

# National Overview

## • PREFACE

- 1 This chapter seeks to provide an overview of the context in which conflict developed and gross violations of human rights occurred. Other chapters in this volume focus specifically on the nature and extent of violations committed by the major role-players throughout the mandate period. The volume focuses specifically on the perpetrators of gross violations of human rights and attempts to understand patterns of abuse, forms of gross violations of human rights, and authorisation of and accountability for them.

### Sources

- 2 In identifying the principal organisations and individuals responsible for gross violations of human rights in its mandate period, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (the Commission) had a vast range of information at its disposal. In addition to court records and press reports, it received over 21 000 statements from individuals alleging that they were victims of human rights abuses and 7 124 from people requesting amnesty for acts they committed, authorised or failed to prevent. In addition, the Commission received submissions from the former State President, Mr P W Botha, political parties, a variety of civil institutions and organisations, the armed forces and other interested parties. All these submissions were seriously considered by the Commission. Through its power to *subpoena* witnesses, the Commission was also able to gather a considerable amount of information in section 29 and other public hearings.
- 3 While the Promotion of National Reconciliation and Unity Act (the Act) gave the Commission free access to whatever state archives and documents it required, in practice, access to the holdings of various security agencies was difficult, if not impossible, with the exception of the National Archives. It was also discovered that literally tons of security files were destroyed on the instructions of the previous government.
- 4 Despite these difficulties, a vast corpus of documentation was collected – more material than has been available to any previous enquiry into human rights in South Africa. However, the sources of information, while rich, were not evenly distributed, presenting difficulties in the identification of organisations and individuals who became perpetrators of torture, killing and other gross violations. The amnesty applications received from former members of the South African Police (SAP) represent an invaluable new source of material. The Commission received many applications from serving or retired police officers specifying their role in gross violations of human rights. Some of these cases, such as the death in detention of Mr Steve Biko, were well known both at home and abroad; others were unknown outside a very small circle of the perpetrators themselves. The information contained in amnesty applications revealed a deeper level of truth about the fate of a number of individual victims.

- 5 The Commission received notably fewer amnesty applications from members of the former South African Defence Force (SADF), notwithstanding the fact that the SADF was involved in a series of regional conflicts over a period of more than fifteen years. Many of these conflicts transgressed the 'laws of war' as laid down in international protocols. The Commission was unable to determine whether fewer gross violations are attributable to military personnel than to police officers or whether, in the belief that they would be less likely to face future prosecution, military personnel were more reticent than police officers in applying for amnesty.
- 6 Moreover, the Commission found the South African Police Services (SAPS) considerably more helpful with regard to the transmission of documents, the identification of former personnel and so on than officers of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). The latter was frequently reticent about supplying documents, often imposing unduly severe restrictions and constraints on access to military documentation, including the screening of documentary material made available to the Commission.
- 7 With regard to applications for amnesty, the Commission noted that individual applications received from personnel of the African National Congress (ANC), some of whom now hold senior positions in government, frequently lacked the depth of detail found in police amnesty applications. The Commission acknowledged the fact that the ANC's political leadership accepted collective political and moral responsibility for violations committed by its members. However, lack of detail made it difficult for researchers to ascertain with precision the role of individual members of the ANC in the commission of gross violations of human rights. The writing of this volume was also severely constrained by the fact that the majority of security force amnesty applications had not been heard at the time of reporting. This affected the ability of the Commission to include in this report assessments of the planning and authorisation of gross violations. Observations in these respects are therefore tentative and will be dealt with more fully in the final report of the work of the Amnesty Committee.
- 8 The Commission attempted to resolve these difficulties by identifying patterns and trends in the gross violations reported, as well as patterns of behaviour in groups and parties responsible for their perpetration. In so doing, it aimed to achieve a broader and more accurate picture of the history of human rights violations during the mandate period, 1960–94.
- 9 As elsewhere in this report, researchers and writers in the Commission have made use of secondary source material. The reports and publications of research institutes and monitoring bodies, both at home and abroad, have been extensively used. Affidavits collected for other enquiries and investigations have been used where they apply to the cases before the Commission. Published monographs, press reports and 'unrest reports' of the South African Police (SAP) have been extensively used.

## **External violations**

- 10 While few statements were been received from deponents and victims outside South Africa, it has been argued that the *majority* of victims of gross violations of human rights were in fact residing outside the country's borders at the time the violations were committed. One of the biggest single incidents of gross violation which occurred during the mandate period was the assault by the SADF on a base of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) located at Kassinga, Angola in 1978. More than 600 people were killed at Kassinga in one day. According to SWAPO,

these were unarmed refugees. According to the South African government, Kassinga was a guerrilla base and thus a legitimate military target. This is discussed in this volume.

- 11 Second, from evidence before the Commission, it would appear that conflicts in southern African states, particularly in Mozambique, Namibia and Angola, were often inextricably linked to the struggle for control of the South African state. Hence there is a sense in which the large number of people who died in wars and conflicts in the neighbouring states since 1960 did so, to some extent, in the furtherance of the South African struggle. While it is impossible to specify how many of these deaths were directly connected to the struggle for South Africa, the Commission believes that the number of people killed *inside* the borders of the country in the course of the liberation struggle was considerably lower than those who died *outside*.
- 12 It is for this reason that a distinction has been made in this volume between security activities and gross violations of human rights *outside* and *inside* South Africa's borders. This does not imply that the two spheres were separate. It is, however, clear that some of the most powerful protagonists in the conflict in South Africa recognised at an early stage that the contest was occurring to a large extent outside South Africa. In its first submission to the Commission, the SADF stated emphatically that "national security policy made explicit provision for pro-active actions beyond the borders of the RSA"<sup>1</sup>. This was consistent with a view frequently expressed at State Security Council (SSC) meetings that the defence of South Africa should take place outside its borders. The South African government's principal armed opponent, Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) also recognised, after the arrest of many of its personnel and the destruction of its internal organisation in the early 1960s, that its war had of necessity to be waged from outside South Africa.
- 13 Evidence before the Commission shows that members of the ANC and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in exile were also involved in the commission of gross violations of human rights, particularly within their own ranks.

## Internal violations

- 14 The difficulty of attributing precise responsibility for human rights violations committed outside South Africa applies also to the internal situation. As the political conflict in the country gained intensity, many more people were drawn into activism. In the 1990s particularly, more gross violations were carried out by members of South African society acting in what they considered to be the pursuit of a political aim than by members of political organisations acting on the express orders of their superiors. Both the state security services and guerrilla organisations such as MK aimed to supply such social actors with the means to achieve their aims – including weapons, information, trained personnel, and, in the case of the state, funding. It was therefore difficult to attribute direct responsibility for many violations, such as the lynchings or necklacings carried out by crowds loosely aligned to the ANC/UDF in the 1980s, and attacks carried out by social groups such as the '*witdoeke*' in Crossroads, encouraged and endorsed by state security forces.
- 15 The political authorities that promoted these actions, such as the chief of staff (intelligence) of the SADF, or the ANC propaganda station *Radio Freedom*, can be seen to have encouraged them or created the climate in which they occurred. They cannot, however, be described as direct perpetrators.

- 16 By the 1990s, the great majority of human rights violations, especially killings, were being carried out by persons who were not bound to a political authority. In some cases, weapons were supplied by organised groups. The Commission sought to establish a proper balance between individual cases where an identified perpetrator could be shown to have violated the rights of a specific victim, and the many more cases where large numbers of people, hundreds or even thousands, were killed in the course of 'collective' violence. Examples of the latter included drive-by shootings, indiscriminate massacres on trains or in certain residential areas, and armed political conflicts in KwaZulu-Natal and the East Rand where the responsibility of individual actors cannot be identified with precision.
- 17 Volume Three of this report deals with human rights violations in the different provinces and regions of the country. In many ways, the division between that volume and this is an arbitrary one and has resulted in an inevitable overlap in certain instances. In others, detail is included in one volume and simply sketched or referred to in the other. Ideally, the two volumes should be read together and seen as complementary.

## ■ SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONFLICT: 1960 . 1990

- 18 By far the largest proportion of amnesty applicants from the security forces and, to a large extent, the leadership of the liberation movements, were children and teenagers in the 1960s. They grew up in a world that was dominated by racism – a powerful socialising principle. The period was further characterised by two major historical phenomena: decolonisation and the cold war.

### Racism

- 19 Race was a powerful organising framework, drawn on, to varying degrees, by all parties in the conflict.
- 20 White South Africans were constantly told by their parents, schools, the media and many churches that black people were different from them and at a lower stage of development. With the emergence of the bantustan scheme, they were told that blacks were not even South Africans. Thus a distinction emerged in their minds about the citizenship of South Africans. Whites were the South Africans while their fellow black residents were now foreigners, temporary sojourners in white South Africa, no different from other disenfranchised migrants working outside of their home countries. They became 'the other', a short remove from what they were to become, 'the enemy'. An SADF amnesty applicant relates how, on arriving in what was then South West Africa, he and his fellow conscripts were told by their commander: "*Boys, hier gaan julle duisende kaffers doodskiet*" (Boys, here you will shoot dead thousands of 'kaffirs').
- 21 For the PAC 'the enemy' was just as unequivocally based on race. Thus in the words of Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) commander Brigadier Mofokeng:

*The enemy of the liberation movement of South Africa and of its people was always the settler colonial regime of South Africa. Reduced to its simplest form, the apartheid regime meant white domination, not leadership, but control and supremacy ... The pillars of apartheid protecting white South Africa from the black danger, were the military and the process of arming of the entire white South African society. This militarisation, therefore, of*

*necessity made every white citizen a member of the security establishment. [Transcript of Commission hearing on the armed forces]*

- 22 Even where parties to the conflict, such as the ANC, held to a strongly non-racial policy, the experience of their members and those they sought to organise drew centrally on the racial realities of South Africa.

## **Decolonisation**

- 23 The tide of decolonisation sweeping through Africa served only to reinforce the tendency of whites to regard blacks as 'the enemy'. The creation of a substantial number of new member-states of the United Nations and the shift in public perceptions in the former colonial metropolises greatly increased the pressure on the former government to grant full civil and political rights to all its inhabitants. British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan shocked and angered many members of the South African government when, in an address to the South African Parliament in February 1960, he spoke of "winds of change" blowing through Africa, implying the need for the South African government to adapt to changing times. Its response was to do all in its power to ensure that this wind changed course before reaching South African borders. It did so, moreover, in the face of rising expectations of black South Africans that the days of white minority rule were numbered and that it was a matter of time before South Africa, too, would be ruled by a black majority.

## **The Cold War**

- 24 Another important factor shaping the South African government's actions in the 1960s was the anti-Communist zeal of the cold war, in which the West was seen to be engaged in an effort to stem an encroaching and creeping Communism. Despite the South African government's diplomatic alienation from Britain and the Commonwealth in the early 1960s, the notion of a common struggle against the forces of Communism gained increasing popularity among key security policy-makers. The adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955, the relationship between the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) after 1960, and the ANC's later links to China and then the Soviet bloc, entrenched the National Party (NP) government's perception of a link between Communism and the struggle against white domination.

- 25 A number of NP leaders, including Mr FW de Klerk, have acknowledged in varying degrees that the racial policies pursued by the NP government in its attempt to ensure continued white rule were 'a mistake' and 'morally indefensible'. The struggle against Communism nevertheless continues to be put forward as an explanation and justification for security force actions. In the words of former Security Branch and Military Intelligence operative, Major Craig Williamson:

*[The] South African security forces gave very little cognisance to the political motivation of the South African liberation movements, beyond regarding them as part and parcel of the Soviet onslaught against the 'civilised/free/democratic' Western world. This fact, I believe, made it easier for the most violent actions to be taken against the liberation movements and their supporters, because such violence was not aimed at our own people, but at a 'foreign' enemy ...*

- 26 Thus, in the period 1960–94, virtually all opposition was labelled ‘Communist’ in its overwhelmingly negative ‘Cold War’ sense. Extra-parliamentary, and particularly black, opposition was considered illegitimate, and those associated with such opposition were effectively criminalised.
- 27 The liberation and later internal opposition movements were undeniably increasingly influenced by the tide of national liberation struggles sweeping the globe, many of which were deeply influenced by socialist ideas. The ANC, SWAPO (South West African People’s Organisation), MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Front) all increasingly presented themselves as part of this process and, to a greater or lesser degree, articulated their struggles as part of an international struggle against colonialism and imperialism, sometimes within the framework of socialism and Marxism.

## ■ THE DEVELOPMENT OF INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY STRATEGIES 1960. 1990

- 28 The history of resistance in South Africa was frequently associated with shifts in the patterns and forms of gross violations of human rights, as well as in the changing identities of perpetrator groups. In response to the events of 1960 and the liberation movements’ adoption of the armed struggle, the former state invoked the full force of its security legislation to curb resistance. Detention of political activists became the primary means of intensifying repression. Torture of detainees and other abuses associated with detention were the main forms of violation reported to the Commission for this early period. The most frequently reported perpetrator grouping was the security police.
- 29 The growing influence of counter-insurgency thinking – associated with South Africa’s involvement in the wars in the former South West Africa and Rhodesia – had a substantial impact on the patterns and modes of abuse reported. In the first place, it introduced a regional dimension to gross violations of human rights. Victims were increasingly non-South Africans. Secondly, as the political temperature rose within South Africa, models of crowd control employed by both the SAP and the SADF were informed by a counter-insurgency perspective. Thus counter-insurgency thinking was turned not only on a foreign but on a domestic civilian population. Increasingly, gross violations were attributed to those responsible for public order policing, among them the riot police and later the SADF. Thirdly, counter-insurgency thinking legitimated and facilitated the emergence of covert units such as Vlakplaas, and resulted in an increase in the number of reported abductions and killings of political activists. This trend intensified from the mid-1980s, as the rationale of counter-revolutionary warfare took hold within dominant quarters of the security establishment.
- 30 The insurrectionary model of resistance adopted by the ANC in the 1980s was based on the notion of a ‘people’s war’. Associated with this shift in strategic thinking was the fact that, increasingly, gross violations of human rights were perpetrated not by members under the direct command of the ANC or MK, but by civilians who saw themselves as ANC supporters and acted in line with what they perceived to be the ANC’s strategic direction. Thus violations associated with the liberation and mass democratic movements in the 1980s were not, in the main, the result of armed actions and sabotage, but tended to target those perceived to be collaborating with the policies and practices of the former government.

## 1960–1964: Internal repression and the emergence of armed opposition movements

- 31 The NP government responded decisively to the events of 21 March 1960 at Sharpsville, Langa, Cato Manor and elsewhere, and to the attempted assassination of Prime Minister Verwoerd on 5 April 1960. It banned both the ANC and PAC and declared a nation-wide state of emergency during which it detained over 1 600 people. It banned all public gatherings in terms of the Riotous Assemblies Act and sent the PAC leader, Mr Robert Sobukwe, to jail for three years. He would not, in fact, be released for nine – the one and only victim of a clause (the 'Sobukwe clause') in the 1963 General Laws Amendment Act that enabled the police to continue to detain individuals after the expiration of their sentences.
- 32 While the government was facing widespread opposition in urban areas like Sharpsville, it also faced a sustained rural uprising in eastern Pondoland. Again, the government's response was uncompromising. After several clashes in which protesters were killed, the police launched a helicopter assault on a meeting at Ngquza Hill in June 1960, killing at least eleven people. A state of emergency declared in eastern Transkei towards the end of that year remained in force for the next twenty years. During this period, twenty individuals were sentenced to death for offences relating to the Pondoland uprising, and eleven were executed.
- 33 The end of the national state of emergency in August 1960 led to a re-evaluation of tactics and strategies of resistance on the part of a number of political movements opposed to the government. The first to adopt an armed strategy was a new underground grouping, the African Resistance Movement (ARM), composed largely of disaffected white members of the Liberal Party and anti-SACP Trotskyites. The ARM launched a campaign of sabotage directed at strategic installations or non-human targets in October 1961.
- 34 A development of more lasting significance was the abandonment of non-violence as the preferred mode of protest by both the ANC and PAC as well as other groupings like the SACP, and the adoption of one or other form of armed struggle. In 1961, the ANC and the SACP both supported the establishment of an underground guerrilla army, Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), which formally declared war on the Republic of South Africa on 16 December 1961.
- 35 During the 1960s and most of the 1970s, armed actions by MK resulted in few human rights violations. Targets were symbolic or economic and care was taken not to endanger civilians. The first sabotage actions of MK resulted in some damage to property, notably to electricity pylons and similar infrastructure, but the intention of such actions was, according to the MK Manifesto, to "bring the government and its supporters to their senses before it is too late" rather than to initiate a revolution.
- 36 MK's *Operation Mayibuye* was a more ambitious plan which envisaged small groups of armed combatants infiltrating the country and "sparking off" a guerrilla war, by means of the recruitment of "armed auxiliaries" inside the country, political agitation, and urban sabotage. This strategy was thwarted by the arrests of the MK High Command at Rivonia in 1963. Police evidence showed that proposed targets of MK included administration board buildings and policemen. The trial led to sentences of life imprisonment for Mr Nelson Mandela and a number of other ANC leaders.

- 37 Over the next three years, MK carried out a widespread campaign of sabotage of government buildings and infrastructure. At this time, leaders of the liberation movements were working on a new strategy of guerrilla warfare, which entailed members undergoing military training abroad.
- 38 The PAC explained in its submission how it turned towards violence. Until March 1960, the PAC's policy, as expressed by Mr Robert Sobukwe, was that while "[w]e are ready to die for our cause; we are not ready to kill". However, the Sharpsville massacre led to the "formation of rudimentary armed units comprising mainly ... Task Force members." Armed operations were carried out at Mbashe (Bashee) Bridge, Paarl, Ntlonze and Queenstown between 1960 and 1962. Poqo was formally established as the military wing of the PAC and the decision to embark on an armed struggle was taken in Maseru in September 1961. The "Task Force/Poqo" was later transformed into APLA.
- 39 Poqo targeted white suburbs and individuals seen to be 'collaborators'. The popular theme at its branch and cell meetings was the overthrow of white rule by force. It also believed that the way to liberation was through a 'bloodbath'. Part of the blood to be spilt was that of black informers, spies and collaborators with the government. Hence bantustan chiefs like Mr Kaiser Matanzima also became targets. Any who questioned the legitimacy and constitutionality of certain developments could be included in the category of 'enemy agents'. While the PAC disciplinary code encouraged members to air their views "and to agree or disagree with all or any member of the movement, including the leader", there were instances where action was taken against those who disagreed openly with the leadership.
- 40 Following the events of the early 1960s, the South African government began to implement its bantustan policy. All Africans were to be stripped of South African citizenship and forced to become citizens of separate, ethnic bantustans or homelands. Ten homeland administrations were set up, although the South African security forces remained at least partially in control of security in the homelands.
- 41 The government also sought to strengthen and re-organise its security forces and security legislation. During the 1950s, the government had passed a range of security laws including the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Public Safety Act of 1953, the Police Amendment Act of 1955 and the Riotous Assemblies Act of 1956. During the 1960s, the government enacted further laws to counter the influence of political organisations which had been banned by law, notably the ANC, PAC and SACP.
- 42 One of the first such acts was the Indemnity Act of 1961 which granted indemnity to police officers for acts committed in good faith. It was made retrospective to 21 March 1960 (the date of the Sharpsville and Langa massacres) and began the process of placing the police above and beyond public scrutiny.
- 43 The General Law Amendment Act (1962), one of many to amend the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, built on the general premise that new security legislation was necessary to fight the perceived threat from 'Communist' organisations and Marxist ideology. During the second reading of the bill in Parliament, Minister of Justice Mr BJ Vorster noted that, considering the balance between personal liberty and the interests of the state, the state should offer protection only to the law-abiding citizen. In view of the brutal acts of sabotage that had been committed, the state now needed protection against subversion and the legislation was intended as a pre-emptive measure to maintain order and calm within the state.



- 44 The Act increased the government's power to declare organisations unlawful, as well as to impose a host of restrictions in the form of banning orders on designated persons. The Act also created the offence of sabotage which encompassed broad-based elements such as "wrongful and wilful" acts designed to "obstruct, injure, tamper with or destroy ... the health and safety of the public" or "the supply of water, light, power, fuel or foodstuffs". The penalties were the same as those for treason, ranging from a minimum five-year sentence to the death penalty. Further, the Act transferred the burden of proof to the accused, rather than maintaining the traditional stance that the accused was innocent until proven guilty.
- 45 The Act was followed by a series of measures aimed at strengthening the legal powers and effectiveness of the police as well as the powers of provincial Attorneys-General and the Minister of Justice. Simultaneously, the government curbed the ability of the judiciary to review the new security laws or to release people detained under these provisions. A further amendment to the General Law Amendment Act (1963) made provision for *incommunicado* detention for a period of ninety days. In practice, people were often released after ninety days only to be immediately re-detained for a further three-month period. This Act was later replaced by other laws providing for detention without trial – the Criminal Procedure Amendment Act of 1965, providing for a 180-day period of detention and re-detention, and the Terrorism Act of 1967, allowing for indefinite detention.
- 46 These laws were critical in establishing an environment of surveillance and repression in which the police were seen to be beyond public scrutiny and 'untouchable' by the judiciary.
- 47 In 1961, responsibility for the police was added to Justice Minister Vorster's portfolio. In 1962, he appointed Lieutenant General JM Keevy as commissioner of police and, in 1963, Hendrik van den Bergh as head of the Security Branch. According to the official history of the SAP, the three were a formidable triumvirate whose major objective was "to safeguard and protect the country."<sup>2</sup> They obtained significant increases in the police budget, a large proportion of which was absorbed by the Security Branch, which grew substantially in the 1960s.
- 48 A special unit, the so-called 'Sabotage Squad' was set up, drawn from the SAP's investigative section. In addition, a covert intelligence section was established as part of the Security Branch in 1963. Known as Republican Intelligence (RI), it largely ran 'informers' and aimed to penetrate the liberation and specifically the armed opposition movements. Many of the informers so recruited were journalists. Mr Gordon Winter, author of the book *Inside BOSS*, credits RI with the Rivonia bust, helping to smash Poqo, infiltrating the ARM and compiling extensive dossiers on white liberals connected to the Liberal Party. Winter was initially handled by Mr Johan Coetzee and later Mr Mike Geldenhuys, both of whom were later to lead the Security Branch before going on to become commissioners of police.
- 49 By utilising this legislative and institutional framework, the NP government effectively put the lid on extra-parliamentary opposition by the mid-1960s. The life sentences imposed on the leadership of MK at the Rivonia trial in November 1964 marked the end of this period of internal underground resistance.

### **1965–1973: The regionalisation of conflict**

- 50 Prior to the 1960s, the South African government saw the southern African region as an exploitable resource, a source of cheap labour and a ready market for the country's products. The continued subordination of the region could be ensured and was achieved through institutions like the Southern African Customs and Monetary Union which came into existence in the early twentieth century.
- 51 This attitude began to change in the early 1960s, in response to the rise of African nationalism and the steady withdrawal of the European colonial powers from the continent. NP politicians and senior security strategists began to conceptualise the region, and particularly the minority-ruled and colonial territories of Southern Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique and South West Africa, primarily as a military buffer zone.
- 52 Conversely, black opposition groups drew inspiration from the nationalist movements in other parts of Africa which had led to the independence of most former European colonies in the continent by the end of 1960. Some also became increasingly influenced by Soviet, Chinese or other models of political thought and organisation.
- 53 From the early 1960s, the ANC, the SACP and the PAC all established administrative headquarters outside South Africa and actively sought financial, diplomatic and military help to launch armed campaigns in South Africa. Following the Rivonia trial, the ANC established bases in exile – initially in Tanzania, later in Zambia and Angola – and began to develop fraternal links with other liberation movements.
- 54 By the mid-1960s, South Africa's stance towards the region was becoming more interventionist. In the SANDF's second submission on the SADF, the country's military strategy at the time was described as "defensive" but "more outward", prompted by the perception that there was now, "for the first time, the potential threat of conventional war on the northern borders of the sub-continent". The SADF's "strategy was to keep the 'defence line' as far as possible away from South Africa itself". This notion was the direct consequence of the fact that the security establishment's strategic thinking was deeply immersed in the logic of the cold war. Thus all forms of conflict and instability in Africa were seen as "avenues for Soviet involvement", with the SADF arguing that South Africa was faced with "a Soviet-backed revolutionary war".
- 55 Consequently, from the mid-1960s, the government undertook or authorised a number of defensive and pre-emptive operations outside of South Africa's borders. The first of these was the establishment of an SAP security police camp in the Caprivi Strip in northern South West Africa in March 1965, under the guise of an engineering company. The camp was under the command of former sabotage squad member, Major Theunis 'Rooi Rus' Swanepoel. The role of the camp was to monitor SWAPO activity. Sixteen months later, SAP units were deployed to the area in response to SWAPO's decision to move its trained cadres into South West Africa. On 26 August 1966, SAP forces attacked SWAPO's first military base inside South West Africa at Omgulumbashe, marking the beginning of South Africa's armed intervention in the region.
- 56 The first armed campaigns launched by a foreign-based South African liberation movement were the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns of 1967 and 1968. According to the ANC's second submission to the Commission, its Rhodesian campaigns were launched with the aim of "infiltrating trained MK operatives into South Africa in line with the concept of rural-based guerrilla warfare". The idea was that MK soldiers would thus create a "corridor" along which to infiltrate

guerrillas into South Africa. The campaigns were not a military success and resulted in the death and capture of a number of MK combatants.

- 57 In response to this development, SAP units were sent to Rhodesia in September 1967 to assist Rhodesian forces fighting ZIPRA (ZAPU) and MK (ANC) guerrillas in the north west of the country. In the SANDF's first submission on the SADF, it was explained that the SAP units were dispatched to Rhodesia "to fight against men who originally came from South Africa and were on their way back to commit terrorism in South Africa". By 1975, when the police contingent was withdrawn, 2 000 South African policemen were involved in combat operations inside Rhodesia.
- 58 In the period up to 1974, South African military support to Portuguese forces engaged in operations in Angola and Mozambique took the form of the supply of medicines, the pooling of intelligence information, helicopter support, some joint commando training and occasional joint commando operations. In Angola it included the secondment of a small number of experienced SADF trackers who wore Portuguese military fatigues, and were used to track UNITA fighters operating in alliance with SWAPO at that time.
- 59 In order to draw lessons from the Portuguese counter-insurgency effort, a number of the SADF's promising military strategists were appointed to 'diplomatic' posts in the two colonies. In December 1965, General Jannie Geldenhuys (later both Chief of the Army and of the SADF) was sent to Luanda as Vice Consul. According to his biography, his brief was "to study the Angola war". From 1971–75, the post was held by Major (later Major General) Marius Oelschig. After Angolan independence in 1975, Oelschig became the most senior SADF official operating in liaison with UNITA.
- 60 Similar links developed in Mozambique where SADF officers were seconded to the Portuguese regional military headquarters in Nampula from the latter 1960s. One of these was Brigadier Cornelius 'Cor' van Niekerk who was a liaison officer at Nampula in 1972/73. In 1979, he was appointed to head the Military Intelligence Division's Directorate of Special Tasks. In that capacity he was responsible for running the RENAMO operation against the Mozambican government from 1980.
- 61 According to the second submission on the SADF, the SADF began working alongside the Rhodesians and Portuguese in the region because of shared perceptions of threat. The SADF also responded to the changing regional security scenario by initiating a study programme on 'revolutionary war'. In the late 1960s, the SADF's Lieutenant General CA 'Pop' Fraser, then chief of the army, produced his *Lessons Drawn from Past Revolutionary Wars*, which in later years became a blueprint for South Africa's counter-revolutionary strategy. The SADF introduced formal instruction in counter-insurgency into its training in 1968; the SAP had already done so a year earlier.
- 62 In July 1969, senior security figures from the newly formed Bureau of State Security (BOSS), the Portuguese International Police for the Defence of the State (PIDE), and the Rhodesian Security Police met in Lisbon for a week of talks designed to bring about closer collaboration in their counter-insurgency efforts. Several further such tripartite meetings were held in the next five years, coinciding with the development by the SADF of a high-level think-tank focusing on strategic options in the region. Senior Rhodesian officers also participated in the project.

- 63 In the 1970s, the SADF actively propagated its views on counter-insurgency throughout the state sector through courses and lectures to groups from both the security and non-security sections of the public service. It was in this period, too, that General Jannie Geldenhuys introduced the military to the ideas of the American security theorist, JJ McCuen. Further US influence was evident in the co-operation between the security forces and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which considered South Africa a local ally against the Soviet Union. Examples include the role of the CIA in providing information which led to the capture of Nelson Mandela in 1962, as well as training given to General van den Bergh prior to the creation of BOSS.
- 64 Counter-insurgency spoke of 'national security' rather than 'defence of national territory', thus drawing political conflict into the domain of the security establishment. A successful counter-strategy was seen as being dependent on accurately recognising the particular stage of development of the insurgency war and arresting its development by instituting a counter-phase. The theorists on whom the South African securocrats drew stressed the need for a co-ordinated and organised counter-offensive involving the police, the military and bureaucracy.
- 65 The South African government drew on Cold War theories to argue that its opposition to local liberation movements with Soviet sympathies or links was part of the same battle that the US and Western Europe were waging against Eastern Europe and the USSR.
- 66 A few years after the Wankie campaign, the South African security forces began to develop a strategy of clandestine warfare, later known as destabilisation. Although this was widely acknowledged as a policy in the 1980s, there is evidence that it had its origins in a much earlier period. Most of the evidence concerns *Operation Plathond*.

### ***Operation Plathond***

- 67 *Operation Plathond*, a joint BOSS and SADF operation, involved the training of a surrogate force of Zambians for operations against the government of President Kaunda, the ANC's most important backer in Africa. Under the command of the head of South Africa's first special forces unit, Colonel Jannie Breytenbach, this operation is said to have trained some 200 Zambians for destabilisation operations inside Zambia. It was abandoned in 1973 or 1974, when President Kaunda made public allegations of South African interference in Zambian affairs.
- 68 Information about *Plathond* was given to the Commission by a former member of BOSS, Mr Mike Kuhn. The SADF nodal point informed the Commission that it had no knowledge of any project code-named *Plathond*.
- 69 Some evidence to back Kuhn's claims is found in Jannie Breytenbach's book, *Eden's Exiles: One Soldier's Fight for Paradise* (1997). Breytenbach reveals that, in 1971, he was given a mission "to train a hundred guerrillas as a nucleus around which a bigger irregular force could be built. Everything was to be done in utmost secrecy". Whilst he does not state that those being trained were Zambians, he writes that, as part of the training, operations were carried out in south-western Zambia "where small groups from our base would harass SWAPO bases and Zambian army garrisons which gave them support".
- 70 In June 1974, the journal *X-Ray on Southern Africa* (IV, 9) published by the Africa Bureau in London reported that the SADF had been training a force of dissident Zambians in the Caprivi with the objective of toppling the Zambian

government. The report was largely based on two court cases in which Zambians were charged with actions related to the training of Zambians in the Caprivi.

- 71 In a report prepared in 1989 by the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) in Harare for the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers and published under the title *Apartheid Terrorism: The Destabilisation Report*, the point is made that Namibia, and particularly the SADF bases in the Caprivi, had been used from the mid-1960s as a “springboard for ... incursions into Zambia”.
- 72 While it has not been possible to obtain definite corroboration of Kuhn’s claims regarding *Operation Plathond*, there is much stronger evidence of South African involvement in the creation of a Zambian dissident force during the 1980s, in the form of the Mushala Gang. What is significant about this Zambian case is that it pre-dates by several years the conventional wisdom as to when surrogates like UNITA, RENAMO and the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) became key components of South Africa’s regional counter-mobilisation strategy.
- 73 The security establishment was further restructured with the creation in 1968 (retroactively legislated in 1969) of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), a ‘super-security’ structure to which both the security police and military intelligence were required to submit intelligence on an ongoing basis. Appointed to head the agency was the special security adviser to Prime Minister Vorster, General Hendrik van den Bergh.
- 74 Whilst BOSS’s supremacy as an intelligence-gathering and assessment agency has never been in doubt, there has been much speculation as to whether BOSS also possessed an operational capacity in the form of the ‘Z-squad’. A former senior National Intelligence Service (NIS) counter-intelligence operative confirmed in a briefing to the Commission that a covert Z division did exist, but asserted that it had never been involved in the elimination of political opponents. An interview with one of the alleged few surviving members of this division also confirmed its existence and its involvement in *Operation Plathond*, in the rehousing of former PIDE officers and agents in South Africa following Mozambican and Angolan independence, and subsequently in covert intelligence collection in southern Africa. Other claims have been made that Z division specialised in interrogating South Africans who had been captured fighting alongside nationalist guerrillas in Rhodesia and Mozambique. Some of those interrogated were later killed.
- 75 Appearing before the Erasmus Commission of Inquiry into the so-called ‘Infogate’ scandal in the late 1970s, General van den Bergh hinted that his department had an operational capacity and that murder was not beyond its line of duty:

*I am able with my department to do the impossible ... I can today tell you here, not for your records, but I can tell you, I have enough men to commit murder if I tell them, kill ...*

- 76 Two amnesty applications revealed that members of the South African security forces were engaging in targeted assassinations at the time of BOSS’s early existence. Brigadier WAL du Toit [AM5184/97] applied for amnesty for the production of explosive devices intended for unknown victims in 1969 and 1970, and Brigadier Willem Schoon [AM4396/96] for the abduction, arrest and killing of two ANC combatants in Zeerust in July 1972.

- 77 By the end of the 1960s, the SAP and the SADF, backed by powerful ministers, had both undergone processes of expansion and re-organisation, with the result that the security-related structures had moved from the margins of the state to its very centre. This move was symbolised Mr BJ Vorster's accession to power following Dr Hendrik Verwoerd's assassination in 1966. The transition had not come about without conflict and without a significant degree of rivalry between the different members of the security establishment. The tensions were greatly exacerbated by the establishment of BOSS and the near 'untouchable' status that General van den Bergh enjoyed.
- 78 One consequence of these tensions was the appointment in 1969 of the Potgieter Commission. The report spoke, for the first time, the language of a 'total onslaught'. It resulted in the establishment of the State Security Council (SSC) to replace the old Cabinet State Security Committee. In terms of the Security Intelligence and State Security Council Act of 1972, this council was to play an advisory role to cabinet in respect of intelligence priorities, security policy and strategy.
- 79 In 1969, the ANC held its first general conference since its establishment in exile. The conference, held in Morogoro, Tanzania, adopted a new programme called "Strategy and Tactics of the ANC". The problems experienced in Rhodesia had led the ANC to realise that military success was unlikely to be a rapid process, and that the Cuban 'foci' model was not applicable in South Africa. The strategy document thus detailed the strategic need for a "protracted armed struggle" depending on "political mobilisation". According to the ANC's first submission to the Commission:

*A decision was made to shift the ANC's approach from sending armed groups of cadres into the country to 'spark off' guerrilla warfare, and instead emphasised that ... [it] was necessary first to extend and consolidate an ANC underground machinery and to generally mobilise the people, especially the black working population, into active mass struggle ...*

- 80 A Revolutionary Council was established to co-ordinate military and political work. A formal alliance between the ANC and the SACP was announced, with members of the Revolutionary Council drawn from both bodies.

### **1974–1978: The collapse of the buffer and the re-emergence of internal opposition**

- 81 After the crushing of the liberation movements in the early 1960s, there was a period of relative calm in resistance politics inside South Africa. Simultaneously, workers' organisations began to emerge from the early 1970s. Their presence and impact was felt in the Durban strikes of 1973, and later in the formation of the independent black trade union movement. In the late 1960s, the South African Students Organisation (SASO) and other organisations influenced by the ideology of Black Consciousness began to emerge. This came about due to growing disaffection by some black student activists with the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the leadership composition of the University Christian Movement (UCM). This mobilisation culminated in country-wide mass resistance in the 1976–77 period, popularly known as the 'Soweto uprising'.
- 82 The uprising, though largely spontaneous, was of tremendous political significance. It contributed to the reconstitution of mass extra-parliamentary politics in South Africa and helped revitalise the exiled liberation movements. Moreover, it stimulated a rethink on the part of big business as to how their interests were to be best safeguarded, and impelled the state to engage in extensive restructuring of institutions, past policies and practices.

- 83 The most obvious threat to South Africa's regional security, however, came from developments abroad. Most notable was the collapse of the Portuguese dictatorship that opened the way to independence for its Southern African colonies, Mozambique and Angola. According to the first submission on the SADF: "The unexpected coup in Portugal on 25 April 1974 brought the RSA's defence line to its borders and this changed the government's perceptions of security in a very dramatic way".
- 84 Inside South Africa, the liberation of these countries inspired the resistance movement, which held celebration rallies in their honour. Indeed, the collapse of the buffer surrounding South Africa opened up new possibilities for the liberation movements. By the time of Mozambique's independence in June 1975, the ANC had established a sizeable diplomatic presence in Maputo and it was clear that the new FRELIMO government would allow MK guerrillas transit facilities to both Swaziland and South Africa. By this time too, senior ANC figures like Mr Thabo Mbeki, Mr Jacob Zuma and Mr Albert Dlomo were in Swaziland, resuscitating the ANC's political presence and re-establishing links to the ANC underground inside South Africa. By 1976, a reliable 'underground railway' had been established between Swaziland and both the Durban and Witwatersrand areas.
- 85 The Central Committee of the PAC, weakened by internal struggles in the early 1970s, met in 1975 and resolved to work together towards the "final push" of the struggle. Members of the High Command were dispatched to the front-line states to prepare an underground trail for the infiltration of arms and guerrillas into the country.
- 86 By the mid-1970s, the PAC had begun military training amongst refugees in Swaziland. The refugees had fled a chieftaincy dispute amongst the Mngomezulu clan of northern KwaZulu and had been allocated land in the area. However, in 1977 the Swaziland government suddenly moved against the PAC by banning the organisation in Swaziland and rounding up all its known members and supporters. All were eventually deported via the United High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to countries other than South Africa, in some cases after lengthy periods in detention.
- 87 On South Africa's western flank, SWAPO had by this time opened a diplomatic mission in Luanda and had been given permission to establish military training bases, transit camps and refugee camps in central and southern Angola.
- 88 The government responded in a way that which suggests that the previous domination of state security policy by the SAP and BOSS was on the wane while that of the SADF, in particular with regard to external military policy, was becoming increasingly influential. This was reflected at a number of levels. Firstly, in 1975 the SADF took over the SAP's previous responsibility for counter-insurgency operations in the border areas of northern Namibia. Secondly, it appeared that the government was preparing to become involved in the conflict that developed in Angola after the collapse of the agreement signed by the three Angolan liberation groups in January 1975.
- 89 The next critical development was the occupation by the SADF of Calueque in southern Angola in August 1975. The immediate aim was the protection of the joint South African–Portuguese funded Calueque–Ruacana hydro-electric scheme but a general aim, according to the second submission on the SADF, was to counter "further Soviet-led

expansion in the region". As it turned out, the move into Calueque formed the initial phase of *Operation Savannah*, the SADF's secret invasion of Angola in 1975.

90 The failure of *Savannah* held three important lessons for the SADF.

- a First, it exposed the SADF's urgent need to update its weapons systems which, according to the SANDF submission on the SADF, "led to major developments in the armaments industry in South Africa over the next decade". One of these was the launch in 1980 of *Project Coast*, the SADF's chemical and biological weapons programme.
- b Second, it impressed upon the SADF the need for and utility of surrogate forces as allies. With UNITA regarded as "one of the few remaining buffers against further East bloc expansion in Southern Africa", it now became integrated as a central component into the SADF's military strategy on its western flank. Assistance took effect on 1 April 1977 with the launch of *Operation Silwer*, the codename by which aid to UNITA was referred until 1983, when it was changed to *Operation Disa*.
- c Third, it made the SADF aware of a need for increased "intelligence, reconnaissance and a wide spectrum of covert capabilities". In order to meet this demand it was essential "to continue with the development of its special forces and their covert and clandestine capability". In October 1974, a Special Forces division was set up as a separate and autonomous arm of the SADF with its command structure headed by a general officer commanding (GOC) reporting directly to the chief of the SADF.

91 By the time of the SADF's intervention in Angola in 1975, a third arm of Special Forces had been created in the form of 5 Reconnaissance Regiment into which some 500–600 former members of the Portuguese military in Mozambique had been integrated. These were largely specialists in landward and airborne counter-revolutionary warfare. After *Savannah*, and to incorporate some 1 600–1 800 Portuguese-speaking former members of the defeated Angolan army, a specialist unit of the army, Battalion 32 (the so-called 'Buffalo Battalion'), was established. Headed by Colonel Jannie Breytenbach, this unit grew in time to number as many as 9 000 troops.

92 Thirty-two Battalion was, in fact, the second such special army unit formed by the SADF. In 1974, it had formed a special tracking unit composed of white officers and !Xu or 'Bushmen', many of whom, according to testimony presented to the Commission, were forcibly recruited into the SADF. This unit was Battalion 31 (originally 201), often also called the 'Bushman Battalion'. Its headquarters were at the Omega camp in the Caprivi, close to the border of Zambia.

93 Another essentially ethnic unit was 101 Battalion, also known as the 'Owambo Battalion'. This seems, in the eyes of the SADF, to have been an highly effective outfit. In the SADF's *1986 Yearbook*, 101 is described as:

*the reaction force of Sector 10 (Kaokoland and Owambo with headquarters in Oshakati) and is a force without equal. It accounted for many of the terrorists eliminated by the Security Forces during 1986, and had the best combat record of all SWA and RSA units during the year.*



- 94 In 1978 the 44th Parachute Brigade was formed, as well as 4 Reconnaissance Regiment, a seaborne Special Forces unit based at Saldanha Bay.

### ***The San and Battalion 31***

- 95 The information below is drawn from a submission to the Commission by the *!Xu & Khwe Vereeniging vir Gemeenskaplike Eiendom* (the !Xu and Khwe Union for Common Property/Ownership). The submission suggests that the bulk of the approximately 350 !Xu and Khwe were forcibly recruited into 31 Battalion. One of the !Xu leaders, Mr Agostinho Victorino, is quoted as saying they were given two choices by the South African military – “either join the army or we'll bomb your villages”. The submission also suggests that, within the battalion, the trackers were subjected to a regime of harsh discipline and that dissent was dealt with ruthlessly.

- 96 Two examples of the latter are cited in the submission. The first relates to an alleged attempted mutiny by twenty-seven members of 31 Battalion during an operation in Zambia in October 1979. It draws on the evidence of a national serviceman present at the time in the Caprivi:

*After they were found guilty the SADF sent them to UNITA headquarters in southern Angola. Their women and children were collected at Omega base in Caprivi and reunited with the men. We never saw them again. On their return, horrified drivers said they witnessed how the men, women and children were killed by black Portuguese-speaking soldiers who slit their throats with knives.*

- 97 The submission also includes statements taken from the wives and relatives of four !Xu killed in a separate incident in 1979. Ms Joachina Dala, wife of murdered soldier Paulino Dala stated that:

*The men were beating him up and made him suffer. We just sat and had to watch. I cannot describe what we had to witness. We were crying all the time but the soldiers didn't care ... My husband's eyes were beaten shut and he was covered in blood ... when the white troops left they waved at us and shouted 'viva'. My husband was first beaten to death and then shot. They dug a hole and put him in there and covered him with sand.*

- 98 In 1975, the SAP established an elite anti-terrorist unit known as Unit 19 or the Special Task Force. The Special Task Force played an important role in the training of the police Riot Units established at more or less the same time. Based in several centres around the country, its recruits were drawn largely from those with counter-insurgency training. Thus, for example, Colonel Theunis 'Rooi Rus' Swanepoel, veteran of the sabotage squad and Ongulumbashe, was drafted into Soweto on 16 June 1976 to command a riot unit which was responsible for a high number of civilian casualties. Interviewed in the 1980s about the operations of his unit in Soweto, he stated that he regretted only not using more force. “You can only stop violence by using a greater amount of violence”.

- 99 The security police, severely criticised for their poor intelligence and thus lack of forewarning regarding the Soweto uprising, also underwent a process of expansion and reorganisation. The Security Branch continued to play a role in South West Africa, despite the fact that the SADF had assumed control of the war. 1976 saw the beginning of Security Branch special operations under the codename 'K', which later developed into Koevoet.

- 100 Security legislation underwent a process of consolidation with the passing of the Internal Security Amendment Act, effectively rationalising five other security acts. In response to public pressure to the sharp rise of deaths in detention during the 1976/77 period, the detention provisions of the Act required the State President to appoint a review committee to assess detainees' custody at intervals of not more than six months.
- 101 This period also saw independence being granted to the first homeland government – Transkei – and a number of other homelands acquiring greater autonomy, although they remained wholly financially dependent on South Africa. These developments also resulted in the creation of homeland police forces and, in the case of independent homelands, defence forces. Such security structures continued to be run by seconded South African security force personnel; structures and legislation mirrored South African models. However, limited oppositional structures, a weak civil society, and little national or international media interest meant that homeland security structures operated with far less restraint than the South African security forces.
- 102 The liberation movements did not play a military role in the events that began on 6 June 1976. Although a limited number of ANC underground activists attempted to give some direction through the spread of propaganda, the youth involved in these events were influenced by Black Consciousness ideology on the one hand, while responding to genuine grievances on the other. The ANC did, however, benefit from the events of 1976 and 1977, as it was the only liberation movement able to absorb, train, educate and direct the thousands of youth who left South Africa as a direct result of these events. MK established its second battalion from these new recruits, who were sent to Angola for training in the newly established bases there.
- 103 In addition to military camps in Angola, the ANC developed residential centres in Tanzania and had a diplomatic presence in many countries. In 1979, it established a Department of Intelligence and Security (DIS). This body, together with the military headquarters of MK, controlled the Angolan camps – including a special camp established to hold 'dissidents', known as Camp 32 or the Morris Seabelo Rehabilitation Centre (popularly known as Quatro).
- 104 The PAC claims in its submission to be at least partially responsible for the Soweto uprising in 1976. Mr Zephaniah Mothopeng, at the time an "internal leadership member of the banned PAC", was tried with seventeen others in the Bethal 18 'secret trial' for their role in "fermenting revolution" and for "being behind the Soweto uprising". Mothopeng and others were jailed for their alleged involvement.
- 105 These internal events together with events in the sub-region formed the backdrop for a series of shifts both in state policy and in oppositional politics in the second half of the 1970s. For a variety of reasons – the improved organisation of the SADF, Mr PW Botha's expertise in building empires and the SAP's inability to deal effectively with the 1976 uprising – PW Botha possessed a far stronger power base than Prime Minister Vorster. Moreover, the notion that South Africa was facing a 'total onslaught' was gaining greater acceptance within government circles. Two influential reviews, the Venter Report in 1974 and the Van Dalsen Report in 1977, began to put forward the need for a co-ordinated national security management strategy to cope with this onslaught. The first public airing of this developing strategy was in the 1977 Defence White Paper.
- 106 Within the security establishment, the growing influence of the military was evident in the rise to power of PW Botha. Through a series of manoeuvres involving the intelligence structures of the SADF, information about the Department

of Information was leaked to the press, precipitating the 'Infogate' scandal<sup>3</sup> and the demise of both Vorster and Van den Bergh. On 28 September 1978, PW Botha became Prime Minister and moved rapidly to implement a policy soon dubbed the 'total strategy'.

- 107 The late 1970s saw a regrouping following the bannings of Black Consciousness organisations in 1977 and the growth of independent black trade unions. It also saw the emergence of local community organisations involved in mass mobilisation and campaigns on basic issues such as housing, rents, electricity, and transport. These structures initially adopted a strategically low political profile, while more explicitly political organisations such as the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) and student organisations such as Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO) and the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) articulated a more strongly political perspective. Rivalry and conflict developed, however, between activists aligning themselves with Black Consciousness and those increasingly supportive of the ANC.

### **1979–1984: The 'total strategy', regional destabilisation and resistance**

- 108 'Total strategy' was based on the premise that South Africa was the object of a total onslaught, supported or even co-ordinated by the Soviet Union. The objective of this onslaught was to overthrow the government of South Africa. In a graphic illustration of this, at a briefing to the Commission, a former secretary of the SSC described a scene in the government's operations room in the 1980s. A large map filled the wall. A series of markers and labels linked activists in a local township to larger co-ordinating structures nationally. From there a line was drawn linking exile structures in Lusaka to the offices of the KGB in Moscow.
- 109 The government understood the onslaught as being in the tradition of guerrilla warfare. This type of warfare is characterised by the relative unimportance of military operations in the sense of combat operations carried out against opposing armed forces. Rather, the aim of the revolutionary forces is to gain control of government by gaining the support of the people through a combination of intimidation, persuasion and propaganda.
- 110 The Botha government's riposte was a 'total strategy' of counter-revolution, in which every sphere of government activity was to be co-ordinated so as to prevent the perceived revolutionary onslaught from succeeding. The task of the armed forces was to prevent the enemy – chiefly the ANC–SACP alliance, but also the PAC and others – from establishing a viable rear-base outside South Africa while, in its domestic operations, the government developed the necessary political initiatives to win the support of the population, thus enabling it to survive the revolutionary onslaught.
- 111 There were four main pillars to the 'total strategy':
- a the maintenance of state security at all costs;
  - b reform of the political environment;
  - c efficient and 'clean' government;
  - d the co-ordination of all state action.

- 112 The importance of a 'total strategy' was underlined by developments within the ANC. A joint meeting of the ANC's National Executive Committee and Revolutionary Council received a report from senior members of the ANC, the SACP and MK who had undertaken a study tour of Vietnam in October 1978 as part of a strategic review. The delegation had spent some time with General Giap, the architect of victories over both French colonial and US forces. Based on insights gained on this mission, the ANC/MK decided on an adaptation to its insurgency strategy.
- 113 Abandoning an earlier emphasis on rural guerrilla warfare, the strategy aimed now at integrating political and military activity, while attributing particular importance to urban areas. A Politico-Military Strategy Commission consisting of Mr Oliver Tambo, Mr Thabo Mbeki, Mr Joe Slovo, Mr Moses Mabhida, Mr Joe Gqabi and Mr Joe Modise was established to oversee the new strategic direction and, in 1979, a Special Operations Unit was formed which reported directly to the ANC president.
- 114 Militarily, a campaign of 'armed propaganda' attacks by a specially-trained elite unit ('Special Ops') was designed less for immediate military effect than to advertise the existence of MK and to win publicity and support. This was to lead to a general uprising or, to use the idiom of the time, a 'people's war'.
- 115 The 'lessons from Vietnam' were contained in a report which became known as *The Green Book*, finalised in March 1979. It envisaged a strategy involving the escalation of armed attacks combined with the building of mass organisations. A strengthened underground movement inside the country would provide the link between the two. However, while underground political units of the ANC began to organise around some of the above aims, the military imperative remained the focus of ANC strategy in this period. At that time, the PAC was beset by splits and internal problems.
- 116 It was largely in response to the ANC/SACP mission to Vietnam, and the subsequent strategy overhaul, that Mr PW Botha convened an elite gathering of high-ranking cabinet ministers and security officials at Fort Klapperkop. Those attending the Fort Klapperkop conference included Mr Pik Botha, General Magnus Malan, Mr Gerrit Viljoen, Generals Jannie Geldenhuys and Johan Coetzee, and a General D'Almeida, a visitor from Argentina.
- 117 D'Almeida's presence reflected an emerging alliance between South Africa and a set of allies of 'pariah' status internationally and with a reputation for ruthlessness, involving the use of violence and terror, towards their opponents. With Argentina in this group were Chile, Israel and Taiwan, all of whom had in recent years entered into some form of security co-operation with Pretoria.
- 118 Co-operation with Argentina continued. SAP commissioner, General Mike Geldenhuys, and some of his senior officers, including Brigadier Albertus Wandrag, head of the Riot Unit visited both Argentina and Chile in 1982. These trips led to mutual visits and agreements on the exchange of information. In May/June 1982, the British journal X-Ray reported "there was growing evidence of the use of new forms of torture in South Africa, which are known to have been used in Argentina".
- 119 One of the major decisions of the Klapperkop Conference was to authorise the military's Special Forces units to undertake counter-guerrilla operations outside of the country in order to prevent MK from developing rear-bases within striking distance of South Africa and, consequently, an effective logistical network.

- 120 General Magnus Malan, chief of the SADF and, from 1980, Minister of Defence, was first exposed to the theories of counter-insurgency in the United States where he completed the regular command and general staff officer's course in 1962–63. As officer commanding of South West Africa Command from 1966–68, he acquired first-hand experience of a war conducted largely on the principles of counter-insurgency. During his tenure as chief of the army (1973–76), a series of joint inter-departmental counter-insurgency committees was established to help manage the war in Namibia, creating a model for the National Security Management System (NSMS).
- 121 In August 1979, the establishment of the NSMS was officially announced. It strengthened the SSC through the appointment of a permanent secretary and the establishment of a full-time Secretariat and Working Group and rationalised cabinet committees to four; namely, the Cabinet Committees on Constitutional Affairs, Economic Affairs, Social Affairs and Security. The latter, the Cabinet Committee on Security, was the already existent SSC and sat at the pinnacle of the NSMS. Later, the NSMS was divided into two arms – a Security Management System and a Welfare Management System. The former was headed by the SSC while the latter was headed by the remaining three cabinet committees (Constitutional Affairs, Economic Affairs and Social Affairs). In the mid-1980s these two systems were integrated into a National Co-ordinating Committee.
- 122 The SSC was the policy and decision-making body of the NSMS. It was assisted by a Work Group and between twelve and fifteen Interdepartmental Committees (IDCs). Decisions taken at the fortnightly SSC meetings were sent to the heads of the respective departments for implementation. From 1979 onwards, some 500 regional, district and local Joint Management Centres were put into place, theoretically enabling a co-ordinated security system to reach from the highest level to the smallest locality. The first national strategy of the SSC, known as *Boek 1/Beleid: Die RSA se Belange en die RSA-Regering se Doel, Doelstellings en Beleid*<sup>4</sup> was approved by cabinet in March 1980.
- 123 The establishment of the NSMS was followed by a related restructuring of the intelligence services – an outcome of the Klapperkop Conference and an accompanying initiative, the Coetzee Committee. A conference held at Simonstown in January 1981 focused, inter alia, on the establishment of a co-ordinating intelligence body known by its Afrikaans acronym as KIK (the Co-ordinating Intelligence Committee). The conference also looked at the areas of responsibility of the various structures. The result was a division of labour between the police and the military. In regard to extra-South African territories, Swaziland was assigned to the SAP while the rest of the world, but more particularly the region, became an SADF responsibility. The agreement also made provision for joint SAP–SADF operations. As a consequence, the powers of the NIS (the reconstituted BOSS) were considerably reduced, while those of the SADF substantially increased.
- 124 In 1979, the Vlakplaas unit was established under section C of the Security Branch. It was originally a rehabilitation farm where former ANC and PAC activists were 'turned' into police informers, known as *askaris*. Other branches of the security police could call on the *askaris* to infiltrate ANC activists and glean information. In August 1981, several white policemen were transferred to the unit and the *askaris* were divided into four groups, each headed by a white policeman. By the end of 1982, Vlakplaas operatives were increasingly becoming the 'special forces' of the Security Branch. Vlakplaas, and more broadly the C Section, also worked closely with the SADF – indeed, for significant periods, an SADF liaison officer was assigned to work full-time with Vlakplaas. To a large extent, Vlakplaas owed its

existence to the SAP's experience first with the Selous Scouts in Rhodesia and then with setting up Koevoet in South West Africa.

125 In 1978, MK began attacks in the PWV (Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vereeniging region) and western Transvaal. The Special Operations Unit engaged in some successful acts of economic sabotage (such as Sasol II) in the early 1980s. These had the additional strategic aim of raising the profile of MK among the general public. It was largely in anticipation of the growth of such campaigns from outside the country that the state began planning pre-emptive action in the form of what became generally known as destabilisation.

126 In February 1979 the SSC adopted the *SSC Guidelines for a Long-term National Strategy in regard to Self-defence Actions*. The preamble to the document noted that, while international law made provision for a state to undertake self-defence actions in order to protect its territorial integrity, not all the actions proposed in this document could readily be brought under the juridical concept of 'self-defence actions' and that some of the operations proposed would necessarily be clandestine.

127 The five types of operations proposed and adopted were:

- a Planned operations: actions against bases on foreign territory undertaken on the basis of long-term planning.
- b Hot pursuit operations: actions permissible if
  - the state whose territory was to be entered was either unwilling or unable to act against those being pursued;
  - the goal of the operation was the capture and arraignment of the person or persons being pursued before the courts of the state executing the action;
  - violence or force was to be used only where those pursued resisted arrest and only directed against those being pursued.

The Commission received considerable evidence of abductions from foreign territories of real or perceived opponents of the South African government. None of these, however, conform fully, or even nearly, to the prescribed requisites of the 'hakkejag' variety. They were rather carefully planned, clandestine kidnapping raids either by the security police or their Vlakplaas unit, and the fate of those abducted was more often to be killed or forced into becoming an *askari* than to appear in court. The one exception was Mr Ismail Ebrahim who, after his kidnapping from Swaziland in 1986, was eventually tried and convicted of treason.

- c Reconnaissance operations: top-secret operations undertaken in order to acquire intelligence on planned enemy actions.
- d Clandestine operations: similarly top-secret operations which were unrestricted.
- e Arresting actions: involving police crossing a border for distances of up to approximately one kilometre for the purpose of arresting the criminal elements whom they were following.

128 By 1979, the SSC was clearly geared up to take the fight to the 'enemy' and to confront it in its regional strongholds rather than wait for it to penetrate the South African interior. The priorities at this point were the outer-periphery states

of Angola, Rhodesia and the eastern front of Mozambique and Swaziland which, in the words of an SADF general, was “leaking like a sieve”.

- 129 The late 1970s saw the internal emergence of both black trade unions and a range of student and community based structures. Within these structures, some owed allegiance to black consciousness, while an increasing number of activists within such structures began to move towards support for the ANC or ‘Congress tradition’. While the development of internal structures was broadly in line with ANC policy as expressed in the *Green Book*, and key activists strengthened links with the banned movement, such structures seem to have developed rather from an increasingly politicised climate and around specific local demands. Indeed, the banning of Black Consciousness organisations in 1977 had further restricted free political space, and activists responded to this by organising in communities around local ‘bread and butter’ issues. During the late 1970s, the divide between the Black Consciousness and Congress movements was neither wide nor rigid and was straddled by many individuals and organisations. Only in the early 1980s would conflicts around principles and strategies cement and harden.
- 130 During 1982–83 the government introduced new constitutional proposals which sought to incorporate Indian and coloured people as junior partners in political decision-making. In addition, two bills were introduced which proposed new measures to regulate the presence of Africans in cities. The Black Local Authorities Act of 1982 gave a range of new powers and responsibilities to the highly unpopular and frequently corrupt township governments. In order to protest and frustrate these new state initiatives, and also as an indicator of the schism within anti-apartheid politics, anti-apartheid organisations launched two separate national formations in 1983. One was the United Democratic Front (UDF) – comprising over 500 decentralised, local and regional civic, youth, women’s, political and religious anti-apartheid organisations, together with national student organisations and trade unions. The other was the smaller National Forum, a loose association of some 200 Black Consciousness-oriented organisations and small left-wing groups.
- 131 Although the UDF had co-ordinating structures at national and regional levels, affiliate organisations retained their autonomy in terms of policies and programmes of action. Office-bearers were required to be accountable to the membership of their affiliate organisation. In its submission to the Commission, the former UDF leadership conceded that, by the mid-1980s, the UDF was consulting with the ANC in exile.
- 132 From its establishment, the UDF vehemently challenged the government and its apartheid policies. As a driving force behind resistance politics in the 1980s, the UDF spearheaded a number of campaigns aimed at mobilising the broader population. While the UDF itself never adopted a strategy involving the use of violence, in the context of heightened mass resistance following 1984, such campaigns were increasingly associated with violence at a local level. Targets of such violence included community councillors, black policemen, those who broke boycotts and groups such as Inkatha.
- 133 There were a few ANC acts of sabotage in this period that resulted in civilian casualties, such as the Goch Street shooting in 1977. For the most part, however, MK operations in this period did not lead to civilian casualties.
- 134 While such armed attacks continued to raise the profile of the ANC, individual members of ANC underground political units played a crucial role in the formation of mass organisations such as COSAS, civic structures and militant trade

unions that were to unite under the banner of the UDF and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Such mass organisations formed one of the ‘four pillars’ of struggle, which together constituted the ANC’s strategy for the liberation of South Africa. These four pillars were: the armed operations of MK, the building of mass organisations, the building of an underground movement inside South Africa to provide the link between the two, and the campaign for the international isolation of the South African government.

- 135 During its life-span, the UDF went through states of emergency, mass detentions of its members and leadership, and victimisation of its leaders, mainly by state surrogate forces. The state tightened its laws, and banned the UDF and many of its affiliates in 1988. During that process, UDF supporters clashed with several other oppositional groupings and vigilante forces, some of which were state sponsored. In the late 1980s, together with COSATU and other sympathetic non-aligned organisations, they formed a loose coalition termed the Mass Democratic Movement (popularly known as the MDM). The UDF organisations worked with the ANC after the unbanning of the latter in 1990. The UDF was formally disbanded on its eighth anniversary in August 1991.
- 136 In May 1983, MK exploded a car bomb in Pretoria’s Church Street. Nineteen people were killed and 217 injured. The incident is identified by many security force members as the moment at which they realised the significance of the threat facing them and began to see the ANC as a ‘terrorist organisation’. In addition to such armed actions, the first of a number of planned assassinations of individuals labelled as ‘enemy agents’ or ‘collaborators’ took place in this period.
- 137 Two months after the Church Street bomb, the SSC held a three-day meeting in the operational area of South West Africa where it reviewed the security situation in the region. In an intelligence briefing at the start of the meeting, SSC secretary Major General Groenewald noted that, with the help of the SADF, UNITA’s troop strength had reached 36 000 and was growing by 2 400 per year. However, in regard to Mozambique, he noted that if FRELIMO succeeded in overcoming RENAMO, the Soviet Union’s hold on the African east coast would be strengthened and the spread of its influence to the landlocked states of Southern Africa facilitated; so too would the establishment of ANC bases in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Lesotho.
- 138 To counter the threat, the SSC agreed that ‘terrorism’ had to be fought beyond South Africa’s borders; that, with or without the co-operation of neighbouring governments, proactive and defensive operations against South Africa’s enemies, their supporters and their hosts must be undertaken; and that South Africa had to develop the capacity to destroy/neutralise ‘terrorist concentrations’ and their headquarters, as well as foreign troop concentrations such as the Cuban presence in Angola. The proposed options included the encouragement of internal conflict in other countries to the extent of active support for a change of government in a country like Lesotho, as well as continuing to promote instability in Zimbabwe – ‘*dat die pot van interne konflik in Zimbabwe subtiel aan die kook gehou word*’ ([so] that the pot of internal conflict in Zimbabwe is subtly kept on the boil).
- 139 The kinds of operations undertaken by the security forces in the light of the 1979 guidelines and the 1983 priorities, and gross human rights violations which resulted from such operations are examined in this volume.

## **1985–1989: The war comes home**



- 140 By the end of 1984, the government appeared to have believed that it had turned the corner. The signing of the Nkomati Accord and a similar earlier negotiated agreement with Swaziland, together with the considerable success of the Security Branch's anti-terrorist units, held out the promise that MK's supply and infiltration routes had been severely compromised if not totally cut off. The Tricameral system, albeit widely rejected, was in place and unrest was still relatively localised. Moreover, the decision in August 1984 to deploy the army in the townships strengthened the capacity of the security forces on the ground.
- 141 However, by the second half of 1985, unrest had spread throughout South Africa. Whereas previously unrest had occurred sporadically in the homelands and in the rural areas, in the post-1985 period it became more sustained. The widespread demonstrations and more violent forms of dissent and opposition which began in the Vaal Triangle in August 1984 surprised not only the government, but also the ANC.
- 142 At its Kabwe Conference in 1985, the ANC formulated a strategic response which it hoped would enable it to capitalise on the 'popular revolt' and turn it into a people's war, possibly even an insurrection. However, the Kabwe Conference had to deal with other problems. These included the dissatisfaction of the many trained MK combatants who had been kept in camps in Angola, and could not be deployed inside the country because of logistic problems.
- 143 While the ANC, with hindsight, claims credit for the development of the strategy of people's war and 'rendering the country ungovernable', and the security police argue similarly that the ANC was behind the violence which prevailed, there are two important caveats to this interpretation. The first is that the ANC was responding to violence which had already erupted and was spreading largely spontaneously around the country. The pamphlet released on 25 April 1985, calling on people to "Make apartheid unworkable! Make the country ungovernable!" was an attempt to keep up with the rising militancy in the townships. The second is that the ANC's Kabwe conference was called primarily in response to the dissatisfaction of its soldiers in the Angolan camps and the mutinies of 1984. In the event, the 'uprising' gave the Kabwe conference strategic focus, and the problems of the camps were not given much time.
- 144 The military operations of MK in this period can be categorised as follows: Firstly, there were bomb attacks on urban targets. The targets selected were meant to be security force related, but the reality is that more civilians than security force personnel were killed in such explosions. The reasons included technical incompetence, faulty devices, poor reconnaissance and poor judgement or misunderstanding by operatives. In addition, there was some deliberate 'blurring of the lines' which gave operatives the leeway to vent their anger by placing bombs in targets that were not strictly military. Lastly, there were instances when explosives were tampered with or security force infiltration resulted in civilian deaths.
- 145 The second type of military operation was the 'landmine campaign' of 1985–86 in the northern and eastern Transvaal. The thinking behind this campaign was that these areas were defined by the South African security forces as being part of a 'military zone', and the white farmers were conscripted into a commando. The ANC halted this campaign when it became clear that most victims of such explosions were civilians, including black farm labourers and the wives and children of farmers.

- 146 The third type of operation involved engaging in combat with South African security force members, sometimes offensively and sometimes defensively. The casualty rate was very high for MK guerrillas in urban areas, with few losses to the security forces; in rural encounters MK seemed to fare somewhat better.
- 147 The fourth type of activity involved the killing of individual security force personnel and people who were deemed to be 'traitors' or 'enemy agents'. Security policemen were naturally considered to be important targets; but as the South African government reinforced its security forces by using rapidly-trained black policemen – both in support of the Black Local Authority councillors and in support of the riot police – these police became targets as well. Key leaders of violent vigilante movements or 'warlords' also came to be considered 'legitimate' targets for MK soldiers, even though they were not formally defined as members of the security forces.
- 148 The 'people's war' strategy meant the blurring of distinctions between trained, armed soldiers and ordinary civilians who were caught up in quasi-military formations such as the *amabutho* or the self-defence units (SDUs). On the one hand, the MK guerrillas were not identified by uniforms and used the civilian population as 'cover'. On the other, *amabutho* or 'comrades' were youth who, in the 1980s, formed themselves into quasi-military formations. While neither the UDF nor the ANC controlled these structures directly through any 'chain of command', they were seen at the time as being broadly 'in line' with the strategy of a 'people's war'.
- 149 MK attempted to 'marry' the armed struggle and the mass formations by infiltrating guerrillas who then selected youths from such formations for short military training courses. Sometimes this occurred 'on the spot'; sometimes they were taken to front-line states for further training. In the process of implementing such a strategy, the general population, especially the youth, became militarised and 'hardened' to violence and brutality. Encouragement or sanction by the liberation movements, combined with a lack of direct control, can be seen as having led to many gross violations of the rights of others through 'people's courts', 'necklace murders' and other brutal acts. Many innocent civilians suffered as a result – killed either by security forces for 'harbouring' combatants, or by *amabutho* for their association with state representatives.
- 150 In Natal, the anger of UDF-supporting youth became focused on Inkatha members, who often served as the equivalent of councillors in KwaZulu, controlling local resources and operating under a system of patronage. This conflict became violent in 1984 and escalated towards the end of the decade. After the unbanning of the ANC and the transformation of Inkatha into the Inkatha Freedom Party (in 1990), the prevalence of weaponry led to the further escalation of conflict. The ANC denied that it ever engaged in a policy of attacking members of other political parties, including the IFP. However, during the period when the ANC was still banned, many people from Inkatha and other rival political groupings, such as AZAPO, were attacked by UDF supporters. Such actions were often perceived as ANC attacks.
- 151 Meanwhile, internal support for the ANC began to be displayed publicly in an increasingly defiant manner. Moreover, this support, traditionally confined to African areas, appeared to find significant resonance in coloured and Indian areas. Increasing support by major Western powers for a democratic settlement was combined with a small but vocal sense of disquiet from local business. For the first time since it assumed power, the government appeared unable to control, let alone quell, resistance.

- 152 These internal and external events led to a reappraisal by the SSC. By 1985, the SSC saw the situation as a growing spiral of threat. The realisation that the war had come home, and the move to an aggressive internal proactive policy was encapsulated in an SSC minute on 18 July 1985: "The chairman points out that he is convinced that the brain behind the unrest situation is situated inside South Africa, and that it must be found and destroyed. Action thus far has been too reactive, and the security forces must attend to this urgently." (18 July 1985, translated from Afrikaans.)
- 153 In accordance with these sentiments, police reaction to the demonstrations and other dissent became increasingly robust, and a considerably hardened approach began to develop. However, the more intensive police and army surveillance of the townships became, the more the vulnerable underbelly of the security forces came under attack – councillors, black policeman living in the townships, suspected informers, anyone associated with such people and increasingly even those who did not adhere to boycotts initiated by the mass democratic movement. The centrality of such individuals and groups to the success of the government's reform initiative put further pressure on the state's political programme.
- 154 The extent of the challenge posed by the internal unrest and the ANC can be gauged by a special meeting convened by the KIK in October 1985 to discuss whether it was possible to avoid a settlement with the ANC. Attended by top-level generals and intelligence personnel, the meeting referred to the massive national and international support for the ANC and to the widespread perception that the government was losing ground. While clear differences of emphasis are evident, the consensus was that any negotiation should take place from a position of strength, not weakness and a settlement should be avoided until the balance of power could be shifted. In the words of General Groenewald: "This is the stage when one can negotiate from a position of strength and can afford to accommodate the other party, given that it has largely been eliminated as a threat." (Translated from Afrikaans.)
- 155 The need to 'eliminate' the ANC as a threat led to the adoption of an internal strategy of counter-revolutionary warfare. A number of developments reflect this change.
- 156 First, there was a marked shift in the terminology used in SSC and related documentation. Words such as 'neutraliseer', (neutralise), 'vernietig' (destroy), 'elimineer' (eliminate), 'uit te wis' (wipe out) and so forth became common parlance.
- 157 Second, this shift was accompanied by an increasing dominance of the military in formulating and driving security perspectives. Former military intelligence officer HC Nel told a section 29 hearing:

*Out in the commandos, in the commands, in the territorial areas of the country the army was in charge whenever there was a crisis. The Defence Force would take charge because of our arrogant stance of "we know how to plan..." The police jump in a van and go and try and solve a problem and they normally end up in an ambush and run away. While the military have a much more structured role, and we have the force levels to our capability and we have the resources. And we assume that superior part and role. And in most areas where former Western Front guys were in charge of commands, that was obvious that the army was always controlling the situation.*

- 158 This shift is further evidenced by the adoption of significant sections of the influential text on counter-revolutionary warfare written by the SADF's Brigadier CA Fraser. Thus an extra-ordinary meeting of the SSC on 18 July 1985 adopted eleven principles for the 'countering of the revolutionary onslaught,' closely based on Fraser's text. Indeed, much of Fraser's book was later reproduced, with a foreword by PW Botha and circulated among state functionaries.
- 159 Third, and in keeping with the language used in SSC documents as well as the main tenets of counter-revolutionary warfare, there was an increasing use of the same methods 'of the enemy against the enemy'. This led to an approach in which violence was met with greater violence and the security forces themselves became covertly involved in extra-judicial killings, acts of arson and sabotage and other reprisals.
- 160 Fourth, there was an increasing emphasis on covert support for conservative groupings within black communities. This took a variety of forms. It included *Operation Marion*, in which a paramilitary and offensive capacity was given to Inkatha; *Operation Katzen*, which aimed to overthrow the existing homeland governments in the Ciskei and Transkei and establish a regional resistance movement (*Iliso Lomzi*) to counter the UDF/ANC influence in that region; and the provision of financial and other support for a range of conservative individuals and vigilante groupings. Central to the latter aspect was the attempt to exploit divisions within organisations and communities, thus weakening the support base of the liberation and mass democratic movements.
- 161 Fifth, there was an increasing emphasis on co-ordination of security action, and significant resources were poured into the NSMS. The inter-departmental committee on security was upgraded and by 1987 was co-ordinating the activities of regional Joint Management Committees (JMCs), under the full-time direction of the Deputy Minister of Law and Order. JMCs were fully activated and thirty-seven 'hotspots' were designated as 'oilspots' where security would be normalised before urban renewal projects put in place. Indeed, the new strategic direction was characterised by the idea that reforms did not go hand in hand with law and order but could only be implemented once political stability had been achieved.
- 162 At the same time, however, emphasis was placed on co-ordination, several covert structures began to be put in place, including what became known as the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB) . In terms of a plan devised by Major General Joep Joubert, Special Forces operatives were deployed to work with selected Security Branch divisions. It was in part the development of this plan and the covert deployment of Special Forces internally that led to the development of the CCB.
- 163 Finally, the above took place in the context of a nation-wide state of emergency that effectively remained in place from June 1986 until mid-1990.
- 164 In the year after the imposition of the national state of emergency, the full force of a strategy of counter-revolutionary warfare unfolded domestically. By the end of 1987, the government succeeded in reasserting control and effectively defused whatever potential existed for an insurrectionary situation. Meanwhile, the international balance of forces changed as the Cold War ground to a halt with policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union.
- 165 The ANC, realising the improbability of seizing state power through an armed insurrection, began genuinely exploring the possibility of a negotiated settlement. The government too began to move secretly towards negotiation. A series

of secret meetings between emissaries of the South African government and leading ANC figures were held in the second half of the 1980s. At the same time, the ANC implemented *Operation Vula* with the intention of returning senior ANC leaders into the country. *Vula* was seen by some ANC leaders as an ‘insurance policy’ in case the negotiation process failed. Others within the ANC possibly still held to a revolutionary dogma that could not contemplate attaining political power through peaceful means, and which still anticipated the arrival of an ‘insurrectionary moment’ after the suspension of armed struggle.

## **1990–1994: The transitional phase**

- 166 The period from February 1990 changed the logic and the rules, written or unwritten, governing the contest for power in South Africa. In July 1989, President PW Botha formally received Mr Nelson Mandela to tea at the Tuynhuys, signalling the beginning of open negotiations. In September 1989 Mr FW de Klerk became president of South Africa, and shortly afterwards independence elections were held in Namibia. In February 1990, De Klerk announced the unbanning of proscribed organisations including the SACP, ANC and PAC, and released Mandela. The next four years saw intensive negotiations towards a democratic transition. The strategic thinking underlying this transition period is dealt with later in this volume.
- 167 This then provides an overview of the development of conflict in South Africa during the mandate period, the context in which gross violations of human rights occurred. The following chapters focus specifically on the nature and extent of violations committed by the major role-players throughout the mandate period.

## **Postscript**

- 168 Reference has been made in several others places in the Report (notably in the *Legal Challenges* chapter in Volume 1 and in the *Findings and Conclusions* chapter in Volume 5) to the difficulties involved in making findings and naming perpetrators of gross violations of human rights. The definitive judgement of Mr Justice Corbett, which required the Commission to give anyone against whom a detrimental finding was being contemplated a reasonable opportunity to respond, made a huge impact on the work of the Commission. Those who may have expected this report to contain a long list of perpetrators of gross violations of human rights will, consequently, be only partially satisfied with what they find in this and other volumes.
- 169 The Commission has sent out numerous section 30 notices during the past few months to persons against whom it anticipated making a finding to their detriment. The response process has been slow and extremely time-consuming. At the same time, the Commission has sought to be meticulous in taking the representation of those against whom negative findings have been contemplated very seriously before making a final decision on the finding. This process was indeed still underway at the time of going to print. The outcome is that the chapters that follow do not contain all the names of those who the Commission is likely ultimately to name as perpetrators.
- 170 The amnesty process was also still underway. When this process is complete, a full list of those whom it has seen fit to name as perpetrators will be published in the Codicil to the Report that will appear at that time.

- 171 The Commission received a number of statements from family members of those who disappeared during the Commission's mandate period. While the Commission was able to determine the fate of some of these victims through investigations or as a result of amnesty applications or submissions, numerous cases remain unresolved. However, a number of amnesty applicants have applied for amnesty for abduction or killing of unknown persons, the identity of whom will be canvassed and investigated during the continuing amnesty process. Consequently, the Commission's report on disappearances has been deferred to the end of the amnesty process and this too will appear in the Codicil.
- 172 Great problems have been experienced with the spelling and the inconsistency in names in the writing of this volume. Again, everything possible has been done to resolve these matters. Where there are errors, the Commission apologises. We have also sought to be as accurate as possible in identifying the rank of military and police personnel, recognising that these often changed during the career of the persons concerned. In some amnesty applications and other submissions to the Commission, the rank of a person has been given at the time of the violation. In others, the rank is given as at the time of the amnesty application or submission. Again, everything possible has been done to ensure the greatest possible accuracy.
- 173 Versions of some violations are in certain instances based on the information of amnesty applications that have not yet been heard. We have taken this into account and refrained from naming alleged perpetrators solely on the basis that they were mentioned in these applications. The Commission, however, resolved to make use of these untested applications in a more general sense. Even here restraint has been exercised as it is recognised that, in the hearing of these and/or other applications, conflicting information may emerge.