

Militarisation, Hegemony and the South African Media, 1976–1986¹

P. Eric Louw, Keyan G. Tomaselli

University of Natal, Durban

Abstract

The militarisation of South Africa during the period 1976–1986 left its impact on the media as well as on other sectors of society. However, the media were especially deeply affected by the process of militarisation. One reason for the deep inroads militarisation made on the media was the central place accorded to the role of communication and the media within the 'total strategy' / WHAM (Win Hearts and Minds) theory – a theory that was influential within the military fraction of the South African state. As the influence of the military fraction grew within the state, so state communication policy shifted. This, in turn, created certain tensions within the ruling hegemonic alliance. This paper will describe the relationship between Beaufortian strategic theory within the South African Defence Force, state communication policy and the militarisation of the South African media. The paper will also trace out how fractional tensions and shifts within the ruling hegemonic alliance were revealed by a shifting state media policy, and by the reaction of differing sections of the media to these shifts.

Key words: communication; media; militarisation.

The political power of the military grew extensively between 1976 and 1986 as a result of the extended crisis faced by the ruling hegemony after 1976, and its resultant need for a coercive machinery. This expansion was, in part, emphasised by the shift from the dove-like WHAM (Win Hearts and Minds) to the hawkish COIN-OPS (Counter Insurgency Operations) under the states of emergency, which necessitated greater military intervention as a mechanism of rule. This is not to argue that the military ruled South Africa, but rather that it had the capacity to exercise tremendous influence within the corridors of political power. The view that the military was dominant during the study period is difficult to prove empirically, mainly because of severe

¹ This paper has been rewritten and updated from Graaf (1988).

restrictions on information. We therefore rely on theoretical argument, while inferring trends from media reports, statements made by the Minister of Defence and military publications.

The growing influence of the military resulted in a 'militarisation' of the media. That is, media were increasingly tamed by the military. Hence messages generally sympathetic to the military and its aims were increasingly evident during the study period; and white South Africans were conditioned for war. Militarisation of the media occurred in a complex way through a series of realignments within the hegemonic bloc:

- Contents of the commercial media and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) reflected the rise and decline of fractional² interests and disputes. A decoding of media hence offers one means of access into the frequently hidden world of conflicts and influence-shifts within the ruling hegemony.
- Some conflicts were contested in the media itself. The ebb and flow of militaristic signification (such as the terms 'total onslaught', 'total war', 'total strategy', 'preparedness', 'civil defence') reflected the growing influence of the military and police within the SABC in particular in relation to other sectors of the state.

An understanding of the relationship between 'class fractions' (see Poulantzas 1979, 1982) and the media requires analysis and identification of:

- The various fractions within the South African ruling classes.
- Fractional disputes/conflicts and the growth and decline of particular sections within the ruling alliance.
- The relationship between the various media and different power groupings.
- The extent of control that any particular fraction(s) may have over any particular media institution and the effects thereof.
- The way fractional disputes/conflicts are represented in media content.
- The derivation of militaristic rhetoric used in the media in terms of certain theories of military strategy.

² O'Meara (1983) has demonstrated the value of applying a class fraction analysis to South African conditions especially when analysing the ruling class(es).

Ebb and Flow of Fractions in the Ruling Classes

The South African ruling class alliance underwent a series of restructurings during the study period, mainly due to a crisis in capital accumulation and an intensification of class struggles (Saul and Gelb 1981; O'Meara 1983). Core fractions of the former Afrikaner ruling alliance were ejected or themselves left the centre stage, while new fractions coalesced in a realigned political struggle.

Fractions that lost influence between 1976 and 1984 included the Afrikaner Calvinist churches, white farm owners and white working class miners. Those which increased their influence in the same period were Afrikaner-dominated capital (especially Cape-based), the military and police (commanded from Pretoria), the urban petit bourgeois fraction(s), and English-controlled capital.³ Infrastructural changes, such as the tricameral parliament since 1983, attempted to co-opt the Indian and coloured bourgeois and petit bourgeois classes and the black rural (homeland) petite bourgeoisies into 'reformed' apartheid structures. The influence of multinational corporations on the hegemonic bloc, a strong factor following P.W. Botha's Carlton Centre conference in November 1979, waned after mid-1986 when the government declared a State of Emergency on June 12. A similar decline was apparent with regard to local monopoly capital's influence within the hegemonic bloc,⁴ and could account for a shift amongst sectors of local capital towards 'explorations' in the direction of 'negotiations' with the democratic movement both in and outside the country after 1986.

Military and Police Fractions

The military and police increasingly exerted their solutions within the state between 1976 and 1986. (See *Sunday Tribune*, 25 May 1986: 3) This can be attributed to a number of factors:

³ English capital refers to capital controlled by English-speaking South Africans.

⁴ The growing frustration felt by English capital with the state was reflected in their move into the arena of confrontational politics during 1986 (see *Business Day*, 20 September, 1986: 2; and *Sunday Star*, 22 September, 1986: 19). This has even resulted in the fractions of capital putting advertisements in the South African Press in which they call for accelerated reform (*Sunday Tribune*, 29 September 1986: 13). This advertising strategy has also been used by foreign capital represented in South Africa (see *Sunday Times*, 1 June 1986). In the post-1986 period this trend accelerated, and some sections of capital even began to examine the possibility of possible alliances and compromises with the mass democratic movement (UDF, ANC, etc.).

* *First, the dynamics of managing hegemony changed following the 1976 uprising:*

- (a) The use of coercion increased dramatically, especially after 1985.
- (b) Ideological appeals formulated by intellectuals lost currency (as coercion was increasingly substituted as a method of rule). This resulted in attrition of Afrikaner academic support for the National Party.
- (c) The role of media (as conduits for intellectual leadership-messages) was redefined.

Between 1976 and 1985 the media were encouraged to generate a 'war-psychosis' amongst whites, whilst trying to pacify blacks (Seegers 1984; Evans 1983; Tomaselli 1984). Following the 1986 State of Emergency, the media were directly manipulated by the Bureau for Information (Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1986), and all verbal, pictorial and written criticism of state action on containing the continuing 'unrest' was declared 'subversive' (*Government Gazette*, No 101, 1986). The definition of 'subversive' fluctuated as trade unions and media institutions challenged (sometimes successfully) the regulations through the Courts, only to see the state immediately redraft the regulations. As the ruling alliance found itself increasingly under attack both internally and externally, it dramatically increased pressure on the press and journalists.⁵

* *Second, the military and police had learnt from their Rhodesian and South West African experiences.* (See interview with Major-General Meiring, *Indicator*, 3, 3, 1986) These forces built up their security infrastructures *in response to guerilla attacks*. In South Africa itself, the situation was different:

- (a) Military and communication infrastructures were built to counter potential guerilla warfare *before* the war even started (Frankel 1984: ch 2).⁶

5 The South African media are, of course, not the first to be influenced in so negative a way by a war situation. If anything, this sort of militarisation of the media content is the norm in conflict situations (see Knightley 1982).

6 This has included: improving military command structures; centralising all military headquarters in Pretoria (for easier access to the SSC); building large military hospitals; re-drawing local security command boundaries that are more suitable for a revolutionary warfare situation; setting up grassroots security infrastructures amongst the white

- (b) The military and police commands familiarised themselves in advance of the war with the theory and practice of revolutionary tactics (Frankel 1984: ch 2, 3).⁷ They also studied the theory and practice of counter-revolutionary warfare. Most influential were Beaufre's *An Introduction to Strategy* (which informed WHAM), McCuen's *The Art of Counter Revolutionary Warfare* (which informed COIN-OPS), and William Colby's (CIA) notion of 'oil spots', where there is a shift from killing opponents to organising those not sympathetic to the mutual opponents (see Ranelagh 1986: 543).
- (c) A military-directed WHAM exercise was launched in the rural areas prior to the start of guerilla warfare (Frankel 1984: 92-94; Nusas 1984: ch 3; Seegers 1984: 27; *Paratus*, 10, 1985: 2).⁸
- (d) Whites were psychologically prepared for battle through the media, schools, and other civil institutions (Frankel 1984: 95-100; Nusas 1984: 51-53; Tomaselli 1984; Seegers 1984: 34-39, *Work in Progress*, 1982: 19).
- (e) Armscor was built into the country's third-largest industry (Frankel, 1984: 82-91). The huge investment of resources that all this restructuring entailed meant that the military and police got their way in terms of the societal allocation of funds. The huge investments into the three Sasol petrochemical plants, for example, had more to do with military-strategic planning than with economic development.

community; setting up a radio communication infrastructure in the border areas; building strategic roads; and militarily training the entire white male population and incorporating them into a command structure that can call upon their services at any time.

- 7 The South African military and police academies teach what they call counter-insurgency warfare. Those in command of the military and police are clearly familiar with the theoretical texts of both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary warfare: SADF actions, in particular, reveal the influence of Beaufre (1965), Clausewitz (Rapoport 1968), McCuen (1966), Thompson (1966), Trinquier (1964) and Clutterbuck (1981); and with the experiences of anti-insurgency operations in Malaysia, Philippines, Greece, and Vietnam.
- 8 This is obviously a problematical strategy for those trying to defend the South African *status quo* because black South Africans are well aware they are exploited and so the SADF 'hearts-and-minds' exercise (called 'Burgersake' in the SADF) does not really have a saleable message.

* *Thirdly, as resources flowed into the military and police hierarchies, powerful individuals within these structures scrambled for more funds to expand their 'empires'.*

As was the case in Rhodesia, the police, military and paramilitary (e.g. Armscor) institutions attempted to recruit the most talented youth (*Paratus*, 3, 1983: 56-7; Enloe 1980: 55-56) in preparation for the final defence of apartheid. This resulted in more people with vested interests in maintaining the existing order, to ensure their continued employment. The circulation of an annual *State of Threat Document (Bedreigingsdokument)* influenced the distribution of funds (Seegers 1984: 31), and the military was increasingly able to influence, and even set certain agendas within the state.

Between 1976 and 1986 the military and police developed to the extent that they no longer (only) served other fractions in the ruling alliance; they strongly influenced both foreign and domestic policy as well (Seegers 1984: 44-51). The military and police did *not*, however, rule South Africa. They were only *one* part of the hegemonic bloc. Consensus existed within this bloc on the need to preserve capitalism (or to use the officially preferred term, 'free enterprise'). Differences, however, remained. Local monopoly capital, for example, was not in favour of the SADF and SAP's increased influence and criticised unnecessary coercion. International monopoly capital became increasingly alienated from the South African government because of the massive destabilisation campaign launched against neighbouring states by the SADF and its surrogates.

Three different responses typified the state's use of violence to restore 'law and order' between 1976 and 1985:

1. The 'hard-liners' believed that the military and police *could* win the war and restore the racial-capitalist hegemony (the Conservative Party (CP), the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP), the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (AWB), and the right-wing of the National Party (NP)).
2. Cynics within the NP realised that the military and police could not win in the long term, but that the existing order should be maintained for as long as possible.
3. Moderates argued that the military and police should maintain 'law and order' so that sufficient reform could be enacted to dismantle apartheid while preserving capitalism (Progressive Federal Party, NP *verligtes*, local monopoly capital).

Paradoxically, the military and police did not themselves agree on policing strategy and tactics (*Daily News*, 3.9.86: 6), which is why we refer to them as fractions, and not a fraction. Disagreements also arose within the SADF and SAP over strategy, particularly over the relative merits and demerits of WHAM (Beaufre) versus COIN-OPS/Counter Insurgency Operations (McCuen).

THE MILITARISATION OF THE MEDIA

Political alignments continually shifted. Different issues elicited different responses from different fractions at different times. If a degree of unanimity existed it was that the commercial press and SABC backed (to a greater or lesser extent) the centre-to-*verlig* fraction of the National Party. The State of Emergency – together with the growing alliance between the *verligtes* and the military and police – however, increased tensions between the state and the liberal press, just as it increased tensions between the state and local monopoly capital, and between the government and its Western allies. For this reason, some sections of the commercial press increasingly qualified their support of this *verlig* fraction after the October 1984 Vaal Triangle uprising.

Extent of Control of the Media

The commercial press (Nasionale Pers, Perskor, Argus Company, South African Associated Newspapers) and SABC backed – with slight differences – the same horse. This manifested itself in several ways:

- The neofascist right-wing (AWB, HNP and CP) were ignored, attacked or belittled.
- Conflicts between the different fractions within the hegemonic alliance were downplayed.
- Certain buzz words were uttered repetitively (though with different emphases in the different fractional media). Those given positive treatment included 'reform', 'free enterprise', 'moderate blacks', 'the West', 'civilised standards', 'total strategy', 'our boys on the border', 'privatisation', 'Thatcher', and 'Reagan'. Those given negative treatment (boo words) included 'radicals', 'communism', 'socialism', 'the Eastern Bloc', 'the United Nations', 'total onslaught', 'terrorists', 'ANC' and 'UDF', and so on. Through repetition of these words the media presented a unified image of South Africa as a reasonable and moderate society having to defend itself against an evil and malicious plot orchestrated from 'outside'. This deflected media emphasis away

from the massive internal opposition to apartheid. Since the second State of Emergency certain new boo words became apparent such as 'sanctions' and 'Commonwealth'. The state even banned the use of certain descriptions, such as 'draconian measures' and 'minority white regime'.

- The massive internal support for the ANC, UDF and socialism was downplayed. Such support was linked by the media to a deviant minority or was explained as resulting from 'intimidation'.
- Overt racism was avoided. The English liberal press (excluding *The Citizen* and *Natal Mercury*) even avoided using racial designations, although its selection of 'newsworthy' items did reflect a clear white 'world view' (see Louw 1983, 1984). The Afrikaans press and SABC continued to use racial classifications. However, this was done to make race classifications appear 'natural' rather than 'hurtful'; (see *Rapport*, 15 June 1986).
- A growing influence of the military strategists' definition of reality (i.e. an 'us-them' view) prevailed (see *Paratus*, 36, 1986: 56). This was frequently reflected on SABC (Allison-Broomhead *et al.* 1986). Fractional differences were apparent here. The press owned by English capital, for example, tended to be more positive toward the military and overtly hostile toward the police, while the press owned by Afrikaner interests was somewhat less antagonistic toward the police. Conflict also occurred within the SABC. But all media increasingly popularised the 'siege' mentality. Military correspondents could not operate unless they maintained good relations with the SADF. Afrikaans newspaper editors even called for the security forces to create 'positive' news for themselves, thereby cancelling the 'negative' news of 'terrorists', becoming pro-active newsmakers by permitting a 'freer flow of information' (Muller 1986).

The rhetoric of 'siege' was popularised after the 1976 Soweto disturbances. Although this unrest was due entirely to the repressive nature of apartheid, the state sought to mystify the causes through the adoption of the internationally-used discourse of 'national security' (Moss 1980; Pimnock and Tomasselli 1985; Addison 1980; Mattelart 1979).

Language, Legitimation and Militaristic Rhetoric

South Africa awoke in August 1979 to the discourse of the 'total strategy', the 'total onslaught' and 'total war'. These phrases were not new. Part of SADF terminology as early as 1973, they were adopted by the Nazi war

machine from the German Quartermaster-General, Ludendorff, a military strategist during World War I. He, in turn, had worked from the eighteenth century Prussian military writings of Clausewitz (see Rapoport 1968). Moving via Britain during World War II, the idea of 'total war' was transported to the Americas. There the terms were refined by the American military academies and the South American dictatorships during the 1960s (Mattelart 1979).

Beaufre (1965) is read in conjunction with texts dealing with the French experience in Algeria, the American experiences in the Philippines and Vietnam, and the British experience in Malaysia. 'Total war', which embraces every aspect of life, is conceived of as a *defensive* action in the preparation of the nation in advance of the perceived 'onslaught'. Total strategy legitimises the pre-emptive counterattack by capitalism against socialism, and creates a sympathetic climate for a permanent arms economy (Mattelart 1979). (In South Africa, this manifested itself in the form of Armscor.) From the perspective of the military, 'total war' demands a total response, a notion the South African military sold to white civilians. General Golbery of Brazil talked about a 'national power'. In South Africa it was called the 'total strategy'. It is 'total' because, according to Golbery, it does away with the previous distinction between civilian and military categories and the distinction between peacetime and wartime disappears; it is a war between the 'Christian-Western world' and the 'Communist-Eastern world' (Mattelart 1979: 406)

The discourse of 'total war' – a war that is economic, financial, political, psychological, scientific, in addition to being a war of armed forces – does away with the distinction between civilian and military categories. As Armand Mattelart (1979: 406) states:

All of society has become a battlefield and every individual is in the camp of the combatants, either for or against. It is a total war because the battlefields and the arms used pertain to all levels of individual and community life, and because this war does not allow the very slightest space to escape from the gravitational pull of the conflict.

It is not coincidental that the 'total war' terminology came into vogue at the time of P.W. Botha's assumption of power. Botha had previously been Minister of Defence and took control of the premiership in the wake of the political chaos following the Information Scandal. Through him and General Magnus Malan the rhetoric of Beaufre came onto centre stage.

Although the means were different, the increased military ascendancy in South Africa had similar effects to the military intervention in South American dictatorships. The military becomes a very powerful fraction within the state and the private sector is integrated into military planning (*White Paper* 1979). The increased power of the military is demonstrated by the fact that information and decisions of the State Security Council (SSC) may even be withheld from the full Cabinet itself (see Swilling and Phillips 1988; Sarakinsky 1988). The significance of this restructuring of policy-making lay in the extent to which it shifted executive responsibility away from Parliament, even the NP caucus, into the hands of a non-parliamentary group which included senior military and police officers (see Geldenhuys and Kotze 1983). The SSC's Secretariat has four branches: Strategy, National Intelligence Interpretation, Strategic Communications (involving psychological warfare or 'cultural action'), and Administration. Only the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Law and Order and the State President are statutory members. The moderating influence of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Information, as well as that of the Financial and Economic Ministries which favoured economic power and control of the communications system as a means of defence, was reduced (Gillmore 1983). This strategy failed and coercive control of the media and the state prepared for sanctions in 1986. As the 'us-them' distinction shifted, the multinational companies, and at times even Reagan and Thatcher, were excommunicated into the 'them' camp by the government, Afrikaans press and SABC (see *Daily News*, 17.6.86).

The total strategy initially attempted to forge an alliance with business and industry, both local and international. Botha's 'bloodless' coup was followed in quick succession by the 1979 Carlton Centre meeting between government and business, a state commitment towards a free enterprise economy, the selling of SASOL shares to the public, followed by a number of other 'mini-Carlton' meetings. The increasingly militarised state that emerged under Botha became more friendly towards multinational capitalist interests. This was partly due to the *rapprochement* between English and Afrikaner capitals between November 1979 to October 1984, and partly strategic. The 'total strategy' planners could not defend white privilege without substantial Western help. If they could 'sell off' a sufficiently large percentage of the economy to overseas capitalists, then presumably these interests would, of necessity, bring pressure to bear on their own governments to defend the existing order in South Africa. Between 1979 and the end of 1985 South Africa permitted the unrestricted repatriation of profits and wages to the metropolitan countries, and did nothing to prevent the massive devaluation of the rand. It continued to provide hefty tax

incentives for firms locating in the 'border areas' next to the 'homelands', a policy which was cynically exploited by Taiwanese, Israeli and some local businesses. As a result of these policies, enormous amounts of capital flowed out of South Africa.

Certain similarities became apparent between the South African context and those South American regimes which had experienced military intervention. In such situations the state becomes a surplus value-producing factory for the multinational corporations. It guarantees the conditions necessary for the penetration of foreign capital and the establishment of an economy directed towards foreign markets (Mattelart 1979: 418), either from the United States itself, or from its neocolonial industry to non-American markets.

Militarisation permits the overexploitation of workers through facilitating higher profits than are normally earnable in capitalist democratic states. This is done through paying workers less than the costs of family reproduction – as on the mines – and through denying labourers access to generally accepted benefits, such as medical aid, pension and the like. In South Africa, the emphasis on unskilled labour keeps costs low. Paradoxically, in an economy which until the mid-1970s relied on cheap unskilled labour, and low productivity levels, workers were now blamed for their continued low wages. The state and business were thereby able to justify low wages as the result of the low productivity of these same workers. This anomaly, of course, works to the benefit of 'free enterprise', which lays the blame for poverty on individuals rather than the social structure. However, with the eruption of nationwide resistance after October 1984, resulting in a low level civil war, the state was forced to take additional measures to counteract multinational corporation nervousness, disinvestment and international pressure. The government misread the signs, as instead of ensuring the development of a nonracial and more stable class society, it entrenched the hierarchy of racial privilege but sought – unsuccessfully – to mystify the racist basis of the 'new dispensation' by recoding apartheid discourse into liberal-sounding terms intended to strike a sympathetic chord with Western democracies. The government then spoke of 'protection of minorities' (i.e. Afrikaner privilege), 'democracy' ('power-sharing' but retaining control), 'negotiation' (recipients will be compelled to act in accordance with the wishes of the government), 'self-determination' (centralisation of control), 'reform' (reacting to specific capital imperatives to redesign and disguise exploitative conditions to ensure capital accumulation) and so on (see also Slabbert, 25.4.1986 in *Daily News*).

The state responded to disinvestment campaigns and criticism of the 1986 State of Emergency by declaring such discussions 'subversive'. Deployment of the military and police to restore 'order' in the townships accelerated. The state faced increasing desertions from significant sections of local capital (including elements of Cape Afrikaner capital). Foreign capital became increasingly disenchanted with the Nationalist government's handling of the country and its policies in the wider South African region. These changes began to be reflected in the relationships between the state and the commercial media from 1986 onwards.

The military and police appeared to be in agreement as to the handling of the media despite differences over other issues. The media have generally not been unwilling participants in the propagation of reassurances that threats to nation and society (and capital) can be countered. There are, of course, contradictions within the ruling alliance which affected media content. Certain elements of English capital and their media were less cooperative than others due to their dislike of violent 'solutions'. The June 1986 declaration of the Emergency increased tensions within the ruling alliance between the (militarist) hawks and the liberals (especially the liberal-capitalist fraction). Conflict between the military-police fraction(s) and the English liberal press intensified as measured by the number of editorials denouncing police behaviour, the government's suicidal attitude towards sanctions and restrictions on the press (see for example *Sunday Tribune*, 7.9.86 which headed its editorial with *P.W. Botha a National Calamity*).

Legitimising Totalitarianism as Democracy

The central dilemma facing the state was how to legitimise and naturalise its authoritarian solution as the only *democratic* alternative available to South Africa? Its strategy was complex. We will consider only the role of the media.

The sustained attack by the government on the 'freedom of the press' in South Africa has often been explained in terms of the irrationality of Afrikaner politics (see Hachten and Giffard 1984; Pollak 1979, and Potter 1975). It is doubtful, however, that the government ever intended to control the press in a Nazi-style dictatorship. The government only acts - or threatens to act - against the press during periods of crisis (Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1987). At such times it deploys the alarmist media logic found in Clutterbuck (1981) and restricts media coverage. This is consistent with Beaufre's (1965) idealism in which war is largely reduced to a psychological battle. Hence

South Africa's total strategists (influenced by Beaufre) stressed the importance of the media and of public perceptions, and paid less attention to economic and other material factors.

The media restrictions partly prevented black South Africans from realising the geographical extent of dissidence and helped reassure domestic capital and white South Africans. The restrictions were also aimed at blocking the flow of information overseas. SAPA, Reuters, UPI/TN and other news agencies transmitted images of disorder, of violence, and of brutal police action which had a negative effect on international investment in South Africa.

To sell South Africa as a safe place for overseas investment, the government realised the need to make it appear as if South Africa was ruled not by whites alone but by a multiracial alliance. This resulted in the attempt to engineer a facelift for apartheid. In the absence of a broad-based class alliance the state forged one in the form of the tricameral parliament.

During the *rapprochement* between the National Party and capital, 1979-1984, the state and capital had to rally the white, Indian and coloured petty bourgeoisies into their 'national project' to win the 'hearts and minds' of these class fractions and deploy them against the 'total onslaught'. The reality of total strategy was semantically engineered and bludgeoned into the consciousness of the nation - specifically the petty bourgeoisie. By this means the state countered its lack of democratic support. Because of the nature of the SSC, however, real power still lay with the white (particularly military and police) fractions.

From the early 1980s, the media splashed the trappings of state pomp and ceremony. Newspapers, magazines, television and radio were full of Ministers handing out awards and medals at every opportunity. Military bands and red carpets crammed state ceremonies with the purpose of (a) generating a common sense of compliance with the necessity of total strategy; and (b) reassuring white South Africans that all was under control. Militaristic images were, however, not seen as sufficient in themselves to induce acceptance of the increasing authoritarianism by which the country was being governed. Semantic engineering and sloganeering filled the remaining gaps as the state 'set the climate' for the passage of a series of laws which, if and when applied, would ensure an ultra-cautious press.

The prime salvo was fired by the Steyn Commission which reached new heights of jargonistic nonsense and metaphorical gobbledygook in 1982. Although the (then) Prime Minister claimed that the report provided 'irrefutable

proof' of the onslaught against South Africa, conventional wisdom held that the Commission had 'gone over the top'. After much media fanfare, the Commission was forgotten. It's proposed legislation was unworkable, its proposals ridiculous. What, then, was the function of this Commission? The Commission was an attempt at 'psychological warfare' to induce the media to consent to further loss of autonomy. The Media Council set up in 1983 saw the realisation of a self-censoring mechanism. Though the Council proved to be less than a lap dog, the total strategy planners had got their way.

The Steyn Commission effectively *displaced* attention from the passage of three Acts already in preparation: the *Internal Security Act*, the *Protection of Information Act* and the *Registration of Newspapers Amendment Act*. These Acts are evidence of the increasing influence of the military strategists within the ruling hegemonic alliance in the post-P.W. Botha takeover. By creating a straw man in Steyn, the government created the conditions where two of the Acts could have a relatively muted passage through Parliament as far as press comment was concerned. (It is debatable if Steyn himself realised that he was being 'used' by the hawks within the National Party.) The result was that the hawks succeeded in increasing their structural capacity to manipulate the media and semantically engineer the way South Africans would be encouraged to perceive their worlds.

Under the *Internal Security Act* the Minister may take action against an organisation, publication or person who he deems may be engaged in advocating communism. This Act redefined the earlier definition: the doctrine of Marxian socialism as espoused by Lenin and Trotsky, the Third Communist Comintern or the Communist Information Bureau. The new Act widens the old definition of communism by extending the list of forbidden authorities and by adding the vague phrase 'any other recognised theorist'. The Act is silent on what, in fact, constitutes 'recognition'. Where the previous Act named the theorists, the new Act leaves the names blank. The Steyn Report provides the background to who could be a recognised 'name'. By conveniently dividing up the world into good versus bad (capitalist versus communist, black versus white, Christianity versus Marxism, etc.) any oppositional theorist, lecturer or reporter could be 'named'.

The new Act defines the 'enemy' in very wide terms. In the old Act, the propagator's action had to be directed at the establishment of a despotic system based on the dictatorship of the proletariat. The new Act forbids the establishment of any form of socialism or collective ownership. Most alarming is that accused organisations need not even be aware of their alleged 'socialist tendencies'.

Second was the *Protection of Information Act*. This Act deems certain categories of information 'protected'. These include 'prohibited places' whereby it is an offence punishable by a maximum of 20 years imprisonment to approach, inspect, pass over, be in the neighbourhood of or enter any prohibited place for any purpose prejudicial to the security or interests of the Republic. Such places are not identified. While it is not an offence, say, to walk towards a prohibited place, it is an offence to be accused of walking TOWARDS a prohibited place. The onus is on the accused to persuade the judge of the difference. Because of the nature of the reporter's job, it is axiomatic that such individuals would *always* be considered to have acted with intent.

Section 3 of the Act includes any matter which the communicator 'knows or reasonably should know may directly or indirectly be of use to any foreign State or hostile organisation' *and* which should not be disclosed 'for considerations of the security or other interests of the Republic'. The intent required for liability apparently consists not of an intent to benefit the recipient of the prohibited information to the detriment of the state, but merely in the knowledge that the action will lead to disclosure. Such disclosure need not be to an official of the hostile state, but to any *inhabitant* thereof. The phrase 'indirect use' casts the journalist into a state of complete uncertainty about the use of *any* information whatsoever.

All three Acts were passed in 1982, just a year after the Steyn Commission had reported. By relaxing – or appearing to relax – the application of the laws in periods of stability, the government created a sense that press freedom was not dead, and surprised foreign commentators on the extent of press 'freedom' in South Africa.

The Steyn Commission might have 'gone over the top', but the climate it set to enable the above and subsequent repressive legislation to be enacted was its most important function. The proposals set out by the Commission were achieved: the 'facts' officially sanctioned by the SSC could now be enforced. In many ways, these Acts went a lot further than the Commission. Steyn was right, a media law was not necessary: the three other Acts did it all.

With the failure of the tricameral parliament to induce consent from the subordinate classes, in 1986 the government attempted to co-opt (so-called 'moderate') black 'leaders' onto a National Statutory Council, which failed. The underlying motive was to find a mechanism to incorporate, *irrespective of race*, class fractions which support capitalism, but in a way which did not undo the racial premises of the National Party.

Each change in the character of the ruling bloc (such as the increased influence of the military and 'non-white' middle classes, and English capital's increased and then waning influence) coincided with a new semantic engineering. A number of new media themes were evident. First was the need to counter the Verwoerdian racism that was taught to a whole generation of white South Africans. The military realised the need to co-opt 'moderate non-whites' in order to bolster white privilege. The Afrikaans press and the SABC in particular tried to 're-educate' neofascist whites into a realisation of the need to broaden the ruling hegemony's power base.

Second, a harking back (emphasised by P.W. Botha's pilgrimage to the Delville Wood Monument) to South Africa's participation in the Second World War occurred on SABC in 1985. The State President's Guard even changed its dress to look like the Second World War South African uniform. The now ruling National Party had opposed fighting 'for the English' against the Nazis. The Second World War theme (a) was linked to the broader aim of generating a war-psychosis amongst South African whites in preparation for war; (b) was linked to a desire to incorporate English speakers more closely into the ruling alliance; and (c) suggested that the conflict in South Africa was similar to the West's 1939-1945 democratic struggle against fascism.

If the military was to have unfettered muscle in deciding the resolution of conflicts on the subcontinent - especially if it was to be in the name of 'orderly' economic development - then the ideological terrain had to be bulldozed to make such development feasible. The Steyn Commission's logic offered the means of controlling the media, while after 1979 a rhetoric of 'free enterprise' provided an ideological 'justification' for 'security action'.

One aspect in the development of a pervasive ideology, however, was the state's growing inability to redefine this ideology when conditions warranted it. Although the discourse of 'total strategy' was de-emphasised from political speeches and SABC reporting within hours of the Nkomati Accord (see Seegers 1988: 419), certain state agencies continued as if nothing had changed. Struggles occurring within the state (between the police and the SADF, and between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information and the state repressive agencies) increasingly surfaced after Nkomati.

After Nkomati, the abstract idea of total war gave way to the conventional image of creeping communism. The shift was necessary in the light of police statements that since Nkomati (until the end of 1985), the ANC terror and sabotage programme had significantly diminished. Following the Accord, charges of Russian expansionism reappeared in political and SADF statements

and Defence Force generals warned of an impending conventional arms clash. These statements were made in the face of concrete evidence from a growing number of political analysts about the Soviet 'hands-off policy'. Despite this, it was not difficult for the state to persuade white South Africans of the 'truth' of the long-awaited Soviet invasion.

The maintenance of this hawkish posture allowed the government to continue with its repressive legislation. However, the rift between state agencies about the nature of the post-Nkomati enemy continued to be a problem for government. The Defence Force tagged its continued need for high military expenditure on the threat of Soviet expansionism, while the police still chased the old enemy which they identified as agitators, trade unionists, community organisers, boycotters and anybody belonging to the UDF. These hawkish policies, of course, created problems for the 'reformists' within the state to explore new means of inducing the consent and cooperation of the subordinate classes.

The application of contradictory strategies by different government departments after Nkomati heralded a growing unworkability of the notion of 'total strategy'. A comparison of the violent police action in the Crossroads Squatter Camp during the same period as the UDF arrests, when residents pre-empted a state attempt at forced removal with the approach of the SABC and other government agencies, is illuminating. The SAP had over-reacted and embarrassed local capital. In contrast, the SABC deflected images of confrontation and ill-advised police repression with those of 'negotiation' between the Chief Development Board Commissioner and the Crossroads Residents' Committee. A spokesman for the Committee was allowed to address the camera. This was the first time that SABC Television News transmitted interviews with the *victims*, rather than only with authority. An interview followed with the Minister of Cooperation and Development on the need for consultation between the state and the Crossroads residents on removals. Although the Minister of Law and Order was briefly quoted, he was not interviewed. The Development Board was also shown to be at fault. It was reported that the Board had not 'set the climate' which would have persuaded the residents of Crossroads to consent to their removal. The problem was framed as a *communication gap* between authority and the squatters, and not the result of 'communist agitators' as the SAP alleged.

It would appear that fissures within the state had resulted in the application of conflicting 'solutions.' So while enormously complex and expensive ideological attempts were made to create the impression of democracy

through the tricameral parliament, 'reform' was often nullified by precipitate action on the part of the security apparatus.

By the end of the period under scrutiny, the theoretical coherence of 'total strategy' was ceasing to bind the state or capital (both local and international). The struggles that went on within the Cabinet prior to the second State of Emergency were reflected at every level of the state, from the repressive agencies themselves to ideological apparatuses like the SABC. To complicate matters further, the 1984 uprising put paid to the honeymoon between the National Party and local capital. As a result, many of the features of the militarisation of media messages in the liberal press had, by 1986, to be enforced, rather than 'voluntarily' adhered to, as in the pre-1984 period.

POSTSCRIPT

The intrahegemony tensions that were already beginning to manifest themselves in a mediated form through the media had by 1988 become more obvious. The hawk position came to dominate after 1985, but in the process created serious tensions within the ruling bloc, many of which became manifest in the media. By 1988 the security apparatus had, through massive repression (based on COIN-OPS principles), inflicted severe damage on the internal anti-apartheid movement, and the state was busy implementing an 'oil spot' strategy under the 'cover' provided by COIN-OPS. However, in the process of militarising the state (and the media) it was perceived by some of its former partners to have 'gone over the top' and so it isolated itself from many of its pre-1984 allies, namely: from significant elements of local capital (including local monopoly capital, and even elements of Cape Afrikaner capital); from international monopoly capital; and from its traditional Western allies. Increasing pressure from the latter seemed to be strengthening the hand of the doves. Presumably, the growing Soviet 'hands-off' policy was also aiding the doves within the state. Hence late 1988 saw the cabinet climb-down over Mandela, the Namibia settlement, and the sudden switch from support for Renamo to Frelimo. All this indicated that the militarists were being outmanoeuvred despite the massive machinery they had in place on the ground. This is not to suggest that a de-militarisation of South Africa is on the cards: the military and police infrastructures are vast and powerful. However, their interests and power are seemingly being challenged following their Angolan debacle. Ideologically this has manifested itself in the media as a series of mixed messages, with inertia ensuring that many of the old militaristic messages continue as before, but with new messages making their appearance, and with the media being unable to explain state policy shifts.

REFERENCES

- Addison, G. 1980. Total Strategy as Total Propaganda: The Socialisation of Danger. Paper delivered at the 1980 Conference of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa, Maseru.
- Allison-Broomhead, M., Chetty, A., Prinsloo, J. and Daran, D. 1986. The Visual Role of the 'Rubicons' as Part of the 'Reform' Strategy. Durban: CCSU.
- Beaufre, A. 1965. *An Introduction to Strategy*. London: Faber.
- Clutterbuck, R. 1981. *The Media and Political Violence*. London: MacMillan.
- Enloe, C. 1980. *Police, Military and Ethnicity: Foundations of State Power*. London: Transaction Books.
- Evans, G. 1983. SADF and the Civic Action Program. *Work in Progress*, 29: 19-32.
- Frankel, P. 1984. *Pretoria's Praetorians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Frederikse, J. 1982. *None but ourselves*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Geldenhuis, D.J. and Kotze, H. 1983. Aspects of Political Decision-making in South Africa. *Politikon*, 10: 33-45.
- Gillomee, H. 1983. The Militarisation of Government Policy in South Africa. *Indicator*, 1(2).
- Graaf, M. 1988. Hawks and Doves: The Pro- and Anti-Conscription Press in South Africa. Durban: CCSU.
- Hachten, W.A. and Giffard, C.A. 1984. *Total Onslaught*. Johannesburg: Macmillan.
- Knightley, P. 1982. *The First Casualty*. London: Quartet Books.
- Louw, P.E. 1984. The Libertarian Theory of the Press: How Appropriate in the South African Context? *Communicatio*, 10(1).
- Louw, P.E. 1983. The English and Afrikaans Press: One Press or Two? *Communicatio*, 9(2).
- Mattelart, A. 1979. Notes on the Ideology of the Military State. In: A. Mattelart and S. Siegelau (Eds.), *Communication and Class Struggle. I: Capitalism, Imperialism*. New York: International General, 402-431.

- McCuen, J.L. 1966. *The Art of Counter Revolutionary Warfare - The Strategy of Counter Insurgency*. London: Faber.
- Meiring, G. 1986. Fighting on Two Fronts: The Hearts and Minds of the Border War. *Indicator*, 3(3).
- Moss, G. 1980. Total Strategy. *Work in Progress*, 11.
- Muller, P. 1986. The Media and Security Forces: Is a Joint Strategy Possible? *Communicare*, 5(1).
- Nusas. 1984. *In Whose Defence? Conscription and the SADF*. Cape Town: Nusas
- Nusas. 1982. *Total War in South Africa: Militarisation and the Apartheid State*. Cape Town: Nusas.
- O'Meara, D. 1983. *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1934-1948*. Johannesburg: Ravan.
- Pinnock, D. and Tomaselli, K.G. 1985. Underdevelopment and the Progressive Press in South Africa. *FUSE*, 7(5): 215-218.
- Pollak, D. 1979. *Up Against Apartheid*. Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois.
- Potter, E. 1975. *The Press as Opposition: The Political Role of South African Newspapers*. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Poulantzas, N. 1982. *Political Power and Social Classes*. London: Verso.
- Poulantzas, N. 1979. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Ranelagh, J. 1986. *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
- Rapoport, A. 1968. *Clausewitz On War*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Sarakinsky, I. 1988. A Web of National Manipulation. *Work In Progress*, 55: 38-41.
- Saul, A. and Gelb, S. 1981. *The Crisis in South Africa: Class Defense, Class Revolution*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

- Seegers, A. 1988. The Government's Perception and Handling of South Africa's Security Needs. In: D.J. Van Vuuren, N.E. Wiehahn, N.J. Rhoadie, and M. Wiechers (Eds.), *South Africa: The Challenge of Reform*. Pietermaritzburg: Owen Burgess Publishers, 407-424.
- Seegers, A. 1984. Dimensions of Militarisation: Separate Development, State Structures and the Rise of the Military in South Africa. Paper presented at the Economic Development and Racial Domination Conference, University of Western Cape, October.
- Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the Mass Media*. RP/80/1981. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Swilling, M. and Phillips, M. 1988. Reform, Security and White Power: Re-thinking State Strategies in the 1960s. Paper presented at the 19th Annual Conference of the Association of Sociologists of South Africa.
- Thompson, R. 1966. *Defeating Communist Insurgency - Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Tomaselli, K.G. 1984. 'Adapt or Die': Militarisation and the South African Media. *Reality*, 16(1): 8-13.
- Tomaselli, K.G. and Tomaselli, R.E. 1987. The Political Economy of the South African Press. In: K.G. Tomaselli, R.E. Tomaselli and J. Muller (Eds.), *Narrating the Crisis: Hegemony and the South African Press*. Johannesburg: Lyon, 98-103.
- Tomaselli, R.E. and Tomaselli, K.G. 1986. A Pressing Emergency: The Commercial Media Under the Bureau. *Indicator SA*, 4(3): 19-22 (Durban).
- Trinquier, R. 1964. *Modern Warfare - A French View of Counterinsurgency*. New York: Praeger.
- Work in Progress*. 1982. Militarisation in South Africa. 24: 16-20.
- Newspapers and magazines consulted:
- Star; Rand Daily Mail; Weekly Mail; Sunday Times; Sunday Tribune; Sunday Star; Rapport; Daily News; Natal Mercury; Pretoria News; Beeld; Burger; Vaderland; Transvaler; Citizen; Cape Times; Argus; Eastern Province Herald; Evening Post; Paratus; Uniform.