

General Jannie Geldenhuys

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Chief SADF 1985-1990

Chief of Army 1980-1985

Missing Voices Project

Interviewed by Mike Cadman

	TAPE ONE SIDE A
Interviewer	Tell me about your background.
Geldenhuys	<p>I grew up in a difficult period in the history of South Africa or at least in certain parts of South Africa in terms of politics and economy, etc. I was born in 1935 on a farm called Dansfontein in the Kroonstad district. When I say that those were difficult times, you may recall that there was drought on a large scale, there was poverty on a large scale, etc, and so we can go on. But that's history and it's well known. And there were also various diseases...but the serious...and politically it was also a difficult time in the sense that my father came from a family that were Smuts supporters, and my mother from a family in Bethlehem who were...there wasn't really a Nationalist Party as we knew it later on, but that she was in the Afrikaner party which was later on assimilated into the National Party of Hertzog. And there were many others...conflicts within the family. My father's people were called Smuts people, and the others were called Nats, or whatever. So when war broke out, like so many others, my father also joined the South African Union Defence Force at the time, and he went Up North, as we used to say. I was a camp follower, or the whole family were camp followers, with my mother, my elder brother, three and a half years older than I am, and myself. And I think we first came to Pretoria, as my father was transferred from one place to another, and then to Piet Retief, and then now starts a...I think a good story, but it depicts the atmosphere of the time, which I would like to tell you, and that is that there at Piet Retief, I think it was – and by the way, throughout my talk I may slip up on minor detail, because I don't want to look up all the dates and facts and figures down to the last cent of the last hour.</p>
Interviewer	I'm happy to get the broader picture.
Geldenhuys	<p>Ok. And I was perhaps too small to remember all this but my mother told me many years ago, not recently – she died many years ago – that one day the commanding officer of the regiment and the adjutant had been called to Defence headquarters, our Union Defence Force Headquarters, whatever the name was at that time, for orders. And of course anybody was waiting, what the hell was going on now? What could these orders be? Are they going north or what? And then one night while they were still now awaiting the return of these two, one of their women turned up there and said, you don't have to wait anymore, we've got the news, the regiment is moving to Ladysmith. And we heard this, she said, on Radio Zeesen. Which was the German radio broadcast especially for English speaking peoples, and it just shows you how good their information was that, <i>laughs</i> we got</p>

	<p>that information from Radio Zeesen before we got it from our own people. So that gives you an idea of the sort of atmosphere already then in which we lived. So then we went to Ladysmith and then my father did eventually have to go up north and we then, my mother and her two sons, we went to Frankfort in the Orange Free State where my aunt lived and we stayed with them for a while and then we moved to Bethlehem, which is where my mother's people were, and I lived the rest of my school days in Bethlehem while my father was up north. He died not long after he came back from World War 2. He was in Egypt and other places in the Middle East, and possibly Italy, I can't remember all that well. So ok, comes 1952 I matriculated in Bethlehem and I got onto the train and I went up north in my way, meaning to Pretoria, to what my father used to call still Roberts Heights... I think it was the name Roberts Heights was changed in 1939 to Voortrekkerhoogte. But the name Roberts Heights still stuck. And that was the end of my happy teen career. I started at the military gymnasium with a one year's course...am I giving you too much detail?</p>
Interviewer	<p>No, this is absolutely fine, because what it does is it paints a picture of who you are, how you came to be where you did.</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Ok, so I really went to the military gymnasium as it was called then...later on it became the army gymnasium, that time it was still the military gymnasium...because we didn't really have the finance for me to go and study somewhere and I also didn't know quite what to do with myself. And that I would get one year now to think about all these things. And I'll be on my own financially at about nine pounds a month, I think it was. But then it so happened when I arrived they said, do you want to go to the candidates platoon or the candidates company or the rest? I said, well what do you mean by candidates? They said, well, it's like sort of a pre-officer cadet course. It means that you do the same course as the others at the military gymnasium but it will include two academic subjects. And then if you pass that, at the end of the year you can decide you can go back to civilian life or you can continue with the cadet officer's course. So I said, well ok, why not? So I went for that. And you can be assured that they picked on us because of we were now supposed to be going for higher honours and so they'll show us what the army is all about. But I think I'm giving you too much detail now.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Ok, let's abbreviate it a bit, so...</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Ok I'll cut it short. So I completed the course, I did these two academic subjects and I could then go to the military college for the officer cadet course. Which I did. And there I did all the other military subjects including courses on the medium machine gun, the Vickers, and the anti-tank gun, the 6-pounder, and some others. Those we did over weekends and during school holidays and so on, the military courses, whilst we were doing the three academic first year subjects. So at the end of that year, I had then done five first year courses, academically, and military</p>

courses. So then in the third and fourth year we did only the academic subjects apart from once again school holidays and Saturdays and so on, when we did further military subjects. So after four years...I passed out as a second lieutenant after two years, and after four years I became a full lieutenant. And I could, like the others, select which unit I wanted to go to, so I selected the One Special Service Battalion, 1 SSB Bloemfontein. I don't really know what influenced me, probably because I was a Free Stater. But the other main options were, either Potchefstroom or Oudtshoorn, but it would have been very much the same in the sense that 1 SSB which had more service, consisted of a training regiment with a training infantry company, a training armoured squadron and a training artillery battery. So you had all the three of the main arms of the corps, of the army in that, it was virtually a regimental group one could say. Which was very good at the time and you had the opportunity to do training and field exercises with armour, artillery, signals and the lot. I know of many other people in other countries and in other parts of this country where you could only do one or the other. So right from the beginning I was used to hearing tanks firing or seeing them firing, the same with artillery, etc. And I must interrupt myself to go a little bit back again but it prevailed throughout my early career, and that is, you must realise now at this stage...I'm now talking about 1957, '58, '59 thereabouts, that at the army college where we finished our officer's training, and at these training centres, regiments wherever, we mixed with people ex World War 2. You go at the college to the pub and there would be officers and they would be talking, and they would be reminiscing about previous war experiences, and the same thing happened at Bloemfontein again, so we grew up with unintended after hours military education. And I'd like to give you what I think is a meaningful example. I can recall at the college, trying to be as modest as I can make myself, and make myself the smallest I can, because you're there as a youngster amongst war veterans you make yourself look small and modest. *laughs* I think it was Captain Piet Nel – I say Captain, he was a war veteran with many years of service, war, behind him, and he told this story of Montgomery, Field Marshall Montgomery, and the story went more or less like this: there was during the war training done, during war time my father was also in the South African Infantry Corps at that stage so I knew a little bit about that, and there was a type of military college at Aleppo and then shortly after General Montgomery arrived on the scene as the Commander in Chief of, I think it was called, the British Imperial Contingent, North African Contingent, I forgot the name...so he delivered an opening address to a staff course at Aleppo and he started off with more or less the following, and I don't think you'll find this anywhere written. You see the education that you get from passing on from the previous generation to the next one is not necessarily in books. He said, Montgomery said, there were three things wrong with the British High Command in the desert up to now. He said one was, the High Command, but fortunately that

	<p>has now been put right. <i>Laughs</i> I want to tell you another story about Montgomery. It was in the same conversation and I think the other guy who told this one was probably at that time Lieutenant Major P.P.J. Grobblers who also was a World War veteran...I think he was from the artillery or, coastal artillery and he told this story about Montgomery, that he was driving in his jeep – might have been just before El Alamein or before another operation... <i>phone interruption</i> or a unit commander or a battalion commander or a brigade commander or a sector commander. You cannot <i>phone interruption</i></p> <p>If you read the book that I've written under the title of (A General's Story from the Era of War and Peace), you will find that I have always passed this on to juniors under my command to remember you cannot win military confrontations only through good training and through drills and procedures. You must always visualise and try and think yourself into the frame of mind of your opponent, because you have an opponent, a person like you, who thinks and who has certain strategies or tactics if you like, and you must outwit him. It's not only a question of performing the right drills and performing the right doctrines, you have an opponent and you must outwit him. And later on you'll see that it worked out. So now, Montgomery must also have said to himself, how do I conquer, how do I beat, a legend. So he had to create an atmosphere in which there was confidence in him and the ability to outwit this legend of Rommel. So those two things...other people say, yes, he was always a very arrogant person, and he was, like we say in Afrikaans, voor op die wa, he was conceited, is that the word? I said, no, those were the things he had to do to outwit this legend, because a legend can't be beaten by a normal a person, you must instil confidence and outwit him. So that's why I stress the point that don't only think in times of nineteen so and so, we grew up as young officers in an atmosphere where we rubbed shoulders just about every day with people with military experience, World War 2 experience. Ok, so...back to...</p>
Interviewer	You went to 1 SSB.
Geldenhuys	Yes, I left there end of 1959 and I was then posted...I must have done something right somewhere along the line because I was then posted to the South African Military College again – I can't remember when the name became army college from military college – as an officer instructor at the infantry branch of the college. The infantry branch after a few years moved to Oudtshoorn and became the South African Army Infantry School. That stage it was still a branch of the college. But we were a branch of what was called the G branch, in other words, operations training and so on. And then I was sent on a series of

	<p>courses in the UK and I did a counter intelligence course. I can tell you something interesting about that, which will bore down to this, that whereas as a young officer I rubbed shoulders with World War 2 veterans, a considerable time in the UK I rubbed shoulders with people who had also World War 2 experience and whatever military activities that the United Kingdom might have participated in after that.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Ok, would they have been veterans from Malaysia and things like that?</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Yes, but also Second World War. I'll give you a few examples. For example at the counter intelligence course that I did one of the instructors, I forgot his name now, was in fact the security officer who was in charge of the security of the building where Churchill held his war cabinet meetings. That guy was responsible for all the security aspects, not only the physical. And then I did also an air photo reading course. Now incidentally on that course one of the instructors was Major Babington Smith. Now you may recall during World War 2 for a long time, the Germans had the British flustered a bit with their V1 and V2 flying bombs, flying missiles. And it was then picked up by two air photo readers this Babington Smith who was my instructor, and his wife who was actually the first one who first picked it up, the V1 and the V2 bases at Peenemunda in Germany. So there again I was fortunate to have had instruction on their photo readings from people who did it during actual operations. I then also did with other NATO students an airport ability course. This had to do with the planning of movements, of troops with their equipment, etc.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Did you do anything with relation to. At the time, this was the early sixties, late fifties, there was, I'm sure, a lot of conventional training, was there any course in counter insurgency?</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>No, not really very much, it was part of the next course I was going to mention. I did the company commander's course and that was actually the main course and the big one, and a number of weeks that that happened. And there was a bit of counter insurgency, but not much, but I think it was more about Cyprus and Malaya if I remember correctly, more than anything else. I can't really say that I learned much from that. It was very much the same as films that we had in the South African Defence Force troops from the UK about Malaya, or based on Malaya and I think Cyprus. But other than certain lectures and perhaps certain exercises for a small period the main emphasis was under conventional warfare and also nuclear warfare. Those days there was still...the UK prepared for a nuclear warfare situation, which I also did. There might have been others too but I can't remember them all now. I was away for about let's say, six months. But there again I became very...oh yes, I was there, it was just after that, I think, the Poqo murders in the Eastern Cape, which was closely followed I think, or just preceded by the Sharpeville. So in certain ways I had a torrid time there. And you felt very alone. Only South African there amongst those guys. But I had ? (257)</p>

	<p>sympathy to earn. A lot of admiration, people who expressed their admiration. For example, they were all company commanders and I was on that level and they were on that level, the other students, and some of them already had career experience and they then said, listen, every time the frag is issued in the morning, we were very keen to see that frag. The frag is the fragmentation of an order indicating which airforce unit could support which ground unit. And they were always hoping that it would be the South Africans who would give the air support to them. I said, why? I said, because we only flew Mustangs. They said, you flew Mustangs but at least we saw you. And we could see what you did. They said, when you get the others you never hear or see them! But the South Africans, you actually saw them, and it's a nice thing. Apparently that has a psychological effect if you actually can see the aircraft doing its job on your part of the front. There were other things of importance that flashed through my mind but...I did say I did also an air portability course?</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yes, you mentioned. And you mentioned nuclear, obviously because of the concern. But we can always revisit that if there's something that you remember.</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>The other thing that I wanted to mention to you is that, a Ghanaian and I became friends, he was a major I was a captain, and he often visited me at my place and we had long talks and his name was Major (Emmanuel) Kotoka, and not long after he went back to Ghana and I came back to South Africa, because he actually lifted the coup on Nkrumah and became president. And I think up to today still, he had built at Accra, it's called Kotoka airport. But after a few numbers of weeks he was hung up on a tree with his head downwards. Ok, also to give an indication why we're at that of the influence, on a very personal level at that but nevertheless, picked up during inter-relations with other people was that my friend General van Deventer, when he was on a staff duties course at Camberley, one of his friends was somebody who took over Uganda, and then became the "King of Scotland", namely Idi Amin. Ok, so that was the sort of people we mixed with at that time of my life and during those times. That must have been about 1960 plus.</p>
Interviewer	<p>South Africa became a republic in 1961, so you came back into that milieu, that political era when South Africa was emerging from three quarters of a century of British rule, into a republic.</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Yes. Talking about that, I was a commander of the guard at Jan Smuts airport when Harold Wilson arrived at Jan Smuts airport shortly before he gave his end of change speech at...</p>
Interviewer	<p>Harold McMillan?</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Harold McMillan. What did I say? That's a very big mistake, <i>laughs</i>... Harold McMillan. And then I incidentally was in charge of a certain sector in '61 with the inauguration of the first President in Church Street when he was installed, inaugurated.</p>

	<p>So then I was actually posted as a staff member again at the military college. And I gave instruction on G subjects, operations intelligence training, etc, at the level of...my students were lieutenant to captain, up to that level. We had a hard time because at that time also started National Service on a larger scale than before. And we had to produce the first second lieutenants and corporals to receive the first intakes under the new system. So I'm giving perhaps too much detail but we find today that people tackle things but they don't prepare and plan for that, and then things go wrong and then it's a mess. In double quick time they planned and prepared people and places and equipment and locations to receive the new lot. So how that affected us was at the college we had to produce the first corporals and lieutenants. So we started at six o'clock in the morning, the staff, and certain of the courses at the college started at six until, I think, ten minutes past three in the afternoon. Then other courses started at, I think, eight o'clock and went on until about half past five or so. But the staff had always to start at six o'clock, be there and end at six o'clock or seven o'clock that night. And that went on for a number of months, which was a hard time. But that is actually by the way, I don't think you'll be very much interested in that. But to prepare and plan to give instruction for 12 hours a day, is a hard job. But in any case, after that...that was for about 1961 thereabouts to 1963/4. Then I did my staff duties course. That was between 1963 and 1965 thereabouts. Yes, between '63 and '65, it was about a 15 months course or a year's course but between that time. I think then I was probably better prepared than any other time in my career because I had studied the subjects myself, I had instructed in those subjects and I've lived some of it, and I thought I was very well prepared for the next whatever. So then I got hold of a circular inviting applications for a post as vice-consul in Luanda, Angola. If I could explain, apparently the thinking was that we would probably get involved in more insurgency type operations. That's what they were busy doing in Mozambique and Angola.</p>
Interviewer	The Portuguese, yes.
Geldenhuys	<p>So apparently the South African government requested to Portuguese to accept a posting of South African officer at Lorenzo Marques and at Luanda as military attaches. So of course the military said, well you can't have military attaché in a province because Angola was a province. Constitutionally. You can only have an attaché at an embassy, so that would have been in Lisbon. So they changed the name of the posting to vice consul instead of military attaché. Which made it difficult because it wasn't really a secretive thing, it wasn't really that you were involved in a spy...you were not supposed to recruit spies and all that and handle agents and so on, it was just a normal attaché's work that you had to do, but because you are titled a vice consul you had to perform some vice consul's duties at least. And you couldn't go about telling all and sundry what your real position was because it would not be fair to your hosts. Because they</p>

want you to be known as a vice consul so you had to perform as a vice consul. But I then had the opportunity there to study the way the Portuguese were operating. And there must be no misunderstanding about the Portuguese effort. They were very good. And let's forget about why I say, what they do, why I say they're good, let's just look at their record. You know, by that time Spain had given up most of its overseas colonies. The French had given up most of their overseas possessions, and so I can go on. They were just about the only who still had possessions, of Angola, and Mozambique, and Macau and Portuguese Guinea, at East Timor. Now I think at that time Portugal was classified as one of the three poorest countries in Europe together with Greece and Turkey. So you can imagine with that small resources available to them that they could actually fight wars in 4 or 5 overseas provinces spread over the world tells a story. So they were quite efficient. The way I looked at it that time, the way I analysed it was that the senior officers, I'm talking about the generals, particularly general rank staff and commands, were actually very good. Very good. They were intellectual people, well trained, and people of standing, and in all respects, I think first class senior officers, or general officers. Their troops were also, in my opinion, were very good. That's because they were poor. Some of them had had a hard life before they joined the army. Once they were conscripted they probably had a better time than they had before. Some put on shoes for the first time when they got into the defence force. Some lived only a few kilometres from the coast but some of them saw sea for the first time, because they lived a very closed local type of living. And they were hard. And they were disciplined. Being of a sort of lower figment of the Portuguese community they are used also to taking orders. So they were very good too, the soldiers. I think if they did slip a bit I think, they didn't have, to put it in practical terms, in my opinion, but I may be wrong, the sort of battalion commanders and RSMs, sergeant majors, that we had, that could convert fantastic strategies and plans into executing them on the ground. Whereas our lieutenant colonels as they call them now, and RSMs, and sergeant majors on all levels, are on many occasions the backbone of our military structure. I think they didn't have that same backbone that we had, but the results speak for themselves, they did very, very well. So I learned a lot there but I would like to have seen more but I did see a lot. I was once, for example, my land rover all by myself from Luanda to Serpa Pinto, later called Menongue, when I got there the Portuguese wanted to give me a medal because they couldn't believe that I all by myself, travelled through that area which was a dangerous area. So I think that also gave me a lot of background, and more information, more experience, so that when I was incidentally transferred back, I think I had then at that stage, quite a good training eras behind me as well as at least, if not actually participating, being also witness to practical implementation of military operations, counter insurgency operations.

Interviewer	How long were you there for?
Geldenhuijs	I was there for three years, then they asked me to stay another year, which I did. Because then when they asked me for a second time to stay there for another year, this is now the Portuguese, I said no. I'll stay for a bit more but I wanted to be considered for the secondary annual transfers of April of the year. There's always the transfers that happen in December and then there's the secondary supplementary list again in April. So I wanted to be considered for that, otherwise they just plonk you down anywhere, that sort of...so it is quite interesting but perhaps something you can cut out for your purposes but I was then first transferred to an office job here at office headquarters, SO2 something. Administration at some or other headquarters. But in the meantime...I can mention names too...they had transferred somebody to Windhoek, as Colonel G, which would also have been the second-in-command of the South West Africa Command, and he refused to go, I believe. So then somebody else was put in his place, transferred to Windhoek in his place, and he said, he didn't want to go there but he'll go in the meantime but they must look for somebody else. So as soon as somebody else becomes available then he will also want to come back to South Africa. So that's how I ended up there. So it's more by incident than...
Interviewer	Now this year is what?
Geldenhuijs	That was April '65. No, hang on, I was posted there in November '65 and this was now April 1970.
Interviewer	So at this stage, you're a young man but you got proper training as a soldier, you've got experience with all the various weaponry and practice and so on, but you've also got some quite considerable political experience after three years in the vice consul position.
Geldenhuijs	Well yes, but I wouldn't over rate the political experience. I must tell you that my father, the little bit that I can remember of the things that he told me was, he said, stay out of politics, it's a dirty thing. And for that reason and many others, I was very apolitical and I stayed out of politics and I didn't want to get mixed up with politics, and that happened right through my whole career. So politics not, but I got to know how administrative state systems work and so on. There's politics and there's political science, and there's political administration or state administration. Yes, I did get some experience of that.
	END OF SIDE A (counter at 528)
	SIDE B (counter at 14)
Geldenhuijs	So if you didn't ask me to start from the beginning I would have started at this point where we are now, in this sense that I arrived there in April 1965 as Colonel G, Colonel G meaning staff officer responsible for operations intelligence training and so on. And a

	<p>Colonel G also acted as second-in-command, so if the commanding officer was away, then I was the acting commanding officer, who was at that time General Andre van Deventer. He was soon followed by Brigadier Ben Roos during the time that I was there. And then soon thereafter I was promoted to brigadier and I became the commanding officer of South Africa command. I just thought I'd like to remind you at that stage South West Africa as we knew it then, which later became South West Africa/Namibia, which later became Namibia, but the military command then was split. South of the so-called red line was South Africa Command with its headquarters in Windhoek, and north of that line up to the border with Angola and Zambia, that had other names with the headquarters first at Rundu, later at Grootfontein, until a date which I will mention a while from now. So it wasn't the whole South West Africa.</p>
Interviewer	<p>And the red line was north of Tsumeb.</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Yes. Now the red line got its name from...it was actually...that was also regarded as what they called the operational area north of the red line. But the red line didn't have so much significance. It was only a way of partitioning. Because it was in fact the old foot mouth border. And as I said, what then happened...no, ok. So my, let's call it, operational career if you like, perhaps that's not the right word, of more or less senior command and operations there was when I was transferred from Angola to Namibia...no, it was when Angola became important even at a later stage. So I knew Angola very well, as I described to you, I was driving all over Angola with my land rover. It was my job. So I knew Angola fairly well. So later on it served me well. Then I was transferred back to Pretoria about 1975, '74, thereabouts. Let me jump a bit, that was also when Operation Savannah happened. So I filled about five posts in a period of about two and a half years. I was transferred first as director of intelligence at army headquarters, not at Defence Force headquarters. And that was for a short while and then I became director of operations at the army headquarters, not at Defence Force headquarters. And then is when Operation Savannah started. Now, as you probably know and that was probably not a very good thing to do, but Operation Savannah started in such a way that it was not a command and controlled through the normal military structures. The two or three director of operations, one of the army, of the airforce, and the one at the high headquarters of Defence headquarters, formed a sort of controlling committee to control that operation. And the director general of operations, and also a staff position, was then at that stage General Constand Viljoen, and he was the...I can't say in command, because he wasn't a commander, he was a senior staff officer. But he was chief controller then of Operation Savannah. And then during Operation Savannah a friend of mine was killed in a very unfortunate accident. It was, I think Colonel was his rank, J D Potgieter, and they think he was shot down by own forces. And he was then incidentally replaced by another friend of mine, Ben Roos. And at that stage, it's not right at the</p>

	<p>beginning but at that stage the battlefield commander, if you can put it that way, the field commander was General André van Deventer, who was also my commander at South Africa Command when I got there the first time. Now, I would like to skip Operation Savannah for a while...and just go a little bit ahead and then I'll come back again. Then after Operation Savannah...and this what I'm going to tell you now I got to know only a while later. The headquarters for Operation Savannah was at Rundu. Then after Operation Savannah it moved to Grootfontein. And that was also a headquarters for the area north of the red line. General Viljoen was there for a while I think, and then my friend, officer cadet friend, Ian Gleeson was then head of command. I may slip here and there, the one soon followed the other one, etc, etc. And then this is what I actually got to know, the inside information later on, apparently General Malan who was at this stage still Chief of the Army, him or somebody higher up ordered a committee or commission of enquiry into what should be the military structure in Namibia? And the way I got to know about all this...I also appeared before that committee. And the one issue that had to be resolved there was: where should the...if you amalgamate the two north of the red line and south of the red line, where should the headquarters be? I believe that some said Ondangwa, because that's more or less a key point in Ovamboland and a key point in the counter insurgency war. Others said Grootfontein where the headquarters was for a short while just before this. And others said Rundu where the headquarters also was before for a short while. And apparently I was one of the few – I was told the only one – who said, no, amalgamate the two and you make the headquarters in Windhoek. So how I came to hear about all this was when General Malan called me in – he was then Chief of the Army – he said, listen, you are the only one who said – General Rogers said something else, General Viljoen something else – he says, you were the only one who said Windhoek and I agree with you, so I'm going to appoint you rank, you go back there now. So that's how it came about, I believe, to Windhoek, to do a second tour. This is now after I'd been there two and a half years before. Ok. Now during Operation Savannah I think I told you that when Potgieter was killed...</p>
Interviewer	What was he flying?
Geldenhuis	<p>A helicopter. When he was killed then Roos took over from him and General van Deventer succeeded somebody by the name of Schoeman and he was in charge in Rundu. And then happened Operation Savannah...oh yes, then I went...yes, that is why I mentioned, when Potgieter was killed and Ben de Wet Roos, when he went there he was actually chief of staff at Rundu, as chief of staff of the general officer commanding the operation Savannah. So when he went for...I was transferred to Rundu as chief of staff. So by now I've been second-in-command at Windhoek, then commander in Windhoek, then 1975 onwards...I'm repeating now but I must just get it all for my own</p>

	<p>purposes <i>laughs</i> I was first chief intelligence staff officer of army headquarters, then operation staff officer, then came Savannah when I was chief of staff at Grootfontein for a while, then I came back I was then chief of staff operations army headquarters. And then transfer to Windhoek as commander. So it's about 4 or 5 jobs those two and a half years. So there I was back at Windhoek. So Operation Savannah, I cannot tell you much as you can imagine. I think what stands out is...and I'm going to get to that later on...it was typical of the Cold War era. I'm going to say unnecessary, but with unnecessary intrigues and secrecy and all that. I say unnecessary but it happened all over the world. For example, our troops had to go in there without their ID books. They couldn't wear that. And the weaponry had to be cleared of all the insignia on them. Now we all thought at the time, and more so afterwards, that that was rather stupid, but I've gone into some Russian veteran internet websites, and what do I find there? There were 3000 Russians in Angola, that went in there, they also were not allowed to wear ID books. They were also not allowed to wear their normal uniform. And it's just about the same as we did, and that is something I want to come back to – the characteristics and the quirks of the Cold War era. But people ask me certain things about Savannah of a level perhaps higher than my posting was, but even so, when I can't answer their questions they think I'm hiding something. But let me just explain then you'll see what...I was not the president of the country. I was not the Minister of Defence. I was not the Chief of the Defence Force of that time, which I think was Admiral Biermann I was not the Director General of Operations at the Defence Headquarters. I was not the Chief of the Army. I was not the Chief of Staff of Operations of the Army. I was the Director of Operations at the Army. Can you see what a long way I am from up there. Now people come and ask me about things which happened above that level.</p>
Interviewer	Like, why didn't South Africa withdraw after...?
Geldenhuis	<p>Why did we commit troops in that effort? What was our aim? Etc, etc. So these questions are asked all over and every day when the subject comes up, and when I say, well I haven't got the faintest idea...well I have a slight idea and I think this and I think that, but other than that I don't know. Then they think I'm trying to hide something, then they say, well listen the war is over now, you can speak, why not? But it's because I don't know. But as I have it, second hand, third hand, fourth hand, fifth hand, what definitely happened was the Portuguese decided to give up possession of Angola. And they were not very meticulous about the way they were going to do it. As fast as they could get shot of it, the better. But it ended in agreement, Alvor I think it was. Under this agreement the three parties: FNLA – I mention that first because that was the first freedom party, if you'd like to call it that. And MPLA, they were the second, they broke away from the FNLA. And then the third one, Unita, also a breakaway,, that they would form a government of national unity. And they would ?</p>

	become independent on the 11 th of November of nineteen...you can work out the date...
Interviewer	It was '75...
Geldenhuys	<p>It was '75 or '76. '76 I think. And until that happened in the meantime they would have an election and then at the 11th of November the party who won the election would then assume government, would become the government. But then...and there was a dispute about this but I think that dispute is not really dispute anymore...the Cubans were the first to appear on the scene at most definitely Luanda. And their aim was to put the MPLA into power. And that's more or less what they did. And later on, when we talk we can come back to this subject, but I can already tell you now there is no doubt in my mind and it is not really such a question, a matter of debate as it used to be, it's more or less accepted that that is what I've told you now is the truth, but please remind me, let me come back to this. So the FNLA was supported by...let's say they had the sympathy more than anything else of the United States and there was really little support also, but by comparison very little support really, and too little too late. The MPLA was very strongly Moscow orientated and they had the support of Russians and Cubans. There's a debate about what time the Cubans went there and if the Cubans went there because the Soviet Union asked them or whether they did it on their own steam, but we can get to that later. And I can't say that I can answer all those questions but I have very good reasons for what I think the situation was. And the United States then, as I have it, through that...who was that American roving ambassador?</p>
Interviewer	Henry Kissinger.
Geldenhuys	<p>Henry Kissinger. Him, or as ordered by him, requested the South African government to assist FNLA and UNITA, and that is why FNLA and UNITA then formed a very loose alliance. As a matter of fact they never really co-operated well in any way whatsoever, but I think that was a prerequisite to get support, so that was a front that they put up, that they have an alliance. So officially and formally for all intents and purpose, for all outside intents and purposes they were allies, but they didn't really act that way fully. And it was in that set up, in that framework, South Africa was asked to assist militarily the alliance of FNLA and UNITA. Ok, now I offer all sorts of reasons why I don't know the whole story, now I tell you how I said this is what I perceive. Now I tell you why I perceive this. I can recall when I was director of operations for those few months that when General Viljoen was then DG, director general of operations at the higher headquarters, that through him I and my section got the job to draw up a list of weaponry, arms, ammunition and the logistics necessary for a contingent to go into Angola to support UNITA and the FNLA. So I didn't get any more details than that, but that I believed that the United States was going to support us and we had to offer a list to them of what we needed to do, to comply with their request.</p>

	That's about the only, what we call raakpunt...I don't know what you call in English...
Interviewer	Reference point.
Geldenhuis	Reference point on which I built this...that is how I understood it. That is why we had to prepare that. I'm talking about now this was 1975 thereabouts, more than 30 years ago. But that's how I had it all the time. Now we did the blitzkrieg there, there were quite a few South Africans heroes there. Like Jan Breytenbach who formed...that was the beginning of 32 Battalion. Like Delville Linford who was the founder commander of the...commanding officer of the Bushmen Battalion, which later became 301 Battalion. Those two were, on a unit commander's level, certainly heroes. And there were others too, but we can think about that again later on. And now to pull out of Angola is also a very touchy point...not touchy point, but it's debatable and people have different views about that. I can recall that I at one stage, when I was at Rundu as chief of staff of the contingent, and General van Deventer was the general officer commanding, or was he a brigadier, I can't remember. But I had Ben Roos at the later stages, as I said, he took over from Potgieter, in command of the northern section, of the task force, one could say. I told him over the radio, you've got orders from Pretoria, you've got to withdraw. And I can remember, it was in Afrikaans, I said, julle moet (<i>inaudible</i>) en terug te trek. And there was a long silence and he said, Ek aanvaar die opdrag met gelaate I accept the order with...
Interviewer	Reluctance.
Geldenhuis	Yes, with more or less reluctantcy, I want give any comments now that's what it means. But the reason...now how I understood it, why did we withdraw, and that I'm going to come back to that one too, it's very important later to come back to that one. But as I have it, by this time we have still not received a single cartridge from the United States. And I was...I do know that I had to draw up the schedules for a force. Now none of those things happened. One isolated incident, we also had a group of people before the end, when Ben Roos was at Umbrige, that was where Holden Roberto found himself. And I flew there once by C130 aircraft with...what were those big guns of ours?
Interviewer	The 155mm or the five.five, the old fashioned five-five?
Geldenhuis	The old five-five, with one of them, there were already two there, I went there to offload the third one. I spoke to him there, I saw Holden Roberto. Now Ben Roos told me, Holden Roberto the day before had a meeting and he showed Ben Roos, what's that South American old rifle, M1 or something like that? He showed him that and said, now look at this, this is what the Americans gave me. Now he had 250 or 400 of these rifles. He said, that was about all I got from the Americans. And there's always a lighter side and Ben Roos said to me, just a few days before I arrived he had a serious talk with Roberto, because what Holden

	<p>Roberto knew about armies and war was almost zero if not less, and when he finished, when Ben Roos tried to coach him a bit, then Roberto said to him, general you know, war is such an important thing. You can't leave it to the generals. <i>Laughs</i> So they tried but Ben Roos advised them against it, but Roberto wouldn't know because the 11th of November was scheduled for the day for independence. So on the 11th of November he saw fit to attack Luanda from the north, and he wasn't prepared for it, his troops wasn't trained for it and it was a shambles. It was a losing battle before it started. Ok, that is now, at that time when I issued Ben the order to prepare himself and to withdraw, I told that later...a long time afterwards...to André van Deventer, I was Chief of Staff and he was the commander, so he said to me, listen you were there for a few weeks, he said, the order to withdraw, we got about five of them. <i>laughs</i> So yours I don't know if it was the last one or just one of the others. I won't say five but we had more than one of them, he said. And what I did hear on a later occasion, during that time frame just in the aftermath of Savannah, or perhaps even during the last phases of Savannah I can recall personally that PW Botha said distinctly, listen, we went into this thing with promises from United States and I cannot see my way open. I'm not going to fight the whole of the west war all on our own, because nothing had materialised in the form of assistance from anywhere. Nothing. And that is what he said, I'm not going to do this all on our own. But there are many other reasons for the withdrawal. And I would like you to remind me about that because it is actually quite a natural thing to do. I'll put that into a different frame. Ok, so then after that, and I told you, that I just came back to Pretoria and I was then transferred...when they pulled out, they pulled out and the headquarters was moved from Rundu to Grootfontein. General Ian Gleeson, my lifelong friend was there in command for a while, and then I relieved him there when he went on leave and while I was there I think I was then told that I would now...that is when I was called in and said, we are now going to change the structure. Windhoek is going to be the headquarters for the whole of the lot and you go there.</p>
Interviewer	<p>By now at this stage it's quite clear that there's something going on in the region; the Portuguese have relinquished Angola and Mozambique, the Rhodesian war is starting to get quite serious by this stage, and then in Ops Savannah you saw a lot of things happening, you realised that there was Cuban influence there and a Russian influence. So was this, if I can term it, the beginning of the modern phase of the conflict on South Africa's borders?</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Yes, I don't really like the idea much of saying on our borders. Can I just before I get to that mention, that once again on a Soviet...let's say Russian, veteran website, and when I say website I'm talking about including some of the known Generals Korotchkin and so on and [Konstantin] Shaganovich. On one of those they said they had 3000 Russians in Angola...I don't</p>

	know exactly at what time, which was more than they had in Vietnam.
Interviewer	Ok, in other words they considered it pretty important.
Geldenhuis	For sure. And it will come up again later. When we get to the more interesting and more recently.
Interviewer	And on a more practical level, Ops Savannah, you say that all insignia had to be removed from weapons, from uniforms, ID books, stuff like that, and from what I've read it strikes me that you had to make do with weaponry that was sort of a hodgepodge of weaponry. What was the situation of the SADF at that stage in terms of the weaponry used? Was it still pretty much based on old British equipment and Second World War stuff, or was it moving into a more modern era?
Geldenhuis	I think both. Both in this sense that like I supposed happened with all countries also happened with us. After the war you scale down the military and you more often than not overdo it. And then you start to build up too late. Or not soon enough, let's put it that way. And that was certainly the case with us too. So yes, we didn't have modern equipment. I see no reason why we should have had according to the thinking of the time. So no it is true that that woke up a lot of people to realities. And it was not only in our case, I think it probably might have been the same with Australia, New Zealand, other countries too, although Australia might have been alerted I think in the east that I don't think of now, perhaps Malaysia and so on, but yes, we didn't have up to date, state of the art weaponry at that time, no. But, that doesn't mean that we were quite helpless. I think what hampered us more was the secret way all these things had to be used, in the sense that we had to scratch numbers off the armoured cars, and off ammunition, etc. If anything had to fall into enemy hands there shouldn't be a way it could be pinned down as South African, which was rather stupid but that's the way...it was all over the world at that stage.
Interviewer	Sure. But now had some...and I know that some people did die there...died there and had their bodies fallen into enemy hands, surely it would have been obvious that the people fighting were South Africans? It seems to me a slight of hand that wasn't really necessary.
Geldenhuis	Well there too, people even had to remove all identity on their body and they had other uniforms. I don't want to mention names now because I'm not that type of person, but I can tell you that until recently still I had people saying that what disgusting thing it was that we ordered the troops that they couldn't take their pocket bibles with them. And I seriously object and I shouldn't say this on the record but I seriously object to that, and it happened just the other day, because our orders were you shouldn't have anything on your bodies that would identify you as a South African. Now you can't have a bible with Piet van der Merwe written on the first page because then you're disobeying

	the orders. So it was because of those orders that we had to do that, not because we wanted to.
Interviewer	And this was all in the intrigue, in the global Cold War climate.
Geldenhuis	Yes.
Interviewer	And as you say the Russians were doing the same thing, they also came without identity.
Geldenhuis	Yes, exactly. Exactly the same. And I think the Cubans too. But while I agree without reservation that we fought with relatively old equipment there was some...I can't think of it now but there were probably some exceptions...like we did fight with the 303 rifle. The rifles were relatively modern. But it was a very good thing that it happened because it was a wake up call, so that later on we did have state of the art and better than many other countries with which we did our fighting. Now I'm talking about very intimate personal knowledge, in the sense that after Operation Savannah...and as I told you I was then for a while chief of army operations at army headquarters. I succeeded General Dutton. It didn't just overnight occur to me that nobody had planned...what do you call it when you have a rethink?
Interviewer	An appraisal?
Geldenhuis	Yes, but there's another specific military term for that which I've now forgotten. Now there is not something like that organised, so I did it. And the airforce didn't do something like that, the navy didn't do it, nobody else did, but some of them then clubbed in with us if I remember correctly. And at this point I may be wrong but at least for the army I think I invited the other arms of the service to sit in. I had a proper, methodically, scientifically arranged session of two or three days where all the commanders, from low levels up to high levels, worked in syndicates to prepare all their strong points and bad points and weaknesses and whatever else, in a systematic way just properly structured and then ended up in a final analysis, conclusions, and we made formal and very specific recommendations which were then used as a very large scale project to improve on tactics, equipment, the lot. And so in that sense Savannah was a blessing in disguise because then we knew exactly where our weaknesses were and what we required and so on. So that was...it didn't come from the top, it came from army headquarters level, but it involved in the end the whole of Armscor and Denel, the lot. And from that developed, you could say, the new look Defence Force. So in that sense it was a very important step in the South African Defence Force. I'll give you one example: we still used at that stage...what did we call the Noddy car?
Interviewer	The Eland 60.
Geldenhuis	The Eland 60 and the Eland 90. Now, that was originally the French Panhard. Then we called it the Eland. And we had the 60mm mortar, it was the main armament, the other one was the

	<p>90mm. Which was incidentally the most delicate balance between fire power and the stability of the platform. You couldn't have put a bigger gun on that platform. So it was good for its time but then started the Mark 1, 2, 3, or perhaps we were already at Mark 3, but then we started the Mark 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. All the improvements on that one and the initiation of other vehicles and projects for to deliver weaponry and armoured cars, etc, etc. And you know what happened? I think when we were at about the Mark 7, France imported Panhard parts from us. They imported for theirs.</p>
Interviewer	I wasn't aware of that.
Geldenhuys	Yes, well that's what the Armscor people did. That we did all those adaptations and we exported parts back to France.
	END OF SIDE B (<i>counter at 520</i>)
	TAPE TWO SIDE A
Geldenhuys	<p>I'm now going to start with what I regard as the beginning of the modern era of the South African Defence Force and of the Cold War era, which is of perhaps more importance than anything else at this point in time. Not that the previous history didn't have its important aspects, but now we are more than any other time really entering into, except Operation Savannah, into what I call the Cold War era as it happened in South Western Africa. And I think we should have a clear idea of what we mean by the Cold War. We should characterise it. You see, a lot of people, and books, and articles, and authors write officially about the Bush War, by some of them. Some of them call it the border war. And so I can go on. And that is not descriptive of the type of war in which we were involved. Border war means it's a border region, so what? Bush War means that certain parts of the terrain which we fought, so what? But the Cold War era that had finished a short while ago had certain characteristics, and a lot of people, and I'm talking about intelligent people, I'm talking about intellectual people, I'm talking about academics make big mistakes in analysing the war because they slipped on basics and that is characterising the Cold War era. Now if I should characterise that, and this will be the background, it's already even background for Operation Savannah too, but especially also post Savannah. First characteristic, but I don't mention a definite sequence, tomorrow I may make it a second one, but in any case, one main characteristic is that during the modern era, I'm not talking about the thirty years war and the eighty years war, because they all) they were thirty years of war and eighty years of war, it was not a long drawn out (inaudible)...but in the modern time that ended in the World War 2, one of the main changes from that to the Cold War era is that wars were not declared anymore. That's point number one. Now, if I just leave it at that it's also meaningless, but if you do study and analyse the Cold War era you will find that it had great impact on the essence of the Cold War. And that is, for example, one of the main</p>

	<p>reasons was all the secrecy. We analyse, why did the government say you can't wear the uniform? Why did the government say you must remove your ID cards, etc, etc? Why did the Russians also do it? And the Cubans also do it? Were they all stupid? It is characteristic of that war. Because if you declare a war everybody knows, it's open. And once you've declared war they may say they don't like it that you did but then after that they accept it. But if you don't declare a war, the one who is discovered first tossing a boulder or being offensive, he's the culprit. So the point is that going with declaring or not declaring war is although the politicians, the governments stopped declaring war, they didn't stop committing their defence forces to war. So you have a war just as you would have had but you haven't declared it so it doesn't happen. <i>Laughs</i></p>
Interviewer	<p>So this was happening in the late seventies, Savannah finished effectively '76.</p>
Geldenhuys	<p>It already started with Savannah.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So it had already started. So there was this escalation on the Cuban side, the Cubans were already in Angola, South Africa was in a situation where it could see that things were escalating so these undeclared wars were actually taking place already without anybody having stood up and said we're at war.</p>
Geldenhuys	<p>Yes. And that is why they didn't wear the South African uniforms or Cuban uniforms or the Russian uniforms, that's why they didn't wear their ID books, etc, etc, etc. Why we didn't even allow them to use bibles. Although now some people say, it's we who did that. It's not, it's the higher-ups of the time, it is a characteristic of the Cold War. Now, about who was first, the Cubans or us? I went to Angola again after that, I stayed there, I lived there for nearly five years. I went there and saw my old house again. I went there two or three times and the destruction there is terrible. We never even reached Luanda. So that happened, the Cubans were there but we were never even there. And by the way you see, I interrupt myself, but to give you one other example of what's happening is that, I will tell you in a short while how I met with General Ochoa Sanchez, the Portuguese general in command there. And he, not long after I met with him, he was shot. Now, later on I met one of their main top commanders and top negotiators, he was in fact one of the top negotiators, and I met with him, and I am very sensitive about telling you who he was, because the other one whom I knew, and wrote about it, he was shot. Now this one I'm going to tell you about now, he is, I believe, incommunicado, and when I told that to the history writer of Castro, Professor Piero Gleijeses, I said to him, I believe my friend so and so is incommunicado. No, he's not incommunicado! I said, where is he then? He said, he just doesn't talk anymore. <i>Laughs</i> Now you see, I'm even scared that if he's in the papers tomorrow that that guy tells me that I'm going to tell you now, that he may also disappear. But he said to me that was in 1988 early '89, thereabouts, he said to me, General you know we've been at</p>

	war for so long, in so many parts of the world, we thought that we were going into Luanda at the time, and we put the MPLA in power and we've gone here and it's all over. He said, it's 13 years later, we're still here, we just can't stick it out any longer.
Interviewer	So they were just fatigued from so many years of war.
Geldenhuis	So I have that from his tongue. You don't have to believe me if you don't want to but you're going to miss out if you don't believe me. So they were there a long...and we were never even in Luanda...ok, what's the point I was trying to make?
Interviewer	We were talking about wars not being declared and you said it often hinges on who was there first, who gets accused of being the one who started it all and the aggressor.
Geldenhuis	That's right. Ok, so the first one, wars are not declared anymore. Secondly, that goes into secrecy and intrigue and a lot of other things you may regard perhaps as quirks or as sentiments, but the things that also fall by the wayside is, some of the honesty and pride that sometimes go with military campaigns were virtually non-existent. You're always to blame for something. Then...I don't know which other I should mention first...ok, let's tackle this one first. Something that goes hand in hand with this, in this war where it's not declared, it has an effect on the relationship between governments, the politicians, and the military. I think perhaps the best example is, to illustrate this is, the order that is issued by the politicians, let's say, by the government, to the senior military commander – because it starts at the top naturally – in the modern past, these are my own words, you'll see I have many own words and own concepts that I haven't read somewhere but I give it to you for what it's worth, I've decided to use the word, the government gave the senior military commander what I call an absolute order, or an absolute command or assignment. One example is this, I think it was about August 1942, when Churchill issued orders to Alexander...
Interviewer	General [Harold] Alexander of the British Expeditionary Force?
Geldenhuis	The British Expeditionary force. Do you know what his orders were? I give you a clue, two words, I saw it on the film of the original document, two words, "Conquer Egypt".
Interviewer	That's nice and simple. Conquer Egypt, he knows his orders.
Geldenhuis	That is what I call an absolute command. There's nothing mysterious about it. It's singular, it's straightforward, it's understandable. 'Conquer Egypt', now you can do what you like. There's no stigma in the national laws of war, and conquer Egypt. Now there was never by comparison an order, conquer Luanda, conquer Angola, nothing of the sort. And not only in our case but anywhere else in the world. There was never such a simple, explicit order again.
Interviewer	So the kind of warfare we're talking about was of a very different nature from the Second World War, the 'Conquer Egypt' clear-

	cut, defined issue. Things were much more muddied by politics, by circumstances, by the Cold War.
Geldenhuys	<p>That is why the politicians continued in the Cold War to be involved themselves throughout. Because once you've said, 'Conquer Egypt', you're finished with that war and they had to carry on with the job. But if you don't give an order like that, you meddle all the time, from the politicians. So anywhere it happened, don't say is it right or wrong? If it is wrong, it is wrong of the Cold War era. And many people, I said it a while ago, I'll come back to it, why did we withdraw? The order was never to capture Luanda. So to withdraw that was a natural thing to do. at some stage or another you were going to withdraw. Because if it was to capture Luanda we would have gone on, we would have continued. Another side effect of this is that, and I've already mentioned it but I would like to add it as another fact, and that is, politicians continuously involved themselves whereas not in the pre Cold War era, they didn't. They left it to the...now, mention another one first before I come back to this, the other phenomenon of the Cold War era is that, whereas up to World War 2 the army fought a military campaign against another state's defence force, it now happened that the defence force had to fight a political party with an armed wing or political parties with armed wings probably supported secretly because they haven't declared war, by other countries. For example, we had to fight PLAN, People's Liberation Army of Namibia, the armed wing of a political party. But they were supported by another country, Angola, which at that stage was not everywhere acknowledged as an independent country because they had taken it on an irregular manner, and supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba. So up to then it was a country against another country, a state between state, now it's state between a country supported by various other countries in secret. Can you see how it completely changed the character of the whole setting? With lots of implications. To take it one step further these implications, in the democratic countries the defence forces and the fighting force, the contingent, whatever you'd like to call it, the expeditionary force, they had a command structure that ended with the commanding general. Then like I was at one stage, then my next higher headquarters – when I was commanding in Namibia – my next higher commander was the Chief of the Army. Then his next higher was the Chief of the Defence Force. Then the minister and then only do you get to the political level. Whereas these organisations that we were fighting they had, on every level of military command, they had political commissars. So their first contact with the politicians started at a very low level. So they had a short way to go to get political orders. Because the military commander was almost subordinate to the political commissar. But they slept in the same tent, if you could call it that way. So they got their orders very quickly. So we had to go up the whole long way. So that is why, and it being, with all the intrigue and dirty tricks, which is characteristic of the Cold War, that is why the West in general were always one or two steps behind with their</p>

	psychological warfare and propaganda. So I think that explains what a lot of people argue about. But if you have this background then you know exactly how it works.
Interviewer	Now, in the late seventies when this was all slowly developing, were you as...you were quite senior...were the military aware of how complicated this war was going to be? Did you realise that you were in, as you pointed out, not just fighting a group of soldiers, you were fighting political parties, you were backed by sometimes unrecognised countries or forces, or movements, and in South Africa you also had your own political considerations?
Geldenhuis	Well I was aware of it, yes. But as I said, I was lucky, I've gained experience from an early age, stage, and I've lived with it for a long time so for me it was natural, but in the Defence Force in general it was not so clear-cut as I put it to you now. Perhaps not even myself but I think it was. Because you can go and read what I've written in 1990, then you'll see, I was quite aware of these things. And I'm going to start that as a second phase of the background that I want to give you. But I've now outlined some of the characteristics of the Cold War, now I can tell you, you can go and read many newspaper articles and magazine articles and email articles of the recent times, and you can see there that people embark on arguments, they ask questions, but if they had known about the scene that I've just told you, it would have been all clear. Because it's very simple but if you don't consciously think of what I've just told you, then you're bound to misinterpret. Do you agree with me on this point?
Interviewer	I do because it's not like an old fashioned war - go back two centuries where all the soldiers would line up in a square and they'd fight each other according to set rules and they'd all march away over the hill again and that was the end of the battle. We're looking at a far more complex thing that, as you say, the politicians had an important role and sometimes the enemy wasn't seen, you couldn't see your enemy. Your enemy might have been six thousand kilometres away, over the ocean, sending money, sending political sort of...well, offering moral, political support. And so yes, I understand that you've got to look at a much bigger picture than just soldiers with guns fighting a battle.
Geldenhuis	Ok, I would like to now, the next phase, give you some examples to illustrate in practice how I experienced it. You see how it fits into what I've just told you. Which I say is full of lies, deceit, dirty tricks, psychological indoctrination, etc. I'll start with...Andrea Chipanga was a founder member of SWAPO. And he was in the early stages, at some time, their secretary of information with his office in Lusaka. I think it was about 1976. '67 or '76, it's about the principle, the phenomenon. He came to know about a village in Namibia that was, as he called it, ransacked by the Boers, by the South African army, Defence Force, and in the process they killed all the women and children and burnt down the huts, the whole of the village, and the remnants were left there for anybody

to see. So he, Andrea Chipanga went to Stockholm. He got hold of a guy who became well known, I believe he's in Windhoek now, a Swedish TV producer by the name of Per Sunden. So he said to him, would he like to make a program of the villages that had been massacred by the Boers and all that, because he's willing to go and show it to him. He said, is it true? He says, of course it's true, you can come and have a look. He said, ok. So he went there with a team, went to Lusaka, and there Chipanga received him, and he also in the meantime had got hold of an old guy who had been wounded during that event, which he also introduced to him, and he then took them by vehicle up to the border and there they had to dismount and he said he had gypso guts himself at that time so he provided somebody else to take them across the border to the village. He said, they had to remove all their watches and things because they are now entering into enemy territory and you know with a watch you can keep direction and all that. now hy het die drama 'n bietjie aangesmeer, and they went there and they came back with reels and reels and reels of tapes. And the meantime Andrea Chipanga had staged an international media conference. They then showed the reels that they have taken there and the one guy who'd witnessed then, he gave his side of the story, the one about him being wounded there. And the next morning it was all over the world. And it was front page also in South Africa. Pik Botha at that time was Secretary of Information here, he asked the military, by way of Cyrus Smith, what the hell happened Cyrus Smith asked the ops people, they said no, it's a load of bullshit, a load of nonsense. So he told Pik Botha it was a load of nonsense, so Pik Botha gathered also an international group of journalists and he went with them by aircraft to go to that place where it was supposed to have happened. But along the way for some reason or another he got cold feet and he said to the pilot, just say you've got technical problems, and they aborted the flight, came back. Now later on...the whole world, brilliant, people believed that thing. They've seen it. How can you not believe it? So at a much later stage when the new politics around Namibia developed, PW Botha who was then president, invited politicians sometimes to Pretoria, sometimes to the Cape, and on one of those occasions at the Cape I was also invited and in the meantime Andrea Chipanga had broken away from SWAPO and he formed his own party, the SWAPO Democrats. And he was also invited. And it so happened that at lunch time I found myself with the same table as Pik Botha and Andrea Chipanga. Now I knew Andrea Chipanga well because when he changed I was still in Windhoek and I got to know him, and I thought all of a sudden it clicked and I said to him, Mr Chipanga please tell Mr Botha about the massacre of the villagers. So then Andrea Chipanga told him, but this time he told him the real story. What happened was that village *laughs* was not even in Namibia. It was in Angola. And that massacre that happened there was from old Portuguese colonial times. That guy who was wounded in the leg, he was the guy who many years ago was caught for some or

	<p>other game theft or whatever it was by the police, but he said it was that place where it happened. And as the story unfolded of how Andrea Chipanga bluffed his way through Per Sunden and all the other thousands of journalists and the world, and how he bluffed and lied his way right up to where we were in Cape Town that day, it was all one big hoax.</p>
Interviewer	<p>He had a political strategy by staging this hoax.</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Yes. That sort of thing it happened. It was the in-thing at the time, but it was all a bunch of lies. But millions of people around the world, because that thing hit headlines all over the world, because it's very sensational. It hit headlines and millions of people still think that that's what happened. So that is one incident to illustrate of the dirty tricks. All Pik Botha could say was, Chipanga you bastard. That's all he could say. Now even today most people believe that. The important point I can make also from here is, what I'm telling you now is not entirely a secret. But I can tell you not more than comma zero one percent of people in South Africa know the true story. But I'd written it in my book which was published in '93, the English version was published in '95. Andrea Chipanga wrote it in the book, My Walk to Freedom, something like that. He wrote it himself, assisted by a girl...I forgot her name now...so it is actually in fact an old story but people don't read...few people read those things, but that sensation still remains. So that is one example of...which was the order of the day during the Cold War. So because it's one thing for me to say, dirty tricks are the order of the day, but it doesn't mean anything unless I give you certain definite, credible, truthful examples. This is one of them. I give you another one. Unless you want me to stop with these stories.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Carry on.</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>The other one, I'm just taking them ad hoc, not in any sequence. Because what I illustrate is how you mix politics and dirty tricks with the military and how they could influence international political decisions and how it could form the concepts of nations, national and international. The other one I wanted to tell you is, at a later stage, that must have been about 1988, I was part of the regular South African negotiating team and on one occasion the negotiations were going to be about purely military matters. So I was then the leader of the South African negotiating team. And we were going to negotiate with the Cubans mainly, and the venue was Sal Island (Cape Verde). So before I left for Sal Island I told my staff, listen when I go there, in my team I want an operations staff officer from the bush. I don't want anybody from Pretoria or from Windhoek, I want it from the bush because it's about practical things, I want people who are in the know, up to date. And also I want intelligence staff officers also from the bush. So they gave me...I don't even think that I knew before the time who they were going to be, because you give such orders and then later on the people turn up then you see who they are. But one was then, who later became known as Echo Victor, his</p>

initials are EV, Eddie Viljoen. He was eventually also battalion commander of 32 Battalion, which was actually more than a battalion strength And the other one was Freddie Oelschig. he was intelligence staff officer, the one from Oshakati, the other one I think also from Oshakati or somewhere in the operational area, the border area. They were in, up to date, with everything that was happening. So I think it was the second day, the morning of the second day, my counterpart, the Cuban chief of the air defence force didn't turn up. So after a while I asked the neutral people who were hanging around there, on Sal Island government officials. I said, listen, what's happened to my counterpart? They said, no, well he asked for a break because he has something he wants to do first, we must please bear with him and wait for him. So I think it was the next morning or late that afternoon they called me and said, ok, he's ready now. So I went there to meet him and then to walk to the lounge or the room that we used as a conference room, and he said, no, he has a little ceremony lined up for me in another hall because he would like to introduce me to his team. So I said, ok. So I went there and for some reason or another he sort of hovered there at the second person in the line, there was a long line, but I couldn't understand his Spanish and he didn't understand English. But eventually I carried on, like I thought it's like a parade, you would walk past, you can't chat with everybody along the line, and I walked past then that's where we went back to this conference room. Later on I got behind the whole story. what happened was...there's no secrecy about it, it became common knowledge, even there at that time, when I arrived there with Eddie and Freddie, Eddie Viljoen had a very big moustache. They come from the bush and you don't always have enough water to shave, you are busy with operations, etc, and we allowed people under such conditions to have moustaches and beards. And Freddie had a beard. And he thought, General Deltoro, that it was my dirty trick to intimidate him with my bush characters...tough bush fighters. And to counter that, that second one in the queue was General Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez. You see, he is in Cuba a hero. If people see him in the streets, they wave at him. He was one of the few who were honoured with the title 'hero of the Republic of Cuba'. And there were only a few of them. If you go there in the public buildings, you see the poster with the names of those people. So there were so few that they all fitted on one poster, and he was one of them. And he was world renowned in those circles. So he was the counter to Eddie and Freddie. Can you now see again, how far the dirty tricks and the psychological operations and trickery go? Can I tell you one more? Because if you don't capture the atmosphere and the...it may sound as stories, but those were the real life happenings, and if you don't get that picture you will never understand the Cold War. I'm going to tell you this one in two phases. About a year or two ago Special Assignment asked me for an interview. Now they were in military circles not regarded as big friends of the Defence Force. Why they wanted to interview me was, they discovered according to

the news media skulls and bones that was scraped open by building contractors near an old South African Defence Force in Ovamboland. And that was big news, sensational, women and children killed by South African troops. So I said to them on the telephone, listen, you can come, I give you an interview, but I think it's only fair to tell you that what you are looking for you're not going to find that. Because it's not sensational, it's not women and children that have been killed by South African Defence Force people. No, no, no, they come. Ok, so they came. I've got the video here. Because I said, you can come but I want the video of the whole interview. They said yes. So I gave them the interview and this is the story that I told them. And now I come to the second part of the story. What happened was on the first of April 1989...on the 31st of March 1989 there were more journalists, mostly international journalists, in Windhoek, in relation to the total population of Namibia than any other country in the world. And I don't think that was the first time, it happened quite a few times, and that's what the journalists told me. Because, 31st of March, the next day what happened, would start the ceasefire according to the United Nations Resolution 435 but mostly the Geneva Protocol, which would then end the last of the Cold War hostilities. So it was going to be a big event. Margaret Thatcher was also there. But then during that night, the 31st of March to 1st April, came across the border, 1600 and more SWAPO armed fighters shooting left, right and centre, killing people, civilians. At that stage ninety nine comma nine percent of the South African Defence Force had already been withdrawn to South Africa, what was still left was a few helicopters, mainly for the assistance of the police, and there were individuals with units of the South West Africa Territory Forces. I had two sons there at that time too. But they already had given in their weapons. And in all those bases was flying the blue flag of the United Nations. They were firmly under control of the United Nations. But then, I think Pik Botha was also in Windhoek at that time. He was always there when such important events happened. After all he was Minister of Foreign Affairs. And it was a great occasion, an important occasion. The point is, SWAPO was not supposed to have been there, and Martti Ahtisaari who was the commissioner of...this person was the secretary representative of the secretary general of the UN, responsible for Untag United Nations transitional assistance group, and he had declared that everything was in place for the D day of the peace, and now this happened. SWAPO shouldn't have been there. So it was mainly his...he is to blame. But the few of those celebrities then decided that they would call on the South African Defence Force and the South West Africa Territory Force to save the situation, which they did. And in the process they killed more SWAPOs than in any other single occasion during the whole war of ten, twenty years. And they restored the peace. And the SWAPOs that had been killed were buried there in mass graves under supervision and as organised by the United Nations and witnessed by all scores of journalists and the public. So there was nothing sinister.

	When they had to do certain constructions in Ovamboland, they scraped open those graves so it was not women and children killed by the South African Defence Force. I told this television company the whole story, and they never showed it. They never showed it!
Interviewer	In other words the story no longer held because they'd got the wrong end of the stick.
Geldenhuis	No, because if it was...
	END OF SIDE A (<i>counter at 558</i>)
	SIDE B
Geldenhuis	...because if the South African were to be blamed, they would have showed it. But now it reflected on SWAPO, so they never showed it. So now can you see the atrocities committed, which I regard this one too as characteristic. Because there are others too I can tell you. Very much the same. Many. It's in my book too. So it was characteristic of the Cold War era, I've lived with it every day of my life for decades. But the public and your listeners or your clients would be people that they've never lived this in the way that I lived it and would probably not know about it unless they listened to what we're talking about now. Now that too was in my books. It was in newspapers. But even knowledgeable people, like Special Assignment, didn't know about it although it was in the open, it was in the newspapers. But ten years later they've completely forgotten about it, so completely that within 72 hours after it was now rediscovered they couldn't even click that this was an old thing. Now I just want to also use this as indication of how the role played by the media, and dirty tricks, could affect us, and how it did affect us. For example, A: that knowledgeable people in the media who've lived through the Cold War era, that they didn't know about this, and they thought it was something new, and even after I'd warned them, listen this is nothing new and this is no sensation, they still wouldn't believe me that that's important to take note of that they wouldn't believe me. And I told them the story but then it also came through other reports clear, that I was actually telling them the truth and they just stopped it. Now ok, the second point I'm trying to make is this...that they denied the public the knowledge that this was a trick. So much so that I think I'm going to shock you now. You know at that time SWAPO were the favourites of many people, and now I'm going to say something which I perhaps should put in another context but while I'm at it let me do it now. You see there were many lies in the Cold War, like Cuito Cuanavale for example. And one should ask yourself the question, but why did these lies catch on so easily? Why were they not exposed? The answer is, they were exposed, but it wasn't convenient for some people to believe the truth. Let me put it to you this way, in the middle late eighties, let's make no bones about it, let's be quite open about it, some people were not only very much opposed to it but were actually hateful of people like John Vorster, the prime

	<p>minister, then his successor, President PW Botha, and the Minister of Defence, General Malan, which was regarded as the blue eyed boy of PW Botha. And they hated them, they hated the government, they hated the National Party. It is common knowledge, I don't think that anybody would dispute this, it was a fact of life those days. And the point is that John Vorster was once before Minister of Police, security forces. PW Botha was 12 years minister of defence, security forces. Magnus Malan was Minister of Defence and Chief of the Defence Force. So any nederlag...if you lose...any battle lost or any shameful thing about the Defence Force was regarded as a slap in the face of the National Party, of the government, of PW Botha, of John Vorster, etc. So I'm going to venture to mention names but I would think, perhaps I'm wrong, but I think Ken Owen of the Sunday Times would probably have been very happy to splash something like that on the front page of the Sunday Times because it's a blow to the government, to the National Party, to PW Botha, to John Vorster, etc, etc. So in that sense some people really took to...they were quite happy every time SWAPO scored points, and they were happy every time the Defence Force would lose in their views. So that is why these lies catch on easily because it suits people to think that way, and I don't blame them for that, that's the way politics go, and that's why I say, remember always that this was as much a political thing as it was a military thing.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Actually that's quite an interesting point. In terms of handling publicity campaigns, which automatically involve propaganda which you're fighting a war, was South Africa in the late seventies and perhaps for much of the eighties, was South Africa...and I'm talking about South Africa as the government and the military responsible to the government...was South Africa not as good at that as they could have been? In other words, was Castro not a better publicity practitioner than say the South African government of the time?</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Well I've already made the point that in the Cold War era it was characteristic of the Cold War era that the Khrushchev, they themselves were at the forefront of the propaganda. Who was it that we all saw on television, a visit when Nixon was president of the United States, was that I get mixed up.</p>
Interviewer	<p>It could have been... Khrushchev was at the time the Cuban missile crisis, Gorbachov would have been later on...it could have been Nixon, but I also...</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>One of those guys, I saw that on television. The poor Nixon used to sort of relatively decent political encounters, all of a sudden he came face to face within the face the tricks by, I think it was, what president X of the Soviet Union, and he said to him in his face, you guys think you own the world. We were the first on the moon, we were the first to put up the first satellite. You Americans can't tell us anything. The answer is we are first in the nuclear register. And poor old Nixon didn't know what to do. He was never ever</p>

	<p>confronted that way. So that was the political thing, but you see now you can explain why Chester Crocker can write "Cuito Cuanavale the myth" So Robin Renwick can write, the South Africans he said, beat the Cuban alliance there. And he said, 32 Battalion pulled off some heroic feats and against all odds and against a much bigger force we beat them. And Helmoed-Roemer Heitman can say that and Fred Bridgeland can say that, but even in spite of that people still say, why do you only tell us now you think you won at Cuito Cuanavale? Tell us now, it's old! I give you a practical example. Let's be practical. I read the other day, Mr van Zyl Slabbert's book, and he's a good guy, nice guy. He's a knowledgeable person, he was in politics, he's well read, he's well informed. He wrote in his book 2006 that perhaps we should have second thoughts about the Cubans having beaten the South African Defence Force at Cuito Cuanavale. Now we say this in 2006, that perhaps we should have second thoughts! It meant that he didn't believe Robin Renwick, he didn't believe me, he didn't believe Chester Crocker. Why not? There's only one reason, it was not good news for him at that time. So he got it out of his head. You can't say he's not knowledgeable, you can't say he's not well informed. So now if it happens to a person like van Zyl Slabbert, think about the man in the street. How many people read books? A thousand. If a book sells 1500 copies it's regarded as satisfactory. So this is old news, but people didn't know it. But now coming back to the fact that Special Assignment didn't show that...you know what now happened? Did you know...and I don't mean it personally to you...I don't want to embarrass you, but did you know that there's a serious split in SWAPO?</p>
Interviewer	I've heard rumours of it yes, and I can trace it back a little bit to the Caprivi people and so on and so forth.
Geldenhuis	No, I'm not talking about Caprivi, no.
Interviewer	Are you talking about SWAPO, there was a split recently in the last six months or something?
Geldenhuis	<p>Yes. What happened was, it's full in the Namibian newspapers but I got to know about this per chance. I've still got...I've been to Namibia quite a few times, been very well accepted there by my old adversaries, very well accepted. And so I phoned people there and they sent me the clippings. There were lots of newspaper clippings. And I read this thing at first and I saw the people who broke away from SWAPO to form a party which is something progressive democracy...movement for progressive democracy...something like that...but any case, and the names looked a little bit like Herero names to me, but Herero names and the Ovambo names are very much the same, so I phoned somebody who said, no, it's not Herero...because I thought it was the Hereros, the Hereros got a very small percentage of SWAPO as a party. So it wasn't Hereros. The people who broke away are the Kwanyamas, the biggest Ovambo tribe. But also extend deep into Angola. As a matter of fact the guy who became Chief of the Defence Force and later minister of the defence</p>

	<p>force, and later ambassador of Angola in the United States, either at the UN or the United States, by name of Ndalú (Antonio Dos Santos Franca “Ndalú”), that is his nom de guerre – he’s a Kwanyama. So it is a significant thing. Now you know SWAPO was just about in the newspapers for two decades, just about every day. Everybody knew about them, and as I said, I believe that some people also liked it when they achieved victories or supposed victories, etc. So it should be topical, it should be relevant for South Africans to know. And it was in no South African newspaper. Nothing! Can you see now how the propaganda worked during the Cold War era and in its aftermath, and people often blamed us and said, you didn’t impart news with the press and the media, etc. But we did! And I’m going to give you more examples about that too.</p>
Interviewer	<p>To a degree, you’re a military man and earlier on you said that your father had said to you politics is dirty business, stay out of it, and you’d tried to stay out of direct politics. But to a degree wasn’t...if you think about, we can use the term, that was the years of apartheid, South Africa was the focus of huge international attention because of those issues...wasn’t the military that you represented, weren’t they indirectly a victim of that broader argument? You mentioned how military and politics, modern wars weren’t declared. This was a war that was a lot more than just soldiers shooting, it was a much greater war, a propaganda war globally on both sides. So was the military to a degree a victim of that?</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>No, of course, that’s the point I’m trying to make, we were a victim of that and as a matter of that you’ll see as we go further with this conversation we were much more of a victim than you already think at this stage, much more so. But the point is, as I said, our contact with the military is at the ministerial level. So you can’t just...even if you’re the general officer commanding, South West Africa command and the South Africa Territory Force, you still have to follow the channel up to the minister, through the Chief of the Army, Chief of the Defence Force, before you get to the politicians. Whereas, it was a daily thing, the politics being mixed with the military, it wasn’t sort of a once off thing or once in a month or once in a quarter, it was the regular run of the mill type of incidents. I’ll give you another example, can I? when we reached that stage in Namibia where the United Nations sent their first delegation to Namibia for inspection in loco, Martti Ahtisaari was already then the special representative of secretary general of the UN. And General Hannes Felipe of Austria who was a veteran peace keeping, peace making, whatever you’d like to call it, military politician or diplomat. When they first arrived there I was in command in Namibia at that time. It was about early seventies. And so I arranged a meeting with him when he arrived there. So I said to him, what would you like to see? Where would you like to travel? What would you like to hear? And I guarantee you I’ll give you exactly what you want, no reservations. A few hours later, he gave me it all in writing. You</p>

	<p>could see he was well prepared. So I said, ok, I went back to him, we'll take off tomorrow morning eight o'clock, we're going up north. So I think it was about the first stop, was at Ondangwa, which is close to Oshakati, which is in Ovamboland, in the heart of the target area of SWAPO, you could say. And then from there we went to Eenhana, which is right up north in the centre of Ovamboland in the north, which was supposed to be the most active military area. As we were about to leave from Eenhana, General Felipe said to me, but listen are you sure, is this really Eenhana? I said, yes. I said to him, but listen you confuse me now, because remember at Ondangwa you asked me if that is really Ondangwa. I said, you're a soldier, you've got a map on your lap, you followed us from where we took off to every stop that we took on the map, what's the matter? What's your problem? And then he came out with the whole story. He said, on their way to Windhoek they passed through London, and at London they were given a briefing by Peter Cachavivi who was the SWAPO representative in London. And he then told them that SWAPO had a few days earlier attacked the South African airforce base at Ondangwa, destroyed a number of aircraft and vehicles and buildings and fuel installations, etc, etc, and they also attacked the base at Eenhana, killed a lot of people there and destroyed armoured cars and whatnot and whatnot. That is why he didn't know what was happening because he was at Eenhana and there was not a sign of any such thing, and then I clicked. That thing I picked wasn't it in the newspapers a few days before that? But you know we were so used to those allegations, which were all cock and bull, complete nonsense, that when we denied it the press didn't even publish our denials anymore. It was such a common event that it drew no attention from anybody. But for them they heard about these things and they believed SWAPO. It is only when they saw for themselves for the first time then that it was nonsense that they then realised this was...I said to him, oh welcome to the Cold War.</p>
Interviewer	To a degree a similar thing happened at Cassinga didn't it?
Geldenhuys	<p>Well yes, at Cassinga they had the same type of thing but it was a little bit different...there were two different cases because in Cassinga they sanitised the whole thing and then they got the press in. So that is another example of...but this happened on a weekly, on a daily basis, these lies. As I said to you, when I got there in the beginning, if there was such a report by Peter Cachavivi in the newspapers we issued a press statement denying it. Later on we didn't anymore, because it was an every day occurrence, it wasn't even newsworthy...it's newsworthy if SWAPO announces, but it's not newsworthy if we denied it.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Once again in terms of the practice, if I can call it the public relations of war, I think during Operation Savannah, I think Pik Botha was the foreign minister and he was denying that South Africa were inside Angola. So in a way that was also, not a dirty trick per se, but it was also part of the Cold War deception of...</p>

Geldenhuis	Yes, but that is a sort of thing that he denies it and everybody knows he denies it because he has to, because that is, as I said, if you think back, that was a hallmark...
Interviewer	The trademark.
Geldenhuis	It was the trademark of the Cold War. But then you see, people come and go. Some people for them it's old news, that's trademark, and then another new one comes in and then for him he also thought that it was...there were some of our own people who thought that these things of SWAPO were true. It's only then later on when they also go to the operational area that they find out that these things are not true. So some people are always being misled but the point I'm trying to make is there are people who I've no doubt about, who actually knew that these things weren't true, but it suited their politics to pretend as if it were true. Like the example I gave you of van Zyl Slabbert. How can he say in 2006 in writing in the book that we must think again about Cuito Cuanavale? Because it was common knowledge, for any knowledgeable person, which he should have been, to have known this about in 1993.
Interviewer	Speaking of Cuito, I mean, we'll get to Cuito in a lot more depth...
Geldenhuis	But while we're on this topic, perhaps I should make another point because it belongs here. There are a lot of people, individuals I must say, who say that it's our own fault because we didn't take the press into our confidence and we didn't make use of the press, even people who are favourably disposed towards us, like Leopold Scholtz who now sits in Belgium. He makes that point. He's the ambassador for Media 24.
Interviewer	He's the diplomatic correspondent for them in Brussels.
Geldenhuis	Now he makes this point that, yes, it's our own fault because we didn't...we were apathetic towards the press. Now I tell you my story. When I arrived there I played as open cards with the press as you will never ever find in any other place in the world in the same situation. I played absolute open cards and you can go and ask senior people who are still around. I don't know what happened to Colleen Hendricks, but André le Roux, who was at City Press, he was there for some time. Max du Preez was there for some time. He's not our greatest friend, but it doesn't matter. There were Alan Dunn of the Independent, you can go and ask him. You can go and ask Willem Steenkamp. You can go and ask Lester Venter. You can go and ask a moer of a lot of other people. They will, I have no doubt, vouch to you that they never had anybody ever that played so open cards with them than I did. Ok, but the people don't know, or they should know but they don't know or they pretend not to know because it doesn't suit them is that, there was the biggest concentration of journalists in Windhoek ever in southern Africa at that time. Virtually during that whole time. And every newspaper, or newspaper group, had their representative there, at least one, some had two. And I can

	<p>mention them by name, I've mentioned already a few. There's another guy here, he works for the Rand Daily Mail, he sometimes comes to the pub here just a block away...forgot his name now. But now people who complained were those who were in South Africa. Many of them will say, yes, it's because we didn't invite them, we didn't play open cards with the press. But do you know the other side of the story is, the press representatives there were hateful, hateful in career terms. They were hateful of the people who came from South Africa to there because they say, listen I am Max du Preez, I am the rep here of Nasionale Pers, and now you guys want to invite people here from Pretoria or from Cape Town. What the hell am I doing there? It's my job! That goes for the Star, it goes for all the others! So there's that other side to start off with. Now those guys there I had at least one press conference with them per week. If there wasn't anything to tell them I issued a short press statement. Otherwise a press conference and I'm there myself. Not a staff officer, myself. And they could ask me anything. And I want you to make contact with some of these people that I've mentioned to you.</p>
Interviewer	I know some of them.
Geldenhuys	<p>Then a few of them at one stage came and they said, listen you always have your press conferences in such a way that it favours...in those days we still had the morning newspaper and an afternoon newspaper. They said, you only favour...I can't remember was it the morning press or the afternoon press...and you always favour the Daily Press and I'm Hannes Smit of the Windhoek Observer, previously the Windhoek Advertiser, mine is a Saturday newspaper, I never get a chance to publish something for the first time. So it's always the other guys first. Sunday newspaper, some of them said the same. Then some said, the radio get the thing first and then only the written press gets it. And so I can go on. So I called them all together one day, I said to them, ok, I've heard all your complaints. Everyone singly has a point, but I don't know how to solve the problem. I tell you what, I'm going to walk out of this room now, then you select yourself a chairman, and they did. That chairman was a guy of SAPA, Tom Kraus. And then you tell me when I must have my press conference. And whatever you decide I promise you now I will do. Now it is a bit difficult because if you draw up a standard thing like every Tuesday or every Wednesday, somebody is going to lose out. So I said to them, you don't have to follow a pattern, you can take the diary for the rest of the year and mark it by day and time and I will fall in with it. Now, you can't offer more than that. So for some time I heard nothing, then I phoned them and said, who is your chairman, convenor? They said, Tom Kraus. I phoned Tom Kraus. I said, what's the matter? He said, no, they're still busy sorting it out. I phoned him again two weeks later, they said, listen, and that was Hannes Smit himself, he said, listen tell the general he can go on as before because we can't reach an agreement. Point number one. Point number two</p>

is: I organised from time to time, I gave them an aircraft, a CD3 to visit the operational area and then take it from the west to the east. And then one day Hannes Smit of the Observer...you know he's a bit of a character, he said to me, yes, but I don't give him enough chance to visit the operation area. I said to him, but listen, two weeks ago there was an aircraft! He said, I don't fly. So I can go on. Let me tell you another one. I can tell you many things because now I have the opportunity and I think I may tell you things that may even make you change your mind about what really happened. But where you can check on everything I've said. Before Operation Sceptic took place...I'll tell you now what Operation Sceptic was...I had invited somewhere in the order of 35 representatives of the press. And by the way, that was one of the occasions where the big local contingent of press media people in Windhoek were very acid with me, very, very cross with me. Because that is one of the occasions where they said, we are the representatives. All the press groups and papers are represented here, we are them, why do you get people from Cape Town and Pretoria and Johannesburg? It's not right! But no, whether it's right or wrong, there were about 35. Now, the first actual battle that took place during Operation Sceptic was known as Smokeshell. Now Smokeshell wasn't the code name for an operation. Smokeshell was the code name for an objective on that first day, but because there was a big fight there and some people got killed and wounded, Smokeshell became sort of the name for that operation. Ok, now after that operation...now there was on the second day, second or third day...I joined one of the combat teams or combat groups, because that was only the first operation, the first battle if you like of a much longer plan, bigger plan campaign. So I went with, it was either Battle Group one zero or two zero, the commander was Lieutenant Colonel Major at that time, Chris Serfontein. I went with him. And while I'm at that I might just as well mention another point of dispute. There are many arguments pro and against somebody like me, general or senior officer, joining a combat group or team during battles. Now, I know all the arguments pro and against. But there's one thing that people fail to bring in to the arguments and that is...but I must also give you this background also...that remember there's a big difference in the culture of the police and the military. Let's take the police. Let's say you have ten policemen and they have to prevent a rowdy crowd in the streets from causing damage, and there's a sergeant in command. Now if the colonel turns up there, then he takes over command. And he takes over command from the sergeant, he's now then the commander. Our culture is totally different. I joined a combat group like that but I'm a passenger. Chris Serfontein, he remains the commander. Now some commanders...I know...I've been at so many things from 1975 right up to 1990, that I know all the different types and likes and dislikes. Some don't like it, you're in the way or they think you're going to look over their shoulders, because you know we had people coming and going, coming and going, there are not many of us who were there from 1975 right

	<p>up to 1990. And some are perhaps a bit scary, perhaps the general is going to find fault with what they do. But I don't intervene, but nevertheless some like it, like old Chris Serfontein. He says, hell you know, it's so nice, because if you're a commander you're alone. You're alone. You must make all decisions, you take the responsibility. He said, with you here, I always get a second opinion and I like it. And he gave me other jobs on that particular occasion, for example, you can go and check the dates...can't remember if it was the French, but there was rugby test in Bloemfontein I think, during that operation, just after Smokeshell. And so he made the arrangement, he gave me the rear link on the radio, the rear link radio set, and I must listen in on the radio to the rugby commentary and the inform them from time to time and he would <i>laughs</i> pass it on.</p>
Interviewer	<p>You were nominated the very important job of keeping them informed on the rugby.</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Yes, but as I said, he was also the same person who said, it's nice to have you because sometimes you like to get a second opinion. I may take it or I might discard it. But I understand that. Ok, now to get back to the point, then I said to Chris, where's your media rep? Turned out there was no-one. So I started, but now you can't interfere because there's fighting and mopping up going and so on, but I established during the course of the day, second day or third day, that nobody had...none of those combat teams had a journalist. And the invitation to the journalists were that we're not going to make special provision for a press person, we have to fall in with a battle team with which you go. So there was nobody there. So I managed to get through on the radio to a chap by the name of Marius Kleynhans, he was my senior press liaison officer in Windhoek. So I said to him, find out where have all those guys disappeared to? So he came back with a story, he said, no they said they got their story at Sceptic...remember that was where they had photographs and all sorts of things, that was very well covered. He said, they said they've got their story now, they can't just now go and drive around the bushes and wait for something else to happen, we must know that they also have editors and they can't just drive around the bush. So I was very die donder in. Because they say I don't give them a chance to cover operations. Now I give them the chance, they all disappeared. So I said, send me three. One from a press agency, one from radio and one from TV. So they sent me Tom Kraus that I mentioned before. He was a senior sort of...what do you call that guy...but in any case, he was a senior media guy in Windhoek. And they sent me Oshie Gibson who was television, and then a third one of radio, I can't remember his name. So they sent them up. So can you see I had to beg them to come. And then later on people like Leopold Scholtz come and say yes but we don't give the media enough time. But now I can tell you that in the case of, let's call it Cuito Cuanavale, which is not really the right name, I couldn't get in there. Because we didn't have air superiority and that was an area with low wetlands and you</p>

couldn't use land transport and we were short of air transport and we couldn't fly any time we liked. So even I couldn't get in there. So to get in a journalist was almost impossible. For all practical purposes it was impossible. But I tell you, we even sometimes made special provisioning, but it depended also on...let's forget about the word 'press', let's go down to individuals. I once joined another operation called Operation Daisy, which was done by a combat group and Colonel Roeland de Vries. Incidentally he was the kingpin in the project that delivered the Ratel, infantry fighting vehicle. I was for a time project officer of the army side, Defence Force side...I'm not talking about Armscor...of that project. So we knew each other well, and I joined him. And on the night before we left, who did I see there? Lester Venter. So I said to him, how the hell did you arrive? How did you get here? He said, well I asked permission to come and you said yes, so here I am. But now he went through the whole thing and back. Somebody else that did the same thing was Willem Steenkamp. So if an individual is prepared...he works on his own, he's his own boss. If it's a reporter working under an editor and the editor says, well what are you going to do? Then perhaps more often than not the editor said, no, no, no, I can't spare you for two weeks and you don't even know what you're going to find. So Lester Venter was there. Through the whole thing and he was sitting there once next to where an incident happened when a guy got his Honoris Crux, and he published that. Now tell me how does he get so close if I didn't allow...if we didn't allow, newspaper people. What happened was, we reached a certain objective, but when we got there the enemy had already left, but during the course of reaching that position, we picked up a hell of a lot of old weapons and ammunition, etc, etc. And I saw there...we were sitting, myself, Commandant...Major at that stage...L.A. Anderson, and Lester Venter. And I saw there a vehicle, can't remember what that vehicle's name was...full of ammunition, rockets and they didn't look very good to me, they looked old and scrappy, etc, and I thought oh my goodness, if one of them goes off for some reason or another then there's going to be trouble, and I said to myself now, well what does one do then? But in any case we were chatting and all of a sudden it started exploding. And Andy got up from next to me and he jumped into that car...I thought if I have to drive that thing away to get it out of the...so it's not within distance of...and I wouldn't know how to start it, but shame it will be...but before I could think, Andy was off in that vehicle and he drove it off about four or five hundreds yards, a long end away, and he parked it there and ran back. So that he got a Honorus Crux. And a journalist witnessed it. Because he was willing to slog it out with us. So I have so many things I can tell you of why it's my opinion there may be odd individual cases, but it is not generally true to say that the public didn't get the information because we didn't make provision for the press to witness things. After what I told you now, actual, real, factual stories, I can't just accept it.

Interviewer	I hear what you say. Although for example 32 Battalion operated inside Angola for a long time and that wasn't publicly known, was it?
Geldenhuis	Well for a start, I will never make it public if they go into Angola. Because SWAPO sit there with radios. They listen to all these things. Sure, I'm not going to commit murder.
Interviewer	Against your own men.
Geldenhuis	If I had made such a thing like that public and people had got caught, because the enemy was aware that they were coming, I would be to blame.
Interviewer	So all this is happening and you speak about Sceptic and Daisy and then there was a whole bunch of big operations, Askari and so on. And also just your operations on a day to day basis in northern Namibia, South West Africa, you had more than just military issues to deal with. There was the PR capability and in Namibia must have been the sort of hearts and minds, if I can call it that, so it was more than just making sure that your people had ammunition for their rifles and fuel for their Ratels.
	END OF SIDE B <i>(counter at 544)</i>
	TAPE THREE SIDE A
Geldenhuis	...I stopped where I said I became general officer commanding the South African army in Namibia as well as the South African Territory Force to be. That was about 1977. Let's say the beginning of 1977 or halfway through 1977. So then I was general officer commanding the forces in Namibia for the second time. But that was also the beginning of a new era. So if you want to divide the war, and the war meaning embracing also the more important, perhaps even in certain occasions, the political developments and the international political developments, then started a new era. That was the starting point of a new era. And we had to get clarity for ourselves about our strategies, if that is the right word. And I think that is a very important point in the chain of events. So let me stop there for a while. You know, there are people who define strategy as something that happens and that is owned by the highest authority of a country. That is the definition of strategy in many parts of the world – in South Africa in the military community that was started by General H V du Toit, who later also became director of military intelligence. All your supporting, all the means, at your availability...in other words it must be the top of the...it must be the government of the country. Now that is in certain circumstances the correct way of looking at it, but if you go strictly on that you put yourself in a strait jacket which is not necessary and is sometimes bad for getting clear pictures. Now the political events did take a new turn at that time because...and now we come back to the difference between the modern conventional war and the post situation where you had the Cold War, in this sense that if you were the commanding general in Namibia you now had two governments

	<p>because...ok, I'm jumping a bit. The change at that junction came about, which is very important and it was initiated by the then Prime Minister John Vorster. He then said the South Westers must decided themselves over their future. Now at that time that meant only one thing in practice, it meant that South West Africa, or Namibia if you like, must have one person one vote elections. It's cut and dried, and it wasn't questioned that that was the case. So that was a complete change in the politics. When I say complete, one could have anticipated it but now it has happened. I must remind you that Namibia as it is now known was never a province or a property of South Africa but on the other hand it was never indicated formally what its future should be. Because there were different categories of mandates. Now I can't remember if South West Africa was a category A, B, C, or D...</p>
Interviewer	I think it was C.
Geldenhuys	<p>Ok, C Mandate, but that mandate in which South West Africa was classified was it wasn't foreseen that such a territory would ever become fully independent. Like for example we still have the Malvinas who were also named by the British...Falkland Islands. There are such territories which were foreseen at that time that they would never become independent. And if South Africa...the South African government never won the international court cases it certainly never lost any of the international court cases. So it was still in the air what should and would happen with Namibia. So that was a watershed decision by Vorster. And it was duly implemented. And what is important is that in order to implement, and to show you that it was not just one of the speeches that politicians sometimes make, it was implemented in that was appointed then the first ever administrator general instead of just the administrator by the name of Judge M.T. Steyn. He was the new administrator general and he had to initiate the new political and constitutional development. He had more powers than the old administrator had. Although he wasn't supposed to participate in politics he was there to facilitate it and to get it going. And it did very soon, in the sense that I think it was already in August 1978 that they had the first one person one vote election. Which was a very successful election and a very significant election. One thing that was not good about it is that SWAPO refused to participate but the rest went on. And the future proved that the outcomes of the elections were quite credible. So there started a new political movement and it was a very emotional thing with the locals. By the way, that was also one of the occasions where there were more journalists vis-à-vis the population...the number of the population, than any other place in the world. And the international world, I had many interviews with Japanese, with Chinese, with Germans, with you name it, and they were most impressed with the elections. And those elections were followed by a new black majority government. So now I was there...it's not me but whoever the general officer commanding was, now had two governments. He had the long way through the Chief of the Army, then Chief of the</p>

	<p>Defence Force, to the minister of defence. And then he had the administrator general and the new government there. Now the GOC was not under command of that government but you couldn't ignore it. And they started in practice, and not just for the show, a new political and social system. And as I said we actually...and although we didn't report to that government...you couldn't ignore the administrator general, he called you in and he wanted to know and he wanted to see and everything. But you didn't get your orders from him but he was there and you couldn't ignore him, and you couldn't ignore the local government. For example, the South Africa Territory Force became a complete racist organisation. And when I arranged troops for the politicians to the operational area I had to invite all those because they were in the majority in their executive congress. We were about ten to fifteen years ahead of the republic. There was a person here who was...when I wrote that first book, the publishers gave it to a certain gentleman, he was a doctor in history or political science or something like that, and when I saw again he was rewriting my book. He was writing there that the South African government sent the South African Defence Force to Namibia in order to maintain apartheid. I said to him, but you know you can't do that? He said, well you can't get away from it, that's the truth. I said, no it isn't and in any case it's my book. If I want to write that it's my right to do so. He said, no but you can't, you must say that. So I said...to cut a long story short I went back to the publishers and said this is unacceptable to me and they took him off the job. There were we...you see I was thinking now because it's a much more different set up than you might think. For example...</p>
Interviewer	<p>You were talking about the responsibility of two governments to deal with, obviously one you couldn't ignore the...</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Ok, the point I was trying to make is this, in South Africa I think there were about 20 organisations who were banned, including not only MK but also the ANC. In Namibia SWAPO was never banned. And People's Liberation Army of Namibia was never banned. And even if there were any obscure somewhere, any organisation that was banned, that ban was lifted. So it was a complete free society. And I had to send representatives of all the parties for this up to the operational area. Now this may not sound...if you only think about it theoretically it may but in practice it was like this, SWAPO may have a thousand people at the meeting in Windhoek or just outside Windhoek, at the same time we were fighting a SWAPO infiltration coming through Ovambo. Some of us had SWAPO people as neighbours, but we were fighting the armed wing of SWAPO. So it was a most complicated situation which we found ourselves...I'm sure some people would say, well but you can't fight a war like that. But we did! You walk into a café or into a shop in your uniform and the guy next to you may be SWAPO, may be even PLAN. So that is the situation in which we found ourselves.</p>
Interviewer	<p>But that raises the question that this university professor, or</p>

	<p>doctor whatever he was, was looking at your book, the SADF...SWAPO was not banned but you were fighting PLAN up in the north, so who was the SADF fighting? Was it fighting the backers of PLAN? Because you weren't fighting SWAPO because half of SWAPO was legal. So were you fighting the backers of PLAN and who were the backers of PLAN? I think I know the answer but...</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>The backers? No, we were only fighting PLAN.</p>
Interviewer	<p>But were you fighting a bigger force than PLAN? Were you fighting Communism as well?</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Indirectly it had that effect yes. But listen, even when I became Chief of the Army people said that ANC is our enemy. I said, no, no, no, MK is our enemy. ANC is the minister, the politicians enemy, not ours. And there we did exactly the same.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So you were only fighting the armed wing of those organisations?</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>Yes, but you know <i>laughs</i> they didn't wear uniform so you never knew when you go shopping if the guy next to you is SWAPO or MK or PLAN or whatever. So I don't think people realised that we were in that position where you were in their midst. And we managed through all this to face that situation and all the problems it brought for us and we still did the job under extreme complicated situations. So, the politics and the violence of our side vis-à-vis the insurgent forces it was a complete mix-up but we had to...some people would have said in South Africa, used to the South African set up, no, you can't fight a war like that. And we did! And without complaint.</p>
Interviewer	<p>But then later on the war took a slightly different component, which we'll get to later with Cuito you were running into the Angolans and then the Cubans...</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>No, they were always there. The Cubans they were also there.</p>
Interviewer	<p>You encountered them during Sceptic...was it Sceptic? But anyway you encountered Angolan troops...often the Angolan troops would be confined to base or not directly confront your soldiers.</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>The Angolans didn't pick a war with us. They didn't pick battles with us. But SWAPO affixed themselves to FAPLA bases and then we attacked the base and then you can't differentiate between the one and the other, and that is one of the reasons why there was sometimes, quite often friction, between the Angolans and SWAPO. But more so between Angolans and the ANC, or MK. Ok, so we had at that junction to get ourselves in gear and work out a strategy. Now somebody else may come and say, no that's not a strategy, strategy is only on a higher level. But now at this stage I must also make this point that...researchers are not as clever as they think they are. Perhaps I should have made this point earlier. There are many people who write about the war, they are world known. Some are</p>

very good like Willem Steenkamp, like Helmoed Heitman, like Bridgeland, and others. And some are putrid. And they influence the general public and they often confuse the public. Especially the researchers or even reporters, they think that if they can produce... *interruption* You must bear with me because I live with these things and I must tell you about them otherwise I'll be the only one that knows about them. But I got big problems with some of the guys who are well meaning, some of them are good, some of them are bloody sharks, which I'm very against them. But let me explain to you why. We're talking about how did the strategy develop in the circumstances which we are talking about. Now some people come and they go to the archives and they get things from the State Security Council and they say here it is on black and white, this is what you did. I say to them, no, that's not what we did. We did just the opposite. And they wouldn't believe you. So let me explain to you, after I'd been general officer commanding in Namibia and I became Chief of the Army, and after five years I became Chief of the Defence Force and during that time I also had the seat, ex officio, on the State Security Council. Now let me give you an idea, and I'm sure you're going to say yes, you can imagine that that's the way it worked in practice. For any project or scheme or something that the system want to plan for, it can either be initiated from a lower level...say listen, we haven't got a strategy...or somebody at the top could start and say listen, let's work out a strategy. So whether you start it from top or bottom, there's the procedure that happens after that is very bureaucratic as you can imagine and almost works like this, say for example, it was originated at the bottom. Let's say it's about something in South Africa. So let's forget about Namibia for a while. That's even more complicated. Then, the Natal Command would say, listen, what is your strategy for combating internal friction in Natal? Then they would make a proposal. Now they would probably start with the groups, the commands, break them up into groups, and then you'd go to the command level, and then from the command it would go to the army headquarters, then they would work at it there then and send it up to Chief of the Defence Force headquarters. Because at every level you have a composite thing, a joint thing with other departments and other...and then it ends up eventually at the secretariat of the State Security Council. Then they would probably have said at some stage we can't draw up a strategy for Natal but they feel the need for a strategy and guidance from...but let's tell all the other commands, Western Province, Eastern Province, Free State, Northern Transvaal, and so, to also draw up their things and then send it up. Then you see now what's happening. Then it will go all the way up then the secretariat of the State Security Council will then consolidate the thing and they will then probably take that final thing and send it lower down and say, do you agree with this before we present it to the State Security Council? Then it goes back again and back again and then it will be circulated to the various departments. Now you can imagine, I think you have a fair idea of the

	bureaucracy, it will probably go up and down a few times and then it would be presented to the State Security Council. Now I have a seat there too. Then they would probably discuss it and say, no, but listen we don't like that and we're not sure about that, and refer it back, then it goes all the way down and then all the way up again. It may take a year, 18 months, 2 years to finalise such a thing.
Interviewer	In which time your commanders on the ground are saying, what's happening?
Geldenhuis	In the meantime the whole war is not standing still. So if in the end they agree on something, it's probably at the time when it's issued, it's already outdated again. So then you start all over again. But in the meantime the war goes on, so what do you do? You form your own strategy by whatever name. And you take notice of the others and in some you say it's a load of shit. Sorry I'm speaking...but you may sometimes be doing just the opposite of what you're supposed to do. And you can't have one strategy for that because there's such a big difference, especially between Namibia and the rest, as I said, in Namibia there's not a single party which is banned. Here, ANC is banned, MK is banned, etc, so it's totally different. So it's just a fact of life that theoreticians never experience and they don't know about and even if they bring a paper and say, this is what you did, I would tell him you don't know what you're talking about, I know you've got it in black and white but I know better.
Interviewer	Because you were there on the ground.
Geldenhuis	You see I had a whole paper prepared at one stage to say, how an author who is a researcher and who reads newspapers and professional magazines and so on, and then write Cuito Cuanavale, and there's another story if you were responsible. And you talk with people who low down were responsible you get different presentations.
Interviewer	Absolutely. It's a bit like a scientist doing theoretical research but then they've got to go and do something called ground-truthing to see if their research is actually borne out by what's happening on the ground. Is the environment behaving the way you think it is in the theoretical model? That leads me to a question we could either address it now if you'd like or a later stage, but you've got South West Africa being what it is with no political party is banned but you're also fighting a counter insurgency war against PLAN, but throughout as the eighties wear on you got involved in some fairly conventional warfare with tanks and artillery...
Geldenhuis	I agree with that
Interviewer	Ok, so you've got that aspect of the war that you're fighting, but back home in South Africa throughout the eighties there was more and more emphasis needed on troops to support the police, so you had a very complex set of problems to deal with. There wasn't just one kind of war, you had a whole range of wars to

	deal with.
Geldenhuis	You're absolutely right, it was very complicated and something that I enjoyed very much in doing. When I was the general officer commanding in Namibia, when I was Chief of the Army, and when I was Chief of the Defence Force. And I said now that we had almost, you could say, two governments, with vast different politics – we were the first to have black officers. And we had actually two different armies there. There were the South African armed forces in Namibia as well as the South West Africa Territory Force. And I formed them. And as soon, I think the second year, we went on different budgets. There was a different budget for the South African forces there and for the South West Africa Territory Force. And so it was not just words, it was actually like that in practice.
Interviewer	But that must have been exceptionally difficult, because for example 101 Battalion, if I understand correctly, would have fallen under South West Africa Territory Forces...
Geldenhuis	Yes.
Interviewer	But 101 would have backed a conventional unit from South Africa – you can choose whichever unit you want – on an operation you'd have Citizen Force guys, Permanent Force soldiers and National Servicemen fighting alongside 101 Battalion...
Geldenhuis	Yes.
Interviewer	And you had to try and separate out the budgets how you were fighting this war.
Geldenhuis	Yes, but if you want to do it, if you don't complain and moan all the time, if you get on and do your job, you get it done. For example, can you see the necessity for splitting even the financial function? This is a very interesting...the one commando unit in Namibia, for example in this case, 112 Commando Squadron. It's a commando squadron of aircraft. There were 11 others in South Africa. That one was 112, the others were in South Africa. They flew...that one Namibian South West Africa Territory Force commando, flew twice as many hours as all the other 11 in South Africa together.
Interviewer	That's very interesting. What did the pilots think about that?
Geldenhuis	You see the human material that we had there, and we had...I think we were...I can't say this myself, but I think we were so good and we managed the people including the human side of things so well, that we had people like Tickle Kessler who lived in south of Karibib even near Helmering-hausen on a farm, and he would just turn up every now and again at Windhoek at the headquarters and say, listen, is there no war anymore? What do you mean? Because you haven't called me up for six weeks now! Then we send him to Oshakati and the airforce commander there fits him into...and he was actually killed there eventually. This guy, I shouldn't say this, but he fitted two AK47s on his aircraft.

	<i>Laughs</i> It's light, single-engined, fixed wing aircraft.
Interviewer	His own private aircraft?
Geldenhuis	Yes. They all used their own private aircrafts. They flew more hours, that one squadron, than all the 11 others in South Africa. Twice as much. Well that's why I say it was difficult but we're proud to say we did it. And with great success! Because I so glibly said that there was political change, but when John Vorster said that the people of Namibia must decide themselves over their future, and meaning one person one vote, it caused the split of the National Party. The National Party split into two. One remained National Party or it gave another name and it eventually called itself Action Committee of the Turnhalle something. And the other one was Republican Party which had found itself other indigenous groups, parties, and they formed the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance. And it was brother against brother. I've just given you one indication of how the Citizen Force of the commandoes also participated. Now in that commando squadron I'm talking about there were people who were members of ACTUR and others who were members of the DTA. So as a military commando we managed to keep...and you know the friction was hot, hey. For example, to give you an idea of how hot it was, one morning when I was driving down the main street, Kaiserstrasse, there at a big white building was painted against the white wall, Vorster, Steyn and Geldenhuis are selling the whites out in Namibia.
Interviewer	That's very interesting because I wasn't aware of that level...I knew there was animosity between the groups but I didn't realise there was that extreme.
Geldenhuis	The one guy there, we were involved with that thing, was a National Serviceman, who later got into other trouble too, and I saw him the other day last time I was there in Windhoek – he was in court for the thing, he might have been in jail for a short while, a year or two, I can't remember exactly. But he's now in the leather business and he gave me a little present. So a National Serviceman. So we were part of all the friction and happiness and hatred and friendship and everything. And in spite of all that we were very successful. I sometimes myself wondered how the hell did we manage to do this. We must have done some things right.
Interviewer	You mentioned 112 Commando flying more than twice the hours of the other units put together. With your SWATEF, South West Africa Territory Forces guys, you had 101 Battalion, 201 Battalion, and the names changed I think right at the end to 711 and things like that, my understanding is...and 32 Battalion fell under South Africa though, that was the SADF?
Geldenhuis	Yes, but in practice, apart from the financial side, we employed it as if...for operational purposes, it was as if they were Namibian or South African defence, didn't make any difference.

Interviewer	Ok. Because my question about that is, there were large...National Servicemen and Citizen Force guys went up back and forth to the operational area all the time. And they got involved in the big operations like Askari, Protea, and so on and so forth. There were skirmishes from time to time in South West Africa itself. I'm getting here a feeling or a sense that the troops from South West Africa Territory Force, particularly the black guys in the 101, the 201 Battalions, they did most of the day to day fighting, didn't they?
Geldenhuis	They did a lot. Exactly how much I can't give you man hour figures.
Interviewer	I don't expect that.
Geldenhuis	<p>But you see...we come again to the point where internally in South Africa the government and some of the personalities in that government, were very unpopular. And the opposition grabbed anything to sort of discredit them or make them life difficult for them, that's politics. I'm not complaining. I'm not complaining about anything because I always said to the people, when they said, why, how come you do this mundane service? I said, listen let's do our job. Forget about these things, if you get your mind frame in a positive mind then you laugh about these things. You laugh it off and we do the job. And we managed to create that spirit. There were actually less National Servicemen involved than people made out to be, because it became a way of attacking the government to say, you know, we lose lives there, etc, etc, and it's not fair, and one went to London and shot his mouth there off on television, etc. They grabbed those things and about...let's face it, if I didn't join the army I would probably also not have liked to do National Service but then you have to go, so you go, but that doesn't mean that you like it. And so you have to accept all those things. But they wanted National Servicemen to complain. And they grabbed every time there were lost lives they made a big issue out of it. Even there were at times stupid people in the National Party itself, like Pik Botha...sorry I said the wrong thing now...but I said to him one day when he was on a visit there, I said you know, I'm going to give you another element of our strategy. That is what I was going to do right in the beginning. But please remind me to do this...let me just finish this story first. We had commando people whom we know of as the old commando elements, which we used mostly internally. It's very important to keep the interior status stable otherwise you can't fight outside if you can't keep the interior stable. We used only Citizen Force units in Namibia and in South Africa only for a limited period after Operation Savannah. We were so rapid in creating the South West Africa Territory Force that soon it was not necessary to have companies and squadrons of the Citizen Force. And we only used, you could say almost, volunteers, individuals who we employed there. I can't think that we ever had any Permanent Force unit there. So it was commandoes, individuals from South Africa and from Namibia, but the</p>

	<p>Namibians we employed there mostly in their own areas, except volunteers who we also employed in the border areas, and the same with Citizen Force, after the first two years we didn't...seldom that we used a company or a squadron of the Citizen Force. Mainly individuals who offered themselves or volunteered. Then we had the local and Namibian troops on a small scale. I think most of them actually joined the 101 Battalion, the Ovambo Battalion. Now they became a very big battalion over the years. So you could almost say that it was not a single battalion, it was a battalion group. It was more than a normal battalion complement. Then we had the Kavanga Battalion. They also did mainly service inside the Kavanga. Then we had the Caprivians. Also mainly inside. And then we had the Three Two Battalion and Three One, the Bushmen and the others. Now the Bushmen could decide whether they wanted to be South African or South West African. The Three Two were all South African. So we had Permanent Force, Citizen Force, commandoes, South Africa Territory Forces, and you know, as you know in the military you have a system, attachments and detachments. This is the force and attached to them for this operation is XYZ. So that is how we organised them to fit in where it was necessary. And as I said, remember the internal politics was hell of an explosive and an emotional thing, and we had them all in one commando unit, in one Citizen Force unit. And we managed it to such an extent that as soon as a guy gets into uniform he forgets about all the other nonsense. And we get on with the job. And once soldiers have fought together, they can be of different political parties, it doesn't make a difference. You all have one goal and you're all the one dependent on the other. Ok, so we had to devise a strategy by whatever definition, and now I come back to the story I wanted to tell you about...</p>
	<p>END OF SIDE A (<i>counter at 511</i>)</p>
	<p>SIDE B (<i>counter at 24</i>)</p>
<p>Geldenhuis</p>	<p>I want to tell you about the aspects of...amongst others...of the loss of life in battle. One of the mistakes I made in my life was I can't recall any single occasion where I had a prepared speech which I read off anywhere on any particular date. My philosophy was, especially the higher up you get in a hierarchy, the further you are removed from troops and even the public. So every speech that you have to make is an opportunity to get your policy across, to get your doctrines across, to appeal to the people, whatever that appeal might include, etc. the disadvantage of that is, you know how things go I the press. A newspaper would call your secretary on a Wednesday and say can I have your general speech for Saturday please? And my secretary had to say, no, there is no speech. So then it's not reported. 95% of the time it's not reported. If it is reported it's more often than not perhaps even worse because every individual makes different notes from what he hears in the speech. And I'm getting back again now to researchers, I know I jump a bit around, but...so many of things</p>

that I'm telling you now would have been on paper if I had read my speeches. But once I thought to myself that I have special way of developing a strategy, which I've never read in any book or pamphlet or magazine, which is entirely homemade and I was once invited to...like Montgomery...to make a speech for new staff duties course, and I thought I would talk about strategy. And I then thought I would now...I must get this on paper because it contains something that you can't find elsewhere. So I asked the college, ok, I'll do the opening address but I want a transcript of my speech. I got the transcript and I think I tore it up, because it wasn't properly edited and I wasn't going to edit it. Because what happened was, it was like the anecdote of little Johnny in the classroom, he was a bit of a naughty little guy, and the teacher once lost her temper and she said, Johnny come up here, and she gave him a piece of chalk and she said, go up to the blackboard and write what I tell you. So he went up to the blackboard, she said, write there, the teacher says, Johnny is a dunce or a donkey. So he went there and he wrote, the teacher says, Johnny is a donkey. And then he put in inverted commas, "the teacher", says Johnny, "is a donkey". Now that's exactly what happened with that thing so I was so disappointed I took it and chucked it away, or I might have it somewhere, but...it may not have even been necessary for you to have an interview with me because everything would have been on paper but it isn't unfortunately. But the strategy was – and I now come to that other thing, that personnel losses – basically this internally, that is internally inside Namibia, we must have a plan that would keep society as normal as possible. And we did work out a way to achieve that and we were successful. I give you one example, and you'll probably laugh at my example, but there in the middle eighties, what we're talking about – I was even involved with rugby there, the South West Africa Rugby Union executive committee – I was as a matter of fact one of the Namibian representatives to the South African Rugby board. And in that one year we played in, you may remember, the Sport Pienaar Cup, and I was with the side in Pietersburg when we won there. The next year we won the Currie Cup B competition. And the next year we beat Western Province in the Currie Cup A at Newlands. We beat the Western Province. And I think there were only about two players who played for the Windhoek Defence side and they were all South Westers, not people from South Africa. The two Stoot brothers. That gives you an idea of how normal we managed to keep things. Another example is, the Etosha Pan and other tourist places were never closed. And overseas visitors came to me and said, but where's the fighting? We heard that there was...we went to Etosha, we don't see any sign of war of any kind. So we managed that as one part of our strategy through the Citizen Force and commandoes. And through pre-emptive, because internally we could manage all that. But infiltrating that was our problem, but we also worked out counters for that.

Interviewer	That was the question I was going to ask. For somebody living in Windhoek you could manage normality such as it is, but for somebody living somewhere between...I don't know, you choose, a rural part of Ovamboland, might things have not been a bit different? There was conflict going on. You had 101 Battalion, which most of the people came from that area, so their families would have known that their husband or brother or whatever it was, was in the army and from time to time there were conflicts. So in Ovamboland itself could things be regarded as normal?
Geldenhuis	Well yes, much more normal than South Africa is today. Listen, I think it's probably a hundred times more people are killed here through violent crime than were killed there in Namibia. Perhaps 200 times more. You see, all Ovambos were not SWAPO. And I want to bring you back to my argument that to popular press, and even overseas press, actually boosted SWAPO quite a bit. You go back and read newspapers of those years, and magazines, and you will find it there. And they highlighted every time SWAPO scored something against us, which gave you a distorted picture. That is why you ask me this question because now with hindsight, I've told you a while ago, that the main Ovambo group is the one that now broke away. So don't think that all Ovambos were SWAPO. We couldn't...now I've said that almost like Three Two Battalion, the Ovambo Battalion increased to about, I'd say, between a battalion and a double battalion size. And we couldn't accommodate all the applications. So a big part of the Ovambos were in the Ovambo Battalion. So you can imagine that, in other words, they were in the majority vis-à-vis the SWAPOs who tried to do things there. So it wasn't all that bad as one might think.
Interviewer	You see, just while I'm on it, a battalion is what about 3000 men or less?
Geldenhuis	Well you see I can't even say that now because we had, with certain types of battalions we had 8 people to a section. In other battalions we had 10 per section. In some we had 3 platoons per company and others we had 5 platoons per company. And so I can go on. But let's say, 1500. And some have bigger supporting platoons than others, etc, but make it 1500. But, now that's the point I was trying to make, I think Three Two Battalion had about double that.
Interviewer	That's the figure I've got in my head. I've got Three Two at about 3000 people, 101 at about 3000 as well.
Geldenhuis	Yes, yes.
Interviewer	I hear what you say because...
Geldenhuis	But listen, what I'm telling you is...you are right but again to give you an indication of how well it worked out, and it's not by accident, it's not per chance, it's because we planned for that. That is that there were about 26 headmen murdered by SWAPO. And I'll give you again my nasty experience, even in recent times of the Cold War era type of thing, and that is, a certain company

	<p>has just completed a series...I think 37 episodes on the Cold War. And they were here a few times interviewing me and then at one stage one person said to me, I'm afraid general, there are some nasty things coming up in this series about the horrors and about cruelty and other nasty things. I said, well, you know, war is war. If you want to, make one episode about the horrors of war, and then carry on then with the rest of the story. He said, no, no, no, it comes up every now and again. I said, ok, if that's the way you want it, do it. War brings out the best and the worst in a human being. But then you must also apply the same norm to our opponents of that time. Yes, they said, they'll do it. So on the second occasion when they came again for an interview, I said, now have you also asked the same questions to me about the horrors to my opponents of those days? Which incidentally I know them by name, I visited them. The minister of defence and the Chief of the Defence Force there. They said, yes, but you know...because I said to them, for example, they killed 27 headmen. So I said, now did you also interrogate my opponents of those days? They said, yes. I said, well what about those 27 headmen? She said, no, they said, they regarded them as enemies of the revolution, so we killed them. So end of story! And that's not fair. Because in one case of the Lange family, I think it was, they murdered the father and the mother in front of the children. They must tell that horror story too, but they don't. So my answer to your question is, a lot of Ovambos were in the battalion, or relatives of them in the battalion, and they were probably more than other people thought it would be...you can just imagine if they were 3000, and every one of them probably has a father and a mother, so you can now treble that figure. Every one of them probably had at least two brother and a sister, so you could treble another time, so now you're almost at 60, 70% of the whole Ovambo population.</p>
Interviewer	<p>You see that's interesting because once again in reading and trying to understand what happened there, it strikes me that the average PLAN guerrilla soldier had almost no chance of penetrating very far across the cutline. Because part of...and you know it better than I...but part of the strategy to guerrilla warfare is that you're able to move through the local population because they give you shelter and food and so on. But if such a high percentage were already serving in the Ovambo Battalion, not to mention other battalions, it must have made it extremely hard for the PLAN fighters to get anywhere?</p>
Geldenhuys	<p>Of course. And we had commandoes who were very good like the Uchu commando. They had a horse element, an equestrian element, which we didn't have in South Africa. I can't even remember how we got authority for that if we did...and then we developed a very sophisticated and very efficient South West Africa Territory Force special unit, which is a scout unit but it consisted of motorbikes, horses, and people on foot. The people on foot were mostly Bushmen. And there were, I think, twice, perhaps three times, incursions, and we got on to them, and once</p>

	<p>we were on their tracks they will eventually catch up with them and they will be killed or captured. With Bushmen there their chances are not very good that they would be caught, they would probably kill them.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Why, did Bushmen not take prisoners?</p>
Geldenhuis	<p>It's not really their culture...no...but I don't want to make as if they were murderers. War is war, perhaps it's a matter of if I don't kill you first, you'll probably kill me. So you see the difference between there and there. Here they've disbanded commandoes on the Lesotho border, and they still have problems with cross border theft. There, once they're on the track, sooner or later they're going to catch up with them. We went about these things very scientifically. For example, long before they started to do it in rugby, we gathered proper statistics...for the summer time and winter time. For example, in summer time, foliage is lush, there's an abundance of water. So any infiltrator has easy access to water and easy access to cover. So then you have to double up on your patrols. If it's winter when an infiltration takes place, then the infiltrators don't have to...they have to stick close to water. And they are easier observed because of the...it's like when you go hunting, it's the same thing. But we worked all that out, so you step up your number of man hours. You double them in summer and you halve them in winter time. And we always allocated as early as possible Bushmen trackers. And those guys with motorbikes and things, they also patrol the...just south of the border there used to be a road path, so you can see tracks and we monitored those paths by air, by motorbikes, and otherwise. So once the people had crossed that, you're on their tracks. So we had a very efficient internal thing. as a matter of fact...and don't underestimate the so-called ploeg en plan, or communications operations. And I'm going to give you one example here now, but then I must also say something which I wouldn't like to make public, but ok, let's do it. We have given for every sector command very tangible objectives. And we had a permanent headquarters...a sector is brought up into sub sectors. Every sub sector there is like a lieutenant colonel...commandant. And we know how many incursions there took place in the previous year or in the previous season, and according to that we give him the goal or aim...he must bring it down to a certain figure. And if they pick up a crossing of the border and he needs assistance we give it to him straight away. But he must pick it up. But now because...this is the important thing...because he is there for at least a year, he can be helped for that whole period for the safety of that area, and therefore he must use communication operations including the ploeg en plan, as we call it, to get the locals on his side. Because if you've got them on your side, if there's a crossing they will report it to you. If you're not on a good footing with them, they won't. So then it makes it more difficult for you. So it's not so easy to show in figures the effectiveness of that type of area the operations that we fought, because if they have no incursions, it's a zero...it's</p>

	actually a good thing but you know it's not sensational.
Interviewer	If it's zero it's zero, you can't reduce it.
Geldenhuis	Whereas he should get a hundred percent points for having no...but now ok, so we were intent on being good and kind and co-operative and of assistance to the locals. You know it happened for example that in Kaokoland a National Serviceman, a private soldier, started the first ever cattle sales in Kaokoland, which happened every 3 or 6 months or whatever the case may be. Like the modern thing that happened here in South Africa, a National Serviceman did that. So he was immediately a big man in the eyes of the locals. He is making it possible for them to trade with their cattle. A National Serviceman! So you can imagine that they liked the army. It's doing them good. So now, to explain it by way of just the opposite...and I think it is also because of the structure. Our structure was, there's a commander at least for a year. Then he is replaced by another one who's there for a year, and he's responsible and he's got his objectives. Whereas the police didn't have that type of system. And the police insisted on staying there, and that's where Koevoet came in. And they were good. Well let's say they were effective. But they didn't have an area responsibility. So it changes, the attitude of a commander when he's got permanent responsibility for a specially demarcated area, or when he just moves through there for a certain operation when you can see he's on the heels of something and then after that he's going to go away again, he's got no responsibility in that area. So they did do certain things there in a certain area, which our commander wouldn't have done because tomorrow he's still there. They can come in to that area, do a thing and the next day they don't care, the next day they're not there anymore.
Interviewer	And he's got to back and make friends again after they've been through.
Geldenhuis	We actually went along happily with all and sundry. It was our policy but there were sometimes things like these that created brutality, etc, that created friction between our commander and the other police.
Interviewer	Did you have any recourse? Could your commander have called the Koevoet commander...I think the overall commander was Hans Dreyer...could your commander have called up and said, listen guys, I've spent a whole year trying to look after my area and in one evening you've come through and ruined everything I've done.
Geldenhuis	Exactly that happened. They complained. That's exactly what I mean. But if you switch this off...the internal thing and we've discussed that to some length...and the historic facts data show that we were highly successful. And it's difficult to go into more detail, which I can if we take certain aspects one after the other, but then we're going to be here forever. We were successful, very successful, and I've given you illustrations of that, to tourists

who went there and our sports went on, etc, etc. Life went on as usual. Now some people are inclined to and there's some good reason for that, that there was...our strategy was in two parts. One strategy for this internal thing and another one for our cross border operations. But it's wrong to draw a difference. It's almost like the one I talk to you about, you're now in Techipa and then you're in Bophuthatswana. All these things happened at the same tie and they fit in like that and you can't draw a straight line and say, this is one strategy, that is the other strategy, because...they go together and they happen at the same time. But one other thing, which sounds very general, but it is the truth and it worked, and that is, we said that to fight the Russians or Soviet Union, and Angolans, and Cubans, and PLAN, or SWAPO if you like, is one thing, but take away the Soviet Union and the Cubans fall away, and the others fall away, and then it's only us and PLAN, then it's a different kettle of fish altogether. Now I come to the point I've tried to make where I said my speeches were never on record, but we had a strategy and I used my opportunity again when I was asked to open the Windhoek show in 1979 in Windhoek. The Windhoek Agricultural Show is just about the event of the year. In that speech, I made a speech there, I said certain things and a reporter reported it in Die Suidwester. You see, I never kept really clippings but that one I did, and I've got it here, and I mentioned it in the book, it was September 1979 and we had Bushmens during a drill performance there for the first or the second time...and by the way when I first got the Bushmen in there, at the Windhoek show, before it happened, people like even the one group commando, Colonel Theron who is incidentally also my one daughter's godfather – he's quite rightish. But you know we kept *laughs* how we did it I'm not sure, but he was far right. But he fell in line with our policies. But he said, if we issue the indigenous population with weapons and allow them to walk with that weapons in public, we've had it. It's not acceptable, it won't be done. He's my friend. I said to him, I'm sorry, you'll just have to toe the line. And we did that. And I can tell you many things, the Bushmen were there armed, they walked around the town of Windhoek with their weapons, they gave an exhibition, and there was a very peculiar thing, they would march like that and then instead of a right turn like that, they would go sort of obliquely. And I asked Delville Linford, their unit commander, I said to him, why? He said, no he didn't know, but the only thing that he can think of was that when those Bushmen came into Windhoek it is the first time in their lives ever that they couldn't see the whole horizon. So they were disoriented. They can't make a right turn. It's the first time ever in their lives that they can't see the whole 360 horizon. But then again, be that as it may, so that illustrated now one thing but now to come to the main point, I then said in that speech, almost as I've said now, we don't only fight PLAN. I would never have said SWAPO because that's political. We fight PLAN. If once the Soviet Union disappears from the scene it's a walk over. So we are on the winning side. The situation is

improving, and I could quote every time the statistics. Many people didn't believe me because some of them didn't want to believe me. But we were improving all the time. The statistics just as you have in cricket and rugby, you have statistics, you have your statistics in battle. And so I said we must just keep on the winning side and...I'll get to that how we do that later on...because eventually the Soviet Union just wouldn't be able to continue. And it's on paper. I quote it in the book and I give the name of the newspaper and the date. So it's not something that I'm thinking up now for your sake. And now to come to a point which we have mentioned a few times before, when Pik Botha was there once with others, and he made a dramatic...he dramatises everything. Because like Eugene Terblanche I think his subjects at university was drama and law, which is good for a politician. And I said to him, sir please listen to me. In this war the one who sticks it out longest is the one who is going to win. And emotion is part of this war, and we are trying our best to keep morale high, and we are succeeding and it's actually going quite well. But you know already every time there's loss of life, there's very dramatic music on the radio before they announce it, and then they announce it, it's a really sombre thing, etc. I said, now you make more speeches playing on the emotions. I said, it's the wrong thing to do because it's who's going to give in first? The Soviets or us. And we are doing so well, and they are definitely going down. It's only a matter of time. And by the way, it's not something that I'm thinking up now for your benefit. During those times there were so many international journalists, they came to me and I told them the same thing. And they said, but how can you say that the Soviet union will give in? They're so powerful. I said, how powerful were the Americans when they pulled out of Vietnam? The USSR are in a much worse situation. Phone interruption And my staff or my junior commanders...and remember I was in this fortunate position, I was twice their commander as a brigadier and then I became Chief of the Army, people associated me with Namibia and Angola and I went there so many times, even when I was Chief of the Defence Force, to me it was one continuous thing. I could always promote the same strategy. And a lot depends on the general public. That is why I used speeches to that effect and that's why I did it at Windhoek at the Agricultural Show there. And I lived this thing in practice. I'm not theorising. For example, I was either the Chief of the Army or the Chief of the Defence Force and I had the important meeting, to which I invited top people, but before that somebody said to me there's a certain officer...but he said that to me in private, not officially. He said, you know I've been told that military intelligence is after that guy, he's a spy. One of our officers. And so I had this meeting and it was a sensitive thing but as I walked in I saw there this guy was sitting. I said, ok, now I can use this opportunity, I want him to take this message back, or send it back to Moscow, and I said to him what I'm telling you now, that not long the Soviet Union is going to see its ass and then we've won. And that guy was Dieter Gerhard. It turned out

	<p>later that he was. When Mr Wim de Villiers, he first became the minister of one portfolio and then eventually ended up with three finance related portfolios. He was a very clued up fellow that, and a gentleman. And I asked him, listen you must have lot of financial information, I would like to know, I think and there are certain indications which I mentioned at the time, that the Soviet Union is scratching financially? He came back two weeks later, he said, you're right. He said, my information is that the Soviets are looking for things like razor blades, soap, etc, he said, and once a country looks for things like that, you know they're on their last legs. This must have been about 1988. So we were actually doing quite well. And the whole thing, and that is what I always explained in speeches, that who's going to give in first, and if we go on like we do, the others are going to give in first. And that is exactly what in the end actually happened. That's exactly what happened. I suppose later on we're going to talk about the so called Cuito Cuanavale, but that was the last straw for the Soviet Union. Now the strategy was two pronged, the one was the internal situation but it linked up with the rest. As far as the rest is concerned, but you can see now it's also part of the internal strategy and that is we must deny our opponents, and I'm now including Soviets, Cubans, and Angolans as a back-up for SWAPO, and SWAPO, we must deny them initiative and taking the offensive. We must pre-empt them and we must keep them busy on the other side. Instead of tracing them as we did successfully south of the border, it's still better to keep them so busy on the other side that they haven't got time and people to do the infiltration. And we went out of our way to do exactly that. And this was a touchy thing because the politicians didn't like it and now some people say but why didn't you go across the borders and do this, that and the other thing, but they were at that time people who actually talked against it. So we made ourselves unpopular with what we did, but we persisted. But now, you see the funny thing is, the people who are, let's say, in the media against our efforts, how it worked, some of them come now and say, but why didn't you take Luanda? Now first of all, it's not like World War One like take, they capture Egypt. Secondly, we have, I suppose, about in order of 150 operations that we did across the border and we came back every time. But now that we came back after we beat the enemy at the Lomba, they say, because we came back they said, it's because you lost at Cuito Cuanavale. So with these people you can't argue, they twist all the arguments. So we made ourselves unpopular but...and sometimes we had problems with our own government.</p>
Interviewer	I was going to ask that.
Geldenhuys	Can I tell you one last Cold War dirty tricks/intrigue...when the negotiations started at the Brown's Hotel in London, my Cuban counterpart asked sort of on the side if he could have a chat with me privately. In other words, apart from the mainstream of negotiations because Neil van Heerden was most of the time the leader of our delegation. But now this was now separate. So I

	<p>said, ok sure. So he said to me...that is in 1988 sometime...that he's now got a magnificent force coming down in the west of Angola south towards Namibia. And more or less I must toe the line or we'll get hurt. So I listened to that, and I then said to him, and I could tie this to something else too but we haven't got the time now...if you remind me later I'll tell you the whole story...but in any case I said, listen, you cross that border, you put a toe over that border, and it will be the darkest day ever in Cuba's history. It will be the end of Cuba I can promise you. So be my guest, you do that and I promise you, you're going to pick up something you've never expected, or perhaps you do expect it but it's the end of you, I can promise you.</p>
Interviewer	And clearly they took your...
	END OF SIDE B (<i>counter at 549</i>)
	TAPE FOUR SIDE A
Geldenhuis	<p>Then when I got back to South Africa I said to myself well the doctrine is, if you threaten like I did, I threatened him, if you threaten, you must demonstrate that you are willing and capable of executing that threat. So when I got back to South Africa I told my staff to call up Citizen Force elements to the size of about a brigade for locating them in north west of Namibia. So, I can't remember who it was, but a politician came along, or I think it's my liason officer, or the minister said, something like that, that we are calling up Citizen Force people...now funnily enough some people's recent articles about Cuito Cuanavale say that is the proof that we had already won the war by that time, otherwise we wouldn't have called up a Citizen Force, we would have called up a more regular type of force. But in any case, that time, the minister apparently said...I don't know who, but somebody from higher up from the political side said, but you know these people are normal citizens, and you can't just call them up, you must give the public some sort of reason why you do it. So I don't even think it's I, but probably the media liaison officer, issued a press statement more or less to the fact that in view of threats from the other side of the border the Chief of the Defence Force has decided to call up a brigade for that. Now the end result of that thing is, in recent times I knew exactly what was coming because I could read the indications...I was in Johannesburg, SABC TV called me, they said that their TV team in Cape Town asked the Pretoria TV team to have an interview with me, because there's a Cuban delegation in Cape Town about Cuito Cuanavale. That's why they wanted a meeting with me. This was two or three months ago. At the same time there was a Castro biography by the name of Professor Piero Gleijeses, he's well known, he's an Italian, he's at John Hopkins University, and he writes books about Cuba and Africa, Cuba, and South America, etc, etc. And I had an interview or two with him and then when I contacted him again he was gone. When I heard again he was in Cape Town. So there he was in Cape Town at the same time as the Cuban delegation was there. And then I saw a book in the window,</p>

	<p>'Castro, My Life'. I can see a COM-OPs operation by now, I can recognise it when I see it, so I know that this is a Castro communication operation, a propaganda project. Because as soon as this Castro dynasty disappears, the history of Castro and Cuba and their jollies overseas and in all parts of the world are going to change. So they're trying their best to get their history established as much as possible. So when I saw that Gleijeses he said to me, there's one very good factor to show that you ran away from the Cubans <i>laughs</i> he apparently got hold of...he went into the archives and got hold of that press release that I said we would call up the Citizen Force regiment. He regarded that as now...I know that he knows that we were not scared, but he pretends now as if that is clear proof that we were now so scared that that is why we gave up and acknowledged defeat. So that is another story from the Cold War tricks.</p>
Interviewer	Carrying on all these years later, still.
	END OF INTERVIEW FOR THE DAY (<i>counter at 49</i>)

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