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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/JCH43.v1.1>

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)

Journal for Contemporary
History

2018 43(1):1-20

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HOW AFRICAN COUNTRIES ASSISTED THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBERATION STRUGGLE: 1963-1994

Abstract

In order to arrest historical amnesia among South Africans, it is necessary to raise a public campaign of awareness on how the majority of African countries beyond the Limpopo contributed significantly in assisting the liberation of South Africans. Xenophobic or Afrophobic outbursts since 2008 have scarred the South African nation and tarnished its international reputation. Therefore, it is essential that a re-evaluation is made of the myriad ways in which other African nations gave military training and humanitarian assistance to thousands of South African refugees, and of how the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), the United Nations (UN) and the Commonwealth platforms strongly agitated for the end of minority rule. Furthermore, the economic destabilisation and terrorism that was inflicted on the Front-Line States (FLS) by the white minority-led state also need to be remembered by a new generation of South Africans. Fundamentally, whilst South Africans sacrificed their lives for political freedom, there were other sister African nations who sacrificed critical resources and human lives to see the end of apartheid on the African continent.

Keywords: Liberation struggle; African unity; xenophobia; Afrophobia; humanitarianism; Organisation of African Unity (OAU); United Nations (UN); Non-Alignment Movement (NAM); destabilisation; Front-Line States (FLS).

Sleutelwoorde: Vryheidstryd; Afrika-eenheid; xenofobie; Afrofobie; filantropie; Organisasie vir Afrika-Eenheid (OAE); Verenigde Nasies (VN); Onverbonde Statebeweging (OSB); destabilisasie; Front-linestate (FLS).

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been 24 years since South Africa had witnessed the collapse of apartheid to become a non-racial democratic state, which was met with euphoria, not only in South Africa, but across the African continent and throughout the world. The whole of Africa celebrated with South Africa during April 1994 as black South Africans exercised, for the first time, their inalienable right to freely choose a political party to govern them.

Whilst 24 years is a drop in time, those years have also been marred by the vicious outbursts of xenophobia/Afrophobia in South Africa in 2008, 2010 and 2015.¹ On 24 February 2017 the South African Police Service (SAPS) employed water cannons and stun grenades to disperse anti-immigration protesters in the capital, Pretoria, when the protest became violent.² According to the journalist *Jean Pierre Misago*, “The reality is that this type of violence is a daily occurrence in the country, although it does not always get media attention. It has, in fact, become a long-standing feature in post-apartheid South Africa.”³ This article asserts that it is necessary and important to reflect on how the African continent, and particularly the Front-Line States (FLS), contributed to the struggle to end apartheid, liberating South Africa in particular, and southern Africa generally, from the brutalities of white minority rule. In addition, it was the spirit of Pan-Africanism that motivated the efforts of the FLS and other African nations to assist in the liberation struggle of South Africa and, therefore, the recent violence and hostility directed at other black Africans residing in South Africa is wholly unethical and immoral in the context of the material sacrifices

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- 1 There is a growing literature on the development of “Afrophobia” and “xenophobia” in South Africa. See, for example, the work of D Matsinhe, “Africa’s fear of itself: the ideology of *Makwerekwere* in South Africa”, *Third World Quarterly* 32(2), 2011. Matsinhe prefers the term “Afrophobia”, which he describes as a hatred for other black African residents in South Africa who are deemed to be foreigners or *Makwerekwere*. The latter is a derogatory term in South African popular languages which refers to the unintelligible sounds and languages of black foreigners. Matsinhe emphasises that white foreigners have not been the target of such outbursts and, therefore, “Afrophobia” is distinct from “xenophobia”, which can be described as fear, hostility or hatred of strangers. Afrophobia is a loathing and fear of specifically other black Africans perceived to be *Makwerekwere* on African soil. See also, M Neocosmos, “From ‘foreign natives’ to ‘native foreigners’: Explaining xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa”, CODESRIA, 2006; A Zegeye, “Rehearsals of genocide in South Africa: Thinking with and beyond Francis Nyamnjoh and Michael Neocosmos”, *African Identities* 10(3), August 2012; A Biney, “Cry my beloved South Africa: The cancer of Afrophobia”, <<https://www.pambazuka.org/human-security/cry-my-beloved-south-africa-cancer-afrophobia>>; Jason Hickle, “‘Xenophobia’ in South Africa: Order, chaos, and the moral economy of witchcraft”, *Cultural Anthropology* 29(1); Baruti Amisi, Patrick Bond, Nokuthula Cele and Trevor Ngwane, “Xenophobia and civil society: Durban’s structured social divisions”, *Politikon* 38(1), October 2010.
 - 2 See *The Guardian*, “South African police use force to disperse anti-immigration protesters”, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/24/south-african-police-use-force-anti-immigration-protest-pretoria>>, accessed 18 October 2017. See also, “In South Africa, a protest against foreigners turns violent. Why was it allowed to go ahead”, *The Los Angeles Times*, 24 February 2017, <<http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-south-africa-foreigners-20170224-story.html>>, accessed 18 October 2017 and Jean Pierre Misago, “South Africa: Xenophobic violence in the ‘rainbow’ nation”, 1 March 2017, <<http://allafrica.com/stories/201703030562.html>>, accessed 19 October 2017.
 - 3 See Misago.

such sister nations made.⁴ Perhaps historical amnesia has filtered into the South African consciousness with regard to the contributions many African countries – including immediate neighbours and other sister African nations – made in assisting the liberation struggle in South Africa, and therefore, integral to the efforts to eradicate xenophobia/Afrophobia, must be a public education campaign to restore to the national memory how African countries aided the South African liberation struggle.

Memory and forgetting have increased as spectacles and phenomena of contemporary literature and art, as well as growing into a multidisciplinary field of study, within the academic discipline of history. “Remembering and forgetting are two sides – or different processes – of the same coin, that is, memory. Forgetting is the very condition for remembering”, writes Eril.⁵ The subject matter of memory is not only profoundly transnational, but, in the context of Africa, memory may take a Pan-Africanist orientation. As Abdul-Raheem contends, “No one [African] country can be a sustainable miracle if its neighbours are in hell.”⁶ Hence, histories and cultural experiences do not remain in cultural silos and, in fact, spill over physical and mental borders as peoples and communities intermarry and interact in socio-economic and political forms.

In short, whilst thousands of South Africans lost their lives during the years of apartheid rule (1948-1994) – and also prior to the formal adoption of apartheid in 1948 – many Mozambicans, Angolans, Zimbabweans and others in the FLS also lost their lives. How many South Africans are aware of this fact? Furthermore, the FLS were considerably damaged by the economic destabilisation of their countries by the racist regional overlord and the bitter politics of the Cold War; a context in which we should also locate the circumstances in which African countries assisted the liberation struggle in South Africa. The political rivalry and conflict between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States of America (USA) after the Second World War until the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, was at times played out by proxy in Africa and, especially, in the southern region of Africa. South Africa, in particular, was considered an important region in the world as, “investments and access to important minerals were among the most important imperatives for the superpowers’ support of the apartheid government”.⁷ Ndlovu provides a

4 The author argued in “Cry my beloved South Africa: The cancer of Afrophobia” that xenophobia and Afrophobia are cancers that are dangerous to the future of Pan-Africanism in the 21st century. See A Biney, *Pambazuka News*, 23 March 2017, <<https://www.pambazuka.org/human-security/cry-my-beloved-south-africa-cancer-afrophobia>>.

5 A Eril, *Memory in culture* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011), p. 8.

6 Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, cited in T Murithi, *The African Union: Pan-Africanism, peacebuilding and development* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005), pp. 8-9.

7 Azaria Mbughuni, “The western superpowers and the subversion of African solidarity: The complicity of ‘Francophone’ countries”. In: *South African Democracy Education*

highly detailed informative account of South Africa's geostrategic importance to the Western super powers on account of South Africa's, "3 000 km coastline with harbours at Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Walvis Bay (a seaport in Namibia, then South-West Africa)" in the fight against communism, not only in South Africa, but throughout southern Africa.⁸ He argues that, at the centre of the apartheid government's foreign policy, was the Cold War and the aim to repel the threat of international communism from within and without.⁹

Mbughuni also illustrates how the Francophone states were supported and manipulated in order to promote US interests in Africa during the Cold War. Several of these states, such as the Ivory Coast, were encouraged to defy the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) when it was formed in 1963¹⁰ with the formation of the *Organisation Commune Africaine et Malagache* (OCAM; African and Malagasy Common Organization) in 1965. OCAM was supported by the western powers as an alternative to the perceived radicalism of the OAU.¹¹ Another example of the pervasiveness of Cold War politics is illustrated in the fact that many of the Francophone countries under the extensive influence of their former colonial master, France, remained silent as France continued to sell arms to the white minority regime¹² and, therefore, these Francophone nations were upholding a duplicitous policy, as they were simultaneously members of the OAU which condemned the sale of weapons to the racist government of South Africa.

The politics of the Cold War also pervaded the intervention of Cuba in the southern Africa region and, specifically, in the affairs of Angola. One cannot examine the contribution of African countries to the South African liberation struggle without mentioning the colossal contribution of this small island in the Caribbean which can also be considered as an extension of Africa with its unyielding commitment to international solidarity. Such solidarity translated into this tiny country sending thousands of military troops to Angola in order to expel the invading South African army both in 1975 and in 1988. Cuba's intervention highlighted not only the willingness of Cubans to die alongside continental Africans for the principles of democracy, freedom, justice and equality for the liberation of others, but the duplicity of the Western imperialist nations who

Trust (SADET), *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 2 (Pretoria: UNISA, 2015), p. 580. This excellent series by SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, African Solidarity, Part 1 and 2, provides a highly detailed analysis of the contribution by most of the African countries to the South African struggle for political freedom.

8 SM Ndlovu, "The geopolitics of apartheid: South Africa in the African continent, 1948-1994". In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 2 (Pretoria: UNISA, 2015), pp. 1-13.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

10 Mbughuni, p. 581.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 592.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 598.

condemned Cuba for this action, whilst remaining silent on the atrocities and oppression of the white minority regime against the black majority of its citizens.

Disappearing into historical obscurity is the fact that, “leading members of the Swazi royal family under the leadership of Queen Regent Labotsibeni were members of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), later renamed the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923. This was made concrete by the fact that Labotsibeni was one of the financiers of the mouth piece of the SANNC, *Abantu-Batho*”.¹³ Also significant is the fact that in the launch of the SANNC, there were two Swazi members, Prince Malunge and Benjamin Nxumalo, and that, for a long period, King Sobhuza II was a card-carrying member of the ANC¹⁴ and the Swazi king also gave financial donations to the ANC. Therefore, Swaziland’s role in South Africa’s liberation struggle was an intimate one and it intensified in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Contributing to this intimacy was certainly geographical proximity, as the tiny kingdom of Swaziland strategically borders South Africa on three of its borders, in addition to sharing a border with Mozambique. This strategic location produced tensions with its regional overlord, but did not halt the determination of the Swazi state and Swazi citizens from assisting the South African liberation movements in their political objectives. Amnesia also prevails in the fact that King Letsie II of Lesotho also sent a delegation to the ANC’s founding meeting on 12 January 1912 and was proclaimed Honorary President along with 22 other traditional leaders.¹⁵

This article aims to provide an overview, for the subject matter is vast, of how African countries, particularly the FLS, assisted in the South African liberation struggle.

Analytically, the article is structured into five parts which discuss the ways African countries, along with Cuba, helped in the South African liberation struggle, followed by a conclusion. The five parts are divided thus:

1. Military assistance given to the liberation movements;
2. Humanitarian assistance to South African refugees (including education, passports, jobs, etc.);
3. Efforts of the OAU, the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), the United Nations (UN) and the Commonwealth platforms;
4. The impact and costs of apartheid destabilisation on the FLS; and
5. Cuba’s contribution to the liberation of South Africa.

13 HS Simelane, N Dlamini and J Sithole, “Swaziland’s contribution to South Africa’s struggle for independence: Charting the maze and straddling contradictions”. In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 2 (Pretoria: UNISA, 2015), p. 621.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 622.

15 TH Mothibe and M Mushonga, “Lesotho and the struggle for liberation in South Africa”. In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 1 (Pretoria: UNISA, 2013), p. 472.

2. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

Several African countries provided military training to members of the ANC's military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (or MK), Poqo, the armed wing of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) of Angola and the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) of the then South-West Africa. Among these African countries were Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Ethiopia and Ghana. For example, in 1962 a group of ANC cadres, including Isaac Makopo, were sent to Morocco for six months' military training in a small village some distance from the capital, Rabat. They were surrounded by mountains in very cold weather. They were then sent to Tanganyika where they reported to the ANC leadership their dissatisfaction with the quality of training they had received in Morocco.¹⁶ They were then despatched to the USSR in 1963.¹⁷

Another group of 28 cadres led by S Senna and R Moagi were sent to Egypt for military training, because Moroccan training was perceived as unsatisfactorily in the light of reports from Mokopo's group. They described their experience in Egypt as, "efficient, ruthless and tough, but simply irrelevant to guerrilla warfare".¹⁸

It is very interesting that MK cadres observed a significant distinction between training by the Russians and Egyptians. In short, there was an ideological difference, whereby the Russians believed that there was a need for inculcating political consciousness among trainees; freedom fighters had to analyse the social and material realities before launching an armed struggle, whereas, "the Egyptian approach [...] turned the trainees into heartless and efficient killing machines".¹⁹

During a state visit to Algeria in May 2010, President Jacob Zuma emphasized, "South Africa received immense support from Algeria during the struggle for liberation and that has influenced the good relationship enjoyed by the two countries currently."²⁰ Algeria appealed to Nelson Mandela because he was especially interested in ways to adapt Algeria's urban guerrilla and rural warfare to the South African context.²¹ In Algeria, ANC soldiers were trained

16 The criticism of the ANC combatants should not take away from the fact that the Moroccans offered this military training.

17 SM Ndlovu, "The ANC in exile, 1960-1970". In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 1, 1960-1970 (Pretoria: UNISA, 2004), p. 455.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 457.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 459.

20 I Debeche, "Algeria and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, 1955-1994". In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 1, African Solidarity (Pretoria: UNISA, 2013), p. 159.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

together with soldiers from other African countries, such as Mozambique, Angola, Sao Tomé, Príncipe and Guinea Bissau at a training centre on the Moroccan-Algerian border. Mandela was trained by highly skilled Algerian military officers on the Algerian western front in late 1961.²² In Algeria, the ANC was recognised as a fully-fledged diplomatic institution and given strong political and material support for its activities and programmes.

Tiny Lesotho did not allow the ANC to open a fully-fledged office in Maseru, but they could operate, “a presence in Maseru”, together with the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Both organisations operated from a private dwelling. It was Chris Hani, a member of the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) and a key commander of MK, who set up the ANC presence in Maseru. He lived in Lesotho for almost eight years, moving in and out of the country while mobilising against apartheid.²³ Mothibe and Mushonga contend, “Hani’s task was to infiltrate MK cadres into South Africa and build up the SACP/SACTU/ANC alliance in the Free State and the Cape.”²⁴ He was a regular visitor in both Basotho and South African anti-apartheid circles in Lesotho.

Whilst the ANC was neither allowed to open offices, nor to allow its cadres to carry weapons in Lesotho, unofficially it was permitted to store limited quantities of weapons in the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) armoury.²⁵ The ANC were not allowed to establish bases on Lesotho territory. However, Lesotho provided covert military training by absorbing some ANC cadres into the Lesotho Army, and by allowing members of the Army to provide a crash course in the use of firearms, grenades and techniques of subversion to ANC militants.²⁶ Some Basotho also joined the MK as combatants, for example Sechaba Sello, Khalaki Sello and others.²⁷

As a direct neighbour to South Africa, “Swaziland became a strategic territory for linking the South African liberation movements to areas of operation inside South Africa”,²⁸ especially for the ANC. However, the PAC also established an operational base inside Swaziland, but their presence was not as numerous as that of the ANC.²⁹ The ANC presence enabled Robert “Malume” Manci to set up the, “Soweto to Swaziland underground route via the Eastern Transvaal (Mpumalanga).”³⁰ Swazi citizens in rural communities not only hid ANC combatants in their homes from the South African border controls,³¹ but

22 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

23 Mothibe and Mushonga, pp. 492-493.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 493.

25 *Ibid.*

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*

28 Simelane *et al.*, pp. 622-623.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 630.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 627.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 651.

also sacrificed their lives by joining the ANC's military wing, for instance Keith McFadden who was killed by the apartheid regime on 22 November 1983.³² As Swazi citizens could enter South Africa legally, many aided the ANC as couriers of critical information and money to ANC individuals operating underground in South Africa.³³ Not all operations were successful and Swazi citizens, such as Jobe Ngwenya, took risks. Ngwenga operated as a courier and, whilst in the company of two ANC cadres, Sihle Mbongwa and Henry Chiliza, were stopped at a roadblock and are likely to have been killed by the South African authorities.³⁴

3. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEES

A critical manifestation of assistance given by many African countries, including the FLS, but also countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, were in the field of humanitarian assistance, as well as the provision of education, medical services and passports. For example, all South Africans based in Tanzania who travelled abroad to workshops and conferences were issued with Tanzanian passports and were recognised as Tanzanians citizens. In addition, ANC and PAC leaders were issued with diplomatic passports – other African countries did the same, such as Zambia and Ghana.

Countries such as Tanzania, Zambia, Lesotho, Botswana and Zimbabwe provided tertiary education for South African refugees who flooded the region from the 1960s onwards, and particularly after the watershed of the 1976 Soweto uprising. Education was given specifically to South Africans to prepare them to take responsible positions in a future democratic majority government. This included tertiary education and professional training in various fields, such as teaching and administration. An example is when, just before MK was launched in December 1961, 21 nurses left South Africa after the introduction of the Nurses Act. This Act introduced racial segregation in training black and white nurses in South Africa. Around the same time, on 9 December 1961, Tanganyika gained independence and, when white British nurses in Tanganyika resigned, rather than work for an African government, Tanganyika showed solidarity with the South African liberation struggle by asking the ANC to send a contingent of qualified South African nurses. Among them were Kholeka, Edith Thunywisa, Edith Ncwana and Edna Ncwana Miya. They had been recruited by Albertina Sisulu, a qualified nurse herself, working in Soweto.³⁵

Apart from allowing the PAC and the ANC to set up offices in Dar-es-Salaam in 1962, following the banning of these two organisations, Tanzania's

32 *Ibid.*, p. 655.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 653.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 628-629.

35 Ndlovu, "The ANC in exile", p. 415.

capital became known as the “Mecca” of the freedom movements, with liberation movements seeking sanctuary in Tanzania. These included the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Zambia, the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO); the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the South West African People’s Organisation (SWAPO) of, what was later to be renamed Namibia. The ANC set up its headquarters in Morogoro in Tanzania, where it operated until it moved to Lusaka in 1963.

However, “One of the greatest contributions made by the Tanzanian government was the education and training of the southern African freedom fighters. Those who completed their secondary education were given professional training as teachers, doctors, nurses, administrators and secretaries.”³⁶ Several of the accomplished professionals in the ANC government who are diplomats, economists, journalists, medical doctors, agricultural officers and defence personnel, were either trained or had career orientation in Tanzania. One example includes Dr Manto Shabalala-Msimang, who served as the Minister of Health from 1999 to 2008 and who had been able to specialise in a degree in gynaecology and obstetrics at the University of Dar-es-Salaam.

Morogoro also served as a transit centre to other liberation sites, as well as a training and settlement camp in its own right. It is located about 200 km from Dar-es-Salaam. It is important in ANC history annals that it housed the ANC headquarters in exile before the ANC relocated to Lusaka. Within Morogoro were the famous Mazimbu and Dakawa training and settlement camps.³⁷ There was also the PAC settlement and training camp, called Msuguru at Ruvu in Tanzania, which was in use from 1978 to 1993.³⁸

Mazimbu became the ANC’s educational centre to correct the deficiencies of the racist Bantu education system of South Africa. The Tanzanian government gave the land free of charge and the local people offered voluntary labour to construct the camp around 1976. In 1979 the Mazimbu Education Centre was renamed the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in honour of Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu, a young student activist who was executed by the South African government in April 1979. The SOMAFCO was South African-based and aimed to provide a sound primary and secondary school education in accordance with the values reflected in the Freedom Charter.³⁹

36 ECJ Tarimo and NZ Reuben, “Tanzania’s solidarity with South Africa’s liberation”. In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 1, African Solidarity (Pretoria: UNISA, 2013), pp. 218-219.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 234-239.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 239-241.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

Other examples of humanitarian assistance are reflected in the fact that the Zambian Government ensured South African refugees that they were welcome. The government paid for the refugees' rentals, electricity, water and telephone expenses. They were integrated into Zambian society. Some freedom fighters were given pseudonyms to facilitate their passage to other countries.⁴⁰

Lesotho, being an enclave within South Africa, was also a labour reserve for South Africa and heavily underdeveloped by the former colonial power, Britain. As, "no less than 20% of Lesotho's able-bodied men worked in South African mines and their cash earnings totalled almost three times the total wages and salaries paid within the country",⁴¹ Lesotho was economically heavily dependent on South Africa, since all its food and almost all manufactured items came from its larger neighbour. Despite this harsh economic reality, the government of Lesotho under Leabua Jonathan supported PAC and ANC militants. For example, after the repression of the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960, many PAC members fled to Maseru, the Lesotho capital, and were received by the Basotho Congress Party (BCP), as well as individual residents and communities. According to Mothibe and Mushonga, "The BCP leadership, using funds sourced from Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, built a two-roomed house" for PAC members.⁴²

The PAC established its first political headquarters in Maseru in 1962, opened by PK Leballo, until it moved its office to Dar-es-Salaam in 1963. The PAC also set up an adult education centre at Seapoint Township for both PAC freedom fighters and a few Basotho students that was later paid for, in terms of salaries and science equipment, by the Lutheran Church in Geneva.⁴³ According to Mothibe and Mushonga, "Unlike countries such as Botswana, Tanzania, and others, Lesotho did not build refugee camps where South Africans were placed. Instead, all refugees were made part of the Basotho community, and accommodated in their homes and families, making it impossible to tell who was a refugee and who was not."⁴⁴ In Lesotho, refugees were provided with a monthly cash allowance for living expenses via the Lesotho Ministry of the Interior and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They were also provided with scholarships.⁴⁵

It was in the area of education that Lesotho provided the greatest contributions. Consequently, many eminent South African academics, economists, lawyers and politicians acquired their first degrees at the University of Roma

40 CH Chirwa, "Zambia and developments in the South African liberation struggle, 1960-1994". In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 1, African Solidarity (Pretoria: UNISA, 2013), p. 289.

41 Mothibe and Mushonga, p. 479.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 476.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 478.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 488.

45 *Ibid.*

during the 1970s and 1980s. Examples include, Njabulo Ndebele, Mbulelo Mzamane, Tito Mboweni, Jama Mbeki (the late brother of Thabo Mbeki), and many others.

Botswana assisted the liberation of South Africa in myriad ways. Sharing a border with the racist regime meant that Botswana had to tread a difficult tightrope of maintaining some dialogue without diplomatic recognition of South Africa, while simultaneously providing asylum, transport and security for those freedom fighters proceeding northwards.⁴⁶ Mandela passed through Botswana in January 1962 and then boarded a plane to the then Tanganyika. Similarly, Joe Slovo and JB Marks arrived there two months later. Botswana was of the opinion that it would be suicidal to allow freedom fighters to launch attacks from within its borders. However, such activities were known to take place and when they did, the government of Botswana turned a blind eye. This caused suspicion and, in turn, threatened the security of the country.

The Botswana Government also used its police and special branch to gather intelligence and shared this with the appropriate liberation movement. In cases where the freedom fighters were arrested for violating the laws of Botswana, they were immediately sent north to Zambia and Tanzania. To avoid retaliatory action by the South African minority regime, freedom fighters would be imprisoned for a short stint and then released.

The upheaval after the Soweto uprising on 16 June 1976, and the subsequent exodus of young South Africans into neighbouring countries like Botswana, saw Botswana assist these refugees in finding scholarships, placement in local schools and transit to the north for military training.⁴⁷ Swaziland also gave refuge to hundreds of young South Africans who fled in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising.⁴⁸

Other forms of support that may be overlooked may fall under “logistical” support in the form of unloading, transportation, storage, and distribution of goods secured from friendly countries, which Tanzania carried out through the Special Duties Unit of the Tanzanian People’s Defence Force. Military equipment, food, medicine and office equipment were distributed to freedom fighters in the camps in this manner.⁴⁹

46 PT Mgadla and BT Mokopakgosi, “Botswana and the liberation of South Africa: An evolving story of sacrifice”. In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 1, African Solidarity (Pretoria: UNISA, 2013), p. 396.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 408.

48 Simelane *et al.*, pp. 633-634.

49 Tarimo and Reuben, p. 219.

4. EFFORTS OF THE OAU, THE UN, THE NAM, AND THE COMMONWEALTH PLATFORMS

The OAU, as a body that had its origins in Pan-Africanism, sought to unite and free all Africans in Africa – particularly in the countries that continued to remain under colonial domination – via vigorous statements and actions in the context of the Cold War politics of the era. Consequently, the OAU carried out a dynamic international campaign for the enforcement of sanctions against South Africa. This included termination of trade and economic relations with the racist regime. The majority of OAU member states closed their ports and airports to South African ships and aeroplanes respectively, and prohibited South African planes from flying in their air space. Through the UN Africa Group, the OAU pushed the UN to pass an arms embargo against South Africa, leading to the Security Council (SC) Resolution 418, prohibiting the supply of arms and related materials to the apartheid regime in November 1977.

The UN Africa Group was particularly proactive in the 1970s in campaigning for the liberation of South Africa. Ndlovu remarks, “Through the Africa Group based at the UN meeting of the Security Council [they] were convened to review the implementation of decisions and resolutions on apartheid. Action oriented and pragmatic strategies of action were adopted at the UN as a result of the pressure exerted by the Africa Group.”⁵⁰ Moreover, the OAU invited the liberation movements to present their points of view at the OAU’s official meetings. The OAU was also proactive in establishing the OAU Liberation Committee in 1963, which was headquartered in Dar-es-Salaam. Its functions included:

- mobilise resources for the liberation struggle;
- mobilise international solidarity for the liberation movements;
- assisting the liberation movements financially and materially;
- giving advice to the liberation movements;
- conflict management and resolution within and among liberation movements.⁵¹

All member states of the OAU were encouraged to give financial contributions to the OAU Liberation Committee. Those who were outstanding in their contributions were Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Algeria, Angola, Egypt and Nigeria. Yet, it has to be noted that, “because of the inadequate and unreliable contributions by the OAU member states, the Liberation Committee (LC)

50 Ndlovu, “The geopolitics of apartheid”, pp. 41-42.

51 ECJ Tarimo and NZ Reuben, “The role of the OAU Liberation Committee in the South African liberation struggle”. In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 1, African Solidarity (Pretoria: UNISA, 2013), p. 256.

was always constrained by lack of funds from executing the formidable tasks of liberation”.⁵²

At the level of the UN, Enuga S Reddy contends that, “African and non-aligned states were the driving force behind all UN and intergovernmental action against apartheid”.⁵³ It was the African countries that pushed for an 11-member Special Committee within the UN that was set up in 1963 and had six African countries as members. Its role was to monitor developments in South Africa and to bring matters related to South Africa to the UN. For instance, when Mandela and his colleagues were brought to court on 8 October 1963, the Chairman of the Special Committee, Diallo Telli from Guinea, and the Africa Group within the UN, acted with extraordinary urgency. Throughout the years of apartheid until 1994, both the Special Committee and the Africa Group within the UN acted with unrelenting resolve to put pressure on Western countries to force the white minority regime to dismantle apartheid. They were also in the forefront of pushing for the numerous Special Committee resolutions, countless meetings on apartheid, the establishment of cultural boycotts, the arms embargo, the oil embargo, sanctions, divestment, the sports boycott, and other activities until the cultural boycott was lifted in 1991. South Africa was expelled from the Olympic Movement in 1970, and in 1977 the Commonwealth States signed the Gleneagles Agreement that committed their sporting nationals to non-contact with South Africa. In 1983, the UN published a register of entertainers who had performed in apartheid South Africa as a way to shame cultural artists lending legitimacy to a regime considered a pariah state within the international community.

The Special Committee of the UN established close cooperation with the Asian and African states, the Nordic states, the OAU, the NAM, as well as the specialised agencies. For example, “The UN organised a ‘World Conference on Sanctions against Racist South Africa’, in cooperation with the OAU and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in Paris from 16-20 June 1986.”⁵⁴

It was African countries that pushed the UN to declare as null and void the so-called “new constitution” and the elections South Africa organised in 1984 for the “Coloured people” and people of Asian origin in South Africa.⁵⁵ Another example of the positive role of African countries, via the auspices of the UN, is the fact that, during the period leading up to South Africa’s first democratic elections, there was the establishment of the UN Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) in 1992 in the Witwatersrand/Vaal and Natal/KwaZulu

52 *Ibid.*, p. 259.

53 ES Reddy, “The UN and the struggle for liberation in South Africa”. In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 3, Part 1, International Solidarity (Pretoria: UNISA, 2008), p. 110.

54 Reddy, p. 79.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

regions of the country where 70% of the ongoing political violence was taking place. Several of these observers were from African countries. For instance, by 22 December 1992, there were 17 observers from the Commonwealth, 14 from the European Community and 11 from the OAU in South Africa. It is generally agreed that the UNOMSA, the OAU, the Commonwealth and the European Community made a positive contribution in curbing violence and promoting the transitional process.

The mandate of UNOMSA also covered the monitoring of the electoral process at every stage and assessing the ultimate freedom and fairness of the election which cost approximately \$38,9 million and came out of the regular UN budget.⁵⁶

With regard to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), President Mugabe of Zimbabwe became Chair of the NAM in 1986 and he took advantage of this to resuscitate the idea of military intervention in South Africa, but to no avail. He was also Chair of the FLS and lobbied for sanctions, as well as blocking a South African Springbok rugby tour to New Zealand. In September 1986 the NAM Summit Meeting was held in Harare and Mugabe demanded, "action and not words" against South Africa from NAM delegates. His call was answered when the NAM set up a solidarity fund to help the FLS in their fight against apartheid. It was called the "Africa Fund" and by August 1988 it had raised nearly US\$250 million which was donated to the liberation movements in South Africa.

The Commonwealth also lent its voice and concerted action towards the clamour against apartheid rule. It was African states and India that announced they would boycott the Commonwealth Games in Christchurch in 1974 if the tour of the New Zealand Rugby Union went ahead in South Africa. The Prime Minister, Norman Kirk, pressed the Rugby Union to withdraw from the tour in the larger interests of New Zealand.⁵⁷

In July 1986 Nigeria spearheaded a 32-nation boycott of the 13th Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh, Scotland, when the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, refused to implement sanctions recommended by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), set up in 1985 during the Commonwealth summit in the Bahamas in the same year. The role of EPG was to, "investigate and mediate the political crisis in South Africa".⁵⁸

In the mid-1970s, when the racist regime introduced the concept of Bantustans in South Africa, many of the FLS refused to lend political legitimacy by recognising the Bantustan administrations. This indeed was another type of political solidarity given to the liberation struggle of South Africans. South Africa

56 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

58 EE Osaghae and OO Olarinmoye, "Nigeria's solidarity with South Africa's liberation struggle". In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 1, African Solidarity (Pretoria: UNISA, 2013), p. 390.

hoped that Lesotho, as a full member of the UN, would set the precedent by recognising the Transkei as a Bantustan in October 1976, on account of the fact that Lesotho shared three border posts with this Bantustan. Lesotho refused and South Africa sought to push the tiny state into compliance by closing the entire eastern border between Lesotho and the Transkei. The economic impact of this tension and pressure upon Lesotho will be examined in the following section.

5. THE IMPACT AND COSTS OF APARTHEID DESTABILISATION ON THE FLS

Joseph Hanlon argues that, “South African aggression and destabilisation has cost its neighbours in excess of \$10 billion US dollars in the five years since the founding of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This is more than: All the foreign aid received by the SADC states during this five year period; One-third of the all SADC exports in the past five years.”⁵⁹

Needless to say, this figure of \$10 billion is simply an illustration of the damage for the years 1980 to 1985, and subsequent years are likely to have more than doubled this figure. The overall cost of destabilisation on the FLS through the racist regime’s “constellation of states” and “total war strategy” can be assessed in direct war damage; extra military expenditure incurred; higher transport and energy costs incurred; lost exports and tourism; smuggling; refugees; reduced production; and lost economic growth.⁶⁰ Hanlon contends, “Thus the price of destabilisation is not simply seen in the dead and displaced, and in the enlarged military budgets. It is also seen in lost development and reduced living standards.”⁶¹ It is this aspect – the invisible, intangible aspects of the contribution the people of the FLS made in assisting the liberation of South Africa – in terms of, “lost development and reduced living standards”, as they were destabilised (and invaded, as in the case of Angola) – that the current generation of South Africans need to remember when the derogatory term of *Makwerekwere* is employed in popular discourses against other African nationalities in South Africa (otherwise called “foreigners”).

The impact of Lesotho’s refusal to recognise the independence of the Transkei in 1976 was South Africa’s closing of the entire eastern border between Lesotho and the Transkei, leaving Lesotho without road access and almost cut off from the populated west. It also adversely affected the economic well-being of some 238 114 Basotho, constituting 19% of the population in a landlocked country.⁶² Lesotho then appealed to the UN for financial assistance. Pretoria responded by withdrawing the longstanding subsidy on Lesotho’s grain

59 J Hanlon, *Beggar your neighbours* (Nottingham: CIIR, 1986), p. 265.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 266.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

62 Mothibe and Mushongo, p. 491.

products. As Lesotho held out, South Africa was obliged to back down and restrictions were relaxed.⁶³ Other ways in which Lesotho was pressured by the racist regime was in the Lesotho Government's refusal to hand over refugees to South Africa, in particular Chris Hani. The apartheid regime then proposed an exchange and offered the detained leader of the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA), Ntsu Mokhehle. However, the Lesotho Government refused to budge.⁶⁴

Zambia too was also severely impacted by South African attempts to squeeze the country. As a small country, Zambia occupied a strategic geopolitical position in respect of the liberation of the southern Africa region. As a landlocked country, this contributed to its preoccupation with the liberation struggle in southern Africa, since all its imports and exports went via the southern routes and it sought to lessen its economic dependence on the regional overlord, South Africa. In the long term it was essential to keep these routes open. Another important point is that the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WENELA) recruited thousands of workers from Zambia's western province to work in South Africa's mines, as did many Basotho, Batswana and Mozambicans. This historical fact of the economic contribution of other African nationalities to South Africa's colossal mining industrial complex in the building of the economy of South Africa is another critical involvement of the peoples of the region in the indirect and direct assistance to the liberation of South Africa, despite the fact that both these economic migrants and black South Africans were paid meagre wages. They were equally exploited as black and cheap labour.

At the time of Zambia's independence in October 1964, Zambia's economy was one of the richest and fastest growing in the region, but this soon changed when Rhodesia made a Universal Declaration of Independence (UDI) in November 1965. Zambia's relations with the south became even more fraught and Zambia had to find reliable independent routes to secure its economy and lessen dependence on South Africa and Rhodesia. In recognition of its economic dependence on South Africa, the Kaunda Government embarked on the Tanzania-Zambia railway (TAZARA) in 1969, which was completed in 1974, and also the Tanzania-Zambia pipeline (TAZAMA), which was completed in 1968 with financial assistance from the Chinese.⁶⁵ This tiny country was to experience bombings, sabotage and destruction to its infrastructure by South Africa implying that it had to look for, what turned out to be, expensive import and export routes. South Africa also carried out numerous violations of Zambia's borders and airspace during the year 1980, as well as in 1986, 1988 and 1989. According to Chirwa, "The cost of Zambia's solidarity with the liberation struggle was incalculable".⁶⁶

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.*, p. 492.

65 Tarimo and Reuben, "The role of the OAU", p. 221.

66 Chirwa, p. 327.

Another country targeted by the white minority regime was Zimbabwe after it had gained its independence in April 1980. It was clearly targeted by the white minority racist regime, not only for harbouring South African liberation movements, but principally because of its role in the international campaign for sanctions against South Africa, using its influential positions in organisations, such as the FLS, the NAM, the Commonwealth and the SADCC.

Other aspects of the impact of apartheid on the FLS were the terrorist activities of the apartheid regime against its neighbours. This was essentially a war waged on these countries and direct assassination attempts and killings.

In short, since 1981 there had been a plan by the South African Defence Force (SADF), code-named "Operation Mixer", to assassinate the top 50 leaders of the ANC in exile. The first victim was the local ANC Chief Representative, Joe Gqabi, who was killed by gunfire in the driveway of the ANC "safehouse" in Harare on 31 July 1981. The South African regime also bombed the ANC office in Harare in 1986. There were also attempts at sabotage and assassinations in Zimbabwe. For example, on 16 August 1981 South Africa exploded bombs at the Inkomo Barracks, an arsenal of arms and ammunition, which could be heard 30 km away in Harare.

Five months later, on 18 December 1981, a bomb exploded at the ZANU Headquarters at 88 Manica Road in downtown Harare, killing seven people and injuring 124. Mugabe and other government ministers could have been present and were clearly the target if the meeting had not been delayed.

Such operation was also felt in Lesotho. The Pretoria Government carried out two bungled *coup* attempts against the Government of Leabua Jonathan in 1972 and in 1974. In addition, it turned to using a surrogate force, similar to those in Mozambique and Angola, in the form of supporting the LLLA.

It began a campaign of bombing in Lesotho in 1979 that caused extensive damage to the Maseru post office, the electricity headquarters, bridges, electricity pylons and telephone posts. In 1982 South Africa was using both economic pressure and the LLA to try and push Lesotho away from the FLS and from support for the ANC. South African commandos raided houses and flats in the centre of Maseru and killed 42 people on 9 December 1982. Among the fatalities were 30 South Africans and 12 Basotho. There was also pressure on Lesotho to sign a non-aggression pact, similar to the one the government of President Samora Machel signed with South Africa on 16 March 1984 in Nkomati.

The complex context of motives as to why Machel's Government signed this pact with "the devil" needs to be understood. It amounts to the fact that Mozambique had been brought down to her knees. It's natural seaport for much of the hinterland and the country was central to the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) – a body formed in April 1980

to lessen the economic development of the FLS and, thus, was perceived as a direct economic threat to South Africa.⁶⁷

According to Hanlon, “By 1983 Frelimo was being pummelled from all sides”.⁶⁸ It was facing the worst drought in memory that was moving into its third year, while South African attacks and support for the Mozambican National Resistance (MNR) was increasing. Despite Machel’s overtures to the West for direct foreign investment, the MNR continued to burn grain stores and blow up infrastructure and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from the West failed to materialise. The Nkomati Accord – otherwise ironically referred to as, “the policy of Good Neighbourliness” – entailed the Frelimo Government expel nearly all ANC freedom fighters and to deny them access to Mozambique as an important access route.⁶⁹ South Africa was supposed to cease its support for the MNR. It shut down the MNR radio station, but did little else.

Mozambique’s colleagues in the FLS were in general displeased with Nkomati. It is interesting that Julius Nyerere later said of the Nkomati Accord that it was a “humiliation”.⁷⁰

There was the killing of Ruth First on 17 August 1982 when she opened a parcel bomb that had been sent to the University of Maputo. It was evidently the work of the South African Police. Several years later, in 1988 in Maputo, Albie Sachs lost an arm and sight in one eye when a bomb was placed in his car.

6. CUBA’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

It is well-known that South Africa invaded the territorial sovereignty of Angola in 1975 with the approval of the US. Consequently, the government of Agostinho Neto called on the military assistance of Cuba to repel the SADF. Fidel Castro said at a mass rally on 15 March 1976 in Guinea-Conakry, “We Cubans have helped our Angolan brothers, in the first place because of a revolutionary principle, because we are internationalists, and in the second place, because our people are a Latin American people and they are a Latin-African people.”⁷¹

In short, as Lopez Blanch succinctly argues, “The blows dealt by Cuban troops to Pretoria’s regular forces from 1975 to 1988 assisted in bringing about the collapse of apartheid, persevered Angola’s independence, and opened the doors to independence of Zimbabwe and Namibia.”⁷² The politics of the Cold War

67 Hanlon, p. 134.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

70 *Ibid.*

71 H Lopez Blanch, “Cuba: The little giant against apartheid”. In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 3, Part 2, International Solidarity (Pretoria: UNISA, 2008), p. 1159.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 1160.

also complicated the situation in Angola as the country also became entrapped in politics with nationalist movements in the country, such as the MPLA aligning themselves to the USSR, and the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA, Union for the Total Liberation of Angola) aligned to the West and supported by the white minority government of South Africa.

In the aftermath of Angola's independence in 1975 and the tragedy of Soweto in June 1976, the generals of the SADF formulated the "Total Strategy" policy which was a multi-faceted military and economic operation to destabilise the entire FLS. As Campbell argues, it also promoted, "psychological warfare (promoting the idea that Africans cannot rule themselves, that Africans are inferior)".⁷³ Fearful of the leftwing ideology of the Marxist oriented MPLA and SWAPO, which had relocated its headquarters from Dar-es-Salaam to Luanda after 1976,⁷⁴ the white minority regime, was threatened with, what it perceived as, a contagious communist virus infecting the black South African masses from without. Hence, it justified its "Total Strategy" onslaught as a means to eradicate this virus and to continue white minority rule. This led to the SADF occupying the provinces of Cunene and Cuando Cubango in Angola between 1981 and 1988 with over 11 000 troops and high-level weaponry.⁷⁵

Much has been written on Cuba's critical role in the famous military battle of Cuito Cuanavale in south-eastern Angola, in which the Angolan and Cuban forces routed the South African military between October 1987 and June 1988.⁷⁶

Fundamentally, as Blanch contends, "This victory by the Cuban-Angola forces was a turning point in bringing peace in South West Africa",⁷⁷ and also to South Africa. It illustrated that white military power could be defeated on the battlefield.⁷⁸

73 H Campbell, "The military defeat of the South Africans in Angola", *Monthly Review* 64(11), April 2014. See also, Ndlovu, "The geopolitics of apartheid", pp. 63-65.

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Ibid.*

76 P Gleijeses, *Visions of freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the struggle for Southern Africa 1976-1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); L Scholtz, *The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale: Cold War Angolan finale, 1987-1988* (Solihul: Helion & Co., 2016). See also, Campbell.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 1186.

78 Over 300 000 Cuban combatants served voluntarily in Angola in what was referred to as "Operation Carlota" that lasted from 5 November 1975 to 1988 and approximately 2 077 lost their lives. See Lopez Blanch, p. 1186. In addition to Cuba's critical military contribution, the author (p. 1194) points out that Cuba offered educational training for South Africans, "In 1988 the largest South African group came, a total of 107 young people", received by the Cuban Ministry of Education.

7. CONCLUSION

It is also important for us to consider that the dogged destabilisation of the FLS, particularly Zambia and Zimbabwe – as they also had significant white settler communities – was also on account of the fact that they offered alternative visions of a society based on racial equality and respect that were intolerable to apartheid proponents.⁷⁹ Apartheid advocates were committed to justifying and hegemonising apartheid ideology, and this required the denial, sabotage and assassination of opponents and alternative visions of existence. That the governments of Cuba, the MPLA of Angola and FRELIMO of Mozambique were ideologically aligned to the Soviet Union also threatened the ethos of free market capitalism that the Pretoria regime adhered to. The threat of communism, as an alternative way of organising society, motivated the regime to destabilise, kill and terrorise the people of the FLS to submit to its hegemony.

Another factor that needs to be considered that contributed to the liberation of South Africa, is that of charismatic personalities. African leaders, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere, loom large as leaders who played an important role in promoting the cause of freedom for South Africans. They had a personal commitment to the principle of racial equality, national self-determination for oppressed people and the objectives of Pan-Africanism.

History is an important tool for equipping us to deal with the problems of today and tomorrow. It is vital that the South African Government, the church, the mosque, trade unions, the media, students, women's groups, NGOs and other societal institutions are in the forefront of understanding, remembering and disseminating the role other African countries played in the liberation of South Africa. By what method should the dissemination of the history of how African countries assisted the South African liberation struggle be approached, in order to not only dislodge historical amnesia, but to sensitise new generations, remains the challenge. Yet, in order to do this, political will of those committed to this much-needed endeavour is required. Undoubtedly, the academic discipline of history has in the last 23 years of South Africa's post-apartheid era made significant and commendable efforts to unearth the contributions of the FLS to South Africa's freedom.⁸⁰ However, the issue remains how the channelling and framing of information about the past is transmitted to inform and educate the South African public – for the process of forgetting historical deeds is also enacted in Afrophobic/xenophobic outbursts. Whilst there appears to be a dialectical relationship between remembering and forgetting, conscious human effort is necessary in paying tribute to the commendable efforts and contributions of our ancestors.

79 NM Bhebe and GC Mazarire, "Paying the ultimate price: Zimbabwe and the liberation of South Africa, 1980-1994". In: SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa*, Volume 5, Part 1, African Solidarity (Pretoria: UNISA, 2013), p. 444.

80 Here the author is referring specifically to the series documenting South Africa's history, *The road to democracy in South Africa*.