

Master's Research Report

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The Politics of Memory and Commemoration in the
Post-Apartheid Era: A Case Study of 32-Battalion

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Masters of Arts in Film and Television in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, nor has it been prepared with the assistance of any other body or organisation or person outside of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Julia Heywood

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Abstract

This research report looks at the politics of memory, commemoration and representation in the new South Africa with a focus on 32-Battalion. The research draws on interviews and testimonies of ex-SADF soldiers who were members of the unit and unpacks how when considering memory and remembering, a multitude of viewpoints emerge. Factors such as the impact of the ideological transition from apartheid to democracy and the resultant impact on ex-SADF soldiers as well as the reshaping of the country's official history which has been shaped to suit the current political climate, are considered. The research reflects on how these political processes which include exclusions of unwanted histories have affected nation building in South Africa post 1994.

1. Introduction

One of the significant contributions of memory studies has been to explore how the construction of the past, through a process of invention and appropriation, affected the relationship of power within society. -*Alon Confino, 1393* (Kostadinova, 2014: 4).

The history of South Africa has had an emphasis on the divisions of race dating back to the days of colonialism. Race has been at the heart of South African history, politics, society, culture and economics since the European colonisation up until today. After the fall of apartheid in 1994 the official ideology changed and for some South Africans the reality changed, but not for all as the new liberalism kept much of the old status quo in place. This research assesses just how successful this ideological transition to democracy has been with a focus on the politics of memory and how it effects the differing representations of history in a country with a history of racial divisions. It will look at whether or not the government has in fact embraced and acknowledged the diversity of histories of individuals and groups within society (*Race, Ethnicity and Language in the new South Africa, 2014*).

This research report takes a more in depth look at the way in which ex-South African Defence Force (SADF) soldiers, both black and white, have been portrayed and remembered in the post-apartheid years by the new government and revisionist history. It sets out to discuss how the remembering and the politics of memories affect the way in which aspects of the past are remembered, represented and how the process of remembering is based on what can be seen as ideologically driven constructed histories.

The case study for this research focuses on the politics of memory and remembering with reference to 32-Battalion and their experiences of the transformation from apartheid to present day South Africa. 32-Battalion was a significant military unit within the South African Defence Force during the apartheid era. A comparison and contrast is drawn by looking at the transformation process from the point of view of soldiers from 32-Battalion in light of the outcomes dictated by the country's transition. The way in which members of the unit recollect their experiences of the past are contrasted to how they feel they have been treated and remembered in the post-apartheid in South Africa.

To facilitate a smooth ideological transition in South Africa intense negotiations took place between the ruling National Party and the incoming African National Congress (ANC) in the

years leading up to 1994. In 1993 during these negotiations the ANC demanded that the National Party Government disband 32-Battalion. As written by Nortje (2014) all who formed part of this unit black and white were left with few alternatives to fall back on. In light of the country's current political climate there is a sense of irony in the disbanding of 32-Battalion as according to the members and subsequent body of literature on the unit, 32-Battalion was one of the only units of the SADF at this time which openly included and practised racial integration. "32-Battalion has been living in the 'new' South Africa since 1976. Nowhere in South Africa has racism been eradicated as it had in 32-Battalion" (2014: 1161).

In light of several events and incidents that took place during the apartheid era involving 32Battalion the group earned a reputation for their ruthlessness when executing their assigned operations. The reputation was re-enforced in 1992 when the unit was involved in the 'Phola Park Incident' among other incidents in which people, predominantly ANC supporters and Freedom Fighters, were killed. As a result of these incidents 32-Battalion came to be viewed in a poor light by the ANC and ultimately this was the main factor that led to its demise when the ANC took power in the country (Nortje 2014: 1157).

This research report unpacks the post-apartheid experiences and memories of ex-SADF soldiers from 32-Battalion by conducting interviews and gathering testimonies. This research report shows how when it comes to remembering events of the past a multiplicity of viewpoints begins to emerge. It further looks at how the point of view of testimony and memories change when it is told by individuals who have experienced the same event differently.

This research compares the differences found between testimonies of those who participated in respective events of the past in comparison to representations of the same events included in revisionist history informed by the ideologies of the current government, what is available in the public domain and what was reported by the media at the time. This research looks at memory and the impact of shifting ideological points of view on remembering within a qualitative analytical framework. Also important for this process is to further look at the role of remembering and forgetting for individuals. It looks at how individuals group up and form what Anderson (2006) describes as 'imagined communities' that emerge based on common memories and experiences and/or membership of certain groups of the past. It looks at how these groups of imagined communities play an important role in how the past becomes manifested in the present.

The research sheds light through the use of first hand testimonies of ex-SADF 32-Battalion soldiers about their experiences of 32-Battalion and how the realities of their current situations influence the way in which they choose to remember their past in post 1994. The events surrounding the demise of the unit and the controversy thereof will be looked at within the body of this research.

2. Revisiting and Reshaping South Africa's History

In 1994 South Africa experienced a major transition from an apartheid regime to that of a democracy. The country experienced a major ideological shift which brought about great challenges that the new government would have to address and deal with. The two groups, that of the oppressed black majority and that of the white population who previously ruled the country are now have to coexist in the new South Africa. As a result of the circumstances of the past, these two groups have vastly differing histories. Hart and Winter (2012) believe that over the past twenty the ANC government has begun revisiting history and rewriting it to suit a particular political agenda based on the current ideology which is vastly different to its predecessor (2012: 88).

Verovsek (2012) argues "Politicians frequently make references to the events of the past, or rather myths created within memory, to justify their decisions and standpoints on a variety of issues, both foreign and domestic" (2012:1). In a similar way one could argue that the ANC government often refers to the traumas of the past under apartheid and colonial rule as a means to justify and substantiate policies and decisions made today. This is evident in policies such as the Land Claims Act. and that of Black Economic Empowerment. This approach has a profound effect on minority groups and results in the marginalisation of various members of society such as white males, and specifically for this case study, those who were part of the now defunct 32-Battalion. It seems that this approach has a divisive effect on South Africans and as a result impedes on the country's ability to consolidate as a nation.

The fall of apartheid posed many challenges for South African society after 1994. In the newly formed democracy the new ANC government was faced with the challenge of reshaping the countries national identity. As stated by Hart and Winter (2012) "In view of South Africa's

history of oppression and the complex nature of its society there is a lack of consensus as to what constitutes a South African identity and/or nation” (2012: 88). When looking at the integration process it is important to look at how the issues of memory and commemoration are addressed in a country such as South Africa where the divided population has always had vastly differing historical backgrounds. In such a case it is important to address these issues of historical representation of each group and work towards finding a possible common ‘all inclusive’ history amongst the population that represents everybody regardless of their previous positions in society (2012: 84).

Nicholas (2008) Politics is selective in the way it remembers events of the past and thus political regimes more often than not choose to remember the past in such a way as to support their own ideological positioning as well as to support the ideals they wish future generations to adopt therefore what is considered as official history can be considered revisionist when it is created by the process of altering memories and selectively choosing historical events that support the political agenda of the time (2008: 16). The ANC government represents the majority of the population and has therefore put a focus on the history of black South Africans. In 2010 the ANC and UmKhonto We Sizwe (MK) Veterans association began working on a document titled ‘Documenting the History of Courage’. As stated within the document

The neglect of MK and ANC history is an affront to thousands and their families. MK members are committed to telling the story of the cadre so that future South Africans and young people all over the world can take courage that they too can make an extraordinary contribution to history (ANC and MK Veterans association 2010: 7).

Smith (1988) argues that in South Africa the teaching of history has been transformed as a new generation of younger historians has begun the process of recovering the history of the majority. He further contends that in the years leading up to the demise of apartheid, South Africa underwent a great historiographical transformation. He believes the country’s history has been decolonised and a long overdue Africanisation of history has occurred with a major shift away from white ethnographic history and enormous advances in knowledge of the previously neglected history of African societies (1988: 1).

Smith (1988) also argues that history can be used as a potential weapon by governments, via control of the media and school syllabus, to distort the past and justify their ideological positioning (1988: 5). As further stated within the ANC and MK document

Documenting the history of courage is a space for honouring the memory of the fallen heroes of MK it is a space that will preserve their memory and celebrate their heroism [...] We foresee a time when the young of all hues can access memory using digital media and through that process, find deeper connection with the ancestors of the beautiful struggle (ANC and MK Veterans Association 2010: 7).

Documents such as these give a good indication as to where the government's priorities lie when it comes to revisiting the country's history. Smith's point of view supports the notion that with the newly refocused and reconstructed history there has been a tendency of avoidance when it comes to white history as seen in examples of the way in which the ANC government has chosen to remember the history of the SADF, 32-Battalion and its fallen soldiers such as that of Freedom Park which will be discussed further in this research. Hodgkin and Radston (2003) state that "While memory challenges and subverts dominant accounts of history, contested pasts shows how it may also disguise and reinvent, serving to cover up as well as to reveal" (2003: 1).

Verovsek (2012) contends that political power is generated by control of political memory and those persons who are in a position to manipulate memory and "the valued symbols of a society or group, ultimately hold political power" (2012: 16). The ANC has always pinpointed the old apartheid government as the oppressors and in doing so they have had the ability to influence the thoughts and actions of their supporters; the majority of South Africa's population. The actions by the government have become complicated as these representations of the past vilify and exclude minority groups such as white South Africans, bringing about a conflict in the way in which the past is remembered by individuals and that of the revisited history. Thus problems of historical representation of race groups still tend to emerge as stated by Smith (1988) "In such a country as culturally-divided and fragmented as South Africa, it would be an extraordinary thing if such a thing as a single historiography existed" (1988: 5). However such sentiments are often dislocated as argued by Sturken (1997) "The survivors of recent political events often disrupt the closure of a particular history; indeed history operates more efficiently when its agents are dead" (1997: 5).

Sturken (1997) supports the view point that political regimes often propagandise history to suit their political wants, needs and desires and she also talks of the process of history-making through the use of cultural-memory. She argues that politics is often guilty of popularising

history and propagating certain versions of history through the use of popular culture, the media, popular images and public memorials as means to engage with historical narratives in the public sphere (1997: 5). The country's history is now told from the view point of those once oppressed and as is the case with many countries in transition the political elites often mediate the reshaping and refocusing of history "through complex mechanisms of conscious manipulation that are unconsciously absorbed by the members of society, including the very elites who sought to manipulate the remembrance in the first place" (Verovsek 2012: 11).

Verovsek (2012) argues that in a society such as South Africa that has gone through a major transition it is important to address issues of cultural trauma, historical consciousness, contested pasts and continuing narratives (2012: 26). When the transition in South Africa began to take effect after 1994, the country's new government under the leadership of Nelson Mandela and FW De Klerk who chose to take the path of reconciliation post-apartheid in efforts to try to right the wrongs of the past and mend the deep racial divisions between black and white people as to move forward peacefully in the new democratic South Africa. Despite this approach, the way in which history has been reconstructed has not enabled the erasure of racial divisions of the country as people remember differently. Sturken (1997) states that "traditional history has a paradoxical relationship to the body of the individual who lived through the event" (1997: 5). Although Sturken uses the Vietnam War as the example for her findings the same ideas can be applied within the context of South Africa. The use of revisionist history within the new democracy may in fact become problematic when many of the people who were involved in these reconstructed historic events are still alive and thus may possibly remember certain historical events differently. This is evident in the way in which small groups of SADF military veterans remember events of the past as their renditions are often in opposition to the way in which the ANC has chosen to represent the same events of the past and how these representations have manifested in the public domain.

Research in this case study shows that the actual experiences of these minority groups do not coincide with the new official versions of history and thus problematises the relationship between these individuals and the status quo in South Africa and undermines the government's credibility in their eyes. As these groups of SADF military veterans are small and their experiences unrecognised in current times means that there is a possibility that their renditions of these events may become irrelevant in a broader context. Verovsek (2012) argues that "Memory is mediated through intellectual and cultural backgrounds or frameworks, to those

who assume, forget and manipulate traditions and memories about the past that don't fit into their accepted political discourse" (2012: 13).

In 1975 the South African government as a part of the country's strategy to stop the spread of communism the SADF sent professional soldiers and young white males to fight in the 'Border War' in Angola. By the late 1980s the resistance to apartheid fuelled by the black majority began to destabilise the country and major unrest broke out within the townships. To assist the police, members of the armed forces were sent to help maintain law and order. At the time the ANC was considered a terrorist organisation and had spent many years in exile outside of South Africa. However after 1994, with the new era of democratic rule in South Africa the same soldiers who once fought against groups such as the ANC now find themselves in a country run by their former enemies. According to Baines (2009) for many ex-SADF soldiers in South Africa it is a continuing struggle and up-hill battle to come to terms with the apartheid conflicts of the past and their efforts to have their voices heard under the new political dispensation of the country (2009: 2).

Gear (2009) writes that feelings of resentment and betrayal are a re-occurring theme amongst the older generation of ex-SADF soldiers in South Africa in the post-apartheid era. These feelings extend both towards the former National Party government as well as that of the ANC government. They feel that they have been let down by their former leaders and are now left in a country run by their former enemies who view them in a very poor light and treat them accordingly. As written by Gear

For ex-SADF soldiers a common element is the sense that the ideological paradigms that framed the wars they fought in, and their identities as combatants, have been betrayed. For many the disjuncture between what they fought for and their present realities are a bitter pill to swallow (2009: 1)

3. Memory and the Politics of Forgetting

De Brito et al. (2001) argues that when a country makes the transition from an authoritarian or totalitarian regime to that of democratic rule one of the most important factors that societies face is how to deal with 'legacies of repression'. Such was the case during South Africa's transition from the apartheid regime to the new democracy post 1994. The way in which the

newly formed democratic society deals with these legacies of repression has a major impact on the success of the country's transition (2001: 1).

Anderson (2006) deals with the origins of nationalism and states that “nationalism is not awakening of nations to self-consciousness, it is the inventing of nations where they do not exist” (2006: 49). Therefore if the country is to make a successful transition it is important that the new government creates a conscious sense of national identity and/or nationalism amongst its people. In a post-conflict society where enemies now have to co-exist in harmony, it becomes a challenge to create a sense of national identity as the government has to change the mind-set of its once divided population. In doing so efforts have to be made to unify and reunite the population under one common national identity. De Brito et al. (2001) argue that

Once the transition has occurred, it is important that societies look back and attempt to understand a collective failure to contain violence, and struggle to find solutions to legacies of violence that may affirm the rule of democratic government” (2001: 1).

They believe that a county with a legacy of repression often tries to deal with the past by establishments of symbolic representations such as building a memorial and/or proclamation of commemorative days of remembering (2001:1).

Wilson (2001) argues that new democratic governments that succeed old authoritarian regimes often find themselves having to face the issue of suddenly having to deal with problems of human rights violations of the past. Wilson states that

Once a transition has taken place the parameters of justice are framed by the historical character of authoritarian legality, by the balance of power between bellicose parties, and in concrete pacts reached during negotiations to end armed conflict (2001: 190).

Wilson (2001) writes that it is a common problem when after a conflict has occurred and/or struggle for political liberation, such was that case in South Africa, that the new regime has to face the dilemma of choosing between two competing logics that of ‘political logic’ and that of an ‘ethical logic’ (2001: 190). He looks at this in greater detail arguing that ‘political logic’ prioritises issues of stability and consolidation of democracy whilst ‘ethical logic’ calls for the prosecution of offenders in the aftermath of a conflict and/or struggle (2001: 190). The chosen logic of the incoming regime ultimately has a significant impact on the outcome of the country's transition. The way in which the country approaches the chosen logic is also of great

importance to the overall outcome of the country's consolidation as a unified nation after the conflict and/or struggle has occurred (2001: 190).

In the case of South Africa when Nelson Mandela took power, the country was on a clear path of political logic with the implementation of institutions such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the clear avoidance of revenge and punishment for its former oppressors which helped to avert a race war after the ANC took power in South Africa. Verovsek (2012) supports this notion when he contends that

The new wave of democratisation has spawned a whole new version of political memory addressing issues of the past through institutions such as truth commissions as a way of dealing with authoritarian legacies of repression and violence" (2012: 15).

Vora and Vora (2004) have found that the use of truth commissions are effective under certain circumstances and in the case of South Africa it can be said that many issues were resolved. They write that the success of the TRC was seen differently by different racial and ethnic groups who participated. Vora and Vora also found that black people, especially those from the Xhosa tribe who made up a vast majority of the ANC, found the TRC to be greatly successful whilst the Afrikaans participants found the TRC to be fruitless and unsuccessful (2004: 301). A survey done in 1998 by the South African Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation also found that after surveying hundreds of people involved in the Commission that most felt that the TRC had failed to achieve reconciliation between the black and white communities (Storey 1997: 27).

The findings of the survey and that of Vora and Vora (2004) are evident in South Africa today as within the country there is a layer of society, that of older white males, who still feel a strong sense of resentment towards the new government because of the way in which they have been side-lined under the new political dispensation. These individuals feel that they have not been given the opportunity to thrive in the new democracy and thus feel excluded giving rise to problems of consolidation within society. Wilson (2001) argues that reconciliation commissions are problematic as

Truth commissions and selective amnesia are locked into in a direct relationship. The criminal justice system and other institutions for addressing past violations such as truth commissions are part of a single process. They both complement and contradict each other, but are never autonomous from one another, nor independent in their implications for the other (2001: 190).

Verovsek (2012) maintains that “Collective memory is not about objective factors, but how the past is understood by those collectives” (2012: 10). He further argues that collective memory of a nation can often appear similar to that of individual memory as it provides the nation with a sense of cultural identity. Both forms of memory are important as they give the past a sense of importance. As argued by Sturken (1997)

Memory forms the fabric of human life, affecting everything from the ability to perform simple tasks to recognition of the self. Memory establishes life’s continuity it gives meaning to the present, as each moment is constituted by the past as means by which we remember who we are, memory provides the very core of identity (1997: 1).

The challenge faced by the ANC government and that of South Africa’s population is trying to understand these differing histories and coming to terms with how they fit into the country’s new democratic framework. When it comes to the politics of memory, issues arise in the form of traditional justice and “the effectiveness of institutions such as truth and reconciliation commissions, trials, amnesties and apologies as a way of dealing with authoritarian legacies of repression and violence” as was the case in South Africa (2012: 15).

Lebow et al. (2006) argues that countries pay a big price for not dealing with their past. It is vital for countries going through a transition to acknowledge their history in its entirety.

After a war there will always be those who are labelled as the victim or perpetrator, collaborator or bystander. What matters is how the nation’s political elite interprets history and advances that message in the public domain (2006: 26).

Lebow et al. further states that “the political elite will always choose to emphasise certain stories from their past whilst tactfully burying others” (2006: 26). It seems that there is a gap that needs to be bridged between those who fought for the apartheid government and the SADF and those who were once the enemies of the apartheid government namely the ANC. Channels of tolerance and understanding need to be created and each group’s respective histories need to be recognised in a way that benefits all who were affected.

4. Case Study: 32-Battalion and the Politics of Memory

The politics of memory when dealing with the past and how it manifests in the future can be seen within the case study of 32-Battalion. This section will look into the background of the unit through the use of interviews, testimonials and literature.

4.1 Background of Unit

Founded by Colonel Jan Breytenbach in 1975, 32-Battalion initially known as Bravo Group was formed as a unit within the South African Defence Force in the early years of the conflict on the border of the then South-West Africa and Angola. The unit was a special light infantry battalion that from the beginning comprised of black Angolan soldiers and white SADF permanent force members and conscripted soldiers. The combination of these soldiers made for a formidable force and the unit soon became one of the strongest and most effective within the SADF. The unit was involved in all types of combat during its years of existence and saw much of its combat within Angola. However, in its later years it was deployed to keep the peace in the South African townships during the apartheid era (Breytenbach 2011: 257).

South Africa's involvement in Angola what eventually came to be known as the Border War began in 1975. Angola was in the midst of a civil war set against the backdrop of the Cold War. There were three main fighting groups within Angola namely: *Uniao Nacional para a Independencia total de Angola* (UNITA) which was a socialist organisation backed by China, *Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola* (MPLA) which was a communist organisation backed by the Russian and Cuban communist governments and *Frente Nacional de Libertacao* (FNLA) which was an anti-communist organisation backed by the United States of America and the CIA in efforts to stop a communist take-over of Angola. Despite the American support, the MPLA defeated FNLA and UNITA, and assumed power in Angola in 1975. During this time the South African government had a zero tolerance policy on communism referring to it as 'Die Rooi Gevaar'. The victory of MPLA in Angola was thus seen as a good enough motive for South African military intervention to try and stop the spread of communism in Africa (Heitman 1990: 10).

In 1975 the victory of communist organisation MPLA saw many Angolan black troops from its anti-communist rival group FNLA seeking refuge in South-West Africa which at that stage

was under the control of the South African government. Col. Breytenbach saw the great potential of these black FNLA troops and enlisted them as non-commissioned soldiers into the SADF and these troops were then organised into the Bravo group. Breytenbach further enlisted white soldiers into the unit and after its expansion it came to be known as 32-Battalion (Nortje 2014: 70)

In an interview (Appendix A) conducted with Noel Viljoen a young white soldier who served in 32-Battalion he reflects on the early dynamics of the unit

The most important thing about 32-Battalion was that it was made up of Angolans who mostly fought for the FNLA. We felt that we were joining them rather than them joining us. 32Battalion was totally different from the rest of the army. I enjoyed being in 32-Battalion [as] it was a totally new experience. The discipline was different, the doctrine was different and the operational circumstances were different. We were a rather hectic bunch and mostly just because of the Angolans. What you need to understand is that when a young white boy walks into a group of Angolans who can't speak English you soon realise that you are the one that needs to adapt (Viljoen, 2014).

An interview (Appendix B) was conducted with Tshisukila Tukayula De Abreu, who was a young Angolan freedom fighter who joined the FNLA in 1975 to fight the communist threat in the country and had to flee Angola after the MPLA defeated the other factions and took control of the country. He was one of the many Angolans who fled their country and who were recruited by Col. Breytenbach. According to Tukayula De Abreu he was the first black soldier who became an officer within the SADF, contrary to the country's ideological political positioning at the time. In the interview conducted with Tukayula De Abreu he talks of how reluctant the government was at the decision made by the SADF to recruit the black Angolan soldiers. He states that

They never trusted us and they watched our every move. No Angolan soldier was ever allowed to hold or use a radio as the white soldiers were worried we would sell them out to the Angolan enemy, it took a long time before they started to trust us (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014).

Tukayula De Abreu talks of how hard it was to communicate with his fellow white soldiers as all the Angolan soldiers only spoke Portuguese. He tells of how, as he learned to speak the same language as the white soldiers, they began to trust him and as a result he formed strong bonds with his fellow white recruits as was the case with many of the other Angolan soldiers.

Tukayula De Abreu states that “The black men and the white men were friends. There was no racism. We were all Christians. We are all the same in God’s eyes, black or white it doesn’t matter” (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014). He explains that 32-Battalion (after 31 Battalion which consisted of San Bushmen and white soldiers) was one of the first units within the SADF to be racially integrated during the apartheid era (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014). Breytenbach (2011) states that

Those who died were black and white. But what does skin colour matter? They were all heroes. In 32-Battalion, any colour was fine as long as it was not a cowardly shade (Breytenbach 2011: 348).

It has been said that 32-Battalion may have in fact been the first crack in the apartheid regime’s armour in terms of desegregation, however, ironically they were one of the first to be disbanded when the country moved into the era of democracy and since then their path to integration into the new South Africa has been tumultuous (Breytenbach 2011: 348).

The unit was primarily used as a counter-insurgency force, unlike other SADF units, 32Battalion was deployed on the South Angolan border, where they formed the main buffer between SADF regular forces and their communist enemies across the border. The unit’s activities covered a wide spectrum ranging from guerrilla operations, counter insurgency, reconnaissance missions, and semi-conventional combat to fully-fledged conventional operations (Breytenbach 2002: 25).

As a result of 32-Battalion’s wide array of skills and discipline their involvement as a unit in the Border War was greater than any other unit of the SADF (32-Battalion, 2010). They also quickly gained a reputation for being ruthless, relentless and merciless in their approach to combat and destroying the enemy. Viljoen (2014) states that

32-Battalion didn’t take any crap, when they were shot at they shot back. They were extremely disciplined and they had vastly effective procedures that they followed. People feared 32Battalion because they didn’t let them get away with anything and they always caught them (Viljoen, 2014).

According to Viljoen, the combination of the Angolan troops with the South African Special force troops made 32-Battalion a formidable force. The unit is said to have been responsible for the highest percentage of enemy casualties in comparison to any other SADF unit during the entirety of the Border War (Viljoen, 2014).

As stated in the documentary *The Incredible Story of Apartheid's Black Shock Troops* (2007), to their supporters the unit came to be known as 'The Buffalo Soldiers', 32-Battalion was said to have been one of the most feared units by its Angolan enemies who referred to them as 'Os Terriveis' or 'The Terrible Ones' (*The Incredible Story of Apartheid's Black Shock Troops*, 2007). Tukayula De Abreu recalls that "Os Terriveis was our name, even today. When I tell people I was in 32-Battalion they run away, they are scared" (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014). 32Battalion was considered as one of the most controversial units in the SADF due to the aggressive nature of its involvement in the Border War and the fact that they used the same aggressive approach in their later deployment in the townships and allegations that the unit were operating as a third force within the townships. Controversy followed them until their eventual demise (*The Incredible Story of Apartheid's Black Shock Troops*, 2007).

At the time of the Border War the political climate was such that the entire world was embroiled within the conflict of communism and capitalism. South Africa had declared itself a capitalist Christian nation in opposition to communism. They used the threat of communism as a justification to engage in wars across the continent in order to stop the ideology from spreading (Stemmet and Senekal 2013: 99). Many of 32-Battalion's operations were highly classified and secretive and it has been said that the group was in fact one of the key players in curbing the communist forces in Angola during the Border War (32-Battalion, 2010). The ideology of young SADF soldiers at the time was simplistically tied to the opposition of communism as seen in the statement by Viljoen (2014) "I didn't have any concept of ideology at that stage of my life. I just knew we had to fight the communists" (Viljoen, 2014). As argued by Stemmet and Senekal (2013)

There is a popular perception that the threat of Soviet expansionism during the time of South Africa's Border War (1966-1989) was a fabrication by the National Party government to motivate young men to fight to maintain apartheid as the main political ideology (2013: 99).

Stemmet and Senekal further describe the young soldiers as pawns used to further the National Party's selfish goals of the constructed fiction of communist expansion (2013: 99).

The Angolan FNLA troops that formed part of 32-Battalion had also been indoctrinated by anticommunist sentiments as FNLA was the main opposition party to communism in Angola. Tukayula De Abreu (2014) explains that the Angolan soldiers were not fighting for South

Africa when they were a part of 32-Battalion and they were not patriotic to South Africa in any way. To the Angolan soldiers South Africa and FNLA had one common enemy and that was communism and for them this was a good enough reason to fight for the unit.

In the beginning we didn't say we were fighting for South Africa, we just said we were fighting against the communists, so we both had the same enemy, a common enemy. To me these communist were going to destroy the continent. They had already destroyed my country (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014).

According to Breytenbach (2002) members of the ANC often slated the black Angolan 32Battalion troops calling them 'white loving mercenaries' 'who should go back to their own bush' (2002: 327). As stated by Tukayula De Abreu

After the Border War ended we gave Namibia to SWAPO. International journalists came to us there and when they talked to us they were very confused. They asked why we were fighting together with these white men and killing our African brothers, I told them those people weren't my brothers those people were communists (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014).

This illustrates how the Western press's interpretation and that of the ANC of the conflict was seen as a race war i.e. black vs. white where as those taking part in the war saw it as a fight against communism where blacks and whites were on both sides.

4.2 End of the Border War

In 1987 the Border War came to an end when the decision was made by Soviet forces to withdraw their troops from Angola. The end of the Border War marked a new era for 32Battalion as they were withdrawn from Angola and sent back to South Africa. The entire unit both black and white soldiers were relocated to a military base in Pomfret in the Northern Cape. The new base in Pomfret was described by Breytenbach (2002) as a 'death trap' due to the fact that it was located on an old asbestos mine. The new location of the base posed a major health risk to the unit's personnel, however all efforts to have the unit relocated to a more human friendly environment were turned down by government administration (2002: 327).

Breytenbach (2002) talks of how there was also the question as to what would happen to the Angolan troops now that the Border War was over. Back in South Africa these Angolans did not share the same language or cultural values with local South African tribes. Furthermore,

they were alienated from their own country when they pledged allegiance to South Africa, which prevented their return to Angola. As stated by Breytenbach

In the minds of the black troops, at least, there was considerable concern for their personal wellbeing. They still belonged to the army, but suddenly they found themselves in a position they were not used to (2002: 326).

According to Breytenbach (2002) the unit that was once highly respected and decorated by the apartheid government were not greeted with the welcome they were hoping for once back in South Africa. Breytenbach further states that the end of the Border War filled his men with a sense of dread and uncertainty. They were left wondering what the impact of this new era would be on the spirit, character and operational readiness of 32-Battalion (2002: 326).

4.3 32-Battalion and the ANC

Organisations opposed to white domination in South Africa were banned from the country during the 1960s onwards. As a result these organisations had to operate underground in exile in other African countries. The ANC and their military wing MK in particular were banned from the country from 1960 to 1990 (Britannica, 2014). According to Barlow (2010) the ANC and Mk had been identified by the South African government at the time as a terrorist organisation whose main objective was to achieve the violent overthrow of the all-white National Party government and ultimately replace it with a Black Nationalist government (2010: 33).

UmKhonto We Sizwe's main base was stationed in Zambia. Many of their members were trained in the Soviet Union and after their training they were sent to Zambia either to receive further military training or to infiltrate South African borders on specific missions of what was described by the National Party government as sabotage and terrorism. According to Barlow the ANC's location in Zambia made it difficult to conduct effective attacks and as a result they began to establish several special underground infiltration routes through Zimbabwe and Botswana over the Limpopo River into South Africa (Barlow 2010: 33). Mzwandile Piliso a prominent member of the ANC leadership who was in exile during this time stated

The ANC and its allies have strengthened their underground structures and combat capacity. Units of UmKhonto we Sizwe, our people's army, continue to engage the enemy in battle. It is

these actions that have compelled Pretoria and its allies to concede that the ANC is central to any resolution of the conflict raging in our land (Piliso, 1988).

After the Border War 32-Battalion was primarily used as a permanent force-based counter insurgency unit involved in regular action and warfare on a year round basis. In 1988 one of unit's first major operations on South African soil was to interdict and intercept one of MK's main infiltration routes situated along the Limpopo River on the Zimbabwean border. The unit was successful in their aims to prevent ANC infiltration. On numerous occasions they caught, killed and wounded MK guerrilla fighters and gang members (Breytenbach 2002: 333).

In later years a report was conducted by the TRC regarding one instance where MK fighters met up with the unit when they attempted to infiltrate South Africa's border. The report talks of the meeting of MK and SADF troops when they attempted to infiltrate the country and it gives details of the deaths of its members at the hand of these 32-Battalion soldiers. The document gives details of how in March 1988 an MK unit consisting of four persons infiltrated into South Africa. The unit encountered members of the SADF which resulted in the deaths of three MK members and the arrest of the fourth member. It was alleged that the SADF soldiers initially only caught two of the men and asked them to squat on their haunches upon searching the men they discovered that the men were armed, the MK members broke free and ran away at which point the SADF soldiers opened fire on them killing one and they then arrested the other member. Upon interrogation the man confessed that there were two other MK members in the area. The SADF soldiers quickly located these men in the bush and opened fire on them killing both men (Truth and Reconciliation Recommendation Report, n.d.).

According to Nortje (2014) many exiled ANC members took refuge in Angola and thus the ANC came to hear of 32-Battalion through their Angolan MPLA allies who had experienced the ruthlessness of the unit first hand during the Border War (2014: 240). The ANC was very critical of what they called 'the mercenary army of Angolans in 32-Battalion' (2014:1142). During the time of the Border War the exiled ANC had close ties with the MPLA who the South African government considered the main communist Angolan enemy. As stated by Piliso (1988)

In Angola, the South African government not only arms and supports UNITA, but is sustaining the biggest and most vicious aggression ever. We congratulate the People's Republic of Angola on its resistance and are confident that it will ultimately win. But we believe that the world, and especially the West, can act resolutely to end the carnage if it forgets self-interest (Piliso, 1988).

Barlow (2010) states that once in South Africa MK members would incite mass mobilisation and political uproar amongst the local black populations with the intentions of making the country ungovernable for the apartheid government. This government soon felt it was necessary to bring an end to these 'terrorist' activities As quoted by Barlow "For me the enemy had changed from MPLA in Angola to that of the African National Congress and UmKhonto We Sizwe" (2010: 33). According to Breytenbach (2002) the guerrilla tactics and fighting skills of MPLA enemy soldiers in Angola was vastly superior to that of MK. Therefore compared to what 32-Battalion had been up against in the decade before, MK guerrillas were no match in combat against 32-Battalion. The unit was successful in its efforts to stop MK infiltration into South Africa. However, Breytenbach believes they would have been a lot more successful if they had the opportunity to cross the borders and hunt down the MK guerrillas before they entered into South Africa, but the political climate at the time was not conducive to such drastic action (2002: 334).

It was soon discovered that the ANC and MK had established a top secret military base in Gaborone Botswana. To the apartheid government the ANC was slowly but surely moving closer to the South African border which would essentially make it easier for them to carry out acts of terrorism. Members of 32-Battalion were sent on a secret mission to Botswana to bring an end to any ANC activity in the area. Barlow (2010) writes

On the morning of June 14 1985, I awoke to hear the news that South African military forces had attacked ANC targets inside Botswana. A total of twelve people had been killed in the attacks including a prominent young MK leader by the name of Thami Mnyele (2010: 42).

Botswana's president at the time Quett Masire condemned the attacks and he issued a statement stating that fourteen people had in fact been killed, describing the ANC members as 'South African refugees' (2010: 42). When the news of the incident reached the rest of the world, the international community was quick to condemn the attacks calling them outrageous and barbaric (2010: 42). As stated by Piliso (1988)

We do not make a fetish of, nor do we glamourize, the armed struggle, but in our conditions, dramatically heightened by the latest attacks on the mass democratic movement, we are left with no choice but to resist with arms in hand. Our answer to Pretoria's combined arrogance, intransigence and ruthlessness is to intensify the armed struggle. Our armed offensive must assume the level of intensity that is consistent with the general task of advancing towards people's power - towards a democratic and non-racial South Africa (Piliso, 1988).

These instances of confrontation between the ANC and the SADF especially that of 32-Battalion laid the foundations for future hostile relations between the two groups that would ultimately lead to 32-Battalion's demise. The unit's punitive approach to the ANC and MK members created reciprocal feelings of dissonance from the ANC towards 32-Battalion from the onset.

5. 32-Battalion: Townships and the ANC

The early nineties in South Africa brought about an entirely new role for 32-Battalion. In 1990 violence and unrest within the townships increased dramatically. In April 1990 32-Battalion was withdrawn from Pomfret and their various other operations and placed on standby for possible redeployment into the unruly townships. In May there was a sudden flare up of violence within the townships that could no longer be controlled by the police. As a result the SADF was called in to try and maintain law and order within townships across the country. As stated by Nortje (2014)

It is necessary to explain the prevailing internal threats of the early 1990s to understand what 32-Battalion's contribution would be towards the maintaining of law and order in the townships. Politically inspired troubles in the black townships escalated and ran out of control (2014: 1115).

32-Battalion was one of the main SADF units to be deployed into the townships during the unrest. Nortje (2014) argues that the challenges of quelling unrest in the townships suited 32-Battalion as they were trained to deal with various conflict situations but the problem was "that their trade was war specific" (2014: 1116). Wilson (2001) proposes that these realities gave rise to what became known as the 'Third Force'. He states

Here lay the origins of the Third Force amongst professional counter insurgency specialists with long experience of border wars, which as the years went by they increasingly applied in South Africa itself (2001: 7).

According to Nortje (2014) the townships proved to be a challenge for 32-Battalion as they were used to centralised military bases as the enemy targets. The townships however were densely populated areas and the enemy was all around, hiding in hostels and would often stage ambushes from civilian dwellings (2014: 1116). The first major operation that 32-Battalion was assigned to within the townships was to curtail the violence taking place in Natal (now known

as Kwazulu Natal) specifically in Umlazi, Pietermaritzburg and township settlements around Durban. The Zulu dominated Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) lead by Chief Buthelezi was at war with the ANC and its members. In the townships surrounding Pietermaritzburg free movement had been severely curtailed as a result of violent clashes between ANC supporters and IFP supporters (2014: 1115).

32-Battalion was deployed to bring an abrupt end to the violent, bloody clashes between these two groups. According to Breytenbach (2002), the combatants, especially those of the ANC, were taken by surprise and did not expect to be handled in such a brutal and robust manner. The unit had the same approach to other warring ANC and IFP factions in other townships across Natal. Breytenbach states that

Both the IFP and ANC were in a state of dismay to discover that 32-Battalion had no loyalties to either side and treated both tribes with the same level of brutality and force (2002: 335).

In a short period of time the unit was successful in bringing all unrest within Natal's volatile townships under control. According to Viljoen (2014)

Sending 32-Battalion to the townships was the best thing the government could have done. 32Battalion was extremely effective, they stopped a lot of the infighting because at that stage the ANC and IFP were fighting big time. When 32 moved in they stopped the war (Viljoen, 2014).

Breytenbach (2002) believes that although they were successful in achieving their immediate goals these further clashes with the ANC only created further dissonance and feelings of hatred between the ANC and 32-Battalion (2002: 334). In a statement released by the ANC's Department of Information and Publicity (1991) about the violence in the townships they contend

The African National Congress expresses its extreme concern at the increasing violence, both in Natal and on the Reef. Scores of people have died in circumstances of horrific violence. This escalating violence should sound warning bells to all South Africans (ANC Department of Information and Publicity, 1991).

According to Breytenbach (2002) the local black populations throughout South Africa had come to hear of '*The Terrible Ones*'. 32-Battalion was feared by many and they came to be known as a force not to be trifled with. The unit soon started to become the centre of controversy apart from the reputation the unit received amongst those in the townships, 32Battalion's antics soon attracted media hype and they were often referred to as 'notorious blood-thirsty killers' (2002: 327). In light of the way in which 32-Battalion was seen by the

ANC and other black population groups, Viljoen (2014) states that

32-Battalion was an insurgency unit, that's what we specialised in, we went into the townships to infiltrate. The ANC realised that they didn't have the skills or capability to take on the unit in the townships. They tried to make the country ungovernable by creating civil disobedience and demolishing infrastructure (Viljoen, 2014).

It was not long before there was an outcry of ANC and IFP leaders demanding the withdrawal of 32-Battalion from the townships in Natal. At the same time negotiations had begun between the National Party government and that of the ANC in what came to be known as The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). As a result of the harsh way in which 32-Battalion had been approaching the violence in the townships, the ANC demanded that the troops be withdrawn because of their inhumane treatment of their members. Even members of the National Party began to voice their disapproval of the unit's behaviour in the townships and as a result 32-Battalion was withdrawn. As stated by Breytenbach (2002)

It was apparently a growing political reality of the time that appeasement of the ANC by returning 32-Battalion to its barracks had to be done, even if it meant the breakdown of law and order, in spite of the unit having achieved remarkable success in the affected townships, the troops were pulled out and given no credit (2002: 335).

Nortje (2014) explains that the war between the ANC and the IFP spread further to elsewhere in the country. Violent clashes between the two groups and its supporters continued to emerge and erupt within the townships. Townships in the Witwatersrand especially that of Tembisa, Soweto and Khatlehong became no-go areas because of the severity of violence within the area. The police as well as the army were struggling to maintain law and order and it was decided that more drastic measures would have to take place (2014: 1115). As stated by Breytenbach (2002)

The government was hesitant to send 32-Battalion because of their infamous reputation. There was however no other alternative and they decided to deploy 32-Battalion into the Witwatersrand townships to try and bring an end to the bloodshed (2002: 335).

Townships on the Witwatersrand had become a lot more politicised in comparison to those in Natal and thus the level of violence was much bloodier (2002: 335). 32-Battalion's first deployment was into an informal settlement in Heidelberg and they moved on to other

townships from there. The unit was mostly called out at night when violence was most prevalent on the streets of the townships. ANC and IFP supporters would often launch attacks on the unit then retreat back into the masses giving the unit no opportunity to retaliate. 32-Battalion soldiers were often wounded in such attacks which created feelings of great dissonance (Nortje 2014: 1116). In contrast however ANC and IFP members saw the unit's actions in the township in a very different light. As quoted by Deacon Mathe a former ANC commander

32-Battalion came into the townships; they were attacking our people and destroying activist's houses. People today view 32-Battalion as the outcasts because their activities were very vicious and they constantly opened fire on innocent people (*The Incredible Story of Apartheid's Black Shock Troops*, 2007).

Breytenbach (2002) writes that members of 32-Battalion would often taunt senior ANC members who lived in the townships by dumping large amounts of rubbish on their steps which inevitably did little to endear the Battalion to the ANC (2002: 336). Nortje (2014) writes that the ANC referred to the soldiers of 32-Battalion as SADF mercenaries and often rallied up large masses of township residents who demanded the removal of the unit from their townships (2014: 1143).

The Battalion soon brought an end to the violence in the respective townships bringing about law and order. They were merited and praised for their peacekeeping efforts by the various township municipalities however their hard hitting approach did not improve the unit's reputation amongst the ANC. As stated by Viljoen (2014) "The ANC always hated 32-Battalion even before we moved into the townships" (Viljoen, 2014).

Breytenbach (2002) writes that the ANC members saw 32-Battalion as a 'Third Force' purposefully sent by the nationalist government to try and stir up black on black violence. As stated by Breytenbach

The ANC were furious with 32-Battalion's effectiveness in restoring law and order, while they were doing everything they could to stoke the fires of discontent. A show down was inevitable. The ANC complained and threatened, insinuating that the Buffalo soldiers were a 'Third Force' (2002: 336).

The ANC counters Breytenbach's opinion in a press statement they stated "The racists are out to terrorise our people into submission, crush their democratic organisations and force us to

surrender” (ANC statement on Negotiations, 1987). Ellis (1998) assesses the ANC’s views about a ‘Third Force’ operational in the townships at this time as expressed by Nelson Mandela.

Ellis states that

Mandela had been incensed by a spate of murderous, random attacks on black people, first in the Vaal area and later on the East Rand. These attacks, he believed, bore the hallmark of organised, covert government death squads [...] Mandela suggested that a mysterious third party- distinct from the ANC and the National Party, but presumably members of the security forces (Ellis 1998: 261).

In contrast to the views expressed by the ANC Tukayula De Abreu states that

We went to the townships to stop them from fighting, the men from IFP and ANC were always killing each other. Someone had to stop them and the police couldn’t do it, they were not strong enough. So we were sent there. It was IFP and the ANC but I believe there was another party involved. The ANC called it the Third Force and they told people it was 32-Battalion but it wasn’t us it was someone else (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014).

5.1 The Phola Park Incident: Contested Memories

32-Battalion gained widespread attention and criticism for their involvement in Phola Park. The events that occurred there have been remembered differently by the two groups involved and represents a clear indication of the politics of memory at play. The ANC’s version of events plays out quite differently to that of 32-Battalion’s rendition of what happened that day. By 1992 tension between 32-Battalion and the ANC had risen dramatically due to the units’ deployment in the townships and their hard hitting approach (Breytenbach 2002: 336).

In April 1992 32-Battalion was deployed by the SADF into Phola Park to try and curb the violence that had been taking place in the area. An incident however occurred on the night of April 8, which involved the unit and that of ANC members. The specificities of this incident have been widely contested and each side has their own version of the events that played out that night. Nortje (2014), was a member of 32-Battalion, he gives his rendition of how events played out that night: Phola Park was an ANC strong hold in Thokoza that harboured many ANC criminally inclined gangs and comrades. The area was rife with violence and as a result

it had been fenced off from the rest of the township in efforts to try and bring about some sort of control. According to Nortje shots were fired at the military vehicles from surrounding shacks as the unit moved into a fenced area. The troops were trained to deal with these types of attacks and rapidly disembarked and returned fire (2014: 336). Tukayula De Abreu (2014) was present at Phola Park on the night of April 8th, he recalls his version of events

We were in Phola Park to protect the people and we were there to keep the peace. The night that everybody talks about in April, the politicians have forgotten, the story they tell is not the story that happened. We went into Phola Park and they started to shoot at us. They shot our boss in the stomach. We never found out who it was. We opened fire on them. I believe one or two men died from the other side. But the investigation saw things differently. They said we were too aggressive (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014).

Nortje (2014) recalls that some of the Angolan soldiers came forward in an internal investigation of the incident and admitted that they may have in fact been 'heavy handed' when dealing with some of the suspects in Phola Park that night. Some of the men further admitted to kicking and slapping civilians, but they too stated that nobody was killed in the incident. They also testified that there was no need for an enquiry into the matter as any military units deployed into the townships would have done the same if presented with the same circumstances (2014: 1153).

On April 9, the morning after the incident a police investigation team was sent to the area where the incident occurred. Sergeant Jan Hendrik Olivier who was the detective at the scene stated that a woman had been shot in the leg and that one dead person had been found. Many residents at the scene had made claims to Oliver that they had been assaulted the night before by army personnel (Nortje 2014: 1153).

The ANC and the media however had a very different outlook on the events that took place in Phola Park that day. As reported by the SABC

On April 8th 1992, over a hundred residents of Phola Park, Thokoza, were severely beaten with rifle-butts by members of the SADF 32-Battalion, in Thokoza, after an SADF member was shot and injured in the area. Two women were shot dead and at least four raped during the raid (SABC, 1993).

Another media account reported that Daniel Lucas Monyepao an ANC supporter

[W]as severely beaten with rifle butts by members of the SADF 32-Battalion in his shack in Phola Park, Tokoza, Tvl, on 8 April 1992. Mr Monyepao was one of more than 100 Phola Park

residents, including women and teenagers, who were assaulted by members of the Battalion after a member of the SADF was shot and injured in the area. Two women were also shot dead and at least four raped during the raid” (SABC, 1993).

Other reports spoke of 32-Battalion going into Phola Park and using live ammunition on innocent unarmed civilians. Images of dead bodies and wounded people began to surface all over the media. John Msimango who was an ANC member involved in the incident recalled the events in Phola Park in an interview conducted by the Sunday Times in May 1992. In the interview Msimango stated that he was unarmed and that he and his wife were caught up in the crossfire between 32-Battalion and ANC supporters. Msimango was shot in both legs and his wife was killed. Several other interviews were conducted at the time with over seventy ANC and Phola Park residents all of who stated that they had been victims of violence and brutality at the hands of 32-Battalion (Nortje 2014: 1155).

The ANC’s department of Information and Publicity released a statement on April 10 1992 condemning the events that took place at Phola Park. They stated

32-Battalion is notorious for their barbarity against Namibian and Angolan people and now they are bringing that barbarity here. What was 32-Battalion doing in Phola Park in the first place? It is precisely the deployment of units like this that reinforce our distrust of the security forces and the impression that such forces bear much of the responsibility for the ongoing violence (ANC Department of Information and Publicity, 1992).

According to Breytenbach (2002) 32-Battalion saw the claims and statements by the media and the ANC as a convenient excuse to expose the cruel face of apartheid. They believed that the ANC was deliberately staging a propaganda exercise to try and mislead the public. In contrast the ANC began to make allegations that a ‘Third Force’ was operating in the townships with the main objective of killing ANC leadership. The Third Force in this instance being that of 32Battalion who were seen as agents of the apartheid regime and the National Party (2002: 338).

A regional inquisition was opened to investigate the incident at Phola Park. Testimonies and evidence from both 32-Battalion members and that of ANC members involved in the incident were gathered and heard. According to the lawyers for Phola Park residence and the ANC’s regional committee

32-Battalion had failed to provide any justifications for the acts of violence committed. The unit was castigated for acting without police support and the committee was asked to find that 32-

Battalion was guilty of ‘gross acts of impropriety’ and should be removed from policing duties ‘forthwith’ (Nortje 2014: 1155).

As a result of the various conflicting versions of events that began to emerge and because of the fragile political climate of the time, the National Party government was hesitant to side with 32-Battalion on the matter of Phola Park. As a result of incidents such as Phola Park and other occurrences of violence within the townships, a commission of enquiry was set up by President De Klerk under the leadership of Judge Richard Goldstone. The Goldstone Commission did a thorough investigation into the incident at Phola Park. The initial findings of the Goldstone Commission did not favour the rendition of events given by the members of 32-Battalion. The commission stated that 32-Battalion’s entry into Phola Park was unjustified and that in certain unspecified incidents members of 32-Battalion acted in a manner inconsistent with the function of peace keeping forces. Further enquiry was done in to the matter and eventually the charges against the men were dropped as a result of insufficient evidence to convict them. In the aftermath of the Phola Park incident 32-Battalion was withdrawn from urban deployment (Nortje 2014: 1156).

In the writings of Zulu (1992) he looks at the rendition of events given by ‘The South African Report’ at the time

Although South Africa’s inquiry into public violence last April denied there was evidence of a ‘Third Force’ operating in the country, it did not, as the South African government first claimed, clear the country’s security forces of complicity in the violence”. Phola Park is evidence that the police force and army “have been instruments of oppression by successive white governments in maintaining a society predicated upon racial discrimination” (1992: 1).

Breytenbach (2002) writes that in mid-November 1992, the Goldstone Commission was reopened. Judge Goldstone announced that after conducting a raid on the military intelligence headquarters in Pretoria new evidence had emerged that allegedly indicated unacceptable activities as well as the extreme possibility of a third force (2002: 337). Wilson (2001) writes that in March 1994 the Goldstone Commission confirmed that they had found evidence that 32-Battalion had been training IFP hit squads to demolish and destabilise the ANC (2001: 196). The new findings of the Goldstone Commission further strengthened the ANC’s case against 32-Battalion. As quoted by Breytenbach (2002) “Phola Park came and went. The Goldstone findings stoked the fires of hatred against the battalion by the ANC” (2002: 337). Breytenbach

further writes that 32-Battalion denies that they were acting as a third force and further denied the allegations against them by the Goldstone Commission. Up until today the unit still carries the blame for events that they state never actually happened (2002: 337).

6. The Ideological Shift and its effect on 32-Battalion

According to Breytenbach (2002) after the incident at Phola Park 32-Battalion and its future in the SADF became a topic of conversation amongst those involved in CODESA. The ANC demanded that the National Party Government disband 32-Battalion due to their violent conduct in Phola Park (2002:338). In a statement regarding 32-Battalion and their involvement at Phola Park, the ANC's Department of Information and Publicity (1992) listed a set of demands

- All mercenary forces be confined to base during this transition period pending their disbandment and return to their countries of origin.
- The covert activities of the SADF cease forthwith and personnel involved be confined to base. There must be a full public disclosure of which forces are confined and at what bases.
- That those soldiers involved in acts of violence, including murder, rape and beatings, against the people of Phola Park immediately be charged and court martialled.
- That the SADF bear full financial responsibility for the damage to life and property, and ensure compensation is paid to those who submit claims.
- The Minister of Defence respond to the above and outline what action will be taken to prevent a recurrence of such aggression against the people (ANC Department of Information and Publicity, 1992).

However Viljoen (2014) believes that

It was only in the ANC's interest to show the unit up as the bad guys and to discredit them because we were screwing up their plans. I don't know if we will ever truly know the effectiveness of the ANC's campaigns during this time (Viljoen, 2014).

According to Breytenbach (2002), in line with the negotiations, the ANC deliberately orchestrated a psychological offensive and propaganda type warfare to try and discredit the

government and its security forces in this instance that of 32-Battalion (2002: 338). When questioned about 32-Battalion's reputation Viljoen (2014) testifies that

32-Battalions reputation was mostly a result of propaganda. We were just a normal bunch of guys most of the time. The ANC with their support from Russia, they had the mileage to spew this bullshit propaganda. You would not believe the stories they told. It was all just crap (Viljoen, 2014).

Pfister (2003) argues that the negotiations were in a fragile state at this point with the ANC seeking to opt out at any given point if it did not produce the results the ANC desired (2003: 6). As the negotiations at CODESA continued so it was decided, on the demand of the ANC, that the unit be fully withdrawn from the townships. The demands were granted and 32Battalion was sent back to their base in Pomfret (Breytenbach 2002: 337).

The ANC also insisted that 32-Battalion was purposefully sent into the townships as part of a third force to undermine and destabilise the ANC's power. When questioned about the existence of a Third Force, Viljoen (2014) states

In my opinion the ANC invented the Third Force and furthermore I believe that in some instances they themselves were the Third Force. They were never able to achieve the chaos in the townships they had wished for and so they set their own people on each other to create problems (Viljoen, 2014).

Breytenbach (2002) further argues that the ANC did all in their power to try and shift public opinion and that of international opinion in their favour. Their main objective was to neutralise 32-Battalion and essentially break the unit down because they were seen as a hindrance in obtaining their main objective of gaining power in South Africa (2002: 340). Viljoen (2014) believes that

The pressure from the ANC was the reason for the unit's disbandment. The ANC demanded the unit be disbanded purely because they were getting fucked up by us in the townships. They did not have their right of way anymore in the townships and they lost their authority and their control of their own people because 32-Battalion stopped them every time they tried to advance (Viljoen, 2014).

The CODESA negotiations reached a critical point and it seemed the National Party was at a major disadvantage. Furthermore the country was being further strangled by international pressure and sanctions. It was apparent that an agreement needed to be reached soon which meant that sacrifices had to be made (Breytenbach 2002: 340).

6.1 Disbanding of 32-Battalion

As a result of the negotiations between the National Party and the ANC, 32-Battalion was officially disbanded on March 27 1993. The political implications of the time and the mounting pressure on the National Party government gave them little alternative and it was decided that disbanding the unit was in the best interest of the people as well as the outcome of the negotiations. According to Breytenbach (2011) this came to a shock to all those in the battalion as they were given no prior warning. He writes that

Those who did so much dying and fighting for this country were just sort of disbanded on the spur of the moment. It just isn't right. I think it is terrible. I think they were betrayed, quite honestly (2011: 390).

The disbanding of 32-Battalion was to be one of the more controversial problems faced by the apartheid regime as it shed light on the transition that was taking place and with that the slow demilitarisation of the SADF to make way for the new era of democracy in the country (2011: 390).

According to Breytenbach (2002) the official justification used for the unit's arbitrary disbandment was that of 'disgraceful conduct'. To the men the disbanding of 32-Battalion seemed to be a dishonest attempt by De Klerk at trying to keep the peace with the ANC during the negotiation period (2002: 341). According to Breytenbach (2002) 32-Battalion felt a sense of betrayal by the apartheid government and a sense of resentment for the ANC because they had brought the disbandment about

In the end the relocation back to South Africa turned out to be a disaster for the unit that had done more than any other unit to further the National Party Government's cause. When the political sun was shining and it seemed that nothing could go wrong, they were only too pleased to take credit for 32-Battalion's military achievements. However when the negotiations began and the apartheid sun began to set they were not interested in anything to do with the unit (2002: 326).

According to Nortje (2014) once the unit had been dissolved many of its members were left with feelings of uncertainty. Many of the soldiers knew no other skills other than soldiering and a vast majority of them had little educational background to fall back on outside of the confines of the SADF. There had been rumours at the time that "the ANC had made secret

plans with the Angolan government to repatriate all 32 Battalion Angolans back to Angola after the elections in April 1994” (2014: 1173-1174). Thus feelings of uncertainty were especially felt by the Angolan men and their families. As recalled by Tukayula de Abreu (2014) “The ANC wanted to force MPLA to take us back. But MPLA said no these are not our sons anymore. So we had to stay in South Africa” (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014). The men had become naturalised South African citizens by the time the unit was disbanded which meant that they could not be forced to return to Angola, however integration into normal South African society outside of the comforts of the unit would prove to be a major challenge for them (Breytenbach 2002: 345).

Nortje (2014) writes that the SADF made minor efforts to create channels in which the men of 32-Battalion could be integrated into other SADF units; this they hoped would further assist in creating future military career opportunities for the men. The men of 32-Battalion were also given the option to leave and/or retire from the SADF all together at which stage they would be compensated accordingly (2014: 1172).

Breytenbach (2002) writes that despite the demise of 32-Battalion, the SADF and the government at the time allowed members of the unit especially Angolan soldiers to remain in Pomfret where they were given state housing. He further argues that little consideration was given to the major health hazards the area presented as a result of an abandoned asbestos mine. Pomfret is situated in an extremely remote area of South Africa thus ensuring that the men and their plight were kept as far away from the political realm as possible. Breytenbach (2002) argues that

Retiring the men to Pomfret was a disaster in the making from which there was no rescue. At the time De Klerk put these men out of his mind as he had far weightier problems to contend with in a rapidly changing South Africa that was threatening to leave both him and his party behind (2002: 342).

When talks began in parliament to discuss the possible amalgamation of the SADF with MK. 32-Battalion members used this opportunity to express their dismay and disillusionment with the government. They arranged for thirty silver coins to be hand delivered to De Klerk to express their feelings of betrayal. They believed that De Klerk not only betrayed them but in the midst of the hand over was betraying the country too. The handing over of the thirty coins had a biblical reference to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. The event caused a great deal of

controversy. The ex- 32-Battalion member's actions were described by President De Klerk as disgusting and insulting. To the ex-members however, they saw their actions as a great success in the name of the fallen unit (Breytenbach 2011: 392).

7. A New Era: The Transition from SADF to SANDF

In the late 1980s, it had become clear to most South Africans that the political landscape was about to undergo a radical change. After the 1994 elections South Africa's transition from an apartheid state to democracy brought about an array of complex issues that spanned across many elements of society; one of these being the SADF (Barlow 2010: 15). As is the case with most countries that undergo an ideological transition such as the one that occurred in South Africa, the military is always a major obstacle in achieving the democracy that the country desires. The political transition made it crucial for the country's military be reshaped (Cock and McKenzie 1998: 1).

The ANC's victory in their liberation struggle to bring apartheid to an end was successful however as shown by Cock and McKenzie (1998)

Even when there has been victory in liberation struggles against the oppressive rule or regime, real peace has often been short lived and democratic government has not been realised. Frequently the reason for this is the failure to demilitarise (1998: 1).

Therefore in the case of the demilitarisation process of the apartheid regime, it was essential for the new ANC government to shift power and resources away from the old regime in order for the country to successfully transition into a peaceful democratic state (1998: 1).

Cock and McKenzie (1998) argue that during the apartheid era between 1948 and 1990 South Africa became highly militarised. During this period the SADF mobilised all its resources for war on a political, ideological and economic front. As a result when the transition occurred after 1994, the new ANC government inherited arguably one of the most powerful armies in sub-Saharan Africa. The SADF had highly sophisticated weaponry, infrastructure, and

equipment as well as highly trained personnel. Thus it was essential that the transition of the military was done properly (1998: 2).

As argued by Kynoch (1996) during the apartheid era up until the 1980s the SADF was one of the key instruments used by the National Party Government in defending and maintaining the apartheid regime. The apartheid government used the SADF in a 'systematic campaign of destabilisation' to eradicate and/or bring those who opposed apartheid under control. "[...] The National Party (NP) Government's 'total strategy' that employed violence as a key in its regional policy to achieve economic, military and political hegemony" (1996: 441).

Kynoch (1996) describes the SADF's primary function during the apartheid years as an institution used to "support a minority, racially-based regime that denied political, economic, and social equality to the vast majority of the population. As a result the SADF was often deployed to fight against South Africans themselves". The SADF discriminated against blacks and other disadvantaged groups such as women and these individuals were denied opportunities for advancement. The institution also promoted ethnic divisions to further their stronghold on these marginalised groups. The SADF was in essence a politicised organisation which served as the armed wing of the National Party Government during the rule of the apartheid regime (1996: 442).

Huntington (1993) states that

In almost all cases, during political transitional periods democratic regimes have reduced the sizes of their military forces in order to instil in them a greater sense of military professionalism and reduction in military power (1993: 36).

Huntington's observations are evident in South Africa's transition. Cock and McKenzie (1998) argue that during the negotiation period between 1989 and 1994 President De Klerk and his government began the process of downsizing South Africa's armed forces in preparation for the transition that was about to occur. During this period the SADF closed several military bases, disbanded many of its strong units, dramatically reduced military expenditure and ended conscription (1998: 2).

In light of this research it can be said that the downsizing of the SADF during the beginning stages of the transitional period may have been a contributing factor to the disbanding of 32 Battalion. Kynoch (1996) views the downsizing of the SADF as essentially one of the first definitive moves made in light of the upcoming first inclusive elections that were to be held in 1994. In doing so the military's role and involvement in the politics of the country was essentially diminished (1996: 441). In light of 32-Battalion, the unit was once one of the strongest military units within the SADF and one of its key strong holds of military force and power, thus its demise correlates with the views expressed by Kynoch.

In 1994 free and fair elections were held for the first time in South Africa which ultimately resulted in the demise of the apartheid regime and that of the National Party Government's rule. The ANC won the election and Nelson Mandela became the first black president of South Africa. After the elections, procedures began to transfer power to the new democratic government. The changeover saw the remoulding and revaluation of many governmental institutions to fit in with the new democratic government and its policies. The military was therefore one of the first governmental institutions to be reshaped (Kynoch 1996: 441).

The new ANC government represented the majority of the country's population and repeatedly stressed their commitment to massive social reform across the country. Kynoch (1996) quotes from Nelson Mandela's speech given in 1995 at the Defence Exposition for South Africa

No longer seeking to oppress most of its people, at peace with its neighbours and accepted in its international community, South Africa is forging a defence industry which is guided by new priorities and a new ethos. We have a unique opportunity to help ensure that peaceful purposes are served by the defence industry (1996: 449).

After 1994 the reshaping of the SADF began. The SADF was merged with eight other armed forces in order to create a more representative structure. Of these eight armed forces the most significant were that of the ANC's military wing MK, the IFP and that of the Azanian people's liberation army. The newly amalgamated defence force took on an entirely new form and was renamed as the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) (Cock and McKenzie 1998: 2). The SANDF pledged to be vastly different to that of its predecessor both in mandate and in composition. The SANDF's manifesto presented in The White Draft of 1995 reads as follows

The SANDF is subordinate to the elected civilian authority, is pledged to eliminate discrimination of all forms within ranks, and is required to obey the dictates of international

law. It is the military arm of a democratic, non-racial government that has declared its intention to pursue peaceful and mutually beneficial military, economic and political relations with its neighbours (Kynoch 1996: 443).

Sparks (1996) argues that the death of apartheid had signalled 'miraculous social, moral and political transformation in South Africa', however behind the scenes the country was faced with a series of internal challenges. South Africa's transition to a democratic state was hard fought for but behind global media coverage the country and its people were battling to come to terms with the new system of rule (1996: 48).

Kynoch (1996) argues that the highly politicised nature of the SADF and MK prior to 1994 as well as their history of mutual antagonism posed a major threat to the peaceful integration of the two organisations within the SANDF. The white soldiers who once hunted the MK 'terrorists' were now forced to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Dissatisfaction over training facilities and procedures as well as the racism of white officers, carried over from the apartheid era, resulted in the dismissal of many former SADF personnel. As quoted by *The Economist* (London) in 1995 "If the government wants the army's racial composition to match that of the population it is the white soldiers who must lose their jobs" (1996: 445). The government soon began to implement a policy that stated that the make-up of the country's military should essentially reflect the ethnic make-up of South Africa. The ANC also believed they were indebted to MK combatants who led the party during the struggle and as a result these men were prioritised over former SADF personnel. As a result hundreds of white former SADF soldiers were retrenched and or fired from the SANDF (1996: 445).

Kynoch (1996) further argues that the new government and the SANDF aimed to erase the legacy of apartheid and enhance the quality of life for the impoverished masses that were once so severely oppressed by the previous regime. In doing so the new SANDF took on a more 'human face' attempting to "recast itself as a more socially responsible institution, a generator of jobs and technology, and proponent of international law" (1996: 449).

The demise of the SADF and the emergence of the SANDF saw the implementation of new policies that greatly differed from the ones of the SADF as a result of the ideological shift. As argued by Cock and McKenzie (1998) the new policy framework of the SANDF is a significant break from the past it does however have flaws that may have contradictory consequences that could be detrimental to the country for example what to do with demolished and retired exsoldiers in a rapid changing society (1998: 3).

7.1 Effects of Demobilisation on 32-Battalion

During the transition from the SADF to the SANDF the military experienced mass demobilisation due to the change in political dispensation of the country in the post-apartheid era. Demobilisation is defined by Motumi and McKenzie (1998) as

[T]he significant reduction of people employed by the military and how they are reintegrated into civilian society. [...] The process often involves the physical demobilisation of the soldiers with some short-term assistance, and a long term social reintegration process (1998: 182-183).

Motumi and McKenzie (1998) argue that when a country's military experiences a demobilisation of soldiers such was the case in the downsizing of the SADF during the transition, it is important that the demobilisation process is done properly in a planned and managed manner. In the case of the SADF's transition to the SANDF Motumi and McKenzie believe that ex-SADF combatants were not effectively provided for and/or adequately reintegrated into society post 1994. They contend that the demobilisation of ex-SADF combatants was "poorly planned, badly executed and wholly inadequate in meeting the needs of ex-combatants". The authors further state that "A country that which fails to provide for the social integration of its ex-combatants poses a potential threat through increased political and social instability" (1998: 181).

In light of the argument presented by Motumi and McKenzie (1998) the treatment and experience of 32-Battalion soldiers it can be said that there has possibly been a general failure by the SANDF to adequately demobilise those once part of the SADF. In 1994 just one year after the disbanding of 32-Battalion, members of the unit found themselves in very different circumstances. Barlow (2010) argues that within 32-Battalion and the armed forces as a whole the realisation that they had been misled by the apartheid government dawned on them. With the new political dispensation and the demise of the SADF many soldiers began to see the inevitable end of their military careers. As stated by Barlow "The military was their calling and they didn't care about the politics however many of them grappled with the idea of pledging allegiance to the new government who they once saw as their enemy" (2010: 212).

The long term challenge for ex-combatants lies in the area of long-term social integration. Excombatants who have spent most of their lives in the military are faced with the challenge of finding employment and reintegrating into normal civil life outside of the military. Motumi and

McKenzie (1998) argue that

At an individual level, many soldiers face problems in making the transition from military to civilian life and many do not have the skills or experience needed for civilian work. Militaries operate in a hierarchical manner with little regard for creative and lateral thinking required in many sectors of civilian life (1998: 186).

Motumi and McKenzie (1998) write that in an instance where adequate social demobilisation occurs those who have been demobilised from the military are usually given what is known as a 'demobilisation package'. These packages usually include "financial assistance, educational assistance, psychological counselling, accommodation and job placement" (1998: 183). From the interviews conducted for this study it seems that with regards to 32-Battalion measures for proper demobilisation were not put in place and have had long term consequences for many of the men. Viljoen (2014) describes the plight of the men who remained in Pomfret after the unit's disbandment

In terms of life after disbandment I believe that the men should have been taken out of Pomfret once the unit was disbanded. The government should have done more after the unit was disbanded but these men were given very little. They basically had to start their lives with nothing (Viljoen, 2014).

Breytenbach (2002) writes that once the SANDF came into being the remaining permanent force soldiers, who once belonged to 32-Battalion, were integrated into new army units, run under a very different set of rules and regulations. These SANDF units were fully racially integrated, something that was once so unique to 32-Battalion was now the accepted norm under the new democracy. Many of these soldiers were deeply unhappy in these new units and most felt they had no choice but to leave and find alternative employment (2002: 346).

As a result of the lack of a properly managed demobilisation process and the dissatisfaction with the SANDF, many ex-SADF soldiers made the transition from the army to private military companies (PMC) such as Executive Outcomes. Many of these men had very few prospects available under the political dispensation of the new South Africa and as a result of their military backgrounds decided that joining a PMC seemed like the most viable alternative (Barlow 2010: 212). The men who joined PMCs were involved in mercenary-like activities across Africa and were paid very well for their services. As many as two thousand ex-SADF soldiers began to work as paid mercenaries across the world. Soldiers from 32-Battalion were

no exception. Tukayula De Abreu (2014) was one of the 32-Battalion soldiers to join up with a PMC he states

My son works in Afghanistan at a private military company. He is following in my footsteps. I also worked in a Private Military company when I left 32-Battalion. I left the SADF in 1995. They didn't want to give me a pension. So I resigned. They gave me a signed document with conditions that anything can happen in the new SANDF, so they will call me when something happens. This was not interesting to me. So I joined [a] PMC. They [SANDF] paid me forty thousand rand, this was nothing. I would get much more in the PMC, so I left. I went to Sierra Leone and I was there until 2002 (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014).

Barlow (2010), who was a soldier from 32-Battalion, decided upon leaving the SADF to start up a private military company which came to be known as Executive Outcomes. He recruited many of his fellow 32-Battalion soldiers who had found themselves abandoned by the new SANDF. In this way Executive Outcomes became a reincarnation of 32-Battalion. They were involved in many controversial missions across Africa and soon gained a reputation for being out of control (2010: 22).

Motumi and McKenzie (1998) argue that as a result of the absence of adequate control within the PMCs that usually exists in a structured military institution, the political viability and military discipline of PMCs are considered inherently suspect (1998: 184). As a result of the infamous reputation of PMCs the ANC soon began to grow suspicious of Executive Outcomes because of the large numbers of 32-Battalion members that formed part of the PMC. It was apparent that the grudges between the ANC and that of 32-Battalion still ran deep even though the circumstances of each group were vastly different to what they once were. The ANC suspected that Executive Outcomes in partnership with far-right movements such as the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (AWB) were plotting to overthrow the new government. To the former 32-Battalion members who now formed part of Executive Outcomes, these allegations by the ANC were seen as amusing and unfounded (2010: 218). Tukayula De Abreu (2014) states that

There were lots of 32-Battalion men in Executive Outcomes. The ANC was worried about Executive Outcomes because they thought we were 32 in disguise. People need to realise that not all Afrikaans people want to kill them (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014).

7.2 Manifestation of the Past in the Present: Pomfret

The events that have unfolded in Pomfret over the past twenty years are also a good indication of how the past manifests in the present. After the disbandment of 32-Battalion a rapid decline in the wellbeing of those who remained in Pomfret began. As well as the extreme health concerns the people of Pomfret who once depended on 32-Battalion now slipped into misery and dismay. After 1994 many of the ex-32-Battalion men who had been integrated into SANDF units were forced to leave their families to attend to their army duties and this resulted in an increase in broken families in the area. Many of the ex-soldiers who had taken the compensation package after the demise of 32-Battalion had squandered their money and as a result of the limited employment within Pomfret were forced to live in dire poverty. Many of these men and their families had no option but to move into squats and many of them turned to alcohol and drug addiction. There was no police station in the area and as a result desperately poor and hungry members turned to crime to keep themselves and their families alive. The infrastructure of the town was left to ruin and thus water shortages as well as limited electricity supply plagued the area. The people of Pomfret were essentially abandoned with only two options: die of malnutrition or Asbestosis (*The Incredible Story of Apartheid's Black Shock Troops*, 2007).

It has become apparent that the ANC government has shown little sympathy towards those in Pomfret because of their tumultuous past. As stated by ANC official Deacon Mathe “the veterans of 32-Battalion are a product of this country’s past and it is time for them to move forward with the new South Africa” (*The Incredible Story of Apartheid's Black Shock Troops*, 2007). Viljoen (2014) argues that “the relations between 32-Battalion and the ANC in history have definitely impacted these men’s lives today. The ANC still hate their guts” (Viljoen, 2014).

According to Breytenbach (2002), other ex-32-Battalion members soon became aware of the terrible conditions their former colleagues were facing and attempts were made to initiate a report on the matter which was handed to the government. The report concluded that those ex-32-Battalion members and their families were living in abject poverty which was seen as a consequence of the poor way in which the matter was dealt with by the former government as well as the new democratic government. Breytenbach (2002) states that

I did not wish to see Pomfret again after the unit was disbanded. I could not look my ‘comrades in-arms’ in the eyes again. As the founding commander of 32-Battalion that led them in many battles it was hard for me to turn my back on their misery (2002: 345).

McIntyre (2008) writes about how in recent years the ANC has called for the demolition of Pomfret and the forced removals and relocation of its Angolan population. She looks at the views expressed by Chris Hattingh, the provincial leader for the ANC's opposition party the Democratic Alliance, describes the manner in which the forced removals are being conducted by the ANC as a style reminiscent of the apartheid era. He believes the persecution of the Pomfret residents by the ANC is solely of a vindictive nature due to the fact that a large percentage of the town's population consists of 32-Battalion veterans. Hattingh states that "The Democratic Alliance regards the intimidation and victimisation of the people of Pomfret as not only illegal but also as a gross human rights violation" (2008: 2).

In the case of 32-Battalion it is evident that the lack of proper integration and demobilisation by the new government has created deep feelings of dissonance. The reasons for not adequately demobilising soldiers particularly those from 32-Battalion may be a result of underlying feelings of resentment towards these particular ex-SADF soldiers who they once considered their enemy who caused great pain and suffering during the struggle period.

8. Memory and 32-Battalion

'The past is never dead. It's not even past' (Faulkner 2013: 9).

Memory and forgetting are two sides of the same coin. [...] To remember everything would mean that one would be in a state of total chaos and similarly complete forgetting would create an equally undesirable blank. Instead it is the possibility of forgetting that makes it possible to remember certain things and vice versa (Papadakis 1995: 2).

When looking at the situation that has developed in South Africa after the transition from an apartheid state to democracy it is important to look at the role that memory has played in the way in which the countries divided population's contested histories are remembered. Cultural memory is a term Sturken (1997) uses to describe the interaction of individuals to create cultural meaning within a country using memory. "Cultural memory is essentially the field of cultural negotiation within a society for which different stories and memories vie for a place in history" (1997: 1). Sturken examines the role of cultural memory in the United States of America after the Vietnam War her views and findings on the subject however are applicable and relevant to that of South Africa. Sturken looks at how cultural memory is used to produce

concepts of the 'nation' and explores how people interact with cultural products (1997: 1). The recollections and experiences of 32-Battalion soldiers have not been included in the making of cultural memory in the new South Africa and as such it can be a disruptive force when it comes to national identity formation and the consolidation of the population.

The way in which 32-Battalion is remembered and commemorated today brings about a sense of confusion for those who served in the unit. These ex-soldiers were patriotic and still to this day feel a strong connection with the unit twenty years after its demise. The unit's official website to which many members regularly contribute describes the unit in its introduction as

A truly elite and extraordinary battalion of the South African Defence Force. 32-Battalion was an elite unit consisting of former FNLA guerrillas from Angola integrated with South African officers to become acknowledged as the best fighting unit in the SADF since WWII" (32Battalion, 2010).

Those who were on the opposing side of the unit such as the ANC freedom fighters who often came into conflict with the unit, view 32-Battalion in a very negative light as a result of the traumas and atrocities committed to their people by the unit. Therefore these contradicting memories of the unit by the two different groups bring about what could be described as "an instability in cultural memory" (Sturken 1997: 2).

The way in which the two groups, the ex 32-Battalion soldiers and the ANC, remember the unit, poses questions about how the unit should be remembered and from which perspective? Does one take the stance of the ANC in which case the unit will be remembered for its ruthlessness and horrific acts of violence against ANC members at the time, or the stance of the ex-32-Battalion soldiers who view their actions at the time as normal protocol and military procedure that was accustomed to the time.

Sturken (1997) argues that it becomes a 'field of contested meanings' when people interact with memories of the past. When traumas have occurred in the past between two groups that are forced to coexist under the new rule, fractures in the culture are often exposed (1997: 3). Sturken writes about artefacts from the Vietnam War, however, her findings can be applied to the testimonies of ex-32-Battalion soldiers as it seems that their recollections become of a cryptic nature which "prevents them from fitting neatly into traditional narratives of historical discourse" (1997: 3). These ideas presented by Sturken relate to the divide in how 32-Battalion is remembered in South Africa.

Penny (2002) argues that during apartheid and in the build up to the elections in 1994 over thirty five thousand young white South African men were conscripted into the army every year. On the other side thousands of other South African males mostly black anti-apartheid freedom fighters fought as soldiers for MK and other anti-apartheid struggle forces. In the post-apartheid era these men from both sides continue to live with their demons and still harbour painful memories of the past which often manifest in their present lives, how to deal with these feelings brought about by the past however is often a topic left unspoken (2002: 3). As quoted by Sturken (1997) “The changeability of memory raises important concerns about how the past can be verified, understood and given meaning” (1997: 2). Therefore changing the mind set of these individuals and reshaping the way in which they understand and experience painful memories of the past, could in fact help to consolidate and heal them from feelings of resentment and hatred in the present. The conflicting views between the two groups have given rise to a complex array of issues. The history of bad blood between the ANC and 32-Battalion as well as the role that the ANC and the National Party played during the negotiations in ensuring the disbanding of 32-Battalion has led to feelings of hatred and resentment between all parties that are still harboured in present times. As quoted by an ex-32-Battalion soldier on the Battalion’s website

Side by side we fought and some brothers died but no one in our government cried. We gave our lives and our souls but were sold out for other goals. But one day those traitors we will meet and then we'll duel at Satan’s feet. Eternally in hell they will rot for the heroes they forgot (32Battalion, 2012).

Hodgkins and Radston (2003) examine the ideas of contested pasts, they argue that the way in which people understand their past has ‘strategic, political and ethical consequences’, they believe that contested meanings of the past ultimately become contested meanings in the present (2003: 1). In the case with the current way in which the ANC and ex-SADF soldiers have come to remember their past, each group has constructed their own explanations, memorialisation and justifications for why the events in question took place. Hodgkins and Radston (2003) state that

The focus of contestation is very often not conflicting accounts of what actually happened in the past so much as the question of who or what is entitled to speak for the past in the present (2003: 1).

Therefore the ANC's success after apartheid and their rise to power led to the ANC's version of events to be included in the revised national history of the new South Africa. In the case mentioned above the relationship between memory discourse and history becomes of great significance. As quoted by Hodgkins and Radston (2003)

The differences between the modes of engaging with the past seems in certain respects an important one to maintain, and not only for practitioners of history; there are major implications when discourses of memory infiltrate the historical (2003: 8).

Amadiume and An-Na'im (2000) argue that "It is important to look at different situations that generate conflict, such as national interest to maintain unity, local determination to separate, and international economic and political interests" (2000: 4). Often decisions have to be made in order to create a sense of determination of national and economic interests. Conflicts in Africa and especially in the case of the struggle against apartheid have brought about complexities amongst its population of who find themselves in a state of 'permanent transition' (2000: 4). As argued by Amadiume and An-Na'im (2000) often the problems faced by the society are masked by the political regime in efforts to construct feelings of 'truth', 'social justice' and 'healing' even if in reality it is not the case. This in turn brings about problems in remembrance and commemoration when it comes to revisiting events of the past (2000: 5).

De Brito et al. (2001) look at the unique picture of how new governments and societies deal with 'legacies of past repression' such is the case with the new ANC government in the postapartheid era. The government has the power to select memories of which they feel are of significance and in the process discard memories that they feel are of no value. In doing so they reshape the country's history based on what events of the past they believe should be conveyed to the wider population (2001: 1). Papadakis (1995) states that

Selective memory, a phenomenon common to many, if not all countries traumatized by war and repression, is not always easy to acknowledge or understand, precisely because the selectivity serves as a political purpose: usually to justify the claims of one group over a competing group (1995: 2).

8.1 Overcoming Traumas of the Past

Hodgkins and Radston (2003) look at memory and how it relates to historical events specifically that of trauma memory. They view memory as a referential system that is “complex and mediated, involving fantasy and wish rather than simply recording what happens” (2003: 6). In the case of trauma memory the individual is said to go into a state of memory crisis when recalling the terrible events of the past. The trauma has a disrupting effect on the event and way it is represented through the memory. Memory discourse within a historical framework has a “direct and significant implication for the meaning of the event in the present” (2003: 7).

The effects of memory have impacted on the current relations between the ANC government and that of ex-SADF soldiers. Post-traumatic stress experienced by soldiers from both sides have had an impact on their memories of certain events. Sandler, cited in Cock and McKenzie (1998) argues that many soldiers are deeply affected by war and in the case of South Africa the struggle against apartheid. Many of these soldiers thus suffer from psychological and social problems. These individuals often show symptoms such as

Severe survival guilt and self-punishment; episodes of severe rage and violent impulses towards what may be indiscriminate targets; psychic numbing; alienation from one’s own feelings; doubts about whether one can ever love or trust someone else again; and pessimism about the very nature of love and life itself (1998: 186).

As a result of the history of negative experiences between SADF soldiers and that of ANC/ MK soldiers during the apartheid era, over twenty years later many of these men still grapple with the past and their experiences in battle. As a result many of them hold on to their memories and reflect their resentment upon those that they considered to be the enemy. For the men of MK the SADF soldiers were considered the enemy of who inflicted great loss and pain in their lives during the struggle period. Many of these men were never debriefed after experiencing trauma and/or given adequate psychological treatment by the state. Members of MK have also expressed feelings of bitterness and resentment towards the SADF in the past twenty years. As a result it is hard for those on both sides to forgive one another and live in harmony in the new democracy (Cock and McKenzie 1998: 186).

Wilson (2001) believes that “the ANC could exact greater compromises for the outgoing political elite” (2001: 216). He argues that since the end of apartheid, the new political

movement in South Africa has reshaped and reformulated the traditional meaning of justice. The meaning of justice within a post-conflict society is forever changing shape as those who experienced pain and anguish during the years of struggle, battle to overcome the memories of the past as well as to forgive those who wronged them, be it on an individual level or political level (2001: 216).

Despite these sentiments given by Wilson (2001) the ANC has in recent years addressed the problems faced in South Africa when it comes to remembering the past stating that

The African National Congress is committed to building a reconciled nation at peace with its memory and at peace with itself. We hope to create exemplary tools and strategies on how to deal with the residual pain left behind by the painful struggle (ANC and MK Veterans Association 2010: 6).

However it seems that the successful implementation of these objectives mentioned above still remains to be seen, as mentioned within this research, there are still great challenges when it comes to reconciliation as a result of the contested memories and contested pasts of its still divided population.

Hodgkins and Radston (2003) argue that the 'presentness' and lingering of traumatic memories of the past insists that there is unfinished business in the form of guilt and/or vengeance (2003:7). In the case of this study these views expressed by Hodgkins and Radston may be a good explanation for the lingering resentment between the ANC and various SADF soldiers. It is also important to look at the ideas of remembering and suffering when dealing with memories of the past that have implications for the present. As explained by Hodgkin and Radston (2003) it is problematic to try and class and/or measure the degree of a suffering experienced during a traumatic event. What is considered traumatic for one may not be the case for another. Within the framework of 'trauma theory' the cluster of ideas that may be identified as traumatic work with the basis of what effect is felt by the given event (2003: 97). In the interviews conducted with the members of 32-Battalion it was evident that each individual had experienced various traumas during their time in the SADF. These traumatic events impacted on their lives and have transcended into the post-apartheid era. Viljoen (2014) recalls how he has coped with personal trauma after his time in 32-Battalion

I have to say I have no regrets about my involvement in 32-Battalion. If I was young I would go back and do it again. It's weird to think that two guys involved in the same thing will always have different experiences, it's the trauma of the whole thing 32-Battalion was definitely one

of the units with the highest casualties because we did most of the fighting. We always lost a couple of guys during an operation. I lost many friends during my time in 32-Battalion. I just realised after time that it was much easier to speak about the trauma I experienced there as a young soldier. Unfortunately war is not a very happy experience (Viljoen 2014).

Tukayula De Abreu (2014) states that

I don't blame 32-Battalion you must understand, but to be frank with you since 1976 I have never had a happy day in my life. I have always felt like a monkey on a chain living here in South Africa because of those times. Today I can never go back to my country. I am not where I am meant to be (Tukayula De Abreu, 2014).

9. Politics of Remembrance in the New South Africa

Hart and Winter (2012) argue that since the introduction of a democratically elected government in South Africa the country has been faced with the task of readdressing the imbalances within the country's history. There has been a major shift in the focus of South African history since the shift to democracy. A tendency has begun to develop that identifies, interprets and commemorates history that is symbolic of the new South African identity and nation in the post-apartheid era (2012: 88). Many believe that there is no need to still celebrate and remember a history that does not represent the majority of the population thus a lot of history belonging to the apartheid era has been side-lined under the current political dispensation. South Africa faces an array of challenges that are centred on the contested and 'ephemeral nature' of a new South African identity and its contemporary past (2012: 91). As stated by Hart and Winter "The difficulty lies in the fact that there is much contemporary relevance in historical political issues in South Africa, many of which remain unsolved" (2012: 88).

South Africa's past and present bring about a sense of confusion amongst members of its population. As time has progressed so the narrative of the country has changed and thus the defining factors that divided the nation in the past start to take different forms in the present. Hart and Winter (2012) look at the ideas expressed by Weyeneth, a civil rights activist in America during the civil rights movement in the 1960s, who stated

The story becomes complicated when the heroes, victims and villains become harder to define, when the violence seems to take on some futility; when society loses consensus about the meaning of the movement and what the future should hold (2012: 88).

The media is also a vital tool utilised by political movements as a way to represent history that suits the political climate of the time. The media becomes a tool of communication between politics and its people. Media comes in all forms and is easily accessible to the public and is recorded and documented in such a way that it becomes a collection of historical events and/or memories. As quoted by Nicholas et al. (2008)

The representation of history in the forms of communication has been with us since humans began to communicate through language, pictures and writing. All cultures have used media in some way or another to articulate versions of events that have taken place in history for a variety of ends (2008: 2).

For the case of this study it seems that the way in which 32-Battalion was represented in the media created a divide and contributed towards the general perception of the unit in the public sphere.

9.1 Case Study: Exclusion at Freedom Park

Kostadinova (2014) defines the politics of memory as

A field of action where different memory entrepreneurs- Political and social stakeholders such as government structures and political parties use public discourse and practises such as the erection and construction of monuments to collect constructive narratives of the past in order to support and legitimise political action (2014: 5).

Kostadinova (2014) emphasises the importance of memory within public spaces as a key way to bring societies together in post-conflict era'. She looks at how museums, memorials and monuments as well as designated historical sights constitute not only places of common memory but also places of common forgetting as she believes most public memorial sites represent a past that is subjectively selected and politically imposed (2014: 6). The ideas presented by Kostadinova can be applied to a South African context within the post-apartheid era in the case of Freedom Park and the exclusion of ex-SADF soldiers, such as those from 32Battalion, from the newly constructed memorial for fallen soldiers. Freedom Park is a good example of how conflicting versions of the past manifest in the way history is told in the future.

Freedom Park was built by the ANC government in 2007. It is a public monument and place of remembrance to celebrate South Africa's rich and culturally diverse history. Within the grounds of Freedom Park a memorial has been erected, listing the names of all those who died in the South African Wars, World War I, World War II and anti-apartheid struggle activists. However this memorial omits the names of all SADF soldiers who died during the apartheid era. The founder and CEO of Freedom Park, Dr Wally Serote states that "Freedom Park is a place where 'all' South Africans can go to 'reflect on their past'" (Mitshali 2007: 2). In the light of the exclusion of fallen SADF soldiers it would appear that the monument is not in fact for all South Africans as stated by Serote as it excludes a large portion of soldiers who died for the country. This act of exclusion was considered as a major insult to SADF veterans who patriotically fought and risked their lives for South Africa during this time (Stuijt 2009: 3).

Sturken (1997) argues that any historical event that results in tragic loss and consequence is demanding of a memorial site. It is a sign of respect to those who have fallen in battle in the name of their country and its political circumstance of the given time (1997: 183). The exclusion of the names of fallen SADF soldiers sparked widespread debate across the country. When questioned as to why the names of fallen SADF soldiers were excluded from the memorial at Freedom Park. Dr Serote was quoted as saying "The Freedom Park memorial wall is only for freedom fighters, the SADF soldiers don't deserve it because they did not die for freedom and human dignity" (Stuijt 2009: 1). In the Case of 32-Battalion Breytenbach (2002) however writes that

Most fought for a cause they did not understand. But they did not die for that cause - they died for 32-Battalion [...] but they also fell for you and me so that there could be a better South Africa (2002: 348).

Baines (2009) argues that during the apartheid era almost all white males between the ages of eighteen and thirty five were conscripted to perform national service. They had no choice in the matter as failure to do so resulted in a six year jail sentence. It is unclear exactly how many conscripts were killed during this time in various battles across Africa and within South Africa, but it has been estimated to be roughly around two thousand. These men felt at the time that they were fighting for a just cause, that of communism, and many of them had no choice but to sacrifice their lives for their country. Twenty years on many of these soldiers are still battling to understand why they made such great sacrifices for a country that in the light of the fall of apartheid has ultimately forgotten them (2009: 3). As stated by Gear (2009)

[M]any SADF respondents feel that they were cast aside, brainwashed to be pawns in a political game they neither understood nor had control over. Compounding their anger, is a pervasive sense that what they fought for has been given away, handed to their enemies on a plate (2009: 2).

Mitshali (2007) writes about the views expressed by prominent political commentator Somadoda Fikeni who states that “SADF soldiers do not belong in Freedom Park because the notion of national victims of circumstance should not be elevated to a degree of heroism” (2007: 2). Mtshali further looks at the statements made by PAC general secretary Ngili Muendane who argues that

It is premature to discuss the inclusion of SADF soldiers as South Africans still have a lot of work to do to achieve a common understanding of themselves as well as national reconciliation (2007: 2).

When considering the ideas presented by Kostadinova (2014) and Sturken (1997), the viewpoints expressed by Fikini, Muendane and Dr Serote show a lack of the country’s new leadership’s efforts to try and commemorate and include all members of societies’ differing histories to form one common collective history. When questioned about his feelings about the exclusion of SADF soldiers at Freedom Park Viljoen (2014) stated that

The events at Freedom Park are an absolute joke. It just shows us the ANC’s true colours. They put up their own comrades’ names but they negate the history of other members of society. They just negate the actual facts to suit their own agendas. They will eventually write us out of history. They have painted their own fellow South Africans as the enemy. How can we live like that? How can peace be made between races when they are always calling us the enemy all the time? (Viljoen, 2014).

Hodgkins and Radston (2003) look at the ideas of ‘empathy for the life not lived’ (2003: 65) In this regard they state that there needs to be a certain level of consideration and understanding for other members of society who have suffered a traumatic loss. During the apartheid era and the liberation struggle both sides suffered losses therefore each group should be mindful and respectful of one another’s grief for their lost ones. Breytenbach (2002) writes that

The fallen of 32-Battalion should also be remembered – even if the memory is only dim, even if the graves in which they lie are reclaimed by the jungle, even if people should forget about that little cemetery in a country that no longer belongs to us (2002: 348).

Mtshali (2007) further looks at the people who are in support of the inclusion of SADF names at the Freedom Park memorial such as that of Steve Hofmeyer who expressed his concerns about the exclusion of fallen SADF soldiers. Hofmeyer stated “I plead with you to allow the Afrikaners, my people to be included as they too were hurt by apartheid” (2007: 3). At a conference focusing on the exclusion policy at Freedom Park it became evident that the participants quickly divided themselves along racial lines, “most black people rejected the notion that SADF troops were fighting a just war as a complete twisting of facts” (2007: 3).

In reaction to the exclusion of their ‘fallen comrades’ names at Freedom Park, SADF veterans built their own memorial at the Voortrekker monument situated across the road from Freedom Park. The memorial lists the names of all those who died for the country during the Border War and was privately funded by the veterans (Baines 2009: 2). The memorials at Freedom Park and the Voortrekker monument, represent two vastly differing versions of South African history and “highlight one big unresolved issue - how should a war be commemorated and remembered when the majority of a nation would rather choose to forget?” (2009: 2).

Hart and Winter (2012) argue that South Africa needs to find more resourceful ways of materialising the past. They argue that from the colonial period to the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, the building of memorials and monuments has been a powerful tool to inscribe racial exclusivity and white supremacy. With the latter in mind it can be argued that the roles have now been switched. The building of Freedom Park by the ANC government has taken a similar stance by excluding SADF soldiers to ensure black exclusivity and supremacy under the new political dispensation of the country (2012: 90). The conceptual challenge for history in South Africa and the way in which it is commemorated, is to ensure that its ‘meaning is durable’ therefore it is essential that the remembrance of history in the form of monuments and memorials, represents collective and/or public memories rather than exclusive groups (2012: 91).

As argued by Hayden (1995)

Public spaces can help to nurture the profound, subtle and inclusive sense of what it means to be a citizen where identity is intimately tied to memory: both our personal memories and collective social memories are interconnected with the histories of our families, neighbours, fellow workers and ethnic communities (1995: 91).

Hayden (1995) further argues that public places and memorials are ‘store houses’ for social memories, “because the elements or features frame the lives of many people and often outlast many lifetimes” (1995: 91). As a result it is essential that memorials that are erected enhance the social meanings sensitive to all citizens and their diverse histories, both in the cultural realm and that of the political realm. Hayden further believes that inclusive memorials and historical sights of remembrance should be accessible to all citizens and link to the collective memory of the past (1995: 91).

It is important that the government try and be mindful of these arguments and incorporate all layers and members of society within the collective history they decide to commemorate in the public sphere. In order for the country to make a successful transition to a full democracy free of racial tension and resentment, it is imperative that a collective memory and all inclusive history is constructed so that all members of society can feel a sense of inclusion in the nation as a whole. Kostadinova (2014) that it is vitally important for a nation to form common memories, she stresses

The role of spatial memorials as central to the formation of collective memory, arguing that the individual and the group can recapture the past only by understanding how it is preserved by the relevant physical surroundings (2014: 6).

Kostadinova (2014) looks at the destruction and construction of memories and history in building ‘brotherhood’ and ‘unity’ within a divided nation. Although this research focuses on the events that took place in Yugoslavia after World War Two (WWII) many of his ideas can be applied to a South African context in light of this research. Kostadinova assess as to how feasible it really is for national unity to occur in a post-authoritarian era. In his example he looks at how after World War Two, socialist politics of memory in Yugoslavia established numerous sites, monuments and museums to promote the perception of a strong political and monolithic community. Most of the sites of remembrance that were erected were against the outgoing regime and all that it stood for (2014: 8). The same sentiments can be applied in the context of South Africa as is the case of Freedom Park and the exclusion of the names of fallen SADF soldiers.

Kostadinova (2014) writes that people who belonged to the former regime in Yugoslavia were still residing in the newly formed country and as a result, their histories differed vastly from the rest of the population because of their opposing political affiliations. The new political elites of Yugoslavia defined themselves entirely along ethnic lines as a way to justify their own

existence and to remap their national territory by demolishing the memory and identity of the former government (2014: 9). The Freedom Park controversy, and the actions of the new political elites in excluding people who belonged to the former apartheid government bears many similarities to the events that took place in Yugoslavia after WWII.

Kostadinova (2014) writes that in recent years Yugoslavia, now known as Bosnia and Herzegovina, have made a conscious effort to try and reconcile their nation and many successful commissions and projects have been established to re-cast the past. In doing so they have managed to reconstruct a cultural heritage that is inclusive of all their peoples' histories emphasising the importance of shared memory in a nation in order to fully recover and reconcile the past (2014: 10). Steps such as the ones that were taken in Yugoslavia after their transition should be considered in the context of South Africa as an example of ways to approach the reconstruction of the countries past under the current circumstances.

The death of memory is also an important factor in this research as explained by Hodgkins and Radston (2003) "As memory is bound up with the ideas about subjectivity, so also it has a bearing on death, and the passing of the subject" When the person who is remembering dies then with them essentially goes the memory too. In terms of collective and social memories it is thus important that memorials and/or monuments are erected to re-establish these memories to future generations (2003: 9). In the case of remembering SADF soldiers if no points of remembrance are established and/or erected soon the memory of their efforts and losses during the apartheid era will essentially be forgotten and the memory of them will die within time. As quoted by George Orwell "The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history" – George Orwell, 1949. (Quotery, 2015)

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research report focusing on the experiences of 32-Battalion in the new South Africa, it is evident that there is no one single version of history that can claim to be definitive. It is clear from the arguments presented in the body of this research that governments in particular attempt to dominate the interpretation of history in the public sphere for political objectives. In South Africa the refocusing and reshaping of history after apartheid by the new government has led to a culture of subjective remembrances that commemorate the history of one group whilst omitting the history of others. As argued in this research this becomes

problematic for creating a national identity and hinders the consolidation process of the population as certain members of society, such as those who were part of 32-Battalion, feel excluded, victimised and forgotten as a result of their association with the current government in the past. This research suggests that South Africa needs to find more resourceful ways of revisiting the country's past in order to construct an accurate national history that includes and represents all layers and members of society. It is imperative that all memories of the past regardless of their ideological or political alignment should be taken into account when commemorating and representing the past. The current government should possibly try and draw comparisons from global histories of other countries such as Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina) who have experienced similar transitions in order to correctly approach the situations faced in the country if it is to continue down its desired path of reconciliation and democracy.

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Interviews

Appendix A:

Noel Viljoen. 2014. *Remembering 32 Battalion*. Interviewed by Julia Heywood. [Transcription] Pretoria Private Residence October 3 2014.

Appendix B:

Tshisukila Tukayula De Abreu. 2014. *Remembering 32 Battalion*. Interviewed by Julia Heywood. [Transcription] Pretoria Private Residence September 30 2014.

12. Appendix A

Interview with Noel Viljoen a former 32-Battalion soldier

Interviewer: Julia Heywood

Interviewee: Noel Viljoen

Julia: Why/when did you join the army and 32-Battalion? What were your reasons for joining?

Viljoen: I joined 32-Battalion in 1980. I joined the army because I had too. I was conscripted. I had the choice between doing national service or to study so a bunch of us decided to go to the army.

Julia: What were your expectations when you first joined the army as a young man?

Viljoen: I went to Potchefstroom and one day they came up to us and asked who wants to become an officer and I asked them what it would entail and they told us we would be in charge. So I naturally thought this would be a good reason to join. Then we went to infantry school and my whole life changed. When I first signed up for 32-Battalion my friend asked me if I was crazy. He told me that they were the unit that was always involved in serious battles and that they were always shot at and killed. To me I thought well that's what being a part of the army means so why not join them? So off I went.

Julia: What was your concept of ideology at the time? did you know why you were being sent to the border?

Viljoen: I didn't have any concept of ideology at this stage of my life. I just knew we had to fight the communists and SWAPO was our main enemy. They were the terrorists trying to overthrow South West-Africa then there was FAPLA and then UNITA.

Julia: Can you tell me about the group dynamics of 32-Battalion?

Viljoen: The most important thing about 32-Battalion was that it was made up of Angolans who mostly fought for the FNLA. We felt that we were joining them rather than them joining us. 32-Battalion was totally different from the rest of the army. I enjoyed being in 32-Battalion it was a totally new experience. The discipline was different the doctrine was different and the operational circumstance were different. We were a rather hectic bunch and mostly just because of the Angolans. What you need to understand is that when a young white boy walks into a group of Angolans who can't speak English you're the one that needs to adapt. We had to try and learn Portuguese. When it came to racial dynamics it all came down to discipline. It took us a while to be accepted by the Angolans. They wouldn't follow your orders. So you had to prove yourself in battle you had to prove to them that you were a respectable person. These guys had been fighting a guerrilla war since 1965 they were older and more experienced they had seen things that me at eighteen had never dreamed of. Like Titi (Tshisukila Tukayula De Abreu) for example he and his brother fought alongside me but they were a lot older than us but because of the apartheid dynamics I was in charge of them which made it hard. Through the history of these people we got to know more about the politics of war. There was no question in their minds or ours that communism was not right. The combination of the Angolans and the white special force troops made for a formidable force. We were responsible for the highest percentage of enemy casualties in comparison to any other SADF unit during the Border war.

Julia: 32-Battalion had a notorious reputation in the public eye. Can you tell me about that? Why do you think it was the case?

Viljoen: 32-Battalions notorious reputation was mostly a result of propaganda. We were just a normal bunch of guys most of the time. The ANC with their support from

Russia, they had the mileage to spew this bullshit propaganda. You would not believe the stories they told. It was all just crap. They told stories of men throwing civilian babies into rivers and dams to get fathers to talk. And men raping women and children but none of it was true. Stuff like that didn't happen. That's not how we did things. Yes we had our ways of getting people to talk but they were not drastic.

32-Battalion didn't take any crap, when they were shot at they shot back. They were extremely disciplined and they had vastly effective procedures they followed. People feared 32-Battalion because they didn't let them get away with anything and they always caught them.

Julia: Do you believe sending 32-Battalion to the townships was a good idea?

Viljoen: Sending 32-Battalion to the townships was the best thing the government could have done. 32-Battalion was extremely effective, they stopped a lot of the infighting because at that stage the ANC and the IFP were fighting big time. When 32-Battalion moved in they stopped the war.

Julia: Do you think the unit's harsh approach in the townships towards groups such as the ANC and IFP was necessary? and do you think the units reputation amongst these groups was justified?

Viljoen: The ANC always hated 32-Battalion even before we moved into the townships. 32-Battalion was an insurgency unit, that's what we specialised in, we went into the townships to infiltrate. The ANC realised they didn't have the skills or capability to take on the unit in the townships. They tried to make the country ungovernable by creating civil disobedience and demolishing infrastructure.

Julia: What are your views on the third force?

Viljoen: In my opinion the ANC invented the Third Force and furthermore I believe that in some instances they themselves were the third force. They were never able to achieve the chaos in the townships that had wished for and so they set their own people on each other to create problems.

Julia: Why do you think the unit was disbanded?

Viljoen: The pressure from the ANC was the reason for the unit's disbandment. The ANC demanded the unit be disbanded purely because they were getting fucked up by us in the townships. They did not have their right of way anymore in the townships and they lost their authority and their control of their own people because 32-Battalion stopped them every time they tried to advance. It was only in the ANC's interest to show the unit up as the bad guys and to discredit them because we were screwing up their plans. I don't know if we will ever truly know the effectiveness of the ANC's campaigns during this time.

Julia: What are views on the current situation in Pomfret regarding ex-32-Battalion veterans?

Viljoen: In terms of life after disbandment I believe that the men should have been taken out of Pomfret once the unit was disbanded. The government should have done more after the unit was disbanded but these men were given very little. They basically had to start their lives with nothing. Now the town is not functional and these people live there now with nothing. The relations between 32Battalion and the ANC in history have definitely impacted these men's lives today. The ANC still hates their guts.

Julia: What are views on the exclusion of fallen SADF soldiers at Freedom Park?

Viljoen: The events at Freedom Park are an absolute joke. It just shows the ANC's true colours. They put up their own comrades' names but negate the history of other members of society. They just negate the actual facts to suit their own agendas. They will eventually write us out of history. They have painted their own fellow South Africans as the enemy. How can we live like that? How can peace be made between races when they are always calling us the enemy all the time?

Julia: Do you have any regrets about your involvement in 32-Battalion? How have you coped with your personal trauma after being in the unit and involved in war?

Viljoen: I have to say I have no regrets about my involvement in 32-Battalion. If I was young I would go back and do it again. It's weird to think that two guys involved in the same thing will always have different experiences; it's the trauma of the whole thing. 32-Battalion was definitely one of the units with the highest casualties because we did most of the fighting. We lost a couple of guys during an operation. I lost many friends during my time in 32-Battalion. I just realised after time that it was much easier to speak about the trauma I experienced there as a young soldier. Unfortunately war is not a very happy experience.

13. Appendix B

Interview with Tshisukila Tukayula De Abreu a former Angolan 32-Battalion Soldier

Interviewer: Julia Heywood

Interviewee: Tshisukila Tukayula De Abreu

Julia: Why/when did you join the army and 32-Battalion? What were your reasons for joining?

Tukayula De Abreu: It was 40 years ago do you understand. In 1974. Myself I was normal and my father was a farmer we were normal Portuguese speakers living in Angola. Then there was a coup in Portugal and the Portuguese lost control of Angola. In Angola the Portuguese army was very aggressive but they couldn't control Angola anymore. Then the police and army lost control and people started killing each other. When I was 24 I didn't want to join the Portuguese army so I had to run away. Then we did a demonstration in Luanda, we approached the government palace and we were protesting then they opened fire on us. I got down on my stomach but when the gun fire stopped and it was silent I was the only one who stood up all around me there were just dead bodies. They tried to take me away in an ambulance but I didn't trust them first they were shooting at me and now they wanted to help me. That's when I decided I need to leave Angola. I had to leave my family and my son it was so hard but I had no place in Angola I decided to go to Zaire and I was received by FNLA in 1975 and they trained me.

In April 1975 MPLA started to attack us and we had to escape Luanda we were refugees. We formed a convoy of FNLA troops and made our way down to South Africa in August 1975. Then when we got to Impupa which was an SADF base on the border of Angola and Namibia. We met some white soldiers and they decided to train us. We did our first training and our first operation which was operation Savannah. Then in November 1976 it changed from Bravo Group to 32-Battalion. The

South African government was worried about recruiting black soldiers they never trusted us and they watched our every move. No Angolan soldier was ever allowed to hold or use a radio as the white soldiers were worried we would sell them out to the Angolan enemy, it took a long time before they started to trust us We did many operations and a few years more of training. We did a good job and we killed many people. They started to like us. Then in 1984 I became an officer. I was the first black officer in the SADF.

Julia: What were your expectations when you joined the army as a young man?

Tukayula De Abreu: When I joined 32-Battalion I expected to attack the enemy and finish then go back to FNLA and back to Angola. But things never changed. The fighting never stopped so we had no reason to go back to Angola. We just stayed in 32-Battalion.

Julia: Can you tell me about the group dynamics of 32-Battalion?

Tukayula De Abreu: It was not easy being a black man in a white unit. When we moved to Bravo group in 1976 we were sleeping without shelter we had nothing. Only in November 1976 when it changed to 32-Battalion we went to do our first training and we were told to attack some bases. In 1977 when I went back to buffalo there were so many new faces and people. In the beginning the white SADF men didn't actually know who we were or how many of us there were they just called us by numbers. Communication was never easy between us and the white men. We were all friends but it was hard in the beginning. Only when we started to learn Afrikaans then we all started to understand each other and they started to trust us. The black men and the white men were friends. There was no racism. We were all Christians. We are all the same in gods eyes

black or white it doesn't matter. We were one of the first SADF units to have black men in it the other unit before us was 31-Battalion with the Bushmen.

Julia: What was your concept of ideology at the time? Did you know why you were being sent to the border?

Tukayula De Abreu: We were not patriotic to South Africa when we were in 32-Battalion. In the beginning we didn't say we were fighting for South Africa, we just said we were fighting against the communists, so we both had the same enemy, a common enemy. To me these communist were going to destroy the continent. They had already destroyed my country.

After the Border War ended we gave Namibia to SWAPO. International journalists came to us there and when they talked to us they were very confused. They asked why we were fighting together with these white men and killing our African brothers, I told them those people weren't my brothers those people were communists.

Julia: 32-Battalion had a notorious reputation in the Public eye. Can you tell me about that? Why do you think it was the case?

Tukayula De Abreu: 'Os Terrivas' was our name, even today. When I tell people I was in 32Battalion they run away they are scared.

Julia: Do you believe sending 32-Battalion to the townships was a good idea?

Tukayula De Abreu: We went to the townships to stop them from fighting, the men from IFP and ANC were always killing each other. Someone had to stop them and the police couldn't do it, they were not strong enough. So we were sent there. It was IFP and the ANC but I believe there was another party

involved. The ANC called it the Third Force and they told people it was 32-Battalion but it wasn't us it was someone else.

Julia: Do you think the unit's harsh approach in the townships towards groups such as the ANC and IFP was necessary?

Tukayula De Abreu: In the townships we used normal SADF training. We were professional soldiers. We acted the way we were trained. You put more than one bullet in one of our guys, you will be in big shit with us. We never wanted to shoot anyone but sometimes they were causing shit with our guys.

Julia: Can you tell me about the incident at Phola Park?

Tukayula De Abreu: I was in Phola Park for a few months doing operations. I was already company commander by this stage. And sometimes ANC men would come to me and ask me to shoot another man from the other group and I would say no that isn't why we are here. Then sometimes they would accuse us of killing some of their members but most of the time it wasn't us. They were killing their own people. Then men from Inkatha would do the same. We were in Phola Park to protect the people and we were there to keep the peace. The night that everybody talks about in April, the politicians have forgotten, the story they tell is not the story that happened. We went into Phola Park and they started to shoot at us. They shot our boss in the stomach. We never found out who it was. We opened fire on them. I believe one or two men died from the other side. But the investigation saw things differently. They said we were too aggressive.

Julia: Why do you think the unit was disbanded?

Tukayula De Abreu: 32-Battalion was disbanded because of Phola Park.

Julia: What did you do after the unit was disbanded?

Tukayula De Abreu: The ANC wanted to force MPLA to take us back. But MPLA said no these are not our sons anymore. So we had to stay in South Africa. I went back to Angola in 1994. I went there just to see and I wanted to move back. But I was still part of the army in South Africa at this stage. They said I had to leave the South African army if I wanted to move back. It was sad there though. Nothing had changed. I hadn't seen my family for 34 years. Then I came back, I couldn't be there it wasn't my home anymore. Then I went to Executive Outcomes. I prefer my life here today in South Africa. I have problems here in South Africa though.

My son works in Afghanistan at a private military company. He is following in my footsteps. I also worked in a private military company when I left 32-Battalion. I left the SADF in 1995. They didn't want to give me a pension. So I resigned. They gave me a signed document with conditions that anything can happen in the new SANDF, so they will call me when something happens. This was not interesting to me. So I joined [a] PMC. They [SANDF] paid me forty thousand rand, this was nothing. I would get much more in the PMC, so I left. I went to Sierra Leone and I was there until 2002. There were lots of 32-Battalion men in Executive Outcomes. The ANC was worried about Executive Outcomes because they thought we were 32 in disguise. People need to realise that not all Afrikaans people want to kill them.

Julia: Do you have any regrets about your involvement in 32-Battalion? How have you coped with your personal trauma after being in the unit and involved in war?

Tukayula De Abreu: I don't blame 32-Battalion you must understand, but to be frank with you since 1976 I have never had a happy day in my life. I have always felt like a monkey on a chain living here in South Africa because of those times. Today I can never go back to my country. I am not where I am meant to be.

