Corporate monopoly in the South African print media: Implications for the alternative press with particular reference to *New Nation*

Abstract

This dissertation sets out to analyse post-apartheid re-arrangements of press ownership and control following the reform process that led to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. Located within the historical context of the South African political economy, it pays attention to the decline of the alternative or leftist press from the close of the 1980s. The incorporation of *New Nation* in 1995 into the corporate press marked the final decline of the alternative press in South Africa. This decline should be rooted in the dynamics of socio-political and economic reform in South African society. Linked to this decline, and of importance to this study, is the way the powerful private enterprise newspaper sector has made attempts to change in response to political criticisms emanating from interest groups within civil society, and the African National Congress (ANC) in particular. The ANC ascended to political power in 1994, emerging as the most significant political fraction in the Government of National Unity (GNU). The post-apartheid restructuring in the newspaper industry, initiated by the private white-owned corporate or mainstream press, is an illustration of what political economy theorists have noted that: "Many of the actions of capitalists are in fact reactions…attempts to maintain profits in the face of pressures exerted by shifts in the general economic and political system" (Murdock, 1982:125). The decline of the alternative press and the restructuring that has occurred in the newspaper industry, have had the impact of further narrowing the South African public sphere of which the press constitutes an important part. The concept of the public sphere, which was initially developed by Jurgen Habermas (1989) and later re-articulated by others, refers to the platform or `space' through which individual citizens come together as a public, debate and democratically arrive at decisions on matters common concern to themselves.

Introduction

- The Problem and its Setting
- Statement of Purpose
- Organisation of this Work

In South Africa, control of the print media, which constitutes a large section of the national media, is a virtual monopoly of a few privately owned newspaper groups. These groups are underpinned by large commercial sectors of the national economy. In their long history of establishment, they have found themselves embedded in the interests of those groups at the helm of political and economic power. Generally, the South African media have, since colonial times, formed a considerable constituent of a racially narrow public sphere. Access to, and participation in, the public sphere has been dominated by the dominant political and economic groups of society. This is despite the widely-held claim that the free enterprise press in South Africa is an independent press in comparison to most of the mass media in the continent. The private enterprise newspaper sector constituting the largest portion of the print media industry is known as the corporate press.

However, developing almost contemporaneously along with the corporate press, was a genre of newspaper publications which emerged in an attempt to fill in the information gap that the corporate press neglected, and to access participation in the public sphere, to the neglected subordinate classes. This press, known as the alternative or left-wing press, arose primarily to represent discourses and opinions which were counterpoised with those of the dominant classes (Tomaselli & Louw, 1991:5). It also emerged to challenge the way the subordinate classes were represented in the South African media in general. The alternative press emerged in an attempt to re-orient the agenda of public discourse and to bring in new popular issues to the fore. It sought for the legitimation of new voices, that is, the inclusion of issues from people previously excluded from engaging in matters of public discourse.

The rise of the alternative press in response to the growth and ideological practices of the corporate newspapers began, albeit slowly, as early as the beginning of the 20th Century with such publications as *Imvo Za Bantsundu*, *Izindaba za Bantu*, *Izwi la Bantu*, *Ilanga lase Natal*, and various others (Switzer, 1991:63). The common goal among these earliest alternatives was that they all supported the African nationalist cause. However, this nationalist bent did not last for long as these publications either were forced to close down or were bought by, or incorporated into, corporate newspapers.

In the 1980s a plethora of even more radical alternative publications such as *New Nation, Grassroots, South* and others spawned by the radicalisation of the nationalist political movements, emerged. Most of these newspapers obtained their funding from overseas donors or missionary institutions. These bodies were sympathetic to publications which encouraged the airing of alternative discourses which countered apartheid (Louw, 1993:177; Tomaselli and Louw, 1991). But the coming of a new South African political dispensation in the early 1990s meant decline for these papers. With the initiation of the socio-political reform process from the end of the 1980s, foreign donors withdrew their funding. This withdrawal followed the repeal of apartheid and

the introduction of a democratic constitution. Finding themselves disabled by lack of adequate financial resources to viably compete in the monopolistic market, the alternative newspapers closed down (Louw, 1993:177). Those titles such as *New Nation* which have survived, have found themselves incorporated into the corporate newspaper groups.

At the time of writing, the print industry remained concentrated in the hands of the few white capitalist owners. A heavy concentration and monopoly of media ownership, whether by the State or Capital, has the effect of narrowing public `space' through which citizens can take part in discussions of issues of public concern. The concentration of print media ownership in a few hands led to criticisms from the new democratically elected government, as well as some groups in civil society. In response to these political criticisms, the private enterprise newspaper owners responded by undertaking restructuring, a process which left the print media under the control of even fewer hands.

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

The beginning of the 1990s saw the emergence of democracy in South Africa after many centuries of colonialism and four decades of legislated apartheid. The repeal of apartheid, saw it replaced by a guarantee of Western liberal values and standards, as found in the Interim Constitution put in place during the period of transition to democracy between 1990 and 1994. But seemingly, beyond the 1994 all-race and multi-party elections South Africa was characterised by a "normative consensus on democracy, without significant indications on how this could be realised on the ground" (Gillwald, 1994:1). The mass media in any modern society are central to this process of democratisation, as they represent a major resource for effective citizenship without which people cannot make the informed decisions that are crucial to democracy. But this essential resource in this country has been, since its development during the colonial times, under the ownership and control of the classes privileged to hold political and economic power. Resultantly, access to, and participation in, discussions of matters of public concern through the media, have thus been limited to these privileged classes which have constituted a minority in the South African social stratum. Siebert and others have noted about the operations of the media: "the press always take on the forms of the socio-economic and political structures within which they operate" (Siebert et al, 1959:79).

In the transitional period of the 1990s, with the exception of the re-regulated SABC, ownership and control of large sections of the media especially the print media, remained still concentrated in the hands of few private enterprises. In March 1996, the major owners of the South African press were Independent Newspapers Holdings (formerly Argus Newspapers Holdings); Times Media Limited; Nasionale Media Berperk, Perskor and the newly formed New Africa Investments Limited (NAIL). The concentration of ownership in South Africa:

> …rates among the highest in the world with four groups
> controlling close to 90 per cent of the daily circulation of

newspapers in the country. Between them they also own and control a third of the registered papers in the rural areas; an estimated 70 per cent of the knock and drops, and half of the registered magazines (Oosthuisen, 1995:2).

With the end of apartheid after 1990, the new South African Interim Constitution explicitly guaranteed press freedom and freedom of ownership with the view that this would encourage diversity of ownership and therefore diversity of opinion (*Sowetan*, June 5, 1995:11). The concept of diversity of opinion lies behind the freedom of speech clause in the South African Interim Constitution. The apparent implications of this being that, public `space' for debate and participation therein would be broadened. The white-owned newspaper groups had insisted on this clause during the writing of the Constitution. Seemingly, the fear behind this clause was that the new black-led government that was ascending to political power at the time, might have power to limit that diversity as has been experienced in some independent African countries such as Zimbabwe.

Since the 1990 reforms, various political and racial criticisms and charges have been levelled against the highly concentrated nature of ownership and control of the South African enterprises in general, and the press in particular. These criticisms have emanated mostly from the ANC and other social movements within civil society. As a group emerging to political power the ANC has faced the problem of lack of direct access to, and control of the media sector, hence the political charges. The calls by the ANC-led Government of National Unity (GNU) for free and unedited air time from the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) (*Sowetan*, 5 June 1995:11), testify to the dilemma it is facing as far as direct access to public media is concerned. The continued political and racial criticisms from such organisations as the Black Editors' Forum, Council for African Thought, including those from the ANC as well, for black affirmative action in the control and ownership of the print media, also constitute part of the calls for deconcentration of free enterprise ownership in South Africa. The recent tensions between the Black Editors Forum and the Conference of Editors, have also signified tensions between private enterprise and civil society. In response to this the major economic and media players have responded by undertaking `unbundling' or restructuring. Unbundling is the desegregation of a company by selling its constituent parts (Tomaselli, 1996:6). Ironically, the restructuring of press ownership which has thus far been witnessed has had the effect of further narrowing public `space' for debate.

Argus Holdings' so-called unbundling, with which this study is particularly concerned, resulted in the selling of its large components early in 1994 to an individual capitalist entrepreneur, Irish Tony O'Reilly, an international media mogul. The company had, in the previous year, also sold its largest circulating African daily, *Sowetan*, to a consortium of black businessmen, and assisted them to form New African Investment Limited (NAIL). Tony O'Reilly's group has recently helped NAIL purchase *New Nation*, which had been the only alternative title remaining outside monopoly ownership in the post-apartheid period (see discussion in Chapter Five of this study). The incorporation of *New Nation* by a corporate company seems to be a repeat process of what happened to earlier alternatives, in which these papers have had either to fold

up or sell themselves to the more affluent groups. During the apartheid era, this title had played a significant role in accessing voices previously excluded by the corporate media.

The concern in the mid-1990s, as expressed by many people and interest groups within the realm of civil society, was that the range of opinions to which the public had access, was limited by a few private media enterprises that were driven by profit. Those who control the conduits of print media information were far too few for a democratising country. Such a heavy concentration of ownership has the effect of restricting public `space' for debate, and this is an impediment to the democratising process, as much as it is in countries where political and state monopoly of media ownership exist.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This study analyses post-apartheid press ownership re-arrangements with particular reference to the unbundling of Argus Newspaper Holdings. Particular attention is paid to the sale of *Sowetan* to NAIL by Argus, and the incorporation of the former alternative title *New Nation*. NAIL is headed by Dr Ntatho Motlana, a long standing member of the ANC. In this study I analyse some of the political and economic imperatives that impinged upon the formation of NAIL and the subsequent establishment of its newspaper stable.

The formation of NAIL and its acquisition of *Sowetan* and *New Nation*, as well as other papers that were earmarked for acquisition such as *Ilanga* (Klaaste, October 1995:interview with author), are helping in the process of creating a new hegemony through the current discourses of nation-building, reconstruction and the idea of South Africa as a `rainbow-nation'. Such discourses have been engineered to help bring South Africans together as a nation, and are, I argue, a way of concealing the continuing contradictions of an adapting capitalist social formation. The concealment of such contradictions is helping in the construction of a new hegemonic order. Hegemony can be defined as the dominance of one social class or group by another, and this domination can be achieved through force or persuasion or both. The corporate press has operated in such a way that the central band of views and opinions which are emerging as dominant, are drawing from the new social and political process which itself is more subtly contentious than it appears. Thus in emphasizing the consensual and dominant values the press in South Africa is playing a part in reaffirming a highly specific ideology to which no counter is easily available. The new political and socio-economic scenario in South Africa is such that those forces of the left that were in opposition to right-wing white minority rule, have ascended to political power and have created an historic ruling hegemonic alliance with the right-wing political groups as well as with those who control economic power. The (GNU), as well as ANC's endorsement of, and its close relations to private enterprise and the market economy, bear testimony to this. The new historic bloc has to elicit consent and legitimacy from those that it governs.

ORGANISATION OF THIS WORK

This work is organised into five sections. The following chapter provides a theoretical framework of analysis. The second chapter is an historical background to the development and role of the media in the South African public sphere before the repeal of the apartheid order. The third chapter analyses the development of the progressive alternative press in the 1980s. The fourth section examines *New Nation* as a case study of the alternative press. The final chapter makes an analysis of ownership and control of the print media and its role in the public sphere in the post-apartheid period locating *New Nation* within dynamics of socio-economic and political change. The whole study shall be located within the wider framework of the general restructuring of the economy and the media in particular as a response to socio-political change.

CHAPTER ONE:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Introduction
- Political Economy of the Media
- Hegemony and the Role of Intellectuals
- The Media and the Public Sphere
- Rationalisation of the Public Sphere
- Rethinking the Public Sphere
- The Media as Modern Institutions of Power

Introduction

Central to the thinking of many South African media owners and their practitioners and academics alike, and virtually universally acclaimed by the English-language press in particular, has been the theory of the libertarian press. The theory applied to the South African context has, among others, the notions that: the private enterprise press in South Africa is free of State control and that journalists are objective and unbiased. The South African press has acted as a `Fourth Estate', that is, as an interface between the state and society, thereby accessing the general public to information about state institutions, and thus playing a democratising role on behalf of the society in general (Louw, 1992:31; McQuail, 1987:Ch5). The libertarian theory advanced in the Europe of epoch of Enlightenment from the 17th Century under the banner of democratisation of the media, was meant to free the media from the shackles of oligarchical and monarchical political censorship (White, 1992:141).

The Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the operations of the South African media, appointed in 1981 by the then apartheid regime, also acknowledged the existence of a `free' South African press and, in its recommendations rejected the libertarian press theory in favour of the social responsibility

thesis (Louw, 1992:1). These findings and recommendations were clearly in light of the conclusions reached by the apartheid State that the English press, in particular, was in opposition to the dominant economic and political order. This led to various forms of State intervention in the English-language press, both white and black owned, especially in the closing decades of the 1970s and much of the 1980s, when the legitimacy of the ruling classes was under serious threat of overthrow by the subordinate classes. This is an indication that there was much claim that the South African press developed under the guidelines of the libertarian philosophy.

The nature of the development and the role of the media in South African society has been one of the many manifestations of societal class conflicts and social change. The media have been involved in the social and political struggles for power and legitimacy, as well as control of, and participation in, the process of debate on matters of public concern. The development of the left-wing press in the 1980s was an attempt to legitimise resistance movements in their challenge against apartheid and to aid these movements to gain political ascendency. The media in this country has developed to reflect and manifest the conflictual relationship between the dominant and the subordinated classes.

South Africa has developed into a society characterised by capitalist relations of social stratification and can be seen as a developing sub-metropole of multinational capitalism. The basic institutional framework found in capitalist societies generates unequal social groups that stand in structural relations of domination and subordination. As such, any tools of analysis of the media and communications in such societies should include theories that reassess and account for the liberal assumptions that have hitherto governed the South African media organisations and the professional practices of their practitioners. There is need for a theoretical and conceptual framework that can grasp the complexities of historical, socio-economic and political relationships that have influenced the structure and operations of the South African media. Up until recently most studies amongst academic circles about the South African media have usually fallen within `positivist-functionalism' and `conservative idealism' and most of the commentators of these approaches identified their academic principles with dominant interests of the time. This was notwithstanding the importance of the politically legitimating role of the print media for dominant classes (Tomaselli & Louw, 1993:283).

An analytical premise that can comprehend the structure and role of the South African media within a wider context of societal class contradictions, and taking into account historicity, can also help debunk some of the mythical epistemological assumptions that have been held by many academics and professionals that the South African media operate within a libertarian framework. With this in view, this study will employ some of the recent theoretical ideas that have developed within the materialist approach. They help in understanding the subtle dynamics of domination and subordination within which media operate in modern capitalist societies. I have in mind the following works:

* The *political-economy* tradition as represented by such scholars as Graham Murdock and Peter Golding (1982, 1979) who have analysed bourgeois

societies and the media in terms of structural ownership and control in their wider historical, political and economic conditioning. They argue that these societies are characterised by unequal social class relations of domination and subordination and that the media play a key role in legitimating and maintaining such relations (Murdork and Golding:1979). They also hold that any discussions concerning the nature of media control should focus on two broad processes. The first process relates to factors operating outside media organisations which constitute a system of structural constraints within which media are enclosed. The second process involves agents within media organisations who exercise allocative and operational control in advancing their individual and class interests (Murdock, 1982).

 * Theoretical ideas of Antonio Gramsci (1971), recently rediscovered by English-language academics, are an *oeuvre* which provides insights into issues of *ideology*, and *hegemony* (Tomaselli et al, 1987:6). Gramsci has defined hegemony as the domination of one social class or group by another, through coercion or persuasion or both. Ideology is the way `men' make common sense of the world through the values they internalise in everyday life and experience. Gramsci has highlighted the role of intellectuals in social class struggles for and against domination and subordination. Though Gramsci does not deal with the media *per se*, the implications of his ideas are very clear: for him media and institutions and their workers are involved in political and ideological struggles at superstructural level of society.

 * The concept of the *public sphere* as articulated by Jurgen Habermas (1989) and developed by others (Calhoun C, 1994; Fraser N, 1994; Dahlgren P, 1991 and Thompson, 1993), also provides insights which can help inform researchers on communication and the role of the media in modern societies. Habermas like Gramsci, is also concerned with socio-political class struggles in modern societies. He locates the media in these struggles. The public sphere refers to the `space' or arena through which individual citizens come together as a public, critically debate issues that affect them, and reach informed decisions through consensus. Habermas' accounts of the rise of literary and political journalism and the subsequent transformation of the press into one of the several mass institutions of a consumer society, can help us comprehend the role and position of the media in the process of institutionalised public discussion of matters of general interest in any modern society.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in which he articulates the idea of the public sphere, Habermas nonetheless, concerns himself much with the idea of a single or dominant public sphere (1989). However, some commentators (Calhoun, 1994; Fraser N, 1994; Dahlgren P, 1991; Thompson, 1993 and others) have thrown in some very insightful and interesting critiques which help to better understand the conflictual nature of the relationship between State power and society. They argue that there is need to break away from the Habermasian idea of a singular public sphere. They reconceptualise the public sphere as having multiple forms. For example, Dahlgren has pointed to the existence of other nonbourgeois alternative public spheres which grew alongside and in opposition to the dominant bourgeois sphere. Calhoun raises the importance of social movements as part of public spheres that are subsidiary to the bourgeois or

dominant sphere. If we consider the concept as having multiple forms then we can better understand conflictual social relations within which media operate in modern societies.

 * The role of the media can also be understood in terms of recent theories of post-modern thought as especially propagated by Michel Foucault (1976). His theory about the nexus of power and knowledge can enhance our understanding of the media as institutions that help extend power relations of domination in modern capitalist societies. Foucault sees the modern institutions of consumer societies such as the media, as part and parcel of the subtle mechanisms of maintaining social structural relations of domination and subordination. Though not a materialist scholar, his ideas could be usefully employed in our understanding of modern capitalist institutions and their role in society.

 * This study is also indebted to the research done by Lisa Bold, Nikhil Bramdaw and Andrew Young (1994) at the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies (CCMS) in which they analysed corporate ownership and control with reference to Argus Newspapers Holdings (now Independent Newspapers Holdings). Keyan G. Tomaselli (1996), has up-dated this research study to include some of the recent developments in the post-apartheid media and the public sphere. Tomaselli's work, together with that of P.E. Louw (1987, 1991, 1992, 1993), on the South African media in general, employ critical approaches in their studies. Some of these approaches will be essentially useful in this study. This dissertation shall build upon these works, to include the most recent developments within the South African print media landscape. Below, I elaborate on the theoretical and conceptual framework of analysing this study.

Political Economy of the Media

The analysis of the South African media should be placed within the wider context of a society characterised by social class relations reminiscent of capitalist societies. The media have played a key role in the legitimation of unequal social class relations. The continuity of capitalism as a system depends on the maintenance of the unequal class relations that characterise it. Marxist theory has defined social classes in terms of the relations of production, that is, in terms of social relations of control and subordination which, on an economic level are defined in terms of ownership (or lack of it) of the means of production. On the level of ideology they are defined in the way in which classes as a whole fulfil the roles assigned to them (Tomaselli et al, 1987:9). In capitalist societies social class inequalities remain a central structural axis. The capitalist system has to perpetually legitimate the social strata by reforming itself, and constantly recreating and presenting as natural and inevitable, the societal inequalities through social and cultural production.

Mass communications have played a significant role in the overall process of recreating world-views of society and reproducing class relations through cultural and social reproduction. They relay social knowledge and social imagery, and Murdock and Golding have noted that:

...available evidence indicates that most people in these societies [capitalist] get most of their information about the social structure from the mass media, and that by and large control of this crucial flow of social imagery is concentrated in the hands of groups towards the top end of the social structure (Murdock and Golding, 1979:12).

Any study therefore that analyses class relations and the process of legitimation should thus take into account concrete consideration of the role of mass communications which most studies have often ignored. The passage below written by Marx and Engels emphasises the importance of the mass media in capitalist societies:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it...In so far as they rule as a class and determine the compass of the epoch, it is self-evident that they among other things...regulate the production and distribution of ideas of their age...(Marx and Engels, 1975:39).

This celebrated passage from Marx and Engels' in the *German Ideology* provides an important starting point towards an understanding of the relations between communications, class and social control. There are three propositions that are put forward by this passage: `control over the production and distribution of ideas' is concentrated in the hands of the capitalist owners of the means of production; that as a result of this control their views and accounts of the world receive insistent publicity and come to dominate the perceptions of the subordinate groups; and that this ideological domination plays an important role in the maintenance of class inequalities (Murdock and Golding, 1979:15). Emphasizing the fact that the system of class control over the production and distribution is itself embedded in, and conditioned by, the fundamental dynamics underpinning the capitalist economy, Marx noted that:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life (Marx, 1975:425).

Murdock and Golding also note that an adequate analysis of cultural production by mass communications needs to examine their class control, but also the general economic context within which its control is exercised. This should not however, be seen in the narrow sense of economic determinism, but in a much looser sense of setting limits, exerting pressures and closing off options (Williams, 1973:4, cf. Murdock and Golding, 1979:15). Control over

material resources and their changing distribution are ultimately the most powerful of the many levers operating in cultural production. Murdock (1982) also argues that discussions concerning the nature of media control should also focus on two broad processes. The first of these processes relates to political and economic factors operating outside the realm of media organisations and constitute a system of structural constraints within which media operations are enclosed. The second process involves agents within media organisations who exercise allocative and operational control in advancing their individual and class interests. Allocative control, according to Murdock, refers to "the power to define the overall goals and scope of the corporation and determines the general ways it deploys its productive resources"; and operational control occurs at a lower level and is "confined to decisions about the effective use of resources already allocated and the implementation of policies already decided upon at the allocative level" (Murdock, 1982:125). The site of allocative control rests with those who have ownership.

Murdock argues that theorists from both tendencies ask two kinds of questions about corporate control. The first are "action/power questions", which identify "key allocative controllers" who exercise ultimate control over human and material resources. Second are "structure/determination questions", which identify economic and political determinants constraining both allocative and operational controllers. Both external and internal constraints therefore, ought to be considered simultaneously (Murdock, 1982:24).

Hegemony and the Role of Intellectuals

In analysing the emergence and role of intellectuals in society, Antonio Gramsci's interest lay in the way in which political rule and hegemony of a particular class in a historical period is concretely articulated and organised. At the heart of his concern was the examination of the role of intellectuals in political struggles and in constructing civil society. For him, the intellectuals organised the beliefs and consciousness of society. The implications of his ideas for media owners and their workers are clear. For him, media practitioners and their owners are but one category of intellectuals who perform certain functions in society on behalf of the classes they represent. Gramsci focused his attention on the superstructure out of his concern with the role of intellectuals in either helping to generate a leftist revolution, or in aiding the *status quo* in preventing a revolution.

Gramsci saw the superstructure as a site of struggle in which forces of the Left and Right are locked in. The superstructure represented an arena where contradictions of capitalism could either be: `manifested' or `papered over'. The work of the intellectuals of the Right is to try and "paper over", "camouflage", or "deflect" these contradictions (cf. Louw, 1991:156). The role and work of Rightist intellectuals would coincide with the labour of those what the Frankfurt School called the "culture industry" which would be to try and "still" the dialectic, or at least to "deflect" it in favour of the maintenance of the status quo. On the other hand intellectuals of the Left would be trying to

"encourage" dialectical contradictions and help to make social contradictions manifest (Louw, 1991:156).

Gramsci identified two types of intellectuals: traditional and organic intellectuals. Constituting traditional intellectuals would be, for instance, clerics, philosophers, the creative artists or the `contemplative thinkers in the old idealist sense of the intelligentsia' (Eagleton, 1987:119). Traditional intellectuals are those intellectuals who appear to be outside the ambit of connectedness with a particular historical social formation or means of production. They hold themselves aloof from contemporary struggles and seem to remain detached from any social class. On the other hand, organic intellectuals, grew organically from the ranks of different classes in society. They are less of the `contemplative thinkers', and they actually take part in social life. They help to bring to theoretical articulation political currents within which social life is contained. They are specialists who fulfil technical, directive, and organisational functions and needs of society. Their goal in that society is to construct a common consciousness in which other heterogeneous wills are welded together on the basis of a common conception of the world. In one of his most celebrated passages, Gramsci noted the following about organic intellectuals:

> Every social group coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its function, not only in the economic but also in the political and social fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of the new culture, of a legal system (Gramsci, 1971:5).

Organic intellectuals is that group of intellectuals which is more directly linked to a social group or class. They are a product of a social group; and their role is to lend that group some homogeneous consciousness in the cultural, political and economic fields. They are organic intellectuals in the sense that they all belong, as a category, to the same historical time as the class that elaborates on them (Gramsci, 1971:6). These intellectuals give the class that creates them and alongside which they emerge, a commonality that makes it aware of its function and place in all spheres of social life. They are characterised by their conscious responsibility and their role in production and organisation of work.

The role of South African media owners and professionals in the corporate press has been that of organic intellectuals created by the dominant groups that have formed the hegemonic bloc (Tomaselli et al, 1987). I also argue that the emergence of journalists and editors who worked for the alternative press represents another spectrum of organic intellectuals that was brought into being by a particular social class. The development of alternative journalism in this country was spawned by the rise of leftist social movements that opposed the apartheid order.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony can be defined as the dominance of one class

or social group by another, and this domination is achieved either through force or persuasion or both. It is exercised through what Gramsci terms the `civil society' which is an ensemble of educational, religious and associational institutions. It is attained through a large number of ways in which such institutions of civil society operate to shape, directly or indirectly the cognitive and effective structures whereby men perceive and evaluate reality.

The composition of `hegemony' is determined by the interests of the various class fractions represented in the ruling alliance or the `hegemonic bloc'. The power it exerts over subordinate classes cannot solely rest on force and coercion-it needs to be attained 'without force predominating over consent' as Gramsci puts it:

> The normal exercise of hegemony is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally without force predominating over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force would appear to be based on the consent of the majority by the so-called organs of public newspapers associations- which therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied (Gramsci, 1971:80).

The granting of legitimacy to the dominant classes is therefore the mixture of force and compromise to the various conflicting and competing demands necessary in maintaining the status quo. It must appear natural and inevitable. Gramsci argues that consent is a very crucial element in the maintenance of any hegemonic order. Every hegemonic order is underpinned by a `hegemonic principle' and in South Africa, up until recently, it has been `racial capitalism' which refers to capitalist relations overlaid by economic and political apartheid (Muller, 1987:149). The hegemonic principle is always embodied in an ideological discourse, which is necessarily a discourse for a specific set of interests. Ideology here, is seen, not as a system of ideas imposed from somewhere outside, but rather, "….as an inter-linked ensemble of social, political, and economic structures which permeate our everyday experiences" (Tomaselli et al, 1987:22). The practice of apartheid was similar to what Gramsci termed `organic' ideologies. By organic ideology, Gramsci meant that, it had the ability to "organise human masses and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc" (cf. Tomaselli et al, 1987:15). Apartheid was an example of an organic ideology which was constructed from elements of the beliefs of religious `chooseness' and racial exclusivity (1987:15). In other words apartheid was:

> …a means by which…an alliance of the ruling classes, is not only able to coerce subordinate classes into conforming to its interests, but to exert total authority over the classes (Tomaselli et al, 1987:15).

The Media and the Public Sphere

The theory of the public sphere, as articulated by Jurgen Habermas (1989),

refers to the sphere between the State power or authority and the realm of civil society where private individuals publicly and democratically arrived at decisions through critical and rational discourse. Ideally, it is the space in which citizens deliberate about affairs of commonality amongst them and hence it is an institutionalised arena of discursive interaction. The public sphere, conceptually distinct from both the State and the official economy, is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can be critical of State power and authority.

Tracing its development in bourgeois societies of 17th and 18th Century Europe, Habermas has argued that the rise of the public sphere was accompanied by the development of competitive capitalism which tended to foster liberal democracy. It represented a clash between the bureaucratic practices of the absolutist state and the emergent bourgeois class. Analysing the development of bourgeois public spheres in continental Europe from the beginning of the 18th Century, Habermas defined the public sphere in the following terms:

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatised but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. The medium of political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent people's public use of their reason (Habermas, 1989:27).

It should be understood that in examining the liberal bourgeois public sphere Habermas deals with a historically specific phenomenon that was created out of the relations between capitalism and the state in the 17th and 18th Centuries in Europe. Hence it is "a category that is typical of an epoch. It cannot be abstracted from the unique developmental history of that `civil society' originating in the European High Middle Ages; nor can it be transferred, ideally typical generalised, to any number of historical situations" (Habermas, 1989:ix) It was a sphere or `space' in which state authority was publicly monitored through informed and critical discourse by the people. According to Habermas, this space of public discourse represented a `new sphere of communicative action' upon which power is built (Golding, 1993:18). It was the provider of communicative power from the governed to the governors. It is a collective effect of speech in which reaching consensus is an end in itself for all those involved. Habermas linked the development of the bourgeois public sphere with the related interdevelopment of the literary and political consciousness of the new emergent social class. This new sphere of communicative action developed, as he argues, because the rise of capitalism provided the new emergent political bourgeois class with both material resources and time, to create a network of institutions within civil society in which the new political force, and public opinion could come into existence (Golding, 1994:18). He brings together literary and political journalism (that is, the periodical press of the 19th Century particularly in England), the spread of new centres of sociability in the urban centres of early modern Europe, such as libraries, universities, learned and debating

societies, salons and coffee houses as constitutions of the public sphere. Here a plurality of ideas was aired in a context that was free from both State and capital intervention.

Habermas argues that the critical debate engendered by the press helped to gradually transform the state into its modern institutional form. By being persistently scrutinised in various public forums, parliament eventually relinquished its right to prevent any publication of its proceedings or anything it found inimical to it. This development, together with other constitutional gains, including the right to free speech, secured a political role for the public sphere which eventually became legally recognised (Thompson, 1993:177). From the rise of the periodical press in the 18th Century, the mass media have evolved to perform the functions of the public sphere. This has been a result of their long tradition as an interface between those in State authority and society.

Gradually, with the maturing of capitalism, the public polity expanded beyond just the bourgeois class to include other groups that had been systematically disadvantaged by the machinations of the free market and state power. They all came to seek some form of regulation of public authority. The Habermasian public sphere at the time was protected from the power of public authority and was easily accessible. The public sphere was in principle open to all in the same way that access to the market was open to all, because the "cost of entry for each individual was dramatically lowered by the growth in scale of the market" (Golding, 1994:18). All participants within the public sphere were on terms of equal power because the costs of participation were widely and evenly spread and because social wealth within the bourgeois class was evenly distributed. The public sphere then was the arena in which every voice was equal to one. It was distinct from the private interests that governed civil society on the other hand because, in the Enlightenment tradition, it obeyed the rules of rational discourse, political views and decisions being open not to the play of power, but to that of argument based upon evidence, and because its concern was not private interest but the public good.

Rationalisation of the Public Sphere

However, Habermas argues that the bourgeois public sphere of rational politics was destroyed by the very same forces that had brought it into being. In the 19th and 20th Centuries, the state had become so intertwined with society to the extent that the sphere became indistinct. This meant the structural transformation or the end of the liberal bourgeois public sphere. Habermas' discussion of the structural transformation of the public sphere turns largely on the continual expansion the public sphere to include more participants as well as the development of large scale social organisations as mediators of individual participation. Habermas argues that as the public sphere expanded to include the nonbourgeois strata, conditions for rational discourse were eventually eroded. Class struggles came to polarise society and the public was fragmented into a mass of competing interest groups. In the end, with the development of the welfare state mass democracy, the

state and society became mutually intertwined.

Habermas points out that the development of monopoly capitalism led to an uneven distribution of wealth (growing patterns of ownership concentration in the media, the dominance of advertising and public relations).This in turn led to unequal access and control over that sphere. In particular, the rise of advertising and public relations has embodied these trends since they represent direct control by private or state interests of the flow of public information in the interest, not of rational discourse, but of manipulation. The public sphere rather became a field of competition among conflicting and contending interests. Various organisations representing diverse interests of diverse constituencies emerged to negotiate among themselves and with public officials, much to the exclusion of the general population from the proceedings of public discussions and decision-making. As public discussions have become restricted, and the media in modern capitalist societies serve less as organs of public and information debate than as vehicles which manage consensus as well as promoting a consumer society. The masses now became managed by political leaders through sophisticated media techniques in an attempt to legitimate their political programmes.

Rethinking the Public Sphere

As several critics have noted, Habermas' account idealises the liberal public sphere and fails to examine other non-liberal, non-bourgeois and contemporary public spheres, such as the feminist movement for the rights of women. The bourgeois public sphere never was the only public sphere. Peter Dahlgren, for instance, has drawn attention to the existence of alternative, popular, informal or oppositional public spheres such as the early radical press, which he argues Habermas neglected:

> Under the periods of liberal and advanced capitalism there have existed other fora which have shaped people's consciousness, served as networks for exchange of information, rumour and gossip, and provided setting for cultural expression (Dahlgren, 1991:9).

Habermas neglects a host of other competing counter-publics which arose almost contemporaneously with the bourgeois public sphere. There arose counter-publics such as the nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, women's publics etc., which stood in a conflictual relationship with the bourgeois public. These contested the exclusionary nature and norms of the bourgeois public sphere, and they elaborated alternative norms of public speech and political behaviour (Calhoun, 1994:36). There is need to see the concept of the public sphere as referring, not to a single or dominant phenomenon, but as concept that allows for other competing and even counter-public spheres.

Breaking with Habermas' notion that there must be one public sphere, Craig Calhoun (1994) has criticised Habermas for his inattention of social

movements which, he argues, form part of subsidiary public spheres. Seemingly, public discourse and democratic politics are influenced by social movements. Social movements are very crucial in re-orienting the agenda of public discourse, bringing new issues into the fore. In the modern era social movements have to a larger extent, helped to legitimate new voices that have previously been excluded. Calhoun argues that the public sphere involves a field of discursive connections and within this network there might be a more or less even flow of communication (Calhoun, 1994:37). There are always clusters of relatively greater density of communication within the looser overall field. These clusters may epitomise the whole. They may also be organised around issues, categories, persons, or basic dynamics of larger society. However, Calhoun points out that we should not just focus so much on the thematic content, but also on how each particular cluster is internally organised, how "it maintains its boundaries and internal cohesion in relation to the larger public and whether its separate existence reflects sectional interests, or a felt need for bulwarks against the hegemony of the dominant ideology" (Calhoun, 1994:37). The Habermasian notion of the public sphere thus neglects the importance of a much more pluralistic approach to the conceptualisation of the public sphere.

Several commentators have pointed out to the development of the plebian public sphere (that is the discourse of artisans, workers, peasants etc), alongside the liberal or bourgeois public sphere, which is cited in Habermas' structural transformation as a derivative discourse during the 17th and 18th Centuries (Calhoun, 1994:38). The rise of the plebian and other nonbourgeois public spheres is an indication of the nature of the field of force that impinged on the bourgeois public sphere. The bourgeois public sphere, which itself was an outgrowth of the rise of capitalism, was not just oriented towards the defence of civil society against the State, but also towards the maintenance of a system of domination within civil society. The liberal public sphere was, throughout its existence, always permeated by demands from below. These demands took the forms, not only of calls for broader inclusivity but also more basic challenges and pushing new issues forward on the agenda of public discourse.

In the same vein, Nancy Fraser (1994) criticises Habermas' liberal or bourgeois public sphere as stopping short of developing a new post-bourgeois public sphere. In rethinking the public sphere, Fraser points towards an alternative, post-bourgeois conception of the public sphere. In stratified societies, that is, societies whose basic institutional framework generates unequal social groups in structural relations of domination and subordination, the subordinated groups have always found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics (the subaltern counter publics) (Fraser, 1994:123). They form these publics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses of their identities, interests and needs. Through their discourses they recast their needs and identities, thereby reducing, although not eliminating, the extent of their disadvantage in official public spheres. Such a conceptualisation of the public sphere becomes very important in understanding any modern society which is characterised by social conflict. Though Habermas argues that this concept cannot be transported ahistorically to other contexts, it is, however, applicable in the South African context, since

South African society has developed in a manner not very dissimilar to that of societies that Habermas studied. With the onset of British colonialism in this country in the 19th century, there developed quite a distinct South African public sphere, as the colonial settlers wrestled to regulate the power of Imperial authority. The emergence of newspapers during that period is nearly characteristic of the rise of the periodic press in 18th Century England and the anti-metropolitan criticism in pre1revolution America during colonial rule. The rise of the alternative press, especially in the 1980s must be taken as the emergence of a public sphere, albeit not a bourgeois one. It was a sphere that lay between the state and the new emerging civil society.

The Media as Modern Institutions of Power

Michel Foucault (1976) and post-modernist thought have introduced new insights concerning the emergence of modern institutions deriving from the epoch of Enlightenment and how these institutions have enhanced the power relations of domination in capitalist societies. Foucault in particular, sees modern institutions such as the mass media, as having the effect of interpellating `individuals' into subjects of domination, contrary to modernist thought that the `individual' has been emancipated from the `old' feudal power relations of domination.

The mass media produce social knowledge and social imagery. For Foucault, knowledge and power are two inextricably linked concepts. Power produces knowledge which has the impact of extending that power with potent effects over whom it is exercised (Foucault, 1976:232). He maintains that there can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth. Foucault makes the suggestion that it is truth that people are subjected to by power, which also produces what he calls the rules of right (Foucault, 1976:232). These rules of right then become instruments of domination and subjugation of the human beings into subjects. Says Foucault of the relationship between power and knowledge:

> …that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge that does not pre-suppose and constitute…power relations (Foucault, 1980:27).

According to Foucault, social science knowledge is enmeshed in wider political and socio-economic structures and institutions through which power is exercised in modern societies. J. Ball has also commented that: "These knowledges have interrelationships with the wider political and socio-economic history in the formation and constitution of human beings into subjects" (Ball, 1992:3).

Foucault's major concerns centre on the transition from traditional to modern, capitalist industrial societies and is specifically concerned with forms of knowledge and modes of social organisation characteristic of capitalist modernity. He is concerned with the emergence, expansion and consolidation

of administrative power through such institutions as the media in their modern form.

The above theoretical ideas shall inform the analysis and critique of the operations of the South African print media. The theories shall aid in illustrating the ideological, and legitimating role that the print media has played from its rise during the colonial times. These theories help us to understand how modern institutions such as the media, play key roles in reproducing capitalist relations of domination and subordination. The following chapter characterises the emergence and role of the South African press during the colonial apartheid period.

CHAPTER TWO:
AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS: THE COLONIAL AND APARTHEID PERIOD

- Introduction
- The Development of Press Formations
- The English-Language Press
- The Afrikaans Press
- TABLE 2.1: Circulation of Weekly Newspapers
- TABLE 2.2: Circulation of Daily Newspapers
- The Black Press prior to 1980
- Political Struggles for Hegemony
- Black Editorial Controls and Limitations

Introduction

The history of the development of the press in South Africa dates back to British colonisation in the 19th Century. It cannot be divorced from the historical socio-economic and political processes that were initiated by colonisation. The press came to reflect the tensions and contradictions that were created by colonialism and later, apartheid policies. Colonisation, like elsewhere in the continent, initiated the system of capitalism which completely changed the nature and relations of production.

The contradictions that issued out of colonial and apartheid practices reflected themselves at many levels of society. The development of the South African press was a reflection of the various inter and intra-class and racial tensions within the social class formation. The press, as it developed throughout the colonial and apartheid period, came to reflect the socio-economic and political antagonisms that were so replete in South African society. Social change which was catalysed by rival nationalisms in the country, impacted heavily on the way the press operated. This chapter shows how the various press formations that emerged, represented various interests and aspirations of the different classes which brought them into being. It gives an historical account of the rise of the press and its role in South African society during the colonial

period.

With the introduction of relations of production based on the exploitative nature of the capitalist system, there emerged social class formations which were in conflictual relationship with each other. British colonial settlers came to constitute the dominant economic fraction in the country. They started and eventually controlled the booming mining industry and other important sectors of the economy. The mining industry developed to become the backbone of the country's economy. Even today it continues to influence political and economic change (Innes, 1994:69). Hence, the English-speaking people formed the dominant economic fraction. The Afrikaner settlers who had been around the country since the 17th Century rose to political prominence (Muller, 1987:120). From the beginning of colonisation, there was always tension between the English and Afrikaans-speaking peoples. This conflict was based on the control of the national economy which the Afrikaners felt was monopolised by the British settlers. From the early days of colonisation the British visitors, officials and settlers had a generally anti-Afrikaner attitude. This partly stemmed from slave trade which the Afrikaners were still practising long after it had been internationally declared illegal (Morris, 1982:104). The British also resented the way the Afrikaner settlers were more like aristocrats. At the centre of Afrikaner economic activity was agriculture which relied heavily on cheap labour. When the British started their mercantile activities, they had problems in acquiring cheap labour which was confined to Afrikaner farming areas. The issue of labour and general Afrikaner mode of production became a cause for British resentment of the Afrikaner people (Morris, 1982:104).

Ethnic tension between the English and Afrikaans speakers culumnated in the 1898-1902 Anglo-Boer War in which the Afrikaners were defeated (Louw, 1993). The result of this war left white English speaking people in the driving seat of the South African economy. This engendered Afrikaner nationalism which developed in an attempt to contest English domination in the national economy. Afrikaner thinking revolved around the organic unity and the national destiny of Afrikanerdorm (Murray, 1982:4-5). The National Party (NP) formed in the early years of the 20th Century spearheaded this nationalism. The NP's ascendency to political power in 1948 and its subsequent institution of apartheid policies marked the height of Afrikaner nationalism. Afrikaner nationalism which manifested itself in apartheid policies, caused a lot of antagonism with the white English-speaking people. English colonial settlers saw Afrikaner nationalism as an affront to the stabilisation and practicability of the capitalist system (Morris, 1982:47; see also Louw, 1993). The antagonisms between the two groups gave the English settlers a `liberal' image and a sense of progressiveness. This image was to prevail in every Englishman's mind and was even transposed to the English-language press. On the other hand, Afrikaners appeared to be `conservative' and unwilling to change into `modernity'. Nonetheless, despite this tension and contradictions, the Afrikaans and the English class fractions dominated South African era. They both emerged in 1910 to form the dominant hegemonic bloc or ruling group of alliances. They believed in the capitalist system based on the exploitation of cheap African labour. The antagonism was essentially a conflict between fractions of capital over the redistribution of capital gained from the exploitation of black labour.

During colonial and apartheid rule, the dominant hegemonic order had been racial capitalism. The relationship between economic development and the system of white supremacy first came in the form of segregationist policies. This was followed by apartheid policies after 1948. One of the direct outgrowths of the capitalist hegemonic order was the proletarisation of the black labour force. Colonial and apartheid policies were a mechanism of effectively controlling the rapidly expanding black proletariat (Morris, 1982:53). This labour had to be adequately distributed amongst various sectors of the economy. Cheap black labour constituted an important part of the general social formation. With the advancement of capitalism and the entrenchment of apartheid in the 20th Century, there was an upsurge of black political unrest. African nationalism which grew from the start of the 20th Century, was an effort to challenge and eventually bring to an end, the colonial segregationist and apartheid practices.

The colonial social class formations as they developed in the country, were characterised by tension. Socio-political and racial relations were polarised by the legislation and entrenchment of apartheid after 1948. The polarisation led to South Africa becoming a highly interventionist capitalist State (Morris, 1982:49). This interventionist nature of the State should be located in the offensive struggle for white economic and political hegemony. Racial tension, from the start, was to strongly impact on the course of South African history.

The Development of Press Formations

The development of the South African press should be seen as a manifestation of the political struggle for and against white hegemony. In the colonial and apartheid period three recognisable categories of the press emerged, namely, the white-owned English and Afrikaans presses on the one, and the black press on the other hand. Each one of them reflected various compositions of the social class structure. They were each spawned by the particular needs of the classes whose aspirations and interests they came to represent. The white-owned press developed into distinct categories which emerged as part of a distinctively white-controlled public sphere. The division in the white-owned press represented the main dominant fractions within the ruling alliance of dominant classes, that is, the English and the Afrikaans fractions. This parallel development reflected the antagonistic nature of the relationship between Afrikaner and English interests. Political relations in the early colonial years, as they came to present themselves in the emergent South African press, were characterised by the antagonistic relationship between English and Dutch (later, Afrikaner) interests. This relationship was to strongly impact on future press developments in the country (Bold et al, 1994:5).

The Afrikaans press emerged as an unequivocal mouthpiece of Afrikaner nationalist ideology. On the other hand, the English-language press arose from the 19th Century in support of English capitalist interests in the country as well as British imperialism. As relations with the white Afrikaner people worsened after 1902, the English-language press reflected this antagonism. It became vocally opposed to the apartheid policies and Afrikaner nationalism

because these represented a threat to the capitalist order (Tomaselli et al, 1987). Alongside these white-owned press groups, there also emerged a black press which attempted to represent the aspirations of the African people in general. As colonial and later apartheid labour policies bore hard on the black proletariat, antagonistic relations were generated. The black press developed in three phases which were in tandem with developments in African political consciousness. It developed as part of the whole social movement that challenged the dominant hegemonic order. The first phase in black publishing began in the 1880s to about the 1940s was marked by elitist publications. Though they represented African expectations, they were not very radical in their opposition to colonial rule (Switzer, 1980). From the 1940s and 1950s onwards as opposition to apartheid became militant, black publications already in existence and others that emerged acquired radical discourses in opposition to the status quo. However, most of these pioneering black publications were soon to suffer economic and political constraints and restraints which led to the closure of some and the incorporation of most of them into the white-owned corporate newspaper groups. So that in the end black publications found themselves under the control of white newspaper owners serving the interests of the fractions of the ruling elite (Tomaselli et al, 1987:56).

Black journalists and editors who worked in these white-owned black-oriented papers especially in the 1970s, found themselves constrained in representing aspirations of their fellow black men and women, because of the editorial controls and policies of these companies. Black journalists suffered both internal and external constraints of corporate control. The limited and limiting conditions of practice for black journalists in the white-owned newspapers resulted in the frustration of fellow blacks who felt that the black journalists were nothing but a part of the `system' (Tomaselli et al, 1987:52). Such frustrations and that of some of the black journalists, especially in the 1970s as political tensions became more and more polarised, acted as an impetus to the rise of the third phase of black publishing which came in the decade of the 1980s. The 1980s witnessed the establishment of even more radical independent black papers that came to be known as the alternative or leftist press in South Africa. This press represented the rise of a new public sphere through which the new emerging civil society tried to influence the process of national public policy formulation. Below I discuss the various press formations that developed during the colonial period prior to 1980.

The English-Language Press

The history of the South African media dates back to the beginning of the 19th century with the advent of British imperialism which initiated the development of an English-language press that emerged along the ideas of `libertarian' ethics and press freedom. The ideas of press freedom had their roots in the British and European political and economic developments emanating from the epoch of Enlightenment and the rise of Europe to modernity (White, 1992:141). In 1829, the libertarian ethic of the press was recognised in the Cape Colony following a protracted struggle for press freedom between colonial officials and the London metropolitan rulers. This

was followed by a proliferation of newspapers throughout the major emerging urban centres of the country (Louw, 1993:159). This struggle for press freedom waged by British colonial settlers against the English colonial administration, by such people as Thomas Fairbain, Greg and Pringle among others, in the 1820s, marked:

> ...the beginning of a public sphere within colonial society in South Africa which came to regard its own interest as divergent from those of a colonial administration which had attempted to prevent participation in the public sphere (Bold et al, 1994:5).

As colonial settlers came to influence and shape colonial policies, the British settler mercantile class exerted political pressure for more effective and adventurous exploitation of the land and economic resources of the vast South African interior. They also became more articulate in defending their constitutional and political prerogatives as subjects of the British Empire (Hachten and Giffard, 1984:26). From the start, the struggle for press freedom in the colony was waged in the interests of an emerging Anglo-Saxon commercial class. The South African Commercial Advertiser became the first truly commercial newspaper, seeking advertising revenue and actively promoting the spread of commerce in Africa (Bold et al, 1994:5). The interests of this emergent commercial class no longer necessarily coincided with those of the colonial authorities in metropolitan London. The conflicting interests of British colonial administrators and colonial settlers are similar to relations that obtained between colonial settlers in the Americas and metropolitan Europe during the 18th Century. The colonial settlers publicly criticised, and ultimately rebelled against metropolitan countries for the sake of their own commercial and political interests. The conflictual relationship that obtained between the English settlers and the metropolitan administrators, and later, the Afrikaners, gave the English-language press the `liberal' aura which has always pervaded the thinking of many an English newsman (Bold et al, 1994).

During the colonial period, the English press was owned, almost entirely, by Argus Holdings and South African Associated Newspapers Limited (later renamed Times Media Ltd), the two corporate companies that came to dominate ownership of the English language newspapers until the mid-1990s. From the beginning, these two newspaper companies were intimately tied to the furtherance of capitalist- and more specifically, mining-capital's interests (Louw, 1993:160). These newspaper groups had links with the major sectors of the economy, particularly Anglo-American which rose to dominance as the country's mining and industrial giant. From its early days in the 1870s, Anglo-American became actively involved at a number of levels in influencing the direction of political and economic change in the country (Innes, 1994:15).

The founders and shareholdings of English-language newspaper corporates clearly reveal whose interests their efforts and operations would be directed towards. What was to become Argus Holdings was founded in 1889 as Argus Publishing and Printing Company the Cape Argus was established, by Joseph Francis Domer, an admirer of Cecil John Rhodes, who founded Argus largely to promote Rhodes interests and aspirations. By the mid-20th Century, key shareholders in the company included the following eminent mining

magnates; Anglo-American, Johannesburg Consolidated Investments, and the Bannarto Brothers (Louw, 1993:161).

Key allocative control of the English press was, from the early days, thus located in dominant economic institutions in the country. The Argus company's newspapers "became the voice of mining capital and supported those governments and political parties that served and continue to serve capitalist- especially mining-capital- interests" (Louw, 1993:161). Murdock (1982) has asserted that capitalists use communications corporations to further their interests and consolidate their privilege and power. As such, it came as no surprise that the newspapers established from the early days were used to serve the interests and purpose of their owners and founders. For instance, Louw (Louw, 1993:161) has noted that: "The new Johannesburg newspaper…called The Star,…served as the voice of mining-capital as well as of British imperialism".

Times Media Limited, formerly South African Associated Newspapers until the 1987 restructuring of the group, was started in 1906 by Jim Bailey with the Rand Daily Mail and the Sunday Times. Both these newspapers were products of the new colonial South Africa in which the British had succeeded in colonising South Africa following the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902. Louw has written of Jim Bailey in the following terms:

> Sir Abe Bailey was a wealthy capitalist who had made his fortunes in mining. He was a member of the Unionist Party…[which]…strongly advocated pro-British imperialist interests…the three Bailey Group newspapers could generally be seen to have supported the idea of building a South Africa closely tied to London; dominated by English-speakers; and in which whites dominated over blacks (Louw, 1993:167).

The start of the 20th Century experienced unprecedented phenomenal industrialisation in South Africa. The advancement of capitalism engendered the need for complete transformation of relations of production as the territory moved from mercantile colonialism of the 1870s to full-scale industrial production in the 20th Century. This development was originally based in the booming mining sector, but later spread to other economic sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. During this process of industrialisation the South African economy entered the stage of `monopoly capitalism', a situation characterised by consolidation and concentration, and subsequent monopolisation of ownership and control of sectors of the economy (Innes, 1994:69). In short, this period marked the rise of big business in South African industry. The trend of industrialisation and the rise of cartels did not leave the press industry untouched, as it also spread to that sector. This development was far more in keeping with the trends that took place in Europe and North America during their ages of industrialisation. Gordon Jackson has observed for the South African press industry that: "…the press [has tended] to perform far more in keeping with professional, production, and commercial standards of the West rather than the of Third World nations" (Jackson, 1993:30-31).

Since the historic formation of the South African Union in 1910, the English-

language in particular and later the Afrikaans press, underwent rapid and unprecedented commercialisation. This was happening in an era during which advertising was gaining considerable primacy in the whole economy. The end result of all this was that the press industry became quite well developed and sophisticated due to increased competition. In terms of Habermas, as far as the English press was concerned, the rise of the concept of a free press and its legalisation as a political public sphere, meant that the press could now act as a public arena or platform for `critical-rational debate' without being unduly pressured to take ideological sides, from both the state or the private economic sectors:

> …legalisation of a political public sphere released the press `as a forum of rational-critical debate', from the `pressure of to take sides ideologically'. This enabled it to abandon its polemical stance and concentrate on profit opportunities (Tomaselli, 1996:1)

However, the English press, which is universally self-acclaimed as liberal, and indeed the white-owned press in general, failed to provide that platform for `rational-critical debate' as it evolved alongside with specific ideological inclinations due to the nature of the political economy of its ownership. It undoubtedly supported the capitalist system which was based on the exploitative division of labour (Tomaselli et al, 1987:61). It also concentrated more on profit-maximisation and running its papers as big business, and less as organs of public and information debate. Growing patterns of ownership concentration in the newspaper industry, and the dominance of advertising increased the cost of entry to the public sphere and resulted in the unequal access and control over it. Advertising represents direct interest in the flow of information in the interest, not of rational discourse, but of manipulation. The English press thus operated under the dictates of the private economic sphere, and aided in generating and managing consensus as well as promoting a consumer society (Emdon, 1996).

As competition in the newspaper industry increased, smaller groups were either forced to shut down due to their limited competitiveness, or were incorporated into larger affluent groups. Other groups amalgamated to form even much larger groups, a process which resulted in conglomeration. Towards the close of the 20th Century the South African press in general was characterised by concentration of ownership which, in the case of the English press emanated from profits invested by mining capital (Louw, 1993). Corporate ownership is what has come to characterise the white-owned press.

The Afrikaans Press

An Afrikaans-language press developed early in the 20th Century as an appendage of the National Party, and Afrikaner settler nationalism which emerged from about this period in reaction to British imperialism. This Afrikaner nationalism was an outcome of the defeat of the Afrikaners in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. But this nationalism soon realised that it had no means of representing its voice since the existing English press served

only as the voice of English mining-capital and British settler imperialism. As a result, Nasionale Pers Beperk was formed in 1915 and later Perskor in the 1940's from the funds mobilised by the Afrikaners themselves in an attempt to promote the emergent nationalism (Louw, 1993:170). From its inception in 1915, the Afrikaans-language press saw itself as a specialist extension of the National Party's communication system. After 1948 when the NP took over State control, the Afrikaans press continued to be the mouthpiece of the Afrikaner ideology; "hence government's messages were directed primarily and often exclusively to the `Volk' whose interests it represented and to whom it was responsible." (Potter, 1975:170).

All major Afrikaans newspapers were founded with the aim of propagating Afrikaner nationalism seen in the views of various leaders of the National Party. As a result the Afrikaans papers never:

> …pretended to be anything but a party press to promote the cultural and political interests of Afrikanerdorm. As such, these papers have been integrally linked to the development of the National Party's policies, both before and after the party attained power in 1948 (Jackson, 1993:87).

A former editor of one of the oldest Afrikaans papers, Die Burger, once described the relationship between the Afrikaans press and government, "…as a sort of marriage, in which the partners never really think in terms of divorce, but do think, sometimes, in terms of murder" (Wepener, 1979, cf. Tomaselli et al, 1987:87). Unlike the English press which was financed with mining corporate capital, the capitalization of the Afrikaans press was initially made possible by large number of investors who were supporters of the NP. None of the important Afrikaans papers, especially the early pioneering papers, were started as commercial ventures. They were started primarily to promote national Afrikaner ideology as embodied in the NP (Wepener, 1979).

The Afrikaans press therefore, emerged from the propaganda organs of the NP, which after 1948 legislated apartheid. The legislation of apartheid was a kind of Afrikaner `affirmative action' by which they wanted to redistribute surplus wealth in favour of the Afrikaners and remove it from the hands of the English speakers as much as possible. This phenomenon dubbed `volskapitalisme' or `people's capitalism' was not a challenge to capitalism per se, but rather it sought to challenge `English' control of South African capital (Louw, 1993:171). `Volscapitalisme' was essentially the attempt by the Afrikaner nationalists to wrest hegemony from English capital and through the use of state apparatus, to divert the surplus gained from mining towards internal Afrikaner industrial activities. By transferring national capital and other material resources more into their own hands, the Afrikaner people sought to have more control of the South African public sphere which had hitherto largely been a domain of the white English-speaking population.

After 1948, the NP managed to solidly entrench apartheid and itself as the dominant ruling political group. English-dominated capital, on the other hand, still largely constituted the dominant economic fraction (Muller, 1987). From the early times, the Afrikaans press was tightly controlled by the party and carefully followed party line. As James McClurg, a journalist who has written

about the Afrikaans press noted; "one would have searched the columns of the Nationalist newspapers in vain for the mildest dissenting opinion or for news that could embarrass the party" (McClurg, 1986:76-77, cf. Jackson, 1993:34).

However, in the early 1980s a major split occurred within Afrikaner ranks, on the account of the policy of apartheid ideology. Party hardliners within their ranks, feared government was abandoning apartheid ideology. This resulted in the formation of the right-wing Conservative Party which became the official Afrikaner opposition in Parliament (Jackson, 1993:33). All the Afrikaans newspapers, however remained pro-government, and the ultra-right-wing failed to launch a major daily despite their attempts to do so (Jackson, 1993:33).

The implementation of apartheid widened the rift between the English language press and the Afrikaner-controlled government. The English press eventually gained for itself a distinguished record for opposing apartheid. Indeed, the role of the English papers attained such importance that Elaine Potter commented that it had in reality become the main opposition voice in the country, displacing an ineffective official opposition (Potter, 1975:170).

Nonetheless, despite the uneasy relationship between the English press and the government, both the English and Afrikaans speakers as a hegemonic bloc were committed to the system of capitalism. Thus, both presses of these groups were closely associated with the aims and objectives and interests of the hegemonic bloc as a whole. Although the English press was indeed opposed to apartheid, this was only structurally limited since the English press was owned by white capital and therefore, had vested interests in maintaining the conditions conducive to continued accumulation of capital, based on an exploitative division of labour (Tomaselli et al, 1987:61). English opposition to apartheid expressed in the English press, as summed up by Potter; "...stressed the economic impracticability and expense of implementing the doctrine" (Potter, 1975:170).

In the 1980s however, the ideological gap between the English and Afrikaans newspapers narrowed as a result of the national reforms that the NP started to introduce prior to the dismantling of apartheid. But on the whole, both presses and the electronic media supported the hegemonic bloc. The Afrikaans press in particular and the SABC, played a significant role in helping the NP consolidate its influence over white South African opinion after its electoral victory in 1948. These media worked in the interests and aims of the discourses of apartheid, which later became contested by popular black ideologies, from the 1960s right up to the repeal of apartheid. The ruling alliance suppressed and marginalised the concerns of the black majority, and the Afrikaner controlled media set to define social life in terms of apartheid imagery.

Participation in the white-controlled public sphere in colonial era, therefore, was only limited to `hegemonic interests' and ventures by the disadvantaged black majority and other marginalised groups to have their voice and concerns heard were suppressed. The structure of the South African press during this period replicated the shape of the ruling white hegemony. This

argument debunks the libertarian notion of the press which was so central to many South African newsmen and more universally acclaimed by the English press. The way the media participated in the public sphere demonstrates the limitations of the libertarian thinking that the media can operate as a constituent of a democratic limb in capitalist societies. The libertarian notion that the South African press acted as "Fourth Estate", or as a check against a government's excesses, is a fallacy. The liberal capitalist press could not be regarded as looking after the collective interests of the people as a "Fourth Estate". Rather, the South African newspapers and groups could and can only represent the interests of their owners as a class and not the whole of society. This claim as held by the English press in particular, which saw itself as liberal and ideologically immune, has been to succumb to liberal ideology which "conceals class exploitation in a specific manner to the extent that all traces of class domination is systematically absent from its language" (Poulantzas, 1982:214).

The way the white-owned press operated from its earliest developments serves to illustrate what theorists of the political1economy tradition have observed about the role of media in capitalist societies. Murdock and Golding (1979) have demonstrated that mass communications in general, found in capitalist societies, play a significant role in the creation and legitimation of social class formations by recreating world-views of society and reproducing social class relations of domination through, cultural and social reproduction. The South African media and the practices of their workers have been similar to the institutions and labours of what the Frankfurt School referred to as the `culture industries'. Mass communications during the colonial period served the interests of dominant fractions within these societies. They helped to legitimate and maintain social class relations of domination and subordination. Murdock and Golding argue that any analysis of social classes in capitalist societies should take into consideration the role of mass communications which play a key role in the stratification and legitimation of social classes. Therefore, the South African media as it developed, was linked to and concentrated in the hands of the dominant political and economic fractions of society. In such a structural position, they helped promote white `hegemonic' interests, contrary to the much held notion that liberal capitalist press would be the best guarantee of a "free market place of ideas." This scenario of ownership concentration only results in the limited access to the public sphere which becomes a domain of powerful interests in society. Hence, therefore, only the views of the dominant were represented in both the English and Afrikaans presses.

By the end of apartheid in 1993, the South African media was dominated by the SABC, Argus Holdings, Times Media Ltd, and the Afrikaner-owned Perskor and Nasionale Pers Beperk which were all interconnected within the wider web of South African monopoly capital (Tomaselli, 1996:2). These press groups controlled the bulk of the major newspapers. The four white-owned press groups together also controlled M-Net and other important media sectors such as book publishing. They also controlled and monopolised paper manufacturing, printing, advertising, distribution (Louw, 1993:Ch.13).

Therefore these major press groups dominated the flow of information in the entire country. The public sphere was thus tightly managed and controlled,

with closely regulated advertising, printing and distribution arrangements (Louw, 1993:177). Before the post-apartheid era, the major press groups owned nineteen dailies, fourteen in English and five in Afrikaans. By 1991, their total circulation was 1,3 million and four-fifths of this is amount was contributed by the English papers (Jackson, 1993:31). The tables below show a list of the dailies and weeklies owned by these press group.

TABLE 2.1: Circulation of Weekly Newspapers

Title	City	Language	Owner	Circulation
City Press	Johannesburg	English	NPB	134 389
Ilanga	Durban	Zulu	independent	120 676
Imvo	KingWMS'Town	Xhosa	Perskor	34 533
Post Natal	Durban	English	Argus	48 141
Rapport	Johannesburg	Afrikaans	NPB & Pers	355 675
Sunday Star	Johannesburg	English	Argus	83 975
Sunday Times	Johannesburg	English	TML	521 315
Sunday Tribune	Durban	English	Argus	122 880

TABLE 2.2: Circulation of Daily Newspapers

Title	City	Language	Owner	Circulation
The Argus	Cape Town	English	Argus	100,137
Beeld	Johannesburg	Afrikaans	NPB	99,583
Die Burger	Cape Town	Afrikaans	NPB	72,619
Business Day	Johannesburg	English	TML	32,500
Cape Times	Cape Town	English	TML	59,030
The Citizen	Johannesburg	English	Perskor	133,601
Daily Dispatch	E London	English	Independent	33,581
Daily News	Durban	independent	English	92,544
Diamond Field Adv.	Kimberly	English	Argus	7,779
EP Herald	PE	English	TML	27,906
Evening Post	PE	English	TML	19,633
The Natal Mercury	Durban	English	Argus	60,063
The Natal Witness	Pmaritzburg	English	Independent	27,609
Die Oosterlig	PE	Afrikaans	NPB	8,846
Pretoria News	Pretoria	Afrikaans	Argus	24,299
Sowetan	Johannesburg	English	Argus	208,591
The Star	Johannesburg	English	Argus	204,347
Die Transvaler	Johannesburg	Afrikaans	Perskor	42,703
Die Volksblad	Bloemfontein	Afrikaans	NPB	26,309

Total Circulation of Daily newspapers = 1,281,610.
Total Circulation of Weekly newspapers = 1,421,584.
Source: Audited ABC circulation
Total on data for July to December 1991

The Black Press prior to 1980

The white-owned media evolved in the service of the interests and aims of the hegemonic bloc and helped in consolidating its power, as well as maintaining the exploitative nature of social class relations in which blacks were the subordinate group. The concerns of the subordinate classes were virtually neglected. As the capitalist principle of `racial capitalism' got solidly entrenched, in an attempt to create hegemony, blacks particularly from the middle class began to voice their grievances. From as early as the late 1880s, there was an emergence of educated Africans from the Christian communities. They represented the black elite social strata of the day. They were clergymen, lawyers, teachers, court interpreters, semi-skilled and skilled clerks, traders and nurses (Switzer, 1991:34). Together, they all came to form a black middle class culture that was bound together by a multiplicity of economic and cultural ties. These were the pioneers of black political consciousness, who sought to speak on behalf of all the African masses under colonial and apartheid rule. From the 1920s onwards there was increased African political discord with the rise of African political consciousness which was linked to their general limited and limiting socio-economic and political conditions in the country.

Another catalyst to this discord was the marginalisation and limited accessibility of Africans in national decision and policy-making. Blacks lacked a platform through which to channel issues of common concern to them. There were no blacks who owned any commercial media, and their grievances could not be accessed through the white-owned newspapers. The African voice could not be given platform in the white-owned media because this would have been at variance with the interests of the dominant hegemonic bloc to which these newspapers were inextricably linked. This lack of access was partly responsible for the channelling of black grievances through industrial action, boycotts, and subversion (Tomaselli et al, 1987:46).

As a result, some elite blacks, sometimes with the assistance of church funding, started publications which voiced black aspirations. But most of the early publications started only as small newsletters which could only be consumed among the elite. These earliest publications were: "highly individualised, non-corporate, elite press for literate blacks drawn from rural, usually Christian, peasant communities and nascent urban areas of South Africa" (Switzer and Switzer, 1980:4).

However, as colonial pressures mounted especially, against the urban black population, the rhetoric of protest became more militant, and this culumnated in the need for more militant publications from the 1920s onwards. Some of the papers that tried to espouse black discourses of the times included Abantu Batho, Umthetheli waBantu, The Workers' Herald, as well as those which had been established earlier on such as Imvo za Bantsundu, and Ilanga lase Natal. But unfortunately, these early papers were only slightly radical in challenging the political order of the day (Switzer, 1991:63). There was a need for papers that could openly criticise public authority in a manner that was in line with the amount of growing African nationalism and political

consciousness still remained.

Some of these early pioneering black publications suffered economic and political restraint, and were forced to close down. However, with the gradual emergence of African nationalist resistance against white domination, this nationalism adopted discourses of a radical nature which witnessed the rise of some radical publications in the 1940s and 1950s (Tomaselli et al, 1987:47).

In 1931 the Bantu Press had been established by two white South Africans with the Bantu World later to be called World (precursor of Sowetan) as their first paper meant for black readers. They soon acquired Ilanga, and started the Evening Post. However, World was soon acquired by Argus in 1963 because of the perceived potential in the black market. Within a short space of time Argus had improved circulations of these papers (Tomaselli et al, 1987:47).

Characteristic of these papers once they came under corporate ownership is that, they could not deal with political issues that could perhaps enhance black popular participation in the public sphere. They only dealt with what they thought Africans, the urbanised Africans in particular, were interested in, that is: crime, sex and violence as well as symbolisms of western values and lifestyles which some of these Africans were aspiring to. Other papers which sprung up in the 40s and 50s included: Inkundla ya Bantu, Spark, and Torch, all of which were banned due to their association with African political movements (Tomaselli et al, 1987:47). Bantu Press was eventually bought by Argus because of the perceived possibilities of profits. Argus also started the Sowetan which was also aimed at the black market and to date it is one of the biggest circulating African dailies.

During the 1960s and 1970s all papers that were outside corporate ownership were either banned or brought under corporate ownership. The Afrikaans press also similarly acquired some publications that were formerly under independent black ownership, such as Imvo which was bought by Perskor. They also started black-oriented newspapers and magazines such as, Citizen, Bona, and Zonk (Louw, 1993:172-3). These were meant for the growing black urban (township) population who `aspired' to Western values and lifestyles. The main purpose was to make profit as well as ensuring that the `African mind' was `kept under control'. Even black journalists working for these papers were controlled and restrained by the owners, from diverting from the `norm'. Ultimately, newspapers serving black readers:

> …came firmly under control of white-owned parent companies
> and were, if only from purely economic point of view, unlikely
> to espouse radical discourse (Tomaselli, et al, 1987:46)

Economic and political restraint were the mechanisms through which the `black press' came under control of white capital, and any attempts to establish truly independent `black' press and alternative media channels were always quashed. Therefore, the political economy of the press has been such that all sectors of this industry the white-owned black-oriented press, the English and Afrikaans newspapers operated in the service of the hegemonic bloc in different ways. The press reflected the country's single most important

political and economic reality: white dominance. The ownership, management and editorial control of virtually all the corporate newspapers were in white hands. Even the nation's only important black daily Sowetan was owned by the white-controlled Argus. Commenting on this white dominance Jackson noted:

> Given the dominance of white control and ownership in the mainstream press (by far the most powerful and influential papers), whatever the influence in the press has filtered through predominantly white values, reflected white world-views, and sought to further white interests (1993:36).

Political Struggles for Hegemony

In 1948 the NP won electoral victory under the leadership of ultra-right wing H. Verwoed who became Prime Minister, and immediately legislated the apartheid system. This system was a mechanism to ensure that only the white ruling fractions in the hegemonic bloc remained in control of power as well as the public sphere. This hegemonic order, however, came more and more under challenge from the rising tide of African nationalist resistance spearheaded by such notable political movements as the African National Congress (ANC), Black Conscious Movement, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), and a host of others. They represented popular ideologies of the Left which contested apartheid and its discourse.

These resistance movements gradually formed popular fronts which came to represent even other races who were in opposition to the apartheid order. This is exemplified by the formation of the non-racial United Democratic Front (UDF) in the early 1980s. The UDF subsequently formed an alliance with the militant labour movement, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, into what became known as the Mass Democratic Movement in the late 1980s (Louw and Tomaselli, 1991:23). There was thus a unified internal resistance movement against apartheid rule.

From the 1950s onwards, the NP intensively implemented apartheid in its struggle to legitimate the hegemonic order. In the subsequent decades particularly the 1970s and 1980s, South Africa came to be identified as a society in a state of crisis. The South African government faced a declining economy due to imposed international sanctions, coupled with a resurgence in the working class and popular resistance to its rule (Louw and Tomaselli, 1991:77). Racial capitalism as a social order, especially in the 1980s, came under increasing attack and could not withstand major critical disturbances either from within or without the system. It therefore had to tighten its mechanisms of control to lessen the impact. The State employed violence through its police, military, and judiciary machineries. In this way, the apartheid regime was thus trying to create hegemony through coercion.

This crisis of hegemony led to fierce government curtailment of the flow of

information mainly through legislation. This was meant to co-opt the press in its struggle to preserve the crumbling hegemony. The state wanted to harness the media to promote the ideology of apartheid capitalism. Apartheid thus became a means through which the alliance of the ruling groups wanted not only to coerce the subordinate classes into conforming to its interest, but to exert its total authority over the classes.

But as Gramsci (1971) argues, the power exerted over subordinate classes cannot solely depend on force and coercion alone. It must be attained without force dominating over consent, so that the granting of legitimacy must appear ideally, not only spontaneous but also natural and inevitable.

The South African media was, therefore, harnessed by the ruling fraction to play the role of winning some form of consent to help sustain the threatened hegemonic order. The state attempted to control and silence the press, particularly the English-owned press which opposed apartheid for purely economic reasons. The suppression of the English press was not meant to silence it per se, but to suppress black opposition to apartheid. Sometimes the English press was to some extent prepared to articulate black sentiments against apartheid and as such it was subject to state intervention (Tomaselli et al, 1987:70)

Black Editorial Controls and Limitations

In this section, I discuss how black journalists and editors working in white-owned, black-oriented papers found themselves constrained from espousing, in these papers, expectations and aspirations of their class. They were also constrained from articulating black majority concerns, especially in the 1970s when black popular discontent and resistance were at peak momentum.

By the 1970s, the black press had come under the ownership and complete control of the white newspaper groups. The 1970s decade is a benchmark in South African political struggles, as it marked even more radical black popular resistance exemplified by the virulent rhetoric of Black Consciousness Movement and the 1976 Soweto disturbances. White-owned publications under the editorship of blacks such as World, and City Press tried to espouse the radical discourses of the period, but soon faced State intervention and became subject to varying degrees of white editorial controls (Tomaselli et al, 1987:52). The content of these papers was decided by their editorial directors who exercised `allocative and operational' controls in these newspaper organisations. The editors and journalists were part of the black professional elite, of doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc who felt duty bound to campaign for the upliftment of the aspirations and expectations of their class and their communities. But generally they found themselves constrained by their white-overseers. For example, one of the editors of World, MT Moerane was: "unable to fulfil the expectations of his own class and it is therefore not surprising that journalism under his editorship generally fell short of the standards aspired to by the more radical Black Consciousness Movement" (Tomaselli et al, 1987:52).

Such inability to fulfil the aspirations of the black populace by editors and journalists, attracted disappointment and criticism from fellow black intellectuals such as Njabulo Ndebele, a literary writer, who felt that these practitioners had an ambivalent attitude, and were nothing but a part of the system under which they were serving (Tomaselli et al, 1987:52). But the journalists themselves became increasingly disillusioned and dissatisfied with the editorial policies of these papers, as well as the discriminatory working conditions they experienced. During the unrest of the late 1970s, for instance, black journalists were sent into the areas were there was unrest and wrote reports that were then watered down by their white political editors. Gabu Tugwana, working for the Rand Daily Mail at the time, recounted that:

> During the unrest we witnessed a lot of things happening in the townships- how police were mowing down unarmed school pupils, how they would surround a bottle store which was being looted and executed on the spot justice by shooting indiscriminately at everyone on sight. When we went to the offices, such stories could not be accepted as they were because we were thought of as being emotional. At the end of the day, the word that the readers read was not actually the original word we would have written entirely (Tugwana, October, 1995:interview with author).

Sometimes black journalists were being made to serve as interpreters for white journalists, and they would be quoted only as an eye witness. There grew a felt need among journalists for a more committed stance and more journalistic responsibility among black practitioners. This need actually culminated in the establishment of the Union of Black Journalists (UBJ) in 1973 (Tomaselli et al, 1987:53). Patrick Lawrence described UBJ as a: "black consciousness union [which] sought to mobilise black journalists and synchronise their aspirations with those of the broader black community" (Lawrence, 1980:54).

And by the time of the 1976 Soweto uprisings their editorial concerns had:

> switched from what may be seen as the peripheral to central issues in South African politics, and from co-operation to uncompromising rejection of the institution of apartheid (St Leger, date unknown; cf. Tomaselli et al, 1987:55).

There was a felt need for a different kind of approach to journalism in the country, from that which was practised by the mainstream papers. Amrit Manga working for one of the white-owned papers at the time observed the following about the nature of journalism in the country that:

> When we went to the cadet school we were taught to report objectively. A reporter should not get emotionally involved in what he was writing about. You stayed aloof and did not intervene and interpret facts. We felt that this was nonsense. We felt that as journalists, we had to be part of the momentum for change. We had to intervene to speed up this change for democracy, and bring the demise of apartheid. We felt we were

restricted in the way reports were presented. But we didn't
believe you could be entirely objective, we believed we came
from a society we were experiencing oppression (Manga,
October 1995;interview with author).

The State dealt with these black journalists with a heavy hand. The journalists
were harassed by the security forces, they were sent into detention without
trial, they were intimidated, assaulted and, sometimes had their press cards
withdrawn (Tomaselli et al, 1987:53). Such harassment at the hands of the
State, the banning of some of the papers such as World, and the general
mood of dissatisfaction amongst the black journalists, led to their increased
radicalisation. This also led to increased State onslaught against them.
Relations got worse when they formed the Media Workers Association of
South Africa (MWASA), which pledged to uphold what they called
`commitment to journalism' which amongst other things rejected ideological
controls and adherence to principles of `objectivity' (Tomaselli et al,
1987:53). The formation of MWASA was an attempt to mirror working-class
grievances and black majority views. But as long as it worked within the
premises of white-owned papers, such progressive ambitions were hard to
bring to realisation. This discord among black journalists and some liberal
white editors, and lack of truly independent black media, were to catalyse the
development of a new genre of the press called the alternative or left-wing
press, which became involved in the political struggles against the apartheid
hegemonic order. Below I discuss the rise of the alternative press in the
1980s, which rose primarily as a new and distinct public arena for largely the
disenchanted black population to criticise and challenge the State.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE 1980s AND THE RISE OF THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

- Introduction
- The Alternative Press
- TABLE 3.1: Circulation of Alternative Newspapers
- Problems Compounding the Alternative Press
- Contribution of the Alternative Press to the South African Media Terrain
  and Socio-political History

Introduction

Under the periods of…advanced capitalism there have existed
other fora which have shaped people's consciousness, served
as networks for exchange of information,…and provided as
networks for cultural expression (Dahlgren, 1991:9).

In his critique of Habermas' theory of the public sphere, Peter Dahlgren has
drawn our attention to the existence of other public platforms that have
performed the functions of the public sphere, which he categorises into

alternative, popular, informal or oppositional (1991:9). They represent the `space' or arena between the State and civil society through which popular alternative discourses are aired. In South Africa there arose a distinct alternative public sphere that was in opposition to the dominant white-controlled public sphere. It arose to challenge colonial and apartheid discourses which were meant to maintain the hegemonic order that had been created by capitalism. The rise of the alternative press in the 1980s was part of this distinct South African public sphere through which members that constituted it, could publicly criticise the State.

This chapter deals with the development of the alternative press in the 1980s. This press tended to lean towards the left of the political spectrum. The growth of this press was a representation of the whole social movement that arose against colonial and apartheid rule. It developed almost contemporaneously with the dominant white-controlled public sphere. It sought to provide alternative progressive views and opinions that had been hitherto neglected or ignored by the white-owned and controlled media. Hence, these papers collectively came to be known as the alternative newspapers.

Failures and problems that had previously characterised the black-owned press and the heightened political consciousness and discord and, the felt need for journalistic responsibility towards the neglected majority population among the black media practitioners, led to the development of the alternative press. It was characterised by progressive journalism. The protagonists of the alternative press regarded and welcomed it as the most "vibrant, influential and heartening development in South Africa's media in the 1980s", while its detractors, most notably the government, regarded it otherwise (Jackson, 1993:46). The papers that emerged in the 1980s decade were characterised by a considerable level of commitment, passion, and purpose among its founding journalists and editors. These journalists and editors represented Gramsci (1971)'s strata of organic intellectuals. Because of their anti-apartheid criticisms, they evoked the wrath of the State. But before long, they rapidly attained an influence which was far greater than their limited size and circulation suggested (Jackson, 1993:46).

The major issues that this chapter is particularly concerned with relate to the genesis and the characteristic nature of these publications which defined them as alternative to the white-owned corporate press. Also important is the contribution that this press made to the South African print media terrain and general South African history. It also examines some of the fundamental problems which led to its decline in the early 1990s amidst predictions by most media pundits, that the they were likely to play an even more important role in the new South African dispensation. For instance, Zwelakhe Sisulu, pioneering editor of *New Nation*, had remarked in 1986 at the launch of the paper that; "The alternative media in this country are in the process of becoming the mainstream media" (*New Nation*, January 1986).

The Alternative Press

The publications which proliferated during the 1980s came to be known as the alternative or leftist press, a term easily collapsed by the State to refer to all papers that viciously attacked it the way this press did in this period (Tomaselli and Louw, 1991:4). The term `alternative', as Anton Harber, one of the several editors to whom the term also broadly applied as he was co-editor of the *Weekly Mail*, noted: "we [are] on the fringe...it [was] a phrase used by the state to isolate us" (Harber, 1989:70), implied that editors of these papers justifiably challenged the status quo. The alternative papers were singled out for attack by government which grouped them together as collaborators with the anti-apartheid resistance movements. But *Weekly Mail* for instance, was noted for its non-alignment with any specific political movements, though it criticised and supported the calls for a democratic dispensation (Tomaselli & Louw, 1991:7).

Another problem raised by the term `alternative' is that it suggested that these were somehow an exception or deviation from the norm. This raises the question about the generic style of this press. For most editors, the very existence of their papers was an indictment against the corporate white-owned press (Jackson, 1993:54). This meant that if the latter group had been covering events as it should have, the gaps the alternative papers sought to fill would not have existed. The suggestion here is that these publications were an alternative to some `pure standard', from which the alternative papers differed. The label `alternative' implies that these papers did not provide `standard' or `normal' journalism and that only the corporate press defined what good journalism in South Africa ought to be. But to suggest that the alternative publications were an alternative to some `pure standard', from which the alternatives differed merely in that they offered another perspective, minimises the size of the gap between the editorial philosophies of these two groups.

Ameen Akhalwaya, editor of *Indicator*, defined this press as the "emerging extra-parliamentary press" (Akhalwaya, 1988:14). This description captures well the newness of the publications and their formative character. It also reflects their primary focus and their *raison d'etre*. The focus of these papers, without any notable exception, was on extra-parliamentary politics. They saw the most significant political activity taking place beyond the national legislative Assembly (Jackson, 1993:46). Not only did these papers focus on ideas and activities of this segment of politics, but the socio-political movement and circumstances of the time spawned these papers into being.

The roots of the development of the alternative press should be located in the historical practices of the hegemonic order of the time. The emergence of the alternative press as part of the whole anti-apartheid movement cannot be seen apart from the parallel developments and practices of the corporate media and the political circumstances of the time. The most important distinguishing characteristic of the alternative press was its genesis and grounding in the emerging largely black civil society. It was not simply the political emphasis of these newspapers which characterised them, because this was sometimes a feature which was also found in the corporate English and sometimes the Afrikaans newspapers. Rather, what made it distinct was its rootedness in opposition to apartheid and capitalism. The alternative press sought to break away from the tradition of the `establishment' media which

represented capital and the State- the hegemonic bloc.

Journalists working for the alternative publications were another category of organic intellectuals whose function in society is to make manifest the contradictions created by capitalism. The role of these intellectuals is to try and encourage dialectical contradictions. They help to make social contradictions manifest. Their intervention often results in social change (Gramsci, 1971). Journalists working for this press represented a counter-hegemonic ideology. They thereby involved the alternative press in political struggles for legitimacy, that is the legitimation of voices that had previously been excluded from participation in national public affairs. The table below shows the most significant publications that came to constitute the alternative press.

TABLE 3.1: Circulation of Alternative Newspapers

Title	Place	Frequency	Circulation
The Indicator	Johannesburg	biweekly	27 000
New Nation	Johannesburg	weekly	80 000
New African	Johannesburg	biweekly	7 000*
South	Cape Town	weekly	20 000*
Vrye Weekblad	Johannesburg	weekly	10 000*
Weekly Mail	Johannesburg	weekly	23 000

Source: ABC circulation data for July to December 1991.
* No longer publishing.

The papers listed in Table 3.1 were only a fraction of the overall alternative newspapers. These were among some of the professionally produced papers as they were run by professional journalists who had commitment to the ethics of their profession (Jackson, 1993:46). It was a way of avoiding the professional setbacks they had suffered when they worked for the mainstream newspapers. These newspapers were vitally important because of their wider distribution, high frequency of publication, and relatively large circulations. They were the flagship papers of the alternative press.

The alternative papers were quite a diverse group ranging from those that directly emerged to serve interests of specific groups such as the trade unions and political organisations, to those that strived for independent positions. They were aimed at:

> …at different audiences, fulfilling different roles and meeting different needs. Some [were] literary and cultural; others theoretical and analytical; there [was] the student press, the community press, trade union newsletters, and….publications of political organisations (Harber, 1989:12).

The alternative papers were, nonetheless, all engaged in the wider nationalist extra-parliamentary movement for democracy. The anti-apartheid media that developed in the 1980s was directly influenced by the popular movement of the counter-hegemonic class alliance that built up during this period in protest against apartheid. This alliance was created between the organised black working class and the progressive petty-bourgeois elements from all race groups. This co-operation:

> …expressed itself in the `workerism populism' debate, which explored how to work out mechanisms for the democratic regulation of interests. The alliance also had to find a way of institutionalising a dialogue between the leadership and its constituency. The popular structure that emerged impacted directly in the way the anti-apartheid media developed (Tomaselli and Louw, 1991)

It is therefore important to examine the characteristics of the various important publications than to conflate them as a monolithic phenomenon. Though most of the papers that developed in the 1980s fell under the alternative stable, they developed different characteristics. But they all opposed white minority rule in favour of a democratic dispensation.

The *Weekly Mail* and *Vrye Weekbald*, both based in Johannesburg, were unusual in the sense that they both were primarily aimed largely at the liberal and affluent white readership, as well as black intellectuals. The *Weekly Mail* was started in 1985 by a grouping of professional editors and journalists when the *Rand Daily Mail* had been forced to close down. The *Weekly Mail* came to be regarded as; "…the most professionally produced paper and consequently was highly respected as the premier alternative press1 both within its ranks and by the mainstream press" (Jackson, 1993:47). The *Weekly Mail*, though generally supportive of the broader democratic tendency, remained independent of specific political movements. The *Weekly Mail* differed significantly from other alternatives in that it did not have specific political alignment. This was probably due to the circumstances that led to its emergence. It was formed by professional journalists who had a deeper sense commitment to journalistic practice.

Vrye Weekbald was the only Afrikaans alternative newspaper and was produced primarily by Afrikaners. Like the *Weekly Mail*, it dealt with national political and socio1economic issues and was nationally distributed. *Vrye Weekbald* was opposed to apartheid, but it chose to remain detached from particular political movements (Jackson, 1993:47).

There also were the `progressive-alternative' community based publications that were in the form of `newsletters'. These included such publications as *Grassroots*, published in Cape Town, *Saamstaam* published in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa, *Izwi lase Rini*, *Ukusa*, and *The Eye* (Tomaselli and Louw, 1991:9). Founded at the beginning of the decade of the 1980s, they were the pioneering alternative publications. This category of the alternative press, also known as the `people's media', expressed community struggles at grassroots level. They still located themselves in the wider national struggle for democracy. They were organically linked to their communities and they used

the signs and codes arising out of popular political movements such as UDF and labour movements. For the editors of these publications, community issues occupied a central role. They formed a link between the national mass movements and local organisations at community levels. As a result, they became involved in the popular bottom-up resistance to apartheid (Tomaselli and Louw, 1991:9).

This symbiosis between the alternative publications and communities at local levels, and their commitedness to the struggle for social change, were important characteristics by which they could be identified from the practices of the corporate press. What made most alternative publications different from the mainstream newspapers was the bond between the editors of these publications and the people for whom they wrote. There was an organic link between the intellectuals working within the alternative newspapers and the classes which they represented. The closest parallel of this organic link would be the ties between the present Afrikaans newspapers during their earliest days and the struggling, impoverished Afrikaner populace looking to its own nationalism for salvation (Jaffer, untitled address to the Annual Congress of the South African Society of Journalists, 13 May, 1988).

Another important distinguishing characteristic of the `community press' in particular and some alternative newspapers was that it was a people's press and hence the masses were participants in a dialogic or two-way process of communication. The editors of these publications sought to articulate the socio- political aspirations of the people whose views they also shared. They drew heavily on this segment of the population for signs and codes, news and opinions that filled their pages. The editors of the alternative papers were unlike their counterparts in the establishment of newspapers whose accountability was spread among management, readers, and ultimately shareholders. In contrast, they felt far more obligated to accurately represent realities perceived by their readers and community leadership (Jackson, 1993:51). Therefore, these publications tended to grow out of the need by a community or organisation for a channel of communication. The alternative papers, particularly community publications employed an egalitarian, two1way approach to producing their newspapers that was utterly alien in the mainstream press. For example, the process of the establishment of *Grassroots* in the Cape Province towards the end of the 1970s, was one which involved intense consultation amongst representatives of various sectors of the movement for democracy at grassroots levels. Hence the name of the title. This newspaper developed:

> …from the premise that community issues were central to its
> *raison d'etre*. From the very outset, community organisations
> were involved in the *Grassroots* project: in December 1979
> WASA [Writers Association of South Africa] approached about
> 50 community organisations, civic and worker groups in the
> Western Cape concerning the idea of starting such a
> newspaper. Only when the project was granted was the project
> set in motion during 1979 (Louw, 1991:256).

Nonetheless, despite their promising nature, the production cycles of early community newspapers such as *Grassroots* could no longer cope with the

volume of information and news generated from the resistance movements. From the formation of the UDF in 1983 and its subsequent transformation in the MDM, there was a heightened need for increased frequency of protest news and information. This development spawned the emergence of the alternative or left-wing commercial press which included such titles as *South, Weekly Mail, New African* and *New Nation*, among others, from the mid-1980s onwards. These newspapers were a hybrid of the liberal mainstream capitalist and progressive alternative presses (Tomaselli & Louw, 1991:9). The rise of this left-wing commercial press was a result of the failure of the earlier alternatives to cope with adequate management and distribution of increased volumes of leftist news as political action continued proliferating.

The left-wing commercial press was still organically connected to the popular-democratic struggles of the masses. These newspapers were, however, not as profit-oriented as the mainstream press, although they would have welcomed self-sufficiency through advertising. Most editors worked to this end but saw it as incidental to their purpose. The commercial alternative newspapers, in keeping with their views of the movement for political democracy, also displayed views of hostility and opposition to the South African economic system which the mainstream press embraced. As journalist educator Clive Emdon noted; "'alternative' assumes a political and economic identity of its own. It is anti-capitalist…There is no half-way, we cannot use the same structures of organisation and control of the commercial press" (Emdon, quoted in Jackson, 1993:46).

Describing the problem of the alternative press with the capitalist structure of the mainstream newspapers, Mansoor Jaffer, former full time organiser for *Grassroots*, stated:

> The framework of the commercial, [i.e., corporate] press is by and large shaped by the pander to the most backward and reactionary sentiments in the market- the white readership who are the main target of most commercial newspapers. There are countless examples of this trend; from the vilification of the ANC and Bishop Tutu, to the editorial space regularly offered to the SADF through the person of certain `Defence Correspondents' (Jaffer, untitled address, 1989).

Problems Compounding the Alternative Press

The fundamental problems that came to confront the alternative press, besides legal and political restraint, were basically two-fold: funding and advertising. These difficulties separated them from the corporate press. Compared to the established press groups, the typical alternative newspaper was financially vulnerable and small. Because alternative papers were driven less by motives for profitability, and generated only part of the money needed to establish and run a paper, they relied on outside funding. The money came mostly from foreign governments, and international media organisations such as the International Federation of Journalists, church groups, and humanitarian organisations (Louw, 1993:177). The Canadian government, for

example, donated R2,4 million in August 1988 to counter "South African propaganda and censorship." Canada also provided *Vrye Weekbald* with a computer system worth R73 000 (Southern Africa Report, 1989:4). The Roman Catholic Church was the force behind the launch and funding of *New Nation*, and *South* relied on Scandinavian and European donors (Louw, 1993:177). *Weekly Mail* was started with minimal capital, consisting mostly of severance pay its founders received when the *Rand Daily Mail* was closed in 1985 (Jackson, 1993:59). The reason for funding opposition papers was that the donors: "were increasingly concerned with gaining a toe-hold into what they see as potentially the future ruling hegemony in South Africa" (Louw, 1991; cf. Jackson, 1993:59).

When the 1990 reforms came to the fore, dependence on foreign donors proved to be a serious blow to the alternative papers. Most alternative papers that had depended on foreign funding from both the Western and Eastern countries, got into serious trouble after 1990 because "Western countries were under pressure to stop funding the alternatives" and channel funds into other development projects such as education (Tomaselli and Louw, 1991:224). This was because the reforms initiated by the NP had resulted in the end of the anti-apartheid struggle. Therefore, donors from the Western countries saw no reason for continuing to support organisations which had given support to the anti-apartheid movements. The Eastern countries on the other hand terminated funding following the collapse of the Socialism towards the end of the 1980s.

The alternative papers lacked adequate financial independence which they could have sensibly achieved through advertising. The major problem, besides the views they represented, was that they were established to service a readership that was poor. Hence, they had problems in attracting advertisers. This problem was summed up by Harber as follows: "Advertising is a great difficulty because of the prejudice in the advertising community about alternative newspapers" (Harber, 1989:).

Advertisers feared being associated with the political positions of the alternative papers. Besides, these papers were operating in a very tight market, one that was heavily controlled by the corporate companies. Thus in comparison to the capitalist press the left-commercial press was weak to compete in the print media market. This weakness can be demonstrated by looking at circulation figures. Except for *New Nation*, these papers, typically had low circulations that were among specialised readerships: "The circulation of all six 'alternatives' in 1990 was only 220 000 per week. (By comparison, the circulation of, for example, *The Star* was 215 000 per day, *Beeld* was 99 000 per day; the *Sunday Times* was 537 000 per week …" (Louw, 1993:177). Furthermore, the alternatives had to rely on distribution outlets owned by the corporate press, for instance, most had to rely on Allied Publishing for their distribution (Louw, 1993:177).

Another serious difficulty which had profound implications on the operations of the alternative press was that it suffered limitations of resources. Because they tended to be undercapitalised, this therefore, meant lower salaries for their staff. As a result, they could not attract and maintain high calibre journalists (Jackson, 1993:63). Incessant government threats to close down

the alternatives also meant less security for the employees. The *Weekly Mail* and *Vrye Weekblad* were notable exceptions. Their small editorial budgets meant fewer journalists on staff. Thus the alternative press did not start smoothly, yet it flourished and became an important part in the South African media landscape in the 1980s: "The alternative press obviously did not begin with a silver spoon in its mouth. Yet the difficulties it faced took surprisingly little toll on morale or its overall performance" (Jackson, 1993:63).

Contribution of the Alternative Press to the South African Media Terrain and Socio-political History

Despite the problems the alternative press faced, it made a meaningful contribution which had profound effects on the South African media and socio-political landscape. One of its most evident contributions was that it filled in the information gap that the corporate media neglected. As a result, those areas of South African life that had previously been neglected, received coverage. Amongst these were, national labour problems, rural images such as drought, disease, and disasters, police brutality, political discontent etc. (Tomaselli et al, 1987:64-68). The alternative press provided the information and view-points that the mainstream papers did not report. This also countered the impressions that the other papers created.

The alternative newspapers brought in their own impressions, emphases and perspectives. They enriched the media choice on the market. Most editors in the corporate press said they found the alternative press as an important source of information that supplemented their own understanding of the country (Jackson, 1993:63). For instance, Andrew Drysdale of the *Argus* thought that the alternative papers were mostly "preaching to the converted," but welcomed the diversity of opinion they provided" (cf. Jackson, 1993:61). Commenting on the role of the alternative press Ameen Akhalwaya noted that:

> Our role has been to counter the increasingly blatant- and sophisticated propaganda of the NP and its junior partners of all hues. And it has been to counter the nonsense some newspapers give us about what black people are supposed to be thinking - and who is thinking for them (Akhalwaya, 1988:18).

The alternative press thus made an invaluable contribution when one considers the high concentration of media ownership in this country, by providing society another vehicle of public expression. For instance, people in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape who had been hitherto neglected by the corporate media, got a new channel to air their concerns. The community papers also helped to localise the medium, focusing directly on the readers' concerns in ways previously untried in South Africa.

The alternative press also catalysed socio-political change that resulted in dismantling of apartheid rule by opening up the area of political debate. It

was in the forefront of covering the most contentious political issues of the day: the situation of political detainees, especially children; prison conditions; police and military action against protestors, including allegations of government-backed assassination squads; the growth of trade union movements and so on (Tomaselli et al, 1987:64-68). The alternative press, by no small means, left an indelible mark in South African media and political history. Below I focus on *New Nation* as a specific example of a progressive paper of the epoch. Much of the information constituting this section is derived from interviews with people who have been involved with the paper from the early days of its establishment up to date. Some of them have worked for the mainstream newspapers papers.

CHAPTER FOUR:
***NEW NATION*: A CASE STUDY OF THE RISE AND DECLINE OF AN ALTERNATIVE TITLE**

New Nation was one of the highest circulating alternative papers. By the time of the elections in 1994 it had a circulation of almost 100 000 copies per week (Tugwana, October 1995:interview with author; see also Table 3.1). The paper started publishing in January 1986 amidst the State of Emergency. It began as a fortnightly and turned weekly in 1987 (*New Nation* Reader Survey, 1987:4). In 1993, at the height of its success, the paper unsuccessfully tried to compete in the Sunday market (Manga, interview with author 1995). The whole idea of establishing *New Nation* was mooted as way back as the late 1970s by the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC). The SACBC felt it needed to start a paper that would not focus on matters of religion entirely but a paper that would also reflect on the socio-political processes that were going on in society at that time (*New Nation* Reader Survey, April 1987:4). In the late 1970s the apartheid State was caught up in an intense struggle to maintain its hegemony. This inflamed class and racial relations.

The idea of establishing *New Nation* was also mooted at a time when most prominent black journalists were in detention and were discussing their frustrations with the way the white-owned press represented events of political and industrial unrest of the time and the need to form a paper that would identify with people struggling against the apartheid system (Tugwana, October 1995:interview with author). It was felt that the papers [the English-language press] in existence at that time were not supportive of the democratic movement though some of them might have been critical of apartheid. Amrit Manga, one of the pioneering journalists with *New Nation* said: "…these newspapers reflected a liberal perspective of society and were critical of apartheid but were limited in their opposition to it. They were not supportive of the pro-push of democracy" (Manga, October 1995:interview with author).

Following the 1976 Soweto uprisings the State mounted a crackdown on all those who championed for the end of apartheid including journalists, human rights people and political figures. They were sent into detention centres and were restricted from their activities. It was in detention while discussing the need for increased championing of the black cause that Tugwana, who later became editor of the paper, and other journalists, met with a high ranking

Catholic priest who had also been detained (Tugwana, October 1995:interview with author). After detention, as Tugwana recounted, the priest was able to sell the idea for the need of a paper that would play a role in the struggle for the demise of apartheid.

Tugwana remembered that what actually pushed the Church to establish such a paper was an incident which took place in the early 1980's. The event occurred in the Vereniging area when there was a blockade mounted by the South Africa Defence Force (SADF) which surrounded the area and conducted a-house-to house search during which atrocities took place. This occurred after a white woman driving in her car with an infant was stoned and the infant had died instantly as a result of stoning. The white woman was on her way home from delivering her servant home. The State had then sent the SADF to find the killer. The SACBC conducted an investigation into the atrocities perpetrated by the army and came up with a report that was difficult to get published in the existing newspapers. The SACBC was forced to publish a book on that particular incident. From this experience, the Church felt there was a need to set up a paper of its own that would report on issues that the mainstream media would not touch. The Inter-Diocesan Pastoral Consultative Conference held in August 1980 resolved to establish a `national Catholic' newspaper designed to enter into the life, struggles, needs and burning aspirations of South Africa's people (Tomaselli & Louw, 1991:11). The SACBC sourced funds from the European Community, from the Nordic countries, and other organisations which were in support of the struggle for democracy in South Africa.

When the paper was established in 1986, it circulated nationally and made attempts to be commercially viable though profit motive was not the emphasis (Tugwana, October 1995:interview with author). In its bid to be a commercially viable paper, *New Nation* adopted management, distribution and advertising practices that paralleled the capitalist newspaper formula (Tomaselli & Louw, 1991:11). However, as Tomaselli and Louw further note, the paper had a democratic approach in which all staff participated in decision-making. While the SACBC saw to much of the funding of *New Nation*, the day-to-day running of it was entirely the responsibility of the staff members. There was quite a lot of input from staff working for the paper. As Manga said, "the paper was essentially owned by the SACBC, but the Church eventually gave up ownership to people who worked for the paper to become the custodians" (interview with author, October 1995). *New Nation* was established amidst other papers that were aimed at the mass audiences struggling for the end of apartheid such as *Sowetan* and *City Press*, which were white-owned. Talking about the differences between *New Nation* and these papers, Amrit observed that:

> We were reporting in a different way, we were writing in an interventionist way. We got directly involved in what we wrote about. A concrete example would be our reporting during the State of Emergency during which there were certain restrictions placed on newspapers concerning certain activities. For example, when police were sent to break a march, reporters in the mainstream press could only report that police were there the break the march, but without mentioning the brutality and

atrocities committed in the process. We at *New Nation* pushed
the limits and challenged the law whereas other papers
obediently complied (Manga, October 1995: interview with
author).

Sounding the same note on the differences between *New Nation* and the
papers in the mainstream, like *City Press* and *Sowetan*, Tugwana, mentioned
that:

The *Sowetan* and *City Press* were white-owned and
administered. But they had a big personnel of black journalists.
However, at the end of the day policies were not drawn by
those journalists. There was a large amount of black personnel,
but they were not involved in the day-to-day decision-making
as journalists in *New Nation* would do (interview with author:
October 1995).

In a comparative study done in 1987 on the differences between *New Nation*
and *Sowetan*, it was found that *Sowetan* by virtue of its title was considered
to be a paper serving mainly regional interests. It was felt that it also showed
bias towards the PAC and the Black Conscious Movement (BMC). On the other
hand *New Nation* had a national appeal and was more linked to the African
National Congress and Trade Unions than to any other political organisation
(CASE, *New Nation* Reader Survey, 1987: 4). Aggrey Klaaste, now Editor-in-
Chief of both newspapers and former journalist and editor of Sowetan,
remarked that: "*New Nation* was out-and-out ANC and there was no beating
bones about it. It developed as an organ of the ANC" (Klaaste, interview with
author: October 1995).

While *New Nation* was essentially funded by the European Community and the
Scandinavian countries through the SACBC, like any other alternative, it had
the problem of attracting advertisers. Hence it had to be content with
donations. As Manga observed, the paper failed hopelessly to attract
advertisers because of its political content and political profile because: "*New
Nation* was perceived as an organ of the ANC and therefore advertisers did
not want to be associated with and support a publication that supported the
ANC" (Interview with author, October 1995). Advertisers were also not
forthcoming because: "of the threats they received from the police to the
effect that supporting a paper like *New Nation* was as good as supporting
communism, and people who wanted to see the fall of good order" (Tugwana,
interview with author, October 1995).

Failure to attract advertisers was one of the major reasons for the decline of
most alternative newspapers in the 1990s. *New Nation* was by no means an
exception to this problem. The problem of funding became very apparent
when the donors withdrew their funding following the reforms for democracy
(Louw, 1993: 177). This was because the original idea of funding these papers
by the overseas donors had been in aid of the struggle against apartheid.
When the struggle ended after 1990, donors diverted their attention from the
papers to development projects such as housing and education (Tugwana,
October 1995: interview with author). When external funding was withdrawn,
New Nation could not sustain itself to the extent that by the end of 1994 it

was `in the red', as it had accumulated a huge debt burden (Klaaste, October 1995: interview with author).

Thus changes from the discourse of struggle also meant the decline of not only *New Nation* but various other alternatives such as *South* which had to eventually shut down. Another problem that faced *New Nation* and which also contributed to the decline of the paper in the 1990s was that it was being distributed through Allied Publishers which was owned by Argus and the deal was not as attractive as the one they gave to their own newspapers. As Tugwana realised: "…we did not get the kind of service we should have got from them in terms of distribution; in terms of promoting the paper in the market" (interview with author, October 1995).

Another problem which almost saw the collapse of *New Nation* was its attempt to become a Sunday newspaper from the month of August 1993. This problem arose from *New Nation*'s failure to viably compete in the Sunday newspaper market. The idea of becoming a Sunday for *New Nation* had come about as result of the paper's high circulation which had reached almost 100 000 copies per week in 1993. For an alternative title, this figure was quite a breakthrough. As Manga explained, such a breakthrough created a sense within the title that it "could break even by going Sunday" (interview with author, 1995). The idea of entering the Sunday market was also encouraged by Allied Publishers who were owned by Argus and distributed Argus as well as TML's newspapers. This encouragement came about when *City Press*, which was also distributed by Allied Publishers, decided to pull-out from the distribution deal. Allied Publishers had to fill in the gap caused by *City Press*' pull-out. *New Nation* acccepted the offer to be distributed by Allied Publishers and for the following three months it was on the Sunday market with a total circulation of 15 000 copies (Interview with author, 1995). This was an obvious drop from the paper's previous 100 000 copies per week.

New Nation had, however, underestimated the Sunday market as it nearly crumbled as a result of its decision to compete in the Sunday market:

> We had underestimated the costs of entry into the Sunday
> market. We had to start new sections- more features, more
> news coverage, etc for us to compete with other papers such as
> the *Sunday Times*. This required a lot of resources than we
> could afford for a longer period. This completely eroded our
> resources (Interview with author, 1995).

New Nation decided to operate in a market that was so highly competitive at a time when the SACBC had withdrawn its sponsorship of the paper. The attempt to become a Sunday paper obviously meant a strain on the paper's budget. The paper also suffered from the problem that it was distributed by Allied publishers who did not give *New Nation* "the fair deal" that it gave to other papers under its distribution:

> We did not get a fair deal from Allied. By making us fill the gap
> left by *City Press*, Allied simply wanted to subsidise other
> papers that it distributed such as the *Sunday Times.* Allied did
> not give us the push that it had earlier indicated it would give

us. As a result, the paper's sales plummeted and we realised
we had made mistake (Manga, interview with author, 1995).

Failure by *New Nation* to make it on the Sunday market forced the paper to revert to Friday publications to avoid total closure. As Manga observed, they had "underestimated the Sunday market" and had not foreseen the high level of competitiveness in this market. By 1995, *New Nation* was facing financial difficulties due to the problems that compounded not only it, but other papers like it. Financial difficulties threatened the paper with closure. This made it vulnerable to a buy-out which eventually came in 1995. Early in 1995, *New Nation* sold itself to newly formed New Africa Investments Ltd (NAIL), headed by emergent black business tycoon Dr Ntatho Motlana. The paper had an option of either shutting down or getting itself a business partner. They opted for the second choice. NAIL had just formed New Africa Publications (NAP), and bought *Sowetan* from the restructuring Argus early in 1994. NAP was formed amidst the crisis of legitimacy in the broader South African public sphere, that the new significant ruling fraction, ANC faced. Below I discuss press ownership re-arrangements in the post-apartheid era locating them within the dynamics of socio-political change. I discuss some of the political imperatives that impinged on the formation of NAIL and its acquisition of *Sowetan* and *New Nation*.

CHAPTER FIVE:
PRESS OWNERSHIP IN THE POST-APARTHEID ERA

- Introduction
- Reform and Transition to Democracy
- Calls for Diversity of Media Ownership
- Corporate Response
- Argus and the Restructuring Exercise
- The Sowetan Deal
- New Nation
- The O'Reilly Deal
- Black Economic Empowerment and the Creation of the Motlana Empire

Introduction

The end of apartheid in the early 1990s came about as a negotiated reform process. The end of apartheid saw it replaced with a Government of National Unity (GNU) which was an alliance consisting of the ANC and the NP, with the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) playing the role of junior partner. The GNU marked the start of a new South African order and the end of the old Afrikaans-English-Bantustan alliance. The GNU settlement conformed largely to the agenda conceived by the NP rather than the ANC (Tomaselli and Louw, 1991:222). The reform package presented by the NP was meant to be managed along the lines that left the basic outlines of the existing capitalist social order in existence. The establishment of the new hegemonic order

forced the press to change in a way that mirrors this process. The press has tried to remodel itself within the contextual framework of the GNU settlement.

This chapter analyses press ownership re-arrangements and restructuring in the mid-1990s with particular reference to Argus Holdings Ltd. The analysis is located within the broader context of the restructuring of the national political economy. This general restructuring came as a result of changes in the balance of power which followed the end of the 1948-1993 rule of the NP. The changes that have been witnessed in the nature of ownership of the print media cannot be viewed apart from the dynamics of socio-political reform. The dramatic political shift experienced in the 1990s presented the country's major press owners with challenges for adjustments to the new order. Of particular concern here is the way privately-owned capital shifted in response to political criticism by interest groups within the realm of civil society. These criticisms also emanated from the ANC which emerged as the most significant political fractions within the GNU.

Reform and Transition to Democracy

Increasing international pressure against, and intensified internal resistance to, apartheid rule in the 1980s and the negative results thereof (massive foreign disinvestment and social and political upheaval), forced the NP to reform its racial practices and accept transition to democracy in the 1990s. The shifts within the NP, in part, explain the initiation of the reform process and the subsequent formation of the GNU. By the close of the 1980s it had become clear that apartheid as a system could no longer hold. From its legislation in 1948, apartheid underwent several reforms due to the changing political and economic environment which determined its feasibility. Initially, apartheid discourse was legitimised on the basis of racial superiority (Tomaselli, 1996:5). This basis changed from racial superiority to that of `cultural difference' as the economy allowed a black middle class to emerge within the system, which challenged the basis of that racial superiority. As a result, overt racism disappeared from apartheid discourse from the beginning of the 1980s. Other racial groups were co-opted into the system of patronage as exemplified by the Tricameral Parliament which was set up in 1984 (Tomaselli, 1996:5). This was an attempt to reform apartheid ideology while maintaining white power.

Tomaselli and Louw (1991:222), have also reckoned that the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the end of the Cold War had much to do with the initiation of the reform process which subsequently led to the creation of the GNU. The collapse of socialist countries weakened the ANC which had grown dependent on them for support. For the ANC, this meant that any realistic prospects of overthrowing the NP regime through armed struggle were now removed. The NP took this as an opportunity to initiate a reform package that could be managed in the direction of a `corporatist settlement', that is, a settlement stabilising the basic outlines of the capitalist social order. The end of the cold war left the USA with much power and freedom to pressure any African regime to democratise. The USA thus forced the ANC and the NP to deal with each other (Tomaselli and Louw, 1991:222).

The NP-initiated reform process under the leadership of PW Botha during the 1980s can be perceived as an attempt to create a real hegemony- that is, where `legitimacy' and `alliances' or `persuasion', the important constituents of that hegemony are as important as 'violence' or 'coercion'. The NP, prior to the leadership of F.W. de Klerk, had previously tended to `ignore' all the other constituents of hegemony except violence (Louw, 1991:163). When it realised that `persuasion' had become indispensable, the ruling NP resorted to reform to include those ingredients necessary in the establishment of a real hegemony.

With the impending unbanning of the political resistance movements such as the ANC and PAC towards the close of the 1980s, the NP especially under F.W. de Klerk, adopted Western liberal terms such as `protection of minorities' and `multiculturalism' (Louw, 1991:159; see also Tomaselli, 1996:4; Tomaselli, Louw and Tomaselli, 1992). This political re-organisation was too late and too little, as the country was already caught up in a socio-political and economic crisis. This crisis culumnated in the contrived institution of increased transition to political democracy in the beginning of the 1990s by the NP, when it realised that apartheid as an ideology was no longer tenable. As a result, in February 1990, the NP under the leadership of F.W. de Klerk announced the reform package.

Political organisations involved in the struggle against apartheid were unbanned. Their leaders in detention centres were released and engaged in the negotiations for the establishment of a new democratic South African dispensation. In the multi-party and all-race elections which followed in April 1994, the ANC won electoral victory and quickly formed the GNU in which it constituted the largest fraction in the ruling bloc. This alliance included the NP as a major partner, as well as the IFP which played the role of a junior partner.

Calls for Diversity of Media Ownership

The year 1994 is yet another benchmark in South African political history as it marked the end of decades of legislated apartheid and centuries of colonial rule in the country. But at the same time the GNU settlement left the basic outlines of the capitalist social order intact. In trying to implement and concretise the settlement, many contradictions about the settlement have sprung up. These contradictions have attracted criticism about the nature of socio-economic change that has resulted since the end of apartheid. These criticisms have focused mainly on the lack of substantial change at the level of ownership and participation in the general economic sector and the public sphere.

During and immediately after the period of transition to democracy the ANC and some sections of civil society such as the Black Editors' Forum (BEF) publicly levelled political and racial charges against the concentrated nature of ownership and control in the whole sector of the national economy. The particular concern of the ANC has been to close the `racial chasm' in South Africa's business world as once spelt out by President Nelson Mandela:

> Big business is by definition white. Blacks- and here I mean Africans, coloureds and Indians- are confined to small and medium-sized business. We want the economy to be improved and it cannot be improved if the wide gap still exists (President Mandela, *Sowetan*, April 15 1996:2).

The argument of the various critics has been that such an ownership structure limits access to, and participation in, the public sphere by the black majority. The criticism against ownership concentration has also filtered to press ownership. Critics have called for diversification of ownership within the print media industry which was still largely white-owned and did not reflect changes at that occurred the political level. The concern with the structure of ownership of the media in the country was clearly expressed by President Mandela at a Conference of Editors' meeting in 1994:

> Firstly, the ownership and structure of South Africa's media is not only concentrated in a few hands, but reflects the patterns of racial exclusion of the old era. Secondly, the demographic composition of management, editorial executives and senior journalists mirrors the same patterns (Mandela, 1994).

In a report that was presented to government on the state of ownership of the national media by a group comprising black journalists, the main concern raised was that "…media ownership in South Africa is…roughly ninety per cent in white hands" (*The Mercury*, April 30 1996:2). The ANC's Deputy President and National Executive Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, is one of the many people who have, at different times, called for media deconcentration within the newspaper industry:

> …what is at issue is…the extent of monopoly or concentration of ownership. After almost a century of domination of this country's print media by Argus, now renamed Independent, newspaper circulation penetration is only three percent of the population and is falling rapidly (Mbeki, *Mail and Guardian,* 1-7 December 1995).

Mbeki is implying that the print media, due to the nature of its ownership and control, reaches far too few people in a country with a population of about 45 million (*The Mail and Guardian*, 1-7 December 1995). This also came about because of the ANC's complaint that the print media, virtually white-owned, was hostile to the ANC. While Mbeki has reiterated the ANC's support of freedom of expression and a free media, the ANC's major concern is with breaking up white-owned monopolies in the media (Emdon, 1996:204).

Groups such as the BEF and the Council for African Thought, have called for the dislodging of whites from editorial and managerial positions and having them replaced by blacks (*Mail and Guardian* September 15-21 1995:14). The groups within civil society cannot tolerate a situation where the very same people who controlled the media previously and at the same time conformed to the "status quo and to conservative press judgements" and sometimes, particularly in the case of the Afrikaans press, vilified protest movements, are still in control. The remarks by Thami Mazwai, National Chairman of the Black

Editors' Forum, for example, are testimony to this dissatisfaction:

> Not because they are conglomerates [i.e. the newspaper organisations], but because they are still controlled by the very people who controlled them yesteryear. There is no black shareholding and few blacks hold senior management or editorial positions. Black views and aspirations are therefore, not reflected in the media, except for publications like *City Press*, *Sowetan* and titles generally aimed at blacks. People who called our organisations terrorist groups still control the main media. Can we now expect them to give fair coverage now that one of these is the bigger component of our Government (Mazwai, *Sowetan*, June 5 1995:11).

The feelings expressed in this passage remind one of the following remarks concerning the nature of ownership of the mass media uttered by the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, after that country gained its independence in 1980. Like in South Africa, the media had, under the colonial times, been under white-control. Mugabe, as a representative of the triumphant anti-colonial social movements in Zimbabwe, could not tolerate the media remaining under the control of former erstwhile arch political rivals who had vilified nationalist movements in that country, as terrorist groups. Below is part of the speech made by PM Mugabe in 1981:

> In the final analysis, the mass media in any country is an instrument of the dominant social force in that particular country…In independent Zimbabwe, the formerly oppressed masses have now become the dominant social force. The media should reflect their wishes, and help consolidate their political gains as a result of achieving national independence (Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, *The Herald*, July 1981).

Hence, the government there nationalised large sections of the media. Nationalisation was possible in Zimbabwe because, the Leftwing socialist movements had been able to defeat the ultra-Rightist regime under Ian Smith, and had been able to co-opt some elements from the Right-wing.

Organisations such as the BEF have therefore similarly called for the `Africanisation' of the media institutions which they believe still espouse white values and are also critical of anything administered by blacks. For example, Mazwai's incessant calls at various public fora and in his writings has always attacked the white-owned press for this reason as illustrated by what he said at one conference organised by the BEF that: "The white media goes out of its way to hammer black enterprise and achievement…the white media is interested only in scandals, corruptions and failures of government." He also expressed the need for the media to focus on the "achievement by blacks in the business economy….blacks need to see themselves in a positive light" (*Mail and Guardian*, September 15-21 1995:14). In other words, the concern over the concentration of the press in white hands has much to do with the perceived agenda against the black-led administration. Hence the call for black affirmative action and the Africanisation of the print media. Thami Mazwai comes from a Black Consciousness Movement background which was

to the extreme left of the political spectrum. His racial remarks and calls for black affirmative action in the media, therefore, come as no surprise.

Another case of perceived bias in the white-owned newspapers has been that of "…harrowing cases of black children being abducted, [but] have been and are being ignored by the media while equally horrible cases involving white children were given prominence…for example the Micaela Hunter case" (*The Mercury*, April 30 1996:2). This was part of the report tabled by a group of black journalists from both influential newspapers and the electronic media. Such remarks bear the belief that as long as the print media remains white-owned and controlled, black concerns can never be adequately addressed in public fora.

Corporate Response

The white dominant class in the economic sector has responded to these criticisms in a way that ensures the survival of the capitalist system, in which its interests remain considerably untouched. The criticisms about media ownership that have recently been aired caused a number of deals that the English-language press has so far undertaken. Argus Holdings is the company that has been notable for undertaking restructuring.

The criticisms of the structure of ownership in the South African media derive, to a larger extent, from the view that the restricted nature of the capitalist newspaper medium market limits access to, and participation in, the public sphere. In other words, accessibility to the print media is limited by the nature of ownership and control of this medium. The demands for a broadened access to media and widened participation in the public sphere have influenced, to a greater extent, the changes that have taken place in the print media to date.

The deals undertaken by Argus illustrate propositions developed by political economists to explain the dialectical relationship between political and economic arrangements in the terrain of the print media. They represent the movement of capital and ownership in the post-apartheid era. As Bold et al have noted, an analysis of the deals should be related to the whole crisis of legitimacy in the broader South African public sphere, a crisis which cannot be understood apart from the conditions of capital concentration that characterise the South African political economy (Bold et al, 1994:7). The restructuring undertaken by Argus reveals the ways in which:

> intentional actions of large capital formations are shaped by the political and economic structures within which they are enacted; and the ways in which such structures are themselves reshaped by purposive actions undertaken to sustain the allocative control exercised by organised capital over economic and cultural resources in the public sphere (Bold et al, 1994:7).

Print media restructuring seemingly has further restricted access to, and

participation in, the South African public sphere. Restructuring has further left the newspaper industry in private and profit-oriented ownership whose interests generally do not coincide with those of large sections of the population. The public space within which media operate, has ironically been narrowed by the restructuring that Argus Holdings has undertaken in response to the political pressures to diversify.

Argus and the Restructuring Exercise

Debates which have arisen around the questions of ownership and control of media organisations, and changes resulting therefrom, should be seen in terms of a contested South African public sphere of which the private-owned corporate press has always constituted a significant part. With the re-regulation of the SABC, which was formerly an apartheid government arm, and the inefficiency of, and structural contradictions within the South African Communication Services, as well as the failure of Government media liaison officers to act on behalf of the government, the new ANC-led government has been left in a crisis for access to the media public sphere (Tomaselli, 1996). This is exemplified by recent government calls for unedited air time from the SABC to sell itself to the public (*Sowetan*, June 1995:11).

Most alternative papers which had previously supported anti-apartheid movements had closed down. *New Nation* which had specifically supported the ANC, was faced with problems of closure due to financial problems. These problems had left the title vulnerable to a buy-out which eventually came early in 1995. The ANC has lambasted the white-owned press and called for change in the nature of ownership as reflected in the speech President Nelson Mandela made in 1994:

> With the exception of the *Sowetan*, senior editorial staff of all South Africa's daily newspapers are cast from the same racial mould…They are white, they are from a middle class background, they tend to share a similar life experience…While no one can object in principle to editors with such a profile, what is disturbing is the threat of one-dimensionality this poses for the media. It is clearly inequitable that in a country whose population is overwhelmingly black, the principal players in the media have no knowledge of the life experience of the majority (*The Star*, Feb. 15, 1994)

The comments and remarks that came from the ANC regarding media ownership have also smacked of threats to regulate the print media. For instance, the statement made by Nelson Mandela in 1994 to the Conference of Editors that:

> …government needs to take urgent steps to create conditions for the emergence of more commercial and community voices, particularly amongst disadvantaged communities (Mandela, 1994).

These remarks and criticisms have thus been a cause for concern for the major press houses in the country. As a result, early in 1994 Argus Holdings Ltd, by far the most dominant group in the newspaper sector and the media industry in general, undertook readjustments. The newspaper company sold *Sowetan*, its only black newspaper and the largest circulating black daily, to a consortium of black businessmen linked to the ANC. Argus sold this paper to ANC-linked interests in an attempt to placate the ANC by providing it with its own daily newspaper. Early in 1994 Argus also sold significant portions of its interests to Tony O'Reilly, an Irish international media mogul and entrepreneur (Bold et al, 1994:1). This unbundling was in line with the general restructuring of the big industrial conglomerates. At the time of restructuring, Argus was then linked to the mining conglomerates Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI) and Anglo-American Corporation, which were also in the process of unbundling. With the impending coming to power of a black-led government, Argus had set up a Task Group to look into the possibilities of change following widespread criticism about its dominance in the newspaper industry. Total `unbundling' was rejected by the group in favour of selling the entire group of newspapers to O'Reilly of the Independent Newspapers Holdings (INH), and selective `unbundling' was preferred resulting in the *Sowetan* deal with Motlana and his black partners in business (Louw, 1993:166).

Below I focus mainly on the sale of the *Sowetan* and the subsequent formation of New Africa Publications, and its recent acquisition of *New Nation*, and the implications thereof. But the analysis of restructuring would be incomplete without paying some attention to Argus' sale of its interests to O'Reilly. As a result I also briefly examine the O'Reilly deal. Particularly important in these deals are the political and economic implications of the nature of re-arrangements of ownership resulting form the unbundling of Argus.

The Sowetan Deal

The sale of the Sowetan to a black-owned Corporate Africa, through its subsidiary NAIL consortium, constituted the first Argus restructuring exercise. *Sowetan* is the largest circulating black daily with a total of 200 000 copies a day. Corporate Africa is headed by Dr Ntatho Motlana and is linked to Kagiso and Thebe Investments, an ANC-dominated grouping (Bold et al, 1994:9). At the time of writing, NAIL was the largest black-controlled entity on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, valued at R900 million (*Sunday Times*, Business Times, May 5 1996:5).

In the *Sowetan* deal, NAIL obtained 52,2% controlling interests of the title and about 5% of the shares are held by the employees of NAIL's subsidiary, New Africa Publications. But Argus still owns a 42% controlling interest in the newspaper title as well as advertising and management contracts of the paper (*Enterprise 200*, 1995:10). The General Manager of NAP (now Managing Director), for instance, is Roger Wellsted, who was moved directly from Argus to manage the black newly established company. A few months after he assumed duty, staffers at *Sowetan* in particular complained of managerial

interference in their operations (*Mail and Guardian,* April 26- May 2 1996).

Aggrey Klaaste, now Editor-in-Chief of *Sowetan* and *New Nation*, and member of New Africa Publications' Board of Directors, acknowledged that the paper still depends very much on the infrastructure of Argus, now renamed Independent Newspapers Holdings (INH) (Klaaste, October 1995:interview with author). But he said that with the passage of time, they would phase out these arrangements and leave NAP with its own infrastructure.

The action/power and structure/determination process which resulted in the centralisation of the white1owned press under apartheid were now at work regarding black managed newspapers like *Sowetan* and its holding company's relationship to black dominated capital. INH therefore, evidently still has effective allocative control though Klaaste said this would be phased out. This remains to be seen, especially in view of the mutual relationship that exists between NAP and INH. Reacting to public criticisms which followed the deals that the ANC "aided and abetted Tony O'Reilly and Ntatho Motlana to consolidate the Independent group's stranglehold over the country's English-language print media", Thabo Mbeki maintained that the ANC was opposed to the *Sowetan* deal for the reason that; "…the management contract demanded by Argus meant that Motlana was an effective new owner but was rather a front figure created by Argus to give an impression of change when there was none" (*Mail & Guardian,* 1-7 December 1995). In other words, it is quite clear that Argus sold the paper to a black businessman who would be used a `front figure' for change without much significant change realised on the ground.

While Motlana might have the largest number of shares within *Sowetan* ownership, Murdock has argued that owning a large number of shares within a corporation does not necessarily confer any influence or control over activities (Murdock, 1982). Rather, when effectively talking about ownership and control one has to consider allocative control and economic ownership. Therefore, while NAP might own the largest number of owning shares in *Sowetan*, effective economic ownership and allocative control rests with the INH. The balance of power is still in favour of INH. The manner in which the *Sowetan* deal was conducted also serves to illustrate Murdock's point. *Sowetan* was sold at a total cost of R15 million and it is believed that the money used by Motlana to get the title and form New Africa Publications was provided for by Argus (Klaaste, October 1995:interview with author). The idea behind helping Motlana to form NAIL and buy *Sowetan*, was that the paper should remain in the hands also in favour of capital, and that allocative control should remain more within the hands of the previous owners. It was also in the hope that ANC critics would be appeased.

Interests and the influence that INH still exercises in NAP are revealed in a press statement the Chief Executive of Independent Newspapers, John Featherstone, issued in response to continued criticism from the ANC. This was particularly a response to Mbeki's continued attacks on the `exclusive dissemination of news and information by white-owned monopolies.' Featherstone's remarks reveal INH's hand in controlling the whole process of reform of the newspaper group:

> Independent helped in the formation of NAP and its acquisition

of *Sowetan. Sowetan,* easily South Africa's largest selling [daily]newspaper is now controlled by black interest…IN management has [also] helped it (*Sowetan*) to grow towards its target of becoming South Africa's first national newspaper-*Sowetan* will shortly be printed and distributed by independent newspapers in KwaZulu/Natal, and it is already being test-marketed in Cape Town. *New Nation* has joined the *Sowetan* stable, and with Independent's help and support has been repackaged and re-launched…. (*The Star,* 29 September, 1995:6).

Passing ownership of largest circulating black daily to Motlana, an ANC affiliate, was seen as a `proper political' deal (Klaaste, October, 1995:interview). Motlana and his colleagues in the NAIL consortium were `proper political buyers' in that it was hoped that, selling the paper to people connected to the ANC would appease this constituency. In other words, INH would appear to be readjusting in accordance to ANC demands for such restructuring. In the quote below, Klaaste explains how the deal landed on NAIL's hands:

> When the unbundling situation came to the fore, when it seemed that a black government was coming into power and the white monopolies were going to be in serious trouble, at least everyone thought. When the paper (*Sowetan)*, was in the process of being unbundled, Dr Motlana and other businessmen were not even considered then. We had thought of forming some kind of trust, so that the paper should be owned by black people. But these businessmen came in and they had R15 million needed to buy the paper. Argus was readily willing to sell the paper because here were guys with big money to buy it and [they] looked proper political buyers (Klaaste, October 1995).

Shifts in ownership of *Sowetan* to a consortium sympathetic to the ANC thus "enabled Argus to answer ANC political and racial charges", as well as ensuring that allocative control of the paper remained, at least within circles of capital (Bold et al, 1994:13).

The *Sowetan* had always been believed to be an anti-ANC paper and that it leaned rather towards the PAC and the Black Consciousness Movement. Therefore, it was believed that selling the paper to interests connected to the ANC, the paper would become sympathetic to the ANC-led government. Hence, this was a `proper political deal'. Dr Motlana was Nelson Mandela's personal friend and is a long standing member of the ANC. The inference is that when ANC circles are displeased with *Sowetan*'s reporting, Motlana would be "the first person they phone to complain. Motlana is always quick to convey their concerns to those who edit *Sowetan*…PW Botha would have been impressed" (*Weekly Mail*, 23 March, 1995). Klaaste acknowledged that when Motlana and others bought the paper, they also came with the view that *Sowetan* was anti-ANC and therefore they were getting political pressures from the ANC higher echelons. This pressure also filtered down to him as Klaaste commented:

Dr Motlana and them are part of that ANC clique...and they were getting some very hard noises from the people upstairs in the ANC. Our new owners lean on me now and again. When my journalists attack Mandela, for instance, I get phone calls at night and they make things tough for me, even tougher than before. You see, most guys here are PAC, AZAPO and so on (Klaaste, October 1995).

Media reports have also confirmed interference with *Sowetan* staffers by NAIL management. The reports have mentioned that some board members of NAIL have been accused of editorial interference. These accusations have been made by staffers at *Sowetan* to the Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA). MWASA represents the interests of most staffers at the Sowetan (*Mail and Guardian*, April 26 May 2 1996:B5). According to the report, staffers at Sowetan feel the managing director of the newspaper, Roger Wellsted, wields too much power and that he is being manipulated by NAIL Chairman Dr Ntatho Motlana "who wants [us] to sing the praises of the ANC". Wellsted, who was given the post of General Manager from Argus soon after the paper was sold to NAIL, as part of the whole deal, was also accused by political journalists of secretly submitting the press clippings of political reports for scrutiny by Motlana because of the paper's perceived bias against the ANC.

Such interventions as those experienced by staffers at *Sowetan* cannot be discounted in a complete account of corporate power. The fact that effective allocative controllers may not intervene in routine operations on a day-to-day basis does not mean there is no relationship between the owners' ideological interests and what gets produced. While all private enterprise media owners have a basic interest in increasing profitability of their enterprises, recent changes in patterns of ownership have added a new corporate impetus to ideological intervention. Murdock (1982) has argued that because of growth of institutional investment, media enterprises are increasingly linked to companies and organisations operating in social and politically contentious areas (Murdock, 1982:140). This leads to the increase of potential "no go" areas for critical reporting' and presentation, as corporates seek to use their media enterprises to promote a favourable image of their activities (1982:140).

The interferences that most journalists working for *Sowetan* have in recent months complained about seem to stem from INH which wants *Sowetan* to be ANC-friendly in the hope that both the government and the ANC will be less vociferous on the issue of media ownership. As one journalist was quoted as saying: "Independent would be happiest if Mbeki and others toned down on the issue of monopolies owning the media" (*Mail and Guardian*, April 26 May 2 1996:B5). This exemplifies the political nature of control of media organisations. Bold et al (1994) have noted that it also illustrates the ways in which allocative controllers respond to political imperatives by seeking new arrangements which simultaneously seek to appease powerful political interests and consolidate their own dominant economic positions. It is apparent that they are trying to help the ANC-led GNU from its crisis of media access it is faced with. ANC's is engaged in a struggle for legitimacy and control of the public sphere.

There is another interesting side to the *Sowetan* deal which also helps as an illustration of capitalist reaction to socio-political change. According to Klaaste, Argus sold the paper to Dr Motlana and others because, as he says, people like them and himself (he is now in the Board of Directors of NAP), have been preaching the themes of reconciliation, nation-building and reconstruction which appealed to white capitalists. Such discourses coincided with the NP's reform calls for `multi-racialism', `multi-culturalism' and `reconciliation' of the late 1980s:

> White business was favourably disposed to this idea of nation-building and reconciliation, themes which were also shared by Dr Motlana and others, because it appeared that we were nice black guys saying non-revolutionary stuff of the PAC and the BCM. I started the idea of nation-building in the late 1980s as a journalistic code from the felt need for unity among the black people to form the foundation of the nation because they are the majority in this country. Then I thought of the white guys. Of course, the damages of apartheid have to be repaired and the country reconstructed. But we cannot do that alone- we have to do it with other South Africans, because whites have the money and if we don't they can sabotage the nation. We need to reconcile and rebuild this our rainbow nation (Klaaste, October 1995).

New Nation

In March 1995 NAIL acquired the *New Nation* title (*Enterprise 200*, 1995:10). According to a newspaper report, Motlana, who is also chairman of NAP, said the acquisition was in line with the group's plans to add publications to its stable (*Natal Mercury*, 17 March 1995). At the time of writing, NAIL was gearing up to bid newspapers in the TML stable (*Mail and Guardian*, April 26-May 2 1996). At the time of its acquisition *New Nation* was hard-hit by bankruptcy and on the verge of liquidation. *New Nation* had been a popular and vocal paper in the 1980s and under the editorship of Zwelakhe Sisulu, now Chief Executive Officer of the SABC, it had been twice banned (Klaaste, October 1995). It had vigorously supported and aligned itself with liberation movements, the ANC in particular. It also took the side of the labour movement Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). *New Nation* was bought according to Klaaste, because of its good name and because it has good connections now in government. But he also made the point that *Sowetan* was forced to buy the paper also, because of political reasons:

> Because *Sowetan* was considered to be anti-ANC, our new owners were under pressure from the ANC to ensure that they reformed the paper. We were also kind of lagooned into buying *New Nation*, because of its obvious connections with the people it supported during the liberation struggle who are now in power (Klaaste, October 1995).

Sowetan has found itself in a very curious and anomalous position which

might also help to explain the acquisition of *New Nation* by NAIL. To start with, ownership of *Sowetan* was passed on to NAIL by Argus in the hope that the ANC would at last have its own daily paper and stop its complaints about monopolies owning the media. But most staffers working for the paper support the PAC and are critical of the ANC. For instance, the *Sowetan* has been noted to be in the forefront of criticising ANC politicians for joining in the `gravy train' and enriching themselves (Pannall, 1994). The acquisition of *New Nation* by NAIL seemingly came to counter the obstacles and headaches that *Sowetan* poses for the ANC. At least *New Nation* was a staunch supporter of the ANC and the trade union movements. As such, the hope seemingly, was that it could help cover up for the anti-ANC criticisms from *Sowetan.*

The new ownership and control arrangement of *New Nation* and *Sowetan* will obviously be fraught with contradictions. Effective control and ownership, as argued earlier, still rests with INH owned by a foreign capitalist, O'Reilly whose interests are basically profit-oriented. But the staff working for the two newspapers have different ideological orientations. The staff from *Sowetan* have a Black Consciousness orientation, while that at *New Nation* come from a moderate ANC socialist orientation. Such an ownership arrangement initiated by INH could also be read as capitalist strategy to `breed' confusion within the new black-led newspaper organisation and in a way distract attention from the interests of ownership. Such an assortment of people of differing and contending ideological inclinations, through coincidence or not, normally leads to squabbles at organisational level, to the neglect of contradictions at higher levels.

One of the reasons why NAP bought *Sowetan* and *New Nation* was profit motive. Klaaste alluded to the fact that Dr. Motlana is a businessmen first and foremost and therefore, he bought the *New Nation* title in a bid to make money, by "selling a good newspaper that will attract advertisers and bring profits to the organisation just like the *Sowetan* is doing" (Klaaste, interview with author). Dr Motlana is an advocate of the market economy, as exemplified by his call for 'black economic upliftment' and participation in the system (short for the establishment of a black middle-class). According to him black empowerment means the transfer of ownership of the means of production into black hands capable of running business.

Marketers are trying to segment the changing South African society on a non-racial basis in an attempt to find markets for products (*Enterprise 200*, 1995) This makes *New Nation* and *Sowetan* attractive vehicles for advertisements because the *Sowetan* is the largest circulating back daily while *New Nation* was a very popular paper among the alternative titles with the largest circulation in this stable. These publications seem to have become financially attractive investments. For example, *Sowetan* boasts a staff of 160, reported in 1994 a turnover of R75,2 million an increase of R38,5 million from the 1990 figure of R36,7 million. Operating income increased from R3,9 million in 1990 to R11,4 million in 1994. The newspaper's asserts in March 1994 were R55,1 million (*Enterprise 200*, 1995:11).

Sowetan is therefore a money-making enterprise and it seems *New Nation* has been bought to play that role as well. In his bid to increase the NAP stable it is intimated that Motlana also wants to buy community papers which

the government also wishes to fund (Klaaste, 1995). But Klaaste said that he and his colleagues think that it is better for these papers to be bought by the black private entrepreneurs. Klaaste also said that other papers they have in mind include the Natal/Kwazulu based paper *Ilanga* which is aligned to the Inkatha Freedom Party, a union he said might hamper their move to buy it (Klaaste, October 1995). At the time of writing, NAIL was geared to bid for some of the newspapers in the TML stable.

Like any other capitalists, black entrepreneurs like Motlana would want to use the media to enhance their business operations and maximise profits. Capitalists -whether black or white1 use media organisations to further their interests to secure and enhance their strategic positions in the socio-economic order. They do this both in terms of the appropriation of profit, and the creation of cultural products (Tomaselli, 1996:10). At a general level, the instrumental approach shows how media organisations as whole operate to advance the collective interests of the capitalist class.

The O'Reilly Deal

The O'Reilly deal constituted the second exercise in the Argus restructuring exercise, when in early in 1994 the group sold 31% of its interests to the Irish-based company, Independent Newspapers (INH) (Bold et al, 1994:9). This deal came through following the report presented by Argus' Task Group set up in 1993 to look into the possibilities of unbundling in the face of perceived threats of nationalisation by the ANC. The arrangement with O'Reilly might as well have been a pre-emptive effort to head off possible State intervention in the group's newspapers.

The Irish-based company is headed by media mogul Tony O'Reilly whose IN has secured effective allocative control over Argus newspapers which is listed separately in the JSE, so that by mid-1994 IN and TML were the two significant English press groups. Anglo-American and JCI no longer have a direct link except through the 14% stake held by the group's pension fund, and the final link between Anglo and the press was severed after the new government took power (*Sunday Times*, 10/04/1994). Now O'Reilly has almost a 60% stake in the group (*Business Report*, 30/3/95). The deal was made possible after South Africa opened its borders to foreign investment following the end of apartheid and ANC's electoral victory in 1994. O'Reilly has inherited virtually intact Argus Holdings. While Argus Holdings indicated that: "this transaction was a result of Argus' commitment to deconcentrate ownership of the South African press", in real terms it transferred ownership to another "conglomerate which also owns 65 per cent of newspapers in Ireland and in addition has also has interests in Australia" (Oosthuisen, 1995:2). Instrumentalist analysis of media control in terms of Murdock (1982) reveals that the deal struck with O'Reilly is a shift in ownership that has resulted in little change in the nature of control of the South African print media. The Argus newspaper stable has been further consolidated in the hands of an "individual capitalist" whose ownership would "bolster the general interests of the capitalist class, or of dominant fractions within it" (Murdock, 1982:124).

Murdock has examined how capitalists pursue their individual interests and at a more general level how media organisations as a whole operate to advance the collective interests of the capitalist class. O'Reilly has made it clear that he invested in the Argus company for the sole purpose of maximising profits, and to this end the organisation has been restructured by IN Group Director, Ivan Fallon who is imposing a Fleet Street approach on the Group (*Style*, March 1995:59), thus exercising allocative control.

Black Economic Empowerment and the Creation of the Motlana Empire The acquisitive tendencies of NAIL have important clear political and economic implications. Dr Motlana and other emergent black businessmen represent a strata of organic intellectuals. Motlana himself is well known for his protest efforts as Chairman of the Committee of Ten, a Soweto-based black civic organisation which was strongly linked to the ANC and vigorously opposed to apartheid rule. Socio-political change has enabled people like Motlana to accumulate enough capital capacity to muscle into big business. Their entry into big business through the assistance of established enterprises should be viewed as part of the whole process of trying to create and reflect the new South African hegemony.

Motlana and a number of new wealthy black businessmen represent a newly emergent class of black capitalists. They have emerged as a result of the phenomenon of black economic empowerment for which they have been advocates. Black economic empowerment essentially started as a way of bringing in black business people into the mainstream of the economy. Black economic empowerment is similar to Afrikaner affirmative action of the 1950s and 60s when the Afrikaners had gained political power whilst economic power remained in the hands of the English-speaking whites. As a result, the NP through State intervention had tried to create an Afrikaner middle-class as way of passing control of the economy to the Afrikaner populace. But so far, black empowerment has come to be viewed by many as an `embourgeoisification' or enriching of a few elite of the black businessmen such as Motlana (see *Sunday Times*, Business Times, May 5 1996). The few pioneers of the movement of black empowerment have been accused of using it as a tool for their enrichment. For instance, it was reported in the media in the early 1990s that Thebe Investments Corporation one of the respected black groups, traded on its association with the ANC and its black empowerment programme to conduct its business deals. Subsequently, the ANC distanced itself from Thebe following criticisms of enrichment of the corporation's members (*Sunday Times*, Business Times, May 5 1996:B5).

Debates have arisen within the black community about the merits of black empowerment and attention has been focused on Motlana considered to be the front runner and chief beneficiary. Motlana has been able to create his business empire through forming strategic partnerships and alliances with established businesses. His association with the ANC has also been an advantage in his dealings with big business. NAIL's business partners include: Sankorp, the investment arm of Afrikaans insurance giant Sanlam, Independent Newspapers Group, Standard Bank and M-Net. Recently Motlana was reported to have failed in his 48% bid for Anglo's shares in Johnnic, the R7 billion industrial arm of the unbundled JCI. Johnnic has direct and indirect controlling interests in interests in the dominant Central News Agency retail

stores, recording company, Gallo, M-Net and TML. (*Sunday Times* Business Times, June 4,1995:1).

But reports have mentioned that Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC's Secretary General and Chairman of the Constitutional Assembly since 1994, resigned his government post to become NAIL's deputy chairman. This move has been widely reported as meant to strengthen NAIL's bid for Johnnic now valued at R10 million. It is also seen as a move meant to deflect some of the criticisms that "NAIL chairman Dr Motlana represents black enrichment rather than black empowerment" (*Sunday Times*, Bisness Times, May 5 1996). Ramaphosa's move into the private sector to spearhead the black empowerment policy has also been viewed as a *coup* against Motlana and his colleagues who have been accused of tarnishing the image of black empowerment and the ANC through their personal enrichment (*Sowetan*, April 15 1996:1).

In a bid to serve the African Bank which was last year rescued from bankruptcy following recapitalisation by Metlife, government and NBS, Motlana bought a 21% stake in the only black-owned bank in the country (*Sunday Times* Business Times, May 5 1996:B5). NAIL also has significant interests in the financial services sector (30% controlling stake of Metropolitan Life, South Africa's fifth largest assurance company with net assets of R8,6 billion and a strong foothold in the black life insurance market) and in the telecommunications (20% of cellular phone network MTN) (*Enterprise 200*, 1995:11; see also *Sunday Times*, Business Times, May 5 1996:5). Other shareholders in the wide spectrum of NAIL base also include 78% shares under black ownership, Corporate Africa (51%); Sanlam/Sankorp (20%); the National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu), (13,7% through pension funds); Sefelana Employee Benefits Organisation (4,9% through pension funds) and 8 500 individual black shareholders (7%) (*Enterprise 200*, 1995:1). Besides Tony O'Reilly, other international partners include: Cable and Wireless and the American Merchant Bank Morgan Stanley.

Ironically, the first overture to black business was made by the Afrikaans group Sanlam which sold a 30% stake in Metropolitan Life to Motlana in 1992 (*Sunday Times*, Business Times, May 5 1996). Almost three decades earlier Afrikaners had been in the same position as blacks today. Then, the Afrikaners had gained political power, but lacked economic control. As a result, they initiated the Afrikaner economic empowerment programme which was known as `volkscapitalisme'. This was an attempt to create an Afrikaner middle class through State intervention in the economy. When the NP-controlled State threatened to nationalise the mining industry, Anglo-American which dominated the ownership of mines in the country responded by selling General Mines (now Gencor) to Sanlam (*Sunday Times*, Business Times, May 5 1996). This was done in order to mollify the NP. Seemingly black empowerment has produced the same effects as `volkscapitalisme'. Big business in the country is making concessions to black business people such as Motlana in the hope of mollifying its critics.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSION

Indications are that while the corporate press expresses its willingness to reform, the changes that have been witnessed in the post-apartheid print media terrain show very little about the concrete realisation of the owners of this press' desire to change. Control of the South African press today still remains concentrated in the hands of the few capitalist owners who have their own agenda of ensuring the continuity of the capitalist system in the country. The entrance of the Motlanas into big capital and the media industry means very little as far as widening ownership diversity that will broaden participation in the public matters of society, to include the information poor and marginalised populations of society is concerned. Like the Royal Commission on the Press in Britain reported in 1977, increasing concentration of the press carries with it a strong potential for further restricting the "diversity of opinion and expression" (cf. Emdon, 1996:191). The few newspaper owners have their own set political and economic interests in the way they operate their media organisations, which are within the whole framework of the capitalist system. Like Tomaselli has observed, capitalists- whether black or white- use media organisations to further their own interests and secure and enhance their strategic positions in the socio-economic order (Tomaselli, 1996:10).

The decline of the alternative press dealt a heavy blow to media diversity in the country. Its decline represents the decline of a public sphere that had been crucial in influencing public events and the shaping of South African history in the 1980s. The media as a crucial resource to the democratic process in South Africa therefore, remains still owned and controlled, like before, by big capital whose sole interests are profit-driven as well as appeasing dominant political power groups within society. Today, more than ever before the print media in South Africa has come to operate under the dictates of the motive for profit typical of media operating in advanced consumer societies. The print media continues to serve dominant hegemonic interests in the South African society. One role of organic intellectuals working for the establishment has been to attempt to co-opt oppositional forces into the established order (Gramsci, 1971). Immediately prior to the reform process that led to political democracy, Louw (1991), had hoped that organic intellectuals of the anti-apartheid resistance movements would avoid such co- option. But seemingly, the intellectuals within the former apartheid establishment have, since the end of the 1980s, succeeded in creating a new hegemony based on the alliances with former oppositional forces. This new hegemony is framed within the basic outlines of the capitalist social order. The corporate press has had to change to be seen to be dealing with the challenges of mirroring the new hegemony.

While the government as a public body has come up with strategies to ensure that broadcasting in the country equitably serves the needs of society as a whole, there is dire need for public policy that will address the skewed nature of ownership of the public newspaper medium in the country. But as such scholars like Robert White (1980; 1984 & 1992), Armand Matterlart (1980; 1986) and others have for instance argued, democratisation of the media should be accompanied by structural changes in the socio-political and economic processes at the wider levels of society. There is need for a

theoretical and methodological framework for a communication policy that would lead to the liberalisation of the South African print media. A democratised South African print media could facilitate free flow of information and participation in public communication by the population as a whole. The print media is a potential resource for strengthening the `space' between society and the State and Economic spheres. Therefore, it has the potential to be an effective resource in democratic politics. However, establishing such a framework constitutes another big and important area of study which should concern researchers on South African public communication.

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- *Gabu Tugwana*, interview with author, October 1995, Johannesburg. Tugwana is currently editor of *New Nation*. He is one of the pioneering journalists with *New Nation.* He has been involved with the newspaper from its early days.
- *Amrit Manga*, interview with author, October 1995, Johannesburg. Manga has also been involved with the *New Nation* since its establishment in 1986. Currently he specialises in labour reporting.