the Botha Government to execute a series of far-reaching measures in order to fundamentally and totally scrap the system of apartheid. To give some thrust to their ideas the assembled heads of states introduced a new package of anti-apartheid sanctions. These covered the economic, military and socio-cultural spectrums.²²³

At the Commonwealth rendezvous British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was the only leader who opposed the implementation of sanctions. Tensions ran high and Thatcher was attacked for her stance. “I was lectured on my political morality, on my preferring British jobs to black lives, on my lack for concern for human rights,” Thatcher later said. The debate turned nasty, but

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.* p.79.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² Geldenhuys, *Isolated states*, p. 278

²²³ *Ibid.* pp. 278-279.

Thatcher held her ground. Then, after three hours, when the debate had turned personal, Thatcher hit back.²²⁴

“To their palpable alarm I began to tell my African critics a few home truths,” Thatcher recalled, “I noted that they were busily trading with South Africa at the same time as they were attacking me for refusing to apply sanctions. I wondered when they intended to show similar concern about abuses in the Soviet Union, with which of course they often had not just trade but close political links. I wondered when I was going to hear them attack terrorism. I reminded them of their own less than impressive record on human rights.” The Ugandan representative took Thatcher on about racial discrimination, “...I turned on him and reminded him of the Asians which Uganda had thrown out on racial grounds, many of whom had come to settle in my constituency in North London...”²²⁵

After this Thatcher attended a meeting of the draft committee to decide on just how to impose the Commonwealth sanctions. There she again came under bitter attack. “I had never been treated like this and I was not going to stand for it,” she recalled, “So I began by saying that I had never been so insulted as I had been by the people in that room and that it was an entirely unacceptable way of conducting international business.” The other members said that they didn’t mean anything personal, “I answered that it clearly was personal and I wasn’t having it.”²²⁶

The members became more modest in their approach to Thatcher and asked what she would accept. The British Prime Minister’s concessions included a prohibition on the importation of krugerrands. She told them that if her proposals were not accepted, she would withdraw from that Commonwealth assembly altogether, go back to London and that Britain would release its own statement. They accepted her conditions.²²⁷

The Commonwealth’s sanctions package was not what the actual commotion was about. They had decided to send a special contingent of Commonwealth representatives to South Africa, known as

²²⁴ Thatcher, M., *The Downing Street years*, p. 517

²²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 518.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 519.

the Eminent Persons Group.²²⁸ The British leader was persuaded by Canada's Brian Mulroney, India's leader Rajiv Gandhi and Bob Hawke to support not only a phase-by-phase increase in some anti-apartheid measures but also, in accordance with the jointly endorsed Commonwealth's Southern African Accord, the creation of a "small group of eminent Commonwealth persons to encourage... political dialogue" aimed at bringing about a non-racial South Africa.²²⁹

The Eminent Persons Group was chaired by Nigerian General Obasanjo and included former Australian Prime Minister Malcom Fraser, Britain's Lord Barber, Nita Barrow of the Bahamas, John Malecca from Tanzania, Swavan Singh from India and Canadian Archbishop, Edward Scott.²³⁰

Thatcher, who had endured bitter attacks for her opposition of anti-apartheid sanctions, beseeched PW that the least he should do was to accept the Group into his country in a positive and constructive manner.²³¹ At first State President Botha did not at all warm to the idea, he did not want these foreign fact finders anywhere near South Africa. But, after the minority government's international position became increasingly precarious, the Nationalists reconsidered.²³²

Eventually PW wrote to the chairperson of the Eminent Persons Group and said that he was prepared to take a constructive approach to them. But, warned the President, the Group should under no circumstances act like a pressure group; they shouldn't make the mistake of trying to force his government's hand in making concessions.²³³ If the delegates could be objective, without any preconceived ideas or bias and could impartially promote peaceful political dialogue in the apartheid-state, then he had no objection.²³⁴

While tensions were brewing within the Commonwealth and the organisation resolved to send their representatives to examine the South African crisis firsthand, the Government's economists and macro bankers were still trying to resolve the country's banking crisis, which had started

²²⁸ Hawke, B., *The Hawke memoirs*, p. 319

²²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 320.

²³⁰ Prinsloo, p.313.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

during August 1985. While tensions arose at the Commonwealth meeting on the apartheid-issue, tensions were still running high on South Africa's banking crisis.

Both the Commonwealth's decisions regarding South Africa and the resolutions of the banking community trailed on through the rest of the decade. As such, while the visit to the country of the Eminent Persons Group will be examined later, it is important to look at where the banking crisis was at this stage.

The government needed the help of a go-between to sort out its problems with the foreign bankers. The Swiss banking expert, Dr. Fritz Leutweiler was requested to fill the position. Leutweiler's job was to facilitate an agreement between Pretoria and the bankers – a Herculean task indeed. Between May 1985 and March 1986 foreign monies were withdrawn from South Africa to the tune of US\$1, 000, 000, 000.²³⁵

Overseas banks withdrawing from the apartheid-state was nothing new, as Dr. Leutweiler most certainly knew. In the 1970s his own Swiss government restricted long-term loans to Pretoria; Japan banned loans to the apartheid-state as did the Dutch commercial banks and so too the Bank of Boston and the legendary Citicorp. The decade ended with America's liberal Pres. Carter prohibiting Eximbank loaning to Pretoria. The new decade began with the Toronto Dominion Bank quitting its funding to Botha's country.²³⁶

Then, in 1983 the US representative at the International Monetary Fund [IMF] were given orders to oppose all loans the IMF would have spent on the economy of the apartheid-state. The following year some six US banks ceased their funding of the country's corporate sphere. The National Bank of North Carolina blocked its flow of funding, as did the Swedes. The already mentioned Bank of Boston gave emphasis to their ban on loans to Pretoria by extending that to include the country's private sector as well. And in mid-1985 France and Canada ceased loans to South Africa.²³⁷

²³⁵ Geldenhuys, p. 404

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

Pretoria's foreign banking debt crisis included some 400 banks, but Leutweiler decided to hold a meeting with the 29 most important.²³⁸ Prominent activists in the anti-apartheid campaign including, Father Trevor Huddleston, Bishop Tutu and Dr. Beyers Naudé, all lobbied the banks and appealed to them not to help Pretoria resolve its economic crisis. The bankers were very compassionate about these requests, but they wanted their money, if apartheid got ended along the way – good, but first and foremost they were bankers.²³⁹

Chris Stals, a top comptroller at the Reserve Bank, and chairperson of the government's special Standstill Committee²⁴⁰ that was organised to handle the crisis, lead Pretoria's contingent at the meeting with the foreign financiers, with Leutweiler in the middle. Stals said that there was absolutely no way that the South African authorities would be able to repay US\$14.3 billion in a single year. Not good enough though for the bankers, some debate followed but no agreement was reached.²⁴¹

According to Dr. Gerhard de Kock, in purely technical economic terms, Pretoria ought not to have had any worries but "because of political considerations it was a very difficult meeting... The banks can't be seen as helping South Africa because it would be seen as propping up apartheid."²⁴² The power of foreign banks to make the white minority government sweat was now clear. The famous former American politician and president of the World Bank, Robert McNamara, argued in favour of using the power of the banks to pressure Pretoria for political change by way of a financial ultimatum: The banks would help Pretoria – if and when the Nationalists negotiated.²⁴³

Said Stals: "We could play the role of messenger and deliver political demands to the government, but we did not have a mandate to negotiate a political package – we are merely a technical team."²⁴⁴ For obvious reasons the Botha Government wanted to separate its politics and economy, including credit ratings and currency, as far as possible. But that was exactly the problem.

Business had turned into politics and visa versa. "If," explained one banker, "there was a statement

²³⁸ Sampson, p.50.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ "Foreign debt – untying the knot" in *Financial Mail*, October 25th, 1985, vol. 98, no. 4, p. 37.

²⁴¹ Sampson, p.51

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ "Foreign debt – untying the knot" in *Financial Mail*, October 25th, 1985, vol. 98, no. 4, p. 37.

of a... constitution that had some integrity, South Africa would find foreign creditors approach rescheduling with a different attitude.”²⁴⁵

Eventually, in February 1986 the South Africans and the bankers reached an agreement. Accordingly, an end to the moratorium on foreign debt repayment was bashed out and an extension was granted – until June 1987 – on debts frozen in 1985. By April 1987, the Government had to pay at least 5% of its total outstanding debt. This was followed by yet another agreement in March 1987 that included a rescheduling of repayments covering a three-year period. By late 1988 the Government got good news again as the foreign banks agreed to extend the repayment of some US\$3 billion of their debt into the early 1990s. Citicorp and Manufacturers Hanover agreed to rollover on their loans well into the 1990s.

It is vitally important to remember that irrespective of the country’s position regarding its debt problems, its currency was still regressing. The implication was dire. Pretoria’s debt grew in dollars as their rands became less worth. At the end of 1987, Pretoria had a debt of R43, 6 billion. By October 1988, the rand had lost some more value, so that according to the exchange rate the country now had a debt of R56, 5 billion.²⁴⁶

And make no mistake, although Pretoria scraped by in obtaining trade credits overseas, after mid-1985, actual loan funding had become scarce. Barend du Plessis, Botha’s Finance Minister, even admitted as much and more in 1988 when he said that the country would be cut off from any foreign loans “for the foreseeable future.”²⁴⁷

The 1985 banking crisis was a watershed in the prologue to the end of apartheid. Stripped from technical economic jargon, the crisis and its implications were dire in their simplicity, the price of South African apartheid had now finally overtaken the price of South African gold, and anything else it had to offer for that matter. Whereas the minority Government had always succeeded in paying a good economic dividend, Botha’s country had now become shaky in the eyes of the

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 37-38.

²⁴⁶ Geldenhuys, pp. 403-406.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

international financiers and bankers. The world saw South Africa as an unstable country with an uncertain future.

Simply put: you don't furnish a house when it's on fire, you try to get your furniture out as quickly as possible before the whole thing collapses. This is how many of the world's leading businessmen and bankers thought of South Africa. Why invest in a country where, as 1985 showed, anything could happen? Quite arguably, the idea of South Africa having an apolitical capitalist economy had expired. Apartheid politics and the South African economy had become inseparable. And although during this period things had not yet become economically unliveable, analysts knew what lay ahead. The apartheid albatross was dragging the South African economy into the depths of a socio-economic-cum-political quagmire.

The country's economic recovery lay not in the realm of economics, but in the political sphere. The next few years in the period covered in this study served to highlight these realisations. Nigel Bruce, editor of the influential newspaper *Business Day*, poignantly summed-up: "The cash crisis, the capital boycott, the irreparable harm done to our credit ratings, the international opprobrium heaped on apartheid these have all heightened the insecurity associated with prolonged township violence. They signal radical change, of some form or other, probably lies ahead. All that is missing is the identification of a catalyst... If so, this need not necessarily mean that we face cataclysm. Without being absurdly optimistic, it could also mean a period of enhanced but uncertain opportunity even if at a slower pace than in the past. But for that to happen the appropriate political changes need to take place. What they should be, like the value of the rand tomorrow, is perhaps better forecast by a political scientist than an economist."²⁴⁸

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha, and his department were under tremendous pressure during this period. On the one hand he had to justify the Government's security measures and on the other hand, had to try and persuade the international community not to close ranks against South Africa. At the end of 1985 he lamented his government's precarious position in a

²⁴⁸ Bruce, N., "The rand and the cash crisis" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 4, no.3, 4th quarter, 1985, 42-47. p. 47.

Leadership SA article entitled "The Sacking of the South."²⁴⁹ He stated that "no other country is faced with problems as complex, as sensitive, as emotional or as potentially dangerous," as those working in on South Africa and its minority government.²⁵⁰

It was important for Pik Botha that his Government's critics realise how complicated the situation was and that change would require time and patience. The Minister of Foreign Affairs explained how the pace of reforms was established by "internal considerations" and that a constructive international climate towards the Government boosted the process of change. But "punitive actions" directed from abroad and targeted against the Nationalist government "have aggravated our problems in promoting reform."²⁵¹

According to Pik Botha, the Government's "political program" to further change South Africa, centred around:

- Providing for a united South Africa and common citizenship
- Granting "full political participation" in Government "in respect of matters of national concern of all our communities"²⁵²
- Accepting the principle of power sharing with regards to national affairs "subject only to the principle of the protection of the rights and interests of minorities through group autonomy."
- Understanding that "white domination" will necessarily have to go, so that no single group will dominate another.
- Ensuring the "creation of structures" which will be needed and utilised "to give effect to these principles through negotiations with the leaders of all the communities of this country."
- Making it clear that Pretoria would not dictate "who may represent the other communities or what the agenda will be for negotiations."²⁵³

These points seem quite extensive, but as critics pointed out, also vague and there was no stated timeframe. The actual question was how the State President and his ruling National Party were

²⁴⁹ Botha, RP, "The sacking of the South" in *Leadership SA*, vol.4, no.4, 1985, p.12.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

going to interpret these points, how they were going to go about it, when and using what structures.

On using sanctions to try and force Pretoria to change, Pik Botha wrote that the idea was based on “fallacies.”²⁵⁴ The Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote that when the Government decided how and when and whether to change, it considered “domestic needs” and not foreign affairs: “We have changed because we are conscious of what is right and what is wrong.”²⁵⁵ On foreign critics, Pik Botha stated that his government refused to accept that “persons who rule over many of the most oppressed and downtrodden people on earth should prescribe to us what is right.”²⁵⁶

The Foreign Affairs Minister, like so many other government officials arguing against sanctions, argued that the world could not hurt the white minority power without also severely crippling the economies of South Africa’s struggling black ruled neighbours. Destroy the South African economy and the whole region would dissolve.²⁵⁷ There were “350 000 foreign blacks” legally labouring in the apartheid-state. In 1983 “more than 50 per cent” of Lesotho’s GNP was derived from these workers’ income. Each of these 350 000 workers supported an estimated six people back home: 2 000 000 people across the region survived on money earned by their menfolk in the apartheid-state. Those, it should be remembered, were just the legals, there were some 1 200 000 more illegal black foreigners working in South Africa.²⁵⁸

Furthermore, Pik Botha stated that those who banned loans should remember that the Electric Supply Commission (ESCOM) and the South African Transport Services (SATS) were the biggest borrowers. ESCOM supplied electricity to Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and Mozambique. SATS controlled a quarter of the whole continent’s railroading. Pretoria’s postal and telecommunications sectors also borrowed large sums abroad to develop their services.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 17.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 18.

Irrespective of these and other similar arguments, the global anti-apartheid sanctions drive continued unabated, in fact it gained renewed momentum. In no small part due to Pres. Botha and his government's staunch unwillingness to initiate faster and further change – the Government's stringent handling of the violence also played a key role.²⁶⁰

Raymond Ackerman, the wealthy retailer and prominent fighter against disinvestment, explained how at the end of 1985, "it had become so much harder, not only to persist in speaking out against disinvestment and sanctions, but to keep faith with the belief that the government would eventually dismantle apartheid, would take the steps necessary to re-establish South Africa as an honourable country in the world. It was difficult if not impossible to see any kind of future... For the first time, a Markinor poll ominously revealed that a clear majority of black South Africans saw civil war as inevitable. How much worse could it all get?"²⁶¹

Early on the morning of December 23rd 1985, a bomb exploded at a crowded shopping centre in Amanzimtoti, Natal.* The ANC-made bomb targeted so-called *soft targets*. It created a bloodied mess and killed civilians and children. Oliver Tambo spoke out against it, saying that it was the work of frustrated rogue ANC agents, but he did not disavow violence per se. Tambo said that it was "because of the violence" that Anglo American's Relly and his group of corporate executives had felt obliged to meet with his outlawed organisation.²⁶² Relly was furious and outraged by the ANC's *soft target* killings. He spoke out against the ANC and said that Tambo had misled him in Zambia.²⁶³

Before one is done with 1985, it is important to make a sensitive assessment of the personality of PW Botha. This is based on the basic message of indeed various many other evaluations as well as having read and studied a plethora of Mr Botha's speeches, writings, interviews, actions and pronouncements. In the period after the Rubicon Speech, and not necessarily because of it, PW Botha had undergone a metamorphosis.

²⁶⁰ Ackerman & Prichard, p. 203.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

* See the chapter on Umkhonto we Sizwe in Section 1.

²⁶² Kanfer, p. 354.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

Although his political outlook more or less stayed the same, PW's persona underwent an evolutionary regression. Something, somewhere, on some level within the President's character had changed. PW Botha's incumbency systematically regressed into what many referred to as the *Imperial Presidency*. The time of, as journalists referred to him, *Die Groot Krokodil* had arrived. This was PW Botha's final, and eventually, politically fatal, change.

President Botha increasingly became an elusive and even to an extent, reclusive, enigma. In the first half of his tenure as State President, Botha showed himself to be someone who was pragmatic and would act accordingly politically. During the last three years of his presidency, the State President became erratic.

What state was South Africa in at the end of 1985? Ken Owen called for "statesmanship."²⁶⁴ He wrote: "Meanwhile, the society continues to adjust to stress in its own blind, brutal way. Capital flees through nooks and crannies, jobs disappear, the currency moulders and prices go up. Youngsters plot in corners, and police hunt them down in the dark. Unemployment undercuts the bargaining power of the unions, erodes the gains in living standards won so arduously during the Seventies, brings capitalism into disrepute, and glamorises revolutionary violence, thus laying the basis for renewed cycles of violence and hardship."²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Owen, K., *These times – a decade of South African politics*, p. 60.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 5

1986: PARIAS AND PIRANHAS

When Fritz Leutweiler, the Government's go-between in its dealings with the banks, went to see Pres. Botha in 1985, he called on the President to do something bold, to move creatively forward so as to try and restore bankers' confidence in his government's leadership; to give the foreign business community confidence in the Government to bring about fundamental change.¹

After the Rubicon affair, PW Botha realised that only quick political grants would bring about the foreign capital his country so desperately needed. The government assured Leutweiler that during the opening of parliament in 1986, State President Botha was going to announce some profound changes.²

The speech, to be delivered at the opening of parliament, was dubbed *Rubicon 2* by the media. Government's whole attitude towards *Rubicon 2* was different and more responsibly controlled.³ On Friday, January 31st 1986, State President PW Botha gave his traditional Presidential address at the opening of parliament. Some 13 points can be distinguished in Botha's speech:

- Apartheid was a depleted political concept. Instead Pretoria would now work towards the ideal of powersharing
- A national Statuary Board, to be chaired by PW Botha himself, was envisaged for the future. The idea was that leaders from all communities would thus be involved in the country's management as well as setting about writing a new constitution
- The dreaded influx control was to be scrapped⁴
- The creation of a permanent and joint body would be erected for the co-ordination of security affairs throughout Southern Africa

¹ Sampson, A., *Black and gold – tycoons, revolutionaries and apartheid*, p. 298.

² *Ibid.*

³ Hauptfleisch, DB, "Die tweede oorsteek van die Rubicon" in *Journal for Contemporary History*, vol.11, no.1, April 1986, 101-102.

⁴ *Ibid.*

- The government will endeavour to create a united South Africa, inclusive of the so-called independent homelands
- Common citizenship for all
- The total scrapping of the hated, not to mention costly, pass system: to be done before July 1st 1986
- Legislation regarding black property rights
- The initiation of a uniform identity document for everyone
- The rectifying of the immigration policy in order to remove certain discriminatory conditions
- The governing powers of the so-called independent homelands would be expanded
- The provincial governments were to be restructured in order to include all the communities
- To strive for equal education for all
- The possible release of Nelson Mandela on humanitarian reasons⁵

In terms of public relations, the speech was a success. "When a National Party leader declares that apartheid is outdated," the *Sunday Times* stated, "... only the blind or the wilfully perverse will persist in claiming that nothing has changed in this country."⁶ *The Sowetan*: "Perhaps the most significant difference between Mr. Botha's speech...and what is now known as Rubicon I was the style of delivery. Even the headline-grabbing part about Nelson Mandela was delivered in a more sombre style."⁷ *Business Day* thought PW "handled a difficult situation with phlegm and charisma."⁸ "Perhaps," the *Pretoria News* commented, "just as important these days as what President Botha says is how he says it. It is hugely encouraging to see that the President and his advisors... have accepted this principle... His speech... was crisp, well-written and, for the most part unambiguous."⁹

The Anglo American Corporation's top man, Gavin Relly also bestowed praise on PW Botha's performance, saying that *Rubicon 2* had "brought South Africa back into the mainstream of western thinking..."¹⁰ Soon afterwards, the rand speedily rose back to US\$0.45. Of course the

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Sunday Times*, 2 Feb. 1986.

⁷ *The Sowetan*, 3 February 1986.

⁸ *Business Day*, 3 February 1986.

⁹ *Pretoria News*, 3 February 1986.

¹⁰ Sampson, p. 299.

blacks and the overseas critics were less appreciative, but for the moment, it was a successful political offering.¹¹

After the speech, the State President appeared on most of the SABC's television channels and various radio stations, further explaining the implications of his speech. On the Sunday following the speech, Pretoria had bought double page advertisements in the 3 biggest Sunday-newspapers, which were followed during the next week by the same advertisements placed in all the leading dailies and some 50 other regional newspapers.¹²

The advertisement, explaining the speech, had a large heading: "Revolutionaries may stamp their feet. The communists may scream their lies. Our enemies may try to undermine us," but, said the ad, "Here is the reality."¹³

The political notice, signed by PW and presented as if he had written it personally, stated: "My government and I are committed to power sharing... Those who want to seize power shout that apartheid lives. Well, those who want to share power say that is dying. That is reality."¹⁴ The advertisement went on to explain other *realities*, the scrapping of the pass system by July 1st and the future removal of influx control, because according to the notice: "Our policy is one of encouraging development. Not controlling movement."¹⁵

The State President, pointing to all the reform announcements he made in his speech, added: "I don't intend to stop here... I will go further." At face value, these were progressive pledges. But the President added: "South Africa will never hand this country over to those who would see it destroyed... Peace and prosperity will come about for those are with us. And despite those who are against us."¹⁶

¹¹ Sampson, p. 299.

¹² Vorster, PJ, "Political communication in South Africa after Rubicon: a trend towards professionalism?" in *Communicare*, vol.5, no. 1, 1986, p.21.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 22

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Although people liked what Botha had said, they wanted to know exactly when and how the Government was planning to instate these many and far-reaching changes. The greatest factor here was what government intended to do next.¹⁷ Words had to be matched by deeds. In that one well choreographed address, PW Botha made some truly epic political forecasts, but if he couldn't, or wasn't really prepared to act as boldly as his words were epic, then the Government would only lose more trustworthiness and it would only serve to frustrate its legitimacy crisis even further.¹⁸ As for the good publicity, a month after *Rubicon 2*, an incident occurred which negated some of that positive promotion.

Pik Botha, had called a press conference for foreign journalists, scheduled for February 6th 1986. Many issues were raised and finally one newsman put a hypothetical question to the Nationalist Minister. The journalist asked the Foreign Affairs Minister whether, hypothetically speaking, he would be prepared to serve under a black president in a future non-racial South Africa? The State President did say that apartheid was on its way to being scrapped, so in principle, would he be prepared to serve under a black? After substantial rationalisation on the part of the Minister, he conceded that it would be "unavoidable".¹⁹

Pik Botha's pronouncement, albeit hypothetical, made news across the board and throughout the world. Reactions to what he said ranged from bemusement to condonings and condemnations. At first, PW Botha didn't seem particularly bothered, trusting that his Foreign Affairs Minister would rectify the whole thing. As the media buzzed, Pik Botha was peppered with questions about what he actually meant and he again stated: "Logically speaking, it is the only conclusion that one can come to if comprehensive agreement can be reached that will make it possible." ["Logies gesproke is dit die enigste konklusie waartoe 'n mens kan kom indien gesamentlik tot strukture ooreengekom kan word wat dit moontlik maak."]²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Reis, L. & Dommissie, E., *Leierstryd*, p. 134.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 135

Reconfirmation of what he had said was not what PW Botha had in mind when he had told Pik Botha to fix the affair. The State President, now angry, called Pik Botha and made it very clear to him that he, PW, was very upset about the way that Pik was handling the whole affair.²¹

On February 7th 1986, the State President stood up in parliament and tackled Pik Botha's pronouncement. PW Botha didn't try to hide his anger: "I want to make it perfectly clear that any speculation ... as to the future state president ... is confusing and not representative of the party's policy," ["Ek wil dit omonwonde stel dat enige spekulاسie... rondom die toekomstige staatspresident... verwarrend is en nie die party se beleid verteenwoordig nie,"]²² and then he added, "No minister of the ruling party has any right to compromise his party so without consulting them beforehand." ["Geen Minister van die regerende party het enige reg om sy party so te kompromiteer sonder raadpleging vooraf nie."]²³ The President then said that Pik Botha was well aware of his unfortunate lapse of judgement and that the Minister of Foreign Affairs "agreed with him" ["stem daarmee saam."]²⁴

Although he was motionless in parliament, Pik Botha was furious and flabbergasted. Like certain occasions before and after, he contemplated quitting the National Party.²⁵ Allegedly, a group of wealthy businessmen immediately sent word to Pik that if he walked away and started his own party they would finance it with some R12, 000, 000.²⁶

Pik Botha's original hypothetical pronouncement aroused tremendous interest throughout the world, as did PW Botha's reaction. The State President had not only humiliated his Foreign Affairs Minister and in the process also his party, but he had also jeopardised his government's legitimacy in the eyes of the world even further. The world believed that PW Botha's reaction had proved that the grand announcements of *Rubicon 2* were merely an exercise in public relations; a ploy to improve the image of the minority power.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 134-135.

²⁵ Prinsloo, D., *Stem uit die wildernis*, p. 335.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

The Government's precarious foreign position wavered even further. To many onlookers in South Africa and beyond, the fact that the President personally took such pains to directly and very openly berate a senior minister over a merely speculative sentence was clear proof that PW Botha wasn't serious or honest when he so lavishly prophesied the dawn of a *New South Africa*.

DB Hauptfleisch argued, in a 1986 article: "Die vooruitskouing t.o.v. 'n Swart Staatspresident vir Suid-Afrika is per slot van rekening in ooreenstemming met die hervormingsrigting wat die Staatspresident met sy openingsrede [1986] aangedui het. Wanneer 'n nasionale statutêre raad in die vooruitsig gestel word waarin Swartes saam met Blankes oor verdere grondwetlike hervorming in Suid-Afrika kan beding, staan alle opsies oop – òòk wat betref die kleur van die toekomstige Staatspresident."²⁷

The political writer Brian Pottinger, said: "There was no single statement by [PW] Botha which was so decisively damaging to black confidence in both the man himself and the sincerity of the process he was inaugurating. This, then, was the main political dyke damming the political flow of Botha's reform programme."²⁸ Not only did PW Botha confirm the cynicism of leftist blacks, he also intensely damaged the goodwill of the conservative black population.

Very shortly after the Pik episode, the powerful Zulu politician, Chief Buthelezi, who was relatively susceptible to Pretoria's reformist plans, distanced himself from PW Botha's envisaged multiracial statutory board. He made it clear that the President's scathing chastisement of Pik Botha had proven that the State President wasn't serious about fundamental change and was instead playing around with appeasement. When he travelled to Germany, he asked Chancellor Kohl to apply constructive pressure on PW Botha's minority regime to implement change faster.²⁹

On January 20th 1986, the Federated Chambers of Industry distributed their business charter. It was compiled by noted academic Prof. Marinus Wiechers and called upon Pretoria to:

- Release any and all political prisoners

²⁷ Hauptfleisch, pp. 104-105.

²⁸ Pottinger, B., *The imperial presidency: PW Botha the first 10 years*, p. 238.

²⁹ Hauptfleisch, p. 105.

- End the state of emergency
- Introduce one and the same citizenship for all
- Accept power-sharing on central level and within one institution
- Aim at devising a system of education – which should be acceptable to all population groupings³⁰

In the meantime, on January 24th 1986, industrialist Dr Anton Rupert composed a letter to PW Botha. In the long letter Dr Rupert eloquently and firmly criticised the State President, his style and his brand of politics. It's an insightful document and warrants closer inspection. The industrialist referred Botha to two occasions where the President had discussed the country's socio-economic-political issues in Rupert's presence. Rupert wrote that "I came to the conclusion that your attitude was firstly 'rather to be poor than to yield,' and secondly that you were not prepared to say that you were renouncing apartheid." He informed Botha that if that was indeed how he actually felt, then "I am deeply concerned about this attitude."³¹

He dealt with that better-to-be-poor attitude first, arguing that poverty will "lead to both 'poverty' and 'black domination'". According to Rupert "the biggest source of unrest is unemployment."³² Dr. Rupert then outlined, for the State President, exactly how South Africa's economy had slipped and slid backwards under National Party management:

- For 9 years "there has been no net increase in black employment"
- By 1970 the Government had made a national debt of R2,7 billion, according to Rupert's sums by 1985 the country had a debt of R60 billion. "There must be reasons why this enormous increase in export revenue was used so ineffectually and in fact squandered"³³
- From 1970/71 to 1984/85 the money spent by central government had "**doubled every five years** in terms of the running value of the rand."
- Lamenting the ever-rising inflation, he said that "we must remember that the inflation of 1920 gave rise to the rebellion on the Rand in 1921"

³⁰ Hauptfleisch, p. 105.

³¹ JA STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM THE OFFICE OF AE RUPERT: TRANSLATED COPY OF AE RUPERT'S 24-01-1986 LETTER TO PW BOTHA.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

- He also argued that South Africans “live too highly” and that this kept foreign capital away because foreign investors didn’t have “confidence in our economy” as long as the people lived too highly³⁴
- He also reminded the President of how in 1981 he had “pleaded strongly” that the Government should rethink its “investment priorities” and had warned them about the pitfalls of borrowing huge sums of foreign cash: “But, it was all in vain”
- “If we talk of ‘rather being poor,’ we dare not lose sight of the fact that we are not even in a position to repay our claimable debts. Neither can we overlook the fact that Public Enemy Number one [inflation] is eroding the capital of those who have steadily put by their money for a rainy day. The spirit of the respectable middle class is being broken, thus preparing the country for revolution. Consequently I wish to emphasise that unless there is confidence in our monetary unit, we are heading for a future which will be ‘poor’ and ‘black’.”³⁵

Rupert also debated apartheid. Rupert first listed various examples where the private sector had initiated certain socio-economic programs that were either “neutralised” by the Nationalists or disastrously copied by them. For example, he cited the corporate community’s South African Foundation, which had been created to better the apartheid-state’s foreign image – the Government then created its own *Department of Information*. This failed, wrote Rupert, because the bureaucrats had the “wrong ethical concept.”³⁶

Then there was the business community sponsored Sports Foundation of Southern Africa, which the Government had mimicked with its own *Department of Sport and Recreation*: “The result? We are out of international sport.” He recounted other examples where the Government’s approaches had inadvertently torpedoed the positive and professional ingenuity of the private sector. “You will understand,” Rupert said to PW, “why at times there are grievances and indignation.”³⁷

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

He informed Botha that the topic of apartheid was taught in schools in New York as being “on par with the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany.” Rupert rhetorically asked whether “this was the cornerstone of our survival? **Certainly not. I believe that the belief that Apartheid guarantees the interests of the white man’s survival is a myth. As a matter of fact, it threatens his survival.**”³⁸ The whole premise of apartheid had become a futile endeavour according to Rupert, as separate development “is seen by too many as a transgression against humanity: the Neo-Nazism of a Herrenvolk.”³⁹

Rupert put it emphatically before the State President: “The fact that the price we had to pay, and are still paying, for our conscience is too high.” And: “For these reasons I am appealing to you personally. Reaffirm your rejection of apartheid. It is crucifying us; it is destroying our language; it is degrading a once heroic nation to be the lepers of the world. Remove the burden of the curse of a transgression against mankind from the backs of our children and their children.”⁴⁰

Rupert wrote that irrespective of whether the world realised it or not, the apartheid-state was still the “catalyst of this continent” but mistakes had been made along the way. He listed a few, the fourth one read: “We have denied our people their rights. We have impaired human dignity. While allowing dark-skinned foreigners to own property and to conduct business, we denied these rights to South African born citizens because of the colour of their skins and their appearance.”⁴¹

Rupert wrote that the President had both the “power” and “duty” to “free our people” and doing so to “imbue them with hope and with love for their fellow man.” He wrote that this task was PW Botha’s “God-given task” and that if he failed “we shall surely end up with a Nuremburg.”⁴²

Interestingly, Dr. Rupert then shifted his focus onto the State President’s personal style. He wrote that a friend of his, who was also close to Pres. Reagan, agreed that when Botha conveyed “a message” to the people it must be “in understandable simple language.”⁴³

* Emphasis in original letter.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

Rupert made some suggestions to the President on his style and personal presentation. He suggested PW Botha should “speak in simple terms” and should remember that “the more you say, the more you can be misunderstood.” Furthermore: “The more you qualify, the more you divide” because “you segment your audience.”⁴⁴ He recommended that Botha stay away from jargon as the “world is moved by simple concepts.” Rupert also implored that the President not just focus on his immediate audience, but must remember that “you are speaking to the world.” When stating his case, Botha should refrain from using “too many arguments,” because if “you use ten arguments and a listener disagrees with only one of them, he disagrees with the lot.”⁴⁵

One can but only guess at what PW Botha’s reaction must have been at this critique of him, his government and his party. Irrespective of how the State President reacted to the letter from the Rembrandt Group’s head, the letter was justified as the South African situation was becoming critical. Rupert’s attitude as revealed in his personal letter was representative of a segment of the progressive white moderate community – particularly those in the higher echelons of the South African corporate world. Of course there were other *thinking whites* whose thoughts took them in other directions.

It increasingly dawned on South Africans that, ironically, under PW Botha’s progressive reformist programmes, the country was internationally worse off. Because the further the Government went with reforms, the more the world clamoured for more. It was now becoming very clear, that the only way South Africa would be accepted as a full member of the international community again would be when the country got rid of apartheid. This was the crux of the Botha Government’s dilemma.

Deon Geldenhuys came to the same conclusion and asked a rather more poignant question. “Pariah states as a rule try to counter their international isolation and, ideally, wish to become respectable

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

or acceptable members of the community of nations. They are particularly keen to find acceptance among Western nations, which they typically regard as their traditional or natural allies.”⁴⁶

Geldenhuys noted that during the past few years some of the pariah states did in fact manage to return to diplomatic normality but: “What is significant is that international approval was in each case preceded by a change of government and not merely a change of policy.”⁴⁷

A keen observation and followed with a tricky question, cutting through to the actual crux of PW Botha’s whole political manifesto for white power: “Can we nonetheless conclude... that the chances are generally slim that a government whose very policy led to the State’s international isolation, can in effect reform itself out of enforced isolation – and still remain in power?”⁴⁸

Then there was the more pro-Botha 1986 paper of Dr Carl Nöffke, formerly one of Pretoria’s diplomats turned academic. Dr Nöffke espoused the more stereotypical *laager* attitude. “No reasonable South African,” Nöffke wrote, “desires despair, doom and chaos to be at the end of the long tunnel of political reform. Change should be orderly, conform to the South African values system and be sustained at a pace that ensures stability. It should not present a threat to any section of the population. The options are limited. Only South Africans can determine the course of events... Assurances by major powers are, in the final analysis, meaningless.”⁴⁹

Elaborating on this he steered towards the topic of foreign misperceptions about the apartheid-state and Africa as a whole. Pres. Reagan’s constructive engagement could, according to Nöffke “become a real catalyst of change in southern Africa when members of Congress in the American capital and the State Department begin to match their public criticism of South Africa with equal accent on the political imbalances and economic disaster areas elsewhere in Africa.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Geldenhuys, D., “South Africa and the world: unloved and lonely” in *Reality*, vol.18, no.2&3, March 1986, p.13.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Woodward, C. (ed.), “The United States and South Africa” in *On The Razor’s Edge – Prospects For Political Stability in Souther Africa, Communications of the Africa Institute*, no.46, 1986, p.49

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Dr Nöffke stated that foreign demands for “full democratic rights” in the apartheid-state were “nonsensical and hypocritical” as long as foreign lobbies ignored the dictatorships throughout the rest of the continent.⁵¹

Millions of words were used during this time to debate, evaluate, theorise, criticise, ponder, explain and philosophise the South African crisis. But, PW Botha and his Government had an altogether immediate, not to mention uncertain, diplomatic venture ahead of them. The Commonwealth’s Eminent Persons Group was visiting the apartheid-state.

Between February and May 1986 the representatives of the Commonwealth made 21 trips to South Africa and Oliver Tambo’s ANC. Incidentally, neither one of the two was particularly happy about the Eminent Persons Group. Botha thought they were interfering troublemakers. Tambo thought they were just going to quietly budge under the Government or were going to gain such a high profile that they were not actually going to be able to bring about any real change.⁵²

After arriving, the makeshift diplomatic corps were taken aback by what apartheid actually looked like. On the other hand they were just as surprised to find how far and deep the resistance movement had spread. Although the sights and sounds of apartheid violence shook them and although the political violence was grisly, they were nonetheless encouraged to find that none of the role players they met were interested in a physical fight to the bitter end. Eventually they composed a “possible negotiating concept.”⁵³

The basic proposal was quite simple: the Government would release all political prisoners; unban the ANC and grant normal political movement, while the army was pulled out from the townships. On the other side and in return the ANC would also have to: negotiate with the state and suspend the armed struggle. The Group also placed great emphasis on the possible role of Nelson Mandela, the person, during a period of transition and negotiations.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION: INCH: “Mission to South Africa – The Commonwealth Report.”

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

PW Botha made clear that he detested both foreign punitive measures as well political violence and with the 10th anniversary of the June 16th Soweto Riots nearing, this prospect was very serious. The Minister of Foreigner Affairs, who managed talks with the Group appeared sympathetic to their aims and cause.⁵⁵

They visited Nelson Mandela in jail, and gave him their proposals for a possible negotiation process. Mandela agreed that it could be a start, but made clear that he could not give a final answer on behalf of the ANC high command. Allan Boesak's United Democratic Front, in effect the ANC's powerful internal offshoot, asked that they might consider the proposals for some ten days.⁵⁶

The group then met with Pik Botha. "We understood from the Minister that the Government had not accepted the concept, nor had it rejected it."⁵⁷ He explained his Government's biggest problems with their negotiation concept. He said that they should remember that the Government:

- Did not view the South African crisis as consisting solely of the Government and the ANC – they had a whole range of opposing groups to take in account
- Saw detention-without-trial as a cardinal measure used by security forces to deal proactively with unrest wherever and whenever it appeared.⁵⁸
- Had a problem with what exactly was meant by "suspension" of violence on the side of the ANC. Because if that meant that the ANC could simply restart their armed struggle whenever Tambo felt the need for it, the Government could not accept that. The Eminent Persons assured Pik Botha, the ideal was that "the black leadership would issue a joint appeal for calm" and each one would be expected to "lend his personal efforts" to bring about peace. They singled out the possible calming role of Nelson Mandela in this regard.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Pik Botha also underlined his Government's power. It was important that the Group should not doubt this. He said to them that only three ways existed in which his Government could be removed from the Union Buildings: (1) White votes. (2) Violence. (3) Negotiations. About option 2, Pik Botha said that it was almost too impossible to contemplate as the Government could, and had not yet even started to, muster extensive conventional military force. But on the whole, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the violent option was far fetched and a negotiated settlement was inescapable.⁶⁰

On May 15th 1986, the State President told parliament that he would be quite prepared to negotiate with people who did not use violence to further their political goals nor called in foreign groups to help them. Furthermore, with Mandela's support for the basic principles for negotiations and the ANC in Lusaka evenly split about whether or not to talk with the Botha Government, things were actually looking, relatively, positive.⁶¹

And so, for a fleetingly brief moment in the period 1984-1988, it seemed that a real prospect for negotiations could possibly not be too impossible. Just maybe there might be a chance.

Some of the government's more hardliner securocrats realised that the possibility, albeit faint, for negotiations or at least tentative talks actually existed. They knew that if PW Botha and Oliver Tambo were to talk they weren't going to discuss reformist tinkering of influx control or the desegregation of beaches. Negotiations weren't about reform. Negotiations would be about power. If the ANC and Pretoria were to talk, the conversation would invariably lead to the apartheid system and white minority power being deconstructed. For some of the more hardline securocrats who still had a lot of fighting in them, that prospect was still a bridge too far. Too much and too soon.⁶²

Some of the security chiefs resolutely informed the State President that they were not at all at ease with what was going on. They emphatically restated that the ANC could not, and should not, be trusted. They were sceptical about the prospect of such reforms and what they would actually

⁶⁰ *Ibid*

⁶¹ Pottinger, pp.331-332; Sampson, pp.290-293

⁶² *Ibid*.

entail. What's more, they told their President that they could not be sure how the security forces, who had been conditioned to vehemently fight the ANC, would take the news that their Government was going to negotiate, never mind talk, with the enemy.⁶³

PW Botha had no intention of following the advice of the foreign diplomats. At that stage the President had grown resentful of foreign pressure groups trying to force his hand. The public fanfare over the Eminent Persons Group had forced him to face up to the prospect of actual negotiations. He understood the problems and the choices now facing him, but PW Botha was no diplomat, so he applied the one option he understood very well, having used it throughout his political tenure, force.

In the meantime, on May 19th 1986, the Eminent Persons Group went to Cape Town for a meeting with Chris Heunis, the minister in charge of constitutional issues. As far as they and Minister Heunis, were concerned, deliberations were continuing. What they did not know was that during the early hours of May 19th 1986, the South African Air Force and army, in a quick succession of coordinated attacks, simultaneously struck at targets in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia. People were killed, and buildings wrecked.⁶⁴

The fact that South Africa's army attacked empty buildings and did not kill any ANC commanders, correctly suggested that the mission was to serve more as a political message than an actual military strike. Their aim: to destroy alleged ANC bases.⁶⁵ The implicit political goal: to torpedo the diplomatic initiatives of the Eminent Persons Group; the prospect of negotiations with the ANC as well as to send a deterring message to all interested foreigners that their assistance and pressure was undesired and futile.⁶⁶

The State President had not informed his cabinet that he had decided on the military option, let alone that he had given his security chiefs permission to cross national borders and launch attacks inside three of South Africa's neighbours. Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha was incensed and

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Pottinger, p. 332.

⁶⁵ Pottinger, pp.331-332, Sampson, pp.290-293.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

embarrassed, as were Chris Heunis, Kobie Coetsee and Barend du Plessis.⁶⁷ Decisions like this – made by PW Botha, with his cabinet only being informed after the fact, led to a gradual deepening of divisions within the Government.⁶⁸

The Government's officials had a tough time explaining to the Eminent Persons why this course of action had been taken, while it seemed that the Government was not totally opposed to their proposals. Heunis decided to go on as usual and told the Eminent Persons that they should leave South Africa's problems to South Africans.⁶⁹ The Minister of Constitutional Affairs and the Group also bumped heads over the "suspension" and/or "renunciation" of violence. The ANC had said that they'd consider suspension at the most and the Nationalists wanted renunciation at the least. The meeting ran out of steam over this difference.⁷⁰

The Eminent Persons Group had hit their final dead-end. With the ANC refusing to budge on the issue of the armed struggle and the Government's apprehension of foreign arbiters and the Government's strongman attitude, the Eminent Persons realised that the time for negotiations had not yet arrived.⁷¹

Die Volksblad reported the negative international reaction to the attacks: "Die golf van protes teen Suid-Afrika oor die aanvalle op ANC-teikens in Botswana, Zambië en Zimbabwe wen onheilspellend hoog op en die vrees bestaan dat 'n sanksie-brander teen die Republiek kan breek."⁷²

The international reaction was made immediately clear by a tumbling rand. The rand immediately fell by two American cents, but later stabilised.⁷³ The Eminent Persons Group, the Commonwealth and indeed the world was bewildered and outraged by the Government's excessive behaviour. PW Botha argued that if Pres. Reagan could execute military actions against Libya, then surely he had the same right to carry out military actions against South Africa's enemies in bordering countries.

⁶⁷ Waldmeir, P., *Anatomy of a miracle: the end of apartheid and the birth of the new South Africa*, p. 97.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Prinsloo, p.314.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Die Volksblad*, 20 May 1986.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

The White House called the raids an “outrage” and condemned them – booting one of the Pretoria’s military attachés out of the US. Canada recalled its ambassador to the apartheid-state and Argentina officially broke off diplomatic relations with South Africa, saying that Botha’s government “threatens international peace.”⁷⁴ *The Guardian*, in England, reported that America’s constructive engagement was to blame for these attacks, because it was that policy that gave South Africa the confidence to execute such actions while being protected by the White House from suffering serious repercussions.⁷⁵

According to her enemies, she was the white minority’s biggest ally, but Prime Minister Thatcher was flaming over Botha’s blitzkriegs. “I simply do not understand why,” she informed Botha, “the South African Government should have mounted such attacks while the Commonwealth Group were in Southern Africa trying to make progress towards achieving dialogue. Given the timing of the raids, it will inevitably be said that they were a deliberate attempt by your Government to torpedo an initiative which was developing too well.”⁷⁶

The members of the Eminent Persons Group shared Thatcher’s views. Lord Baber said that the Nationalists “simply could not bring themselves to take what seemed to them a leap into the unknown.”⁷⁷ Sonny Ramphal reasoned that they were “doing too well for Pretoria’s liking.”⁷⁸ He said that the South Africans executed these attacks to make it clear that they had no intention of taking part in a peace initiative.⁷⁹

As for Pik Botha, who also had no idea that the army was raiding bases in neighbouring countries, he quickly had to try and put a public relations-cum-diplomatic turn on the whole affair. After having led the Commonwealth’s diplomatic group into believing that the Government would consider their proposals in return for a suspension of violence on the part of the ANC, he now

⁷⁴ Prinsloo, p. 314.

⁷⁵ *Die Volksblad*, 20 May 1986.

⁷⁶ Prinsloo, p. 314.

⁷⁷ Sampson, p. 294.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Die Volksblad*, 20 May 1986.

backtracked.⁸⁰ The Minister of Foreign Affairs said that suspension of violence wasn't enough, the banned liberation movement had to renounce their armed struggle altogether.⁸¹

Pres. Botha and his Government had come to the conclusion that reformist concessions were not enough to keep sanctions at bay. In the past when the outside world had pressured Pretoria the government made some internal conciliatory reformist overtures. But that type of reasoning had gone. From now on outside pressure would not be countered with internal reformist concessions. Foreign diplomatic pressures on the apartheid-state would be countered with forceful actions on the part of the Government, which included, as these raids demonstrated, military force.

The political and economic analyst, Ronnie Bethlehem called these raids a “watershed moment” as they signalled “a near complete reversal of the policy which the South African Government had been pursuing until then regarding its main economic allies, Britain and the United States.” Right up to the day of the raids the Government had seemed to be attentive to “doing what it could, within the limits of its own policy, to accommodate these countries’ wishes on the matter of reform.”⁸²

After the raids, argued Bethlehem, the Government increasingly appeared to be “committed to an attitude of defiance in which caution regarding their sensibilities was cast to the wind... and it had ceased to care about any additional abuse it might bring upon itself.” Botha and his administration apparently speculated that international pressures “might just be headed off by a realisation on the part of the outside world that it had gone too far.” Concessions, the Government concluded, created the impression that it was going soft and or felt threatened which just served to motivate its enemies.⁸³

Simplistically, what it boiled down to was that if the world tried to push the Government forward too hard, the Government would pull back more strongly – the scenarios stalemates are made of.

⁸⁰ Smith (et al.), “Lashing out at the ANC” in *Time*, vol. 127, no.22, p. 28.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Bethlehem, R. W., *Economics in a revolutionary society – sanctions and the transformation of South Africa*, p.97.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Later, Nigerian Gen. Obasanjo, spoke about his experiences as a member of the Group. Asked whether he now believed that sanctions were the only option left to the outside world to try influence Pretoria. "What other options? Diplomacy hasn't worked, talking to them hasn't worked. The only other option is violence. I am not against violence," said the General, "But is there a possible alternative that can avoid the colossal waste of life and property that will be the outcome of a long period of military struggle? The only thing is negotiation."⁸⁴

Obasanjo also criticised the Americans, saying that Chester Crocker "should admit the abysmal failure of his constructive engagement policy." He said that the American diplomat "may have been right in theory but wrong in practice."⁸⁵

He said that if the west did not intensify anti-apartheid sanctions, the ANC combatants would step up their armed onslaught which, after some years passed, would evolve into a "full scale guerilla war" which would probably drag on for some years in some or other form before "it is resolved on the bones and ashes" of South Africa.⁸⁶ Such a post-civil war South Africa, according to the General, would have a government that would most certainly be black and "radicalised."⁸⁷

"It failed," said Malcolm Fraser, the former Australian statesman and prominent member of the Eminent Persons Group, "because the hard-liners who thought they could shoot it out with the blacks in South Africa won."⁸⁸ The Australian politician was even tougher than the Nigerian General in his assessment of the South African crisis and the minority government.

Fraser maintained that because of the Afrikaners' political psychology anything less than the imposition of stringent anti-apartheid sanctions would be quite futile.⁸⁹ "The very idea that the Afrikaners only listen to words, sweet reason and common sense," was naïve according to Fraser,

⁸⁴ "Olusegun Obasanjo and Malcolm Fraser" in *Africa Report*, vol.31, no.5, September-October 1986, p. 5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p.8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p.7.

according to him, “the Afrikaner will never and has never altered his view except as a result of pressure.”⁹⁰

As such, it was his opinion that the constructive engagement-minded Reagan and Thatcher were “very, very badly advised” on how to handle Pretoria.⁹¹ As a matter of fact, Fraser reasoned that because of their relatively pliable approach to the apartheid regime, at the end of the day Moscow would “probably” take over the country and region.⁹²

He also belittled Botha’s reform initiatives, warning that people should not be fooled by the Nationalists reformist ploys. Fraser stated that although PW Botha tried to create a new order “it is not a democracy... They do think that they are more clever than other people.” As far as the Australian was concerned, State President Botha might speak of ushering in a *New South Africa* but “at the same time they are maintaining apartheid and establishing a different kind of apartheid...”⁹³

After leaving the country, the Eminent Persons Group compiled their findings and produced an account of the whole experiment. They called it: “Mission to South Africa – the Commonwealth Report: Report of the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons appointed under the Nassau Accord on Southern Africa.”⁹⁴

They made detailed and extensive records of their experiences. “As we moved about the country we became persuaded that there was, in fact, a systematic and seemingly orchestrated campaign of intimidation directed at activists in the democratic cause.” They relayed how they heard accounts “with depressing repetition” of security force attacks on children. “While we were in South Africa, we encountered or heard of violence and its manifestations nearly everywhere we went. We did not have to seek it out: it was a daily phenomenon.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 8.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 9.

⁹⁴ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION: INCH: “Mission to South Africa – The Commonwealth Report.”

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

On the State of Emergency, they wrote: "If it had been imposed to bring the situation under control, it had palpably failed. Events had increasingly passed out of the Government's control..." Incidentally, the state of emergency had been temporarily lifted while the Group was travelling in the country. "The Nassau Accord called upon the South African Government to 'terminate the existing state of emergency.' From a technical viewpoint, this has come to pass," noted the Report and stated, "in reality, however, South Africa is sliding even further into a permanent state of emergency in terms of the existing laws of the land."⁹⁶

When they brought the violence issue up with the Government, the Eminent Persons were "immediately struck" by the Government's attitude. According to them, Botha's officials were "deeply concerned" that their reformist curriculums weren't winning field among the black people. Pretoria's comptrollers denied that apartheid was inherently violent or that the only way to sustain it was through violent means. The Report also noted that there was not "any willingness" on the part of the Nationalists to "admit the militarisation of the townships" nor the "brutality of some elements of the security forces" who, according to the Report, had been "themselves provoking a violent response."⁹⁷

Pres. Botha's officials claimed the origin of the unrest lay at the feet of the ANC: "So far as the Government was concerned, the overwhelming responsibility for violence lay upon the ANC and its supporters."⁹⁸

The ANC in Lusaka blamed the Government. Tambo's officials told the authors of the Report: "Violence in South Africa was attributed as being a result of an apartheid system which needed guns, arrests and prisons to maintain it; violence would abate if the system was dismantled."⁹⁹ Tambo's exiled political executives told the Group that if Botha renounced apartheid then both the ANC and Pretoria could earnestly start to refrain from violence.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

If, the ANC told the Commonwealth's representatives, the Nationalists withdrew their army and police from the townships then "the ANC could begin to consider a suspension of violence."¹⁰¹

According to the Report if the organisation were to forgo its armed struggle at this juncture it would in effect "reduce itself to a state of helplessness." Before the ANC would consider rejecting the armed struggle, the Government had to show that it was serious and committed to transition and negotiations. The Government, as already pointed out, said that first the ANC should prove its trustworthiness by suspending its armed struggle¹⁰².

The lengthy Report ended with a summarised assessment of their efforts in the apartheid-state and the South African crisis as a whole:

- They reported that they inspected Botha's reform formulas and went away with the conclusion that the white minority government had "no intention" of fundamentally disassembling apartheid
- Although the state of emergency might have been lifted on paper, in practice the "substantive powers remain broadly in force under the ordinary laws of the land..."
- Mandela and his political allies still remained in jail.¹⁰³
- The ANC and the other liberation groups were still banned. "Political freedom is far from being established; if anything it is being more rigorously curtailed."
- "The cycle of violence and counter-violence has spiraled and there is no prospect of a process of dialogue leading to the establishment of a non-racial and representative government."¹⁰⁴

And then as a final thought, the Commonwealth's diplomats wrote: "Overall, the concrete and adequate progress looked for in the Nassau Accord towards the objectives of 'dismantling apartheid and erecting the structures of democracy in South Africa' has not materialised."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

During all the political and diplomatic developments, South Africa was still steeped in violent political unrest. With the 10th anniversary of the Soweto riots around the corner on June 16th 1986, things could only get worse before they got better. The State President's security advisors had informed him that during the days ahead, the black radicals were planning to disrupt the country. The Government was preparing for a show of force in response to these threats to the country.

A few days before *Soweto Day*, as June 16th was popularly known, the State President addressed the nation. He said that since March 1986 the violent climate in the country had not, as hoped, subsided in fact "it has been increasing in such leaps that I am of the opinion that the normal legislation ... is not able to place the government in a position to maintain the security of the public ..." ["het dit sulke afmetings begin aanneem, dat ek van mening is dat die gewone landswette... onvoldoende is om die Regering in staat te stel om die veiligheid van die publiek te verseker..."] and that Pretoria had intelligence information that proved the revolutionary forces had been planning a wave of violence and destruction for the coming days: "Dit hou 'n wesenlike gevaar in vir alle bevolkingsgroepe."¹⁰⁶

Botha informed the country that, according to his security advisors and intelligence officials, the ANC "en ander radikale en anargiste" were planning to wreck the country between June 16th and 18th 1986.¹⁰⁷

He said that he and his Government were well aware that "stricter security action" would "elicit strong criticism and even punitive measures from the outside world." And: "The implications and the price of these have also been taken into account." The President called the "call for sanctions" in America a "cynical political move to buy Black votes in the USA..."¹⁰⁸

He continued talking about the outside world in Afrikaans, saying that the Government had at various times experienced how "selfs regerings en organisasies in die Vrye Wêreld ons pogings

¹⁰⁶ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: Address – 12 June 1986. PV203//4/2/143.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

ondermyn.” He said they did this by giving “naïewe morele, politieke en materiële steun aan die magte van rewolusie...”¹⁰⁹

Pres. Botha said “reguit aan die buiteland” that his people had seen what had happened in Angola and Vietnam and dramatically proclaimed: “We shall ... prevent our civilization of more than three hundred years from needlessly being placed on the altars of anarchy and ruin.” [“Ons sal... voorkom dat ons beskawingserfenis van meer as driehonderd jaar nodeloos op die altare van wanorde en verval geplaas word.”] Botha asked “nasionale en internasionale begrip vir die streng optrede waarop besluit is...”¹¹⁰

On the same day, June 12th 1986, PW Botha travelled to Stellenbosch. The State President went there on the same day as he implemented the national state of emergency to talk to a group of business leaders. He told this exclusive group that there could be no doubt that the country was more in the “international crossfire” than ever before. Botha told the executives that “our naïve friends abroad” were displeased when he “decided not to negotiate with people or groups who do not want to renounce violence. They insist that the Government yield to pressure to negotiate with the ANC while ANC bombs are destroying people...”¹¹¹

He went on to talk about those businessmen who went to Lusaka to meet with the ANC and charged that they were mere pawns in the hands of these revolutionaries. He quoted an SACP document, which explained that just because the ANC had been meeting with white moguls the armed struggle should not at all be abandoned.¹¹²

Botha tried to explain why he believed the business community should refrain from talking to these radicals. “This is the background against which the opposition to the Government’s reform initiatives should be seen. We are seriously busy broadening democracy in this country, we have

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

projects that would considerably extend democracy from the third to first level of government,” so as to say *there see, leave politics to the politicians*.¹¹³

Why, when the Government is serious about the broadening of democracy, do the blacks avoid supporting the Government? Botha said it was sad but simple: “The Black leaders who should approach us... fail to do so. They fear the intimidators and for their lives.” The President told the assembled business leaders that: “These are the real problems with which the Government has to contend from day to day.” In conclusion the Groot Krokodil told his audience: “Ek is van mening dat die privaatsektor ‘n groter bydrae kan lewer wat kan lei tot oplossings vir ons probleme.”¹¹⁴

This was easier asked than necessarily possible. The Federated Chamber of Industries had been in negotiations with black trade unions and prominent members of the black community when Botha declared his security clampdown. Under the state of emergency many of the members of the trade unions the Federated Chamber of Industries was talking to, were subsequently arrested.¹¹⁵

The powerful Federated Chamber promptly issued a statement under the signature of its head – also the head of Shell South Africa, John Wilson. In the stinging communiqué the group distanced itself “from the strategy of political repression and economic isolationism” which they felt the Government was clinging to.¹¹⁶

Botha wrote a private and very angry letter to Wilson. The President told the powerful business leader that he should not trouble him with his viewpoints if “you are not prepared to take the trouble of familiarising yourself with mine.” The State President warningly informed Wilson that he should “come to grips with the realities of the security situation... and act accordingly” or Wilson too was “bound to pay a heavy price.”¹¹⁷

He called this a “considered warning” to Wilson and proposed that instead of the head of Shell criticising the Government in the “most irresponsible fashion” he should rather try to contribute to

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ PW BOTHA: PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: 12 Junie 1986: PV203//4/2/143.

¹¹⁵ Sampson, p. 319.

¹¹⁶ Bethlehem, p. 185.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

assisting the Government, because: "That is your duty as a South African..." Botha went on to tell Wilson that he had a "very clear picture" of all the threats to the country and that as President he had a "moral and statutory" responsibility to deal with these "dangers" using "all the powers at the disposal of the State." Botha continued: "Take my word for it that I know what I am doing is in the interest of my country and its citizens – including the members of the FCI."¹¹⁸

On June 4th 1986, Pres. Botha wrote a letter to Pres. Reagan. PW wrote about certain pressing internal and external factors regarding the South African crisis. The Nationalist President criticised Reagan's State Department for what he perceived to be double standards in their handling of the apartheid-state. He also criticised Reagan for allowing the souring of Pretoria's relations with Washington.¹¹⁹

"I am concerned at the mindset concerning South Africa which is evolving in your State Department and certain other circles in the United States of America, which does not," Botha declared, "take account of the inevitable consequences of handing-over power to a communist dominated organisation." He added: "If Secretary of State Shultz and Dr Crocker persist in expressing their distorted views, I must frankly ask you whether further communication between us will serve a useful purpose."¹²⁰

That PW Botha felt strongly about these issues was his prerogative, but there were different ways of expressing these feelings. For the leader of South Africa's so-called *apartheid regime* to strongly criticise the American president in this way, while Reagan was under tremendous pressure in the USA to isolate South Africa, was probably not the wisest option.

On June 13th 1986, the US Ambassador, Herman Nickle, met with Pres. Botha after Reagan had asked Nickle to personally deliver an oral message to the apartheid-state's leader. The Ambassador made it clear that Reagan was immensely upset by PW Botha's letters. Reagan was apparently bewildered by Botha's attitude as he was all for dialogue with the Botha Government and had no

¹¹⁸ Sampson, p. 319; Bethlehem, p. 185.

¹¹⁹ Prinsloo, pp. 323-324.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

intention of deviating from that policy. He made it clear that he thought of the two countries as allies and didn't want to see those relations soured by poor or shoddy lines of communication.¹²¹

Botha told the American Ambassador that he failed to understand why, instead of personal letters, Reagan had now decided to correspond with him through intermediaries. Botha then asked Nickle why Pres. Reagan always refused to meet with him in person. "Your President had time to see many people – mainly from the left – from South Africa on various occasions, but all attempts that were made in the past for me to see your President failed." He also told Nickle that he would determine the process of reform and that Pretoria would never be intimidated by outside forces and that included Ronald Reagan and the USA.

He told Reagan's emissary that if countries wished to impose anti-apartheid sanctions, they should not hesitate and "do so as quickly as possible." Botha declared: "I'm not going to crawl before other countries because of the threat of sanctions..." The State President then went ahead and dared the Americans to impose sanctions against his country: "If you want to threaten us with sanctions, why don't you go over and apply it so that we know where we stand."¹²²

Botha said that "South Africa had had enough of these threats..." the President added: "I prefer sanctions rather than the threat of sanctions..." He told the American that he had no intention "to look for trouble" with the White House, but that the Americans "must stop interfering..." And then Botha uttered: "We are a small country but I'm not going to be buggered about – I'd rather fight."¹²³

The leader of an infamous African country didn't behave like this towards the personal attaché of the leader of the free world. The meeting further served to weaken the Government's, and specifically PW Botha's, relations with Ronald Reagan. Botha wrote to Reagan about his disappointment that the American leader didn't correspond with him as in the past and instead used a messenger. Reagan's response was curt. "I want to ensure you," Reagan wrote, "that the message he conveyed was based on my personal instructions. This Government speaks with one voice; that

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

voice is mine.”¹²⁴ As for Botha’s tirade about the lines of communication: “Allow me to state my preference that in the future such messages be exchanged via the channels that have long been accepted between us; that is via your Foreign Ministry and my Department of State.” Reagan, although he remained courteous, wasn’t going to stand for Botha’s criticism.¹²⁵

In the wake of the Rubicon Speech, Pretoria’s controversial assaults on its neighbours, the failed Commonwealth initiative and of course the renewed wave of brutal violence and Botha’s harsh handling of it, dragged the apartheid-state’s international image further into the doldrums. Between June 16th and 20th the Organisation of African Unity, the United Nations and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries organised a *World Conference on Sanctions against Racist South Africa* in Paris, at the end of which they adopted a declaration which was basically a condemnation of the apartheid-state’s white minority authorities.¹²⁶

The declaration noted that the conference commenced on the 10th anniversary of the Soweto “massacre,” June 16th 1986, and served to remind everyone of the nature of the “monstrous regime” controlling South Africa. It stated that the “racist regime” had intensified “its massive repression of, and violence against” the black majority in a “desperate attempt” to further perpetuate “racist domination” of the country. It said that Pretoria represented “a clear and present danger” to the region as the minority Government did not respect international treaties, which held “incalculable consequences in terms of bloodshed and loss of life and property.”¹²⁷

It stated that Pretoria’s threat to “international peace” stemmed from:

- “its ever increasing internal repression and brutality in the perpetuation of apartheid”
- Pretoria’s control over Namibia
- The white minority government’s “acts of aggression, subversion, destabilisation and terrorism” against its sovereign neighbours. Further on in the document, it stated that:

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Anon, *The United Nations and apartheid, 1948-1994*, pp. 397-406.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

“The South African actions have been held to be a clear illustration of the policies of state terrorism”

It also stated emphatically that, “no encouragement should be given to so-called reform.” Instead, apartheid “must be totally uprooted and destroyed.”¹²⁸ It suggested international support in ending apartheid and the white minority’s reign in South Africa. Such actions should:

- “Assist the South African people” in “eliminating” the system of separate development and erecting a “non-racial, equalitarian and democratic State.”¹²⁹

It again that no support or legitimacy should be given to Botha’s reforms, as these were “designed to deceive world opinion, divide the oppressed people and entrench apartheid.” The Conference called on “Governments, transnational corporations... to cease forthwith collaborations with and support of the racist regime of South Africa.” The Conference called upon them to “co-operate in, rather than hinder, international action.” It beseeched the Security Council of the United Nations to “adopt comprehensive and mandatory sanctions” with regards to:

- Military and nuclear collaboration
- Oil and petroleum products
- Investments and loans
- Other, including a ban the “transfer of technology” to the apartheid-state and an end to the importation of “agricultural products, coal, uranium etc” an abolishment of “air and shipping links” with the apartheid-state and the cessation of “all academic, cultural, scientific and sport relations” with Pretoria.¹³⁰

It sent a warning to the Botha Government: “The racist regime has had too much leeway for too long... Let it now understand that the days of apartheid are numbered and that the Governments

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

and people who have gathered here are determined to do everything they can to see that apartheid shall be extirpated in the shortest possible time...¹³¹

The Government must have realised, if the day ever came when these measures would be implemented against them and more importantly, be endorsed by the Western superpowers, notably America, Britain and West Germany, it would do fundamental and irreparable damage to their country. The fatal effect of which would most probably have outlasted even apartheid. During the same period, an altogether different incident in the history of apartheid developed in America. Eventually it would culminate in a development that would have a far greater effect on apartheid than the bravado of the Congress discussed above.

Ronald Reagan was to deliver his so-called *apartheid speech*. During the past few months, as the South African crisis again engulfed the world's attention, the Reagan administration had maintained its policy on apartheid. But, as Botha's Government, with increasing frequency, brutally clashed with black opposition groups, while behaving in defiance of world politics and opinion, the clamorous anti-apartheid debate in Washington gained new momentum.¹³²

Excitement grew and on Capitol Hill all eyes were on the White House, which they had hoped would now finally get tough with the Botha Government. Chester Crocker, who tailored *constructive engagement*, explained that the White House wanted to do something that "lends strength to our statements but leaves us in a position to exercise what persuasion we can." In other words, a middle-of-the-road stance between polarised extremes – indeed a very tricky position to maintain. Although Crocker defended his policy, very few politicians and commentators in Washington still lent any credence to *constructive engagement* or its chances of success.¹³³

All the main political groups in Washington wanted the Oval Office to give new and improved direction. Anticipation and expectations of Reagan's speech were thus heated.¹³⁴

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Smith, WE (et al.), "Search for a middle ground" in *Time*, July 14th, 1986, vol. 128, no.2, p.20.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

Some of Reagan's aides felt that the President should never even have had considered giving a speech specifically and solely on such a possibly explosive, not to mention emotional, topic. They even decided to call the whole thing off, but then the President himself stepped forward, he wanted to do it, so he was going to do it. In his presidency he had never given an address that dealt explicitly with apartheid. He wanted to state his case – Reagan wanted to tell his countrymen and the world once and for all how he and his Republican administration saw the situation and how they wanted to deal with the minority Government.¹³⁵

Pres. Reagan's large team of political scriptwriters and public relations officers reworked his proposed speech 6 times. Concerned Republican Senators went to the Oval Office and beseeched Ron to be tough while others phoned his advisors and advised them to keep things tame. Faction-like groups scurried about with sentences, wordplay and adages they thought should be left in or scrapped. A bit of a frenzy developed on Capitol Hill about Reagan's planned speech.¹³⁶

The President's officials were so edgy, that at one point they summoned a former aide to the Secretary of State, George Shultz, to verify for them whether marginal notes on the draft speech were actually Schultz's handwriting. They weren't, and were subsequently dropped.¹³⁷

In the end, the speech proved to be an anticlimax. He delivered it to an ensemble of foreign policy groups and offered nothing new in terms of American policy towards South Africa. The American President said that apartheid was "morally wrong and politically unacceptable" and then poured praise on the Botha-government for the "dramatic change" he thought they had initiated in the apartheid-state.¹³⁸ He then spoke out strongly against those "Soviet-armed guerrillas" of Oliver Tambo. He spoke of the "emotional clamour for punitive sanctions" against the apartheid-state and made clear that he would not easily support such an "historic act of folly."¹³⁹

He reasoned that sanctions would have an overwhelmingly detrimental effect on South Africa's black neighbours, deter reform and jeopardise American strategic interests. Sanctions, according to

¹³⁵ Stengel, R. (et al.), "Falling short" in *Time*, August 4th, 1986, vol. 128, no. 5, p. 4.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

Reagan, would really only hit “the very people we seek to help.”¹⁴⁰ Instead of getting out of the apartheid-state, he argued in favour of “deeper involvement by the Western business community, as agents of change and progress and growth.”¹⁴¹

Should Congress override him, he said, and impose punitive anti-apartheid sanctions it could only “destroy America’s flexibility, discard our diplomatic leverage...”¹⁴² Pres. Reagan turned to the Botha Government and called on the Nationalists to introduce a timetable for reform and, indeed, for the end of apartheid; he also urged Botha to initiate a dialogue with his outlawed black enemies. Reagan also announced that he was planning to send a black American ambassador to represent him in the apartheid-state.¹⁴³

Although the Botha Government regarded the speech, as a whole, as a positive sign – in America, the anti-apartheid groupings were furious. The key reason for the disappointment and anger that Reagan’s speech elicited was that the President offered nothing new in terms of policy changes in the White House’s approach towards the apartheid-state. Although most of the main political groupings in the United States were outraged by the South African crisis, they could not achieve consensus over what they ought to do about it, exactly how they should do it – and when. Even certain Republican powerbrokers were quite vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction with their President’s long awaited speech.¹⁴⁴

Saying that she had expected Reagan to announce new measures to help end apartheid, Republican Senator Nancy Kassenbaum added: “I was deeply disappointed with the President’s speech... It gave no new direction.”¹⁴⁵ Richard Lugar, the Republican Senator who chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and one of Reagan’s closest allies, had urged the President to announce bold and new measures to deal with the apartheid issue. Afterwards he said: “I think the President needs to do more.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Bishop Desmond Tutu made world headlines when he said: "I found the speech nauseating... I think the West, for my part, can go to hell."¹⁴⁷ *TIME* commented: "Reagan, by heightening the visibility of the subject without offering a solution, succeeded only in exposing his own policies to closer inspection and greater criticism."¹⁴⁸

Indeed. Although Pres. Ronald Reagan was the most powerful political leader in the world, he was not the most powerful political institution in America – the Democratic Party controlled Congress. Soon the time would come when the latter would surprise the President and utterly stun Pretoria.¹⁴⁹

On June 20th 1986, a couple of days after he imposed the comprehensive state of emergency and while the international anti-apartheid crusade was as intense as ever, Pres. Botha addressed a parade of young police recruits. This speech, given to the group of young impressionable policemen, was a shining example of his newly found defiance. He told the SAP that the West was caught in a "links-radikale konkelry" aimed against the Republic and its people.¹⁵⁰

He told them that nobody abroad could actually have a clear picture of what was going on in the apartheid-state as: "International politics today is overshadowed by the Great Lie."¹⁵¹ The President told the young group of police officers that wherever and whenever on earth the South African issue was discussed "common sense disappears."¹⁵²

The State President then added: "For years I have been warning against the extensive international onslaught..." Botha argued that, the world wanted to see his reformist politics fail because if his policies were to have succeeded "the charges and so-called excuses for the onslaught against us would fall away."¹⁵³ "This sly interference for the benefit of the radicals in our country must be exposed to public contempt," the State President demanded from his policemen.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION: INCH: PV 203: 4/2/144: 20 JUNE 1986

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

While PW Botha was speaking to the police, British the deputy-minister of Foreign Affairs, Lynda Chalker, spoke to Oliver Tambo. Chalker said that the Thatcher government believed in the value of dialogue with the ANC, but said that neither the British government nor the ANC had succeeded in changing each other's minds about the South African issue and how to bring about change.¹⁵⁵ Chalker defended her Government's stance towards the Botha Government and Tambo said that the ANC was not going to abandon the armed struggle. Chalker also stated that it was very difficult to understand why Tambo adamantly refused to renounce violence.¹⁵⁶

At the end of June 1986, *TIME* brought out a lengthy article about the state of the state of emergency, noting how the country had been hit by violence and how the Government had tried to stop the bad news from spreading by placing a moratorium on all media coverage of the unrest. "South Africa's attempt to obscure the details of the crackdown could not stop the wave of anger around the world," the internationally read news magazine reported. It described, with accompanying photographs, how thousands of people had taken part in marches across the globe to protest against the strengthened security measures.¹⁵⁷

In the USA, the House of Representatives took the White House by surprise when it proposed that a total trade embargo be implemented against the apartheid-state. Under this proposed measure, all American companies would be forced to withdraw and divest from the country within 180 days. For most analysts it had become abundantly clear that Crocker's constructive engagement was a failure. George Shultz did concede that it was time to intensify America's anti-apartheid policy. Secretary of State Shultz pointed out that it wasn't a question of *whether* to end apartheid but *how*.

Writing of the new wave of mass arrests Botha's security forces had made, *TIME* noted how Tony Bloom, the head of the Premier Group, had written to Louis le Grange and pointed out to him that because his police had removed scores of union leaders the business community was "now faced with attempting to run our factories and enterprises by dealing directly with the mob."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ *Die Volksblad*, 20 May 1986.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Smith, WE (et al), "See no evil, hear no evil" in *Time*, vol. 127, no.26, June 30th 1986, pp.6-9.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

So widespread had the worldwide outcry against the Botha Government become that the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that his Government had reached a point where they were fed up with “a Western world that is sick.” The usually moderate Pik Botha announced that the West could “hurt us, threaten us, damage our economy, but they cannot kick us out of our land.”¹⁵⁹

During that same period, mid-1986, a group of Western European diplomats tried to talk some sense into the white minority’s authorities. “We are trying to warn them that they are heading for real and perhaps imminent disaster,” one senior European diplomat remarked, discouraged, “But they are not listening. They seem to be mentally retreating from everything.” In Luxembourg the European Community’s Foreign Ministers sat down to lunch and to talk about anti-apartheid sanctions.¹⁶⁰

There was talk of a total trade boycott, but the West Germans and British deterred the imposition of any such thing. Thatcher’s Sir Geoffrey Howe, gave them the British viewpoint: “Our purpose must be to bring down apartheid and not the South African economy.” A ban on South African fruit, vegetables and wine, was suggested by the Dutch representatives – such a ban would have been worth about \$380, 000, 000. Again the West Germans and British refused. As can be expected, the Thatcher government came under attack for their attitude towards the minority Government in South Africa and under tremendous pressure to support the drive for extensive sanctions.¹⁶¹

“Economic sanctions are punitive and negative,” she retorted during a debate in the House of Commons, “The important thing is to try end apartheid by negotiations.” Her Government supported her and diffused a Labour motion calling for tougher actions against South Africa. But the Commonwealth was united against Thatcher’s handling of Botha’s Government; British clergy were against her South African stance and there were backbenchers that wanted to see her change her attitude towards the apartheid regime.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

The British Prime Minister, who had been clinging to her own version of constructive engagement, was under unprecedented pressure to deal Botha's government a detrimental blow. After PW Botha had announced the June 1986 state of emergency, Whitehall held a special emergency debate on Britain's stance on the South African crisis. Thatcher took a lot of hammering, but held her ground. She did undertake to put together "effective measures" to handle the apartheid-state.¹⁶³

Next, she and 11 other members of the European Community held a gathering and debated the South African question.¹⁶⁴ The European Council had the power to severely hurt the apartheid-state economically. Thatcher was particularly skeptical of the Dutch who, according to her, "having been the original home of the Afrikaners – suffered from a pervasive guilt complex about South Africa..." The 12 leaders concurred that later during the year, they might ban new investments in South Africa and impose sanctions on imports of South African coal, iron, steel and krugerrands. They also agreed that Thatcher could send her Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, to the apartheid-state as their emissary.¹⁶⁵

Howe and Thatcher did not completely agree on the sanctions-issue; Howe believed that it was necessary for Britain to impose tougher anti-apartheid measures. While Thatcher adamantly restated her anti-sanctions convictions, Sir Geoffrey stated that he was strongly opposed to apartheid as it was "not Christian, not civilized and certainly not in the interests of the West that it should survive."¹⁶⁶

Neither the Botha Government nor the black political groupings in South Africa were keen on Howe's visit. Neither Botha nor the black groups made any effort to accommodate him. The black groups believed that it was a Thatcher tactic to try and curtail the immediate imposition of sanctions.¹⁶⁷

The jailed Nelson Mandela declined to meet with Howe; Winnie Mandela called him "that clown"; while the leadership of Allan Boesak's powerful United Democratic Front not only refused to meet

¹⁶³ Sampson, p. 327.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 327.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Stengel, R. (et al.), "Falling short" in *Time*, vol. 128, no. 5, August 4th 1986, p.8.

him, but also forbade their millions of members to talk to the Englishman; Bishop Tutu ignored him and said that a meeting with Howe could only be a “waste of time.”¹⁶⁸

To the Nationalists, Sir Geoffrey was but yet another foreign critic. The State President met him, briefly, and told Howe that he didn't tolerate “interference”.¹⁶⁹ Sir Geoffrey was granted an audience by Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda to discuss the South African situation, but once he was there, the Zambian President publicly criticized Thatcher's policy on South Africa. Kaunda told Sir Geoffrey, on television, that he was certain that the Americans and English were perpetuating some “kind of conspiracy” to protect the minority power. The Zambian leader went on: “Sir Geoffrey, you people will not be forgiven by history, because South Africa is about to explode. And that you should encourage it to me is incomprehensible.”¹⁷⁰

Sir Geoffrey's visit to the apartheid-state was over in a few days. On all accounts, it had been a failure. In London the debate about apartheid had reached a point where it threatened to become a political frenzy of sorts. Still, very few British politicians actually touched on the crux of the issue – black majority rule.¹⁷¹

Most were very vocal about apartheid, but decidedly noncommittal on the issue of black majority rule. Lord Moran, a noted British diplomat, spoke about the Conservative Party's fears about a majority-ruled South Africa: “There can be no half-way house in South Africa. Either you must have a white dominated society or you must have one man, one vote, which would lead to black majority rule and, in due course no doubt, a one-party regime... I think one man, one vote would necessitate the departure of most of the 3 million whites, many of them to this country...”¹⁷²

In August 1986, Japan placed a ban on the import of South African pig iron and steel; ended issuing tourist visas to people from the apartheid-state; placed a prohibition on all flights from the apartheid-state to Japan; and called upon its citizens to stop vacationing in South Africa. Earlier, Japan had banned computer sales to Pretoria's security forces; restricted sporting, cultural and

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Sampson, p.328.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

academic relations with the country; scaled diplomatic ties down to consular level and discouraged the buying of South African gold coins.¹⁷³

They refrained from issuing a ban on coal and iron ore imports, because they were afraid that it may be detrimental to their own home industries and because they were sympathetic to the possibility that such measures could be harmful to black South African workers.¹⁷⁴ In the meantime, the spotlight in the European apartheid debate was still focussed on Thatcher. Again, the emphasis was on her South African position in the Commonwealth.

“We ended up as friendly as we started,” said Prime Minister Thatcher after the August 1986 Commonwealth summit held to review the report of the Eminent Persons Group and further debate the apartheid crisis. Since the 1985 Nassau summit, the situation in South Africa had deteriorated even further.¹⁷⁵

Although the Government had indeed made important reformist changes, Mandela was still in jail and political violence was still dragging on. Thatcher had a daunting task ahead of her, as she wanted to argue against tougher anti-apartheid measures. “It was clear that I would have to come up with some modest package of measures,” recollected Thatcher, “though whether this would arrest the march towards fullscale economic sanctions was doubtful.”¹⁷⁶

According to the Australian leader, Bob Hawke, who also attended the meeting, Thatcher “was more stubborn and intractable” than in Nassau. He noted how her attitude towards some representatives, who were fiercely criticising her, had “descended into rude hostility.” Hawke also noted how the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, who was there to report on his own excursion to the apartheid-state, was “appalled by Margaret’s views and behaviour.”¹⁷⁷ Some 48 Commonwealth heads-of-government supported sanctions, except the most powerful one, Margaret Thatcher. Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister, accused England of “compromising

¹⁷³ Cooper, C. (et al), *South African Race Relations 1986*, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 7.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Thatcher, M., *The Downing Street Years*, p.520.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Hawke, B., *The Hawke memoirs*, pp. 327-328.

its basic values for economic gain.” Kenneth Kaunda called Thatcher a “pathetic figure” and accused her of “worshiping platinum and gold.”¹⁷⁸

Everybody at the Commonwealth’s special London meeting, except Thatcher, agreed to: end consular facilities for non-nationals in the apartheid-state; ban: air links, the importation of agricultural products, the import of coal, iron, steel and uranium; and prohibit any new investments/reinvestments in the apartheid-state, with an accompanying ban on any new bank loans to both the public and private sectors. They also agreed that measures ought to be designed with which to ban governmental promotion of economic relations with the apartheid-state, as well as to prohibit the promotion of tourism.¹⁷⁹

Thatcher did concede that PW Botha’s Government was “unimaginative and inflexible,” but still she backed away from backing the Commonwealth’s new package of sanctions. The Prime Minister was prepared to support only some of the more timid measures, but not the tougher ones that the rest of the members agreed upon.¹⁸⁰

“Such a package sacrificed the living standards of South Africa’s black population to the posturing of South Africa’s critics and the interests of their domestic industries. I was simply not prepared to endorse it,” she explained. Thatcher was, apparently, also satisfied that the apartheid-state was in fact changing progressively, albeit little by little. At this juncture she thought that although apartheid was still very much a reality, it was “at least rapidly dying.”¹⁸¹

On his return to Australia, Prime Minister Bob Hawke told his Parliament: “Specific and meaningful change has not been taken to dismantle apartheid... Political freedom does not exist and the bans on the African National Congress and other political parties have not been lifted... I wanted us if possible to be united, but above all I wanted to be credible and effective. Better that

¹⁷⁸ Orkin, M. (ed.), *Sanctions against apartheid*, pp. 149-150.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Thatcher, pp. 520-522.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

those of us ready to act should do so than that we should for opt some transparently ineffectual compromise.”¹⁸²

The Australians imposed the sanctions proposed at both the Nassau and London meetings. On top of that it pledged \$5 million worth of assistance to the oppressed people of South Africa. They also closed down South African tourist offices throughout Australia as well as inviting Oliver Tambo to visit the country in 1987.¹⁸³

Meanwhile, the National Party Government’s reaction to the Commonwealth’s decision came quickly – within a few hours. The Minister of Foreign Affairs held a media conference and sternly warned: “You can rest assured we are not going to take this lying down.”¹⁸⁴

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said the Government warned that it could, for example, raise a levy on goods moved from South Africa’s ports to the north. And, in future a cash deposit of 25% would have to be paid for all imported goods on route to Zambia via South Africa. Traffic over Beit Bridge, the cardinal link between Zimbabwe and South Africa, was slowed down. South African’s officials explained that for statistic purposes they deemed it necessary to examine “the nature and extent” of every single item being transported across the bridge. They might as well have just closed the bridge altogether.¹⁸⁵

Pik Botha was furious with Zimbabwean leader, Robert Mugabe and the Zambian leader’s anti-apartheid outspokenness in London. He publicly dared them to “put their money where their mouth is and introduce comprehensive sanctions against this country.” Kaunda and Mugabe found themselves in a very difficult position. The Zambian leader said that Pik Botha’s actions were “blackmail and intimidation,” the Zimbabwean leader told his citizens to prepare for tough times ahead.

¹⁸² Hawke, p.328.

¹⁸³ Orkin (ed.), p. 153.

¹⁸⁴ Smith, WE (et al), “Going part of the way” in *Time*, vol. 28, no.7, August 1986, p.20.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

In the long run, the apartheid-state's black neighbours could lighten South Africa's economic hold on them by, for example, diverting their import-transport away from Durban and Port Elizabeth. But that was easier said than done – for the moment, the Botha Government could seriously impede these countries' economic workings.¹⁸⁶

While South Africa was struggling to keep the threat of sanctions at bay, prominent elements in the local business community were urging the Botha Government to go further and faster with its reforms.

By 1986, more than one company in South Africa – indeed, arguably most of the biggest and best known – had ensured that their public images were, although not necessary overtly opposed to the Botha Government, very much in favour of progressive changes.

One example was Harry Oppenheimer's Anglo American Corporation's "post apartheid society" ads. One such advertisement showed a tableau of images: a racially mixed university class, racially mixed track contestants; an overalled black man and white man working together in a workshop and a smiling racially mixed group of engineers discussing blueprints on a mining sight. Under these *progressively positive* images was a heading: "Towards a post apartheid-society."¹⁸⁷

Underneath was a short message from the Chairman of Anglo American, Gavin Relly. "Our greatest hope for peace and stability lies in marshalling the huge labour resources which we have... For it is here, more than anywhere, where different groups of South Africans are discovering their interdependence, as well as learning the skills of constructive conflict resolution," the executive concluded, "It is in the workplace that the multi-racial reality of South Africa has become tangibly evident. It is here that a productive and equitable post-apartheid society is being forged."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Relly, G., "Towards a post-apartheid society" in *South Africa International Quarterly*, July 1986, vol.17, no.1, p.19.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

A post-apartheid society, was the key phrase. From the mid-1980s, the focus of the apartheid-debate started to shift somewhat. Increasingly, people spoke less of why apartheid must be stopped and spoke more about how, when and where negotiations could start. Groups increasingly started to assess the feasibility of possible scenarios for change. Various groups and organisations also began to outline the somewhat more practical intricacies of different proposals they thought could be utilised to facilitate change-cum-negotiations.

Certain commentators noted how quiet Gavin Relly had become during this period. It seemed as if, following his visit to Lusaka in 1985, he had decided to play his role behind the scenes. But that the executive still played a definite role, cannot be denied.

On September 10th 1986, Gavin Relly sent State President Botha a confidential document.¹⁸⁹ It was a complicated proposal which, according to Relly, if implemented, could simultaneously facilitate: the release of Mandela and company, the revitalization of the southern African economy; the normalization of the Government's relationship with the banks; the supporting of the Government in the normalization of relations with its black neighbours and the unbanning of the ANC. The proposed plan involved the help of the Americans, the Swiss, the British, the Japanese and the West Germans.¹⁹⁰

At the crux of the proposal was the creation of a "regional assistance plan." "If," Relly's proposal started, "the frontline states want a plan, which their bad economic position demands that they do, they will have to recognise the reality of South Africa's position and so will the international community in general."¹⁹¹ The executive argued that if a program for macro regional economic development was to be developed, and if it was to have any chance of implementation, it would necessarily and inherently also have to deal with the question of violence, regional safety and security. "Here also the frontline states will have to face the reality of their involvement."¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 203 / PS 13 // 38 / 1.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

Understood more holistically, this was all about creating a process that could “give us opportunities in a number of directions to diminish or remove” the whole sanctions campaign against the apartheid-state and even “perhaps solve the issue of violence and political prisoners.” Relly also put it to PW Botha that if it failed, “I do not believe we would be any worse off.”¹⁹³

The corporate executive reasoned that everybody that mattered, inside and outside the country, knew very well that “a major development plan” was crucial for the survival of the region as a whole. He felt certain that the economic plan could “help to unlock some of South Africa’s current problems.” Relly stressed that this initiative was confidential and that nobody else in the corporate community knew about it.¹⁹⁴

According to Relly’s reasoning, the frontline states were hoping that foreign aid schemes would be offered which would help them to weather the negative effects of anti-apartheid sanctions. “In practice however, precisely those who are reluctant to impose sanctions will be most needed to respond if sufficient aid is not forthcoming,” he wrote. As for who would be financing Relly’s proposed regional economic plan – apparently some powerbrokers inside the banking and business communities in the UK, Japan, America and West Germany all “prefer to support a comprehensive development plan which includes renewed banking facilities for South Africa”¹⁹⁵.

The chief executive of the Anglo America Corporation stressed that although these institutions wanted to help relieve the country’s and the region’s plight, they “also prefer not to be seen again taking the initiative on South Africa’s side against sanctions...” The overseas bankers might have been concerned about the effect that the dire situation in southern Africa could have had on the economy of the whole continent, but they were not going to risk backing huge financial initiatives which “bluntly [confront] the pro-sanctions campaigns.”¹⁹⁶

According to Relly, what they envisaged was that the presidents of American and European banks would “invite” Swiss intermediaries to “investigate terms and conditions for a development plan.”

¹⁹³ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*

They would look at the situation in the frontline states, while “privately ” assessing how such an economic plan could “gain the support of those for and against sanctions.”¹⁹⁷

It was only logical that “regional stability and security” was vital to the success and durability of such a plan’s. “The proposed regional development plan could therefore be taken as an opportunity to make the ANC and PAC responsible for their actions in the region, not only in South Africa: if the plan as a whole was to be financed, it would require an understanding regarding non-violent political development. The ANC and PAC would therefore come under pressure from the entire region to renounce violence, so as not to damage their prospects of receiving aid,” Relly argued.¹⁹⁸

He reasoned that it would be “attractive” to get the ANC, PAC and “long term prisoners” to take part in facilitating regional stability. The intermediaries could be assured that Botha would release those prisoners in order for them to attend the talks, if “adequate safeguards” could be implemented.¹⁹⁹

Those safeguards could possibly include:

- That once released, the prisoners must leave South Africa
- That before leaving the country, they be allowed to hold some meetings if proper safety and security measures can be maintained
- That the prisoners are “encouraged to minimise their use of specific rhetoric.”²⁰⁰
- That they get “professional guidance” in how to “avoid locking themselves into positions” and of how to “avoid creating an inflammatory atmosphere.”²⁰¹

The idea was that the ANC and PAC could/would then “agree to a cease fire” while the talks were underway. PW Botha, the businessman suggested, might want to cast the release of the prisoners

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

“in the context of the talks and in the interests of regional stability. Such a move would be welcomed as statesmanlike, and would be made without foreign pressure.”²⁰²

Furthermore, Relly pointed out that this initiative was not a purely South African affair. “A number of governments and political movements with interests in the region would be involved so that the ANC and PAC would not be given undue prominence. The South African Government and these movements need not meet. The talks would concern the region as a whole, so a focus on South Africa alone is avoided.”²⁰³ But “at a suitable time” the Government might feel content to “propose that the ANC and PAC will be unbanned” of course, only if Botha was assured of “understandings” having been reached, with regards to the economic plan, including “provisions for stability.”²⁰⁴

If Pres. Botha was seen as being progressive in this endeavour, additional economic and financial funds could be forthcoming “as an incentive for agreements to be reached.” As most frontline states were in a deep and deteriorating economic crisis, the huge financial packages on display would be “particularly difficult for the frontline states to resist...” Relly also guaranteed Botha that the possible intermediaries – unlike the Eminent Persons Group – would all be reserved, seasoned and experienced statesmen.²⁰⁵

Relly also pointed out to Botha that via the economic development plan, the Government could “make them [the frontline states] responsible” for reducing the threats to security. Under the rubric of the regional development plan, the Government could look for a route to a New South Africa.²⁰⁶

As PW Botha leafed through Relly’s proposal, he repeatedly scribbled in the margin: “The document ignores the South African Government and is weak on the question of violence – I cannot agree to it. The Government’s policy towards the ANC and PAC is quite clear. They and their supporters who are in gaol must first abandon* violence – before negotiations can take

²⁰² *ibid.*

²⁰³ *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*

* Underlined by PW Botha in the original document.

place.”²⁰⁷ At the sections where Relyly referred to the release of political prisoners, Pres. Botha wrote: “Only if they undertake to abandon violence.”^{**} As for the suggested *cease fire* the President scribbled: “Any talks can only take place on principle that the ANC & PAC undertake the abandonment of violence.”^{***208}

This proposal, which never became common knowledge, was at once too complicated, too simple and too ambitious. There were too many loopholes. For example, would the released prisoners agree to leave South Africa? What if, once free, these leaders decided to stay, would the Government put them back in jail again? Would the masses agree to let their freed leaders go, once they saw and heard them? And how would the masses have reacted, once they learnt that these leaders were now going to leave them?

Furthermore, what prevented Tambo and the leadership of the ANC from simply entering the country, irrespective of whether or not the ANC was unbanned, once these leaders were freed? Would the Government gaoil Tambo after they had released Mandela? What's more, the document emphasises foreign arbitration. Both the Government and the ANC shared at least one viewpoint, an apprehension of foreign mediation.^{****} Both parties believed that South Africa's problems had to be solved by South Africans.

The issue of violence was a crucial factor for both the ANC and the Botha Government. If it had not been dealt with in some bilateral understanding, neither party would accept any kind of proposal for negotiation. Pres. Botha was correct in stating that the document did not pay enough attention to the issue of violence. In the writer's opinion, if this proposal had been presented to the ANC leadership, they would have made the same observation. At this point in time, both parties wanted an assurance from the other that it would abandon violence. More correctly, both believed that the abandonment of violence was the other side's responsibility. Moreover, both groups

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

* PW Botha's comments found on the original document.

** PW Botha's comments found on the original document.

*** PW Botha's comments found on the original document.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

**** See the chapters on the ANC in Section 1.

believed that a unilateral victory was still possible and as such, both groups still felt confident enough to continue fighting.

This was but a proposal. One does not know to what extent the State President considered it or whether he circulated it amongst his Cabinet members. The question is of course that, even if an agreement on violence could have been reached, would the President have accepted it? In the writer's opinion, he would not have. As noted, the time for negotiations was not yet ripe. Both parties still felt confident enough about their strategies, positions and strengths to continue fighting against one another. Irrespective of how confident the Government felt, the longer the white minority power refused to negotiate, the more their international image would worsen.

In September 1986, a West German television crew was commissioned by the huge Allgemeine Rundfunkanstalten Deutschland (ARD) to interview the State President. Botha told the reporters that he did not feel like an "outcast" but that the world was treating him "unfairly." He said that in his opinion, the West could treat his Government "more decently" and that it would be "in its own interests" to do so.²⁰⁹

The Germans stated that "most of the popular black leaders" were in gaol. Botha denied that sternly, saying that they were quite wrong and that, in fact, the "most popular and reliable and responsible" were not in prison and were working closely with him.²¹⁰

The interview then turned to the question of one-man-one vote, the President said casually that: "The principle of one man one vote has long been accepted in South Africa" but "It all depends in which structures you want to apply it" and concluded that "if you mean by one man one vote a system where the majority will dominate the other minorities in South Africa, then the reply is no."²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Kruchem, T. & Von Boehm, G., "Getting to know the President" in *Financial Mail*, Vol. 101, Nr. 10, 5 September 1986, pp. 57-61.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

The television reporters asked how he felt about the Police torturing people in gaol. "No, that's not correct..." he replied quickly.

"But it's continually being reported," retorted the Germans. Botha said that it was simply untrue, but "there will be exceptions."²¹²

The foreign journalists asked Botha whether his Government was still able to control the police. Botha adamantly replied that the South African Police Force was still very much under control and that it was "One of the best police forces in the world."

"Every night people are shot in the townships. You know that?" the reporters pressed.

"That's a deliberate lie, whoever says it," said Botha, adding "... we have a lot of lies reported about South Africa." The President declared: "I deny that police shoot people without reason."²¹³

Their last question was about the President's belief that his country could survive sanctions and the whole economic anti-apartheid campaign. "We have had to deal with voluntary and mandatory sanctions in the military field for years. We broke the sanctions and we came out stronger than we were before the sanctions were started," the President said. He went on to say that the apartheid-state was an economically strong country, pointing out its strategic mineral wealth and "South Africa has a strong trade with most Western countries and cannot be denied its potential; and South Africa will maintain its position and will fight sanctions in a decent responsible way, and eventually, I believe we will be stronger economically than when we went into it."²¹⁴

The Government and State President continuously stated that South Africa could withstand sanctions and disinvestment. Asked about what he really thought about that, PW Botha told the writer: "The disinvestments campaign was encouraged by foreign forces. I thought it was disastrous for South Africa. IT wouldn't only have affected the Afrikaner community, it would have influenced all race groups." ["Die disinvesteringeveldtog is aangevuur deur buitelandse

²¹² *Ibid.* p. 61.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

magte. Ek het gedink dis rampspoedig vir SA. Dit sou nie net die blanke bevolking, die Afrikanervolk geraak het nie, maar dit sou alle bevolkingsgroepe geraak het.”²¹⁵

While Botha told the reporters that his country would survive sanctions and the isolation campaigns, South Africa’s overseas allies were finding it increasingly difficult to ward off the implementation of tougher sanctions. The American Secretary of State, George Shultz, argued that US involvement in the apartheid-state “had made it easier for the South African government to go forward” with its reforms. Shultz argued in favour of the virtues of constructive engagement.²¹⁶ He also said to those critics of Reagan who wanted the White House to back the ANC that the administration had “serious questions about the ultimate objectives of the ANC” as well as the extent of communist influence in the organisation.²¹⁷

Shultz said that it looked to him as if the ANC was “imitating” the Botha Government’s “preference for violence and intimidation rather than dialogue...”²¹⁸ He again argued against American withdrawal from the apartheid-state, because “US presence gives us access to various groups and individuals which provide openings for using diplomacy and political and moral persuasion.” These were, according to the Secretary of State, “the most effective tools available to us.”²¹⁹

In conclusion Shultz drew a bottom line. “By its policies, the South African government has isolated itself politically and diplomatically. Its most recent actions are having the effect of isolating it economically as well. If current trends continue, the outlook for South Africa is dismal. In such a South Africa, there will be no winners, only losers... We want a democratic and prosperous South Africa... To achieve this apartheid must go.”²²⁰

To defend constructive engagement against the anti-apartheid lobby in the United Nations must have been an unenviable undertaking. Reagan’s ambassador to the UN, Gen. Vernon Walters, had

²¹⁵ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PW BOTHA. 3 October 2000.

²¹⁶ Shultz, G., “Toward a New South Africa” in *Africa Report*, vol. 31, no. 5, September-October 1986, p. 18.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 19.

²¹⁸ Shultz, G. p. 19.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

to do exactly that. While the apartheid-crisis had annexed international interest and the sanctions drive in the USA was growing, the General said that for America to intensify sanctions, would be the “popular thing, but it wouldn’t be the right thing”.²²¹ He said that the white minority power was “insulated” against sanctions and the white minority would not feel the brunt of sanctions, whereas the “black community is not insulated.” Gen. Walters argued that in case of emergency, the Botha Government would utilise the country’s considerable resources to protect the whites: “The blacks don’t have that protection.”²²²

Commenting on the political violence in South Africa, Walters pointed out that compared to a country like Afghanistan, the South African skirmish wasn’t really apocalyptic. Still, he did say that the Botha Government’s “abhorrent system” had to be done away with, but “without destroying that infrastructure that can be a powerhouse.”²²³

Calling apartheid “a totally archaic idea”, he said that even limited sanctions “will hurt the black community. You will not hurt the white community.” Adding that South Africa’s black neighbours ought not be so ignorant to the detrimental effect anti-apartheid sanctions would have their own economies.²²⁴

On the subject of disinvestment, Gen. Walters was emphatic: “The only place a young black South African today can get the kind of technological training that will make him competitive in the free South Africa of tomorrow is by working for a foreign company. You pull the foreign companies out and you know what he’s going to do? He’s going back to manual labour.”²²⁵

The General argued that much of the clamour for sanctions was based on “emotion” and if he had been a black South African he probably would have felt differently, but he said that he wanted to look at the situation “in a realistic way.” He said that if the USA was to slam South Africa with every possible punitive measure and the South African economy started to fall apart, blacks would be the first to suffer: “I don’t want my country to be a party to the creation of that much misery.”

²²¹ Novicki, M., “Gen. Vernon Walters” in *Africa Report*, vol. 31, no.5, September-October 1986, p.24.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*, p.25.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.26.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

He also said that he honestly could not see how apartheid would be ended because of foreign companies "leaving the game." Instead: "You've got to stay there and press change and press change and press quick change on them."²²⁶

He was also outspoken about the ANC: "Do we really want the South African people to go from a regime of apartheid to a regime of totalitarian dictatorship?" Gen. Walters was fearful "that there is a very powerful totalitarian influence in the ANC and I don't think they deny it." He also drew attention to how the ANC "encourages violence."²²⁷ Not everybody in Reagan's Republican Party, shared the General's outlook on the South African situation. One of the most outspoken voices in the American anti-apartheid lobby belonged to, not a Democrat, but a Republican.

Republican. Sen. Richard Lugar was slowly but surely growing more susceptible to the idea of well placed anti-apartheid sanctions, which might have not been so important except that the Senator held the distinguished post of being Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. According to Lugar, Reagan's securocrats had believed that they could utilise South Africa to help them fight the spread of communism in the southern African region.

At the same time, Reagan's policy designers wanted to bring about a gradual and civilized end to apartheid. Whereas Jimmy Carter was loud in his condemnation of the minority regime, Reagan's officials thought it best to employ amiable diplomacy towards the minority Government. By late 1986 few politicians in Washington could have helped noticing that constructive engagement wasn't as successful as many had hoped.²²⁸

Sen. Lugar explained why, in the light of the above, it was vitally important for the USA to be involved in the apartheid-state's crisis: "The problem is that no one in power [Pretoria] is listening. That is why the United States and the other democracies of the world have to [listen]."²²⁹ Pointing out that Botha's Government had made the apartheid-state "almost self-sufficient." Sanctions,

²²⁶ *Ibid.* p.27.

²²⁷ *Ibid.* p.28.

²²⁸ Lugar, R., "Making foreign policy: the Congress and apartheid" in *Africa Report*, vol. 31, no.5, Sept.-Oct. 1986, pp.33-36.

²²⁹ *Ibid.* p.35.

Lugar admitted, might or might not bring about the desired change in South Africa, however “they do send a strong message. The message is that change must occur.”²³⁰

The Republican then outlined some key points to ponder when designing and evaluating American foreign policy towards the apartheid-state. These included:

- “Moral outrage” over the South African upheavals was, according to Sen. Lugar, as “important as our strategic and economic interests”²³¹
- “The cause of freedom and justice in the world is strong.” He argued in ideological-cum-Cold War terms and maintained that if Washington did “not ally itself with those movements demanding human rights” the USSR would exploit the situation for their own purposes. As such, the Senator explained that the US must “help friendly but authoritarian countries become more democratic”
- From Sen. Lugar’s viewpoint anti-apartheid sanctions and punitive measures were designed and meant to act as “a strong message to those countries whose human rights policies we dislike.” He agreed that even though sometimes those measures’ success was questionable and or downright “ineffective”, they were “an expression of political morality basic to America’s democracy...”
- Punitive measures should be “carefully targeted... without destabilising the country” or letting it fall into becoming “a less desirable alternative.”²³²
- American influence and economic weight should be utilised in a “hands-on” way to back those companies and/or organisations that strove for equal opportunities.
- Capitol Hill mustn’t support “total disinvestment, total withdrawal, and total economic sanctions.” Lugar admitted that although from time to time it was very tempting to support hitting Botha’s Government with every type of punitive measure available, but cautioned that America must have as its overriding priority “reform of a friendly country” and not its economic destruction.
- “We cannot force one-man, one-vote government on South Africa...”

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.* p.36.

- America's policy makers should avoid creating "political polarisation" and economic ruin in South Africa. Instead the USA should "use our influence to keep open as many options as possible."²³³
- Both risk and luck played a role, according to Lugar. As the Reagan administration tried to maintain cordial relations with both Botha's Government and black groups, there was a certain amount of risk involved. The middle of that political road was very narrow indeed. The Senator noted that the USA risked "being pushed off the tightrope act by righteous and emotional persons in both countries who claim that they would feel better with conditions leading to total civil war."²³⁴

As can be ascertained from the above excerpts, many pros and cons were debated in Washington regarding anti-apartheid sanctions and the various other types of punitive measures. What would be best? What, in essence, were the fundamental issues? What would or would not happen if this, that or the other anti-apartheid action was to have been activated? How realistic were these proposed measures? Were they not too soft? Were these suggestions not too severe? These arguments were debated throughout Washington until the last few months of 1986, when it seemed as if the American debate on anti-apartheid measures was to be brought to a halt.

On October 2nd 1986, Chester Crocker's South African policy was delivered a severe blow by the US Congress. Constructive engagement was effectively halted when Reagan's opposition at long last succeeded in introducing the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. Reagan activated his Presidential vetoing powers to try and smother the proposed legislation, but the Senate backed the House and overrode Reagan's veto. In other words the Republicans supported the Democrats against the President, on all accounts an embarrassing moment in Reagan's illustrious career.²³⁵ In any case and for all purposes, Crocker's constructive engagement was – per implication – burnt at the stake. Some would argue that it was more a case of the merciful euthanasia of a dilapidated policy than a political execution.²³⁶

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ Venter, DJ, *South Africa, sanctions and the multinationals*, pp.154-156.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

During a prominent debate about sanctions and Pretoria, Sen. Kennedy elaborated on the US's shame at being "implicated in the terrible system that blights South Africa. Our corporations have benefited from the apartheid economy, and our government has, for many years, indulged the leaders of apartheid." Sen. Proxmire said that if a people were oppressed by their government "it is their duty to throw off such government." Sen. Weicker called apartheid "cancer" and stated: "The laws of Nazi Germany vis-à-vis Jews are identical to the laws of South Africa vis-à-vis black South Africans."²³⁷

The South Africans were desperately, not to mention haphazardly, trying to do some lobbying of their own. Chief Buthelezi phoned senators and assured them that poor black people would suffer most under anti-apartheid sanctions. Pik Botha was a bit more forthright. He rang senators and warned them that if they supported sanctions he would retaliate against American farmers.²³⁸

Implicit in the fact that the law had been accepted was that the American Congress had openly shown its contempt for constructive engagement. In the place of constructive engagement the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act had been placed. The new law's prologue explained that it was designed "to set forth a comprehensive and complete framework to guide the efforts of the United States in helping bring an end to apartheid in South Africa and lead to the establishment of a non-racial, democratic form of government."²³⁹

The Act had been fitted with a two pronged carrot and stick. The carrot being: If the National Party authorities succeeded in adequately satisfying certain specified requirements, Pres. Reagan could decide to lift and/or lighten some of the Act's measures. The stick being: If Botha's Government refused to budge and did not adhere to the Act's goals, then the White House could boost the Act's punitive firing power.²⁴⁰ The requirements the Botha Government had to meet before the Act would be eased demanded that the apartheid-regime:

- End the June 12th state of emergency

²³⁷ Sampson, pp. 331-332.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Venter, JD (ed.), pp.154-156.

²⁴⁰ Henning, J. (ed.), *Mededelings van die Sentrum vir Ondernemingsreg*, No.12: A survey of the United States State and local Anti-South African legislation. (12MedSor UFS), Bloemfontein, 1989, p.4.

- Release all political prisoners – starting with Nelson Mandela
- Allow all races to freely exercise their equal political rights
- Develop a clear timetable for the elimination of apartheid
- Embark upon negotiations for the creation of a new South African dispensation
- Stop destabilising black neighboring countries²⁴¹

The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 prohibited:

- US importation of krugerrands
- US importation of arms, ammunition and/or anything produced by any of the Government's parastatals the latter being understood as any organisation that was in partnership with the authorities or received state subsidies.
- Within 90 days of the law being activated, the importation of any uranium ore, uranium oxide, coal or textiles from the apartheid-state²⁴²
- The sale of American computers to South Africa's armed forces, police, prisons, security agencies, ARMSCOR, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, movement control authorities and or any apartheid-enforcing agency
- All US loans to the apartheid-regime, including their parastatals. Exemptions were made with regards to funding for nonracial upliftment/humanitarian undertakings
- The supply of all crude oil and petroleum products to the apartheid-state
- All air transport links between the US and South Africa
- The US consumption of all sugar, food or produce grown or made in the apartheid-state.
- New American investments in the apartheid-state – except in companies that were owned by black South Africans
- Nuclear trade between the US and Pretoria²⁴³

The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 also had a built-in deadline for the institution further measures. If “substantial progress” had not been made by Botha's Government in the

²⁴¹ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute of Race Relations 1986*, p.69.

²⁴² *Ibid.* p. 69; Venter, DJ, pp. 155-156; Orkin (ed.), p. 157.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

dismantling of apartheid within 12 months – Reagan would have to report to Congress on the state of the apartheid-state. If the White House came to the conclusion that the Botha Government had not done enough towards the scrapping apartheid, further more intensive sanctions would be imposed.²⁴⁴ These possibilities included:

- The prohibition of military assistance to those countries, which helped to equip South Africa's army in spite of the international arms embargo
- The banning of South African food, agricultural produce, textiles and diamonds
- Prohibiting American banks from accepting, holding and receiving deposits from South African nationals
- Banning the importation of strategic minerals from the apartheid-state.²⁴⁵

Furthermore, in 1985, some 40 American companies withdrew from South Africa and during 1986, 48 followed them. In August 1986, the state of California followed the example of 20 other US states and sold its South African related stocks. In practice, this meant that the state had sold off R25 000, 000, 000 worth of stock that was associated with South Africa. Throughout the year American states, cities and universities continued cutting all economic ties with the apartheid-state. This resulted in them getting rid of R55 000, 000, 000 worth of South African related stock.²⁴⁶

The group of American companies that withdrew from the apartheid-state in 1986 in one form or another included big ones like Exxon, Carnation, Coca-Cola, Eastman Kodak, General Motors, Microsoft, Revlon, Warner Communications, Honeywell, Proctor and Gamble and Pepsico.²⁴⁷

As the anti-apartheid cause had grown in the USA during 1986, so too did the anti-apartheid lobbies and pressure groups burgeon. These groups had a wide variety of targets.

²⁴⁴ Bethlehem, p. 106.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Cooper, C. (et al), *South African Institute of Race Relations Survey 1986*, pp. 67-68.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

A prime target of anti-apartheid groups in the USA was the soft drink company, Coca-Cola. After a lot of corporate debating and arguments for and against, the mighty Coca-Cola Company announced, at the end of 1986, that it was going to disinvest from the apartheid-state.²⁴⁸

This came after certain religious leaders in the US threatened to boycott the soft drink if it continued its operations in the apartheid-state. The powerful business also announced that it was planning to try and sell its bottling plant in South Africa to competent black operators. Coca-Cola also unveiled their plan to create an Equal Opportunity Fund in the apartheid-state and kickstart it with a \$10 million grant. The Company said that it would appoint Bishop Desmond Tutu and the leader of the UDF, Rev. Allan Boesak to administer the initiative.²⁴⁹

The Company finally moved its concentrate plant from Durban to Swaziland, but the world's largest soft-drink company had no intention of forgoing its hold on the South African market. The Company still supplied the apartheid-state with all the Coca-Cola syrup and marketing advice they could handle.²⁵⁰

The Coca-Cola Company's international headquarters are in Atlanta and few South Africans probably knew that the daughter of one of the most famous black South Africans of all time also lived in that American city: Tandi Gcabashe was the daughter of Albert Luthuli.²⁵¹

Because of her own anti-apartheid beliefs and her family heritage, she was a prominent figure in the American anti-apartheid network and she didn't care much for Coke's own constructive engagement with South Africa. After Coca-Cola had announced all these steps, she still argued that for every 80cent Coke sold in South Africa, the Botha Government received 10cents – therefore, according to her, the Coca-Cola Company was making a substantial contribution to apartheid. As for that Equal Opportunity Fund, she said it was but merely a drop in the ocean.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Pendegrast, M., *For God, country & Coca-Cola*, pp. 370-371.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

* Founding father of the ANC.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

Privately she concurred that the giant soft-drink business was at the “forefront of good companies” doing business in the apartheid-state. Nonetheless, when her critics pointed out to her that there was a host of other American companies that made more sense to target, she explained the practicality of hitting Coke. They were famous around the world, and “They are so visible and so good with their advertisements that it works to our advantage. We can say, ‘What company profits from apartheid?’ *Coke is it!*”²⁵³

She called upon college students to support her proposed boycott of the soft-drink and the students, always ready to rally around an emotive cause, heeded her calls to such an extent that the Coca-Cola Company had to counter her initiative at executive level. The Company got Carl Ware, Coke’s most senior black executive, to travel to the student communities and personally explain to them the soft-drink company’s viewpoint. Then, when Desmond Tutu gave an address at an American university, he posed for photographs together with Roberto Goizueta, Coke’s Chief Executive Officer, and the archbishop of Atlanta. The pictures were a clever public relations ploy and the student boycott was over.²⁵⁴ Coke followed a clever strategy to divert anti-apartheid campaigners.

Coke knew that a picture spoke more than a thousand words. Coke knew that it could thwart the boycott with that picture and its changes and programs in South Africa. The student support for the boycott – which was so big that it drew attention from top executives – was brought to an end by a picture and the blessing of an individual anti-apartheid celebrity. This incident showed how quickly the anti-apartheid campaign-field could shift. Other businesses suffered more under the spotlight of the anti-apartheid movement.

One of the biggest disinvestment shocks of 1986 was when the British giant Barclays Bank PLC gave notice that it had decided to sell its 40% stake in its South African branch. Harry Oppenheimer’s corporate group jumped at the opportunity acquire the bank. They scraped together some R527 million and bought Barclays’ South African operations.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ Coetzer, JA, “Current affairs column” in *Journal for Contemporary History*, vol. 12, no. 1, April 1987, p. 105.

The Barclays pullout came after anti-apartheid groups waged an intensive campaign against the British bank. These groups, inside and outside the UK, portrayed Barclays as the so-called *apartheid bank*. British municipalities and colleges and other organisations started to close their accounts at the *apartheid bank*. This trend occurred not only in Britain, but in various countries where Barclays had branches.²⁵⁶

Apart from the closing of accounts there was some other unpleasantness as well. On one single day, throughout the UK, as part of a comprehensive and coordinated anti-apartheid operation against the bank, 125 of Barclays' branches were vandalised by anti-apartheid activists. They smashed windows; harassed customers and threw paint everywhere. In addition to this and in no small way thanks to the anti-apartheid groups' successful propaganda campaigns, Barclays' share of the student market in Britain fell by 30%.²⁵⁷

All this happened because Barclays had a South African branch. It wasn't simply annoying anymore – they were losing money. In England, the bank's powerful executives started to seriously reassess the value of their South African business and the detrimental effect it could have on their plans to expand in the USA as well as in the rest of Africa – the result: South Africa came in second.²⁵⁸

Gordon Adam, general manager of Barclays Bank PLC, the international headoffice, explained the bank's decision: "To us, the unacceptable irony was of being dubbed the 'apartheid-bank' simply because we were in South Africa – no discussion whether we were or were not a force for good – while our associate, Barclays National [South African], was losing business because of its reputation as the 'anti-apartheid bank' in South Africa."²⁵⁹

He explained that in the end, "we faced a choice, and we chose America and Africa and elsewhere in preference to South Africa..." The banker stated that: "I believe it is impossible to expect the

²⁵⁶ Adam, G., "Behind Barclays' pull-out" in *Africa Report*, May-June 1987, vol.23, no.3, pp.23-25.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

present South African government to have the will to satisfy even part of the world's demands...²⁶⁰ As for the apartheid-state's economic future, Adam's assessment was rather bleak.

He argued that because of the violence South Africa could expect "no early return to national solvency." Combined with that was "the view that the rest of the world has taken about South Africa" which effectively curtailed the country's chances of future wide economic prosperity.²⁶¹

As the end of 1986 got closer, Dr Anton Rupert said in an interview, that the Botha Government was using too little money to develop the economy and spending too much on the military and defence. He said that the Afrikaner "finds himself in a tight corner as he believes that he is fighting for his very existence."²⁶²

He said that it was a sad irony, that as most people in South Africa's white community believed in the value of reform, the West was more aggressive than ever in its position towards the country. Rupert also said that it was of the utmost importance that the Government set a clear and specified "time-table for reform." As for sanctions, the businessman said that: "I am afraid that if sanctions were imposed with any degree of success, it would amount to hara-kiri in this part of the world and be a severe blow to private enterprise in the whole subcontinent."²⁶³

During this period, many whites argued that sanctions, and a so-called siege economy, would stimulate the local economy, as the country's business community would be compelled to utilise its capital for inward development and industrialization – the country would become economically more independent and self-reliant. These arguments concluded that sanctions could help to boost the economy instead of breaking it up. There was some truth to this, but there would eventually come a point where the country would be strapped for from abroad. At the end of the day no country on earth could survive, never mind develop while isolated from foreign financial and technical input.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 25.

²⁶² Murray, H., "Anton Rupert" in *Leadership SA*, vol.5, no.4, 1986, p.10.

²⁶³ *Ibid.* p.10.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.14.

Commenting on the consequences of a siege economy, Rupert said that: “It could stimulate the economy by creating immediate opportunities,” quickly adding in the same breath, “but in the long-term it harms all parties involved.”²⁶⁵

Rupert said he was “sad that it took so long to convince people that apartheid or separate development, regardless of the good intentions with which it may originally have been imposed can never be a practical solution in Southern Africa,” and again restated his stance that, “It is a myth that apartheid is a safeguard for the Afrikaner’s survival. On the contrary, it endangers the existence and future of all.”²⁶⁶

Rupert said he “regretted” his “inability to have persuaded more of my fellow-countrymen that peaceful co-existence in Southern Africa could be have been achieved through partnership and sharing. Also that we shall not be able to sleep in peace if our needy neighbours do not eat.” He concluded the interview by saying that he did indeed believe that the whites of South Africa, particularly the Afrikaners, could come to grips with the dilution and sharing of their powers, but only if they could be guaranteed a share in the country’s management “and not be subjected to one-man-one vote.”²⁶⁷

Rupert’s viewpoints, to a degree, encapsulated the general viewpoints of many moderate so-called verligte [progressive] whites. He expressed concern about the huge amounts of money spent on security, which according to him should have been spent on economic development. It stands to reason, that Rupert realised that in such turbulent times a strong security network was necessary. However, the turbulence was brought about by political factors and as such, it was necessary to normalise the political climate so that the security-establishment would need less funding so that more funds could be channelled to economic development. The large amounts of money spent on the security-establishment – compared to funding for socio-economic development – was a major reason why a growing number of whites wanted to see political change.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Rupert also wanted a time-scale from the Government, implying that he, like many other role-players, wanted to see clear direction from the Government regarding its plans for the future. Although Rupert did not express a clear and specific concept of what a new political dispensation should look like, apart from protection for minorities, he did want to see the establishment of a totally multiracial political dispensation. These were the dilemmas facing the Government – how and when to bring about the changes expressed by Rupert – i.e. how to neutralise the violent conflict and normalise the political climate.

During the same time, Julian Ogilvie Thompson, head of De Beers, spoke about the country. The executive said that there was no way in which you could get the country's economy up and running again if you did not first "restore confidence" in the economy "which means that people have got to have more faith in a satisfactory political outcome."²⁶⁸

He spoke about hardliner attitudes and said, "No doubt the security forces can maintain the situation for a longish time but it will be extremely nasty... That seems to me a disastrous road to go down. The other road is certainly a dangerous one, and it is not going to be easy. But if you have to choose between danger and disaster there is no choice."²⁶⁹

As for what it was like to try and do business abroad as a South African company, Thompson said that it was particularly strenuous. "It is well-nigh impossible to cement business links while this situation continues and that is obviously not helpful for our group and bad for the country," and that "I don't think we can realise the potential of this country, or meet the aspirations of all people, except as a full member of the Western community."

Thompson also spoke about the hardliner attitude of the ANC and their sanctions-drive. He said that he believed the ANC might be under a grave misconception in believing that when the country was completely ruined and they came to power, the West would pour funds into the country to rebuild it. "Looking at the record of investment in independent Africa, that I think is an

²⁶⁸ Murray, H., "Julian Ogilvie Thompson" in *Leadership SA*, vol.5, no.3, 1986, pp. 33-38.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

illusion.”²⁷⁰ While Rupert and Thompson called for greater change, the Botha Government’s relations with the USA were placed under further strain.

In the last month of the year, early in December 1986, George Shultz disappointed many Nationalists when he announced that some of his officials were talking with the ANC and PAC about human rights and constitutions. Roundabout Christmas, Pik Botha announced that he had denied a group of American politicians entry into South Africa. He explained that these men, who wanted to visit the apartheid-state to assess the effect sanctions were having on the country thus far, had supported the sanctions drive and were responsible for South African Airways having lost its American landing rights. As such, they were not allowed to visit the country.²⁷¹

Two days after Christmas a rather disturbing incident took place. When a coloured South African on board a ship sailing up the east coast of Africa, the *Sea Pioneer*, became critically ill, the governments of Aden and Djibouti and Kenya all refused him medical help, on the sole grounds that he was a South African.²⁷² They didn’t care that he wasn’t white. At the risk of making a generalisation, this incident illustrated the inhumanity of some African states that were supposedly very much against the inhumane apartheid-system. The fact that they did not even want to give medical help to a non-white South African raises questions about these states’ own morality. It also served to illustrate how some countries’ anti-apartheid attitudes, during the 1980s, had reached the point of fanaticism.

On December 28th 1986, the Canadian authorities informed their embassies that they were not allowed to issue visas to South Africans anymore. Exceptions could be made where the South African applicants applied in person.²⁷³

Assessing 1986, Simon Jenkins, a political commentator, put it as follows: “Sanctions have probably made life easier rather than harder, for Mr. Botha and his Nationalist colleagues.” Jenkins held that although the international frenzy over apartheid had helped and boosted many black

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Coetzer, JA, “Current affairs column” in *Journal for Contemporary History*, vol.12, no.1, April 1987, pp.119-120.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

South African leaders, "it has also enabled Mr. Botha to play the Afrikaner gambit of xenophobia in countering pressure from his right wing." Tackling the State President, he argued: "President Botha would appear to be a leader firmly in the tradition of Afrikaner pragmatism. Each step down the path of reform... is not taken as part of a coherent ideological program. It is conceded only under force of circumstances to meet what appears the line of least resistance. Each year a new 'bottom line' is drawn, only to be abandoned the next."²⁷⁴

Jenkins observed that PW was "tactician not strategist." He argued that Botha's success as leader of the Nationalist Party was not evaluated in terms of "reaching a new political destination for whites or blacks; it is simply another year of white survival for white supremacy, of relative prosperity and peace."

Jenkins reasoned that at the end of the day, Verwoerdian apartheid ideology was inherently unworkable because of powers intrinsically lodged in the free market system. "These pressures undermining apartheid remain within the South African political economy and can only grow stronger with the passage of time. But," argued Jenkins, "they derive their vitality from sustained economic development. The tragedy of 1986 is that the efforts of those who should be supporting this development have been directed at undermining it. The sanctions campaign is another deplorable chapter in the West's eternal incomprehension of all things African."²⁷⁵

"The national state of emergency of June 1986 embodied a mood of defiance in the South African Government," observed the South African journalist Henry Kenney, "which seemed irreversible, at least as long as PW Botha was in charge..." Commenting on the international anti-apartheid campaign he wrote: "By the end of 1986 the sanctions campaign had become one of the great moral causes of the time. If the sanctioners believed their own inflated rhetoric, they had no doubt that opposition to disinvestment and trade bans differed little from an enthusiasm for genocide and indeed reflected an irredeemable racism."²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Jenkins, S., "Looking back on 1986" in *Optima*, vol. 34, no. 4, December 1986, pp. 176-177.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Kenney, H., *Power Pride & Prejudice: The Years of Nationalist Rule in South Africa*, pp. 369-371.

As the dramatics of 1986 showed, the anti-apartheid groups had grown and were continuing to grow in their prominence and prestige. To put it bluntly, from 1986 onwards, the anti-apartheid campaign had turned into something of an industry. According to Kenney "power, prestige and substantial material reward awaited those who best knew how to keep the sanction fires burning."²⁷⁷

Be that as it may, 1986 was not a good year for South Africa. It was definitely one of the most chaotic the National Party had thus far encountered, with intense and harsh pressures at home and from abroad. Even so, on December 31st 1986, the National Party still ruled South Africa and Nelson Mandela was still in gaol. Although the country's economic and diplomatic positioning was balanced on a seesaw and continuously slipped and slid between bad and worse and vice versa, at the end of the day the white minority regime of the apartheid-state had survived yet another year.

²⁷⁷ *ibid.*

CHAPTER 6

1987: CHECKMATES AND STALEMATES

Compared to the previous year, 1987 appeared to be – although still very tense – rather more manageable for the white minority government. In this review of 1987, particular attention will be paid to selected and specific incidents. It should be made absolutely clear that although specific incidents are being discussed it does not mean that they were the only important events that occurred during 1987. Indeed not, many of the processes that started during 1986 followed through into 1987. Still, it was a more manageable year for Pretoria than the previous year, but the apartheid-state's diminishing position in the world didn't suddenly get better. As, for example, the first two months of 1987 clearly showed.

Early in the year, on January 28th 1987, George Shultz's State Department held a 50-minute talk with, Oliver Tambo. According to the powerful Secretary of State's spokespersons, the Department had made it abundantly clear to the head of the ANC that the White House certainly did not think that violence could solve South Africa's crisis.

A few days later February 17th 1987, Les Manley, who had been Pik Botha's representative at the United Nations informed the Security Council that mandatory sanctions could only impede the speed of reforms in the apartheid-state and would hurt black workers the most.¹ In South Africa, PW Botha said that radical revolutionaries were receiving alarming measures of support from reckless forces in the West. And on February 23rd 1987 in the United Nations, Italy voted in support of a resolution that would mean the imposition of punitive anti-apartheid actions. Chancellor Kohl's representatives voted against it.²

In March 1987, the Israeli government said that it was going to examine ways in which to downgrade relations with Pretoria – it should be noted that they meant non-military relations. Pik

¹ Coetzer, JA, "Current affairs column" in *Journal for Contemporary History*, vol. 12, no. 1, April 1987, pp. 122-123.

² *Ibid.*

Botha said that this was a direct result of American anti-apartheid pressure on the Israeli authorities' relations with South Africa.³ In September 1987, they introduced sanctions against South Africa. These measures included:

- A prohibition on new loans / investments
- Prohibiting the use of Israel as a *third country* transit point for Pretoria's sanctions busting
- Freezing the amount of iron and steel that could be imported from the apartheid-state
- Prohibiting the importation of oil and Krugerrands from South Africa
- A ban on any new scientific agreements between Israel and the apartheid-state
- Preventing civil servants from going to the apartheid-state without first obtaining cabinet approval for such visits
- Announcing their determination to minimise any cultural or sporting relations between Israel and the apartheid-state.⁴

Then there was also the situation with Shell, the multinational petroleum giant. In the same way that the European anti-apartheid lobby had smeared Barclays as being Botha's apartheid bank, so they had honed their scopes on Royal Dutch Shell as the company that *fuelled apartheid*. During January 1987, the anti-apartheid network decided to intensify their internal pressure campaign against the oil company.⁵

Leaders of anti-apartheid organisations in Belgium, the UK, Scandinavia and the USA and those in the Netherlands announced that Shell would become one of the prime targets in their anti-apartheid disinvestment campaign. According to the anti-apartheid movement's strategists, the petrol giant was one of the most flagrant breakers of the oil embargo against South Africa and that the company also controlled vast mining concerns in the apartheid-state.⁶

³ Cooper (et al), *South African Institute for Race Relations 1987 / 88, The Economy / International links*, p.412

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.414.

The anti-Shell crusade took a distressing turn when hardcore anti-apartheid campaigners in the Netherlands violently wrecked a few of Shell's petrol stations through sabotage and arson attacks.⁷ However, Shell stayed in South Africa.

As was the case with so many other foreign corporate groups operating in the country during this period, Shell was slammed abroad as being the company that kept Pretoria's wheels of oppression turning, but at the same time within the apartheid-state Shell was known as a progressive institution. Pointing this out to anti-apartheid fighters was futile. The petroleum giant was indeed quite active in its sponsoring of various social programs within the apartheid-state. In the same year that its petrol stations in the Netherlands were being blown up, Shell spent R27.9 million on socio-economic schemes in South Africa – all aimed at the country's black people.⁸

Shell had given R10 million for housing; almost R2 million was spent on building a maths and science centre; a further R1.3 million was spent on giving bursaries and scholarships; a million went to an education foundation; Shell used R1.5 million to pay for university residences; almost three million was pumped into training initiatives and R4 million was also used for various other public projects.⁹

The company was also a forerunner in affirmative action and between 1977 and 1987, the number of black supervisors and managerial staff at Shell South Africa increased six fold.¹⁰ Shell also looked after their workers with educational aid, medical aid, pension and provident funds. It also played a valuable role with regards to wildlife preservation and ecological initiatives. The multinational corporation also assisted in setting up projects to help black community organisations, social workers and aspiring artists.¹¹ Still, the anti-apartheid movement in Europe couldn't be brought to see the company in a good light.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Venter, DJ, *South Africa, sanctions and the multinationals*, p. 127.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Sir Peter Holmes, who had been the chairman of the international Shell Group during this period, later said that the apartheid-issue during the 1980s was the most testing part of his whole term as global chairperson of Shell.¹²

Sir Peter later recapped: "Outside South Africa we were hated by the anti-apartheid groups, because we were determined not leave under duress, indeed not to leave at all – we felt we could do more by being there – leaving the country would have been an empty gesture... At the same time, inside South Africa, we were hated by the right-wingers, because we'd spent a lot of money educating blacks and teachers of blacks. And we were very unpopular with the South African government of the time, because we were so overtly supporting black aspirations... we took out full-page advertisements on a regular basis, supporting free speech, unions, education, everything. But it was a very difficult road to tread."¹³

The business community was in a difficult position indeed. On the one hand it needed to press the Government to continue with change, yet at the same time it could not afford to openly confront the Government. When Harry Oppenheimer was asked about how far the business community should go in pushing for greater change, he said: "They should be prepared to do anything that the law allows them to do. And the law allows them to do a great deal more..."¹⁴

Asked about the chances for increasing conflict between Government and the private sector he replied: "I see much less risk of conflict than there was in the past, simply because Government seems to be moving a very long way in the direction that business wants it to go... Naturally I am going to watch carefully to see whether the things he (PW Botha) said are really done. If they are not done I believe it is the job of, not only business people, all sensible South Africans to make a hell of a fuss about it."¹⁵ Business-state relations might not have been very good before, but during 1987, they deteriorated further.

¹² Howarth, S. *A century in oil*, p. 370.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 370-371

¹⁴ Albedas, M. & Fischer, A., *A question of survival*, pp. 340-341.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

During February 1987, it was revealed that Chris Ball, Managing Director of Barclays Bank South Africa, had been involved in financial dealings with leftist anti-apartheid extra-parliamentary political groupings. It led to a public dispute between Ball and State President Botha. Afterwards, Chris Ball left South Africa and settled in England. The affair was a complicated one with a long prelude and was not only a political incident, but was also of a personal nature.*

It should be emphasised that the so-called Ball Affair was not so much a clash between Barclays Bank and the Government, but much rather a dispute between Chris Ball and Pres. Botha. Although interesting, the Ball Affair did not have a direct substantial effect on the broader process examined in this study. The affair made for sensational headlines, but seen within the broader historical context, the Ball Affair was a storm in a teacup. What is important is the perceptual effect the Ball Affair had on the business community. The Ball Affair made South African business people cautious about getting too involved in extra-parliamentary opposition politics.

“Business leaders in responsible positions with a high profile must, of course, be careful of what they say or do – simply because they are what they are. They must take into account that personal opinions should be balanced against the interests of the economy as a whole. But businessmen have a duty to inform the government about how they feel,” said the central banker Dr. Gerhard de Kock, rather donnishly, “Politics and economics are now so entwined that it is virtually impossible for a prominent businessman to express a view on economic policy without, at the same time, saying something about political or constitutional development.”¹⁶

As should be apparent, the relatively good relations that had existed between the Government and the private sector during the early part of the decade, had soured considerably by the latter half of the 1980s. Big business blamed the National Party Government for economic mismanagement and the country’s ever deteriorating international position. For its part, the National Party hierarchy accused the private sector of being opportunistic and blamed them for not following the

* As such, although it entailed a prominent businessman and the State President, the Ball Affair cannot be defined as a development or clash between the State and the Corporate Community and as such falls outside the ambit of this study. Although it formed part of the period, the Ball Affair does not comfortably fit into the process examined in this study. Suggested reading: *The Imperial Presidency* by Brian Pottinger; *Stem in die Wilderness* by Daan Prinsloo; *Leierstryd* by Alf Reis & Ebbe Dommissie.

¹⁶ Murray, H., “Gerhard de Kock” in *Leadership SA*, vol.6, no.2, 1987, p. 15.

Government's instructions on how to turn the economic slump around.¹⁷ The Ball Affair further worsened the relationship between the Botha Government and the business sector.

"When it was reported that Barclays National Bank MD Chris Ball and his family needed armed guards to protect their lives, fellow business leaders received an uncomfortable reminder that the results of being identified with opposition to the government, even just by association could be swift and nasty," wrote Raymond Ackerman, "...I remember discussing... the importance of keeping a cool head as a business leader, not being panicked into making statements you would regret in South Africa's fraught political climate."¹⁸

Whether or not this was PW Botha's intention, Henry Kenney noted the effect the Ball Affair had on the corporate community's perception of the Government: "They now knew, if they did not before, that their views did not count for all that much with the State President. Nor could they doubt that if they overstepped some easily reached limits they would be facing a very rough and dirty fighter indeed. The Ball episode," Henry Kenney surmised, "had shown that PW Botha was willing and able to alienate one of the most important interest groups in the white community."¹⁹

Political commentator Heribert Adam concurred that this was the perception that now prevailed amongst businessmen: "After the Chris Ball investigation, Pretoria has for the time being successfully intimidated corporate heads to avoid their being labelled 'friends of the enemy'... A conservative in-house constituency, a fear of government action and a political timidity born of prosperity constrain even the handful of far-sighted entrepreneurs who seek to come to terms with the revolutionary forces."²⁰

After the Ball Affair, but by 1987 in general, it was clear that if the corporate community wanted to play a political role it would have to be a much more discreet initiative. A sector in the business community knew that instead of trying to oppose the Government in an attempt to bring about change, a more diplomatic route was more sensible. What was needed for change was, first of all,

¹⁷ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PW Botha. 3 October 2000.

¹⁸ Ackerman, R. & Prichard, D., *Hearing grasshoppers jump – the story of Raymond Ackerman*, p. 207.

¹⁹ Kenney, p. 385.

²⁰ Berger, P. & Godsell, B., "Fantasies about South Africa" in *Optima*, vol. 35, no. 3, September 1987, p. 119.

to get South Africans, specifically the white minority, to think differently about that change. One way of doing this was educating people about the sound logic of change, herein the corporate community played a definite role.

Clem Sunter was a Director of the Anglo American Corporation and reported directly to Harry Oppenheimer. He was a scenario-planner, but was also called a socio-economic soothsayer and in 1987 he took the country's rationalism by storm.²¹

During this period Sunter had to deliver a futurist scenario to an in-house audience at the Anglo American Corporation. The seminar, known as *The World and South Africa in the 1990s*, was the end-result of an extensive three year international study which was commissioned and funded by the Anglo American Corporation.²²

The first time he presented the seminar was when he addressed the executives of the Anglo American Corporation. The second time was when he spoke to the top leadership of the Afrikaner Broederbond, after which the head of that organisation, Prof. JP de Lange, arranged for Sunter to address PW Botha's full Cabinet, although the President himself did not attend.²³

Subsequent to that presentation to the cabinet, invitations for Sunter to present his seminar flooded his office at Anglo's headquarters. In fact, he turned into something of a quasi-academic-showman and toured the country with his seminar. He delivered his seminar to all races and age groups; to the far-left, liberals, Nationalists and ultra right-wingers. His seminar was so talked about that he even gave his seminar in prison to Nelson Mandela. In the end Sunter presented his seminar on

²¹ Clem Sunter is British by birth and originally hails from Suffolk, he was educated at Winchester College and later studied Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford. He was appointed as a management trainee by Charter Consolidated and then in 1971 he travelled to Zambia where he worked for Anglo American Corporation Central Africa. Two years later he was taken up into the Anglo hierarchy and worked at their Johannesburg headquarters. He had worked mainly as a *gold man* and while he worked on his scenario planning he was appointed as a Director of the Anglo American Corporation and reported directly to Harry Oppenheimer. See biographical notes: *South Africa in the 1990s*. Sunter has an energetic and at the same time unpretentious way about him, coupled with his exceptional people skills, Sunter had all the dexterity that makes for a successful public persona.

²² JA STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: INTERVIEW: CLEM SUNTER. 13 November 2000.

²³ *Ibid.*

about 250 occasions and spoke to a total of about 30 000 people. Later his seminar was developed into book form, which was an instant bestseller. It was also made available on video.²⁴

Although the three-year global study the seminar was based on was filled with rather complicated premises and intricate strands of research, Sunter's bottom line was quite simple. He had edited it into compact segments and formulated it in plain terms, which made it easily accessible for a diverse national audience. The seminar was devoid of party political bias, ideological propaganda and emotional rhetoric, instead he presented facts in a balanced and unbiased way – one reason why it was so successful.²⁵

The gist of the Sunter seminar was: If South Africa changes progressively and through negotiation, this might possibly lead to all-round prosperity. This then was his so-called *high road* scenario. But if the country refused to alter its course and defiantly remained put, then most assuredly South Africa would implode and become a wasteland. This was his so-called *low road* scenario. Simply put: progressive change could lead to a bad or good future, but if managed correctly it could possibly lead to prosperity. Without a doubt, according to Sunter, in the long run, political stagnation lead to a wasteland.²⁶

According to the Anglo Director's reasoning, the *High Road* had to include and or lead to:

- Minimal sanctions
- Small government
- Decentralised power
- Joint negotiation and synergy: "What has to develop out of the negotiation process is a solid cross-section of people who are willing to put themselves on the line and say, 'We're on the 'High Road.' Stop wrecking South Africa.'"²⁷

²⁴ "Clem Sunter" in *Financial Mail*, vol.105, no.4, July 24th 1987, p.59; Waldmeir, p.255.

²⁵ JA STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: INTERVIEW: CLEM SUNTER. 13 November 2000.

²⁶ See: Sunter, C., *The world and South Africa in the 1990s*.

²⁷ Sunter, C., *The world and South Africa in the 1990s*, pp.104-106

Sunter set out the Low Road as a South Africa where "... sanctions increase because the future is imposed. The economy becomes more controlled... Government becomes more centralised and bigger, just when it should be less centralised and smaller. Co-option superficially works to begin with, but eventually there is confrontation and conflict," while South Africa could be "spun off into regional conflict."²⁸ The *Low Road* according to him, would have included:

- Increasing sanctions
- Controlled economy
- Centralised government
- Eventual confrontation and conflict²⁹

He also painted a third doomsday scenario. This scenario might have been possible, but was less plausible than the other two. This so-called *Cautionary Tale* was the ultimate climax of the *Low Road*: South Africa "turns into a completely military fortress. The dynamic inside the fortress cannot be predicted at all; nobody can say what happens to a nation when you subject it to abnormal stress... The end game, we feel, is the 'Waste Land'."³⁰

"If South Africa does not move to where the money is really being made, we are going to end up with the same kind of perennial foreign exchange shortage that blights so many other economies," Sunter said in a 1987 interview.³¹ According to him: "Economic growth is vital" and with negotiations, economic growth was a fundamental prerequisite for the creation of a post-apartheid South Africa. "You need a growing common pie to accommodate everybody's slice of the pie. If you want a growing common pie you have to have social harmony," for that to materialize, Sunter reasoned, "... you have to negotiate the future."³²

He also continuously emphasised that "negotiation is not enough" to create a prosperous post-apartheid South Africa: "That is why all the other aspects of a winning nation should be

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Murray, H., "The hottest gospel" in *Leadership SA*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1987, p. 37.

³² *Ibid.* p. 40.

emphasised too, such as education, such as a work ethic and a dual logic economy.”³³ But of course in 1987 the overriding issue was about negotiations – change for that matter. Sunter also stressed the point that what was needed was *negotiation* and not some form of *consultation*, calling this distinction “the absolute crux of the matter.”³⁴

For Sunter and his research-team, true negotiations encompassed four basics:

- “There has to be give and take on both sides.”
- “...no one person has control over the agenda or over who participates.” And each group “decides on its negotiators.”
- “...negotiation...is risky because the outcome is uncertain.”
- Both sides must be authoritative in stature and strong in following. “When you have struck a settlement, you want everybody to go back to the people they represent to make the deal stick.”³⁵

Sunter also pointed out that a growing economy wasn’t the only prerequisite for the commencement of negotiations, because if that was the case, according to him, “we would have been on the high road in the fifties and sixties.” He stressed that the “willingness of all parties to negotiate” was absolutely crucial.³⁶

Also important was that people understood full well what could happen if they refused to change. “It’s very difficult to make the wasteland scenario credible to people when there is a perception on both sides that they can win any war and inherit this place as a going concern,” he said, “It’s difficult to convince both sides that there’s another, highly plausible scenario out there – that in slugging it out, nobody is going to inherit anything.”³⁷

Some time later, in 1989, he wrote that after negotiations for a new political dispensation had taken place, “the two most essential words” that should become permanently wedged into the

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 40.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 38.

national psyche were "... 'tolerance' and 'moderation'. In pursuit of our common vision for a South Africa in which everyone has an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential, these two qualities above all others are required."³⁸

It seem that for Sunter, like for so many other businessmen, economic necessities were the factors most responsible for the natural erosion of apartheid. "The formation of economic alliances between whites and blacks will from now on erode apartheid... Economic inter-dependence will weaken the ability of both sides to go it alone," and he explained, "Most important of all, if the economy can liberate the remarkable entrepreneurial talent which exists in the black community, no government will be able to roll the tide back and recreate an authoritarian state."³⁹

An important part of Sunter's message was the vital importance of moderation and sensible pragmatism. "The goal," he wrote explaining his views on political change during 1988, "should be to establish a political system that works, not one that satisfies the ambitions of extreme ideologues."⁴⁰

According to Sunter, the socio-economic and political unrest experienced during the 1980s, drew the traditionally Afrikaans and English sections of the country's corporate community closer together. An example of this can be found in the fact that Sunter's seminars received such overwhelming support amongst Afrikaans businessmen.⁴¹ "The place I got a lot of support from was Afrikaans Business," Sunter told the writer, "And they opened the doors to seeing the government and so on... and that includes the parastatals who were also realising that change had to happen. So I wouldn't say that the English business community was *verlig* and the Afrikaans community was *verkramp*."⁴²

As explained earlier, it was important to get people to think differently about change; to convince people of the logic of change. Sunter said that he had written the book because he had wanted to

³⁸ Sunter, C., "Shooting the rapids" in *Leadership SA*, vol. 8, no.10, 1989, p.30.

³⁹ Sunter, C., "The ring of regression" in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, August 1988, no.16, pp.24-25.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* pp.24-25.

⁴¹ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with Clem Sunter. 13 November 2000.

⁴² *Ibid.*

“open peoples eyes... instead of having a bloody great war...”⁴³ What actual direct effect did Sunter’s scenario talk have on the course of events? Although that is difficult to assess, he undoubtedly had a definite effect on the way in which scores of South Africans thought about the virtues of positive progressive change. Assuredly, he made many think differently; more holistically and a little more pragmatically about the possible future of the country.

Another feature not to be overlooked here is the mere fact that Sunter’s talks were so successful, which said something about the country. South Africans were increasingly being bombarded by the idea of *change* – assessing its prospects, pitfalls and feasibility. Thinking ordinary citizens, powerbrokers and intellectuals were increasingly pondering it, writing about it and philosophizing about it.⁴⁴

Clem Sunter’s scenario seminar about change was by no means the only one. There were, in fact, quite a number of similar popular seminars and books. Leon Louw and Frances Kendall’s *The Solution* was another popular scenario projection, as was *Permanent Peace* by Denis Beckett, to name only two.⁴⁵ The logical soundness of change discussed by these scenario-planners, gained increasing merit as South Africa’s international position worsened.

In October 1987, the Commonwealth’s annual meeting was held in Vancouver, Canada. The apartheid-issue was a prominent feature of the delegates’ discussions. It was that a special monitoring body would be established to oversee the Commonwealth’s implementation of anti-apartheid measures. The committee consisted of the foreign ministers of Australia, Canada, Guyana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Thatcher opposed the creation of this committee and did not support its work either.⁴⁶

She reasoned that such a body would be “not just a waste of time but counter-productive...” Thatcher was quite adamant: “I said that its only purpose would be to satisfy the ego of the Commonwealth heads of government and I would criticise it publicly and openly.” In her address

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Pottinger, B., *The imperial presidency: PW Botha the first 10 years*, p. 451.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Van Pletzen (ed.), *South Africa Yearbook 1988-89*, p. 204.

to the Commonwealth leaders, she explained how anti-apartheid economic measures would hurt blacks more than their white political masters, for example: if the Commonwealth were seriously to hit the apartheid-state with an all-out ban of South African fruit and vegetables between 100 000 and 200 000 non-whites would be left without jobs. She also criticised the black Commonwealth leaders who were vocal in their clamour for punitive measures while knowing full well that they wouldn't be able to survive economically without South African assistance.⁴⁷

The Commonwealth leaders also held a press conference explaining their anti-apartheid point of view and Thatcher grew tired of the Canadian leader's "sanctimonious criticism" of her arguments. She subsequently released facts and figures that showed how Canada's imports from the apartheid-state had risen. "So I was more firmly convinced than ever that sanctions were not the answer," Thatcher affirmed, "Of course, such arguments cut little ice with those determined on gestures."⁴⁸

In the same month, October 1987, some American publishing businesses made their stand against apartheid, when they announced that they were no longer going to operate in South Africa. Some of these publisher-cum-distributors included some of the biggest publishers: Simon & Shuster were included, as were its offshoots, McGraw-Hill and Macmillan-Scriber. South Africa's international position was further worsened when a joint committee of the Senate and House of Representatives adopted the Rengel amendment. Accordingly, American companies that did business in South Africa would now be forced to pay taxes in both countries.⁴⁹

In spite of these new developments, the Botha Government held its position and again stated that outside pressure would not force it into a direction it was not prepared to take. "[F]or us to avoid sanctions, boycotts or economic retrogressions," Pik Botha remarked on the issue of foreign pressure, "merely because we feel time is limited, or merely to please the Americans or British, the United Nations or some outside forces, will in the long run bring greater hardship, more poverty, more suffering. We must show a firm attitude towards any interference or imposition of any system which we know this country cannot adopt and cannot accept."

⁴⁷ Thatcher, M., *The Downing Street Years*, pp. 522-524.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Van Pletzen, pp.203-204.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs concluded with a remark that must have caused concern to some whites: "Thus we must rather, in the shorter term, accept the lowering in our standards of living and look towards the future."⁵⁰ Implied here was what had concerned Anton Rupert – that there was a tendency to believe that poverty was not as bad as majority rule. Concern over the Botha Government's management of the economic state of the country prompted the newspaperman Ken Owen to write at the end of 1987: "Businessmen are saying openly that they no longer fear revolution; they fear that economic mismanagement will make revolution unnecessary." And warned "... the cost of Botha's administration has yet to be paid."⁵¹

The political analysts, Bobby Godsell and Peter Berger, noted at the end of 1987, that if the situation continued as it was, "if the country is not to be destroyed, there is no alternative to the forging of a new political system in which all South Africans can participate... it will have to be established through the give and take of negotiations." But they added, "it is too early for negotiations. The reason is both depressing and simple. Parties to a dispute begin negotiations when they have concluded that victory on their terms is not possible." According to the writers, both the ANC and Government "continue to believe that they can 'win.'" As such the country's upheavals were not to end yet.⁵²

They wrote that instead of negotiations, the stalemate that was setting in, would lead to more suffering. "However," they noted, "the stalemate has also created the time and space for second thoughts, new initiatives, compromise solutions."⁵³

⁵⁰ Albedas, M. & Fischer, A., *A question of survival*, p. 476.

⁵¹ Owen, K., *These times – a decade of South African politics*, pp. 118, 120.

⁵² Berger, P. & Godsell, B., "Fantasies about South Africa" in *Optima*, Vol. 35, Nr. 3, September 1987, p. 129.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

CHAPTER 7

1988: CURRENCIES, QUIVERS AND QUO VADIS

In 1988, the National Party turned 40. It was a year of commemoration, confrontation, further deterioration and most importantly contemplation.

During the early months of 1988, it became known that the apartheid-state's biggest economic ally was Japan. It had overtaken the USA's trade with South Africa and as such was now suddenly the apartheid-state's no.1 trading partner. Although the Japanese authorities had some elementary anti-apartheid measures in place, these had very little effect. As news of Japan's economic ties with South Africa was made public, the international anti-apartheid movement now focused its attention on Japan.

This quickly became a problem for Japan when the US House of Representatives and the Black Congressional Caucus threatened the Japanese. They warned Tokyo that if they didn't rectify their relationship with the apartheid-state, and quickly, Japan itself might be targeted with American punitive measures. Loosing South African economic ties was one thing, jeopardizing dealings with the USA was quite another. Not surprisingly, Japan's closeness with South Africa drew an unfavorable reaction from African leaders who were opposed to apartheid. Next, the Japanese anti-apartheid movement gained momentum, numbers and volume as many Japanese were upset to have learned that their country had such close ties with the apartheid-state.¹

By the middle of the year, Japan had done a major reassessment of its anti-apartheid-policy. Whereas in the past, Japan had only a few basic anti-apartheid measures, it was now quickly changing its attitude. An example of the fast changing mood in Tokyo was when 133 members of the Tokyo parliament with some 235 other Japanese powerbrokers published a series of notices in South African Sunday newspapers. In these they called upon Pres. Botha to set free his political prisoners, unban outlawed political organisations and remove the restrictions on the labour

¹ Venter, DJ, *South Africa, sanctions and the multinationals*, pp.33-35.

movement; they also demanded that Japanese companies that did business in South Africa protect the rights of their black workers.²

Apart from this public relations exercise, the Japanese Government unveiled its so-called policy of *persuasion*. Accordingly, Japanese businesses were to be *persuaded* to scale-down their operations in the apartheid-state. The policy of *persuasion* was undeniably adhered to – with important exceptions. The biggest motor car manufacturer in Japan, Toyota, refused to give up their holdings in South Africa; they were, in fact, planning to expand their South African operations, because they found the working conditions quite favorable there. The Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO), which was funded by the Japanese Minister of International Trade and Industry, announced that they were going to leave the apartheid-state, but stayed on anyway.³

Indeed, as was so easily the case with so many countries' positions towards South Africa, what was said and what was were two different things. Although Tokyo was adamant that they despised apartheid, little changed in practice, they just did what they always did, only more covertly. For example, instead of buying gold directly from South Africa, they traded through intermediary third party countries. As such, Japanese trade with the apartheid-state could not be recorded as being South African in origin.⁴ This was, as already explained earlier, an old *sanctions-busting* strategy and difficult to spot.⁵

By and during 1988, one could be sure that the international sanctions campaign was debated whenever and wherever the apartheid-issue was discussed, yet what did that actually mean. By the second last year of the decade the roster of anti-apartheid-measures implemented against the country was extensive, these included:

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

□ TOTAL BOYCOTT

This referred to countries that supposedly had no financial, trade, cultural or diplomatic contact with the apartheid-state, these states did not, officially, trade with the apartheid-state, nor did they recognise any overflight or landing rights with regards to South Africa; port and landing rights were prohibited; they had restrictions on post and South Africans were not allowed to enter these countries.

- These restrictions were, officially, imposed by the Organisation of African Unity, India and the socialist countries.⁶

□ COUNTRIES THAT IMPOSED A BAN ON SALES/THE TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY

- Total Ban: Denmark, Finland.
- Arms Sales Ban: A mandatory United Nations Security Council Resolution
- Oil: Ban on the Sale/Transfer thereof: Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC), the European Economic Community (EEC), the Commonwealth and the USA.
- Nuclear: Ban on Technical Support Services/Sale of Equipment and/or Enriched Uranium: European Economic Community (EEC), the Commonwealth, the United Nations Security Council, Austria, Japan, the Scandinavian states and the USA all had some form of restrictions.⁷
- Computer: Hardware and Software: Commonwealth, United Nations Security Council, Canada, Austria, France, Ireland, Japan and the Scandinavian states all had some restrictions.
- Trade Licenses: Ban: Finland, Norway and Sweden.⁸

⁶ "Growing List" in *Sanctions A Leadership SA Publication 1988 / 89*, p. 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

□ COUNTRIES THAT RESTRICTED PURCHASES:

- Nothing grown, produced, manufactured or exported by South Africa parastatals: USA
- Ban on Governmental Trading with South Africa: Australia, Canada and Scandinavian countries.
- Importers Beseached to find other sources than South African: Sweden.
- Agricultural Bans: the Commonwealth (excluding the UK), USA, Scandinavian countries, Ireland, Canada, the Netherlands all had some form of restrictions in place.⁹
- Industrial Minerals and Steel: the Commonwealth (excluding the UK), European Economic Community (EEC), Hong Kong, Japan, USA, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, Denmark, France, Ireland had some type of restriction.
- Textiles: USA
- Airlinks: Unites Nations Security Council, the Commonwealth (excluding England), India, Eastern Bloc states, Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Australia and the USA all had some form of restriction.
- Diplomatic Restrictions: Argentina, Denmark, New Zealand and Panama all had shut down their South African missions; Japan only had consular representation; Australia and Canada stopped issuing South Africans with business or tourist visas and the European Economic Community (EEC) had withdrawn their military attachés.¹⁰

□ FINANCIAL RESTRICTIONS:

- Double Taxation: USA and Canada.
- Investments: Japan, the Commonwealth (excluding the UK), the United Nations Security Council, the European Economic Community (EEC), Denmark, Finland and Sweden all had some type of restrictive measures or policies.
- Bans on Loans: USA, the Scandinavian countries, Australia, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Canada and Britain all had some form of restrictive policies.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

- Loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF): Uncertain and unlikely in the future, because of American opposition.¹¹

It is very important to remember that these measures must be read only as examples of the type of bans, restrictions and boycotts that were imposed against the apartheid-state. They do not include anti-apartheid measures that pertained to the cultural, scientific/academic, professional or sporting spheres and there were a large variety of punitive measures covering these sectors.¹² While punitive measures against the country were on the increase, the business community lost one of its most outspoken critics of the Botha Government.

In January 1988 the head of the Premier Group, Tony Bloom, who was also a loud critic of the Government, announced that he was leaving South Africa and was going to take up residency in England. It should be pointed out that his move was prompted by a family tragedy and not politically motivated. Before he left he granted an interview and gave a blatant assessment of the South African crisis. He told the foreign journalist that he was most concerned about “the decline of liberal values” in the apartheid state.¹³

As far as he was concerned, many whites were going along with the National Party government out of “fear” and that PW, “a skilful exploiter of white fears,” was scaring them with the prospect of majority rule into accepting the Nationalist rationale.¹⁴

Bloom wasn't only open in his dislike of the Botha administration, but also in his distaste for economic anti-apartheid sanctions “because I believe that the way to break apartheid is by economic advancement.” He added that he did not believe that sanctions were effective as they could only “produce belligerence and defiance in the South African white population and I've never seen [them] as a weapon for black advancement.”¹⁵

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² It is virtually impossible to list all the measures that were in place across the world.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Akhalwaya, A., “Interview with Tony Bloom” in *Africa Report*, vol.33, no.2, March-April 1988, p. 62.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

He also stressed that the apartheid-state's economy was not dwindling, but in fact much more developed and "strong, robust," as such: "It is not that fragile that all you've got to do is impose a few sanctions and the whole system will collapse and therefore something will arise from the ashes."¹⁶ He also underlined that he was seriously worried about "the fact that there is no foreign capital coming in to develop the whole infrastructure of business and create jobs that are necessary to absorb all the work-seekers..."¹⁷

In his opinion, Botha could only turn this around in one way: "There is only one answer – you have to scrap statutory discrimination, take it off our statute books in every vestige. You might have to announce a timetable, a very short timetable, but a precise one. But until we take statutory entrenched discrimination out of our laws, we're going to be regarded as the polecat of the world." Asked whether he thought the Botha government was, at that stage, ready for such a move, Bloom stated firmly: "No."¹⁸

Bloom's statements encapsulated the general views of the progressive business sector. His pronouncement on the uselessness of sanctions is interesting. Sanctions did not have such a dramatic immediate effect as many had thought would be the case. As Bloom pointed out, South Africa had a strong and developed economy and sanctions could not destroy it overnight. But, he also said that the shortage of foreign investment was upsetting – therein lay the true impact of sanctions.

As already noted, an isolated South Africa could still survive economically in the near future, but sanctions were a long-term strategy and their potency lay not in the immediate present, but rather in the future.

South African commentators, like Clem Sunter, increasingly began assessing the country's future position as an isolated state. It was the diminishing prospects for future prosperity that were important in the long run. Although South Africa could ward off the effect of sanctions for the immediate present, in the long run it would not be able to do so – if it did not want its economy

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 64.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64.

totally destroyed. Patti Waldmeir noted that by the end of the 1980s: "Increasingly, the business community made clear that Fortress South Africa was not an option."¹⁹

To develop economically, any country needs foreign economic trade and investment and South African commentators increasingly realised that this was where the true effect of sanctions lay: the country's diminishing prospects for future economic development. Henri de Villiers, the head of Standard Bank, noted: "In this day and age, there is no such thing as economic self-sufficiency, and we delude ourselves if we think we are different. South Africa needs the world. It needs markets, it needs skills, it needs technology, and above all it needs capital."²⁰

In the middle of March 1988, the State President spoke to the *Washington Times* newspaper, the bottom line of the 75 minute interview was captured in the headline: "The world should let Pretoria change at its own pace." Speaking about the international anti-apartheid sanctions drive, the President said that he believed the Kremlin now understood his Government to be "a regional power of importance" and then reiterated his view about sanctions: "... I don't believe in sanctions. Never believed in boycotts either... The world should be a free place, to converse with each other, negotiate, trade and generally help each other improve their way of life."²¹

Pres. Botha also spoke out against the USA: "What worries me more than anything, is that the US, whose symbol is the Statue of Liberty, can act the way it does. Whether because of what is described as an imperial Congress and, weakened executive, or a media that distorts facts, or other reasons that escape me, I don't know. But the fact of the matter is that there is a growing perception, all over the world, of a superpower that is playing domestic politics with critically important problems."²²

In comparison, he said that the Russians had realised that his Government was stronger than its enemies, saying that the Kremlin now knew that there would not be a South African revolution and Gorbachev "knows it's simply not on." He also said that the communists had a far better view of

¹⁹ Waldmeir, P., *Anatomy of a miracle: the end of apartheid and the birth of the new South Africa*, p. 134.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ PW BOTHA COLLECTION AT INCH: PV 203 / PS 12//106//1 / 1988.

²² *Ibid.*

sanctions than the Americans: "New Soviet leaders also know that the destruction of our economy would be a disaster for the entire region." PW Botha said that the Russians had seen how blacks' "half-baked Marxist economics" had destroyed the economies of pro-Kremlin African states. According to Pres. Botha, Moscow knew that ANC-rule would mean the destruction of the economy of South Africa and "what a drain this would become to the Soviet Union."²³

On the one hand, relations between the Botha Government and the USSR had improved considerably, while on the other hand these statements of Botha illustrated how the Government's relations with the Americans had soured. As noted earlier, the Reaganites in Washington had to more or less accept that *constructive engagement* had failed to get the Botha Government to end apartheid faster. While having to constantly justify and defend constructive engagement to its liberal anti-apartheid critics, the statements of Pres. Botha only further frustrated the White House's position on South Africa.

In an interview with *Leadership SA*, Chester Crocker reminded the white South African powers that it was not at all impossible that during the 1988 Presidential elections, Reagan might be succeeded by an administration that was markedly less supportive of *constructive engagement*. A possible American Administration that was "more outspokenly hostile and shrill, more prepared simply to go with the flow of emotions in Congress and things like sanctions."²⁴

The diplomat, and architect of the *constructive engagement* policy, also pointed out that, in spite of the Government's constant complaints about the way Washington dealt with them, Crocker had been brave in his, relatively, positive handling of the Botha Government and had received very little gratitude in return from the white minority government.²⁵ "This Administration has paid a price for the courage of its convictions and we have no regrets in that regard because history will

* Relations between the USSR and South Africa's minority government improved considerably during the last few years of the 1980s. See the chapter on Umkhonto we Sizwe in Section 1. In *Comrades Against Apartheid* Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba summarised that by 1988 "Perestroika had... persuaded Moscow's policy-makers that since there was to be no revolution in South Africa, it was in the Soviet interest to be on good terms with those in power."

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Lurssen, N., "No regrets" in *Leadership SA*, vol.7, 1988, no.2, p.36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

prove us right,”²⁶ Crocker said, but later added, “What I would say is that it is in South Africa’s interests to get its house in order and to open the windows of promise for the future which are not currently open to chart a course, to define strategies, to create facts that will get the attention of people and capture their imaginations and focus attention away from destructive strategies.”²⁷

The policy maker noted that, by then, everyone had been assured of the minority Government’s “staying power, in purely physical terms” as well as the black majority’s “determination...to keep going with the struggle...” Crocker said that once all these different sections had finished proving their seriousness and strength to each other, there could open a window of opportunity for advancement “but only if the government [was] prepared to explore it to get something done.”²⁸ According to Crocker, after all had been said and done, the ball was in Botha’s court and he should stop accusing others and seize the initiative.

As Crocker’s comments illustrate, although he still defended the merits of *constructive engagement*, it was his policy after all and he was clearly becoming frustrated by the Botha Government’s apparent unwillingness to break the political stalemate.

In the interview, Crocker spoke of the possibility that Reagan might be succeeded by a more aggressively anti-apartheid President.* He was referring to the liberal Democratic Party’s candidate, Michael Dukakis. As the Governor of Massachusetts, Dukakis had been outspoken in his anti-apartheid stance; his criticism of the Botha Government and the way the National Party governed South Africa. Dukakis was already very blatant in his pronouncements and pledges about what he would do about apartheid should he be elected president.

One thing was certain, in a Dukakis White House, *constructive engagement* would have been scrapped immediately. In fact, as the presidential candidate himself had made clear, as conciliatory as Reagan was regarding South Africa, so hard he would be. He guaranteed that instead of vetoing resolutions to impose mandatory anti-apartheid measures in the Security Council, he would

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

* America had a Presidential Election in 1988.

sponsor them. If elected he said that he would have undertaken to force the apartheid-state's other trading partners to adopt the same anti-apartheid sanctions he envisaged. On top of that, he said that his Administration would also seriously penalise foreign groups that took advantage of American anti-apartheid sanction.²⁹

The Presidential candidate said that should he succeed Reagan, he would declare the Republic of South Africa a terrorist state. Although this term carried with it no inherent punitive measures, it would certainly not simply be of symbolic value either, for it prompted some logical questions. For example, would America have diplomatic representation in a *terrorist state*? Would the White House accept the credentials of ambassadors from a *terrorist state*? Most probably not, therefore the possibility arose that under a possible Pres. Dukakis, the USA and the apartheid-state would not have ambassadorial ties. In such a situation, the British government would probably support the Americans, at the risk of jeopardising the historic bond that existed between the two states.³⁰

Herman Nickle, Reagan's former ambassador to the Republic, wrote that South Africans should realise that these "fire and brimstone" pronouncements, pledges and undertakings by the Dukakis camp were not merely "campaign talk, rhetorical ballast to be dumped as soon as the Dukakis administration discovered reality..."

He pointed out that for the Democratic Party the South African apartheid-crisis had "emerged as a unifying symbol of the party's commitment to racial justice, both at home and abroad." Nickle remarked that on how the South African issue had become a very serious and real American issue: "The reason is that South Africa touches the sorest nerve in the American body politic and provides a relatively, low cost outlet for two of its most potent emotions – white guilt and black anger."³¹ The other prominent candidate was the Republican, George Bush.* Nickle noted that although Bush did agree with the way the Reagan-presidency handled the South African-issue, the Botha Government should not be too at ease. He warned the white minority: "...as with Thatcher, Pretoria better not take him for granted, either." The seasoned diplomat cautioned and beseeched

²⁹ Nickle, H., "We'll blow your house down" in *Sanctions Leadership SA 1988/1989*, pp. 36-38.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

* George Bush eventually won the election and succeeded Reagan.

the white South African community to be bold and to seize the initiative without delay, because opportunities were dwindling.³²

Irrespective of whether a Democrat or Republican was president, the American anti-apartheid lobby was still as diligent as ever. By early 1988, they had succeeded in organising anti-apartheid regulations in some 20 American states, more than 60 US cities and some 13 counties. Indeed, if Tim Smith, a director of the prominent Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility was to be believed, things were not looking up for Pretoria. "The climate for American corporations doing business in South Africa is not looking up," adding Smith said, "Virtually every major company, if not making plans to withdraw, is continuing to evaluate the situation and is working on contingency plans for withdrawal. If anything, there has been an increase in pressure..." but he said that the bigger newspapers in the USA weren't giving it as much coverage as they had been.

The director of the prolific TransAfrica anti-apartheid body, Randall Robinson, explained the anti-apartheid lobby's goals. "The near-term is to firm up the sanctions we already have, with the understanding that the South African government will not capitulate to anything less than global sanctions" – the latter being the organisation's ultimate objective. In this regard, Robinson said that Washington must take the lead: "An important step is to have the US show leadership in bringing its allies and partners to impose sanctions together."³³ At the top of the list of leaders Robinson wanted Washington to influence in taking a more hardened anti-apartheid stance, must have been Prime Minister Thatcher of the United Kingdom.

As all ready pointed out, in 1988 she refrained from giving the Commonwealth her support for tougher anti-apartheid-measures. Thatcher, more so than Reagan, was seen as the main obstacle in giving the sanctions drive renewed strength. As long as Thatcher did not support all-out anti-apartheid measures neither would her allies, which included the West Germans, Portuguese, French, Japanese and Americans.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Howard, W., "Lobbying against apartheid" in *Africa Report*, vol.33, no.2, March-April 1988, pp.40-41.

“As you know, our objective is the abolition of apartheid...” Sir Geoffrey Howe once again explained his Government’s policy towards the apartheid-state, “Punitive economic sanctions are not an effective means of pursuing this... Sanctions can have economic effects. The problem is that they do not have the desired political effects,” saying that anti-apartheid sanctions would most likely “harden existing attitudes and thereby make change more difficult to achieve.”³⁴

Sir Geoffrey also stated that the British government sincerely wished that all sectors of the South African arena would realise that the real solution to the country’s crises lay in negotiations. He conceded that “violent revolutionary action is possible,” but that it would only hurt the country without actually “achieving the desired result.” He also stated that the end-result of South Africa’s problems rested in the hands of the National Party; whether they had the courage to be bold and to seize the initiative and to take Botha reformist policies to their logical and ultimate conclusion. “The best way to contain black frustration would be for the South African government to take a lead in accelerating reform and in moving towards a constitutional settlement acceptable to all South Africans,” the Secretary of Foreign Affairs said.³⁵

Implicit here was that the white minority government was correct when they argued that any fundamental change would emanate from South Africa and not by force or interference from outside.* But, there was a flip side to that argument. Were the minority Government and PW Botha prepared to make the changes of their own accord, voluntarily? Prepared to do what had to be done, without being pressured from abroad? Prepared to move boldly forward without being forced to do so by outside powers? For the moment, with a Conservative Party government in England and a Republican in the White House – followed in 1988 by another Republican – outside pressure on the Botha Government was still being diluted by a few solitary political strongmen.

At least the Botha Government’s relations with one country were improving. Information on how the USSR viewed the apartheid-crisis of the 1980s, compared to the plethora from the West, is relatively scarce.

³⁴ Uys, S., “Strong signals” in *Leadership SA*, vol7, no. 1, 1988, p.46.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 50.

* The ANC also held the view that it was imperative that whatever the outcome of the country’s political crisis, it had to be reached by South Africans, free from foreign interference. See: Thomas, S., *The diplomacy of liberation – the foreign relations of the ANC since 1960*, New York, 1996.

As explained in the first section of the study* and as already noted in this chapter, Moscow's relations with the minority Government were steadily improving. As already noted, the moderate Mikhail Gorbachev was attempting to reform the dilapidated USSR.³⁶ This entailed scaling down the USSR's aggressive involvement in regional conflicts across the world. Simplistically put, for South Africa this meant that the Russians, having realised that a South African revolution was not going to happen, had come to the conclusion that they might as well normalise relations with Pretoria.³⁷ In fact, at the end of the 1980s, it seemed that the country's biggest external threat came not from the Russians, but from anti-apartheid lobbyists in the West.

By 1986, the Russians had started to realise that the minority Government was not going to be toppled as easily as they and the ANC, had initially reckoned. In 1987, Gorbachev gave a speech in Mozambique and spoke specifically about the position of the apartheid-state.

The leader of the USSR said that there was no doubt that separate development was going to fall, but that it should occur by political means. In this regard, *realpolitik* was crucial and indeed a new and balanced perspective. In other words, the time had arrived to stop examining the situation through the barrel of a gun. He also made clear that white South Africans could not simply be wished away or exterminated, according to the Russian leader, what was required was "a negotiated settlement which should take into consideration all people who live there."³⁸

Gorbachev also prompted the ANC to start forgetting about the *great South African revolution* and to start strategising in terms of negotiations with the minority Government. At the same time he also stressed minority protection; that it was crucial for the black groups to take very serious notice of the whites' fears and aspirations and to start thinking of how to accommodate that. Moscow also thought that it was time to hold low-level talks with the Nationalists and also to try and get Western participation in trying to work out a solution to the apartheid-crisis.³⁹

* See the chapter on Umkhonto we Sizwe, Section 1.

³⁶ Ellis, S. & Sechaba, T., *Comrades against apartheid*, p. 194.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Nel, P., *A Soviet embassy in Pretoria*, p.25; Fituni, L., "A new era: Soviet policy in Southern Africa" in *Africa Report*, vol34, no.4, July-August 1989, p.65..

³⁹ *Ibid.*

At the time, Dr. Leonid L. Fituni, head of the Department of International Crisis Management Studies of the Institute for African Studies in Moscow, summed up the Kremlin's point of view regarding South Africa. "The principles of the new political thinking necessitates the rejection of dogmatic, sectarian approaches to the problem of allies and fellow-travelers in the struggle for a democratic South Africa..."⁴⁰

It would seem, by 1988, that the minority Government had lost its traditional nemesis with which it had scared white voters into following and accepting its political logic. Indeed, the *Reds* seemed a lot less omnipotent than before. The thawing of the Cold War made fundamental change even more plausible in South Africa. Patti Waldmeir wrote that the demise of the USSR "made South Africa safe for black rule in the eyes of the Afrikaners. It removed the last remaining obstacle to talks with the African National Congress, whose commitment to socialism... was now seriously eroded by the demise of its ideological mentor."⁴¹

By the end of the 1980s another threat, more possible than a Russian takeover of South Africa, dawned on the minority Government.

"Mandela, take a look at your chest," the doctor told the most famous political prisoner on earth when he examined him in the winter of 1988. He told Mandela that his lung was filled with fluid and quickly after having pointed that out, Nelson Mandela was operated on. The medical team at the Tygerberg Hospital in the Cape, removed some two liters of fluid from his chest, had it analysed and found that the aged prisoner was suffering from tuberculosis – although still in its early stages. Mandela was ill. The news spread across the planet like wildfire.⁴²

What if Mandela were to die in gaol? PW Botha's office was flooded with letters calling on his government to quickly release this *sickly* old prisoner. The American President sent an urgent note to Botha: "It is my earnest hope that, as you weigh the options before you, you will conclude that

⁴⁰ Fituni, L., "A new era: Soviet policy in Southern Africa" in *Africa Report*, vol. 34, no. 4, July-August 1989, p.65.

⁴¹ Waldmeir, p. 136. See also: Section 1.

⁴² Mandela, N., *Long walk to freedom*, p. 530.

Mr Mandela's release would serve the long-term interest of South Africa as a whole." The President replied to Reagan stressing the expert medical treatment that Mandela had received. President Botha also stated his own concern pertaining to Mandela's imprisonment and then again reiterated what his conditions were for Mandela's release. "I hope that he will make it possible for me to act in a humane way and in such a way that we can have peace in South Africa instead of violence," the Nationalist leader wrote.⁴³

From London, Thatcher also sent an urgent message to PW Botha: "Mr Mandela has now spent 26 years in prison. The longer he stays there, the more of a legend he becomes. His death in prison would have very damaging consequences, not only for South Africa's relations with the outside world, but also for the prospects of peaceful change within South Africa."⁴⁴

Michael Dukakis, Governor of Massachusetts and the Democratic Party's prolific Presidential Candidate for the 1988 Presidential elections, sent an urgent telegram to the President on August 29th 1988. "I join together with all Americans in urging you once again to release Nelson Mandela from prison without delay and without precondition. The unjust imprisonment of this great South African patriot symbolises the struggle of the millions of his fellow citizens who remain shackled by the cruel system of apartheid. His release would provide new hope and a renewed vigour to those seeking peace, justice and democracy for your country..." Dukakis added that the news of Mandela's illness "brings increased urgency to calls for his freedom. Further delay in his release places at risk not only the life of this courageous man, but also the peace and stability of the South African nation." Concluding: "He must be released from prison and allowed to seek the medical treatment he chooses, where he chooses."⁴⁵

PW Botha admitted to the writer that he was scared by the thought of Mandela dying in gaol, "therefore we took very good care of him when he was in gaol. He fell ill when he was in gaol and he had to be operated on ... we admitted a medical expert from Switzerland who presided at the operation." ["daarom het ons hom baie goed behandel toe hy in die tronk was. Hy het siek geword

⁴³ Prinsloo, D., *Stem uit die wildernis*, pp.325-326.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁴⁵ PW BOTHA PRIVATE COLLECTION AT INCH. PV 203: Correspondence. Telegram from M. Dukakis. 29-08-1988.

toe hy in die tronk was en hy moes geopereer word en... ons het 'n bekende mediese deskundige uit Switserland laat ontbied om teenwoordig te wees by die operasie.”]⁴⁶

What if Nelson Mandela were to die in gaol? The question became an increasingly important one at the end of the 1980s, as Mandela got older. Irrespective of the causes, either natural or unnatural, what if the most famous political prisoner in the world, this international icon, were to die whilst in an apartheid gaol? The possible answer to that question was self-evident: immediate and total chaos. The ripple effect of which could not really be thought out or anticipated. Sooner or later he would die. *If* was unavoidable. *How* could be controlled. But *where* and *when* were the questions that became an increasingly burning topic for the minority Government.⁴⁷ On top of all the other pressures mounted against the minority Government, Mandela's release was now also a pressing motivation for change. Mandela could not die in gaol, the internal and external consequences were simply too unpredictable and dangerous.

In October 1988, in an article in the South African magazine *Insig* entitled “Eenheid uit verskeidenheid,” Anton Rupert wrote candidly that apartheid had been a mistake. He chronicled the path that the Afrikaner people had followed from the Great Trek to the 1960s when the National Party sliced the newly formed republic into five separate pieces, “This well-intentioned attempt to recognise others, is unfortunately hamstrung by two serious conceptual errors.” [“Hierdie goed bedoelde poging ter erkenning van ander, is ongelukkig weens twee ernstige denkfoute verydel.”] According to him, the first mistake was the belief that “living together was impossible, that togetherness was a recipe for conflict.” [“medebestaan onmoontlik is, dat gesamentlik 'n resep vir konflik is.”] Rupert noted that the other grave mistake was the belief that “separation was possible. This idea did not take into account that if your neighbour doesn't eat, you don't sleep soundly ... No fence or wall will stop the hungry when there is plenty on the other side. It is difficult, if not impossible, to be an island of prosperity in a sea of poverty or unrest.” [“afsondering moontlik is. Hierdie siening het nie rekening gehou met die feit dat as jou buurman nie eet nie, jy nie rustig slaap nie... Geen grensdraad of muur gaan die hongeriges keer as daar oorvloed aan die anderkant is nie. Dis moeilik, indien nie onmoontlik nie, om 'n eiland van

⁴⁶ JA STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with PW Botha. 3 October 2000.

⁴⁷ J-A STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: Interview with Prof JP de Lange: 28 June 2000.

welvaart in 'n see van armoede of onrus te wees.”] The consequence of separate development “is, economically speaking, unsustainable.” [“is ekonomies gesproke, onhoudbaar.”]⁴⁸

Having set out the mistakes, Rupert gave ideas about solutions. Pointing out various regional factors, he wrote: “I believe that this South African area ... can possibly be combined into an economic federation based on the Swiss pattern.” [“Ek glo dat hierdie Suid-Afrikaanse gebied... moontlik volgens die Switserse patroon in een ekonomiese konfederasie saamgesnoer moet word.”] For this to materialise Rupert said, the political place of homelands would have to be reassessed. He concluded: “I believe mutual existence is possible and that we are unmistakable in Southern Africa as a result of our role as a catalyst. I also know that no worthy foreign investments will flow into South Africa as long as it is seen as a place of war and unrest.” [“Ek glo medebestaan is moontlik en dat ons onmisbaar is in Suider-Afrika vanweë ons rol as katalisator. Ek weet ook dat geen noemenswaardige buitelandse beleggings na Suider-Afrika sal vloei solank dit as 'n plek van oorlog en onrus gesien word nie.”]⁴⁹ As exemplified by Rupert, the logical merits of change were increasingly being assessed and spelt out during the last years of the 1980s. Change was being presented, from all quarters of progressive or pragmatic white circles, as being an opportunity to ensure whites survival in South Africa. While progressive sections in the white community were promoting the soundness of change, the country was reminded that there were other sections in the white community that felt totally the opposite way.

On Tuesday, November 15th 1988, an unknown young white male embarked on a course of action that made him a household name throughout South Africa and indeed would put him on the covers of newspapers throughout the globe.⁵⁰

At around 11:00 am, Barend Strydom, a white rightwing fanatic, walking through the busy centre of Pretoria, took out his gun and casually shot the first black people he encountered. The fanatical rightwinger randomly approached and shot 23 black people at point blank range. At the end of his 15 minute shooting-spree, Strydom had killed 7 persons and wounded a further 16 people.

⁴⁸ JA STEMMET PRIVATE COLLECTION: CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM THE OFFICE OF DR. A. RUPERT.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Hochschild, A., *The mirror at midnight*, pp.216-217.

Strydom was apprehended and during his highly publicised trial, Strydom, a dedicated member of the infamous *Wit Wolwe*, told the court that he sincerely believed that blacks were animals and that white people were descendent from the ancient Israelites. He justified what he did by saying that he felt Botha's reformist concessions to blacks were suicidal.⁵¹

Pictures showed black people of all ages lying on the ground in pools of blood. The killings made news across the globe. Was this an isolated incident – or was this an omen of things to come? Was a racial, black-and-white holocaust going to engulf South Africa? These were questions that were asked around the world. Either way this gruesome event further worsened the white minority's international image and gave strength to the anti-apartheid lobby calling for sanctions.⁵²

As the anti-apartheid lobby was giving the same old reasons why tougher sanctions should be instituted, the Government also gave the same old reasons why they should not. In December 1988 the *Journal for Contemporary History* published a piece by Pik Botha in which he lamented the worldwide anti-apartheid sanctions drive. "The theory of sanctions is that the instruments of the sending parties should be commensurate with their objectives.

In our case there are no sanctions which are worse than the consequences which would follow from the surrender of our sovereignty and our ability to build our own future. Misconceptions cannot last forever. It may take ten, twenty or even thirty years to convince our enemies of our resolve. Our resolve is not defiance in defence of the status quo. The status quo is unacceptable to my Government and to the majority of people in this country. Our goal is that we South Africans should ourselves negotiate and evolve a greater democracy..."⁵³

Jan J. van Rooyen compiled a booklet that commemorated the 40th year of National Party rule. Writing about PW Botha's reforms, he stated rather adamantly: "Nou sê ons ons doen al hierdie hervorminge en die wêreld daarbuite haat en boikot ons al meer. Dit is omdat die wêreld nie die

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Botha, RF, "Foreign misconceptions about economic sanctions against South Africa" in the *Journal for Contemporary History*, vol.13, no.2, December 1988, pp. 9-10.

dinge wil hê nie, maar 'n eenheidstaat met verswelging van groepsentiteite. Dit dien dalk tot troos om herinner te word aan wat veldm. Smuts 42 jaar gelede van sy ondervinding by die VVO gesê het toe hy daarvandaan teruggekeer het: 'Die wêreld ken of verstaan ons nie...'”⁵⁴

Irrespective of whether or not the arguments of Botha and Van Rooyen had any merit, the fact was that arguments were not going to stop the wave of international pressure against South Africa. The international community wanted change and only change in South Africa would normalise the country's position in the world. There were sections, as illustrated by Van Rooyen, who condoned the Government's defiance in the face of growing isolation, but there was also the progressive section of white society that blamed the Government's lack of faster change for the country's worsening position.

The *Financial Mail* placed a scathing critique of the Botha presidency during the latter part of 1988. “South African society would not be the loser if there were to be a change of leadership now – and almost any change would do. For Botha's volatile, even ambivalent disposition is now the greatest impediment to progress and prosperity. The National Party, which is by no means about to be unseated should consider very carefully whether it can continue to afford him.”⁵⁵ Tackling the Nationalists' economic management in the face of intensifying international anti-apartheid measures, it concluded: “What he and his party are telling us is that they are prepared to see this economy reduced to a wasteland if that is what maintaining the status quo entails. Is it that much different from the spirit of Tutu's... scorched-earth sanctions policy? The outcome will be the same – impoverishment.”⁵⁶

South Africa, at the end of 1988, at the risk of sounding melodramatic, resembled an elephant trapped in the middle of a dilapidated suspension bridge. It couldn't turn around. It couldn't stay put, because the bridge would eventually give way. It was unsure about going forward. But it knew that the latter alternative, going forward, was its only real option.

⁵⁴ Van Rooyen, JJ (ed.), *NP altyd nuut 1988*, p. 24.

⁵⁵ “Neither honour nor success” in *Financial Mail*, vol.109, no.9, September 2nd 1988, p. 28.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Politically, ideologically, economically, diplomatically, intellectually and socially the apartheid-state was trying to do a very difficult balancing-act. When PW Botha had taken control of the National Party some ten years earlier in 1978, he presided over a relatively steadfast country. In the interceding ten years the country had gone from being relatively safe and prosperous to being relatively unpredictable and haphazard.

Really, the question was not whether the country could survive the 1980s, it had done that. Rather it was asked, whether, as things were going then, a white controlled minority Government could survive into the next century – and at what price? This question became the overriding issue of the 1989 general election. Whereas the 1987 election had revolved around security* issues, the 1989 election revolved around the topic of international isolation and economic deterioration. Although the 1989 elections falls outside the timeframe of this study, it is nonetheless important to look at it

“It was the international isolation of South Africa that started to count,” said the head of Military Intelligence, Gen. Thirion, about the last few years of the 1980s, “It was about the economy – how much more could be spent on the war and the military budget?”⁵⁷ By the last part of the 1980s, this was most certainly a very real and overriding concern for the white minority in South Africa. Apart from that, in 1989, politically the world stood on the brink of being recreated. The Cold War was thawing at a dramatic rate and the USSR was falling apart. With the end of the Cold War in sight, the Government’s propaganda of an international communist plot to overthrow South Africa was also fast becoming obsolete.* At the same time the apartheid regime was facing a severe economic and diplomatic crisis because of its refusal to change fundamentally.

Chester Crocker wrote poignantly of the stalemate: “Botha was winning the pure physical test of strength, reminding the black opposition forces once again of the limits to their ultimate bargaining power. Botha could rule, but he could no longer govern. The opposition could not overthrow him or the system he led; but it severely undercut his legitimacy at home and overseas, and it could discredit him at every turn. Nor did it appear that he had an internal political strategy – beyond

* See Section 1.

⁵⁷ Hammann, H., *Days of the generals*, p. 128.

* See Section 1.

crackdown – that he would like to implement. A domestic stalemate was setting in. The South Africans were master tacticians, but they confused military power with national strategy.”⁵⁸

Although the South African economy was not yet falling apart, the question was for how much longer would the white minority manage to hold out, to survive economically? Possibly, for some time to come, but what about ten or twenty years on? Foreign investment was crucial to the country’s development. To pave the way for its far-reaching changes the then De Klerk National Party focussed its 1989 election campaign on economic and diplomatic issues.⁵⁹

The best example of how dramatic the mind shift was that was taking place in the Government can be found in comments made by the Minister of Finance, Barend du Plessis, only a month before the 1989 election. The Government itself was now admitting the dire effects the international isolation had on the country. He said that South Africa was quite literally paying the price for stalling the imposition of one-man-one-vote.⁶⁰ The main factors that were derailing the apartheid-state’s economy were:

- The financial price of maintaining apartheid and its structures, particularly its military-security complex, were sky-high.⁶¹
- The annual repayment of Pretoria’s gigantic foreign debt placed serious constraints on what the Government could and could not do in developing the economy.⁶²
- Apartheid South Africa could forget about wooing foreign financiers as long as *that system* was in place. The problem here was actually twofold: South Africans had alarmingly little savings, while at the same time the country just couldn’t get any money from abroad. The country was thus threatened by a weakening of its capital base and serious limitations on the resources needed for tangible development.⁶³
- PW Botha’s failure to view and manage his reform campaign holistically. The Botha administration did not fully realise that most of the problems facing the country were

⁵⁸ Crocker, C., *High Noon in Southern Africa*, p. 381.

⁵⁹ Strong, W., “Die algemene verkiesing van 1987 en 1989 en die politieke gebeure daartussen,” unpublished Master’s Thesis, UFS, 1993, pp. 207-219.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 211.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* pp. 207-219.

⁶² *Die Volksblad*, 15 August 1987.

⁶³ *Die Transvaler*, 7 December 1988.

actually interwoven at their core. Furthermore, the Government didn't take a hard and realistic enough look at what the vast reform process would cost. PW Botha and his Government kept on reforming without making sure that the Government could indeed afford it and keep on paying for it. So, for example, the black municipalities were created without also double checking the Government's financial resources. The result was that these structures were completely inadequately financed and they became a political disaster and a financial bottomless pit.⁶⁴

- As a whole, during the decade the country had an economic growth rate of only 1,5%. "It was clear that political reform would have to precede economic reform." ["Dit was duidelik dat politieke hervorming ekonomiese hervorming sou moes voorafgaan,"] wrote Strong.⁶⁵

So, during the 1989 election the issues were taxation, privatisation, deregulation, state spending, inflation and economic growth rates, whereas only two years before the most pressing issues had concerned security.⁶⁶

Prof. JP de Lange, who headed the Afrikaner Broederbond during the 1980s, assessed the position of the Afrikaner and his country by the latter part of the decade: "Die langdurige effek van die ekonomie sou ek hoër sit as die van die onluste. Ek sou sê dit het 'n diepgaande effek gehad juis omdat ons so gebeskerm was teen die onluste... Ek dink daar kom 'n derde momentum by, en dit is 'n gewetensprobleem. Baie Afrikaners het begin om 'n gewetensprobleem te ontwikkel oor die bestaande situasie. Die effek van apartheid, of ons daarmee kan saamleef, aangevuur deur die ekonomiese; aangevuur deur die onluste."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Rapport*, 30 April 1989; Strong, W., "Die algemene verkiesing van 1987 en 1989 en die politieke gebeure daartussen," unpublished Master's Thesis, UFS, 1993, p. 215.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 207-219.

CHAPTER 8

FINAL CRITIQUE

*"I looked, and there before me was a pale horse!
Its rider's was named Death, and Hades was following close
behind him. They were given power... to kill by sword, famine and plague... "*

Revelations 6:8

*"I think that you might want to know the details and the facts...
...I think its really cool that you're concerned
But we'll have to try again
After the silence has returned
Cause blood makes noise
And I can't really hear you
In the thickening of fear
Blood makes noise... "*

Suzanne Vega

Anyone making blanket statements that either condemn or condone the performance of the ANC or the Botha Government during the 1980s, clearly does not understand the groups or the period. For the historian, the period and its turbulent political processes remain something of a morass. In time, more information will appear, more discussion and debate will take place, and eventually that political era will be understood more clearly. Within the context of the year 2002, a study of the violent political conflict of the 1980s and its accompanying processes will necessarily have to end with more questions than answers.

One of the objectives of this study was to assess what the effect of the violence was on the political processes of the 1980s, and vice versa. *Blood makes noise*. Violence changes any conflict. A conflict might be brewing without anyone taking any notice, but the moment blood is drawn everything changes. Violence complicates conflict. It adds and intensifies

emotions. In some cases, it can eventually overshadow the original conflict that sparked the violence in the first place. It draws attention. It shows strength. It intimidates and spreads fear. It dramatises scenarios. Violence gives weight to and highlights grievances or frustrations. It forces people to take sides. It can force some people to get involved in the conflict or prevent others from doing so. Violence can resolve conflicts, but not necessarily ensure that justice prevails. On the other hand, violence can ensure that justice prevails, but not necessarily resolve conflicts. Partaking in violence proves commitment to viewpoints and causes. Above all, however, violence begets violence.

If one side decides upon violent means, the opposing side will either have to surrender or do likewise. In South Africa, during the 1980s, both the ANC and the Botha Government embarked upon strategies that induced violence. The question of which side struck the first blow depends, almost exclusively, on subjective viewpoints and is not the aim of this study. What can be objectively stated is that both sides executed strategies with which to violently attack or harass the other. Both sides also executed strategies with which to protect themselves against the offensive strategies of the other. In other words, both sides waged a total onslaught against each other and either side had an accompanying total strategy to protect itself from its opponent. Both sides were perpetuating violence against each other and subsequently both sides were justified in the utilisation of violent force to protect themselves.

In South Africa, in the context of the year 2002, it is easy to belittle and ridicule the Botha Government's Total National Strategy and Total Management System as being over excessive and absurd. Although in some respects they were indeed extravagant, one must realise that the 1980s and the year 2002 are worlds apart. During the 1980s, the Botha Government, irrespective of whether or not it was democratic and legitimate, was the government of South Africa and it was under attack. Forces, both inside and outside South Africa, threatened the Government's authority. The ANC wanted to bring about a complete socio-economic and political circumvolution in South Africa through a violent revolution. If the latter succeeded, what would South Africa have looked like today?

The ANC did not succeed in realising their goal of a revolution because of the Botha Government's formidable security strategy, as encapsulated by the Total Strategy and National Management System. These strategies maintained and protected the authority of the Government and prevented the success of a violent revolution led by the ANC. However, the security strategies of the Botha Government came with a very heavy price.

It is a fact that in times of social unrest, in order for a government to restore order, it is sometimes necessary to disrupt normal democratic and governmental procedures. Simplistically put, sacrifices are made for the greater good. These disruptions are accepted and justified by the rationalisation that extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. These are accepted as being of a temporary nature – their continuation dependent on a return to normality. In South Africa's case the disruption existed for most of the decade and, to some extent, became the norm – with serious consequences. Although the Botha Government's Total National Strategy successfully protected the security of the state, it also threatened basic civil liberties and per implication, core democratic principles.

The Total Strategy of the Botha Government had serious implications. This socio-economic, security and political program proved incompatible with many democratic norms and values. As illustrated throughout this study, the transparency and accountability of the Botha Government was seriously negated by its security strategies. While the country was beset by violence and as security matters increasingly overshadowed political debate and processes in South Africa, secrecy and covert decision-making became an increasingly dominant feature of the country's governmental processes.

Because transparency was increasingly being done away with, the normal system of checks-and-balances that ensured accountability, the ultimate authority of parliament and democratic civilian rule were curtailed and corrupted. As long as the Botha Government defined an issue as being of importance to national security and as such top secret, normal democratic procedures and accountability were sidestepped and decisions made on an ad hoc basis.

One of the best examples of the erosion of transparency, was the Botha Government's media restrictions and their attempts at controlling the flow of information. Media freedoms are generally accepted as being a barometer of the level of democracy that exists in a country. When a government, like the Botha Government did, artificially regulates and or hinders the free flow of information, and per implication perspectives, questions must be raised about the soundness of that democracy. As a whole, the media acts as the watchdog of the people. When the media was restricted by the authorities in South Africa in an attempt to *rectify* perceptions, civil liberties, crucial to the existence of democracy, were threatened. In the process transparency and the people's right to know in what state the country was in was undermined.

As civilian rule and transparency in government was eroded, as an implied consequence of the way the Total National Strategy was implemented, certain elements exploited loopholes to misuse authority. A misappropriation of power took place as transparency and accountability were eroded.

Furthermore, as the violence intensified and as special security measures grew in number and scope – and were applied with near permanency – the authority of the courts was bypassed or impeded. While the political unrest escalated, so too did the powers of the security establishment. The violent political unrest was a direct challenge to the authority of the state and the safety of all South Africans. This necessitated the use of force by the security forces in order to contain the volatile national situation. The authorities relied progressively more heavily on the security establishment to maintain social order and subsequently placed emergency powers at their disposal.

The violence that faced the security forces was brutal and, in many cases, savage. The security forces were in constant mortal danger in the unrest areas and risked their lives in trying to quell the violent political conflict. What is more, the security forces were under immense pressure to neutralise the violent threat to authority of the state and the public in general. Nonetheless, as official accountability, transparency and normal checks and balances

were eroded, serious transgressions and abuses of power took place within certain sections of the security forces.

Certain elements in the security forces resorted to the unchecked, indiscriminate and excessively brutal use of violence, which in some cases verged on sadism. Whether this was done as part of a systematic campaign or whether it was the result of frustration, pressure, or possibly both, or a desensitisation to the violence or some underlying psychological factor, the fact is that there were a number of cases where singular elements within the security forces were guilty of extreme misconduct. Although it is true that force was met by force and fire was fought with fire, even in the context of the unrest, there were cases of violence that proved to be exceptionally extreme and without restraint. These extreme cases were not necessitated by the unrest, but were rather inroads into cruelty and lawlessness that fell outside the parameters that guided the professional conduct of security officers. Furthermore, the excessive behaviour of the security forces greatly undermined the Government's attempts to win the trust and support of the masses in the so-called war for the hearts and minds of the people. As such, the Government's legitimacy crisis was exacerbated.

Some years later, during the 1990s, executive members of the Botha Government claimed that they had no knowledge of the misconduct of certain elements of the security forces and refused to take responsibility for it. If we are to believe these denials, then the question arises of whether the security forces lied to the Botha Government, and specifically to the State President himself? Did some elements in certain sections of the security forces sidestep their accountability to the Botha Government? Was there a breakdown in the system of checks and balances that determined the relationship between the security establishment and the authority of the civilian executive of the country?

Whether they knew about it or not, the reliance of the Botha Government on the security forces to quell the violent unrest placed the executive in a very difficult position. It could not have been seen to be criticising the very groups it needed to contain the violent political conflict. It relied on the security forces to do just that, because of its own failure to come up with a sustainable political solution. At best the security forces could contain the violent

unrest, but the unrest was born out of political frustration and forceful oppression could not succeed as a long-term solution to the turmoil. Instead, the use of the security forces to deal with political frustration only served to further intensify that political dissent. As long as the political frustration amongst the majority of South Africans endured, the violence would have existed alongside it.

The biggest and most critical shortcoming of the Botha Government's strategies was its inability to integrate its security strategies with a political program that was acceptable to the majority of South Africans. As long as the Botha Government could not come up with a political solution the political violence would have continued unabated – irrespective of the efficiency, or for that matter brutality, of the security forces.

The security strategies of the Botha Government, in fact, its Total Strategy in general, tended to the symptoms and not the cause of the South African crisis. The reforms ushered in by the Botha Government might have had a liberalising or enlightening political effect on moderate whites, but as a solution to the country's broad political turmoil, they failed. Apart from excluding blacks from the Tricameral Parliament, the Botha Government's reformist policies had no clear and specific intent and therefore could not have given clear and specific direction towards solving the country's political crisis. Reforms as conceptualised by the Botha Government could not reconcile nor successfully accommodate black political aspirations, in addition to those of whites within one political dispensation. Subsequently, reforms proved to have been more of a long-term political tactic than a conclusive political solution. But then again, the reform program was managed by a man who was more of a political strategist than a political visionary.

Although this study must in no way be understood as a political biography and/or assessment of PW Botha. This study only examines one of the political processes Botha was involved in. It would be ignorant to evaluate him based on his performance and leadership in only one of the processes he was involved in during his political career. Nonetheless, as State President he was a central figure in the process examined in the study and therefore features throughout this thesis. It is thus necessary to make some final comments on his role.

PW Botha is certainly one of the most complicated political figures in the contemporary history of South Africa. This study dealt mainly with those areas that PW Botha did not excel in, but this is not to say that he was a bad president or a poor politician. After all, this study was not an examination of the political career of PW Botha, but of a process that he was involved in. Botha's career and contributions stretched further than just the theme examined in this study.

Like the 1980s, Botha is full of contradictions. On the one hand he can be described as a political pioneer, a groundbreaker who paved the way towards South Africa's multiracial democracy. In this regard Botha's contributions are plenty and far-reaching. At the end of his tenure as State President, he had reformed more than a hundred apartheid laws or regulations. It is insightful to note some of Botha's most outstanding contributions as head of state.

He paid an official visit to Soweto, an event just as significant as his visit to Margaret Thatcher. He scrapped petty apartheid and with that ended the daily humiliation suffered by the majority of South Africans. He reached out to the corporate community and acknowledged their importance. He bettered the situation of the small business sector. He ushered in a rethink of black education. He scrapped influx control – one of the most controversial and hated aspects of apartheid. He repealed the Mixed Marriages Act and Immorality Act. He got rid of job reservation for whites and in the process enraged conservative whites. He recognised, legitimised and empowered the black labour movement. He decisively moved against racial segregation in sport. He opened-up public transport, entertainment and accommodation to all races. He redressed black property rights and ushered in a complete rethink of the homeland policy. He appointed a woman to his cabinet. He redressed forced removals, one of the most infamous aspects of apartheid, and removed its political features. Through his reforms, PW Botha repeatedly sliced deep into the very heart of grand Verwoerdian apartheid and was not intimidated when this was met by rightwing conservative outrage.

In fact, Botha took the rightwing head-on. He even allowed his party to be torn by a rightwing split in 1982, instead of giving up on his reforms. Irrespective of whether he was pressured by conservatives or threatened by the ultra-right Botha was fearless. It was not only from the right that Botha was pressured or criticized. He was under pressure from across the political spectrum.

The right charged that he was a sellout and that his reforms would lead to black majority rule. They branded him a traitor to the Afrikaner and said that he was giving the country away to the blacks. The liberals belittled his policies and charged that he was trying to fool the country with his reforms and that he was not sincere about normalising the South African political landscape. They charged that his reforms were meaningless cosmetic tinkering. The international community regarded him in stereotypical terms as a neocolonial caricature; a boorish megalomaniac and white supremacist. It would not be an exaggeration to state that PW Botha was probably under more pressure than most, if not all, of his predecessors. Through it all he continued to break new ground for South Africa. However, there was also another side to PW Botha.

As already noted, this study focussed on those areas that highlighted Botha's imperfections. PW Botha can be described in many ways, but diplomat is definitely not one of them. He simply did not possess the patience or the temperament for that. Yet, during the period under discussion the minority Government, and its President in particular, was faced with an unprecedented wave of diplomatic pressure and criticism from across the world. Botha did not always show an appreciation or aptitude for dealing with the finer subtleties and intricacies of diplomacy and international politics in general. PW Botha had never been a darling of the media and during the 1980s the media, both local and foreign, scrutinised the South African crisis, Government and its President. The international media watched Botha's every move and ceaselessly criticised his every mistake or shortcoming. As State President of the so-called apartheid-regime, Botha was presented to the world as the human face of apartheid. Nonetheless, through his dealings with the media he showed little appreciation for the immense, combined, influence the media swayed.

At the very real risk of being controversial, one of PW Botha's biggest obstacles, concerning his role in the process examined in this study, can be found in his own persona. The reader must under no circumstances, understand this as a judgement on PW Botha's personality – but few commentators would disagree that his temperament had a very real effect on his political judgement. The biggest criticism against him is not so much about *what* he did as the *way* in which he went about it. There are many instances dealt with in this study that illustrate this point. In some cases, Botha's temper and idiosyncrasies had a detrimental effect on the course of events. For example, the Rubicon Speech should simply not have taken place; the incident concerning Pik Botha's remark about a black South African president should have been handled completely different; Botha's stormy meeting with Ambassador Nickle soured relations with Pres. Reagan and should have been handled differently.

These comments should not be misinterpreted or exaggerated. It is true that even if the State President had been more amiable and diplomatic, it would have taken a lot more than one man to resolve the South African crisis. Nonetheless, a more amiable and diplomatic approach could have relieved tension and would have neutralised certain incidents before they developed into crises. The aforementioned Rubicon Speech, with its wave of detrimental international repercussions, was an example of this.

In the above, mention is made of the international community. It was there that some of the most important shortcomings of the Total Strategy lay. The Total Strategy could not change people's perceptions of the illegitimacy of the minority Government nor could it ward off growing international isolation and the accompanying economic deterioration of South Africa. The Total Strategy prevented South Africa from, quite literally, falling apart – but it could not prevent the country from deteriorating at an unprecedented pace.

The Total Strategy was a security strategy, not an economic plan. The Government's Achilles' tendon was the economy. It could control and maintain the internal situation, but South Africa was not an economic island; it was part of the global village and needed the latter for economic development. It could not separate its domestic politics from its

international economic positioning, subsequently as the violence grew, so the rand plummeted. As tougher security measures were announced to stamp out political dissent and protect minority rule, so overseas bankers announced that they were canceling loans.

The Botha Government stated repeatedly that it would fight majority rule and protect minority power – no matter the cost. The economic deterioration that took place as a result of its refusal to abandon minority rule, more than the political violence or military threat from outside forces, tested the conviction of that statement. The minority could maintain its political position through its security measures, but were whites prepared to hand their children an insolvent country without the prospect of any real socio-economic prosperity?

The Botha Government's security strategies focussed on – mostly successfully – protecting the physical safety of the state and its white supporters, but failed to render a political solution or sustainable protection against international isolation and implied economic deterioration. The Government's holistic strategy also had other shortcomings.

The Total Strategy, or rather the way the Total Strategy was implemented and managed, jeopardised its very *raison d'être*. The Botha Government stated repeatedly that it defended minority rule to ensure that Western norms of democracy, Calvinistic values and economic prosperity prevailed in South Africa. Yet, in its attempts to defend these, the minority Government threatened the long-term survival of all of these bastions of minority society.

As the study illustrates, if whites had refused change, there was the very real possibility that a minority-controlled South Africa would have degenerated into what many whites had feared most for their country – a poor, African *banana republic*. At the end of the 1980s white South Africans had reached a fork in the road. A decision had to be made. On the one hand, there was the prospect of negotiations and the uncertainty that went hand in hand with it. On the other hand, they could cling to the status quo and know for sure that South Africa's own pale horse was approaching ever closer.

The minority's decision to change significantly depended on the position of its main opposition. As the minority Government had conceptualised and implemented its Total Strategy to defend its political power base and position, so too the African National Congress had constructed a total strategy to destroy that of the minority Government.

As was the case with the Government's Total Strategy, the strategy of the ANC accommodated and promoted the use of force and violence as a means to a political end. The ANC was correct in arguing that the white minority would not have eventually dismantled apartheid of its own free will. It was also correct in its realisation that it would have taken a total onslaught to overpower the South African white minority. Although it worked – somewhat ineffectively – towards bringing about a revolution in South Africa to wrest political power from the minority, as the study shows, its focus on the political value of violence proved not to have been misplaced. Even though a revolution did not take place, the political violence did set in motion processes that led to the end of apartheid and majority rule.

The ANC had certain advantages. It had won the battle for the hearts and minds of the masses. Through mass mobilisation the ANC succeeded in politically empowering the masses, albeit only outside of parliament. It successfully utilised and exploited the combined economic strength of the masses as a potent political weapon. By connecting any and all apolitical grievances to the unjustness of apartheid, the ANC succeeded in sustaining the anti-apartheid vigour of the masses. It successfully exploited and channelled the frustration of the masses into active mass violence. Combining these advantages with the armed struggle and its work in the international community, the ANC did succeed in mounting an unprecedented onslaught against the minority establishment. Nonetheless, the ANC's campaign to Render the Country Ungovernable came with a very heavy price.

By drawing the masses into its violent political strategies, the ANC had opened-up a Pandora's Box of sorts. Drawing the masses into violent conflict and protest did have its strategic value but, as the ANC learnt, it could easily backfire. As South Africa proved, mass violence can easily become endemic and surged uncontrollably. One can argue that this was

the point of the ANC's strategy, to spread chaos throughout the country. But as the study shows, the more the campaign to render the country ungovernable succeeded, the more the ANC-in exile's control over it faltered. Mass violence, as found in South Africa, was not successfully coordinated, thus there was the very real threat that it could degenerate into politically pointless chaos.

Chaos for the sake of chaos, without any real political leadership guiding the turmoil or giving any kind of discipline, was not the goal of the ANC's strategy. It wanted this chaos to lead the way to the destruction of the Government's authority and in its place see the creation of an alternative power within the country. Here it failed. The mass violence did spread chaos and it did defy the authority of the Botha Government, but fell short of overpowering it. Instead, the mass violence did spread chaos, but the ANC was not in control of it. As long as the ANC did not succeed in controlling, directing and coordinating that chaos, what long-term political benefits could the ANC reap?

The ANC wanted the aforementioned alternative power to emerge from the chaos in the form of alternative structures for people's power. On the one hand, these alternative structures did succeed in gaining the neutral middle ground in favour of the ANC, but at a heavy price. Furthermore, these alternative structures did give some communities a sense of political self worth and confidence, a sense of people-are-doing-it-for-themselves. But, these alternative structures had a very dangerous feature – the most infamous being the so-called people's courts.

The lofty ideals envisioned by the ANC for these alternative structures and people's courts were easily exploited and corrupted. Because the ANC's strategy did not give these alternative structures and people's courts specific systems of checks-and-balances and because the ANC did not have in place operatives to oversee the workings of these, the people courts quickly degenerated into witch hunts, mob justice and brutality. Although the people's courts did succeed in intimidating and punishing so-called collaborators, they also helped to make the violence endemic and turned segments of the community against the

ANC, its strategies and supporters. In many cases, the latter came about because of the involvement of the youth in these alternative structures.

By utilising and exploiting the vigour of the youth the ANC had mobilised a powerful section of society. But, this also had serious detrimental repercussions. Through its mobilisation and empowerment of the black youth, the ANC permanently disrupted the social fiber of South Africa. Many black youths lost out on their normal education and, to an extent, because of that many of these people, now adults, are now lost to the country. Furthermore, the black youths witnessed, and in some cases, actively partook in sadistic brutality. They were taught by example that violence gets things done; that violence and sheer force is an acceptable means to get your voice heard and to further your needs. Do those children, now grown up, not still carry the psychological scars of their childhood experiences?

The ANC's biggest failure was in the realm of the armed struggle. Although it succeeded in launching armed campaigns against the authority and its supporters, these were the bombings and sabotage that failed to make the slightest dent in the military-security complex of the Botha Government. To make any headway in its armed struggle and to prove itself as being a political entity to take seriously in this regard, the ANC had to resort to plain terrorism. The attacks on civilian targets, whether an official policy of the ANC or not, did scare white South Africans – but not into submission. Although the ANC stated that its bombing campaigns were of a low intensity because of the organisation's restraint, in the opinion of the writer, if the Botha Government's military-security complex was less formidable, the ANC would have used less restraint. In other words, the Botha Government's security establishment prevented the ANC from carrying out more armed attacks, instead of the frequency being due to the restraint of the revolutionary organisation. The ANC's idea of bringing about a revolution in South Africa and overpowering the military-security complex of the minority government proved to be not only futile, but rather ludicrous.

As the necklaces and bombing of civilian targets illustrated, the ANC had little direct control over what its internal supporters did. Or rather, its internal supporters had little regard for official ANC policy. Although the ANC stated that bombings of civilian targets and

necklaces were not ANC policy, the practises continued nonetheless. These examples and the case of Winnie Mandela illustrated that the chain of command between the ANC-in exile and the internal situation, was longer and shoddier than the ANC-in exile had hoped. Could a situation have evolved in the long run where the authority of the ANC would be discarded by the disillusioned masses, dragging the country into completely uncontrollable bloody chaos? The study noted that this future possibility, by the end of the 1980s, had become an unnerving prospect to the ANC-in exile. But, like the Botha Government, the violence had put the ANC in a difficult position. The ANC-in exile could not easily be seen to be criticising the means its supporters used to reach its political ends, which further impeded the ANC's control over the violent internal situation.

The question now arises as to whether the ANC did succeed in its execution of its total strategy. As far the establishment of a permanent alternative power was concerned, no it did not. The security establishment of the Botha Government prevented that. Did the ANC's campaign to render the country ungovernable succeed? There are two answers to that question. It did succeed in making the townships ungovernable – albeit not completely because the security forces did succeed in containing the violence. But, the ANC's biggest drawback in this regard was that it did not succeed in making the white areas ungovernable; that it did not succeed in spreading the chaos to where the political power of the country lived. In fact, the ANC's campaigns were, with the exception of the armed struggle and boycotts, only executed within the black communities. As a whole, the ANC's strategy, with the exception of the armed struggle, never really had any physical effect on the lives of the majority of whites. As such, the whole of the Republic of South Africa was never really ungovernable. In general, those with political power in South Africa, the whites, were left unscathed.

What did have a very serious effect on the white community, or rather its long-term prospects for future stability, was the ANC's drive to isolate the country internationally. But here too, the long-term effect of the ANC's campaign to isolate the country internationally and economically, proved to have been indiscriminate in its detrimental long-term effect. Although calling for sanctions and disinvestment made strategic sense at the time, today all

South Africans are feeling the crunch of the sanctions campaign of the ANC of the 1980s. The country lost out on investment and jobs. The ANC was warned that it should remember that once the country lost foreign investment it was unlikely to be returned in a post-apartheid South Africa and today, in the new millennium, the ANC Government has to contend with the economic effects of its anti-apartheid struggle.

Where then did the ANC's greatest strategic achievement lie? In frustrating the Government's attempts to, unilaterally, resolve the South African crisis. In emphasising, through the implementation of its total strategy, that there could not be a solution to the country's problems without them, the ANC. As its strategy for establishing a revolution in South Africa proved to have been a dismal failure, while also losing the backing of its prime international supporter, the ANC, at the end of the 1980s, reached a fork in the road.

It had to assess its plans for the future. Like the Botha Government, the ANC stated repeatedly that it would fight for the destruction of minority rule – no matter the cost. The 1980s tested the conviction of those pronouncements. It had to ask itself whether it was really prepared to destroy South Africa along with apartheid? The ANC argued that it was fighting to liberate South Africa and to create a better, democratic, prosperous South Africa. Yet, if the ANC refused to negotiate and continued to fight for a straightforward total abdication and surrender of white minority power there was the real, long-term prospect that, if they did succeed in gaining that objective, they would hand their supporters a bloodied, insolvent wreck of a country.

The 1980s was not to be the decade for negotiations. Although there was repeated clamour for negotiations, neither the ANC nor the Botha Government, nor their supporters were geared for that. Both sides, as illustrated by their respective strategies, still believed that a unilateral solution was possible; that it was possible to overpower the other and *win* the political combat. The 1980s was the decade of impasse. During the 1980s, processes brought about or intensified by the violence, prompted a stalemate. It was during that stalemate that existed by the end of the 1980s, that the two opposing sides started to redress their strategies, political viewpoints and views of a future South Africa. Violent strategies to bring about or

prevent fundamental political change were simply not feasible long-term options; the socio-economic and political consequences were simply too devastating and too unpredictable.

Processes enacted by the violence had shoved South Africans to a fork in the road at the end of the 1980s. On the one hand, there was the prospect of negotiations, which implied sacrifices and uncertainty for both sides. On the other hand, there was the prospect of further struggle and with that prospect came the certainty that South Africa's pale horse was approaching ever closer.

`nkosi sikelela i`Afrika

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