

**'PERCEPTIONS OF THE 'RED PERIL''':
THE NATIONAL PARTY'S CHANGING PORTRAYAL OF THE 'COMMUNIST THREAT'
C.1985 - FEBRUARY 1990.**

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

2 September 2002.

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Abstract:

For the National Party of South Africa, Communism was simultaneously a legitimate concern and a useful concept with which to attract voters and deflect criticism. The threat of Communism was frequently allied with the threat of African nationalism in National Party discourse during the apartheid era. The alliance between the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party, and the Soviet's role in supporting various governments and opposition movements on the subcontinent lent credence to the National Party's stance. This study, believed to be the first of its kind on the subject, examined the National Party's perception of the Communist 'threat' or 'red peril' from c.1985 until February 1990, at a time when the Communist's role on the subcontinent was changing but 'revolutionary' unrest in South Africa was escalating. The study culminated in an assessment of National Party discourse prior to and during February 1990 to decipher the influence of the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe on the decision to lift the bans on the ANC, SACP and PAC.

Secondary research examined the facets of the Communist 'threat' in South Africa. Primary research used the South African *Survey*, the parliamentary Hansard, key journals, party and sub-national newspapers, the papers of P.W. Botha and F.W de Klerk, and party electioneering material to analyse National Party references to the Communist 'threat'. In addition F.W. de Klerk, and his co-author, David Steward were interviewed. The analysis was necessarily qualitative, but the volume of evidence gathered enabled a number of insights to be advanced.

The National Party's references to the Communist 'threat' changed during the period in response to political settlement in South West Africa/Namibia, the increased pressure from the West to abolish apartheid, and to domestic political challenges both from traditional sources of opposition and traditional sources of support. The confusion caused by the changing loci of domestic political opposition and international criticism was also evident. While the portrayal of a Soviet driven Communist threat declined in party discourse and the National Party posited a more constructive approach to socio-economic aspects of the Communist threat (in the face of Conservative Party opposition), the portrayal of a military and political threat from Communist-backed forces remained common until 1989. The discourse between 1985-89 did not anticipate the lifting of the ban on the ANC-SACP alliance who were portrayed in party rhetoric as being committed to Communism, and therefore illegitimate negotiating partners, as late as July 1989.

In this context the study examined the February 1990 lifting of the ban on the ANC-SACP alliance, against the background of the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. The study demonstrated de Klerk's misjudgement of the ANC and his belief that as a result of the collapse of Communism, the initiative could be seized at the ANC's expense, to create a new political dispensation that still 'protected' the white minority.

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1. Introduction

‘‘Gogga maak vir baba bang’ goes an old Afrikaans saying - bogey scares baby. But if the gogga is no longer scary, if the Russian bear has turned into a teddy, how do you keep baby clinging to Mama?’

Allister Sparks, The Mind of South Africa, (London, 1990).¹

Fear of Communism and anti-Communism were potent motivating forces in white South Africa, particularly between 1945 and 1992.² This study examines the National Party’s portrayal of the ‘Communist threat’ during the final years of apartheid and of Soviet Communism.

Many journalists,³ historians and political scientists⁴ have argued that Communism was used as a ‘bogey’ in South Africa throughout the era of Nationalist hegemony (1948-90). There is certainly a wealth of evidence to back up the argument that the ‘Communist threat’ was over emphasised by the National Party (NP), (chapter 2 below). Members of the governing National Party frequently referred to the Communist threat at times when the legitimacy, feasibility or morality of the apartheid system was in question, or when South Africa faced international or regional condemnation.

During the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the ‘Communist threat’ to the Southern African sub-continent appeared to diminish and the dynamics of Soviet intervention in the subcontinent changed. Most historians would agree that the Soviet Union became more conciliatory; under Gorbachev the Soviet Union ultimately effectively withdrew from much of the African continent, (and consequently played a lesser role in the politics of the sub-continent). The Soviet Union’s changing stance on the subcontinent, and indeed, the collapse of the Soviet Union accompanied or preceded apartheid’s crisis and dramatic political reform in South Africa. The end of the 1980s saw dramatic change in both Soviet and Nationalist Regimes. By the end of 1989, revolutions across Eastern Europe showed that Soviet supremacy in those countries was no longer to be maintained by force as it had been previously and the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolised the collapse of the Communist

¹ Sparks, The Mind of South Africa, p.363.

² BBC, The Story of South Africa, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/12chapter8.shtml>.

³ Murphy, South from the Limpopo p.xix; The Argus (Editorial: The Nat bogeyman and South Africa’s future), 1 May 1987.

⁴ Guelke, South Africa in Transition, p.37.

edifice.⁵ Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, F.W. de Klerk announced his intention to release Mandela, to unban the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP).⁶

The extent to which the demise of the Soviet Union and the collapse of Communism were necessary portents to the release of Mandela and the ending of apartheid has been the subject of debate in political scientists' circles.⁷ Few deny that there was some link between the two, and yet, de Klerk himself is unable to atomise the relative importance of the changing Communist and Soviet role in the National party's assessments of, and response to, the events of the era.⁸

The question remains as to what role the changing global and regional position of the Soviet Union and Communism had on the National Party's view of the domestic and regional situation in South Africa. What was the National Party's response on the domestic and the international stage as the Russian 'bear' turned into a 'teddy'?⁹

This study assesses National Party discourse on the subject of Communism during 1985 - February 1990, (when Mandela was released, the SACP, PAC and ANC unbanned, and the process of negotiation was begun). The subject is an important contribution to the South African apartheid and post-apartheid history for a number of reasons. Fear of Communism had been a useful ideological prop (though one of many) for the apartheid regime since 1948. As a feature of political discourse in South Africa, anti-Communism had predated even McCarthy's Communist witch-hunt in America; it was also one of the first hallmarks of oppression within South Africa. During the years of nationalist hegemony, the political system of apartheid was accompanied by sophisticated rhetorical justification. The rights of Africans, Indians and Coloureds were removed and diminished in the name of apartheid or separate development. But alongside the proactive ideology of grand apartheid and petty apartheid, with their plans for the racial segregation of South Africa, lay the reactive notion of anti-Communism. Though anti-Communism did not have a racial goal, it became intertwined with apartheid in South Africa, and a useful baton for castigating

5 Johnson, Modern Times, p.760.

6 Thompson, A History of South Africa, p.243-5.

7 Guelke, South Africa In Transition, the Misunderstood Miracle, pp.23-44.

8 De Klerk, 'It did contribute, not so much directly as indirectly' in, The Citizen, 15 February 1999.

9 Sparks, The Mind of South Africa, 1990, p.363.

those who did not agree with the aims of the apartheid government. In addition, the Communist threat was used as a tool for garnering international support.¹⁰ The subject therefore has an intrinsic importance.

The 1980s were tumultuous for South Africa. P.W. Botha attempted to reform apartheid, but in reality his reforms failed to redress the racial situation. At the same time, opposition forces within the country grew, and the country experienced greater unrest than it had known since the 1960s. While it was clear that P.W. Botha's reforms were not satisfying the disenfranchised masses, members of the NP frequently denied that this was the case. Instead of acknowledging the racial dynamics of the political situation, NP spokespeople continually reverted to the defence that the situation in South Africa was not due to white versus black anger, but rather moderate versus radical.¹¹

The late 1980s need to be brought under the microscope because by that stage, the international attitude to Communism was changing and Western fear of Communism was becoming blunted. While Reagan's election in America was a response to, and a stimulus for anti-Communism, his policies received little support in Western Europe outside Margaret Thatcher's Britain. Increasingly Communism was viewed by many as anachronistic, a stagnant force, and the image of Communist government was of old men clinging to power by methods that involved the suppression of basic human rights.¹² Furthermore, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev the Soviet Union became more conciliatory in international affairs.¹³ The National Party's perception and portrayal of Communism at a time when the international consensus was moving towards a less overtly hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union merits thorough examination. Though there is not room in the dissertation to draw comparisons with the statements made by Western governments about the Soviet Union, the changing attitude of the West serves as a context for the analysis of Nationalist discourse in South Africa. How did South African politicians respond to an international arena where one of the few remaining *raison d'être* of the apartheid regime was weakening as a political force?

¹⁰ Further discussed herein, chapter 2.3.1.

¹¹ Norval, *Deconstructing apartheid discourse*, p.205.

¹² Guelke, *South Africa in Transition, the Misunderstood Miracle*, p.37.

¹³ Brown, *The Gorbachev factor*, Chapter 7 and especially p.227.

The unbanning of the South African Communist Party and the ANC in 1990 was a measured political decision by F W de Klerk. De Klerk clearly did not plan to negotiate himself out of power when he lifted the ban on high-profile opposition movements in the country (including, principally the ANC, SACP, PAC).¹⁴ In taking the decision, there may have been a number of factors that swayed him to go further than simply releasing Nelson Mandela, which had become a focal point for international demands. Political scientists (Schlemmer,¹⁵ Gilomnee,¹⁶) have proposed a number of factors that influenced de Klerk, and have weighed up the relative importance of the various factors behind the decision: the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Namibian peace settlement, economic factors. In assessing the transition, many historians attribute a great deal of significance to changing status of the Soviet Union and its impact on the ANC. The collapse of the Soviet Union, Sparks argued, 'Took the monkey off de Klerk's back and enabled him to justify to his people what would otherwise have appeared to them a suicidal course of action'.¹⁷ If the collapse of the Soviet Union was seen to have such a restraining effect on the ANC, the historian is forced to question how the National Party came from such a position of strength at the beginning of the transition period to such a position of weakness by 1994. The negotiations that took place after February 1990 are outside the scope of this study. But the debate that persists about the role played by the Soviet Union's collapse in the February 1990 declaration can only be resolved by an understanding of the Nationalists' perceptions of Communism before that date. The point serves to underline the significance of the current study. The role of perceptions is important in history. Whether or not F.W. de Klerk misjudged the ANC when he unbanned it depends largely upon his (and his NP colleagues') perception of the group in 1990. Was there a fundamental error of judgement in perceiving the strength of the ANC to be the product of an external force rather than domestic support? Whether de Klerk overweighed the political significance of the collapse of Communism may similarly be answered by assessing the discourse leading up to the speech of the 2 February 1990.

Critics might argue that given the structure of South African government by the late 1980s, National Party public discourse on the subject of Communism was irrelevant, that

14 Further discussed herein, Chapter 8.2.

15 'The turn in the road, Emerging Conditions in 1990' in Lee and Schlemmer (eds.), Transition to democracy, policy perspectives, Oxford University Press, Cape Town 1991.

16 Gilomnee, 'Democratisation in South Africa' in Political Science Quarterly Vol 110 Spring 1995.

17 Sparks, Tomorrow is Another Country, p.98.

those in the inner corridors of power increasingly wielded influence and that the practitioners in politics and the military manipulated policy. While this was true, the National Party did in fact need to respond to national and international public opinion. By the late 1980s a strange irony in the South African system made the National Party's portrayal of Communism more significant than it might otherwise have been. Since 1979, the security system had come to firmly underpin the system of government. The State Security Council (in which the military played a significant role) had become, in many ways, an alternative cabinet.¹⁸ The State Security Council had been transformed to a key decision-making body with direct access to the President.¹⁹ But in spite of the fact that to some extent a state within a state had developed, the South African government had to maintain an air of credibility and legitimacy amongst the population. The façade of democracy (at least amongst the white population) was maintained. Elections were held at prescribed intervals.²⁰ The English speaking press, though stifled, was sufficiently independent to raise questions about the action of the regime. Each new piece of legislation and each government departmental budget had to be passed by Parliament. And though the white House of Assembly still had the decisive vote after 1984, the Coloured and Indian houses were able to filibuster and create legislative blockages and pressure.²¹ Deep traditions of democracy and justice were ingrained in the South African psyche,²² and served to pique the enfranchised public's conscience. These factors contributed to a situation in which the National Party government had to convince its listeners that it was in the right. Most significantly, it had to justify the overweighing of the representative system in favour of whites, and the truncation of the electorate to the exclusion of Africans. As will be discussed, anti-Communist discourse was an important claim to legitimacy made by the NP to an increasingly critical audience.

This study therefore seeks to assess the nature of National Party's anti-Communist discourse in the later 1980s. It also looks to draw a preliminary conclusion as to the

18 Cock, Jacklyn, and Nathan, Laurie, Ed: War and Society, The Militarisation of South African Society, p.8.

19 De Klerk, The Last Trek, pp.114 - 151.

20 Ross, A Concise History of South Africa, p.135.

21 During the Amendments to the Group Areas Act, in 1987, the Labour Party's obstruction ultimately led to the withdrawal of the three group areas bills. The House of Representatives then agreed to consider and dispose of a number of other bills. See SAIRR, Survey, 1987, p. xxxvi; In 1988, the Houses of Representatives and Delegates refused to debate four bills, which were referred to the President's Council in September 1988. Survey, 1988-89, p.502.

22 Sparks, The Mind of South Africa, p. 342.

extent to which the collapse of the Soviet Union was a force in the decision in 1990, to unban the ANC, PAC and the SACP, and whether F.W. de Klerk had overweighed the significance of the Soviet Union's collapse.

1.1. Methodology

There has not yet been sufficient passing of time to quell the passions aroused by the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and the ending of apartheid in South Africa. Predictably, the historiography of the period has not yet matured. Many of the authorities on the subject were involved in the events of the late 1980s (e.g., Shubin,²³ Ellis & Sechaba,²⁴ De Klerk,²⁵ Mandela²⁶). Others operated in the anti-Communist atmosphere of Reaganite America (Sparks,²⁷ Waldemeir,²⁸ Welsh,²⁹) or Thatcherite Britain (Sampson,³⁰). The literature and historiography of the period must be treated with caution. Many archives are still closed,³¹ individuals remain determined to vindicate their own action;³² the Truth & Reconciliation Commission has reopened wounds with the aim of healing them;³³ and the passions aroused by a subject so contemporary are evident in many of the studies of the period.³⁴

On the other hand, some historians, so revolted by the atrocities of the apartheid regime, may have been inclined to ignore or dispense with evidence pointing to a Communist 'threat' or indicating the ANC's dependence on Communism.³⁵ In this respect, I have exposed my own handicap as an historian. As a student of the post-Marxist generation, for whom 1992 (the collapse of the Soviet Union) were early days in my historical education and interest, I was incredulous that any educated South African could have believed the

23 Shubin, ANC.

24 Ellis and Sechaba, Comrades Against Apartheid.

25 De Klerk, The Last Trek.

26 Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom.

27 Sparks, A, The Mind of South Africa: Tomorrow Is Another Country.

28 Waldemeir, Anatomy of A Miracle.

29 Welsh, A History of South Africa.

30 Sampson, Mandela.

31 On 24 July 2002, access was won by the South African History Archive (Saha) to apartheid-era military intelligence records. The landmark ruling was, unfortunately, too late for the current study. Africa News July 24, 2002

32 E.g., De Klerk, The Last Trek; De Kock, A Long Night's Damage.

33 Commission Chairman, Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated the 'need to open the wound in order to pour in a balm'.

<http://www.facing.org/facing/fhaov3sb.nsf/a29077e36026fddb8525683200630725/3f2a272e6332dbdc85256887006868b8?OpenDocument>

34 The vehemence with which Vladimir Shubin, for example, responds to Ellis and Sechaba's analysis makes for stimulating reading, but may lack the academic perspective gained by reflection on long past events.

35 Ellis & Sechaba, Comrades Against Apartheid, p8.

magnitude of the Communist threat as stressed by the National Party government. Research required me to step outside the paradigm, to recognise the dimensions of a Communist threat on the subcontinent, to empathise with the people of the era, and to assess the rhetoric of anti-Communism and public perceptions of Communism in that light.

Secondary research thus sought to illuminate the magnitude of fear of Communism in South Africa, how that fear (and anti-Communism) had become enshrined in South Africa's international, domestic, regional and security policy and discourse. Research therefore covered the history of Communist intervention in Southern Africa and developments in the Soviet Union and on the sub-continent of Africa during 1985 - 1990. The effect of such developments on the national liberation movements in South Africa was also studied at some length. There is a paucity of material on the latter, and those studies that exist are subject to the shortcomings mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter. However, the secondary research was an essential and extensive precursor to the assessment of anti-Communist discourse during the later 1980s.

Primary research sought to produce a qualitative overview of the references to Communism made by the National Party in their speeches, statements, publications and declarations. A number of difficulties were encountered when undertaking primary research. Many of the documents are in Afrikaans, many have been destroyed and many are currently inaccessible. It was frustrating, for example, to be unable to obtain a comprehensive set of National Party electioneering material which would have enhanced the chapter of the study dealing with this aspect of the Party's rhetoric, but telephone calls to the New National Party, requests in the African Studies Library, the National Library and the Archive Contemporary Affairs only garnered a patchy selection of leaflets and posters. The difficulty with attaining documentation that was so publicly accessible at the time is one illustration of the difficulties with such a study.

A framework of primary research was constructed. Initial research involved using the South African Institute of Race Relations' Surveys and the Cape Times, to draw up a sophisticated chronology of events. When a chronology had been obtained, and the events, issues and parliamentary motions that were likely to have stimulated references to the Communist threat had been highlighted, the Parliamentary Hansard was consulted. The debates during 1985-89 in the South African Houses of Assembly, Representatives, and Delegates were considered. Debates relating to each of the topical areas of political discussion were scrutinised, with the help of indexes. The use of indexes (rather than

reading each volume from cover to cover) might mean that some references to Communism were missed; however, there is no doubt that the most significant references to Communism would have been noted during the research. Search terms in the indexes included *inter alia* African National Congress, Angola, COSATU, Freedom Charter, Free Enterprise, Mandela, Mozambique, Nkomati, OAU, Radio Freedom, Sanctions, Security Matters, Slovo, South African Communist Party, South West Africa/Nambia, Soviet Union, Spies, Swapo, Tambo, Terrorism, Total Onslaught, United Democratic Front, Unrest. In addition speeches relating to particular incidents were consulted. The speeches were analysed noting references to Communism and socialism and the political context, as well as the symbolism, tone and pace of the passage used (where this was relevant). Unfortunately the study did not utilise the Presidential Council's minutes, except insofar as these were publicised in the press. This would be the focus of more extensive work on the subject.

As mentioned above, a thorough study of the Cape Times was part of the preliminary stage of research. After consideration of the Hansard, a survey of The Nationalist (the Nationalist Party Newspaper), and the South African Digest was conducted. In addition, media searches were conducted using the South Africa Media Archive at the University of the Free State, with a number of key terms: ANC, Angola, Botha, Communism and Communist, Cuba, De Klerk, ECC, Malan, Mandela, Russia, Soviet Union, and Slovo. This may not have revealed all the references to Communism in the South African newspapers of the period. As a press cuttings service the media archive claims to be one of the most comprehensive and judiciously selected, but inevitably some articles on Communism may have been omitted. However, I am confident that the variety of search terms used enabled articles on most of the key events and speeches referred to in the press to be selected. The speeches referred to in the press were collated under subject references, and considered in the same way as the speeches in the Hansard had been. In addition to the media search of South African press, a search was conducted using Lexis Nexis (media search engine) for worldwide media coverage of the South African situation, which gave an indication of the international perspective on events in South Africa.

The archives at the Archive for Contemporary Affairs (INEG) at the University of the Free State were accessed. The inventories were used to assess which files might contain articles of interest, and Mrs Esta Jones ably guided the process. In particular, the private collections (and especially the speeches) of Mr F.W. de Klerk, Mr P. W. Botha and Adv. Leon Wessels were extensively examined. Some of the papers were at least partially in

Afrikaans, but with the use of a dictionary, the most relevant passages were isolated and translated.³⁶

As will be seen, the focus of much of the final stages of the study was Mr F.W. de Klerk, and therefore it was pertinent to find out more about his role in the NP's perceptions and portrayal of Communism. Interviews were conducted with the David Steward, Director General of the De Klerk foundation, who had been de Klerk's speechwriter and also co-wrote his biography. De Klerk himself was also interviewed.

Philip Nel, former Chair of Stellenbosch University's (now discontinued) Institute for Soviet Studies, and author of 'A Soviet embassy in Pretoria?' and 'Perceptions, Images and Stereotypes in Soviet South Africa Relations - a cognitive interpretative perspective' shared some of his insight into the period, which had been gained through active participation in the interaction between Soviet Russian and South Africa.

In addition, Margee Probyn, Alan Macintosh Research Fellow, Institute for the Study of English in Africa at Rhodes University was a useful source of suggested lines for inquiry and material, including a videotape of 1985-86 news footage contrasting the BBC and SABC coverage of the ANC and the conflict in Angola.

The research relied on the qualitative analysis of National Party speeches and media statements. The applied methodology necessarily relied on anecdotal evidence. However the collation of individual citations from a large variety of sources enabled trends within the National Party's portrayal of the Communist threat to be discerned. Where trends existed, they were illustrated in the course of the dissertation with reference to, and quotes from speeches, and, as an analysis of discourse, the study drew heavily on direct quotation.

In collating the research, the dissertation was divided into three sections. The first section considered the historical context of perceptions of the Communist threat. The second section reviewed the National Party's portrayal of the Communist threat during 1985-89 in five inter-related spheres: 'international', 'military', 'socio-economic', 'religious' and 'political'. The categories represented a stylisation of the National Party's portrayal of the threat; deemed necessary to facilitate analysis and because it reflected

³⁶ With thanks to Anton Cartwright.

the elements of the 'total onslaught' to which the National Party frequently referred. In the final section, the portrayal of Communism in February 1990, and de Klerk's own perceptions of Communism were considered.

2. The role of the Soviet Union and the spectre of Communism in Southern Africa

2.1. 'Comrades against apartheid' The ANC, SACP and the Soviet Union

National Party politicians in South Africa in the 1980s argued that the country was under a total onslaught, both externally and internally. It was claimed that the total onslaught was orchestrated by the Soviet Union and necessitated a 'total strategy' to deal with it.³⁷ An understanding of the Nationalist's depiction of Communism during the 1980s demands an understanding of the relevant history and relationship of the components of the perceived Communist 'onslaught' - the Soviet Union, the South African Communist Party and the ANC. This chapter is an overview of the issues associated with Communism and anti-Communism in South Africa since World War II, serving to illuminate the context in which the politicians of the late 1980s were operating.

2.1.1. Pre-war Contacts Between the Liberation and Communist Movements

Until 1950, the African National Congress, (formed in 1912), and the Communist Party of South Africa, (formed in 1921), had a chequered history, vacillating between co-operation and hostility, depending principally on the attitudes of the organisations' leadership.³⁸ During the early years, there was co-operation, largely due to the relationship between some of the key members of each party. Gumede, (then President of the ANC), La Guma (a Coloured leader and member of the Communist Party) and Cochraine (member of the South African Congress of Trade Unions) attended the International Congress Against Imperialism together, and Gumede paid tribute to the role of Communists in South Africa. 'I am not a Communist, but we find that the Communist Party are the only people who are with us in spirit and we are watching them'.³⁹ However, the 1930s and 1940s saw a decline in the relations between the two parties, as Gumede was replaced with the more 'conservative' Pixley KA Isaka Seme.⁴⁰ The CPSA allegedly saw this as the 'ANC revealing its true petty-bourgeois colours'.⁴¹ During the 1940s - the heyday of the ANC's youth league, suspicion was mutual. Many leaders of the Youth League were cautious about the intentions of the white dominated Communist Party. Lembede, the first leader of the

37 Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid*, p.131.

38 Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid*, pp.9-26.

39 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/1920s/gumedesp.htm>.

40 Nel, *A Soviet Embassy in Pretoria?*, p3.

41 *Ibid*.

Youth League, fiercely attacked Communists and broke up one Communist meeting in Orlando with a menacing tirade;⁴² the position of the League largely followed his stance.⁴³

The limited cooperation between the movements in the domestic sphere was echoed by lukewarm support from the Soviet Union for the liberation movement. The exact nature of links between the two movements are difficult to establish, and subject to historical revisionism.⁴⁴ There was some cooperation with the Soviets, but beyond the attendance by members of the ANC and the SACP at various international congresses, there was little support from outside South Africa for the liberation movement. In 1928 the Soviet Union expressed desire for a unity between the movements for national liberation and scientific socialism. Inevitably, this had implications for Southern Africa. But the Soviet's desire for such unity did not amount to a directed policy. Comintern or the 'third international', the Soviet body charged with spreading revolution,⁴⁵ declared that the Communist Party of South Africa should be urged to work for a long term goal - an 'independent native republic' with black nationalists with the goal of establishing majority rule.⁴⁶ But during the 1930s, Comintern became increasingly preoccupied with the threatening war clouds over Europe and gave instructions that less attention should be paid to the ANC. A later symptom of the paucity of contact between the groups was that, after World War II (1939-45) relations between the Soviet Union and the liberation forces were dissolved along with Comintern. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Archives do not contain any record of bilateral relations between the South African and Soviet Communist Parties in the 1950s.⁴⁷ This lends weight to the notion that events stimulating the development of Communism and Communist goals and practices in South Africa prior to 1960 largely took place inside South Africa.

2.1.2. Developments between the ANC and the SACP in the 1950s

The National Party's actions, perhaps more than any external factor, pushed the ANC and the CPSA towards a joining of forces. In 1948 when Malan's National Party was elected,

42 Sampson, Mandela, p.42.

43 Davenport & Saunders, South Africa: A History, p.364.

44 Roth, 'Eddie, Brian, Jack', pp.191-209.

45 JN Westwood, Endurance & Endeavour, p.274.

46 Nel, P, A Soviet Embassy in Pretoria?, p.3.

47 Shubin, ANC, p.33.

the Party's earliest legislation included the Suppression of Communism Act.⁴⁸ The National Party, with the support of the English-speaking United Party opposition, pushed the Act through the South African parliament on 2 May 1950 and the Communist Party of South Africa was banned.⁴⁹ Prejudice towards the Communist Party in the ANC had been weakening prior to the Suppression of Communism Act. Individual Communist's personal commitment and practical planning had attracted some previously sceptical members of the ANC.⁵⁰ The banning of the Communist Party catalysed such developments. Members of the ANC recognised that the new legislation would effectively be a threat to all opposition. Walter Sisulu warned that Communism, to the National Party, meant believing in equality between the races and that statutory Communism would be defined far more widely than following Marxist policies. The Act was seen as a threat to freedom of speech. The Communist and nationalist movements drew together in the face of a common enemy.⁵¹

Communism in South Africa had not been the mass movement that its opponents feared.⁵² The Central Committee of the CPSA's response to the Suppression of Communism Act was to dissolve. That there were only two dissenters in Cape Town demonstrated the party's numerical weakness. The party was also psychologically crippled. Rusty Bernstein's wrote of 'abject dejection' at the meeting in which the decision on future courses of action was to be taken. 'We had come expecting a message of courage, hope, perhaps defiance or confrontation; but not cold surrender without a whimper'.⁵³ The CPSA dissolved, but in its weakness was forced to abandon its prejudice against the ANC - which it had formerly frequently disdained as petty bourgeois and irrelevant.⁵⁴ The Act brought together the two movements in opposition. As Ray Simons, a Communist stalwart, wrote, 'In the hour of dissolution...the class struggle had merged with the struggle for national liberation'.⁵⁵

2.1.3. The Congress Movement and the Freedom Charter

48 Sampson, *Mandela*, p.63.

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.* p.64.

51 *Ibid.* p.61.

52 *Ibid.* p.61.

53 Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, p.121.

54 Nel, *A Soviet Embassy in Pretoria?*, 1990, p3.

55 Simons, *Class & Colour in South Africa 1850-1960*, chapter 25 <http://www.anc.org.za/books/ccsa25.html>.

If the two movements 'merged' with the Suppression of Communism Act, it was not without dissenters, as will be seen below. The ANC embraced a more encompassing structure shortly after the banning of Communism. Non-blacks were not allowed to become members of the ANC proper but a broader anti-apartheid coalition was sought. To this end, the Congress movement was founded in 1953. The Congress movement represented a broad spectrum of South African society and aimed to organize a campaign to enlist the participation of black masses and win the sympathy of the outside world.⁵⁶ The South African Coloured People's Organisation, the South African Indian Congress, the small, predominantly white Congress of Democrats and the multi-racial South African Congress of Trade Unions came under the Congress umbrella. Some commentators alleged that Communists drove the formation of the Congress movement.⁵⁷ This is not true.⁵⁸ The Congress movement was not a Communist Initiative.⁵⁹ But the South African Communist Party, when it reconvened under a new name in 1953,⁶⁰ recognised Congress leadership in the struggle and became active and dynamic in promoting such leadership, through each of the four organisations.⁶¹

A meeting of 3,000 Congress delegates in Kliptown Square near Johannesburg to adopt a Freedom Charter was attended by representatives of many different bodies opposed to apartheid. Though the Liberal Party and Smuts's United Party refused to attend the meeting, the fact of their invitation was not insignificant; it demonstrated the Congress' aim to be an anti-racist alliance of all hues of opinion.⁶² The Kliptown meeting was called to declare the aims, method and philosophy of the struggle against apartheid, but was deemed by the State to be a contravention of the Suppression of Communism Act. The implication was that the Congress of the People was a Communist initiative. But this was never proved (and the State's case eventually collapsed).

56 Thompson, History of South Africa, p.208.

57 Including, Henry Pike, A History of Communism in South Africa, p. 30.

58 Thompson, History of South Africa, p.208.

59 Bernstein, Memory Against Forgetting, pp.142 - 144.

60 Even the reconvention of the Communist Party was galvanised by the action of the National Party state. Bernstein details the genesis of the new party, which only emerged from the tiny splinter groups when the 'Liquidator' appointed according to the Suppression of Communism Act, demanded that fifty members of the Johannesburg party be listed unless they could prove otherwise. This demand, Bernstein recalls, broke 'the log jam which had blocked the path to the resurrection'. Bernstein, Memory Against Forgetting, p.124.

61 Shubin, ANC, p.13.

The nature and content of the Freedom Charter adopted at Kliptown, was a further subject of controversy. The Charter included concessions to socialism: 'The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole. [and]..Restriction of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it'.⁶³ It was undeniable that members of the SACP (particularly Rusty Bernstein through his role in the Working Committee) had assisted in the drawing up of the Charter.⁶⁴ But the Charter was not a Communist document: a fact underlined by the state's inability to convict any of the 156 delegates arrested at the meeting for their association with the Congress and the Charter.⁶⁵ The Freedom Charter's originator was in fact a conservative elder statesman and Cape President of the ANC, Professor Z.K. Matthews.⁶⁶ A number of statements (both contemporary and retrospective) underline that the Freedom Charter was not a Communist document. In 1956, in an article in *Liberation*, Nelson Mandela refuted claims that the Charter was socialist. He argued that, yes, it was a revolutionary document, and that it underlined the need for public ownership. But he also welcomed the opportunity that would be created for free enterprise to expand, and for the development of a 'non European bourgeoisie class',⁶⁷ pointing out that the Charter endorsed private enterprise and would allow capitalism to flourish among Africans for the first time.⁶⁸ In an ANC article in *New Age*, it was argued that the Charter was 'Not Socialism.. Whatever one's views might be as to the desirability of establishing a socialist system in South Africa, the immediate aim of the liberatory movement is not and cannot be the establishment of socialism'.⁶⁹ 38 years later, in *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela argued that the Charter 'was not meant to be capitalist or socialist but a melding together of the people's demands to end the oppression'.⁷⁰

62 Sparks, *Mind of South Africa*, p.240.

63 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html>

64 See Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, Ch. 10.

65 Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid*, p.26.

66 Ross, *Concise History of South Africa*, p.125.

67 Sampson, *Mandela* p.95.

68 *Ibid.* p.64.

69 *New Age Magazine*, 'Does the Freedom Charter Mean Socialism', November 17 1957 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/campaigns/cop/fc-socialism.html>

70 Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p.164.

Not everyone concurred with Mandela. Debate about the Congress alliance and the allegation that, as a result, non-blacks manipulated the ANC became intense. In November 1958, frustrated by the ANC's commitment to non-racialism and by their own failure to reshape the ANC from inside (as the youth league had before them), a group of Africanists broke away from the ANC.⁷¹ The Pan African Congress (PAC) claimed to be the true heirs of the 1912 ANC and the 1940s Youth League.⁷² The PAC posited the alternative goal of an African social democratic order avoiding the totalitarianism of the Communist state.⁷³ The PAC's claim that the ANC was an Xhosa tribal movement, dominated by white Communists, was to be a thorn in the ANC's side for years to come. Meanwhile South African Liberals and many Western sympathisers portrayed the Charter as a typical Communist ploy aimed at discreetly achieving influence through a popular front.⁷⁴ The Communists' influence, amongst other things, caused some members of ANC to contest that the Congress represented a departure from previous ANC policy. The Government portrayed the Communist 'bogey' more menacingly after the Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter.⁷⁵

While the Communist influence was often seen in the Congress movement, it is important to underline that the Congress movement was indigenous: it was not driven from outside South Africa. As stated above, the contact with the Soviet Union was, at this stage, minimal. The Freedom Charter and the Congress of the People were uniquely South African phenomena.⁷⁶

2.1.4. Closer ANC-SACP contact: Developments of the 1960s

The ANC's relationship with the SACP, which had grown steadily in the years following the banning of the latter, was further cemented by a change in State policy in 1960. The Unlawful Organisations Act banned the ANC and the PAC, and closed all legal channels for combating apartheid. New strategies had to be developed. In May 1961, recognising that fifty years of non-violence had brought the African people, 'Nothing but more and more

⁷¹ Barber, *South Africa in the 20th Century*, p.155.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p.156.

⁷⁴ Sampson, *Mandela*, p.87.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, p.98.

repressive legislation',⁷⁷ the ANC and the SACP commenced a violent campaign against the state. The decision to undertake violent struggle was not a Communist initiative. Opinions on the armed struggle were not divided along party lines. For example, SACP General Secretary Moses Kotane surprised Mandela by his opposition to the formation of a military wing, and was ignorant of the plans for armed action when he left South Africa for Moscow in October 1961.⁷⁸ In May 1969, Joe Slovo, emphasised, 'The simultaneous decision by both leaderships to chart the new way - the way of armed struggle'.⁷⁹

The decision to form an armed wing in 1961 was neither imposed from above nor imported from outside. Two of the principal authorities are in agreement on this. Shubin commented that, 'Moscow neither instigated nor agitated for the armed struggle in South Africa, but rather respected the decision taken by South Africans themselves',⁸⁰ a view supported by Appollon Davidson. Davidson stated that the policy departure was, 'Presented as fact. Moscow was sometimes more moderate than the groups it supported, in Palestine, Algeria or South Africa'.⁸¹ The decision to take up arms, however, necessitated support outside South Africa. Black South Africans lacked the resources to sponsor such a campaign.⁸²

The ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe, (Spear of the Nation or MK), commenced action in December 1961. Formally separate from the ANC, but in reality subordinate to it, the MK's formation brought the ANC into closer league with the SACP, and ultimately necessitated the movement seek support outside the Republic.⁸³ The formation of MK necessitated that the people with a flair for, and knowledge of strategy and armed insurgency should have a role in the movement. Individuals with these skills were often to be found in Communist Party ranks. The High Command of Umkhonto had three members from each organisation - Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Andrew Mlangeni from the ANC; Joe Slovo, Govan Mbeki and Raymond Mhlaba from the SACP. Even so, after 1963,

77 http://athena.english.vt.edu/~carlisle/Postcolonial/South_Africa_Apartheid.html

78 Sampson, *Mandela*, p.150.

79 Shubin, *Digging in the gold mine: the Mayibuye Centre Archive as a Source on the history of the South African Liberation Struggle*, at <http://www.history.ilstu.edu/mtavakol/cssaame/Vol.%2019-1/Shubin.DOC>.

80 Shubin, *ANC*, Cape Town p.43.

81 Appollon Davidson, interviewed by Sampson, *Mandela*, p.151.

82 BBC Documentary, 1986, (Title not available), Courtesy of Margie Probyn.

83 Numerous sources affirmed this, including, inter alia: BBC documentary.

the MK was almost exclusively directed by ANC exiles, while the Communist Party involvement was negligible.⁸⁴

The turn to armed struggle necessitated support from countries that were prepared to sell or donate arms; but even then, Eastern Bloc countries were not the only port of call. However, the ANC's alliance with whites and Communists caused some reluctance amongst other countries (such reluctance was expressed during Nelson Mandela's trip to African countries in 1962): for example, when in Cairo, Egypt, Mandela had to respond to complaints about the Johannesburg weekly *New Age* criticising President Nasser for attacking Communists and assure Egyptian officials that the journal was not an ANC mouthpiece.⁸⁵ ANC spokespeople persistently argued that they would have preferred Western support at this time.⁸⁶

2.1.5. Closer Communist / African National Congress Co-operation

Moscow's role in supporting the liberation struggle in South Africa matured during the 1960s. In 1962-64 the ANC's internal mission received a series of blows and a number of high-profile arrests (most prominently at Rivonia) which all but eliminated it as a force in South Africa.⁸⁷

With the internal mission suppressed due to the imprisonment or exile of its major leaders inevitably the external mission gained influence.⁸⁸ Western support was piecemeal and Western nations were very reluctant to supply armaments. The International Defence and Aid Fund in London supported political trialists and prisoners and their families but beyond that, support was minimal. Furthermore, the functions of the Pan African Freedom Movement for East, Central and Southern Africa were taken over by the Organisation of African Unity Liberation Fund, and the Liberation Committee's support was extremely limited.⁸⁹ Paucity of support from the West and from other African countries increased the role of the SACP and the Soviet Union in the liberation movement. In 1963 Soviet

⁸⁴ Karis, Thomas, *South African Liberation: The Communist Factor*, Note 5.

⁸⁵ Sampson, *Mandela*, p.165.

⁸⁶ *Cape Times*, Oliver Tambo Interview, 4 November 1985.

⁸⁷ Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid* p.38.

⁸⁸ BBC Documentary, 1986, (Title not available), Courtesy of Margie Probyn.

⁸⁹ Shubin, *ANC*, p.66.

funding of the ANC increased, as the ANC turned to a country that was prepared to sponsor revolution in South Africa.⁹⁰

2.1.6. 'Colonialism of a Special Type' and the Revolutionary Council

A re-articulation of South African Communist Party strategy in 1962 formulated the protocol for a two-stage revolution in South Africa. The SACP's made the decision to act as part of a broader front of opposition. The SACP's National Conference adopted a resolution expounded in 'The Road to South African Freedom', which concluded that South Africa was suffering from 'Colonialism of a special type'.⁹¹ According to this interpretation of South African history, the country showed, 'The characteristics of both an imperialist state, and a colony within a single indivisible political and economic entity... The Non European population, while reduced to the status of a colonial people, have no territory of their own, no independent existence, but is almost wholly integrated in the political and economic institutions of the ruling class'. The interpretation offered an ideological middle ground and a means by which the ANC and the SACP were able to work together, in spite of their differing long-term goals.⁹²

In 1969 the creation of the Revolutionary Council by the ANC recognised the contributions of non-African Communists in the ANC - Yasuf Dadoo, Reginald September and Joe Slovo. Ellis and Sechaba claim that this demonstrated that the ANC was dependent on Communists.⁹³ However, the Revolutionary Council, operating outside South Africa, was an effective way of both rewarding and further utilising the dedication, commitment and strategic thinking of the three men, who were unable to be members of the ANC's National Executive. Furthermore, the disbanding of the Revolutionary Council in 1983 highlighted that the National Executive was the most important body in the ANC structure.⁹⁴

2.1.7. Depictions of Individuals' Roles

90 Vladimir Shubin 'Soviet Union/Russian Federation's Relationship with South Africa', p.6.

91 Ellis & Sechaba, Comrades Against Apartheid, p.36.

92 D. Eversatt, 'Alliance politics of a special Type': p.39.

93 Ellis & Sechaba, Comrades Against Apartheid, p.56.

94 Karis, Thomas, South African Liberation: The Communist Factor, Note 5

Political scientists have debated the significance of the 1960's developments on the ANC and the extent to which policy departures shed light on the link between the two movements.⁹⁵ It is not easy to assess the Communist role in the ANC alliance. National Party members cited policies and speculated about numbers for many years, to back up the assertion that the Communist Party dominated the movement. The two organisations were intimately, even symbiotically linked at leadership level, but, as has been demonstrated, there was credible reasoning behind this.⁹⁶ The ANC was an open organisation, and its top leaders Tambo and Mandela, were not Communist.⁹⁷ At Rivonia Mandela likened the alliance to that between the Western allies and Stalin to defeat Hitler: a progressive alliance to defeat fascism. This did not mean that the ANC as an organisation had aligned itself with the SACP's Marxist philosophy. 'The two influence each other. The ANC is quite capable of influencing, and is likely to be influenced by others', Oliver Tambo, said on 30 June 1981, at the 60th Anniversary Celebrations for the SACP.⁹⁸

Speculation as to an ANC membership of the SACP or the number of SACP members on the executive fuelled debate by outsiders for decades. But even people within the movements did not know which members of their leadership belonged to the Communist Party. Nelson Mandela, for example, remained an enigma. The fiery youth leader who had been vehemently opposed to Communism, appeared to change his attitude. By the time Mandela was imprisoned, even his colleagues admitted that he was indistinguishable from a Communist or even a secret SACP member. Mandela was always able to refute claims that he was a member. At his trial in 1964, Mandela convinced even Western diplomats that Communists did not dominate him. His statement led one Member of the UK Foreign Office to comment, 'His arguments for collaborating with Communists [presumably strategic] are very difficult to answer'.⁹⁹ In July 1966 while serving life imprisonment on Robben Island, Mandela received a letter from the Department of Justice informing him that he was to be included in a list of members/active supporters of the SACP. Mandela's emphatic response denying that he had ever been a member of the Communist Party and asking twelve questions for details of any affidavits, stumped the

95 Including Inter alia Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid*, pp.39 - 60, and Shubin, *ANC*.

96 Waldemeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle*, p.92.

97Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, p208.

98 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/1980s/or81-10.html>

99 Sampson *Mandela*, p.197.

Department of Justice, and caused them to withdraw the threat. A secret letter by the Official Liquidator of the Communist Party endorsed Mandela's stance, admitting that on the available evidence he could not be described as an office bearer, member or active supporter of the CPSA.¹⁰⁰

2.1.8. Soviet Assistance to the ANC-SACP Alliance

Just as the departure from peaceful resistance gave a new role to the SACP in the Congress alliance, it also increased dependence on the Soviet Union. The ANC's link with the SACP probably increased their credentials with the Soviet Union, but according to Shubin, the ANC did not need to channel their requests for assistance to the Soviet Union through the SACP. 'From the 1960s onwards the ANC had direct access to the USSR. The supplies were requested by the ANC leadership and sent to the ANC initially through (and by agreement with) Tanzania and Zambia, and later Angola and Mozambique. The very fact that the ANC's regular delegation to Moscow, headed by President Oliver Tambo or Secretary General Alfred Nzo, usually included leading members of the SACP, such as Moses Kotane, Yusuf Dadoo, Mose Mabhida and Joe Slovo, was clearly an additional weight for the Soviet Union. A certain assistance to the SACP was provided directly, but as a rule with the full knowledge of the ANC's top leadership'.¹⁰¹ High-level contacts between the Soviet and the ANC leaders were a feature of the relationship after 1963.

Soviet assistance to the ANC took many forms, principally military. According to the Department of Military Technical Co-operation of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, the volume of assistance to the ANC between 1963 and 1990 was about 61 million Roubles. Of 53 million roubles worth of supplies, 36 million were armaments. To those au fait with military terminology, the physical size of supplies is perhaps more revealing (armaments were particularly cheap in the USSR): several thousand AK-47s, over 3,000 SKS Carbines, over 6,000 pistols, 275 RPG grenade launchers, 20 Malyutka anti tank missile launchers, over 60 mortars.¹⁰² At the same time, Umkhonto fighters were sent to the USSR to be trained in the camps of Odessa, Moscow and Tashkent, later in the Crimea. When relations between African countries and Pretoria improved, dependence on the Soviet Union was increased (for example after the Lusaka Manifesto of April 1969, ANC had

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p.220.

¹⁰¹ Shubin, 'Soviet Union/Russian Federation's Relationship with South Africa', p.11.

¹⁰² Ibid. p.15.

to move its camps to the USSR).¹⁰³ But from 1979 onwards, Soviet instructors started to train Umkhonto cadres on African soil. Several dozen officers were posted in Angola during the early 1980s.

Soviet support was not limited to the military. Non military support included diplomatic support, participation in international solidarity campaigns, supplies through Soviet governments and NGOs of food, clothes, cars, trucks, stationery, sportswear, building material and other goods.¹⁰⁴

However, Soviet assistance to the ANC did not approach the level given to socialist countries or even other liberation movements (For example Soviet aid to the ANC at about £24m in 1985 did not nearly approach the level of aid provided to Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU at the height of the Rhodesian civil war).¹⁰⁵ Additionally, in spite of military and other support rendered by the Soviet Union to the ANC, the Soviet Union did not dominate the movement. It had autonomy and remained, in its statements, committed to being non-aligned. The ANC continued to declare itself non-aligned: welcoming support from East and West. A statement by Mandela in 1989 asserted that, 'The only difference is... that the socialist countries supply us with weapons, which the West refuses to give us'.¹⁰⁶

The available evidence confirms that the ANC and the SACP were in a relationship prior to the 1980s. The debate lies about the nature of the relationship: it has been seen that this relationship was one of co-operation in the face of adversity. By distinguishing two stages of the revolution the SACP could put its energy into achieving the first stage of the revolution, without abandoning aspirations towards the second phase - the establishment of a socialist worker's republic - at a later date. The link was one forged in adversity and cemented by opposition and repression from the state. More importantly, the Soviet Union was not actively involved in the movement between 1948 - 1960, and even then, that regime was not the only port of call for assistance. The ANC's emphasis that it was

¹⁰³ The Manifesto adopted at the Fifth Summit Conference of East and Central African States in April 1969, and later by the UN and the OAU, held that without commitment to the principles of human equality and self determination, there could be no basis for peace, but emphasised a preference for conciliation and non-violent change.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p.15.

¹⁰⁵ Nel, *A Soviet embassy in Pretoria?*, p.12.

¹⁰⁶ From the Text of the Mandela Document, Presented by Nelson Mandela to P.W. Botha before their meeting on 5 July 1989. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/64-90/doc890705.html>

non-aligned should be underlined: it had not committed itself to the establishment of a Soviet style government. However, the National Party had other evidence for their argument that South Africa was under an onslaught. Developments on the sub-continent after 1974 seemed to lend credence to their stance on Communism.

2.2. The Soviets, the Sub-Continent and the South African Response

2.2.1. Soviet Intervention in the Front-Line States, 1974-84

Beyond the National Party's fear of the ANC and its Communist Links, the other cause of the National Party's fear of Communism lay in Communist doctrine and the Soviet Union's actions since World War II, and Soviet activity amongst South Africa's geographical neighbours. Soviet leaders had espoused expansionist policies to varying degrees. The iron curtain across Europe symbolised the division of the world into two camps, but Soviet expansionism was not limited to Europe. Under Nikita Khrushchev (CPSU First Secretary, 1953 - 1964) and Leonid Brezhnev (CPSU First Secretary, 1964 - 1982) Soviet policy makers began to look towards the Third World to exercise influence.¹⁰⁷

In the mid-1970s, the withdrawal of Portugal from Angola and Mozambique (1975), the fall of the Smith government (1979) and civil war in Zimbabwe opened opportunities for Soviet influence in Southern Africa. When Portuguese rule came to an end in Angola in November 1975, the democratic elections anticipated by the international community did not take place. Instead, the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) seized power and Soviet arms shipments to the movement, which had commenced eighteen months previously, were increased to a 'massive scale'.¹⁰⁸ An expeditionary force of 20,000 Cubans was introduced to back up the MPLA's war effort against the FNLA and UNITA. In October 1976, a treaty of friendship and co-operation signed between the Peoples Republic of Angola and the Soviet Union sealed the relationship.¹⁰⁹ A similar treaty was signed with Mozambique on April 4, 1977, and thereafter Moscow supported the Frelimo Socialist government against the insurgent Renamo movement.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Porter, USSR in Third World Conflicts, p. 16.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p.31.

¹⁰⁹ Albright, Moscow's Africa Policy of the 1970s, p. 50.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.63.

Soviet influence and the sovereignty of the frontline states piqued Pretoria. South Africa's 'fifth province' (South West Africa/Namibia) now had a frontier with a sovereign black state, and the South West African Peoples Organisation acquired bases within easy reach of the frontier.¹¹¹ Furthermore, these new sovereign regimes were friendly to the African National Congress. The ANC had played an active role in the international campaign in support of the MPLA and was rewarded in February 1976 when Angola opened an ANC base. Cubans became involved with the training of ANC cadres. An ANC office was also opened in Mozambique. The ANC was more easily able to reach its principal target - the Republic of South Africa.¹¹²

Soviet involvement in the Frontline states seemed to underline the assertion that the sub continent was under a Communist onslaught, but significantly South Africa also became involved - attempting to exert influence in the vacuum left by decolonisation. South African troops clandestinely invaded the territory of Angola on the eve of independence in support of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).¹¹³

Even after the Angolan War, 1976, in spite of withdrawal in the face of the MPLA (rearmed by the Russians), South Africa asserted dominance over the sub-continent 'by means of destabilising acts, forward defensive strikes and economic leverage'.¹¹⁴ This involved covert assistance to the MPLA's opponents, UNITA, in Angola, and to the Frelimo government's opponents, Renamo, in Mozambique.

By 1984, the cost of such support had taken a toll financially and psychologically on the South African population. In that year, the South African government coerced its neighbours into signing the Accords of Lusaka and Nkomati with the respective socialist governments. The Nkomati Accord guaranteed non-aggression or assistance to the resistance movement, in return for Mozambique's termination of support for the ANC.¹¹⁵ Discussions relating to Pretoria's failure to keep these accords were a feature of parliamentary discourse of the later 1980s.

¹¹¹ Calvocoressi, *World Politics since 1945*, p.595.

¹¹² Shubin, *ANC*, p.166.

¹¹³ Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, p.528.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.548.

¹¹⁵ Hanlon *Beggar your neighbours*, p.45.

The South African government continued to assert heavy-handed control over Namibia in the 1970s and 1980s. This aggravated the MPLA in Angola, and SWAPO in Namibia. Although South Africa abandoned its policy of annexation of the territory under Vorster, but formally annexed Walvis Bay and aimed to transfer authority to anti-SWAPO alliance.¹¹⁶ The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance to whom Pretoria bequeathed power was designed to be responsive to the needs of Pretoria. In 1978, when the initiative passed to the UN, South African stipulations regarding the implementation of Security Council Resolution 435 combined with the delivery of heavy attacks on SWAPO's bases in Angola and ongoing harsh administration of the territory all but wrecked the negotiations. Talks in 1981 were similarly brought to nought. By 1984, when a government of National Unity was proposed (and accepted by Pretoria) little unity could be found amongst Namibia's warring factions.¹¹⁷

The South African government, in its attitude to its neighbours, was able to tap into international conservative support. The United States under Reagan (US President November 1980) vindicated Pretoria's regional policy. Reagan stipulated that the removal of the Cubans from Angola should precede or be concurrent with any pacification of Angola or independence of Namibia. South Africa accepted this notion of 'linkage' but the Angolan government rejected it.¹¹⁸ The Angolan's dependence on the Cubans was increased by South African support of UNITA. Thus, by the mid 1980s, South Africa's policy of simultaneously trying to negotiate with the Angolan government and reinforcing UNITA, contributed to a stalemate on the subcontinent.¹¹⁹ The Communist threat so denounced by National Party (NP) politicians was unlikely to decline unless Pretoria altered its policy. The 'onslaught' on the sub-continent was partially a result of South African raids on, and destabilisation of, neighbouring territory.

South African politicians of mid-1980s onwards were operating in the political context and atmosphere outlined above. The stalemate reached by the end of the 1980s might only have been alleviated by a change of attitude on behalf of the one or other of the protagonists. However, for the previous 30 years, Pretoria's anti-Communist policy had been aimed at eliminating a perceived threat, and in 1985, it was not easy to envisage a

¹¹⁶ Calvocoressi, World Politics since 1945, p.596.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Jaster, The 1988 Peace Accords and the future of South West Africa, p.31.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.601.

change of policy. While there was some evidence for the existence of the threat, in attempting to combat it, Pretoria had not only over emphasised it, it had increased the ANC-SACP solidarity and the dependence of South African's neighbours on the Soviet Union and Cuban proxies.

2.3. Anti-Communism in Post-War South Africa

Chapter 2.2 discussed the international and national evidence that was provided as evidence for the National Party's anti-Communist stance. However, any assessment of the anti-Communist discourse of the late 1980s demands an understanding of the nature of the National Party's anti-Communism and its historical depth.

The portrayal of the Communist threat was a facet of National Party discourse even before the party was elected in 1948. Prior to their election, one of the NP's major disputes with General Smuts's post war government related to South African support of the Yalta agreement (1945), which the party contended would expose the whole of Europe to Communist domination. The National Party further argued that the Soviet Union was promoting Communism in South Africa and was intent on instigating a revolution amongst Blacks in South Africa. This argument became entrenched in election policy. One of the key themes in the National Party manifesto for the 1948 election was opposition to the twin threats of Communism and South Africa's 'black sea'.¹²⁰

Many politicians, including Jan Smuts, had ~~used~~ occasionally used the communist party as a scare mongering technique; but since its reunion in the late 1930s, the National Party had frequently in its propaganda fused the themes of the red menace and the black threat, and this persisted after Hertzog departed.¹²¹ In the context of African urbanisation which increased racial divisions, militancy and strike action amongst labourers (for example, the African Mineworkers Union strike of August 1946 in which 70,000 were involved), and of the difficult economic climate of the 1940s; as well as the advances that communists were making amongst some trade unions (and the credit that they claimed for strikes), there might have been some legitimate fear of the increased threat of Communism.¹²²

In understanding the National Party's perception of Communism in the 1980s, the historian has to comprehend the extent to which fear of Communism infused government policy and the extent to which individuals acting within the government truly believed that they were fighting an international enemy. J.P.J Coetzer's attempt to refute the findings of

¹²⁰ Geldenhuys, *Official South African perceptions of the Soviet Union*, p.8.

¹²¹ Gilomme, *The Afrikaners*, p.498.

¹²² Brit, *Op Die Vooraand Van Apartheid*, p. 22.

the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's on the crimes of apartheid is insightful.¹²³ Coetzer, who served over many years as director general of the Department of Justice and a member of the State Security Council conveys the government's paranoid fear of communism and argues that the scale of the Communist threat justified the National Party's actions. Coetzer's simplistic argument - that the National Party was fighting against communist inspired forces, controlled by Moscow, provides a useful insight into quite how real the threat was communist threat was felt to be by members acting within the government after the 1948 election, and indeed, how individuals - even intelligent individuals - were able to justify draconian measures (with which they did not necessarily agree) due to the nature of the threat. Coetzer conveys the extent to which the Communist threat manifested in political -or even personal - decisions. For example, although Coetzer believed that a judicial commission of inquiry should have investigated Steve Biko's death in 1977, he was happy to be overruled by Vorster due to the warlike situation in which he felt his country was. That other individuals within the National Party were guided by similar emotions enables the historian to understand the climate of opinion, which formed the background to the 1980s. Coetzer's stance gives the historian an insight into quite how real the threat may have seen to those working within the National Party, though it leans heavily on Pike's flawed History of Communism.

If Coetzer's attitude - still clearly piquing him in the year 2000 - demonstrated how potent the fear of Communism was for a National Party apparatchik, a more objective demonstration of how acute the threat felt to some, is provided by the political life of Patrick Duncan. A liberal politician, and editor of the party mouthpiece, Contact, Duncan was 'one of the strongest anti-Communists in the country' according to Helen Susman.¹²⁴ In an Open Letter to Albert Lutuli in May 1989, Duncan recited some of the most salient evils of the Communist threat. A catalogue of Soviet Crimes, including the millions killed by collectivisation and the destruction of minority populations; a chilling picture of the tyranny of Communist China, and a portrayal of the imposition of Soviet dictatorship on Eastern Europe¹²⁵ highlight how invasive this threat was perceived to be by this - a staunch opponent of the NP. Duncan repeated the chilling picture in other statements. However, the silencing of Duncan under the Suppression of Communism Act, as discussed below in

¹²³ Coetzer, Gister se dade vandag se oordeel.

¹²⁴ Vigne, Liberals Against Apartheid, p.160

¹²⁵ Driver, Patrick Duncan, p.82.

section 2.3.2, also demonstrated the National Party's zeal to use any fear of Communism against those who were equally opposed to Communism as they were to apartheid.

As J.P. Brit demonstrates, the National Party effectively used whatever legitimate fear existed to emphasise the communist threat during the 1948 election campaign, using it as a weapon against the Smuts-Hofmey~~er~~ constellation. Although those who voted for the National Party on the 26 May 1948 were voting for a 'comprehensive Afrikaner ideology',¹²⁶ the threat of communism was an effective part of the package. The Nationalists represented communists and 'race liberals' as synonymous, and in one speech D.F. Malan stated that the Communist Party 'palmed in' one after the other of the black organisations.¹²⁷ J.H. Hofmey~~er~~, who as the main torchbearer for liberalism during the election, was a particular target for the National Party. Ultimately, Brit concludes that the National Party won because it was more acceptable that the Smuts-Hofmey~~er~~ idea, which seemed tentative, reluctant to serve Afrikaner ideals, soft on communism and other radical movements, unprepared to accept the dogma of race policy, and servile to British interests.¹²⁸ But the seeds of anticommunism evident in the election campaign were to bear legislative fruit soon after the Party's election.

2.3.1. Anti-Communism in Foreign and Diplomatic Discourse

Anti-Communism impacted on many areas of political life. The specific measures that the National Party took in aligning themselves against the 'Communists' and the threat from Moscow should also be understood to contextualise the 1980s. The NP abandoned its wartime advocacy of neutrality. In foreign policy, support was shown for the West. In 1948 South African forces were dispatched to help with the Berlin Airlift. In 1950-53 South African troops were also sent to fight alongside the American forces in Korea. Through a diplomatic, military and anti-Communist stance, Pretoria sought to win the approval of the West, but in fact, failed to win it.¹²⁹ Hopes for some form of participation in military agreements with the West were not met. For geographical reasons, South Africa was denied entry to NATO or to a similar agreement for countries in the Atlantic Ocean.¹³⁰ In

¹²⁶ Brit, *Op Die Vooraand Van Apartheid*, p. 113.

¹²⁷ Brit, *Op Die Vooraand Van Apartheid*, p. 113.

¹²⁸ Brit, *Op Die Vooraand Van Apartheid*, p. 126.

¹²⁹ Spence, *Southern Africa in the Cold War*, para. 10.

¹³⁰ Davenport & Saunders, *South Africa*, p. 520.

1955, South Africa signed the Simon's Town Agreement with the United Kingdom, but this fell short of a military alliance, and signified that the anti-Communist stance of the Republic had not reaped great diplomatic rewards. In 1963-64 a UN arms embargo showed just how far short the Republic had fallen of its diplomatic and military aspirations.¹³¹

In the late 1960s the South African government tried a different strategy: attempting to capitalise on its strategic position at the junction of the Indian and Atlantic Ocean, Pretoria argued (in 1968) that the newly established Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean constituted a major threat to the security of Western shipping lanes around the Cape. South Africa's projected image as the 'bastion of the free world' failed to convince Western policy makers. In the West the opinion prevailed that the Soviet's naval policy sought political influence rather than the means to provoke military confrontation and that in the event of conflict in the southern oceans, the Republic's anti-Communist posture would leave it little choice but to place its ports, harbours and military facilities at the West's disposal. Strategic considerations thus dictated that closer political and military co-operation was unnecessary.¹³²

At the same time as trying to curry Western favour through an anti-Communist diplomatic stance, the Republic waged a diplomatic war on the Soviet Union. The closing of the Soviet Union's embassies in Cape Town and Pretoria in 1956 showed that two enemies - black and red - were merging in the view of the National Party. When justifying closure, Eric Louw referred to the accusations made by Die Burger that the Soviets were trying to subvert blacks and transgressing South African laws by serving liquor to them during consular parties. The accusations showed that as a foreign government that had made common cause with South African blacks, the Soviet Union would be regarded as an enemy of South Africa.¹³³

During the 1960s and 1970s the NP's picture of the Communist threat gained new dimensions, and Communist inspired insurgents were seen as the new danger. The independence of Angola and Mozambique in 1975 removed two vital links in South Africa's cordon sanitaire.¹³⁴ Vorster became convinced that the Soviet Union wanted to, 'Establish

¹³¹ Spence, *Southern Africa in the Cold War*, para. 7.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Nel, *A Soviet Embassy in Pretoria?*, p.3.

¹³⁴ Hanlon, *Beggar your neighbours, Apartheid power in Southern Africa*, p.58.

a string of Marxist states across Africa from Angola to Tanzania'. When in 1980, Robert Mugabe became Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, completing the link between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans; the Communist threat must have appeared more sinister. The presence of Cubans in Angola and Soviet support for the front line states, (discussed above chapter 2.2.1), created a genuine sense of being surrounded. Even the Lusaka Accord and Nkomati Accords of 1984 did not stop the Defence establishment proclaiming the Soviet threat and it was stated in 1986 that, 'The major threat to world peace remains the USSR's pursuit of world domination'.¹³⁵

Furthermore, during the later 1970s the threat of sanctions, which had hovered since a UN resolution in 1962, began to take shape. The actions of the United Nations and of Western governments became another element of the total onslaught perceived by the NP. Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan claimed that the Western powers, 'Make themselves available as handymen of the Communists and they are indirectly contributing to the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of world Communism'.¹³⁶

2.3.2. Anti-Communism on the Home Front

Anti-communism became a crucial part of the National Party's election strategy in 1948.

On gaining power in 1948 the National Party's action rapidly gave legislative framework to the Party's entrenched anti-Communism. A Commission of Inquiry Report in 1949 concluded that Communists had already made dangerous inroads into South Africa, and recommended decisive action.¹³⁷ Shortly afterwards, the Suppression of Communism Act marked a definitive step on the march against Communism. The Act, together with later amendments, (1967 and 1972) provided a pillar of the restrictions on political activists in South Africa. Not only did the Act outlaw the South African Communist Party, it also introduced so-called 'statutory Communism', and deemed the latter a criminal offence. The police were given the means for silencing a wide range of opponents of the regime by defining any person a Communist whom the Governor General deemed as, 'Aimed at bringing about any political, industrial, social or economic change within the union.. by unlawful acts'. The act also prohibited the encouragement of feelings of hostility

¹³⁵ Geldenhuys, *Official South African perceptions of the Soviet Union*, p.11.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* p.9.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* p.7.

between the European and non-European races of the Union.¹³⁸ In laying down such a broad definition, the Act paved the way for a widespread clampdown on voices of dissent within South Africa. Anti-Communism was used to constrain many forms of extra-parliamentary opposition. As Dervla Murphy travelling in South Africa 43 years later, perceptively noted: 'The apartheid regime, set up at the start of the Cold War, immediately jumped on the West's anti-Communist band-wagon. For the next forty-five years many opponents of apartheid, however impeccable their Christian/liberal/capitalist credentials, were defined as Communists and treated as Criminals'.¹³⁹

References to the Communist threat were made to justify repressive measures within South Africa to its citizens and to the international community. The Rivonia Trial became a showpiece operation for Pretoria to demonstrate that she was protecting not only her own interests but also the whole of the Western world. Of the hundreds of documents seized at Lilliesleaf farm, the most prominently referred to was one in Mandela's handwriting on 'How to be a Good Communist'. A key state witness was 'Mr X' or Bruno Mtolo (a former ANC member) whose testimony linked Mandela, the MK and the Communist Party. Four days after the close of the Trial, and in response to world outrage, Prime Minister Verwoerd declared, 'We are dealing here with a Communist attack which was directed not only against South Africa but against the West'.¹⁴⁰ Uprisings against the government, such as the Sharpeville incident, in which 67 people were killed and hundreds injured by the police were dismissed as a 'Communist inspired plot'.¹⁴¹

The National Party and other members of the white community often perceived protest events within South Africa as a demonstration of Communist activity. Indeed, any legitimate protest was often deemed to be unacceptable and 'Communist'. The Suppression of Communism Act was used against some very unlikely characters. Patrick Duncan, for example was served with a five-year banning order under the Suppression of Communism Act. The banning of Duncan, who had been so opposed to the Communist influence within the Congress of Democrats that he had deeply offended Chief Lutuli and as editor of *Contact*, had dismayed his colleagues by refusing to run COD advertisements because of potential influence of Communism, demonstrated the 'looking glass world' of

¹³⁸ Ashworth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth Century South Africa*, p.154.

¹³⁹ Murphy, *South From the Limpopo* p.xiii.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Shubin, *ANC*, p.59.

¹⁴¹ Geldenhuys, *Official South African perceptions of the Soviet Union*, p.8.

the Security Police.¹⁴² Duncan's conflict with the COD was seen as adding to their claim that he was furthering the aims of Communism.

Likewise, protest against apartheid - be it violent or pacifist, was often conceived as motivated by Communists. The ANC's bombing of SASOL and Koeberg installations, and other acts of sabotage were seen as Communist motivated. The 1984 Defence White Paper stated, 'The South African Communist Party and the African National Congress, which for all practical purposes has been integrated with the SACP and acts as its military wing, are the major elements of a Soviet plan to obtain control of the RSA'.¹⁴³

2.3.3. The 'Total Onslaught' and 'Total-Counter-Revolutionary Strategy'

Under P.W. Botha first as Minister of Defence (1966-80), and later as Prime Minister (1978-89) and then State President (1984-89), anti-Communism was elevated to a central pillar of government strategy. In 1977 the notion that South Africa was facing a 'Total onslaught' became enshrined in government policy and its counter revolutionary strategy - 'total strategy' was launched in a Defence White Paper. The onslaught, General Magnus Malan elucidated in 1980, was aimed at 'the overthrow of the present constitutional order and its replacement by a subject Communist-orientated black government'.¹⁴⁴

'Total strategy' as adapted by Pretoria meant mobilising a number of resources in order to combat the perceived Communist threat in all its dimensions. Total strategy sought to combine effective security measures with reformist policies aimed at removing grievances that revolutionaries could exploit.¹⁴⁵ The strategy also aimed to restructure society in ways acceptable to industry (increasingly alienated by apartheid's restrictive measures and inhibitive labour practices) in the political interest of Botha's National party and in the security interest of military and security forces.¹⁴⁶

Behind the strategy of counter-revolution lay the writings of a French anti-guerrilla strategist General Andre Beaufre, who had fought in Indo-Chinese and Algerian wars. The

¹⁴² Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid*, p.158.

¹⁴³ Defence White paper, 1984 quoted in Geldenhuys, *Official South African perceptions of the Soviet Union*, p.11.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Swilling & Phillips 'State Power in the 1980s', p.136.

¹⁴⁶ Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa*, p.123.

belief that the onslaught was taking place at many levels: psychological, political, economic, military, diplomatic, social, and religious was the key precept driving the notion of a total strategy. Beaufre argued that total strategy was 'At the top of the pyramid.. [of different forms of strategy]... whose task it is to lay down the object for each specialised category and the manner in which all - political, economic, diplomatic and military should be woven in together'.¹⁴⁷ In reality this perspective gave the security establishment a greater influence on P.W. Botha, and became the means through which the new Prime Minister consolidated his hold on power.¹⁴⁸ Botha formed an elaborate network of security committees, collectively called the National Security Management Systems, at the top of which lay the State Security Council. Since Communism was perceived to drive the onslaught, and since the total onslaught necessitated a total strategy to combat it, anti-Communism penetrated many areas of political and social life.

During the period under consideration, the total strategy evolved into a 'total counter-revolutionary strategy'. The writings of Lieutenant Colonel John McCuen, an American officer, supplemented Beaufre's total strategy theory and advised that the tactics being followed by insurgents should be analysed and then applied in reverse. Thus it was deduced that the multi-headed United Democratic Front (UDF) must be imitated and countered in its spheres of action, and revolutionary organisation should be destroyed or neutralised, and 'the majority of the population which is normally neutral and initially uncommitted to either side'.. must be mobilised so it that it supported the governing power'.¹⁴⁹ Repression was to be accompanied by a strategy of 'Winning Hearts and Minds' in order to persuade this neutral majority to support the government.¹⁵⁰

2.4. Anti-Communism in Broader Discourse since 1950

Even before the genesis of total strategy, fear of Communism had pervaded many areas of political and social life, from parliament through to the university lecture halls. Numerous institutions and organisations through their literature, lectures, television and

¹⁴⁷ Andre Beaufre, Introduction to Strategy p.30, quoted in Sparks, The Mind of South Africa, p.310.

¹⁴⁸ Swilling & Phillips 'State Power in the 1980s', p.137.

¹⁴⁹ Sparks, The Mind of South Africa, p.354.

¹⁵⁰ Swilling & Phillips 'State Power in the 1980s' p.144.

radio broadcasts, gave depth and breadth to the National Party's contention that South Africa was under a Communist onslaught.¹⁵¹

The works of academics, such as Dirk J. Kotzé, and Henry R. Pike substantiated the government's contention that there was a Communist onslaught on South Africa. While Pike, an American clergyman's 'History of Communism' was a polemical narrative, Kotzé's analytical work 'Communism in South Africa' dissected the Communist interest in South Africa. As an academic at Stellenbosch University, Kotzé's work shows the tenor of opinion amongst some educated Afrikaner Nationalists at the time. His conclusions about the nature of the threat were bleak. Kotzé's analysis is important as a demonstration of why and how the 'Communists are interested in South Africa'. A chapter on the subject categorised Communists' interest in the country. Though each argument was explained, it will suffice here to summarise the arguments briefly:

South Africa was on the hit list of Communist revolutionaries simply because it purported to be capitalist. South Africa was suited to revolution because it was a highly industrialised country with two developed classes engaged in a class conflict and it would also provide high publicity value. The country was the greatest obstacle to Communist endeavour to gain control of the whole of the African subcontinent. Militarily and economically it would be a great asset to the Communist world. The gaining of South Africa to the Communist cause would be a victory in the worldwide struggle especially against the US (because of investment in South Africa). If the Soviet Union conquered South Africa, it would be able to be employed against China in the struggle between two nations. Nationalistically inclined blacks would be amenable to Communist aid. Blacks would readily accept the Communist order for two reasons: because of their communal traditions, and because, as equal wage earners they would stand to gain from nationalisation. Red China had added that the have-nots in capitalist society were black, yellow and brown people, and the owners of capital were whites, therefore, the expropriation of the whites was a natural Communist strategy.¹⁵² Significantly, Kotzé dissected different aspects of the Communist threat such as African Socialism and Soviet Socialism. This was different from other political discourse of the day, which stressed 'Communism' but did not elucidate what the 'Communist' threat was or what the components of Communism were. As will be seen, in political discourse it was sufficient

¹⁵¹ Probyn Pers. Comm. (2001), De Klerk, Pers. Comm (2001).

¹⁵² DJ Kotze, Communism and South Africa, pp.45-65.

to brand someone a 'Communist'; further explanation appeared not to be needed by the political community.

The Communist threat was also taught in schools, ('An Outright Enemy: International Communism' was a chapter heading in one textbook on South African history).¹⁵³ The dangers of Communism were also emphasised in the pulpits and through church leaflets. The atheist nature of the threat was an anathema to English speaking and Afrikaans speaking churches, and their fear of Communism found expression in pamphlets produced by Frontline Fellowship,¹⁵⁴ and Christian Mission International.¹⁵⁵

The threat of Communism was also stressed through the teaching of history at Afrikaner Universities, if lecture notes from the University of Durban-Westerville are indicative: 'Communism poses a threat to every inhabitant of South Africa under the pretext of fighting for the liberation of all Africa, it has nothing less in mind than world domination. Already the Communists are aiding the so-called freedom fighters on South Africa's extended borders'. In addition to this, questions in examinations suggested that the Communist threat was neither taught, nor examined, in a neutral tone: 'Give a critical account of the methods employed by the Government - in the Republic of South Africa to combat the Communist menace 1961-1966'. (History III, 1973). Though the author of the study emphasises that such questions had 'disappeared forever' by the 1980s, the examples given illustrate the conditioning to which those educated at an Afrikaans institution were subject.¹⁵⁶

Women were also mobilized in the fight against Communism. Groups such as 'Women for South Africa', produced documents exhorting fellow women to study the dangers of Marxism and the threat it posed to society, and to know how to recognise the Marxist in and around the home. A document produced in 1979, Women our Silent Soldiers, encouraged women to, 'Make a study of Marxism in your own family, social or political circles' and to educate their children so that they would not be drawn away from the 'National fold by foreign dogmas'. In 1986, a similar document produced by the group

153 W. Grutter and Prof. D.J. Van Zyl, The Story of South Africa, p.58.

154 Including inter alia, Communist Liberation: Myth and Reality [INEG] also available at http://www.frontline.org.za/articles/communist_liberation.htm

155 Including inter alia, For Christ & country ; Communism's greatest Friend; Communism and Trade Unions [INEG].

156 Dhupelia-Mesthrice, 'A blast from the past', pp.49-69.

modelled conversations that should take place between women and their domestic servants. 'The Communists are really like all these animals. They look like lambs at first, soft and innocent. Then they change into the jackal, sly and under hand. When they change in to wolves, they show their true colours. They show their teeth that will cruelly rip us up. Then you see the Communist in his true colours'.¹⁵⁷ The metaphor of the cunningly disguised wolf was a vivid depiction to scare the housewife into seeking out the wolf in her daily contact with those near to its influence: the domestic worker.

Perhaps the single most effective channel for presenting the Communist threat to the community was state television. Television was not introduced into South Africa until 1975, but became a useful instrument of propaganda thereafter. A broadcast in 1986 by *Netwerk*, a state 'news' programme, evidenced how the media was used.¹⁵⁸ The programme on the ANC (in stark contrast to a BBC documentary of the same time) was rich with both overt and covert messages linking the ANC to the SACP and the Soviet Union, and sinister and hostile forces. Stating that the present government was 'trying level best to bring peace and harmony' the documentary juxtaposed this with a 'three-stage revolution' to be undertaken by the ANC. The documentary spoke of the 'red tide' with its 'hired ANC puppets'; meanwhile the ANC were also stated to be 'terrorists and butchers with Marxist designs'. A concluding voiceover in chilling tones stated that 'the ANC operates under the shadow of the sickle. History will hold accountable all who betray the hope of democracy, all who betray the right to freely voice their opinion, all who betray the hope for peaceful change in South Africa'. In another stage of the programme, the ANC's Communist and Soviet links, and their links with Cuba were outlined. Again, the rhetoric was strong and the images enduring. It was stated that the SACP was 'the most faithful disciple of Moscow', and simultaneously an outline of the map of the USSR against a red background filled the screen. A flashing hammer and sickle and a piece of barbed wire were in the foreground. At another stage, the image 'ANC' flickered onto the screen, written in broken text with the image of a bear drawn above the three letters. The connotations of Russian dominance were so obvious that they do not warrant further analysis. In addition, the programme had numerous images of crowds, stone throwing, and flames - pictures of cars being overturned, and angry Africans. The images confirm Posel's suggestion that visual imagery on television conveyed a sense of disorder,

157 G Malan: 'The crisis in our country: a conversation between the housewife ad her domestic help' quoted in Norval, Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse, p.205.

158 *Netwerk*, 1986 (undated, and untitled). Courtesy of Margee Probyn.

destruction, unbridled energy - the absence of reason or intelligent purposes.¹⁵⁹ Suffice to say that television was a rich media for propagating the message that Communists dominated the ANC and that Communist domination was dangerous. Radio, particularly the daily editorial entitled 'Current Affairs' performed a similar function.

Fear of Communism thus penetrated many facets of life in South Africa. While this was not dissimilar to other states where Communism was feared, in South Africa, anti-Communism was a useful prop for an otherwise discredited regime. This dissertation seeks to outline how, against a background of anti-Communism and fear of Communism, the regime adapted when the Soviet Union began to withdraw from the continent, to crumble and collapse, and Communism came to be perceived internationally as a much less severe threat.

159 Posel, Deborah, 'A battlefield of perceptions: State discourse on political violence 1985-1988' pp.262-254.

3. The International Front: Soviet Communism and South Africa

The notion that Communism was an external threat driven internationally by the Soviet Union was central to the National Party's depiction of the Communist threat to South Africa, and was frequently used on public platforms to justify the National Party's aggressive cross border action, and aspects of internal repression prior to 1985. However, during the late 1980s, the foreign policy of the Soviet Union (and, therefore, the nature of international Communism) changed dramatically.

The appointment of Mikhael Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union paved the way for a new era in international relations. The principles of glasnost (openness) perestroika (restructuring) and demokratizatsiya (democracy), and rapprochement abroad framed Gorbachev's policies. In August 1985, Gorbachev declared a unilateral moratorium on nuclear weapons setting the scene for cautious trust between the opposing cold war factions. The subsequent transition to disarmament or peace was not smooth. But diplomatic brinkmanship became less common and the threat of nuclear war reduced. The new premier's motives were the subject of debate and scepticism, but his actions amounted to a profound change in direction for international relations and consequently for Communism.¹⁶⁰

There were implications for Southern Africa. The Soviet Union had intervened in Africa since 1975 (see Chapter 2.2.1). But, in the climate of glasnost that pervaded the Soviet Union after 1985, differing views regarding the conflict in Southern Africa found voice. Preliminary indications of discordant opinions within the Soviet hierarchy came from Gleb Starushenko, a Deputy Director of the African Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences when he delivered a paper in Moscow urging the ANC to consider giving white South African collective guarantees and group rights. In Zimbabwe a year later the other deputy director, Victor Gontcharov, told a South African journalist that Moscow's position on apartheid was unchanged, but that the Soviets were prepared to act, 'More realistically, more flexibly, with every side participating'.¹⁶¹ Gontcharov stated that if the opposition were to insist on promoting the ideas and principles of socialism before settling

160 A Brown, *Gorbachev*, p.217.

161 Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country*, pp.364-365.

the problems of national liberation, they would lose both potential and existing allies.¹⁶² In 1987, Vladimir Tikhomirov (soon to become Secretary of the Africa Institute) offered the opinion that a future black government in South Africa should moderate economic reconstruction, not nationalising any more of the economy than at present. Boris Asoyan, Deputy Director of the Southern Africa Department, commented that while in the past it had been assumed that there would have to be a classical revolutionary overthrow it was now accepted that there would have to be a political settlement.¹⁶³ While each of these positions represented a personal opinion, collectively they reflected a reappraisal of policy taking place throughout the Soviet polity.

Gorbachev was not immune to the influence of senior personnel. In February 1986, at the 27th Congress of the CPSU, Gorbachev's attitude towards regional conflicts was outlined. Gorbachev outlined the USSR's interests in 'stepping up a collective search for ways of unblocking conflict situations..in all the hot-beds of the planet'¹⁶⁴ Gorbachev recognised, *inter alia*, the expense of Brezhnev's expansionist policy; Third World issues were no longer high on the Soviet priority list. Soviet support for South Africa's socialist neighbours was ultimately radically redrawn. Gorbachev stressed the need to end regional conflicts via political negotiation. The exact details of commitments made regarding the African subcontinent during superpower meetings are the subject of some debate.¹⁶⁵ But it is clear that the Soviet's action on regional issues were raised at both Geneva and Reykjavik, and Gorbachev's desire to engage more proactively in fresh thinking on issues such as East West relations rather than prioritising regional issues, must have been clear.¹⁶⁶

The change in Soviet rhetoric did not immediately manifest in policy. Gorbachev affirmed that the USSR would not 'abandon' Angola and even replenished its weapons (at an estimated cost of \$1.bn).¹⁶⁷ During the mid 1980s the Soviet Union made some record sized arms deliveries to the conflict areas of Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua in response to some unprecedented armed sorties by local insurgents in these areas. As

¹⁶² Pottinger, *The Imperial Presidency*, p.136.

¹⁶³ Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, p. 364.

¹⁶⁴ Jaster, *The 1988 Peace Accords and the future of South West Africa*, p.28.

¹⁶⁵ Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid*, p.182, Shubin, *ANC*, p.306.

¹⁶⁶ Brown, *Gorbachev*, p.219

¹⁶⁷ Jaster, *The 1988 Peace Accords and the future of South West Africa*, p.29.

will be discussed in chapter 4, in Angola, the period 1985 - April 1987 was one of renewed conflict. However, there was some progress towards a settlement in South West Africa/Namibia as the deadlock that had existed since the failure to implement UN resolution 435 in 1978 finally began to crack. The Multi Party Conference's (an alliance of anti-Swapo groups) recommendation that a transitional government be established with MPC parties proportional to their strength was taken up by the South African government and established on 17 June 1985. Section 3.1 considers the rhetorical response by the NP to the diplomacy of the Soviet Union during 1985-87.

However, changes in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev began to impact on the subcontinent of Africa in early 1988. Gorbachev earned the respect of the international community when he kept his word regarding arms limitation commitments and pressed on with domestic reform, despite the friction generated amongst Soviet citizens. Early signs of dissident nationalism did not go unnoticed internationally, for example Estonia declared economic autonomy in 1987 and independent sovereignty in 1988. By acquiescing in nationalism and not responding harshly to local dissent, Gorbachev demonstrated that he was prepared to break the pendulum swing between reform and reaction/repression that had characterised the actions of his predecessors in the Soviet Union.

Similarly Gorbachev proved trustworthy on regional issues. On 15 April 1988 Soviet troops began to withdraw from Afghanistan. In a speech on February 8 1988 Gorbachev signalled that an Afghan settlement could open the way to a more constructive approach in other regions. Gorbachev's hope was realised to an extent in Southern Africa. Although in 1988 conflict in Angola escalated, ultimately transformation occurred on South Africa's borders. A meeting between the Soviets and the US symbolised a new level of commitment to peace in South West Africa. By March 1988, the Soviet Union had joined the US in pressuring the opposing sides towards a negotiated settlement. And when negotiations were held, the Soviet Union were observers in the meetings. In June, the Soviets indirect intervention behind the scenes was praised in the South African media for preventing the talks falling into impasse.¹⁶⁸ The move towards peace will be considered in more depth in chapter 4; section 3.3 considers the impact of the Soviet's diplomatic changes on the National Party's discourse.

¹⁶⁸ *Cape Times*, 27 June 1988.

Negotiations on the future of the sub continent facilitated some high level contacts between Soviet and South African diplomats. As relations between the two countries eased, (in contrast to South Africa's relations with the West), some South Africans visited neighbouring states for discussions with Russian diplomats (in December 1988, for example, Roelof (Pik) Botha and Magnus Malan met Anatoly Admashin, Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, at Brazzaville).¹⁶⁹ Shortly afterwards, the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria established a Russian desk and several Russian journalists were allowed into the Republic.¹⁷⁰ In March 1989, Soviet and British academics convened to discuss the ANC and the armed struggle,¹⁷¹ and the ensuing headline in the Cape Times ('Soviets prefer talks to war on South Africa's future') suggested that representatives of the Kremlin were espousing a constructive attitude towards the situation in Southern Africa. Such reports were later partly refuted ('Soviet's back violence');¹⁷² and it is clear that the Soviet continued to support the ANC through 1989 and into 1990.¹⁷³ But the increased contact between the Kremlin and Pretoria combined with advances elsewhere on the sub-continent inevitably impacted on the portrayal of the Soviets by the NP.

Concurrent with the changing attitude of the Soviet Union towards the South African situation, the South African government was faced with an increasingly hostile Western attitude. If Western nations and institutions had ever been convinced that the Communist threat was sufficient justification of the National Party's apartheid policies, that conviction appeared to wane during 1985. In July 1985 Chase Manhattan Bank refused to roll over its short-term loans to South Africa, commencing a snowball effect and stimulating a capital haemorrhage.¹⁷⁴ Disinvestment by foreign firms was stepped up - one fifth of British firms had pulled out by April 1988 and British investment fell from £6bn in 1980 to under £3bn in 1986. In America, Congress seized the diplomatic initiative, overriding Reagan's veto of sanctions against South Africa and in August 1986 the senate voted 48 to 14 for a comprehensive sanctions bill and in October that year implemented a comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act. The legislation imposed bans on new investment, loans, airport landing rights and exports of oil. Like British firms, American firms pulled

169 Shubin, *ANC*, p349.

170 Philip Nel, Pers. Comm.; SAIRR, *Survey, 1987-88*, p.xxviii.

171 *Cape Times*, 13 March 1989.

172 *Cape Times*, 9 May 1989.

173 Shubin 'Soviet Union/Russian Federation's Relationship with South Africa', p.5-31.

174 Welsh, *History of South Africa*, p.491.

out of South Africa, or were discouraged to stay by the threat of further penalties contemplated by Congress. The Commonwealth, slower to act due to Margaret Thatcher's influence, ultimately implemented the 'most decisive package [of sanctions] of all'.¹⁷⁵

Attempts were made by foreign governments to seek peaceful solutions in South Africa during the late 1980s. Margaret Thatcher's initial reluctance to impose sanctions forced the Commonwealth to look for constructive ways of promoting negotiation in South Africa. When the Commonwealth Conference held at Nassau (October 1985) failed to reach an agreement on sanctions, members proposed an alternative method of promoting reform in South Africa. A group of 'Eminent Persons', headed by Former Australian Prime Minister, Malcom Fraser and Former Nigerian Premier, General Olusegun Obasanjo, visited South Africa between March and May 1986. The report of the group is intrinsically significant as a counterview to the National Party statements of the time and is discussed in Chapter 7.1, below. However, the EPG was not able to complete its mission. On the 19 May, when the report was still being researched, the ANC bases in Harare, Gaborone, and Lusaka were bombed. It was probably more than a coincidence that these bases were in commonwealth countries.¹⁷⁶ The EPG mission left South Africa that evening.

3.1. 'The Concentration of World Evil is There':¹⁷⁷ Depictions of the Soviet Union, 1985-87

National Party spokespeople depicted the Soviet Union as the epicentre of the Communist onslaught between 1985 and 1987.¹⁷⁸ The Soviet interest in South Africa was seldom defined, but references to the Soviet's interest in the Cape Sea Route and the mineral riches of South Africa abounded in NP discourse. Johannes A. Vermeulen (NP, Indirectly elected) spoke at some length in 1986, to explain the Soviet interest in the subcontinent. The three reasons for Soviet interest were: minerals and strategic importance to the development and growth of the industrial and military strength of the Western world; the control over countries bordering on the Indian and the Atlantic oceans and shipping routes

¹⁷⁵ Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, pp.536-37.

¹⁷⁶ Swilling and Phillips, 'State power in the 1980s, from total strategy to counter revolutionary warfare', p.8.

¹⁷⁷ *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 19 April 1987, col. 3802.

¹⁷⁸ *Hansard*, House of Assembly, State President's opening speech, 31 January 1985, col. 326; State President's appropriation speech, 12 April 1985, col. 3327; State Presidents opening speech, January 1986; State President's opening speech, 30 January 1987, col. 10.

Soviet Union's revolutionary history served to further emphasise the external origin of the threat to South Africa, even when the Communist threat being discussed was not directly linked to the current Soviet threat. References to the Communist onslaught frequently invoked images of rapacious hunger. Botha likened the Communists to, 'Locusts...they want to devour what has been built up over centuries in the Republic of South Africa'. In using this analogy, Botha implied that Communism would strip South Africa bare; destroy what South Africans had created over years: the so-called 'fruits of freedom and private enterprise'.¹⁸³ The image of 'fruits' with connotations of juiciness, health, sunshine, and growth, reinforced previous images of hunger and greed. In suggesting that all would be devoured by a Communist regime, Botha again implied that the moral good was on South Africa's side. He reinforced that the threat was backed by the Soviet Union by an extensive reference to Polenski, a dissident from Soviet Russia.

The onslaught in South Africa was portrayed (particularly by President Botha) as an apocalyptic battle between the 'forces of hatred and devastation', which were, 'dictated to by Moscow' and the, 'civilising principles and Christian norms'.¹⁸⁴ The notion of a 'force' was a powerful one. It suggested that the movement had coercive strength and potential for violence. It hinted that the onslaught was organised - suggesting a military operation. By contrasting this 'force' with 'civilising principles and Christian norms' Botha suggested that there was an abundance of free will in South Africa at that time and that people were able to organise their lives according to principles, but free from coercion. By contrast, Moscow was 'dictating' - the suggestions of a dictatorship emphasised the lack of freedom in Russia. The two concepts juxtaposed created a chilling picture of the possible outcome of the Communist onslaught, and re-emphasised the Soviet nature of the onslaught. The picture resonated throughout 1985-87, and was reinforced and embellished in speeches by other National Party MPs.

Soviet Communists were depicted as a power hungry elite, and as the forefathers of the revolutionaries in South Africa. Botha stated, 'They are interested in power, just as their predecessors were in Soviet Russia until they seized that power and used it to create an elite government with the masses in subjugation.... South Africa will be transformed into a dictatorship that will not only result in a blood bath but will mean that the masses they

¹⁸³ Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 April 1986, col. 3597.

¹⁸⁴ Hansard, House of Assembly, 12 April 1985, col.3327.

supposedly wished to save will not be saved'.¹⁸⁵ The repetition of the explosive 'p' consonant, and the hissing 's' consonant, implied that the Communist onslaught was simultaneously an overtly dangerous, forceful threat and an insidious one which would creep through the population. As the course of this study shows, the dual pronged nature of the Communist threat: depicted paradoxically as both overtly aggressive and insidiously subtle, was a key theme in party perspectives on Communism in the period. Furthermore, by referring to the situation in Russia, the speaker tapped into years of anti-Soviet propaganda. The image of a blood bath was a potent one, suggesting that the pogroms, disappearances, and death camps of the 1930's would be repeated in South Africa. Furthermore, should the government's opponents be brought to power in South Africa, the country would be plunged into chaos, with an elite of power hungry despots capitalising on the efforts of the masses. The notion that 'the masses they supposedly wished to save will not be saved', suggested that those leading the revolutionary struggle were deceiving their followers; 'wishing to save' whilst all the time aiming to further their own ends.

State President P.W. Botha was the most vocal articulator of the Communist threat; analysis of P.W. Botha's speeches suggests that the Communist threat was Botha's personal obsession. Indeed, on some occasions Botha amended speeches prepared for him to emphasise the Communist threat. For example, in the speech quoted above, the typed version did not include Alexander Solzhenystin's quote. Botha added the quote in after the speech had been typed.¹⁸⁶ As a result the tone of the speech changed from a relatively sober analysis of the Communist threat to a chilling depiction of an apocalyptic battle of world forces in which South Africa was caught up.

P.W. Botha's so-called 'Rubicon Speech' to the National Party Congress at an in August 1985 was particularly significant. As an example of the President's attitude towards the Communist threat, and its implication for South Africa's interaction with the international community, the speech merits close analysis. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Roelof Botha had raised international expectations of a major policy departure. However, although the speech was televised internationally it was no more than a damp squib.¹⁸⁷ The speech was peppered with furious implicit and explicit references to the Communist threat. Angered

¹⁸⁵ Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 April 1986, col. 3597.

¹⁸⁶ Observing Botha's papers at the Institute of Contemporary History has revealed a number of occasions when this occurred.[INEG].

¹⁸⁷ Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, p350.

have been that the passage referred to above was personally altered by the President - as other speeches had been.

It is useful, therefore, in an analysis of the perceptions of Communism, to examine P.W. Botha's personal attitude, and indeed how this influenced the National Party at large. P.W. Botha was 'both a' reformer and a reactionary.¹⁹¹ As Henry Kenney noted, Botha at least recognised the need to 'adapt or die'; and he was fundamentally responsible for the demise of Verwoerd's ideology and for the move towards a more egalitarian society, even in the face of resistance from his constituency (the tricameral parliament established in 1983 and the notion of 'healthy power sharing' epitomised political blasphemy to many members of the NP). Botha viewed South Africa as a country of minorities - he was committed to the flawed notion of 'separate but equal'.¹⁹² However, beyond this he did not seem to have a driving ideological or political goal; he had little patience with grand ideology and was essentially a crisis manager.¹⁹³

According to Van Zyl Slabbert, Botha's philosophy was simple: if things go wrong there must be an enemy responsible, and if they go right it is because of 'good government'. The simplicity of the total onslaught theory had appealed to Botha during his tenure as Minister of Defence: if all else fails Moscow must be responsible for what goes wrong. When reform failed to elicit widespread gratitude amongst the disenfranchised, to earn international favour, or to promote peace within South Africa, Botha's initiative as well as his patience, seemed to run out. By the time of the State of Emergency - even by the time of the Rubicon Speech in 1985, Botha's patience with reform had run out and the petulant, reactionary side of his character re-emerged.

Both was a formidable character, remembered for his blustering, bullying and hectoring. At caucus meetings, he terrified MPs into a cowed silence.¹⁹⁴ Those who crossed him were subject to carefully conceived denigration as evinced by his dressing down of Chris Ball in 1987, his attack on Allan Hendrickse, and his vituperative letter to Archbishop Desmond Tutu. National Party MPs would only have challenged the President's depiction of the struggle. Increasingly, Botha saw the struggle as a personal one and therefore any

¹⁹¹ Steward, pers. com.21.08.01

¹⁹² Kenney, *Power, Pride and Prejudice, The Years of Afrikaner Nationalist Rule in South Africa*, p.361.

¹⁹³ Van Zyl Slabbert, *Last White Parliament*, p.147.

¹⁹⁴ Leon, *FW de Klerk, the Politics of Enigma*, p21.

challenge might be conceived as a personal attack. Criticism was likely to provoke a searing attack from the 'old crocodile'. Meanwhile, within Parliament, it became very difficult to criticise the President. Increasingly, Botha relied on the position of president to protect his position. In parliament in September 1986, the Speaker Mr. Johan Greef announced that he would 'take strict action' against any Member who humiliated the State President.¹⁹⁵

National Party MPs and other spokespeople were seldom as theatrical or as colourful as the State President when speaking of the Soviet led Communist threat. Nevertheless, MPs created a picture of a sprawling mass that could envelop the RSA. In the lead up to the 1987 General Election (during which allusions to the Communist threat were pervasive), Jacobus (Kobus) Meiring, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, constructed an idealistic picture of a South Africa where all 30 million people might live happily together. The potential for this utopia was in jeopardy due to Communist expansionism. 'The threat of Communism and its hunger for expansion have already reached all outposts of the world. It is a danger aimed at dominating and controlling the entire world. This country of ours is and will be no exception on this road of Marxist hunger. No democratic dispensation can or will deny the evil nature of Communism or ignore the danger it holds. Consequently it is vital that the danger of Communism be acknowledged and that the bear be called by name'.¹⁹⁶ Meiring's speech lacked the alliterative resonance of the State President, but the message was essentially the same. The words 'threat', 'hunger' 'danger' and 'evil' all created a terrifying impression of Communism, which appeared to be sweeping around the world, swallowing up anyone unable to stand up against it.

Gorbachev's accession to power, and conciliatory statements regarding the need to seek peace in regional conflicts was not reflected in an alteration in the National Party's assessment of the Soviet threat during 1985-87. On the contrary, Magnus Malan depicted Gorbachev as, 'A stronger Marxist and revolutionist than his two predecessors'. His evidence was the build up of arms in Angola and the style of Gorbachev's accession to power: 'He was even taking over the reins... when his predecessor was ill'.¹⁹⁷ By referring in such a way to Gorbachev's method of winning power (a method used by a number of Soviet leaders) Malan suggested that the man was duplicitous and deceitful, and prepared

¹⁹⁵ Pottinger, *The Imperial Presidency P.W. Botha, the First Ten Years*, p.364.

¹⁹⁶ *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 5 February 1987, col. 409.

¹⁹⁷ *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 18 April 1985, col. 4253.

to exploit others' weaknesses. In a statement (when renewing the State of Emergency in 1987) that emphasised the duplicity of Communism, P.W. Botha suggested that Gorbachev had cynically taken over the West's own phrases relating to democracy and freedom in his publication 'The Way to Peace'. The NP did not accept Gorbachev's reputation as a peacemaker. Indeed, in phrase that linked Gorbachev to evil practices, the new premier was said to be disseminating 'diabolical stratagems'.¹⁹⁸

Thus between 1985 and early 1988, the Soviet Union was portrayed as the origin of the Communist threat to South Africa, as an evil empire, and no acknowledgement was given to Gorbachev's conciliatory statements or placatory action on the international scene. There was a profound distrust that the man with whom Margaret Thatcher has said she 'could do business' was anything other than a fraud.

3.2. 'A Seriously Ill Man':¹⁹⁹ Depictions of the Soviet Union, 1988-90

In early 1988, in spite of the changes in Afghanistan, and the hope for change on the African sub-continent (outlined above), it did not appear that the NPs depiction of the Soviet Union was to change rapidly. P.W. Botha, in a 'Statement on Matters of National Importance' in June 1988 claimed that Gorbachev would not allow interference in Russia's internal affairs, but he allowed the exportation of weapons to enable other people to bring the internal affairs of South Africa to a head.²⁰⁰ Though the comment was made only in passing, it propagated the opinion that Gorbachev was malicious and untrustworthy, and suggested that, like his predecessors he was bent on world domination. A number of other MPs echoed the view. Mrs Esme J. Chait (NP, Indirectly elected) stressed that it was necessary to protect South Africa and its borders from the external threat, which, she said, was driven by 'dogmatic left wing ideologues to further the aims of Soviet expansionism in the region'.²⁰¹ Similarly in June 1988, Mrs Johananna E.L Hunter (NP, Edenvale) argued against co-operation with 'atheists in Moscow'. She expressed distrust of Gorbachev and dismissed reforms as 'eye wash'.²⁰² Hunter linked the policies of Moscow and of the ANC.

198 Hansard, House of Assembly, 4 February 1987, col. 245.

199 Hansard, Joint Meeting, 3 May 1989, 7499.

200 Hansard, House of Assembly, 21 June 1988, col. 14215.

201 Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 May 1988, col. 9993.

202 Hansard, House of Assembly, 16 June 1988 col. 14297.

However, the increased level of interaction between Soviets and South Africans did impact on the rhetoric of the NP, beginning with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led the way in publicly elucidating an alternative image of the Soviet Union and Soviet-South African relations. While in May 1988, members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained that Gorbachev was a dedicated Communist, committed to improving the system in which he believed,²⁰³ by September 1988, it was evident that a change had occurred in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Kobus Meiring spoke at the Free State Congress of the National Party in September 1988 and commented that the USSR 'had reached a period in its history where it simply cannot do what it wishes outside its borders. The bankruptcy of Communism no longer allows it'.²⁰⁴ Meiring unveiled a new attitude towards Moscow; the choice to do so in a strong Afrikaner constituency was significant. It marked a watershed in the evolution of opinion within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, members in the upper echelons of the NP must have been sufficiently confident of the change in attitude of the Soviet Union to raise the issue at a public meeting. The changing portrayal of the Soviet Union, from being an outright enemy and source of evil, to being a victim of its own ideology - bankrupted by Communism, implied that Communism too, was bankrupt. The Soviet Union was no longer seen as a severe threat, but as a crippled enemy.

Pragmatic considerations regarding the Soviet Union prevailing within the Department of Foreign Affairs were aired in Parliament, too. By May 1989, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was defending his interaction the Soviets at some length in parliament. Responding to a question about 'what he was getting up to in Russia', Pik Botha claimed to be serving South Africa's interests in every discussion. Botha stated that he was not so naive as to think that the RSA could escape the impact of American sanctions by trading with Russia, but he was not going to insist that the Soviet Union would boycott RSA. He therefore justified increased trade with the USSR on pragmatic grounds.²⁰⁵ His speech illustrated a new, pragmatic attitude to the Soviet Union embraced at the foreign ministry. The Minister was defensive in the light of criticism from the right wing. He dissected international attitudes to Gorbachev. He concluded that South Africa had not been effusive towards Russia, but the latter's attitude during the unravelling of South West

203 Hansard, House of Assembly, 11 May 1988, col. 9722.

204 Cape Times, 8 September 1988.

205 Hansard, House of Assembly, 3 May 1989, col. 7503.

Africa had shown that her diplomats were not bluffing. Significantly, Botha stated that, 'Russia, is no longer going to employ organisations such as SWAPO and the ANC to achieve its hegemonic objectives'.²⁰⁶ The implication was that Russia was no longer sponsoring revolution, and therefore could be approached as a disinterested entity.

The scrutiny of the Gorbachev regime that took place after September 1988 stressed the regime's size and significance, but portrayed the empire as a defunct dinosaur. Pik Botha quoted a new economic thinker who had likened the Soviet Union to a, 'Seriously ill man, who after a long time in bed takes his first steps with the greatest degree of difficulty and finds to his horror that he has almost forgotten how to walk'.²⁰⁷ Gone were the images of greed, of hunger and expansion of the previous years in the lexicon of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Soviet Union was portrayed as an old man whose days were numbered. The speech portrayed Russia in such a way that it was almost pitiful. The use of a metaphor suggested that the Soviet Union was not only weak militarily (physically) but that it was weak cerebrally - or ideologically, too (loss of memory). The suggestion was significant, for it could be inferred that the very nucleus of Communist ideas were damaged. This must have had implications for the Nationalist's perception of the Communist influence in South Africa.

By April 1989, it appeared that most of the Party rank and file had assimilated the new attitude towards the Soviet Union. Where it was mentioned, the tone adopted towards the Soviet Union in NP speeches by 1988 was generally more sympathetic. For example, Gert B. Myburgh (NP, Port Elizabeth North) reminded his audience that they must not forget that Russia was still the paradigm of international Communism. And yet, he argued that the country had to make adjustments: 'Any immediate turnabout will result in a credibility crisis. .. change takes place on an evolutionary basis and even when changes have taken place they are always regarded with suspicion... honourable members know how it is a continuous struggle to make people realise that changes have taken place in a society.. we must not ourselves be guilty of measuring other countries with the same unfair criterion with which we are measured'.²⁰⁸ Myburgh traced the change from Soviet commitment to violence back to 1986. Myburgh's choice of words was significant. The word 'evolutionary' describing the changes taking place in the Soviet Union was frequently

206 Hansard, Joint Meeting, 3 May 1989, col. 7503.

207 Hansard, Joint Meeting, 3 May 1989, 7499.

208 Hansard, Extended public committee, Chamber of Parliament, 24 April 1989, col. 7359.

used to defend the pace of the NP's incremental reform. The tone of sympathy and the exhortation not to be hypocritical were not criticised by members of the NP ranks, and members' silence on the subject implied that the Soviet Union was viewed afresh.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs thus led the rejection of the notion that the Soviet Union was at the epicentre of world evil. As will be seen in chapter 4, the defence establishment was slower to respond to changes in the Soviet Union and continued to portray a military threat. Furthermore, the change in the governing party's attitude towards the Soviet Union did not amount to an abandonment of all the facets of total Communist onslaught rhetoric, nor did the changing attitude towards the Soviet Union mean that references to the Communist threat were entirely abandoned. While P.W. Coetzer, (NP, Springs) was forthright enough to stress the demise of the total onslaught, arguing that J.F. Le Roux (CP, Brakpan), 'Was really like the child in the old joke this afternoon. He swallowed the gramophone needle and it got stuck on the one old tune',²⁰⁹ but the conviction of many of National Party speakers on the subject differed from Coetzer. The fact that the Soviet Union no longer posed a great threat, it was implied, would not effect a change in the Communist threat from other sources. MPs stressed that though the international Communist onslaught was declining, this was not the case in South Africa itself, (to be discussed in Chapter 7). The two aspects of the Communist onslaught, international and internal, were desegregated in much of NP discourse. The de-coupling of the international and local threats fundamentally weakened the Communist threat as a vehicle for winning the support of the electorate and parliament. With the international backbone of the Communist threat acknowledged as crippled, the NP sometimes had to find other reasons to explain their failure to negotiate with their opponents.

By the end of 1989, the international dimension of the Communist threat was absent from National Party discourse. This had implications for party policy, as the international dimension of the onslaught had been central to the party's border, defence and security policy. Furthermore, the desegregation of the international and the domestic onslaught fundamentally undermined the notion that the Communist onslaught was a threat to South African society and undermined many aspects of the militarisation of society that had taken place since the late 1970s. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the defence ministry

²⁰⁹ Hansard, House of Assembly, 2 May 1989, col. 7342.

did not adapt their notion of the onslaught as quickly as had the ministry of foreign affairs.

3.3. 'Better to have Sworn Enemies than..this kind of Friend':²¹⁰ The Portrayal of the Communist threat vis a vis the West, 1985-89

As discussed at the outset of this chapter, Western nations increasingly put pressure on the South African state after 1985. Significantly, although the West and indeed, the very bastions of capitalism (the banks) - were responsible for disinvestment, many NP politicians continue to draw links between the economic pressures and the Communist threat in 1985 and 1986. Initially the NP's response to the threat of sanctions and diplomatic pressure suggested that if only the perpetrators knew the real - i.e. Communist motives - of the revolution in South Africa, then the country would be left alone. During the budget appropriation for the department of foreign affairs in 1985 (and therefore prior to the Anti-Apartheid Act in the US), G.P.D. Terblanche (NP, Bloemfontein North) stated that, 'The eyes of the Reagan administration and many Americans have been opened as regards the realities and capabilities of South Africa. One can only hope that other Western countries will follow this example and cease playing right into the hands of Moscow in their attacks on South Africa'.²¹¹ The NP's public discourse showed that the Western powers were perceived to be playing into enemy hands. Communism was the ultimate enemy, but in the National Party's opinion South Africa was virtually alone in recognising the Communist forces for what they were.

When sanctions became a political reality, the NP sought to demonstrate a link between the Communist onslaught and sanctions. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha implied that Moscow itself had designed sanctions. Speaking at a public meeting, Pik Botha argued that the United States' House of Representatives did not want to hear the views of blacks on issues such as sanctions and South Africa must fight against the, 'Slug of lies and distortion from abroad', by making further changes that were believed to be right. He argued that, 'Western countries were doing the work of Moscow'.²¹² On another occasion, Pik Botha stated on that, 'What the West is doing is trying to promote Moscow's cause here by encouraging those who want to achieve their political aims by means of the violence and

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Hansard, House of Assembly, 24 April 1985, col. 4142.

²¹² South African Digest, 27 September 1985.

refuse to negotiate'.²¹³ The suggestion that the West would want to promote Moscow's cause was incongruous, and the reason why the West should want to promote Moscow's cause was never explained. It was doubtful that Botha would have an answer, but the use of rhetoric was significant. The word 'Moscow' was potent, suggesting an immoral enemy, tapping into all the emotional depths outlined above - and painted the West in the same colours. In 1988, Pik Botha again made a similar statement, suggesting that, 'Nothing short of a black Marxist regime would satisfy the international community'.²¹⁴ That the Minister of Foreign Affairs was forced to make such pronouncements, without cohesive explanation, underlines the challenge that sanctions imposed by Western capitalist nations posed to the legitimacy of the National Party regime.

The NP therefore implied that Communists had duped the Western world. During the early part of the period, National Party members acted as if the West simply needed to be made aware of the way in which their actions were playing into enemy hands. President Botha was a vociferous proponent of this viewpoint. Botha frequently seized the opportunity to try to convince foreigners that sanctions were playing into the hands of the Communists. For example, when the French withdrew their ambassador, the President was quoted as saying that, 'Communists and Communist inspired forces were murdering people and attempting to disrupt black communities'.²¹⁵ Similarly, the night before South African debt re-negotiations, Botha told the American business community that unrest was due to a worsening economy and a few Communist agitators, and that sanctions would only play into Moscow's hands.²¹⁶ He maintained a similar stance on German television in 1986.²¹⁷ The implication was that if the West were woken up to the threat, they would cease playing into the hands of the Communists by applying sanctions. However, as will be shown, by the end of the period, these arguments were abandoned in favour of a more aggressive stance towards the Western world.

The abrupt end of the Eminent Persons' Group visit to the RSA, and the South African bombing of the ANC bases in Commonwealth countries marked the beginning of a watershed in the NP's depiction of the Communist threat. The South African

213 Hansard, House of Assembly, col.10657.

214 The Argus, 11 May 1988 .

215 Sowetan, 'Don't blame the Communists' quoted in Cape Times, August 5, 1985.

216 Cape Times, 23 October 1985.

217 Daily News, 2 September 1986.

government's public response to the invasion, outlined in a statement at an international press conference, represented a reiteration and codification of previous discourse. The Deputy Minister of Information, Louis Nel, coordinated the justification of the invasion in the media. A three-columned article outlining the 'Facts' regarding the ANC's links with the international terrorist network and the Soviet Union, Nel claimed that the RSA's military action had not been correctly understood. The ANC was a terrorist organisation, forming part of the international terrorist network and dependent upon foreign support and attacking lives and property of innocent citizens. It placed the ANC firmly under the leadership of the Soviet Union, and in the international terrorist movement alongside Gaddafi's PLO. The statement was cogent and comprehensible. But the bulk of the information referred to the ANC's Communist links. Fact after fact was cited, to demonstrate the link between the Soviet Union and the ANC:

'ANC terrorists are trained mainly in the Soviet Union, East Germany and Libya. The PLO also receives training in the Soviet Union and East Germany...

The ANC is dependent for its arms support exclusively on the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries...

The ANC consistently rejects peace initiatives by the West. On the other hand, the ANC supports, without exception, the initiatives of the USSR and the actions of Communist supported international terrorist organisations for example the PLO, SWAPO and others...

The official ANC Mouthpiece, *Sechaba*, which is printed in East Germany also bears out this fact.

On 12 May 1986 the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev again confirmed his support of the ANC...

The escalation of terrorist actions in the past 18 months can be ascribed mainly to the support that the ANC receives from the USSR, to the availability of bases and transit facilities in certain neighbouring states of the RSA and to opportunities created by the unrest situation...

The Government cannot prevent the Soviet Union from training, arming and logistically supporting the ANC. It can however, prevent the ANC from enjoying secure base facilities in its neighbouring states and from subsequently achieving its objectives of terror in the RSA'.²¹⁸

The NP did not want to leave the international press in any doubt - they were fighting the ANC because it was a Communist supported organisation. The implication was, again, that

218 *South African Digest*, May 23 1986.

if the West only understood that the Communist nature of the opposition to the NP, they would condone South African government action. The document is evidence of the National Party's conviction that they West needed to be persuaded that the Soviet Union was behind the revolutionary onslaught. The clarity and emphasis of this statement indicated an attitude within the ranks of the National Party that if the West only understood the nature of the ANC, then they would refute any attempt to find common cause with it or to further the negotiation between the ANC and the National Party.

While the public response was not a new departure in National Party rhetoric, the diplomatic response to the invasion represented a new approach in the South African attitude towards the international community's pressure. Botha was unrepentant. In two letters to Margaret Thatcher dated 26 May Botha revealed his attitude to international interference, and his conviction that the Communist threat justified the aggressive action of the SADF. In a letter that enclosed an unpublished SACP document, Botha implied that South Africans had a special insight into the machinations of Communist expansionism, and as a result South Africa was under a special obligation to act. In a closing sentence, laced with hyperbole, Botha claimed, 'We in South Africa who bear the responsibility of upholding civilised standards and Christian principles do not delude ourselves as to the motives and methods of the dangerous and deceitful forces aligned against us'.²¹⁹ The assonant repetition of consonants, 'motives and methods; deceitful and dangerous' suggested that there were layers of the Communist threat that only South Africa had unravelled and exposed for what they were. The implication rang clear: South Africa was a bastion against Communism and the rest of the world was being deceived.

Why Botha wrote a second letter on the same day is unclear. But the tone adopted marked a change in the portrayal of the Communist threat. Botha coupled the Marxist threat with the threats of the Western communities. He used apocalyptic phraseology, 'If the Republic of South Africa is forced to make a choice between accepting the domination by Marxist revolutionary forces and threats from certain Western countries and our determination to maintain civilised standards and our very existence - we have no option but to follow the dictates of our own consciences'.²²⁰ In a similar manner to the Rubicon Speech, Botha loaded multiple clauses into a sentence, underlining his anger. Botha's response was illustrative of a new attitude in some National Party circles. Former

219 Letter to Margaret Thatcher, 26 May 1986, P.W. Botha Private Collection [INEG] PV 203 P5/13/32/1.

220 Letter to Margaret Thatcher, (2) 26 May 1986, P.W. Botha Private Collection [INEG] PV 203 P5/13/32/2..

diplomatic allies in the West now expressing their desire for change in South Africa were equated with the threat from the Soviet Union. Significantly, in a letter to Reagan, Botha did not allude to the Communist threat. Reagan's own letter had pre-empted the discussion of Communism by referring to it himself.²²¹ But Botha's letter was confrontational. 'Frankly, Mr President, when it comes to the use of force in international relations, South Africa's record.. is demonstrably better than that of the USA'.²²² The anger resonating in Botha's statement indicated his willingness to justify his actions with any useful argument - be it against Communism or not. But as will be seen, the threat of Communism remained a prevalent justification for NP policy.

During 1986, therefore, the portrayal of the Communist threat changed. The Soviet led Communists were no longer seen as the only threat to South Africa; the West was seen as a partner in the threat. P W Botha's response to international diplomats altered accordingly. He referred to the Communist threat when approached by the English Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe, and told him that there could be no talks with the ANC as long as they were 'under Communist control'.²²³ George Shultz, US Secretary of State, received similarly dismissive treatment. When speaking to the country after Howe had left, portraying the Communists as the ultimate enemy, Botha stirred South African patriotism. 'Let there be no question about it', he said of Howe's visit, 'I can never commit suicide by accepting threats and prescriptions from outside forces and hand South Africa over to Communist forces in disguise. If we are forced until our backs are against the wall, we will have no alternative but to stand up in self respect and say to the world you won't force South Africans to commit national suicide. Leave South Africa to the South Africans and with God's help our country can go forward in faith'.²²⁴ Apocalyptic phraseology evoked the image of death and linked it with the potential future of the country. The notion that Communist forces were 'in disguise' suggested that giving into the West's demands was equal to giving into the demands of the Communist forces. Botha's invocation of 'God' and faith suggested that God was on South Africa's side; that unity would help them combat the threat to their fundamental beliefs: a concept which

221 Letter to P W Botha from Mr Ronald Reagan, dated June 1986: 'I labor under no misconceptions about the ANC. I realize that many of the ANC leadership are members of the South African Communist Party and have ties to Moscow. We are not naïve, but at the same time we recognize - as indeed you have—the strong strain of nationalism that runs through important elements of the ANC'.

222 Letter to President Ronald Reagan from Mr P W Botha, dated June 1986.

223 Toronto Star, 30 July 1986.

224 P W Botha Statement on 29 July 1986 [INEG], PV 203 4/2/150..

could be traced back through Afrikaner history to the Great Trek.²²⁵ But most significantly, Botha no longer deemed that the West could be woken up to see the nature of the Communist threat for what it was. Instead, he coupled the Soviet threat with the threat from the West. His demand that South Africa should be left to the South Africans highlighted South Africa's isolation; as if morally inferior enemies (both Eastern and Western) surrounded the country.

President Botha's statements could not hide that South Africa was becoming increasingly alienated from the Western powers - an international pariah. His arguments that the Western powers were now *supporting* those with a, 'Commitment to terrorist murder and violence; a dedication to a Marxist form of government; a commitment to nationalisation and a socialist economy; the destruction of freedom of faith and worship',²²⁶ sounded increasingly desperate. The late 1980s saw a proliferation of enemies in the NP discourse. Communists were still enemy number one, but South Africa's former allies supported them. When speaking about the forces of revolution within South Africa, Botha claimed that they were, 'Supported by goodie goodies from America, goodie goodies from Britain and goodie goodies from Europe....the goodie goodies are in blissful ignorance of the devils they are supporting'.²²⁷ To Botha, the West's support of revolution was unpalatable, because reform had been attempted in South Africa. He was indignant that the more South Africa reformed, the more they were condemned and punished by those who they had perceived as 'friends'. Botha demanded, 'Is that what the Statue of Liberty really symbolises? To that we say: no thank you, we cannot regard them as our friends. For us it is often better to have sworn enemies than to have this kind of friends'.²²⁸ Thus the former 'friends' of South Africa were now perceived as enemies, and this view was increasingly infused into statements regarding the international community. As Anthony Sampson observed in an article in Newsweek, the 'big bad Russian bear mythology' was being abandoned, and replaced with a depiction of Western nations as more dangerous than Communist countries.²²⁹ The West largely displaced the Soviet Union as the focus for Botha's wrath.

225 Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, p109.

226 P W Botha *Statement on 29 July 1986* [INEG] PV 203 4/2/150..

227 *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 4 February 1987, col. 246.

228 Address on occasion of the Young Presidents' Association of South Africa '87 [INEG] PV 203 4/2/162.

229 Sampson 'A change of enemies', *Newsweek*, 27.3.89.

The State President was not alone in perceiving and discussing a change of enemies, and budgetary speeches reflected the alteration of the National Party's view of the international scene. In 1988, Pik Botha argued angrily against the 'imperialistic arrogance' exhibited by the USA, Europe, Japan or Russia passing laws their legislative bodies to impose sanctions on South Africa.²³⁰ In 1989 during an austere budget, Finance Minister Barend du Plessis declared, 'Every South African will have to make a sacrifice in the battle against an economic onslaught which is being organized against the country internationally'.²³¹ Significantly, as the Soviet Union became more amenable to discussion in South Africa, and to trade with South Africa, and as the West became more inclined to put pressure on the Republic, the Soviet Union was portrayed less severely, and the West more severely. Incongruously however, the West was frequently portrayed as pushing South Africa to Marxist ends.

Thus, as the threat of Soviet sponsored revolution diminished during 1985-89, National Party discourse changed. References to the 'evil empire' were modified and dimmed. Ultimately, the NP's attitude to the Soviet Union mellowed, references to the Soviet Union became almost sympathetic, and new 'enemies' came to dominate the NP's depiction of the international scene, as the West imposed sanctions and attempted to find solutions to the South African situation. The notion of a Communist onslaught became riddled with internal contradictions. The efficacy of the antiCommunist argument as a motivating factor was that it wedded an international threat and domestic pressure. The change of the international threat necessarily had implications for the portrayal of the domestic threat. However, the decline in the references to Communist threat originating from the Soviet Union did not result in a concurrent abandonment by the NP of the argument that Communism was a significant threat to the South African polity. Thus in spite of the change in the international scene, the threat of Communism remained common in NP discourse.

230 Hansard, House of Assembly, 10 May 1988, col. 9405.

231 Sampson 'A change of enemies', Newsweek, 27.3.89.

4. The Military Onslaught

The military onslaught on South Africa's borders was the most tangible element of the Communist onslaught referred to by the National Party, and it was inseparably linked with the portrayal of an Soviet Communist threat. The National Party portrayed the Communist onslaught on South Africa's military capabilities as distinguished not only by conflict on the battlefield, but also by subtle methods used by Communists to undermine and denigrate the Defence Force.

As seen in chapter 2.3.4 above, the South African government and the Soviet Union had supported opposing factions in Angola and Mozambique since Portuguese decolonisation in 1975. By 1985, the South Africa government in Pretoria was under pressure from the international community for positive action on South West Africa/Namibia and from business interests within South Africa, which saw a regional settlement as one way to reduce the defence budget.²³² In 1984, in the Lusaka Accord (February) South African undertook to withdraw troops from Angola, and, in exchange for Angolan controls on SWAPO, to work towards Namibian independence under Security Council Resolution 435. In March 1984, the Nkomati Accord 'on non-aggression and good neighbourliness' stipulated that neither South Africa nor Mozambique would provide facilities for 'elements' hostile to either, i.e. that South African assistance for Renamo would end, in return for the cessation of Mozambican hosting of and support for the ANC.²³³ But hopes that the South African military instrument was being retired from direct use and replaced by economic instruments to maintain regional hegemony were rapidly dashed.²³⁴ Indeed, rather than diminishing, military conflict on the subcontinent escalated during 1985-88,²³⁵ despite the good 'intentions' declared at the Accords of Nkomati and Lusaka. In spite of the commitments made at Lusaka it took the SADF more than a year (until April 1985) to withdraw its troops from Angola; when withdrawal ostensibly took place, the SADF's support for UNITA barely flagged, UNITA operations continued and South African troops continued to cross the border in hot pursuits;²³⁶ and in September 1985, the SADF

²³² Hanlon, *Beggar your neighbours*, p.50-15.

²³³ Hanlon *Beggar your neighbours*, pp.37-43.

²³⁴ Chan, S, *Foreign Policies in Southern Africa*, p.58.

²³⁵ Hanlon, *Beggar your neighbours*, p.41.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

intervened on an unprecedented scale on UNITA's behalf.²³⁷ The history of Mozambique was not dissimilar: war there 'increased', in spite of the commitments made by South Africa to terminate support to the opposition movement, Renamo. (It later transpired that two months before the Accord of Nkomati, South Africa had given Renamo six months worth of supplies and launched an attack on Maputo at the time of the Accord's signing).²³⁸ South Africa destabilisation of her neighbours, which had commenced in 1977, persisted during the period, causing widespread devastation, loss of life and homelessness. Investigating South Africa's activity, the Truth & Reconciliation Commission found that, 'While some acts of regional destabilisation may have been a defence against Communism, the purpose of the war was to preserve white minority rule in South Africa'.²³⁹ The NP's discourse did not refer to the efforts to preserve minority rule, instead the SADF's actions on the subcontinent were shrouded by the obfuscation of the State Security Council and NP spokespeople. But when the mask of South African pacification on the subcontinent was 'rudely pulled off'²⁴⁰ and South African intervention in neighbouring states revealed, threatening to severely tarnish the government's reputation, public opinion called for an explanation. At this point the threat of Communism was widely referred to (discussed in chapter 4.1.1).

After 1987 the power balance on the sub-continent changed, and with it the rhetoric employed by the NP. In March 1987, South African reconnaissance commando teams in Angola reported People's Liberation Army of Namibia, Cuban and Angolan troops moving south-eastwards, and again deployed air support, but with less success than before. In November 1987, the Angolan-Cuban defenders managed to bring SADF-UNITA forces to a halt at Cuito Cuanavale, and until May 1988, a series of battles ultimately changed little, reinforcing a stalemate at Cuito Cuanavale but the Cubans notched up considerable successes.²⁴¹ In November, the South African government admitted for the first time that its troops were actively involved (saying that the involvement was necessary to prevent UNITA from being overwhelmed by Soviet and Cuban troops supporting the MPLA) but by this time, international and domestic pressure was moving the opposing sides towards

237 Brown, S 'Diplomacy by other means' in Leys, C and Saul, J (eds.), Namibia's liberation struggle: the two edged sword p.35.

238 Hanlon, Beggar your neighbours, p.42.

239 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Volume 2, Chapter 2.

240 Hanlon, Beggar your neighbours, p.41.

241 Susan Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means' p. 36.

negotiation. Chapter 4.1.2 considers the NP discourse after military deadlock had been reached.

In January 1988, in talks on the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola and the independence of Namibia, Chester Crocker (American Assistant Secretary of State) was joined for the first time by a Cuban Official, and at the end of the talks, it was announced that Angolan and Cuban troops had agreed to the eventual withdrawal of some 40,000 Cuban troops from Angola. Under Crocker's leadership, which sought terms to allow each side to claim victory, further progress was made in August 1988 when South African, Angolan and Cuban representatives announced a cease-fire agreement in which South Africa would withdraw its troops from Angola by 1 September, at which time Angola and Cuba would present a timetable for the withdrawal of Cuban troops.²⁴² In addition, it was agreed that Angolan hosting of the ANC would be terminated.²⁴³ A target date was also set for the implementation of Resolution 435, and the holding of UN-supervised elections in Namibia. The Brazzaville Protocol of December 1988 firmed up the agreement and provided for Namibian independence and on 10 January 1989 Cuban troops began their withdrawal from Angola. Chapter 4.1.3 considers the NP's discourse about the Communist military threat as the Namibian situation was settled.

The discourse relating to the military onslaught on South African borders thus responded to the dramatic political events of the time; however, during the period, the military budget was increased (until 1990) and that increase had to be passed by parliament. Elements of the discourse relating to the military threat became divorced from the reality of the situation on the borders, and were related to the demands of the military establishment within South Africa.

4.1. 'Moscow's Springboard': The Depiction of the Namibian Situation and Explanations of Cross-Border Raids, 1985-87

During 1985 and 1986, the failure to resolve the Namibian situation came under parliamentary scrutiny. The National Party portrayed the South African presence in Namibia as a necessity for defending against the Communist threat there. Opponents of South Africa's presence in South West Africa were depicted extremely negatively as Soviet

²⁴² Jaster, *The 1988 Peace Accords and the future of South West Africa*, p. 32.

²⁴³ Riley, E, *Major political events in South Africa*, p206.

'interventionists', supporting Cuban forces.²⁴⁴ South Africa's continued presence in the region was consistently blamed on the threatening presence of Cubans in the region. Meanwhile the Multi-Party Conference (essentially an alliance of anti-SWAPO groups responsive to the needs of Pretoria) was implied to be the legitimate government in SWA opposed by the Communist organisation, SWAPO. It was suggested that a dangerous vacuum would be created in the absence of South Africa's stabilising influence in the region.²⁴⁵ 'Who is to fill that vacuum? For whom must the table be set? For Swapo? For Cuba? For Russia?'²⁴⁶ The implication of speeches during 1985 and 1986 was that South Africa was at war against the Soviets in Namibia, and this was dangerously close to South Africa itself. 'We dare not allow the Communist forces and Cuban troops to raise their red flag in Windhoek'.²⁴⁷

Although the situation in Namibia was often blamed upon the Cuban presence in Angola, the role of the SADF continued to be a focal point of criticism in parliament. In spite of Parliament's and civilians' ignorance of the precise details of the South African Defence Force's action in the field, in 1985-87 there was extensive criticism of the role of the Defence Force in cross border raids. In countering the accusations of various opposition voices, and in order to legitimise their own actions, members of the NP with defence portfolios frequently emphasised the severity of the Communist threat, both in parliament and beyond. The onslaught was shown to be both very real - in terms of a frontal attack; and psychological - in terms of subtle undermining of the SADF. Both elements of the Communist's military onslaught were stressed simultaneously when the defence establishment was responding to criticism. Such criticism occurred during the 'Cabinda Scandal' of 1985 when it was suggested that South Africa was contravening its commitments in Angola; and after the discovery of the Vaz diaries in a camp recaptured from Renamo by the Mozambican government when it was found that the South African government had shored up Renamo prior to the Nkomati Accord and maintained its support for the insurgent movement throughout the period.²⁴⁸

244 Hansard, House of Assembly, 18 April 1985, col. 3845.

245 RF Botha, speaking in the House of Assembly, argued that the 'Cuban presence remains a serious and intimidating factor to any election planned in Namibia under UN supervision'. Hansard, House of Assembly, 5 May 1986, col. 4960.

246 Hansard, House of Assembly, 24 April 1985, col. 4168.

247 Address by State President P.W. Botha on the occasion of a public meeting of the National Party at Lichtenburg 25 March 1987 [INEG] PV 203 4/2/143.]

248 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.432.

The debates succeeding the Cabinda Scandal were an early and high profile example of NP Member's rhetorical tactics for diverting criticism from the SADF and South African policy towards neighbouring states. On 21 May 1985, despite South Africa's supposed withdrawal from Angola in April, two men were killed and one man (Captain Wynand du Toit) captured allegedly attempting to blow up a Gulf Oil installation in the North of Angola. A public relations disaster loomed for the South African government and defence establishment if the allegations were verified. Sasol was a source of essential foreign revenue for Angola and of Angolan oil for America. SADF spokespeople first claimed that the Defence Force was gathering information about 'hostile elements', but it later transpired that this was untrue and that South Africa was covertly pursuing a strategy designed to bring the Angolan government to its knees.²⁴⁹ During the debates relating to the Cabinda Scandal in the House of Assembly, Malan claimed that the SADF was both a principal target of Communist attack and a central vehicle in the combating of the Communist threat. Malan dismissed as 'Marxist disinformation' the allegations that Wynand du Toit had admitted that he was on a raid to blow up the installation. Malan maintained that Marxists were, 'Masters of the art of forcing captives to make false confessions and promote propaganda and lies'.²⁵⁰ The implication was that Du Toit's captors were corrupting him; that he was being subject to torture and brainwashed to discredit South Africa. The Deputy Minister of Defence, Adriaan J. Vlok, reiterated this argument later in May, citing a 1956 report from the American Government to back up his argument. 'It is true that a Communist has considerable skill in the extracting of information from prisoners, and in making prisoners do his bidding, including confessions for crimes they do not commit'.²⁵¹ The language used by both Malan and his deputy emphasised the cunning ('masters of the art' 'skill') and cruelty ('forcing', 'extracting') of Marxist captors. Du Toit's captors were labelled neither as Angolans, nor as members of the MPLA or FPLA but as Marxists or Communists. This rhetoric flagged up that the captors were a moral enemy in the wrong, thus apparently justifying and vindicating the Defence Ministers' stance. The impression given was that Communists were highly skilful at perverting their captives. It can be surmised that in stressing this, Malan and his deputy sought to discredit information that might subsequently contradict the statements made by the South African government and to prevent any further revelations being taken seriously. For their reputation it was crucial

249 Cape Times, 24 May 1985.

250 Hansard, House of Assembly, 18 April 1985, col. 4025.

251 Hansard, House of Assembly, 29 May 1985, col. 6472.

that they did so. The revelations regarding Cabinda were potentially very damaging. Malan's resignation had been demanded, should he be unable to explain.²⁵² By laying the blame squarely at the feet of 'Marxists', Malan and his deputy propagated and sought to benefit from the perception that Marxists held different moral standards.

In discussing cross border raids, Malan simultaneously emphasised the threat of Communism and belittled his opponents in parliament. He poured scorn on his critics by referring to the Communist, organised nature of the onslaught. By suggesting that they little understood the severity of the situation, Malan implied that the official opposition (Progressive Federal Party) were too simple minded to understand the threat, and thereby attempted to prevent any discussion of the military situation. Any one wishing to discuss destabilisation in the sub continent, he said, should first consider the gravity of the situation. During the Defence Appropriation Bill of 1985, Malan stated that, 'The threat against us especially from Kremlin inspired terrorist circles is not child's play or fireside chat'.²⁵³ A reference to the Kremlin cleverly tapped into the fear of Soviet Communism discussed in the previous chapter. The ensuing phrases implied that those who dared to postulate about the Defence Force's actions were idle and immature; the notion of child's play or fireside chat was derisive and disdainful of those who felt that they should intervene: it strongly implied that they had no comprehension of the scale of the problem.

In depicting the forces opposing South Africa on the subcontinent, Malan and his colleagues implied, firstly, that South Africa was innocent and good neighbourly - extending a, ' Hand of friendship that is rejected'²⁵⁴ and secondly, that the nexus of expansionism was neither South Africa nor her neighbours, but Soviet Communism. In a speech at the Springbok Air Show, Malan claimed, 'The tragedy of Angola is that its government is being shunted around by Moscow and Moscow is using Angola as a springboard to reach its ultimate goal'.²⁵⁵ The terminology suggested that the Angolans were victims of Soviet expansionism, that the country was unwittingly being used as a tool in the hand of a larger force. The word 'tragedy' implied sympathy with the Angolan's plight, and similar terminology was used in depicting the situation in Mozambique. For

252 Cape Times, 24 May 1985.

253 Hansard, House of Assembly, 28 May 1985, cols. 6376-6534.

254 Hansard, House of Assembly, 15 September 1987, Col. 5908.

255 M Malan, Springbok Show 19.10.86 quoted in Nel, Perceptions, Images and Stereotypes in Soviet South Africa Relations, in, Die Annale Van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch No 4, Stellenbosch 1992, p.36.

example, speaking to recruits at the Louis Trichardt air base, (after the SADF had been under attack for attempting to destabilise Mozambique, and cynically dishonouring the Nkomati accord), Malan used terms of sympathy and respect as he defended South Africa's action by alluding to the threat of Communism. 'South Africa recognises the existence of a sovereign state like Mozambique and we respect them, as we do the Nkomati accord. But it is in the interests of our region that the USSR and its surrogates are not given unlimited free reign, in this subcontinent, under the so-called cloak of liberation'.²⁵⁶ Malan implied that South Africa was a diplomatically scrupulous country virtuously upholding the Accord and he juxtaposed that with unscrupulous Soviets.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' public reaction to the Cabinda scandal were not dissimilar to that of the Ministry of Defence. In a statement to the press, the Minister of Foreign Affairs highlighted the avenues through which progress might be achieved. Some editors interpreted Botha's statement as an indication that the government might now press on with an internal settlement in SWA/Namibia if the United States agreed. But the statement also played on fears of Communism. Botha implied that the Cabinda affair was a confirmation of a dangerous superpower presence on the subcontinent against which South Africa was dwarfed. The size and sinister nature of the supporters of the Angolan government were emphasised. 'The presence of foreign forces on such a large scale, together with the presence of organisations which proclaim the so-called virtues of international terrorism, can only serve the purposes of a superpower whose ideology and policy have brought misery to untold millions of people all over the world'.²⁵⁷ Botha's statement merits underlining - it demonstrates that at this stage a fear of the military threat of Communism still pervaded the Department of Foreign Affairs, if only as a tool for justifying military incursions on the subcontinent.

4.2. 'War is War, Negotiation is War, Peace is War': Cuito Cuanavale, Military Setback and Independence for Namibia, 1987-89

By early 1988 South Africa's military grip on the sub-continent was loosening. In Angola, at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale when South African troops clashed directly with Cuban forces, they suffered strategic defeat: The South African Air Force had lost control of the

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Cape Times, 31 May 1985.

air (ageing Mirages were outmanoeuvred by Cuban MiGs) and the number of men dying on the borders was no longer politically acceptable.²⁵⁸

A statement by Magnus Malan aimed at the Gorbachev suggested that military setbacks and diplomatic advances were promoting a change in the portrayal of the Soviet Union's military role on the subcontinent. In March 1988, Malan indicated South Africa's willingness to come to a bilateral agreement with the Soviet Union along the same lines as that reached between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan in which, provided the Soviets accepted Angolan non-alignment, and the MPLA and Unita reached an agreement, South Africa would withdraw from Angola. Malan stated, 'We realise that a future government in Luanda, seen against the tension between East and West, must certainly follow a non-aligned and neutral political attitude'. Significantly, the statement did not vilify the Soviets, and it further accepted a non-aligned government as a future prospect. The statement suggested that a less hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union might be permeating the corridors of military power. Though the speech received a negative response from Soviet diplomats who were unsympathetic (commenting that the only similarity between the two countries was that they began with the letter 'A'),²⁵⁹ it was widely lauded in the South African press; the Star ran the headline 'Magnus Malan: South Africa rejects US to woo Soviets'.²⁶⁰

The Star's headline was premature, however, for Malan and his colleagues continued, during 1988, to vacillate between a negative and a neutral portrayal of the Soviet Union. In May 1988, Malan's profound distrust of the Soviets was revealed in a budget speech, in which he stressed that negotiations were only the continuation of war by other means. 'To the Communists war is war, negotiation is war and peace is war'. He suggested that the Russians were pursuing two alternatives simultaneously; a political method and a military method, in order to achieve their ultimate target - the RSA. The anti-Communist statements in the speech were frequently directed against the Cubans but the Soviets were seen to be the originators of the Communist threat and the bank-rollers of the Cubans. The speech was saturated with anti-Soviet sentiment, and demonstrated that the military establishment had not yet abandoned their hostile posture towards the Soviets. Similarly, in a speech to the Institute of Strategic Studies in Pretoria in November 1988,

²⁵⁸ Although only 37 white combatants had been killed. Sampson, 'A change of enemies', *Newsweek*, 27.3.89.

²⁵⁹ Shubin, *ANC*, p.325.

²⁶⁰ *The Star*, 11 March 1988.

Malan expressed vehemently anti-Soviet views and emphatically denied that any change in Soviet policy would impact upon the sub-continent. He stressed the continuing military threat to South Africa and warned that the relaxed East West relationship, might well conceal the fact that in changing course the Soviet Union had retained, 'The fundamental principles of Lenin... the dialectic remains a fundamental principle'. He stated unequivocally that Soviet pronouncements declaring that regional conflicts must be solved were not made applicable to Southern Africa and that there was no firm or visible evidence that the Soviet Union's more relaxed international relationship had permeated to Southern Africa.²⁶¹ The assessment of the theoretical origin of the Soviet threat to the sub-continent underlined its violent origin and suggested that this had not changed fundamentally.

The focus of the portrayal of the Communist military threat did shift, however. While the Russians were less frequently referred to in National Party discourse relating to the military onslaught, the Cubans were increasingly depicted as untrustworthy and mercurial, particularly since none of the terms in the Western lexicon (peaceful co-existence, negotiation) meant the same to a Communist. The implication of the depiction of the Cubans during 1987-88 was that they had inherited the Soviet's role and history was referred to in order to urge caution in negotiation and to illustrate that the Cubans might not carry out promises: it was underlined that when Gorbachev had first come to power, in spite of his iterations on nuclear weapons, he had tried to expand influence in Angola, and similarly, the Cubans could not be trusted. The Cuban forces in Angola were held responsible for havoc, 'Like locusts, [they] can only destroy',²⁶² and statements as to the untrustworthiness of Communist forces were underlined. In July 1988, in response to Cuban successes in the border war, Malan underlined the threat, stating that while the implementation of UN Resolution 435 was a bold and positive step, sight could not be lost of Soviet expansionism and Cuban bravado in Angola. Cubans were increasingly seen to be the wild card on the subcontinent, and even in February 1989, the Cubans presence was shown to be 'tremendously unpredictable' and an extremely dangerous force on the sub-continent.

²⁶¹ M. Malan, Lecture before Institute of Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 2.11.88, quoted in 'Perceptions, Images and Stereotypes in Soviet South Africa Relations - a cognitive interpretative perspective'. *Die Annale Van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch* No 4, Stellenbosch 1992.

²⁶² Hansard, House of Assembly, 16 May 1987, col. 9933.

Thus the Ministry of Defence was slower than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to espouse a view of the Soviet Union and its leadership as anything other than an expansionist evil empire. When the Soviet based military threat began to fade from National Party discourse, the depiction of a Cuban based threat escalated. This was in part, a response to events, but it also became clear that the military establishment depended for their budget upon the conception of an onslaught.

4.3. 'The Minimum to Develop Constitutionally': The Military Budget 1985-89

Between 1985 and 1989, Malan increased the defence budget. The budget for the year 1985-86 was R4.2bn,²⁶³ and for the 1988-89 year the budget was R8.2bn.²⁶⁴ Malan faced opposition criticism in each budgetary cycle, and it was particularly vociferous when the PFP were the official opposition. In the speeches justifying the increases lists of Soviet weaponry laid emphasis on the build up on the borders. It was a fact between 1985 and 1987 the supply of arms to the Angolan MPLA by the USSR increased.²⁶⁵ In the budgetary debates, Malan scrutinised figures relating to the increase; these numbers were, he implied, ample justification for increasing the defence budgets commensurately every year until 1989. In 1985, Malan listed 49 attack aircraft, 25 helicopters, 3 transport aircraft moved to Angola and created a frightening picture of the armed forces in Angola. A list of weaponry created the impression that the increase was out of all proportion of need. 1986's budget list was almost as fearsome - Russians had delivered 19 assault aircraft, MIG 21s and MIV 23s, a total of 25 helicopters and 21 to Angola alone and a few MI 17s, transport air craft. The number of foreign soldiers in Angola also emphasised the severity of the military onslaught on the border. It was stated that Russians and 53,000 Cubans, 'alien' to the continent were gaining a foothold in Africa.²⁶⁶ The emphasis on the numbers gave the Cuban onslaught terrifying dimensions although the SADF's full time army of 95,000 was not of an insignificant size.²⁶⁷ Soviet weaponry and manpower was portrayed as increasingly sophisticated; unnecessary for a civil war. 'I do not know why tanks are being given to Angola,'²⁶⁸ Malan commented (Defence Appropriation vote, 1986). The suggestion hung in the air that the tanks were aimed at the RSA. Against this

263 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.415.

264 SAIRR, *Survey, 1988/8*, p.518.

265 Susan Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means' in Leys, C and Saul, J (eds.), *Namibia's liberation struggle* p.35.

266 Hansard, House of Assembly, 18 April 1985, col. 4035.

267 Neta Crawford, *Domestic Sources and consequences of aggressive foreign policy*, p.13.

background, Malan suggested, South African increases in defence appropriation were both necessary, and proportionate. The rhetoric of the defence budgets, particularly between 1985 and 1988, emphasised that South Africa was in a war situation; the terminology highlighted that a military campaign of significant size and skilful execution was being waged against South Africa, and military might was necessary for combat. The war, parliament was reminded, was not just against an equal enemy, but against a superpower. The scale of the war, emphasised by the figures reeled off, lent impact to the argument that the Soviet Union was targeting South Africa via proxy forces in the neighbouring states.

Direct access to the output of the defence establishment has unfortunately not been obtained during the course of this study. However, the extracts of papers and white papers that have been obtained demonstrate that Malan was an accurate representative of the department's views. If anything, Malan softened the emphasis on Soviet driven Communist attack that was evidence in departmental White Papers. For example, the White Paper on defence of 1986 claimed, 'The revolutionary onslaught (against SA) is directed and co-ordinated in such a way by Soviet Russia, as chief planner and initiator, that it promotes the execution of the USSR's indirect strategy'.²⁶⁹

When the Progressive Federal Party was the official opposition in the House of Assembly (until May 1987), the Defence Budget was depicted by the National Party as the single most effective method of securing and promoting constitutional development in South Africa; the SADF was portrayed as a crucial pillar of South African development and reform in the face of the Communist threat. Security was shown to be the very centre, the single principle on which South Africa could develop. In the defence budget vote of 1986 (mentioned above), Malan stated that the amount proposed was the, 'absolute minimum to allow SA an opportunity to develop constitutionally along evolutionary lines, with a view to ensuring the preservation of Western standards we all want to maintain here. Short sighted views about supposedly spending too much on defence would only lead to our own debilitation and incapacity and will also destroy our ability to serve Western interests, for example safeguarding of the strategic Cape sea route'.²⁷⁰ Malan showed the Communist onslaught was a military threat but in linking the need for military security

²⁶⁸ Hansard, House of Assembly, 14 May 1986, col. 5588.

²⁶⁹ The Citizen, 23 April 1986.

²⁷⁰ Hansard, House of Assembly, 14 May 1986, col. 5588.

with the need for constitutional development, he attempted to mollify critics and opponents. The alleged Communist threat also enabled Malan to deride any potential opposition to budgetary approval as 'short-sighted'.

By 1989 the Soviet led Communist military onslaught was no longer stressed. In keeping with the National Party's diplomatic policy, Malan's Defence Budget speech focused less on the Soviet threat, and he submitted that the Soviets had changed their approach and were now prepared to reformulate their interests in Southern Africa.²⁷¹ However, Malan proclaimed that in spite of the changed Soviets' attitude, the revolutionary onslaught would not let up. The onslaught was, he warned, going to, 'increase in intensity. To tell the truth, I am very sure that the time scales for this increase...may be far shorter than we generally think'.²⁷² The fact that until 1988 the Defence Minister had continued to refer to the Communist threat in Appropriation Bills demonstrates that the Communist threat had become a central feature of the annual budget discourse. The Defence Budget relied upon parliament agreeing that increases in defence were necessary, and this in turn, relied upon the conception of a Communist military threat. It is significant that in 1989, while he no longer named the Communist threat, Malan proclaimed that a revolutionary onslaught would take place. The notion of an 'onslaught' was a central element in party discourse, particularly in military budgetary discourse, which though modified, was not abandoned in 1989. Elements within the National Party, as will be seen in chapter 7, continued to envisage an onslaught driven by Communist inspired forces as a source of South African discontent.

4.4. 'A Cloak of Respectability':²⁷³ Responses to the End Conscription Campaign and Criticism of the Defence Force, 1985-88

The NP focus on the Communist military onslaught stressed the 'psychological onslaught', aimed at, 'The demoralising of the will of the population so that eventually they cannot offer enough resistance to the Marxist revolutionary onslaught'. The psychological onslaught's principal target, according to the NP, was the Defence Force.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Cape Times, 26 April 1989.

²⁷² Hansard, House of Assembly, 20 February 1989, col. 1067.

²⁷³ Hansard, House of Assembly, 23 February 1987, col. 1259.

²⁷⁴ Hansard, House of Assembly, 14 May 1986, col. 5556.x

The Communist revolutionaries' aims to demoralise the army were elucidated on a number of occasions; the absolute centrality of an army in anti-revolutionary battle was explained. Schapiro's quotation of a speech by Lenin was repeated on a number of occasions:²⁷⁵ if the army was behind the State, then the revolutionaries would not have a chance of winning, even with the support of all the people. If the army was behind the revolutionaries, the revolutionaries could win even without popular support. In using such a quote, Dr Barend L. Geldenhuys (NP, Randfontein) reiterated that the origin of the threat was Communism, and the potential outcome of failure to thwart the threat was Communism. The quote from Lenin reminded the audience of the foreign, sinister origin of Communism. Similarly, soldiers and the public were consistently reminded of the centrality of the Defence Force in the fight against Communism, and, particularly in speeches on high-profile occasions celebrating the SADF, the Marxist military onslaught was emphasised to an unprecedented degree, and the 'forces' of evil referred to. Malan stated at the Armistice Day celebrations, 'Our soldiers of today... are on the frontline of the defence of South Africa .. against the evil forces of Marxist expansionism and terrorism'.²⁷⁶ The statement was remarkably nebulous; there was no specific focus for the SADF's efforts, but a generalist Marxist, evil enemy. In stressing the centrality of the SADF in combating the Marxist onslaught, NP spokespeople elevated the SADF, justified increased expenditure on Defence, and directed harsh criticism against anyone who protested at National Service or the militarisation of South Africa.

That the SADF were fighting a foreign enemy and a historical movement heightened the patriotism with which the NP portrayed the army. Motions of thanks were passed in the House of Assembly, (for example a motion proposed by Adv. Leon Wessels (NP, Krugersdorp) in 1987), in praise of, 'The bulwark between the RSA and a Marxist takeover [which] has, in years gone by, gone hand in hand with sacrifice, privation and even loss of life'.²⁷⁷ Indeed, the most frequent use of anti-Communist rhetoric came in support of the Defence Force in parliament. Conversely, passions were strong to the point of being vicious when NP spokespeople were defending the SADF; the argument that the Defence Force was central in the battle against Communism ultimately meant that opponents of any element of the SADF's action or of National Service were dubbed opponents of the state. When Jan Van Eck (PFP, Claremont) argued that the war on the border was nothing

²⁷⁵ Hansard, House of Assembly, 14 May 1986, col. 5556.

²⁷⁶ South African Digest, 13 November 1987.

²⁷⁷ Hansard, House of Assembly, 4 June 1987, col. 828.

more than a civil war, he was accused of, 'Talking like a Communist'.²⁷⁸ Later, when Jan Bernardus de Ruyter Van Gend (PFP, Groote Schuur) criticised the indoctrination in the SADF, he raised the venom of Dr Johannes Jacobus Vilonel (NP, Langlaagte). The latter responded, 'I can only say to him You ain't foolin' nobody - not me and not any normal balanced South African, whatever colour or creed, and also not as you know full well, Sir - the ANC or SACP. They have clearly received his message, and no doubt with gratitude. What is more, they will undoubtedly quote his words from the Hansard to strengthen their Marxist revolution and propaganda'.²⁷⁹ The argument that the ANC and the SACP seized upon any derogatory reference to the Defence Force held common tenure in the discourse of the period. However, Vilonel's lambasting went even further. He later associated the Van Eck with 'our [i.e. the PFP's] very own necklace'²⁸⁰ suggesting that the PFP was involved in the township violence. Vilonel's arguments reveal the vehemence with which members of the National Party defended the Defence Force during the period, and highlight that any criticism of the SADF was attributed to being related to the forces of revolution. The implication that the member of the PFP was involved in township violence was inaccurate and hypocritical. 'Third force' violence in the townships was intimately linked to the SADF/SAP, with the connivance of the National Party government.²⁸¹ However, it seemed that such accusations by a member of the NP were justified by the fact that this was a 'war' against a 'Communist' enemy.

The portrayal of a psychological onslaught on the military peaked in 1987, and the principal focus was the End Conscription Campaign. The ECC was a single-issue group with the aim of increasing awareness of and resistance to the militarisation of society. It made no further political prescriptions, allowing it to attract widespread support. As one of the Campaign's founding members stressed, the movement was a broad, dynamic and creative coalition representing a range of political opinions - liberals, radicals, Marxists, pacifists, Christians, humanists.²⁸² The message of the ECC caused it to be the subject of criticism

²⁷⁸ Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 May 1988, col. 9987.

²⁷⁹ Hansard, House of Assembly, 14 September 1987, col. 5851.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Truth & Reconciliation Commission Report Vol 2, Chapter 3, Note 52: Mr P.W. Botha was present during an SSC meeting where proposals for a 'third force' were tabled; the commission later found the 'special constables' had committed gross human rights violations and that they municipal police provided an armed capacity to those pro-government individuals that the state sought to defend or promote; note 594 The commission found the state covertly conspired to endorse and promote the activities of the Witdoek leaders.

²⁸² Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report Vol 4 Chapter 11 Note 23.

and vilification by the NP. Laurie Nathan outlined: 'We were subject to merciless vilification, the thrust of which was that we were traitors, cowards, 'mommy's boys' (as Magnus Malan once put it); that were in bed with Communists and that we were part of the revolutionary onslaught against South Africa'.²⁸³ The criticism that the ECC was Communist inspired, or a cloak shielding the Communists from exposure, resonated until the movement was banned in February 1988.

NP spokespeople portrayed the End Conscription Campaign as the chief vehicle for the Marxist attack on the morale of the military and, 'The most dangerous political movement to emerge in the current national crisis'. The movement was equated with that which defeated the Americans in Vietnam, namely apathy in the 'front room'.²⁸⁴ While this was a more general reference to the fact that the ECC was damaging a war effort, most references made by the NP in parliament regarding the ECC related to the Communist threat. It was argued that the ECC was undermining the single greatest bulwark between the RSA and a Marxist take-over,²⁸⁵ and Magnus Malan stated in the House of Representative (14 May 1987), that the ECC broke down the country's ability to fight Communism. This was a fairly common accusation, against which the ECC fought back with a public statement regarding the movement's objectives, but arguments that the Campaign was a movement that wished to promote Communism persisted.²⁸⁶

The NP's portrayal of the End Conscription Campaign suggested that it was 'doubly dangerous'. Not only did it besmirch the Defence Force; it gave the, 'Marxist inspired revolutionary forces...a cloak of respectability'.²⁸⁷ The End Conscription Campaign were depicted as local pawns of Moscow's 'Active Measures' programme via open links with the Helsinki based War Resisters International, and deemed to be attempting to overcome South Africa, like the rest of Africa, at the expense of 'progress and order' and threatened from abroad by international organisations.²⁸⁸ The NP thus implied that concealed beneath the seemingly respectable movement lay another far more sinister movement, deliberately shrouding the Marxists and giving the Marxists a secret passageway into the

²⁸³ Ibid. Vol 4 Chapter 11 Note 24.

²⁸⁴ Hansard, House of Assembly, 4 June 1987, col. 1259.

²⁸⁵ Hansard, House of Assembly, 4 June 1987, col. 828.

²⁸⁶ The Cape Times, 15. May 1986; The Star, 17 May 1986.

²⁸⁷ Hansard, House of Assembly, 23 February 1987, col. 1259.

²⁸⁸ Hansard, House of Assembly, 23 February 1987, col. 1302.

heart of the South African state. The NP simultaneously denied the validity of the ECC's cause and portrayed the movement as having a sinister, clandestine motive. This depiction of the ECC was evident until the movement's banning in August 1988.²⁸⁹

After the May 1987 election the NP referred to a different manifestation of the Communist psychological onslaught: disunity. It was claimed that Moscow's instructions were to sow divisiveness in the population. The need for unity was stressed throughout the debates of 1987- 1989 as an effective way to combat the onslaught. The country must unite behind the SADF - which was the subject of such intense onslaught. The argument was applied to those on both the left and the right of the National Party. The Conservative Party was criticised for the fact that their hatred of the NP exceeded their love of the fatherland, and therefore had failed in its resistance to the psychological onslaught and parliament was informed that South Africa's most expensive luxury was the quality of its opposition, and its two greatest enemies regarding the psychological onslaught were the PFP and the CP.²⁹⁰ After 1987, the tactic for garnering support in parliament was to exhort the opposition to rise above any divisions and to prioritise the combating of the revolutionary onslaught. Geldenhuys ominously reminded the House of Assembly of the folly of the Russian Orthodox Church - leaders had been arguing about the colour of the priests bands in 1917, while the country was on the brink of revolution. The house was exhorted to not fall foul of the same petty mindedness and to recognise the need for unity.²⁹¹

In addition to the assistance given to the Communist military by the End Conscription Campaign and by the Conservative party, the government portrayed an onslaught of 'disinformation' by Communist forces. Arguments relating to disinformation peaked at a time when the SADF's role in neighbouring states was under scrutiny. When a member of the opposition insinuated that NP policy was aggravating the situation on the subcontinent, or that they were using the Communist threat to justify their moves, some NP spokespeople responded that the opposition were deluded. Geldenhuys declared that the PFP's failure to acknowledge the onslaught merely showed to what extent they were already the victim of disinformation.²⁹² But the criticism of 'disinformation' persisted as a feature of NP rhetoric in 1988. As a result of stringent restrictions placed upon the media

²⁸⁹ Cock, and Nathan, (eds.), *War and Society*, p.12.

²⁹⁰ Hansard, House of Assembly, 14 September 1987, col. 5840.

²⁹¹ Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 May 1988, col. 9952.

²⁹² Hansard, House of Assembly, 14 May 1986.

in the State of Emergency (and a new provision in 1987 which empowered the minister of home affairs to suspend the publication, production or importation of a periodical or appoint a censor to the journal for up to three months) there was a great deal of concern in liberal and media circles that the country was not being informed of developments in the military sphere. In response to criticism from PFP that the country was being kept in the dark, the NP focused upon disinformation, which, they maintained, was aimed at telling untruths and played into the hands of the enemy. It was suggested that excessive media coverage was a part of revolutionary warfare, and Brigadier J. F. Bosman (NP, Germinston District) spoke extensively about disinformation, portraying a situation in which a propaganda onslaught on South Africa from beyond the border was being lapped up by foreign media. He stated that media bureau like Angolan's AIM, were staffed by, 'Well trained members of the KGB' who aimed their propaganda at the masses in support of a military operation. The House of Assembly was told that their 'right to know' necessarily had realistic limitations during a time of such intense security threat and that a balance must necessarily be struck between security interests and information interests. Disinformation was portrayed as part of the psycho-socio attack, aimed at undermining the military. Such social scientific terminology implied that the attack was another co-ordinated aspect of a Communist onslaught, when in fact, media coverage and the questions by the likes of Van Eck were usually attempting to establish the truth behind NP obfuscation.

The National Party's portrayal of a Communist military threat developed from being a simple depiction of a military campaign against the Republic. Initially the NP portrayed an overtly dangerous, Communist military threat, with weapons of destruction and methods of torture. However with transition on the sub-continent, the portrait changed. The NP continued to portray a threat of Communism, but the threat was seen to be subtler - attacking the military through criticism, campaigning against conscription, or not uniting behind it. The depiction of a military threat posed by Communism thus changed - from being a picture of an overt and deceitful, but still tangible enemy, to being an insidious enemy using covert methods of contaminating the population, demoralising them, and destroying the will to fight.

5. The Socio-Economic Onslaught

During the later 1980s, there were significant challenges to the South African state, as popular resistance spread across the country in the form of school boycotts, strike activity, and violent incidents in the townships. Prior to 1985 the National Party frequently related such activity to the influence of Communist activists. Indeed, in a resolution in 1984, the National Party's programme of principles had laid out the official party view of the struggle as being driven by outsiders, and not 'between White and non-White, but as a struggle between the forces of chaos, violence and suppression on the one hand, and a Christian civilisation of law, order and justice on the other'.²⁹³ Thus the division between 'socio-economic' and 'political' aspects of the onslaught is difficult to draw. However, this chapter discusses the NP's depiction of those aspects of the 'threat' that were not specifically related to the ANC-SACP alliance and political negotiation. During the later 1980s, as the international Communist threat altered, and the internal politics of South Africa also changed, the depiction of the Communist provocation of socio-economic activity altered.

Severe upheaval took place in South Africa between 1985 and 1990. In October 1984, as Asian and Coloured voters went to the polls and the African councils established by the government increased rent charges, the Vaal Triangle erupted into violent discontent.²⁹⁴ Violence spread in early 1985 to the Northern Free State and the Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage area and ultimately to Natal and the Western Cape.²⁹⁵ Protest evolved from scattered demonstrations relating to specific issues (particularly the declining standards of living and new local authorities), to a national campaign against the government's reforms. Rent boycotts, school boycotts, and violent attacks on collaborators with the regime (policemen, councillors and government buildings) characterised the upheaval.²⁹⁶ Violent confrontation between the police and the public occurred on a number of occasions; an incident at Uitenhage in March 1985 when police shot 20 participants in a peaceful funeral heightened public awareness of the situation. Several thousand troops were deployed in the townships backing up the police force, and aided by emergency

²⁹³ National Party Programme of Principles, p.4, cited in Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, p.251.

²⁹⁴ Thompson, L, *A History of South Africa*, 1995, p.229.

²⁹⁵ SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.xxv.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

regulations, this had largely quelled the rebellion by 1987.²⁹⁷ As discontent amongst African communities escalated, and the question whether South Africa was facing a 'revolutionary situation' was repeatedly raised, the National Party's explanation of, and proposals for solutions to, unrest became a crucial aspect of political debate. However, the National Party's portrayal of the unrest changed between 1985 and 1989; pivoting around the General Election of May 1987, in which the Conservative Party (with 23 seats) displaced the PFP as official opposition in the House of Assembly. Although the National Party still had a majority (133 of the 178 seats),²⁹⁸ for the first time since it gained power in 1948, the National Party's opposition lay on the right. The party's parliamentary rhetoric changed accordingly, demonstrating the confusion caused by having a right-wing opponent.

5.1. 'Experienced and Hardened Advisers':²⁹⁹ Explanations for Unrest, 1987-89

Between 1985 and 1987, Nationalist Party members frequently denied that a genuine liberation struggle was being conducted across the country. In accordance with the party resolution, unrest was frequently blamed upon 'outside agitators', who had 'politicised' the populace. According to President Botha, socio-economic statistics of South Africa nullified any contention that unrest was legitimate. The President stated that there were few if any economic, social and political indicators that did not place the peoples of SA - white, brown and black - high above any other on the African continent. Ignoring the discrepancies between statistics for white and non-white populations, Botha claimed that statistics relating to life expectancy, education, income, transport, medical services, electricity, political parties and elected leaders refuted any legitimate motives for discontent in African communities. Botha contended that the Republic was a paragon of high standards: the very fact that people came to South Africa from the rest of the continent demonstrated that South African people were not discontent. 'If this is the 'apartheid' the world is crucifying us for, then perhaps it has done more for South Africa than anything else has done for the rest of Africa!'. In denying that unrest could have a genuine cause, Botha reverted to the argument that the discontent was imported from an external aggressor. Botha attributed the spirit of revolution to the forces of hatred, 'not representative of the majority of South Africans'.

²⁹⁷ Worden, *The making of modern South Africa*, p.131.

²⁹⁸ SAIRR, *Survey, 1987-88*, p104.

²⁹⁹ SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*. pxxx.

Botha was not alone in his stance. The NP reiterated over and over again both on the domestic political and the international stage that outside influences were causing domestic unrest. During a House of Assembly debate on the 'Defence of South African Security and Territorial Integrity', Malan claimed that a small, radical element in the black residential areas was fomenting unrest. 'It originates with the ANC - we need have no doubt whatsoever about this - the extension of the Communist party'.³⁰⁰ Similarly, in a debate on the Police, Louis Le Grange, Minister of Law and Order, stated that the 'unprecedented' revolutionary onslaught in 1985 was due to, 'experienced and hardened advisers [that are] involved in the background'.³⁰¹ Unrest, it was implied, was due to an unequivocal onslaught from external forces, answerable only by force. The terminology suggested that outsiders spearheaded the campaign and that callous individuals were stirring up discontent merely to further their own ends, irrespective of the damage caused. The stress on the tough and external nature of those involved in the background justified and even demanded a tough response, as will be seen below.

The 'hardened advisers' that the NP suspected of involvement in causing the uprising included the United Democratic Front. It was true that the UDF were a key element fomenting uprising during 1985 - 1988. Founded in August 1983 by a thousand delegates of all races, trade unions, sporting bodies and community groups, by 1985 the UDF claimed a membership of two million through over 600 affiliates.³⁰² The organisational format of the front was said to be a stroke of brilliance, for instead of being a unitary mass organisation, the UDF's leadership emanated from hundreds of smaller community based organisation affiliated with the national body. The government could not detain members of the UDF without a mass arrest or detention - which would have caused international outcry.³⁰³ However, the UDF was banned in 1988, its activities having been inhibited by the State of Emergency.³⁰⁴

300 SAIRR, Survey, 1985. XXX

301 Hansard, House of Assembly, 24 April, 1985, col . 4131.

302 Thompson, A History of South Africa, 1995, p.229.

303 Seegers, The Military in the Making of South Africa., p.246.

304 Ibid.

There was some evidence for the presence of Communists in the UDF (for example, the Communist flag was flown at a number of funerals of UDF organisers),³⁰⁵ however, the Front was a heterogeneous group representing far broader interests than just those of Communists.³⁰⁶ National Party spokesmen, however, derided the United Democratic Front as having been formed by the ANC and under Communist influence. In an interview with Ted Koppel, of Nightline in the United States, P.W. Botha stressed that the UDF was, 'Communist inspired and aimed at overthrowing the State and good order in this country'.³⁰⁷ The statement hardly needs closer analysis - Botha was using the familiar technique of contrasting the 'Communist' force with its discursive moral adversary, 'good order'. UDF spokespeople (Dr Farouk Meer, acting President of Natal Indian Congress) vociferously dismissed as 'arrogant nonsense' Botha's claims, which had no substantial evidence. The revocation in December 1985 of a 588-page indictment against sixteen leaders of the UDF appeared to vindicate Meer's stance.³⁰⁸ But Botha and his NP colleagues persisted in the claim that the UDF was Communist inspired until the Front was banned in February 1988.³⁰⁹

A report by the President Council (in 1988) asserted that that the ANC and the UDF 'were fronts for Communist Russia',³¹⁰ and National Party MPs developed an image of the UDF's Communist leanings in their speeches. The Minister of Defence claimed that the goal of the UDF was the eventual establishment by force of a Marxist system in South Africa and that it was 'Little more than an instrument of the South African Communist Party' which, he claimed, virtually controlled it as an instrument of international terrorism.³¹¹ Although the expression used qualifications such as 'virtually', terms relating to the UDF conveyed the National Party's opinion that it was just another instrument of foreign dominated Communism. Mr Petrus J. Badenhorst (NP, Oudtshoorn) argued when discussing the UDF that 'the people of the Kremlin' initiated the UDF's actions against the RSA and was in full-time control of the UDF.³¹² It was suggested that the SACP's power penetrated beyond

305 SAIRR, Survey, 1985, p41. The funeral of Matthew Goniwe in July 1985 at Cradock drew particular attention in the media.

306 Seegers, The Military in the Making of South Africa, p.246; Thompson, History of South Africa, p.229.

307 Cape Times, March 1986.

308 SAIRR, Survey, 1985, p.40-41.

309 SAIRR, Survey, 1988-89 p706.

310 The Cape Times, 23 June 1988.

311 Hansard, House of Assembly, 14 May 1986, col. 5550.

312 Hansard, House of Assembly, 4 June 1987, col. 979.

the ANC, right into the community through the UDF. The UDF was derided as nothing more than a method and instrument for a socialist government to gain power.

The argument that forces external to South Africa drove the UDF facilitated the levying of the 'patriotic' argument against the UDF's supporters. Symbols of patriotism and treachery were referred to in discussions relating to the UDF. National Party Members seized upon the unfurling of the Communist party flag at UDF funerals as evidence for this argument. P.W. Botha's papers contain a clipping from the front page of the Citizen newspaper, showing Alan Boesak, leader of the UDF standing under a Communist flag at a UDF funeral. Louis Le Grange demanded an explanation of the Communist flag during a debate on the Police; it was claimed that the Communist Party had been involved in the organisation of the funeral.³¹³ More significantly, by linking the UDF to the SACP and 'external forces' the NP criticised members of the PFP for their support of elements of the UDF, suggesting that this was a betrayal of South Africa. Helen Suzman, long standing opposition MP, was taunted in parliament for attendance at UDF funerals. Comments such as, 'Does she want us to go with her under the red flag',³¹⁴ and, 'At home under the red flag',³¹⁵ conveyed an image of Suzman under the red flag, and suggested a perversion of nationalism and patriotism. Their association with the UDF caused the NP to taint Suzman and her colleagues as friends of the Communists agitators outside South Africa.

5.2. 'Revolutionary agents':³¹⁶ The School Children's Uprising

The National Party explained one of the most disturbing elements of the unrest of the 1980s, the rebellion of school children, with reference to the Communist threat. School boycotts had disrupted black education frequently - in 1980 almost no black education had happened at all,³¹⁷ and by the mid 1980s, the phenomenon was common and numerous secondary schools were affected by boycotts during 1985-89.³¹⁸

The National Party offered a complex explanation for the school children's uprising, the crux of which related to the Communist influence. Geldenhuys stated that the

313 Hansard, House of Assembly, 10 May 1986. col. 3110.

314 Hansard, House of Assembly, 10 April 1986, col 3110

315 *ibid.*

316 Hansard, House of Assembly, 9 May 1986, col. 2989.

317 Davenport & Saunders, South Africa, p.489.

schoolchildren's uprising were a new example of the phenomenon of the 'revolutionary agent' (namely those individuals on the 'first level who have to cause the violence that brings about change'). In Russia the revolutionary agent had been the worker, in China the peasant, in Europe the student, but in South Africa, the new element added to the classical Marxist protocol meant that scholars were being used as revolutionary agents.³¹⁹ Geldenhuys argued that the initiator of the onslaught was without doubt the South African Communist Party acting as the agent of Soviet expansionism.³²⁰ Geldenhuys' conjecture simplified a baffling element of the unrest of the 1980s. His pseudo-scientific terminology lent credence to his argument. The phenomenon of a 'revolutionary agent' sounded as if it could have been drawn straight from the textbook of a social scientist, and furthermore, by putting a label on the scholars' uprising, Geldenhuys provided an explanation that suited the National Party's stance. The implication that Soviet led revolutionaries were using the school children simultaneously emphasised the children's innocence and the Communist's threatening potential; by stressing that the children themselves were not guilty; it emphasised the exploitative nature of the Marxist onslaught. This explanation justified security measures, and reform. The answer to the schoolchildren's rebellion was not simply to shoot the scholar - but to deal with the social problem, the crisis of authority in the Black residential areas which had been exploited to promote Marxism. Geldenhuys advocated abandoning the migrant labour system, in order to provide paternal role models in those areas. The tenor of his speech and the complex explanation given for the uprising, however, drew attention away from the weakness of government legislation and emphasised that the threat was due to outside influences.

As with many aspects of the social Communist onslaught, the NP portrayed the situation as being one not just of local, but of global significance. Piet G. Marais (NP, Stellenbosch) commented that the unrest in schools was part of a 'world-wide assault [in education] by Marxist-Leninism on the existing order'.³²¹ In portraying the rebellion in this way, the NP created the impression that other countries as well as South Africa were under threat. Like Geldenhuys, Marais focused on the methods for countering discontent, but by blaming the threat of Marxist Leninism, avoided broaching the uncomfortable subject of the true origins of schoolchildren's discontent.

318 SAIRR, *Survey*, 1986, p.415, 1987-88, p.172.

319 *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 9 May 1986, col. 2989.

320 *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 9 May 1986, col. 2989.

321 *The Citizen*, 29 July, 1987.

5.3. 'Defusing Revolutionary Unrest':³²² Justifying Security Measures and the State of Emergency, 1985-87

Drastic steps were taken by the Government to contain and curtail violence. In July 1985 a State of Emergency was imposed on 36 districts.³²³ It was temporarily lifted in March the following year, before being re-imposed nation-wide in June 1986.³²⁴ The emergency regulations empowered police commissioners to restrict the movements and access of people, or to confine and remove them, to control services and protect installations, and to distribute or withhold information. In addition the army was used extensively to control violence in the townships.³²⁵ The elaborate network of security committees established under the total strategy gained a 'free hand' under the State of Emergency. A powerful State Security Council headed by P.W. Botha served as a permanent cabinet secretariat headed by a general from the military intelligence. In March 1986, the extent of the structure was partially revealed to the public when General Magnus Malan (Minister of Defence) acknowledged the presence of 12 Joint Management Centres, which were, he said, 'A lean, highly effective mobile mechanism to defuse revolutionary unrest'.³²⁶ These structures were backed up by almost 500 joint monitoring structures, which brought military police and civil structures under the chairmanship of one ranking military office, which could gain access to the State President's office within hours. The structures meant that any issue could potentially be a security issue.³²⁷

The prevalent NP attitude that unrest was caused by Communist agitators was used to justify the NP's continued elevation of security to a central issue of government policy and discourse, and the increased use of the army in domestic incidences. The most viable response to a Communist onslaught, according to the Party, was to suppress dissent and clamp down on uprisings. Security was at the nub of the National Party policy and discourse during 1985-87. The NP acted as if the country were fighting a war against a foreign enemy.

322 SAIRR - *Survey, 1986*, p.xxi.

323 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.463

324 SAIRR, *Survey, 1986*, p.xxv and p.163.

325 SAIRR, *Survey, 1986*, p.xxv and p.163.

326 SAIRR - *Survey, 1986*, p.xxi.

327 J. Cock, and L. Nathan, (eds.), *War and Society*, (Cape Town, 1985), p.8.

327 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985* p.57.

During 1985-87, the NP undertook some reform. Significant aspects of the apartheid system were dismantled. In September 1985, Botha announced citizenship would be restored to all Africans residing permanently in white South Africa.³²⁸ The Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, and Section 16 of the Immorality Act of 1957 were repealed. Inter racial mixing was no longer forbidden. The Black Communities Development Act of 1986 conceded Africans the right to property ownership in urban areas. The abolition of the Influx Control Act repealed the pass laws and removed one of the most potent symbol of white domination.³²⁹ As will be discussed in Chapter 7, talk of further constitutional change abounded. There were categorical denials of one-man-one-vote, which would lead to 'group domination' and 'black majority rule'. But it was suggested that although 'democratic ideals would have to be realised in a novel way',³³⁰ Africans would be allowed to participate in structures up to the 'highest level' of government'.³³¹ However, the NP's discourse reflected the party's perception that reform itself was not the answer to the Communist threat; in the party's view, that socio-economic unrest was Communist inspired justified a slow pace of reform or 'evolutionary reform', and parliamentary discourse emphasised the need for security instead.

Reform, it was stressed by the NP during this period, could only take place under the umbrella of security. It was frequently stated that security (and particularly, large defence budgets) enabled the country 'to develop along evolutionary lines'³³² and reform must necessarily take place at an 'evolutionary' pace. Anything faster was seen to be giving in to the demands of the revolutionaries (as, it was argued, the PFP would).³³³ The phrase 'evolutionary reform' was frequently used in NP terminology. It was deemed necessary to, distinguish between on the one hand, the 'just demands' of South Africa's population in all spheres - constitutional, political socio-economic and social, and, 'The Communist danger which is also threatening this country on the other hand' (Meiring).³³⁴ The dividing line between 'just' reforms and 'the Communist danger' was significant. It

328 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.55.

329 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.90.

330 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.51.

331 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.xxvi.

332 *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 14 May 1986, col. 5588.

333 *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 14 May 1986, col. 5588.

334 *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 6.February 1987, col. 409.

seemed that the Party dubbed those reforms 'Just' reforms which they had engineered and sanctioned. (For example, J. Christian (Chris) Heunis, Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, defended the Group Areas Act's protection of individual rights as the only defence against Communism);³³⁵ the Communist danger was embodied in the demands of the ANC-SACP, UDF and even the PFP. In this way, members of the NP prior to the May 1987 election frequently defended the status quo or moderate changes thereto as the right defence against Communism.

Another key element of the NP's argument prior to 1987 was that reform could not be the only solution. Symptomatic of the Party's attitude was the argument put by Willem J. Hefer (NP, Standerton) that, 'It would be glib to suggest that an immediate repeal of South Africa's race laws would solve the whole problem and signal a warm welcome back into the world community. South Africa is a bigger piece than that on the superpower's chessboard. Nor would a rapprochement between the races in South Africa cause Moscow to cease coveting the mineral riches and strategic location of the Republic'.³³⁶ The statement conveyed a sense that South Africa was merely being played with in a grand power game, (in which, it was implied by the second sentence, the Russian's were more covetous than their American counterparts). More significantly, Hefer's warning (addressed to Fredrick Van Zyl Slabbert, Leader of the Official Opposition (PFP)), that reform would not solve South Africa's problems suggested that there were more effective methods of combating the Communist threat. It also used the Communist threat to deny the rationale of reform.

5.4. '..Good Health Services and Prosperity...the Answer to Communism?': Rationale For Reform, 1987-89

In the May 1987 General Election, the National Party sought a mandate for 'reform' based on 'security',³³⁷ and the Conservative Party displaced the PFP as official opposition. In addition, across the country, the domestic situation began to change. The implementation of a State of Emergency in June 1985 and June 1986 (thereafter renewed annually) meant that violent unrest was quietened to some degree. The National Party's discourse relating to the revolutionary threat in the domestic sphere altered. In

335 *The Argus*, 12 March 1987.

336 *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 24 April 1985.

337 SAIRR, *Survey, 1988*, p745.

parliament, a more sophisticated analysis of the causes of and potential solutions to the unrest began to infuse NP statements. The emphasis turned to evolutionary reform to quell the threat of Communism; this was accompanied by a more sophisticated analysis of the cause of violence and unrest. References to the Communist military onslaught did not cease after May 1987, but the nature of references to the Communist threat in the socio-economic sphere changed.

It is true that the NP continued to repress dissent after 1987, and when it did so, it portrayed the source of that dissent as being Communist inspired. For example, strictures against the UDF and COSATU were couched in anti-Communist terms. In March 1988, the Minister of Law and Order, defending the banning of several organisations spoke of the government's decision, 'in favour of Christianity and against Marxism and Communism'.³³⁸ The government's depiction of COSATU, which before 1987 had not tended to focus on 'Communist' links with the Trade Union, repeatedly associated COSATU with Marxism during 1988. When COSATU was restricted to strictly trade-union activities in 1988, it was suggested that this was necessary in order to prevent it acting as another Communist front organisation. Johannes W. Maree, (NP, Klip River) spoke of the organisations' 'devilish work' and their desire to establish a Communist community.³³⁹ The Minister of Law and Order stated in the House of Representatives that the government had to take action against certain organisations and persons that the ANC described as fighting allies. He stated that in 'Problems of Communism', the UDF had been described as a key organisation for the ANC and COSATU was described as the second key organisation. The Minister stressed that COSATU was, 'The second important tool of this Communist controlled organisation. COSATU is openly and vocally anti capitalist and pro-ANC'.³⁴⁰ Thus the repressive measures post 1987 continued to be couched in anti-Communist terminology.

After May 1987 need for a constructive reform programme to combat the influence of Communism in the townships was widely acknowledged amongst party spokespeople. Few statements during 1987-89 suggested that the Communist threat had been eliminated. It was tacitly acknowledged that the 'threat' still existed. But, instead of positing more and more military measures as a response to the threat, the discourse of 1987-89 emphasised

³³⁸ Hansard, House of Assembly, 1 March 1988, col. 2510.

³³⁹ Hansard, House of Representatives, 2 March 1988, col. 2171.

³⁴⁰ Hansard, House of Representatives, 2. March 1988, col. 2171,

reform measures. A number of significant speeches illustrate the point. The Minister of Foreign Affairs' preceded most of his nationalist colleagues in positing a proactive, social welfare method for combating the Communist threat. In a significant speech during the debate on the motion of censure in 1987, Pik Botha argued that the struggle now awaiting SA was between power sharing and a power take-over. Those who advocated power sharing suggested the prosperity and the freedoms of the country be shared. Would it not, argued Botha, 'Contribute to a safer South Africa if the vast majority of Blacks were home owners and landowners; if they felt safe in this country and if they could share in a system they felt was fair, which benefited them with good health services and prosperity? That is the answer to Communism'.³⁴¹ Botha was addressing the CP, who had put forward the motion. His argument suggested not that the Communist threat should be discounted, but that the threat should be met with a positive, constructive social response, rather than a negative, repressive one. The speech was emotive, using rhetorical questions to emphasise the plight of the poor African. It marked a decisive move away from the arguments of the previous years that the Africans were lapping up the Communist propaganda and that the principal solution should revolve around security measures. Instead, Botha's speech posited reform to counter the socio-economic aspects of the Communist onslaught. Botha's speech did not divert from the NP policy of perceiving the uprisings in terms of an external onslaught. Indeed, by drawing the line between those advocating power sharing and a power takeover, Botha drew upon the NP's construct of a dividing line between radicals and moderates. But in suggesting that reform could counter the problem, Pik Botha acknowledged that there was genuine socio-economic and even political discontent in the townships.

Ministers of all shades of opinion, after May 1987, followed Pik Botha's example and focused on the need for positive social action rather than simple repressive measures. F.W. de Klerk, for example, (who, as Minister of National Education, had not been known for progressive views)³⁴² responded to Conservative Party challenges about educational reform saying that a 'realistic response' to the threat was needed. Conservative MP Dr Ferdinand Hartzenberg held that Black education was used as a vehicle to 'promote...Communist aims' and the solution lay in a system of ethnic education. De Klerk applauded the State of Emergency which had ensured the return of normality, but stressed that equal educational opportunities were best and asked, 'The Communists do

³⁴¹ Hansard, House of Assembly, 21 May 1987, col. 281.

³⁴² Evening Post, 20 February, 1986.

not precisely want the government to abandon its ideal of providing equal educational opportunities?’³⁴³ The question was an almost verbatim reiteration of a frequent PFP jibe at the NP, and it demonstrated that the NP were challenged by the threat from the right and were forced, particularly after 1987, to adopt aspects of the rhetoric of their more liberal opponents.

Even members of the defence and security establishment spoke of the necessity of reform. In September 1987, Magnus Malan talked of six important requirements to help South Africa overcome the revolutionary onslaught (which, he made plain, had as its final goal the implementation of Communist ideology). The requirements as well as ‘law, order and stability’ included, effective third level structures, housing, job opportunities, education and training and a strike prevention plan.³⁴⁴ Malan’s exposition of a six-pronged strategy demonstrated how the National Party’s attitude towards defeating the Communist threat had developed, and how the Party was prepared to discuss at length the more socially constructive aspects of their programme. That a Defence Minister, (whose speeches prior to 1987 had served to endorse his reputation as a ‘cold war warrior’) was prepared to consider such wide reaching changes, demonstrated the extent to which the need to change the portrayal of the necessary response to the Communist threat had taken seed within the party. Other pro-defence MPs made similar speeches. Geldenhuys when referring to ‘Evolutionary Reform’ claimed that, ‘For a Marxist inspired revolutionary every manifestation of political reform is in fact, counter productive’.³⁴⁵

One of the key precepts of the ‘total strategy’, that reform was an essential feature of combating the Communist threat, was thus elucidated more clearly in Nationalist discourse after 1987. This may have been influenced by the fact that the NP faced clamorous opposition from the Conservative Party who challenged the NP’s reform programme as a fatal course of action.³⁴⁶ The NP therefore had to address these complaints, either covertly or overtly, and in the speech cited above Geldenhuys had made explicit that he was speaking for ‘the Conservative Party’s benefit’.³⁴⁷

343 Hansard, House of Assembly, 10 June 1987, col. 2508.

344 Hansard, House of Assembly, 15 September 1987, col. 5908.

345 Hansard, House of Assembly, 13 August 1987, col. 3726.

346 SAIRR, Survey, 1988, p.721.

347 Hansard, House of Assembly, 13 August 1987, col. 3726.

Members of the National Party referred increasingly after May 1987 to 'winning hearts and minds'³⁴⁸ and to the notion of a 20-80% strategy for combating revolutionary onslaught. The dual-pronged nature of the 20-80% strategy is seldom appreciated by commentators. The NP recognised the need for more than just a security response to the uprising and onslaught, and couched this terms of military action being, as Dr J.A. Vilonel elucidated, 'only 20% of their action. 80% is social, economic and political action'.³⁴⁹ The emphasis in NP rhetoric was increasingly placed on the 80% of non-violent action, particularly after 1987. Vigorous action was taken to eliminate discontent as Allister Sparks recounts.³⁵⁰ Secondly, the 20%-80% strategy dictated that the government needed to gain a 'critical mass of moderate support',³⁵¹ (20% of the African population according to some secuocrats), and then the remaining 80% would cease to be the support base of the revolutionary movement and would swing over to support the government.³⁵² The second prong of the 20%-80% principle received some attention in the discourse after the election of May 1987. Both elements of the 20-80% strategy tapped into John McCuen's counter-revolutionary theory - firstly that the onslaught should be combated using a plethora of methods, and that security should only be one of those methods (see Chapter 1), and secondly, that the 'apolitical majority' would be won over by the change of allegiance of a small body of approximately 20% of the population. References to the 20/80% principle were absent from NP parliamentary discourse during 1985-87, but were more frequent during 1987 and 1988.

In the 20-80% strategy lay the roots of the NP government's misinterpretation of the situation across South Africa. For the 20%-80% notion reflected the National Party's belief that they were countering a revolutionary onslaught driven by outsiders; a Communist threat. McCuen's strategy, effective as it might have been had the threat been driven entirely by outsiders, was not as usefully applicable to South Africa. The masses were not apolitical, to be won over by piecemeal reform and bread and butter issues, or swayed by the crushing of a small number of their leaders.³⁵³ Neither was the onslaught driven by a minority group of Communists who, once dealt with would be rebuffed by counter-

348 Weekend Argus, 20 August 1988.

349 Hansard, House of Assembly, 20 May 1987, col. 121.

350 Including roads being paved, sewerage systems laid, a massive housing project started.

351 Weekly Mail, 22 July, 1988.

352 Sparks, The Mind of South Africa, p.360.

353 *Ibid.* p.360.

revolutionary strategy. Therefore although the NP's conception of the most effective response to a Communist onslaught became more sophisticated during the late 1980s, the perception of a Communist threat was not sufficiently realistic to counteract the ANC. Furthermore, as will be seen in the next chapter, the NP remained hostile to what it perceived as the ANC's Communist nature, and so continued to deny what the ANC wanted above all else - democracy for all South Africans.

The depiction of the socio-economic threat therefore altered substantially between 1985 and 1989, pivoting primarily around the May 1987 election. After the election and in the face of opposition from a Conservative Party that claimed that Africans were not by nature democratic (thereby denying them the right to any political power)³⁵⁴ and that placed an even stronger emphasis on the threat of Communism, the NP discourse relating to the Communist threat in the socio-economic sphere changed significantly. By 1989, when discussing socio-economic problems, the National Party did not deny the Communist threat, but they no longer emphasised it. The Party also stressed that the most effective method for combating the threat was reform - rather than security. But the internal inconsistencies of the NP's argument were visible after 1987. Acknowledgement that the Communist threat could be countered by reform undermined the argument that the onslaught was external, since it suggested that it could be combated at home amongst unhappy citizens; which could not fail to imply (in spite of McCuen's rather convoluted arguments) that the source of the discontent was internal rather than external. The NP's changing perception and portrayal of the Communist threat reflected their difficulty in adjusting to a new locus of opposition, from the right rather than the left wing. The fact that the threat was seen to be soluble through far reaching socio-economic changes inadvertently furthered the argument of the left wing, that the political onslaught could be combated through far reaching (and not merely superficial) political changes. The fragmentation of views relating to the Communist threat in the socio-economic sphere reflected the confusion of a party for whom anti-Communism, as well as apartheid, had been central to their grasp on power.

354 SAIRR, *Survey, 1986*, p.xx.

6. The Religious Onslaught

Significant developments took place in the sphere of organised religion in the 1980s. The Dutch Reformed Church, known colloquially as the 'National Party at prayer',³⁵⁵ had pressure placed upon it by churches within and outside South Africa to reject the doctrine and practices of apartheid, and in 1985 and 1986 the impact of this upon NP rhetoric can be discerned. The swelling of revulsion with apartheid in the ranks of organised Christianity (which had developed under the influence of *inter alia* the South African Council of Churches and the Black Consciousness movement) was epitomised by a charter drawn up by the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in 1981. The Charter stated that the, moral and theological justification of apartheid was heretical, a travesty of the Gospel and a betrayal of the Reformed tradition.³⁵⁶ The Anglican church later made a similar declaration. In 1982, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Ottawa accepted the indictment of apartheid, suspending the Dutch Reformed Church and ultimately causing one branch, the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk to resign and the main branch (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk) to stop paying fees.³⁵⁷ The publication of the Kairos document by fifty theologians from all races and denominations in September 1985 gave a theological critique of the state's use of concepts such as law and order, divine right, and the threat of Communism in the political crisis in South Africa. The Afrikaans churches document, 'Church and Society, a witness of the DRC' was more cautious, but it articulated that the 'application of apartheid as a political and social system by which human dignity is adversely affected, and whereby one political group is detrimentally suppressed by another, cannot be accepted on Christian-ethical grounds'.³⁵⁸ Christians' role in combating apartheid took on a higher international profile during the 1980s, when Bishop Desmond Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1984), in recognition of his non-violent campaign to limit international trade and investment activities in South Africa and became Archbishop of Cape Town and head of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa (1986).³⁵⁹ Thus the National Party was confronted with a swelling of religious opinion against apartheid and church leadership that promoted eloquent African leaders as a

355 Mark R. Amstutz, *Failure and Hope: Church and state in South Africa*, Christianity Today, March 2000.

356 Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, p.285.

357 Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, p.287.

358 Norval, *Deconstructing apartheid discourse*, p..259.

359 <http://sunsite.wits.ac.za/histp/tutu.htm>

statement of their non-racial intentions³⁶⁰ and openly and effectively supported an international sanctions campaign.

The NP's response was predictably defensive. References to Communism frequently outlined its evil nature, opposed to the kingdom of God (as outlined in Chapter 3.2). Willem J. Cuyler (NP, Roodeport) in a debate on the Appropriation Bill quoted Alexander Solzhenitsyn to emphasise the threat that the NP believed Communism posed to Christianity. 'The world has never before known a Godlessness so organised, militarised and tenaciously malevolent as that preached by Marxists. Within the philosophical system, of Marx and Lenin and at the heart of their psychology, hatred of God is the principal driving force, more fundamental than all their political and economic pretensions'.³⁶¹ The reference to organised and militarised Godlessness had connotations of the battlefield and wartime. The use of the word 'Godlessness' suggested a dangerous-sounding vacuum at the very core of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and thus implied that the philosophy was inherently evil. The implication was that to give in to Marxism would be to inaugurate a spiritual ice age. Marxism was also characterised as fraudulent. At a later stage of the same debate, P.W. Botha showed how men of religion in other countries had been drawn to a supposed freedom struggle. He quoted from an open letter from two Vietnamese refugees in the US to a South African bishop, urging him not to get involved. 'You will realise that you have turned away from God and his people and that you are being manipulated by Communists'.³⁶² For the religious members of parliament, the chilling description implied that South African churches were in danger of being duped by and manipulated by revolutionaries into conceding defeat - a defeat which would ultimately spell their own downfall. Like the Vietnamese Revered Tran Huu Than those men of religion - or otherwise, who supported the anti-government movements might end up in prison.

The threat posed to the regime by liberation theology (as enshrined in the Kairos Document) was examined in parliament. The Kairos document had argued that the South African government had its own concrete symbol of evil and of hell and that the South African state had invented, or taken over, the myth of Communism in order to frighten

360 Davenport & Saunders, *South Africa*, p.684.

361 *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 9 April 1986, col. 2969.

362 *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 17 April 1986, col. 3597.

people into accepting any kind of domination and exploitation.³⁶³ In the NP's rhetorical response, the Party proclaimed the danger of liberation theology and liberation theologians.³⁶⁴ It was claimed that liberation theology was not true theology. For example, Meiring in a speech on the Kairos document in June 1986, termed liberation theology, 'Christian Marxism' which differed from genuine Christianity in several ways: it was person oriented not church oriented; it was humanist and not Christian; it had its origin in Marxism instead of the bible; it was, 'Political ideology based on Marxist theory' and a smoke screen behind which the Marxists hid in order to twist people in South Africa, 'Around their little fingers'.³⁶⁵ Meiring created a picture of a dangerous, manipulative theological deception and in analysing the document the MP attempted to undermine its very origin - suggesting that those who wrote the document were not true Christians.

In analysing the Kairos document, Alwyn F. Fouché (NP, Witbank) claimed that Christianity in South Africa was at an hour of crisis and that some churches were promoting the objectives of Communism, becoming part of the problem, rather than part of the search for solutions. He exhorted Christian leaders to, 'Unite against the onslaught of Communist enslavement in the time which we are living' and sought to discredit those churches that opposed the apartheid system by implying that they might be midwives to a system of Communist enslavement.³⁶⁶ He advocated that Church function separately from the State, though the Government must endorse Christian principles and apply them in the management of the country, and simultaneously tried to invoke a spirit of unity and to unite the church behind the NP. The message of the speech was that unity, and unity behind the NP's policies, was needed to combat the Communist threat.

A principal target of the NP's (in particular P.W. Botha's) anti-Communist venom was Bishop Desmond Tutu. Statements (particularly when provoked by Tutu's actions) frequently questioned whether Tutu was driven by Communistic motives, and implied that he was. For example, in March 1988, when Tutu had petitioned against the banning of seventeen organisations and the proposed execution of the 'Sharpeville Six' (a group which had been found by a court to be responsible for killing a town councillor in the Vaal

363 <http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/SAKairos.html>

364 [Hansard](#), House of Assembly, 17 May 1988, col. 9990.

365 [Hansard](#), House of Assembly, 17 June 1986, col. 8524.

366 [Hansard](#), House of Assembly, 11 April 1986, col. 3133.

triangle in September 1984)³⁶⁷ Botha responded in a letter which was later publicised extensively. Tutu was asked, 'Whether you are acting on behalf of the kingdom of God or the kingdom promised by the ANC and the SACP?'³⁶⁸ The letter questioned Tutu's understanding of evil: 'Is atheistic Marxism the evil, or does your view of evil include the struggle on behalf of Christianity, the Christian faith, the freedom of faith and worship and against the forces of godlessness and Marxism?'³⁶⁹ The President suggested that the ANC/SACP and Christianity were dichotomously opposed and that the Archbishop was confusing the two, or even deliberately mimicking or acting on behalf of the former. Botha highlighted phrases from Tutu's letter, (which were simply statements of the need for a democratic approach) 'people's organisations', 'democratic activity', and 'the struggle for justice and peace' in Tutu's petition, and quoting an extract from Radio Freedom (the ANC's radio station), he underlined where the same or similar phrases had been used, implying that the Archbishop was merely echoing the ANC/SACP alliance's phraseology. The letter was a typical example of the President's contortion of the evidence in order to confirm that an individual opposed to the NP regime had Communistic leanings. Later in 1988, when Tutu visited the USSR, the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok repeated Botha's criticism.³⁷⁰ Although Tutu deflected the criticism extensively, (stating in the second instance that, 'I cannot waste my time responding to such utter nonsense, especially when Mr Vlok knows it is nonsense') the criticism persisted until 1989.

While church leaders who criticised the regime were subjected to verbal attack and criticism suggesting that they were Communist inspired, loyal churches (in particular the Zionist Christian Church) were praised and preached at in the virtues of loyalty. In April 1985, in a publicity coup the President spoke at a gathering of the Zionist Christian Church at Moira.³⁷¹ The speech warned the congregation of the, 'Forces of darkness and evil', the, 'Messengers of terror' and exhorted them that South Africa would not 'Tolerate the people who come from far away with evil minds to kill and injure innocent people,'³⁷² and

367 Tutu, *The Rainbow People of God*, p.145.

368 P.W. Botha, Letter to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, March 1988. [INEG], PV 203 P5/13/32/1.

369 P.W. Botha, Letter to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, March 1988. [INEG], PV 203 P5/13/32/1.

370 *Cape Times*, 29 June 1988.

371 Sparks, Allister, *The Mind of South Africa*, p.296.

372 *South African Digest*, 12 April 1988.

presented himself as a divinely sanctioned ruler.³⁷³ The white population were consistently reminded that their president had addressed the largest African Church in the country, and a special edition supplement of the South African Digest, the President's speech was reported and distributed around the world. Those churches loyal to the regime were characterised as legitimate and Christian, while those critical of the regime were deemed to be Marxist inspired and ultimately Godless.

The notion of a Communist threat to religion was employed as a rhetorical device when it seemed to the NP expedient to do so. The Communist threat was highlighted as corrosive to the very core of the spiritual foundation of the nation - a Communist regime would herald 'Godlessness'. For the Afrikaans audience, who were often deeply religious,³⁷⁴ fear of Communist atheism must have been potent. As churches increasingly criticised the apartheid regime, the threat of Communism was often referred to. Tutu was a particular focus for tainting as a Communist.

373 Sparks, Allister, The Mind of South Africa, p.296.

374 Sparks, Allister, The Mind of South Africa, p.158-164.

7. The Political onslaught

During 1985-89, the National Party devoted consistent attention to the political threat posed by the perceived Communist onslaught. As has been shown, the depiction of the international, military and socio-economic aspects of the Communist threat changed substantially, but the discussion of the political threat remained common and largely unchanged until 1989. As discussed previously, the political onslaught could not be divorced from the other aspects of the Communist onslaught. But, as will be demonstrated, while other aspects of the perceived Communist onslaught were brought under control (through reform and repression) or resolved (through the settlement of the Namibian situation) the political situation remained unsolved. Consequently, the NP's portrayal of a political threat from Communists continued right up until 1990.

Between 1985 and 1987, international and South African attitudes to the inclusion of the ANC in a negotiated settlement changed. Members of the international community made tentative overtures to the ANC. Under Thatcher's leadership, the British government had initially been reluctant to acknowledge the ANC as anything other than a terrorist organisation, but in 1986 international and domestic pressure impacted upon the British government's policy. The EPG's abortive visit (March to May 1986) to South Africa was followed in June 1986 by a meeting between Mrs Lynda Chalker, Minister of State at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and an ANC representative and in and in September 1986, Oliver Tambo met Geoffrey Howe.³⁷⁵ Progress between the ANC and US diplomats followed a similar pattern; tentative contacts were made when Representatives of the ANC met US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Dr Chester Crocker in October 1986,³⁷⁶ followed in January 1987 by a meeting between Secretary of State George Schultz and Oliver Tambo.³⁷⁷ Such meetings enabled probing questions about the ANC's economic, social and political policies. Mr Schultz for example, expressed concern that the apartheid system would be replaced by another form of unrepresentative government.³⁷⁸ The National Party portrayed the meetings as an exposure of the ANC as terrorists, 'with direct links to Moscow'.³⁷⁹ However, meetings between the ANC and

375 SAIRR, *Survey, 1986 Part 1*, p.137.

376 SAIRR, *Survey, 1986, Part 1*, p.137.

377 SAIRR, *Survey, 1987*, p.704.

378 *The Star*, 29 January, 1987.

379 *The Citizen*, 30 January, 1987.

others enabled the ANC to air their views, without the National Party's prohibitions and distortions.

Internationally, academics challenged the NP's portrayal of the Communist Party, and reports by the EPG and the State Department in the US echoed the views of the academic reappraisal. Although, the journal 'Problems of Communism' held a pessimistic opinion of the SACP's dominance of the ANC,³⁸⁰ many academics of stature argued that the ANC was not dominated by the SACP, and these academics clearly held influence. Tom Lodge, a South African historian, played down the role of the Communist influence in the ANC, and Thomas Karis, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the City College of the City University of New York, wrote convincingly in *Foreign Affairs* that the ANC's strength lay in its stature as a national movement rather than a party, iterating that most students of South African politics did not believe that the ANC was dominated or controlled by the South African Communist Party.³⁸¹ The report of the EPG, and a report by Washington's State Department on the Communist influence in South Africa accommodated such views and demonstrated the National Party's portrayal of Communist influence was no longer accepted as a true picture. The EPG's Report claimed that the NP's exploitation of white fears and creation of a picture of the ANC as wedded to Marxism was a 'tragedy'.³⁸² The US State Department's report viewed the SACP's role in the alliance with caution and hostility, but questioned the ideological and numerical dominance of the alliance by the SACP (as posited by the National Party). The non-Communist leaders of the ANC were deemed to have considerable counter-leverage and it was unequivocally stated that government intransigence would aid the ANC's radical wing, affording the ANC the luxury of postponing discussion of the real issues within its own ranks.³⁸³ Thus a reappraisal of the Communist influence and potential influence accompanied the increased interface between the international community and the ANC.

³⁸⁰ Radu, Michael 'The African National Congress Cadres and Credo' pp.58-81.

³⁸¹ Thomas Karis, *South African Liberation: The Communist Factor*, Paragraph 3.

³⁸² Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on Southern Africa Mission to South Africa: *The Commonwealth Report*. Note 78. The report cited the views of Tom Lodge - that the ANC an indigenous force and a movement of pragmatists, not ideologues, committed to change not due to some externally derived Marxist revolutionary conspiracy but from South Africa's present apartheid based social, economic and political arrangements. The ANC's radicalism was 'a reflection of the time and society that have produced it. Nelson Mandela had impressed the group 'with the consistency of his beliefs' and his emphasis that he was a nationalist and not a Communist. While he was still committed to the principals of the Freedom Charter, he showed that these were not necessarily socialist. Over a four-year trial in court, the Crown had failed to establish its case that the Freedom Charter was a treacherous document.

Meanwhile members of the South African business community (led by Anglo American Chairman, Gavin Relly) visited the ANC in October 1985; representatives from the PFP and from Stellenbosch University followed later that year.³⁸⁴ In 1986, Chairman of the Broederbond, Pieter de Lange, held a discussion with Thabo Mbeki (then ANC information director) in New York. In July 1987, sixty-one white South African intellectuals - the majority Afrikaners, led by Fredrik van Zyl Slabbert (who resigned from parliament in February 1986) went to Dakar, Senegal and held three days of talks with seventeen members of the ANC. Significantly, members of the NP establishment also commenced covert discussions with the ANC. Minister of Justice Kobie Coetsee visited Nelson Mandela while he was in hospital for surgery; the bedside meeting culminated in a series of twelve secret meetings beginning in November 1985.³⁸⁵ Late in 1987, Coetsee proposed Mandela meet with a team of four, headed by Dr Niël Barnard, the thirty-six year old head of the National Intelligence Service, and meetings commenced in May 1988. Meetings went over the old arguments: violence; nationalisation; Communism.³⁸⁶ In November 1987, with Botha's knowledge, a British mining house officer, Goldfields organised a series of secret meetings in England between prominent Afrikaners and ANC leaders.³⁸⁷ In July 1989, P.W. Botha agreed to see Nelson Mandela at his residence in Tuynhuys.

At the same time, the ANC's attitude to negotiation evolved. During 1987-89, the ANC pushed forward a campaign to establish dialogue with the United States and Western European governments and business, and white South Africans opposed to apartheid but unwilling to identify fully with the UDF. However, the movement ostensibly stepped up its opposition to the government and declared after the consultative conference at Kabwe in July 1985 that the peoples' war would be intensified in order to make South Africa ungovernable³⁸⁸ and deemed 1986 to be the 'year of the people's army'.³⁸⁹ 1988 was declared to be the year of united action towards people's power. The ANC refused to cease the armed struggle or abandon its links with the South African Communist Party and

383 *The Cape Times*, 'Government Intransigence will aid ANC's radical wing' 20 January 1987.

384 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.10.

385 Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p.512.

386 Sampson, *Mandela*, p.367.

387 Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country*, pp.75 -87.

388 SAIRR, *Survey, 1985*, p.7

389 SAIRR, *Survey, 1986*, p.130

therefore to negotiate on the terms demanded by the government. Numerous declarations to this end were made from Lusaka, reminding the government that the ANC would not dissolve links with former allies. A document of October 1987, for example, stated that the ANC would not bow down to pressures intended to drive a wedge between it and the SACP, nor would they submit to attempts to divide or weaken the movement by conducting a 'witch-hunt' on the basis of ideological belief.³⁹⁰ Prior to meeting Botha, Mandela issued a document in June 1989 rejecting the charge that the ANC was dominated by the SACP, highlighting that the movement was non-aligned and pointing out the NP's inconsistency when it negotiated with Marxist neighbours but refused to negotiate with Marxist within its own polity. The document asked, 'Which man of honour will ever desert a life long friend at the instance of a common opponent and still retain a measure of credibility among his people?'

However, in spite of the commitment to the SACP declared by members of the ANC, a reappraisal in the ANC's policy was discernible, and iterations by the SACP also suggested that a new direction might be imminent. Joe Slovo stated in an interview in March 1987 that he believed that transition in South Africa would come through negotiation, and that he would be the first to say 'let's do it' to any prospect of settling peacefully.³⁹¹ The ANC, while maintaining a suspicion of the government's approach and dedication to the principles of the Freedom Charter, between 1987 and 1989 issued documents that implied a willingness to negotiate under certain conditions. In October 1987, the ANC National Executive Committee endorsed negotiations under certain provisos: the release of political prisoners, lifting of the State of Emergency and withdrawal of the SADF from townships, the repeal of 'politically repressive laws', the end of the Bantustan system, and the permission for unconditional return of political exiles.³⁹² The 'Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa' of July 1988 laid down the ANC's vision for the future of South Africa including *inter alia* a mixed economy, a multiparty democracy in a unitary state, and the protection of cultural and language rights.³⁹³ In 1989, the Organisation of African Unity adopted the ANC's guidelines for negotiation as the 'Harare Declaration' (as had been discussed by the NEC in October 1987). The declaration committed the ANC to

390 ANC document On negotiations 9 October 1987, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/1980s/pr871009.html>

391 Sampson, *Mandela*, p.365.

392 SAIRR, *Survey, 1987-88*, p.704

393 SAIRR, *Survey, 1988-89*, p.637

intensifying the liberation struggle and the drive to mobilise international pressures but it also stated that circumstances existed in which the ANC could negotiate.

7.1. ..'Also Members of the SACP'.. Depictions of the ANC alliance 1985-87

This chapter focuses on the NP's analysis and depiction of the Communist's influence on the ANC during 1985-87. The NP's single most prominent contention regarding the ANC endured until 1989. The NP claimed that the South African Communist Party was in control of the organisation, had been since the late 1950s, and therefore the ANC was a Communist controlled organisation. (Communists were depicted, as discussed in Chapter 3.2, as dangerous, power-ravenous and evil creatures). In 1985-87, the Communist domination of the ANC was frequently posited as the single reason why negotiation with the ANC should be avoided; this view was propagated internationally.³⁹⁴ SACP domination of the ANC was subject to both qualitative and quantitative analysis during the years 1985-87.

Members of the National Party depicted the South African Communist Party as being dominant numerically within the ANC. During 1985 and 1986, scant attention was paid to the ideology of the ANC, their aim was dismissed as 'one man, one vote..[which would] cause the greatest blood bath this country has ever seen', without any further explanation or exploration.³⁹⁵ Instead, statements relating to the ANC focused on the number of SACP members within the ANC executive. While the real number of SACP members was not known, statistics relating to the numerical dominance of SACP members on the ANC executive were frequently quoted to emphasise SACP domination of the ANC. Estimates of the number of SACP members on the ANC varied, however Daniel J. Nel's (NP, Pretoria Central) assertion in the House of Assembly that, '23 out of 30 members of the ANC executive are either members of the SACP or supporters' was not atypical.³⁹⁶ Nel repeated the same information twice, expounding the point and underlining the magnitude of the problem. Statistics were also laid out to undermine the credibility of those who argued that the ANC should be unbanned, and to make the proponent of negotiation look ignorant or stupid. Fredrick Van Zyl Slabbert's suggestion that

394 In March 1985, P.W. Botha claimed unequivocally on American television that the ANC was under the control of the SACP., Cape Times, 18 March 1985.

395 Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 April 1986 col. 3957.

396 Hansard, House of Assembly, 9 February 1987 col. 512.

Communists did not dominate the ANC was met with the implication that he was unable to perform basic arithmetic. 'He did not explain how this could be possible given that 19 out of 30 members of the executive committee also being members of the SACP', (H.C. Coetzer, NP, East London North).³⁹⁷ Numerical arguments regarding the role of Communists in the ANC-SACP alliance were posited as a principal reason for not negotiating with the ANC, to the discredit of the PFP.

While the NP stressed the extent of the Communist domination of the ANC's executive, it was acknowledged that not *all* ANC members were Communist. P.W. Botha, for example, stated in April 1986 that the government had never said all ANC members were Communist and that it was clear that there were black nationalists within the ANC who were not aware that Communists were manipulating them.³⁹⁸ Some observers welcomed Botha's statement as an indication that the door to negotiation 'was ajar' and that a more sophisticated approach was on the horizon.³⁹⁹ But Botha's statement did not represent a new departure or a new attitude towards the ANC; the speech stressed the manipulative and deceitful nature of the, 'Terrorist alliance under the auspices of the SACP' placing them alongside the Libyans as an anti-Western terrorist group.⁴⁰⁰

That Botha was not prepared to commence negotiation with the ANC was made abundantly clear in Botha's analyses of the ANC in April 1985 (State President's Appropriation Vote) and June 1986 (Statement on the Security Situation in South Africa). In these speeches, Botha discussed Communist penetration of the ANC at some length. In April 1985, Botha claimed that since the 1960s there had been more and more signs of Marxism and Leninist influence in the ANC, and that the Communist Party regarded the ANC as an instrument to achieve its particular form of liberation in South Africa. The grip of the SACP over the ANC was getting stronger, he argued.⁴⁰¹ Using a device common in National Party rhetoric, Botha backed up his argument with a slim piece of evidence taken out of context, stating that Joe Slovo's declaration in the Washington Post (that the SACP held a unique position in the ANC) was confirmation of the SACP's increasing domination by the ANC. From a single statement by one individual, Botha extrapolated that the SACP was increasingly

397 Hansard, House of Assembly, 9 April 1986, col. 2950.

398 Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 April 1986, col. 3595.

399 Cape Argus, 18 April 1986.

400 Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 April 1986, col. 3595.

401 Hansard, House of Assembly, 19 April 1985 col. 3802.

dominating the ANC. The use of evidence made his argument sound convincing, yet the evidence was itself insubstantial, and not directly related to the point that he made.

When introducing a nationwide State of Emergency in June 1986, the State President similarly used ostensibly solid evidence to justify his action. A document to be released to the public, allegedly originating in the SACP's politburo, was cited as evidence of the implacable commitment of the SACP to violent revolution, and the dangerous intertwining between the ANC and the SACP. The ANC was itself implied to be ignorant of the SACP's influence in its ranks - the State President called upon the ANC to investigate the infiltration of its structures and its ideology by the SACP. The implication of the State President's comments was that the SACP was so secretive, or the ordinary, non-Communist ANC so stupid, that the ANC itself did not understand the relationship with Communists. The conclusion of the President's speech was that no-one could enter into discussions with the ANC 'without the knowledge that he is probably also in discussion with the SACP'.⁴⁰² The underlying assumption was that Communists were so dangerous and so manipulative that negotiation with them was beyond contemplation.

The link between the ANC and the SACP was depicted as the fissure through which the USSR might gain influence in the Republic of South Africa. The relationship between the ANC and Moscow was rarely properly explained or examined in the NP's public discourse. While in March 1987, P.W. Botha explained to a public meeting in Lichtenburg that the struggle for political power to subject South Africa to a Communist dictatorship was given 'financial assistance from abroad',⁴⁰³ frequent assertions were made without clarifying the nature of the support by Russia for the ANC. More often, ringing rhetoric was used to imply Russia's control of the ANC, without any further analysis. It was argued on one occasion that the ANC was a 'tool of Moscow close to us' (Malan),⁴⁰⁴ on another that it was an 'instrument of the USSR'.⁴⁰⁵ The suggestion that the ANC was merely a small object in the hand of a larger movement was repeatedly asserted. The implication was that people should avoid negotiation, since they could not possibly grapple with the larger movement.

⁴⁰² Hansard, House of Assembly, 12 June 1986, col. 8110.

⁴⁰³ Address by State President P.W. Botha on the occasion of a public meeting of the National Party at Lichtenburg 25.3.87 [INEG] Pv 883 1/A1/1.

⁴⁰⁴ Hansard, House of Assembly, 14 May 1986, col. 5585.

⁴⁰⁵ Hansard, House of Assembly, 12 June 1986, col. 8114.

While discussing the number of Communists on the ANC, executive, members of the NP also portrayed certain individuals within the ANC as under the influence of Communism. Oliver Tambo was portrayed as an 'ogre....terrorist ogre',⁴⁰⁶ during a speech relating to the State of Emergency. But more venom was reserved for Joe Slovo. In the NP's lexicon Slovo personified white Communist domination of the Black Nationalist members of the ANC and was portrayed as, 'the real devil...the power behind Tambo' (P.W. Botha),⁴⁰⁷ and as a KGB general (Geldenhuys).⁴⁰⁸ The implication of NP statements was that Slovo was 'proof' that whites led the SACP and Slovo's profile within the liberation movement was posited as proof that the SACP dominated the ANC. As leader of Umkhonto We Sizwe, and a Chairman of the SACP, Slovo's persona also gave substance to the allegations that Communists were behind the ANC commitment to violence. The portrayal reinforced the notion that the liberation struggle was not a black on white struggle. It also lent credence to the argument that the blacks were incapable of organising their own struggle. The demonization of Slovo continued in political discourse right up until negotiations were underway after 1990.

Nelson Mandela, who had previously been portrayed as a Communist, was not overtly referred to as a Communist but the insinuation remained. Pressure to free Mandela reached a climax in the later 1980s, as the Free Mandela campaign, which began in March 1980, reverberated around the world.⁴⁰⁹ At the opening of Parliament in 1985 the P.W. Botha offered to release Nelson Mandela, on the condition that he renounce violence.⁴¹⁰ In January 1986, Botha offered the release of Mandela in return for Wynand du Toit and two Jewish dissidents.⁴¹¹ However, on both occasions, Botha's choice of words implied that the Communists dominated the prisoner. Botha's offer in 1985 was overshadowed by an analysis of the forces ranged against South Africa, Russian dominated forces which were interested only in 'power' and dedicated to subjugating the masses. The nature of Botha's offer to 'swap' Mandela's freedom, for the freedom of three captives, implied

406 Hansard, House of Assembly, 3 February 1987, col.248

407 Ibid.

408 Hansard, House of Assembly, House of Assembly, 2 February 1986, col. 16

409 Sampson, Mandela, p329

410 Ibid, p335

411 Cape Times, 3 February, 1986.

that there were two sides pitted in a war against each other. Furthermore, Botha claimed that Mandela was 'in effect being jailed by the SACP and its affiliate the ANC'.⁴¹²

Offers to release Nelson Mandela were undermined by the implication that Mandela was under the influence of Communism. During the Rubicon Speech, Botha asserted that if Mandela gave a commitment that he would not make himself guilty of planning, instigating or committing acts of violence, then the President would be prepared to consider his release. But the President immediately hinted at the improbability of such a commitment from Mandela. Citing Dr Yutar's conviction of Mandela and quoting from a document that had been instrumental in the conviction, in which it had been written, 'We Communist party members are the most advanced revolutionaries in modern history. The enemy must be completely crushed and wiped out from the face of the earth before a Communist world can be realised',⁴¹³ Botha implied that Mandela's determined Communism would prevent him from negotiating. The relation of a link between Mandela and Communism at this juncture had multiple implications: that Mandela would not change or modify his views and that he was devoted to violence: Communists, in the NP's lexicon, were irreversibly committed to violence. Thus the impression of a dangerous and violent man who did not deserve to be released was created; in spite of Botha's 'offer' to release him. Allusions to Mandela's commitments to Communism declined after July 1986, when the Minister of Law and Order admitted in an interview with *Leadership* magazine that he believed the ANC leader was no longer 'Communist controlled'.⁴¹⁴ It seemed that the contact made between the NP and the prisoner allowed him to allay their fears, and discredit previous statements.⁴¹⁵

7.2. 'Useful Idiots':⁴¹⁶ Depictions of the ANC in Response to its Increased Publicity

During 1986, the NP's depiction of the ANC as dominated, numerically, by members of the SACP, began to evolve new elements. A 42-page government pamphlet, entitled 'Talking with the ANC'⁴¹⁷ was produced and widely distributed. The pamphlet went to some length to demonstrate that the NP's stance towards negotiating with the ANC was, in fact, the

⁴¹² *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 2 February 1986, col. 16.

⁴¹³ Speech to National Party Congress at Durban, August 1985 [National Library of South Africa].

⁴¹⁴ *The Star*, 19 July 1986, *The Cape Times*, 18 July, 1986.

⁴¹⁵ Sampson, *Mandela*

⁴¹⁶ *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 16 May 1988, col. 9933.

safest option, the correct and morally right one. When introducing the pamphlet, Louis Nel claimed that it was important that South Africans were properly informed of the ANC's nature, history, ideological orientation, composition and policy.⁴¹⁸ The pamphlet was an extensive justification for the government's policy, and an example of the National Party's methods in convincing their audience that the ANC was Communist and therefore it merits close examination.

The document focused on how the ANC was linked to the SACP and the Soviet Union; how this impacted on their tactics for liberation and revolution, and the implications for negotiation. The argument was conveyed visually and textually. At the outset it was stated that, 'This publication is based primarily on the ANC's and the South African Communist Party's own statements and documents'. The technique (that has been referred to before) of arranging the statements of the liberation groups to suit the NP's own depiction of the situation was highly visible in the document. The document served two purposes: it denied the validity of arguments for unbanning the ANC, and it refuted the contention that the NP were keeping the population 'in the dark' or misinformed about the true nature ANC. Members of the NP argued in parliament that they had made the most authoritative policy statements of the ANC publicly available.⁴¹⁹ However, the government twisted the evidence to suit its own ends. The document argued that the ANC had a formal alliance with the SACP and that both groups were committed to the violent overthrow of government, that elements in the ANC viewed negotiations simply as a tactic for the seizure of power; influential elements in the ANC played a leading role in the formulation of a strategy for a two-stage phase of the revolution; which had as its objective the establishment of a Communist state; the ANC strongly opposed the US and the West. The document painted a picture of an initially loyal ANC, systematically corrupted by the Soviet Union since 1928; increasingly infiltrated by the SACP since 1950.

Evidence for the SACP's domination of the ANC from the party's beginning to the current day was illuminated. The evidence given in the pamphlet was not unfamiliar. The state's

417 Department for Information, Talking with the ANC, June 1986 [African Studies Library, UCT].

418 Pottinger, P.W. Botha, The Imperial Presidency, p. 333.

419 Hansard, House of Assembly, 18 August 1987, Dr SA Golden, Responding to the accusations that the SA population remains in pitiful ignorance because a fearful government says they must. 'The facts are that last year the Bureau for Information published a booklet, Talking with the ANC' based on direct quotations from the ANC and SACP...Is it the govt which has made the ANC's most authoritative policy documents available, or is it those who uncritically accept and disseminate everything which the ANC's propaganda machine chooses to dish out to them?'

case against Nelson Mandela at the Rivonia Trial ('proving' that he was a Communist); Bartholomew Hplane's testimony at the Denton hearing (1982); Oliver Tambo's speech to the SACP in July 1981 ('It was not so much as a guest invited to address a foreign organization. Rather we speak of and to our own'). Numerical evidence was also given - that 30 members of the ANC National Executive Committee, 23 were members and/or active supporters of the SACP. The evidence given here was not so much incorrect, as distorted. No reference was made to Mandela's defence; no reference to Tambo's statements about interdependence of the two movements. Moreover, of the 23 members of the SACP, two were listed as deceased. The document was an exposition of the two-phase revolution, which it was maintained, had been implemented successfully in a number of countries. Historical precedents - Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, were all given as evidence that the same thing might happen in the RSA. The document suggested that SACP would seek to assume leadership during the second phase of the revolution. Those negotiating with the ANC were naive, and divorced from the hard political reality of the modern world. The price of negotiation, 'by way of personal, community, political and economic freedom', would be too heavy 'Talking with the ANC' concluded.

The arguments of 'Talking with the ANC' were not unfamiliar. Novel ways of presenting the Communist threat were represented in the pictures and diagrams. Of eleven pictures or diagrams in the booklet, six concerned the link between the ANC and Communism, the Soviet Union or the SACP. The visual imagery in the document effectively conveyed the impression that the ANC was Communist influenced. A graph depicted the two phases of the revolution: the ultimate objective being cited as 'A classless Communist society in terms of international proletarianism'.⁴²⁰ Another picture had a 'variety of publications of the ANC and the SACP' including, prominently displayed, a cover from the African Communist magazine with 'Long live the ANC-SACP Alliance!' The picture lent credence to the argument that the government had access to the ANC-SACP material and so endorsed arguments that the ANC was dominated by the SACP. On another page, a picture of Nelson Mandela, beneath which the text read 'Nelson Mandela, former leader of the African National Congress (ANC): 'We Communist Party members are the most advanced revolutionaries in modern history'.⁴²¹ The text, taken from a document used as evidence against Mandela during the Rivonia trial, suggested that he had spoken it himself as an exhortation to fellow members. This was not the case, but the arrangement in the

⁴²⁰ Bureau for Information, *Talking with the ANC*, p.16.

⁴²¹ Bureau for Information, *Talking with the ANC*, p.6.

publication suggested convincingly that it had been, and so implied that Mandela was a dangerous individual who should remain behind bars. The ANC's Communist links, and in particular the two-phase revolution were thus depicted in such a way that the ANC was misrepresented, but probably not misquoted. The document thus cleverly portrayed the ANC as a Communist threat, and discredited members of the population who had indulged in 'talking with the ANC'. The leaflet 'Talking with the ANC' was evidence that, in 1986, the government felt that it was justifiable to try to win hearts and minds to their strategy of not negotiating with the ANC.

During the 1987 and 1988 sittings of the Houses of Assembly and Representatives, the arguments of 'Talking with the ANC' were incorporated into the NP's parliamentary discourse. This meant that several new elements were introduced into the NP's depiction of the ANC: the ANC's deception (as evidenced by the two stage revolution, and the Freedom Charter, the meaning of the phrase 'peoples democracy', and the ANC's use of other parties). These had been occasionally mentioned prior to 1987, but they were the principal feature of the NP's discourse on the subject of the ANC after 1987.

The NP depiction of the Communist influence in the liberation movement after 1987 focused increasingly on the deceptive nature of the alliance. While the ANC's links with Communism had previously focused on the number of Communists within the alliance, there was far less reference to the numerical dominance by the SACP after 1987. (This may have been due to Philip Gastrow's (NDM, Durban Central) categorical statement that it was *not known* how many members of the ANC were Communist; and having visited the ANC, he was in a position to discern this).⁴²² Instead, the notion that the ANC was merely a front organisation - and a deceptive one - for a Communist master became a common suggestion in parliamentary discourse. Malan asserted that, 'The ANC is the spokesman, the actor on the stage. It sets the scene, but behind the scenes is the actual producer, the man pulling the strings, the manipulator, the SACP'.⁴²³ It was implied that while the liberation struggle might look like children's entertainment, the sinister side, behind the screen, was a serious threat. Malan tapped into the notion that the ANC was the tool in the hand of a larger force - a familiar argument. The reference to a puppet show served to emphasise the naivety of those who had visited the ANC - as if, like children, they had fallen for a mere puppet show without being aware of the major implications. Thus, the

422 [Hansard](#), House of Assembly, 14 August 1987, col. 3856.

423 [Hansard](#), House of Assembly, 14 September 1987, col. 5899.

NP persistently argued that although the ANC might appear conciliatory at this juncture, in reality neither they nor their masters were.

The State President accentuated the dangerous and deceptive nature of the Communist influence within the ANC in a speech about the Dakar 'safari'. Reprimanding the Dakar visitors, as if they were disobedient children, 'Lured by curiosity, feelings of guilt, or misguidance... make light of my warnings and standpoints on the ANC', he depicted an ANC delegation that had been chosen with deliberation and cunning to manipulate the pilgrims. The phraseology implied that the individuals were totally incapable of comprehending or grappling with the nature of the problem. The 'masters' of the ANC were 'clever and sophisticated' and those who went to Dakar were not capable of dealing with those masters. An allegedly 'Leninist' term was used to discredit the visitors. The ANC, Botha claimed, 'is laughing up their sleeves at the naivety of 'useful idiots' who, as Lenin puts it, can be used to further the aims of the revolution... For the ANC/SACP alliance talks are only a means to an end, namely the revolutionary takeover of power'.⁴²⁴ In fact, the Dakar visitors had had the covert support of the National Intelligence Service. Perhaps Botha was surprised or threatened by the declarations following the meeting, which revealed that common ground had been found with the ANC, and challenged the persistent 'myth' of a total onslaught, (William Van Vuuren). The revelations of the Dakar visitors that a vigorous debate existed within the ANC-SACP alliance over the relationship between armed struggle and a broader political strategy, and that the state in South Africa was responsible for the strategy of the ANC, (Andre Du Piasani)⁴²⁵ may have made the ANC-SACP alliance look more of a viable bargaining partner than Botha had planned. Certainly, the ferocity with which the State President reprimanded the Dakar visitors suggested that they had approached something far too dangerous for them to handle: a clandestinely Communist manipulative group, acting according to a revolutionary strategy used by Lenin, and much cleverer than those who tried to negotiate with it. The State President thus discredited the PFP and other visitors to Dakar by hinting that they were victims of a Communist plot, merely being used as pieces in a Leninist jigsaw. Alluding to the international links of the SACP, Botha also questioned the patriotism of the Dakar visitors, demanding how using foreign money to talk with a Communist-controlled banned organisation could possibly be deemed patriotic. Thus Botha tapped into the notion of a foreign onslaught, to discredit his opponents and critics.

⁴²⁴ Hansard, 13 August 1987, col. 3748.

⁴²⁵ IDASA Occasional Papers, 11, Dakar Report back.[INEG]:

The intransigent nature of Communism received more emphasis during 1987-89 than previously. It was emphatically claimed that talks were only a means to an end, namely, the revolutionary takeover of power; and that negotiation was merely a continuation of the struggle by other means; designed to divide the ruling class and gather 'useful idiots'.⁴²⁶ It was maintained that the ANC, under the influence of the SACP had only agreed to the talks with certain parties in order to divide the whites and the ruling class. A favourite phrase was that a leopard would not change his spots (P.W Botha, J.H. Kriel), the implication being that the Communist would never abandon violence in spite of all protestations to the contrary.⁴²⁷ In response to the implicit challenge by the Dakar visitors, Botha in particular implied that he had a monopoly of superior information, and an insight into the true nature of a Communist. Other MPs echoed his stance as late as 1989, proclaiming superior comprehension of the ANC's attitude towards negotiation. Frequently, jibes were directed at the newly formed Democratic Party (an alliance of the PFP, dissident Nationalists, and an Independent Party). The State President's words were echoed, 'The ANC is laughing at them [the DP].. They call them useful idiots who do the enemies work for them so well that they can achieve victory without a war'.⁴²⁸ The term 'useful idiots' attempted to discredit the DP opposition and the policy of negotiation.

7.3. 'Stripped of pretence..' Depictions of the ANC-SACP alliance 1987-89

The National Party paid far greater attention to the ideology of the ANC-SACP alliance after the Dakar discussions. While up until 1987 the most frequent comments about the alliance had alluded to the dominance (particularly the numerical dominance) of the Communists, with little attention to the ideology of the alliance, after 1987, members of the NP scrutinised the Freedom Charter, in particular analysing what a 'people's democracy' was. Such analysis often attempted to expose the ANC's hidden Communist desires, and emphasised that any argument to the contrary was merely a further example of the ANC's deceptive nature. The Freedom Charter, for example, was portrayed as the starting point for a Communist revolution, at the crux of the ANC's deception, a, 'Dangerous wolf in sheep's clothing'.⁴²⁹ The Freedom Charter was seen to have a

⁴²⁶ Hansard, House of Assembly, 16 May 1988, col. 9933.

⁴²⁷ Hansard, House of Assembly, 13 August 1987, col.3754 and Hansard, House of Assembly, 22 May 1987, col. 290.

⁴²⁸ Hansard, House of Assembly, 21 April 1989, col. 6120.

⁴²⁹ Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 May 1988, col. 9962.

socialist/Communist core, which meant that it could not be acceded to. It was discredited on the grounds that those demands that in the NP's view were justifiable had already been satisfied. Malan claimed the Charter was an exceptionally significant document, and that any member of the House of Representatives who had not read it should do so.⁴³⁰ On a different occasion, ignoring some of the key demands of the Freedom Charter, Geldenhuys argued that most of the demands of the Freedom Charter were now a reality and suggested that radicals were fighting to win a society in which the socialist hub of the Freedom Charter could be implemented. He claimed that, 'The SA of 1950 and the SA of 1987 are not after all one and the same. Yet apart from the demands relating to the economy which amount to flagrant socialism...many of these demands have already been met. Nevertheless the violence continues'.⁴³¹ The terminology - 'flagrant socialism' emphasised that within the charter lay bald, unadulterated socialistic demands, placing emphasis on these. The speech recognised as valid some of the original demands of the Freedom Charter, which made the viewpoint seem balanced, but in claiming that those had been met, the speech tried to deny the validity of the document by arguing that its economics were socialist. Carried to its conclusion, the argument implied that if it had any purpose at all, the current violence related entirely to the socialist/Communist demands of the Charter. In this case, the conception of a threat of Communism prevented Geldenhuys from seeing, or at least acknowledging, the reality of the situation and understanding properly the multifaceted causality of the violence.

The Freedom Charter was also dangerous as a Communist-inspired document since it reflected the two-phase nature of the proposed revolution. As explained in chapter 2.1.4, the ANC-SACP alliance had forged a compromise to enable them to both work in harmony towards the 'first' phase of a 'two-phase' revolution. In 1987-89, the NP laid disproportional emphasis on prospects for the second phase of the revolution. Malan emphasised at length that for the revolutionaries, the Freedom Charter was only a starting point. He claimed that the document served the ANC's (implicitly duplicitous) needs, because it was acceptable in Western circles but after the first, democratic phase of the revolution, it would be discarded, would disappear from the scene completely and a switch to Communist ideology would take place. Malan stressed that the SACP was preparing itself for an opportune moment when it would take over from the ANC. To Malan the Freedom Charter was the blueprint for a two-stage Leninist revolution. The

430 Cape Times, 23 October 1987.

431 Hansard, House of Assembly. 13 August 1987, col. 3727.

freedom charter was the banner for the first stage of the revolution, but the SACP, in the second phase, would consummate a social revolution with Marxist goals.⁴³²

The terminology employed in the Freedom Charter and in the ANC's announcements was scrutinised far more closely between 1987-89. Particularly close attention was paid to the ANC's and the Communist's definition of 'democracy' and 'people's democracy'. For example, Dr FJ Van Heerden (NP, Bloemfontein North) emphasised the vagueness of the definition in the Freedom Charter of who the 'so-called 'people'' are, and who the 'so-called anti-'people'' are. Heerden derived the interpretation from the Communist definition. Government by 'the people' as proposed in the Freedom Charter would in practice mean government by, 'An elite party with misery, famine, civil war for the masses', Heerden claimed.⁴³³ Though the sinister motives in the Freedom Charter were not overtly clear, Heerden convincingly implied that there *were* sinister motives. Dismissing the Freedom Charter's purportedly inclusive references to 'the people' as mere Communist terminology, Heerden emphasised that the document was Communist, and therefore deceptive and dangerous. By emphasising that a 'people's democracy' was a Communist notion, Heerden dismissed any statements in the Freedom Charter that reflected a constructive plan for the future. For example, Heerden stated that group rights (which had become a key precept for the NP) were acknowledged in the Charter, but that this did not mean much. The difference between the NP's vision of group rights and the ANC/SACP alliances was that, 'That they will pursue this objective only as long as it serves their own interests'.⁴³⁴ In laying emphasis on the alleged Communist core of the Charter, the NP stressed that the regime envisaged by the Charter would be exclusive, government by a minority and sought to demonstrate that the Charter's promises concealed a sinister reality.

Similarly, when the ANC's new political dispensation was made public in July 1988 it was argued that Marxist conception of democracy was so different to the Western one that the new dispensation of the ANC needed to be considered with extreme caution. Geldenhuys argued that the ANC had three factions, an old guard, a Soweto Group and Marxists - and that one needed to know who the authors of the constitutional provisions were. The implication lingered: that if the Marxists did not give in and accede to change, then

432 Hansard, House of Assembly, 17 May 1988, col. 100019.

433 Hansard, House of Assembly, 7 September 1987, 5411.

434 Hansard, House of Assembly, 13 August 1987, col. 3754.

change would not be possible. The NP looked for holes in the ANC's document to prove that the new guidelines represented a narrow, exclusionist, Marxist conception of democracy. For example, Geldenhuys stated that under the ANC's policy everyone would be tolerated but, in terms of one of the document's provisions, those who practice racism, fascism, Nazism or the incitement of ethnic or regional exclusiveness would be outlawed.⁴³⁵ Geldenhuys proclaimed indignantly that under these terms Inkatha would be banned, and concluding that this was an exclusionist clause. In associating the ANC with Marxism members of the NP thus tried to proclaim that it would be a narrow exclusionist sect.

Furthermore, in spite of the ANC's new political dispensation, according to the NP, the ANC's link with Communism meant that it was still bent on destruction of South African society. The link with Communism was often portrayed as the principal reason for the movement's failure to abandon violence, and it was frequently suggested that should the ANC dissolve its link with Communism, it would also abandon violence. The Minister of Law and Order, for example, argued that, 'The Communists know that the ANC is launching certain political reform directed initiatives, but not one of them has given a convincing indication, either in private or in public that they are relinquishing their original violent objectives'.⁴³⁶ The movement's link with Communism, alongside its refusal to abandon violence, remained a reason for the continued ban. The stipulation that the ANC dissolve its commitment to Marxism and violence indicated that the National Party was not prepared to negotiate. The ANC had repeatedly made it quite clear that it would not abandon the SACP. And the National Party did not believe that the SACP would ever lay down their arms. The portrayal of the Communist threat in the latter half of the period therefore emphasised its deceptive influence on the ANC, and its commitment to violence because of its indissoluble link with the SACP.

In 1988 and 1989 the National Party called on the ANC to disassociate themselves from the Communists. They claimed that it was not the NP's duty to draw the line between the Communists and the ANC; it was the ANC's.⁴³⁷ In 1988, the National Party suggested that the ANC could return to South Africa provided it cut its ties with Communism and ceased its violence. In the statement on 'Matters of National Importance' uttering the 'offer'

435 Hansard, Joint Meeting, 14 April 1989, col. 5768.

436 Hansard, House of Assembly, 20 May 1988, col. 10622.

437 Hansard, House of Assembly, 24 April 1989, col. 6376.

Botha reminded his audience (a joint sitting of Parliament) that many states on the continent, 'Had been brought to their knees by such destructive policies and ideologies'.⁴³⁸ Botha stressed that the ANC should cut ties with international Communism and return to the country to search for peaceful solutions, build the economy and improve social conditions. The speech suggested that the problem in South Africa was essentially social, but that those motivated by revolutionary ideals exploited it. The implication of the speech was that, due to the emergency measures, which had changed the circumstances, the ANC was pursuing new tactics of deception, and pursuing the struggle in different ways without relinquishing violence. The ANC was deemed to be trying to attain political acceptability, and concealing their undemocratic, Marxist goals beneath the apparently congenial meetings. A number of speeches in 1988 and 1989 reaffirmed the President's statements, suggesting that the ANC's new democratic stance was merely a deception.

The ANC's failure to abandon violence caused NP to argue that the ANC was not totally subservient to the USSR. In a contradiction of many preceding statements that had maintained that the ANC was simply a 'tool of Moscow', it was now argued that the ANC was not at the Soviet's beck and call. Geldenhuys commented that the, 'ANC is not going to come to the negotiating table because the Soviet Union asks it to do so'.⁴³⁹ This comment, amongst others, was in stark contrast to the argument that had been propagated previously, that the ANC were dominated by the Soviet Union and the SACP and entirely at the Communists' beck and call.

The Communists were deemed to be dedicated to thwarting the National Party's political reform initiatives. When political reform measures were introduced, the Communist nature of the ANC-SACP alliance was often held up. For example, in 1988, when a bill for a National Council including Africans was introduced, the Deputy Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, Badenhorst, stressed the 'inclusive' nature of the reform and argued that any aggravation caused to the ANC merely reflected the SACP's influence in the movement. He said that if the ANC was not prepared to support the proposed council, 'We will see it for what it actually stands for, stripped of pretence'.⁴⁴⁰ Again, the phraseology reflected the impression that the ANC had a great deal to hide because of their Communist connections, which needed to be exposed. In response to questioning,

⁴³⁸ Cape Times, 21 June 1988.

⁴³⁹ Hansard, Joint Meeting, 14 April 1989, Col, 6014.

⁴⁴⁰ Hansard, House of Assembly, 24 June 1988, col. 14827.

Badenhorst indicated that if the ANC rejected the initiative, only one inference was possible, that they wanted a Communist model of government. Geldenhuys similarly argued that the NP was not merely offering the crumbs from the political table and that consequently, the ANC's rejection of the reform, confirmed the long-standing suspicion that the ANC were not interested in black participation in the decision making process but only in the destruction of the existing order and its replacement by a Marxist one party state.⁴⁴¹ The so-called political liberation struggle was being used as a means to an end, that end being to establish a 'people's democracy' which in essence was not anything other than a Communist dictatorship. Those who remained in jail or continue to sojourn abroad were there, Geldenhuys claimed, because they were, 'Deliberately refusing to turn their backs on a system on a system of, 'Godless Marxism...radical destruction..terrorism'.⁴⁴² Thus the ANC was portrayed as being wedded to Communism and the Communist influence ensured that the alliance was implacable enemies of good governance and reform. Whereas in a previous instance the NP had portrayed the rank and file of the ANC as unwittingly and unknowingly being led by Marxists, Geldenhuys now created the impression that the ANC members were deliberately excluding themselves by their active commitment to Communism and terrorist destruction. Thus the ANC was portrayed as a more, and not less dangerous group.

Ironically, under P.W. Botha, as negotiation with the ANC became more and more of a likelihood, declarations by members of the NP as to the futility of negotiating with Communists became more prominent. As late as February 1989, it was stressed that the negotiation would be futile given the 'facts' of Communist domination of the movement. 'The ANC cannot speak for itself because as a party to the so-called liberation alliance it must also pursue and promote the objectives of the SACP. In terms of this liberation alliance dialogue with the ANC is also dialogue with the SACP. Not one of these organisations' objectives can be reconciled with democracy. The question remains: why dialogue?'⁴⁴³ The clarity with which the speaker iterated the point repeatedly suggested that it was so blatant, so intuitive that it should not be argued with. In July 1989, the Minister of Law and Order, Vlok claimed that, 'At no stage had the South Africa Communist Party/ANC alliance dropped their revolutionary aim to seize power and install a Marxist regime'. Vlok warned that 'The SCAP-ANC planners are trying to pull wool over the eyes

⁴⁴¹ Hansard, House of Assembly, 22 June 1988 col. 14720.

⁴⁴² Hansard, House of Assembly, 22 June 1988, col. 14719.

⁴⁴³ Hansard, Joint Meeting, 7 February 1989, col. 183.

of naïve people in South Africa, including Mr Wynand Malan, who held discussions with the ANC'.⁴⁴⁴ The rhetoric of previous years of intransigence of Communists and of deception being played off against naivety was as strong in this declaration as it had been in 1987 and even 1985.

A perception of the Communist political threat endured until 1989 as a feature of the National Party's discourse, even when the depiction of a Soviet led onslaught was no longer used. Thus by 1989, references to the Communist onslaught had declined, but were still present in NP discourse. Colin Eglin (PFP/DP) welcomed that the NP had come to realise that, 'Our problems in SA do not originate in Moscow but in Pretoria and in Cape Town'.⁴⁴⁵ However, although the NP no longer referred to the threat from the Kremlin, they continued to use the Communist threat to defend against criticism of their lack of initiative, to rebuff those who had been involved in such initiatives, and to demolish ANC declarations regarding the future possibility for negotiation. The election of September 1989, showed that the National Party had not ceased criticising its opponents for their promise to negotiate with the ANC - and, by inference the SACP. The dual threat of Communism and black majority rule remained an NP electioneering strategy. This tendency had reached its peak in 1987 but was still alive in 1989.

7.4. 'Frightening White Voters Back into the Laager'⁴⁴⁶ The Communist Threat During Elections

The National Party's depiction of the Communist threat peaked during election time. Electioneering material proved difficult to obtain,⁴⁴⁷ but the available material indicates that the 'rooi gevaar' was commonly referred to during the two General Elections that took place in the period, 1987 and 1989. It is not insignificant that the Communist threat was a principal feature of the election of 1987.

The life of the House had been extended until 1989 and so in actual fact there was no need for an election in 1987. But P.W. Botha, perhaps in response to the Conservative Party's challenges to test white public opinion in the light of the CP's breakaway from the NP

⁴⁴⁴ Nationalist Newspaper 'Facts belie DP's troika claim' (New Action, George/Knysna edition, July 1989)

⁴⁴⁵ Hansard, Joint Meeting, 2 May 1989, col. 7305.

⁴⁴⁶ The Argus, (Editorial) 1 May 1987.

⁴⁴⁷ INEG, New National Party, African Studies library.

before the new constitution came into operation in 1984, had announced in his New Year's Eve broadcast that an election would be held on 6 May.

Whatever the president's motives for setting that particular date for the election, it was a hard fought battle. The National Party as a coalition of factions was facing pressure from within the party.⁴⁴⁸ The decision of Wynand Malan, Dennis Worrall and Esther Lategan to contest seats as independents demonstrated the rising tide of opinion against the National Party's failure to implement reform amongst former party supporters. The election was also to prove a genuine test of the party against the Conservative Party.

On the left of the NP, the PFP was beset with problems. Since the resignation in February 1986 of their leader, Fredrick Van Zyl Slabbert, and of another valued member, Alex Boraine, the party had been in a state of confusion. The appointment of Colin Eglin to act as leader of the party assigned a man who was seen by some as a 'political retread' to a challenging role.⁴⁴⁹ An uneasy alliance was forged with the NRP. The party also had a thorn in its side in the figure of Horace Van Rensburg, a former frontbencher who had defected from the party at the end of the previous parliamentary session. Van Rensburg made public the rationale for his resignation, and alleged that the PFP was soft on security, unpatriotic, cynical in their response to the total onslaught scenario, and hostile to Afrikaans elements. In spite of these handicaps, the party had high hopes to increase its representation and to put up a strong campaign. The party was not short of funds as a result of support from The Slabbert Trust, and the alliance with the NRP meant that the party was free of debilitating inter-opposition conflicts. The name 'Operation Turbocharge' demonstrated the party's expectations and the decision to contest seats on a wide front.

Dubbed as a referendum on the next stage of the reform process and a public declaration of proposals for the future, the key feature of the election was a conflict between the PFP and the National Party.⁴⁵⁰ The NP therefore emphasised 'evolutionary reform', but defended a narrow path of reform, which did not include negotiating with the ANC. The NP's campaign commenced with the statement, 'Over my dead body will I vote for the

⁴⁴⁸ *Frontline*, March 1986, p.35.

⁴⁴⁹ Swart, *Progressive Odyssey*, p.183.

⁴⁵⁰ *The Argus*, (Editorial) 1 May 1987.

ANC, so why vote PFP'.⁴⁵¹ Some observers contend that the PFP's response was effective. In one advertisement the opposition listed, year by year, the catastrophic progress of white nationalism.

But the National Party's counter-reaction 'pulled out all the stops', and 'exploited the 'total onslaught' theme to the maximum'.⁴⁵² The campaign echoed Van Rensburg's allegations. Indeed, in a newspaper advertising campaign, which went full page in the Sunday Papers,⁴⁵³ the NP directly and deliberately linked the PFP (perceived to be their principal opponents) with Communists. References to the Communist threat in the public domain reached a climax during the election of 1987. A number of contemporary commentators observed the heightened use of references to the red peril in National Party statements. An editorial in the Cape Argus commented in 1987: 'Running through every election campaign since the NP won power in 1948 has been one or another bogey, but the two traditional favourites have been the swart gevaar and the rooi gevaar. The current election campaign has seen these two obsessive fears combined in the almost hysterical use of the ANC as a menace with which to frighten white voters back into the laager'.⁴⁵⁴

In line with the National Party's resolution to view the threat to South Africa not as black on white⁴⁵⁵ but as radical against moderate, the 'swart gevaar' (black threat) was only referred to covertly. Black majority rule, it could be inferred from National Party statements, was a threat in so far as it heralded the end of democracy in South Africa. The 'rooi gevaar' took the centre stage. The NP publicly claimed to be fighting Communism for the good of the South African people. A key feature of the election campaign therefore was discrediting the ANC as a potential negotiating partner. The ANC's link with Communism was frequently and vociferously stated. Communists were extremely dangerous. An election poster, 'We must hate - hatred is the basis of Communism' cited Lenin's quotation exhorting the people to hate. 'Children must be taught to hate their parents - if such are not Communists. If they are, then the children need no longer worry about them. Children should be present at the executions, and

451 Swart, *Progressive Odyssey*, p.191.

452 Swart, *Progressive Odyssey*, p.191.

453 Hope, *White Boy Running*, p.91.

454 Ibid.

455 National Party of South Africa, Programme of Principles, p4 cited in Aletta Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* p251

should rejoice in the death of the enemies of the proletariat'.⁴⁵⁶ The poster linked Lenin's exhortation to hatred with the township violence - suggesting that the two were one and the same thing. 'You've probably noticed that this barbaric philosophy has been violently evident in our black townships of late'. It then went on to suggest that senior PFP spokesmen had proposed unbanning of the ANC and the SACP, because both would be dealt with in the courts. The PFP therefore, was 'dangerously naive' to propose the unbanning of the SACP. The poster concluded that, 'Lenin was less polite. He bluntly labelled such naïve liberals as 'useful idiots'. Thus the PFP was shown to be soft on security and unrealistic for wanting to unban the ANC and the Communist Party. The threat of Communism - the dangers of the 'hatred' that Communists represented, were used as a weapon with which to attack the Nationalist's liberal opposition. Though the link between the two was theoretically weak, the National Party made it rhetorically strong.

The campaign against the PFP was based on several assumptions, that the party would unconditionally lift the ban on the ANC and the SACP. This was an inference, not a stated fact. One National Party MP stated that, 'We will say to the electorate, and we will say it clearly until such time as we have an authoritative statement from that side of the House - that the policy of the PFP is the unbanning of the ANC, the unbanning of the SACP, the unbanning of Umkhonto We Sizwe, and the condoning of commitment to violence and revolution'. The NP appeared to publicise this view in whatever media available. For example Mr Japie Basson, in a letter to the Cape Times argued that the PFP would unban the ANC's 'partner in violence', the SACP.⁴⁵⁷

The international dimension of the Communist threat was also referred to during the election campaign. The subcontinent was portrayed to be under an onslaught from aggressive predators against whom the only effective defence was an NP government. Under the heading of 'Our plan for peace' one leaflet stated: 'Your guarantee for safety. We are all concerned about the safety of our country and its people. We cannot afford to fall prey to Communism'.⁴⁵⁸ The use of the word 'prey' echoed statements that Communists were avaricious, greedy all consuming force. A picture of a tank implied that the action to be taken in defending the country was necessarily military. The reference to

⁴⁵⁶ *The Nationalist*, April 1987.

⁴⁵⁷ *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 9 February 1987.

⁴⁵⁸ *The NP Four Point Plan* [African Studies Library, UCT].

the Communist threat emphasised the NP's role as a protector of the people and justified the increased expenditure on an armament building programme. The repeated use of the word 'we' stressed that the NP was together in unity with the people in the face of the common enemy - Communism.

The portrayal of the PFP as being soft on Communism was prominent in advertisements in English language newspapers. The NP paid for a number of advertisements that depicted the Communist threat. The aim was not to rally the people against the Communist threat, but in reminding them of the threat, to rally the people against the PFP. An NP campaign advertisement placed on the 4 May is illustrative of the tactics used in depicting the Communist threat to the electorate. The advertisement was purportedly addressed to the PFP leadership⁴⁵⁹ (who, the advertisement claimed, 'still haven't grasped what it is about'). The advertisement claimed that the PFP were naive to the point of being stupid in their belief that they could talk the Communists out of what they wanted. It argued that no one had said that the PFP were Communists, but they were incapable of understanding the real issue facing South Africa and therefore incapable of dealing with it. The poster quoted Brezhnev, 'Our aims is to gain control ...of the mineral treasure house of Central and Southern Africa'. It further stated that: '23 out of the 30 members of the ANC national executive committee are Communists on Moscow's payroll'. Finally, it quoted Lenin, 'when a country is demoralised you can take it over without firing a shot'. The first of these statements was outdated (there had been two leaders since Brezhnev); the second was misleading (even if there were that many SACP members working within the ANC national executive, they were not on 'Moscow's payroll' as such). Although the statements were misleading or inaccurate, the National Party propaganda machine would not, by May 4 1987, have been unduly concerned. At this stage in the campaign (a day before the election) the NP abandoned responsibility to facts. The rhetorical resonance of the argument was what counted. Innuendo was as important as direct statement in a campaign that implied that the PFP was 'soft' on Communism and 'soft' on security.

Members, supporters and campaigners for the PFP did their best to refute the claims that it was soft on Communism. A Cape Times editorial stated, 'The NP's advertisement campaign smearing the PFP as soft on Communism needs to be forcefully rebutted...it is falsely implied that the PFP's readiness to unban representative black leaders and negotiate with the ANC means that the Opposition condones Communist - inspired

459 *The Star*, 5 May 1987.

violence. What nonsense!’⁴⁶⁰ Indeed the NP’s campaign was often factually incorrect or based upon a statement made by a single member of the PFP rather than on party policy. In one instance, the NP was made to withdraw the statement made in an advertisement because it was wrong. However, the PFP could not afford to ignore the allegations, and the campaign had the party lurching from one defensive position to another. The NP had success over in its portrayal of the PFP as pro-Communist was shown by a PFP advertisement on the morning of the election stating categorically that it was not ‘for’ Communism, terrorism and the ANC’.⁴⁶¹ Such last minute desperation and damage limitation did not augur well for the PFP.

On the soapbox, and in opposition to PFP candidates, NP candidates became vitriolic in their denunciations of Communism and suggestive of the opposition’s softness on Communism. P.W. Botha took centre stage in the campaign. For him, the Communist threat was a central issue, and as a result the Communist threat remained a pivotal aspect of the NP election campaign in 1987. The hackneyed arguments about the Communist threat were used. There was little variation in substance from the speeches made during parliamentary sessions. However, the style of references to the Communist threat altered during election time. At a speech to the NP in Pietermaritzburg, six days before the election, Botha devoted substantial time to the Communist onslaught.⁴⁶² The speech was a deliberate attempt to win votes, and as such was balanced between humour and seriousness, rhetoric and vitriol. Even the humorous anecdotes were underpinned by a sense of the seriousness of the Communist threat. With reference to negotiation, Botha told the following story: ‘The hunter took careful aim at the big bear, but pulling the trigger, he heard the bear say: Isn’t it better to talk than to shoot? Let us rather negotiate, make your choice. The hunter lowered his gun and he said: I want a fur coat. Good, said the bear, that is negotiable, I only want a full stomach. So they sat down and they negotiated. Eventually the bear walked away, his stomach full, and the hunter had his fur coat!’ The light-hearted tone with which Botha told the story suited the occasion. But the metaphor of the bear -(the choice of predator was surely no coincidence: Russia was portrayed as a Bear) to portray the ANC/SACP alliance served to remind the listener that this was no joke. The ANC, because of its links with Communism, were hungry and

⁴⁶⁰ *Cape Times*, 28 April 1987.

⁴⁶¹ *The Citizen*, 5 May 1987.

⁴⁶² Toespraak deur Staatspresident P.W. Botha by Geleentheid Van ‘n Openbare Vergaardering Pietmaritzburg 30 April 1987 [INEG]. PV 203 4/2/156.

predatory; dangerous and unpredictable. The only answer to the Communist threat, according to Botha, was to elect him as State President again. He pitched himself as a central defence against Communism throughout the campaign, and argued that the Communists didn't want to isolate Colin Eglin or Worrall, but they wanted to isolate Botha because 'Botha is standing in the way of Communism against South Africa'.⁴⁶³

The National Party's campaign at the May 1987 election also referred to the Communist threat as a justification for the State of Emergency, which might otherwise have been a vote-loser. For example, NP candidate at Sandton, Roland Host, stated 'People do not realise the extent of Communist activity here. The total Communist onslaught is not calculated over a period of two to three years. It is a long-term exercise. If we don't curtail and hinder the development of Communist organisation in South Africa we are in big trouble'.⁴⁶⁴ Host's speech might not have been typical of the NP's speeches; that he admitted to being a man who, 'Sees a Communist behind every bush' indicates the tenor of his opinion. However, the speech does give an indication of the Party line during the election.

The Communist threat was therefore a central feature of the 1987 election. Although the Communist threat was viewed as less serious internationally, it was still a useful vehicle for NP propaganda, and as Swart points out, the NP was assisted in this by the heightened unrest amongst the local black population, and ANC incursions across the border.⁴⁶⁵ Measured by immediate electoral returns, the campaign worked. The PFP lost six seats, and the NRP lost all but one seat it held. However, NP may have overplayed their hand in the 1987 election. The Conservative Party benefited from the swing to the right, and gained twenty-two seats. Though this was only enough two more than the PFP held, it was sufficient to displace the PFP as official opposition. As Colin Eglin bitterly commented in the first meeting of the new parliament, the NP's 'Rooi en Swart gevaar campaign' and its exploitation of the siege psychosis that is developing among the voters of SA caused those voters to turn to the right'.⁴⁶⁶ The character of parliamentary discourse after 1987 changed accordingly.

⁴⁶³ Toespraak deur Staatspresident P.W. Botha by Geleentheid Van 'n Openbare Vergaadering Pietmaritzburg 30 April 1987 [INEG]. PV 203 4/2/156.

⁴⁶⁴ *The Star*, 3 April, 1985.

⁴⁶⁵ Swart, *Progressive Odyssey*, p.191.

⁴⁶⁶ *Hansard*, House of Assembly, 20 May 87 col. 70.

By 1989, anti-Communism was no longer as central a pillar of the NP's election strategy. However, the NP continued to attempt to demonstrate that the newly formed Democratic Party (DP) was unfit to govern and in so doing, continued to make references to the DP's attitude to Communism. A focus of the National Party's arguments was that the DP promises were pie in the sky. The implication was that the DP was weak on security. The promise that one of the DP leaders had made, to lift the ban on the ANC and Communist Parties was referred to in a poster that drew parallels with the DP leaders and 'three blind mice' and concluded 'Climb on the DP coach and you'll end up with a pumpkin'.⁴⁶⁷ In spite of the scaling down of references to Communism, a key feature of the discrediting of the DP was the fact that they would unban the SACP. This was reflected in parliamentary debates. (Shortly before the election, the DP were mocked as 'useful idiots' who can do the enemies work for them').⁴⁶⁸ In a speech which drew upon generations of anti-Communism, and the perception that the Communists like locusts would strip South Africa bare, de Klerk lambasted the DP for their proposals to unban the ANC, suggesting that it would not be worthwhile to live in South Africa as a result.⁴⁶⁹ The ANC-SACP alliance was therefore subject to continued demonization by the end of 1989. But criticism was not as intense, in spite of the precarious nature of the National Party's electoral stance.

Thus as late as 1989, the Communist threat was still casting a shadow over National Party discourse, and there was certainly no suggestion or hint that the ANC and the SACP's unbanning was imminent. The National Party had used the 'rooi gevaar' for many years, and the fact that it was still prepared to do so, albeit less vociferously, in the election of September 1989 showed that the Party was not prepared to lay down this useful political weapon - effective against left and right. But the explanations of Communism in the previous parliamentary sessions had revealed what a dead end party policy had come to. Though the Party claimed that the ANC's rejection of their reform measures revealed that it was Marxist controlled and interested only in the violent seizure of power and Marxist revolution, in the context of increased interface with the ANC, the warnings sounded more and more like hollow scare mongering.

467 'Climb on the DP coach and you'll end up with a pumpkin' Election Poster, September 1989.

468 Hansard, House of Assembly, 21 April 1989.

469 Toespraak deur waarnemende staatspresident, 21 August 1989 [INEG] PV 743 M716/1/9/127.

Nonetheless, however hollow the scare mongering was, there is no doubt that the NP was deeply concerned about black majority rule. It would take a complete change of mindset to unban the ANC and the SACP. But the rhetoric of the election of September 1989 gave no indication that such a transformation was on the political horizon.

The hollow nature of threats highlighted during the 1989 election represented the fact that, by this stage the National Party could not rely on a homogenous body of support and therefore were resorting to electoral messages which sounded weak; which sought an 'enemy' in order to unite a fairly disparate body of support. By 1989, there was dissatisfaction amongst many elements of the National Party's traditional support base - the Afrikaner community; any belief in the total onslaught that had existed during the previous election was diminished. At Van Wyk describes himself as an Afrikaner who found 'himself in no man's land'; had there been an IP candidate in his constituency, he would have voted for them, he maintains; he hoped to see the NP forced into an alliance with the DP. As a patriotic Afrikaner who had previously 'swallowed it all [the total onslaught argument] hook, line and sinker', Van Wyk's disclosure demonstrates how disillusioned many Afrikaners were by 1989.⁴⁷⁰ By 1989 many key pillars of support for the NP within the polity had been eroded. The Broederbond, the secret lobby of some of the most powerful men in Afrikanerdom, had circulated a document proposing a non-racial charter with built in protection of minorities, which accepted that the majority could be black.⁴⁷¹ In the mid 1980s, alternative Afrikaner youth movements had sprung up - the punk movement held its elders in undisguised contempt. 'We Afrikaners were always from the bottom of the barrel. We realize that many of the country's problems of the last 40 years must be laid at the door of the National Party and us Afrikaners. But we are angry about this. We are furious because our parents have !"£\$%^ up everything'.⁴⁷² ⁴⁷³ The movement attracted members of the Security Branch to its concerts. Developments in other spheres also reflected fissures within the Afrikaner race. 1988 had seen the formation of the Vrye Weekblad, the first newspaper fully in Afrikaans that was in favour of 'non-racial, democratic, united South Africa'.⁴⁷⁴ Furthermore, students and academics at the alma

⁴⁷⁰ Van Wyk, *The birth of a New Afrikaner*, p.71.

⁴⁷¹ Pottinger, *Imperial Presidency*, p.402.

⁴⁷² O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party*, p.368.

⁴⁷³ See for example, C. Louw, *Ope Brief aan Willem de Klerk* in *Boetman en die Swanesang van die Verligtes*

⁴⁷⁴ Alan Emery, *South African Democratization: A Multidimensional Model Of Power Mobilization*, available at <http://www.interaction.nu.ac.za/sasa2003/emery.htm>

mater of some of the most prominent minds of apartheid had been alienated.⁴⁷⁵ In 1987 the Independent Movement was supported by 50% of Stellenbosch academics.⁴⁷⁶ Thus by 1989, there were many within the Afrikaner community who were prepared to challenge the long standing beliefs of the National Party. Under P.W. Botha, these developments had been opposed and resisted, but their presence was a realistic consideration for any pragmatic government.

Thus although the election of 1989 saw some elements of the 'total onslaught' message persisting - the electioneering materials attained demonstrate that it was weaker. It appeared that the NP was searching for enemies. That they had to turn upon previous members, defectors to the DP, in order to find those enemies reflected that the 'total onslaught' was no longer perceived to be as politically useful as it had been, and demonstrated the wider fissures in the NP's traditional support base.

8. The Transition

8.1. South African Politics and the Global Context, August - November 1989

In January 1989, P W Botha suffered a stroke, which temporarily incapacitated him. In an extraordinary political gesture he issued a statement declaring that the roles of State President and Party Leader be separated and that he would retain the presidency while relinquishing control of the party, in order to be a, 'Special force for Cohesion in our Country'.⁴⁷⁷ In the elections to the party leadership that followed, (after the elimination of Chris Heunis and Pik Botha in the first round), F.W. de Klerk won a narrow victory (of 8 votes) over Barend du Plessis, (the candidate of the enlightened element in the party caucus). Soon after the new party leader took up office, tension flared up between Botha and de Klerk, and in August 1989, P W Botha resigned. De Klerk assumed the Presidency.

Though de Klerk had a reputation for conservatism, the new president's inauguration demonstrated that this was going to be a different style of government than his predecessor's had been. On 6 September 1989 de Klerk allowed a march of 30,000 demonstrators, assumed by some observers as a de facto acknowledgement that such

⁴⁷⁵ Pottinger, *Imperial Presidency*, p.402.

⁴⁷⁶ Alan Emery, *South African Democratization: A Multidimensional Model Of Power Mobilization*, available at <http://www.interaction.nu.ac.za/sasa2003/emery.htm>

⁴⁷⁷ Barber, *South Africa in the 20th Century*, p.271.

public demonstrations were now to be permitted. In October 1989, he announced the release of the last prisoners, except Nelson Mandela. On 28 November 1989 he announced the dismantling of the National Security Management Systems; these actions demonstrated that the new State President's government was to assume a different tone than that of his predecessor.

Beyond the borders of South Africa, F.W. de Klerk's first few months were dramatic ones in the history of the modern world. A crescendo of events in Eastern Europe began in May 1989 when the much-hated leader of the Hungarian Communist Party was dismissed. Hungary began to dismantle the Iron Curtain, opening up its border fence with Austria and permitting East-West traffic. The Polish Communist Party was defeated at the polls in June 1989, and on 12 September the first non-Communist government took over in Warsaw. On 10 September Czechoslovakia opened up its border to East Germany and the many people of East Germany poured across it, en route to West Germany. Some of the East Germans who were not fleeing began to demonstrate, and when Gorbachev refused East German premier Honecker's request to send in troops (7 October), the latter resigned (18 October 1989). Gorbachev made a public statement that all East European regimes were in danger unless they responded to the 'impulse' of the times. On 4 November a million demonstrators marched in East Berlin and on 9 December East Berlin party boss, Gunter Schabowski announced that its frontier police would no longer try to prevent East Germans from leaving the country. In November 1989, popular discontent with authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe swelled, and ultimately, the Berlin wall was breached. Other regimes toppled like dominoes - Czechoslovakian demonstrations began on 17 November, Bulgarian on 18 November; and in Romania Ceausescus and his wife were executed on Christmas Day 1989. Images of the toppling of authoritarian regimes were beamed across the world.⁴⁷⁸ Inevitably this had an impact on the political climate in South Africa.

8.2. 2 February 1990

None of the changes that took place across the globe entirely predicted or removed the impact of de Klerk's declarations at the opening of parliament in South Africa on 2 February 1990. On that day, in a move that surprised the local and international community, de Klerk announced that not only was Nelson Mandela to be released, the

⁴⁷⁸ Johnson, *Modern Times* pp. 759-765.

bans on the ANC, the PAC and the SACP were to be lifted. The following chapter of this dissertation seeks to assess the NP's depiction of Communism during the early months of 1990 and to analyse how it changed since 1989. For, as has been shown, the ANC's link to Communism was still seen to be a reason to continue to distrust and ban the movement until 1989. The chapter also assesses whether de Klerk and his colleagues misinterpreted the collapse of Communism (as discussed in the introduction) and how de Klerk's own conception of Communism impacted on the declaration of 2 February 1990.

De Klerk's statements of February 1990 demonstrate that he no longer viewed the Communist threat as a serious one. Indeed, early in his speech, de Klerk stated, 'The year 1989 will go down in history as the year in which Stalinist Communism expired... The collapse, particularly of the Marxist economic system in Eastern Europe, also serves as a warning to those who insist on persisting with it in Africa. Those who seek to force this failure of a system on South Africa should engage in a total revision of their point of view. It should be clear to all that it is not the answer here either'.⁴⁷⁹ This view of Marxism, as a defunct ideology - having 'expired' and become unworkable, a 'failure of a system' demonstrated that de Klerk no longer saw the ideology as a danger to South Africa in itself. The assonant resonance of the phrase 'force this failure' drew attention to the futility of any attempt to impose Communism on South Africa. De Klerk perceived a lesson for the ANC in the expiry of Communism; in highlighting that others needed to be aware that Communism was unworkable, de Klerk preached at those who continued to believe in the Marxist ideology, as if, somehow having misinterpreted the events, the ANC needed the warning pointed out to them. At a later point in his speech, when de Klerk announced the rescinding of the ban on the ANC and the SACP, of his list of the most important facets which had informed the decision, the first was, 'events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, to which I have referred already, weaken the capability of organisations which were previously supported strongly from those quarters'.⁴⁸⁰ This reflected a view that the ANC had changed as a result of the collapse of Communism, and that it had been profoundly weakened by the collapse of the latter.

De Klerk chose to seize the advantage of the collapse of Communism, using it as a vehicle to proactively promote change. In language that posited a vision for South Africa he claimed: 'Hostile postures have to be replaced by co-operative ones; confrontation by

479 Hansard, House of Assembly, 2 February 1990 col. 3 onwards, also available at <http://www.fwdklerk.org.za/archives/920124par.htm>

480 *ibid.*

contact; disengagement by engagement; slogans by deliberate debate. The season of violence is over. The time for reconstruction and reconciliation has arrived'.⁴⁸¹ De Klerk overtly used the collapse of Communism positively, to launch South Africa into a new era of negotiation and reconciliation.

In seizing the initiative, de Klerk drew members of his cabinet with him. In the House of Assembly, Minister after Minister took to the floor, affirmed their support for de Klerk in his decision and reiterated that Communism was no longer a danger to life in South Africa. But the speeches of most of the ministers demonstrated that there was still a preoccupation with Communism. Pik Botha, speaking on 6 February 1990, referred to his statement of 3 May 1989 and claimed that though Gorbachev was not a poorer or less inspired Communist, this did not matter because, 'Russia no longer has an interest in supporting organisations that favour violence'. In the passage, Botha suggested that the turnaround in Russian attitudes would have inflicted massive harm on the opposition to the NP regime. He postulated that the events of Eastern Europe clearly illustrated that one party states, the Communist economic system, collectivism, management, planning and control of national economies from a central state bureau was no longer acceptable. In a tone reminiscent of a school master, Botha talked about the lessons that South Africa had to learn from Europe, namely that Communist economic and ideological systems had not worked and that the support that certain organisations received from Eastern European countries have been dealt a 'tremendous psychological blow'. The speech suggested that the initiative lay entirely with F.W. de Klerk's ministry as a result. Botha claimed that the ANC leaders must be thinking, 'We had better watch it. That chap de Klerk might be moving too fast for us'.⁴⁸² Botha implied that the decline of Soviet Union had reduced the ANC to children without guidance who were incapable of taking their own initiative.

Magnus Malan, Minister of Defence, also declared his support for the State President. Malan asserted that the securocrats had not 'had their wings clipped', and went on to say that the ideology of the SACP and its ally the ANC has been based on the Moscow model since the '20s' and that because of this same dependence on the Moscow model, (and the collapse of the Communism) the State President was able to unban the ANC.⁴⁸³ The ANC

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Hansard, House of Assembly, 6 February 1990 col. 140.

⁴⁸³ Hansard, House of Assembly, 6 February 1990 col. 147.

now had to return with, 'An ideology, a political vision and an economic system that have not worked anywhere in the world. Their vision has failed before the entire world. They admit it. They can come back to participate and I hope that the media will place their thoughts under close scrutiny'.⁴⁸⁴ This was a stark contrast to previous statements in which members of the NP (including Malan) had stated that the media was responsible for the disinformation and for propagating the Communist onslaught. Malan stressed that the ANC were coming back with a discredited ideology, as if the rug had been pulled from under their feet. He suggested that the ANC was a dismal failure.

Geldenhuys' speech had similar elements to Pik Botha's. He claimed that the fact of the matter was the Soviet Union was no longer willing to use violence to maintain a socialist, Marxist government in any other country. Claiming that it was time that the people were confronted with the reality of Communism - which had been perceived to be a kind of Robin Hood organisation - and therefore be able to reject it.⁴⁸⁵ Numerous other speeches were made along the same lines: the Minister of Law and Order stated that the NP had beaten Communism by restrictions and charges against Communists, but that to beat it in hearts and minds was necessary (i.e. by unbanning the SACP). Most of the speeches referred to Communism but only to state that it was something that could be dealt with by law, since it had proved to the world that, 'It cannot work and that is why it is no longer necessary to ban it by way of legislation'.⁴⁸⁶ In a remarkable speech Coetsee, the Minister of Justice, claimed that the Conservative Party were longing for the days when, 'The country was faced with an attack by the combined forces of Russians, the ANC, the Red Chinese, Bolshevists, Communists and Marxists', because they would not know what to frighten voters with now.⁴⁸⁷

Perhaps, inwardly members of the NP were themselves longing for those days of simplicity outlined by Coetsee, when they were facing the months of uncertainty and negotiation ahead. But on 2 February 1990, members of de Klerk's cabinet laid down the 'red peril' as a rhetorical and ideological weapon with which to justify oppression. The speeches outlined above created the impression that the ANC was no longer something to be feared. Instead, due to the collapse of Communism, it was a body with which meaningful

484 Hansard, House of Assembly, 6 February 1990 col. 153.

485 Hansard, House of Assembly, 6 February 1990 col. 164.

486 Hansard, House of Assembly, 6 February 1990 col. 164, The Citizen, 7 February 1990.

487 Hansard, House of Assembly, 6 February 1990 col 378.

negotiation could be held. They created the impression that as a result of the collapse of Communism, the ANC would limp back to South Africa, lame because its ideology was discredited, paralysed because its lifeblood had been withdrawn, that it would be blinded by the light of media scrutiny and that its supposed Communism would be revealed as nothing more than a sham. It was as if now, the NP could unban the ANC, lecture them, and the ANC would hang their heads in shame and accede to the NP's desire for power sharing. The National Party's speeches and proclamations about the weakness of the ANC should be considered in context. They were faced with outright fury from the Right Wing, who believed that they had betrayed their election promises.⁴⁸⁸ Perhaps members of the NP were merely trying to mollify their opponents; or perhaps the cabinet ministers who spoke about the collapse of Communism genuinely believed that the withdrawal of Soviet support for the ANC would enable the NP to maintain the upper hand in negotiation, and to implement a 'power sharing' model. It is probable that they realised - when urged by De Klerk - that the impasse into which the country, and that National Party, had fallen and that the erosion of the National Party's power base needed a radical solution. The final stage of the dissertation focused on F.W. de Klerk, the key player in the National Party's decision to unban the ANC, the SACP and the PAC, and assessed his perceptions of Communism, to consider whether the NP did misjudge the ANC when they unbanned them.

8.3. F.W. de Klerk's perceptions of Communism

With a National Party heritage of more than a generation, (his father had served in the NP cabinets under three Prime Ministers and his grandfather was a friend of Paul Kruger) de Klerk undoubtedly grew up with anti-Communist influences around him. While he cannot cite particular instances, a number of factors in his life shaped an anti-Communist stance, including, 'Afrikaans newspapers, cultural organisations, churches and the National Party'⁴⁸⁹ and also events such as the 1960's so-called International Conference in Pretoria which drew attention to the danger of Communism.⁴⁹⁰ De Klerk drew parallels between anti-Communism to which he was exposed and the views of many Americans in this regard.⁴⁹¹ In addition, de Klerk had a reputation as a conservative, both as leader of

488 Hansard, House of Assembly, 6 February 1990

489 De Klerk, Interview, November 2001.

490 David Steward, Interview, August 2001.

491 De Klerk, Interview, November 2001.

the Transvaal NP after the overthrow of Treurnicht,⁴⁹² in cabinet posts (Home Affairs and Education) and as Chairman of the Ministers' Council. De Klerk's conservative policies included opposing the entry of African students to white universities, acting harshly against radical students, and in 1986 defending the Own Affairs system of government.⁴⁹³ His conservative image was reinforced by speeches inside and outside parliament that had as their leitmotiv the notion that the South Africa's racial groups (i.e. Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Africans) should be given separate institutions at all levels of government. The defining characteristic of de Klerk's speeches and writings was his belief in, 'Diversity and interdependence'.⁴⁹⁴ On the grounds that South African racial groups were both diverse and interdependent, de Klerk claimed *inter alia* that the Conservative Party's view of the Afrikaner's sovereign country and state, and the ANC's view of 'one man, one vote' were equally impracticable.⁴⁹⁵

De Klerk's exposure to the security apparatus' views of a Communist onslaught seemed to convince him that it should be taken seriously. For example, in 1986, though recognising that the ANC was a crucial factor that could not be ignored, he was ambivalent about negotiation. 'It was an indisputable fact that the USSR with its expansionist policies exerted enormous influence on the ANC'.⁴⁹⁶ De Klerk did not ridicule P.W. Botha's view of a total onslaught, stating that during the mid 1980s the intelligence received in the SSC underlined a very grave situation; not only a concerted campaign to make South Africa ungovernable as the prelude to general revolution but also extremely serious external threats.⁴⁹⁷ De Klerk held the view that seldom had such a comprehensive international campaign been mounted against one country; he alluded to the sanctions net, to the fact that Soviet Union and their Cuban allies had established imposing positions in some of South Africa's neighbouring countries, to South Africa's involvement in a low intensity war in Northern Namibia and Southern Angola that had brought the SADF to direct conflict with

492 W. De Klerk, FW: Man in His Time, p.14.

493 Citizen, 30 April 86.

494 This view is borne out by a number of his speeches and writings. For a thorough explanation of it, see Address by Mr F W De Klerk, Minister of National Education and Chairman of the Ministers' Council (Administration: House of Assembly) City and Civil Service Club Dinner, Cape Town May 20 1987,

495 De Klerk, Donnerunderwriting Cape Sun Hotel 9 February 1988.

496 De Klerk, Interview, 7 November 2001.

497 De Klerk, The Last Trek, p.114.

Cuban and Russian-led forces, and to attack by guerrilla groups on South Africa.⁴⁹⁸ De Klerk's close colleague, speechwriter and co-author of his autobiography, David Steward, backed this up. 'We didn't need to invent a bogey, the bogey existed, in fact'.⁴⁹⁹

De Klerk's speeches often alluded to the expansionist nature of Marxism, and the threat it posed to South Africa. In a speech to UNISA in 1985, for example, he claimed that the ideology of Marxists and other radicals, 'Had to be unmasked by objectivity and a critical attitude for the unscientific wishful thinking'. He denounced Marxism saying it was, 'False, but also dangerous'.⁵⁰⁰ Like other members of the NP during 1985 - 1989, de Klerk highlighted the link between Communism and opposition to the National Party regime, and links between the ANC and the SACP. He claimed that the 'Communist dominated ANC' was a negative influence on potential group based solutions. In a speech to Assocom (the Association of Chambers of Commerce) discussing the challenge of responding to adversity, de Klerk referred to, 'The threat of Communist expansionism and related Black power dictatorship which has devoured the largest part of Africa'.⁵⁰¹ Similarly, de Klerk was inclined to make electioneering statements regarding the DP handing power over to the ANC and the SACP, claiming that thereafter South Africa, 'Won't be worthwhile to live in either'.⁵⁰² Thus de Klerk held an impression of a Communist threat to South Africa, which had been created during his upbringing and sustained during his cabinet membership by the influence of security briefings, and which were exposed on certain occasions both before and during his presidency.

However, de Klerk's speeches and activity upon accession to the position of Party Leader and State President demonstrated that he was not as obsessive as his predecessor about the Communist influence over the ANC. While his speeches occasionally referred to the 'terrorist ANC' as a 'radical organisation', they did not emphasise the threat to the same extent as P.W. Botha. In his speech to the National Party Conference on 21 August 1989, he referred to the ANC-SACP, when discussing the reasons for his discussions with Kaunda, but he did not go into detail about the alliance.⁵⁰³ Furthermore, the dismantling of the

498 De Klerk, *The Last Trek*, p.114.

499 David Steward, *Interview*, August 2001.

500 *The Citizen*, 28 September 1985.

501 Address by Mr F W De Klerk, To Assocom Annual General Meeting, East London, October 20, 1987.

502 Toespraak deur waarnemende staatspresident, 21 August 1989 [INEG] PV 743 M7/6/1/9/127..

503 De Klerk, Toespraak deur waarnemende Staatspresident, Port Elizabeth, 21 August 1989.

National Security Management System, announced on 12 September 1989,⁵⁰⁴ suggested either that de Klerk objected to the prominent role of the military in politics, or that he did not envisage the scale of threat that his predecessor had anticipated.

De Klerk also appeared to view the Communist threat in its international context, and to scrutinise the changes in the Soviet Union, rather than merely persisting in using the terminology of the previous years. In 1989, de Klerk responded to questioning on 'World Monitor' with the statement that, 'Like the rest of the free world, we are watching with interest developments in Russia, changes in policy; as far as we are concerned important changes seem to be aimed at withdrawing from regional conflicts, withdrawing support of organisations who participate in violence, that sort of thing. It is interesting, I think in as much as it is true, it is a good development, but as far as future relations are concerned, I think it's early days at this stage'. De Klerk espoused more of a flexible view of the Soviet Union than his predecessor.⁵⁰⁵ In discussions of the Communist threat he was less vehement and ideologically focused, and more pragmatic.

Pragmatism played a role in de Klerk's decision between November 1989 and February 1990. He recognised that South Africa's position was becoming more and more precarious, that the country was economically crippled and that, 'Internationally we were teetering on the edge of the abyss'.⁵⁰⁶ He possibly also recognised the extent to which the National Party was losing its traditional support base, and he was certainly more prepared to listen to caucus members.⁵⁰⁷ Thus de Klerk's February speech marked a departure from the dominance of ideological motivation and a response to the reality of the situation in South Africa. This was a significant departure, for although anti-Soviet feeling had dimmed in the later 1980s and had little *raison d'être* after 1989, it was clear from the speeches of 1988 and 1989 that members of the National Party could contort the notion of a Communist onslaught beyond its original parameters. De Klerk did not permit such contortions to take place during and after February 1990.

However, judged against the future that de Klerk envisaged for South Africa when he unbanned the various movements, it becomes clear that the decision was also generated

504 F.W De Klerk, *The Last Trek*, p.151.

505 De Klerk, *Interview*, November 2001.

506 W. de Klerk, *F.W. De Klerk the man in his time*. p.5.

507 Leon, *FW de Klerk, the Politics of Enigma*, p21.

by a conception of the passing of the Communist threat. The collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe impacted heavily upon de Klerk and influenced the decision to unban the ANC, the SACP and the PAC. Questioned by Ted Koppel of American Broadcasting Corporation's Nightline as to how events in eastern Europe influenced his decision, de Klerk claimed that it contributed indirectly by creating a scenario where the Communist threat lost its sting, giving the opportunity to break new ground.⁵⁰⁸ De Klerk recognised an opportunity in the collapse of an ideology, and on the back of that collapse, persuaded his cabinet to take a 'quantum leap', which he had spoken of in his first speech to the party caucus.⁵⁰⁹ 'A window had suddenly opened which created the opportunity for a much more adventurous approach than had previously been conceivable. It was as if God had taken a hand - a new turn in world history. We had to seize the opportunity'.⁵¹⁰

Though the decision was driven by a combination of pragmatism and ideology, de Klerk was dazzled by the legacy of ideological motivation that had driven the party for so long. De Klerk seemed to believe that, as a result of the collapse of Communism he could control the ANC. De Klerk claimed that negotiation was possible, but denied that he would concede ground on 'black majority rule' (which, though not explicit in the ANC's demands was implicit in a fair electoral system because of South Africa's demography). On 9th February 1990, de Klerk stated in parliament that the DP advocated a 'majority domination model', which the NP rejected, but the NP advocated a 'power sharing model' (which, it was implied, would protect the white minority).⁵¹¹ De Klerk subsequently claimed that he accepted the, 'Full logical consequences of power sharing provided there would be reasonable protection for minority rights'.⁵¹² However, though he might not publicly admit it later, de Klerk hoped and expected to tightly limit any 'power sharing' model. In a letter to a constituent, dated 29 May 1990, de Klerk explicitly stated: 'I would like to make it plain that there is *no possibility* of the ANC taking over the Government of the country. That would be possible only under a system providing for simple majority domination. That is something to which my Government will not agree'.⁵¹³ The fact that de Klerk did not envisage an ANC government was evidence of his

508 Interview Transcript from Ted Koppel's Nightline Programme, February 1990. [INEG].

509 De Klerk, Interview, November 2001.

510 , W. de Klerk, F.W. De Klerk the man in his time, p.8.

511 Hansard, House of Assembly, 9 February 1990, col. 480.

512 De Klerk, The Last Trek, p.160.

513 Letter to Mr C H Botha, 29 May 1990. (INEG), PV 734 4/11/13 v2. 90.

conviction that he could out-negotiate what he believed to be a newly weakened ANC, and of the fact that he had not accepted any one-man, one-vote system in 1990.

That de Klerk misjudged the ANC's power-base was clear in 1989, when in a speech he aired his, 'Sincere belief' that, 'too much credence is attached to the ANC...Scientific surveys proved beyond doubt that the support of the ANC is absolutely overrated in many quarters'.⁵¹⁴ The suggestion was that the ANC's support lay externally to South Africa. This was incorrect. The ANC was a popular local movement, not one that drew its strength entirely from external sources. An HSRC survey in 1990 of African urban areas showed that 20% supported ANC, and 30% were sympathetic to it, which was remarkable given that it was a crime to support the ANC.⁵¹⁵ The Soviet Union's diminishing support for the ANC did not cause it to wither and die. Though the armed struggle might fizzle out, the strength of the ANC was as a local political force; its influence had penetrated deep into black society with the help of movements like the UDF and the National Forum. Just three hours after Mandela's release an indication of the strength of the ANC, and the calibre of its leadership was given when the former prisoner addressed a crowd of 60,000 on Cape Town's Grand Parade.⁵¹⁶ Over the coming months and years, the ANC-SACP's negotiating skills demonstrated that the movement had not been ideologically crippled by the collapse of Communism; the resounding election victory (with 62.6% of the votes) in 1994 showed that the alliance had genuine popular support.⁵¹⁷

In February 1990, when taking a pragmatic decision in the context of the deteriorating economic situation in South Africa, de Klerk was assisted by the momentum created by the changing international climate. He used the situation to generate an internal momentum within the cabinet, convincing them that it was now important, and 'safe', to 'seize the initiative', and later he and his colleagues tried to ensure that the momentum stayed with the National Party. For example, recognising that timing was crucial in sustaining world media attention, the 2 February speech withheld the most important announcements until last. Similarly, the release of Mandela nine days later ensured that the National Party was 'the only show in town', and all the cabinet ministers were able to confirm their

514 De Klerk, 'Uittreksels uit slotboodskap deur Mnr. F.W. De Klerk, Leier van die Nasionale Party: Nasionale Party Kongres, Kaapland', 22 July 1989,

515 Human Sciences Research Council Survey 1990, cited in Guelke, *South Africa in Transition*, p.35.

516 Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, p.398.

517 Sampson, *Mandela*, p.491.

commitment to de Klerk's decision in the glare of the world media in anticipation of Mandela's release.⁵¹⁸ Such media handling was effective, and had the NP been facing a movement genuinely discredited or crippled by the collapse of socialism, the initiative might have remained with the NP. But the fact was that the ANC was not crippled by the decline of socialist ideology. As a result the NP could not discredit the ANC as easily as they might have anticipated.

⁵¹⁸ De Klerk, *The Last Trek*, pp. 160.

9. Conclusion: the myths we live by

With the words, 'Stalinist Communism..expired' on 2 February 1990, F.W. de Klerk finally destroyed anti-Communism and the threat of Communism as a rhetorical device for justifying oppression in South Africa. Until that date, the National Party's portrayal of the Communist threat to South Africa had frequently been used in political discourse. It had peaked prior to the May 1987 election, and changed and declined slowly thereafter. The NP's changing portrayal of the Communist threat was complex. It was used to defend the National Party's chosen pace of 'evolutionary' reform against threats from the right and the left.

The NP's perception of international Communism did change, albeit slowly, in response to the events of the period. The impression that the Soviet Union was an implacable enemy, the root of all evil in the world, and irrevocably set on a path of total world domination, changed slowly as the Angolan/Namibian conflict on the subcontinent was settled with Soviet assistance. Gradually, a new conception of the Soviet Union emerged. The West, in imposing sanctions on SA, displaced the Soviet Union as enemy in much of National Party discourse. With this change in perception of the Soviet Union, other elements of the Communist bogey were irrevocably weakened, for the strength of the Communist bogey had been that it united local and international enemy, justifying a siege psychosis, and military might.

Whereas the change in portrayal of the Soviet Union was a response to international events led by the Department of Foreign Affairs, the change in NP portrayal of other aspects of the Communist threat was linked closely to domestic political exigency. The NP's portrayal of the Communist threat altered in response to their perception of the sources of opposition within the country and within parliament. Communism was a ubiquitous 'bogey', wheeled out in support of a personal, departmental, party political or national argument. Therefore in spite of the fact that the USSR was no longer consistently portrayed as the instigator of violent change, the concept of a Communist onslaught on the military establishment was slow to decline.

Members of the defence establishment continued to imply (during Defence Appropriation votes) that a Communist onslaught could and would undermine the South African Defence Forces and the country's ability to defend itself, right up until 1989.

In the domestic political sphere, the notion that Communists were at the centre of socio-economic uprising was eroded, as a more sophisticated conception of the situation in the townships emerged amongst National Party members. The Communist threat received a different emphasis, and became a justification for 'evolutionary reform' in the face of Conservative Party opposition after 1987. However, this in itself further weakened the Communist threat as a political zeitgeist, for it affirmed that the threat could be solved by local socio-economic palliatives, thereby confirming that it was a domestic and not an international problem.

But the enduring aspect of the NP's discourse on the subject of the Communist onslaught was the Communist 'political' onslaught. Throughout the period, the NP branded any source of political opposition as active proponents or victims of the Communist threat. This analysis was most prominently applied to PFP members, and Afrikaners who had ventured to meet the ANC in Dakar. Even by 1989, the ANC was demonised by members of the NP as being irrevocably wedded to Marxism and, as a result, to violence and revolution. It appeared, even in 1989, that there was no way the ANC would be unbanned until it renounced its links with the SACP.

The National Party thus blew up the myth of Communism to such an extent that it had become larger than reality. The Party used the threat of Communism to deny to themselves, as well as to the wider political community, that African nationalism (without a Communist agenda or Communist support) was a genuine threat to National Party hegemony and white political power in South Africa. Communism and 'black majority rule' were wedded in their minds; once one had collapsed as an international force, the National Party seemed convinced, at least outwardly, that demands for the other would expire, too.

As explained at the outset, the course of negotiations after 2 February 1990 is unfortunately outside the scope of this study. But this dissertation has shown that the National Party's 'myth' of the Communist threat, though it had some elements of reality, ultimately prevented the National Party from comprehending the nature of the ANC, or understanding the strength of the ANC. This misunderstanding, placed together with the revelations of gross human rights abuses and the skilful negotiating power of members of the ANC, meant that by the time of the April 1994 elections, the NP was a faint shadow of its former self.

Through dissecting the 'myth' of anti-Communism, other 'myths' are exposed, namely those that any politician creates about himself or herself, and that those surrounding them propagate, create and sustain. A study in contemporary history is fraught with difficulty, especially when that period in history is dominated by big personalities such as P.W. Botha, F.W. de Klerk, Nelson Mandela, and Joe Slovo. Each individual inevitably creates their own 'myths', and institutions that are active in South Africa in 2002, the ANC, the New National Party, and de Klerk's own foundation ('Working for peace in multi-cultural societies'),⁵¹⁹ sustain these 'myths'. Some individuals - and P.W. Botha was one of these - are more successful at imposing their own personal 'myths' on the wider populace. When analysing contemporary history it is easy to be buffeted around by the 'myths' associated with individuals - indeed, they may themselves believe the myth. Though it is only human to be susceptible to the influence of such myths, the historian cannot afford to be unduly swayed by the myths that surround the individual politician; he has to look beyond that and to visit and revisit the statements made by the individuals in order to draw a conclusion.

There is no doubt that as the historiography of the period matures, historians will be better able to decipher the 'myth' and the 'reality' of the Communist threat to South Africa. This study is a first attempt at the task: future studies would be enhanced by analysis of the numerous National Party and governmental papers in Afrikaans, by access to the papers of the SADF and the State Security Council and by a more thorough analysis of the election campaigns of the party. Ultimately, historians may be able to pinpoint the extent to which fear of the Communist threat motivated individuals within the National Party and shaped policy; and to distinguish between genuine fear and rhetoric used to garner support. This study represents a preliminary attempt to analyse the NP's portrayal of the Communist threat, to comprehend the 'myth', to see beyond the myths which will be propagated for years to come about the individuals involved with events, and so to 'understand the people of the past better than they understood themselves'.⁵²⁰

519 <http://www.fwdklerk.org.za/>

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11. Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ASSOCOM	Association of Chambers of Commerce
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DP	Democratic Party
ECC	End Conscription Campaign
EPG	Eminent Person's Group
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
FRELIMO	Front of Liberation of Mozambique
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, or Committee for State Security
NP	National Party
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
MPLA	Popular Front for the Liberation of Angola
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDM	National Democratic Movement
PAC	Pan African Congress
SACP	South African Communist Party
SSC	State Security Council
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola