



## **Coloured Views:**

### **A discourse analysis of Dutch media representation of the Cuban involvement in the Angolan Civil War, 1975-1988.**

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<sup>1</sup> The Cuito Cuanavale monument in Cuando Cubango, Angola

## ***Summary***

The role of the Cubans in ending apartheid is a hotly contested topic where opinions are usually divided along the colour line and across the political spectrum. The Angolan Civil War, where the support of the Cuban armed forces played a significant role in driving back the invading South African army, remains one of the least studied conflicts in the late Cold War. In the West, opinions on the role of the Cubans in Southern Africa are usually defined by the politics of the author. This thesis attempts to better our understanding of why opinions are so divided on the influence of the Cuban armed forces by applying Critical Discourse Analysis to two major newspapers on different sides of the political spectrum in the Netherlands, which was chosen as a case study Western country. It concludes that the Cuban perspective is largely lacking in both historiography and the media reporting on the conflict.



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<sup>2</sup> Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom. Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991* (Chapel Hill 2013)

***Commonly used abbreviations:***

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency, United States
FAPLA	People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola
FAR	Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias), Cuba
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
SAAF	South African Air Force
SADF	South African Defence Force
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

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## Introduction

The Apartheid Regime was one of the most notorious authoritarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This system led to widespread opposition, both domestically and internationally. Domestically this opposition was spearheaded by the African National Congress (ANC) and their armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation).<sup>3</sup> Internationally, opposition came from both the Eastern and Western blocks in the form of economic sanctions against the Apartheid Regime. On top of this, large civil society movements appeared, urging consumers to boycott products from South Africa and urging their governments to cut relations with the Apartheid Regime. In some countries like the Netherlands, this movement would come to grow so large that it would influence every layer of society.<sup>4</sup>

One country that took its opposition to Apartheid to a higher level is Cuba. In 1975, Cuba intervened in the Angolan Civil War on the communist side against the invading South African Defence Force and their allies. It paved the way for the victory of the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) in the Angolan Civil War. Yet the consequences of this intervention reach far further than just Angola, they also had a profound effect on Namibia and South Africa. When Cuban and Angolan forces repelled the South African Defence Force (SADF) from Angola, South Africa was forced to negotiate the New York Accords of 1988 which led to the independence of South West Africa, currently known as Namibia.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the defeat of the SADF had profound consequences in South African politics. The image of the black Cuban soldier defeating the white South African soldier of the Apartheid regime dealt a fatal blow to the prestige of the SADF in South African politics. This led to the decline of the more hard-line pro-apartheid right wing of the governing Nasionale Party, who were closely associated with the SADF. Its primacy was replaced by the group of F. W. de Klerk, who was of a more liberal inclination. His group was associated with many of South Africa's most powerful businessmen, which saw a change in the apartheid system as a means to have some of the economic sanctions against the country removed.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa* (Cambridge 2008) 141.

<sup>4</sup> Roeland Muskens, *Aan de goede kant. Een geschiedenis van de Nederlandse anti-apartheidsbeweging 1960-1990* (Amsterdam 2013) 11.

<sup>5</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 482.

<sup>6</sup> Isaac Saney, *From Soweto to Cuito Cuanavale: Cuba, the war in Angola and the end of Apartheid* (thesis for the degree of PhD in History, London 2014) 326.

When apartheid finally succumbed to both internal and external pressures and allowed the first free elections in South Africa, the ANC won an overwhelming majority and Nelson Mandela was elected president of the Rainbow Nation. One of the first foreign nations he visited in his new position as head of state was Cuba, shocking many of his liberal supporters in the West. Mandela was paying homage to an important debt, as he made clear during his visit:

*“The battle of Cuito Cuanavale is what made it possible for Angola to enjoy peace and establish its own sovereignty... The decisive defeat of the aggressive apartheid forces destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the white oppressor. The defeat of the apartheid army served as an inspiration to the struggling people of South Africa. Without the defeat at Cuito Cuanavale (of the South African Defence Force) our organizations would not have been legalized”.<sup>7</sup>*

This stance towards Cuba is not exclusive to Mandela, many of the most important black organizations of the anti-apartheid struggle recognize and highlight the important indirect role that the Cubans played in liberating the people of South Africa. One of these organizations is the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Up until the 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress of COSATU in 2009, it was almost a tradition to thank the Cubans for their help in the opening speech and to return the favour by pronouncing the Congress to be in solidarity with the Cubans in response to the latest perceived aggression of the United States.<sup>8</sup>

The white community in South Africa has, unsurprisingly, a very different perspective. For many fighting and later writing on the white South African side, the Cuban influence has been perceived differently.<sup>9</sup> Like most subjects about the end of apartheid, it is a very politicized topic. Thus, we can say that in the public sphere the events are

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<sup>7</sup> Nelson Mandela, quoted in: Odd A. Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge 2007) 393.

<sup>8</sup> Sidumo Dlamini, ‘Opening Address of the 10th National Congress of COSATU’ (2009), <https://mediadon.co.za/10th-national-congress/> (version October 10<sup>th</sup> 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Jannie Geldenhuys, *A General’s Story. From an Era of War and Peace* (Johannesburg, 1995) ; Hilton Hamann, *Days of the Generals. The untold story of South Africa’s apartheid era generals* (Cape Town 2001) ; Magnus Malan, *Magnus Malan. My life with the SA defence force* (Cape Town 2006).

interpreted differently by organizations across the political and racial divide in South Africa and the West, both at the time this conflict was concluding and continuing to the present day. As this thesis will show, this also extended to the mainstream media in the West, including the largest newspapers in the Netherlands.

We thus see that the same events are interpreted completely differently by groups in society. Beyond the colour divide, the instrumental role of the Cubans in ending apartheid is often highlighted by people in general on the left of the political spectrum while it is minimized by people on the right of this spectrum. The roles of the South Africans and the Cubans in the conflicts in which they fought each other, like the Angolan Civil War, are also interpreted differently by historians on opposite sides of the political spectrum, they are a hotly contested topic in historiography. This is the heritage of the Cold War and many of the dominant discourses remain relevant until today.

Cuba has always been the target of vicious attacks from the conservative right in the United States and the rest of the former Western bloc. It has a special place in the imagination of the political right since Reagan's period as president. If the USSR was an 'evil empire' then the Cubans were their foot soldiers around the world, intervening in Angola, Ethiopia, and Central America.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, for the Cubans the Cold War never ended and recently only became more relevant thanks to Donald Trumps' intensification of the US Blockade that has been in place for over half a century.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, as will become clear throughout this thesis, the Cuban side of the story is not well known in the West and parts of the media have neglected it throughout the last few decades. The central hypothesis of this thesis is that political attitudes have influenced reporting on the Angolan Civil War and that it was the South African perspective that was mainly highlighted in the media.

The very events of the Angolan Civil War and their consequences are hotly contested topics in historiography. In historiography, we can distinguish three interpretations of the Angolan Civil War and the influence it had on the end of apartheid. These four interpretations all centre around what importance is given to the climactic Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. The first approach sees the battle as something insignificant and they certainly

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<sup>10</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 168.

<sup>11</sup> Branko Marcetic, 'The US Blockade on Cuba Must End' (version July 17<sup>th</sup> 2021), <https://jacobinmag.com/2021/07/us-policy-cuba-blockade-embargo-protests-rubio-history-war-covid-food-medicine-shortages> (July 20<sup>th</sup> 2021).

don't give the Cubans an important role in making possible the events in South Africa that happened after it. Two exponents of this camp are Edward George and Tom Lodge. George upholds the idea that the consequences of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, the seminal moment in the Angolan Civil War, were rather insignificant.<sup>12</sup> Lodge does not go as far as calling the consequences insignificant, but he emphasizes that it were South African blunders which had profound consequences for the regime. Thus, he is of the opinion that the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale had a negative result for South Africa because of political hesitancy and not Cuban military factors.<sup>13</sup>

The second position is that the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale was a defeat for the Cubans and Angolans and that it had thus no real influence on discrediting the apartheid regime by forcing the independence of Namibia. The exponents of this position often highlight that casualties in the battle were higher for the Cuban and Angolan side or they highlight that '*South Africa never had any intention of deploying its troops to capture Cuito Cuanavale*' and, therefore, had not put itself in a position where it could have been defeated.<sup>14</sup> This position is also defended by a sizeable group of non-academics: prominent members of the apartheid regime or the SADF. Former SADF Chief of Staff Jannie Geldenhuys and Magnus Malan, who was Minister of Defence under P.W. Botha, both state in their memoirs that the Cubans and Angolans had been conclusively defeated and they even go as far as saying that it was the victory of the SADF, not its defeat, that paved the way for the changes that would unfold in the 1990s in South Africa.<sup>15</sup>

The third position directly contradicts the second one, it claims that the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale was won by the Cubans and Angolans and that it had serious repercussions for the region. The main example of this position is the work of Piero Gleijeses, an Italian historian who is one of the few historians who has had access to the Cuban National Archives. This has produced two important works on the role that Cuba has had in Africa: *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* and *Visions of Freedom:*

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<sup>12</sup> Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991. From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale* (New York 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Tom Lodge, 'Resistance and Reform, 1973-1994', In R. Ross, A. Mager, & B. Nasson (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of South Africa* (Cambridge 2011) pp. 409-491, 478-479.

<sup>14</sup> William M. James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola 1974-1990* (London 1992) 177.

<sup>15</sup> Geldenhuys, *A General's Story*; Adam Heribert and Kogila Moodley, *The Opening of the Apartheid Mind. Options for a New South Africa* (Berkeley 1993) 46.

*Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991*.<sup>16</sup> In both works, there is much emphasis on the regional repercussions of the Cuban intervention in Southern Africa. Another relevant publication is a Ph.D. thesis by Isaac Saney: *From Soweto to Cuito Cuanavale: Cuba, the war in Angola and the end of Apartheid*. For Saney, Cuito Cuanavale is a decisive moment in the downfall of the Apartheid Regime.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that most western historians do not see the Cubans and the Angolan Civil War as an important battlefield of the Cold War which contributed to the end of apartheid begs the question of how this conflict was presented in the West when it was in process.

In his landmark mass communication theory reader, noted media theorist Denis McQuail wrote that the mass media can often be thought of as a metaphorical mirror, reflecting myriad events in social and physical worlds.<sup>18</sup> It is this function of the media as a mirror of societal norms and social structures which is interesting to this research. The portrayal of this conflict in Western media can inform us on how this conflict and its combatants were presented in the public sphere. This could help further explain the politicization of this conflict and how the Cubans were framed in the West in the mid to late Cold War. Do we see a fragmentation along ideological lines, just like in academia, or are there other factors of influence?

As a case study, I have selected the Netherlands, mainly because its largest media outlets represent opposite sides of the political spectrum. Most historians that have written about the Cold War part of the Angolan Civil War are South Africans, with notable exceptions like Edward George and Piero Gleijeses. South Africans are usually biased towards the SADF if they are white or towards the Cubans and Angolans if they are black, as has been described earlier in this introduction. A study about how the conflict was presented in South Africa, while interesting, would not have allowed us to answer our question as the press in South Africa was instrumental in the regime's propaganda effort, something known both inside and outside the country.<sup>19</sup> Outside of South Africa there is not a country that can really be pinpointed as having shown the most interest in the conflict,

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<sup>16</sup> Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill 2002) ; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*.

<sup>17</sup> Isaac Saney, *From Soweto to Cuito Cuanavale*, 351-353.

<sup>18</sup> Dennis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (London 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Ron Nixon, *Selling Apartheid. South Africa's global propaganda war* (London 2016) vii-ix.

except if we try to analyse attitudes in the West in general. While an analysis of the media in the US would certainly be interesting, this country does not have a media outlet with nationwide influence that is ideologically left of liberal. Because the hypothesis, that political attitudes influence reporting on the conflict, is dependent on there being a left-wing position with nationwide influence, the US can be discarded. This would leave the UK and the Netherlands as the two countries in the Western bloc that were most involved in the Angolan Civil War. The Netherlands is a natural candidate, being on the one hand a typical Western nation that never strayed far from the political line of the US. On the other hand, the Netherlands has a historic relationship with South Africa and with some of the strongest proponents of apartheid in that country. Many of the most extreme right-wing Afrikaner political groups traced their mythology back to the original Dutch Settlers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, this historic relationship is one of the reasons the Netherlands had the largest anti-apartheid movement per capita outside of South Africa. On top of this, as is already partially evidenced by the prominence of the anti-apartheid movement, the Netherlands had a citizenry that was engaged with international matters in the late 80s.

This leads me to the following research question:

*How were the battles and operations in the Angolan Civil War, and the Cuban influence in this conflict, portrayed by newspapers in the Netherlands, 1975-1988?*

This covers almost the entire Cuban and South African interventions in Angola, and these are also the years in which it was truly a Cold War battleground. From mid-1988 onwards, reporting on Angola focused mostly on the tripartite negotiations between Cuba, South Africa and Angola which would result in the independence of Namibia. The period before 1975, although interesting if one is looking for political biases in media, predates any large-scale intervention by foreign powers.

To answer this research question, I will answer several sub-questions the following sub-questions:

*How did Angola become independent and how did the Angolan Civil War start?*

*What role did Cuba and South Africa play during the main battles and operations of the Angolan Civil War between 1975 and 1988?*

*How did de Telegraaf represent the Cubans and South Africans in the Angolan Civil War between 1975 and 1988?*

*How did de Volkskrant represent the Cubans and South Africans in the Angolan Civil War between 1975 and 1988?*

The first two sub-questions have the objective of informing the reader of what happened in the conflict and in which context it is taking place. While there was reporting on the conflict by both newspapers up for analysis, this is not nearly detailed enough. Furthermore, much of the information on the conflict only became available after the Cold War portion of it ended, when the US, South African and Soviet archives released a deluge of information on the topic. Thus, much of the reporting on the conflict is both superficial and often ideologically biased as both newspapers were dependent on the South Africans as their main source of information. In the interest of presenting the full story, with an emphasis on those parts of the historiography that are contested, two chapters giving context will be presented. The final two sub-questions have the objective of answering the research question by looking at how the Cubans and South Africans were represented in the conflict. This analysis of how they are represented will be done by Critical Discourse Analysis, which will be further elaborated upon below.

## ***Methodology***

### ***Critical Discourse Analysis: a brief introduction***

The language we use says a lot about our convictions and values. By extension, the language used in the media by television broadcasters or newspapers reveals subliminal information about their political and social values. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the critical study of language to find the ideology and tactics behind spoken and written words. Through CDA, scholars are able to highlight the connections between language, power, and ideology.<sup>20</sup> When a source works ideologically, one is not in the first instance claiming that it is false or claiming a privileged position from which judgements of truth or falsity can be made. One is just claiming that it contributes to the reproduction of relations of power.<sup>21</sup> This thesis will

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<sup>20</sup> David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction* (London 2012) 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis. The critical study of language* (New York 1995) 9.

look at how the Cubans, associated with communism and the Eastern bloc, and South Africans, associated with apartheid but also seen as fighting communism, were represented in Dutch media on both sides of the spectrum. A detailed description of the CDA used can be found in Chapter four, which includes an even more detailed CDA using a socio-semantic inventory employed by Mohamedwesam Amer to study how Israeli's and Palestinians were represented during the Gaza war of 2008-2009.<sup>22</sup>

### **Note on primary sources**

Because what happened in the Angolan Civil War will be discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, I will now limit myself to a brief note on the primary source material. To get an idea of how the Dutch media saw the Border Wars I have researched two newspapers: *de Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant*. *De Telegraaf* is a conservative-populist newspaper that has been the most read newspaper in the Netherlands for the past few decades. It walks the line between a tabloid and a newspaper and is absolutely no stranger to sensationalist reporting. Cold War narratives and potential demonization of the communists have to be balanced with the fact that these communists were fighting the forces of apartheid, a system that was generally frowned upon in the Netherlands. The *Volkskrant* is a traditionally centre-left newspaper which is sometimes sarcastically called the “party paper of the Labour Party (PvdA)” by critics.<sup>23</sup> As could be expected, their reporting was more sympathetic towards the Cubans and Angolans, although still with hints of anti-communist sentiment. Both of these newspaper archives have been digitized and were available on *Delpher*, a search engine managed by the Dutch Royal Library that contains the archive of most major newspapers in the Netherlands.

### **Structure of the thesis**

First, we must explain how this conflict emerged and for this it is necessary to recall the twilight of the Portuguese Empire. The *Guerra de Independência de Angola* was the struggle that set the stage for the conflict between South Africa and the fledgling People's Republic

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<sup>22</sup> M. Amer, 'Critical discourse analysis of war reporting in the international press. The case of the Gaza war of 2008–2009', *Palgrave Communications* 3 (13) (2017).

<sup>23</sup> Harrie Verbon, 'De Volkskrant als partijblad van de PvdA', *Joop* (December 16th 2011), <https://joop.bnnvara.nl/opinies/de-volkskrant-al-s-partijblad-van-de-pvda> (version October 20th 2020).

of Angola. This first chapter will deal with the independence struggle of Angola, passing through the Carnation Revolution and ending with the South African incursion into Angola and the Cuban intervention as a reaction to this. The second chapter will be focused on the first part of the War in Angola between the SADF and the Angolans and their Cuban allies, cutting off around 1980. The third continues with the next phase of the Angolan Civil War which started around the election of Ronald Reagan in the US, which had profound consequences for the conflict. These chapters will give special attention to the different battles and operations. This emphasis on the military history of the conflict is justified by the length of this thesis: a study which tries to capture the military, political and diplomatic aspects of the conflict run the risk of becoming an opus similar to *Visions of Freedom* by Piero Gleijeses.

The fourth chapter will answer the question of how the main intervening countries in the Angolan Civil War were represented in two major Dutch newspapers, the *Telegraaf* and the *Volkskrant*. This chapter is divided into two sections, with each section dealing with one newspaper. These last chapters will also briefly introduce the newspapers responsible for the production of the texts we are analysing. By analysing how the Cubans and South Africans are represented in these newspaper articles over a period of thirteen years we can conclude whether any frames were pressed on the public by newspapers on the centre left- and right of the political spectrum. Because of the chronology we can also see whether the way these parties are represented changes over the years. In this way, we can get an idea of how the public and academia in the West saw the Cubans, and as a contrast the South Africans, in the Angolan Civil War.

## ***Chapter 1: The Twilight of Empire***

### ***1.1 Introduction***

This chapter will give a quick history of Angola up until the moment the country becomes independent from Portugal. Starting with a brief explanation on how Angola became part of the Portuguese Empire, the chapter moves quickly through Salazar's dictatorship to the start of the independence movements in the mid-1900s to the war for independence. The chapter ends with the Independence of Angola, which is strongly linked to the Carnation Revolution. Throughout this chapter it will become clear that this war of liberation was an international affair.

### ***1.2 A Global Empire***

In early modern times, the Portuguese were among the first sailors from Europe to cross over to the Americas regularly and, more importantly for the topic of this thesis, to follow the African coast into the Indian Ocean. In 1488 Bartolomeu Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope and "discovered" a maritime route from Europe to the Indian Ocean. Ten years later, in 1498, his compatriot Vasco Da Gama reached India via the Cape of Good Hope. Portugal, and the World, would never be the same. Over the centuries the Portuguese build up a large seafaring empire stretching from Brazil in the Western hemisphere all the way to what is currently known as East Timor in the Indonesian archipelago. In between lay the African colonies of the Portuguese, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique and Angola.<sup>24</sup>

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to colonize a piece of Africa, the Portuguese laid claim to parts of modern-day Equatorial Guinea in 1472. The role of these African colonies changed significantly in the centuries of Portuguese rule. Broadly speaking, Portuguese Imperialism can be divided in three phases. The first phase was focused on the spice trade and the East Asian possessions of the Portuguese Crown and can be dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In this first phase the African colonies served mostly as supply points on the route to the Indian Ocean. The second phase of the Portuguese Empire was centred around the crown jewel of its empire: Brazil.

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<sup>24</sup> Roger Crowley, *Conquerors. How the Portuguese forged the first global empire* (London 2015) 359-363.

Just as the British had India, the Portuguese had Brazil and they exploited it mercilessly. The African colonies, especially Angola, fulfilled the role of sources of slave-labour for the plantations in Brazil. This phase ended with the independence of Brazil in 1822. The third and final phase of the Empire can be dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the loss of Brazil and changing attitudes towards slavery in Europe, the African colonies change their main function. Whereas for the slave trade it had been enough to have some settlements on the coast, the new and more modern colonialism required the exploitation of the hinterland.<sup>25</sup> The Portuguese turn towards a new imperialism was significantly influenced by the economic downturn Europe suffered in the 1870s. While the powerful economies of northern Europe could turn towards protectionism, Portugal's population was too small for this option. Closer economic integration into its Iberian neighbour Spain was disliked by nationalists on both the progressive and conservative side of the political spectrum. Furthermore, the wealth of Africa seemed confirmed by the recent *Scramble for Africa* between the great powers.<sup>26</sup> By 1914 Portugal had established itself as one of the prime colonial powers on the African continent. By this time also, Portugal had stopped being a monarchy and had become a Republic, firmly in the grasp of its military.

### **1.3 The 'Estado Novo' and the Age of Decolonization**

In the 1920s European financial crisis struck Portugal with severe economic consequences. In 1926 the crisis reached such severity that the ruling President Carmona, a military man, invited Antonio Oliveira Salazar, a professor of economics at Coimbra University, to become finance minister with full veto power on all government expenditures. As the crisis developed into the Great Depression, and with the spectre of the Russian Revolution haunting Europe, labour and popular unrest increased. Strikes, arson and even attacks with bombs were employed by the impoverished Portuguese proletariat.<sup>27</sup> This caused much fear in conservative and bourgeois circles in Portugal and thus the military kept firm control and meted out repression.<sup>28</sup> By 1933 Salazar, who was one of the few civilians in the government, was trusted enough by the military to form a government. Salazar was given

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<sup>25</sup> Norrie MacQueen, *The decolonization of Portuguese Africa. Metropolitan revolution and the dissolution of empire* (London 1997) 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem* 5.

<sup>27</sup> James Maxwell Anderson, *The History of Portugal. Part two* (Westport 2000) 145.

<sup>28</sup> MacQueen, *The decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 9.

dictatorial powers and he used them to draft and pass a new constitution. This constitution was explicitly anti-Communist and antiparliamentary and it concentrated a lot of power in the executive. The market economy was maintained yet it was to be united with the state and society in a corporate system. Secret police, called PIDE (International Police and for the Protection of the State), hunted down communists, trade unionists and other opponents of the regime. These were the foundations of the Second Republic, the Estado Novo (New State).<sup>29</sup>

After the end of World War Two, Portugal attempted to join the newly created United Nations. However, because of antifascists revealing the abuses of the government and them getting support from the governments of other countries Portugal was only admitted in 1955. It was at this moment that it was also admitted into the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, The World health Organization and the World Trade Organization.<sup>30</sup> Significantly, it was already admitted into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. Portugal was in large part a one-man dictatorship, as the 1933 constitution concentrated most of the power in the person of Salazar. As with many Germans, Italians and Spaniards after World War Two, fascism was seen as excusable as long as the individual was staunchly anti-communist.<sup>31</sup>

Yet it was also through these international organizations that Salazar and his government must have realized the times were changing. As newly independent nations started to fill the UN, the Portuguese soon found themselves under attack because of their colonial possessions. For two decades the Portuguese heard the concerns of former colonial nations about the oppression and lack of self-governance in the Portuguese colonies. As the Portuguese Foreign Minister Franco Nogueira already warned Salazar in 1961, 'The Afro-Asian bloc is entirely dominant at the UN... supported by the communist bloc, enjoying and automatic majority of 60 votes on any issue'.<sup>32</sup> For two decades, Portugal became the prime target of anti-colonialism, as it was the only state not willing to grant independence to overseas territories. Only the openly racist regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia competed with Portugal for attention from the Afro-Asian bloc. The Portuguese responded with a

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<sup>29</sup> Anderson, *The History of Portugal*, 146.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem 151.

<sup>31</sup> Bruno Cardoso Reis, 'Portugal and the UN. A Rogue State Resisting the Norm of Decolonization (1956-1974)', *Portuguese Studies* 29 (2013) 251-276, 273.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem 261.

conservative legalism that emphasized traditional precedents and set procedure over majority voting and ideals. The most important precedent was that its colonies had been colonies for centuries and that weighed more than ideals about self-determination. In fact, the overseas territories of Portugal were not colonies, they were integral parts of the mother country according to the regime.<sup>33</sup>

#### **1.4 The Colonial Wars**

International politics and a UN clamouring for independence did not go unnoticed in Portugal's colonies either. In fact, the União dos Povos do Norte de Angola (UPA), which would later become the FNLA, began its armed uprising in Northern Angola on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1961, the same day a meeting of the UN Security Council was scheduled. In fact, Holden Roberto, the leader of this March uprising which was the beginning of the Angolan war of Independence, had spoken at the UN two months earlier in January. Insurgents in Angola dared to take up arms because they knew they were not alone in their struggle, they had at least the moral support of many nations in the UN. This might have functioned as a catalyst for the insurrection in Angola.<sup>34</sup>

But there were many other reasons for the revolt against Portugal by its colonial subjects, not least of them the tremendous backwardness of Portugal itself. It lagged behind in everything to the other European colonial powers, including in how labour relations were organized. For example, slavery was only abolished in 1876 and systematic abuses of labour contracts, with force labour and compulsory production of cash-crops, continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was especially the case on the cocoa plantations of its largest colony, Angola. Also, because the mother country had itself an extremely deprived population, much of the provision of basic social services was delegated to the Catholic Church. It is not unreasonable to say that the indigenous population of Portuguese Africa was the most disadvantaged of any European Empire. But ironically, this supported the idea that Portugal and its empire were "one and indivisible", as the metropolitan proletariat was also the most disadvantaged in Europe.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem 262-263.

<sup>35</sup> MacQueen, *The decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 12.

Although the organized uprising by the FNLA began only in March 1961, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) had already attacked a Portuguese police station in February. Luanda was the epicentre of the MPLA-led revolt, with attacks on police stations and prisons. In northern Angola, the FNLA was more influential, and they caused a serious insurrection along the Angola-Congo border which startled the Portuguese.<sup>36</sup>

Among the colonial troops one mood prevailed: Portugal would have to negotiate with the guerrilla movements, especially as it seemed that guerrilla warfare was spreading. It was the common opinion of the colonial military command that a military solution to guerrilla warfare in a territory so large and ethnically diverse was simply beyond the capabilities of the Estado Novo. In Lisbon, this stance found support with Colonel Francisco da Costa Gomes and general Botelho Moniz. Sadly, for them it was not supported by Salazar, who saw this as a cowardly solution and promptly removed Moniz from his post and relegated da Costa Gomes to an obscure administrative position in Beja. The dictator then went on television to state his determination to maintain the Portuguese Empire in Africa in defence of Western and Christian civilization against the perceived communist onslaught.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of the year, Portugal had sent 50.000 troops to Angola. Over the years, independence movements all across its colonial possessions began to emerge, resulting in Portugal also having to send several thousands of troops to its other colonies in Africa and to Timor. Portugal, a nation of 9 million inhabitants, had to maintain an army of up to 200.000 men because of the continued imperial illusions of its ruling class. Its defence budget amounted to 40 percent of total public expenditure. The most backward nation in Europe prioritized guns over schools and hospitals.<sup>38</sup> This almost stubborn impulse to maintain their colonial empire was not without material motives. The colonies, especially Angola, had become a valuable source of foreign currency during the commodity boom of the Korean War. The quickly expanding plantation system, largely comprised of coffee plantations, also generated a new prosperity in the Portuguese towns where the colonists came from. During the 1950s the number of colonists from Portugal to its African colonies increased drastically, which created a captive market for Portuguese wines and textiles, two of the few products Portugal produced. However, this increased immigration, which came

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<sup>36</sup> Ibidem 24.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem 151-152.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *The History of Portugal*, 153.

with a new wave of displacement and subjugation for the indigenous population of the colonies, is also one of the reasons these peoples would revolt in the 1960s.<sup>39</sup>

### **1.5 A War of (Inter)national Liberation**

As mentioned before, Portugal's Colonial Wars were profoundly influenced by the international climate of the Cold War and the wave of African Nationalisms that occurred after the Second World War. A crucial tacit supporter of the Portuguese colonial project was the United States. The Portuguese had seduced the US to change its African Policy by renewing the lease on the military base on the Azores, which were a vital part of the hegemonic command of the North Atlantic the US needed for its security concerns. The policy it had applied on the British, French and Belgians was that it supported the rising black national bourgeoisie against their colonial overlords to avoid an emancipation led by communist actors. In exchange for the Azores however, it allowed Portugal to attempt to suppress the uprisings in her colonies. A nice added bonus of the Azores lease was that the US could discretely lend its technologically advanced military equipment to the Portuguese for use in colonial expeditions.<sup>40</sup>

The Uprising in Angola and the subsequent national liberation war was by far the most complicated in Portuguese Africa because of the different movements it involved. These movements represented different ideologies and thus depended on support from different states for resources and refuge.<sup>41</sup> They also found most of their support in one of Angola's three distinct major ethnic groups: the 2 million strong Ovimbundu in the central highland, the 1.3 million Mbundu in the north-central region, and the 400.000 Bakongo in the northwest.<sup>42</sup> When the insurrection broke out there were two major organizations, the MPLA and the UPA. They would later be joined by a third organization, UNITA, although UNITA collaborated with the Portuguese quite often.

The UPA, which later became the FNLA, was founded in 1958 and led by Holden Roberto. The FNLA drew its support from the Bakongo and operated out of Northern Angola and increasingly out of Zaire (nowadays the Democratic Republic of Congo) after being

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<sup>39</sup> David Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal* (Cambridge 2018) 175.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem 181.

<sup>41</sup> Antonio Costa Pinto and Stewart Lloyd-Jones, *The Last Empire. Thirty years of Portuguese Decolonization* (Bristol 2003) 18.

<sup>42</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 26.

driven out of Angola by the Portuguese.<sup>43</sup> Roberto himself was a brother-in-law and protégé of Joseph-Desire Mobutu, who seized power in Zaire<sup>44</sup> in 1965. Roberto initially found support from the US under the Kennedy administration. They received CIA funds to fight the more radical MPLA. These funds were funnelled through the Adoula administration in Congo, which also granted the UPA the right to establish bases in Congo, something it denied the MPLA.<sup>45</sup> Foreign funds dried up for a few years, as the lease on the Azores expired in 1962, the Portuguese managed for a few years to stop US support for the FNLA. This meant that until Nixon took power the FNLA only received non-military aid from the US. After Nixon came to power, all aid ceased for Roberto because the Nixon administration had decided to back the Portuguese. Nixon believed his predecessors had neglected Southern Africa and wanted to compensate for this. The result was a policy in which South Africa and the Portuguese were bulwarks against communism and forces for stability in the region. Local racist regimes were propped up as regional policemen to thwart the threat of a communist revolution.<sup>46</sup> After the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1970s, the FNLA managed to receive weapons and advisors from China, North Korea and Romania.<sup>47</sup> This hodgepodge of benefactors meant that the FNLA did not have a clear ideology but used anti-communist rhetoric to win international backing. Because most of this rhetoric was aimed at the USSR and Cuba, it could still count on support from the Chinese block after the Sino-Soviet Split. On top of this, the FNLA distinguished itself by criticizing the MPLA for allowing whites and people of mixed race (*mestiços*), into its ranks. In this way it tried to present itself as the real representative of African nationalism.<sup>48</sup> FNLA was numerically the strongest of the three groups fighting the Portuguese, with Roberto claiming that he had 10,000 men under his command. Realistically however, the FNLA had close to 6,200 men and never more than 1,000 actually inside of Angola fighting the Portuguese and, increasingly, the MPLA.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ian F. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies. Guerrillas and their opponents since 1750* (New York 2001) 133.

<sup>44</sup> Zaire was called Congo after its independence from Belgium but its name was changed to Zaire in 1971, under the Mobutu regime. After the death of Mobutu, the name was changed to Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Cambridge 2013) 85.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem* 85-87.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem* 93.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem* 81.

<sup>49</sup> Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 133.

The União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) was ideologically very similar to the FNLA, except that initially it adopted a Maoist internal party structure.<sup>50</sup> UNITA broke away from the FNLA in 1966 and was led by Jonas Savimbi. Savimbi was a Swiss-educated political scientist with a master's degree from the University of Lausanne. Both friend and foe alike acknowledged his intelligence, charisma, and prowess on the battlefield. Operating mainly in the central highlands and in eastern Angola, UNITA drew the bulk of its support from the largest tribe in the country, the Ovimbundu. In spite of this, it was by far the smallest of the three groups. Usually it did not have more than 500 to 800 cadres in Angola simultaneously.<sup>51</sup> UNITA was also the group which posed the least resistance to the Portuguese and by 1971, barely 5 years after the break with the FNLA, Savimbi had signed deals with the Portuguese to collaborate against the FNLA and the MPLA.<sup>52</sup> UNITA was continuously funded by the Chinese bloc and this, in combination with their Maoist "party" organization, earned them the nickname of the "Black Chinese".<sup>53</sup> When Savimbi was still part of the FNLA he had been in charge of diplomatic relations and he was a formidable diplomat. After Angolan Independence in 1975 he managed to get support first from the apartheid regime in South Africa. Furthermore, by 1978 the US was giving non-lethal aid and funnelling lethal aid to UNITA through its allies. This in spite of laws which forbid the US from undertaking covert operations in Angola.<sup>54</sup>

The final group opposing the Portuguese in Angola that has to be introduced is the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA). The MPLA was founded in 1956 and its power was concentrated in north-central Angola, including the most important city in the colony, Luanda. Ethnically its powerbase was the Mbundu tribe of that same area yet the MPLA also found strong support among Western-educated intellectuals (*assimilados*), urban workers, the petit bourgeoisie, *mestiços*, and even a small number of Angola's 200,000 Portuguese settlers.<sup>55</sup> Whereas ethnic origin and race were crucial in the other groups fighting the Portuguese, the MPLA prioritized class struggle. Because origin and race were not relevant for inclusion into the organization, this meant that the MPLA had a far larger

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<sup>50</sup> Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, 81.

<sup>51</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 65.

<sup>52</sup> Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, 81.

<sup>53</sup> Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 133.

<sup>54</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 52.

<sup>55</sup> Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, 81.

recruitment pool and could also mobilize all sectors of society against the Portuguese colonial forces, even some Portuguese settlers.

This strategy of mobilizing all levels of society against a common enemy, which was not the Portuguese but Portuguese colonialism, was dubbed the 'national front' strategy.<sup>56</sup> This emphasis on class and class struggle was a consequence of the ideology of the MPLA: Marxism. In the West, the MPLA was seen as just another Marxist-Leninist proxy of the USSR, and the fact that the MPLA called itself Marxist-Leninist did not help dissipate this image. However, the MPLA espoused an eclectic interpretation of Marxism-Leninism which was "very much adapted to the specific conditions and needs of Angola" and few of its intellectuals supported an interpretation that was oriented towards the USSR, as a Yugoslav official gleefully noted.<sup>57</sup>

The MPLA also set itself apart because of the level of education its upper echelons had. While most FNLA leaders had no more than secondary education, most of the command of UNITA had university degrees. Yet the MPLA was led by distinguished intellectuals who had studied in Europe, the perks of being in the communist bloc during the Cold War. None was more distinguished than the leader of the MPLA, Agostinho Neto. Neto had been top of his class in Lisbon and was a distinguished doctor and a poet who commanded widespread admiration from politically aware Africans. Although he was not an inspiring speaker, he was a modest man who "combined an unbending devotion to his cause with a corresponding moral power".<sup>58</sup>

Due to its ideology, it is not surprising that the MPLA was supported by countries of the communist bloc in the Cold War. MPLA soldiers received material assistance and military training from China, Cuba, North Korea, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Czechoslovakia.<sup>59</sup>

The Cubans went beyond mere aid in the form of material or instructors and also send troops to Angola to fight with the MPLA. Although this would take on massive proportions only in 1975 with Operation Carlota, already in 1965, a small number of Cubans

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<sup>56</sup> Arslan Humbaraci and Nicole Muchnik, *Portugal's African Wars. Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique* (New York 1974) 116.

<sup>57</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 27.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>59</sup> Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, 93.

was helping the MPLA in its battles against the Portuguese.<sup>60</sup> Although the MPLA was the group with the largest number of sympathizers, it probably had only 4700 soldiers in 1974. Of these only 1500 were inside of Angola, and most of them relegated to camps in the Congo and Zambia. This became especially the case as NATO weaponry, especially helicopters, gave the Portuguese the means to very easily conduct search & destroy missions to clear out MPLA camps and liberated areas.<sup>61</sup>

### ***1.6 Strategy and Tactics in the Angolan War of Independence***

From 1956 to 1960, the MPLA was committed to strike and demonstration tactics to attempt to take down the colonial regime. This initial emphasis on labour agitation came forth out of socialist theory in the form of building class consciousness by intensifying class struggle among all sectors of Angolan society. The Portuguese responded by unleashing the PIDE, the secret police, on the organization. The PIDE managed to dismantle a significant proportion of the MPLA's network in the countryside. Furthermore, it imprisoned large amounts of cadres and killed an even larger number of sympathizers. When the MPLA switched to emphasizing armed struggle, in 1961, the absence of this network and its constituents were sorely missed.<sup>62</sup> The uprising began in 1961 February across all of Angola by both the MPLA and the FNLA without great success. The Portuguese responded with massive repression, killing more than 8000 Angolans in the following week alone. Still, in the mythology of the MPLA, the botched raid on a police station on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 1961 is still the beginning of the Angolan Revolution.<sup>63</sup>

The Portuguese enjoyed initial success, largely forcing the FNLA out of the country and into Congo by 1964. This almost spelled doom for the MPLA, as this left them as the only group actually fighting the Portuguese, who could concentrate all their forces on them. A timely revolution in 1963 in Congo-Brazzaville, which deposed the pro-Western Youlou regime, made it possible for the MPLA to use this country as a haven in 1964. That same year, the MPLA opened its first front in Cabinda, a northern exclave of Angola which is

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<sup>60</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>61</sup> Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 134.

<sup>62</sup> Humbaraci and Muchnik, *Portugal's African Wars*, 121.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem 119.

sandwiched between Congo-Brazzaville and Congo-Kinshasa. In 1966, after getting assistance from Tanzania and Zambia, the MPLA opened a second front in eastern Angola.<sup>64</sup>

The Colonial War in Angola was, after the initial uprising and subsequent dismemberment of the urban network of the MPLA, entirely a rural conflict. It was often conducted in very difficult terrain such as the mountains, wetlands, jungles and elephant grass forests which covered the 2100 kilometre border between DRC and Angola. This caused significant problems for both sides. On top of this, the tropical and subtropical climate of Angola did not do anyone any favours either. As mentioned before, infiltration across international borders and the establishment of sanctuaries in safe neighbouring countries were of great importance to all groups except UNITA, who were expelled from Zambia in the late 1960s after threatening the economically vital Benguela railway.<sup>65</sup> Once inside of Angola, all three groups tried to establish liberated areas. Only the MPLA, who established protected villages that they called *kimbos*, had any success with this, as the FNLA was particularly inept at its political role, perhaps because of the internal ideological contradictions discussed earlier. Sadly, for the MPLA, these *kimbos* were either very vulnerable to air attacks or too far from population centres to have a real effect. The MPLA's political strategy, of which the *kimbo* was an important aspect, only really took off after the introduction of reliable SAM's (surface to air missiles) in the 1970s, provided by Eastern bloc countries and which ended the constant threat of the Portuguese helicopters. Still, the war has been characterized as 'mines versus helicopters' with minimal contact between the Portuguese and small groups of insurgents infiltrating across international borders.<sup>66</sup>

In spite of not having fought a war since the First World War, the Portuguese army responded ferociously to the challenge posed by the insurgents in Angola. Although initially caught by surprise, the lack of modern armaments among the insurgents meant that the initial uprising was easily repressed. What followed was a cacophony of destruction and slaughter, due to the Portuguese air force, which is said to have cost the lives of 50.000 Angolans between August and September 1961.<sup>67</sup> This was followed by a guerrilla war, in which the Portuguese would mainly use the experience of the British in Malaya and of the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibidem 125-126.

<sup>65</sup> Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 134.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem 135.

<sup>67</sup> MacQueen, *The decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 24.

French in Algeria, as opposed to the US counterinsurgency doctrine which was then being put into practice in South-Vietnam.<sup>68</sup>

There are however parallels between the war the US was waging on Vietnam and the Portuguese Colonial Wars. In both cases the imperialist powers were helped by sizeable contingents of native troops, going as far that by 1971 up to 40 percent of the troops under Portuguese command in Angola were black Africans. Originally drawn mainly from the Bushmen of the Kalahari, these so called *flechas* and other Africans in Portuguese service would soon outnumber the guerrillas they were opposing.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, both wars ended up putting significant political strain upon the imperialist nations with profound political change as a result. Finally, despite very bloody episodes, both counterinsurgency doctrines were focused on winning the 'hearts and minds' of the locals. The Portuguese set up programs for the improvement of social conditions by building schools and infrastructure. They also implemented a system of protected villages and, more significantly, resettlement of Angolans. This resettlement system ended up being quite sizable, with about one million Angolans being resettled. This represented 20 percent of the population and it was done as means of control as opposed to a means of winning hearts and minds.<sup>70</sup> All these measures were enough to ensure a low intensity stalemate in Angola until 1974, the year of the Carnation Revolution in Portugal itself.

### ***1.7 The Sun Sets on the 'Estado Novo'***

It seems almost fitting that Portugal was one of the last countries to relinquish its colonial possessions. Only in 1975 were Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, and Mozambique granted independence, because of the Carnation Revolution. Equatorial Guinea had been under Spanish rule since 1778 and was granted independence in 1968, a measly seven years earlier than the rest of Lusophone Africa.

One important cause for the Carnation Revolution at home and the resulting end of the Colonial Wars was that the ideologies which inspired the Angolans and Guineans to revolt against the Portuguese were also incredibly relevant in a poor agrarian country like Portugal itself. Even in death the towering intellects of revolutionaries like Eduardo

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<sup>68</sup> Ibidem 136.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem 137.

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem.

Mondlane and Amilcar Cabral continued to inspire.<sup>71</sup> Their writings were fundamental in the ideological development of the left-wing officers who would lead the coup 'd'état which would depose Salazar's successor Caetano and President Tomas.<sup>72</sup> These young officers were united in an organization called the *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (Movement of the Armed Forces, MFA) which carried out a coup d'état which deposed prime minister Caetano and put an end to the dictatorship.

Over the following year and a half, "*the most significant revolution in Europe since the Second World War*" would take place.<sup>73</sup> In the period between April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1974 and November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1975 as much as three million people took part in expressions of civil resistance. Many workplaces were taken over by workers and run by them, the people actually doing the work. Women won a host of concessions and made massive strides towards equal pay and equality.<sup>74</sup> What is relevant to this thesis is that the strain put on the Portuguese state and society by the colonial wars was, together with the general economic downturn of the early 70s, one of the main reasons for the revolution.<sup>75</sup> What is also relevant is that the revolution suddenly ended the stalemates in Lusophone Africa. Nowhere else was this more apparent than in Angola, where the sudden exit of the Portuguese meant that a power vacuum was appearing. The end of Portuguese domination also meant the end of the Angolan War of Independence. Sadly, for the Angolans, it also meant the beginning of the Angolan Civil War, which would grow out to be one of the most significant conflicts in the Cold War.

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<sup>71</sup> Julião Soares Sousa, 'Amilcar Cabral, The PAIGC and the Relations with China at the time of the Sino-Soviet Split and of Anti-Colonialism. Discourses and Praxis', *International history review* 42 (6) (2020), 1-23.

<sup>72</sup> Birmingham 183-184.

<sup>73</sup> Raquel Carneira Varela, *A People's History of the Portuguese Revolution* (London 2019) 1.

<sup>74</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>75</sup> The history of the Carnation Revolution is far too complex and a bit too distant from the topic of this thesis to do it justice here, so I refer the reader to Raquel Varela's recent people's history of this fascinating yet not well-known revolution.

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem 3.

## Chapter 2: A Hot Conflict in a Cold War

### 2.1 Introduction

The first chapter has set the stage for one of the forgotten conflicts of the 20th century: The Angolan Civil War. The conflict between the socialist MPLA government and the Western-backed UNITA rebels was one of the most important conflicts of the Cold War in Africa. The conflict had a great impact on the end of apartheid but the devastation it caused still hampers Angola's development. In contrast to the other 'hot' conflicts of the Cold War, like Korea and Vietnam, it is almost unknown outside of specialist circles and does not dominate our public consciousness. For this reason, it has sometimes been called a "forgotten emergency".<sup>77</sup>

However, before describing the conflict between South Africa and the Cubans and Angolans, I will detail the initial phases of the Civil War, so the reader understands that this internal war was always going to become an international crisis. The conflict featured a titanic clash between the apartheid era army of South Africa, the South African Defence Force (SADF), and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* (FAR) of Cuba. The SADF intervened in the civil war on the side of UNITA to secure the regional stability of Southern Africa in favour of white supremacy. The Cubans acted in response to the South Africans to protect the fledgling revolutionary regime in Luanda.

Just as in the first chapter, the emphasis will be on the transnational aspects of the conflict and the confrontation between the SADF and FAR will take centre stage. The chapter ends around the same time as the 80s chronologically. This is because the assumption of power of Ronald Reagan entailed drastic changes in the dynamic of the conflict.

Because the historiography is contested between pro-Cuban/Angolan authors and pro-South African authors this chapter will highlight the contrast between these positions. This contrast must be seen in the context of the polarised historiography of the Cold War. As might have become clear from the introduction, no comprehensive Cuban accounts are available in Western Europe. Piero Gleijeses' magnum opus is the account that involved the

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<sup>77</sup> Chris McGreal, 'Profits fuel Angola's war', *The Guardian*, July 7<sup>th</sup> 1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/GWeekly/Story/0,,291273,00.html> (February 21<sup>st</sup> 2021).

largest number of Cuban sources. For the pro-South African side, no such lack of sources exists.

## **2.2 A Promise of Independence but the War Continues**

In 1974 the Carnation Revolution occurred in Portugal and this had great consequences for its African colonies. In the early 70s the liberation struggle in Angola had developed into a stalemate. The Portuguese were unable to completely eliminate the insurgent groups who in turn were unable to dislodge the Portuguese from the key urban centres of Angola. But with the revolution in Portugal, change was in the air and the international sponsors of the different insurgent groups felt it. The Chinese and the CIA immediately increased their support for the FNLA and UNITA. The USSR however, initially refused to increase its aid to the MPLA until some internal struggles were solved. When it became clear that the struggles would not be solved quickly, and worried because of the escalation by the Chinese and the CIA, the USSR reluctantly increased its support for Agostinho Neto the leader of the majority faction.<sup>78</sup>

Yet where Moscow really threw its weight behind was a compromise between the different insurgent groups and the Portuguese. This solution had been proposed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) who were concerned over the impending war for mastery in Angola after independence. The resulting Alvor Accords, which were signed on the 15th of January 1975, were comprised of 60 articles, and had three key ingredients. First, they acknowledged the FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA as the sole representatives of the Angolan people. Second, they provided a legal and administrative framework for Angola's independence on November 11, 1975. Third, they established procedures by which this independence would be decided.<sup>79</sup> Unsurprisingly, the agreement was broken almost the instant it was signed. It reflected the limits of a hasty and chaotic decolonization process initiated by the Portuguese state after the Carnation Revolution. The transitional government with representatives of all three groups was hamstrung by internal discussions and was thus unable to act. The fundamental issue was that it depended on the goodwill and mutual confidence of three groups that had spent the last decade fighting amongst

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<sup>78</sup> Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, 93.

<sup>79</sup> Gilbert Khadiagala, 'Negotiating Angola's independence transition: the Alvor Accords', *International Negotiation* Vol 10 (2) (2005) 293-310, 301.

each other as much as fighting the Portuguese. Furthermore, by presenting the MPLA, UNITA and the FNLA as the only representatives of Angolan popular will, it silenced other voices in Angola who could have brought a political plurality outside of the confines of Cold War politics. Although a façade of unity was set up at the time the Accord was signed, behind the scenes all parties were looking to take overpower unilaterally on November 11th, 1975 when it entered into force.<sup>80</sup>

Fighting broke out months earlier than November with the first struggle being between the MPLA and a breakaway faction in Luanda. The breakaway faction, led by Daniel Chipenda, was defeated by the MPLA troops and driven into joining the FNLA. The MPLA was seen by opposing groups as fomenting “popular power” by allowing Luandans to strike and not disarming them. Many Luandans, which were largely MPLA supporters, had armed themselves in 1974 to protect their communities from attacks by vengeful Portuguese settlers and paramilitary death squads.<sup>81</sup> The popularity of the MPLA and the now almost unavoidable struggle for dominance in Angola led to a reaction from the CIA. On the 22nd of January 1975 they authorized \$300.000 in covert funds to the FNLA. This enabled them to buy several television channels and newspapers. Together with targeted assassinations of MPLA activists, the FNLA was making a serious attempt to diminish the influence of the MPLA. This campaign was expanded to attacks on the Luanda slums, which were a stronghold of the MPLA. By Early May this had killed 700 to 1000 Angolans. Meanwhile, in southern Angola, heavy clashes happened between UNITA and MPLA supporters. Northern Angola and the enclave of Cabinda were not spared from the violence either. Here large clashes between FNLA and MPLA supporters took place.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the US government began to funnel funds and weapons to the FNLA through Mobutu’s Zaire. Mobutu was in turn preparing to intervene in Angola on the side of the FNLA. From March until May over 1000 Zairean soldiers infiltrated into Angola to fight on the FNLA’s behalf.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibidem 302.

<sup>81</sup> Ibidem 303.

<sup>82</sup> Khadiagala, ‘Negotiating Angola’s independence transition’, 304.

<sup>83</sup> Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, 94.

### **2.3 The Civil War becomes International**

The internal struggles of the MPLA and the eclectic, non-orthodox Marxism of Neto and other MPLA leaders meant that help from the USSR resumed only slowly. The first weapon shipments arrived in March 1975 and only after it had become abundantly clear that the US and Zaire intended on snuffing out the MPLA. However, with new weapons the MPLA was able to drive the FNLA out of Luanda by May. By June it was starting to become clear to the US and its allies that the MPLA would survive. South African intelligence reported in late June that the only way to defeat the MPLA quickly was by intervention on a large scale.<sup>84</sup> Thus July ushered a new phase of close cooperation between US and South African intelligence services to shore up the beleaguered FNLA. Both countries funnelled around \$14 million in tanks, armoured cars, and other weapons into the FNLA through Zaire. \$3 million went directly to Mobutu as payment for his involvement in the conflict.<sup>85</sup> Late August brought another cash injection of \$10.7 million for the FNLA. Around this time was also when the SADF started pursuing SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) guerrillas into Angola. These incursions by the apartheid army continued into September 1975 and significantly escalated the conflict according to Schmidt.<sup>86</sup>

Still, the support the MPLA received from the USSR was very limited. On top of distrusting Neto it also did not want to jeopardize the SALT II arms control negotiations with the US. However, Moscow had to respond when Pretoria and Washington upped the ante and grudgingly approved support for the MPLA by its allies. The Cubans started sending instructors for the MPLA in August 1975. They were followed by the East Germans who sent \$2.5million in weapons, pilots, instructors and doctors.<sup>87</sup> By September, both Pretoria and Washington saw that the MPLA was winning the war. The causes for this were neither superior weaponry nor Cuban instructors but, as a CIA station chief in Luanda noted, the MPLA was "more effective, better educated, better trained, and better motivated."<sup>88</sup>

The MPLA seemed in control of the capital for now and with the date of independence, November 11th, rapidly approaching this caused panic among its opponents. Every party understood that whoever controlled Luanda on the 11th would have the

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<sup>84</sup> Ibidem 95.

<sup>85</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>86</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>87</sup> Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, 95.

<sup>88</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 29.

possibility of forming a government and thus of gaining international legitimacy. South African troops had been occupying parts of southern Angola since August 1975, giving UNITA some much needed breathing space. The FNLA was still receiving a lot of support from Zaire in the form of both manpower and weapons. But intervention was about to be scaled up significantly by both the South Africans and the Cubans. According to historian George Schultz, the clash on the 5th of October 1975 between FAPLA, the military wing of the MPLA, and the SADF at Caluitta was crucial in the South African decision to escalate its intervention. Although it was a fairly limited confrontation, which was a victory for the SADF, it was also the first-time eyewitnesses reported, erroneously, that there were Cubans fighting along the FAPLA forces.<sup>89</sup> The paranoid apartheid state saw its worst nightmares come true with an impending communist victory in Angola being followed up with assaults on Namibia and South Africa. It is no coincidence that on the 14th the SADF would invade with a force of around 500 soldiers, which would swell to 3000 over the following months.<sup>90</sup> This so-called Task Force Zulu, after one of the largest native tribes of South Africa who are known for their martial prowess, was commanded by General Constand Viljoen and consisted mostly of South Africans but also included former Portuguese irregulars and FNLA and UNITA soldiers.<sup>91</sup>

#### ***2.4 The Reasons for South African Intervention***

To understand this paranoid mentality, it is important to briefly explain how the apartheid regime saw itself from the mid-70s onwards. South Africa saw itself as a nation under siege by the sinister and ever advancing threat of communism expressed in the form of black liberation. Whereas in South Africa racial domination had become entrenched with the formalization of apartheid in 1948, in the rest of the continent colonial regimes were on the wane. By 1975 only one country on the continent remained a colony, Namibia, which was then known as South-West Africa, and it was a South African colony.

The defeat of colonialist and white supremacist regimes in Africa was a “Total Onslaught” which required a Total Strategy as a response.<sup>92</sup> While this Total Strategy would

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<sup>89</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 69.

<sup>90</sup> Leopold Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War, 1966-1989* (Cape Town 2013) 18.

<sup>91</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 71.

<sup>92</sup> Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa. Revised Edition* (New York 1996) 224.

only crystallize after 1980, when P.W. Botha was president and Magnus Malan his minister of defence, it was already in an embryonic state in 1975. This is especially true within the SADF which at that time had Malan as its commander and Botha as its minister. They would later seriously undermine the functioning of the already limited democracy in South Africa by giving the State Security Council (SSC) - which consisted of the ministries of defence, foreign affairs, Police, and Justice - a role like that of a shadow cabinet.<sup>93</sup>

The reason SSC was allowed to become so powerful is partially a consequence of the siege mentality of the apartheid regime. It presented the SADF as the last bulwark between black or, even worse, communist rule.<sup>94</sup> This mentality and image helps us explain why a loss of prestige of the SADF could have significant consequences. On top of this, an MPLA regime in Angola meant that there was a potential for a safe haven for SWAPO. This put South African domination of South West Africa in danger. The central goal of the intervention in Angola by the SADF, which would go on until 1989, was protecting Namibia by installing either the FNLA or UNITA in Luanda. This way they could prevent SWAPO from taking both its political and military campaigns to the next stage.<sup>95</sup> This is why the potential presence of Cuban army units in Angola led to such a reaction by the South African state.

### ***2.5 The reasons for launching Operation Carlota***

When the South African invasion started, spearheaded by Task-Force Zulu but soon joined by other columns, they broke easily through the ill-prepared FAPLA lines. South African historians have long berated Fidel Castro for his comparison of these columns with the armoured columns that were instrumental in the Blitzkrieg strategy of the Wehrmacht in World War Two. This was an exaggeration by the Cubans, The South Africans claim, but it was a very convenient way of mobilizing popular support for the intervention.<sup>96</sup> Yet when the army of a white-supremacist state uses a strategy in which armoured, motorized spearheads penetrate deeply into the enemy rear while other parts of the army exploit these gaps, it's hard not to make this comparison. This image was coupled with desperate pleas for help from the Neto government in Luanda. The South Africans were racing to

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<sup>93</sup> Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (London 2000) 460.

<sup>94</sup> William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford 2001) 264.

<sup>95</sup> Saney, *From Soweto to Cuito Cuanavale*, 77-78.

<sup>96</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 17.

Luanda, up the coast with one column and through the central highland with another one without losing a single encounter with FAPLA.<sup>97</sup> On the fourth of November, seven days before the date of independence, Castro gave in to Neto's pleas and gave the order to intervene.<sup>98</sup>

The reasons for the Cuban intervention are various and have been highly disputed and politicized, like everything regarding this conflict. According to Piero Gleijeses, the intervention in Angola is a perfect demonstration of what Cuban foreign policy was throughout the Cold War: a combination of revolutionary fervour and self-defence. Cuba had often tried to explore a *modus vivendi* with the US, being rebuffed every time. The US was seen as attacking Cuba by any means possible and thus the reaction was to combat Imperialism on every continent. This would gain friends for Cuba and weaken the US.<sup>99</sup> Putting this idea into practice was a lot easier in Africa than in Latin America, as the 1960s had proven. In Latin America, Cuban confronted governments which were legal in the eyes of the international community and was thus breaking international law. In Africa it confronted colonial powers and defended established governments like in Angola. Most of all, Africa was not the backyard of the US and a head on confrontation was far less likely. The US barely noticed the Cuban influence in Africa until Castro decided to air and sealift 36.000 soldiers in 1975.<sup>100</sup>

Another important reason Gleijeses singles out is related to the revolutionary fervour, or internationalism, that was such an important part of Cuban Socialist Ideology. Intervening in Angola was an action that implied directly fighting and weakening apartheid. The struggle against racial oppression in Southern Africa was, as Castro called it, "the most beautiful cause"<sup>101</sup> George also highlights the role of internationalism in Cuban ideology but also has a perhaps more realistic, and cynical, analysis of why Cuba intervened. He sees as one of the driving factors the fact that there was a real possibility for a large number of casualties among the Cuban military mission in Angola. At this time, not only was Angola being invaded by the South Africans supporting UNITA in the south but also by the Zairians supporting the FNLA in the north and east. With how the first engagements developed, the

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<sup>97</sup> Ibidem 19.

<sup>98</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 29.

<sup>99</sup> Ibidem 25.

<sup>100</sup> Ibidem 23.

<sup>101</sup> Ibidem 15.

SADF did not lose a single encounter with FAPLA and even the ragtag band of FNLA, mercenaries and Zairian soldiers had some success against FAPLA, there was a real possibility that a small, lightly armed Cuban contingent would be all between these armies and Luanda. To avert this military catastrophe, Cuba had to intervene on a massive scale.<sup>102</sup>

## **2.6 Operation Carlota**

Cuba intervened in Angola with a force which would swell to 36.000 men and 300 tanks by December 1975.<sup>103</sup> The operation was codenamed Carlota, after a female slave who led a revolt in Matanzas in 1843. The name represented and honoured the thousands of slaves who were killed in battle or executed during slave insurrections in Cuba. Here the multiracial FAR and their FAPLA allies confronted the army of a white supremacist state and their mercenary allies.<sup>104</sup> The force was part of the MMCA (Mision Militar Cubana en Angola) which was under the command of Raul Diaz Arguelles. Arguelles responded directly to the first deputy minister of the FAR, General Aberlado Colome Ibarra who was also known by his childhood nickname Furry.<sup>105</sup>

Because the SADF and the FNLA-Zairian army had been advancing since early October they were getting very close to Luanda. In the north, in the Cabinda enclave, another Zairian force threatened to wipe out the Cuban garrison of Cabinda. The situation was dire. The MPLA needed reinforcements and heavy weaponry as soon as possible to stem this tide. Cuba sent a battalion of MININT Special Forces to Luanda via airlift. It also shipped a battery of disassembled BM-21 rocket artillery from Pointe-Noire, Congo-Brazzaville and an FAR (Revolutionary Armed Forces) artillery crew arrived by plane on the 7th of November.<sup>106</sup> The BM-21 was the successor to the *Stalin Organ* of World War Two which was much feared by the Wehrmacht.

The BM-21 would very rapidly live up to the reputation of its predecessor. There was a single road that approached Luanda from the north and it was overshadowed by the hills of Quifangondo, over which already several clashes had been. It was now in the hands of FAPLA and with help of Cuban engineers it had been turned into a heavily fortified sector.

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<sup>102</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 77-78.

<sup>103</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 19.

<sup>104</sup> Fidel Castro and Ignacio Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: Biografia a dos Voces* (Madrid 2006) 654.

<sup>105</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 65.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem* 80-81.

The FNLA under leadership of Holden Roberto tried several times between October and early November to take the ridge and gain access to Luanda. A last attack on the 8th of October was repelled by a barrage of mortar, artillery and rocket fire inflicting heavy losses on the FNLA-Zairian army without inflicting a single casualty on the Cuban-FAPLA forces.<sup>107</sup> This should have been a warning, yet Roberto tried once again to take the Hill on the 10th of November, one day before independence. His force of 2000 FNLA soldiers, 1200 Zairians and 120 Portuguese mercenaries with a South African artillery battery in support faced around 1000 FAPLA soldiers and Cubans supported by a BM-21 battery. Roberto's army advanced unopposed, the defenders hiding until they were within range. Roberto's army was caught in the open, the BM-21 battery and machine gun fire exacting a terrible toll. After a few punishing hours they retreated in disarray. Quifangondo was the battle that ended Roberto's chances of taking Luanda and it also ended the FNLA as an effective fighting force in the conflict.<sup>108</sup>

While the situation to the direct north of Luanda had been stabilized by the victory at Quifangondo, the garrison of the Cabinda enclave was still under threat by a much larger FLEC (Frente para a Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda) and Zairian force. The FAPLA-Cuban force consisted of just one battalion of FAPLA infantry, supported by five artillery batteries and a reduced contingent of Cubans, for a total of around 600 men. They faced a force of around 2000 men, including Mobutu's elite Karmanyola regiment and 150 US and French mercenaries.<sup>109</sup> However, once again a strong defensive position and overconfidence by their opponents meant that the FAPLA-Cuban force was able to punch far above its weight. The enemy attempted to attack Cabinda from several sides, yet their attacks were not well coordinated which allowed the defenders to shift their focus after riposting an attack. Like at Quifangondo, rocket artillery and machine gun fire devastated the attacking forces. On November 11th, the second day of fighting, the commander of the FLEC was among the casualties. The Cuban commander, Ramon Espinosa, sensed weakness and ordered a counterattack which definitively routed the enemy force.<sup>110</sup> Looking over the corpse littered

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<sup>107</sup> Ibidem 88-89.

<sup>108</sup> Ibidem 89-91.

<sup>109</sup> Ibidem 83.

<sup>110</sup> Ibidem 83-86.

valley floor of the N'to river, where most of the fighting took place, he would later write that "it offered an image of absolute defeat".<sup>111</sup>

These Cuban troops arrived none too early as the coastal spearhead of the SADF invasion force, Task Force Zulu, had advanced to within two hours' distance of Luanda. To prevent an advance on Luanda, Cuban sappers blew up the bridges over the Queve River on the 13th of November. This effectively ended the advance and despite two months of creative attempts by the SADF to cross the river, none were successful.<sup>112</sup> A few days later the SADF and the FAR first encountered each other. At Ebo the Cubans inflicted heavy casualties on FoxBat, another one of the SADF armoured columns, with a combination of artillery and machine gun fire. A few days later, the SADF returned the favour and inflicted heavy punishment on a Cuban force at Bridge 14, just south of Ebo. According to Leopold Scholtz, a South African historian of the conflict, it is safe to say both sides "developed a healthy respect for each other".<sup>113</sup> The Cuban attitude made a deep impression on the South Africans and F. J. Spies, the official South African historian of the operation, highlighted that "The Cubans rarely surrendered and, quite simply, fought cheerfully until death."<sup>114</sup> This stance towards the Cubans by many South African writers, one of respect for a brave opponent, can be explained by the fact that almost all of them either served in Angola or had relatives serve in Angola. This position is also found in authors like Gleijeses, who quotes Spies in his book in spite of not really dealing with the military side of Operation Savannah - or the rest of the conflict for that matter. The most extensive account of the operation by a non-South African is written by Edward George, who is staunchly anti-communist. His book on the 25 years of Cuban presence constantly presents alleged Cuban successes as propaganda by Castro yet takes most texts and numbers produced by the apartheid regime at face value. It is not surprising then that he sees the impact of the Battle of Ebo as exaggerated by the Cubans.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ramon Espinosa, as quoted in George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 85.

<sup>112</sup> Ibidem 96.

<sup>113</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 19.

<sup>114</sup> F. J. Spies, *Operasie Savannah, 1975-1976* (Johannesburg 1989) 108.

<sup>115</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 97.

## **2.7 The Final Phase of Savannah**

Most of the early clashes the Cubans had participated in had been with guerrilla units like the FNLA and FLEC or with Zairian forces. These forces were comparable to FAPLA conscripts and guerrillas in combat strength. Furthermore, they had all been fought largely by Cuban troops that were already in Angola before the decision to launch Carlota or by hastily flown in MININT Special Forces or artillery crews. Together with the more experienced command offered by the Cuban and Soviet military advisors, they gave FAPLA an edge against its opponents. In mid-November larger numbers of Cuban soldiers started to be flown in, as a reaction to several SADF columns getting dangerously close to Luanda. The Cuban Airforce ran over seventy reinforcement flights to Luanda. This was beyond anything the US imagined the Cubans were capable of and President Ford called USSR Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin to ask him to stop the airlift, erroneously thinking they were behind it.<sup>116</sup> But there was no certainty even this increased number of Cuban troops would be able to hold the line against the next SADF assault. As mentioned before, the SADF had not lost a single engagement, according to the South Africans, up until the Battle of Ebo. To stop them, Cuba put in motion a massive sealift with the first troopship arriving in Luanda on the 27th of November 1975, followed by two others the 29th and 1st of December. In this first trip they carried around 1250 men and supplies, artillery and tanks. Over the next four months these three ships would be joined by many more and after forty-two round trips 25.000 troops and hundreds of tons of supplies and equipment would be ferried to Angola.<sup>117</sup>

But as 1975 ended and 1976 began, international pressure began to mount on South Africa to pull out of Angola. The operation had been revealed in the Western press and the strategic objective, to install either UNITA or the FNLA in Luanda, became more difficult with every passing day bringing in more Cuban troops.<sup>118</sup> Indecision was also rife within the South African ranks. The SADF under General Viljoen wanted to attempt another thrust towards Luanda but Prime Minister Vorster, wary of angering the OAU (Organization of African Unity who had up until now not recognized the PRC (People's Republic of Angola), bided his time. The OAU not recognizing the PRC meant that it implicitly supported the intervention by the SADF. January 1976 brought a Cuban counteroffensive which pushed

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<sup>116</sup> Ibidem 99.

<sup>117</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 99.

<sup>118</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 29.

the indecisive South Africans back. It was an offensive which combined heavy fighting followed by long advances, as one force advanced and the other gave way.<sup>119</sup> The death blow for the South African intervention was diplomatic, on the 12th of January the OAU voted to recognize the PRC. On the 23d of January the OAU passed a resolution condemning the South African intervention without condemning the Cubans. The time had come for the SADF to retreat, Operation Savannah had failed. By early February all that remained in Angola of the SADF was a rear-guard force of around 5000 men, all situated within 50km of the Namibian border.<sup>120</sup>

The failure of Operation Savannah reverberated through Africa and nowhere more than in South Africa itself. A new confidence appeared among the beleaguered organizations fighting apartheid in South Africa. While in the 1960s it had seemed that the government had finally gotten the upper hand over the ANC, the retreat from Angola inspired a new generation of South Africans to fight for their rights. It is no coincidence that the Soweto uprising happened only months after the final South African soldier crossed the Namibian border.<sup>121</sup> But with the SADF retreating largely unscathed and ready to pounce on the MPLA government the moment the Cubans would retreat, it also meant the long-term commitment of thousands of Cuban troops to the defence of that government.

## **2.8 The Aftermath**

Following Operation Savannah, it seemed like most of the opposition to the MPLA regime had been soundly defeated. The FNLA had been forced over the border with Zaire, where Roberto's family ties with Mobutu ensured him haven. However, because of the Battle of Quifangondo and its aftermath, it was largely a spent fighting force, regardless of the terror they inflicted on the local population of northern Angola. The FLEC, never more than a small secessionist movement, was in a similar situation. Finally, UNITA seemed to have all but disappeared after the South Africans had retreated to Namibia. The Cubans had also stopped advancing short of the Namibian border, in spite of Castro wanting to enforce Namibian independence through UN resolution 435. According to Castro in his

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<sup>119</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 105.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibidem* 106.

<sup>121</sup> William Minter, *Apartheids' Contras. An inquiry into the roots of war in Angola and Mozambique* (Johannesburg 1994) 21.

autobiography, the Soviets had strongly pressured the Cubans to stop, fearful of the US intervening on a larger scale.<sup>122</sup> However, Gleijeses points out that there were no plans for military operations in Namibia and that there was no peaceful way of enforcing resolution 435, considering the stance the South Africans had taken up until then.<sup>123</sup>

The Cubans did want to stay in Angola for as long as was necessary for the Angolans to organize their own professional army. If the MPLA government was to survive this was necessary, FAPLA had not performed well against the SADF and had only won any engagements in a role supporting the Cubans. The Soviets, however, were opposed to the Cubans staying any longer in Angola and Brezhnev almost demanded that the Cubans retreat from Angola. Castro, on the one hand knowing the dependence his army had on Soviet logistics and weaponry but also not wanting to give in, met Brezhnev halfway and said that there would be a phased withdrawal between 1976 and 1978.<sup>124</sup>

## **2.9 The SADF after Savannah**

On the other side of the Namibian border the SADF commanders believed that they had been robbed of victory by the politicians who had ordered the retreat.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, with the South Africans having to retreat out of southern Angola this left that area open for SWAPO to set up bases. This in turn meant that the SADF had to double down on its counterinsurgency measure to prevent infiltration of PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) cadres into Namibia. To ensure this, a 1600km long no-man's land along the entire northern border of Namibia was created. This area was cleared of inhabitants and vegetation and a fence was erected. Another fence was erected a kilometre to the south and the area between the fences declared a 'free-fire' zone. Furthermore, between late 1976 and mid 1977 sophisticated electronic warning devices were installed with Israeli assistance.<sup>126</sup>

With its Namibian border somewhat secured, the SADF started analysing what went wrong during Operation Savannah and searching how to correct these errors. Several points had to be addressed: first and foremost, in the case of a new intervention clear strategic

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<sup>122</sup> Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro*, 659-660.

<sup>123</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 34.

<sup>124</sup> Ibidem 34-35.

<sup>125</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention*, 115.

<sup>126</sup> Ian F. Beckett and John Pimlott, *Counterinsurgency. Lessons from history* (Barnsley 2011) 522.

objectives had to be set. These objectives also had to be limited so that they could not be influenced and constantly changed by politicians. Second, the SADF had been under equipped for the kind of warfare it had to engage in. The great open spaces of Angola and the great distances meant that warfare was highly mobile. For this, a new heavy armoured car, a proper infantry fighting vehicle and modern long-range artillery were needed. Finally, the brigade would become the basic operational unit for the SADF, and it would be a combined arms unit. This, in combination with sending many officers to the IDF's (Israel Defence Force) training schools to follow courses, resulted in a new way of operating.<sup>127</sup> This doctrine had already been developing before Operation Savannah, but the invasion was the first time it was put into practice. Scholtz places the origins for the mentality of the SADF in the Boer Wars, where the hopelessly outnumbered Boers managed to counter the British with superior mobility.<sup>128</sup>

### **2.10 Did the US urge South Africa to intervene?**

The question on whether the US encouraged the South Africans to intervene was a very controversial one during the Cold War. After the invasion of Angola by the SADF the leadership of the apartheid state claimed that they had the wholehearted backing of the US. At the same time, the US establishment personified by President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger vehemently denied this.<sup>129</sup> Today the consensus is that the US encouraged its South African client state to intervene in Angola.<sup>130</sup> The South African leadership had the naïve idea that they could manage to keep a low profile while carrying out the intervention. Operation Savannah, as the first South African invasion was codenamed, had quite extensive objectives including the capture of all harbours in the south of Angola and rolling back the MPLA to Luanda.<sup>131</sup>

It seems almost comical now to think these objectives could be achieved without alerting the international community in a conflict that was closely watched by both superpowers. But until mid-November 1975 the invasion was unknown in the west. This

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<sup>127</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 42-43.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibidem* 44.

<sup>129</sup> Matthew Graham, 'Covert Collusion? American and South African Relations in the Angolan Civil War, 1974-1976', *African Historical Review* 43 (1) (2011) 28-47, 29.

<sup>130</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 17 ; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 29 ; George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 69 ; Minter, *Apartheids' Contra's*, 20-21 ; Graham, 'Covert Collusion?', 43.

<sup>131</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 18.

changed when foreign reporters Fred Bridgland and Michael Nicholson revealed the scale of the South African invasion to the world.<sup>132</sup> Yet the South Africans knew they could proceed as long as they had US support. The issue is that they interpreted support from the CIA as support from the US government. While the South Africans had support from parts of the US government, including support from Henry Kissinger - who at the time had already cemented his reputation as the world's foremost war criminal - most of the democratic organs like Congress were opposed to escalation in Angola.<sup>133</sup> The State Department was also overwhelmingly opposed to intervention in Angola. They saw either outcome, an MPLA takeover or US intervention, as something that could only have negative consequences. The split between Kissinger and his subordinates became so heated that the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Nathaniel Davis, resigned in protest when he learned of US involvement.<sup>134</sup> In 1975 the US was open to providing support in a covert manner that would not decrease its standing in the international community. But this was a regime that had just suffered its biggest defeat ever in Vietnam, the Watergate Scandal, and the Pike Committee's investigation into the CIA's foreign ventures.<sup>135</sup> To support a white supremacist regime in its invasion of a recently decolonized state would have been too damaging to the standing of the US in the developing world.

During Kissinger's tenure it was not uncommon that large parts of the US government were left in the dark when he took decisions which would drastically alter the lives of Cambodians, Chileans or Angolans. The decision to intervene and nudge the South Africans to invade Angola did not reach Congress or the Defence Department until after the fact. The decision was made by President Ford and the National Security Council, which largely voiced Kissinger's opinion.<sup>136</sup> When Congress realized what had happened it passed the Clark Amendment, barring the US from providing any more covert aid in Angola.<sup>137</sup> The US executive asked congress to repeal the Clark Amendment many times but to no avail. This did not mean that the US did not send covert aid to UNITA, South African sources

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<sup>132</sup> Fred Bridgland, 'Obituary - Micheal Nicholson, foreign correspondent. An appreciation by Fred Bridgland', *The Herald*, December 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016, <https://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/14981080.obituary---michael-nicholson-foreign-correspondent-appreciation-fred-bridgland/> (January 12<sup>th</sup> 2021).

<sup>133</sup> Graham, 'Covert Collusion?', 41.

<sup>134</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>135</sup> Ibidem 40.

<sup>136</sup> Ibidem 42.

<sup>137</sup> Minter, *Apartheids' Contra's*, 21.

confirm that covert aid resumed and increased when Reagan took power, but it did make it a lot riskier.<sup>138</sup>

### **2.11 Operation Reindeer and the Kassinga Raid**

Another part of this new, highly mobile doctrine of the SADF was the extensive use of paratroopers and during Operation Reindeer they would be used extensively. Since 1976, SWAPO had been able to set up camps in southern Angola and from there it periodically infiltrated Namibia in its struggle for independence. These operations also meant that its clashes with the SADF increased significantly in 1976 and 1977. Furthermore, in many of these clashes, the SADF employed hot-pursuit tactics in which they often chased PLAN cadres into Angola before destroying them. The SADF asked Prime Minister Vorster for permission to destroy the two largest SWAPO camps, Kassinga and Chetequera. Permission for what would become the SADF's most controversial operation was grudgingly given in December 1977.<sup>139</sup>

Operation Reindeer was an attack by the SADF on Kassinga and Chetequera. Kassinga was attacked by paratroopers while Chetequera was hit by an armoured column. In both cases the defending SWAPO forces were easily overwhelmed. At Kassinga 600 Namibians died while at Chetequera 250 were killed with almost no losses for the SADF.<sup>140</sup> But the purpose of the camps, especially Kassinga, is hotly contested, as some authors claim it had mostly a military function while others claim it was primarily a refugee camp. Pro-SADF authors agree with SADF intelligence who claimed that Kassinga was SWAPO's main operational headquarters for southern Angola. They refute the claims by SWAPO that it was a refugee camp pointing out that there was a quite extensive trench network around the camp.<sup>141</sup> More left leaning authors, like Piero Gleijeses, support SWAPO's side of the story, affirming that it was a refugee camp operated by SWAPO. In an effort to see something positive in what he sees as the Kassinga Massacre he highlights that it was the first time that Cubans and Namibians fought together against South Africa and for the independence of Namibia.<sup>142</sup> He also highlights that although widely discussed in the Western Press, there

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<sup>138</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 180.

<sup>139</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention*, 134.

<sup>140</sup> Willem Steenkamp, *Borderstrike! South Africa into Angola* (Durban 1983) 140.

<sup>141</sup> Steenkamp, *Borderstrike!*, 18 ; Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 82.

<sup>142</sup> Piero Gleijeses, 'Cuba and the Independence of Namibia', *Cold War History* 7(2) (2007) 285-303, 286.

was no retaliation from any Western government. He explains that from Kassinga onwards both SWAPO and the People's Republic of China understood that the South African could act largely with impunity.<sup>143</sup> Another position is taken by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This commission was set up after the end of apartheid to investigate all the crimes committed by the regime, both in and outside of South Africa. Their conclusion is, besides the fact that it was a gross violation of the territorial integrity of the PRC which led to gross violations of human rights, that Kassinga was both a military base and a refugee camp. According to the commission, it housed a significant number of combatants and also commanders of the PLAN, but it also housed considerable numbers of civilians.<sup>144</sup>

Since very early on, Kassinga caught the interest of the academic and activist anti-apartheid left. The fact that the IDF was involved with the reorganization of the SADF and with securing the Namibian border has seen the Kassinga massacre put in the same category as the Sabra and Shatila massacres. The Sabra and Shatila massacres were attacks on refugee camps by Maronite militias who acted with help from the IDF. They had been ordered by the IDF to cleanse the camp of PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) fighters while the IDF had full knowledge that it was a refugee camp. The IDF also let through the militias - who had committed heinous acts before, like all combatants in the Lebanese Civil War - and helped them by illuminating the area.<sup>145</sup> The fact that in both massacres a refugee camp was seen as a military target has led to comparisons between Kassinga and the Sabra and Shatila massacres. This has sometimes been presented as the Israeli influence in the Cold War, the export of so-called West Bank expertise.<sup>146</sup> This comparison did not only exist in Western academic and activist circles, I.F. Mafole of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania makes the same comparison in his condemnation at the UN of the "serious and odious crimes of the terrorist apartheid regime".<sup>147</sup>

Finally, there needs to be a brief discussion of the role of the media. It was the Western media, and the skilful playing of the media field by SWAPO, which broke the story

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<sup>143</sup> Ibidem 289.

<sup>144</sup> South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *TRC Report - Volume 2* (1998) 50-55.

<sup>145</sup> Bayan Al-Hout, *Sabra and Shatila. September 1982* (London 2004) 203.

<sup>146</sup> Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Israel's Role in the Third World. Exporting West Bank Expertise* (Amsterdam 1984) 16.

<sup>147</sup> I.F. Mafole as quoted in: UN Security Council. 2409th Meeting, *Complaint by Lesotho against South Africa*, (December 16<sup>th</sup> 1982) 12. Available at: [https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.2409\(OR\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.2409(OR))

in the West. The apartheid regime was the first to come out with a narrative on the raid, that it was an important SWAPO base, which was propagated in several stage-managed press conferences. However, it was SWAPO who initially caught the eye of most of the media through some harrowing photographs of mass graves. Through these photographs they presented their narrative to the world, that the SADF had attacked a refugee camp, and the photographs of mass graves filled with women and children recalled some of the most heinous crimes of the Nazi's.<sup>148</sup>

Between 1978 and 1990, the year of Namibian independence, South African media tried to shift the narrative away unsuccessfully from the one presented by SWAPO. On the other hand, SWAPO was not interested in delving deeper into what truly happened at Kassinga, including the question on what role the camp had. Kassinga had cemented SWAPO's reputation as sole and authentic representatives of the Namibian people.<sup>149</sup> It is understandable that SWAPO wanted to keep the idea that Kassinga was exclusively a refugee camp. After all, the presence of military elements in the camp could damage their narrative, Western public opinion could believe the camp was not just a victim of racist aggression. On the other hand, it is not surprising that a refugee camp in one of the most violent regions in the world at that time would have defences. Thus, it seems that Kassinga was both a refugee camp and a military base, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has stated. But the fact that there were defences does not mean the attack by the SADF was not a heinous crime. On the other hand, it seems clear that SWAPO gave the camp both a military and a refugee function, thus using the refugees as a shield. This is a common but reprehensible tactic.

### ***2.12 Who Intervened first and was Cuba just a Pawn of the USSR?***

One of the most significant questions in the historiography of the conflict between Cuba and South Africa in Angola is which country intervened first. Edward George heavily implies, as has already been mentioned, that the South Africans reacted to a Cuban presence in Angola which they imagined to be far larger.<sup>150</sup> In general he sees Cuba as equally

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<sup>148</sup> C.M.W. Doherty, *BOSBEFOK. Constructed Images and the Memory of the South African 'Border War'* (Johannesburg 2014) 127.

<sup>149</sup> Leo Barnard, 'The Controversy of the Battle of Cassinga. Does the Media Provide the Final Answer?', *Joernaal* 29 (3) (2004) 184-198, 198.

<sup>150</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 69.

responsible for the war in Angola, thus putting them at the same level as South Africa.<sup>151</sup> This ignores the fact that Cuba was there at the request of the legitimate, internationally recognized government of Angola and, perhaps more importantly, that the request for a Cuban intervention came as a direct consequence of the South African invasion in 1975. This attitude is not surprising considering George's pro-SADF stance and the fact that in his conclusion he seems to hope that the Bush administration - which was in power when he wrote the book - decides to topple Fidel Castro.<sup>152</sup> In the introduction to *Borderstrike!*, Willem Steenkamp seems to imply that South Africa reacted to the Cuban presence in Angola by launching Operation Savannah. This would mean that the Cubans intervened first and that the South Africans were only reacting.<sup>153</sup> Gleijeses, who has written a far more recent book and is the only foreign scholar to be granted access to the post-1959 Cuban archives, states that although many scholars try to distort it - potentially hinting at George - the evidence is clear that the South Africans invaded first and the Cubans responded.<sup>154</sup> Scholtz highlights that the SADF invasion fell apart because the Cubans reacted to it by sending 36.000 soldiers, independently and without consulting Moscow beforehand.<sup>155</sup>

On the question of whether Cuba was acting independently of the USSR when it intervened in Angola there seems to be a consensus, at least among academics. Even three historians with such a different outlook on the conflict as Scholtz, George and Gleijeses seem to agree here. A large part of Gleijeses' thesis in *Visions of Freedom* is based on the idea of Cuba having an active and independent foreign policy. As he sees it, "The Cuban role in Angola is without precedent. No other Third World country has projected its military power beyond its immediate neighbourhood, not even China."<sup>156</sup> As has already been mentioned, Scholtz saw Cuba as acting independently and without consulting Moscow, at least when it initiated its intervention. George admits that at the time of launching Operation Carlota the Cubans had acted completely independently of the USSR and even were originally opposed by their ally.<sup>157</sup> He also denies that the Cubans were a proxy force for the Soviets, something quite remarkable considering *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*

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<sup>151</sup> Ibidem 281.

<sup>152</sup> Ibidem 282-283.

<sup>153</sup> Steenkamp, *Borderstrike!*, 3-4.

<sup>154</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 29.

<sup>155</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 19.

<sup>156</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 9.

<sup>157</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention*, 79.

was first published in 2003. Despite the Cubans advancing Soviet interests in the region, George sees them as acting independently too often to be a mere proxy force. The volatility of the USSR-Cuba relationship in the period 1975-1989 is another reason he does not see it as a proxy war, with both sides often angering the other.<sup>158</sup>

### **2.13 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the Angolan Civil War developed during the second half of the 1970s. This conflict had always been of interest to the Cold War superpowers and they and their regional clients like Zaire had been involved in Angola before independence. However, the international interference was taken to another level after the large-scale interventions of South Africa and, in reaction, Cuba. In late 1975 and early 1976 the Cubans prevented the South Africans from taking Luanda, an act which secured victory for the MPLA in this first part of the Civil War. However, this just meant that the conflict would continue as an irregular guerrilla war between the MPLA and UNITA which was sometimes brusquely interrupted by the invading SADF. The most controversial invasion in this chapter is Operation Reindeer, which led to the attack on the SWAPO camp at Kassinga which was also a refugee facility.

The attack on Kassinga is severely contested by historians at opposite sides of the political spectrum, with authors like Gleijeses maintaining that it was an attack on a refugee camp while pro-SADF historians claim that it was a target of military importance. However, most of the events in this conflict are contested, although often the South African account prevails because the Cuban accounts is not known.

One significant frame which was very prevalent during the Cold War, that the Cubans were there just as pawns of the USSR, seems to be disproven. Furthermore, there seems to be some consensus among historians that the Cubans acted with significant independence. The most recent extensive publications, like that of Gleijeses, show us that it was the Cubans presenting the Soviets with a *fait accompli* instead of them being sent to Angola to do the USSR's dirty work.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibidem 275-276.

## **Chapter 3: A Rough Neighbourhood: the Angolan Civil War after the election of Reagan**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter continues where the last one left off. It starts with the election of Ronald Reagan and the changes that entailed for world politics. It then proceeds with a description of the most important battles and operations that happened between 1980 and 1988, culminating with a discussion of the most significant event in this conflict: The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. The description of these events is detailed to show the impact that these South African invasions had on Angola and to highlight the autonomy of the Cubans in the conflict *vis a vis* the Soviets and Angolans. Finally, the chapter and its conclusion will briefly discuss the use of propaganda in the conflict, forming a connection with the final chapters which will analyse the discourse of Dutch newspapers.

### **3.2 America is back: Ronald Reagan and the end of Detente**

The election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency of the United States in 1980 drastically changed the Cold War, from now on the US would use terrorism to subdue any opponent to her hegemony. Reagan had campaigned on a platform of standing up to the USSR in the Developing World. Members within his campaign and administration, like Jeane Kirkpatrick, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, and especially CIA chief William J. Casey, believed Soviet influence was increasing while US influence was waning. The Cold War hardliners in US politics had found in the Reagan administration the means to “checkmate and roll back” Soviet foreign policy.<sup>159</sup> They thought that détente had been a naive policy which had benefited the USSR greatly. Nowhere was this more clearly visible than in Angola, where for the first time the Cubans had dared to intervene on a massive scale on the African continent without the US making them pay a high price for it. Moreover, the Angolan intervention had largely been carried out by Cuba, a small country taking a role in the Cold War which was usually reserved for the great powers. What made it even worse for US right-wing politicians was that Fidel Castro was behind it, the continued independence of Cuba being a

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<sup>159</sup> James M. Scott, *Deciding to intervene. The Reagan doctrine and American foreign policy* (New York 1996) 16.

constant reminder of two decades of failure to defeat the revolution.<sup>160</sup> In order to move beyond the passive containment, which was the practice of détente, the zealous anti-communist ideologues of the new administration initiated a cleansing of the US foreign policy apparatus. Observers noted that “the striking feature of the Reagan team was its ideological purity. White House political honchos... even reached down to ensure purity in positions normally free from politics”.<sup>161</sup>

One of the institutions where this cleansing had the largest effect was the CIA. Here Reagan brought in William J. Casey, who had left the public sector in 1975, to undo what he saw as the damage done by its last director, Stansfield Turner. Turner, who had been appointed by Carter in 1977, had fired close to 800 operatives shortly after his appointment. This had effectively dismantled the covert operations facilities of the CIA.<sup>162</sup> Casey was convinced that the USSR had taken advantage of the relative weakness of the CIA to expand their operation all across the world. Casey’s worldview was confirmed by the publication in 1981 of *The Terror Network* by Claire Sterling, in which she claimed that organizations as diverse as the Irish Republican Army, the Red Army Faction and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, were all being orchestrated by the KGB. Although the CIA’s own intelligence indicated that most of Sterling’s claims were fabrication, Casey still concluded that in order to counter the USSR the US had to expand its covert actions.<sup>163</sup> By March 1981, Casey proposed a CIA-directed program to provide cover aid to resistance movements in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Cuba, Grenada, Iran, Laos, Libya and Nicaragua. The objective was supporting anti-communist national liberation movements and rebel groups. The final aim was to force the Soviets to spend too many resources on keeping all their allies in power. As Casey put it, ‘we need half a dozen Afghanistan’s’.<sup>164</sup>

The election of Reagan to the White House also brought in big changes in the relationship between the US government and the South African Government. Although he had the trust of Reagan, Chester Crocker, the assistant secretary for Africa, was looked on

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<sup>160</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 166.

<sup>161</sup> I.M. Destler, Leslie Gelb and Anthony Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy. The Unmaking of American Foreign Policy* (New York 1984) 109.

<sup>162</sup> Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right. Anticommunist internationalism and paramilitary warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill 2018) 96.

<sup>163</sup> Ibidem 124-125.

<sup>164</sup> Scott, *Deciding to intervene*, 20.

with suspicion by both the hard-line conservatives and the neo-conservatives in the administration because he did not toe the ideological line of either group. Initially he was also regarded with suspicion by the South Africans, who were still distrustful of the US after they had voted to condemn Operation Savannah, the 1975 invasion of Angola by the SADF, in the UN. Crocker wanted a policy based on “constructive engagement”, the idea that if the West gave Pretoria a better treatment, the South Africans would be encouraged to make concessions to their black population and would carry out a less aggressive foreign policy. This policy was not just naiveté, it was a reflection of the genuine sympathy which Reagan had for the apartheid regime. After all, he had made it very clear during his presidential campaign that he endorsed the policy of separate development, the relocation of South Africa’s black population to nominally independent Bantustans.<sup>165</sup>

During the presidential campaign Reagan had also expressed support for UNITA, a stance which also pleased Pretoria. Two months after his inauguration, Secretary of State Alexander Haig presented him with a memo called “Strategy in Southern Africa”, which highlighted an important role for UNITA in harassing the Cubans out of Angola.<sup>166</sup> In practice this meant that, in spite of the Clark Amendment which would be repealed in 1984, covert US aid for UNITA grew under Reagan when compared to aid under the Carter administration. Furthermore, the Reagan administration introduced the principle of *Linkage*: South Africa should only implement UN Resolution 435, the independence of Namibia, if Cuban troops left Angola.<sup>167</sup> With the moral backing of the US, the SADF was preparing for another decade of incursions into Angola. The conflict would acquire its most violent proportion. With an emboldened SADF and UNITA receiving ever more aid, the FAPLA and their Cuban allies faced tough times.

### **3.3 Operation Protea and Daisy**

The support of the Reagan administration for the apartheid regime gave South Africa the protection against international condemnation that it needed. This in turn gave the SADF the freedom to invade the countries surrounding South Africa. The direct result was an increased tempo of cross-border raids, bombings, sabotage operations and targeted

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<sup>165</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 178.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem* 179.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibidem* 180-181.

murders in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and most of all Mozambique and Angola. All of these countries were in one way or another helping either the ANC or SWAPO. Angola had double guilt, it harboured large training facilities for both SWAPO and the ANC. It is no surprise that it would be hit the hardest by the SADF.<sup>168</sup>

The only force that could in theory oppose the SADF was the *Mision Militar Cubana en Angola* (MMCA), the Cuban military mission in Angola, but this depended on them being able to use their armour and artillery freely. This in turn was dependent on them having constant cover of anti-aircraft guns against the South African Air Force (SAAF). It is no surprise then that Operation Protea began with an air-strike on the 23d of August 1981 which completely destroyed the People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola's (FAPLA) air defence and radar installations in Cahama and Chilemba.<sup>169</sup> This was followed by the incursion of 11.000 South African troops, a force which had been built up since July along the Angolan-Namibian border. With complete air superiority, the defences of the towns of Cahama and Chimemba were flattened by the SAAF and the SADF artillery before three columns of motorised infantry started their assault. After being unable to break through three times via ground assault, further bombardment of the SAAF and artillery forced FAPLA to abandon both towns.<sup>170</sup> Protea had been the 'biggest mechanized operation by the South African Army since World War II' according to SADF general Jannie Geldenhuys.<sup>171</sup> Significantly, the SADF also occupied 40.000km<sup>2</sup> in Cunene province in southern Angola and installed two garrisons in Xangongo and N'Giva.<sup>172</sup> This was the first time in the conflict that the SADF occupied parts of Angola with the objective of establishing a foothold from where to launch further operations into Angola and from where it could support UNITA. FAPLA managed to briefly recapture N'Giva towards the end of 1981 but they were soon driven back by the aerial bombardment of the SAAF. In repelling this FAPLA offensive, the SAAF allegedly made use of poison gas.<sup>173</sup>

The reaction of the international community was an almost unanimous condemnation of the attack. Western countries like France, FRG and even the UK, where

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<sup>168</sup> Ibidem 186.

<sup>169</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 140.

<sup>170</sup> Gavin Cawthra, *Brutal Force. The apartheid war machine* (London 1986) 150-151.

<sup>171</sup> Jannie Geldenhuys, *Dié Wat Gewen Het: Feite en fabels van die bosoerlog* (Pretoria 2007) 115.

<sup>172</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 140-141.

<sup>173</sup> Cawthra, *Brutal Force*, 151.

Thatcher had already taken power, condemned the brazen invasion of Angola. Yet, the support of the US to South Africa was far more relevant in the overall situation. The US State Department deplored the escalation of violence but at the same time communicated that the attack had to be understood within the context of SWAPO raids into Namibia and the Cuban presence in Angola.<sup>174</sup> The debate at the UN Security Council was similar, with the whole world condemning renewed South African aggression. When the time came to vote on a resolution that harshly condemned the invasion but did not impose sanctions, of the fifteen members of the council thirteen voted in favour, with the UK abstaining and the US casting a veto.<sup>175</sup>

Without having to fear repercussions from the international community thanks to their patrons in Washington, the South Africans felt free to launch another three incursions in rapid succession. Operation Daisy was launched in November 1981, with Operations Super and Meebos following in March and July of 1982.<sup>176</sup> The SADF did more than just pursue SWAPO guerrillas during these operations, their objective was establishing a *cordon sanitaire* so as to prevent SWAPO incursions into Namibia during the rainy season.<sup>177</sup> According to William James, who is not particularly sympathetic to the Cubans and the MPLA, this was achieved by killing livestock, poisoning wells, disrupting local communications, and preventing the distribution of food. At the same time UNITA was supplied with arms and food to distribute in the border area. By building up their bases and making clear to the local population that UNITA and the SADF were the only source of resources, they hoped to discredit the MPLA and SWAPO in the eyes of the local population.<sup>178</sup> However, this position is contested by more hard-line pro-SADF authors like Leopold Scholtz who berate claims by 'left-wing' authors that reported a torrent of refugees and the destruction of the region by questioning their sources and their political motivations. Scholtz finishes by claiming that official SADF documents do not confirm the flight of 130.000 Angolans from Cunene village and that although individual SADF soldiers might have abused their power, in general the army "was at pains to treat the civilian

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<sup>174</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 188.

<sup>175</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>176</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 300-301.

<sup>177</sup> Cawthra, *Brutal Force*, 151.

<sup>178</sup> James, *A Political History of the War in Angola*, 152.

population correctly and to ameliorate the hardships necessarily brought about by the war".<sup>179</sup> The fact that a historian who is, overall, pro-SADF is dismissed as a 'left-wing' author by Scholtz reveals much about the siege mentality of some historians in post-apartheid South Africa. Any evidence that puts the SADF in a bad light is dismissed as politically motivated. Furthermore, dismissing it because SADF sources say nothing about refugees and destruction is not a very good argument considering the SADF sources sometimes underreported their own casualties and were thus clearly not an objective reflection of reality.<sup>180</sup> Finally, it must be noted that the destruction wrought by UNITA and the SADF was extensively reported on by multiple other authors.<sup>181</sup>

The Cubans were unable to throw back the SADF, at least not in the far south of Angola. Because of their air superiority, the SADF was free to roam southern Angola with their UNITA allies while their Cuban and Angolan opponents stood by powerless. The Cuban air force stationed in Angola was numerically and technologically outmatched by the SAAF. Thus, the Cubans could only confront the SADF if they were protected by their immobile anti-aircraft systems which were stationed along the ATS<sup>182</sup> Defence Line which cut across a part of southern Angola. The Cubans manning the line prevented the SADF from striking the Angolan heartland but confronting the SADF without air defences would have been suicidal.<sup>183</sup>

### **3.4 Operation Askari**

After the setbacks for FAPLA and SWAPO caused by Protea and Daisy, the South Africans did not launch a large-scale invasion for more than a year. The PLAN, SWAPO's military wing, had suffered significantly and with most of Cunene province in the hands of UNITA and the SADF they had been left with very little room to operate. But UNITA came under significant pressure from FAPLA in 1983. UNITA attacked the town of Cangamba in the south-eastern Moxico province in August 1983 but they were decisively routed by the defending FAPLA

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<sup>179</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 150.

<sup>180</sup> Peter Polack, *The last hot battle of the Cold War. Cuba vs South Africa in the Angolan Civil War* (Oxford 2013) EPUB e-book, chapter 13, 311-312.

<sup>181</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 189 ; Victoria Brittain, *Death of Dignity. Angola's Civil War* (London 1998) xiv-xv.

<sup>182</sup> Agrupación de Tropas del Sur or Southern Troop Aggrupation.

<sup>183</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 189.

force. They returned shortly after with support from the SAAF and were able to take the town after bombing and heavy fighting reduced it to rubble. This prompted a large counteroffensive by FAPLA to drive UNITA out of the Central Highlands.<sup>184</sup> The SADF did not carry out any major operation beside some supporting operations for UNITA in 1983. In late 1983 South African intelligence services detected a large accumulation of PLAN troops preparing for infiltration into Namibia at the start of the rainy season in January 1984. Thus, the SADF set up Operation Askari and according to sources sympathetic to the SADF their objective was preventing the infiltration of a significant force of PLAN troops by taking the fight to them.<sup>185</sup> Sources sympathetic to the Angolans claim that Askari's main objective was to take some pressure away from UNITA, who were being rapidly ejected from the Central Highlands by FAPLA. Furthermore, South African propaganda had already boasted about UNITA's successes and the international press had been informed about it.

Askari was similar to Operation Protea and Daisy in that the South Africans sent in several armoured columns with the SAAF flying overhead. From Xangongo SADF spearheads headed for Cahama, Mulondo and Cuvelai in northern Cunene province.<sup>186</sup> What was significantly different was the amount of resistance they faced from FAPLA in their attacks on these towns. Having learned from their mistakes of earlier years, FAPLA put up stout resistance. Yet in the end, the SADF achieved their objectives, managing to capture all three towns and preventing SWAPO infiltration in the rainy season of 1984.<sup>187</sup> According to the South Africans, the fighting at the town of Cuvelai was especially fierce. According to sources sympathetic to the SADF, the town was defended by not only FAPLA and PLAN, but also by two Cuban battalions. The ensuing three-day battle resulted in a SADF victory only after the SAAF had bombed Cuvelai to rubble.<sup>188</sup> Some sources go as far as to see the ferocity of the fighting at Cuvelai as the catalyst for the Lusaka Accords, a US brokered ceasefire between South Africa and Angola which would come into power on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1984.<sup>189</sup> Besides the ceasefire, the first Lusaka Accords also stipulated that South Africa would cease its support of UNITA. In spite of the accords, the South Africans did not

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<sup>184</sup> Cawthra, *Brutal Force*, 154.

<sup>185</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 164-165.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibidem* 170.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibidem* 184-185.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibidem* 176-180.

<sup>189</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 182.

cease but actually increased their support of UNITA throughout 1984 and Jonas Savimbi was even an honoured guest at P.W Botha's inauguration as State President in September 1984.<sup>190</sup>

However, what most likely happened at Cuvelai was a fierce encounter between a single FAPLA brigade and a SADF force. The Cubans had very early on recognized that confronting the South Africans without air support was a recipe for disaster and had urged President Dos Santos, who had replaced Neto after his death in 1979, to retreat all troops south of the AT line. The Soviets were adamantly opposed to retreating the FAPLA brigade stationed at Cuvelai and in the end the Angolans listen to them instead of listening to the Cubans. The FAPLA brigade put up fierce resistance but their morale broke after the SAAF heavily bombed the town and they fled towards the AT line, leaving behind their supplies and heavy weapons.<sup>191</sup> Thus South African propaganda converted the desperate stand of a FAPLA brigade into an epic struggle against the Cubans and Angolans, in which their forces ultimately prevailed. However, Gleijeses, as the only scholar to have used Cuban, Angolan and South African sources, claims that there were only 60 Cubans south of the AT line during Askari, and all of them in either an advisory or reconnaissance role.<sup>192</sup>

Both sides in the war used the war in their propagandistic efforts. The South Africans, similarly, to the US in Vietnam, justified their conduct by presenting themselves as combating international communism and defending Western Civilisation. Claiming to be combating the "red" threat was a far more politically convenient justification than claiming to be defending White Supremacy.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, the difficulties the SADF experienced in taking Cuvelai were a lot more justifiable if they were facing more than just a FAPLA brigade. FAPLA had been an irregular guerrilla army less than a decade ago so perhaps the South Africans were convinced that they were facing Cubans, who had proven to be a match for them during Savannah. Also, the spin to the story that the SADF had faced heavy resistance from not only FAPLA but also the Cubans might have made their retreat from Cuito Cuanavale, in March 1988, more justifiable, a retreat is less humiliating if it is against a

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<sup>190</sup> Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 44.

<sup>191</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 232.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibidem* 233.

<sup>193</sup> Gary Baines, 'Vietnam Analogies and Metaphors. The Cultural Codification of South Africa's Border War', *Safundi* 13 (1-2) (2012) 73-90, 76.

skilful enemy which has proven himself time and time again. Yet after the war, the SADF would go on to claim that they would have been able to win the war if they had not been betrayed by politicians.<sup>194</sup>

### **3.5 The FAPLA offensives against UNITA: 1985-1986**

In 1985 the Angolans initiated a large Soviet-led offensive to retake Mavinga from UNITA. Mavinga was a small strategic town in south-eastern Angola which was considered the gateway to Jamba, Savimbi and UNITA's headquarters. In August 1985 about 6000 FAPLA troops, organized in four brigades advanced on the heavily defended town. At first their advance went well, UNITA tried to harass them but was unable to disrupt their momentum. This however changed once they reached the Lomba River, 20 kilometres north of Mavinga. Here they had stopped to regroup and resupply, when they were suddenly hit by a series of massive South African air and artillery strikes which effectively ended the offensive.<sup>195</sup> In 1986, the FAPLA tried to launch a similar offensive but this time they were prevented by UNITA and the SADF. In 1985, the Clark Amendment had been repealed, giving UNITA access to more modern weaponry from the US like the famous Stinger missiles. This renewed support, in conjunction with support from SADF artillerymen and the South African Navy, enabled them to launch a raid on the port of Namibe which was the logistical staging ground of the FAPLA offensive. At the same time, they managed to sabotage the bridges over the Lomba River close to Cuito Cuanavale. This made a further advance towards Mavinga too risky. The offensive was over before it even started.<sup>196</sup>

The raid on Namibe set the tone for how the war would develop into 1987. It was a time of ever-increasing pressure from an UNITA emboldened by a combination of SADF support and US weapons and funds. At the same time the Cubans and Soviets were at odds with each other over which strategy to follow in Angola. When Foreign Minister Shevardnadze visited Havana in late 1985, Castro criticized the Soviet insistence on training and organizing FAPLA to become, most of all, a conventional army. This meant that counterinsurgency was of second priority which in turn gave UNITA freedom to expand their influence and carry out raids like the one on Namibe. Furthermore, Castro argued, a

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<sup>194</sup> Ibidem 84.

<sup>195</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 356.

<sup>196</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention*, 197-199.

conventional army attempting to engage in set-piece battles was useless as long as the South Africans had absolute air superiority.<sup>197</sup> Time and time again FAPLA offensives had been ground to a standstill by aerial bombardment, while at the same time the SADF had been able to roam freely knowing that the SAAF could help them break through even the most entrenched opposition. The Cubans had air defences at the AT line but did not break out south of it, effectively leaving southernmost 200-300km of Angola in South African hands. The Soviet advisors in Angola insisted on FAPLA to advance outside of the cover of these defences with the predictable results which were described earlier in this chapter. In a conversation with Gorbachev in 1986, Castro once again made his case, arguing that “stopping Pretoria’s aggression in southern Angola would be a turning point for the liberation of South Africa... All we are asking is that we do what is necessary to end their air superiority”.<sup>198</sup> The Soviets did not give in to Castro’s request for two main reasons. Ostensibly they were overextended, their intervention in Afghanistan already becoming too costly and placing extraordinary pressure on the Soviet military budget. Another important reason was, according to Cuban sources, that the Soviets feared that with the means to neutralize the SAAF, the Cubans would not just eject the SADF from Angola but even advance into Namibia.<sup>199</sup> Castro’s hatred of apartheid meant that this was a real possibility. This would in turn provoke US intervention to prevent the apartheid regime from collapsing. All in all, many Soviet policy makers spoke negatively of the propensity of the Cubans to encourage revolutions in the developing world and many feared that the Cubans were saddling them with a second Afghanistan.<sup>200</sup>

### **3.6 Cuito Cuanavale**

The strategic battle had not yet been won by the Cubans and in early July FAPLA launched another offensive which was overseen by Soviet General Shagnovitch. Once again, the objective was capturing Mavinga and then pushing on to Jamba to deal a fatal blow to UNITA. However, within days they ran into complications being bogged down by UNITA. This time FAPLA did not wait for resupply and reinforcements on the banks of the Lomba River,

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<sup>197</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 360.

<sup>198</sup> Fidel Castro, as quoted in Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 365.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibidem* 366.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibidem*.

like they had done in 1985, but retreated to Cuito Cuanavale to resume the offensive in August.<sup>201</sup>

In response to the FAPLA advance, the SADF launched Operation Moduler, which had the objective of preventing the defeat of UNITA. This operation was initially launched as a small-scale operation in which the SADF would purely have a supporting role. This was highlighted by the fact that no SADF soldier should be in a position to be taken prisoner as it was of utmost importance that South Africa maintain “plausible deniability”.<sup>202</sup> This led to the Battle of the Lomba River in September and October 1987. This battle, which lasted from the 9th of September to the 7th of October caused significant damage to one of the four brigades which had taken part in the offensive on Mavinga. They were caught crossing the river with about half of the brigade still on the opposite site. Being unable to reunite the brigade, the 20th SADF brigade was able to inflict significant damage and force FAPLA back towards Cuito Cuanavale. Initially this meant the end of Operation Moduler as the FAPLA had been sufficiently mauled to prevent them advancing on Mavinga and the SADF and especially the SAAF would have to confront air defences if they attacked Cuito Cuanavale.<sup>203</sup> Thus the SADF extended Operation Moduler and reinforced the 20th Brigade which had up until now taken the brunt of the fighting. While Mirage fighter jets and artillery kept up pressure on the retreating FAPLA troops, heavy Olifant tanks reinforced the ground forces to prepare for an attack on Cuito Cuanavale.<sup>204</sup>

However, the delay between the SADF victory on the Lomba River, to the south-east of Cuito Cuanavale, and reinforcing its invading force had given the Cubans time to act. Fearing the complete destruction of the FAPLA brigades east and south of Cuito Cuanavale, they decided to massively reinforce the town in an operation similar to Operation Carlota. The Cubans were about to wrest back control of the skies from the SAAF by sending their best equipment to Angola. In earlier years they had not dared to do so, deploying only modern equipment when this was provided by the USSR. However, after the Iran-Contra scandal they felt confident enough that significant military action from the US was out of

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<sup>201</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention*, 202-203.

<sup>202</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 259-260.

<sup>203</sup> Helmoed-Römer Heitman, *War in Angola. The Final South African Phase* (Tonbridge 1990) 78-79.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibidem* 111-114.

the question.<sup>205</sup> Similar to 1975, the Soviets were not informed beforehand but presented with a *fait accompli*. Their irritation evolved into helping the Cubans. By late January 1988 aircraft and anti-aircraft weapon systems were arriving in Angola in significant quantities.<sup>206</sup>

The Cuban Operation was named Maniobra XXXI Aniversario, celebrating the 31st anniversary of the landing of the *Granma*. The already sizable force of 38.000 Cubans in Angola would be reinforced with another 17.000. Most of all, it meant the arrival of the most modern equipment the FAR had. The effect was almost immediate. With SAAF air superiority broken by Cuban pilots, Cuito Cuanavale could once again receive supplies by air. It also meant the road connecting Cuito Cuanavale to its supply chain more to the north could be protected from raids, and by late December attacks had become extremely difficult for both SAAF and UNITA.<sup>207</sup> This meant that FAPLA and the Cubans could entrench themselves while they deflected on after another blow by the SADF. Cuito Cuanavale resisted months of half-hearted attempts by the SADF to take it. The apartheid regime was unwilling to take the losses necessary to launch a decisive assault on Cuito Cuanavale and in the meantime the defenders became ever more entrenched. On the 23d of March the SADF made one last attempt to take the bridges leading to the town but they were repelled.<sup>208</sup>

The Battle for Cuito Cuanavale was the largest battle on the African continent since the Battle of El Alamein in WWII yet it had mostly been a defensive battle. Yet once the South Africans had conceded the stalemate the Cubans pressed the attack in Cunene province, including a raid on Calueque which caused heavy losses. This sparked outrage among conservative South African whites who were already questioning the morality of their involvement in Angola.<sup>209</sup> This was only a prelude to more unrest in South Africa, where even the white minority was losing faith in the apartheid system. They had been battered by years of sanctions and being the pariahs of the world with the contradictions in their system becoming ever more apparent. Furthermore, they had allowed their economy to become ever more militarized and now it seemed that sacrifice had not given them military invincibility. Among the black South African population this had also become clear, the SADF

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<sup>205</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 409.

<sup>206</sup> Ibidem 420.

<sup>207</sup> Ibidem 423.

<sup>208</sup> Hetiman, *War in Angola*, 281-282.

<sup>209</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention*, 245-246.

was not invincible. Even more motivating, *black* Cuban and Angolan soldiers had fought the apartheid war machine to a standstill and managed to force them to retreat out of Angola.<sup>210</sup>

More importantly, Cuito Cuanavale forced the US and South Africa not only to the negotiation table but to accept Cuba one of the parties at the table. These negotiations would go on for twelve rounds, several of which took place while fighting was still going on in Cunene province, and would result in the independence of Namibia.<sup>211</sup> Still, the battle has been characterized both as a stalemate and a defensive victory for the Cubans. What is undeniable however is that the following year and a half, between June 1988 and early 1990, would change Southern Africa forever. In these months a new nation was granted independence, Namibia. Historians on opposing side of the political spectrum give different reasons for why the US and South Africa finally agreed to Cuba being an equal negotiation partner in early 1988.

Pro-SADF historians cite the impending end of the Cold War and the intense economic pressures the apartheid regime was under, including the costs of occupying Namibia and invading Angola.<sup>212</sup> Furthermore, South Africa had been under pressure from the UN to grant Namibia independence since the implementation of UN resolution 435 in 1978, despite doing their best to undermine and ignore this resolution.

Pro-Cuban accounts cite a completely different reason: a string of military successes, culminating with the defensive victory at Cuito Cuanavale, had made the costs of war too high for South Africa and forced her to the negotiating table. The loss of air superiority in late 1987 meant that the SADF was suddenly fighting in the same way that Angolans and Cubans had fought up until then, on the backfoot. The regime could not afford the political consequences of a dramatic increase in casualties among the white conscripts of the SADF. They knew from experience that fighting the Cubans had been a difficult affair even when they had a clear advantage in the air. Without airpower the only way to stop a Cuban advance into Namibia was either continue the negotiations to a perhaps non-desirable conclusion or, in a last-ditch effort, use the atomic bomb.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, *Die Groot*

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<sup>210</sup> Saney, *From Soweto to Cuito Cuanavale*, 304-305.

<sup>211</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention*, 254-255.

<sup>212</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 410-414 ; George, *The Cuban Intervention*, 271-273.

<sup>213</sup> Frank V. Pabian, 'South Africa's Nuclear Weapon Program. Lessons for U.S. nonproliferation policy', *The Nonproliferation Review* 3 (1) (1996) 1-19, 8-9.

*Krokodil*, P. W. Botha, resigned in August 1989. Botha's resignation meant the end of the "Total Strategy" and opened the way for F. W. de Klerk to become president who, together with other more liberal politicians, opened the way to the 1992 Apartheid referendum. This was followed two years later by the granting of universal suffrage, even for the black population, and the rest is history, as they say. The big question which to this day remains unanswered is whether the Cuban victory was the thundering shout which set in motion this avalanche of change. The thesis up until here should at least help the reader to lean towards the side that does consider the Cubans instrumental in ending apartheid in the way it did, as it is unlikely that the hard-liners within the regime would have given made way without a SADF forced out of Angola and losing prestige

### **3.7 Conclusion**

When Reagan came to power the dynamics of the whole world changed, not just in Southern Africa. A new, assertive doctrine would attempt to make the world safe for US domination by rolling back the revolutions in Afghanistan, Central America and Southern Africa. It also meant a dramatic increase in the number of incursions made by the SADF. While the late 70s saw dramatic but few invasions, the 80s saw an ever-increasing number of attacks. These happened at the same time as UNITA was gaining strength, causing serious issues for the FAPLA. Meanwhile, the Cubans were relatively inactive until the very end of the conflict, being unable to confront the SADF without air superiority. Showing their superior military judgement and autonomy, the Cubans refused to advance beyond their defences unless they were certain they could win, no matter the Soviet pressure. The prelude to the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale showcased this and when the Soviets led FAPLA into a disaster at the Lomba River, the Cubans came to the rescue. The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale remains the most hotly contested event in the conflict and while the Cubans have presented it as an important defensive victory, the South Africans maintain that it was a stalemate. However, only one of the armies taking part in the battle had to retreat afterwards and that was the SADF.

Propaganda targeted at the Western audience was a powerful tool during the conflict for the South Africans and UNITA. Within South Africa, the regime strictly regulated and curated all information from the warfront but, more importantly, it fed information to Western journalists who preferred to stay in the safety of Johannesburg while reporting on

the conflict.<sup>214</sup> Because of this, much of the excesses committed by UNITA remained hidden to the Western public. Journalist Victoria Brittain, who spent several years in Angola, highlights that UNITA's ideal was violent and primitive, keeping social control through the burning of women as witches, assassinating other political leaders and by using tribal structures to enforce social control.<sup>215</sup> However, the Western media presented UNITA as heroic freedom fighters, largely because of the carefully created persona UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi.<sup>216</sup> It is to the media in the Netherlands that we now turn, where it will quickly become clear that *de Volkskrant* and *de Telegraaf* were charmed by Savimbi and that they reported mostly the South African perspective.

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<sup>214</sup> Brittain, *Death of dignity*, x.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibidem* xv-xvi.

<sup>216</sup> Nixon, *Selling Apartheid*, 167.

## ***Chapter 4: Critical Discourse Analysis of Two Dutch Newspapers reporting on the Angolan Conflict***

### ***4.1 Introduction***

In this final chapter I will critically analyse the discourse on the Cubans in Angola of two Dutch newspapers, *de Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant*. I will analyse the discourses of both newspapers separately, first *de Telegraaf* and then *de Volkskrant*. I will be using a sample of twenty articles per newspaper and using Amer's version of van Leeuwen's socio-semantic inventory to analyse how the Cubans are represented in the reporting on the different battles and operations of the conflict. The focus will mainly be on the way in which the Cubans and, for contrast, the South Africans are represented by these two newspapers who represent a significant portion of the Dutch political spectrum.

This will be done through four categories of Amer's socio-semantic inventory. This methodology will be further explained after this short introduction. The reader will notice that all six categories Amer used are explained while I only use four for my own analysis in the thesis itself, for reasons of brevity. This is because in the original analysis, which can be found in the annex of this thesis, all six were used and by explaining all six here the reader can understand the full data in the annex. After an explanation of the methodology, I will introduce *de Telegraaf* and give a general impression through a few examples of how they were reporting on the conflict throughout the late 70s and 80s. The same will be done for *de Volkskrant*, after the analysis for *de Telegraaf* has been presented.

The analysis for both newspapers was organised by dividing the years between 1975 and 1988 in three periods. The first period covers the years between 1975 and 1979, which if we recall is the period in which large scale foreign intervention began in Angola, in the form of Operation Savannah and Operation Carlota. There was quite some attention for Angola from all sides of the political spectrum because, as we have seen in the first chapter of this thesis, it was a newly independent nation in which both pro-Western and socialist liberation movements first fought the Portuguese and then each other for power. Because the winners would decide in which camp of the Cold War the country would end up, the

world watched with bated breath and often intervened. This period is also important because it includes the Kassinga raid, one of the most controversial events in the conflict.

The period between 1975 and 1979 was marked by some of the most significant events of the conflict, like the start of large-scale intervention by foreign powers and the attack on the camp at Kassinga. On the other hand, it was also notable for the low number of incursions by the SADF. This all changed once Ronald Reagan was elected to the White House in 1980, assuming power in 1981. The introduction of the Reagan Doctrine, which effectively gave *carte blanche* to South Africa and their Angolan allies UNITA, resulted in a dramatic increase in the level of violence in the conflict which is why this is analysed as a separate period from that between 1975 and 1979. The conflict assumed a whole new dynamic which would continue until its conclusion, as has been explained in the previous chapter of this thesis. As a result, we see two important operations happening in this period: Operation Protea in 1981 and Operation Askari in 1983. These two operations are the main military events in the conflict in the period between 1980 and 1984.

Our final period covers the years between 1985 and 1988, so one year less than the other two periods. This period begins with the government offensives against UNITA described in the last chapter. Furthermore, it is the period in which one of the most contested events of the conflict occurs, the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. This is why this period is treated separately from the earlier one, there is a noticeable increase in reporting in, especially, 1987 and 1988. While there is some fighting between South Africans and Cubans in the months after the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, reporting in this period is overshadowed by the different rounds of the negotiations which would lead to the Tripartite Accords. These on the one hand provided a 30-month deadline for the withdrawal of all Cuban troops from Angola while in the same period South Africa had to grant independence to Namibia.<sup>217</sup> However, the culmination of these accords is beyond the scope of our analysis, as our focus is on the battles and operations in which the South Africans and Cubans clashed during the conflict. But some news articles reporting on the negotiations while the fighting was still going on at Cuito Cuanavale are included in the sample.

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<sup>217</sup> Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa. Making peace in a rough neighborhood* (New York 1992) 509-510.

After the analysis of both newspapers, some key differences, and similarities between the two will be highlighted. For example, both newspapers reported largely from a South African perspective, regardless of which side of the political spectrum they catered to. However, how they interpreted this information was often different and the reader will quickly conclude that, just as in the case of the literature written on this topic, this is a reporting with discourses that contest each other. This contestation must be understood in the context of the Cold War and with the developmental ambitions of social democracy, especially in the first period which partially coincided with the last years of the Labour Party dominated Den Uyl government in the Netherlands.

## **4.2 Methodology**

### **4.2.1 Justification for the selected newspapers**

I have selected *de Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant* articles about Angola, starting in 1975, with Angolan independence and the start of large-scale intervention, and ending in early 1988 during the last months of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. These newspapers have been chosen because they are among the largest and most read in the Netherlands. Furthermore, *de Telegraaf* is a centre-right newspaper while *de Volkskrant* is a centre-left newspaper. Roger Fowler claims that "powerful institutions provide newspapers with modes of discourse which already encode the attitudes of a powerful elite. Newspapers in part adopt this language for their own and, in deploying it, reproduce the attitudes of the powerful".<sup>218</sup> Thus by studying the largest newspapers on the centre left and right of the Dutch political spectrum we should get an impression of how the most popular Dutch media presented the Cubans and, by extension considering Fowlers' claim, the attitude of the Dutch elite, at least in part. Other newspapers that were considered were the far-left *de Waarheid* or the reformed newspaper *Trouw*. The readership of these newspapers was not large enough to be representative of Dutch society and media in general. They are still very interesting newspapers to study as *de Waarheid* was an overtly pro-communist newspaper, an anomaly in a Western Europe firmly in the US sphere of influence, and *Trouw* reflected the complicated but fraternal relationship between conservative reformed Christians and the

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<sup>218</sup> Roger Fowler, *Language in the News. Discourse and ideology in the press* (London 1991) 23.

*Boers* of South Africa. *Trouw* had already begun its transformation to a broader public but still by 1979 over 48% of its readership was reformed.<sup>219</sup>

#### **4.2.2 Selecting articles for analysis**

I started by selecting the operations I wanted to research and analyse in this chapter, these are mostly the operations that will be introduced in chapters two and three:

Savannah ( <i>Volkskrant</i> )	01-01-1976 / 15-02-1976 ( <i>Telegraaf</i> ) 01-11-1975 / 01-12-1975
Reindeer	04-05-1978 / 15-05-1978
Sceptic	10-06-1980 / 01-07-1980
Protea	23-08-1981 / 02-09-1981
Askari	01-12-1983 / 15-01-1984
Wallpaper and Magneto	15-09-1985 / 15-10-1985
Modular	November 1987
Hooper	February 1988
Packer	March 1988

The names of the operations were largely useless as search terms as these were the military code names given to them by the SADF and these would often only become known to the public years after the date. However, what can be used from the aforementioned list are the dates the operations took place. It must be noted that these dates are not the exact dates the operations took place. In the case of Savannah, I shortened the time slot I searched for and in most of the other cases I slightly extended it. Because Savannah was the longest operation, searching for seven months' worth of articles would have made it hard to reproduce this study because of the large number of results. Furthermore, different months were searched in each newspaper when searching for articles reporting on Operation Savannah. This is because although some of the heaviest fighting between the Cubans and SADF happened in November, *de Telegraaf* did not report on it. On the other hand, *de Volkskrant* did report on the fighting in November and the fact that the other newspaper

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<sup>219</sup> Jan de Bas, *Een Mijter Zonder Kruis. Sint-Nicolaas in de protestantse pers, 1945-2000* (Amsterdam 2003) 29.

ignored it is interesting in itself. In the other cases the slight extension of the time slot is there because news often did not arrive until a few days or even weeks later. These dates were then combined with the following search code in the *Delpher* search engine:

((Angola Cuba)) or (Angola Cubaanse) or (Angola Cubanen)<sup>220</sup>

Only once was another search term used, Cassinga which is the South African spelling of Kassinga, when searching for articles on Operation Reindeer in *de Telegraaf*. As we will see, this newspaper omitted mentioning the Cubans when reporting on this highly controversial operation. Then the most relevant articles would be selected based on the following criteria:

- The first criteria for selection was that it had to be a news article published on the front pages, news pages or international pages of the newspaper, which excludes Op-eds and commentary articles.
- I would then select them first of all on whether they reported on the fighting, to weed out the articles that focused on international politics as a consequence of the conflict, and second, on their length. This does not mean that no articles reporting the international politics were included as sometimes reporting on the fighting was intertwined with reporting on the international politics. In other cases, there was no reporting on the fighting, only on the consequences in the international political arena. This arena was often the UN Security Council but could also be the Organization of African Unity and other international organizations.
- The selection based on length is no exact science as the *Delpher* search engine is limited in that aspect, it does not mention the length or word count of articles so selection by this parameter has to be done by eye. However, if a piece is the main article on the foreign news section of the newspaper it has almost certainly been selected, if it meets the criteria mentioned earlier.

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<sup>220</sup> There are many other search terms which I could have employed, specifically search terms which included the South Africans. However, this has the potential to significantly increase the amount of search results and thus making the selection process far more random thus endangering the reproducibility of my research. It must also be noted that the objective of this thesis is to analyse the way Dutch newspapers represented the Cubans in Angola, not the South Africans. While the South Africans play a very significant role in this thesis and are sometimes used in the analysis as a way of contrasting how both warring parties are represented, the objective is to research the discourse surrounding the Cubans and how they were represented.

The searches resulted in a total of 70 results from *de Telegraaf* and 74 results from *de Volkskrant*. Although the results are called newspaper articles by *Delpher* one result does not equal one article as subsections of articles are also counted as a result. Of these results 20 were selected according to the criteria to form a corpus for analysis which was then organised in the three periods already explained in the introduction to this chapter, 1975-1979, 1980-1984 and 1985-1988.

#### **4.2.3 Analysis: Employing Mohammedwesam Amer's interpretation of Theo van Leeuwen's sociosemantic inventory to analyse discourse**

The inventory consists of ten categories to analyse the representation of social actors in texts, speech and other human interactions. Because this is my first foray into linguistics, I have based my methodology on that used by Mohammedwesam Amer in his Analysis of war reporting of the international press on the War in Gaza in 2008-2009.<sup>221</sup> It must be noted that although the article is only 11 pages long, it is based on his PhD thesis in Media and Communications.

While van Leeuwen's sociosemantic inventory consists of ten categories, Amer only employed 6 in his analysis where he attempted to answer the question how US and UK newspapers discursively represented social actors in their reporting on the Gaza war of 2008-2009:

1. Inclusion and/or exclusion. Exclusion has two subcategories: (1) 'Radical' (total) exclusion means total/complete suppression, i.e., there is no trace or reference to the social actors, and their actions/activities anywhere in the text. (2) 'Less radical' (partial) means backgrounding of social actors. Social actors are mentioned not immediately in the activity but somewhere in the text.
2. Role allocation distinguishes between activated and passivated roles allocated with social actors. Activated roles mean representing the social actors as active and dynamic in the activities. Passivated roles mean social actors are presented as undergoing the activity (object) or at the receiving end of the activity in the text.

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<sup>221</sup> Amer, 'Critical discourse analysis of war reporting in the international press', 1.

3. Genericisation and specification indicate how the authors of texts use either generic reference or specific reference to the social actors. Specific reference refers to 'identifiable' individuals. This means they are real people living in a real world.

4. Individualisation and assimilation are strict parts of specification of social actors. This means in specification; the social actors are either specified as individuals or as a group of participants. However, in this category the main emphasis is on the social actors as single entities. Assimilation specifies social actors as a group of participants. According to Van Leeuwen assimilation can be classified as aggregation or as collectivisation. Aggregation quantifies groups of participants, treating them as statistics. Collectivisation does not have a specific number of actors, i.e., there is no statistics of social actors.

5. Nomination and Categorisation refer to social actors in terms of their unique identity as being nominated or as functionalised. In the socio-semantic inventory, nomination is a way of addressing people and generally realised by proper nouns.

6. Functionalisation and Identification are part of categorisation of social actors. Functionalisation refers to activities, occupations and roles of social actors. Identification refers to prominent features. It refers to what the social actors are referred to, i.e., how they appear rather than their activities.<sup>222 223</sup>

Amer then uses these categories to answer the question of how social actors are constructed in four newspapers, two British and two from the USA. The corpus he uses is 40 news articles, ten from each newspaper, of similar length, which reported on the War in Gaza in 2008-2009. He excluded Op-ed and commentary articles and focused solely on articles published on homepages, news pages and international pages of the newspapers he selected for analysis. Furthermore, he excluded articles which just mentioned that war without focusing on it. After this he made sure the articles were of similar length by selecting articles which together would have an average amount of words.<sup>224</sup> These articles were subsequently read and organized by key themes and how political actors are

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<sup>222</sup> Ibidem 5.

<sup>223</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the categories van Leeuwen proposes see table 3.2 in: Michael Farrelly, *Discourse and Democracy. Critical analysis of the language of government* (London 2015) 54-55. Van Leeuwen condenses some categories into one which is why Farrelly identifies 16 categories.

<sup>224</sup> Amer, 'Critical discourse analysis of war reporting in the international press', 4-5.

portrayed in them. The categories were employed to show, for example, that an actor is presented as active or passive in searching for a ceasefire.

For reasons of brevity, I have only focused on the first four categories in these chapters, as they are most relevant for my historical and political analysis. The original collection of data was done using all six categories and can be found in the annex.

#### **4a. De Telegraaf**

*De Telegraaf* has historically been one of the largest and most read newspapers in the Netherlands. It has a populist-conservative political orientation which is quite noticeable in the way they report on issues. Like all Dutch media except for public broadcasting organizations, it is a private business which since the 1950s has been owned for about a third by the Van Puijenbroek family, who bought part of the newspaper presumably in an effort to thwart the PvdA. The newspaper has since then had close ties to right-wing politicians in The Hague and been a vocal critic of left-wing politicians, and for example immigrants and trade unions.<sup>225</sup>

While *de Telegraaf* did report substantially on the fighting in Angola, it was not the only topic related to that country they reported on. The newspaper has always had a tendency to report on stories that might seem a little far-fetched, but which could really stir up emotions. Another weapon in the media arsenal of *de Telegraaf* has been the political witch hunt. While today the newspaper might point its arrows at immigrants and the left-wing politicians that dare to advocate for them, during the Cold War these arrows were pointed at various real and imagined communist plots which allegedly were subverting the Dutch State.

One such alleged plot involved Jan Pronk, the Minister for Development Co-Operation under Joop Den Uyl. As a minister he was frequently attacked by both the political right-wing and their media, this being such a consistent theme that even his biography on the official website of the Dutch Parliamentary Documentation Centre mentions that '*he was frequently attacked for his support of African liberation movements and Cuba.*'<sup>226</sup> A quick search on *Delpher* using the code ((Pronk) and Angola) and limiting the search to *de Telegraaf* yields 65 results for the period between November 1975 and December 1977, which was when Pronk left office.

It is no surprise then that he was frequently the target of *de Telegraaf*, notably in January 1976, just after Operation Savannah had become known to the entire world. In a single week the newspaper published no less than three articles on Dutch development aid

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<sup>225</sup> Tabe Bergman, *The Dutch media monopoly. A political-economic analysis of the crisis of journalism in the Netherlands*, (Amsterdam 2014).

<sup>226</sup> Parlementair Documentatie Centrum, 'Prof.Dr. J.P. (Jan) Pronk', [https://www.parlement.com/id/vg09llfvqavy/j\\_p\\_jan\\_pronk](https://www.parlement.com/id/vg09llfvqavy/j_p_jan_pronk) (July 23rd 2021).

for Cuba. This aid had been a thorn in the side of the right-wing of Dutch politics for a longer time but after the Cuban intervention in Angola it became a serious issue.

On the 21st of January 1976 the newspaper published an article with the headline *'We are contributing to the war in Angola'*.<sup>227</sup> This article reported that the VVD, the liberal party in the Netherlands, demanded the immediate cessation of all monetary aid to Cuba, claiming that *'we are contributing to the bill for the War in Angola.'*<sup>228</sup> A day after this article, the newspaper published an anonymous opinion piece which highlighted that the minister had a pro-communist bias. After all, the minister had been far stricter on Indonesia, lowering the aid this last country received after it made no haste in releasing political prisoners from its concentration camps. Because Cuba allegedly also had political prisoners at that time, the writer can only conclude that *'the minister obviously has a double standard for these countries and it is politically motivated.'*<sup>229</sup> Two days after the first report on the complaints by the VVD, the newspaper reported that, in spite of the Cuban intervention, Minister Pronk had no plans to cease aid to Cuba.<sup>230</sup> Then, on Tuesday 27th of January, six days after the first article, the newspaper published another opinion piece titled *'Pronk plays into the hands of Castro'*. The writer of this piece claims that Pronk is indirectly supporting the Cuban interventions across Africa, to the tune of 15 million guilders, through his development aid.<sup>231</sup>

Here we see an interesting mediatic tactic employed by *de Telegraaf*: first the newspaper reports on the news with a suggestive headline. This is then followed up with opinion pieces which are far more explicit in branding the behaviour reported in the earlier articles as deviant and even treasonous. Furthermore, the accusation is not against the whole state or the ministry but against individual politicians and can be understood as an intimidation tactic.

These campaigns were often initiated by poignant op-eds with some of the most aggressive being written by J.G. Heitink. Four days before the complaints by the VVD about the subsidies, Heitink was already laying the groundwork for the campaign with an op-ed. In

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<sup>227</sup> Parlementaire redactie, "'Wij betalen mee aan oorlog in Angola". VVD eist stopzetting geldstroom naar Cuba', *de Telegraaf*, January 21st 1976.

<sup>228</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>229</sup> 'De bemoeizucht van de PvdA', *de Telegraaf*, January 22nd 1976.

<sup>230</sup> 'Ondanks interventie in Angola. Pronk blijft Cuba Steunen', *de Telegraaf*, January 23rd 1976.

<sup>231</sup> 'Pronk speelt Castro in de kaart', *de Telegraaf*, January 27th 1976.

this piece he claimed that the Netherlands was financing the “*Russian-Cuban invasion of Angola*” through her subsidies.<sup>232</sup> He goes on with the accusation that because of politicians like Pronk, Dutch cooperation with the Soviet bloc is increasing, cynically highlighting that development co-operation means the “*development of aggressive Russian communism*”.<sup>233</sup>

Heitink is an interesting character who was very influential in how *de Telegraaf* reported on the Angolan conflict. During the 1970s and up to 1982, Heitink was the deputy editor of *de Telegraaf*. Willem Oltmans, who was then employed by the newspaper, has highlighted that it was a public secret that Heitink was the contact man of the *Binnenlandse Veiligheids Dienst* (BVD) at the newspaper.<sup>234</sup> Furthermore, according to journalist Arnold Karskens, Heitink confessed to Ton Biesemaat that he was also employed by the CIA and the French secret service.<sup>235</sup> This is why it is even more interesting that he sometimes accused other journalists of working for the Russians and East Germans, something which most psychologists would recognize as a classic case of projection.<sup>236</sup>

Thus, we get the image of Heitink as an anti-communist Cold Warrior who was certainly not above sacrificing neutrality in his reporting. What makes him even more interesting when looking at the reporting on Angola by *de Telegraaf*, besides the fact that he was the deputy editor of the newspaper, is that he was someone that was very interested in South Africa. He even wrote a brief book about the history of South Africa, which was published in 1975, the year both the Cubans and South Africans became involved on a large scale in Angola.<sup>237</sup> Furthermore, he often wrote and published op-eds on the situation in Southern Africa which were sympathetic to the white minority. For example, in a 1980 op-ed he claimed that the confessional and left-wing parties had to stop their insistence on seeing South Africa as a one country which should one day be ruled by ‘*the progressive or communist ANC*’.<sup>238</sup> He then briefly disavows apartheid and proposes a solution where black and white communities live in separate political entities, a solution

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<sup>232</sup> J.G. Heitink, ‘Gevaren voor veiligheid’, *de Telegraaf*, January 17th 1976.

<sup>233</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>234</sup> Willem Oltmans, *Persona non grata* (Breda, 1996) 56.

<sup>235</sup> Arnold Karskens, *Journalist te koop. Hoe corrupt zijn onze media?* (Amsterdam 2016) bijlage 2.

<sup>236</sup> J.G. Heitink, ‘Een misselijk spelletje met heel eenzijdig regels’, *de Telegraaf*, January 22nd 1976.

<sup>237</sup> J.G. Heitink, *Zuid-Afrika* (Amersfoort, 1975).

<sup>238</sup> J.G. Heitink, ‘Zuid-Afrika is helemaal geen eenheidsstaat’, *de Telegraaf*, June 28th 1980.

which is remarkably similar to the Bantustans which the apartheid regime used to keep the black majority separate from the white minority.<sup>239</sup>

When Heitink stopped in 1982, he was replaced by as deputy editor by Johan Olde Kalter. Kalter not only took over Heitink's job but was also a Cold Warrior who took over the role of contact person to the BVD.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, Kalter had also worked for *de Telegraaf* as their correspondent in New York, covering some of the negotiations on the Namibia question. It should not be surprising then that the reporting by *de Telegraaf* on all things related to the Cubans in Angola had a very strong anti-communist discourse and a propagandistic hint.

Sometimes the stories they published bordered on the fantastic, such as a story in 1980 which reported that the Cubans were enslaving Angolans to work on the sugar plantations in Cuba.<sup>241</sup> This information comes from two sources: Clay Claiborne, a Jamaican member of the so-called Black Silent Majority, and Dr. Herminio Portell Vila, a Cuban scholar who had emigrated to the US in the 1930s and was tied to the U.S Army War College and Radio Free Americas.<sup>242</sup> Besides the fact that these sources do not seem unbiased, it would seem *de Telegraaf* purposefully misrepresented the emigration of Angolan youths to Cuba during the conflict as enslavement. These youths did seasonal labour in exchange for education on the so called '*Isla de la Juventud*'. Neither left nor right leaning historians describe this as slavery however.<sup>243</sup> This was not the first time *de Telegraaf* reported such a story, two years earlier they published an article in which the aptly named priest Godfried de Kinderen claimed that the Cubans were kidnapping Angolan children for re-education.<sup>244</sup>

The articles discussed previously give an impression of how *de Telegraaf* played its part in the cultural Cold War through their reporting on the Cubans in Angola. However, the most consistent topic which the newspaper reports on is the fighting. This is why the sample of 20 articles that will be analysed in the rest of this chapter consists of articles reporting on the fighting. As has already been explained earlier, these articles have been organised by

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<sup>239</sup> Ibidem ; Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, 217-220.

<sup>240</sup> Oltmans, *Persona non grata*, 75.

<sup>241</sup> 'Voor werken op suikerplantages. Cuba haalt slaven uit zwart Afrika', *de Telegraaf*, February 9th 1980.

<sup>242</sup> Cuban Studies Institute, 'Cubans in Florida: Herminio Portell Vila', <https://cubansinflorida.us/portfolio/herminio-portell-vila/> (July 25<sup>th</sup> 2021).

<sup>243</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 85-86 ; George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 159-160.

<sup>244</sup> Henk de Mari, 'Verbijsterende onthulling van missiepater De Kinderen. Cubanen ontvoeren Angolese kinderen voor "heropvoeding"', *de Telegraaf*, January 21st 1978.

the period in which they were published. For the first period, 1975-1979, our sample consists of seven articles. For our second period, 1980-1984, our sample consists of five articles. The sample for our latest period, 1985-1988, is the largest and consists of eight articles from *de Telegraaf*.

#### **4a.1 De Telegraaf, 1975-1979.**

##### *1. Inclusion and/or exclusion.*

What can immediately be highlighted is that whereas there are few times that the Cubans are suppressed in news messages, this is the other way around when it comes to the South Africans. For example, an article from mid-January 1976 radically suppresses the South African incursion into Angola. The article is headlined:

*'The cost of the Angolan War'*

It mentions UNITA, MPLA, the Cubans and even the Soviets. Conspicuously, there is no mention of the invading SADF or of South Africa in general. This is especially telling as the intervening Cuban army is described as a '*Russian-Cuban invasion force of at least 15.000 men.*'<sup>245</sup> (my emphasis) The emphasis highlights that *de Telegraaf* considered the Cubans an invading army but at the same time did not mention the South Africans involved in the conflict.

The description of the Cuban army, which intervened during Operation Carlota, as Russian-Cuban is also telling. It serves to reinforce the frame of the Cubans being pawns of the Soviets instead of an independent actor in this conflict and by extension international politics. Another article where the South Africans are radically suppressed was headlined '*Cuban advance in Angola*' and reports on how Cuban *elite troops* conquered Huambo, the de-facto capital of the FNLA and UNITA at that time.<sup>246</sup> The following quote from the article is also relevant:

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<sup>245</sup> 'Tol van Angolese Oorlog', *de Telegraaf*, January 19th 1976.

<sup>246</sup> 'Cubaanse opmars in Angola', *de Telegraaf*, February 10th 1976.

*'The Cubans make use of the most modern Russian equipment, like MiG jet fighters, tanks, helicopters and rockets.'*<sup>247</sup>

This quote once again highlights a persistent discourse in reporting on the conflict, the heavy Russian influence on the Cubans. Whereas it is not as explicit in painting the Cubans as mere pawns of the Soviets as the last article, it does try to imply that the only reason the Cubans are able to advance like they do is because of Soviet weaponry. There is also evidence that *de Telegraaf* was aware of the South African presence in Angola. An article that was published at an earlier date than the articles from which the previously discussed quotes were extracted shows an admission of a South African presence in Angola, yet it is partially suppressed:

*'There is also heavy fighting in the south, where the pro-Western movement UNITA bears the brunt of the fighting against the communist MPLA, but the situation there is less hopeless because of the help of South African units supporting UNITA, according to an American spokesman.'*<sup>248</sup>

The South Africans are partially suppressed here because they are only mentioned towards the end of the text while one of the subtitles of the article is the word "Cuba".

There are articles where the South Africans are included while the Cubans are either partially or radically suppressed. For example, the headline of an article in late January 1976 is:

*'South Africa will keep guarding Angolan dam with its military'*<sup>249</sup>

But in the same article the Cubans are partially suppressed:

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<sup>247</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>248</sup> 'Strijd in Angola. Washington: FNLA staat op instorten', *de Telegraaf*, January 16th 1976.

<sup>249</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika Blijft Angolese dam militair bewaken', *de Telegraaf*, January 27th 1976.

*'Cuba has answered accusations from Zaire regarding its involvement in Angola by claiming that its troops are there on the invitation of the MPLA government.'*<sup>250</sup>

We cannot say with certainty why *de Telegraaf* did not mention the fact the Cubans were in Angola and had clashed with the SADF in the headline of the article. One possible explanation is that, because the central theme of the article is the South African retreat from Angola at the end of Operation Savannah, *de Telegraaf* did not want to create the impression that the South Africans were being forced out of Angola by the Cubans. As has been shown in earlier chapters, the Cubans were decisive in preventing the SADF from attacking Luanda.

The most notable case of radical suppression of the Cubans is regarding Kassinga in 1978. As we know, and as has been described in earlier chapters, a Cuban battalion was the first to respond to the SADF attack on Kassinga, fighting with a bravery that has been commended even by the South Africans.<sup>251</sup> It is therefore highly surprising that they are radically suppressed in both articles *de Telegraaf* published about Kassinga.<sup>252</sup> Also notable is the change in description of what the camp at Kassinga was between the May 6 article and the one from May 9th. In the earlier the following is mentioned:

*'according to Angola the South Africans have also hit a camp for refugees from Namibia during their attack.'*<sup>253</sup>

However, in an article published three days later there is no mention of the camp also being a refugee camp. It is described as:

*'one of the most important camps of the liberation movement'* and as *"the military headquarters of SWAPO, according to Pretoria"*.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>251</sup> Gleijeses, 'Cuba and the Independence of Namibia', 286.

<sup>252</sup> 'Golf protesten na Zuidafrikaanse actie in Angola' *de Telegraaf*, May 6th 1978 ; 'SWAPO-delegatie loopt weg: Namibië-overleg komt in de knel', *de Telegraaf*, May 9th 1978.

<sup>253</sup> 'Golf protesten na Zuidafrikaanse actie in Angola'.

<sup>254</sup> 'SWAPO-delegatie loop weg'.

In earlier chapters it has been described how controversial this attack was and that the discussion on the subject is still ongoing. Some pro-SADF historians still claim the attack was justified while most left-leaning and pro-African Liberation historians hold the position that it was an attack on a refugee camp, which some have compared to the Israeli massacres on the Palestinian refugee camps at Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon.<sup>255</sup>

## 2. Role allocation.

The headlines of the articles are also interesting as the emphasis is not on the attack on the camp but on related events. The latter article is headlined:

*'SWAPO-delegation walks away: Namibia-negotiations become complicated'*

While the earlier article is headlined:

*'Wave of protests after South African **action** in Angola'* (my emphasis).

In the latter headline the attack is not even mentioned while in the earlier headline it is described as an action. Action is a purposefully vague description which could mean basically any activity undertaken by South Africa. This is significant when analysing our second representational category, role allocation. It is important to understand that neither activated nor passivated role allocation is always positive or negative, it is all dependent on the context. To use the earlier headlines as examples, SWAPO is presented as actively walking away from the negotiation and thus undermining them. It is only in the second paragraph of the article that the reader discovers the reason for SWAPO's exit: the SADF attack on the SWAPO camp at Kassinga. What is very telling about the position of *de Telegraaf* is that in this article there is no mention of the SWAPO position that the camp was a refugee facility, only the SADF version that it was a military headquarters is mentioned.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Pieterse, *Israel's Role in the Third World*, 16.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibidem*.

In general, in the period between 1975 and 1979 the South Africans are depicted as on the defensive by *de Telegraaf* which is often a passivated role. The headline discussed earlier is an excellent example of this:

*'South Africa will keep guarding Angolan dam with its military'*

In this article the SADF presence in Angola, a sovereign nation that has been invaded by the SADF, is presented as justified. The justification is that the SADF will remain

*'active in the protection of the Cunene Dam which was built with South African aid.'*<sup>257</sup>

On its own this article might not necessarily imply that South Africa was passivated and thus undergoing violence, after all it is mentioned that the dam is in Angola. Yet two weeks later the newspaper published an article headlined:

*'South Africa fears confrontation with the MPLA'*

The lead of this article reads that:

*'The danger for military confrontation between South Africa and the communist - supported by Cuba - MPLA grows by the hour after the rapid advance of the MPLA puts it at only 200km from the South African fortifications in the far south of Angola.'*<sup>258</sup>

Here the MPLA, with Cuban support, is depicted as the activated and offensive political actor despite them advancing in their own country towards an invading army which had recently been denounced by the international community.<sup>259</sup> It clearly seems as if South Africa is being presented as a passivated aggressor.

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<sup>257</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika Blijft Angolese dam militair bewaken'.

<sup>258</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika vreest botsing met MPLA', *de Telegraaf*, February 13th 1976.

<sup>259</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 29.

### 3. Genericization and specification.

Neither South African nor Cuban political actors are very present in the reporting of *de Telegraaf* in this period. Most of the times both countries are genericised with the use of mass-nouns such as *Cuba* or *South Africa*. On the South African side, this lack of specified political actors reflects the fact that the regime hoped that its operations in Angola would remain secret. On the Cuban and Angolan side, there is a purposeful lack of information as this would put the South Africans in a bad daylight.

### 4. Individualisation and assimilation.

We have already seen that only a few individuals are mentioned in our sample, Fidel Castro on the Cuban side and P.W. Botha on the South African side. However assimilated political actors can be divided between aggregations and collectives. Sometimes the Cubans are presented as a collective, for example:

*'Cuban troops are there on invitation of the MPLA.'*<sup>260</sup>

However, they are also presented as aggregations, most notably in the following quote:

*'From the north it is being reported that the MPLA is now being supported by a Russian-Cuban invasion force of at least 15.000 men.'*<sup>261</sup>

This is also the case for the South Africans, aggregation is a bit less common but more notable:

*'According to military sources between 300 and 700 South African soldiers took part in the action.'*<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika Blijft Angolese dam militair bewaken'.

<sup>261</sup> 'Tol van Angolese Oorlog'.

<sup>262</sup> 'Golf protesten na Zuidafrikaanse actie in Angola'.

In both these examples the fact that there is a number signifying how many Cubans or South Africans are involved has a deeper meaning. In the quote referring to the Cubans the number mentioned is significant and it is speculated that the force is composed of at least 15.000 men. The number of Cubans in Angola was probably around that number, with troops swelling to their eventual maximum of 25.000 later in the year.<sup>263</sup> In the quote referring to the South Africans, the number of soldiers is relatively low conveying the impression that it was a limited operation. Once again, *De Telegraaf* estimates the number correctly, during the attack on Kassinga, no more than 370 SADF paratroopers participated. However, they fail to mention that the attack on Kassinga was just one of two attacks occurring at the time in Angola, the other attack on Chetequera involving a larger armoured column.<sup>264</sup> Of course, neither *de Telegraaf* nor even the SADF realized at the time the notoriety which the attack on Kassinga, which is the “action” referred to in the quote, would acquire in the future. Still, the reporting omits the fact that there was another camp being attacked by the South Africans and that the operation was far larger than the limited number they provided.

#### **4a.2 De Telegraaf, 1980-1984.**

##### *1. Inclusion and/or exclusion.*

What is immediately noticeable is that both the Cubans and the South Africans are never radically suppressed in the articles of *de Telegraaf* from this period. However, in a way, the South Africans are partially suppressed in some articles, notably in the header of the article

*‘Angola threatens South Africa with Cubans.’*<sup>265</sup>

The South Africans are partially suppressed here, which in this case means that their responsibility for the confrontation is implied to be lessened. In spite of South Africa being featured in the header, the reason why the Angolans are threatening to call in the help of the Cubans is hidden in the text:

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<sup>263</sup> George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 99.

<sup>264</sup> Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War*, 71.

<sup>265</sup> ‘Angola dreigt Zuid-Afrika met Cubanen’, *de Telegraaf*, July 5th 1980.

*'The Angolan ambassador in Portugal declared yesterday that his government would request the Cuban forces in Angola... if South Africa continues its advance.'*<sup>266</sup>

At a first glance at the header, it would thus seem that the Angolans are the aggressors here while in reality it is a response to a SADF incursion. However, during and after 1981 reporting became considerably less ambiguous as the following headlines show:

*'Angola raises the alarm over South African invasion'*<sup>267</sup>

*'South Africa admits clashes with the Angolan army'*<sup>268</sup>

*'Angola requests UN urgency debate over raid'*<sup>269</sup>

*'Large-scale raid South Africa in Angola'*<sup>270</sup>

These headlines are far more to the point than anything we have seen up to this moment by *de Telegraaf*. The reasons for this could be manifold but something that cannot be ignored is the assumption of power of Ronald Reagan on the 20th of January 1981, a president who was elected largely because of the perceived "softness" on communism of his predecessor's foreign policy.<sup>271</sup> Thus it is not unlikely that influences of the West's new assertive foreign policy might have seeped through to the press, removing the shame associated with an ally, or party toward which the right-wing in the West was sympathetic, invading another country. What must also be noted is how the Cubans are often included and the implication of *Linkage*, the conditioning of a South African retreat on an earlier Cuban exit from Angola, in most articles published from late 1981 onwards:

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<sup>266</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>267</sup> 'Angola slaat alarm over inval Z.-Afrika', *de Telegraaf*, August 26th 1981.

<sup>268</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe', *de Telegraaf*, August 27th 1981.

<sup>269</sup> 'Angola vraagt UNO om spoeddebat inval', *de Telegraaf*, August 28th 1981.

<sup>270</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola', *de Telegraaf*, December 28th 1983.

<sup>271</sup> Jerel A. Rosati, "Jimmy Carter, a Man Before his Time? The emergence and collapse of the first post-Cold War presidency", *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 23 (3) (1993) 459-476, 473.

*'Only Washington reacted mildly. They regretted the attack but highlighted that it must be understood in the context of guerrilla attacks on Namibia and the presence of Cuban troops in Angola.'*<sup>272</sup>

In the quote above the South African attack is justified by the US government by the Cuban presence in Angola and the seasonal thrusts of SWAPO towards Namibia.

*'(referring to Angola) Washington even refuses to recognize this country diplomatically for as long as it maintains a 17.000 strong Cuban intervention force within its borders.'*<sup>273</sup>

This second quote is more explicit in mentioning a Cuban exit as a condition for diplomatic progress, specifically diplomatic recognition of Angola by the US.

*'Progress in the negotiations is stifled by the presence of the Cubans in Angola; Pretoria wants them to leave first while Angola maintains that it is an internal affair.'*<sup>274</sup>

This third quote is the most explicit, it clearly states that the Cuban presence in Angola is an obstacle to peace and that the South African government will not negotiate until this condition is fulfilled. All these quotes show in lesser or greater proportion how *Linkage* not only became an important weapon in the US/South African diplomatic arsenal, but also in the Western press and the battle over public opinion. Conditioning South African non-aggression on a Cuban exit, which would have left Angola completely at the mercy of the SADF, made it very easy to frame the Cubans and Angolans as the main obstacles to peace in Southern-Africa.

## *2. Role allocation.*

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<sup>272</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>273</sup> 'Angola vraagt UNO om spoeddebat inval'.

<sup>274</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola'.

Whereas in the first period we studied the South Africans were often passivated with the Cubans and the MPLA often implicitly blamed for the violence in Angola, in this period the SADF is often presented as initiating the violence, for example the aforementioned headline

*'South Africa admits clashes with the Angolan army'<sup>275</sup>.*

However, it must be mentioned that in this same article the SADF is somewhat passivated, as now Prime Minister Botha's explanation for the clash was given ample attention in the newspaper:

*'The action would have passed without any incident if the MPLA, would not have involved itself, as it has not in the past.'<sup>276</sup>*

Thus, according to Botha, who was the only African politician featured in the article, the only reason there was a clash is because the Angolans decided to respond to the repeated border raids by the SADF, in this case during Operation Protea.

Two years later, during Operation Askari, *de Telegraaf* would publish a similar article, although this time the headline is more explicit:

*'Large-scale raid South Africa in Angola'<sup>277</sup>.*

While the headline and lead emphasize that South African raids have been a yearly occurrence, the article once again highlights the South African justification of the raid and the clashes with the MPLA and Cubans, this time it is Constand Viljoen who is quoted:

*'In the first official South African statement on the offensive, Chief of Staff Constand Viljoen complained about the "increasing interference" by the Angolans and Cubans.'<sup>278</sup>*

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<sup>275</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>276</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>277</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola'.

<sup>278</sup> Ibidem.

Here it once again seems like responsibility for the clashes is given to the Angolans and Cubans interfering with the SADF's hot pursuit operations against SWAPO. The Cubans are thus presented in an activated role while the South Africans are once again passivated aggressors. As we have seen in earlier chapters of this thesis, these operations often carried on hundreds of kilometres into Angolan territory and had devastating consequences for the land and the people living there. The Cubans are also mentioned in an activated role regarding the installation of anti-aircraft installations:

*'they are reputedly building a large base in Lubango, 200 km from the border. According to South African spokespeople, they are also installing Russian anti-aircraft rocket installations in the South that could pose a threat to the South African Airforce.'*<sup>279</sup>

Throughout the conflict in Angola the battle for air superiority was an important theme which was deciding on who could come out victorious, or at least claim victory. It is interesting to see that the importance of air-power and anti-aircraft installations was already noted by civilian newspapers in the 1980s.

Furthermore, sometimes neither party is explicitly presented as initiating hostilities:

*'South African troops came into contact with units of the Cuban army in Angola'*<sup>280</sup>

*During the actions, the South Africans came into contact with the Angolan military and the Cuban army corps garrisoned in that country.'*<sup>281</sup>

Coming into contact can mean many things although usually in this context it refers to a military engagement. However, it is not specified who initiates the hostilities and it is likely left ambiguous on purpose, so the reader blames the Cubans and Angolans. After all,

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<sup>279</sup> 'Angola slaat alarm over inval Z.-Afrika'.

<sup>280</sup> 'Angola slaat alarm over inval Z.-Afrika'.

<sup>281</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola'.

throughout their reporting in this period *de Telegraaf* justifies the SADF incursions into Angola and highlights the “increasing interference” by the Cubans and Angolans. One instance where the Cubans are clearly passivated is the following:

*An unknown number of Cubans, Angolans, and members of SWAPO has been taken prisoner*<sup>282</sup>

In these quotes the Cubans are clearly passivated with the last quote even detailing that they were taken into captivity by the SADF.

When looking at the balance after the analysis of our first two representational categories, most of the times that the Cuban presence in Angola is mentioned, it is in the context of them being there illegally according to the US and South Africa. Thus, they are presented as an obstacle to negotiations and diplomatic recognition as has been shown in our analysis of the first representational category in this period, inclusion and/or exclusion.<sup>283</sup> Meanwhile in the second category they are often implicitly blamed for the violence in spite of the main theme of the articles being SADF incursions.

### *3. Genericization and specification.*

We have already dealt with some of the specific individuals on the South African side such as Constand Viljoen and P. W. Botha who had become Prime Minister of South Africa in 1978 and would remain so until 1984. In 1984 he would go further in concentrating power on his person by creating the position of State President.<sup>284</sup> He is the most frequently quoted political actor in our sample for the years between 1980 and 1984. Often *de Telegraaf* reported his interpretation of events, which was, in general, pro SADF, most notably when South Africa admitted it had clashed with the Angolans during Operation Protea:

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<sup>282</sup> ‘Zuid-Afrika op terugtocht uit Angola’

<sup>283</sup> ‘Angola vraagt UNO om spoeddebat inval’; ‘Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola’.

<sup>284</sup> Davenport, *South Africa*, 460.

(on the Angolan version of the story) *'It is a gross overstatement and a complete misrepresentation of what has truly happened.'*<sup>285</sup>

This quote comes from the lead of an article thus immediately sowing doubt in the reader's mind on the Angolan statement.

Only one Cuban is mentioned, namely Fidel Castro who is only mentioned in passing regarding his role as chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In this same article there is also one of the few mentions of an Angolan political actor, namely President Eduardo dos Santos.<sup>286</sup>

#### *4. Individualisation and assimilation.*

In general, we can say that the Cubans and their MPLA allies are assimilated. However, in this period there is often a number attached to the plural Cubans and, sometimes, also the South Africans:

*'The Cuban army core garrisoned in that country, estimated at 15.000 to 25.000 men.'*<sup>287</sup>

*'(on support by the NAM) chairman: Fidel Castro, who already gives his support by way of 14.000 soldiers.'*<sup>288</sup>

We see that aggregation was common in this period in the reporting of *de Telegraaf*. Like in the earlier period studied we see a lot of speculation and varying numbers on the actual strength of the Cuban expeditionary force. Furthermore, the authors report on the casualty numbers presented by the SADF, something which served a propagandistic end. Both sides exaggerated the number of enemy casualties and underreported their own, the Cubans and Angolans by a factor two and the SADF by a factor six.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>286</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>287</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola'.

<sup>288</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>289</sup> Polack, *The last hot battle of the Cold War*, 311-312.

As has already been mentioned, *de Telegraaf* emphasized the South African side of the story in most articles in our sample. That is not to say the Angolan side of the story is never mentioned but it is often only in the text or, when featured in the headline or lead, implicitly discredited by the South African side of the story. The exception is when the South Africans refused to comment on the matter, such as happened during the early reporting on Operation Protea in 1981.<sup>290</sup> The omission or minimisation of the Angolan side of the story is all the more glaring because *de Telegraaf* does sometimes use information published by the Angolan press agency ANGOP. This means that, in spite of having access to different sources of information than the SADF and South African government press releases, *de Telegraaf* chose not to use them. This decision was both politically and ideologically motivated and should be seen in the context of the Reagan offensive during the late Cold War. After all, as has already been discussed earlier in this chapter, *de Telegraaf* had an intimate connection to the Dutch security services, the CIA and South Africa through some of her employees.

#### **4a.3 De Telegraaf, 1985-1988**

##### *1. Inclusion and/or exclusion.*

Throughout this analysis, in both earlier periods, we have seen different justifications for the South African raids into Angola, most notably operations against SWAPO. However, in this final period the discourse changes and this time supporting UNITA becomes the main justification. This change is already visible in the following headline from 1985:

*'Pretoria support action for UNITA suspected'*<sup>291</sup>

This is also visible in a quote from an article published four days earlier:

*'Aircraft of the South African air force have attacked the Angolan army who are on the offensive against the resistance movement UNITA. This is claimed by the Angolan foreign ministry.'*<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>291</sup> 'Hulpactie Pretoria voor UNITA vermoed', *de Telegraaf*, September 23rd 1985.

<sup>292</sup> 'Pretoria ontkent luchtaanvallen op leger Angola', *de Telegraaf*, September 19th 1985.

These first two quotes have a certain ambiguity as to whether the SADF is really active in Angola. The first one explicitly states that a support action is suspected while the second one presents a claim by the Angolan foreign ministry, a biased source. These factors give the SADF a certain degree of plausible deniability. By 1987, maintaining a certain degree of plausible deniability had become unnecessary. The following headline from 1987 highlights the Cold War context by not mentioning the Angolan government but only the Cubans. Furthermore, the Angolan rebels are not specified as UNITA:

*'South African Army supports Angolan Rebels in struggle against Cubans'*<sup>293</sup>

In the articles from our sample from 1988 the rebels are identified as UNITA or by their leader Jonas Savimbi:

*'The South Africans, who support the resistance movement UNITA, keep their advance going'*<sup>294</sup>

*'the military support Savimbi receives from South Africa remains a large obstacle for a political solution to the conflict'*<sup>295</sup>

The change in the justification for SADF interference in Angola between this period and the last one must be seen in the context of a Reagan doctrine which had now come into full expression. In the earlier stages of the conflict the pursuit of SWAPO was a legitimate justification for SADF interference in Angola. However, in the later stages, supporting UNITA becomes a better justification. Jonas Savimbi, the leader of UNITA, made excellent use of the changing doctrine in Washington, modelling his and his warrior's public image on that of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> 'Leger Z.-Afrika steunt Angolese rebellen in strijd tegen Cubanen', *de Telegraaf*, November 12th 1987.

<sup>294</sup> 'Moskou weigert Angola op te geven', *de Telegraaf*, March 12th 1988.

<sup>295</sup> 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola', *de Telegraaf*, March 17th 1988.

<sup>296</sup> Burke, *Revolutionaries for the right* 178.

The Cubans are also present in all articles in our sample from this period. In two out of eight articles they are mentioned in the headline already and in five of the eight they are mentioned in the lead. Thus, there is no case of suppression of the Cuban presence discernible. Significantly, in five out of eight articles they are mentioned together with the Russians or the East-Germans, see the annex for more examples<sup>297</sup>:

*'Botha called a timetable for an eventual withdrawal from Angola of the 40.000 "bled out Cuban troops and East Germans who are playing a sinister role" of crucial importance.'*<sup>298</sup>

*'(UNITA) has been fighting for over twelve years against the Marxist regime in Angola and controls about a third of the country in spite of the presence of 40.000 Cuban troops and numerous Soviet advisors.'*<sup>299</sup>

One thing that is instantly noticeable is the return of the adjective *Marxist* to describe either the MPLA or the Cubans. This was highlighted in the analysis of the first period, but it was not as prevalent in the second. In the third it is a lot more common as we shall see. In all these quotes there is the impression that while the Cubans provided the men, the equipment but, significantly, the commanders were Russian. One article is even more explicit in minimizing the role of the Cubans, its headline reads:

*'Moscow refuses to give up Angola'*<sup>300</sup>

This recurring theme, that the Cubans were just a satellite of the Russians, is something we have seen in a lesser or greater proportion in all three periods we have analysed. It is not in line with the truth, as we have seen in an earlier chapter of this thesis where it became clear that Cuba acted with significant independence. However, in this period it seems this narrative has become ubiquitous.

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<sup>297</sup> Page 137 of this thesis.

<sup>298</sup> 'Botha: Angolees vredesplan is niet volledig', *de Telegraaf*, March 15th 1988.

<sup>299</sup> 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

<sup>300</sup> 'Moskou weigert Angola op te geven'.

## 2. Role allocation.

We can use the earlier quotes where the Cubans are often mentioned together with other eastern bloc personnel to show that they are usually presented in an activated, offensive role, for example:

*'This is claimed by UNITA: who were under heavy assault by government troops supported by the Cubans and Russians.'*<sup>301</sup>

Here the Cubans supporting the government troops are assaulting UNITA. Furthermore, we have already discussed the theme that the South Africans are portrayed as supporting UNITA in reaction to offensives by government troops against Savimbi and his men:

*'South African Army supports Angolese Rebels in struggle against Cubans'*<sup>302</sup>

Once again, it seems as if the South Africans are presented as passivated aggressors because they are just reacting to pressure from the MPLA/Cubans on their allies UNITA. It must be mentioned that because of the way the role of the Cubans is minimized, often it is highlighted that Soviets are in command, it could also be interpreted as the Cubans being passivated. After all, if they are just following Soviet orders, they are just undergoing the activity and not as a dynamic force with initiative.

One significant theme in which the Cubans are presented as activated is in the use of chemical weapons:

*'The Angolan army and the Cuban troops, who support the Marxist regime in Luanda, have **probably** been using chemical warfare against dr. Jonas Savimbi's UNITA for the last two years (emphasis added).'*<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> 'Verzet UNITA weerstaat regeringsleger Angola', *de Telegraaf*, October 7th 1985.

<sup>302</sup> 'Leger Z.-Afrika steunt Angolese rebellen in strijd tegen Cubanen'.

<sup>303</sup> 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

The word probably is significant here as there is no conclusive evidence that the Cubans or MPLA used chemical weapons against their foes. The article bases its claims on a report by Belgian toxicologist Aubin Heyndrickx, whose name is misspelled as Aubain in the article. Furthermore, the accusation is based on the following claim:

*'Cuban prisoners of UNITA were found to have equipment to protect themselves from chemical attacks with instruction in Spanish and Russian.'*<sup>304</sup>

We first have to look at the source of the information, Dr Aubin Heyndrickx. Heyndrickx was a toxicologist at the University of Ghent who became notorious during the 1980's by claiming that the USSR was testing chemical weapons in Cambodia, Laos and Afghanistan. His claim that Cuba had used chemical weapons against UNITA was the latest in a series of claims which were often seen as politically motivated. He was considered a charlatan by other experts, like Harvard's Matthew Meselson, and considered a Cold-Warrior in service of the CIA by political opponents.<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, Aubin Heyndrickx was not only sympathetic towards apartheid, but he might also have been personally involved in the development of the South African CBW, codenamed Project Coast. After the end of apartheid, Wouter Basson, better known as 'Dr. Death' and the head of Project Coast, was prosecuted for crimes against humanity by the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*.<sup>306</sup> During the process against Basson there was also an accusation against Heyndrickx: supposedly he had sold Basson twelve highly advanced poison gas detectors, bypassing the arms embargo against South Africa.<sup>307</sup>

The fact that Cuban soldiers carried gas masks and other protective equipment against chemical and biological warfare (CBW) during the Angolan war was a consequence of South African use of CBW, or at least the pretence there off.<sup>308</sup> The development of a

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<sup>304</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>305</sup> Gilbert Roox, 'BLIKVANGER. Aubin Heyndrickx (79)', *de Standaard*, June 24th 2006, <https://www.standaard.be/cnt/guru5132> (June 25th 2021).

<sup>306</sup> Niels Posthumus, 'Vermeende apartheidsmisdadiger "Dr. Death" is nooit gestraft. Sterker nog: hij profiteert nog altijd van historische privileges.', *Trouw*, October 10th 2020.

<sup>307</sup> Roox, 'Blikvanger'.

<sup>308</sup> Stephen Burgiss and Helen Purkitt, *The Secret Program. South Africa's chemical and biological weapons*, 27-66, 32; in: Barry Schneider, *The War Next Time. Countering rogue states and terrorists armed with chemical and biological weapons* (New York 2004).

South African CBW program has been well documented, and there are numerous accusations by Cuban and African sources of CBW being used by the SADF.<sup>309</sup>

Thus, we can only conclude that the accusation by Heyndrickx was a clear case of projection, where one accuses an opponent of doing what you are doing. The idea of the Cubans using chemical weapons is thus not supported by conclusive evidence. However, it does show us how eager newspapers were to publish stories which corresponded to their political alignment in spite of being based on shoddy sources. Furthermore, the Heyndrickx case highlights that academia and universities in general were certainly not impartial or immune to being influenced by ideology during the Cold War.

Projection is also employed twice by Magnus Malan in another article from our sample:

*‘Minister Malan reprimanded the Soviet-Union for destabilizing Angola by pumping weapons valued in the billions into the country.’<sup>310</sup>*

This is followed up later by the claim that the morale of the Cubans and Angolans was remarkably low.<sup>311</sup> South Africa accusing another country of destabilizing Angola is a rich claim, as there seems to be some consensus in most of the literature written on the Angolan Civil War and the Angolan Border War that it was the South African incursions that destabilized Angola. Furthermore, this article is from March 1988, which is about the time the South Africans started to suffer serious backlash at home because of the increase in their casualties as a consequence of the war in Angola.<sup>312</sup>

### *3. Genericization and specification.*

Like in the earlier periods analysed, we see that in our newspaper article corpus the South Africans are well represented while the Cubans are not:

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<sup>309</sup> Cawthra, *Brutal force*, 109.

<sup>310</sup> ‘Moskou weigert Angola op te geven’.

<sup>311</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>312</sup> Baines, ‘Vietnam Analogies and Metaphors’, 81.

*'The 500 men strong South African force which has been operating in Angola since Monday has crossed the border and advanced 30 km in pursuit of SWAPO units, according to the commander in chief of the armed forces in Namibia, general George Meiring.'*<sup>313</sup>

*'The South African Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, declared last week that South Africa supports UNITA in all aspects.'*<sup>314</sup>

*'According to the commander in chief of the South African army, Jannie Geldenhuis, the Cubans and Russians became involved when UNITA forced the government army back.'*<sup>315</sup>

*'The South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Roelof "Pik" Botha declared yesterday that the regional peace plan proposed by the Angolan government to the Americans is incomplete.'*<sup>316</sup>

*'And finally, we must highlight the numerous Cuban declarations signalling that Fidel Castro wants to remove his 40.000 soldiers from Angola.'*<sup>317</sup>

What is remarkable is that almost every important South African political actor with a connection to the conflict is mentioned. Not only are both the minister of defence and the minister of foreign affairs quoted, but also the chief of the SADF as a whole and the commander in chief of the army of Namibia. For comparison, there is only one time a Cuban political actor is mentioned, a stark contrast. Furthermore, in three out of eight articles in this sample Jonas Savimbi has a prominent role.<sup>318</sup>

This is not to say that specification is the norm, usually all parties are genericised:

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<sup>313</sup> 'Pretoria ontkent luchtaanvallen op leger Angola'.

<sup>314</sup> 'Hulpactie Pretoria voor UNITA vermoed'.

<sup>315</sup> 'Leger Z.-Afrika steunt Angolese rebellen in strijd tegen Cubanen'.

<sup>316</sup> 'Botha: Angolees vredesplan is niet volledig'.

<sup>317</sup> 'Moskou weigert Angola op te geven'.

<sup>318</sup> 'Pretoria ontkent luchtaanvallen op leger Angola' ; 'Verzet UNITA weerstaat regeringsleger Angola' ; 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

*'According to diplomatic sources in Pretoria, South Africa has informed Angola that it wants to reopen the negotiations about the presence of the Cubans in Angola and the end of hostilities in the south of that country.'*<sup>319</sup>

This is a perfect example of how all parties are usually genericised by *de Telegraaf* by the use of mass nouns. On top of this, it also shows an important narrative the newspaper tries to present, that the South Africans are actively looking to negotiate a settlement. This narrative is also furthered with the following quote:

*'The Angolan government "for the first time" agrees to plans for the full withdrawal of "all" Cuban troops from the country, in the context of a peace deal between Angola and South Africa.'*<sup>320</sup>

This quote implies that the obstacle to peace used to be the Angolan reluctance to negotiate the withdrawal of the Cuban army. Furthermore, *Linkage* is presented as a given fact instead of as an important weapon of the US and South Africa in these negotiations.

#### *4. Individualisation and assimilation.*

In line with the analysis above, we can say that political actors are usually assimilated instead of individualised but that the few actors that are individualised usually are either South Africans or Jonas Savimbi. When distinguishing how political actors are assimilated, collectivisation is the most common form yet there are some interesting cases of aggregation:

*'The Marxist MPLA-government of Angola claims that in the last two months during the fighting in the south of the country 230 South Africans lost their lives. South Africa has admitted the death of 12 soldiers last week.'*<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> 'Verzet UNITA weerstaat regeringsleger Angola'.

<sup>320</sup> 'Angola akkoord met terugtrekking Cubaanse troepen', *de Telegraaf*, February 2nd 1988.

<sup>321</sup> 'Leger Z.-Afrika steunt Angolese rebellen in strijd tegen Cubanen'.

The quote above is interesting because it highlights the already mentioned exaggerating and underreporting of casualties by both sides. This is not surprising in a war in which propaganda played a significant role and which still has an important status for all sides involved to this day. The following three quotes are from the three articles which were all three published in the same week in 1988. This explains the consistency in the number of troops reported. Furthermore, there is once again the implication that the whole Eastern bloc is involved:

*'(UNITA) has been fighting for over twelve years against the Marxist regime in Angola and controls about a third of the country in spite of the presence of 40.000 Cuban troops and numerous Soviet advisors.'*<sup>322</sup>

*'And finally, we must highlight the numerous Cuban declarations signalling that Fidel Castro wants to remove his 40.000 soldiers from Angola.'*<sup>323</sup>

*'Botha called a timetable for an eventual withdrawal from Angola of the 40.000 "bled out Cuban troops and East Germans who are playing a sinister role" of crucial importance.'*<sup>324</sup>

In this last quote, Botha evocatively accuses the Cubans and East Germans of playing a "sinister role". Furthermore, the reader is once again reminded that UNITA and their South African allies are fighting against a Marxist regime. This is once again evidence of clear Cold War vocabulary used by *de Telegraaf*.

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<sup>322</sup> 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

<sup>323</sup> 'Moskou weigert Angola op te geven'.

<sup>324</sup> 'Botha: Angolees vredesplan is niet volledig'.

#### **4a.4 Conclusion de Telegraaf**

Unsurprisingly, *de Telegraaf's* reporting takes a clear right-wing tone with strong hints of anticommunism. Whenever the Cubans are presented, the reader is reminded of the fact that they are wrongfully there, supporting a *Marxist* movement which is not the legitimate government. Furthermore, when the Cubans are mentioned it is often together with other Eastern Bloc countries like the USSR or East-Germany. This is an attempt to take away agency from the Cubans, present them as mere pawns of the 'Evil Empire'.

Angolan government troops are usually identified primarily by their affiliation to the FAPLA or MPLA. This is a subliminal way of sowing doubt and stating that they do not recognize the MPLA as the rightful government of Angola. While they nowhere explicitly state it, the fact that they allow Savimbi to freely propagate his views on who would win an election in Angola in early 1988 is telling:

*'(Savimbi) Declared that if tomorrow there would be elections, he would garner between 60 and 80 percent of the votes.... He reacted to the fact that he is always presented as the evil-doer "there is a saying in Africa: you do not need to shake a tree with no fruit. If they are always so busy talking about me... it is because they are afraid of what I have, the support of the people".'*<sup>325</sup>

*De Telegraaf* seems willing to push Savimbi's propaganda, like many Western newspapers. Savimbi is given much attention in the newspaper. SADF officials are also well represented in the different articles by the newspaper. The same cannot be said of Cuban officials as there is a woeful lack of their perspective. To summarize, *de Telegraaf* largely reports the South African version of the story.

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<sup>325</sup> 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

## 4b. De Volkskrant

*De Volkskrant* is a Dutch centre left newspaper which started as a catholic newspaper but moved more towards the left in the early Cold War. Since the 70s it has had strong ties to the Labour Party (PvdA) leading some critics to call it the 'party newspaper' of the PvdA.<sup>326</sup> With the steady move towards the centre of the PvdA over the last few decades, the newspaper has also become more moderate, especially since the end of the Cold War.<sup>327</sup> In 2016 it had a nationwide circulation of about 210.000, making it the third biggest newspaper in the country by that metric, behind *de Telegraaf* and *Algemeen Dagblad*.<sup>328</sup> The circulation of the newspaper remained stable between 1980 and 2011, which was in line with a trend among national paid newspapers.<sup>329</sup>

During the 70s and 80s, *de Volkskrant* goes through several transformations. It has already been mentioned that around 1980 a slow but steady move towards the political centre began at the newspaper. However, in the early 70s the newspaper was invigorated and inspired by Cabinet Den Uyl, the most left-wing cabinet in Dutch history. This cabinet tried to implement such revolutionary changes such as allowing the labour force to share in the increase in wealth in companies, giving the labour force a say in companies through work councils, and the implementation of subsidies for companies who created jobs and took care of the environment.<sup>330</sup>

There was initial enthusiasm at *de Volkskrant* for the new government and when Den Uyl took power in 1973 the newspaper clearly posited itself as a supporter of the new government. Initial excitement died down after a few years when it became clear that confessional parties like the Anti-Revolutionary Party and the Catholic Peoples Party were blocking many of the plans proposed in 1973. Interestingly for a former catholic daily, the newspaper did not move back to the right but started to represent the left-wing of the

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<sup>326</sup> Verbon, 'De Volkskrant'.

<sup>327</sup> Philippe Remarque and Frits Bolkenstein, "Remarque en Bolkenstein schrijven elkaar: 'is de Volkskrant te links?', *de Volkskrant*, April 14th 2012.

<sup>328</sup> Piet Bakker, 'Oplage landelijke kranten. Telegraaf en AD krijgen opnieuw klappen' (version April 11th 2018), <https://www.svdj.nl/oplage-telegraaf-ad-klappen/> (July 26th 2021).

<sup>329</sup> Trudy Brandenburg van de Ven, '30 jaar oplagecijfers dagbladen in beeld' (version March 27th 2012), <https://www.villamedia.nl/artikel/30-jaar-oplagecijfers-dagbladen-in-beeld> (July 26th 2021).

<sup>330</sup> Mirjam de Rijk, 'De hobbelstrategie', *De Groene Amsterdammer* 43 (Version October 25th 1995), <https://www.groene.nl/artikel/de-hobbelstrategie> (July 26th 2021).

PvdA.<sup>331</sup> However, this turn to the left was only temporary as during the 1980s the newspaper once again moved toward the political centre. This went hand in hand with two developments, professionalization, and a more business-like demeanour. During the 80s these trends led to comparisons to *NRC Handelsblad*, and *de Volkskrant* developed into the second so called 'quality newspaper' in the Netherlands. The newspaper reached a better educated audience which was interested in literature, the fine arts and a detailed foreign section.<sup>332</sup>

This increased detail in the foreign section is also noticeable in the reporting on the conflict in Angola. One notable journalist, for example, is Janny Groen who started working at the newspaper in 1980. Her analysis on developments in Southern Africa was often spot-on, such as in a column from 1983 in which she explains the South African carrot and stick tactics towards her socialist neighbours such as Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe.<sup>333</sup> Furthermore, her analysis of the situation in Angola, which was published six days after the column, was comprehensive. In the article she gives a quick overview of the history of the conflict and also recognizes the conflicts haranguing the MPLA, such as poor economic performance and infighting, and highlighting the influence of the South Africans on the conflict and especially on UNITA. While she does not write extensively on the Cubans in her article, she does recognize that they were instrumental in securing victory for the MPLA in the power struggle after independence. She identifies correctly the role of the USA and of South Africa in the conflict and, considering how often that influence was denied by those parties, that is a remarkable analysis.<sup>334</sup> This level of analysis is far more detailed than anything we find in *de Telegraaf* in this period, especially when compared with the writing of a journalist like Heitink who seems to write in a far more emotional way.

*De Volkskrant* are quite sympathetic towards the MPLA in how they report on the conflict and do not seem impressed by Jonas Savimbi and UNITA. In 1985 they published an article by a former humanitarian worker who had been stationed in Angola. The article with the evocative tittle, "*The UNITA in Angola: a pure terror movement*", details how the pro-

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<sup>331</sup> Frank van Vree, *De metamorfose van een dagblad. Een journalistieke geschiedenis van de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam 1996) 176.

<sup>332</sup> Ibidem 198.

<sup>333</sup> Janny Groen, 'Botha plukt vruchten van tweesporenbeleid', *de Volkskrant*, December 24th 1983.

<sup>334</sup> Janny Groen, 'Militair offensief Zuid-Afrika en UNITA escaleert conflict. Strijd in Zuid-Angola bedreigt MPLA-regering', *de Volkskrant*, December 30th 1983.

western guerrilla movement causes havoc in Angola causing parts of the country to become depopulated.<sup>335</sup> The author of the article highlights that Groen overestimates the power of UNITA when she characterizes them as a force that defeated the FAPLA at Mavinga, going on to state that *'there is almost conclusive evidence that South Africa intervened on the side of UNITA against FAPLA.'*<sup>336</sup> Although Janny Groen and *de Volkskrant* were better informed and used more varied sources than *de Telegraaf*, as we will see in the rest of the discourse analysis, they were still prone to UNITA's propaganda. But this article detailing the destruction by UNITA can be seen as a corrective attempt. It also shows the value *de Volkskrant* put on informed eyewitness sources.

The 20 articles from *de Volkskrant* were divided as follows over the three periods that were analysed: 1975-1979, six articles, 1980-1984, seven articles, and 1985-1988, seven articles.

#### **4b.1 De Volkskrant, 1975-1979**

##### *1. Inclusion and exclusion.*

The first article in our sample by *de Volkskrant* is very interesting as the South Africans are completely excluded while the Cubans are included. However, another group is included:

*'According to unconfirmed reports, a few hundred Cuban soldiers have arrived in Luanda to reinforce the MPLA-army. The MPLA has to resist the advance from the south of the FNLA and UNITA, who are led by experienced white mercenaries.'*<sup>337</sup>

(my emphasis)

The identity of the *experienced white mercenaries* mentioned in the article would be revealed only three days later:

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<sup>335</sup> Jaap Koot, 'De UNITA in Angola. Pure terreurbeweging', *de Volkskrant*, November 11th 1985.

<sup>336</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>337</sup> 'Bewegingen Angola versterken legers', *de Volkskrant*, November 14th 1975.

*'As opposed to earlier reports where the South Africans were described as mercenaries, it is now being reported that these South Africans are part of the South African army.'*<sup>338</sup>

*De Volkskrant* are quick to correct their earlier mistake on the identity of the mercenaries. It is also a logical mistake, as we have seen in earlier chapters the FNLA made extensive use of white mercenaries in its bid for power directly after independence. So, there is doubt in the 1975 reporting of *de Volkskrant* about whether the mercenaries are South Africans. The Cubans, on the other hand, are always clearly named as we have already seen in the first quote of this paragraph and as the following quotes show:

*'UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi admitted on Saturday that his troops were being supported by whites but said it did not weigh on his conscience because the MPLA was receiving support from the Cubans.'*<sup>339</sup>

*'According to the correspondent, the FNLA and UNITA commanders have great admiration for the "Cuban mercenaries" fighting on the side of the MPLA.'*<sup>340</sup>

*'The Cubans are a separate group. They are estimated at 3000, are highly skilled in the use of Russian weaponry and are being deployed in the most difficult places.'*

*'They are the main reason the MPLA has been able to launch a counteroffensive on both the northern and southern fronts last week.'*<sup>341</sup>

From these quotes we garner that *de Volkskrant* describes the Cubans as being '*highly skilled*' and that they felt the need to mention that their opponents have great admiration for them. They even go as far as to posit that the Cubans are the main reason the MPLA was able to go on the offensive, an event which turned the tide of the war. We can only

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<sup>338</sup> 'Zuidafrikanen in Angola', *de Volkskrant*, November 17th 1975.

<sup>339</sup> 'Zuidafrikanen in Angola'

<sup>340</sup> 'MPLA verliest opnieuw terrein', *de Volkskrant*, November 20th 1975.

<sup>341</sup> 'De honden van de oorlog', *de Volkskrant*, November 29th 1975.

conclude that the journalists writing for *de Volkskrant* have a certain admiration for the Cubans, although this is not translated into an obvious pro-Cuban bias.

## 2. Role allocation.

Just as in the analysis of *de Telegraaf*, I will use the reporting on Operation Reindeer and the Kassinga Massacre as an introduction to our second representational category. *De Volkskrant* published just one article directly related to Operation Reindeer, also known as the Kassinga Raid. The headline of this article reads:

*'Action South Africa causes turmoil with the subtitle "Against "SWAPO-bases" in Angola.'*

Here once again the South African raid is presented as an "action". The article also mentions both the South African version, that the SADF struck the headquarters of the SWAPO in Kassinga, codenamed "*Moscow*", and the SWAPO version:

*'another attempt at destroying the camps of Namibian refugees and to prepare for another invasion of Angola.'*<sup>342</sup>

The article then continues with the testimony of Swedish filmmaker Per Sander who had recently visited Kassinga and claimed that:

*'it was not a military camp but that between five- and six thousand refugees were settled there, mainly women and children.'*<sup>343</sup>

Here it seems as if *de Volkskrant* pays a lot of attention to the SWAPO interpretation of what happened at Kassinga which is why there is ambiguity in the headline. Therefore, calling the raid an "action" is surprising. Further role allocation is usually a lot clearer, with the Cubans being usually presented as actively fighting and supporting the MPLA:

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<sup>342</sup> 'Actie Zuid-Afrika wekt beroering', *de Volkskrant*, May 6th 1978.

<sup>343</sup> Ibidem.

*'According to UNITA and the FNLA there are also white mercenaries fighting on the MPLA side. This is what they call both the Cubans and white Angolans'*<sup>344</sup>

*'According to unconfirmed reports, a few hundred Cuban soldiers have arrived in Luanda to reinforce the MPLA-army.'*<sup>345</sup>

Whereas in these quotes the Cubans are presented as fighting and supporting the MPLA, they are not presented as initiating hostilities, in that aspect they are passivated. And there is only one implicit mention of their presence being the reason for the South African invasion:

*'South African Minister of Defence Pieter Botha said on Sunday that "South Africa was defending her borders". After this he informed the public of a "communist military attack on South Africa".'*<sup>346</sup>

The military attack that is referred to in the quote can be a reference to the Cuban presence but also to the MPLA aligning itself with the Eastern bloc. As we have seen in the second chapter of this thesis, white South Africa saw itself as a garrison state, the frontline between the Christian, white West and the godless, black, communists.

The South Africans, on the other hand, are often presented as initiating or expanding their involvement in the hostilities as can be seen in the quote below:

*'South Africans in Angola. White advance from the south.'*<sup>347</sup>

The following quote is interesting because it highlights civil society organizations protesting the lack of condemnation of South Africa from the Dutch government something that was completely ignored by *de Telegraaf*. Furthermore, the fact that there were protests against

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<sup>344</sup> 'De honden van de oorlog'.

<sup>345</sup> 'Bewegingen Angola versterken legers'.

<sup>346</sup> 'Zuidafrikanen in Angola'.

<sup>347</sup> 'Zuidafrikanen in Angola'.

the South African invasions this early into the conflict tell us that it was a topic of interest at least for the leftist and activist parts of civil society:

*'If minister Van der Stoep is really worried about Angola, according to these organizations he should file a complaint with the South African government about the open aggression of this country against Angola.'*<sup>348</sup>

This third quote refers to the exposé written by John Stockwell about US involvement in Angola at the time of Operation Savannah. Stockwell was not just any agent, he was the Chief of the Angola Task Force and he resigned over the US management of the situation.<sup>349</sup> Significantly, this is another topic *de Telegraaf* did not report on:

*'The expansion of South African interference in Angola kept pace with that of the CIA according to Stockwell.'*<sup>350</sup>

### 3. Genericization and specification.

*De Volkskrant* mostly genericized both parties with the use of mass-nouns, as becomes clear by looking at the quotes in the analysis of our second representational category. This is not surprising and is something we have seen in our analysis of *de Telegraaf*. What is surprising is that neither Cuban nor South African political actors are given a lot of text in the articles. There is however a plethora of Angolan political actors from all liberation movements represented in the articles, although analysis of this is beyond the scope of the thesis. No Cuban political actors are specified and the only South Africans are the omnipresent P. W. Botha, who has already been quoted earlier in our analysis of this period, and major-general Jack Dutton:

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<sup>348</sup> 'MPLA verliest opnieuw terrein'.

<sup>349</sup> John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies. A CIA story* (New York, 1978).

<sup>350</sup> 'CIA mengde zich in oorlog Angola', *de Volkskrant*, May 9th 1978.

*'The chief of staff of the South African Armed Forces, major-general Jack Dutton, declared last night that in an action a "large number" of SWAPO-fighters was killed.'*<sup>351</sup>

#### 4. Individualisation and assimilation.<sup>352</sup>

The analysis for this fourth category did not result in interesting enough results to merit mention here. However, this category along with others that were not included in this final chapter are available to those interested in the annex

#### **4b.2 De Volkskrant, 1980-1984**

##### 1. Inclusion and exclusion.

A quick look at the headlines of the articles in our corpus for this period reveals that the Cubans are only named in one of the headlines, the South Africans are named in the other six. In those six articles where the South Africans are mentioned in the headline, the Cubans are partially suppressed as they are not fully omitted yet they don't play a central role. For example, in the following quote they are alluded to yet not mentioned in the title of the article:

*'South African commander in chief in Namibia, general Lloyd, warned earlier this month for a "more serious war: in which Angolan and Cuban troops could be involved.'*<sup>353</sup>

The aforementioned quote includes an ominous threat by a high ranking SADF commander. These kinds of threats are of course newsworthy as they imply an impending escalation of the conflict. The following quote shows that not only the South Africans were platformed by *de Volkskrant* but that the Angolans were allowed to dispute the South African claims:

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<sup>351</sup> 'Actie Zuid-Afrika wekt beroering'.

<sup>352</sup> Pages 148 and 149 of this thesis.

<sup>353</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen', *de Volkskrant*, August 26th 1981.

*'Yesterday the Angolan press bureau Angop contradicted the South African claims about large Cuban troop concentrations in the southern provincial capital Lubango.'*<sup>354</sup>

We also see the perspective of the US being propagated by *de Volkskrant*, in the following quote the South African invasion during Operation Protea is justified by a high-ranking US representative:

*'The American UN-ambassador Lichtenstein sees the actions of South Africa from the perspective of Russian weapon shipments to SWAPO and the presence of 20.000 Cubans in Marxist Angola'*<sup>355</sup>

We see that the Cubans do not play an important role in most articles from our sample that *de Volkskrant* published between 1980 and 1984. The most important exception is of course the first article from our sample that is headlined:

*'Free Namibia helps Cuba out of Angola'*<sup>356</sup>

What is interesting about this article is that it is told from the Angolan perspective, the news is coming from the Angolan minister of foreign affairs. Thus, the impression given in this article from 1980 is that the main obstacle to peace in the region is South African intransigence on the Namibia question. Whereas in *de Telegraaf* it is maintained that the Cuban presence in Angola is the main obstacle to peace, here the South African occupation of Namibia plays this role. This difference reflects the political differences of the newspapers, with right-leaning newspapers defending the South African line while left-leaning newspapers defended the Angolan/Namibian line. It is important to note that this Angolan/Namibian line was not necessarily pro-Cuban or Soviet. The independence of both Namibia and Angola could also be seen through the lens of national liberation instead of through the lens of Cold War superpower conflict.

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<sup>354</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika erkent strijd met Angola', *de Volkskrant*, August 27th 1981.

<sup>355</sup> 'Provinciestad in Angola gevallen. Troepen Z.-Afrika slaags', *de Volkskrant*, August 31st 1981.

<sup>356</sup> 'Vrij Namibië helpt Cuba Angola uit', *de Volkskrant*, July 2nd 1980.

## 2. Role allocation.

To analyse this category, we can use some of the same quotes we used to analyse our first representational category and complement them with the following, for example the following quote clearly presents the South Africans as being on the offensive:

*'South Africa admits battle with Angola. Western Europe demands retreat'<sup>357</sup>*

This quote primarily highlights the international indignation over the South African invasions. The issue was that no matter what Western Europe demanded, as long as the US refused to condemn and apply sanctions onto the apartheid regime there were little consequences to South Africa's behaviour.

*'According to Viljoen, these rocket bases are manned by SWAPO-fighters but possibly also by Cubans.'<sup>358</sup>*

*'He reacted to South Africa intelligence information that Angola was installing anti-aircraft rockets with Cuban and East-German help'<sup>359</sup>*

These last two quotes highlight that the SAAF is encountering opposition for the first time in the conflict. The Cubans, and East-Germans, are implied as being the reason that SWAPO can now fire at South African aircraft. They are thus activated in a supporting role. In the next quote, the South Africans are passivated as they are being fired upon:

*'Aircraft of the South African air force have been fired upon with Russian Sam-8 rockets in their latest action in southern Angola against the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO.'<sup>360</sup>*

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<sup>357</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika erkent strijd met Angola'.

<sup>358</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>359</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen'.

<sup>360</sup> 'Leger Z-Afrika in Angola beschoten met Sam-8 raketten', *de Volkskrant*, December 28th 1983.

However, the context of the article makes clear that it is the invading air force of South Africa that is attacking SWAPO who are being defended by the Angolans from these bombing raids. The following quote highlights the fact that it is unusual for the SAAF to encounter opposition:

*'According to South African military sources it is the first time that the Angolans make use of Sam-8 rockets.'*<sup>361</sup>

These quotes from this article from 1983, together with the two quotes on the Cubans which highlight them either manning or installing anti-aircraft rockets, show a theme which has run through a large part of this thesis: the importance of airpower in the conflict. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the Angolans and Cubans were extremely conscious of the dominance of the SAAF, and it severely hamstrung their operations. It is then no surprise that the introduction of these rockets to the region would slowly but surely start tipping the scales. A significant part of what forced the South Africans out of Angola in 1988 was their loss of air superiority.<sup>362</sup>

### *3. Genericization and specification.*

Just like in the first period both sides are usually genericised by the use of mass-nouns such as Cuba, Cubans, South Africa, South Africans, etc. Looking at specification, we again do not find large differences between the first period analysed and this one. While it must be noticed that there is an increase in the amount of South African political actors specified in the text, the number of Cubans is still very low, but it is compensated by the Angolan presence in the text. I will also include a quote by an Angolan political actor which refers to the Cubans. The following examples show how South African political actors were represented in our sample:

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<sup>361</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>362</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 423.

*'South African commander in chief in Namibia, general Lloyd, warned earlier this month for a "more serious war" in which Angolan and Cuban troops could be involved.'*<sup>363</sup>

*'General Viljoen warned the Angolans not to get involved in the conflict and not to protect the Namibian guerrilla fighters.'*<sup>364</sup>

Note here that in both cases the quotes are warnings by top ranking SADF commanders. These warnings both imply an escalation of the war, if Angola reacts to the South African hot-pursuit operations, that is, if Angola decides to defend her sovereignty against an illegal invading force. The idea that Angola should just remain put while the SADF annihilates one of her allies must have sounded ridiculous to any readers of *de Volkskrant*. The following quote from a high-ranking Angolan political actor reinforces the idea which has already been introduced earlier, that Namibian independence is a prerequisite for peace in Southern Africa:

*'Angolan minister of foreign affairs Paulo Jorge remarked that "when Namibia is free we can tell Cuba that we no longer need their military help because the changed situation allows us to live in peace"'*<sup>365</sup>

What must again be highlighted here is that the SADF commanders cited in the articles stick to the same story: they are in Angola to attack SWAPO and they warn the Angolans and Cubans not to get involved. There is a complete disregard for the sovereignty of Angola as a state and a complete normalization of the resolution of, according to the South Africans, an internal affair on foreign soil. The resolution of the Namibian question is solved in a diametrically opposed manner by the Angolan politician quoted last.

#### *4. Individualisation and assimilation.*

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<sup>363</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen'.

<sup>364</sup> 'Leger Z-Afrika in Angola beschoten met Sam-8 raketten'.

<sup>365</sup> 'Vrij Namibië helpt Cuba Angola uit'

As in most cases, both sides are usually assimilated as has already partially been discussed when we analysed our third category and concluded that genericization by mass-nouns was the norm. However, I would still like to highlight a few cases of aggregation:

*'In the first eight months of this year just 15 South Africans died as opposed to over 900 SWAPO-fighters'.<sup>366</sup>*

*'In spite of South African claims that they had no more troops in Angola, the Angolans claim that that day there was still heavy fighting going on and that 19 Angolan soldiers died.'<sup>367</sup>*

*'A spokesman for the ministry of defence in Cape town informed the press that yesterday four South Africans had died in combat, a very high number for South African standards.'<sup>368</sup>*

*'According to Angola, dozens of civilians died because of the South African action and hundreds of men, women and children were wounded.'<sup>369</sup>*

We see two trends here, on the one hand there is a noticeable increase in reporting of casualties by *de Volkskrant* when compared to the first period. These casualty numbers come from both the South African and the Angolan side. What can be seen is that the number of civilian casualties is highlighted. Furthermore, there are comments about the very low number of casualties on the South African side. This can create an impression of an incredibly asymmetric war where an unstoppable war machine goes on a rampage on an almost defenceless civilian population. What is conspicuously lacking is estimates of how many Cubans are in Angola. Furthermore, the presence of the Cubans in Angola is not presented in the text as an obvious obstacle to peace, which is quite surprising as by 1984 *Linkage* was already starting to be an important diplomatic weapon of the West. Thus, the

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<sup>366</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen'.

<sup>367</sup> 'Vrij Namibië helpt Cuba Angola uit'.

<sup>368</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika erkent strijd met Angola'.

<sup>369</sup> 'Leger Z-Afrika in Angola beschoten met Sam-8 raketten'.

discourse of *de Volkskrant* seems to focus on the humanitarian suffering caused by the SADF instead of on their military victories or the number of enemies killed, something which we saw in *de Telegraaf*.

#### **4b.3 De Volkskrant, 1985-1988**

##### *1. Inclusion and exclusion.*

A good place to start our analysis of this first representational category is to look at the headlines of the articles in our sample for this period:

*'UNITA: Angolan offensive has been stopped. Pretoria ends attack on SWAPO-fighters in Angola.'*<sup>370</sup>

*'Fifty Angolans die in South African attack'*<sup>371</sup>

*'Minister of Defense Malan: "Without South African support UNITA would have been defeated".'*<sup>372</sup>

*'Growing worries over interference. P.W. Botha visited warfront in Angola'*<sup>373</sup>

*'New Cubans on their way to the southern front. South Africa retreats'*<sup>374</sup>

*'Angolan army used poison gas in civil war against Savimbi'*<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> 'UNITA: Angolees offensief is gestopt. Pretoria beëindigt aanval op Swapo-strijders in Angola', *de Volkskrant*, September 23rd 1985.

<sup>371</sup> 'Vijftig Angolezen komen om het leven bij aanval Z-Afrika', *de Volkskrant*, October 2nd 1985.

<sup>372</sup> 'Minister van Defensie Malan: "Zonder steun Z-Afrika zou UNITA zijn verslagen"', *de Volkskrant*, November 11th 1987.

<sup>373</sup> 'Groeierende zorg over inmenging. P.W. Botha bezocht oorlogsfront in Angola', *de Volkskrant*, November 16th 1987.

<sup>374</sup> 'Nieuwe Cubanen op weg naar zuidelijk front. Zuid-Afrika trekt zich terug', *de Volkskrant*, December 7th 1987.

<sup>375</sup> 'Angolese leger gebruikt gifgas in burgeroorlog tegen Savimbi', *de Volkskrant*, March 3rd 1988.

*'Crocker will talk with Botha. Angola and South Africa hold secret talks'*<sup>376</sup>

What is instantly noticeable is that the Cubans are only mentioned once in the headlines we analyse for this period. On the other hand, South Africa is mentioned in every single headline. Furthermore, all headlines except one heavily hint at the South Africans being the main cause of violence in Angola. The exception is of course the last headline, which refers to one of the earliest rounds of negotiation which would lead to the tripartite accords. But this article gives a very interesting insight into the state of the conflict:

*'South African strategists are convinced that the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, which is still being fought out, cannot be won without a large traditional offensive with the corresponding casualties. The death of dozens of white South African soldiers has caused public unrest in South Africa. The fear increases that the country is getting stuck in its own mini-Vietnam.'*<sup>377</sup>

This is an interesting analysis because it is very similar to that of many historians like Piero Gleijeses and Gary Baines. Baines, a South African historian who has focused on the cultural side of the war, has emphasized the analogies between the Border War and Vietnam. Furthermore, he highlighted that an important reason for the SADF to pull out of Angola was the fear of suffering high casualties among conscripts. Doing so would risk alienating the white population in South Africa, something which would mean political suicide for the regime.<sup>378</sup>

Returning to the Cubans and whether they were included or excluded we can state that they were in part suppressed: they don't play a prominent role in the headlines of these stories although they are mentioned in every article of our sample. Still, it must be noted that a reader of these articles would quickly conclude that South Africa bears most of the responsibility for the violence.

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<sup>376</sup> 'Crocker gaat met Botha praten. Angola en Zuid-Afrika houden geheim gesprek', *de Volkskrant*, March 14th 1988.

<sup>377</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>378</sup> Baines, "Vietnam Analogies and Metaphors", 81.

## 2. Role allocation.

From the earlier headlines we can already see that *de Volkskrant* presented the South Africans as an active political actor which bore responsibility for the violence occurring in Angola. Especially telling is the following headline:

*'Growing worries over interference. P.W. Botha visited warfront in Angola'*

In this article *de Volkskrant* emphasizes that even in South Africa the public is becoming more worried about the SADF incursions into Angola:

*'More and more South Africans worry about the growing interference in Angola.'*<sup>379</sup>

We now turn to some quotes about the Cubans from the same articles. The quote below paints a different picture, one of the Cubans being the well-equipped and unstoppable war machine in this conflict:

*'Shortly after Soviet-instructors, and Cuban troops, appeared on the battlefield with tanks, anti-aircraft rockets and fighter airplanes.'*<sup>380</sup>

The explanation for this is that it is a quote in an article that was largely sourced to South African Minister of Defence Magnus Malan. To justify the large intervention of South Africa into Angola in 1987, UNITA had to be under a credible threat. In the following quote we see again the usual discourse of *de Volkskrant*, with the being Cubans presented as supporting the Angolans:

*'According to the military release, the other soldiers were killed in battle with Angolan government forces and Cuban and Russian soldiers who support Angola.'*<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> 'Groeiend zorg over inmenging'.

<sup>380</sup> 'Minister van Defensie Malan:'.

<sup>381</sup> 'Groeiende zorg over inmenging'

*'New Cuban soldiers have arrived in Angola to support the government army in their struggle against UNITA and South Africa. A section of the in total 40 thousand Cuban troops, who recently have first gone into combat at Cuito Cuanavale, will be retreated to the north of the thirteenth latitude.'*<sup>382</sup>

This last quote below is perhaps the most interesting of the lot as it once again refers to the accusations by Savimbi and dr. Heyndrickx that the Cubans had used chemical weapons. Most of the discussion on the topic has already been presented in the analysis of *de Telegraaf's* article on the topic.

*'The Angolan government and Cuban troops make use of chemical weapons in their war against Jonas Savimbi's guerrilla movement UNITA.'*<sup>383</sup>

In this article, Heyndrickx is introduced by the credentials he gained investigating Iraqi chemical warfare in their conflict with Iran. Furthermore, Heyndrickx insisted in the article that Savimbi should send the men he found evidence of chemical weapons on to Europe for treatment and *'to prove that these are not fabrications.'*<sup>384</sup> What this shows us is that, although *de Volkskrant* is far more critical of the sources than *de Telegraaf*, a story like the Cubans using chemical weapons was just too interesting for a newspaper to not publish it. It shows that even moderately left-wing dailies would publish damaging and almost propagandistic stories when presented with the choice whether to publish them.

### *3. Genericization and specification.*

As we can see from earlier quotes, the main way of addressing both sides in the conflict is by mass-nouns, something which we have seen in basically every period we have analysed. When it comes to specific individuals which are named in the text it is no surprise either that most articles include South African political actors and Angolan political actors. It must be noted that not all Angolan political actors are on the government side, in fact the most commonly found is Jonas Savimbi, leader of UNITA. Savimbi appears in four out of seven

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<sup>382</sup> 'Crocker gaat met Botha praten'.

<sup>383</sup> 'Angolese leger gebruikt gifgas in burgeroorlog tegen Savimbi'.

<sup>384</sup> Ibidem.

articles in this part of our sample as a source. On the other hand, there are very few Cuban political actors who are named in the articles so we will start by looking at these:

*'According to a Cuban spokesman in Luanda, the fiftieth division of the Cuban armed forces is on its way to the south of Angola. According to Mozambican press bureau AIM, general Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez, the man who in 1975 led the Cubans in Angola and prevented the South Africans from taking Luanda, has been named commander.'*<sup>385</sup>

This is the only time in our sample that Cuban political actors are named, and both of them in the same paragraph. What is especially interesting about this quote is that it is on the one hand the only time that a Cuban spokesperson is cited as a source in our sample. On the other hand, it is also the only insight into how the Cuban forces are organized that we can garner from our full 40 article sample from both *de Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant*. They are also named in an article with an evocative headline: *'South Africa retreats.'*<sup>386</sup> Thus while the article's headline hints at a de-escalation of the conflict, a significant part of the information is dedicated to a potential escalating factor: the Cuban troop surge.

As in earlier periods, there is no lack of South African political actors being used as sources:

*'The 500 men chased the guerrilla-fighters of SWAPO... penetrating 100 km into Angola, according to the commanding officer, major-general George Meiring, in Windhoek.'*<sup>387</sup>

*'South African minister of defense Magnus Malan declared on Saturday for the first time that South Africa is supporting Savimbi's UNITA.'*<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> 'Nieuwe Cubanen op weg naar zuidelijk front'.

<sup>386</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>387</sup> 'UNITA: Angolees offensief is gestopt'.

<sup>388</sup> Ibidem.

*'President Botha of South Africa repeated yesterday that South Africa won't sit by and watch "how the Angolan army, which is supported by the Soviet-Union, attacks UNITA".'*<sup>389</sup>

*'But Wednesday the South African commander in chief Jannie Geldenhuys said that the South African army would stay in Angola for as long as Cuban and Soviet forces stayed active there.'*<sup>390</sup>

These quotes all highlight the steady transformation of what justification the SADF gave to the press of why they were interfering in Angola. The first quote still shows the older justification: the hot pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas. The rest all justify the South African incursions by pretending they were in support of UNITA in their struggle against the government. In the last two quotes we see a recurring theme: South Africa justifying her presence in Angola because of the presence of the Cubans and Soviets. These two seem to be used either in unison or interchangeably. What this signals, is that the idea behind "Total Strategy", that there was a "total assault" by communists on South Africa, had become institutionalized by this time.<sup>391</sup>

#### *4. Individualisation and assimilation.*

In our fourth category we have already seen examples of specification. When it comes to assimilation it is noteworthy that the aggregation, so when groups of political actors are quantified, is far more detailed than in earlier periods, like the following example shows:

*'Angolan president José Eduardo dos Santos declared on Sunday that three thousand South African soldiers and seventy armoured cars were fighting on the side of UNITA in the south of Angola. On top of this, according to Dos Santos, Pretoria has stationed*

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<sup>389</sup> 'Vijftig Angolezen komen om het leven bij aanval Z-Afrika'.

<sup>390</sup> 'Minister van Defensie Malan:'.

<sup>391</sup> Jan-ad Stemmet and Burgert A. Senekal, 'Threats of Communist expansion in Apartheid South Africa. NP claims versus CIA intelligence perspectives in the years 1960 to 1990', *New Contree* 68 (2013) 99-120, 101.

*thirty thousand soldiers, 435 tanks and 80 aircraft in Namibia close to the border with Angola.*<sup>392</sup>

The intention of president Dos Santos seems to be to highlight the threat Angola was under and the scale of South African interference in late 1987. His claim that 30.000 SADF troops were in Namibia on the border with Angola is the highest South African troop concentration we find in our sample. What we also see in this period which we should recognize from earlier periods are the disputes over casualty numbers:

*'According to the (South African) army 23 South African and Namibian soldiers died in the past two weeks in Angola. Angolan authorities claim the number is ten times as high.'*<sup>393</sup>

#### **4b.4 Conclusion de Volkskrant**

As expected, *de Volkskrant* is far more moderate in her reporting of the conflict in Angola. The Cubans are mentioned about as often as the South Africans in articles reporting on the events. Furthermore, while the South Africans are clearly presented as initiating hostilities, the Cubans are seen as supporting the MPLA. The reader is constantly reminded of the fact that the MPLA is the government of Angola and the newspaper clearly sees this as legitimate, which is different to how *de Telegraaf* sees it. This difference between the newspapers is a reflection of their political allegiances. Left-leaning newspapers usually supported the cause of national liberation in Africa. Thus, we should not understand this sympathy for the MPLA as a pro-communist or Cuban bias as this was not necessarily the case.

Whereas the Cubans are often represented in the newspaper, they are almost never used as a source. This means that the perspective of *de Volkskrant* is largely that of the South Africans balanced out with that of the Angolans on the side of the MPLA. Whilst *de Telegraaf* gave a lot of attention to Savimbi, *de Volkskrant* did this significantly less. Furthermore, *de Volkskrant* actively sought the analysis of the MPLA and sometimes published lengthy interviews with important Angolan government officials who had the

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<sup>392</sup> 'Groeierende zorg over inmenging'.

<sup>393</sup> Ibidem.

opportunity there to present their perspective.<sup>394</sup> Unfortunately, the same effort was not taken to show the Cuban perspective.

#### **4.3 Comparing both newspapers, differences and similarities**

In this section we will briefly discuss our most important findings of the discourse analysis of both newspapers, highlighting some similarities and differences found through our analysis. Speaking broadly, the analysis reveals no massive surprises in what tone the newspapers have when reporting on the Angolan Civil War.

*De Telegraaf* has a clear anti-communist, right-wing bias which meant that they presented South Africa and their actions in a more positive light than *de Volkskrant*. *De Telegraaf* did on the one hand downplay the influence of the SADF on causing the violence in Angola. Meanwhile, they constantly implied that the MPLA and the Cubans were to blame for the violence, and these two are characterised as *Marxist* which in conservative circles is a pejorative adjective.

Furthermore, this right-wing and anti-communist bias reveals itself again in the way the Angolan MPLA government is addressed. They are almost never addressed as Angolan government troops because the newspaper does not see the MPLA as a legitimate government. *De Telegraaf* presents UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi as the legitimate ruler of Angola. We cannot say whether this was a deliberate propaganda project the newspaper was carrying out because of her CIA connections or if it was just a bias towards anti-communist guerrillas. Furthermore, much of the western media was enthralled by Savimbi, largely because most journalists got their stories from the SADF press releases in Johannesburg and because Savimbi was excellent at cultivating his public persona.<sup>395</sup>

When compared to *de Telegraaf*, *de Volkskrant* should be seen as presenting a more balanced perspective. *De Volkskrant* shows, as can be expected, a left-wing bias however this bias should not be understood as being pro-Cuban, rather as being pro-Angolan. The newspaper goes to great lengths to legitimize the MPLA and FAPLA as the government and army of Angola. Furthermore, *de Volkskrant* uses many more Angolan sources in their reporting than *de Telegraaf*, making extensive use of the Angolan press bureau Angop and

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<sup>394</sup> 'Angolese Ambassadeur in Brussel. Aanval gold ons, niet SWAPO', *de Volkskrant*, September 7th 1981.

<sup>395</sup> Brittain, *Death of dignity*, x.

interviewing several high-ranking Angolan officials. It must be noted that *de Telegraaf* also had access to Angop, as it is sometimes used as a source in articles, yet that the newspaper only sparsely uses information provided by the Angolan government. This pro-Angolan stance is mostly noticeable in the first period we studied, 1975 to 1979. This period coincides with a steady move towards the left at *de Volkskrant* and with the final years of the Den Uyl Cabinet, which was very influential on the editorial of the newspaper. This left-wing *Volkskrant* is noticeable by the large number of Angolans used as a source and the small number of South Africans. Furthermore, during this first period there is a subtle pro-Cuban tone in the reporting of the newspaper. This was expressed in a certain admiration for the Cubans in the reporting of Operation Savannah where their skill at arms and decisiveness in the conflict is sometimes highlighted by the journalists at *de Volkskrant*.

However, there are several similarities between the two newspapers, notably in their sourcing after the first period. It has been mentioned that *de Volkskrant* referred to a lot more Angolan sources during the period between 1975 and 1979. After 1980 this trend continued in a minor fashion, yet we see a large increase in the number of South Africans who are used as source. At *de Telegraaf*, this was already the case, with their articles being almost exclusively sourced to South African or Western officials.

Both newspapers call Operation Reindeer a “*South African action*”, which is a very misleading way to call one of the most controversial events of the conflict. However, *de Telegraaf* claims that because of the attack SWAPO recalled its negotiating team from the UN headquarters. This is then presented as SWAPO undermining the negotiations by this action, thus bearing the blame for hampering the peace process.<sup>396</sup> *De Volkskrant*, although not directly contradicting that the SWAPO delegation was recalled, highlights in their article that ‘*according to SWAPO leader Nujoma, the organisation will continue negotiations over a peaceful settlement in the Namibia-question.*’<sup>397</sup> Thus it seems as if *de Telegraaf* is creating a narrative where SWAPO is responsible for the lack of a settlement on the Namibia-question, not South African diplomacy or their cross-border raids. This narrative is contradicted by the most important political historical account of the conflict, Piero Gleijeses’ *Visions of Freedom*. He specifically highlights that the South African regime did as much as possible to

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<sup>396</sup> ‘SWAPO-delegatie loopt weg’.

<sup>397</sup> ‘Actie Zuid-Afrika wekt beroering’.

prevent the implementation of UN resolution 435, which called for UN supervised elections in Namibia.<sup>398</sup>

It must also be highlighted that both *de Volkskrant* and *de Telegraaf* seemed susceptible to UNITA's propaganda, as is clearly noticeable by the fact they both published articles on the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Cubans in Angola. However, a crucial difference is that although *de Telegraaf* has an article twice the size dedicated to the topic, half of the article is just Savimbi legitimizing both his claim to the Angolan government and justifying why he accepts the support of South Africa.<sup>399</sup> *De Volkskrant* did not give Savimbi a similar platform in their article and their tone is a lot more sceptical than that of *de Telegraaf*. We can highlight that both newspapers chose to publish an article on such a contentious issue from such an unbiased source. However, it is important to remember that the story is, to say the least, newsworthy, regardless of whether the newspaper has a left - or right-wing bias. But as in the earlier examples, we can see an implicit bias in the favour of South Africa and her allies by *de Telegraaf*. Another noteworthy difference between the articles is that while *de Telegraaf* highlights that the MPLA is supported by Cuba and the USSR in the article, it only names South Africa as an ally to UNITA. *De Volkskrant* names both South Africa and the United States, thus correctly identifying the superpower supporting South Africa as a factor in the conflict.<sup>400</sup>

But when it comes to how the Cuban perspective is told by both newspapers, they perform similarly poorly. In fact, Cubans are almost never cited in either newspaper, something which fits the frame of them just being a Soviet satellite with little agency. This is perhaps the most significant similarity between the newspapers when analysing the representation of Cubans and South Africans: both report on the Cubans but do not tell the story from the Cuban perspective. Furthermore, as we have seen throughout this thesis, the Cubans are underrepresented as sources in most of the literature and media produced on the topic. Because the Cold War never ended for Cuba, it is not easy to access the Cuban archives nor are many Cuban histories of the conflict available in Western Europe. However, to get a full understanding of the Angolan Civil War it is of utmost importance that the Cuban perspective is told and reflected upon.

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<sup>398</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 152.

<sup>399</sup> 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

<sup>400</sup> 'Angolese leger gebruikt gifgas in burgeroorlog tegen Savimbi'

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

The defeat of the SADF in Angola at Cuito Cuanavale is seen by many black people in South Africa as a fundamental event in the timeline leading to the end of apartheid. Furthermore, many historians on the left of the political spectrum have highlighted the important role played by Cuba and her armed forces in forcing the liberation of Southern Africa. However, this perspective is heavily contested by the white population in South Africa and by historians on the right of the political spectrum.

In public society this difference is often attributed to the colour line, different perceptions of apartheid South Africa also create different perceptions of the role of the Cubans. Yet this thesis has departed from a fundamentally different hypothesis. The central hypothesis of this thesis is that political attitudes have influenced reporting on the Angolan Civil War, the Cuban role in this conflict, and that it was the South African perspective that was mainly highlighted in the media. As this thesis has shown, this hypothesis was largely correct. The answer to the question of how the battles and operations in the Angolan Civil War were portrayed by Dutch newspapers is that they usually portrayed the South African perspective. *De Volkskrant* tried to balance this with a more extensive Angolan perspective, but in the end the South Africans were given centre stage. In both *de Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant* the Cuban perspective is largely ignored and unheard.

The final version of this thesis focuses primarily on two of the most important newspapers in the Netherlands: *de Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant* using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to look at the way the Cubans were represented and how the South Africans were represented. This served the function of creating a contrast and allowed to hypothesize conclusions along ideological lines, *de Telegraaf* being more sympathetic towards the South Africans while *de Volkskrant* had more sympathy for the Cubans. While I chose to focus on how political actors were represented, it is not the only way these newspapers could have been analysed and that is part of the beauty of CDA: there are myriad ways to study the dynamics of power and ideology in human interactions.

The historiographic part of this thesis is a quite long and descriptive part, but it serves an important purpose as it tries to show what happened during the Angolan Civil War and how contested most events are. With the knowledge of what happened we can

understand what the newspaper articles that are analysed in this thesis are about and, especially, how much information they omit. Again, this omission of information is not on purpose, in every war information is hard to come by and unbiased information is just not available. In this final chapter, the sub-questions of this thesis will be addressed, and several key dimensions will be highlighted

Angola became independent after years of struggle against Portugal after having been a colony for four hundred years. During this struggle, the main liberation movement was the MPLA, who were receiving support from Eastern Bloc countries like Cuba. The Portuguese, on the other hand, were receiving help from the US and NATO, which they had joined in 1949. However, the moment of independence itself was rather abrupt, the catalyst being the Carnation Revolution. The abrupt power vacuum as a consequence of the political unrest in Portugal is a major cause of the civil war that followed. Although the MPLA was clearly the most popular liberation movement and did have more legitimacy and public support than either the FNLA and UNITA, it still was not enough to prevent the outbreak of civil strife. The year 1975 completely changed the scale of the conflict, in that year first South Africa and then Cuba decided to increase their interference in Angola massively, making it a key battleground of the Cold War. One of the reasons that they increased their interference was that both countries, supported by the US on one side and the USSR on the other side, had already involved themselves far earlier in the struggle for power in Angola.

When the Civil War started in earnest the FNLA was quickly defeated. It stopped being a significant force by early 1976, but UNITA would start a war against the MPLA led government which would outlive the Cold War. The first five years of conflict are characterised by a relative lack of large battles and operations. The two key exceptions to this are Operation Savannah and Operation Reindeer, as the SADF codenamed them. Savannah was the intervention in late 1975 of the SADF with the objective of installing either the FNLA or UNITA in Luanda. Yet the South Africans and their allies had underestimated the profound internationalism that drove Cuban foreign policy. The largest intervention ever by the Cubans, Operation Carlota, ensured that the MPLA survived this assault by the South Africans. While there used to be significant controversy over who intervened first, most recent accounts agree that the Cubans reacted to the South Africans. Furthermore, most historians agree that the US nudged South Africa towards intervention. Operation Reindeer is also controversial, to say the least. Depending on what side of the

political spectrum you stand, Kassinga was either a SWAPO headquarters or a refugee camp. In reality it was probably a refugee camp with military facilities. SWAPO endangering refugees by giving the camp military facilities was certainly questionable. But that does not make it a legitimate military target.

We see a drastic increase in the level of violence after the election of Reagan to the US presidency in 1981. The Reagan Doctrine meant that UNITA, and other anti-communist armed groups around the world, could expect a surge in the support they would get from both the US and their partners around the world. In Southern Africa, the main US partner was South Africa where the hawkish P.W. Botha was developing his 'Total Strategy'. In practice this meant that the SADF would invade neighbouring socialist countries and attempt to destabilize them by supporting the local anti-communist armed forces. In Angola, this meant several operations like Protea, Askari and the operations which would lead to the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, Modular and Hooper. During this whole conflict the strategic question was who controlled the skies, as that actor was usually the one who controlled the battlefield. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the last months of 1987 and the beginning of 1988. In this period, the control of the skies shifted definitively in the favour of the Cubans and Angolans. This in turn forced the SADF into a military retreat into Namibia, which was the first time since 1978 that no South African troops had been in Namibia. The following advance by the Cuban forces to the Namibian border presented the South Africans with a difficult choice, either fight a potentially very bloody battle or negotiate the independence of Namibia. They chose the latter.

The following chapter in the thesis dealt with the analysis of *de Telegraaf* and how this newspaper represented the Cubans and South Africans in the Angolan Civil War. Reporting by *de Telegraaf* was usually sympathetic towards the SADF and antagonistic towards the Cubans and Angolans. The epithet *Marxist* was commonly used by them in a pejorative manner when describing either the Cubans, Angolans, Russians or East Germans who were all painted as conspiring together in a bid for supremacy in Southern Africa. However, they were hesitant to express outright admiration for the SADF or other institutions of the apartheid state. South Africa was still considered a pariah state in the Netherlands and apartheid was rejected by most of Dutch society. South African political actors feature prominently in every article about the Angolan Civil War they published, and it is no surprise that they are the main source cited. The Angolan political actors who appear

in the articles are far and few between except for one man: Jonas Savimbi, the leader of UNITA. Finally, *de Telegraaf* is quite clear in that they see the presence of the South Africans in Angola as justified for as long as the Cubans are present in Angola. They highlight the link between these two foreign intervening forces, just as they also implicitly highlight the legitimacy of *Linkage*: the diplomatic strategy which the US developed in the early 80s which linked Namibian independence and South African non-interference in Angola to a Cuban retreat.

Reporting by *de Volkskrant* was usually sympathetic towards the Angolan government, although not necessarily towards the Cubans. However, it cannot be denied that, at least in the earlier articles which were analysed, there is a certain admiration for the Cubans. Typical Cold War frames such as that of a global communist conspiracy for world domination are almost completely lacking in the reporting of *de Volkskrant*. However, this does not mean that the newspaper sources their news differently than their more conservative counterparts. South African political actors are still very prominent as a source for news and Jonas Savimbi is still the most featured Angolan. On the other hand, it must be noted that in most of the articles we analysed the South African version of the story is counterbalanced by an almost as extensive Angolan perspective. Frequently the news is sourced to Angop, the Angolan government press bureau, or a high-ranking government official, including president Dos Santos. This does not mean that *de Volkskrant* avoided potentially propagandistic stories, like the accusation by Jonas Savimbi and dr. Heyndrickx that Cuban and government forces were engaging in chemical warfare. However, *de Volkskrant* reported on the news in a far more critical manner than *de Telegraaf*.

This analysis of the discourse used by these two politically distinct newspapers enables us to respond to the main research question of this thesis. Because most of the sources were South African for both newspapers we analysed, we can only conclude that the conflict was portrayed through a South African lens. Furthermore, Angolans often feature far more prominently than Cubans. The times that *de Telegraaf* sought to highlight a global communist conspiracy are the exception to this, here the Cubans feature prominently. It is then no surprise that, at least in most of the Western historiography written before 2010, the Cubans are presented as a force similar to the South Africans: intervening and destabilizing with ulterior motives. It is only after historians interviewed Cubans who were not enemies of the regime that another discourse appeared: one of

genuine, if sometimes tough, international solidarity. However, this discourse of international solidarity is almost entirely missing from both newspapers we analysed. Another conclusion is that we need to be closely aware how different political perspectives and the accessibility of, potentially biased, information about a conflict, including due to language barriers, can influence the independence of historical and mainstream media accounts about that conflict.

When looking at both the newspapers and most of the historiography it is noticeable that although the Cubans play a major role in this conflict, most of the time they are not the source of information. With some very noteworthy exceptions of a couple of historians who have, almost always, written about the conflict after 2010, most historians and all journalists reporting on the conflict during the conflict years themselves have depended heavily on the South African readiness to offer their side of the story to the international press. Language might be a factor here. While some accounts of the war have been written by Cubans, including important Cuban political actors like Fidel Castro and Harry “Pombo” Villegas, these accounts have only recently been translated to English.<sup>401</sup> This is in contrast to the myriad of accounts on the war by South African political actors including both Magnus Malan and Jannie Geldenhuys, which were immediately available to the, primarily English-speaking, Western community of historians and mainstream media. While this does not fully explain why most of the older historiography presents the Cubans in a much more negative light than newer accounts, it does explain why South African perspective seems to dominate most accounts including this one.

Further research should look first of all to answer the initial research question which started this project: what influence did the Cuban intervention in Angola have in ending apartheid and shaping the fate of Southern Africa. Such a research would complement existing research by focusing on the Cuban and Angolan perspective, as at the moment the South African view on this question is far better documented. Further research needs to further unravel the Cuban side of this story, both their experiences in Angola and on the home front during the conflict.

On a national level, research to the discourse of Dutch mainstream media on the role of Cuba and South Africa in the Angolan civil war, and the political consequences of that

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<sup>401</sup> Ramonet and Castro ; Harry Villegas, *Cuba and Angola. The war for freedom* (London, 2017).

war for South Africa, could be expanded by including a reformed daily like *Trouw* and a communist newspaper like *de Waarheid*. Both these diatribes, the reformed protestants and the communists, were each in their own way very involved with Southern Africa. Furthermore, both had interest in the region because of a feeling of international solidarity, the communists with the socialist frontline states facing South Africa and the reformed protestants with their coreligionists in the South African Boer community.

Finally, this research could also be expanded on an international level by comparing, for example, Dutch, British and US media. That way we could get a far clearer view of attitudes on the Angolan Civil War in the Western media and by extension Western society. The most important thing is that we increase our understanding of a key battleground in the Cold War that is far too often overlooked.

## **Annex I**

### ***De Telegraaf, 1975-1979.***

#### *1. Inclusion and/or exclusion.*

The late 70s are the years in which the Angolan Civil War starts. The West and its newspapers are initially still cautious about how to treat the new nation and which independence movement will be in power when it is all over is anything but certain. However, after the Cuban intervention this stance hardens significantly. The MPLA were often portrayed as *Marxist* before the intervention but after the arrival of the Cubans this epithet was often joined by mention of either the Cubans or the USSR, who are most often just called the Russians. It is with the start of the large-scale intervention by foreign powers that we start our analysis, in late 1975.

The first representational category of the inventory to be analysed is Inclusion and/or exclusion. What can immediately be highlighted is that whereas there are few times that the Cubans are suppressed in news messages, this is the other way around when it comes to the South Africans. For example, an article from mid-January 1976 radically suppresses the South African incursion into Angola. The article is headlined "*The cost of the Angolan War*" and it mentions UNITA, MPLA, the Cubans and even the Soviets. Conspicuously, there is no mention of the invading SADF or of South Africa in general. This is especially telling as the intervening Cuban army is described as a '*Russian-Cuban invasion force of at least 15.000 men.*'<sup>402</sup> (my emphasis) The emphasis highlights that *de Telegraaf* had an interest in some of the intervening forces in the conflict.

The description of the Cuban army, which intervened during Operation Carlota, as Russian-Cuban is also telling. It serves to reinforce the frame of the Cubans being pawns of the Soviets instead of an independent actor in this conflict and by extension international politics. Another article where the South Africans are radically suppressed was headlined:

*'Cuban advance in Angola'*

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<sup>402</sup> 'Tol van Angolese Oorlog'.

It reports on how Cuban *elite troops* conquered Huambo, the de-facto capital of the FNLA and UNITA at that time.<sup>403</sup> The following quote from the article is also important:

*The Cubans make use of the most modern Russian equipment, like MiG jet fighters, tanks, helicopters and rockets.*<sup>404</sup>

This quote once again highlights a persistent discourse in reporting on the conflict, the heavy Russian influence on the Cubans. Whereas it is not as explicit in painting the Cubans as mere pawns of the Soviets as the last article, it does try to highlight that the only reason the Cubans are able to advance like they do is because of Soviet weaponry and not their own skill at arms. There is also evidence that *de Telegraaf* was aware of the South African presence in Angola before the aforementioned articles were published. An article that was published three days before the aforementioned article, shows an admission of a South African presence in Angola, yet it is partially suppressed:

*There is also heavy fighting in the south, where the pro-Western movement UNITA bears the brunt of the fighting against the communist MPLA, but the situation there is less hopeless because of the help of South African units supporting UNITA, according to an American spokesman.*<sup>405</sup>

The South Africans are partially suppressed here because they are only mentioned towards the end of the text while one of the subtitles of the article is the word “Cuba”.<sup>406</sup> There are exceptions however, where the South Africans are included while the Cubans are either partially or radically suppressed. For example, the headline of an article in late January 1976 is: ‘*South Africa will keep guarding Angolan dam with its military*’ while at the same time the Cubans are partially suppressed: *Cuba has answered accusations from Zaire regarding its involvement in Angola by claiming that its troops are there on the invitation of the MPLA government.*<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> ‘Cubaanse opmars in Angola’.

<sup>404</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>405</sup> ‘Strijd in Angola. Washington: FNLA staat op instorten’.

<sup>406</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>407</sup> ‘Zuid-Afrika Blijft Angolese dam militair bewaken’.

The most notable case of radical suppression of the Cubans is regarding Kassinga in 1978. As we know, and as has been described in earlier chapters, a Cuban battalion was the first to respond to the SADF attack on Kassinga, fighting with a bravery that has been commended even by the South Africans.<sup>408</sup> It is therefore highly surprising that they are radically suppressed in both articles *de Telegraaf* published about Kassinga.<sup>409</sup> Also notable is the change in description of what the camp at Kassinga was between the earlier article and the latter. In the earlier it is mentioned that “*according to Angola the South African have also hit a camp for refugees from Namibia during their attack*”.<sup>410</sup> However, in an article published three days later there is no mention of the camp also being a refugee camp. It is described as being ‘*one of the most important camps of the liberation movement*’ and as ‘*the military headquarters of SWAPO, according to Pretoria*’.<sup>411</sup> In earlier chapters it has been described how controversial this attack was and the ongoing discussion on the subject. Some pro-SADF historians still claim the attack was justified while most left-leaning and pro-African Liberation historians hold the position that it was an attack on a refugee camp which some have compared to the Israeli massacres on the Palestinian refugee camps at Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon.

## 2. Role allocation

The headlines of the articles are also interesting as the emphasis is not on the attack on the camp but on related events. The latter article is headlined ‘*SWAPO-delegation walks away: Namibia-negotiations become complicated*’ while the earlier article is headlined ‘*Wave of protests after South African **action** in Angola*’ (my emphasis). In the latter headline the attack is not even mentioned while in the earlier headline it is described as an action. Action is a purposefully vague description which could mean basically any activity undertaken by South Africa. This leads us to our second representational category, role allocation. Here political actors are presented as activated or passivated. It is important to understand that neither is always positive or negative, it all depends on the context. To use the earlier headlines as examples, SWAPO is presented as actively walking away from the negotiation

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<sup>408</sup> Gleijeses, ‘Cuba and the Independence of Namibia’, 286.

<sup>409</sup> ‘Golf protesten na Zuidafrikaanse actie in Angola’ ; ‘SWAPO-delegatie loopt weg: Namibië-overleg komt in de knel’.

<sup>410</sup> ‘Golf protesten na Zuidafrikaanse actie in Angola’.

<sup>411</sup> ‘SWAPO-delegatie loopt weg: Namibië-overleg komt in de knel’.

and thus undermining them. It is only in the second paragraph of the article that the reader discovers the reason for SWAPO's exit: the SADF attack on the SWAPO camp at Kassinga. What is very telling about the position of *de Telegraaf* is that in this article there is no mention of the SWAPO position that the camp was a refugee facility, only the SADF version that it was a military headquarters is mentioned.<sup>412</sup>

In general, in the period between 1975 and 1979 the South Africans are depicted as on the defensive by *de Telegraaf* which is often a passivated role. The headline '*South Africa will keep guarding Angolan dam with its military*' is an excellent example of this. In this article the SADF presence in Angola, a sovereign nation that has been invaded by the SADF, is presented as justified as they will remain '*active in the protection of the Cunene Dam which was built with South African aid*.'<sup>413</sup> On its own this article might not necessarily imply that South Africa was passivated and thus undergoing violence, after all it is mentioned that the dam is in Angola. Yet two weeks later an article headlined "*South Africa fears confrontation with the MPLA* " was published by the newspaper. The lead of the article reads that '*The danger for military confrontation between South Africa and the communist - supported by Cuba - MPLA grows by the hour after the rapid advance of the MPLA puts it at only 200km from the South African fortifications in the far south of Angola*.'<sup>414</sup> Here the MPLA, with Cuban support, is depicted as the activated and offensive political actor in spite of them advancing in their own country towards an invading army which had recently been denounced by the international community.<sup>415</sup> It clearly seems as if South Africa is being presented as a passivated aggressor.

### 3. Genericization and specification

The third category is genericization and specification, which refers to whether authors of texts refer to specific, identifiable individuals or whether they generalize a group. In our sample of articles for this time period, there are two examples of a specific Cuban political actor being mentioned, not surprisingly this political actor is Fidel Castro. The first time he is mentioned it is in the following context:

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<sup>412</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>413</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika Blijft Angolese dam militair bewaken'.

<sup>414</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika vreest botsing met MPLA'.

<sup>415</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom* 29.

*'While Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro for the first time admitted openly that Cuban troops were fighting alongside the MPLA in Angola...'*<sup>416</sup>

The other time he is mentioned is in an article published eleven days later:

*'Cuban interference in Africa is not limited to Angola. Fidel Castro's troops are reputedly also present in the Western Sahara supporting the Marxist liberation movement Polisario Front, in Algeria, and in Guinee-Bissau.'*<sup>417</sup>

But the South Africans are not specified either most of the time. The only recognizable South African political actor in our sample is Minister of Defence Pieter W. Botha. But while Fidel Castro is only mentioned either admitting something or as the commander of interfering troops, *de Telegraaf* used quotes by Botha in one of their articles and an explanation from him in another one:

*'South African Minister of Defence Pieter W. Botha declared yesterday... would remain active in the protection of the Cunene Dam'*<sup>418</sup>

*'South African Minister of Defence Pieter W. Botha ensured everyone that "we are capable to stand out ground in case of an attack"'*<sup>419</sup>

Both parties, Cubans and South Africans, are sometimes genericised by the use of mass-nouns such as *South Africa* and *Cuba*, for example:

*'Cuba has answered the accusations of Zaire about its involvement in Angola by defending the fact that her troops are there on invitation of the MPLA...'*<sup>420</sup>

*'Up until this moment South Africa has closed her border for refugees but has instead created camps for them which are guarded by South African soldiers'*<sup>421</sup>

*'The South African action against SWAPO camps in southern Namibia... has led to a storm of protest.'*<sup>422</sup>

In the first quote the explanation for the Cuban presence in Angola is presented as a response to an accusation, the Cubans are accused of being in the wrong and have to justify their presence. Contrast this with the third quote, where the South African attack on Kassinga is immediately explained by the newspaper.

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<sup>416</sup> 'Strijd in Angola. Washington: FNLA staat op instorten'.

<sup>417</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika Blijft Angolese dam militair bewaken'.

<sup>418</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>419</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika vreest botsing met MPLA'.

<sup>420</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika Blijft Angolese dam militair bewaken'.

<sup>421</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika vreest botsing met MPLA'.

<sup>422</sup> 'Golf protesten na Zuidafrikaanse actie in Angola'.

#### 4. Individualisation and assimilation

The fourth category is individualisation or assimilation and deals on whether authors present social actors as individuals or as a group of participants. These groups of participants can be described as aggregations, or a specific number of participants, and collectives, a group without a specific number of participants. We have already seen that only a few individuals are mentioned in our sample, Fidel Castro on the Cuban side and P.W. Botha on the South African side. However assimilated political actors can be divided between aggregations and collectives. Sometimes the Cubans are presented as a collective, for example, *'Cuban troops are there on invitation of the MPLA.'*<sup>423</sup> However, they are also presented as aggregations, most notably in the following quote: *'From the north it is being reported that the MPLA is now being supported by a Russian-Cuban invasion force of at least 15.000 men.'*<sup>424</sup> This is also the case for the South Africans, aggregation is a bit less common but more notable: *'According to military sources between 300 and 700 South African soldiers took part in the action.'*<sup>425</sup>

#### 5/6. Nomination and Categorisation / Functionalisation and Identification

The final two categories are even more similar. The fifth is nomination and categorisation while the sixth is functionalization and identification. The fifth category deals with the way authors refer to political actors either by their name or by their function. The sixth category deals on whether these actors are identified by how they appear or by their activities. There is some obvious overlap between the two, especially when it comes to identifying actors by their function. However, a distinction can be made using the following quote as an example: *'While Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro for the first time admitted openly that Cuban troops were fighting alongside the MPLA in Angola...'*<sup>426</sup> In this quote we see that Fidel Castro is referred to by his name, so in the fifth category of our inventory he is nominated. Yet at the same he is functionalized in the sixth category because he is identified by his function as Prime Minister of Cuba. The same reasoning can be applied to the earlier quotes referring to P.W. Botha, who is also nominated but also functionalized. An example of

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<sup>423</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika Blijft Angolese dam militair bewaken'.

<sup>424</sup> 'Tol van Angolese Oorlog'.

<sup>425</sup> 'Golf protesten na Zuidafrikaanse actie in Angola'.

<sup>426</sup> 'Strijd in Angola. Washington: FNLA staat op instorten'.

someone being categorised, identified by his function in the fifth category of our inventory, is the following quote: '*An army spokesman explained that the action was not planned and was a spontaneous response to the increase in guerrilla-activity...*'<sup>427</sup> Here we see that the source, in this case a South African, is identifiable because of his function: army spokesman in the 6<sup>th</sup> category of Amer's inventory.

### ***De Telegraaf, 1980-1984.***

#### *1. Inclusion and/or exclusion*

The second period that is up for analysis is the period between 1980 and 1984. This period is interesting because of the dramatic increase in the number of invasions by the SADF. While the period between 1975 and 1979 was marked by some of the most significant events of the conflict, like the start of large-scale intervention by foreign powers and the attack on the camp at Kassinga, it was also notable for the low number of incursions by the SADF. This all changed once Ronald Reagan was elected to the White House. The introduction of the Reagan Doctrine, which effectively gave *carte blanche* to South Africa and their Angolan allies UNITA, signified a dramatic increase in the level of violence in the conflict.

Once again, we start with inclusion and exclusion as our first representational category up for analysis. What is immediately noticeable is that both the Cubans and the South Africans are never radically suppressed in the articles of *de Telegraaf* from this period. However, in a way, the South Africans are partially suppressed in some articles, notably in the header of the article '*Angola threatens South Africa with Cubans.*'<sup>428</sup> The South Africans are partially suppressed here, which in this case means that their responsibility for the confrontation is implied to be lessened. In spite of South Africa being featured in the header, the reason why the Angolans are threatening to call in the help of the Cubans is hidden in the text: '*The Angolan ambassador in Portugal declared yesterday that his government would request the Cuban forces in Angola... if South Africa continues its advance.*'<sup>429</sup> At a first glance at the header it would thus seem that the Angolans are the aggressors here while in reality it is a response to a SADF incursion. However, during and after 1981 reporting became considerably less ambiguous as the following headlines show:

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<sup>427</sup> 'Golf protesten na Zuidafrikaanse actie in Angola'.

<sup>428</sup> 'Angola dreigt Zuid-Afrika met Cubanen'.

<sup>429</sup> Ibidem.

*'Angola raises the alarm over South African invasion'*<sup>430</sup>

*'South Africa admits clashes with the Angolan army'*<sup>431</sup>

*'Angola requests UN urgency debate over raid'*<sup>432</sup>

*'Large-scale raid South Africa in Angola'*<sup>433</sup>

These headlines are far more to the point than anything we have seen up to this moment by *de Telegraaf*. The reasons for this could be manifold but something that cannot be ignored is the assumption of power of Ronald Reagan on the 20th of January 1981, a president who was elected largely because of the perceived "softness" on communism of his predecessor's foreign policy.<sup>434</sup> Thus it is not unlikely that influences of the West's new assertive foreign policy might have seeped through to the press, removing the shame associated with an ally, or party toward which the right-wing in the West was sympathetic, invading another country. What must also be noted is how the Cubans are often included and the mention of *Linkage*, the conditioning of a South African retreat on an earlier Cuban exit from Angola, in most articles published from late 1981 onwards:

*'Only Washington reacted mildly. They regretted the attack but highlighted that it must be understood in the context of Guerrilla attacks on Namibia and the presence of Cuban troops in Angola.'*<sup>435</sup>

*'(on Angola) Washington even refuses to recognize this country diplomatically for as long as it maintains a 17.000 strong Cuban intervention force within its borders.'*<sup>436</sup>

*'Progress in the negotiations is stifled by the presence of the Cubans in Angola; Pretoria wants them to leave first while Angola maintains that it is an internal affair.'*<sup>437</sup>

These quotes show how *Linkage* not only became an important weapon in the US/South African diplomatic arsenal, but also in the Western press and the battle over public opinion.

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<sup>430</sup> 'Angola slaat alarm over inval Z.-Afrika'.

<sup>431</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>432</sup> 'Angola vraagt UNO om spoeddebat inval'.

<sup>433</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola'.

<sup>434</sup> Jerel A. Rosati, "Jimmy Carter, a Man Before his Time? The emergence and collapse of the first post-Cold War presidency", *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 23 (3) (1993) 459-476, 473.

<sup>435</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>436</sup> 'Angola vraagt UNO om spoeddebat inval'.

<sup>437</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola'.

Conditioning South African non-aggression on a Cuban exit, which would have left Angola completely at the mercy of the SADF, made it very easy to frame the Cubans and Angolans as the main obstacle to peace in Southern-Africa.

## 2. Role allocation

It is then no surprise that there is also a change in role allocation, the second category of our socio-semantic inventory. Whereas in the first period we studied the South Africans were often passivated with the Cubans and the MPLA often implicitly blamed for the violence in Angola. In this period the SADF is often presented as initiating the violence, for example the aforementioned headline *'South Africa admits clashes with the Angolan army'*<sup>438</sup>. However it must be mentioned that in this same article the SADF is somewhat passivated, as now Prime Minister Botha's explanation for the clash was given ample attention in the newspaper: *'the action would have passed without any incident if the MPLA, would not have involved itself, as it has not in the past.'*<sup>439</sup> Thus according to Botha, who was the only African politician featured in the article, the only reason there was a clash is because the Angolans decided to respond to the repeated border raids by the SADF, in this case during Operation Protea. Two years later, during Operation Askari, *de Telegraaf* would publish a similar article, although this time the headline is more explicit: *Large-scale raid 'South Africa in Angola'*<sup>440</sup>. While the headline and lead emphasize that South African raids have been a yearly occurrence, the article once again highlights the South African defence of the raid and the clashes with the MPLA and Cubans, this time it is Constand Viljoen who is quoted: *'In the first official South African statement on the offensive, Chief of Staff Constand Viljoen complained about the "increasing interference" by the Angolans and Cubans.'*<sup>441</sup> Here it once again seems like responsibility for the clashes is given to the Angolans and Cubans interfering with the SADF's hot pursuit operations against SWAPO. The Cubans are thus presented in an activated role while the South Africans are once again passivated aggressors. As we have seen in earlier chapters of this thesis, these operations often carried on hundreds of kilometres into Angolan territory and had devastating consequences for the

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<sup>438</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>439</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>440</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola'.

<sup>441</sup> Ibidem.

land and the people living there. The Cubans are also mentioned in an activated role regarding the installation of anti-aircraft installations: *'they are reputedly building a large base in Lubango, 200 km from the border. According to South African spokespeople, they are also installing Russian anti-aircraft rocket installations in the South that could pose a threat to the South African Air force.'*<sup>442</sup>

The Cubans are also often presented in a passivated role:

*'His government will appeal to the Cuban troops in Angola'*<sup>443</sup>

*'South African troops came into contact with units of the Cuban army in Angola'*<sup>444</sup>

*'Washington even refuses to recognize this country as long as it maintains a Cuban intervention force of over 17.000 men within its borders.'*<sup>445</sup>

*'The South Africans came into contact during the actions with the Angolan military and the Cuban army core garrisoned in that country.'*<sup>446</sup>

*'An unknown amount of Cubans, Angolans, and members of SWAPO has been taken prisoner'*<sup>447</sup>

In these quotes the Cubans are clearly passivated with the last quote even detailing that they were taken into captivity by the SADF. However, often in the articles they are portrayed as being responsible for the violence. The two articles referring to them "coming into contact" with the SADF do so in the context that they were interfering in the aforementioned hot pursuit operations. Furthermore, most of the times that the Cuban presence in Angola is mentioned, it is in the context of them being an obstacle to negotiations and diplomatic recognition such as in the previously discussed quotes. Here we see the influence of *Linkage* once again.

### *3. Genericization and specification*

Regarding genericizations and specification we have already dealt with some of the specific individuals on the South African side such as Constand Viljoen and P. W. Botha who had become Prime Minister of South Africa in 1978 and would remain so until 1984. In 1984 he

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<sup>442</sup> 'Angola slaat alarm over inval Z.-Afrika'.

<sup>443</sup> 'Angola dreigt Zuid-Afrika met Cubanen'.

<sup>444</sup> 'Angola slaat alarm over inval Z.-Afrika'.

<sup>445</sup> 'Angola vraagt UNO om spoeddebat inval'.

<sup>446</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola'.

<sup>447</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika op terugtocht uit Angola'.

would go further in concentrating power on his person by creating the position of State President. He is the most frequently quoted political actor in our sample for the years between 1980 and 1984. Often *de Telegraaf* reported his interpretation of events, which was often pro SADF, most notably when South Africa admitted it had clashed with the Angolans during Operation Protea: (on the Angolan version of the story) *'It is a gross overstatement and a complete misrepresentation of what has truly happened.'*<sup>448</sup> This quote comes from the lead of an article thus immediately sowing doubt in the reader's mind on the Angolan statement. Another South African political actor who is mentioned is Magnus Malan, who became Minister of Defence after P.W. Botha had left the position: *'According to the South African Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, the army succeeded in its objectives by preventing the infiltration of SWAPO guerrillas into Namibia (Southwest-Africa).'*<sup>449</sup> The final South African mentioned in our corpus is major general George Lloyd: (*de Telegraaf* commenting on the fact that no information on Operation Protea was forthcoming from South Africa) *'The commander in chief of the army in Namibia, major general George Lloyd, dit inform us that two out of three airports in the border area are now open to civilian aircraft again after being closed for a few days.'*<sup>450</sup> This quote refers to the closing of Namibian airports to civilian aircraft during SADF border raids so that SAAF could support the ground troops and bomb Angolan cities and towns.

#### 4. Individualisation and assimilation

This is in stark opposition to the number of Cubans mentioned which is once again only 1 namely Fidel Castro who is only mentioned in passing regarding his role as chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In this same article there is also one of the few mentions of an Angolan political actor, namely President Eduardo dos Santos.<sup>451</sup> Thus in general we can say that the Cubans and their MPLA allies are assimilated, regarding our fourth category. However, in this period there is often a number attached to the plural Cubans and, sometimes, also the South Africans:

*'...it maintains a 17.000 strong Cuban intervention force within its borders.'*<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>449</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika op terugtocht uit Angola'.

<sup>450</sup> 'Angola vraagt UNO om spoeddebat inval'.

<sup>451</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>452</sup> 'Angola vraagt UNO om spoeddebat inval'.

*'According to the South Africans at least five hundred of their enemies were killed while twenty-one of their own died.'*<sup>453</sup>

*'...The Cuban army core garrisoned in that country, estimated at 15.000 to 25.000 men.'*<sup>454</sup>

*'(on support by the NAM) chairman: Fidel Castro, who already supports 14.000 soldiers.'*<sup>455</sup>

We see that aggregation was common in this period in the reporting of *de Telegraaf*. Like in the earlier period studied we see a lot of speculation and varying numbers on the actual strength of the Cuban expeditionary force. Furthermore, the authors report on the casualty numbers presented by the SADF, something which served a propagandistic end. Both sides underreported their own casualties, the Cubans by a factor two and the SADF by a factor six. On top of this the SADF often dramatically over reported enemy casualties to maintain the impression of the SADF being the last defence against the numberless communist hordes. This is why the significant increase in casualties sustained during the Cuito Cuanavale campaign had such an impact domestically in South Africa, it suddenly dawned on the white population that their conscripted children could easily become casualties of war and that their government was not telling them the full truth.

#### *5/6. Nomination and Categorisation / Functionalisation and Identification*

Regarding our fifth representational category, nomination and categorisation, we have already seen that some prominent South African political actors are named throughout our sample. However, sometimes the information presented in the articles comes from functionalized South African actors:

*'Although the enemy had a numerical advantage the battle resulted in a "glorious victory" for the South Africans according to an army spokesman.'*<sup>456</sup>

*'But unofficial military spokesmen admit that since Sunday a large action has been underway, apparently with the objective to destroy far off SWAPO bases.'*<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika op terugtocht uit Angola'.

<sup>454</sup> 'Grootscheepse inval Z.-Afrika in Angola'.

<sup>455</sup> 'Z.-Afrika geeft gevechten met Angolees leger toe'.

<sup>456</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika op terugtocht uit Angola'.

<sup>457</sup> 'Angola slaat alarm over inval Z.-Afrika'.

As has already been mentioned, *de Telegraaf* emphasized the South African side of the story in most articles in our sample. That is not to say the Angolan side of the story is never mentioned but it is often only in the text or, when featured in the headline or lead, implicitly discredited by the South African side of the story. The exception is when the South Africans refused to comment on the matter, such as happened during the early reporting on Operation Protea in 1981.<sup>458</sup> The omission or minimisation of the Angolan side of the story is all the more glaring because *de Telegraaf* does sometimes use information published by the Angolan press agency.

Regarding our sixth category, functionalization and identification, little has to be said. As we have already seen, most political actors are identified by either their military rank or their government function. No identification by prominent features, of character or appearance, are present in our sample.

### ***De Telegraaf, 1985-1988.***

#### *1. Inclusion and/or exclusion*

We now turn to our final period for analysis, 1985 to 1988. This slot is one year shorter than the former two but has the highest number of articles in the sample, 8 as opposed to 6 each for the first two periods. It is also the period in which one of the most contested events of the conflict occurs, the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. While there is some fighting between South Africans and Cubans in the months after the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, reporting in this period is overshadowed by the different rounds of the negotiations which would lead to the Tripartite Accords. These on the one hand provided a 30-month deadline for the withdrawal of all Cuban troops from Angola while in the same period South Africa had to grant independence to Namibia. However, the culmination of these accords is beyond the scope of our analysis, as our focus is on the battles and operations in which the South Africans and Cubans clashed during the conflict. But some news articles reporting on the negotiations while the fighting was still going on at Cuito Cuanavale are included in the sample, mainly because of the lack of articles from *de Telegraaf* reporting on the actual fighting. I also use two in depth articles for my sample in this period

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<sup>458</sup> Ibidem.

Throughout this analysis, in both earlier periods, we have seen different justifications for the South African raids into Angola, most notably operations against SWAPO. However, in this final period the discourse changes and this time supporting UNITA becomes the main justification:

*'Pretoria support action for UNITA suspected'*<sup>459</sup>

*'Aircraft of the South African air force have attacked the Angolan army who are on the offensive against the resistance movement UNITA'*<sup>460</sup>

*'South African Army supports Angolan Rebels in struggle against Cubans'*<sup>461</sup>

*'...the military support Savimbi receives from South Africa remains a large obstacle for a political solution to the conflict.'*<sup>462</sup>

*'The South Africans, who support the resistance movement UNITA, keep their advance going...'*<sup>463</sup>

Once again this must be seen in the context of a Reagan doctrine which had now come into full expression. Jonas Savimbi, the leader of UNITA, made excellent use of the changing doctrine in Washington, modelling his and his warrior's public image on that of the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan.<sup>464</sup> Looking at the chronology of these quotes, with the first two being from 1985 and the last three from 1987-1988, we also see a clear change in the stance of the SADF. While the SADF initially tried to keep some degree of plausible deniability of its involvement in Angola in 1985, from 1987 onwards it does not deny its involvement in the Angola on the side of UNITA.

The Cubans are also present in all articles in our sample from this period. In two out of eight articles they are mentioned in the headline already and in five of the eight they are mentioned in the lead. Thus, there is no case of suppression of the Cuban presence discernible from how prominently they feature in the most visible parts of the article. Significantly, in five out of eight articles they are mentioned together with the Russians and, in one case, the East-Germans:

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<sup>459</sup> 'Hulpactie Pretoria voor UNITA vermoed'.

<sup>460</sup> 'Pretoria ontkent luchtaanvallen op leger Angola'.

<sup>461</sup> 'Leger Z.-Afrika steunt Angolese rebellen in strijd tegen Cubanen'.

<sup>462</sup> 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

<sup>463</sup> 'Moskou weigert Angola op te geven'.

<sup>464</sup> Burke, *Revolutionaries for the right*, 178.

*'Jonas Savimbi has admitted that his movement is suffering heavily because of attacks by government troops who according to Savimbi are commanded by Russian soldiers and supported by Cuban artillery and aircraft.'*<sup>465</sup>

*'This is claimed by UNITA, who were under heavy assault by government troops supported by the Cubans and Russians.'*<sup>466</sup>

*'...South Africa "had to intervene", when Cuban units and Russian military advisors in the war against UNITA started giving active support to the army of the Angolan government.'*<sup>467</sup>

*'Botha called a timetable for an eventual withdrawal from Angola of the 40.000 "bled out Cuban troops and East Germans who are playing a sinister role" of crucial importance.'*<sup>468</sup>

*'(UNITA) has been fighting for over twelve years against the Marxist regime in Angola and controls about a third of the country in spite of the presence of 40.000 Cuban troops and numerous Soviet-advisors.'*<sup>469</sup>

One thing that is instantly noticeable is the return of the adjective *Marxist* to describe either the MPLA or the Cubans. This was highlighted in the analysis of the first period, but it was not as prevalent in the second. In the third it is a lot more common as we shall see. In all these quotes there is the impression that while the Cubans provided the men, the equipment and, most significantly, the commanders were Russian. One article is even more explicit in minimizing the role of the Cubans, its headline reads: *Moscow refuses to give up Angola*". This recurring theme, that the Cubans were just a satellite of the Russians, is something we have seen in a lesser or greater proportion in all three periods we have analysed. It is also not the truth, as we have seen in an earlier chapter of this thesis where it became clear that Cuba acted with significant independence. However, in this period it seems this narrative has become ubiquitous.

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<sup>465</sup> 'Hulpactie Pretoria voor UNITA vermoed'.

<sup>466</sup> 'Verzet UNITA weerstaat regeringsleger Angola'.

<sup>467</sup> 'Leger Z.-Afrika steunt Angolese rebellen in strijd tegen Cubanen'.

<sup>468</sup> 'Botha: Angolees vredesplan is niet volledig'.

<sup>469</sup> 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

## 2. Role allocation

This again forms a convenient bridge into our second category, role allocation. We can use the earlier quotes where the Cubans are often mentioned together with other eastern bloc personnel to show that they are usually presented in an activated, offensive role, for example: *'This is claimed by UNITA, who were under heavy assault by government troops supported by the Cubans and Russians.'*<sup>470</sup> Here the Cubans supporting the government troops are assaulting UNITA. Furthermore, we have already discussed the theme that the South Africans are portrayed as supporting UNITA in reaction to offensives by government troops against Savimbi and his men: *'South African Army supports Angolan Rebels in struggle against Cubans'*<sup>471</sup>. Once again, it seems as if the South Africans are presented as passivated aggressors because they are just reacting to pressure from the MPLA/Cubans on their allies UNITA. It must be mentioned that because of the way the role of the Cubans is minimized, often it is highlighted that Soviets are in command, it could also be interpreted as the Cubans being passivated. After all, if they are just following Soviet orders, they are just undergoing the activity and not as a dynamic force with initiative.

One significant theme in which the Cubans are presented as activated is in the use of chemical weapons: *'The Angolan army and the Cuban troops, who support the Marxist regime in Luanda, have **probably** been using chemical warfare against dr. Jonas Savimbi's UNITA for the last two years (emphasis added).'*<sup>472</sup> The word probably is significant here as there is no conclusive evidence that the Cubans or MPLA used chemical weapons against their foes. The article bases its claims on a report by Belgian toxicologist Aubin Heyndrickx, whose name is misspelled as Aubain in the article. Furthermore, the accusation is based on the claim that *'Cuban prisoners of UNITA were found to have equipment to protect themselves from chemical attacks with instruction in Spanish and Russian.'*<sup>473</sup> We first have to look at the source of the information, dr. Aubin Heyndrickx. Heyndrickx was a toxicologist at the University of Ghent who became notorious during the 1980's by claiming that the USSR was testing chemical weapons in Cambodia, Laos and Afghanistan. His claim that Cuba had used chemical weapons against UNITA was the latest in a series of claims which were

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<sup>470</sup> 'Verzet UNITA weerstaat regeringsleger Angola'.

<sup>471</sup> 'Leger Z.-Afrika steunt Angolese rebellen in strijd tegen Cubanen'.

<sup>472</sup> 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

<sup>473</sup> Ibidem.

often seen as politically motivated. He was considered a charlatan by other experts, like Harvard's Matthew Meselson, and considered a Cold-Warrior in service of the CIA by political opponents.<sup>474</sup> However, this did not prevent him from being commonly cited in the Western media, the most recent example being the reporting on the *Iraq chemical arms trial*. Here his claims went beyond most experts, stating that the Iraqi government had not only used mustard gas but also cyanide and other biological weapons during the Anfal genocide against the Kurds in the late 1980s.<sup>475</sup> Then there is the fact that Cuban soldiers carried gas masks and other protective equipment against chemical and biological warfare (CBW) during the Angolan war. This was a consequence of South African use of CBW, or at least the pretence thereof.<sup>476</sup> The development of a South African CBW program has been well documented, and there are numerous accusations by Cuban and African sources of CBW being used by the SADF. Furthermore, Aubin Heyndrickx was not only sympathetic towards apartheid, but he might also have been personally involved in the development of the South African CBW, codenamed Project Coast. After the end of apartheid, Wouter Basson, better known as 'Dr. Death' and the head of Project Coast, was prosecuted for crimes against humanity by the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*.<sup>477</sup> During the process against Basson there was also an accusation against Heyndrickx: supposedly he had sold Basson twelve highly advanced poison gas detectors, bypassing the arms embargo against South Africa.<sup>478</sup> Thus we can only conclude that the accusation by Heyndrickx was a clear case of projection, where one accuses an opponent of doing what you are doing.

This tactic is also employed twice by Magnus Malan in another article from our sample. In the first case '*Minister Malan reprimanded the Soviet-Union for destabilising Angola by pumping weapons valued in the billions into the country.*' This is followed up later by the claim that the morale of the Cubans and Angolans was remarkably low.<sup>479</sup> South Africa accusing another country of destabilizing Angola is a rich claim, as there seems to be some consensus in most of the literature written on the Angolan Civil War and the Angolan

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<sup>474</sup> Roox, 'BLIKVANGER'.

<sup>475</sup> Elizabeth Rosenthal, 'In Iraq chemical arms trial, scientists face many burdens of proof - Europe - International Herald Tribune', *The New York Times*, June 19<sup>th</sup> 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/19/world/europe/19iht-chem.2001719.html> (version June 25th 2021).

<sup>476</sup> Burgiss and Purkitt, *The Secret Program*, 32.

<sup>477</sup> Posthumus, 'Vermeende apartheidsmisdadiger 'Dr. Death' is nooit gestraft'

<sup>478</sup> Roox, 'Blikvanger'

<sup>479</sup> 'Moskou weigert Angola op te geven'.

Border War that the South African incursions did destabilize Angola. Furthermore, this article is from March 1988, which is about the time the South Africans started to suffer serious backlash at home because of the increase in their casualties as a consequence of the war in Angola.<sup>480</sup>

### 3. Genericization and specification

Now we will discuss our third representational category, genericization and specification. Like in the earlier periods analysed, we see that in our newspaper article corpus the South Africans are well represented while the Cubans are not:

*'The 500 men strong South African force which has been operating in Angola since Monday has crossed the border and advanced 30 km in pursuit of SWAPO units, according to the commander in chief of the armed forces in Namibia, general George Meiring.'*<sup>481</sup>

*'The South African Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, declared last week that South Africa supports UNITA in all aspects.'*<sup>482</sup>

*'According to the commander in chief of the South African army, Jannie Geldenhuis, the Cubans and Russians became involved when UNITA forced the government army back.'*<sup>483</sup>

*'The South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Roelof "Pik" Botha declared yesterday that the regional peace plan proposed by the Angolan government to the Americans is incomplete.'*<sup>484</sup>

*'And finally, we must highlight the numerous Cuban declarations signalling that Fidel Castro wants to remove his 40.000 soldiers from Angola.'*<sup>485</sup>

Note that these are not all the times South African political actors are mentioned in our sample, but it does include the only time a Cuban political actor is mentioned. Furthermore, in three out of eight articles in this sample Jonas Savimbi has a prominent role.<sup>486</sup> This is not

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<sup>480</sup> Baines, 'Vietnam Analogies and Metaphors', 81.

<sup>481</sup> 'Pretoria ontkent luchtaanvallen op leger Angola'.

<sup>482</sup> 'Hulpactie Pretoria voor UNITA vermoed'.

<sup>483</sup> 'Leger Z.-Afrika steunt Angolese rebellen in strijd tegen Cubanen'.

<sup>484</sup> 'Botha: Angolees vredesplan is niet volledig'.

<sup>485</sup> 'Moskou weigert Angola op te geven'.

<sup>486</sup> 'Pretoria ontkent luchtaanvallen op leger Angola' ; 'Verzet UNITA weerstaat regeringsleger Angola' ; 'Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola'.

to say that specification is the norm, usually all parties are genericised: *‘According to diplomatic sources in Pretoria, South Africa has informed Angola that it wants to reopen the negotiations about the presence of the Cubans in Angola and the end of hostilities in the south of that country.’*<sup>487</sup> This is a perfect example of how all parties are usually genericised by *de Telegraaf* by the use of mass nouns. On top of this, it also shows an important narrative the newspaper tries to present, that the South Africans are actively looking to negotiate a settlement. This narrative is also furthered with the following quote: *‘The Angolan government “for the first time” agrees to plans for the full withdrawal of “all” Cuban troops from the country, in the context of a peace deal between Angola and South Africa.’*<sup>488</sup> This quote implies that the obstacle to peace used to be the Angolan reluctance to negotiate the withdrawal of the Cuban army. Furthermore, *Linkage* is presented as a given fact instead of as an important weapon of the US and South Africa in these negotiations.

#### 4. Individualisation and assimilation

Thus, we can also say that political actors are usually assimilated instead of individualised but that the few actors that are individualised usually are either South Africans or Jonas Savimbi. When distinguishing how political actors are assimilated, collectivisation is the most common form yet there are some interesting cases of aggregation:

*‘The Marxist MPLA-government of Angola claims that in the last two months during the fighting in the south of the country 230 South Africans lost their lives. South Africa has admitted the death of 12 soldiers last week.’*<sup>489</sup>

*‘(UNITA) has been fighting for over twelve years against the Marxist regime in Angola and controls about a third of the country in spite of the presence of 40.000 Cuban troops and numerous Soviet-advisors.’*<sup>490</sup>

*‘Botha called a timetable for an eventual withdrawal from Angola of the 40.000 “bled out Cuban troops and East Germans who are playing a sinister role” of crucial importance.’*<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> ‘Verzet UNITA weerstaat regeringsleger Angola’.

<sup>488</sup> ‘Angola akkoord met terugtrekking Cubaanse troepen’.

<sup>489</sup> ‘Leger Z.-Afrika steunt Angolese rebellen in strijd tegen Cubanen’.

<sup>490</sup> ‘Chemische oorlogvoering in Angola’.

<sup>491</sup> ‘Botha: Angolees vredesplan is niet volledig’.

*'And finally, we must highlight the numerous Cuban declarations signalling that Fidel Castro wants to remove his 40.000 soldiers from Angola.'*<sup>492</sup>

*'The Angolan government army is supported by an estimated 25.000 Cuban soldiers.'*<sup>493</sup>

Two things can be highlighted from these quotes: first of all, the estimates on the number of Cubans in Angola is far more consistent and precise than in earlier periods. The last quote, which is also chronologically the one published earliest, is the only one from before the large increase in Cuban strength in Angola as a consequence of the Cuito Cuanavale campaign. Furthermore, the first quote reinforces what has already been briefly mentioned earlier, the under - and over reporting of casualties by both sides of the conflict. This should not be surprising in a war in which propaganda played a significant role and which still has a mythical status for both sides involved to this day.

#### *5/6. Nomination and Categorisation / Functionalisation and Identification*

I will now briefly discuss categories five and six of the inventory. Regarding nomination and categorisation there is no real difference from earlier periods and, as we have seen in the discussion on category three, political actors are usually identified by both their name and their function. There are also examples of political actors being identified by just their function, although most commonly the actor, usually a South African, is also identified by name. None of the "unnamed" functionalized characters quotes are particularly noteworthy or different in kind from those discussed earlier in this chapter.

### ***De Volkskrant, 1975-1979***

#### *1. Inclusion and/or exclusion*

Once again we start our analysis in the late 1970s which if we recall is the period in which large scale foreign intervention began in Angola, in the form of Operation Savannah and

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<sup>492</sup> 'Moskou weigert Angola op te geven'.

<sup>493</sup> 'Pretoria ontkent luchtaanvallen op leger Angola'.

Operation Carlota. There was quite some attention for Angola from all sides of the political spectrum because, as we have seen in the first chapter of this thesis, it was a newly independent nation in which both pro-Western and socialist liberation movements first fought the Portuguese and then each other for power. Because the winners would decide in which camp of the Cold war the country would end up, the world watched and often intervened with bated breath. Finally, this period is also important because it includes the Kassinga raid, one of the most controversial events in the conflict.

We start once again with our first category. Inclusion and exclusion. The first article in our sample by *de Volkskrant* is very interesting as the South Africans are completely excluded while the Cubans are included. However, another group is included: *'According to unconfirmed reports, a few hundred Cuban soldiers have arrived in Luanda to reinforce the MPLA-army. The MPLA has to resist the advance from the south of the FNLA and UNITA, who are led by experienced white mercenaries.'*<sup>494</sup> The identity of the *experienced white mercenaries* mentioned in the article would be revealed only three days later: *'As opposed to earlier reports where the South Africans were described as mercenaries, it is now being reported that these South Africans are part of the South African army.'*<sup>495</sup> *De Volkskrant* are quick to correct their earlier mistake on the identity of the mercenaries. It is also a logical mistake, as we have seen in earlier chapters the FNLA made extensive use of white mercenaries in its bid for power directly after independence. The reporting of *de Volkskrant* attested to this, although we cannot be certain whether these were mercenaries or SADF soldiers: *'The advance of a combined force of white mercenaries and FNLA and UNITA units has been brought to a halt 200 km outside of the capital Luanda, according to a reporter from the Zairian press bureau AZAP.'*<sup>496</sup> However, this is not where the confusion ends, as in some articles the South Africans and the mercenaries are conflated or cited together: *'At least ten reporters have seen South African troops fighting in Angola in spite of South Africa vehemently denying its involvement in the war in Angola. In any case, the war material of the "mercenary column" - around 60 armoured cars and several helicopters - is almost certainly from South Africa.'*<sup>497</sup> It is not surprising that there is uncertainty as to whether the

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<sup>494</sup> 'Bewegingen Angola versterken legers'.

<sup>495</sup> 'Zuidafrikanen in Angola'.

<sup>496</sup> 'MPLA verliest opnieuw terrein'.

<sup>497</sup> 'De honden van de oorlog'.

mercenaries were SADF soldiers or just soldiers of fortune. As has been shown in earlier chapters, and as can be read in the last quote, in November 1975 the South Africans were still denying any involvement in the conflict in Angola.

So, there is significant doubt in the 1975 reporting of *de Volkskrant* about whether the mercenaries are South Africans. The Cubans, on the other hand, are always clearly named as we have already seen in the first quote of this paragraph and as the following quotes show:

*'UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi admitted on Saturday that his troops were being supported by whites but said it did not weigh on his conscience because the MPLA was receiving support from the Cubans.'*<sup>498</sup>

*'According to the correspondent, the FNLA and UNITA commanders have great admiration for the "Cuban mercenaries" fighting on the side of the MPLA.'*<sup>499</sup>

*'The Cubans are a separate group. They are estimated at 3000, are highly skilled in the use of Russian weaponry and are being deployed in the most difficult places. They are the main reason the MPLA has been able to launch a counteroffensive on both the northern and southern fronts last week.'*<sup>500</sup>

*'The operation did not target Angolan or Cuban troops, according to Dutton.'*<sup>501</sup>

*Two months later the Washington Post wrote that pro-western liberation movements in Angola had taken 35 Russian and Cuban advisors prisoner.'*<sup>502</sup>

From reading these quotes we can also notice a certain admiration for the Cubans, both by their opponents as by the authors of the articles. The authors highlight the Cuban skill at arms and the FNLA and UNITA commander's express admiration for them, although they consider them mercenaries.

## 2. Role allocation

Just like in my analysis of *de Telegraaf* I want to briefly touch on the reporting on Operation Reindeer and then move on to our second category, role allocation. *De Volkskrant* published just one article directly related to Operation Reindeer, also known as the Kassinga Raid. The

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<sup>498</sup> 'Zuidafrikanen in Angola'.

<sup>499</sup> 'MPLA verliest opnieuw terrein'.

<sup>500</sup> 'De honden van de oorlog'.

<sup>501</sup> 'Actie Zuid-Afrika wekt beroering'.

<sup>502</sup> 'CIA mengde zich in oorlog Angola'.

headline of this article reads: *'Action South Africa causes turmoil with the subtitle Against "SWAPO-bases" in Angola.'* Here once again the South African raid is presented as an "action". The article also mentions both the South African version, that the SADF struck the *'headquarters of the SWAPO in Cassinga, codenamed "Moscow"'*, and the SWAPO version, that it was *'another attempt at destroying the camps of Namibian refugees and to prepare for another invasion of Angola.'*<sup>503</sup> The article then continues with the testimony of Swedish film-maker Per Sander who had recently visited Kassinga and claimed that *'it was not a military camp but that between five- and six thousand refugees were settled there, mainly women and children.'*<sup>504</sup> Here it seems as if *de Volkskrant* clearly supports the SWAPO interpretation of what happened at Kassinga which is why the ambiguity in the headline, calling the raid an "action", is surprising. Further role allocation is usually a lot clearer, with the Cubans being usually presented as actively fighting and supporting the MPLA:

*'According to UNITA and the FNLA there are also white mercenaries fighting on the MPLA side. This is what they call both the Cubans and white Angolans...'*<sup>505</sup>

*'UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi admitted on Saturday that his troops were being supported by whites but said it did not weigh on his conscience because the MPLA was receiving support from the Cubans.'*<sup>506</sup>

*'According to unconfirmed reports, a few hundred Cuban soldiers have arrived in Luanda to reinforce the MPLA-army.'*<sup>507</sup>

Whereas in these quotes the Cubans are presented as fighting and supporting the MPLA, they are not presented as initiating hostilities, in that aspect they are passivated. And there is only one implicit mention of their presence being the reason for the South African invasion: *'South African Minister of Defence Pieter Botha said on Sunday that "South Africa was defending her borders". After this he informed the public of a "communist military attack on South Africa".'*<sup>508</sup> Although it is not specified who carried out this military attack, it can only be understood as a reference to the Cuban presence in Angola.

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<sup>503</sup> 'Actie Zuid-Afrika wekt beroering'.

<sup>504</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>505</sup> 'De honden van de oorlog'.

<sup>506</sup> 'Zuidafrikanen in Angola'.

<sup>507</sup> 'Bewegingen Angola versterken legers'.

<sup>508</sup> 'Zuidafrikanen in Angola'.

The South Africans, on the other hand, are often presented as initiating or expanding their involvement in the hostilities:

*'South Africans in Angola. White advance from the south.'*<sup>509</sup>

*'If minister Van der Stoep is really worried about Angola, according to these organisations he should file a complaint with the South African government about the open aggression of this country against Angola.'*<sup>510</sup>

*'The expansion of South African interference in Angola kept pace with that of the CIA according to Stockwell.'*<sup>511</sup>

These quotes describe either the advance or the expansion of South African interference in Angola. The two last quotes are especially interesting, the first of these being a reference to civil society organisations protesting the lack of condemnation of South Africa from the Dutch government. The fact that there is reporting on protests in the Netherlands against South African actions in Angola this early in the conflict, in 1975, tells us that it was a topic of interest at least for the leftist and activist parts of civil society. The third quote refers to the exposé written by John Stockwell about US involvement in Angola at the time of Operation Savannah. Stockwell was not just any agent; he was the Chief of the Angola Task Force and he resigned over the US management of the situation.<sup>512</sup> Both these stories were not reported on by *de Telegraaf*.

#### *3/4. Genericization and specification / Individualisation and assimilation*

In our third category, genericization and specification, as we can see from earlier quotes *de Volkskrant* mostly genericized both parties with the use of mass-nouns. This is not surprising and is something we have seen in our analysis of *de Telegraaf*. What is surprising is that neither Cuban nor South African political actors are given a lot of text in the articles. There is however a plethora of Angolan political actors from all liberation movements represented in the articles, although analysis of this is beyond the scope of the thesis. No Cuban political actors are specified, and the only South Africans are the omnipresent P. W. Botha and major-general Jack Dutton: *'The chief of staff of the South African Armed Forces, major-*

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<sup>509</sup> 'Zuidafrikanen in Angola'.

<sup>510</sup> 'MPLA verliest opnieuw terrein'.

<sup>511</sup> 'CIA mengde zich in oorlog Angola'.

<sup>512</sup> Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*.

general Jack Dutton, declared last night that in an action a “large number” of SWAPO-fighters was killed.<sup>513</sup>

#### 5/6. Nomination and Categorisation / Functionalisation and Identification

When discussing our fifth category, individualisation and assimilation, we have already concluded that the norm is assimilation for both parties. Both parties are also mostly collectivised but there are several occasions where we can speak of aggregation:

*‘The Cubans are a separate group. They are estimated at 3000, are highly skilled in the use of Russian weaponry and are being deployed in the most difficult places.’<sup>514</sup>*

*‘During the advance from Sa da Banderia to Novo Redondo about 100 Cubans have reputedly died.’<sup>515</sup>*

*‘...but should take into account the presence of a small contingent of South African soldiers (1500 men)...’<sup>516</sup>*

These numbers are far lower than what is reported in *de Telegraaf* but the period studied for *de Volkskrant* predates the biggest influx of Cuban troops during Operación Carlota. Furthermore, *de Volkskrant* seems less interested in reporting casualty numbers and the second quote mentioned above is thus an exception.

### **De Volkskrant, 1980-1984**

#### 1. Inclusion and/or exclusion

We continue our analysis of *de Volkskrant* with the period between 1980 and 1984, just as we did with *de Telegraaf*. This period sees a noticeable increase in the level of violence which has sometimes been related to the election of Reagan which gave South Africa more freedom to invade. As a result, we see two important operations happening in this period: Operation Protea and Operation Askari. Starting with our first category, inclusion and exclusion, we can take a look at the headlines of the articles in our sample:

*‘Free Namibia helps Cuba out of Angola’<sup>517</sup>*

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<sup>513</sup> ‘Actie Zuid-Afrika wekt beroering’.

<sup>514</sup> ‘De honden van de oorlog’.

<sup>515</sup> ‘MPLA verliest opnieuw terrein’.

<sup>516</sup> ‘Actie Zuid-Afrika wekt beroering’.

<sup>517</sup> ‘Vrij Namibië helpt Cuba Angola uit’.

*'Mobilisation in Angola against South Africans'<sup>518</sup>*

*'South Africa admits battle with Angola. Western Europe demands retreat'<sup>519</sup>*

*'Provincial city in Angola falls. South African troops come to blows'<sup>520</sup>*

*'Army of South Africa fired upon with Sam-8 rockets in Angola'<sup>521</sup>*

*'South Africa attacks SWAPO base. Army Pretoria penetrates deep into Angola'<sup>522</sup>*

*'Pretoria pulls back troops out of Angola. South Africa prepared to directly negotiate with SWAPO'<sup>523</sup>*

Whereas the Cubans are only named in one of the headlines, the South Africans are named in the other six. In those six articles where the South Africans are mentioned in the headline, the Cubans are partially suppressed as they are definitely not fully omitted yet they don't play a central role:

*'South African commander in chief in Namibia, general Lloyd, warned earlier this month for a "more serious war: in which Angolan and Cuban troops could be involved.'<sup>524</sup>*

*'Yesterday the Angolan press bureau Angop contradicted the South African claims that large Cuban troop concentrations in the southern provincial capital Lubango.'<sup>525</sup>*

*'The American UN-ambassador Lichtenstein sees the actions of South Africa from the perspective of Russian weapon shipments to SWAPO and the presence of 20.000 Cubans in Marxist Angola...'<sup>526</sup>*

*'(general Viljoen) said he does not want to provoke a confrontation with the Angolans and Cubans, although last week at Caihundo South African and Angolan troops clashed.'<sup>527</sup>*

*'According to Viljoen, these rocket bases are manned by SWAPO-fighters but possibly also by Cubans.'<sup>528</sup>*

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<sup>518</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen'.

<sup>519</sup> 'W.-Europa eist terugtrekking. Zuid-Afrika erkent strijd met Angola'.

<sup>520</sup> 'Provinciestad in Angola gevallen. Troepen Z.-Afrika slaags'.

<sup>521</sup> 'Leger Z-Afrika in Angola beschoten met Sam-8 raketten'.

<sup>522</sup> 'Z-Afrika valt SWAPO-basis aan'.

<sup>523</sup> 'Pretoria trekt troepen terug uit Angola'.

<sup>524</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen'.

<sup>525</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika erkent strijd met Angola'.

<sup>526</sup> 'Provinciestad in Angola gevallen. Troepen Z.-Afrika slaags'.

<sup>527</sup> 'Leger Z-Afrika in Angola beschoten met Sam-8 raketten'.

<sup>528</sup> 'Z-Afrika valt SWAPO-basis aan. Leger Pretoria dringt diep in Angola door' *de Volkskrant*, December 30th 1983.

*'According to Pretoria, during the South African action 324 guerrilla-fighters and Angolan and Cuban soldiers were killed.'*<sup>529</sup>

We see that the Cubans do not play an important role in most articles from our sample that *de Volkskrant* published between 1980 and 1984. The most important exception is of course the first article from our sample that is headlined *'Free Namibia helps Cuba out of Angola'*. What is interesting about this article is that it is told from the Angolan perspective, the news is coming from the Angolan minister of foreign affairs.<sup>530</sup> Thus the impression given in this article from 1980 is that the main obstacle to peace in the region is South African intransigence on the Namibia question. This is also corroborated by historical record: while resolution 435, which called for a cease-fire and UN supervised elections in South African occupied Namibia, was adopted in 1978 it was only implemented by South Africa in 1988 after the Tripartite Accords. Furthermore, at the time of its adoption, the Vorster and subsequent Botha administrations did everything in their power to undermine its implementation.<sup>531</sup>

## *2. Role allocation*

This leads us to our second category, role allocation. We can use some of the same quotes we used to analyse our first representational category and complement them:

*'South Africa admits battle with Angola. Western Europe demands retreat'*<sup>532</sup>

*The Provincial capital Ngiva in southern Angola has been taken by South African troops today.'*<sup>533</sup>

*'Army of South Africa fired upon with Sam-8 rockets in Angola'*<sup>534</sup>

*'South Africa attacks SWAPO base. Army Pretoria penetrates deep into Angola'*<sup>535</sup>

*'According to Viljoen, these rocket bases are manned by SWAPO-fighters but possibly also by Cubans.'*<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> 'Pretoria trekt troepen terug uit Angola'.

<sup>530</sup> 'Vrij Namibië helpt Cuba Angola uit'.

<sup>531</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom* 148-152.

<sup>532</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika erkent strijd met Angola'.

<sup>533</sup> 'Provinciestad in Angola gevallen'.

<sup>534</sup> 'Leger Z-Afrika in Angola beschoten met Sam-8 raketten'.

<sup>535</sup> 'Leger Pretoria dringt diep in Angola door'.

<sup>536</sup> Ibidem.

*'He reacted to South Africa intelligence information that Angola was installing anti-aircraft rockets with Cuban and East-German help...'*<sup>537</sup>

In these quotes we see that neither of the parties is presented as truly passivated, they are both presented as active political actors in the conflict, albeit that the Cubans are presented in a more supporting role. The one exception is of course the third quote, where the South Africans are fired upon and thus passivized. Yet the context of the article on the one hand makes very clear that it is the invading air force of South Africa that is attacked by SWAPO, and on the other hand the focus is on the new modern weaponry which SWAPO and the Angolans use:

*'Aircraft of the South African air force have been fired upon with Russian Sam-8 rockets in their latest action in southern Angola against the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO.'*<sup>538</sup>

*'According to South African military sources it is the first time that the Angolans make use of Sam-8 rockets.'*<sup>539</sup>

These quotes from this article from 1983, together with the two quotes on the Cubans which highlight them either manning or installing anti-aircraft rockets, show a theme which has run through a large part of this thesis: the importance of airpower in the conflict. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the Angolans and Cubans were extremely conscious of the dominance of the SAAF and it severely hamstrung their operations. It is then no surprise that the introduction of these rockets to the region would slowly but surely start tipping the scales. A large part of what forced the South Africans out of Angola in 1988 was their loss of air superiority.<sup>540</sup>

### *3. Genericization and specification*

We now move on to our third category, genericization and specification. Just like in the first period both sides are usually genericised by the use of mass-nouns such as Cuba, Cubans, South Africa, South Africans, etc. Looking at specification, we again do not find large differences between the first period analysed and this one. While it must be noticed that

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<sup>537</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen'.

<sup>538</sup> 'Leger Z-Afrika in Angola beschoten met Sam-8 raketten'.

<sup>539</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>540</sup> Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 423.

there is an increase in the amount of South African political actors specified in the text, the number of Cubans is still very low, but it is compensated by the Angolan presence in the text. I will also include a quote by an Angolan political actor which refers to the Cubans. The following examples show how South African, and an Angolan political actor were represented in our sample:

*'Angolan minister of foreign affairs Paulo Jorge remarked that "when Namibia is free, we can tell Cuba that we no longer need their military help because the changed situation allows us to live in peace"'*<sup>541</sup>

*'South African commander in chief in Namibia, general Lloyd, warned earlier this month for a "more serious war: in which Angolan and Cuban troops could be involved.'*<sup>542</sup>

*'General Viljoen warned the Angolans not to get involved in the conflict and not to protect the Namibian guerrilla fighters.'*<sup>543</sup>

What can be highlighted here is that the SADF figures cited in the articles stick to the same story: they are in Angola to attack SWAPO and they warn the Angolans and Cubans not to get involved. There is a complete disregard for the sovereignty of Angola as a state and a complete normalization of the "resolution" of, what they consider, an internal affair on foreign soil. The quote from the Angolan political actor highlights something related: that without a resolution of the Namibian question there cannot be peace in the region. Of course, the solution he foresees, an independent Namibia, is diametrically opposed to what South Africa sees as a solution, the destruction of SWAPO.

#### *4. Individualisation and assimilation*

As in most cases, both sides are usually assimilated as has already partially been discussed when we analysed our third category and concluded that genericization by mass-nouns was the norm. However, I would still like to highlight a few cases of aggregation:

*'In the first eight months of this year just 15 South Africans died as opposed to over 900 SWAPO-fighters.'*<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> 'Vrij Namibië helpt Cuba Angola uit'.

<sup>542</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen'.

<sup>543</sup> 'Leger Z-Afrika in Angola beschoten met Sam-8 raketten'.

<sup>544</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen'.

*'In spite of South African claims that they had no more troops in Angola, the Angolans claim that that day there was still heavy fighting going on and that 19 Angolan soldiers died.'*<sup>545</sup>

*'A spokesman for the ministry of defence in Capetown informed the press that yesterday four South Africans had died in combat, a very high number for South African standards.'*<sup>546</sup>

*'According to Angola, dozens of civilians died as a result of the South African action and hundreds of men, women and children were wounded.'*<sup>547</sup>

We see two trends here, on the one hand there is a noticeable increase in reporting of casualties by *de Volkskrant* when compared to the first period. These casualty numbers come from both the South African and the Angolan side. What can be seen is that the amount of civilian casualties is highlighted. Furthermore, there are comments about the very low amount of casualties on the South African side. This can create an impression of an incredibly asymmetric war where an unstoppable war machine goes on a rampage on an almost defenceless civilian population. What is conspicuously lacking is estimates of how many Cubans are in Angola. Furthermore, the presence of the Cubans in Angola is not presented in the text as an obvious obstacle to peace, which is quite surprising as by 1984 *Linkage* was already starting to be an important diplomatic weapon of the West.

#### *5/6. Nomination and Categorisation / Functionalisation and Identification*

We have already seen that political actors are usually nominated in our fifth representational category and functionalized in the sixth category. There is however one time that the source of information is not named and just categorized. Because it is an interesting quote it is highlighted here:

*'In Pretoria an army spokesman remarked that he cannot respond to every assertion the Angolan government makes.'*<sup>548</sup>

This quote is interesting because it highlights how contested information was in this conflict. Both sides accused each other of lying and manipulating the international media and

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<sup>545</sup> 'Vrij Namibië helpt Cuba Angola uit'.

<sup>546</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika erkent strijd met Angola'.

<sup>547</sup> 'Leger Z-Afrika in Angola beschoten met Sam-8 raketten'.

<sup>548</sup> 'Mobilisatie in Angola tegen Zuidafrikanen'.

community. Sometimes the rebuttals took an explicit form, such as the following explicit comment by P. W. Botha: *'The South African prime minister Botha recognised on Wednesday that his country's military did battle with the Angolan army. But he called reports of a large-scale South African invasion "grossly exaggerated".'*<sup>549</sup>

## ***De Volkskrant, 1985-1988***

### ***1. Inclusion and/or exclusion***

The final period up for analysis, and the final part of the critical discourse analysis of newspapers in this thesis, is the period between 1985 and 1988. As has been mentioned before, this period is when some of the most important battles and operations of the conflict take place, notably the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. Just as with *de Telegraaf*, the sample has avoided including articles exclusively discussing the negotiations which would lead to the Tripartite Accords.

One again we start with the first category of our socio-semantic inventory: inclusion and exclusion. Again, a good place to start is to look at the headlines of the articles in our sample for this period:

*'UNITA: Angolan offensive has been stopped. Pretoria ends attack on SWAPO-fighters in Angola.'*<sup>550</sup>

*'Fifty Angolans die in South African attack'*<sup>551</sup>

*'Minister of Defense Malan: "Without South African support UNITA would have been defeated"'*<sup>552</sup>

*'Growing worries over interference. P.W. Botha visited warfront in Angola'*<sup>553</sup>

*'New Cubans on their way to the southern front. South Africa retreats'*<sup>554</sup>

*'Angolan army used poison gas in civil war against Savimbi'*<sup>555</sup>

*'Crocker will talk with Botha. Angola and South Africa hold secret talks'*<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika erkent strijd met Angola'.

<sup>550</sup> 'UNITA: Angolees offensief is gestopt'.

<sup>551</sup> 'Vijftig Angolezen komen om het leven bij aanval Z-Afrika'.

<sup>552</sup> 'Minister van Defensie Malan: 'Zonder steun Z-Afrika zou UNITA zijn verslagen''.

<sup>553</sup> 'Groeiende zorg over inmenging'.

<sup>554</sup> 'Nieuwe Cubanen op weg naar zuidelijk front'.

<sup>555</sup> 'Angolese leger gebruikt gifgas in burgeroorlog tegen Savimbi'.

<sup>556</sup> 'Crocker gaat met Botha praten'.

What is instantly noticeable is that the Cubans are only mentioned once in the headlines we analyse for this period. On the other hand, South Africa is mentioned in every single headline. Furthermore, all headlines except one heavily hint at the South Africans being the main cause of violence in Angola. The exception is of course the last headline, which refers to one of the earliest rounds of negotiation which would lead to the tripartite accords. But this article gives a very interesting insight into the state of the conflict:

*'South African strategists are convinced that the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, which is still being fought out, cannot be won without a large traditional offensive with the corresponding casualties. The death of dozens of white South African soldiers has caused public unrest in South Africa. The fear increases that the country is getting stuck in its own mini-Vietnam.'*<sup>557</sup>

This is an interesting analysis because it is very similar to that of many historians like Piero Gleijeses and Gary Baines. Baines, a South African historian who has focused on the cultural side of the war, has emphasized the analogies between the Border War and Vietnam. Furthermore, he highlighted that an important reason for the SADF to pull out of Angola was the fear of suffering high casualties among conscripts. Doing so would risk alienating the white population in South Africa, something which would mean political suicide for the regime.<sup>558</sup>

Returning to the Cubans and whether they were included or excluded we can state that they were in part suppressed: they don't play a prominent role in the headlines of these stories although they are mentioned in every article of our sample. Still, it must be noted that a reader of these articles would quickly conclude that South Africa bears most of the responsibility for the violence.

## *2. Role allocation*

This leads us to further discussing our second category, role allocation. From the earlier headlines we can already see that *de Volkskrant* presented the South Africans as an active political actor which bore responsibility for the violence occurring in Angola. Especially telling is the headline *'Growing worries over interference. P.W. Botha visited warfront in*

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<sup>557</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>558</sup> Baines, 'Vietnam Analogies and Metaphors', 81.

*Angola*' as *de Volkskrant* emphasizes that even in South Africa the public is becoming more worried about the SADF incursions into Angola: *'More and more South Africans worry about the growing interference in Angola.'*<sup>559</sup> We now turn to some quotes about the Cubans from the same articles:

*'Western military experts estimate that between 25.000 and 30.000 Cubans support the Angolan government...'*<sup>560</sup>

*'Shortly after Soviet-instructors, and Cuban troops appeared on the battlefield with tanks, anti-aircraft rockets and fighter airplanes.'*<sup>561</sup>

*'According to the military release, the other soldiers were killed in battle with Angolan government forces and Cuban and Russian soldiers who support Angola.'*<sup>562</sup>

*'New Cuban soldiers have arrived in Angola to support the government army in their struggle against UNITA and South Africa.'*

*'A section of the in total 40 thousand Cuban troops, who recently have first gone into combat at Cuito Cuanavale, will be retreated to the north of the thirteenth latitude.'*<sup>563</sup>

*'The Angolan government and Cuban troops make use of chemical weapons in their war against Jonas Savimbi's guerrilla movement UNITA.'*<sup>564</sup>

Here we see that once again the Cubans are present in every article and presented as supporting the Angolan government. What has disappeared, when comparing this period with the second period, is the messaging on SWAPO and the Cubans using anti-aircraft rockets. On the one hand this is surprising because, as we already have discussed, air superiority was an important factor in the conflict and the moment the SAAF stopped ruling the skies was an important turning point in the conflict. On the other hand, *de Volkskrant* was of course not focused exclusively on military matters and by 1985 we can assume the novelty and shock of the South Africans had started to dissipate. Therefore, South African airplanes being shot down was no longer newsworthy enough to merit it being included in the reporting on the conflict. The last quote is perhaps the most interesting of the lot as it

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<sup>559</sup> 'P.W. Botha bezocht oorlogsfront in Angola'.

<sup>560</sup> 'Pretoria beëindigt aanval op Swapo-strijders in Angola'.

<sup>561</sup> "'Zonder steun Z-Afrika zou UNITA zijn verslagen'".

<sup>562</sup> 'P.W. Botha bezocht oorlogsfront in Angola'.

<sup>563</sup> 'Angola en Zuid-Afrika houden geheim gesprek'.

<sup>564</sup> 'Angolese leger gebruikt gifgas in burgeroorlog tegen Savimbi'.

once again refers to the accusations by Savimbi and dr. Heyndrickx that the Cubans had used chemical weapons. Most of the discussion on the topic has already been presented in the analysis of *de Telegraaf's* article on the topic. In this article, Heyndrickx is introduced by the credentials he gained investigating Iraqi chemical warfare in their conflict with Iran. Furthermore, Heyndrickx insisted in the article that Savimbi should send the men he found evidence of chemical weapons on to Europe for treatment and *'to prove that these are not fabrications.'*<sup>565</sup>

### 3. Genericization and specification

Our third category, genericization and specification, holds no surprises. As we can see from earlier quotes, the main way of addressing both sides in the conflict is by mass-nouns, something which we have seen in basically every period we have analysed. When it comes to specific individuals which are named in the text it is no surprise either that most articles include South African political actors and Angolan political actors. It must be noted that not all Angolan political actors are on the government side, in fact the most commonly found is Jonas Savimbi, leader of UNITA. Savimbi appears in four out of seven articles in this part of our sample as a source. On the other hand, there are very few Cuban political actors who are named in the articles so we will start by looking at these:

*'According to a Cuban spokesman in Luanda, the fiftieth division of the Cuban armed forces is on its way to the south of Angola. According to AIM, general Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez, the man who in 1975 led the Cubans in Angola and prevented the South Africans from taking Luanda, has been named commander.'*<sup>566</sup>

This is the only time in our sample that Cuban political actors are named and it's both of them in the same paragraph. The Cuban spokesman is identified by his function, when we analyse it through our fifth category of our socio-semantic inventory. What is especially interesting about this quote is that it is on the one hand the only time that a Cuban spokesperson is cited as a source in our sample. Furthermore, it is also the only insight into how the Cuban forces are organised that we can garner from our full 40 article sample, both *de Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant*. They are also named in an article with an evocative

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<sup>565</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>566</sup> 'Zuid-Afrika trekt zich terug'.

headline: *South Africa retreats*.<sup>567</sup> Thus while the article's headline hints at a de-escalation of the conflict, a significant part of the information is dedicated to a potential escalating factor: the Cuban troop surge.

As in earlier periods, there is no lack of South African political actors being used as sources:

*'The 500 men chased the guerrilla-fighters of SWAPO... penetrating 100 km into Angola, according to the commanding officer, major-general George Meiring, in Windhoek.*<sup>568</sup>

*'South African minister of defence Magnus Malan declared on Saturday for the first time that South Africa is supporting Savimbi's UNITA.*<sup>569</sup>

*'President Botha of South Africa repeated yesterday that South Africa won't sit by and watch "how the Angolan army, which is supported by the Soviet-Union, attacks UNITA.*<sup>570</sup>

*'But Wednesday the South African commander in chief Jannie Geldenhuys said that the South African army would stay in Angola for as long as Cuban and Soviet forces stayed active there.*<sup>571</sup>

These quotes all highlight the slow but steady transformation of what justification the SADF gave to the press of why they were interfering in Angola. The first two quotes show how the discourse changed from the hot pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas to supporting UNITA in their struggle against the government. In the last two quotes we see a recurring theme: South Africa justifying her presence in Angola because of the presence of the Cubans and Soviets. These two seem to be used either in unison or interchangeably. What this signals is that the idea behind "Total Strategy", that there was a "total assault" by communists on South Africa, had become institutionalised by this time.

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<sup>567</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>568</sup> 'Pretoria beëindigt aanval op Swapo-strijders in Angola'.

<sup>569</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>570</sup> 'Vijftig Angolezen komen om het leven bij aanval Z-Afrika'.

<sup>571</sup> "'Zonder steun Z-Afrika zou UNITA zijn verslagen'".

#### *4. Individualisation and assimilation*

In our fourth category we have already seen examples of specification. When it comes to assimilation it is noteworthy that the aggregation, so when groups of political actors are quantified, is far more detailed than in earlier periods, like the following example shows:

*'Angolan president José Eduardo dos Santos declared on Sunday that three thousand South African soldiers and seventy armoured cars were fighting on the side of UNITA in the south of Angola. On top of this, according to Dos Santos, Pretoria has stationed thirty thousand soldiers, 435 tanks and 80 aircraft in Namibia close to the border with Angola.'*<sup>572</sup>

The intention of president Dos Santos seems to be to highlight the threat Angola was under and the scale of South African interference in late 1987. His claim that 30.000 SADF troops were in Namibia on the border with Angola is the highest South African troop concentration we find in our sample. What we also see in this period which we should recognize from earlier periods are the disputes over casualty numbers: *'According to the (South African) army 23 South African and Namibian soldiers died in the past two weeks in Angola. Angolan authorities claim the number is ten times as high.'*<sup>573</sup>

#### *5/6. Nomination and Categorisation / Functionalisation and Identification*

Finally, we must briefly mention that in our sixth category, functionalization and identification, we only see functionalization, as no political actors are identified by physical or character traits.

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<sup>572</sup> 'P.W. Botha bezocht oorlogsfront in Angola'.

<sup>573</sup> Ibidem.

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## PLAGIARISM RULES AWARENESS STATEMENT

### **Fraud and Plagiarism**

Scientific integrity is the foundation of academic life. Utrecht University considers any form of scientific deception to be an extremely serious infraction. Utrecht University therefore expects every student to be aware of, and to abide by, the norms and values regarding scientific integrity.

The most important forms of deception that affect this integrity are fraud and plagiarism. Plagiarism is the copying of another person's work without proper acknowledgement, and it is a form of fraud. The following is a detailed explanation of what is considered to be fraud and plagiarism, with a few concrete examples. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list!

If fraud or plagiarism is detected, the study programme's Examination Committee may decide to impose sanctions. The most serious sanction that the committee can impose is to submit a request to the Executive Board of the University to expel the student from the study programme.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the copying of another person's documents, ideas or lines of thought and presenting it as one's own work. You must always accurately indicate from whom you obtained ideas and insights, and you must constantly be aware of the difference between citing, paraphrasing and plagiarising. Students and staff must be very careful in citing sources; this concerns not only printed sources, but also information obtained from the Internet.

The following issues will always be considered to be plagiarism:

- cutting and pasting text from digital sources, such as an encyclopaedia or digital periodicals, without quotation marks and footnotes;
- cutting and pasting text from the Internet without quotation marks and footnotes;
- copying printed materials, such as books, magazines or encyclopaedias, without quotation marks or footnotes;
- including a translation of one of the sources named above without quotation marks or footnotes;
- paraphrasing (parts of) the texts listed above without proper references: paraphrasing must be marked as such, by expressly mentioning the original author in the text or in a footnote, so that you do not give the impression that it is your own idea;
- copying sound, video or test materials from others without references, and presenting it as one's own work;
- submitting work done previously by the student without reference to the original paper, and presenting it as original work done in the context of the course, without the express permission of the course lecturer;
- copying the work of another student and presenting it as one's own work. If this is done with the consent of the other student, then he or she is also complicit in the plagiarism;
- when one of the authors of a group paper commits plagiarism, then the other co-authors are also complicit in plagiarism if they could or should have known that the person was committing plagiarism;
- submitting papers acquired from a commercial institution, such as an Internet site with summaries or papers, that were written by another person, whether or not that other person received payment for the work.

The rules for plagiarism also apply to rough drafts of papers or (parts of) theses sent to a lecturer for feedback, to the extent that submitting rough drafts for feedback is mentioned in the course handbook or the thesis regulations.

The Education and Examination Regulations (Article 5.15) describe the formal procedure in case of suspicion of fraud and/or plagiarism, and the sanctions that can be imposed.

Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse. Each individual is responsible for their own behaviour. Utrecht University assumes that each student or staff member knows what fraud and plagiarism



entail. For its part, Utrecht University works to ensure that students are informed of the principles of scientific practice, which are taught as early as possible in the curriculum, and that students are informed of the institution's criteria for fraud and plagiarism, so that every student knows which norms they must abide by.

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.

Name: Juan Lovera

Student number: 6628206

Date and signature: 28-07-2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juan Lovera', written over a light-colored background.

Submit this form to your supervisor when you begin writing your Bachelor's final paper or your Master's thesis.

Failure to submit or sign this form does not mean that no sanctions can be imposed if it appears that plagiarism has been committed in the paper.