The Politics of Discourse and the Discourse of Politics:
Images of Violence and Reform on
the South African Broadcasting Corporation's
Television News Bulletins - July 1985 - November 1986

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal, Durban.

Durban, July 1992
I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Natal, Durban. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Ruth Elizabeth Teer Tomaselli
July, 1992
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work presented here has been a long time in the making, and the nature of the project has evolved and changed over time. This was partly due to a belated recognition of the necessary limitations of such a work, and a realisation that a complete analysis of all the media covering the period was impractical. Furthermore, in recording what was essentially a civil war, contemporary processes and events were unclear, and the value of a short period of hindsight has been particularly helpful here.

The delayed nature of the project has stretched the patience of many friends, colleagues and sponsors, all of whom have my deep appreciation. In particular I would like to the following people for their encouragement and gentle criticism: Professor Tony Voss; Professor David Maughan Brown; Professor Hilston Watts; Dr Eric Louw and Dr Richard Collins. My special thanks to Dr Phillip Wade for his constructive and encouraging supervision, and to Arnold Shepperson for his proof-reading, layout, printing and friendship.

Finally, without the unstinting support of my family this thesis would not have been completed. My husband Keyan Tomaselli resisted every temptation of nepotism and editorial interference, and provided me with emotional, financial and intellectual support. To Keyan, Damien and Catherine - its done!

The Human Sciences Research Council provided financial assistance for the thesis. The outcome, however, is my responsibility alone. The Centre for Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal, Durban, provided a Graduate Assistantship.
ABSTRACT

The thesis begins with an examination of the literature on television news, taking particular note of the arguments for and against the 'dominant ideology thesis'. It is the contention of the work that the notion of 'professionalization' is a two sided one: while creating patterns and strategies of repetition and formulaic responses, during the emergency it was conversely used to protect the integrity of a cadre of working journalists.

In South Africa a State of Emergency was declared on 17 July, 1985, and successively renewed until 2 February 1990. An important element of the Emergency legislation were the stringent media restrictions placed on print and televisual journalists. This thesis examines the content and application of these restrictions, as well as the part played by the Bureau for Information in providing a bureaucratic base for the policy of media containment. The thesis argues that the restrictions, as well as the State of Emergency as a whole, was predicated on the South African Government's understanding that the country was facing a 'Total Onslaught', which could only be countered by a 'Total Strategy'.

The empirical section of the thesis examines the manner in which the processes of political violence and reform were imaged on the televisual news broadcasts of South African Broadcasting Corporation, in the period July 1985 to November 1986. Under the discussion of 'Reform' particular attention is paid to P.W.Botha's opening speech to the Federal Congress of the National Party in Durban, 17 August, 1985; as well his opening address to Parliament the following year; followed by an examination of the communication of reforms concerning influx control and urbanisation.

In defining political violence a distinction is made between the government's use of the word 'unrest' and 'terrorism', which is contrasted with the critical concepts of 'mass action' and 'insurgency'. The narration of the declaration of the State of Emergency, and some of the main thematic motifs which accompanied reporting in this period, specifically the insistence that the security forces, and through them, the
government, was in constant control; and the concept of ‘black-on-black’ violence as a driving force in the political upheavals, are dissected. This is followed by an analysis of the television coverage of political violence in Durban (August 1985); Crossroads (June 1986) and the contracted ‘Unrest Reports’ which were regularly broadcast throughout the State of Emergency. In the final chapter, the portrayal of the ANC as a terrorist organisation is examined, together with the attitudes of those who were believed to support them.

The thesis concludes with a re-examination of the dominant ideology thesis, specifically as it can be said to have applied to the television news broadcasts discussed in this project.
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LIST OF NOTATIONS USED IN TELEVISION TRANSCRIPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUDIO</td>
<td>sound track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>close-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CK</td>
<td>chromokey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHS</td>
<td>left hand side of screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OST</td>
<td>original sound track (or direct sound)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHS</td>
<td>right hand side of screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SU</td>
<td>stand up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>super</td>
<td>superimposition - titles printed over image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unseen</td>
<td>reporter/ commentator/ questioner not shown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISUAL</td>
<td>image on screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>voice-over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-shot</td>
<td>two persons on screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-shot</td>
<td>three persons on screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>portion of the transcript omitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- -</td>
<td>a pause or hesitancy on the part of the speaker being transcribed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEY
CAPITALS: Indicates a town
Upper/Lower case: Indicates a suburb or township
* Italics: Indicates an area of the State of Emergency
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.7.85</td>
<td>Regulations under Public Safety Act (PSA) 1953:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.7.85</td>
<td>* SAP Commissioner, or person acting on his authority, can control reporting and transmission of news on conduct of security forces maintaining public safety and terminating the emergency (Reg 6(1)(i)).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11.85</td>
<td>* Unless disclosed by Minister, no one can disclose identity of persons detained under emergency regulations (Reg 8(d)).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.86</td>
<td>Amendment of regulations under PSA:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.86</td>
<td>Without the consent of an SAP Commissioner or commissioned officer, no one is allowed to manufacture, reproduce, publish or distribute in or outside SA: any film, reproduction or sound recording of a public disturbance; strike or boycott; the damaging of property; or assault on or killing of person; or of people and security forces involved in these incidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.86</td>
<td>Regulations under PSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.86</td>
<td>* Reinstates State of Emergency Nationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.86</td>
<td>* No one may make, write or print a 'subversive statement' which:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.86</td>
<td>a. promotes the objects of unlawful organisation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.86</td>
<td>b. incites the public to take part in unlawful strikes, boycotts, protest processions, civil disobedience campaigns;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.86</td>
<td>c. opposes the government and security forces who are maintaining public order;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.86</td>
<td>d. undermines military service; aggravates feelings or hostility between one section of the public and another;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.86</td>
<td>e. weakens confidence in the termination of the emergency; or encourages foreign action against SA. (Reg 1 (viii)(a-f), Reg 10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.86</td>
<td>* Minister of Law and Order or person authorised by him may seize copies of any publication which include 'subversive states' (Reg 11 &amp; 12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.6.86</td>
<td>* Reg 9 reinstates Proc 208 (11.2.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.6.86</td>
<td>Amends regulations in Proc 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.6.86</td>
<td>* Definitions of 'subversive statement' now apply to self-governing homelands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.6.86</td>
<td>White spaces are considered to be subversive statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.6.86</td>
<td>In terms of Reg 7 of Proc 109:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.6.86</td>
<td>* Without the consent of a Divisional SAP Commissioner, one can publish or disseminate statements of official of 109 organisations in the Western Cape (Order 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.7.86</td>
<td>Natal Supreme Court: Metal and Allied Workers Union challenges definition so 'subversive statements', among other curbs. Courts finds part of five of the six definitions in Proc 109 to be void on ground of vagueness. Only Regulation 1 viii(b) and the undermining of compulsory military service remain in force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.86</td>
<td><strong>Amends Proc 109 Regulation 12:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proc 140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG 10382</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.8.86</td>
<td><strong>Natal Supreme Court:</strong> Argus, SAAN, Natal Newspapers and Natal Witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GN 1881</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG 10429</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP Commissioner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9.86</td>
<td><strong>Natal Supreme Court</strong> strikes down two regulations (11 &amp; 12) which allow security forces to confiscate newspapers, after applications from SAAN, Argus, Natal Newspapers and Natal Witness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.12.86</td>
<td><strong>Regulations under the PSA:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proc 224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG 10541</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.87</td>
<td><strong>In terms of Proc 224</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GN 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG 10584</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.87</td>
<td><strong>In terms of Proc 109</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP Commissioner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.1.87</td>
<td><strong>Rand Supreme Court:</strong> After application from <em>Argus</em> and <em>SAAN</em>, GN 102 declared null and void, because SAP Commissioner had exceeded his authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeals GN 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeals GN 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Amends regulations in Proc 224</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Enlarged definition of 'subversive statement' makes it illegal to support or take part in activities of unlawful organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Prohibits publication of advertisements which will defend and praise activities of unlawful organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6.87</td>
<td><strong>In terms of PSA:</strong> Renews State of Emergency nation wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reimpose media restrictions above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.8.87</td>
<td>Minister of Home Affairs empowered to stop publication of newspaper for up to 3 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6.88</td>
<td><strong>Renewed State of Emergency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media restriction unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media restrictions unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1990</td>
<td><strong>Lifts State of Emergency and associated media restrictions</strong></td>
</tr>
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PREFACE

This thesis is an attempt to unravel the ideological and political construction of reality presented to the South African white public through the agency of the government information structures, and the medium of news broadcasts in the critical period from July 1985 to November 1986. The body of the work examines the ways in which the discourse of news was constructed, and how this was mediated through television. It is a truism to say that in the second half of the 1980s the South African State faced crises in every sphere: economic, political and ideological. At each level the government’s response was a contradictory one of attempting to enforce its will through repression, while at the same time engineering consent and legitimacy for its rule. While not denying the importance and pervasiveness of repression, or ignoring the many attempts to ‘co-opt’ black South Africans into the hegemonic ambit, this study is concerned with the way in which the government attempted to elicit support from the white electorate in order to retain power. To achieve this, the government needed to ‘inform’ its electorate of its ‘solutions’ and ‘strategies’ in the impasse it faced: in other words, it needed to ‘sell’ its particular (and vacillatory) vision of reform.

At the same time the government needed to shield the electorate from the knowledge of the extent and intensity of oppositional responses to the structures and implementation of apartheid. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), the national public service broadcaster which has close ideological and structural ties with the government, reflected this closed, highly repressive and violent period in a particularly constrained ideological fashion.

The importance of the SABC in the dissemination of information and attitudes can be gauged from its own assessment. In a radio editorial, Comment (28.4.86), it was noted:

On the South African public’s view of the SABC’s credibility, there is irrefutable evidence. According to the authoritative All Media and Products Survey, commonly known as AMPS, for the last quarter of 1985, radio and television constitute the primary news source for most South Africans of all population groups. More than 70 percent of whites said they believed all or most radio and television news, compared with just 40 percent for the printed media’s coverage. Virtually the same picture emerged from a country-wide survey conducted in October last year by the HSRC. It found that about 90 percent of whites regarded the SABC’s credibility, as far as news coverage is concerned, as ‘good’ to ‘fair’.
The Subject Matter

In retrospect, the middle of the 1980s was a period when crucial processes were coming to fruition. While the violent conflagration which still engulfed South Africa in the early 1990s can said to have begun in the Vaal Triangle in September 1984, June 1985 signalled an unprecedented upsurge in political violence on the Cape Flats, and in the Eastern Cape, followed closely by the Vaal Triangle and the greater Durban area. Political demonstrations in the form of marches, funerals and mass meetings were severely policed, and both the death toll and the number of detentions rose during this period. The first 'partial' State of Emergency affecting 36 magisterial districts, was imposed on 21 July, 1985, and lifted on the 7 March, 1986. Four months later, on the 12 June, 1986, a 'national' State of Emergency was declared. This was successively renewed each year until 1989, when it was lifted throughout the country with the exception of Natal. In February 1990, the Emergency was lifted entirely.

The period under review, July 1985 - December 1986, also saw the major developments in the establishment and elaboration of the Bureau for Information. During this time, severe media restrictions were introduced to control the dissemination of information on political violence by both the domestic and foreign media, particularly television media. As a context to this study, I have therefore devoted considerable attention to the Bureau for Information (Binfo). This body had two primary functions, corresponding to Antonio Gramsci's double Centaur of coercion and consent: to 'perfect the free flow of information' through the policing of media regulations imposed by the South African government; and to elicit support from the South African and international public through the production and dissemination of publicity campaigns, booklets, newspapers, paid newspaper advertisements, conferences and publicity tours. However, it is in its role of enforcer of media controls, and as a primary definer of 'news', that the Bureau is of prime interest to the argument presented here.

The period of the study was also marked by an evolving discourse of 'reform': the much heralded 'Rubicon' speech with which State President P.W. Botha opened the Federal Congress of the National Party, and the address at the opening of Parliament in February 1986 (dubbed 'Rubicon II'), can be seen as the discursive failures of the Reform strategy. While reform was more than 'cosmetic', the abolition of the edifice of apartheid was a piecemeal affair. In the thesis, I look at removal of the hated 'dompas' or 'pass book', the identity document which regulated the movement,
residential rights and employment opportunities of all black South Africans; as well as the changing discourse on urbanisation from 'influx control' to 'orderly urbanisation'.

A Confessional Note on Methodology

The imaging and framing of political violence broadcast on television news bulletins in the first half of 1985 convinced me that this was a process worth studying more systematically. Much of the initial motivation for the project came from a desire to record history in the making. Broadcasting is among the most ephemeral of the media. 'News' is recorded, edited, narrated, and broadcast across the airwaves - a fleeting message which leaves no material trace behind it. Yet the repeated pattern of broadcasts does construct a matrix of ideological traces which are not as easily erased from the public consciousness as individual programmes are erased by succeeding broadcasts: hence my need to record and preserve what was nightly disseminated into our homes.

The general unfocussed desire to record and study news broadcasts, with an emphasis on their depiction of political violence, was galvanised by speculation about an imminent announcement of a State of Emergency in mid-July 1985. The video recordings were begun on the 21 July, 1985, and continued uninterrupted until beginning of March 1986, when the State of Emergency was lifted. Unknown to me at the time, this was to be merely a temporary respite. I began to record once more from early June 1986, in anticipation of a new State of Emergency, which was declared on the 12 June 1986. By the end of that year, it appeared that the main patterns of televisual reporting under the State of Emergency had been forged, and I discontinued the recordings. All these recordings were then transcribed by myself, and form the basis of the empirical data used in this thesis. Television news bulletins have been supplemented by the scripts of the 1:15 pm radio News bulletins from mid-July to mid-September 1985; the SABC's daily editorial programme Comment (now discontinued); and the various publications of the Bureau for Information.

My academic background hitherto had been eclectic, focusing both on socio-political processes and on the media. For this reason, the British approach to cultural and media studies was particularly appealing, offering more of an 'approach', than a method. However, there were no clear guidelines on how to go about the study I envisaged. Drawing on previous work done by the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies, the Glasgow Media Group, Phillip Schlesinger, Graham Murdock and Philip
Eliot; John Fiske, Richard Collins and many others, I set about subjecting the raw data to an analysis of both content and form. To this end, I applied a thematic analysis, teasing out repeated motifs in the material, and attempting to account for their patterns and origins; while at the same time looking at the way in which meaning was communicated through the discursive construction of the bulletins, through the use of semiotic and linguistic analyses.

Transcriptions and Translations

For those unacquainted with South African television, it is necessary to point out the channel from which the recordings were taken - TV1 - was aimed primarily at a white audience, with the assumption that 'Coloured' and Indian viewers would also make up part of the audience. Black viewers were assumed (correctly) to watch TV2 or TV3, which were broadcast in African languages. TV1 was broadcast alternately in English and Afrikaans, with a language change at the 8.00 pm news bulletin. Thus on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and alternative Sundays, the bulletin, and the following 'in-depth' news programme, were broadcast in English. In the transcripts, these are referred to as News and Network. On Monday, Wednesday, Friday and alternate Sundays, the bulletin was broadcast in Afrikaans as Nuus and Netwerk. The transcripts for these bulletins were translated by myself, and are presented in the thesis in English for more general accessibility. In the translations I have attempted to retain as much of the idiomatic 'flavour' of the bulletins as possible, even where this has spoiled the prose. Where there are words which are characteristically Afrikaans, and translation does not adequately convey their meaning (for example 'woongebiede' for 'residential areas', or 'volksgroep' for 'racial group'), I have indicated these in the text. While official government documents have used a capital 'B' and 'W' for 'blacks' and 'whites', I have always transcribed 'blacks' with a small 'b' and 'whites' with a small 'w'; since I wished to avoid the sense of objectification implicit in the use of capitals.

It goes without saying that much of what was recorded and transcribed has not been used. However, I disclaim any suggestion of 'loading' or 'bias' by pointing out that within the thematic areas on which I have focused - reform and political violence - I have extracted examples from across the sample. In the original outline of the project I had proposed to include chapters on 'sanctions'; and 'militarisation and relations with neighbouring states'. However, as the thesis grew and grew, and time (and the patience of the HSRC) became shorter, the scope of the thesis was curtailed.
The news agenda of the SABC could not be studied in isolation from the restrictions placed on all media during the State of Emergency (Chapters Four and Five). While the restrictions demarcated the boundaries of permissible reporting by the media, it was the establishment of the Bureau for Information, risen from the ashes of the defunct Department of Information, which gave institutional form to the government's information strategy. This strategy in turn, pre-supposed an understanding of the broader ideological and political impetuses driving the government of the time - namely the concepts of 'Total Onslaught' and 'Total Strategy' (Chapter Two). These questions quickly turned from 'background information' into substantive investigations in their own right.

A Small Caution

When I started this study, my intellectual tools were ruled by thoughts of Althusserian State Apparatuses. Along with the general common sense of the majority of 'oppositional' white South Africans, it appeared axiomatic that the SABC was 'His Master's Voice', unproblematically doing the bidding of the government. This unquestioned belief in the 'dominant ideology thesis' (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1985) provided me with what Richard Collins (1990:3) has described as a 'moral' purpose. Collins points out that the dominant ideology thesis gave

an attractive social role to intellectuals whose task it became to demystify the false image of the world that the dominant ideology constituted as real. [...] The role of media studies was to strip the legitimizing mask from the media and by revealing them as agents of oppression hasten the day when justice would triumph (ibid.:3-4).

On completion of the project, matters are far less unidimensional. While the SABC was at one level the voice of the government, it was a voice which was often confused and equivocal. If I have demonstrated the contradictory nature of both the strategy which informed the production of television news and the dissemination of information from the Bureau for Information, as well as the inconsistent imaging which resulted from these strategies, I will have fulfilled my purpose.
CHAPTER ONE: TELEVISION NEWS

News (noun, noun) Plural noun, used with singular verb. 1. Recent events or happenings, especially those that are unusual or notable. 2. a. Information about recent events of general interest, especially as reported by newspapers, periodicals, radio or television. b. A presentation or broadcast of such information. c. A newspaper. 3. New information about anything previously unknown.

The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary of the English Language (1965)

***

News is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obscured itself.

Walter Lippman, 1922 (reprinted 1965)

***

The problem facing any commentator on contemporary or popular culture is to recover the obvious, the everyday, the mundane. Questions like ‘What is television?’, ‘What is news?’, or in this case, ‘What is televisual news?’ appear to be redundant, since these are everyday phenomena with which any reader of this work will be familiar. But this very commonness obscures much of the way in which television functions, and the ‘message’ of television is all the more opaque for being ‘obvious’. The necessary question is ‘How does television, particularly television news, create meaning?’

News as Knowledge, Power and Pleasure

News, according to the dictionary definition, concerns the reporting and presentation of selected events or happenings. Not everything that happens is news: commentators of all ideological and theoretical persuasions agree on the non-neutral choice and framing of what is construed as ‘news’. Erving Goffman put it this way:

Obviously the passing events that are typical or representative don’t make news just for that reason, only extraordinary ones do, and even these are subject to the editorial violence routinely employed by gentle writers. Our understanding of the world precedes these stories, determining which ones reporters will select and how the ones that are selected will be told. (Goffman 1974:14).

If it is ‘our understanding of the world [which] precedes these stories’ then it is necessary to examine critically these theories of news, and the professional practices which are associated with them. News and the ideologies of the larger society are integrally related. As Alvin Gouldner (1976:111) has stated, ‘News is defined against the tacit background of unspoken premises, and by the benchmark this provides’. Gouldner’s theoretical point is that ideologies are the connecting link between the so-called ‘facts’ of the news and the background assumptions which enable us, the audience, to understand those facts.

I will outline some of the more pervasive constructs of news theory. It is my contention that the way in which news is conceived will shape the selection and
construction of that news. Ultimately, I wish to propose with John Fiske (1990b) that news should be seen as an interplay of knowledge, power and pleasure. This formulation can be evaluated in conjunction with the SABC's charter: To inform, educate, and entertain. These theoretical positions help to uncover the impulse behind some of the 'professional practices' which inform the work of SABC journalists.

Three theoretical accounts of 'news' construction are presented here:

* The Market / Libertarian / Pluralist theory - which views news as a neutral commodity with the basic objective of informing, educating and entertaining;

* The Mass Manipulative theory - which sees the media as an agent of powerful interests within society, and the audience as a passive and receptive agglomeration, readily swayed by the power of media messages;

* The Critical / Consensual / Dominant Ideology framework - in which the mass media are seen to be the major carriers of ideology. Accordingly, the task of the theorist is to decode the literary, auditory and visual images of the media.

These rather glib thumbnail sketches will be fleshed out later. For the moment it needs to be pointed out that all three theories have been (and continue to be) invoked in discussions of the media in South African debates. In this thesis I have employed the consensus paradigm, which I will argue to be the most useful approach to television news. In the literature it is also referred to variously as the 'critical' paradigm, and the 'dominant' paradigm, and in outlining its history later in this chapter I will sometimes refer to it by these labels. However, while it has been the dominant theory within the discourse of critical theory for at least the past fifteen years, in the South African context it would be misleading to use the term 'dominant', since this is only true of leftist work in this country. In both the Afrikaans universities, and the University of South Africa, a distance-learning institute which has the largest registration of 'communication' students, the market, or pluralist, paradigm remains uncritically presented as the dominant viewpoint on the mass media. Nor can we refer to the consensual paradigm as 'critical', since it is no longer new, radical or critical: rather it is the accepted orthodoxy within marxist studies of the media. It has been subject to a great deal of criticism, revision and reformulation. But no matter how tired and threadbare it is, it remains unsupplanted by what Richard Collins (1990:2) has referred to as a 'coherently articulated revisionist thesis'. All the 'new initiatives remain an unsystematized series

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1 Siebert (1956) includes a fourth category, the 'Communist Model'. Since this model is assumed by to exist only in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, I have not included it for consideration here.
of partial antitheses to the dominant thesis' (*ibid.*)

Using the consensual paradigm, however, is not without its problems. So accustomed are we to the now self-evident truism that news is a mediated and constructed product that we sometimes have difficulty in maintaining any content to the idea of objectivity and 'reality' at all. In these circumstances, it is difficult to see how the crudest government-directed propaganda can be differentiated from the investigative journalism of an independent monitoring commission. This realization throws up basic methodological and epistemological questions of how we are able to know, with any degree of reasonable certainty, that things happen at all, or to gather sufficient information in order to be able to make a reasonable judgement of the circumstances and consequences of events and processes.

Stated more directly, I find myself caught on the horns of a dilemma: on the one hand I want to argue that television news is the result of an ideological construct - a powerful tool of propaganda in the hands of those who 'control' it. At the same time, I want to argue against the view of television as all-powerful, of being able to influence a guileless audience into uncritical acceptance of received positions. In Chapter Three, it will be argued that the South African government held the view of the media all-powerful tools, able to sway people into doing things they otherwise would not do. In turn, the political violence which characterised the State of Emergency was viewed by the government as being directly related to the role played by foreign media.

A Brief Look at News Theories

**News as Information: The Market / Pluralist / Libertarian View**

The conceptualization of news as a neutral product, a matter of conveying knowledge through the 'accurate reflection' of facts, has been termed variously as 'libertarian' (Siebert 1956), 'market' (Windshuttle 1984) or 'pluralist' (Hall 1982; McQuail 1983; Lodziak 1986) view of the press. In terms of this view, the basic underlying purpose of the media is
to help discover truth, to assist in the process of solving political and social problems by presenting all manner of evidence and opinion as the basis for decisions. The essential characteristic of this process [is] its freedom from government controls or domination. (Siebert 1956:51)

Denis McQuail (1983:70) notes that the pluralist model represents

The libertarian ideal in which there is no control or direction, only the 'hidden hand' of the market working to maximize the satisfaction of the changing needs and interests of the customers and clients and eventually the whole society.
Since it is impossible to report on everything that happens, selection is an important consideration. In terms of the market model, there are two bases of selection which can be summarized as 'what the public is interested in, and what is in the public interest' (Windshuttle 1984:262). 'What the public is interested in' fulfills the classic free enterprise ethos, and would include laissez faire sensationalism, together with 'really useful facts', that is, information which is congruous with the concerns and the ideological presuppositions of the readers/viewers. 'What is in the public interest' would include information which allows people to make informed choices in a democratic system, and would include the genre beloved by 'serious' journalists whose ideal is based on a Pulitzer-prize idealism of social responsibility and crusading journalism. Both bases of selection agree that public demands determine the news content, and both claim objective reporting of reality. Notes Henry (1984:135):

American television news [...] is scrupulously 'objective' - which means it does not challenge the prevailing biases of predominately white, Judaeo-Christian, imperial, internationalist-capitalist society.

The reliance on the values of 'objectivity' ties in with an emphasis on professional ideology, discussed later in this chapter. Early in his career, Stuart Hall (1973:77) cautioned that:

News values appear as a set of neutral, routine practices: but we need also to see formal news values as an ideological structure - to examine these rules as the formalization and operationalization of an ideology of news.

News programme producers have become accustomed to think of their routine functions in terms of their ability to be 'faithful to reality'. Yet this is a reinvention, not reflection of reality. Such a depiction of events can only offer an interpretation in visual/verbal terms of some 'raw' slice of experience which they see and film. In this respect, television news is not unlike poetry, which Kenneth Burke described as 'the adoption of various strategies for the encompassing of situations' (quoted by Stuart Hall 1977:103). These strategies size up situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude towards them. The strategies and approaches used by news teams tend to become formulaic and repetitive, classifying situations according to a set of rules based on what has 'worked' in the past. Such routine responses tend to order events into stereotypical categories. For example, civil disturbances are presented as 'the security situation', and are reported as such - a strategy which 'flattens out' the specificity of the type of action reported, whether it be a peaceful stayaway or a political assassination.

Pluralism sees society as the 'plurality of potential concentrations of power which are engaged in a contest for ascendancy and dominance' (Blumer and Gurevitch
and mass media, accordingly, are the terrain on which 'this contest is conducted and public support for one or another grouping or point of view is mobilized' (ibid.). What is emphasised here is the notion of free choice - both to express and mobilize opinions, and to receive or interpret them. Denis McQuail (1983:67), a champion of the pluralist approach, asserts that pluralism sees television as 'creative free and original', in comparison with the 'critical' approach, which emphasises the 'standardized, routinized and controlled' nature of television production. Pluralists stress the representation of 'diverse and competing views', and television's response to 'audience demand' (ibid.). Indeed, a crucial difference between the pluralist and critical approaches lies in their conceptualization of the audience. McQuail (ibid.:168) describes his ideal-type audience as 'fragmented, selective, reactive and active', and ascribes the effects of television on them as 'numerous, without consistency or predictability of direction'. In contrast, he characterizes the critical theorists' view of the audience as 'dependent, passive', who are vulnerable to powerful ideological effects 'confirmative of the established order' (ibid.).

While McQuail makes a valid (if somewhat exaggerated) criticism of the attribution of passivity attributed to audiences by earlier consensual or critical theorists, his perception of the pluralist audience goes too far the other way, since the libertarian-market-pluralist paradigm masks the class divisions of culture, value and behaviour. Power, if defined within the pluralist rubric, is the opportunity of an individual or group to influence another in a way 'which would register as a switch of behaviour' (Hall 1982:59). It is because of this very restrictive behaviourist view of power that the whole question of 'persuasion' is elevated to such an important theoretical height, and persuasion in turn, is dependent on behaviourist methodology to give it the elan of scientific respectability.

While the pluralist vision of society was based on the notion of fragmentation, this fragmentation was held together by a network of shared 'norms', which held society together through 'consensus'. In this respect, 'the media largely reinforced those values and norms which had already achieved a wide consensual foundation' (Hall 1982:61). Since consensus was a positive value, this reflective role of the media was credited with 'a benign and positive reading' (ibid.). Within this mapping out of society, the fragmentation of tastes and needs has been interpreted in a functionalist manner: with different individuals deriving different pleasures from different parts of the programming, while subscribing to a generally agreed 'core' of norms.

The critique by pluralists to the proponents of critical theory, that their view of
the audience is too restricted and insufficiently pro-active, has been accommodated within later theorizations of consensual theory. However, the assumption that messages are neutral statements, coded only by the persuasive and visible intentions of their communicators (which could be verifiably recovered through content analyses and behavioural response-experiments), has proved to be inadequate to the task of understanding the content and formation of media messages.

Mass Manipulative Theory

In its strongest sense, the manipulative theory is taken by those scholars who have adopted the ‘hidden hand’ approach, crediting ‘those in power’, however defined, with direct intervention in the process of communicating values and meanings. In its most static version, material factors which determine cultural meaning are thought to be produced by distinct classes or groups through the activity of consciousness. In this view, there is a capacity in human beings to invest the material forms of existence with rationality and meaning. This approach can be traced back to Karl Marx’s famous dictum in the *German Ideology*:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force in society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. [...] The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. [...] hence among other things [they] rule also as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. (Marx and Engels 1974:136-7)

When radical political economists and students of Cultural Studies turned their attention to the media in the mid-1970s, they were inclined to focus disproportionately on the ability of the dominant interest groups to enforce a rigid news agenda on what was seen to be a fairly passive audience. Ralph Miliband (1977:50) for instance, elaborated on the above quotation from *The German Ideology* by arguing that while in the period of late capitalism, Marx’s views needed to be amended in certain respects [...] there is one respect in which the text [still] points to one of the dominant features of life in advanced capitalist societies, namely, the fact that the largest part of what is produced in the cultural domain is produced by capitalism; and is therefore quite naturally intended to help in the defence of capitalism [by preventing] the development of class-consciousness in the working class.

Neo-Marxist scholars from the late 1970s onwards, for example, Graham Murdock and
Peter Golding (1977, 1982, 1985, 1986), added specificity to this proposition by exploring the material and ideological interactions between the communications industry, both private and government-controlled, and the broader capitalist class. The approach of the political economists was to trace out the ownership and control of the media industries, and to tease out the interlinkages of interests between them and other major sectors of the national economies. On the ideological front, analysts looked at the kinds of images and messages which were being foregrounded in the media, and demonstrated how these messages bolstered and supported the social arrangements, attitudes and presuppositions on which capitalist economies were based.

In the South African context, this largely instrumentalist position has been argued through research which focuses on media text content exhibiting a strong pro-capitalist inflection (see Burton 1987; McCarthy and Friedman 1987). Evidence of the interlocking interests of capital and media companies are also persuasive. The English-language press in South Africa is dominated by two groups, Argus and Times Media Limited (previously South African Associated Newspapers), with the former owning a 40 percent share of the latter (Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1987:77-60; Louw 1991 *passim*). The shareholders of these two companies are predominantly financial and investment concerns traditionally associated with the mining industry; most notably Anglo American and Johannesburg Consolidated Investments. Anglo-American, together with Sanlam, also hold a controlling interest in both major Afrikaans press groups, Nasionale Pers Beperk and Die Afrikaanse Pers (trading as Perskor) (*ibid.* 86-89; see also Louw 1991).

The close financial interconnections among the ‘big four’ extends to broadcasting. In 1982, all the newspaper groups bought shares in Bop-TV, a regional television service broadcast from the nominally independent Bophuthatswana homeland. The subscription channel, M-NET, which is South Africa’s only alternative to the SABC, is jointly owned by the newspaper groups, with an 18 percent shareholding each, the semi-independent *Natal Witness* and *Daily Despatch* holding the remainder share. Elsewhere I have noted that

> Considering the composition of the holding companies and the directors who serve them, it is not surprising that the English- [and Afrikaans-] language press is closely associated with the aims, objectives and interests

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2 M-Net also has a licensing agreement the SABC’s general entertainment channel, TV4, which facilitates an ‘open’ (that is to say, unscrambled) broadcast for one hour daily on the TV4 frequency and an exchange of advertising revenue (Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 1987:79).
of the hegemonic bloc as a whole (Tomaselli, Tomaselli and Muller 1987:57).

However, even then, I warned against seeing this in crudely instrumentalist terms in which the English press was 'controlled' by particular individuals. Indeed, the evidence presented in the following chapter indicates that the English press' reaction to the restrictions accompanying the State of Emergency was more responsive to the professional values and ethics of the journalists, than they were to the interests of the government. This resistance, however partial and half-hearted at times, shows up the inadequacy of the paradigms internationally put forward to explain the selection and construction of news. I would argue that the ideology of objectivity enabled the South African press of the mid-1980s to resist the demands of the state. This was particularly true of the English-language press, although 'alternative' Afrikaans-language newspapers, such as Die Vrye Weekblad, were noticeable in their refusal to be intimidated.

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980) distinguish a 'strong' and 'weak' version of the manipulative approach. In the former version, 'the command exercised by the ruling class over the apparatus of intellectual production means that there cannot be any subordinate culture, for all classes are incorporated within the same intellectual universe, that of the ruling class' (ibid.:21). Here they point to the work of Hindess and Hirst (1975), Jonathan Culler (1975), and the Screen writers of the 1970s, as well as to Louis Althusser (1969; 1977). Abercrombie et al reject this 'incorporation theory' as having any validity in terms of their reading of Marx. From The German Ideology, and particularly the famous passage quoted above, it is not clear to what extent Marx and Engels intended the 'ruling ideas' thesis to be interpreted. From other texts, notably Capital, and Engels' The Conditions of the Working Class in England in 1844, Abercrombie Hill and Turner argue that the 'weak version' is a more balanced reading:

The intellectual life of a society is dominated by the ruling class, so that an observer will necessarily perceive only the ruling class ideas and will not be able to apprehend the culture of the subordinate classes simply because that culture does not have institutions to give it public expression.

Abercrombie et al. cite the case of Capital Volume I (chapter 10), in which Marx outlines the struggle of the working class with the bourgeoisie over the length of the working day. While this struggle started out as an economic issue, it was generalised into a political movement. Marx, in his discourse on the morality of child labour, was also concerned with the ideological, as well as the political, dimensions of conflict and the of repetitive labour under Fordism. See also Agnes Heller () for a theoretical analysis of the evolution of Marx’s conception of necessary labour.
In their crudest form, the 'ruling class' studies took on a conspiratorial guise, in which it was held that editors and proprietors decide what is said. The keywords in these discussions became 'distortion' and 'bias'. It is this kind of wisdom that holds that the English-language press is the mouthpiece of Harry Oppenheimer (Van Rooyen 1980:28). Such theories relied on anecdotal evidence of direct interference in the media by powerful interest groups from industry, the state. Simon Jenkins (1979) documented cases of managerial interference in the editorial content of London's *Daily Express*, while Keith Windshuttle (1984:93) pointed to a number of 'clearly documented' cases of Rupert Murdoch's interference in the editorial decisions of the Australian newspapers he controls.

Locally, the most celebrated case of direct political interference in broadcasting was P.W. Botha's much publicized instruction to Mr Riaan Eksteen, then Director General of the SABC, to change in mid-programme a news item on an altercation between Mr Botha and the Reverend Allen Hendrikse during a cabinet meeting (*SABC-TV Netwerk* 24.8.87). The SABC, on Mr Eksteen's instructions, complied with this 'request', and for good measure, rebroadcast the officially approved Presidential version of Hendrickse's resignation the following morning (see *Sunday Times* 20.9.87). But cases of direct interference are interesting precisely because they are rare. They are not the norm of how newsrooms operate. In a self-referential way, the news media treat knowledge of events such as these as news stories in their own right.

In this study, I prefer to emphasize that the authorship of news bulletins is seldom the result of a conscious intention by particular persons, although such examples do exist. For example, specific pieces produced by individual 'ideologues' within news firms, who stamp their own 'style' on their work. Cliff Saunders and Chris Ockers stand out as examples from the period under discussion. More usually, authorship is present in the text of television as a political or theoretical position represented by the signifying practices of the programmes themselves. These arise from a field of determinations, a 'consensual discourse' which comes from shared ideological positions. This is not to say that these positions are ever fixed and immutable: indeed, throughout the thesis I will argue that they are fiercely contested both by those who voice them, and those who 'read' or receive them.

**Consensual Theory: From Ideology to Discourse**

The mass manipulative model views the distortion of news as a deliberate attempt
by the powerful sectors of society to directly intervene in the production and censorship of news. The market or libertarian model of media production suggests that news is ‘discovered’, and the institutions dealing with the news exist only to satisfy a public demand. In contradistinction, it was pointed out that news is a mediated product: the result of a process of selection by journalists in terms of pre-existing categories and news values, which are processed through a particular set of bureaucratic structures and practices (known in the Argus Company as ‘Mahogany Row’).

Consensual theory, the third paradigm to be considered in this chapter, views the media as prime site for the creation and recreation of social and political legitimacy; the media are, in Stuart Hall’s words, ‘the key terrain where consent is won or lost’ (Hall 1978). Consensual theory regards the distortion of events as the unconscious and unstated process of interpreting the world in terms of a conventionally acceptable ideological standpoint. In the early expositions of the theory, the concept of ideology was paramount, while in later writings, the emphasis shifted to the notion of ‘discourse’.

**Ideology and consensual Practices**

Writing in the mid-’70s, Ian Connell (1978:75) summed up the pervasive paradigm of his time when he argued that ‘the media belong first and foremost to the region of ideology’. The media were seen to provide the ideological working out of the interests of the dominant classes. The emphasis on what Stuart Hall (1982) was to label as ‘the rediscovery of ideology’ in media studies arose as a counter to both the liberal and positivist manipulative paradigms (the Frankfurt School, although heavily reliant on ‘manipulative’ theory, had already taken careful account of ideology). Ideological criticisms were predicated on the realization that

reality could no longer be viewed as simply a given set of facts; it was the result of a particular way of constructing reality. The media defined, not merely reproduced, ‘reality’ (Hall 1982:65).

The shift from ‘reproduce / reflect’ to ‘represent’ was a seminal one. No longer were the media seen to be concerned with transmitting already-defined meaning, rather they were seen to be involved in the active work of ‘selecting and representing, of structuring and shaping’ (ibid.). They were ‘signifying agents’ in the business of ‘making things mean’ through ‘signifying practices’ (ibid.). Some of the tools of decoding these signifying practices are outlined in the next chapter.

A recurrent theme in media studies of the mid 1970s and early 1980s was the detection of a framework for understanding the way in which media in general, and news in particular, were constructed. News was always ‘structured in dominance’:
News is ideological in the sense that it creates a coherent view of reality and furthermore a view that is derived from, and functional for, prevailing structures of power (Golding and Murdock 1979:212).

A useful definition of 'ideology' is provided by Stuart Hall:

By ideology I mean the mental frameworks [...] the languages, the concepts, the categories, imagery of thought and the systems of representation [...] which different classes and social groups display in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works (Hall 1982:59).

Ideological analyses of the media were concerned with the ways in which cultural artifacts - in this case the media - produced particular knowledge and positions for their audiences. These studies contended that the constructed knowledges and positions linked the audience with, and allowed for the acceptance of, the economic, class and political interests of the dominant sectors in society. Ideological criticism was based on the assumption that cultural artifacts - literature, film television and so forth - are produced in specific historical contexts by and for specific social groups; it aimed to understand the nature of culture as a form of social expression (White 1987:136).

The purpose of ideological criticism was not to find the 'real' truth or obvious manipulation 'beneath' or 'behind' a given text or programme, but to understand how a particular system of representation offered us a way of knowing or experiencing the world. The text was now analyzed not merely in terms of its manifest 'message', but rather in terms of its 'ideological structuration' (Hall 1982:65). The concept of an innocent 'content analysis' was shattered permanently.

This was the central tenet of the paradigmatic break referred to as the 'critical paradigm', and despite all the short-comings of the theory, current critical media studies are still enormously indebted to (and heavily dependent on) these insights. At the heart of critical theory is the Marxist understanding that history is a struggle for social and economic resources by contending classes. Thus the most important aspect of critical studies of the media is the question of access to power. The task of the media theorist is to uncover the context of class contradictions, and the continuing domination of the capitalist ruling class. The problem which faces media critical theorists is focussed less on the reproduction of the asymmetrical structures of society, than on the super-structural question of why repressed classes continue to provide support and loyalty to the hegemonic formation - in other words, how inequitable capitalist states continue to have legitimacy. In order to answer this question, early theorists of the consensual paradigm turned to the study of ideology - particularly those formulations provided by Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas.
The Debt to French Structuralism

Ideological criticism was heavily influenced by the work of Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas. Althusser’s use of the concept of ideology was a radical break with the older traditions. Earlier, Georg Lukács had used the concept to explain how the revolutionary potential of workers came to be neutralized in the face of what Karl Marx had referred to as the ‘iron law of capitalism’. The theorists of the Frankfurt School employed ‘ideology’ to account for the successful exploitation of German and Italian workers by fascism, at the expense of their own objective interests. Behind both these mobilizations of the concept of ideology was the assumption that ideology was a sign of false consciousness, that is, the superstructural mentalities imposed by the dominant classes which prevented the historical development of socialism.

The work of Althusser represents a decisive and radical rupture of the paradigms which equated ideology with false consciousness. For Althusser, ideology was not a static set of ideas imposed upon the subordinate by the dominant classes, but rather a dynamic process of ideological production and contestation. He defined ideology in terms of both systems of representation and individuals’ relations to the material world.

Althusser stressed that ideological subjects both construct and are constructed by systems of representation. He also took issue with the distinction between consciousness and the material world which divorced the world ‘out there’ from the world ‘in here’. In his theory, ideological consciousness was located in the practices associated with what he referred to as the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) - notably the media, schools, religious organizations (Althusser 1971).

Althusser placed great value on the relative autonomy of ideological practice. He argued that while modes of representation are always socially determined, they could not be seen as simple or direct reflections of dominant class interests understood strictly in economic terms. The attractiveness of structuralist frameworks lay in their historically and philosophically sweeping and speculative approach. Although it was recognized that their hypotheses were extravagant and over-generalized, they were nevertheless intriguing because of the rich set of potential applications they offered.

Ideological Criticism: The Case of ‘Bad News’

The most celebrated studies of the mid-70s in which ideological criticism was employed and elaborated, are to be found in the work of the Glasgow University Media Group’s studies entitled Bad News (1976) and More Bad News (1980). The Group
initially argued that:

The project has [...] had to concern itself with the vexed questions of cultural power and the consensual legitimation of beliefs. Culture, especially mass culture, is always in the process of change; if one wishes to be more than a spectator to such changes one must identify and map out the nature and output of one of the prime sources of communication. The kind of cultural decoding that reveals the systematic structure of day-to-day productions is needed (Glasgow University Media Group 1976:14).

The Glasgow study convincingly argued against the ‘utopia of neutrality’ attributed to broadcast news (ibid.:1). From their fieldwork in 1975, they demonstrated that the reporting of industrial relations, both by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), emphasised the disruption and the disturbing effects of strikes on the public. The Group’s analysis showed that television news avoided rank and file spokespersons, and favoured certain individuals and institutions by giving them more time and status.

The studies were in turn used to argue that ‘accredited spokesmen’, or elite sources, provided news in a form acceptable to the dominant view of social order (Hall 1977:131). These ‘preferred sources’ had the ability to define which issues entered ‘the circuit of public communication’ (ibid.:143), as well as the terms in which they were to be debated. This tightly constructed view of news selection was criticized as being too particularistic with respect to certain categories of news to be generalized across a wider range of issues:

Far from being a paradigm instance, industrial relations news is exceptional in the clarity with which the limitations of news can be discerned. This clarity invites far too easy an explanation of the sources of news structures (Golding and Murdock 1979:212).

Perhaps the same can be said of the news concerning political violence: the empirical focus of this thesis. Both political violence and industrial action are areas of concern which impinge directly on the long-term stability of the state, and both are mediated primarily by a public broadcasting corporation (the SABC or the BBC), which in themselves have a direct (if equivocal) relationship to the state. This centrality of the state in reporting makes it unsurprising that both studies identified a central news source as supplying news in a form acceptable to the dominant view of the social order.

The methodology of the Glasgow Group depended on a close textual reading of the significations which were both implicit and overt, as well as a consideration of those meanings which were entirely absent in the news reports on industrial action during the period under consideration. Much of inspiration of the present thesis was derived from these studies, (with the obvious caveat that an examination of political violence and
reform in South Africa of the mid 1980s replaces industrial strife in Britain in the mid
1970s). So criticisms levelled at the shortcomings of the Glasgow work must to some
extent be seen as self-criticisms.

A primary objection to the Glasgow Group’s work was that the study had little
to say about the ‘social derivation of such frameworks: by whom are they shared and
how do they come to be part of the very rhetoric and character of news?’ (Murdock and
Golding 1978:213). In order to provide a more sound socio-political background to the
value-system embodied in the selection and presentation of news, I have spent time on
detailing the concepts of Total Strategy, and attempted to draw out the central mindset
this quasi-war-psychosis brought in its wake (see Chapter Three).

Further criticisms came from those theorists (most notably Murdock and Golding
1978:210-211) who complained that in the post-Althusserian era, critical (as opposed to
liberal) media theory had been ‘evacuated of materialism’, and what was needed was a
return to a ‘political economy’ approach.

Moving on: ‘Policing the Crisis’

The most severe limitations of the ideological argument of the critical paradigm
was its tendency to dislocate the text (in this case, television news) from the political,
social and economic forces which drove it. In an attempt to overcome these deficiencies
and break away from an essentialist position of the ‘accredited spokesman’, a more
open-ended theoretical synthesis was sought, in which ideology was nudged slightly off
centre stage, and balanced by the idea of ‘common sense’. Where studies focusing on
the primacy of ideology had concentrated on the autonomy and articulation of the media
as text, the more ‘culturalist’ leanings of what became known as the ‘consensus paradigm’
sought to place the media and other practices within a complex social totality. This
move was, as much as anything, an acknowledgment of Richard Johnson’s now classic
dictum that ‘neither structuralism nor culturalism will do’ (Johnson 1979:54).

The most celebrated example of work in this vein, which had a profound
influence on media studies for more than a decade afterwards (traces can be seen in the
present thesis), was Stuart Hall et al’s *Policing the Crisis* (1978). A flamboyant work,
with somewhat mixed results, it moved boldly through the eclectic theoretical terrain of
Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, a political economy of the factors determining
news production, and a heavy borrowing from sub-cultural studies of crime, deviancy
and moral panics.

Traces of the centralized vision of ‘ideological closure’ (Hall et al 1978:64) remain
in Policing the Crisis. Hall et al maintained that the media played their part in combination with other primary institutional definers such as politicians, the police, the courts (and in the case of South Africa, the Bureau for Information), in 'representing' areas of crisis. The media were not the primary definers of news. Rather it was their relationship to these primary definers which ensured that they maintain a crucial role in reproducing the definitions of those who have privileged access to the media as primary definers (Hall et al 1978:58-59). They are partners in the spiral of signification which reproduces social definitions of the situation in terms of society's powerful interests:

Many of these structured forms of communications are so common, so natural, so taken for granted, so deeply embedded in the very communication forms which are employed, that they are hardly visible at all, as ideological constructs, unless we deliberately set out to ask, 'What, other than what has been said about this topic, could have been said?'; 'What questions are omitted?'; 'Why do the questions - which always presuppose answers of a particular kind - so often recur in this form? Why do certain other questions never appear?' (ibid.:65).

Hall et al attribute the actual mechanisms of ideological encoding to the professional socialization and work habits and technical competence of journalists and news producers.

The Ethos of Professionalism

Journalists, including televisual journalists, are less concerned with some of the theoretical and analytical tools outlined in the sections above, than they are with 'getting the job done'. Most of the day-to-day working life of a televisual journalist is 'sedimented into a socio-technical knowledge within the profession itself' (Hall 1973).

The news practices of journalists, technicians and producers are largely shaped by practical do's and don'ts which they pick up on the job. This news 'lore' is made up of the experiences of veteran news workers, passed on through a process of apprenticeship, in which journalists and producers are initiated into a professionalized, informally codified set of techniques without self-conscious reflection. Rarely are they obliged to focus on first principles or examine their ideological pre-suppositions. These codes and practices became the professional discourse of television, and their enactment can be referred to as 'discursive practices'. Primary among the tenets of this 'lore' is that journalists are simply reporting the facts, in as objective a way as possible.

This 'intuitive' notion of journalism and television production is heavily augmented by a technicist understanding, contained in the plethora of 'how to do it' manuals. An example would be Cohen's (1987) book on the interview technique. These
practices, which are not in themselves immediately ideological, are nevertheless premised on an understanding of what is, and is not, acceptable, an understanding which is derived from the hierarchy of common-sense news values, and 'acceptable' professional and technical practices. Any attempt to remould the practices of television journalists/ producers into a simple manipulation model, based on what I shall refer to as 'the groot krokodil thesis', is bound to be a failure. What then are the practices which inform the discursive practices of television journalists and producers?

The conception of what characterizes 'good' television is a mix of conventional wisdom and professional orthodoxy, some of it learnt through trial and error, and much of it pure fiction. Stuart Hall (1977:104) has referred to these conventions as the 'accreted hard shell of professionalism'. Television actuality, of which News is a prime example, is seen as a reflection of the ongoing form of real life, which needs to be smoothly edited, chaired and presented, to offer a polished professional product. All the material, that is to say the raw material from which News is constructed, should be neatly stitched together in such a way that the viewer is unaware of the transition from piece to piece. Any irregular breaks or discontinuities are regarded as 'unprofessional'.

The insights relating to the professionalization of news production as an ideologically-free occupation, together with the routinization of news production, have provided important tools in the critique of news construction. However, if elevated to the status of an iron law, this critique obscures much of the dynamic within the global production of news. In Chapter Four, I document some of the strategies used by the commercial newspapers and foreign television journalists to overcome the strictures placed on them by the Emergency regulations. During the years when the media in South Africa were under the State of Emergency restrictions (1986-1990), the alternative newspapers, the foreign television-corps, and to a lesser extent, the commercial newspapers, did function as a 'Fourth Estate' - a lobby-group whose interests, insights and allegiances were not homogeneous with the state (see also Tomaselli and Louw 1991). It was largely the professional ideologies of the journalists, with their strong emphasis on objectivity, which enabled news-firms to resist the demands of the state, and not to be sucked into the calls for 'consensus journalism' (see Chapter Three). In this respect they were supported by the professional standards of their editors - sometimes at personal risk - who were not prepared to compromise their integrity for the sake of an easy passage. The owners and publishers of the newspapers, represented by the National Press Union (NPU) also stood up against the government, most notably in

The 'Great Crocodile': a reference to P.W. Botha.
December 1986, when an offer was put to them which would effectively exclude them from government-imposed restrictions, if they were prepared to impose self-regulation (which amounted to self-censorship) on their political content.

A strict reliance on consensus theory, even in its modified form (see end of this chapter), does not take sufficient cognisance of the powerful brake professional ideology can apply to the theory of dominance. Nor can the problem be simply redefined as one of competing discourses. In what follows, I attempt to engage the notion that the mediation of events in the mass media implies a strict relativism in which all accounts are equally constructed, and no discursive strategy is more ‘truthful’ than another.

**Contesting Legitimacy**

The real breakthrough of *Policing the Crisis* was an acknowledgement that:

This picture may now tend to suggest a situation of ‘perfect closure’, where free passage of the dominant ideologies is permanently secured. But this tightly conspiratorial image is not an accurate one, and we should be aware of its apparent simplicity and elegance (Hall et al: 1978:64).

Hall suggests that the chief reason for total closure was the ‘existence of organized and articulate sources which generate counter-definitions of the situation’ (ibid.). In order to impinge on the process of social signification, these counter-definers need to represent a powerful countervailing force in society. They need to have won - or be able to win - a degree of legitimacy which will give them access to the media. This legitimacy can only be won through a process of struggle, an insight for which Hall was indebted to Gramsci, who argued that the moment of hegemony is never final, but always contested.

**A CRITIQUE OF CONSENSUAL THEORY**

**Contested Readings, Contested Writing**

In practice, ‘ideological closure’ is much less uni-directional than theorists originally suggested. Following the work of Umberto Eco on ‘aberrant decoding’, recent studies have paid much attention to the polysemy of texts and images, and the multiplicity of their potential readings. On the other hand, an approach which endows the media with vast powers of persuasion obscures the fact that when we actually watch the news, or bits of it, we too are involved in making meaning, with resources drawn from previous encounters with the media certainly, but also from all the other aspects of our lives. The very existence of definite views about this or that situation depends not just on the media’s contributions, but also upon our active involvement. We as viewers, are not at all the passive bystanders, innocent or otherwise, that the myth makes us out to be (Connell 1984:91).
In *Encoding and Decoding* Hall (1980:136-8) suggested there are ‘three positions from which the decoding of television texts may be construed’: a ‘dominant-hegemonic position’; a ‘negotiated code’; and to an ‘oppositional code’. The first is exemplified by an ideal type in which ‘professional broadcasters’ encode messages which have ‘already been signified in a hegemonic manner’ *(ibid.*:136). They serve to reproduce the dominant definitions precisely by bracketing their hegemonic quality and operating instead with displaced professional coding which foregrounds such apparently neutral-technical questions as visual quality, news and presentational values, televizual quality ‘professionalism’ and so on. The hegemonic interpretations of, say, the politics of Northern Ireland, or the Chilean coup or the Industrial Relations Bill are principally generated by political and military elites: the particular choice of presentational occasions and formats, the selection of personnel, the choice of images, the staging of debates are selected and combined through the operation of the professional code (Hall 1980:136).

This, then, was the ‘classic case’ of the dominant ideology theory at work. It is notable that when pressed for an example of such an ‘ideal case’, Hall resorted to three cases: British industrial relations; the treatment of political violence and terrorism in Northern Ireland; and international news of ‘unstable’, ‘fascist’ and third-world countries. The first two of these categories have produced the mainstay of empirical studies in which dominant/ consensual theory has been applied in Britain. It is perhaps not surprising then, that in terms of the television coverage of political violence in South Africa, we should notice much that is common to these studies, and a relatively ‘close fit’ of the theory to actual presentation and selection of events. In the chapters which follow, I will trace out the way in which ‘professional coding’ and the ‘apparently neutral-technical questions’ of presentation were able to displace overt political content. However, I have to take issue with Hall when this notion of professionalism is seen inevitably to create a conservative and reactionary response to the reporting of news. This is a theme which will be explored at the end of the present chapter.

Hall (1980:134) was also at pains to spell out that what he is referring to here are dominant, rather than determined meanings, since it is always possible to order, classify, assign and decode events within more than one ‘mapping’. But we say ‘dominant’ because there exists a pattern of ‘preferred readings’; and these both have the institutional / political / ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized.

‘Dominant definitions’ are the hegemonic definitions ‘precisely because they represent definitions of situations and events which are in dominance’ *(ibid.*:137). Dominant definitions reconceptualize events and processes in terms of ‘syntagmatic views-of-the-world’, relating individual happenings to larger issues such as the national interest. This
point is very clear in the SABC's narration of 'terrorist' acts.

At the same time, as related in Chapter 3, the commercial and 'alternative' newspapers were reporting, as best they could under the Emergency restrictions, on the atrocities of the security forces in a way which was deemed (by the South African Government) to be against the 'national interest' (see particularly Tomaselli and Louw 1991). This set of reporting practices would be seen in Hall's typology as a 'negotiated version', since they 'contain a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements' (ibid.). Thus, while negotiated codes acknowledge the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions within a society (in the case of the newspapers, the calls for the unbanning of the ANC did not extend to demands for immediate one-person-one-vote rule), they reserved the right to a more negotiated application in terms of their own 'corporate positions'. This, I will argue, was the chief safeguard of the commercial and alternative press (as well as the corps of foreign journalists) against the worst excesses of the Emergency regulations: that they were able to apply their corporate interests and professional ideology to the investigation and reporting of unpalatable and 'unpatriotic' circumstances surrounding the mass resistance of the mid-1980s.

Finally, Hall refers to an 'oppositional code' in which journalists are able to 'detotalize the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference' (Hall 1980:138), to give an oppositional reading. This is the terrain of the politics of signification - 'the struggle in discourse' - and can only happen in times of deep structural crisis, not only on the national level, but also at the level of the individual news organization. During the mid-1980s, the SABC was firmly rooted in its bureaucratic and organizational patterns, and any oppositional discourse which did emerge was insignificant. This is not to suggest that there was no struggle within the SABC, but rather that this struggle was strongly contained - at least in the eighteen months covered here.

If the concept of 'negotiated' and 'oppositional' codes dented the steel ring of determination in terms of the encoding of media messages, the idea of the uncritical receiver of messages was also ripe for review. Armand Mattelart (1979:27) pointed out that, contrary to the often voiced position in conventional media studies of the time, the 'receiver' of communications is not simply a passive consumer of information and leisure commodities; nor does the audience necessarily read the messages sent to it within the cultural code of the transmitters: 'The audience may also produce its own meaning. [...] a dominant message may have the opposite effect of what is intended' (ibid.). The way in which a sub-cultural, minority or oppressed group in society reinterprets and makes
sense of these messages is a crucial problem for any theory of communication of a mode of cultural domination.

The possibility of a multiplicity of readings has been repeatedly brought to the fore in sub-cultural studies, such as Simon Frith's (1978) early work on the sociology of rock, and in numerous studies on crime and deviancy, as exemplified by Jock Young (1981b). The historical studies which set out to reconstitute history 'from below', sponsored initially by the History Workshop movement, both in Britain and South Africa, have been seminal in dispelling the notion of a single truth. In the field of inter-racial interaction, investigations undertaken right across the disciplinary spectrum, from areas such as education, policing, social work and political representation, both in the so-called 'first world', as well as South America (most notably Mattelart 1979; 1983; 1984) and South Africa, have focused on the different perceptions and interpretations held by blacks and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups (see, eg. CCCS 1982). Finally, in what perhaps has been the greatest growth area of cultural and media studies in the 1980s, current feminist writings provide a clear example of cultural struggle and contestation. Annette Kuhn's (1982) readings of cinema, for instance, indicate that women can recover feminist discourses from within dominant texts produced from within an apparently male point of view.

Audience studies influenced by postmodernism, too, have rewritten simplistic notions of the passive receiver. For example, Constance Penley (1990) borrows from ethnography, feminism and psychoanalysis to explore the erotic re-reading of Star Trek through the eyes of 'slash / trekkies'\(^5\). It should be noted, however, that while attempts on the part of the dominant classes to naturalize their meanings are rarely the result of a conscious intention of individual members of the those classes, resistance to dominance, on the other hand, may well be a conscious decision.

All these studies have made a major dent in the idea of a broad consensus, and have stressed the importance and resilience of sub-cultural interpretation.

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\(^5\) These women invert all the usual norms of the programme to frame their interpretation around the proposition that Scotty and Kirk were homosexual lovers. The Slash/trekkie perspective is an 'active reading' which includes writing fiction, producing drawings and videos of the extended characters they have appropriated as 'theirs'. All these activities are 'shared' through regular publications, newsletters, and even annual conventions.
Critiques of the Dominant Ideology Thesis

The most cogent critique of consensual theory comes not from the body of media studies, but rather from a more encompassing social criticism from Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980), who question what they refer to as The Dominant Ideology:

There exists a widespread agreement among Marxists [...] that there is a powerful, effective, dominant ideology in contemporary capitalist societies and that this dominant ideology creates an acceptance of capitalism in the working class.

The major conceptual components of this position, as outlined by Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, are that all societies are based on class distinctions. The dominant class enjoys control of both the means of material production and the means of mental production, which allow it to:

supervise the construction of a set of coherent beliefs. Dominant ideology penetrates and infects the consciousness of the working class with a system which is, in fact, operating against the material interests of labour. (ibid.:1-2).

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner suggest that any theory based on the concept of a dominant ideology needs to answer four questions: firstly, 'What is the dominant ideology to which they refer?'. Secondly, 'What is the effect of the dominant ideology on the dominant class?'. In the third place, 'What is its effect on the subordinate class?'. And finally, 'What is the apparatus that transmits the dominant ideology in society?'.

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner point out that most studies posited on the dominant ideology thesis neglect the second question. They believe that political and economic control of the working class are 'far more important than ideological incorporation' (ibid.:3). The opposite is true in the case of the dominant classes, especially during feudalism and early capitalism, when ideology was instrumental in keeping property within dominant families: 'In general ideology has importance in explaining the coherence of the dominant class but not in explaining the coherence of society as a whole' (ibid.). This observation has important implications for SABC's TV 1, where a primary factor in the production of news is to create a coherence among the white viewers.

Differences between Image and Experience

At the root of the problem with the consensual theory is a failure to draw clearly a distinction between an empirical reality and a constructed set of meanings. By this, I do not mean to collapse consensual theory into a quasi-exposition of ideology-as-false-consciousness. However, the problem arises because consensual theory 'does not situate
consensual ideology in the material reality which gives rise to it' (Young 1981:404).

In comparison, the liberal/ market/ pluralist theory of the media viewed news as a reflection of events in the real world, ordered only in terms of commercial considerations and audience interest. No gap was conceived to exist between the 'reality' perceived by the audience and that portrayed by the media. In the mass manipulation paradigm, there is a chasmal difference between the two. While consensual theory retains a sense of difference, it does not attribute it to a Machiavellian malice, rather it postulates an ideological imperative in which the media itself become the agent of social control within society.

The proponents of the consensual theory were well aware of this trap, and consciously raised a polemic against any suggestion of arguing from a position of false consciousness and the pervasiveness of voluntarism as self-aware subjects. Stuart Hall has noted that

The notion that our heads are full of false ideas which can, however, be totally dispersed when we throw ourselves open to 'the real' as a moment of absolute authentication, is probably the most ideological conception of all (Hall 1985:105).

In terms of this argument, the most successful ideologies are those which appear to be 'natural' and which serve to naturalize a particular way of seeing the world. If we believe that it is possible to contrast ideology to experience, or illusion to authentic truth, then we fall into the trap of believing that it is possible to experience the 'real' world without that experience being mediated through ideological and cultural categories.

Yet, this seems to beg the question. If some media accounts of events are 'truer', 'more accurate' and less 'value-laden' than others, then there must be some way of recovering an approach to 'the real' which will not necessarily slip into the idealist position of 'essence' versus 'appearance'. On this point remarks by Jorge Larraín (1979:57) are helpful:

Appearances are not mere illusions nor is the essence more real than the appearance. Both essence and appearance are real. In other words, reality itself is the unity of essence and appearance [...] Phenomenal forms are, therefore, as real as the essence and yet invert the concealed essence.

Larraín's point is precisely that the phenomenal forms (freedom, equality, equivalence) invert and obfuscate reality (servitude, inequality, exploitation), but this is not a mere illusion. Such a double-sided, opaque and contradictory structure of reality is characteristic of capitalism. 'Freedom of the press' is a slogan which may act to obscure numerous ways in which the press is not free - ways in which it is under the control and ownership of monopoly capital, ways in which it serves particular interests,
ways in which it is imbued with an opaque and apparently impenetrable shroud of liberal ideology - but all this inversion only serves to underline the reality that in democratic societies there is a difference between a ‘free press’, and one which is curtailed and controlled by state-imposed media regulations such as those promulgated under the State of Emergency.

Citing John Fiske’s position in *Television Culture* that ‘Reality is not a matter of any fidelity to an empirical reality but of the discursive conventions’ (Fiske 1987a:21), Richard Collins (1990:19) argues that the ‘constructed and mediated status of the television text’ does not necessarily imply the ‘textuality of experience and the constructed nature of reality’, and reminds us that ‘a language may speak the truth or lie’ (*ibid.*). So too, may the media.

Starting from the position that television texts, in particular news texts, are always highly mediated and never simply a reflection of events, never-the-less I want to recuperate the notion that it is possible to ‘litigate’ between different accounts of events by reference to some sort of empirical experience. News is made up of two elements - ‘facts’ and ‘editorials’. In the first case, it is easier to ‘corroborate’ veracity, and this is of no small importance: there is a fundamental difference between six or ten people being shot dead, and whether they were shot by the security forces or by township residents. These matters can be resolved, and during the State of Emergency independent monitoring agencies made sure they were. Journalists from the commercial press or foreign television stations literally went to mortuaries to count bodies, and report on discrepancies between the verifiable evidence (dead bodies) and the death tolls provided by the official sources (the South African Police or the Bureau for Information). Much more difficult to handle, however, was the question of interpretation, and ‘meaning’ which all texts acquire. What is the truth of the construction which attributes the majority of killings during the State of Emergency to ‘black-on-black violence’? Here, it appears that the only way out of the impasse is to present alternative (‘resistant’) readings and interpretations of the same situations, and compare different accounts in order to demonstrate the validity of different readings.

This is not to collapse into a crude relativism which suggests that since all accounts are mediated, it is inconsequential which account is provided, since none has any greater claim to veracity than any other. Nor is it to deny that the media are totally without ‘effects’. The media do play an important part in shaping people’s views of current events, but the degree to which this happens is dependent largely upon the relevance which the programmes or items have for the audience which ‘decodes’
(watches) them. We need to ask how specific television texts square up to the already formed perceptions of the audience, since part of the latter undoubtedly comes from other forms of media (which may be subject to similar pressures by dominant interest), but others will come from immediate experience.

While it is true that most (white) South Africans appear to depend on television as their primary source of news, this begs the question of what else they are doing during the bulletin:

Despite widespread notions that people are ‘glued to the box’, watching television is normally done in conjunction with at least one other activity and people do not normally watch every moment of programmes. When attention was given, did people find what they saw, heard or read, comprehensible? If they found it so, did they also find it agreeable, or did they suspect it to be, in one way or another, partial, or to confirm their ‘worst fears’? (Connell 1984:90)

Reconstructing the Consensual Paradigm

In the above discussion, I have criticised the consensual paradigm on three different levels: firstly, for its restricted understanding of the authorship and production of news, as well as its somewhat mechanical understanding of its audience; secondly, its reliance on the process of journalistic professional ideology to explain the mechanisms of consensus, since my data indicates that in certain circumstances, professional ethics and standards have acted as a brake against the imposition of controls on the media; and thirdly, consensual theory’s unquestioning reliance on the dominant ideology thesis.

How, then, has consensual theory responded to these criticisms? The realization that the ideology embedded within television texts is in itself mediated by the audience, and that social transformation is a constant but inconsistent process, has led to the radical reformulation of the consensual theory. The way forward has owed much to the insights of Antonio Gramsci (1971), who illustrated that while parts of the social system (both productive and superstructural organizations) are dominated by ruling class interests, traces of earlier social forms, as well as elements of more progressive forces coexist alongside one another in an uneven, contradictory, and even conflicting fashion. The reception and interpretation of television texts, news bulletins and government-produced propaganda, may well express conflicting class and group interests, although the ruling class interests will prevail in most contexts. This is because of the inequitable nature of capitalist society, further skewed in the South African case by the interpolation of race and political resistance. These highly asymmetrical social relations find expression in highly asymmetrical relations of power. Following Gramsci, we can say
that this structure of power, or hegemony, is never fixed or static, but always in a state of flux and contest.

During the period under consideration in this thesis, the contestation between those who were in the dominant position (the white (predominantly male), National Party, government together with elements of capitalist interests), and those who were in a subordinant position (black, predominantly urban dwellers) was particularly marked. Symbolically, this struggle for meaning was mirrored in the news bulletins of the media.

In the domain of culture, this contestation takes the form of the struggle for meaning, in which the dominant classes attempt to ‘naturalize’ the meanings that serve their interests into the ‘common sense’ of the society as a whole, whereas subordinate classes resist this process in various ways, and to varying degrees, and try to make meanings that serve their interests (Fiske 1987(b):255).

Within society the ways in which meanings (values, beliefs, ideas) are expressed through cultural texts, and the ways in which these meanings are received and understood by their audience, is a dynamic and uneven process in which several different influences are evident. Television itself is a mass, industrial medium, involving a variety of texts, produced by many different groups and individuals, aimed at a broad and heterogeneous set of audiences. Thus it is not possible to talk about a single set of beliefs or ideas that is carried by television in any simple or immediate way.

The ideas, beliefs and values which are to be found in the mass media are not a straightforward narrow reflection of the ideas, beliefs and values of the ruling class. People watch television because they find it enjoyable. The definition of ideology as merely false consciousness cannot take account of the pleasures of watching television. Alternative approaches stress contradictions within society, the coexistence of competing ideological positions, and the ways in which individuals assume positions in relation to their social world.

News, unlike more expressively ‘popular’ or entertaining forms of media, such as soap opera or grand opera, needs to be grounded in some facts ‘out there’. Its purpose is to relay the events and situations of the day to the audience at which it is aimed. News needs to fulfil two of three public service requirements of the SABC’s charter: to inform and to educate. This much is its social responsibility in a (far from perfect) democratic system. News programming needs to win consent to an ideology and system of social government which is not democratic, but which always privileges the interests of certain groups over others. In this respect, news takes on what Gramsci referred to as a ‘Jacobin’ function, the ability to make ‘the demands of the popular masses one’s own’, to translate the sectarian interests of ‘the clique, the small group’ into ‘the national
popular element' (Gramsci 1971:66). In other words, news should take the norms, the values and the interests of the ruling group, and present them in terms which are both understandable (and acceptable) to the majority of viewers, many of whom will have very different cultural, ethical and political experiences. At the same time, in order to be successful, news should be able to appropriate subaltern voices and points of view, thereby incorporating the groups within which opposition to the hegemonic alliance originated.

But it needs to do more than that: it needs to entertain, to provide pleasure. People do not view television news out of compulsion: there are no sanctions for not watching. Nor do they watch because they are masochists, and need to suffer the daily humiliation of indoctrination and propaganda. People watch news for pleasure: television news provides them with information they find relevant and useful, because it goes some way to satisfying their curiosity about the 'world out there'. But they do not watch it passively, they are involved in the creation and recreation of meaning and structure; when items are presented in a way which coincides with their ideological world view, these items are satisfyingly affirmative; when they are not, they are contested, reformed, or rejected.

This is not to suggest that assimilation and affirmation on the one hand, and evaluation, restructuring or rejection on the other, are symmetrical processes. While the SABC's dictum to 'inform, educate, and entertain' covers the categories of knowledge and pleasure, it is silent on the question of power: yet this unsaid is most powerfully present. John Fiske (1990a:149) puts the matter succinctly:

[...] knowledge is never neutral, it never exists in an empiricist, objective relationship to the real. Knowledge is power, and the circulation of knowledge is part of the social distribution of power. The discursive power to construct a commonsense reality that can be inserted into cultural and political life is central in the social relationship of power.

Power, then, is the central thread of the information-power-pleasure trinity. It is the political glue which holds news together, and much of this thesis is devoted to uncovering the way in which power is discursively constructed through the television news programmes. However, before we consider this explicitly, it is useful to explore the concept of news-as-information, and the theories which have risen from this.

**The Persistence of the Consensual Paradigm**

Despite all the criticisms levelled against consensual theory, it remains, in its adapted form, the only viable critical media theory. Richard Collins (1990:3) suggests that it owes its survival to two factors. Firstly, it is a grand theory, which is all-
encompassing and lays claim to comprehensive explanatory power. Consensual theory can be mobilized to serve not only the Marxist theories of ideology and superstructure, but also structural-functionalist theories of conventional sociology. Secondly, it has a moral dimension. It empowered (and still empowers) people to ‘decode’ the dominant ideology and ‘see through’ to the hidden relations.

Consensual theory sees television in the role of an extended morality play, to reassure audiences of the correctness of their ideological position within the dominant ideological framework and thus to induce conformity. The central contradiction in consensus theory is crucial here: while the media attempt to promote a vision of consensual society, they focus predominantly on ‘bad news’, on news of deviance from, and disruption of, the socially acceptable rules of a consensus society. While it is true that the news focuses disproportionately on ‘deviancy’, it does so in a way which depicts the consequences of those activities as ‘wrong’, outside the norms of acceptable behaviour, group membership. Jock Young (1981:400) notes that:

Bad news is the order of the day, because such a morality play of law and order, on one side, and deviation, on the other, allays the anxieties of the masses (Young 1981:400).

In terms of consensual theory, the media provide assurance to the ‘rational’ part of the audience that conformity to consensual norms pays off. As Fiske and Hartley (1978) put it, television (particularly television news) fulfils the bardic function of reassurance, and it is this element of reassurance, of reinforcement of values outside the television, which gives it its extraordinary attractiveness.

Such an approach was seen before 1990 in the SABC and Bureau for Information’s portrayal of the African National Congress (ANC) ‘terrorist’ as folk-devil: an embodiment of evil incarnate. In this way, the SABC and the Bureau wove a sophisticated mythology which played on, and exacerbated, the moral indignation and anxieties of the bulk of white South Africans (who at that stage had never met an ANC ‘terrorist’, and depended entirely for their view of the imaginary community made up of such individuals known only through the portrayal of their deeds by the state-sanctioned Bureau for Information, mediated through the SABC). Through this extended morality-play, these media acted to displace a generalized anxiety onto constructed targets.

**Propaganda**

Allied to the manipulative model of communication is the concept of propaganda. Apart from its ‘neutral’ sense in which propaganda refers to the dissemination of the
faith in the Roman Catholic Church, it is most commonly used in a pejorative sense, often interchangeable with terms such as ‘lies’, ‘deceit’, ‘manipulation’, ‘psychological warfare’ and ‘brainwashing’.

The term ‘propaganda’ can be applied to anything from truth (presented within a particular argument) to outright lies. The means may vary from a mild slanting of information to outright deception, but the ends are always ‘predetermined in favour of the propagandist’ (Jowett and O’Donnell 1986:19-20). It is characterised by the fact that it is always value- and ideology-laden. Most frequently, this ideological component is conceived of as institutional in source and objective (ibid.).

The study of propaganda held a privileged place in communication theory and research from at least the 1940s to the 1960s. However, since that time a major shift has occurred in which ideology and not propaganda, is seen as problematic. In the last two decades, ideology has ‘represented the central object of study, functioning as a paradigm for the communication process and its relationship to the social order’ (Selucky 1982:2). The concepts of propaganda and propaganda research reflect the history of the communication discipline as a whole. Propaganda was seen as the archetypical case of the communications process in general, and was based on the same mechanistic cause-effect/sender-receiver model. As the sender-receiver model was gradually discredited and replaced by newer directions in communication studies, so too, ‘propaganda’ became increasingly problematic. The paucity of important studies on propaganda in the past fifteen years has been ascribed to a parallel decline in ‘classical communications (sic) theory and research’ (Selucky 1982:2). Nevertheless, this movement was not unidirectional or complete.

Four years after Selucky’s seminal article, theorists working in the field still failed to grasp the importance of these paradigm shifts. Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell (1986:21) explicitly situate propaganda within a sender-gatekeeper-receiver model:

Communication is a convergence process in which sender and receiver, either through mediated or non-mediated means, create and share information. [...] The communication elements that enable convergence to occur are (1) a communicator; (2) a message; (3) a channel; and (4) an audience. Other important aspects are (5) feedback and (6) effects of the message.

According to this view, communication which is used to accomplish the purpose of ‘sharing, explaining or instructing, [...] is considered to be informative communication’ (ibid.:21), and is regarded as ‘neutral’. The difference between such communication and propaganda is that the latter’s ‘purpose exceeds the notion of mutual understanding’:

The purpose of propaganda is to promote a partisan or competitive cause
in the best interest of the propagandist but not necessarily in the best interest of the recipient. The recipient, however, may believe that the communication is merely informative (*ibid.*).

Jowett and O’Donnell (1986:21) note that the literature on propaganda often refers to ‘mass persuasion’, suggesting that propaganda is persuasion on a one-to-many basis. Propaganda is a general societal process, whereas persuasion is regarded as an individual psychological process. This conception accords with Harold Laswell’s classic formulation: ‘Propaganda [...] is the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols’ (Laswell 1927:627; quoted in Selucky 1982:5). Implicit in this view is the assumption that propaganda is a measurable process set into motion by the sender’s intention to persuade by means of the manipulation of the channel (or medium), culminating in the reception and translation into an effect upon the receiver.

In the South African context, the frontispiece to John Laurence’s Race, Propaganda and South Africa (1979) promises that while the book does not provide an account of South African conditions, ‘it effectively exposes those conditions and confronts apartheid by comparing propaganda with reality’. However, what precisely constitutes ‘propaganda’ is taken to be self-evident, since nowhere is there a discussion of the term. Laurence equates propaganda with ‘bias’ (*ibid.*:19) and no ‘attempt at balance’ (*ibid.*:32), but the closest he gets to a working definition of propaganda is his appraisal of the ‘control’ exercised by the Information Department (*ca.* 1978) as the ‘pro-apartheid government propaganda machine both inside and outside South Africa’:

That this propaganda was [...] not mild persuasion based on legitimate interpretations of the facts is shown in considerable detail throughout this [i.e. Laurence’s] book. South African propaganda - spread by government sources and hundreds of private organisations alike - is based on major distortions of the facts of economics, employment, racial discrimination, politics and even history (Laurence 1979:12).

A perusal of the classic positions on propaganda, taken together with more recent studies which owe their epistemologies to earlier work, provides us with the accompanying table of characteristics attributed to ‘propaganda’ versus the idealized ‘free’ communication:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPAGANDA</th>
<th>NON-PROPAGANDA</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>- transmission of value dispositions</td>
<td>- transmission of skills or information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- elicits predisposition to one side of an issue</td>
<td>- encourages deliberation about all sides of an issue (Laswell 1948b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- presents a prefabricated argument and imposes it on the audience</td>
<td>- presents 'all' sides of an issue and leaves decision to audience (Smith 1968)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- plays on emotional attitudes and feelings</td>
<td>- presents the merits and drawbacks of views under discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- one-sided</td>
<td>- two-sided (Blake and Haroldsen 1975)</td>
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'persuasion': purpose - to promote mutual understanding between sender and receiver (share ideas; explain; instruct)

- prejudice/ distortion

information: purpose - to promote the objectives of sender, not necessarily in the interests of receiver (response shaping; response-reinforcing; response-changing) (Jowett and O'Donnell 1986:22)

- legitimate interpretation of the 'facts' (Laurence 1979)
Critique of Propaganda as an Analytic Tool

The sender-message-receiver model on which classic formulations of propaganda were based is faced with an irresolvable contradiction: when receiving ‘propaganda’, the receiver (audience / reader / viewer) was conceptualized as passive, malleable, emotional and irrational. When faced with ‘free’ communication, however, the same persons became autonomous, fully rational, and able to weigh arguments, compare and judge. In an attempt to disguise (but not resolve) this contradiction, a duality between ‘reason’ as opposed to ‘emotion and intellect’ was set up. Steven Neale (1977:12) suggests that ‘what is posited [...] are two modes of subjectivity, the one behaviourist, the other transcendental, existing within the same subject’. Neale argues that the sender, by contrast, is neither transcendental nor behaviourist, but empirical. The propagandist is seen to share none of the same social tendencies with the addressee and is defined unproblematically in terms of his or her manipulative intentions and assumed success in achieving them.

This placing of the author ‘outside’ the network of the social corresponds to the positioning of the domain of the ideological and political as independent entities ‘conceived as an aggregate of empirically observable ‘events” (Neale 1977:13). In other words, Neale is arguing that ideology is not merely a ‘single set of symbols’ or a ‘prefabricated argument’, ready to be seized by the propagandist and imposed on an audience, but rather that ideology permeates the entire texture of society.

Arguing from a different set of premises, David Sless arrived at a similar conclusion. Attacking what he saw as the assumed neutrality of authorship, Sless (1986:30) averred that:

objectivity is the first rung on the ladder to omniscience. [...] To be subjective, by contrast, is to acknowledge one’s own interest, and be part of the world, inextricably woven into the pattern of things.

This is also the position taken in this thesis. Throughout I have argued that to believe it is possible to be ‘free from’ or ‘outside’ ideological interpellations is to fall precisely into the trap of not recognizing the opacity of ideology. Thus, if we are to revitalize the concept of ‘propaganda’ (and I will point out why I think it useful to do so) it must be done from within an understanding of ideology. In a seminal article, Stuart Hall (1977:345-346) pointed out that:

The media, [...] like other state complexes in the modern stage of capitalist development, absolutely depend on the ‘relative autonomy’ from the ruling-class power in the narrow sense. These are enshrined in the operational principles of broadcasting - ‘objectivity’, ‘neutrality’,

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‘impartiality’ and ‘balance’; or rather, these are the practices through which broadcasting’s ‘relative neutrality’ is realized [...] Balance, for example, ensures that there will always be a two-sided dialogue, and thus always more than one definition of the situation available to the audience [...] The ideological ‘work’ of the media, in these conditions, does not, then, routinely depend on subverting the discourse for the direct support of one or another of the major positions within the dominant ideologies: it depends on the under-wiring and under-pinning of that structured ideological field in which the positions play, and over which, so to speak, they ‘contend’.

It is against this concept of ideological contention that propaganda must be understood. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that propaganda is secondary to ideology, and used only as a last resort, just as coercion is used only when hegemony through persuasion fails. Ideology services the maintenance and cohesion of an existing hegemony: propaganda, on the other hand, operates only when hegemony breaks down. Propaganda can be seen as those instances in which the ‘structured ideological field’ is no longer deemed sufficient to hold together a fraying social formation. Borrowing Hall’s terms, then, propaganda can be conceptualized as the process of ‘subverting the discourse for the direct support of one or another of the major positions within the dominant ideologies’ (Hall ibid.).

Propaganda’s textual surface has been characterised as a ‘dogmatic and exhortatory mode of address, since it is unable to assume that audiences will decode classical realist narratives correctly’ (Selucky 1982:10). Neale (1977:31) distinguishes between ideological and propagandistic films by contending that ‘ideological films’ have a narrative structure which depends on a heterogeneity of representations and positions being integrated and arranged hierarchically into a homogeneity, achieved in a final narrative closure. All the voices of the film are ordered and contained to synthesize a particular ‘position’. This position appears to be logical and neutral in itself, and to flow from the narrative structuring, rather than from external manipulation. This is because it has ‘definite procedures for marking closure as closure, for demarcating a definite space and distance between the text and the discourses and practices around it’ (Neale 1977:31).

In contrast, the ‘propagandistic film’ achieves neither closure nor homogeneity. The ‘subject’ (i.e. the audience-viewer-reader) is explicitly positioned in identification with one set of representations and discourses. That is, closure is posited rather than discursively arrived at:

It is [...] a matter of a continual process of marking the discourses and practices signified within the text as existing outside it, and as existing outside it in conflict, thus of aligning the subject in identification with one
set of discourses and practices and as in opposition to others, of maintaining that identification and opposition, and of not resolving it but rather holding it as the position of closure (ibid.).

While propaganda may well be ‘recognized’ as such by its textual and discursive arrangement, Neale emphasises that to consider propaganda ‘solely as a system of textual address’ would ‘restrict the concept of address solely to an abstract text-subject relationship’ (Neale 1977:34). What is needed here is a consideration of the ‘apparatuses of their production, distribution and consumption’ (ibid.). ‘Text’ must be seen in conjunction with ‘the state of ideological struggle’ (ibid.). It is this latter which crucially determines the positions which are produced by the ‘text’. In this respect, it would be impossible to understand the constant references to ‘weapons of Soviet manufacture’, without understanding the prior absorption by South African secuocrats of fears of Soviet ‘expansion’ through the agency of proxy ‘liberation movements’.

Seen in this light, the concept of propaganda is removed from the problematic of intentionality and manipulation, and inserted instead into the larger framework of ideology, representation, audience and the relations of cultural production. The instrumentalist view of all-knowing propagandists competing to persuade isolated and impressionable individuals making up the ‘general public’ (the archetypal woman on the southern suburbs bus) is replaced by an understanding in which the discursive construction of the message, together with the ideological and institutional position of the audience, are crucial considerations of propaganda. It is no longer set aside in a privileged category. It is not secondary to the media’s position in the production and maintenance of ideological hegemony. The dualistic model of ‘free’ communication versus ‘propaganda’ no longer stands up:

Reduced in importance and place in relation to the historical, social and ideological contexts within which it always operates, propaganda is no longer so easily quantifiable (Selucky 1982:11).

Reviewing Propaganda

Selucky ends her study with the hope that propaganda, when read through an understanding of ideology, ‘can [...] begin to find an important and productive place in communications theory’ (Selucky 1982:11). Despite the obvious shortcomings of the term, and its dependence on a legacy of a static view of communication as transmission, it is possible to distinguish the broadly propagandistic media construction from the less propagandistic. In this thesis, I propose to employ a continuum scale of propagandistic tendencies. At the one end would be those texts which employ a dogmatic and exhortatory mode of address, and directly support a particular position. At the other
end would be the integration of that position, however closely framed, into the wider (though always structured) ideological field of voices, narratives, meanings and reportage.

Applying this to the media examined in this thesis, it should be noted that while all are in rough ideological agreement, and marked with a consonance of purpose, they are nevertheless differentiated hierarchically in terms of their propagandistic / ideological tendencies, depending on the closeness of the institution with the direct control of government. I propose that a continuum scale of these media would look like this:

State President's office > Bureau for information > SABC Comment > SABC TV News > SABC TV Network/Netwerk > Radio News > Police Division of Public Relations >

The direct publications of the Bureau for Information were the most ideologically explicit of the media used during the State of Emergency. This is hardly surprising, since this was the raison d'être for their existence:

In the intense national debate currently being conducted on the constitutional future of South Africa, the Government is one of the main participants. The constitutional authority and its decisions and policies daily affect the lives of millions of South Africans. That is why it has a duty to all those South Africans to give an account of its management of national affairs. The people of the Republic also have a right to be informed clearly of what the Government's plans are for the resolutions of the country's problems. [...] The Bureau's task is to promote effective communication between the Government and the people of South Africa, as part of this essential national debate (Dave Steward in Binfo 1987a:1).

It is indisputable that the SABC and the Government shared the same broad ideological and political conceptions, and that the SABC was far more receptive to the demands of 'national security' and the concerns of the state in general. While the SABC spoke in support of the National Party government, it cannot be thought of in any instrumentalist way as a quasi-Althusserian Ideological State Apparatus. Its relationship with the Government has always been in a constant state of flux, depending upon which faction (the securocrats or the reformists-foreign affairs lobby) was in the ascendancy in the Cabinet. This was true even of the short period surveyed in this thesis.

While the four programmes examined here, Comment, News/Nuus, Network/Netwerk and Radio News, all fell under the responsibility of the Deputy Director General of News, J.E. van Zyl, they retained a relative autonomy in editorial
and management style. Part of the difference in the textual quality of these programmes lay in their 'style'.

*Comment*, produced by the radio department of the SABC's Public Affairs Directorate, was an editorial opinion piece of approximately five minutes, broadcast each morning on both the English and the Afrikaans radio services. This Department also produced similar editorials for the external service of Radio RSA, as well as the various regional and African-language radio services which have not been quoted in this thesis. *Comment* was a purely editorial piece. It dealt explicitly with 'opinion' rather than 'fact', and made no pretence to be objective or 'balanced', two of the hallmarks previously ascribed to the perception of 'neutral' or 'non-propagandistic' programming. *Comment* evinces in a very blatant and unsubtle form the 'dogmatic and exhortatory mode of address' referred to in the discussion above. It also unequivocally supported a 'particular position', that invariably being of the National Party government. To this extent, *Comment* can be seen as propaganda, in the sense that it excluded alternative major positions within the ideological field of South African social and political debate.

*Network/Netwerk* was promoted as the 'news-behind-the-news'. The format included a number of different genres: 'background' analysis; interviews; discussion and chat-show segments; as well as 'straight' news reporting. All these disparate conventions were held together by two 'anchors' - presenters who guided the questions, discussions and conclusions along a pre-determined path. This eclectic format set up the contradiction in terms of ideological content: the openness allowed for a far greater range of opinions and standpoints to be presented than the more 'closed' conventions of the news bulletin, while at the same time, the rules of 'objectivity' were confined to 'giving the story from both sides', a rule which was more frequently broken than observed. Furthermore, the anchors could lead the discussion in directions which could negate, or at least marginalize, views opposing the official line. Specific examples of these dynamics will be provided in the chapters on violence and reform.

In comparison with *Network/Netwerk*, *Television News / Televisie Nuus* was fairly tightly structured. The professional ethos of the news journalist was carefully adhered to in these programmes, albeit within a rubric that explicitly excluded any dramatization of the news which could disrupt peace and order in the country, endanger the security of the country and its people or which could undermine the economy and the country's international position in the prevailing troubled political climate (*SABC Annual Report*, 1984:66).

The news reader, or presenter, adopted a consciously formal approach which gave
her or him an ‘objective’ stance. In contrast, the reporter in the field was allowed more leeway in her or his presentation, particularly the opening statement, or ‘stand-up’ (SU), which framed the rest of the report. Field reports were heavily illustrated, and the video presentations lent greater scope for the embodiment of indexical connotation and symbolical meaning. The studio reporter, for example those dealing with specialized areas of expertise such as economics or politics, fell between the two poles of the news reader and the on-the-spot reporter. She or he was constrained by the desk-bound position and general (though not complete) paucity of illustrative material, relying on the background chromokey (CK) for second-order semiotic information. All the while, none-the-less, convention allowed the expression of ‘expert’ opinion.

Within the news bulletin itself, therefore, it was possible to have a variety of levels of ideological content, over and above the crucial role of language in mediating ‘reality’.

Of the four SABC news programmes, Radio News was the least ideologically laden. This can be ascribed to its conventions and format, in which reports are written in a particularly concise fashion with far less expansion than either newspapers or television news, and read by a single announcer without the supplement of any illustrative material. The format of the News at One-fifteen, the bulletin used in this thesis, excluded all actuality interviews and reports from correspondents, of the type that were used for instance in Radio Today, or Capital Radio’s Independent News Service. This allowed very little scope for the workings of ideology.

I am not arguing that Radio News was an ‘unbiased’ or ‘neutral’ coverage of the ‘hard facts’: like all news programmes Radio News must be seen as a practice, constructed by the social and political world on which it reports, and the institutional basis of the SABC. In this respect, an examination of the crucial role of language in mediating reality, taken together with the selection and structuring of what was reported, and what was left unsaid, provide us with a number of clues to the ideological construction of Radio News.

The purpose of the above section has been to argue for nuanced readings of the issues of political violence and reform, and their presentation, from the different voices representing, or allied to, the South African Government in the period 1985-86. It might appear, in the case-studies of the themes examined in the following chapters, particularly that on the imaging of the ANC as ‘terrorist’ organization, that these various programmes are collapsed into a single voice. The foregoing suggests that such a reading would greatly impoverish our understanding of the way in which the media
Conclusion

The section on ideology opened with a quotation from Ian Connell on the overriding importance of this topic in media analysis. It is only fair, then, to close the chapter with another observation from Connell (1984:93), written a mere six years after the first:

The trouble with blaming the media is that it pulls them out of context, sometimes minimizing their influence and, at others, inflating it out of all proportion. We should not ignore the media and we should certainly not see them as blameless. The stories they put about can be all the things they are normally accused of: sensational, sexist and boringly incomprehensible. It has to be said, however, that they can also be usefully informative and enlightening, though this is rarely emphasised in critical work. [...] If stories have been influential or persuasive, if they have consolidated particular interpretations, then it can only be because they have connected with feelings and thoughts that are already in place. The suggestion that these feelings and thoughts have simply been imposed on the audience by biased media is, really, little more than a convenient fiction that allows us to avoid confronting the difficulties that arise once we acknowledge our involvement.

The consensual paradigm represents a considerable advance on both manipulative theory and liberal/ market/ pluralist theories. Its greatest insight is to stress the ideologically constructed nature of the media. In doing so, it transcends the atomistic view of the audience embodied in previous theories. In its revised formulations, the audience (viewers/readers) are seen neither as passive manipulated atoms, nor as rational calculating ones, but as active participants who are linked to the production of news by a common discourse.
CHAPTER TWO:
THE ORIGINS OF A STATE MEDIA STRATEGY DURING
THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

The ANC itself is the first to admit that the ultimate goal of the revolutionary onslaught is a total
Marxist dictatorship in South Africa. On August 3, 1986, the ANC said on Radio Freedom:
"The destruction of colonialism and the winning of national liberation is the essential condition and the key for
future advance to the supreme aim of the Communist Party. This is the establishment of a socialist South Africa
laying the foundations of a classless communist society".

And ten days later, again over Radio Freedom: "As for us the goal is clear - it is to seize power [...] We are not asking for reform'. There are many participants in this onslaught. Some are innocent 'do-gooders',
manipulated and exploited by the ANC/SACP alliance which is directly controlled from the Soviet Union and
other Communist countries.

- Adrian Vlok. Minister of Law and Order. Speech given to President's Council, 9 June, 1988. Reproduced in

The South African Government's media policy during the State of Emergency was
heavily influenced by the doctrine of 'Total Strategy' which permeated government
thinking and planning, and which formed the basis for an attempt to restructure the
whole of civil society - including the media. A second vital component in the
understanding of the media policy, was the so-called 'Information Scandal', which
concerned the misdemeanors of the former Information Department. The revelations,
a result of the investigative journalism of certain English-language newspapers, notably
the now defunct Rand Daily Mail and Sunday Express, resulted in the fall from power
of then-Prime Minister John Vorster, and the establishment of what was to become the
regime of P. W. Botha. The irony of the situation lay in the fact that although the
demise of the Information Department had brought Botha to power, the spectre of the
affair haunted all his attempts to impose a rigid media policy of his own.

In this chapter, I will outline these events, and relate them to broader
international attempts to establish a media policy in the pursuit of the 'national interest'.
My purpose is to provide the background to the imposition of media restrictions under
the State of Emergency, and to argue that these restrictions were not just the 'iron-fisted'
reactions of an illogical government, but rather the logical outcome of a collective frame
of mind schooled in the doctrines of 'Total Strategy', 'National Interest' and the role of
the media in counter-insurgency warfare.

Previous Attempts at an Official South African Information Order:
The 'Info Scandal'

The Soviet Union has launched a fierce multi-dimensional and rapidly intensifying
onslaught upon the Republic of South Africa [...] it operates preferably by the process of
using proxy forces, such as the South African Communist Party, the ANC and the PAC,
to conduct the revolutionary war in order to neutralize Western Europe by denying it access to strategic minerals and oil before finally tackling the USA.

The debacle that came to be known as the 'Information Scandal' can be said to have started with a rising young Afrikaner intellectual, Eschel Mostert Rhoodie, whose first publication was a book entitled The Paper Curtain (Rhoodie, 1969), a phrase which referred to the 'fanatical hate South Africa campaign' conducted by 'people, organizations and newspapers of the free world' (Rees and Day 1979:xv). The book was to become the basis and blueprint of South Africa's world-wide secret propaganda war. A year later, a Dutch citizen, Hubert Jussen, started To the Point, a conservative publication with a similar format to Time and Newsweek, with the express purpose of counter-balancing 'the radicalism which had crept into so much of the world's media' (quoted ibid.:167). Rhoodie joined as a deputy editor the following year, 'as the government's man to watch over editorial policy' (ibid.). In 1972 he was approached by the then Minister of Information, Connie Mulder, to become Secretary of Information.

During Mulder's term of office, the Department established a secret fund in excess of R32 million, in collusion both with certain politicians and the private sector. Under the cover of various commercial undertakings, the Department made a bid for various organs in the South African Associated Newspapers group, and when this failed, established an English-language Johannesburg daily, the Citizen, to counter the liberal Rand Daily Mail. In the United States, a front-man, George McGoff, attempted to buy a newspaper, the Washington Star, and had innumerable other covert and illegal dealings with foreign media and cinema (See Rees and Day 1979; Hachten 1984; South African Yearbook(s) 1980-1986).

When the extent of their activities and misappropriations was uncovered by the English-language press, the resulting 'scandal' led to the fall of the Prime Minister, John Vorster, and his heir-apparent, Dr Connie Mulder. 'Muldergate', as it was dubbed by the press, provided the opportunity for the militarists in the Cabinet, headed by the then-Minister of Defence, P. W. Botha, to seize power from the ossified regime of Prime Minister John Vorster in a bloodless coup. In symbolic terms, the 'Information Scandal' was an event which took on mythic proportions, both within government circles and the national consciousness, and which left an indelible trace on the communications strategy of the state for the next decade.
The change in the balance of power following the Information Scandal in the beginning of the 1980s, removed power from the diplomatic corps under John Vorster, replacing the government with the militaristic regime of P.W. Botha. The Defence Force was able to take a tougher external posture, by employing sophisticated equipment and a strategy designed to assert military and economic regional dominance. The ‘Total Strategy’ was conceived as a double-pronged attack of a militarist regime, coupled with a reformist programme which would allow for ‘new forms of partial inclusion of the unenfranchised into the formal, officially sanctioned institutions of political society’ (Swilling and Phillips 1989:134). It was, in Gramsci’s telling analogy, a two-headed Centaur of ‘force and consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization’ (Gramsci 1969:169-170).

**Total Onslaught: The Guiding Principle**

The ultimate aim of the Soviet Union and its allies is to overthrow the present body politic in the Republic of South Africa and to replace it with a Marxist oriented form of government to further the objectives of the USSR. Therefore all possible methods and means are used to attain this objective. This includes instigating social and labour unrest, civilian resistance, terrorist attacks against the infrastructure of South Africa, and the intimidation of black leaders and members of the security forces. This onslaught is supported by a world-wide propaganda campaign and the involvement of various front organizations, such as the trade unions and even certain church organizations and leaders. P. W. Botha, 1978 (Quoted in Hanlon 1986:8).

‘Total Onslaught’ was a phrase used by spokesmen of the state in the late 1970s and early 1980s to refer to the perceived attack on South Africa by the international community and internal opposition on the economic, military and moral levels. This ‘Total Onslaught’ was said to be masterminded by Marxist organizations, of which the ANC was the most usually quoted, aided and abetted by black African governments who worked through ‘front’ organizations such as churches and trade unions (and later the UDF). The whole of the ‘Total Onslaught’ was said to be directed from Moscow. Defined in this way, the threat needed to be combatted by an enhanced military capability: the ‘Total Strategy’, which would be mounted at all levels of political and civil society, including the level of media.

The phrase ‘Total Strategy’ was first used in the 1973 *White Paper on Defence and Armament Production*. However, the term has a longer history: German strategists, beginning with Quartermaster-General Ludendorff (who in turn borrowed it from the military writings of Clausewitz) used it in World War 1, and again in the Second World War (Louw and Tomaselli 1989:35). The idea of ‘total war’ was popularized throughout
the French and British colonial skirmishes of the 1950s and 1960s, from which the French anti-guerrilla strategist, Andre Beaufre (1963; 1967), a veteran of the Indo-Chinese and Algerian wars, culled his theories (see Tomaselli and Louw 1991:125-127). It was from this work that the concept was taken up into American military discourse, and through that to a number of South American dictatorships (Mattelart 1979).

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'Total war' did away with the niceties distinguishing between political and civil society. Beaufre (1963:30) put it this way:

At the top of the pyramid [of different forms of strategy] [...] is total strategy, whose task is to lay down the object for each specialized category and the manner in which all - political, economic, diplomatic and military - should be woven together.

Total Onslaught was aimed at all comers, and was seen as the responsibility of all South Africans. Armand Mattelart (1979:406) recounts the South American experience:

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

The 1973 Defence White Paper (RSA 1973:3) emphasized the interaction and interdependence of three basic elements: internal, foreign and defence policy, which in turn required a fusion of the political and military resources available to the State:

The conclusion to be stressed is that our defence is not a matter for the Defence Force only, but also for each department and citizen; it demands dedication, vigilance and sacrifice - not only for the Defence Force but from all who are privileged to find a home in this country.

In his capacity as Minister of Defence, P. W. Botha outlined the 'onslaught' facing South Africa in these terms:

The RSA is a target for international communism and its cohorts - leftists, activists, exaggerated humanism, permissiveness, materialism and related ideologies. In addition, the RSA has been singled out as a special target for their by-products and their ideologies such as black radicalism, exaggerated individual freedom, one-man-one-vote, and a host of other slogans employed against us on the basis of double standards. (RSA 1973:1)

This quotation, taken together with other expositions of the concept of Total Strategy, such as that of P.W. Botha himself quoted at the beginning of the chapter, and of the Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan quoted in the footnotes, alludes to several repeated themes. Firstly, the pre-eminent threat against the country was seen to be of
‘communist’ origin. All other agents (‘leftists, activists, exaggerated humanis[ts]; ‘trade unions’; ‘certain church organizations and leaders’) were viewed as ‘cohorts’, connected together by ‘related ideologies’, although their philosophical and political origins were in fact diverse and often contradictory. Nevertheless, in terms of this thinking, they were all part and parcel of a concerted threat to South Africa, under the direction of the Soviet Union, whose leadership was ‘perceived as omnipotent, giving the Republic the status of a primary target in the struggle to advance the aims of world communism’ (Spence 1989:244).

A second point to be drawn from the Defence White Paper is that political motivations and slogans (‘black radicalism’, ‘one-man-one-vote’) were imbued with subversive qualities. The purpose of the state was to protect the position of whites: therefore, from the perspective of the authors of the military strategy, this perception was rational; since the political fight for equal representation must of necessity result in a diminished, or even subservient, role for the party in power - the Nationalists - together with all white people.

The same White Paper outlined the policy developed against this ‘global background’ a policy which consisted of three basic elements: ‘internal policy, foreign policy and defence policy’ (ibid.):

These basic elements must therefore be loosely co-ordinated and integrated; this is of vital importance, particularly in the present international climate which is typified by total strategy and which obliges us to face the onslaught of monolithic organizations which are in absolute control of all the means available to their states (RSA 1973:1).

The 1977 Defence White Paper (RSA 1977:4) argued that the intervention of South Africa on behalf of the ‘Free World in the two World Wars, as well as in the Korean War and during the Berlin airlift’, ensured that she was viewed as part of the European-American alliance. However, with the decolonization of Africa, it was no longer politically safe for Western countries to openly support apartheid-South Africa. Internationally, South Africa was isolated (with the exception of dubious alliances with other ‘pariah states’ such as Chile, Israel and Taiwan), and it was necessary for the country to provide its own armory, and refocus its security needs.

While some aspects of the idea of total onslaught were raised in 1973, it was the coup of 25 April 1974 in Lisbon, which led to the independence of Angola and Mozambique, which gave momentum to the idea (Spence 1989:241; Van Zyl Slabbert 1989:111). P.W. Botha referred to these developments as ‘Marxist militarism [...] casting
a shadow over Africa' (Defence White Paper 1977:3). For the first time, the cordon sanitaire of white minority governments north of South Africa had been broken, and Rhodesia came under extreme pressure. This set of circumstances led to a decisive break between the Prime Minister, John Vorster and the Minister of Defence, P.W. Botha. Vorster fell back on his well-established response of 'good neighbourliness', while Botha saw it as a reason to redefine the security interests of South Africa. In 1975, South African forces militarily penetrated Angola. Security personnel began to involve themselves in Rhodesia. The strategic response had changed from 'good neighbourliness' to pro-active aggression-as-defence, setting the pattern of the whole of Total Strategy. Internationally, the West was gradually depicted as 'hostile to the security interests of South Africa' and later even as an unwitting ally of Soviet expansionism which coveted South Africa's strategic position and mineral resources.

The Defence White Paper of 1977 (RSA 1977) further refined the notion of National Total Strategy, to be implemented as a 'National Policy'. Externally, this policy was to 'emphasize the strategic importance of RSA, the danger of Marxist infiltration and the external threat of revolutionary take-over in South Africa' (RSA 1977:9). Special attention was to be given to 'the build-up of Marxist influence and military power in neighbouring states' (ibid.). Internally, National Policy was 'to counter with all might Marxist, or any other form of revolutionary action by any group or movement' (ibid.:8).

In 1972 the State Security Council was established with the stated purpose of formulating a 'national policy and strategy in relation to the security of the Republic and the manner in which such a policy or strategy shall be implemented and executed' (Act 64 of 1972). Five years later, when the Council was a relatively dormant body, it was recommended that it be assisted by a permanent work committee drawn from a range of government departments and the security establishment. Within the framework of Total Strategy, certain goals were identified for the state, among which were provision for:

* the preservation of the identity, dignity, right to self-determination and integrity of all population groups;
[*]
* the identification, prevention and countering of revolution, subversion and any other form of unconstitutional action;
[*]
* planning the Total National Strategy at government level for co-ordinated action between all government departments, government
institutions and other authorities to counter the multi-dimensional onslaught against the RSA in the ideological military economic, social, psychological, cultural, political and diplomatic fields (RSA 1977:8).

The White Paper (RSA 1977:9) specifically mentions telecommunications as an ‘aspect of national security which require[d] attention on an inter-departmental basis’.

During the mid-1980s, the State Security Council was the only committee established by statute and chaired by the State President, and was therefore well able to influence the choice of matters relevant for wider Cabinet consideration (Spence 1989:245). The Secretariat of the State Security Council, a body predominantly made up of securocrats, acted as gate-keepers not only for the Council, but for the Cabinet as well: through the preparation of agendas it was able to ensure that the matters which came to the attention of the Cabinet were heavily slanted in terms of security needs. The Secretariat had four primary functions:

1. the provision of strategic options;
2. the interpretation of intelligence gleaned by various Intelligence services;
3. administration; and, most importantly from the point of view of this thesis,
4. a propaganda function, ie. ‘combating the war of words’ (Spence 1989:245).

The Total Strategy spawned a huge bureaucratic network of committees, sub-committees and secretariats, both military and civilian. These bureaucratic structures did not originate merely at P.W. Botha’s whim, but as Selfe (1986:151) reminds us, they were developed ‘as a carefully and deliberately conceived counter-revolutionary strategy’. While the State Security Council acted on a national basis, at the regional level the Joint Management Centres located at twelve main conurbations co-ordinated the activities of 60 officials drawn from government departments with ‘an interest in the Activities of the JMC’ (Selfe ibid.:154). Each JMC had three standing committees, concerned with

1. Intelligence (JIC/GIK);
2. Constitutional, Economic and Social Matters (SEM-KOM); and
3. a Communications Standing Committee (KOM-KOM).

Below the JMCs were 448 Mini-Joint Management Centres corresponding to local municipal councils, incorporating people like civil defence officers, fire chiefs, postmasters and municipal officials, into the security network (Sparks 1990:310).

The task of the JMCs and Mini-JMCs was to disseminate accurate information to both the defence apparatus, and civil society, while at the same time distributing
disinformation to those the state viewed as ‘opponents’. In summary, the system worked
in two directions: information of interest to the security of the country (in Beaufre’s
terms this was widely defined) was passed up the chain of command to the secretariat,
who would formulate a recommendation for the Security Council for decision; directives
would then be passed down again for implementation at the various levels, right through
civil society (see Sparks, ibid.). The prime purpose of the JMCs, in the words of the
then Secretary-General of the State Security Council to whom they were responsible,
was ‘the lowering of the revolutionary climate; the prevention / diffusion of unrest, and
combating terrorism and other revolutionary actions’ (Die Burger 27.5.86).

The Steyn Commission and the Genesis of a State Communications Policy

Following the ill-fated attempts of the Department of Information under Eschel
Rhodie, the new regime of P.W. Botha set up a Commission of Inquiry into the media,
headed by Justice J.J. Steyn (see further Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1982; Lodge 1982).
Steyn recommended the formulation of a ‘national communication policy’ to be
‘determined and controlled by the national strategy’ (Steyn:1981 paras 231; 233). The
second Report of the Commission (1982) spelt the matter out more clearly:

A professional and sophisticated communications system is vital for South
Africa, and if it is to be turned to its fullest account then all concerned -
government, Opposition, press, broadcasting media and private enterprise
will have to co-operate in conveying a true and authoritative ‘story’ to the
world. This story, which creates perceptions on South Africa, primarily
has to be pre-emptive and anticipatory: not reactive and defensive. This
does not mean that all have to speak with one voice. The art of
diplomacy is to say the same things in different ways for the benefit of
different audiences, but with sincere intentions.

The background to the Commission was outlined by the then Minister of Police, Louis
Le Grange, (1981:143) who noted that:

Press responsibility is of the greatest importance in the light of the serious
conflict-situation in which the Republic of South Africa finds itself at the
moment, and which covers the character, form and content of the whole
of South Africa, and the South African state and populations (sic). This
struggle is merciless, all pervasive, penetrating and escalating.

In his Report, Justice Steyn (1981: paras 102-4) argued that at the heart of the
South African initiative to develop a generally acceptable and accessible constitution, lay
the collision between the need to take account of ‘own values’ (‘eie waardes’) on the one
side; and the changes required by the differing ‘communities’ on the other. Furthermore,
the continued existence of a ‘developing but threatened plural democratic constitution’
('bedreigde plurale demokratiese volkeregemeenskap') such as that in South Africa, would be insured by the willingness and determination of its 'peoples' (sic) to defend 'home and hearth', as well as their purposeful and determined commitment to 'their own internal developmental process'.

The discursive strategies employed by Steyn did little to disguise the racist and separatist premises of his argument. In terms of the apartheid ideology he had accepted and internalized, South Africa was made up of a number of 'peoples' - the term by which he referred to different racial groups. The chief line of division lay between those who espoused their 'own values' - the 'white' race - and 'other communities'. The distinction has a transparently embedded normative judgement on the apparently intrinsic worth of 'white values' and the concomitant lack thereof among 'other communities'.

Following from this self-appointed moral high ground, the white-owned media needed to take the initiative in providing 'responsible' fare which would regulate the information necessary for interaction between the differing race-groups ('bevolkingsgroepe'). Steyn went on to argue that since the perception of danger, the interpretations of history, and the political visions of the future of the differing race-groups ('bevolkingsgroepe') within South Africa were so fundamentally different, objective, balanced, serious and competent information over national matters is of the greatest importance for the necessary public debate and coming together of the different races (volkere) to a community agreement over their mutual future (Steyn 1981: para 106).

Against this background, the then Minister of Police, Louis Le Grange, indicated that the South African press' principal duty was to be responsible (Le Grange, 1980:144). He expressed concern that the attitude among some South African newspapers towards 'certain aspects of the attack against the Republic of South Africa' gave cause for concern. To illustrate his contention of an 'irresponsible attitude', Le Grange cited a 'scientific analysis' undertaken by the 'intelligence community' (no further information given!) into the attitude of the media towards political issues. The survey scanned articles on political and 'subversive' topics, and assessed attitudes towards particular anti-government organizations and personalities. The results were then tabulated under the headings of positive, which included 'constructive criticism'; negative; and neutral, in which either no editorial judgement was made, or there was 'objective and factual reporting' (Le Grange 1981: 144).
Examination of the results of the survey indicated that the ‘opposition (English-language) newspapers’ had increased their coverage of ‘revolutionary and subversive subjects’ over the period of study (January - June 1980) (ibid.:147). The offending coverage took the form of ‘slanted editorials’ (‘gelaaide opskrifte’); sensational photographs (‘treffende fotos’); a concentration on grievances; bottlenecks; ‘artificial issues’; and the adoption of inverted racism in the form of Black Power (which was seen as Black Consciousness); and the subtle imaging of a section of whites as repressors and exploiters (Le Grange 1980:147-148).

Taken together with the ‘shocking’ amount of ‘negative’ criticism aimed at the government, this was seen to indicate that the opposition press created a ‘negative climate’ which could be a ‘menace to the safety of the State in the form of a hostile internal press, and this is all the more important in the light of the total onslaught against South Africa’ (Le Grange 1981:148). Here, Le Grange concurred with the Steyn Commission (1981:para 74), which contended that:

Terrorist activities have the purpose of creating the greatest psychological impact. To this end they place great weight on the unpremeditated and unintentional support of the mass media to bolster this attack. Terrorism is aimed at making the democratic political process impossible, and for this purpose they will misuse democratic institutions. In the South African context, this places a great responsibility on the media to make sure that they do not provide a cover to promote terror and revolution by these means.

For Steyn (1981:para 75), this meant that:

The guiding principle of the safety of the State is pre-eminent, even over press freedom and media institutions, [...] in the present South Africa. That this guiding principle should never be misused to withhold information that is in the public interest, and which should be known, speaks for itself. But that does not make the guiding principle any less valid.

The pre-occupation of both Le Grange and Steyn with the ‘psychological impact’ of ‘terrorist activities’ through the ‘unpremeditated and unintentional support of the mass media’, and how this threatened the ‘safety of the State’, was based on their understanding of South Africa as the victim of a ‘Total Onslaught’. The Steyn Commission, and the testimonies on which it drew, conceived the Soviet Union to be an inherently expansionist power, intent on transforming the major powers into bastions of Marxism. According to this logic South Africa was a key area, owing to her strategic geographical position (guarding the Cape Sea Route), and her vast natural (particularly mineral) resources. Thus the principal military and civil threat to South Africa derives

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from the Soviet Union, acting behind its 'proxies', the ANC and PAC. These two black political organizations were viewed in an entirely instrumental fashion, open to the most blatant manipulation (Lodge 1982:23-4). But the threat to South Africa was not confined to the clandestine guerilla activities of the externally-based revolutionary movements: it could be detected in almost every sphere of opposition to the government. South Africa, a 'partly first world, and partly third world' (Steyn 1982:70) country, had a highly developed infrastructure which made it particularly vulnerable to psychological warfare:

In a developed society, the main confrontation happens in the cultural field [...] [T]he indispensable pre-condition of permanent victory in the revolutionary struggle [...] is the subversion of the mind (Steyn 1980:409).

In terms of this argument, all superstructural organizations such as churches, professional bodies, and of course the media (with whom Steyn was most immediately concerned), were seen as important vehicles of the Total Onslaught against South Africa, against which only a Total Strategy could compete. It is the contention of this thesis that the twin concepts of Total Onslaught and Total Strategy formed the lynch-pin of the whole media strategy undertaken by the South African government in the mid-'80s.
Applying Total Strategy to the Emergency: John J. McCuen and ‘Total Revolutionary Strategy’

Although the phrases ‘Total Onslaught’ and ‘Total Strategy’ were used with less regularity after the mid-1980s, the concepts were certainly not forgotten, as is testified by the SABC Radio News bulletin broadcast in August 1985 (24.8.85 13h15):

Questioned about the possibility of a shorter period of national service than the present two years, General Malan said the onslaught against the country, and the continued danger of a conventional war in Southern Africa made this impossible.

The continued fear of a revolutionary onslaught was fuelled by the perceived threat of an intensified ‘propaganda war’, a prospect which made the securocrats extremely skittish. The Chief Director (Operations) in the SADF, Major-General Jan van Loggerenberg, raised warnings of an ‘intensified propaganda war - including a R39-million a year radio broadcast campaign’ (Pretoria News 20.12.85) being waged against South Africa. This campaign was reportedly being financed by Britain and Sweden. The purpose of the campaign, according to the Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, was the dissemination of allegations of a South African attempt to destabilize Southern Africa. Malan attempted to repudiate the claims by shifting the blame onto the frontline states: ‘Accommodating and condoning terrorists, terrorism and blatant propaganda, is not in the interest of peace’, he told a news conference (ibid.). All these fears of ‘onslaught’ from without South Africa’s borders were compounded by deep fears of an ‘onslaught’ from within. The revolt which began in the Vaal Triangle in September 1984 appeared to be a self-fulfilling prophecy of such an internal ‘onslaught’, and required a strategy which would take account of it.

The Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, studied military strategy in America where he rose to the rank of Major (Spence, 1989:241). It was here that he came into contract with the writing of John J McCuen, who elaborated on Beaufre’s theories by providing precise and practical guidelines on tactics to be employed against a revolutionary onslaught. The South African government was convinced that the revolt which began in the Vaal Triangle in September 1984 was not the result of an internal response to years of oppression and brutalization, but a Communist-inspired insurrection manipulated from outside. In an interview on Netwerk (11.9.85), P.W. Botha expressed this succinctly. In his characteristically supercilious style, a cynical smile on his face, he told Andre Le Roux:

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The government is prepared to negotiate with all who are prepared to come in a spirit of peace [...] But the ANC is an instrument of the Communist Party, and the Communist Party has only one goal and that is to overthrow the present state through violence, and to establish a government through force, and to use that force so that the masses don’t have any say, but that a governing clique will have the only say, as has happened in other countries where the same methods have been used.

Sir, I understand that it is not possible (appropriate) to speak to the ANC. But can - (Meneer ek neem aan dat daar nie met die ANC gepraat kan word. Maar kan -)

No there cannot be discussion with the ANC, until they renounce violence (sodra hull geweld afsweer) and until they say they do not want to throw away this country with violence.

And at this stage they are clearly not prepared to do this. But can -

Then that’s their choice. Not mine.

Faced with the perception that the ANC, as ‘an instrument of the Communist’ with the purpose of ‘overthrowing the present state through violence, and to establish a government through force’, it made sense to use McCuen’s ideas and vocabulary as the operational blueprint for implementing Total Strategy. Under the state of emergency, the approach was now dubbed the ‘Total Revolutionary Strategy’ (Sparks 1990:354).

As applied by the South African government during the state of emergency, the strategy was based on McCuen’s premise that the most effective way to counteract insurgency was to identify the tactics of the insurgents and invert them. The popular revolt begun in 1984 had been identified as the direct result of the Mass Democratic Movement’s (MDM) intervention on a variety of levels; therefore it had to be fought on all fronts, an approach which dovetailed with Beaufre’s notion of total strategy. Specifically, since the MDM’s strength was based on mobilizing mass participation (or revolt, depending on how it was assessed), it was imperative not only to thwart their efforts at mobilization, but also to win over the masses on behalf of the government.
Total revolutionary strategy implied a two-pronged approach of destroying, or at least neutralizing, revolutionary organization, while simultaneously replacing it with a restructured social arrangement designed to procure the allegiance of the bulk of the populace by redressing their grievances and attending to their material needs. This was in keeping with McCuen's (1966:29) dictum that:

The decisive element in any revolutionary war, is that great majority of the population which is normally neutral, and initially uncommitted to either side. [...] The objective must be to mobilize this majority so that it supports the governing power.

The first prong of McCuen's counter-revolutionary strategy - destroying the revolutionary organization - was approached through the massive repression of mass-based organizations; the prohibition of meetings and public funerals; the widespread detention of community leaders, activists and even children; the deployment of troops in the townships and various other heavy-handed tactics. All of these have been the subject of numerous studies elsewhere.

This thesis is concerned with the second prong of the strategy - the winning over of people - particularly that part which took place through the media. Through its programme of reform, the government sought to upgrade housing, municipal infrastructure, education and other services. This reform programme followed McCuen's advice (ibid.:59-60) that 'The population will be won or lost depending on whether the governing power can solve the direct, day-to-day problems of the people'. All these accommodations, stressed McCuen, should be backed up by an all-out propaganda campaign through newspapers, bulletins, books, pamphlets and films. The purpose of this propaganda campaign, in this instance, was once again two-fold: to sell the reform programme, and to discredit the revolutionary movement. Adriaan Vlok, then Minister of Law and Order, summarized the government's intentions in terms very similar to those of McCuen:

There is an answer to our problems: we can win if we have a purposeful, counter-revolutionary plan - the same plan that has achieved results in other parts of the world and which we can apply here, with the necessary adjustments. We have already put such a plan into action in South Africa. The main components are:

* Security action against revolutionaries and radical activists: Efforts to control the disturbingly intense revolutionary climate through certain curbs placed on organizations and people are gradually bringing positive results. [...] Although nobody likes a state of emergency and detention, South Africa is at present experiencing a transitional phase in
which such measures are absolutely necessary for our survival. Without them the revolutionaries would rapidly turn this country into ruins with measureless misery for millions of people. This, the Government will not tolerate.

* Sound government for the people of the country. Backlogs exist, but a host of actions shows that Government is trying to prove its genuine concern for all South Africans.[...]

* The establishment of a constitutional dispensation, acceptable to the majority of people (Bureau for Information 1988c:63-64).

The pattern of the ‘total revolutionary strategy’ was set: the strict control of ‘revolutionary’ activity through repression, and the simultaneous meting out of small measures of paternalist reform. Stringent emergency regulations gave the ‘security forces’—an epithet which applied both to the police and the military—almost unlimited power. The press restrictions, which are the subject of the following chapter, allowed the extent and barbarity of much of the security action to go unreported, and as a result, unchecked.

Hawks and Doves: Divisions within the Ruling Hegemony.

Looking at the ruling National Party as a single monolithic structure is not particularly helpful in understanding the direction taken by the government with regard to its media policy in the mid-eighties. Within the government, there were at least two distinct groups of officials, which political analysts of the time labelled as ‘securocrats’, and ‘reformists’ (Swilling and Phillips, 1989; Seegers 1988), or ‘hawks’ and ‘doves’ (Graaf et al, 1987).

Both ‘news’ in general, and television in particular, tends to flatten processes, representing them in terms of personalities (Galtung and Ruge 1981; Fiske 1982; 1987a). A prime example of this was the way in which certain political figures stood for the ‘reformers’, while others represented the ‘securocrats’. The latter were represented by the Ministry of Defence, the Police Force, the National Intelligence Service, and those cabinet ministers sympathetic to the notion of Total Strategy. Most importantly, this lobby included the Office of the State President, which in turn subsumed the State Security Council (see above), and later, the Bureau for Information (see Chapter Three).

P.W. Botha had been Minister of Defence for twelve years between 1966 and 1978. During his tenure, the armed forces were modernized, and were able to command an ever larger share of the national budget to provide for conventional and counter-insurgency capabilities. On becoming Prime Minister in 1978 he applied the

The 'reformers' were epitomized by the Department of Constitutional Development, under the leadership of Chris Heunis. Holding a somewhat ambiguous middle ground, which for the most part leant closer to the 'reformers', was the Department of Foreign Affairs, personified by its minister, Roelof ('Pik') Botha.

This is not to suggest that there was uniform co-operation between the functionaries who represented each of the three arms of the state. Rather, it is important to stress that these were tendencies rather than clear-cut alliances. The two 'factions' (foreign affairs and the Office of the State President) represented nodal points in a pattern of shifting alliances, which sometimes overlapped, and sometimes came apart. It will be argued that particularly during the eighteen months reviewed in this thesis, the deep divisions between conflicting interests within the upper echelons of state power went some way to explaining the often contradictory impulses towards the media and information policy in general.

Of course, the reduction of the dynamic into a short hand form of 'militarists' versus 'foreign affairs types'; hawks versus doves; securocrats versus reformers, can only serve a broad analytical purpose. Pushed too far, the divisions don't hold and can even be dangerously confusing. Individual persons apparently moved from camp to camp, or 'swopped sides' with some regularity. More disturbing was that certain players appeared to have had all the credentials of one camp, and yet operated in a way which suggested they belonged to another group entirely.

Winning the SABC

Following the dissolution of the Department of Information in June 1978, its erstwhile responsibilities fell to the newly established 'Bureau for National and International Communication', which did not enjoy Departmental status (de Wet 1989:10). The following year (1979) the Bureau underwent yet another name change to 'Information Service of South Africa' and became the responsibility of the Department of Foreign Affairs, which now added 'Information' to its title. This latter appellation was dropped in 1980. The portfolio included the publication of numerous magazines and journals for both internal and international consumption, as well as responsibility for the SABC (South African Yearbook 1984). By the mid-1980s, the
Foreign Affairs Department had successfully infiltrated the structure of the SABC, and was able to colonize it as an important weapon in the on-going power-play. This period also marked the ascendancy of the reformist faction in national politics generally (see above). Foreign Minister 'Pik' Botha in particular, was an important voice. A contemporary editorial in the Sunday Tribune (8.9. 1985:11) noted:

On the face of it, Pik Botha seems to have staged something like a bloodless coup. He is in control of radio and television. [...] First indications of what appears to have been a palace revolution were the announcement by the Foreign Minister [...] that the Government had gone too far in legislating divisions in the community. He promised that in future, instead of concentrating solely on differences, the Government would be 'concentrating on what we have in common'. The Pik Botha-controlled radio service then denounced the Verwoerdenian philosophy of total separation, and followed by declaring that apartheid had been an 'obvious cause of inequality and had contributed to an unstable and even revolutionary climate.'

In the mid-1980s the SABC underwent extensive reorganization and 'rationalization'. This was undertaken on two fronts: one as a cost-cutting measure (which included the closure of the bi-lingual commercial radio station Springbok Radio) while the other was a response to various allegations of corruption and fraud within the SABC. The general shuffle in personnel at the SABC allowed for the introduction of a number of persons sympathetic to the 'foreign affairs lobby'. Both Riaan Eksteen, then Director-General, and Brand Fourie, then Chairman of the Board, were previous South African Ambassadors to the United Nations. There appears to have been an effort to move the SABC into a more 'enlightened' position at this time. It can be speculated that the change in middle management personnel following allegations of bribery and corruption during September 1985 could have served as an opportunity for eliminating many of the hard-liner remnants of the Vorster era.

During this period, television news coverage was largely directed by the interests of the foreign affairs lobby. This was reflected in the complete overhaul of programme rescheduling which began in September 1985 - the first of its kind since the inception of television in 1976. The most important change was the initiation of Network/Netwerk, a daily, hour-long programme broadcast during prime time (8-9p.m.). The programme resulted from merging the News with the newsmagazine format programmes, previously known as News Review / Nuus Oorsig and Midweek, into a single programme.

A number of other concurrent developments within the SABC are noteworthy here. The Magazine and Documentary Departments, both of which had been regarded
as troublesome (see Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1986:129-130) were disbanded, and their functions incorporated in an over-arching News Department, now renamed Public Affairs Department. In a seemingly contradictory move, the SABC re-employed Pat Rogers and Donna Doig (as part-time presenters) in order to give their new programme a critical ‘edge’ and enhance its credibility and entertainment value (Daily News 23.8.85), as well as its autonomy and professionalism. Both had previously left the SABC after acrimonious disagreements over ‘subversive’ documentary programmes, Maids and Madams in the case of Doig, and Midweek in the case of Rogers. However, such developments should not mechanistically be seen as indicative of a complete reversal of the SABC’s previous caution, and instances of the dismissal of ‘difficult’ directors, for example Moira Tuck of Prime Time, indicated how little autonomy a director had over her / his own programmes (Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1986b:17-20).

Although there is little empirical evidence to ‘prove’ it, suggestions have been made that the newsroom of the SABC was firmly under the control of the securocrats at this stage. Sampie Terreblanche (1992:6), a member of the SABC Board of Directors at the time, has subsequently suggested that:

at the height of the Total Strategy, securocrats worked on an almost permanent basis in the news offices of the SABC to ‘assist’ the newspeople to remain within the bounds prescribed by the extensive security legislation that was enacted as part and parcel of Total Strategy.

The true significance of this statement is impossible to assess for lack of detailed substantiation. Nevertheless, the placement of the SABC within the Office of the State President must be seen as significant, since it indicates the centrality with which the SABC was regarded. It will be remembered that at this stage, the State Security Council, which gave institutional form to the concept of Total Strategy, was already housed in this office. The Office of the State President was also shortly to become the home of the Bureau for Information. Much of the Bureau’s efforts were into the reproduction of the State President’s speeches.

President P.W. Botha’s ‘Rubicon’ speech in August 1985, was a severe blow to the prestige and power-base of the Foreign Affairs lobby (see Chapter Seven). The ascendancy of the ‘reformers’ in the communications apparatuses was weakened. With the establishment of the Bureau for Information in September 1985, the position became more contradictory. The political allegiances of the Bureau are very difficult to pin down (Table 3.1). The Deputy-Minister with responsibility for the Bureau, Louis Nel, was previously Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Head of the Bureau, David
Steward, was also from that Department, as were many of the personnel, where they had held previous responsibilities. In terms of management style however, it operated more as a military set-up. Louis Nel, despite his Foreign Affairs pedigree, was publicly enamoured with the 'hawks', preferring to use the discourse of threat, retaliation and belligerence rather then the more conciliatory discourse of the reformists (see Chapters Four and Five for examples). The Chief Director of Planning, Major-General P.H.Grunderwald, was 'seconded' as a 'civilian' for the 'duration' of the Emergency (personal interview, July 1987). In keeping with his military background, he was a publicity-shy man, and neither his name, nor his photograph, appears in any of the official Bureau for Information booklets.

While the Department of Foreign Affairs lost its 'information' portfolio to the Office of the Prime Minister in 1985, it had maintained control over the SABC. However, as part of a Cabinet reshuffle announced on the 4 November 1986, which came into effect 1 December that year, responsibility for the SABC was transferred to the Office of the State President. A new post was created with the somewhat clumsy title of 'Minister in the Office of the State President Responsible for the Commission of Administration and the SABC', and Alwyn Schlebusch, a former Vice State President and Chairman of the President's Council (1980-1984), was induced to come out of retirement to fill it. Schlebusch was described as a 'close political associate and loyal supporter' of P.W. Botha, and played a key role in the election of Mr Botha as Prime Minister in 1978 (*The Star* 5.11.86:16).

The Information function retained its 'Deputy' status, but the title was augmented by 'Home Affairs' to form the 'Department of Information and Home Affairs'. The post of Deputy Minister of Information, previously held by Mr Louis Nel, went to Dr Stoffel van der Merwe, Member of Parliament for Helderkruiin. In the press there was much speculation that the debacle of the Bureau's 'Peace Song' project on which R4,3 million rand was spent, was largely responsible for his downfall (see, for example, *Daily News* 6.11.86). However, while it is clear the furore over the 'Song' received a great deal of media attention, its real damage was to focus attention on the Bureau's excessively high R29 million budget, and grandiose schemes. Louis Nel's jarring personal style, and his apparent ambition to encroach on the liaison functions of other departments, were probably more important factors in his personal downfall. Towards the end of 1986, political commentaries were rife with rumours of inter-factional rivalries in government.
circles, including 'tensions between the Department (of Constitutional Development) and the Bureau [for Information]' (Daily News 6.11.86). There was public dissatisfaction too: The Star carried out a telephone survey in Soweto September 1986, which indicated that '95% of the respondents said the Bureau gave out inadequate information and 86% that it was inaccurate' (5.11.86: 19).

While the scale of operation of the Bureau was pruned, there was little indication of a greater 'openness' in its handling of information. The new Minister in charge, Stoffel van der Merwe, said in his initial reaction to his appointment that he believed in the public's right to know, but there were

some facets of political policy which cannot be divulged to the public. This right to know has been exaggerated, especially in the United States. We would like to see that what comes out of the Bureau [for Information] is reliable information and therefore the truth (Network 4.11.85).

Postscript

The Information Department completed the circle of change in yet another Cabinet reshuffle of March 1988. In this case the post of Minister of Information was upgraded to a full Ministry for the first time since the 'Info scandal' of 1978, also taking the SABC under its umbrella. This followed the (second) retirement of Dr Alwyn Schlebusch, seen as the 'elder statesman of the National Party' (The Star 11.3.88:10). Making the announcement, Mr P.W. Botha said 'Mr Schlebusch had asked to step down because it had always been his intention to join the Cabinet for only a limited time' (ibid.:16). This should, I believe, be read as an indication that Schlebusch took the post in a 'caretaker' capacity, in order to maintain the SABC within the ambit of the State President's direct control.

When the situation was deemed to be less critical, and when the power of the State President appeared secure, it was possible to re-unite the information and broadcasting functions under a single, autonomous body, with a strong bent towards the re-constituted reformist movement. This was indicated in the contention that the promotion of Stoffel van der Merwe to the status of full minister was an 'indication that the Government wanted to give more prominence to keeping the public informed, particularly about constitutional matters' (Daily News 11.3.88:3). Van der Merwe said he saw no conflict of interest between his being in charge of both the SABC and information, and noted that it followed the earlier precedent of Foreign Minister Pik Botha controlling both entities:

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I think it makes sense to give the responsibility of SABC to someone involved in the broad communication sphere. One can expect the general capabilities one would develop in one job can be used to the best in the other (ibid.).

The troubled history of the Bureaux and Departments of Information, under all their names, indicates a degree of uncertainty on the part of the State as to what precisely was required of such an institution. As Johann de Wet (1989:11), senior lecturer in the Department of Communication at Unisa, expressed it:

South African governments have always felt the need for such a Bureau, but [...] they have seldom been sure exactly how and where to accommodate it in the public service system. This is partly due to the often controversial nature of government communication.

Nevertheless, it is the contention of this thesis that the state did have a clear communications policy, and that this policy was based on meeting the needs of the Total Strategy. When viewed in this light, the media restrictions which were imposed during the State of Emergency were quite rational, and fulfilled the needs of the State under a perceived threat. Finally, the standpoint of the SABC with regard to the report of all news, and television news in particular, follows the same line of argument as that of the national strategy.

National Security Media Policies

The idea of a communication strategy based on the ‘safety of the State’ is not new, nor is it unique to South Africa, whose ideological strategists have drawn on diverse and mutually supporting theories from throughout the ‘free’ (and ‘not so free’) world. For whose who promulgate the doctrines of ‘national security’, the media are conceived of as tools which can contribute to or impede victory in ‘the war against terrorism’ (Schlesinger et al.:143 ff). The problem faced by democratic states in which national security is a priority is the contradiction which is set up between the expediency of direct censorship, and its threat to the legitimacy of the liberal-democratic order. In Gramsci’s terms, the problem is posed in the balance of coercion and consent: in avoiding the undue use of force in obtaining and maintaining hegemony.

In terms of an information strategy, this meant adopting a policy which integrated the media into a national-security design, but which at the same time kept up the appearance of complete media independence. This was clearly reflected in the South African state’s struggle for a ‘communications strategy’, manifested in the myriad laws governing the press; the state’s relationship with the SABC; and the setting up and
workings of the Bureau for Information. The process has been manifested in part as a struggle for ascendancy between those in government who advocate the persuasion of the media to co-operate with the state, and those who advocate direct control.

National-security doctrines of media control rest on counter-insurgency arguments about the state's need for psychological warfare strategies, culled from three different sources:

* the Cold-War syndrome, especially as elucidated by North American theorists;
* the South American model of the strong state; and
* the French colonial experience, which has much in common with the parallel British post-colonial thinking, particularly as applied to Northern Ireland.

The 'Cold-War' engendered a vision of the world in which Christian, civilized values are under threat from godless communism. In the US, the post-Second World War phobia of the Soviet Union and any form of Communism was articulated largely through the search for 'internal enemies'. Together with the American emphasis on 'hemispheric defence', came the necessity to export the practices associated with the distrust (and hatred) of 'communism' to Latin America, where they were refined and given substance in particularly brutal ways, including dictatorial systems of government and media control. To counter the perceived communist threat, it was argued that the state needed to mobilize for a 'total war' under the leadership of the military, which was thought best able to deal with internal 'subversion' (Dassin 1982; Mattelart 1981; 1983).

An important contribution to the debate on South African defence strategy comes from the counter-revolutionary ideas developed by the guerre revolutionaire school. These are French military writers who have drawn on their experiences in Vietnam and Algeria, and, briefly stated, their position is the following. The nature of warfare has changed since World War II. Modern warfare is characterized by insurgency tactics, and is not won on the battlefields, but rather in the 'hearts and minds' of the population. This is psychological warfare, and it is fought on two fronts: the external, through diplomacy, and the internal, by boosting the morale of the 'home' side into believing that they can win, and that they want to win; and by demoralizing the enemy into believing victory to be impossible. This is achieved through the selective dissemination of information, and through the exclusion of information which will damage the cause (Beaufre 1973; Kelly 1970).
The position taken by those advocating psychological warfare is very idealist, since it ignores economics, and works purely in the realm of the mind. British writers, who shared similar colonial experiences, predictably have similar viewpoints. The most celebrated of these strategists is Sir Frank Kitson, whose experiences in Kenya, Malaya, Cyprus and Northern Ireland, together with a close reading of British, French and American material, came together to produce the influential volume *Low-intensity Operations* (1971). In this book, Kitson defines subversion as 'all measures short of the use of armed force taken by one section of the people of the country to over-throw those governing the country at the time, or to force them to do things which they do not want to do' (Kitson 1971:3). Those using 'armed force' are referred to as 'insurgents'. This dichotomy mirrors the South African state's distinction between 'unrest' (internal 'subversion') and 'terrorism' (external armed 'insurgency'), which is discussed in the chapter on imaging political violence.

Since subversion can be expected in all spheres of political activity: economic, propaganda, etc. governments are urged to anticipate the worst, and prepare themselves for a joint civil, military and police administration, ie. to a 'total' strategy. A shift to 'exceptional forms of rule' (*ibid.*: 10) becomes expedient as subversion becomes more and more assiduous. A primary tool in his strategic conception lies in the use of propaganda:

The government must promote its own cause and undermine that of the enemy by disseminating its view of the situation, and this involves a carefully co-ordinated campaign of what must, for the want of a better word, regrettably be called 'psychological operations' (*ibid.*:14).

In terms of a state-security media policy, one author has been particularly important in the South African context: Richard Clutterbuck (1973; 1975; 1981 & 1986). In his seminal work, *The Media and Political Violence* (1981), Clutterbuck confronts the central question of 'How, in a liberal democracy, we can ensure that television and the press do not become allies of terrorism and other forms of political violence' (Robin Day, in the *Foreword* to Clutterbuck 1981:xi). Clutterbuck's work is a direct outcome of the counter-insurgency canons: it is his thesis that television generally has a 'malignant rather than a restraining effect on public order' (Clutterbuck 1986:65), an effect which he sees as likely to increase with the proliferation of technical advances in the electronic media. Clutterbuck draws his case studies from three kinds of violence, and the influence of the media on them:
violence in industrial disputes; violence in political demonstrations; and terrorism [...] where such violence or its causes are exploited for political ends (Clutterbuck 1981:4).

Throughout these case studies, the authors' underlying assumptions are that 'political violence' is not a spontaneous expression or manifestation of tensions arising from racial conflict, unemployment, economic uncertainty or poor living conditions, but rather an organized, orchestrated event. Tensions and conflicts are simply the 'raw materials' (ibid.:5) of the situation, and are only important in so far as they are harnessed for political purposes. Throughout Clutterbuck's work, the themes of orchestration, exploitation and manipulation are paramount. Television also provides the incentive for demonstrations and, once the cameras are there, their presence incites people to 'act up' to gain attention for their cause. The copycat syndrome was much in evidence in 1981 whereby bored young people were fired by television pictures to go out and riot or loot (Clutterbuck 1986:65).

Clutterbuck exemplifies the point of view that the greatest threat of political violence is the way it undermines the credibility of the government's perceived ability to maintain the secure functioning of society. According to this logic, for political violence to achieve its objectives, its perpetrators depend on publicity. This position has been articulated by others, for example, Laqueur (1977) and Gaunter (1980). Sir William Whitelaw, the (Tory) British Home Secretary under Margaret Thatcher, put the matter this way:

Terrorists and terrorist organizations seek and depend upon publicity. A principal object of their acts of violence is to draw attention to themselves and gain notoriety [...] They bomb and murder their way into the headlines.

In doing so they make war on society and outlaw themselves from its privileges. As broadcasting authorities we owe them no duty whatever, and can owe society itself no duty what ever, to gratuitously to provide them with opportunities for the publicity they want. (The Guardian (London) 17.7.1979, quoted in Curtis 1984:143.)

The greatest problem with Clutterbuck's analysis is his entirely ahistoric view of the way in which liberal democracies are constituted. At the base of Clutterbuck's theories, is an idealist understanding of a democratic order in which the 'public' is relatively homogeneous, undivided by class, history, culture or language. Such a society does not exist in Britain, and certainly is not to be found in South Africa. Apart from his idealist view of society, Clutterbuck also predicated his theory on the inherent desirability of a free press; an appropriate and sensitive use of force; and a need to
sustain the institutional structures of a liberal democracy. The secoSecrats of the mid-
1980s were not particularly fussy about even these ideals (Tomaselli and Louw

The themes developed by Clutterbuck have been frequently invoked in the
discourse of South African politicians in their pronouncements on political violence, and
are quoted in a later part of this chapter. However, Clutterbuck's rhetoric is used out
of context by the South African secoSecrats, who ignored certain of his key assumptions.
Pieter Muller, then Assistant editor of Beeld, and an important Afrikaner intellectual
(described by the journal Communicare as a 'well known political commentator') put it
this way:

Guerrilla action is [...] inherently political, and its main weapon is not
bullets, but publicity. In the onslaught against South Africa, the weapon
of publicity is being used with merciless efficiency. Terror is simply a
callous continuation of this theme of embarrassment through bad publicity
(Muller 1986:31).

In the same article, Muller went on to outline the three goals he saw as being pursued
through acts of terror:

* receiving maximum publicity for the activities of a political group;
* making it as unpleasant as possible for a country's political and
  trading partners to be associated with it; and
* breaking down the population's resolve and softening them for
  political arguments.

Muller's arguments all find their paradigmatic home in the counter-insurgency school.

The Role of the Electronic media in National Security Doctrines

Since the media are seen to play such a vital role in the furtherance of insurgency
and subversion, it is to be expected that argument about the contagion and imitation
effects of the media would find a place in the arsenal of the counter-insurgency
theorists. In terms of this notion, all media are suspect, and during the period of the
State of Emergency covered in this thesis, all media were vigorously policed. However,
television was singled out for the most comprehensive attention. In Clutterbuck's
(1981:164) militaristic turn of phrase:

In the battle for survival of the reasonable society, television is the
supertank - the Queen of the battlefield. Ordinary mortals are wise to
learn her ways and treat her with respect, but those who serve in her
entourage have an awful responsibility.
The most commonly cited example of the power of television is the thesis that the Vietnam war was lost in the living rooms of America, an idea which has sparked much critical debate (Knightly 1982; Harris 1983; Muller 1986). In South Africa, the SABC was particularly careful not to 'provide a platform for revolutionaries', arguing that

The SABC is mindful of the revolutionary's strategy to place himself in the forefront of extra-parliamentary agitation, and to feature in the media headlines. It [the SABC's Charter] stipulates, therefore, that no broadcasts be handled in such a way whatsoever. The Corporation is aware that the revolutionary is attempting to create a climate for revolution through extra-parliamentary agitation, unrest and violence; and therefore reflects such news developments only in such a manner that it in no way becomes a platform or propaganda instrument for the propagation of radical or revolutionary ideologies, activities or plans (SABC Annual Report 1985:15).

The government's stated reason for the clampdown on the electronic media was that the presence of television crews in the townships acted as a catalyst for violence and civil disturbance, or 'unrest'. Louis Le Grange, in his position as Minister of Law and Order, stated that 'in unrest situations, the presence of television and camera crews has proved to be a catalyst for further violence' (Mercury 4.11.86). Louis Nel, in his position as Deputy Minister of Information, added the following comments:

The mere presence of television camera crews makes actors out of the demonstrators, often leading to atrocities specifically to the advantage of film recording. The government, in order to create a peaceful atmosphere countrywide, has the responsibility to do everything in its power to eliminate all factors which could lead to an escalation (ibid.).

It is the contention of this thesis that state ideologues over-emphasized the power of television, particularly in regard to its supposed ability to influence the outcome of political processes. Arguing in a different context, Conrad Lodziak (1986:2) has remarked:

Media theorists have tended to view television and the mass media as primary agents in social reproduction, by virtue of the ideological service they undoubtedly provide for the dominant groups. Insufficient attention has been given to examining ideological forces other than television and the mass media, and forces other than ideology in social reproduction.

A major consequence of this over-emphasis, argues Lodziak, is that critical media theory, and the social engineering which relies on it, tends to be both media- and ideology-centred. The errors, suggests Lodziak, arise 'from an inadequate understanding of power in conjunction with a view which seriously misrepresents the
motivations and intellect of subordinated individuals' (Lodziak 1986:2). The error of under-estimating the intellect of 'subordinated individuals' has already been discussed in the section on discourse. Township residents who lived in daily contact with the Security Forces experienced at first hand the individual and collective devastation of arrest, detention and torture. They could hardly be expected to be convinced by television's minimalized images of political violence, or the news commentators' reassurances regarding the 'reform process'. However, in this context, it needs to be pointed out further that the 'subordinated individuals' within the context of the South African political struggle, did not make up the majority of the TV1 viewership - indeed, they were not considered a serious part of the target audience at all. The TV1 audience was defined in terms of whites, and to a lesser extent, 'coloureds' and 'Asians'. 'In general', notes Nicholas Abercrombie (1980:3), 'ideology has more importance in explaining the coherence of the dominant class, but not in explaining the coherence of society as a whole'. It was this dominant class - or rather - dominant classes, towards whom the media restrictions, discussed below, were aimed. The government was more concerned to reassure the white, 'coloured' and Indian electorate of the Tricameral Parliament that all was under control, and to stem the rising tide of sanctions from outside the country. It was not attempting the ideological incorporation of black 'subordinated individuals' through its restrictive media policy, the contours of which are discussed in the following chapter. Before moving on, however, it is necessary to delineate what I understand to be one of the key issues in this thesis - the relationship between the SABC and the state.

The SABC, and the 'National Interest'

Because it puts the national interest first, the SABC is an unashamed ally of the State in its fight against the revolutionary onslaught. The corporation prepares itself to play its unique - and I think irreplaceable - role in trying to create a South Africa which is inaccessible to the revolutionary's thinking and action. To promote harmony between the diverse population groups, the SABC declares itself fully on the side of consensus politics as against the style of political confrontation. (Eksteen 1984).

The common-sense assumption of most studies concerned with broadcasting in South Africa is that the SABC was - and remains - simply a propaganda arm of the National party, and little attention has been paid to teasing-out the stance of the SABC on the question of the 'national interest'. I have argued earlier in this thesis that a directly conspiratorial or manipulative model in which the state is seen to intervene
directly in the affairs of the SABC is unhelpful. It would be more fruitful to pursue a consensual approach, in which the consonance of interests between the SABC and the government in power was examined, particularly in relation to the question of the 'national interest'.

The period of reform initiated by the Tricameral Parliament in 1984 introduced a strategic attempt to buy the limited support of 'coloured' and 'Indian' people in an attempt to retain a separatist white hegemony. This was reflected in the introduction of TV4, a purely entertainment channel carried on the airspace of the ethnically-based TV2 and TV3 channels after 21h00. TV4 was a ground-breaking move since it was the first time that different 'ethnic groups', the government's euphemism for racial divisions, were catered for on the same television channel (see Tomaselli and Tomaselli 1988). Prior to this move, black viewers were still seen outside the magic circle of power, and the television needs were serviced by the Nguni channel TV2, or the Sotho channel TV3, which remained pristinely 'vernacular'.

The first indication of the SABC's approach on the question of the national interest and state security came from its coverage of the referendum on the Tricameral Parliament, and the subsequent elections for the ('coloured') House of Representatives. The SABC's campaigns for both these events attracted much negative publicity. Referring to some of these criticisms, Riaan Eksteen, then Director-General of the SABC, told the Cape Town Press Club on 24 August, 1984:

I am not ashamed of what the SABC has done. Whatever it has done has been done out of sincere conviction. We did not tell voters which party they should vote for. What we did was simply try to persuade people to go to the polls. We have tried to help them to understand the issues so as to be able to exercise a reasoned choice.

And the SABC has done all that with positive and honest intent. If anyone wishes to denounce the SABC for that, let them. I don't care. Such reactions don't come as a surprise to me any more (Eksteen 1984).

Eksteen's unstated point here is that the choice facing those eligible to vote was not a choice between parties, but rather a choice between withholding their ballot, and voting at all, since any party voted for represented an endorsement of the Tricameral system, and an adaptive apartheid government. This structured absence, or in Foucault's terms, *non-discursive practice*, constituted the key portion of the argument against the SABC's treatment of the elections. Eksteen did not need to spell it out: it was implicitly understood by his politically sophisticated Press Club audience.
Eksteen went on to condemn what he referred to as the ‘lack of response to the blatant propaganda beamed at South Africa before the elections’ (Eksteen 1984 *ibid*.), a reference to the shortwave broadcasts of the ANC’s *Radio Freedom* and the external services of the Frontline States, particularly Mozambique and Zimbabwe, where large numbers of ANC cadres were located. According to Eksteen, these external broadcasts conveyed ‘the message of the ANC in undiluted form’, and advocated a ‘total boycott to bring about a total failure’ (*ibid*.), phrases which show the clear impression of ‘Total Onslaught’-thinking. The reason the ANC messages were broadcast on foreign external services was because, in Eksteen’s own words: ‘I have already made it plain that they will not find a place in any broadcast by the SABC’ (*ibid*.).

The importance of the Press Club address in August 1984 lay in the fact that for the first time a Director-General of the SABC publicly - and defiantly - stated that the SABC openly supported the political initiatives of the National Party government. He did this, however, under the discursive label of the ‘National Interest’:

> Because it puts the national interest first, the SABC is an unashamed ally of the State in its fight against the revolutionary onslaught. The corporation prepares itself to play its unique - and I think irreplaceable - role in trying to create a South Africa which is inaccessible to the revolutionary’s thinking and action. To promote harmony between the diverse population groups, the SABC declares itself fully on the side of consensus politics as against the style of political confrontation.

This does not mean that the SABC, in its information action, will now consciously refrain from illuminating conflict situations within the democratic processes. On the contrary, this could be counter-productive to the SABC’s task, because the responsible handling of political conflict could produce new opportunities for consensus. The emphasis is thereby placed on the promotion of a public sentiment in order to seek and promote success rather than failure (Eksteen 1984).

Eksteen appears to be saying here that the SABC is concerned with responsible reporting in which all legitimate elements of the political debate are reflected. However, the raw material of the debate is skillfully placed in such a way as to create a sense of consensus, even in conflicting areas. Eksteen’s view of ‘consensus’ and ‘national interest’ has much in common with the views put forward by the Minister of Constitutional Development, Chris Heunis, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. It is sufficient to note at this point that he is concerned only with consensus within the framework of apartheid: i.e. National Party policy. This consciously excludes opposition of an extra-parliamentary nature. Holding a monopoly on news-broadcasting rights within South Africa, the SABC has the capacity to delimit both the
source and content of the range of views which may legitimately be expressed through the broadcast medium. This privileged ‘authority of delimitation’ (Foucault 1972:41) effectively gives them not only the capacity to act as a gate-keeper par excellence, and marginalize all other competing views, but also to nominate and define the views constituting the legitimate ‘national interest’.

However, responsibility for this marginalization was shifted from both the SABC and the government - with which the SABC shares elements of discourse - to the professed responsibility of the excluded groups themselves:

This viewpoint of the SABC implies that those groups and parties that have, by their own choice, eliminated themselves from consensus politics in favour of revolutionary and undemocratic methods - or will do so in the future - cannot claim to have their viewpoints reflected at all by the SABC.

The advocates of disruptive politics and violence represent, in the opinion of the SABC, that kind of conflict element in the new dispensation that does not fit into the national interest as understood by us. Under the new dispensation the SABC will lend no sympathetic ear, for example, to the message of terror from the African National Congress (ANC) or the faceless fellow-travellers no matter in what form they may appear or who they may be, here or overseas (Eksteen 1984, emphasis added).

The ANC, and any other group or standpoint which did not actively promote the apartheid version of ‘consensus’ politics, were silent voices. The same idea was echoed in the SABC’s Annual Report that year, in which was noted that it was the stated position of the SABC that news will be evaluated and presented on its news value, but that the SABC will not allow itself to be abused by being a propaganda platform for people and groups which have defined themselves out of the democratic processes and preach violence and revolution (SABC Annual Report 1984:52).

Broadcast Policy of the SABC

In the Annual Report 1984, the SABC described the ‘Security Situation’ in terms very reminiscent of the Total Onslaught: ‘The year once again had its quota of bomb explosions, terrorism, thuggery against law-abiding citizens and unrest at home and abroad’ (SABC Annual Report 1984:52). The following year, the Annual Report was more direct: ‘The year under review (1985) saw determined efforts by radical elements to make South Africa ungovernable’ (SABC Annual Report 1985:68). The 1986 Annual Report (1986:6) is perhaps the most stark:

Against the background of the international onslaught against South Africa, including the imposition of sanctions and the continuing internal
unrest, the News Division performs its informative function with responsibility, placing the interests of the country first.

The ‘internal unrest, increasing foreign pressure and mounting economic problems’ (SABC Annual Report 1985:67) required the SABC to play a ‘constructive and positive role’:

The point of departure was that news programmes should inform the public honestly and accurately, and that any dramatization of the news which could disrupt peace and order in the country, endanger the security of the country and its people, or which could undermine the economy and the country’s international position in the prevailing troubled political climate, had to be avoided (ibid.).

The Annual Report continued:

With specific regard to internal unrest, the News Division adopted the standpoint that, in the interests of informed public opinion, the public should be kept informed factually about all incidents of any significance. At the same time, it has been scrupulous in striving to deal with the events in such a manner that the SABC would in no way become a propaganda platform for radical groups overtly inciting violence and revolution. (SABC Annual Report 1985:67).

A perusal of the Annual Reports in the mid-1980s indicates that the determination not to ‘provide a propaganda platform for radical groups overtly inciting violence and revolution’ became a standard statement of faith (see SABC Annual Reports 1984:52; 1985:68; 1986:6). This position was taken in line with the putative ability of the electronic media to influence the course of events for the worse, along the lines discussed in the previous chapter. In the 1984 Annual Report, this argued power of the media is stated explicitly:

This is a dilemma with which television wrestles world-wide because radical elements have refined their techniques for exploiting the medium’s flair for action and drama to a fine art, in their efforts to make the headlines with their extra-parliamentary radical propaganda. The option adopted by the SABC - after a thorough sounding-out both in South Africa and abroad - is to present the information without giving free rein to the medium’s capacity for action and drama (SABC Annual Report 1984:52).

The ‘international onslaught’ placed a heavy responsibility on the SABC, as was clear from an internally circulated document distributed within the SABC circa 10.6.1986, which noted:

The SABC functions within the framework of the country’s laws. The prescription in its broadcasting licence is that it should broadcast nothing that might disturb the peace and order, risk the safety of South Africa and its people, undermine the economy and the country’s international position, promote revolutionary aims or contribute directly or indirectly to breaches in the law.
Specifically concerning those groups and entities seeking to overthrow order by violence, promoting unrest, civil disobedience and other extra-parliamentary or unconstitutional action, the SABC acts with great circumspection.

Conclusion

In the section above, I have assembled quotations from both an internally circulated in-house document, and the publicly-circulated Annual Reports of the SABC, which together provide evidence that the philosophy of the Corporation during the years 1984 to 1986 - the period of direct concern to this thesis - was self-consciously based on the principles of national security, in order to combat the perceived Total Onslaught. All the quotations support the logic that anything that was disadvantageous to the security of the state, or the morale of those who sustained it, was to be avoided, or at least minimized.

The importance of these sentiments for an analysis of the news on the SABC cannot be over-emphasised, since it not only delimited the parameters of what was acceptable, or 'legitimate', but also unabashedly promoted certain views which advanced the notion of a 'consensus' society at the expense of alternative or critical voices. However, the South African media was much wider than the broadcasting sector. It included a large and varied print media sector, and a substantial corps of foreign print and televisual journalists, who were less obliging than the SABC in accepting the idea of 'national security' in the face of the Total Onslaught. With the declaration of the State of Emergency, these sectors of the press were brought into line through the rigorous application of media restrictions, which makes up the subject of the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE:
MEDIA RESTRICTIONS UNDER THE FIRST STATE OF EMERGENCY:
REDEFINING THE BOUNDARIES OF LAW

The dual perspective can present itself on various levels, from the most elementary to the most complex; but these can all theoretically be reduced to two fundamental levels, corresponding to the dual nature of Machiavelli’s Centaur -half-animal and half-human. They are the levels of force and consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization, the individual moment and the universal moment, of agitation and of propaganda, of tactics and strategy.


The previous chapter outlined the national security doctrines of the South African government prior to the declaration of the State of Emergency in July 1985. Faced with what was perceived to be a subversive threat of major proportions, the government responded with the State of Emergency, a response which was based on a doubly articulated strategy of repression on the one hand, and limited co-option, presented in terms of reform, on the other. This was entirely in keeping with the Total Strategy response outlined by Beaufre and McCuen.

Both these theorists owed an intellectual debt to Machiavelli. So too did Antonio Gramsci, whose most fruitful work, cobbled together after his death under the title of The Prison Notebooks, was written while he was incarcerated by Mussolini in the 1930s. It was from Machiavelli that Gramsci (1971:169) borrowed the analogy of the two-headed centaur of coercion and consent to explain his concept of the state.

Gramsci was pre-eminently a theorist of the superstructure: that is, his primary concern was with the notion of hegemony, or leadership. He saw hegemony essentially as a balance between the ideological and the repressive. Gramsci contended that both were needed in order for a ruling group to maintain its position:

The methodological criterion on which our own study must be based is the following: the supremacy of the social group manifests itself in two ways: as ‘domination’ and as ‘intellectual and moral leadership’. A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to ‘liquidate’, or subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups (Gramsci 1971:57).

The balance between ideology and repression in the maintenance of hegemony varies historically in any concrete social formation. Consent can never be taken for granted, obedience is not automatic, but has to be produced, and re-produced. For Gramsci, hegemony is a very particular, historically specific and temporary ‘moment’ in the life of a society; such ‘moments’, when both coercion and consent are present, are rare. Hegemony constantly needs to be actively constructed and maintained:

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A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise ‘leadership’ before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even as it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to ‘lead’ as well (Gramsci 1971:57-58).

Clues to how this happens concretely are provided in Gramsci’s distinction between civil society and political society, or the state. These two concepts are used to denote separate structures or sets of institutions in society. Civil society is made up of ‘private’ institutions: the church, trade unions, the media and schools; while the state consists of public institutions such as the courts, the police and the army. While civil society is the site upon which consent is engineered, the state is typically the site of repression. At another point in his work, Gramsci argues that the state also has powerful ideological functions, a theme picked up and developed by Althusser (1971). Because of his strong emphasis on the role of institutions of civil society (what Althusser rather mechanistically referred to as ‘Ideological Apparatuses’), Gramsci’s writings provide an insightful starting point for analyzing the South African state’s media strategy.

Existing Legislation

Pre-dating the first State of Emergency in July 1985, the media in South Africa had to run the gauntlet of over 100 laws restricting what and who might be discussed, quoted or photographed (see Stuart 1968; Hachten 1984; Lane, Hoffe et al 1986; Van Rooyen 1987; Armstrong 1987; Grogan 1988). The major restrictions were contained in the security laws such as the Suppression of Communism Act 44 of 1950; the Internal Security Act 74 of 1982; the Unlawful Organizations Act 34 of 1960; the Defence Act 44 of 1957; Sections 44(1)(e), (f) and (g) of the Prisons Act 8 of 1959; and the Publications Act 42 of 1974. Other statutes which contained provisions restricting the media were the Armaments Development and Production Act 57 of 1968; the Demonstrations In or Near Court Buildings Act 71 of 1982; the Inquest Act 58 of 1959; and the Protection of Information Act 84 of 1982. Each of these, and other relevant laws, had been updated and amended several times. Stringent prohibitions in the form of the General Laws Amendment (Protected Places) Act 37 of 1963, which together with the National Key Points Act 102 of 1980, applied to the publication of news about places and commodities which were considered to be of strategic importance to national security, for example supplies such as oil or uranium and armaments. This act also covered installations such as power stations, fuel depots and a host of other ‘sensitive’ areas, including SABC
headquarters in Auckland Park. Severe restrictions on detainees existed, and no 'banned' or 'restricted' persons could be quoted.

Sections 27(a) and (b) of the Police Act 7 of 1958, which forbade the publication of any untrue matter about the police without having reasonable grounds for believing it to be true, left the question of what constituted 'reasonable grounds' wide open. By the end of the period covered by this thesis - i.e. December 1986 - there were ten pending cases under this legislation\(^1\). Of all of the legislation affecting the press, the most bothersome to journalists was Section 205 of the Criminal Procedures Act 51 of 1977. This legislation empowered the police to demand that a person disclose information before a magistrate if it was suspected it had a bearing on an offence or even a suspected offence. In the first few months of 1985, before the declaration of the State of Emergency, this provision was increasingly used to harass journalists covering political insurrection. In the budget debate of the Minister of Law and Order, Dave Dalling, in his role as opposition spokesman on the media, said in Parliament:

In recent months this law has been used largely to compel editors and journalists to disclose sources of published material, to hand over photographs of gatherings, of marches and meetings and even to deliver up personal notebooks for official scrutiny (The Star 30.4.85).

While Dalling accepted the necessity of the law in 'straightforward' crime detection, he identified a problem when alleged offences were of a 'politically controversial nature' (ibid.). Dalling contended that if journalists or editors refused to comply with demands in terms of Section 205, they committed a crime themselves, and were liable to imprisonment. On the other hand, if they complied with the legal orders and produced the documents and information required of them, their credibility and impartiality among their sources was destroyed, and all hope of professional standards of objectivity and independence were dealt a severe blow. Section 205 was used increasingly

\(^1\) Pending cases under Section 27 (b) of the Police Act at the end of December 1987 included the following:

* Chris Bateman (2 charges) and Tony Weaver (3 charges) of the Cape Times, for reports on the shooting of seven alleged ANC members in Guguletu near Cape Town;
* Tony Weaver and Claire Harper of the Cape Times, for a report that police were involved in the demolition of shacks at Brown's Farm squatter camp, Phillippi;
* Tony Weaver of the Cape Times for a report that police had shot off the lock of a community leader's door in Guguletu; and
* Malcolm Freed and Tony Weaver of the Cape Times for a report on the shooting by a policeman of an alleged crayfish poacher. (Stewart, 1987:33)
throughout the States of Emergency, with a number of journalists being subpoenaed. By the end of December 1986, seven journalists had cases pending against them².

This paragraph is by no means an exhaustive account of the legal restrictions imposed on the media in South Africa, and is included here only to indicate the intricacy of an editor's job in navigating the legal requirements, even outside the confines of the Emergency regulations, which are the main subject of the chapter.

These laws were deemed to be insufficient on their own to ensure that the media reported on extra-parliamentary political opposition in a way which was acceptable to the government. The reasons for this can only be speculated on: but it is my contention, argued in the chapter on news and news values, that the South African media, particularly those newspapers labelled as the English commercial press, held a firm commitment to the values of professionalism and liberal inquiry. Despite the fact that criticism was levelled at this sector of the press for an inadequate and superficial coverage of political resistance³, the government nevertheless regarded them as sufficiently troublesome to go to substantial lengths to curtail their editorial autonomy. The situation was compounded by the presence of a large contingent of newswriters representing foreign media, news-agencies and television networks. Their reports of the continued violence, and the repressive state response, were seen as contributing to the negative image of South Africa abroad, and the further application of punitive trade sanctions and diplomatic pressure. For all these reasons, it was considered necessary to foster a relationship between the government and the press which would be advantageous to the government.

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² Cases pending at the end of 1986 in terms of Section 205 of the Criminal Procedure Act included:
* J.C.Viviers, editor, and Andre Erasmus, deputy news editor, of the Eastern Province Herald; and
* Trevor Bisseker, acting editor, and Cliff Foster, news editor of the Evening Post: all four for reports on consumer boycotts which, the police claimed, might involve criminal action by the boycott leader.
* Monk Nkomo, a Sowetan reporter, 'regarding the presumed offence of arson suspected to have been committed by members of the SA Police';
Creating a Receptive Ideological Climate

Following the insights afforded by Total Revolutionary Strategy, the South African government, in its approach to a communication strategy, was presented with a number of options. In accordance with the WHAM (Winning Hearts And Minds) principles of psychological warfare, a first step was to create a suitable ideological climate, within which restrictive media legislation would appear to be an acceptable social and political norm.

In addition to the measures mentioned above, the period under discussion in this thesis was marked by continuous calls for 'closer consultation and co-operation' between the media and the state. These emanated particularly from the Bureau for Information in the first few months of its existence. Chris Heunis, Minister of Constitutional Development, had previously put forward the idea that 'A new press style is needed in the new South African political dispensation' ('n Nuwe mediastyl is nodig vir die nuwe politiekstyl' (Heunis 1974:111). With the shift from 'majority democracy' to 'consensus democracy', there was a concomitant need for the South African media to focus on 'consensus politics' rather than 'conflict politics', and to 'promote understanding and not instigate conflict' (ibid.:107).

'Consensus journalism' has been defined as:

the production of news and comment which aims at fostering or sustaining agreement on political interests which are commonly shared or which have the potential of being commonly shared (De Wet 1986:40).

In a political sense - and Heunis was concerned only with the political sense - consensus arises when three requirements are fulfilled: the identification of common interests; the acknowledgment that these interests exist; and a willingness to negotiate a common position around these interests. Commenting on the South African situation at the time, Gavin Relly, in his capacity as Chairman of Anglo American, defined consensus as 'agreement about ends, leaving room for argument about means' (Sunday Tribune, 9.6.85). Relly suggested that our ideas on the 'future of the Press [...] depends, to some extent on what we think about the reform process and the future of society'. While noting P.W.Botha's call for the press 'to develop a consensus society', Relly put forward two considerations which militated against such consensus: the question of 'whether we are really embarked on a process of credible reform'; and 'whether black people can be convinced that a process of negotiation can lead to a reasonable balance in our society' (ibid.). In this process, suggested Relly, it was behooven on the press to maintain its traditional role of investigation, criticism and commentary. Arguing from a classically
liberal perspective, Relly's remarks offer a sharp contrast to those of Heunis and Botha, who see the media as instrumental in the maintenance of sectional political interests. The press, on the whole, envisaged their own position in terms which were far closer to Relly's than Chris Heunis's; as argued by Rex Gibson (1987:52), then Deputy Editor in Chief of The Star:

We are a society in transition. No one, no action plan can guarantee it will be a peaceful process. Some things can almost guarantee that it won’t - like forcing official silence on angry voices; like driving dissent underground; like gagging real leaders as they emerge. Risky as it may be, free speech remains the only potential antidote to violence.

It was this difference in approach to the role of the media in times of national upheaval that was the fundamental reason why government calls for 'consensus journalism' were ineffectual, and why the elaborate media restrictions outlined in this chapter were deemed necessary.

**Boosting the Image of the Security Forces**

Another proposal to bolster the awareness of national security was that the 'security forces compete directly for publicity against their political counterparts' (Muller 1986:33). It was envisaged that this strategy would entail no legislative restriction on the reporting of political violence. At the same time, the security forces would also become a 'positive and pro-active newsmaker', and in an ideological climate sympathetic to national security, these pro-state actions would 'receive even more than (their) fair share of the positive attention of the news media' (*ibid.*).

The national emphasis on the need for 'Total Strategy', and the glorification of militarisation was part of this theme. Not only did this relate to the expansion of the SADF, but it also permeated the everyday life of South Africans. Military parades, medal awards and commemorative functions, all served to keep the South African public in a state of war psychosis. Constant vigilance in urban areas, baggage and body searches of shoppers, and ubiquitous display-boards of 'terrorist' arms, particularly landmines, all underscored the existence of the 'enemy in our midst'. All these instances can be seen as parts of a grid of signification, through which ideology was enacted. The 'siege mentality' entered the consciousness of whites through, among other mechanisms, Christian National Education (CNE), with its emphasis on youth preparedness, school cadets and 'veld schools' (see Christie 1985:165-175)⁴.

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In the same vein, the daily broadcast of the SABC's *Comment* focused attention on the danger of 'Dialogue with Terrorists' (*Comment* 21.10.85); 'Heinous Terrorism' (19.12.85); and 'An effective Police Force' (2.10.86). Other examples abound, some of which will be considered in following chapters. Taken together, the reiteration of South Africa as a society under siege, protected by a strong Security Force, made calls for 'responsible' media consonant with calls for a politically compliant media.

**Self-Regulation**

A third approach to the control of the media was predicated on efforts to impose voluntary self-control on the media which would limit public access to 'sensitive' information in the name of the national good. Self-regulation was initially introduced through accreditation to a professional body. Following the first State of Emergency, journalists who wished to enter areas demarcated under the emergency regulations were required to be accredited to the Commissioner of Police. Foreign journalists furthermore, needed to be accredited to the Department of Foreign Affairs. With the declaration of the second State of Emergency (July 1986-February 1990) all journalists reporting on 'unrest' were required to be accredited to the Bureau for Information. These accreditations ensured that ideologically suspect practitioners could be excluded from the profession.

Registered newspapers were also subject to the Code of Conduct of the South African Media Council, a voluntary body that came into effect on 1 November 1983. The preamble to the Code of Conduct argues that 'the freedom of the media is indivisible from, and subject to, the same legal and moral restraints as that of the individual, and rests on the public's fundamental right to be informed.' However, serious problems could arise with the interpretation of section 7.1 of the Code with respect to the reportage and comment on political violence

These disciplinary measures could be made more effective if the monitoring body were given the power to exclude journalists from the profession, a suggestion made by the Steyn Commission, of which nothing ever came (Steyn 1981:1340 ff). Further attempts at registration were introduced in June 1988 (*government Gazette* 11342, 10.6.88) when all journalists with the exception of those working for the 14 major news agencies, were obliged to register with the Director-General of Home Affairs. This move signalled a shift in emphasis away from the publishers of news to the individual
writers of news, and affected small, independent and ‘alternative’ news agencies and papers more acutely than the large commercial enterprises. Although this provision was never enacted, in effect the same result was achieved through the insistence on multiple accreditation (See Tomaselli and Louw 1991 for a full account of the government’s efforts to eradicate the ‘alternative press’.)

Overt Restrictions

Gramsci contended that only weak states routinely needed to rely on the use of the force implied in their domination. Strong states rule almost entirely through ‘intellectual and moral leadership’. The political violence which began in October 1984 had all the newsworthy elements attractive to international media: revolution, carnage, and brutal police action. South African newspapers and foreign correspondents alike reported on the daily mayhem. Since reporting of political violence was curtailed neither by attempts at creating a security-conscious ideological climate boosting the image of the security forces, nor by forcing self-regulation, it became necessary for the government to impose restrictive legislation, even though this severely damaged the image of free and democratic media. In ideological terms, this move represented an attempt at what Therborn (1980) refers to as ‘shielding’: the deliberate exposure of certain viewpoints while ignoring or denying alternatives.

Internationally, overt restrictions on the media usually are imposed only when the state feels it is past the option of maintaining a free and open society. In these conjunctures, it is common to employ the rationale that extraordinary times require extraordinary measures. The same pattern was evident in South Africa. In September 1985, Louis Nel (then Deputy Foreign Minister), threatened to withdraw the work permits of ‘media-men sending distorted reports abroad’ (Mercury 12.9.85): ‘The government puts a high premium on Press freedom, but it also puts a high premium on honest journalism’, he said (ibid.). In a later comment on the ban on cameras in November 1985, Louis Nel again averred that while the government considered press freedom to be important, ‘it regards the preservation of human life as a greater priority’ (Sunday Times 3.11.85). A clue to what he considered to be ‘honest journalism’ comes from his assertion that the ‘poor image of South Africa abroad’ was the result not only of the ‘ignorance of some members of the media’, but also because of the ‘distorted reports and half-truths being sent abroad’ (Mercury, 12.9.85). In other words, Nel was placing the blame for South Africa’s poor image squarely on the shoulders of the foreign
The government’s belief that South Africa was ‘in a state of war’ led to the declaration of successive states of emergency after 1985. The declaration of the first (partial) State of Emergency on 21 July 1985 (Government Notice R120), occurred at a time of collective crisis in the South African political structure. The establishment of the new social movements under the auspices of the United Democratic Front in the early 1980s signalled the failure of the reformist impulse’s anticipated incorporation of ‘moderate’ elements within the ‘black community’ (to use the official government terminology). Civil violence was high; business confidence was extremely low, though not as low as it was to fall a month later.

The National Party introduced a matrix of legal and institutional forms of control which, among other restrictions, severely curtailed the freedom of the press and broadcast media. Intervention in the control and dissemination of media coverage on political violence concentrated on two aspects: firstly, the operation of news gathering - i.e. the media’s right to be at the ‘scene of the crime’; and secondly, the way in which political violence was portrayed. In the initial months of the partial State of the Emergency (21 July - 2 November 1985) control over access was far more important to the state than the way in which they were imaged. After November 1985, however, when all photographic, video and audio-recording were forbidden in localities deemed to be ‘unrest areas’, the emphasis shifted to the representation of violence.

I will also argue that the government realized that curbing the media was not enough: there had to be a mechanism whereby the state was able to propagate its point of view. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has been an important medium of National Party propaganda (although not in a simplistic one-to-one relationship), but something more wide-ranging was also needed. It was in view of this realization that the Bureau for Information was established in September 1985.

**September 1985: Institutionalizing Communication in the Bureau for Information**

A low point of the government’s attempts to communicate with its electorate and the world at large was reached with the August 1985 State President’s speech - dubbed ‘Rubicon I’ by the press - to the annual congress of the National Party in Durban. The National Party’s National Congress was not the only sign of severe problems between the government and the media, since even routine political reporting was often difficult. Political correspondents complained of the ineptitude of many of the government’s press
aides:

Some of the things pressmen have to contend with from the more incompetent officials are unreturned phone calls, written copies of speeches with no indication of who is making them, statements issued long after their embargo time has expired, and the old faithful, 'I don't think the Minister would like to comment on that'. The last one normally being that they are too scared to put rough questions to the Minister. (*The Star 26.3.85*)

To summarize then, by September 1985, there were at least four distinct ways in which the 'communications gap' between the government - or at least the image of itself the government wished to project - and the media manifested itself:

* an inability to convey the message of 'reform'; as exemplified by the 'Rubicon' speech;

* a lack of co-operation between government officials, particularly Ministers, and the domestic press;

* a perception on the part of the government that the coverage of the 'unrest' by journalists and camerapersons acted as a catalyst for further violence on the part of activists who 'played up for the cameras'; and

* most importantly, the concern that reports of foreign journalists sensationalised the crisis in the country, thereby contributing to South Africa's negative image, and foreign political and economic pressure on this country.

Judging by newspaper reports of the time, there seems to have been a consensus within government circles on the need for stringent media *control*. The mechanisms for implementing this ranged from *management* of the media through self-regulation and co-option, to out-right media *restrictions*. While the reformist sector of the government, centred in the Department of Foreign Affairs, advocated a strategy of media 'management' and co-option which would include the establishment of some form of institutional body to achieve this, many senior cabinet ministers, notably Stoffel Botha (Ministry of Home Affairs) and Louis le Grange (Ministry of Police and Correctional Services), felt that the answer to the media dilemma was stricter control, rather than the establishment of a statutory body. When the Bureau was set up however, the proponents of co-option and persuasion were in the ascendant. This impression was reinforced by Louis Nel's successful bid to reverse the expulsion order on the *Newsweek* correspondents at this time (*Daily News*, 19.9.85).

The media restrictions, and the television coverage which followed, cannot be seen apart from the establishment of the Bureau for Information. The state realized that apart from stringent *control*, there was a need to provide a body to *manage* the
media. A preliminary attempt at the management of the media was made as early as 1984 with the establishment of a ‘Forum’ under the chairmanship of Louis Nel, then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information. The purpose was to co-ordinate the activities of the state’s numerous public relations and press liaison officials with those of the press. This Forum worked on an ad hoc basis, and had little organizational structure or success in promoting a more accessible flow of information.

By the second half of 1985, there were numerous calls, particularly in the Afrikaans newspapers, for new machinery to replace the dissolved and discredited Department of Information. Rapport (15.8.85) called for the establishment of a statutory body similar to the Tourism Board, while Die Burger’s political columnist, Vryburger (20.8.85), called for a ‘brand-new, stream-lined Information Department manned by experts’. Harald Pakendorf, then editor of Die Vaderland (14.9.85), asserted that the government’s reaction to events was usually too slow, too defensive or too aggressive. What was needed, he suggested, was a ‘senior politician to act as spokesman for the government and handle media affairs in a more up-to-date manner’ (see also Mercury, 16.9.85).

It was against this background that the Bureau for Information was set up in mid-September 1985. The preliminary politicking behind the scenes is indicative of the power struggle between the two camps of ‘securocrats’ and ‘reformists’. It is worth noting in passing that information on these power struggles is difficult to obtain. Even seasoned political reporters / commentators like Stephen Terblanche, on whose investigative work the following paragraph is based, was not able to quote the names of his sources, thus underlining the aura of secrecy that pervaded the most routine political reporting.

A week before the Bureau was announced, Terblanche noted that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha, expressed ‘the strongest opposition to the revival of the old department’, since he feared ‘a repetition of covert actions’ (Sunday Times, 8.9.85). However, Terblanche quoted an ‘official closely involved in reviving the department’ as saying:

Mr [Pik] Botha accepts and supports the need for a co-ordinated information drive to present a more accurate picture of the country to the outside world. To him it is more a question of control. (ibid.)

Pik Botha had good reason to worry, since the article goes on to point out that the original idea of a revived Information portfolio was understood to have emanated from the State Security Council (the stronghold of the militarists in the government). It was
widely believed, in the words of an unnamed Cabinet Minister quoted by Terblanche, that ‘if a senior Cabinet Minister controls the department, he could further his own chances of succeeding President Botha’ (ibid.). In an apparent compromise, two relatively junior Ministers were put forward as possible candidates - Adriaan Vlok, then Deputy Minister of Police, representing the interests of the ‘securocrats’, and Louis Nel, then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a ‘reformist’.

Events indicate that the reformist faction won this particular battle. The Bureau was headed by Louis Nel, who relinquished his Deputy Foreign Affairs portfolio to become Deputy Minister of Information in the Office of the State President. The Bureau recruited most of its staff from the Department of Foreign Affairs, though it drew from other sources as well. Reporting on the appointment of Louis Nel, the SABC Nuus (14.9.85) included the following extract (here translated from the Afrikaans). The newsreader was Riaan Cruywagen:

**VISUALS**

1. Newsreader, to camera
   
   The announcement from the Office of the State President says that Mr Louis Nel has been appointed to head the information bureau. Our political editor says the new information bureau will be named in public next week. A representative of the State President’s Office said Mr Nel would work in the closest co-operation with the section which was responsible for foreign information.

2. Riaan Nel, stand-up outside union buildings, overlooking Pretoria
   
   The information bureau for which Mr Nel will have responsibility in the position of Deputy-Minister will be under the Office of the State President. Final details concerning the new bureau will be made known next week. A successor for Mr Nel as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs will also be announced soon. [...] Mr Nel explained what his programme would be:

3. interview with Nel, seated in his office
   
   Louis Nel: The task will be to distribute information in the interior, and to work in the closest co-operation with the domestic [binnelandse] and foreign media.

4. Riaan Nel
   
   Riaan Nel: But isn’t it simply going to be a propaganda department?

   Louis Nel: No absolutely not. The government has decided to make itself more accessible to the external
and internal media, in other words, to make it easier to get comment for the media, and also to go out of its way to make more accessible advancements in the development of South Africa, the advancement of communities in South Africa, and mainly, to present to the media the intentions [verdoelings] of the government. The whole purpose of the bureau is to ensure greater co-operation between the government and the media.

Riaan Nel (background voice): Will you also work with the other departments?

Louis Nel: The closest co-operation with other departments [will be maintained] because the situation is, that a full cabinet committee will still do their own information work. In other words every Minister will still be responsible for the communication of his own department. But there are certain instances in which the interests of two or more departments, in other words, action which affects two or three departments' functions, and in such a situation, the bureau will play a very important role.

Riaan Nel: Why wasn't it decided to simply revive the old Department of Information [weer aan die gang te kry]?

Louis Nel: What we have here in mind differs entirely from the purpose of the old Department of Information. The old Department of Information was a very expensive project, in the sense that it also had offices overseas, and undertook secret projects, this is absolutely not what we have in mind. The bureau will only work domestically. But with the closest co-operation with the Department of Foreign Affairs, which still will be responsible for the distribution of information overseas.

Riaan Nel: Will special attention be give to foreign information?

Louis Nel: The Department of Foreign Affairs does important work concerning that. But we know that the image of South Africa is produced [verskap] for more than 90% by what is said and done here in South Africa, and the reports that are sent overseas from here. In other words if we want to produce a better, more positive image, then we must work in the closest co-operation with those sources in South Africa who are responsible for the production of the image overseas, and in this respect, the foreign press representatives are a very important component in this process.
Several debates which were current within government circles are alluded to in this piece, although they are not explicitly articulated. Firstly, the announcement is sourced to the Office of the State President. It is repeatedly emphasized that the new bureau will be housed here rather than in any competing Department, thus ensuring that no other department provided a threat to the President's power base. Secondly, Louis Nel denies any possible competition with the existing Department of Foreign Affairs, concentrating instead on the domestic role of the Bureau. Finally, he is at pains to dissociate the Bureau from the defunct Department of Information. The interviewer's question (# 5) as to whether the Bureau will become a 'propaganda department' appears, on the surface, to be an implied criticism. However, an examination of Louis Nel's body language - his easy, affable manner and ready response - indicates that the question was a pre-arranged 'set-up'. Nel was not even slightly phased, and acted as if he had been waiting for the question which provided him with an opportunity to state his case. This impression is reinforced by the unusually long period during which the camera focuses on the subject, without cutting away to the interviewer. This discursive televisual code indicates that Louis Nel was in complete control; had the interviewer taken the role of interrogator, the camera would have concentrated more on him.

The establishment of the Bureau was hailed as a victory by the 'supporters of a free but better-informed press' over 'those in the government who advocate a media crackdown' (Daily News, 19.9.85). Nel stressed the Bureau's role to promote a free flow of information (sic). However, this did not mean that journalists were no longer harassed, but rather that the harassment emanated from different quarters. Repression came particularly through the interventions of the Minister of Police, Louis le Grange, a hard-liner who made his abhorrence and intolerance of the media - particularly the foreign media - very clear. On October 11 1985 he warned that the police in future would take tougher action against journalists who did not report 'correctly' on unrest situations. Overseas television news teams staged 'unrest' scenes and twisted the facts to serve their own ends, he claimed (Daily News, 12.10.85).

Once again, the building of consent by the South African government demanded that the problems faced within the country be projected and externalized onto a source which could be expunged. Between mid-September and 26 October, twenty incidents of harassment by the police, most of them involving two or more journalists, were reported. These included arrests, confiscation of materials, and assault (Stewart 1986a).
A common technique for the harassment of journalists at this time was to arrest them on their arrival at the site of political violence and then to escort them out of the area, usually to the nearest police station, where their films and notes would be confiscated. Sometimes they would be held until the incident was over, and occasionally arrested under the emergency regulations. In either case, the objective would be to prevent them from observing and reporting on the unrest (Cape Times, 4.11.85).

On 26 October, the emergency regulations were extended to the magisterial districts of the Western Cape ( ). On the same day, the police barred journalists without written permission from entering Soweto - though the latter concession seldom had been granted (The Citizen, 28.10.85). In the following week, four black journalists were allegedly beaten up by soldiers and driven around Soweto on the floor of a Buffel for four hours (The Star, 28.10.85)\(^5\).

For the first four months into the first Emergency, government and security officials confined themselves to appeals to ‘patriotism’ and loyalty, together with random harassment of journalists, such as arrests, blocking of access, confiscating material and photographs\(^6\). However, these measures did not stem the flood of reporting on violence, and it is my contention that at this point even the reformists in the cabinet were prepared to envisage stronger measures to control the media. These measures were announced early in November 1985, and addressed what was perceived as the heart of the problem according to the canons of psychological warfare:

* the fewer images of security force brutality that were seen, the less sympathy and encouragement would be proffered to the victims of police brutality;

* the fewer the images of political violence, the more likely the country would be perceived to be stable.

**November 1985: Banning Images of Political Violence**

An extraordinary Government Gazette (Proclamation R 208, Government Gazette 10004, Regulation 9 of 2.11.85) forbade journalists:

to manufacture, reproduce, publish or distribute in or outside South Africa, any film, reproduction or sound recording of:

* Any public disturbance, disorder, riot, public violence, strike or boycott, or any damaging of any property, or assault on or killing of persons;

* Any person present at or involved in any of the above activities

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\(^5\)  

\(^6\)
Any conduct of a security force or its members with regard to maintenance of pubic order or for the termination of the state of emergency.

An adjunct to the November legislation in the form of a police advisory notice also required journalists reporting on political violence to be accredited to either the police or the Bureau for Information, failing which they would not be permitted to report on the unrest at all. The Cape Times refused to comply with this requirement and as a result was totally excluded from all police information for several weeks (Cape Times, 14.3.86 and 29.4.86). The net effect of these regulations was to prevent all visual images from reaching foreign viewers and opinion makers, as well as the South African public. Furthermore, by curtailing the visuality of television news, the reports lost much of their impact, and their newsworthiness, ensuring they received less exposure when they were aired overseas.

The emphasis on pre-eminence of photographic depictions as conveyers of messages, was, from the perspective of protecting the state, not misplaced. Barthes (1977:44) reminds us that:

The type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing (which any copy could provoke) but an awareness of its having-been-there. ... [T]he photograph is never experienced as illusion; ... for in every photograph there is always stupefying evidence from which we are sheltered.

It seems logical to conclude from this that the state did not want South Africans, especially white South Africans, to be exposed to any ‘consciousness of having-been-there’ when scenes of violent opposition to its rule were replayed. Such scenes were not in keeping with the desired self-image, that government was in total control of the political situation in country. Nor was it seen as good statesmanship to expose the instability to foreigners, who could react to the consequent increasing international condemnation of the South African regime by withdrawing investment and advocating sanctions.

The emergency legislation enacted in November 1985 was of greater consequence to the press and foreign television correspondents than to the SABC, which had voluntarily stopped using photographic or video depictions after 26 October 1985, thus pre-empting the ban on cameras by a deliberate act of self-censorship. Two possible conclusions arise from this: either the SABC was far more susceptible to arguments that televised depictions fanned ‘unrest’; or that the SABC was used as a ‘test case’ for a policy which was being formulated by the government.
It can be argued that, up to this point, the state’s double thrust of disciplining the media through persecution and co-option were separable, and even at times at odds with one another. The banning of cameras in November seemed to mark the end of this separation, with the reformists acting in concert with the securocrats. Evidence for this statement comes from Louis Nel’s reaction to the Foreign Correspondents Association (FCA) charge that the ban was ‘an attempt to prevent news of social conflict reaching the outside world’, a charge Nel vigorously denied as being ‘far-fetched and devoid of truth’ (*The Star* 4.11.85). Nel reiterated a statement from the Minister of Police, Louis Le Grange, that ‘in unrest situations the presence of TV and camera crews has proved to be a catalyst for further violence’ (*ibid.*).

From the extension of the State of Emergency on October 1985, to the declaration of the second state of emergency on June 12 1986, forty-four cases of harassment or intimidation of journalists by the security forces were reported (Stewart 1986a). The lifting of the State of Emergency on 7 March 1986 (Proclamation 39/86) meant that the blanket ban on the use of cameras in black townships was also lifted. However, this provision was still applied from time to time, on an *ad hoc* basis, in specific magisterial districts. The cessation of emergency legislation did not immediately bring a change of policy towards the media.

On the same day as the lifting of the State of Emergency, an important point was reached with the confrontation of three CBS newsmen and the Minister of Home Affairs, Stoffel Botha. SABC’s *TV News* (10.3.86) reported the matter in the following terms:

**VISUALS**


2. Super of names comes up over visuals

3. SU of LDV outside Parliament

**AUDIO**

Michael de Morgan: In another development, the government has ordered 3 prominent American television journalists to leave the country. The three are

CBS bureau chief in South Africa, Mr Bill Mutschmann, two CBS employees, Mr Alan Pizze and Mr Wim de Vos. This report from Louis de Villiers:

LDV: Home Affairs Minister Mr Stoffel Botha said in a statement released here in Cape Town that CBS had broadcast footage of the recent funeral in the black township of Alexandra. This had been done after an urgent appeal by various networks to film the funeral had
been set aside by the supreme Court in Johannesburg. Mr Botha said CBS's actions were in flagrant contempt of a South African court decision. It had also come to his attention that CBS was determined to ignore South African law in order to obtain footage, which according to government experience, often led to one-sided reporting and misrepresentation of conditions here. The three journalists have until midnight on Tuesday to leave the country, but Mr Botha has indicated to them that he is prepared to accept direct representation.

The story had a sequel the following day when the American Department of Foreign Affairs demanded an audience with the Minister of Home Affairs. The SABC Nuus (11.3.86) reported the meeting as follows:

**VISUALS**

1. CK: WERELD NUUS

**AUDIO**

Riaan Cruywagen: US Foreign Affairs are still investigating the circumstances which led to the expulsion of 3 television journalists of the CBS network from South Africa. The Department's representative, Mr Bernard Kalb, also said that America welcomed the freeing of persons detained in terms of the Emergency Regulations.

2. Satellite footage of Bernard Kalb super: WOORDVOERDER, DEPT BUITELANDSE SAKE

Kalb: We are concerned about the reported expulsions involving three members of CBS television News. As of now we do not have all the facts of the case. However, our support for freedom of the press is a fundamental principle about which we feel very strongly, and at this point all I can say by way of a bottom line is that the matter is being looked into.

3. Cuts to reporters on floor - cuts back to Kalb

Kalb: We welcome the South African Government's lifting the State of Emergency as one step toward creating a climate in which negotiations can begin with credible black leaders for a new political dispensation in South Africa.

This meeting was followed in turn by another, reported on television the following evening (News 12.3.1986). Realizing the potential damage to South Africa's international image, the Minister acquiesced to the request for allowing the CBS team to remain. In this last excerpt before I finished recording the News in March 1986 (see Introduction), the apparent immediacy of television as a news-medium is given full rein, as the item was broadcast during the actual negotiations:
1. David Hall-Green, sitting in news studio, no CK

2. footage of journalists in room, live.

3. Andre le Roux, facing camera:

4. TV camera with CBS NEWS on side

5. cameramen setting up a shot

6. repeat of shot as in #4

7. continuation of cameramen setting up shot

8. Andre le Roux

9. Hall-Green, in Studio

**Hall-Green**: Minister of Home Affairs Mr Stoffel Botha is meeting representatives of the American CBS television network in Cape Town at this moment to discuss the imminent expulsion of three CBS journalists from South Africa. Andre le Roux reports:

**Le Roux**: The 3 CBS journalists, Bill Mutschmann, Alan Pizzey and Wim de Vos, who were ordered to leave South Africa before midnight tomorrow night, this afternoon took up Mr Botha's offer of an opportunity to make personal representations with a view to staving off their deportation.

**Le Roux**: At the meeting here at the Hendrik Verwoerd building in Cape Town, they were accompanied by a CBS lawyer, Mr John Lane. On Friday Mr Botha charged that CBS had acted in flagrant contempt of a South African court decision prohibiting camera coverage of a funeral in Alexander. Mr Botha also interpreted recent statements by CBS in Washington as indicative of CBS' determination to disregard South African laws in order to obtain film material which in Mr Botha's experience often led

**Le Roux VO**: to one-sided and false accounts of conditions here. Last week Mr Botha made it clear that representatives of CBS will in future only be allowed into South Africa if they abided by the law of the land.

**Le Roux VO**: If Mr M and his crew are eventually kicked out,

**Le Roux VO**: CBS will still have representation.

**Le Roux VO**: At least one more CBS crew is still in attendance.

**Le Roux**: The talks were still in progress a short while ago.

**Hall-Green**: And we've just heard from Cape Town that
the talks have ended, and will resume at eight tomorrow morning.

Government anger against the foreign media corps, who 'behave as if they run this country', remained unappeased. South Africans working for overseas news organisations were regarded as a major problem. 'They cannot be taken to the Media Council or the court or be censored by the public', said a government spokesman (The Star, 14.3.86).

Until April-May of 1986, the reform initiative within the state found its institutional home in the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning, personified by the Minister, Chris Heunis, with the Departments of Manpower and Foreign Affairs providing backup. Swilling and Phillips (1989:142) date the 'decisive break between the political reformers and the hard-line securocrats' to May 1986, coinciding with the failure of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) initiative following the SADF bombing ANC installations in Maseru, Gaborone and Maputo. The flirtation with winning consent through concessions was over, and a more coercive approach was embarked on.