

Afrikaner anti-communist history production in South African historiography¹

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In 1958 an American observer travelling through Africa, Edwin S. Munger, made the following comment:

*“Communism is a word kicked around in South Africa almost as readily and loosely as communists like to kick ‘democracy’ and ‘liberty’ around to score their own goals”.*²

During the 20th century a whole corpus of anti-communist literature was produced, mainly by Afrikaners. And yet, to date apparently no historiographical study on the history of communism in South Africa has been published. One notable exception, though, was Mia Roth’s critique of the orthodox versions of the history of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) as portrayed in various so-called pro-communist publications.³ This chapter attempts to analyse the production and dissemination of 20th-century anti-communist literature in South Africa and to investigate the rationale behind it.

Early perceptions of communism

Socialism (as well as its offshoots, such as “Bolshevism” and “communism”) was imported mainly from Europe into South Africa.⁴ After the discovery of minerals towards the end of the nineteenth century socialism took root on a limited scale via immigrant artisans and, in conjunction with a nascent local labour movement, in the newly emerging South African industrial centres. Various socialist parties and societies, some Marxist orientated, were founded between 1903 and 1909.⁵ Apart from press organs established by labour and socialist parties, and a pamphlet by General Smuts in which he asserted that the 1914 general strike was instigated by a so-called “*syndicalist conspiracy*” (he actually meant by implication a socialist conspiracy)⁶, for the greater part of the first two decades of the twentieth century no serious attention was given in South African literature to the phenomenon of socialism or communism.

The first South African reference to communism appeared in July 1910 in the socialist weekly *Voice of Labour* – a paper that was run from 1908 to 1912 by a Scottish socialist immigrant, Archie Crawford, and his Irish-born partner, Mary Fitzgerald. *Voice of Labour* published a learned article by WH Harrison (a prominent Cape Town socialist who would become a

¹ This contribution was published in Hans Erik Stolten (ed.), *History Making and Present Day Politics. The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 2007, pp.306-333.

² E.S. Munger, *African Field Reports*, Cape Town, 1961, p. 645.

³ See M.Roth, “‘Eddie, Brian, Jack and Let’s Phone Rusty’: Is this the History of the Communist Party of South Africa (1921-1950)?”, *South African Historical Journal* (44), May 2001, pp. 191-209.

⁴ E. Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope. A History of the Black Man’s Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (London, 1948), p. 122. According to Bernard Hessian, “An Investigation into the Causes of the Labour Agitation on the Witwatersrand, January to March 1922”, MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1957, p. 92, the public’s perceptions of concepts such as “socialist”, “communist”, “Bolshevist” and even “Labouer”, were mutually linked and sometimes even regarded as synonyms.

⁵ See D. Ticktin, “The Origins of the South African Labour Party, 1888-1910”, PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 1973, pp. 182,281, 298-299, 305, 328, 362-365, 396; R.K. Cope, *Comrade Bill. The Life and Times of W.H. Andrews, Workers’ Leader*, Cape Town, 1943, p. 96; W.H. Harrison, *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa, 1903-1947*, Cape Town, 1947, pp. 4-5; H.J. and R.E. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, Harmondsworth, 1969, pp. 102-103 and A. Drew, *Discordant Comrades. Identities and Loyalties on the South African Left*, Aldershot, 2000, pp. 8,25.

⁶ Syndicalist Conspiracy in South Africa, A Scathing Indictment. Being General Smuts’ Speech in Parliament on the Recent Deportations, Cape Town, 1914.

founding member of the CPSA in 1921) in which the notion of “*anarchistic communism*”, as a socialist school of thought, was discussed.⁷

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia and the general strike of 1922 in South Africa, or the Rand Revolt, however, generated a new and wider South African interest to communism. Smuts, English mining capital and its media became concerned about the presumed “evils” inherent to communism. In an attempt to de-legitimise the 1922 strikers and their leaders the Smuts government and the media that supported it erroneously depicted the strike as a “*Red Revolt*”, “*Red Terror*” and a “*Red*” or “*Bolshevist conspiracy*”. Smuts was concerned about the “*danger*” if Bolshevism should take root among the black population. He contended that what had begun as a purely industrial dispute had deteriorated into something reminiscent of the French revolution. This transformation, according to Smuts, was precipitated by the capture and eventual replacement of the indigenous labour movements by “*forces of violence and anarchy*” that wished to establish a soviet republic in South Africa. As some Jewish immigrants became involved in local labour organisations, and a small number actively supported the 1922 strike, accusations were also made that the strike was masterminded by “*Bolshevik Jews*”.⁸

In the wake of the 1922 strike Hedley Chilvers, a journalist, published a pamphlet⁹ that reiterated many of Smuts’s and the mining press’s contentions about communism, or “Bolshevism”, as it was referred to at that stage. Chilvers begins by painting a terrifying picture of how a “*red crime*” was committed when the Russian Czar and his whole family were assassinated by Bolsheviks in 1918 and how Bolshevism was ruining Russia. He then proceeds to make white South Africans aware of the “*evil*” of Russian Bolshevism and “*how earnestly the South African ‘Reds’ are endeavouring [as they did during to 1922 strike]...to reproduce Russian conditions in this country*” by, among other things, “*red schemes of intrigue among the natives*”. Chilvers unveils to his readers subversive activities among some of the well-known South African communists of the period, such as David Ivon Jones, Bill Andrews and Sidney Bunting. Therefore he contends “*that the ‘Red’ danger is imminent*”. Also, in South Africa, local Bolsheviks endeavoured to foment revolution among blacks as part of a “*Red world conspiracy*”.¹⁰

The Pact government – a political alliance of the Nationalist Party (NP) and Labour Party – also responded to the radicalisation of black and white labour movements in the 1920s. In this period communist influence in the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union, founded in 1919 for black workers, became stronger.¹¹

In the hands of the state, anti-communist measures, according to Van Deventer and Nel, became part of the strategic means through which the working class movements, both black and white, were emasculated in order to provide a pliable source of skilled and unskilled labour to mining and industrial capitalism. The “*Communist Peril*” was used to justify the imposition of penalties on the “*dissemination of foreign ideologies*” amongst black workers. Legislation and prosecution in terms of it were employed to drive a wedge between white “leftist” trade unionists and black workers. This was bolstered by a slander campaign against whites who were noticeably members of the CPSA. Anti-communist sentiment was propagated and exploited to provide the state with the necessary means to curtail any

⁷ See W.P. Visser, “Die Geskiedenis en Rol van Persorgane in die Politieke en ekonomiese Mobilisasie van die Georganiseerde Arbeiderbeweging in Suid-Afrika, 1908-1924”, PhD thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2001, p. 217.

⁸ W.P. Visser, “Die Geskiedenis en Rol van Persorgane”, pp. 368, 442-443; A. Van Deventer and P. Nel, “The State and ‘Die Volk’ Versus Communism, 1922-1941”, *Politikon* 17, 2, December 1990, pp. 64, 67, 74.

⁹ The Menace of Red Misrule. Facts and Figures for All, Johannesburg and Germiston, c1923.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.11-19.

¹¹ E. Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, pp. 161-175; S. Johns, Raising the Red Flag. The International Socialist League and the Communist Party of South Africa, 1914-1932, Bellville, 1995, pp. 95, 168-181.

perceived threat to white supremacy. For Van Deventer and Nel the origins of anti-communism were therefore coterminous with a comprehensive state strategy to safeguard white interests.¹²

The decision by the CPSA in 1925 to shift its focus and organisational activities from the white to the black proletariat, as well as its 1928 resolution, directed by the Comintern in Moscow, to pursue the goal of establishing a “Native” republic in South Africa, bolstered notions in the white establishment that the communists were fostering a black upheaval against white rule.¹³

Afrikaner nationalism and communism

In South African history the 1930s and 1940s are characterised in particular by the advent of Afrikaner political hegemony. Afrikaner literature of that period also reflects a reaction to the presumed “threats” of communism towards Afrikanerdom.

By the 1930s a fundamental tenet appears in the growing corpus of anti-communist literature produced by Afrikaner intellectuals in particular. Communism was increasingly being seen as a threat to race relations, and especially the continuation of white trusteeship. Blacks themselves were not regarded as the source of a possible disturbance of the paternalistic order of race relations. The real danger lay, so it was believed, with predominantly white communist agitators who could incite blacks against whites. Thus four themes emerged in the development of Afrikaner nationalism’s production of anti-communist literature in the 1930s and 1940s. Firstly, the “Red Peril” was equated with the “Black Peril”. Communists were depicted as proponents of racial equality and internationalism, and their principles were regarded as irreconcilable with Christian beliefs. Secondly, there was the danger of divisions among Afrikaner workers if some would adhere to communism. Thirdly, given the role of a few prominent Jews within the CPSA and in labour organisations, the “Red Peril” and the “Black Peril” were also equated with the “Jewish Peril”. Lastly, in their turn all these “perils” were equated with the danger of Soviet world domination.¹⁴

These themes were reflected in a concerted attempt of the NP and other Afrikaner nationalist organisations after 1936 to present a unified conception of the “communist menace” to the Afrikaner people and to *volkseenheid* (*people’s unity*), and to attack communism’s influence in the white labour movement. The background to this initiative was the formation of the South African Trades and Labour Council (SAT&LC), a trade union federation to which such important trade unions as the Mine Workers’ Union (MWU) and the Garment Workers’ Union (GWU) were affiliated. The SAT&LC facilitated the exposure of white trade unionists, including Afrikaners, to militant socialist ideas. Some of these Afrikaner workers were even sent to the Soviet Union in order to experience the benefits of a workers’ state for themselves. Encouraged by the Comintern, left-wing labour organisations such as the SAT&LC were by the mid-1930s supporting the formation of the United People’s Front (UPF) against Fascism, which was to include all members of the working class. This movement actively propagated the breaking down of racial barriers among the working class and promoted the inclusion of Afrikaans-speaking workers in the Front.

Given the prejudice of some Afrikaner intellectuals against the “threat” of non-racialism propagated by the communists, the events related above provided a trigger for the formation of Christian-nationalist alternatives to “communist” trade unions. Leading young Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs such as Piet Meyer, Nico Diederichs, Eric Louw and Albert Hertzog –

¹² A. van Deventer and P. Nel, “The Sate and ‘Die Volk’”, pp. 65, 78.

¹³ See S. Johns, *Raising the Red Flag*, pp. 162, 200-201.

¹⁴ A. van Deventer and P. Nel, “The State and ‘Die Volk’”, pp. 65, 70-71. For a detailed study of these arguments see A. van Deventer, “Afrikaner Nationalist Politics and Anti-Communism, 1937-1945”, MA thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1991.

all members of the NP and the elitist Afrikaner Broederbond (Brotherhood) (AB) – returned from extensive stays in Europe and America, where they were exposed to extreme forms of anti-Bolshevik and anti-Semitic sentiments. They became the leading proponents of the idea that Afrikaner workers should be protected against the “threats” of liberal-capitalism and communism. Under the guidance of Hertzog the Nasionale Raad van Trustees (National Council of Trustees) (NRT) was created in an effort to purify unions such as the MWU and the GWU of their “*communistically inclined*” Jewish leadership and to “*save*” Afrikaner workers from the “*baneful influence*” of communism and non-racialism.¹⁵

Consequently, anti-communist literature was produced to support these endeavours. AJG Oosthuizen, a minister of the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk (NHK), wrote a booklet entitled *Kommunisme en die Vakunies* in support of the NRT’s initiatives.¹⁶ Oosthuizen wrote of the “*dangerous ideology*” of “*Russian godlessness*”. The aim of the booklet was “*to make our people [Afrikaners] aware of a great [communist] danger threatening us*”. Therefore the NRT’s struggle against the GWU and its general secretary, Solly Sachs, a “*communist Jew*”, was supported by the NHK. Oosthuizen inveighed against *Die Klerewerker*, the organ of the GWU, for inciting a class struggle between (Afrikaner) employees and employers. The Soviet Union was the centre of the “*evil of communism*” from where a world revolution against the existing (white) order, directed by the “*Red Army*”, would be instigated.

In South Africa the communists, it was claimed, aimed at destroying religion, confiscating private property, overthrowing the state and creating a black republic where blacks and Coloureds “*would be boss and govern*”. The danger lay particularly in “*communist*” trade union federations such as the SAT&LC and in its affiliated unions for miners, garment workers and builders that represented many Afrikaner workers. In conjunction with the CPSA these organisations tried to bring about equality between black and white. To fight communism a classless “*volksosialisme*”, which was “*inherent in the character of the Afrikaner people*”, should replace the “*evil*” of exploitative capitalism. Therefore *volkseie* (people’s own) Afrikaner trade unions, such as those propagated by the NRT, should be established to counter all the above-mentioned evils.¹⁷

For Nico Diederichs, political science professor at the University of the Free State and future NP Minister of Finance, communism also implied the annihilation of the existing (capitalist) world order and represented an urge to destroy human institutions such as patriotism, privacy, the family and religion. To him it was clear that the spirit of the communists was the spirit of “*Lucifer*”. According to Diederichs, many individuals, “*mostly from the lower and illiterate classes*”, were already leavened with communist ideas - probably without knowing it. This state of affairs was encouraged by “*agitators*” who propagated the spread of “*communist poison*” among black and white.¹⁸ Chapters of Diederichs’s book were also published in *Die Huisgenoot*, a popular Afrikaans magazine. In the 1930s the literary contents of this weekly made it a highly esteemed publication as it was regarded as maintaining sound intellectual and academic standards, and in some Afrikaner circles it was even regarded as the “*poor man’s university*”.¹⁹

¹⁵ A. van Deventer and P. Nel, “The State and ‘Die Volk’”, pp.71-73. Regarding the NRT’s efforts to Afrikanerise the MWU and to fight the leadership of the GWU, see e.g. S. Sachs, *Rebels Daughters*, Manchester, 1957; L. Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog, die Nasionale Party en die Mynwerker*, Pretoria, 1969; L. De Kock, “Die Stryd van die Afrikaner in die Suid-Afrikaanse Mynwerkersunie aan die Witwatersrand, 1936-1948, MA thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, 1983 and D. O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme. Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948*, Johannesburg, 1983. Regarding Hertzog’s views on communism, and how these views equated with the “Red”, “Black” and “Jewish Perils”, see also A. Hertzog, “Toesprake van Dr. Albert Hertzog tussen die Jare 1930-1948”, Unpublished typescript.

¹⁶ Heidelberg, c. 1938.

¹⁷ AJG Oosthuizen, *Kommunisme en die Vakunies*, pp. 1-22.

¹⁸ N. Diederichs, *Die Kommunisme. Sy Teorie en Taktiek*, Bloemfontein, 1938, pp. 150-153, 172-173.

¹⁹ See C.F.J. Muller, *Sonop in die Suid. Geboorte en Groei van die Nasionale Pers 1915-1948*, Cape Town, 1990, pp. 563-572.

The “Red” and “Black Peril” themes repeatedly surfaced in the anti-communist publications of the period. F.J. van Rensburg, the leader of the Ossewa-Brandwag (Oxwagon Sentinel) (OB), a fascist Afrikaner cultural movement that gained short-lived popularity among Afrikaners in the 1930s and 1940s, emphasized that the OB, with its authoritarian ideology, offered the Afrikaner an alternative to the policies of racial equality espoused by communist ideology.²⁰

By 1944 Piet Meyer, secretary of the NRT and was in later years to become the president of the AB and board chairman of the state-sponsored South African Broadcasting Corporation, toyed with the idea of a distinct form of Afrikaner socialism as an effective counter to the threat of communism.²¹

Also the NP often linked the “Red Menace” and the “Black Peril”. Early in 1943 Eric Louw wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Communist Danger in South Africa*. In this document Louw set out the party’s objections to communist ideology. Communists believed in racial equality and miscegenation. Moreover, they were atheists and were spreading their propaganda among blacks. Thus communists were a threat to the survival of both white civilisation and Christianity in South Africa.²² The NP premises were put into practice after the party came to power in 1948. Louw, who became South Africa’s Foreign Minister in 1948, was instrumental in the closing of the Soviet consulates (established in 1942) at Pretoria and Cape Town, and in unilaterally severing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. According to Philip Nel, the “Black Peril” thus finally fused with the “Red Peril” in official thinking.²³

The accounts of the role of prominent leaders of the CPSA in the freedom struggle that appeared in published biographies and reminiscences from the 1940s onwards²⁴ also strengthened anti-communist perceptions of communist subversion and agitation intended to foment revolt among blacks against white rule.

An interesting effort to counter the Afrikaner anti-communist rhetoric was a CPSA pamphlet by an Afrikaner communist, Danie du Plessis.²⁵ Du Plessis was the secretary of the Paper Workers’ Union and the organiser of the Building Workers’ Union. Because of the widespread unemployment during the Great Depression of the early 1930s he became disillusioned with capitalism. For Du Plessis capitalism’s only intention was to exploit black and white workers and to prevent worker solidarity through racial segregation. In order to generate maximum profits industrial capitalism introduced poll and hut taxes in the black reserves, which had the effect of forcing rural blacks to seek employment in the cities as “cheap slave labour” under the oppressive pass laws. Therefore black workers were not the white workers’ enemies but rather their allies. According to Du Plessis, the Afrikaner’s religion was not threatened by communism as the church “still existed” under communist rule in Soviet Russia. Afrikaners would only be able to maintain and strengthen their language and culture by forming a non-racial working class in South Africa.²⁶

Afrikaner churches and communism

The avowed atheism of international communism understandably touched a raw nerve in the Christian-nationalist ethos of the traditional Afrikaner churches, which in turn stimulated a plethora of studies on communism from an ecclesiastical perspective. These studies reveal the

²⁰ J.F. van Rensburg, *Die Ossewa-Brandwag en die Kommunisme*, Johannesburg, 1943, pp. 15, 20.

²¹ See Die Stryd van die Afrikanerwerker. Die Vooraand van ons Sosiale Vrywording, Stellenbosch, 1944.

²² Quoted by N.M. Stultz, *Afrikaner Politics in South Africa, 1934-1948*, Berkeley, 1974, p. 122.

²³ P. Nel, A Soviet Embassy in Pretoria? The Changing Soviet Approach to South Africa, Cape Town, 1990, p. 2-3.

²⁴ See e.g. R.K. Cope, *Comrade Bill*; E. Roux, *S.P. Bunting: A Political Biography*, Cape Town, 1944; W.H. Harrison, *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa, 1903-1947* and E. Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*.

²⁵ *Waarom Ek ‘n Kommunist Is*, Cape Town, c.1940.

²⁶ D. Du Plessis, *Waarom Ek ‘n Kommunist Is*, pp. 1-15.

construction of a “volkslaer” discourse. The church would act as a vanguard to shield the Afrikaner people from the “Red Peril” and its offshoots.

Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs who endeavoured to Afrikanerise certain trade unions and purify them from “communist” influences found staunch allies in the traditional Afrikaner churches. In May 1937 the NHK appointed a special commission of inquiry to report on communism and its activities in the South African trade unions. Eventually Dr H.P. Wolmarans, an ordained clergyman of the church and Professor of Theology at the University of Pretoria, compiled a brochure on the findings of the commission of inquiry, entitled *Kommunisme en die Suid-Afrikaanse Vakunies*.²⁷ Wolmarans came to similar conclusions on the trade unions as Reverend Oosthuizen had done in *Kommunisme en die Vakunies*. The SAT&LC connived with the “Moscow-ordained” UPF to promote communism and these “pro-soviet” organisations planned to deliver the South African people to Russia. Affiliation to the SAT&LC would imply very negative consequences for the interests of Afrikaner workers, “all” of whom were members of the Afrikaner Protestant churches. Wolmarans’s publication was very defamatory about Solly Sachs of the GWU. Sachs was accused of being the main instigator of the SAT&LC and the pro-Soviet front in South Africa, as well as of manipulating and alienating Afrikaner female members of the GWU from their people.²⁸ Sachs, however, sued Wolmarans for slander and the latter settled out of court for £300 damages.²⁹

In a booklet dedicated to female social workers of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) Norval Geldenhuys revisited the history of the destruction of Russian Christianity under communism, also briefly dealt with in the writings of authors such as Chilvers, Oosthuizen and Diederichs.³⁰ For Geldenhuys the two “most explosive danger points” in the existence of the Afrikaner people were the poor white problem and the “native problem”. The church had a duty to carry out the social upliftment of the Afrikaner poor. Neglect of this duty had already resulted in many female Afrikaner workers joining the ranks of the “communist” GWU. Geldenhuys was also of the opinion that the church and the Afrikaner people should “convince” the black population that the whites’ policy of trusteeship and racial segregation “honestly” catered for their social needs. If the church failed in this mission, “unscrupulous communist agitators” would succeed in turning black against white.³¹

From the 1940s onwards the Afrikaner churches – the DRC, the NHK and the Hervormde Kerk – would organise a flurry of anti-communist conferences and symposia to try and investigate the perceived threat of communism to Christianity in South Africa and to find ways to combat this. In October 1946 the Anti-kommunistiese Aksiekommissie (Anti-communist Action Committee), or Antikom, was founded at an ecclesiastical congress on communism held in Pretoria under the auspices of the DRC. Apparently this initiative was conceived within the ranks of the NRT. Some of the most prominent and influential Afrikaner political, cultural, intellectual and church leaders would serve on Antikom. The constitution of Antikom entailed the following, among other things: combating the communist way of life; the promotion of Christian-nationalist trade unionism among the white workers of South Africa; and influencing the black population in the religious, social, educational, economic and other spheres of life in order to woo them to the Christian-nationalist viewpoint on racial apartheid and to combat ideologies opposing such views.³²

²⁷ Johannesburg, 1939. See also E.S. Sachs, *The Choice Before South Africa*, London, 1952, pp. 58-59, 173-174.

²⁸ H.P. Wolmarans, *Kommunisme en die Suid-Afrikaanse Vakunies*, p. 2, et seq.

²⁹ E.S. Sachs, *The Choice Before South Africa*, pp. 59, 174; E.S. Sachs, *Rebels Daughters*, pp. 141-142.

³⁰ Die Kommunistiese Aanslag teen die Kerk, Stellenbosch, 1947, p. 1, et seq.

³¹ N. Geldenhuys, *Die Kommunistiese Aanslag teen die Kerk*, pp. 59, 67-69, 77-79.

³² S.J. Botha, et al, *Bewaar Jou Erfenis. Simposium oor Kommunisme*, Port Elizabeth, 1968, pp. 11-15.

In April 1964 Antikom organised a *Volkskongres* (People's Congress) in Pretoria, attended by 2428 delegates, on the theme "Christianity against Communism". The object of the *Volkskongres* was to alert all whites, not just Afrikaners, to the alleged perils of communist subversion in South Africa. The 1964 *Volkskongres* established a standing body, the National Council Against Communism. In 1966 the National Council sponsored an "International Symposium on Communism", held in Pretoria. The chairman was the Reverend J.D. Vorster, the Moderator of the DRC and brother of B.J. Vorster, who would succeed H.F. Verwoerd as Prime Minister of South Africa. The main speaker was Major Edgar Bundy, executive secretary of the Anti-Communist Church League of America. Another Antikom symposium on communism was held in Port Elizabeth in 1968. Antikom also regarded its calling in combating communism to be educational. Therefore published conference proceedings and other works were commissioned for public dissemination. In this way the "Red Peril" theme was kept alive.³³

The 1964 congress sported a very striking emblem – a hand grasping a dagger (representing the *Volkskongres*) stabbing a red hammer and sickle octopus draped over South Africa. Even before the congress started fierce polemics broke out in both the English and Afrikaans press as to whether the event, which was referred to by some papers as "*religious McCarthyism*", should be held at all. In an effort to demonise communism speakers at the congress concentrated on a theological analysis of the "*lies*" of communism, communist "*brainwashing*", the "*communist onslaught*" on the church and how communism was "*devouring*" and "*enslaving*" free nations on a world-wide scale. In South Africa the "*danger*" of communism was not the intention to destroy the church, but rather to infiltrate it and other institutions in the broader society, as well as the youth and the education system in order to transform them into "*tools of the communist revolutionary programme*". An "*onslaught*" was directed especially against Afrikaner churches, which represented the majority of South African whites, in order to render them "*defenceless*" against "*liberal*" and "*communist indoctrination*". South Africa was therefore caught up in a "*death struggle*" against communism and it was the task of the congress to find a "*remedy*" against it. In reaction to the critique in the liberal press, - namely, that the congress would be the prelude to a witch-hunt of communists, - some speakers retorted that such a critique showed that the communists were leading the press by the nose.³⁴

As mentioned above, the 1966 symposium concentrated on communism in an international context. Speakers came from France, Hungary, Cuba and the USA, among other places. Three major themes were discussed. Firstly, the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party's (SACP) insurgence and sabotage activities to overthrow the white government were dealt with by Major-General H.J. van den Bergh, Chief of the South African Security Police. A second theme dealt with methods, strategies and actions by Soviet Russia to take over countries such as Hungary and Cuba.

Thirdly, the 1960s were the heyday of *verkramptheid* (arch-conservatism) in Afrikaner politics. Within this context, as in 1964, the Reverend J.D. Vorster repeated his attacks on liberalism for its "*tolerance*" of communism. Liberalism was pointed out as a so-called "*Fifth Column*" of communism. In addition, Vorster attacked what he called "*decadent art*" and castigated new progressive developments in Afrikaans literature. These liberal tendencies should all be combated, Vorster emphasised, because they undermined moral values that would make the Afrikaner people susceptible to communism.³⁵

³³ See S.J. Botha, et al, *Volkskongres oor Kommunisme*, Pretoria, 1964, pp. 5, 271-272; S.J. Botha, et al, *Bewaar Jou Erfenis*, pp. 7, 16; N.M. Stultz, *Afrikaner Politics in South Africa*, pp. 178-179 and C. Dalcanton, *The Afrikaners of South Africa: A Case Study of Identity Formation and Change*, Pittsburgh, 1973, p. 239.

³⁴ See S.J. Botha, et al, *Volkskongres oor Kommunisme*, Pretoria, 1964.

³⁵ See J.D. Vorster, et al, *Oorlog om die Volksiel. Referate gelewer by die Internasionale Simposium oor Kommunisme*, Pretoria, 1966. The CPSA was banned in 1950. After its reconstitution in 1953 it became known as the

Vorster was also the keynote speaker at the 1968 Antikom symposium on communism. He asserted that the church was “*sentenced to death*” by this ideology. Vorster again fulminated against liberalism for doing “*valuable pre-labour*” on behalf of communism. He even reproached the South African Academy for Science and Arts – the elite academic institution of the Afrikaner establishment – for awarding literary prizes to liberal Afrikaner writers whose work “*softened*” Afrikaners towards communism.³⁶ Other papers dealt with how communism subtly attempted to infiltrate areas such as labour movements, education and the media. Conference resolutions were adopted, *inter alia*, to support the underground church behind the Iron Curtain and to request the government to promulgate legislation against multi-racial trade unions.³⁷

Other Antikom publications followed in similar vein. In the 1950s Piet Meyer published a pamphlet containing a concise history of communist activities in South Africa. The cover page displayed the ominous spectre of a Bolshevik looming like a giant over a Christian city in South Africa. Wielding a hammer and a sickle the giant went about destroying the city. Meyer illustrated how the SACP’s policy was repeatedly defined and dictated by Moscow. According to Meyer, the Russian consulate, established in Pretoria in the 1940s, was undoubtedly the centre of “*a communist campaign in the Union [of South Africa]*”.³⁸ In the spirit of the resolve of organisations such as Antikom to inform and educate especially Afrikaners on the “communist threat” to South Africa, Fred Schwarz’s popular book, *You Can Trust a Communist (to be Communist)*, was also translated into Afrikaans by Timo Kriel.³⁹ Schwarz’s work was originally published by the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade in America.⁴⁰

During the 1970s Antikom’s publications also started to concentrate on the “Yellow Peril”, or Chinese communism, in Africa. At the time 15 000 Chinese “communists” were constructing the Tanzam railway line between Tanzania and Zambia and “tried to control black African states”. By means of material assistance and military aid communist countries in Europe and Asia were systematically attempting to influence African countries north of the Limpopo in the direction of communism. White South Africa was the ultimate goal of this Soviet-led communist world strategy. Therefore it was the “*responsibility*” of Christians in South Africa to combat the threat of this “*communist onslaught*”. On behalf of all the people of Africa communism was to be prevented from controlling southern Africa and therefore also the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and South Africa’s mineral wealth.⁴¹

By this time the Theological Seminary of the DRC at the University of Stellenbosch and that of the NHK at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education had started to produce brochures of lecture series to theology students and church ministers on Marxism and Soviet-communism.⁴²

At times Afrikaner churches went to absurd lengths in their quest to demonise communism by means of the public dissemination of anti-communist literature. In 1983 Biblecor, a subsidiary

South African Communist Party (SACP). With regard to the “danger” of liberalism for Afrikanerdom, as it would promote the communist cause, see G.D. Scholtz, *Die Bedreiging van die Liberalisme*, Johannesburg, 1966.

³⁶ See S.J. Botha, *et al*, *Bewaar Jou Erfenis*, pp. 8, 20-23.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-161.

³⁸ Die Hand van Moskou in Suid-Afrika. ‘n Sonderlinge Geskiedenis van Ongelooflike Gebeurtenisse, Pretoria, c.1950, pp. 3-30.

³⁹ The Afrikaans translation was entitled *Jy Kan Die Kommuniste Vertrou* (..om presies te doen wat hulle sê!), Roodepoort, 1962.

⁴⁰ See H.R. Pike, *A History of Communism in South Africa*, p. 568.

⁴¹ P.J. Meyer, *et al*, *Die Rooi Gevaar is Hier. Kommunistiese Aanslag op ons Land en Gees*, Pretoria, c.1971, pp. 5, 7-25, 61-65. See also J. du Plessis, *Kommunistiese Vrede of Christelike Stryd*, Bloemfontein, 1978.

⁴² See D.J. Kotzé, *et al*, *Kommunisme. Die Stryd om die Mens*, Cape Town, 1978 and J.A. du Plessis, *Die Filosofie van die Grafskrif!* ‘n Inleiding tot die Verstaan van die Sowjet-Kommunisme, Potchefstroom, c.1970.

of the DRC, published a Bible correspondence course compiled by P.J. Rossouw. This 68-page booklet purported to present to correspondents a “*survey of communism, its doctrine, aims and how it functioned in everyday life*”. However, its contents reflected superficial and random information on Karl Marx, Lenin, communist ideology, Soviet economic policy and the SACP, and was a very poor attempt to diffuse instant knowledge on communism. Interspersed with Biblical texts and references, as well as photos of Marx, Lenin, Stalin, a general meeting of the Russian Communist Party and even of a Russian anti-ballistic missile paraded on Red Square in Moscow, the purpose of this reader was to guide correspondents to the inevitable conclusion that “*atheist communism*” should be combated as there could be no peace between the latter and Christianity. It was also based on the contentious supposition that, having completed the course, correspondents would have “*a [reasonable] knowledge of communist ideology and policies in Russia and South Africa*” and be able “*to unmask the lies of communism*”. Correspondents would also be able to “*explain the calling of the church regarding communism and its breeding-ground in South Africa and how to contain it*”.⁴³

The publication of ecclesiastical anti-communist rhetoric probably culminated in Henry Pike’s *A History of Communism in South Africa* published by Christian Mission International of South Africa.⁴⁴ The narrative of this comprehensive 601-page study, illustrated with more than 400 photos, is marred time and again, however, by Pike’s subjective anti-communist remarks and commentary that reduce the academic merit of the book to a large extent. The text is also interspersed with biblical texts and references. The central theme of Pike’s rhetoric is that the international community at large, liberals, international finance and the United Nations plotted with “*Marxist-inspired*” organisations such as the SACP, the ANC, etc. to weaken an anti-communist South Africa against a communist “*Red onslaught*”.⁴⁵

Indeed, Pike, a conservative American Baptist missionary who had lived in South Africa for ten years, states emphatically on the dust cover and in his introduction that he was “*totally opposed to the left...and every shape, form and fashion of Marxism-Leninism*”. He categorically declares that it was impossible to write about South African communism from an objective point of view as the “*hellish anti-God philosophy*” of communism “*is inimical to all forms of decent human society*”. He makes no apologies for these statements, Pike continues, and only regrets that more of the Bible’s message of hope could not have been woven into the narrative. The book was intended “*primarily for purposes of instruction and education regarding the subject of communism in South Africa and related events*”. It did not purport to be a definitive, scientific analysis of the South African communist movement. Therefore the book would be “*a pure delight to the conservative Christian*”. Pike also declared that to “*seek communism as the answer to the system of apartheid is to slide from the smoke and pain of the mythical purgatory to the fires and damnation of Hell*”.⁴⁶

South Africa and the internationalisation of Soviet-communism

From the 1950s onwards, as the Cold War became hotter, anti-communist rhetoric in the South African historiography gradually shifted from an internal focus on the danger of the “*Red Peril*” to Afrikaner and white interests towards the threat posed by international Soviet communism in Africa on a global scale and South Africa in a regional context. As in the case of the ecclesiastical publications, anti-communist history production also began to refer to the “*Yellow Peril*” that posed a threat to Africa and to South Africa in particular. Soviet Russia, however, remained the central focus of the international approach to communism.⁴⁷

⁴³ See Die Christen en Kommunisme, Wellington, 1983.

⁴⁴ Germiston, 1985.

⁴⁵ H.R. Pike, *A History of Communism*, pp. 548-553.

⁴⁶ See *Ibid.*, pp. xvi-xviii, 527.

⁴⁷ See for instance C. Dalcanton, *The Afrikaners of South Africa*, p.242 and Report of the Select Committee on Suppression of Communism Act Enquiry, Parow, 1953, pp.150,170-171,193-194.

In his 1954 publication on the future of the Afrikaner the renowned Afrikaner historian and journalist, G.D. Scholtz, pointed out that international Soviet policy posed “*a danger of Communism in Africa sweeping from Cape Town to the Mediterranean*”.⁴⁸ In this context Russia also presented a “*great threat*” to Western Europe. In any conflict between democratic and communist powers Africa maintained a strategically important flank position on behalf of the democratic powers in Europe. The Afrikaner’s fatherland was an “outpost” of Western civilisation in Africa. As such the future might demand from Afrikaners that they fight Russian communists side by side with Western Europeans in order to protect their European heritage in Africa.⁴⁹

Scholtz was fascinated with the power of the Soviet Union and the world-wide expansion of the communist ideology that diametrically opposed the Afrikaners’ nationalist and apartheid ideology. Following on *Het Die Afrikaanse Volk ‘n Toekoms?* he published a comprehensive 561-page book entitled *Die Stryd om die Wêreld*.⁵⁰ The book expounds on the struggle for world domination between East and West in which, according to Scholtz, the fate of the Afrikaner was intimately involved. Scholtz pitches Soviet communism against non-communist countries in Africa, Asia and Europe, and states that the non-communist countries under the leadership of America should make an all-out effort to check the advance of communism.⁵¹

The 1960s was a productive period for “Red Peril” and “Total Onslaught” historiography. Christian-nationalist-orientated publications by academic pedagogues, intended to inform and educate Afrikaners about “*unmasking the falseness of communism*” and to prepare them for the “*struggle*” against this ideology, were still being produced.⁵² Likewise anti-communist rhetoric from a Christian-nationalist pedagogical perspective was produced in dissertations at Afrikaans-speaking universities⁵³; in extreme cases these studies sometimes bordered on absurdity. For instance, the Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch produced an MA thesis on Marxism and South African school cadets.⁵⁴

In 1967 the security police succeeded in the sensational capture of Yuriy Loginov, a Soviet KGB agent.⁵⁵ W.G. Pretorius’s study devoted a chapter to the training and *modus operandi* of the “*Red [Russian] Spy*” and to the inner workings of the KGB.⁵⁶ The central motive behind these works seemed to be to demonise organisations in the armed struggle against apartheid, especially the ANC, and to portray them as puppets directed by the initiatives and tactics of the SACP.

In his book *The Red Trap. Communism and Violence in South Africa* (appropriately provided with a red cover to illustrate the point)⁵⁷ Chris Vermaak, a South African Security Police

⁴⁸ G.D. Scholtz, *Het Die Afrikaanse Volk ‘n Toekoms?*, Johannesburg, 1954.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 37, 42-43, 56, 59. See also F.A. van Jaarsveld, “G.D. Scholtz se Oordeel oor die Toekoms van die Afrikaner teen die Agtergrond van Wêreldgebeure”, *Historia* 38, 2, November 1993, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Johannesburg, 1962.

⁵¹ F. A. van Jaarsveld, “G.D. Scholtz se Oordeel”, *Historia*, 38, 2, November 1993, p. 8; T.S. van Rooyen, “Boekbespreking: Scholtz, G.D.: Die Stryd om die Wêreld”, *Historia*, 7, 4, December 1962, pp. 284-287.

⁵² See e.g. W.G. Pretorius, *Die Kommunisme. Fabel en Feit*, Johannesburg, 1968 and G. Cronjé (ed), *Kommunisme: Teorie en Praktijk*, Pretoria, 1969.

⁵³ See e.g. G.E.P. Nel, “Kommunistiese Infiltrasie: ‘n Ontleding van die Taktiek in Teorie en Praktijk”, MA thesis, University of Pretoria, 1973.

⁵⁴ J.H. du Plessis, “Marxisme en Skoolkadette in Suid Afrikaanse Konteks. ‘n Studie in die Fundamentele Opvoedkunde”, 1988.

⁵⁵ H.R. Pike, *A History of Communism in South Africa*, pp. 464-467. In January 1981 another KGB agent, Major Alexsei Kozlov was captured in Johannesburg. P. Nel, *A Soviet Embassy in Pretoria?*, p. 27 and in 1983 a senior South African Navy officer, Commodore Dieter Gerhardt, and his wife, Ruth, were arrested and convicted for passing South African military secrets via the KGB to the Soviet Union, Pike, pp. 524-525. Translated KGB means “Committee for State Security”.

⁵⁶ See W.G. Pretorius, *Die Kommunisme. Fabel en Feit*, pp. 332-376.

⁵⁷ Johannesburg, 1966.

officer, asserted that a Soviet-inspired communist plot was being hatched to foster anti-apartheid sabotage, subversion and revolution in South Africa. Agents of the CPSA infiltrated organisations such as the National Union of South African Students, the South African Indian Congress, the ANC, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the PAC, the anti-apartheid Congress of Democrats (COD), the South African Congress of Trade Unions and even the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

The objectives of the Freedom Charter, drawn up at Kliptown south of Johannesburg in 1955 by the so-called Congress of the People – a gathering of anti-apartheid organisations – carried “*the unmistakable stamp of Communism*” as the SACP acted in “international cohesion with Russia”. According to Vermaak, the communists instigated the 1946 strike of the African Mine Workers’ Union and the 1952 Defiance Campaign against apartheid. They also tried to incite the Bantustans against white authority. And at the 1956 Treason Trials Bram Fischer, in accordance with his communist convictions, succeeded in obtaining acquittals for the defendants.⁵⁸ A security police document also maintained that liberation movements such as the ANC were controlled by the SACP, but emphasised that the latter was “*subservient to international [meaning Russian] communism*”.⁵⁹

An interesting “Red plot” revelation was Gerard Ludi’s *Operation Q-18*.⁶⁰ Ludi was a South African Secret Service agent who had infiltrated the SACP and even managed to visit the Soviet Union to attend the Moscow Peace Congress in 1962. He was also one of the key witnesses who unmasked Bram Fischer as a communist, which led to the latter’s successful conviction. According to Ludi, the ANC was “*Moscow run*”, while *Pogo*, the military wing of the PAC, operated “*under the aegis of Peking*” (the capital of communist China).⁶¹

The focus of anti-communist literature was adjusted once again in the post-1960s era. From the 1970s onwards many senior South African security and military officers underwent training in strategic studies at military institutions in Western countries such as Britain. From a military point of view South Africa was now being perceived from its strategic global position *vis-à-vis* Soviet and Chinese strategic intentions.⁶²

The military assessment of South Africa’s changing strategic position in relation to communist intentions also permeated “civilian” anti-communist literature in the 1970s, as was already evident from Antikom’s publications in that period. South Africa’s control of the Cape sea route was regarded as “*of the utmost importance*” to her Western European trading partners. The country was portrayed as an anti-communist bastion of democracy in Southern Africa which was feeling the pinch of the “*approaching*” communist influence. Therefore the discourse of the anti-communist publications of this period shifted accordingly from the “Red Peril” inside South Africa to the “Soviet” and “Red Chinese Menace” and expansionism in African states bordering white South Africa.⁶³

⁵⁸ C. Vermaak, *The Red Trap*, p. 14, *et seq.*

⁵⁹ See J.J.P. Brümmer, “The Communist Party of South Africa”, Unpublished typescript, 1967.

⁶⁰ Cape Town, 1969.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.6, *et seq.* For arguments similar to those of Vermaak and Ludi on the relationship between the communists and the liberation movements, see e.g. E. S. Munger, *African Field Reports*, pp. 645-686; G. Ludi and B. Grobbelaar, *The Amazing Mr Fischer*, Cape Town, 1966, p. 29, *et seq.*; N. Weyl, *Traitors’ End. The Rise and Fall of the Communist Movement in Southern Africa*, Cape Town, 1970, p. 96, *et seq.*; J.D. Koster, “Die Invloed van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kommunistiese Party (SAKP) op die Rewolusionêre Strategie van die African National Congress (ANC)”, MA thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, 1983, pp. 105-138 and Bureau for Information, *Talking with the ANC.*, Pretoria, 1986.

⁶² Communiqué from Professor Philip Nel, former Director of the Institute for Soviet Studies. See also G. Cronjé (red.), *Kommunisme: Teorie en Praktijk*, pp. 150-201.

⁶³ See e.g. F.R. Metrowich, *Africa and Communism. A Study of Successes, Set-backs and Stooze States*, Johannesburg, 1967, pp. 9-33, 58 *et seq.*; G. Ludi, *Operation Q-018*, pp. 217-218; N. Weyl, *Traitors’ End*, pp. 29-40, 170-187; H.A. Wessels, “Die Stryd van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika teen ‘Kommunistiese’ Imperialisme – ‘n Staatsfilosofiese Studie”, PhD thesis, University of the Orange Free State, 1972; C.F. de Villiers, *et al*, *Die Kommunisme in Aksie*, Cape Town, 1975, pp. 12-13, 64-108, 133-136; I. Greig, *The Communist Challenge to Africa. An Analysis of Contemporary Soviet, Chinese and Cuban Policies*, Sandton, 1977; C. Groenewald, *Kommunisme in Afrika*, c. 1979), pp. 1-2, 12-40.

The anti-communist point of view claimed that apart from physical aggression, international communism also “*threatened*” South Africa by means of a “*psychological onslaught*”. In an effort to “*undermine*” South Africa and bring her to her knees, the country’s racial problems were internationalised by communists via the media in order to influence world opinion negatively.⁶⁴ Against the background of the fall of the Portuguese colonies in Angola and Mozambique in 1974, Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980 and increasing black unrest and ANC acts of sabotage inside South Africa since, P.W. Botha’s NP government thus became convinced that an internationally co-ordinated “*total onslaught*” was being directed against the country on all fronts: politically, economically and militarily.⁶⁵

From the mid-1980s South African historiography showed a marked deviation from the anti-communist rhetoric of the previous decades and from the attempts to demonise organisations such as the SACP and the ANC. Academics began to analyse the policies and relationships between the SACP and the ANC in a more sober and objective manner in terms of the historical realities of South Africa. Soviet intentions towards South Africa were treated more realistically as support, via the SACP, for the black population’s legitimate struggle against racial discrimination and political oppression, rather than as an aggressive “Red Menace” poised to force the country into a communist empire. Likewise the ANC was portrayed as a national liberation movement in its own right rather than as a puppet of the SACP.⁶⁶

It is interesting to note that throughout the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and even into the 1990s a fair number of pro-communist publications appeared, ranging from biographies on prominent South African communists to histories and published documents of the SACP, almost as if to counter the continual production of anti-communist rhetoric in the corresponding period.⁶⁷

The University of Stellenbosch and the Institute for the Study of Marxism

Given the South African fascination with communism over such a long period, it follows that this phenomenon would eventually also attract serious attention from academic historians. As early as the 1964 *Volkskongres* on communism already A.M. van Schoor, editor of *Die Vaderland*, an Afrikaans daily, advocated the establishment of chairs at (Afrikaans-speaking) universities “*to study world politics with special reference to Communism*”.⁶⁸

From 1976 Dirk Kotzé, history professor at the University of Stellenbosch, began to lobby for the establishment of an “*Institute for the Study of Marxism*”. At that stage, Kotzé argued, communism was an extremely topical issue for South Africa. In order to “*combat*” it effectively, a “*thorough knowledge of communist theory and tactics*” by way of a scientific approach was essential. At the time no institute existed in South Africa where material on

⁶⁴ C.F. de Villiers, *et al*, *Die Kommunisme in Aksie*, pp. 116-121.

⁶⁵ *The Citizen*, 22 March 1980, p. 8; *Ibid.*, 22 August 1980, p. 6; P. Nel, *A Soviet Embassy in Pretoria?*, pp. 8, 16, 6-47, 96-97, 131.

⁶⁶ See D.J. Kotzé II, “‘n Analise van die Ideologie van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kommunistiese Party, 1950-1984”, MA thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1985, pp. 339-347, 516-521; P. Nel, *A Soviet Embassy in Pretoria?*, p. 8 *et seq*; W. Esterhuysen en P. Nel (reds.), *Die ANC*, Cape Town, 1990, p. 25 *et seq*.

⁶⁷ See e.g. H.J. and R.E. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*; E&W Roux, *Rebel Pity. The Life of Eddie Roux*, London, 1970; A. Lerumo, *Fifty Fighting Years. The Communist Party of South Africa 1921-1971*, London, 1971; B. Bunting, *Moses Kotane. South African Revolutionary*, London, 1975; B. Bunting (ed), *South African Communists Speak. Documents from the History of the South African Communist Party 1915-1980*, London, 1981; S. Forman & A. Odendaal (eds), *A Trumpet from the Rooftops. The Selected Writings of Lionel Forman*, London, 1992; B. Hirson & G.A. Williams, *The Delegate for Africa. David Ivon Jones, 1883-1924*, London, 1995 and B. Bunting (ed), *Letters to Rebecca. South African Communist Leader SP Bunting to his Wife 1917-1934*, Bellville, 1996. Although not strictly falling into the pro-communist category the 1995 publication of Sheridan Johns’s 1965 PhD thesis on the history of South African socialism and communism to 1932, *Raising the Red Flag*, as well as the MA thesis of Alan Brooks, “*From Class Struggle to National Liberation: The Communist Party of South Africa, 1940 to 1950*”, University of Sussex, 1967, should also be mentioned here.

⁶⁸ S.J. Botha, *et al*, *Volkskongres oor Kommunisme*, p. 217.

communism could be collected and studied in a systematic and comprehensive manner. According to Kotzé, the Department of History at Stellenbosch was at that stage the only academic institution of its kind in South Africa to offer extensive courses, at both under graduate and post graduate level, on communism and on the histories of the Soviet Union and Red China. In addition, the departments of Philosophy, Political Science, Economics, Theology, African Studies and Sociology also dealt with aspects of communist ideology in their syllabi. For Kotzé, therefore, the University of Stellenbosch was the most suitable academic institution in South Africa to launch the proposed institute.⁶⁹

Dirk Kotzé was probably the most prolific South African historian on the subject of communism. From 1954 to 1956 he studied communism and nationalism as forces shaping history at the Vrije and Gemeentelijke Universities of Amsterdam under the renowned Dutch Marxist historian Jan Romein. He also studied at the Universities of Bonn and West Berlin, and in 1964 he studied Marxism and socialism at the Institute for Social History in Amsterdam.⁷⁰ In *Die Kommuniste Deel 1: Die Klassieke Marxisme* Kotzé wrote biographies on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and explained classic Marxist philosophy.⁷¹ In 1970 Kotzé published his third volume on nationalism as a historical factor, entitled *Nasionalisme en Kommuniste*. In this book he explains how nationalism was “used” by communism to advance its own cause in Soviet Russia, Yugoslavia and Red China.⁷² This was followed by a booklet, *Soeklig op die Kommuniste*, which focused on the origins of Marxism, the basic principles of communism, Soviet and Chinese communism, and Soviet interest in South Africa, and provided a concise history of communism in South Africa.⁷³

Kotzé also wrote a two-part series on the history of communism in South Africa for the journal of the South African Academy for Science and Arts.⁷⁴ In 1979 Kotzé produced *Communism and South Africa*, which was an augmented version of his 1977 Afrikaans publication *Kommuniste Vandag*.⁷⁵ Here Kotzé discusses the nature of communism, orthodox Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, Trotskyism, Maoism, neo-Marxism, the relations between the Soviet Union and Red China as well as communism’s attitude to war and peace, religion, nationalism and Pan-Africanism.⁷⁶

On 1 April 1980 the Institute for the Study of Marxism at the University of Stellenbosch (ISMUS) was officially launched. Professor D. J. Kotzé was its first Director.

According to its introductory brochure, ISMUS intended, inter alia, “to stimulate systematic, interdisciplinary research”. Its aims were related “to the conviction that in the academic

⁶⁹ Institute for Soviet Studies University of Stellenbosch (hereafter ISSUS) Ms 368, File “Stigting”:D.J. Kotzé-Registrateur Akademies, 11.8.1978, p. 2; *Ibid.*, D.J. Kotzé-F. Davin, 4.5.1979; *Ibid.*, Memorandum oor die Skepping van ’n Instituut vir die Studie van die Marxisme, pp. 3-5; *Ibid.*, Memorandum Insake die Stigting vir die Studie van Marxisme, Julie 1979; *Eikestadnuus*, 7.9.1979, pp. 1, 4.

⁷⁰ F.A. van Jaarsveld, “Obituary: Dirk Jacobus Kotzé (1927-1992)”, *Historia* 37, 2, November 1992, pp. 1-2; P.H. Kapp, “Verantwoorde Verlede. ‘n Historiografiese Studie: Die Verhaal van die Studie van Geskiedenis aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch, 1866-2000, Unpublished monograph, 2004, pp. 89-94.

⁷¹ Cape Town, 1965.

⁷² Cape Town, 1970.

⁷³ Cape Town, 1972.

⁷⁴ D.J. Kotzé, “Die Kommuniste in Suid-Afrika: Verlede, Hede en Toekoms. Deel I: Die Verlede en die Hede”, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 16(2), Junie 1976, pp.65-76 and D.J. Kotzé, “Die Kommuniste in Suid-Afrika: Verlede, Hede en toekoms. II. Die Toekoms, met besondere verwysing na die Bantoegebiede”, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 16, 3, September 1976, pp. 119-125. G.A. Rauche published an article on the phenomenon of world communism in the same journal but regarded Chinese communism to be a greater “threat” to South Africa than Soviet communism. See “Die Verskynsel van die Wêreldkommuniste”, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 14, 1, Maart 1974, pp. 3-15.

⁷⁵ Cape Town 1979 and 1977, respectively.

⁷⁶ See D.J. Kotzé, *Communism and South Africa*, p. 1 *et seq.* Kotzé also wrote numerous press articles and presented several public and radio talks on communism.

community in South Africa in general there is a lack of reliable, non-partisan research on Marxism and its relevance for the South African situation”.⁷⁷

ISMUS’s objectives, among others, were to collect source material on Marxism and communism in general; in depth research of communism in Southern Africa through interdisciplinary research projects and to serve the state and approved institutions in supplying scientifically controlled information on communist theory, strategy and tactics.⁷⁸

Although ISMUS claimed to have a neutral approach towards the study of communism, some members of the multi discipline Board of Control⁷⁹ still adhered to the stereotyped anti-communist paradigm. Kotzé, for instance, regarded Soviet and Red Chinese expansionism in Africa and influence among liberation movements in Mozambique, Angola and Zambia as a prelude to world domination. Therefore communism presented “essentially a national danger” to South Africa.⁸⁰ According to Kotzé communism could effectively be combated by means of a counter-campaign involving a national security strategy. Knowledge of the aims, strategies and characteristics of communism was the key to combat this ideology. The forces of all South African population groups “*fundamentally opposed to communism*” should be mustered and the non-communist world should be approached to prevent the total international isolation of South Africa.

Kotzé was also of the opinion that the state had to take a firm stand against communist activities, for instance, by disrupting communist organisations and front organisations by prohibiting the dissemination of communist propaganda and by taking action “*against those who incite others to revolt against the laws of the country*”. There should be more sincere and responsible contact with, interest in, education for, and assistance to “*those who usually take their refuge in communism*”. Kotzé, who belonged to a newer generation of so-called *verligte* (enlightened) Nationalists, suggested that the white government should acknowledge and readily accede to the just demands of (black) nationalistic groups. This would do much to “*vitate the communist onslaught*”. Black leaders should be well informed on the facts of communism. They should be made aware of the fact that “*communist theory cannot stand up to the test of scientific examination and that history has proved it false*”. Lastly, blacks should be encouraged to value principles that communists regarded as “*major obstacles to their cause*”: individuality and personal freedom, religion and the Church, nationalism and a strong country with loyal citizens.⁸¹

The Faculty of Education’s representative on ISMUS’s Board of Control, Dr A.J. Basson, published a Christian-nationalist perspective on the “*degenerate*” influence of communism on learners and school education.⁸² During the 1980s this publication was a compulsory textbook for students at the University of Stellenbosch’s Faculty of Education. According to Basson, there were “*theoretical similarities*” between liberalism and communism. Liberalism and communism were “*allies*” in the sense that both ideologies contained anti-religious and egalitarian tendencies and were “*subversive*” with respect to discipline. Therefore educators should be wary of the “*pernicious*” influence on children of communism via liberalism as they would become “*victims*” in the hands of a communist. Knowledge, religion, nationalism

⁷⁷ ISSUS Ms 368, File “Bekendstelling”: Brochure – Introducing the Institute for the Study of Marxism.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Notules 1979-82: Constitution of the Institute for the Study of Marxism.

⁷⁹ See *Ibid.*, File “Jaarverslag aan Donateurs”: Jaarverslag 1980, p. 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, File “Stigting”: Memorandum oor die Skepping van ‘n Instituut vir die Studie van die Marxisme; *Ibid.*, Notules 1979-82: D.J. Kotzé-President RGN, 5.2.1978, p. 2.

⁸¹ D.J. Kotzé, *Communism and South Africa*, pp. 195-203. In the 1960s and 1970s Afrikaner politics were characterised by a fierce debate between *verkrampes* (arch-conservatives) and *verligtes* (enlightened Afrikaners).

⁸² *Kommunisme en Opvoeding*, Durban, 1981. Basson was also the supervisor for J.H. du Plessis’s MA thesis on Marxism and school cadets.

and democracy were the educator's "*weapons*" to combat the influence of communism on education.⁸³

In pursuance of its stated objections ISMUS also launched a few major research projects. The first project, sponsored by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC), entailed a survey of sources on communism in South Africa by Elizabeth Böhmer. The aim of the project was to compile a research aid on communist sources for academic scholars.⁸⁴ In 1984 Böhmer, a temporary researcher at ISMUS, submitted her thesis. This voluminous 1250-page thesis included approximately 8000 references to books, pamphlets, articles, court records, and local and foreign dissertations on communism.⁸⁵

After its inception ISMUS's library vigorously began to collect and purchase literature and source material on communism and Soviet Russia.⁸⁶ Among these were the remaining portion of the SACP's former library in Cape Town, which was donated to ISMUS by the South African Public Library.⁸⁷

Another major ISMUS research project was the history of the communist movement in South Africa. Launched in 1982, this project initially received a substantial grant from the HSRC.⁸⁸ Eventually, in 1987, Kotzé produced a two-volume report on the history of the communist movement in South Africa to 1921.⁸⁹ However, as a academic research publication it had serious shortcomings. The title was misleading in the sense that Kotzé rather concentrated on the history of the South African labour and socialist movement prior to the founding of the CPSA. Basically the report was an uncritical rewrite of existing narratives on South African labour and socialist history. Overall the narrative lacked proper synthesis and it seems clear that it was completed under great pressure.⁹⁰ In all fairness it should, however, be emphasised that by this time Kotzé had become the victim of Alzheimer's disease of which he died in 1992.⁹¹

Given the particular and emotional interest in the phenomenon of communism, the Afrikaner churches became intimately involved with the activities of ISMUS right from the beginning. Apart from a few individuals and other organisations, these churches and ecclesiastical institutions such as Antikom became ISMUS's major and most consistent financial donors. In particular, various DRC structures such as congregations, the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch, the Sinodale Kommissie vir Sending onder die Kommuniste and the Sinodale Kommissie vir Leer en Aktuele Sake sponsored ISMUS with substantial amounts on an annual basis.⁹²

⁸³ A.J. Basson, *Kommunisme en Opvoeding*, pp. 85-106.

⁸⁴ ISSUS Ms 368, File "Jaarverslag aan Donateurs": Jaarverslag 1980, pp. 3-4 and Jaarverslag 1981, p. 1.

⁸⁵ "A Bibliographical and Historical Study of Left Radical Movements and some alleged Left Radical Movements in South Africa and Namibia, 1900-1981", Master of Library Science thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1984.

⁸⁶ ISSUS Ms 368, File "Jaarverslag aan Donateurs": Jaarverslag 1988, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Jaarverslag 1984, p. 3; *Ibid.*, Notules 1983-86: D.J. Kotzé – Voorsitter ISMUS Beheer Komitee, 30.5.1984; *Ibid.*, File "Memorandum i.v.m. ISMUS": D.J. Kotzé – ISMUS Vyf Jaar Oud. ISMUS also received acquisitions of material relating to communism from the South African Security Police.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, File "Jaarverslag aan Donateurs": Jaarverslae 1981-1986.

⁸⁹ "Die Kommunistiese Beweging in Suid-Afrika tot die Stigting van die Kommunistiese Party van Suid-Afrika in 1921", Unpublished typescript.

⁹⁰ See also F.A. van Jaarsveld's trenchant criticism of Kotzé's history writing in *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek na die Stede en ander Opstelle*, Johannesburg, 1982, p. 285. According to Van Jaarsveld Kotzé's extra-mural activities and commitments affected his historical production negatively.

⁹¹ See D.J. van Zyl en G.S. Hofmeyr, "D.J. Kotzé (1927-1992): Afrikanerhistorikus en Kultuur- en Bewaringsleier", *South African Historical Journal*, 31, November 1994, p. 219.

⁹² See e.g. ISSUS Ms 368, Notules 1979-82: Notule van die Derde Vergadering van die Beheer Komitee, 16.5.1980, p. 1 and Bylaag tot Jaarverslag 1980; *Ibid.*, H.J. Vorster – Direkteur vir Marxistiese Studies, 21.10.1980; *Ibid.*, File "Donasies NG Kerk Oos-Kaapland": Correspondence; *Ibid.*, File "Kommissie vir Sending Onder Kommuniste": Correspondence; *Ibid.*, File "Kommissie vir Leer en Aktuele Sake": Correspondence; *Ibid.*, File "Donateurs Algemeen": Correspondence; *Ibid.*, File "Kuratorium – Donasies en Korrespondensie".

The DRC's intimate involvement with ISMUS was also reflected in the request by one of its synods that the church's representation on the Board of Control be increased from one (the Theological Seminary) to two persons. Kotzé, when he was still Director, diplomatically turned down the request by stating that "*almost all*" members of the Board were also members of the DRC or would be "*religiously acceptable*" to the DRC.⁹³

In another instance members of the Board of Control raised their concerns over the relationship between ISMUS and Antikom, whose outspoken and conservative anti-communist rhetoric could become an embarrassment to the former. It was therefore decided that the Director of ISMUS would clearly communicate to Antikom that acceptance of its annual donations should under no circumstances be interpreted as an ISMUS association with the objectives of Antikom.⁹⁴ Similarly, Philip Nel, the Institute's senior researcher, refused to associate ISMUS's name with the contentious Biblecor publication *Die Christen en Kommunisme* because of its factual errors, misinterpretation and misrepresentation of communist ideology.⁹⁵

Until 1984 a historical focus predominated in ISMUS's research priorities.⁹⁶ At that stage, however, Nel was already convinced that the real motives behind Soviet involvement in Southern Africa were completely obscured by prominent South African political and cultural leaders as well as the media's simplistic utterances on the so-called "Soviet onslaught" against South Africa. The increased Soviet involvement in Southern Africa since 1975 became a "handy tool" to explain South Africa's internal problems. Such overestimation of the "*Soviet threat*", together with the "total onslaught" rhetoric, created a "*dangerous illusion*" that South Africa's socio-political problems were directly caused by the Soviet Union.

In a scathing accusation Nel also criticised the Afrikaans-speaking academic community for having "*disgracefully failed*" to generate a corpus of expertise on the Soviet Union that could evaluate Soviet capabilities, restrictions and aims in a more balanced way.⁹⁷

In 1986 ISMUS's name change to the Institute for Soviet Studies at the University of Stellenbosch (ISSUS) was ratified by the university authorities.⁹⁸ In the same year Nel was promoted to Director of the Institute.⁹⁹ In 1985 ISSUS launched the *Soviet Revue*, a bi-monthly current report on Soviet trends in policy towards Africa and elsewhere.¹⁰⁰ The old ISMUS publication, *Studies in Marxisme*, was terminated at the end of 1986.¹⁰¹

However, severe cuts in government subsidies to tertiary institutions towards the end of the 1980s prompted a reconsideration of the continuance of all institutes at the University of Stellenbosch and the university authorities contemplated the closure of ISSUS.¹⁰² Finally it was decided to scale ISSUS down to the Unit for Soviet Studies within the Centre for

⁹³ ISSUS Ms 368, Notules 1979-82: Notule van die Vierde Vergadering van die Beheerkomitee, 5.12.1980.; Notules 1983-86: Jaarverslag aan Navorsingskomitee 1983, pp. 5-6 and Aanhangsel III, p. 3; File "Korrespondensie Instituut vir die Studie van Marxisme": D.J. Kotzé – Scriba NGK in SWA, 18.6.1980.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Notules 1983-86: Notule van die Eerste Vergadering van die Beheerkomitee, 3.3.1983, p. 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, File "Kontrakwerk – Buite Instansies en Korrespondensie": P.R. Nel – F.M. Gaum, 31.8.1982 and P.R. Nel – F.M. Gaum, 2.3.1983. See also footnote 40, p. 11.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Notules 1983-86: Notule van die Derde Vergadering van die Beheerkomitee, 17.9.1984, p. 1.

⁹⁷ See *Ibid.*, Notules 1983-86: P. Nel – Voorstelle i.v.m. die loods van 'n Sowjet Studies Program, 9.8.1984, pp.1-22; *Ibid.*, File "Memorandum i.v.m. ISMUS": K.M. Campbell – Memorandum concerning evaluation of centre and project description, 1.8.1986, pp.1-6 and P.R. Nel – Memorandum rondom Voorgestelde Verandering van die Benaming van die Instituut vir die Studie van Marxisme, 5.8.1986, pp.1-5.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Notules 1983-86: Notule van die Tweede Beheerkomiteevergadering, 29.9.1986, p. 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Notules 1983-86: Notule van die Eerste Beheerkomiteevergadering, 28.2.1986, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, File "Jaarverslag aan Donateurs": Jaarverslag 1984, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Notules 1983-86: Notule van die Tweede Beheerkomiteevergadering, 29.2.1986, p. 2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, File "Navorsingsfonds Toekennings": Correspondence, P.M. Compion – Direkteur ISSUS, 24.1.1989; P.R. Nel – Voorsitter Navorsingskomitee, 17.5.1989; D.M. Conradie – Rektor, 9.6.1989 and E.P. Wittle – S. Kritzing, 25.4.1990.

International and Comparative Politics at the Department of Political Science from the beginning of 1990.¹⁰³

Conclusion

Philip Nel offers a possible rationale for what he calls the “*excessive pre-occupation with a presumed Soviet onslaught*”. Due to a prolonged period of international isolation during the 20th century, white South Africans became used to worn-out stereotypes and propaganda about the Soviet Union. The apartheid regime’s lack of legitimacy and its growing feeling of insecurity gave rise to the perception that South Africa’s beleaguered position in the international community and the spreading of internal resistance to the apartheid system could be ascribed to a co-ordinated international communist onslaught. The result was that the average white South African, especially during the period 1974-84, was imbued with the psychosis of a fear of a world-wide communist threat.¹⁰⁴

It is relevant to pose the question whether anti-communism has really come to an end in South Africa. For the renowned South African Marxist historian, Martin Legassick, the arguments between pro-worker groups such as the SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions on the one hand, and the ANC government on the other, about the pros and cons of the latter’s neo-liberal economic policies, could mark the beginning of a new Marxist versus anti-Marxist debate. Legassick notes that works in the revisionist tradition, on elite transformation and on a critique of neo-liberalism, has been published in recent years.¹⁰⁵

However, in the wake of the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the retreat of communism since 1989, at least there has been a drastic down-scaling of the emotional rhetoric on this ideology in South Africa. Unbanned since 1990, the previously demonised SACP and ANC were no longer the distant and almost “mythical” enemies of the previous political dispensation. Consequently, the Afrikaner anti-communist history production in South African historiography also seems to have come to an abrupt halt.

¹⁰³ US Senaatsnotules, October 1989: Aanbevelingsrapport van die Navorsingskomitee, 19.9.1989, pp. 1-2; *Ibid.*, December 1989: Mededelingsrapport van die Fakulteitsraad Lettere en Wysbegeerte, 15.11.1989, p. 2; Communiqué from Philip Nel.

¹⁰⁴ P. Nel, *A Soviet Embassy in Pretoria?*, pp. 6-7, 96; ISSUS Ms 368, File “Kommissie vir Sending onder Kommuniste”: Correspondence, P.R. Nel – P.W. de Wet, 12.6.1987.

¹⁰⁵ A. Lichtenstein, “The Past and Present of Marxist Historiography in South Africa”, *Radical History Review* 82, Winter 2002, pp. 124-125. Legassick referred to the publications of D. McKinley, *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography*, London, 1997; H. Marais, *South Africa, Limits of Change: The Political Economy of Transformation*, Cape Town, 1998) and P. Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*, London, 2000.