CHAPTER FOUR:
RESTORING ORDER:
THE SECOND STATE OF EMERGENCY, JUNE 1986

It has been said that the most powerful weapon of the terrorist is not the bomb or the AK47 rifle; it is the publicity in the mass media, especially on television screens. That is no less true of the radical activist: the rioter, the petrol bomber, the "necklace" fire murderer. His outrageous behaviour is enough to ensure international publicity for his political claims, regardless of their validity. Since the television network receives higher viewer ratings, it is a mutually rewarding relationship.
SABC Comment, 4.11.85.

June 1986: Defining the ‘Subversive Statement’

By the second half of 1986, reformist measures were seen to have failed to achieve their objective. Violence continued unabated, and, 'convinced that it was directly threatened with imminent revolution, the state turned to the 'counter revolutionary warfare' strategies of the military to resolve the general crisis of legitimacy and apartheid rule' (Swilling and Phillips 1989:142). The purpose of the declaration of the National State of Emergency (June 1986-February 1990), in the words of Dave Steward, head of the Bureau for Information, was:

to restore stability, to restore normality and to make progress with reform in South Africa [and] eventually, of course, to up lift (sic) the State of Emergency' (Network 12.6.86).

In other words, the purpose of the State of Emergency was the fundamental reconstruction of the basis of society, after which political access could be extended. This strategy was premised on the assumption that ‘Total Strategy’ had failed because it left civil society intact. All distinctions between ‘civil society’ and ‘political society’ were obliterated. The institutions of the former, including notably the press and the media, were to be subjected to the same discipline expected of non-civilian state institutions. This is the nearest example I can find to give substance to Louis Althusser's (1971:137-8) contention that the state is ‘above the law’, and that in practice it is immaterial whether an ideological apparatus (such as the media) belonged to the State or private enterprise, since ‘What matters is how they function’. According to Althusser, private institutions can ‘function’ perfectly well as ‘ideological state apparatuses’ (Althusser 1971:233). However, even in this exceptional case, there were moments of resistance as the press (particularly the ‘alternative’, and English commercial press and foreign correspondents) fought back, and contested government attempts to draw them
into the state apparatuses.

The security establishment implemented a vigorous programme of aggressive propaganda on behalf of the state, partly through the implementation of the Bureau for Information (see below), and partly through the ‘welfare’ functions of the SADF. This ‘winning hearts and minds’ strategy was based directly on the counter-insurgency doctrines theorised by Alan Kitson, and applied to the media by Richard Clutterbuck, which were outlined in the previous chapter. To pre-empt the possible appropriation of aggressive reform by their opponents for propaganda purposes, the securocrats simultaneously enforced the most repressive emergency legislation yet with the declaration of the second (national) State of Emergency on 12 June 1986, (Government Notice R108, Government Gazette 10280). This legislation was a substitute for the two security bills, the Public Safety Amendment Bill, and the Internal Security Amendment Bill, which the government had been unable to get through the Tricameral Parliament before the June 16 anniversary of the Soweto uprising. The purpose of these two bills was to extend the period of detention from 14 days to 180 days, on the order of a police officer above the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Once again, the thrust of the bills indicated the move to rule by decree, rather than rule of law.

The emergency legislation included a third wave of media restrictions. In comparison with the declaration of the first State of Emergency the previous year, the media were seen as a highly significant aspect of the conflict situation, and from the government’s point of view any opportunity to express dissident views needed to be negated. In that earlier State of Emergency the primary aim had been to prevent the depiction of conflict between the security forces and the forces of black resistance. In the June 1986 regulations the objective appeared to be to thwart information relating to protest campaigns and mass resistance, an aim which fitted well with the general counter-insurgency thrust of the whole State of Emergency. The restrictions ‘place(d) crippling restraints on reporting and comment about unrest and related events such as strikes, boycotts and public debate on international sanctions’ (statement of South Africa Media Council, quoted in Mercury, 23.7.86). The government’s contention that it was concerned to stifle propagandistic and revolutionary rhetoric was belied by the banning of essentially domestic protest - boycotts, civil disobedience and marches - in fact anything the state referred to as ‘unrest’, rather than a concentration on external insurgency or ‘terrorism’.

Briefly stated, the regulations empowered the Minister of Law and Order to
confiscate and suspend publication of any newspaper deemed to have contravened these provisions, and to impose a fine of R20 000 on the offending journalist, or a sentence of ten years, or imprisonment without the option of a fine (Regulation 14, Government Notice R108, *Government Gazette* 10280). The restrictions on the reporting of news excluded journalists from scenes of political violence except with official permission, prohibited all but official accounts of security force actions, disallowed the disclosure of names of people detained, and provided a wide-ranging, six point definition of a 'subversive statement':

No one may make, write or print a 'subversive statement' which:

- promotes the objects of unlawful organizations; incites the public to take part in unlawful strikes, boycotts, protest processions, civil disobedience campaigns;
- opposes the government and security forces who are maintaining public order;
- undermines military service;
- aggravates feelings of hostility between one section of the public and another;
- weakens public confidence in the termination of the emergency;
- or encourages foreign action against South Africa. (Regulations 1(viii)(a-f) Proclamation 109 *Government Gazette* 10280: 12.6.86).

The term 'unrest' had until this point been implicitly understood as activity from within the country which in some way contributed to the general 'onslaught'. Now, for the first time, it was defined in this particular issue of the *Government Gazette* as:

any unlawful gathering, concourse or procession of any number of persons; any attack on a force or member of a force; any conduct which constitutes a public disturbance or riot, public violence or contravention of section 1 (1)(a) of the Intimidation Act. (Proclamation 109 *Government Gazette* 10280: 12.6.86).

In this sense, the term ‘force’ is a shorthand reference to the Security forces, including the SADF, the South African Police, the Railway Police, the police forces of the various ‘independent homelands’, and the so-called ‘special constables’. These security forces undertook ‘security action’, which in turn was defined as

[...] any action to terminate unrest [...] to protect life or property in consequence of unrest [...] any follow-up action after any unrest has been terminated or has ended, including any pursuit or tracking down of or any other action taken against a person who participated or who is suspected of participating in that unrest (*ibid.*).

The June 1986 restrictions were remarkably similar to the restrictions promulgated during the State of Emergency declared in 1960. It covered 120 districts, which were also framed under the Public Safety Act 3 of 1953. The earlier restrictions
prohibited the publication of 'subversive statements', provided for the seizure of publications, and allowed for the prohibition of future issues of a publication (Armstrong 1987:203-204). The 1986 restrictions appear to have been based on those of 1960, although they were far more elaborate.

The Commissioner of Police, General Johan Coetzee, was not long in issuing (by means of a telex sent to all major newspapers and news agencies) new orders under the emergency regulations 7(1)(c) and (d). His communication, confirmed the following day in the Government Gazette (Proclamation 208: 10293 17.6.86), prohibited, except with his consent:

announcing, disseminating, distributing, taking or sending any news or comment about security force action under the emergency regulations; the presence of any person in a black township or in any unrest area for the purpose of reporting.

This provision amounted to a blanket ban on media scrutiny of the conduct of the security forces. This last detail proved important in the subsequent court proceedings against the regulations.

Apart from the almost total ban on photographic depictions of political violence, the most serious way in which the press was legally hamstrung was the severely curtailed access to areas of interest. In terms of these restrictions, no newspaper was allowed to be near or within sight of any unrest, restricted gathering or security force action. Again, this order was issued by the Commissioner of Police by telex on the 16 June, 1989, under Regulation 7(1)(d), confirmed in the same Gazette (ibid.), which extended all definitions of 'subversive statements' to apply to the self-governing homelands.

Of the six 'definitions' of a 'subversive statement', a number covered areas which in terms of existing statutes already called for 'great caution in handling by the press' (Gerald Shaw, Cape Times: 16.6.86), including those dealing with the aims of banned organizations. However others, such as the prohibition of the publication of anything which (in the opinion of the government) could be likely to 'weaken or undermine the confidence of the public in the termination of the state of emergency', were new. The most serious aspect of the provisions lay in their broad scope and vague wording, for instance, the provision about 'engendering or aggravating feelings of hostility', which were so 'all-inclusive that any forthright and vigorous editorial comment or denunciation of social injustice (became) a hazardous undertaking' (ibid.). The prohibition against newspapers and other media publishing or even taking 'any' news photographs of 'public disturbances, disorder, riot or other manifestations or unrest or of any action or conduct
of a member of the police or other security forces in dealing with the unrest' (Government Gazette 10280: 12.6.86), was a severe restriction on the collection and publication of news stories. In terms of Regulation 11 of the Notice, the Minister of Law and Order, who was responsible for all Emergency Regulations, or someone standing for him, could seize copies of 'any publication' deemed to contain a 'subversive statement'. Regulation 12 went further, by including the proviso that if in the opinion of the Minister, a publication contained a subversive statement, he could authorise the seizure of all copies of that publication, together with all subsequent issues. In effect, this enabled the Minister to ban a publication for the duration of the Emergency. The day after their promulgation, the June restrictions were acted upon when the Minister ordered police to remove editions of the Sowetan and the Weekly Mail, on the grounds that they contained 'subversive statements' (13.6.86). This 'banning' was challenged in court (see below).

An important aspect of the legislation was its arbitrary nature. While the framework was set out in the primary legislation, the 'details' of how it would be implemented were left to the security personnel, particularly the Commissioner of Police, to fill in. This was evident from the orders telexed to newspapers on June 16 (1986). A number of newspapers left blank spaces to draw attention to what they saw as overt censorship (see below). In response, on June 19, a police officer told a meeting of the NPU Police-Press Liaison Committee that blank spaces could be regarded as a form of writing and therefore as 'subversive statements' (Stewart 1986b:32). Further provisions were 'added in' on June 21, when, in terms of Regulation 7 of Proclamation 109, the Divisional Police Commissioner for the Western Cape ordered that 'Without the consent of the Divisional SAP Commissioner, no one can publish or disseminate statements of officials of 109 organisations in the Western Cape' (Order 4, Government Notice 1355, Government Gazette 10309, 21.6.86). An appendix went on to name the 119 affected organisations. This had the consequence of removing the organizational basis for the articulation of dissident opinions and critique.

The arbitrariness of the legislation was one of the main bases for its contestation in court (see below). In response to these court challenges, this arbitrariness was written into the legislation in August, when Proclamation 109 was again amended to empower any Police Commissioner to issue regulations and orders (Regulation 12, Proclamation 140, Government Gazette 10382, 1.8.86). The provision meant that journalists in the field were subject to the whims of the security forces in the area; furthermore it acted as a
primary source of self-censorship on newspapers, as journalists and editors were uncertain of what would be considered permissible. These restrictions remained in force until February 1990, though some aspects of ‘unrest’ reporting remained illegal after that date.

‘Perfecting the Free Flow of Information’: The Bureau for Information’s Daily Briefings

In view of the stringent limitations on reporting, the bulletins disseminated from the Bureau for Information became, apart from Parliament, the only admissible source of information. During the parliamentary debate in the week following the declaration of the State of Emergency, Louis Nel, Deputy Minister of Information, reassured the House of Assembly (the Whites’ chamber in the Tricameral system) that information regarding the State of Emergency was being dealt with ‘responsibly’. The SABC’s parliamentary reporter, Andre Le Roux, reported the proceedings as follows (Niaus 17.06.1986):

**VISUALS**

1. Andre Le Roux, seated against backdrop of empty parliament, with super: PERSGALLERY

2. same visual

3. slide of Colin Eglin (leader of the PFP), fills whole screen

**AUDIO**

Le Roux: In parliament the Deputy Minister of Information, Mr Louis Nel, contradicted the PFP allegations that people in South Africa were disappearing. He gave the assurance that families of people who were arrested and taken into custody in terms of the State of Emergency, were informed. Mr Nel said that there had to be a return to stability in black residential areas (swartwoongebiede) and schools; and the question of intimidation had to be settled before the end of the State of Emergency.

On the role of the Bureau for Information, during this period, Mr Nel gave the assurance that information would be conveyed to the public immediately and responsibly, except for information such as the number of detainees, which was regarded as of strategic importance. In response to the question on the limitations placed on Mrs Winnie Mandela, which have come to light in the international media, Mr Nel said that it was the experience of the government that Mrs Mandela made subversive outbursts, such as her reference to necklace murders. The government would not tolerate this.

Riaan Cruywagen (newsreader) VO: The leader of the opposition in the House [of Assembly] Mr Colin Eglin, expressed concern about the consequences of the State of
Emergency on the South African people and the international community. He said it was important that facts and happenings in connection with the State of Emergency should be investigated in Parliament, and debate should be conducted around them.

This report is indicative of a number of processes characteristic of its period. Most notable is the way in which the SABC has interpreted the notion of ‘balance’ exclusively within the ambit of the presentation of the viewpoints of white parliamentary parties (the Conservative Party was given brief coverage after the PFP). No extra-parliamentary voices were solicited. Within the vision of ‘balance’, however, the National Party spokesman was given substantially more air-time than either of the other two parliamentary parties, on the grounds that the National Party represented the ‘Government of the day’ (private communication with SABC News Department, July 1987). More significant than the disproportionate time-slots given to the various parties was the foregrounding of Louis Nel (together with his full title) as the subject of the report. Nel is presented as the pro-active party, although he was reacting to an earlier initiative by the PFP on police silence surrounding the detention of activists. Nel denied that families were not informed, but offered no evidence of the this. It was simply an argument by assertion. Precisely the same construction was used in his discussion of the role of the Bureau for Information (for which he held direct parliamentary responsibility):

Mr Nel gave the assurance that information would be conveyed to the public immediately and responsibly, except for information such as the number of detainees, which was regarded as of strategic importance (Niuus 17.06.86).

No indication was provided of the mechanism through which the Bureau would disseminate information, nor of a motivation for the attribution of ‘strategic’ classification to information regarding detainees. The report conveyed a sense of arrogance both in terms of the understanding that the public should accept Nel’s ‘assurance’ on faith, and that matters of ‘strategic importance’ were either self-evident, or should be left to the government to be defined. The dismissive attitude to Winnie Mandela provides further evidence of this arrogance. In the section of the report that deals with this matter, the wording is particularly illuminating: Mandela’s house-arrest and the proscription against the media quoting her were referred to as ‘limitations’ (‘beperkings’), a word that minimises the extent of her isolation, which is justified in terms of her ‘subversive outbursts’ (‘ondernynende uitbarstings’). Finally, the whole
report was given in the third person and included neither direct quotations nor ‘live’ visuals, delivering a particularly mediated and ‘flat’ product which, as intended, underplays any sense of dramatic content in the SABC’s coverage of the State of Emergency.

The Bureau for Information provided the media with very limited information, and which gave *institutional* form to the regulations in so far as it acted simultaneously as censor as well as disseminator. Bulletins were initially disseminated through daily ‘news conferences’ held in Room 159 of the Union Buildings in Pretoria, where the Office of the State President is housed. Later, information was distributed through the Bureau’s ‘unrest reports’. After June 24 1986, the Bureau refused to answer questions unrelated to its briefings, unless they were submitted in writing (or by telex or telefacsimile) four hours before the briefings. A semiotic analysis of the television reporting of these briefings is included in the chapter on violence. Daily briefings were suspended on the 25 June 1986, and held only sporadically after that. On 25 September, the news briefings were stopped altogether, and only telexed (or faxed) inquiries were dealt with.

The control of news through official briefings was not a new idea. Liaison between the police and the press existed long before the Bureau took over this function (one of the Bureau’s chief liaison officers, Leon Mellet, formerly Colonel Mellet, had been seconded from the Public Relations Department of the SAP, a position to which he later returned). Nor were briefings original to South Africa. Despite the celebrated exceptions of Watergate, the American media were usually uncritical reflectors of government positions, particularly in times of war or national crisis (Abrahams 1982:17). This was particularly evident during the Vietnam war. While it was true that towards the end of that war, some portions of the media took up a critical stance in relation to America’s involvement, even the generally right-wing Abrahams (*ibid.*) is ready to concede that:

> early on [...] it was too easy, too comfortable and too safe to report the war from anywhere but Saigon, and at that time the ‘five o’clock follies’ (the official briefings) were taken quite seriously.

This acceptance of the official version as the ‘correct’ version has also been noted in connection with anti-government resistance in Northern Ireland. Simon Hoggart (cited by Elliot 1976:4) notes:

> When the British press prints an account of an incident as if it were an established fact, and it is clear that the reporter himself was not on the spot, it is a 99 percent certainty that it is the army’s version which is given.
Reliance on government/police interpretations of events such as these occurs when, in the absence of ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ sources which may be inaccessible or simply difficult to cultivate, government sources are taken as fact. In this respect, the South African media were reluctant to acquiesce entirely, as will be illustrated below. The chief difference between the Bureau’s briefings and the American and Irish situations described respectively by Abrahams and Elliot, was that the Bureau provided the only legal source of information. Any information gleaned from alternative sources had to be ‘verified’ by the Bureau. Therefore, the information provided by the Bureau cannot be seen as the lazy alternative to ‘real’ reporting: it was made a legal necessity.

A second generalised reason for the reliance on official sources is the need to protect the precarious genuine sources journalists are able to establish. This latter provision works two ways: journalists work hard at cultivating sources within the official networks who, in turn, identify potential allies within the media. According to Elliot (1976:6), the British government has been very adroit in its response to the media:

> Journalists are treated as important guests by a large network of both army and government press corps. Those who adhere to the official line and seek news from official sources are rewarded with continued access and even the occasional scoop. Those inclined to strike out on their own are cut off from official sources and may find themselves harassed out of Ulster.

Comparing these insights to the South African situation, a number of parallels can be drawn. Cases in which journalists were ‘harassed out’ of townships, or even deported from the country, are readily found. The Cape Times was seen to be a particularly troublesome newspaper, and was ‘cut off from official sources’ in an unequivocal way: its reporters were banned from speaking to any police liaison officers, after their crime reporter, Chris Bateman, had reported on a shoot-out in which three alleged guerrillas were killed in Guguletu on 3 March 1986. The ban remained in force for three months. In comparison, the journalists on the SABC were seen to be compliant and to ‘adhere to the official line’, and were treated far better. The timing of the Bureau’s briefings was significant in this respect: briefings were held at 15h00 - a time which was suitable neither for the morning nor the afternoon newspapers, but which was perfect for the television’s evening News.

In February 1986 Jon Qwelane of the Sunday Star reported seeing two SABC journalists, reporter Chris Olkers and cameraman Glen Middleton, touring Soweto in a Casspir and armed with a shotgun and teargas gun respectively (Sunday Star 10.2.86).
The police denied issuing weapons to the two men, saying they 'must just have been handling' them (*Sunday Star* 11.2.86). The issue of arms aside, this is one of many cases (mostly undocumented) in which SABC journalists were singled out for special treatment by the security forces. Private interviews with SABC journalists indicate that they were often 'invited' by police teams to accompany them on 'tours' of the townships, when other journalists were denied access to 'unrest areas'.

The Bureau also arranged a special 'mystery tour' of Soweto on 17 June 1986 (the day after 'Soweto Day'), when twenty local and foreign press and television journalists were flown by helicopter from Swartkops airbase in Pretoria to Soweto, without previously knowing what their destination would be. At the Protea Police Station in Soweto, the reporters and photographers, together with heavily armed policemen, were transferred into two buses and driven around selected areas of Soweto. It was the first time the media had been officially allowed into a township for the purposes of reporting since the imposition of the media regulations on 12 June 1986. As a special concession, cameras were permitted; however, the reporters were not allowed to alight from the buses, and had to content themselves with images taken from behind the heavily meshed windows or with aerial footage shot from the accompanying helicopters. *The Star* (17.6.86) published a photograph of journalists sitting in a caged enclosure, captioned with 'Journalists peer from the inside of a police bus during a mystery tour of Soweto yesterday'. This public relations exercise on the part of the Bureau is indicative of the heavy-handed attempt to win hearts and minds. No really newsworthy information was provided during the tour. On the contrary, the careful selection of 'outwardly peaceful streets' (*The Star* 17.6.86); the presence of 'heavily armed policemen', accompanied by 'plastic crates bearing the information: "Cart riot irit 37mm" (sic; referring to 37mm teargas shells) (ibid.); the insistence on secrecy; and the melodramatic helicopter flight from Pretoria to Soweto and back again (only to have to drive home to Johannesburg), all added to the perception of stage-management and sensationalised theatrics on the part of the Bureau. This in essence was the story as related by *The Star*: a story of the tour, rather than a story about what was seen on the tour.

In its bulletin of the same evening, the SABC *Nuus* (18.6.86) had a different emphasis on a similar tour of Pretoria townships, also arranged by the Bureau. After a routine report covering the Bureau for Information's news briefing, the report cuts directly to Soweto, with a voice-over by Charl de Villiers providing a spurious sense of
continuity. The normality of life, dominated by petty traders and soccer matches, is the main focus of the report. Although we were told that ‘the security forces maintained a visible presence’, on the television screens they were invisible. No sign of police or military personnel disturbed the every-day routine of the township residents. But perhaps the most startling absence was that the report utilized footage taken during a pre-arranged tour without mentioning the Bureau’s role in facilitating the exposure. This deliberate exclusion of any indication of the circumstances under which the film was made acts to hide the collusion between the SABC and the Bureau for Information by presenting the piece as no more than a routine and self-initiated news report. In semiotic terms, it acts as an incomplete framing - a degenerate interpretant designed to reinforce old habits of complacency, rather than to stir new habits of interpretation. In this way, the SABC worked in the same ideological direction as the Bureau for Information, reinforcing the message of orderliness and stability. An extract from Nuus, Wednesday, 18 June 1986 (read by Riaan Cruywagen), illustrates the point.

**VISUALS**

1. Blue map of SA with superscript NOODTOESTAND

**AUDIO**

Cruywagen: Incidents of unrest (onrus) are still decreasing country wide. The Bureau for Information said at its news conference in Pretoria today that the number of incidents which were reported was the lowest in months. Three black people were killed in the past 24 hours in incidents of violence (oproerigheid).

2. Charl de Villiers, outside Union Building.

    de Villiers: The Bureau said that there is new optimism among law-abiding citizens, which indicates the stability brought about by the State of Emergency. This is underlined by the fact that the so-called necklace murders which previously occurred almost daily are now [inaudible].

3. Mellet, head and shoulders

    Mellet (in English, verbatim transcript): So, for example, the presence of the security forces during yesterday, meant for example, at least three persons were saved from a brutal death through the means of the necklace murders.
de Villiers, VO: In this respect, the Bureau reported that a 26-year-old black man, Raymond Kebuse of Jansenville, was sentenced to death in the circuit court at Graaf Reinet, for the murder of another black man, Mr Alfred Marman, also of Jansenville, on 7 April, this year.

de Villiers, VO: The representative of the Bureau, Mr Dave Stewart, referring to detainees, said the Minister of Justice, Mr Kobie Kotze, gave permission to judges to visit them at any time. This was done so that judges can be aware of the circumstances of detention, and submit reports. Mr Stewart also indicated that the government was pleased with the success of law and order after the declaration of the State of Emergency.

de Villiers, VO: He said that the government priority remained to bring stability back, and that foreign reaction to that was of secondary importance.

de Villiers, VO: In the meanwhile the situation in black residential areas (swart woongebiede) remains calm. TV News visited two black areas near Pretoria, Mamelodi and Attridgeville.

de Villiers, VO: and there were no signs of unrest incidents. Inhabitants went about normal activities,

de Villiers, VO: soccer matches between young people were the order of the day.

de Villiers, VO: Businesses, including stalls on street corners, continued operations. The security forces still maintained a visible presence.
[Note: security forces not shown on TV]

The news-dissemination function of the Bureau, which acted in at least three ways to restrict and control news, was open to wide criticism from both local and international journalists. The Bureau limited information flow as follows:
* it severely truncated the form in which information was presented;
it placed obstructions in the way of efforts to verify stories emanating from other sources;
* its deliberate delays in handling queries from the press, led to the loss of newsworthiness, and the dropping of 'troublesome stories'.

The increased bureaucratisation functioned as a further gatekeeping mechanism, since it increased the number of stories which were not verified. Furthermore, even if a report was confirmed, it was often too late to print it, and it was dropped from the news schedule altogether. The bureaucratization should also be seen as having an important function in the internal coherence of the Bureau. By establishing an elaborate set of procedures, and then applying them stringently, the Bureau legitimised its function to its own personnel, and provided a sense of order, and therefore rationality, to its existence.

A guiding thread through all the Bureau's responses to the media's inquiries was a refusal to accept responsibility for its role as imprimatur and censor. Reports concerning police action, for instance, could not be cleared by the police, who would refer them to the Bureau. The Bureau in turn, inevitably said that it was not in a position to give legal advice or clear reports. This was despite Mr David Steward's acknowledgement that the Commissioner of Police had delegated him as the person responsible for the authorisation of publications in terms of Section 7(1)(c) of the emergency regulations (Mercury, 3.7.86). Steward went on to say:

The Bureau is, however, not prepared to act as a censor with regard to such reports. It sees its task as providing information on the state of emergency, not as deciding which reports may or may not be published (ibid.).

By neither confirming nor denying reports, the Bureau left newspapers little alternative but to drop contentious stories.

**The Bureau and the SABC**

The foregoing would suggest it is logical to conclude that the Bureau's role was primarily to distribute news to the commercial and alternative presses, as well as to foreign correspondents. The SABC was of less concern, since during this period it appeared to be particularly compliant. When the SABC celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on August 1 1986, the State President used the occasion to harangue the South African media. Reading the News the following evening (2.08.86), Michael De Morgan reported:

De Morgan: The State President says the South African news media must
decide where to throw their weight in the changing South Africa. The choice lay between a developed country where peace, freedom and progress could be brought about; and the destruction of civilization, as well as the media (News 2.08.86).

The report then cut to video footage of the State President at the banquet. Against the incongruously sumptuous setting, Botha, immaculately dressed in evening attire, delivered in his now classic style of dogmatic address, a speech constructed in terms of the Total Onslaught discourse. The excerpt used for the bulletin was in Afrikaans, but in complying with strict regulations governing single-language news-bulletins (which applied until the 1990s), the whole clip of the speech was sub-titled in English. What follows is an exact transcription of these sub-titles:

P.W. Botha: In these times we are all the target of an often demonic madness which is growing in intensity. And everyone, whether elected or not, wants to assume leadership for himself, but none of them can offer salvation. The world’s hysterical outcry must not silence the voice of South Africa (die stem van Suid Afrika), or reduce us to spineless and laughable jellyfish. There is no indication that this onslaught of humiliation and hypocrisy will come to an end. We are asked to deliver our head, like John the Baptist, on a platter, to be mocked at by the fanatical despots. In the history of nations there are unpleasant times, where they are forced to choose between unpopular alternatives. We have reached such a point in our history. If we are forced to choose we have only one choice - Hertzog’s choice - South Africa first (ibid.).

By invoking the authority of J.B.M. Hertzog (the great Afrikaner patriot, author, a former Prime Minister of the Union, and the founder of the SABC), Botha is following the familiar ploy of legitimising his contemporary ideological standpoint with that of past Afrikaner heroes and literati, a strategy used to great effect in the Rubicon speech (see Chapter Five). The Total Strategy approach is unmistakable in Botha’s obvious reference to the kind of consensus journalism advocated by Chris Heunis. Botha suggested that the contemporary SABC could do no better than give full expression to the call for ‘South Africa first’:

In everything that you do you must reflect and strengthen the voice and spirit of South Africa. [The SABC] cannot let us submit to other voices from America or Europe. Together with every other section of our society - the government, the security forces, the private sector, the ordinary citizen - you must pull together to carry the load up the hill before us. The SABC and every other member of the South African media must make a decision in these days and show where they stand (SAPA 2.8.86).

The television report employed some of the visual conventions usually associated with glitzy social events, including a general round of ‘snapshot-type’ frames of the
guests present, while the reporter, Marius Kleinhans, identified those who were socially and politically pre-eminent. Thus the camera briefly focussed on Mrs Elize Botha, a perfect icon of the ever supportive national matriarch. This display of over-dressed elite persons was more than an attempt to glamourise an otherwise dull news bulletin, it was a consummate piece of SABC public relations: their very presence was symbolic of the importance assigned to the sentiments expressed by the State President. Among the most ‘distinguished’ of the ‘distinguished guests’ was the Chairman of the SABC Board, Mr Brand Fourie, who, in self referential mode, told those present and those watching the report on the SABC’s news bulletin, that the Corporation ‘looked forward to serving all South Africans for another fifty years’ (News 2.08.86). Speaking in Afrikaans, also with English subtitles, Fourie told his audience:

Taking into account the importance of television and radio, especially in these circumstances, a particular responsibility rests with the SABC. It is therefore necessary [that] it should be its own watchdog. Between the three different tasks assigned to it, - (sic) it must ensure that there is a balance between the three different tasks assigned to it. Namely to educate, to inform and to entertain. And if one of these is neglected or another over-emphasised, the SABC will be hampered in its goal. During the past two years, we have had to make far-reaching changes as a result of changes in our environment, public taste, new techniques, a worsening economy, and of course, competition. However, the SABC has focussed on reality, and we will strive to remain a valued member of the information media. But above all, we will strive to deliver a constructive service to our country, our government, and to society (News 2.08.86).

Here then, was the SABC’s vision of itself unambiguously set out: it was to ‘be its own watchdog’, to impose self-restraint and self-censorship in terms of what it considered to be ‘a constructive service to our country’. This latter sentiment, it is worth noting, was equated in the same sentence with ‘our government’.

Assessing the Value of the Media Restrictions on International Perceptions

The emergency restrictions and the efforts of the Bureau for Information were only partly successful in engineering a foreign news black-out on South African news. Soweto Day (16 June 1986) was widely covered in Britain. SAAN’s London Bureau reported that from:

... early morning to evening nearly all British Press, radio and television main news reports were on South Africa, and in Europe coverage was extensive. [...] The spectacular level of coverage followed a weekend which had also seen huge space given to South Africa and the indications are that the remarkably high level of British media interest will continue,
in spite of censorship (Mercury 18.6.86).

A few days later, the London correspondent of the Cape Times, John Battersby, wrote:

Awareness of the issues underlying the crisis in South Africa broke through a new threshold in Britain this week. For the past 10 days the domestic situation has dominated every radio and television news bulletin and millions of words have been written in Fleet Street’s newspapers (Cape Times 20.6.86).

Battersby argued that despite the ironic circumstances in which the price of gold and platinum had steadily risen as a result of the declaration of the State of Emergency, South Africa’s position vis-a-vis Britain was very tenuous, in particular as a result of the stringent media restrictions. Most news reports were sourced to London-based by-lines in order to protect their South African correspondents:

The media blackout has not worked. The news has taken a little longer to come out but it has come out. News bulletins’ time has been doubled by painstaking explanations of the censorship to accompany each report. [...] Expelled CBS journalist Wim de Vos has given the most detailed and chilling eye-witness account of ITN cameraman George D’Ath’s murder - allegedly by vigilantes under orders. The media blackout has been seen here as an act of desperation by the government (ibid.).

The following month, British viewers saw a clandestinely shot television programme on Thames Television’s TV Eye. Included in this were interviews with ‘comrades’, and two UDF leaders in hiding: Trevor Manuel of the national executive, and Christmas Tinto, vice-president of the Western Cape branch. Along with other programmes and a continuous stream of truncated but nevertheless powerful reports, news of political resistance in South Africa did reach foreign audiences, despite the government’s best efforts at restricting information gathering.

A study undertaken by New York University’s News Study Group early in 1986, found that while the camera ban imposed in November 1985 had initially deterred US news networks from coverage of political violence in South Africa, it had also led to a deeper consideration of the country’s problems on television news (NYU News Study Group 1986). Immediately after the ban, the networks concentrated on the order itself: television was devoting less time to the riots and deaths than to its difficulties trying to cover them. [...] In the first three days following the ban, CBS evening news devoted 10 minutes and 30 seconds to South Africa, almost all of it on the ban (ibid.).

Initially, there was evidence that the South African government’s international news blackout strategy might have succeeded. By the end of November, however, the
networks had embarked on a different tactic, going beyond the early style of merely depicting violence by presenting ‘previously untouched analyses of attitudes and causes’ (ibid.):

By the beginning of this year (1986), the networks were digging into the roots of South Africa’s unrest. As ABC’s (anchorman) Peter Jennings said to us, coverage had begun to shift from daily ‘bang bang’ visuals of violence to deeper, more analytical journalism (ibid.).

Air-time figures for the months of October, November and December appear to support the contention that the camera ban provided the South African government only a brief respite from the full glare of international scrutiny. While there was a substantial drop in coverage during November compared to October 1985, December’s coverage was more than double that of November, and furthermore, was 35% above that of October (ibid.).

The study contended that the blackout on television coverage provided ‘incontrovertible evidence’ that such coverage could not influence the course of political violence. During November 1985, when cameras were banned, the township death-toll rose to 101, an all-time high, and December recorded a small drop to 92 deaths. Commented the study report: ‘So much for the official claim that the cameras cause the violence’ (ibid.). In conclusion, the study observed that while the South African government may have won some early victories through the camera ban, it ‘may have lost the news war’ by challenging television’s freedom.
Challenges to the Media Restrictions

The media restrictions were not meekly accepted by the press or by the foreign television correspondents. This was left at first to the alternative press and the trade union movement, followed by the more orthodox sectors of the press establishment. Initially, each law that was promulgated was examined, and the hasty way in which the restrictions had been cobbled together meant that for the astute lawyer and committed journalist, there were loopholes to be exploited. Reviewing the effects of the emergency regulations on the Weekly Mail late in 1988, editor Anton Harber looked back and noted that earlier in the State of Emergency, his newspaper had taken a 'legalistic strategy':

The law was vague and uncertain: and the courts often favoured individual rights over the state. [...] One could explore the grey areas of the law in the belief that they would be reluctant to prosecute one, and could get away with an enormous amount. The fact was that the mainstream press had fallen into the habit of taking a conservative and cautious approach to the law. Weekly Mail and other papers were able to carve out a whole niche for themselves simply by re-interpreting the law in an aggressive and pro-active way. Then we were journalists acting as lawyers. We studied statutes; we spent a great deal of time with lawyers. Two years of Emergency rule, however, have changed this situation for the worse (Harber 1988).

However, the 'commercial' or 'mainstream' press were not the first to challenge the new laws. The Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) challenged the definitions of the 'subversive statement' (Metal and Allied Workers Union and Another vs The State President of the Republic of South Africa and Others: Johannesburg Supreme Court 1986 (4) SA 358 DCLP). Four issues arose in this case, including a challenge to the validity of the definition of a 'subversive statement'. Counsel for the union argued that the statutes (i.e. the Public Safety Act) did not empower the State President to make regulations which are so uncertain that people will not know how to comply with them (ibid). Furthermore, it was asserted that the State President had gone beyond the limits of the Public Safety Act, making the definition of the 'subversive statement' null and void (ibid). In his summary of the MAWU case, Mr Justice Didcott argued that the vagueness of the Government's emergency regulations effectively curtailed 'just about any political description of, or political analysis on South Africa' (quoted in Daily News 18.7.86). The court ruled that parts of five of the six definitions of a 'subversive statement' in Proclamation 109 (12.6.86) were void on the grounds of vagueness. Only one definition, dealing with 'inciting the public to take part in unlawful strikes, support
boycotts, and acts of civil disobedience or undermine compulsory military service' (*ibid*), was valid in its entirety. While the ruling did not change the substance of the emergency regulations, it allowed a greater leeway in the interpretation of what was, and was not, permissible. The Bureau’s response to the judgment was a warning to the media to study the judgment ‘carefully’ before reporting (*Mercury* 17.7.86).

Following this case, an amendment to Proclamation 109 (Regulation 12), empowered ‘any South African Police Commissioner’ to issue regulations and orders. Against the sombre background of a stylised grey-blue outline of South Africa, newsreader Elwyn Morris read the following report in Afrikaans:

New regulations giving the security forces greater power were announced in the Government Gazette today, following two court cases in which the power of officers to issue orders were overturned. In Regulation Seven, the term ‘Commissioner in the South African Police’ now includes Adjutant-Commissioner. Brigadier E.J.Oosthuizen gave notice that the orders he gave on the 26 July in terms of the State of Emergency, were upheld. This follows two court cases this week which decided that orders given by Assistant Commissioners were unlawful. In Johannesburg, the Chief Magistrate placed limitations on the funeral of Montgomery Mlapa Moloi of Zone Three Diepkloof. The funeral takes place tomorrow from the Presbyterian Church in Diepkloof. In terms of these restrictions, the service may only take place indoors, and no placards or banners may be displayed (*Nuus* 1.08.86).

Typical of reporting during this period, the item carried no illustration. The whole screen was occupied with the simple outline map, and even the newsreader is not seen: her voice is projected as a voice-over. This is truly, in Barthes’ terms, ‘an utterance without an utter’ (Barthes 1972); if not the voice of God, then at least the voice of indubitable authority. The restrictions placed on the funeral of a Sowetan activist were appended to the same report, also without illustrative material, served to reduce the phatic informational content even further. The whole item was dealt with in highly formal, legalistic terms, and even the mention of the victim’s name was given in impersonal bureaucratic format: Montgomery Mlapa Moloi of Zone Three Diepkloof.

On 20 August 1986, the major English language newspaper groups (Natal News Pty Ltd, Natal Witness Ltd, South African Associated Newspapers Ltd (SAAN), and the Argus Printing and Publishing Company Ltd) joined forces to challenge the emergency Regulations 7(1)(d) and 8 to 12 of Proclamation 109 (12.6.86), together with the two orders issued by the SAP on June 16 and 21, 1986, as they affected the dissemination of news (Natal Newspapers (Pty) Ltd and Others vs The State President and Others: 113
Natal Supreme Court, 1986 (4) SA 1109). In this case the argument was similar to that of the MAWU precedent, but argued further that the regulations and orders granted discretionary powers to the State President's delegates which were contrary to the provisions of the Act (ibid). In the words of the Counsel for Natal Newspapers, 'the emergency regulations affecting the press are so grossly uncertain, so vague, so extravagantly unreasonable, so meaningless and so totally oppressive, that they go far beyond what Parliament could ever have contemplated, and should therefore be declared void, invalid and ultra vires' (ibid). In defence, the state counsel argued that in an emergency situation, press censorship was acceptable, and that prejudice to newspaper proprietors should not be set higher than prejudice to the individual in an emergency (ibid). This argument is explicitly based on notions of 'total war', in which extraordinary measures taken against the civilian population were seen as a necessary expedient to 'total victory'. At the same time, the psychological aspect of such warfare was underlined in the state's argument over the clause concerning the publication of photographs, in which it was argued that one of the aims of the emergency was to 'prevent the dismay and despondency which the publication of such a photograph could cause (ibid). This morale-boosting exercise must necessarily have been aimed at the white electorate, as black people in the townships in which political violence was a regular occurrence were all too aware of the seriousness of the situation from first-hand experience.

The judgment in this case declared that the emergency powers outlined in Regulations 11 and 12, which allowed the Minister of Law and Order to seize and close any newspaper he felt had published a 'subversive statement' (ibid) were invalid. During the case, evidence was led that on 16 June 1986, the SAP Commissioners, in terms of Regulation 7(1)(c) and (d), had issued orders by telex prohibiting the media from reporting on the conduct of security forces, and prevented journalists from entering black townships or areas where unrest was occurring. Counsel for the state conceded that because these instructions were conveyed by telex, they were invalid.

Thus by the beginning of September, legislation affecting the press had been pruned. The phrase 'subversive statement' had lost some of its sting, and most important, the threat of seizure or closure without prior warning no longer hung above the heads of dissident newspapers. However, in anticipation of the *Natal Newspapers*
judgement-going against the state, new orders were issued before the judgement had even been made, which effectively prevented the reporting on or at the ‘scene of unrest; security action or restricted gatherings’ without the permission of the Commissioner of Police or a commissioned officer in a ‘force’ (*Government Gazette* 10929: 3.9.86). General Coetzee also barred anyone from ‘announcing, disseminating, distributing, taking or sending any comments on or news in connection with any Security Action’ (*ibid*). In terms of these restrictions, no newshpaper was allowed to be near or within sight of any unrest, restricted gathering or security force action.

December 1986: Attempts at division and co-option

During late November and early December 1986, discussions took place between the National Press Union (NPU) (an organization representing media owners and management, and not specifically journalists), the co-chairmen of the Media Council, and the Minister of Constitutional Development, Chris Heunis. (It was Heunis who two years earlier had advocated the notion of ‘consensus journalism’). P.W.Botha later disclosed that he had offered members of the NPU exemption from the imminent application of more stringent Emergency regulations on what / how events may be reported in return for a tightening up of their code of conduct (*Africa Report*, March-April 1987). This would have meant agreeing to the imposition of self-censorship through the mechanism of the Media Council which would control the ‘commercial press’, particularly the mainstream English language newspapers. Stoffel Botha, Minister of Home Affairs, recalled the incident this way:

> When it became clear that sections of the press were being used in the process of promoting a revolutionary climate, press leaders were invited by the State President to host discussions. At issue was not criticism of the government, but subversive and unrest-provoking presentations in the media aimed at the violent overthrow of the entire South African political and socio-economic system. The request was that the press should effectively implement its Code of Conduct. This was eventually declined (Botha in *Argus* 1987:138).

Stoffel Botha did not explore the government’s purpose in approaching the press in this way. It is the contention of this thesis that the objective of the meetings was a two-pronged attempt to force the media into a more subservient role (see also Armstrong 1987:205; Louw and Tomaselli 1991). The strategy employed by the government here is an example *par excellence* of the dialectic between consent and compulsion (with compulsion being the more powerful of the two): either the press
agreed to go along with the notion of enforced ‘consensus journalism’, or it would be subject to even more censorious legal provisions. The hidden agenda was to isolate those newspapers which were not members of the Media Council, the so-called ‘alternative press’ as well as the widely distributed *Weekly Mail, New Nation* and the right-wing *Die Afrikaner* (See Tomaselli and Louw, 1987; Louw and Tomaselli 1991).

To its great credit, the NPU refused to be part of the collusion (*Race Relations Survey* 1987:813). Since the newspaper industry, through the channel of the NPU, had withheld its consent, control was forcibly imposed. A second comprehensive set of ‘emergency’ media restrictions was passed, reinstating many of the June restrictions whittled away by successful court challenges (*Proclamation 224, Government Gazette*, 10541: 11.12.85). The prohibitions included in the previous regulations on ‘subversive statements’ were substantially repeated, and now went further to include a prohibition on the publication of information or opinion related to security action and the security forces, which included the coverage of allegation in court of assault by members of the security forces until final judgment by the court was announced (Regulation 4(a)(iii)). The only reports exempted from this blackout were those disclosed or cleared by a Minister, his Deputy, or an appointed government spokesperson (Regulation 3). A pernicious aspect of the new legislation was that the media were forced to conceal the fact and extent of their censorship: the blank spaces and obliterations which were fashionable after the June curbs were now prohibited (Regulation 3(3)).

A major difference between the December and the June regulations centered on the process of seizure, which was reintroduced after its dismissal in the *Natal Newspapers* case. In terms of the later legislation, the Minister of Law and Order was able to authorize the seizure of newspapers without prior notice (Regulation 6). The new notices set out administrative guidelines for the issuing of such orders, which were required to state the Minister’s objections, together with ‘a test of whether a publication contravenes the regulations’ (Regulation 7). This latter safeguard, which did diminish the Minister’s discretion, was necessary to overcome the court’s earlier objections.

Both the local and the international media reacted strongly against these new restrictions\(^1\). In response, the Bureau for Information published a ‘rebuttal’ to these criticisms in the form of an advertisement placed in all major newspapers on 21 December 1986, which stated that the ‘government would like to set the record straight
with regard to [...] the regulations concerning the media' (see, eg, *Sunday Times and Sunday Tribune* 21.12.86). The Bureau continued:

Most of the media have continued to generate perceptions which have, on balance, been more favourable to the radical cause than to the cause of the moderates, and while *bona fide* critical attitudes towards the government of the day are respected the Government, there are individuals within the established media and organs of the alternative media who strongly believe that the media should be used to promote the objectives of the radical revolution (*ibid*).

It was against these elements that the media regulations were directed. The advertisement went on the argue that South Africans were not engaged in a struggle between whites and blacks, or between the Government and the opposition, but between moderates and radicals [...] between those who advocate negotiation and evolutionary change and those who advocate violence and revolutionary change (*Sunday Times* 21.12.86).

In an echo of the State President’s address to the SABC centenary dinner, the Bureau warns: ‘The media would do well to decide which side they are on’ (*ibid*). The silent premise in this position is that the camp which is characterised by ‘negotiation’ and ‘evolutionary change’ is an extremely narrow one. The Government’s resistance at that time to the limited power-sharing initiative of the Natal Indaba indicated that it viewed ‘negotiation’ as being constrained within the boundaries of white political control. In terms of the government’s logic, anyone who fell outside this ambit was designated into the camp of violent revolutionaries. The only way in which crude division into binary oppositions could be sustained was by involving the spectre of the Total Onslaught, the same onslaught to which President P W Botha referred in his television address on *TV News* 12 December, 1986, when he said that South Africa was confronted by a ‘revolutionary onslaught’.

**The role of the Bureau for Information as Definer and Arbitrator of News**

The December 1986 regulations provided the mechanism through which the Bureau overtly took on the role of censor. The Inter-Departmental Press Liaison Centre was created to proscribe all stories which might have infringed the above restrictions. The IPLC was manned on a 24 hour basis by representatives of government departments on a rotational basis. They described themselves as ‘merely a channel established to facilitate the referral of reports / articles which, in the opinion of the media, fell within the ambit of regulation 3(1) to the relevant government department(s)’ (*The Star*,
18.12.86). (An interview with Dave Steward, head of the Bureau, concerning the mechanisms of the IPLC, is considered below). Predictably, the majority of articles submitted to the IPLC were not cleared for publication. Of the 201 ‘inquiries’ received between the 11th and 22nd of December, 19 were authorised. The rest were either refused or said to be ‘outside the ambit of the IPLC and should be referred to other Government Departments’ (The Star, 29.12.86). Thus, while the Bureau functioned as a censor, there was no guarantee that by submitting contentious stories, newspapers would be ‘safe’. Ultimately, the decision was still the editor’s, and this perpetuated the element of self-censorship.

The Bureau’s role in the control and censorship of ‘unrest’ news damaged its image to such an extent that the IPLC was closed down after a few months, and the responsibility for, clearing contentious stories was handed back to the Police Division of Public Relations in late 1987.

Accounting to the Public: Official Explanations of the Media Restrictions

A few days after the December 1986 regulations were promulgated, Dave Steward, head of the Bureau for Information, together with Kobus Neethling, head of Research at the Bureau, and Roil Meyer, Deputy Minister for Information under Stoffel Botha, appeared on the discussion slot of Network (26.6.86), chaired by John Bishop. (A transcript of this programme is reproduced at the end of this chapter). Steward rationalized the need for further restrictions by saying that the ‘forces of moderation’ would win against the ‘struggle of propaganda and perceptions’. But, he added, these perceptions ‘are being manipulated consciously and unconsciously by elements in the media’. The propaganda war had to be fought according to the dogmas of national security:

We tried right from the start of the State of Emergency to elicit the co-operation of the national and international media. But unfortunately we weren’t successful and I think that the fact that we weren’t successful is illustrated by the continuing problems we experience with the media - both nationally and internationally. We have examples of climate creation in the media on a daily basis. Some newspapers for example, right up to this date, publish articles praising listed communists as heroes of the nation. They use the media as a means of mobilising the population for the purposes of the radical revolution. We believe that in a situation of this kind, where the state and the great majority of people are threatened,

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2See the section on the ‘Rubicon’ speech(es).
the state has a right, and in fact a duty to make sure that the opposition - the radicals - cannot use the media to bring about a situation where the freedom of the media itself would be ultimately destroyed.

Though Steward would not have used the phrase 'Total Onslaught', since it had suffered much satirical lampooning in the popular media, its ghost haunts his entire approach: 'We are involved in a struggle', he said. Steward articulated the position that not only the state, but the whole democratic process, is under threat: a situation where the freedom of the media itself would be ultimately destroyed'. Faced with this threat, 'The State has the right, and in fact a duty to make sure that the opposition [...] cannot use the media [...]' Later he remarked that 'It would be very irresponsible of our government to allow this kind of activity to continue under the present circumstances'. Steward juxtaposed 'the forces of moderation', a concept which is quite unexceptionable and broad-based, with the 'enemy' who used the media as a means of mobilising the population for 'the purposes of the radical revolution'. The 'opposition', in this case, were both the 'international media', as well as the 'national media', in particular the 'alternative press'. Steward suggested that his intended audience, the 'moderate' people, would see the matter in terms sympathetic to his own: 'there is no doubt in my mind and I think in the minds of any person who reads these newspapers that these newspapers are not there as part of the information process - they are part of the struggle and they have chosen sides'. The primary method chosen by the enemy media is one of 'climate creation', a very difficult concept to forbid. In practical terms, this could mean anything which would run contrary to the national security needs, including publishing articles praising 'listed communists as heroes of the nation'. It was for this reason that the regulations against 'subversive statements' was introduced.

Turning to the mechanism of the Interdepartmental Press Liaison Centre, Steward outlined the substance of 'stories' that were to be subject to clearance (Network 26.6.86):

**Steward:** Well the main element of these new regulations is Article Three which makes provision for the media to have stories cleared with certain authorities on a range of matters affecting the State of Emergency. Particularly matters relating to the actions and movements of the Security Forces, restricted gatherings, politically inspired boycotts, illegal alternative structures established by radicals and revolutionary movements.

**Bishop:** Could I just interrupt - what would those be?

**Steward:** I think this would be the sort of kangaroo courts that we have
seen in some of the townships, street committees, black (Courts?) and
alternative structures of administration. Also the harmful utterances by
persons against steps in terms of the way in which the security laws are
enforced, and the circumstances of arrest and detentions of persons in
terms of Emergency regulations, or the releasing of such persons. So
these are all items as you notice which are directly related to the State of
Emergency.

(Bishop interjects - indistinct)

Steward: The intention of these regulations is not to limit debate outside
of the ambit of the State of Emergency. Debate on the constitutional
future of the country is still quite open, but on these areas of national
security there are limitations. But the new regulations make provision for
exemptions from the prohibition provided information can be obtained
from a Cabinet Minister - eh - eh - (hesitates) provided exemption can be
obtained from a Cabinet Minister, a Deputy Minister or a spokesman.
Now what we are doing to facilitate the process for the media is to
establish a centre where spokesmen of the relevant department will be
available on a 24 hour basis. Newspapers or a television company wishing
to have clearance for their reports could then approach the centre for the
necessary clearance on their reports, on this list of matters. This is a new
undertaking for us and we hope that it will get off the ground as soon as
possible and provide the service.

Bishop: Who will provide the clearance? Will the people be skilled in
media in your office?

Steward: These will be people appointed by the government departments
concerned who have experience in liaison with the media. But I would
like to stress also that the media will still be free to approach government
Departments and Ministers directly for clearance should they prefer to do
so. This is simply a facility that is being created to enable newspapers to
gain hold of government spokesmen on a 24 hour basis.

Several points arising from this excerpt are worth comment. Once again, Steward
did not allude directly to the notion of Total Strategy, but objectified the security
interests of the state under the rubric of ‘matters affecting the State of Emergency’. By
conceptualising the situation in this way, he obscured the coercive function of the
Liaison Centre, redefining it in administrative terms: there are Emergency regulations,
and ‘certain authorities on a range of matters’ will be able to help journalists and editors
with decisions on these regulations. Instead of the inconvenience of finding a ‘Cabinet
Minister, Deputy Minister or a spokesman’, the Bureau has helpfully decided to
‘facilitate the process for the media’ by establishing ‘a centre where spokesmen for the
relevant Department will be available on a 24 hour basis’. Steward adopted a humble
pose, calculated to win empathy from his viewers, with his modest disclaimer: ‘This is a new undertaking for us and we hope that it will get off the ground as soon as possible’. The ‘helpful’ function of the Centre is repeated in his summation:

But I would like to stress also that the media will still be free to approach government Departments and Ministers directly for clearance should they prefer to do so. This is simply a facility that is being created to enable newspapers to get hold of government spokesmen on a 24 hour basis (Network 26.6.86).

(It is worth noting in passing Steward’s unabashed use of the masculine gender, although there were several women working as liaison staff.)

The necessity for obscuring the coercive relationship embedded in the Media Liaison Centre arose because the Bureau (and, metonymically, the government as a whole) were caught in the contradiction of needing (in their own terms) to be in total control of the whole of the civil sphere (including the media), while at the same time, appearing to be democratic, and therefore needing to cultivate at least an image of consensual strategy. The ‘choice’ of whether to pursue a consensual or coercive strategy was not an entirely voluntary one: it was limited by a whole matrix of external forces.

The administrative aspect of the regulations stressed by Steward in the interview was also foregrounded in Steward’s contention that they are concerned only with matters which ‘are directly related to the State of Emergency’. At the same time, the logic of Total Strategy insisted that he define as ‘political’ those actions which in a liberal-democracy would be defined as civil rights: ‘gatherings’, ‘boycotts’, ‘alternative structures of administration’, ‘street committees’ are in this paradigm redefined as ‘restricted gatherings, politically inspired boycotts, illegal alternative structures established by radicals and revolutionary elements’. Steward discursively reduces evaluation and critique of the actions of the police to harmful utterances by persons against steps in terms of the way in which the security laws are enforced and the circumstances of arrest and detentions of person in terms of Emergency regulations (Network 26.6.86).

This diminution of criticism to ‘harmful utterances’ was particularly pernicious for the thousands of persons who were detained, and the many who were tortured in detention, some to the point of death (see Race Relations Survey 1985-1990; Webster 1987 and 1989; Human Rights Commission 1988).

Finally, the passage in the programme in which Kobus Neethling expounds his ‘research findings’ in terms of statistical percentages, reinforces the technical aspect of
the Bureau’s work. As will be recalled from the beginning of this chapter, this approach, which divides newspaper articles into ‘positive’, ‘negative’ and ‘neutral’ owes its epistemology to the same source as the study undertaken by ‘intelligence sources’ in 1980, which the then Minister of Police, Louis Le Grange, quoted as grounds for imposing tighter media control. The State’s obsession with reducing political violence to numerically based data, will be further discussed in the chapter on violence.
Public Health Warnings: The Press Retaliates

The most obvious reaction of the press to the curbs were the disclaimers which were printed on the first page of every paper, to the effect that a substantial number of news reports - in particular those related to unrest, security forces actions and some aspects of political comment - were omitted in terms of the emergency regulations. Other reports are being edited to remove facts that may be interpreted as being subversive or contravening the new restrictions. (Daily News, 20.6.86, and subsequently). The Cape Times included a graphic of the three monkeys (‘See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil’) on their disclaimer, while The Star and other newspapers printed their warnings against a screened background for greater visibility. After the legal reviews of the emergency legislation, The Star’s daily warning noted: ‘Although ... the Emergency Regulations have been alleviated by the courts, newspapers are still not able to report freely on a number of issues’ (The Star, various dates).

As the emergency continued, and a sense of deja vu crept in, the monkeys were dropped, and many of the disclaimers - especially in the Sunday papers - were relegated to smaller, less conspicuous positions. Just as old news becomes stale news (Galtung and Ruge 1981), so too, news about news became less newsworthy, and was quickly devalued. All this worked well for consent building within the dominant discourse: both the reading public and journalists became partly anaesthetized to reporting / reading under restricted conditions, and in the process, restriction and repression became, to some degree at least, naturalised. In the following few paragraphs, I have attempted to draw out some of the exceptional efforts made by the press to draw attention to the restrictions under which they worked, and to offer alternative readings to those provided by the official sources.

For the want of alternative sources, all newspapers were forced to use the Bureau for Information’s daily ‘unrest reports’. The way in which they did so varied, however. While some papers used the reports integrated into other stories, the most common approach was to studiously differentiate the ‘Bureau’ information from the newspaper’s own reporting. This was done either by printing the report directly and unmediated, or by using large pieces of the Bureau’s South African Press Association (SAPA) telex in a story without rewriting it. This does not necessarily legitimate the Bureau’s story: in fact by juxtaposing the ‘official’ version with non-official versions, the opposite effect may be achieved. A pertinent example was The Star’s report of the Soweto street
fighting in August. After a brief introductory paragraph giving the salient (unsourced) facts, the report reads:

Today residents and the Bureau for Information had differing versions on how the violence started. Residents blamed council police for opening fire after street barricades had been put up 'to stop them evicting people from their homes' (The Star, 27.8.86).

The report continued with 'The latest Bureau report on the violence is ...' after which the telexed report was quoted from directly. This was followed by an alternative account of the occurrences given by the Soweto residents. However, it should be stressed that access to such 'on-the-spot' sources was difficult, and the problems of verification significant. Few papers attempted to provide 'alternative' reports.

In their reports, newspapers frequently drew attention to the inadequacy of the Bureau reports: 'A 16 year old black youth died after being set alight in Soweto by unknown assailants on Monday, the Bureau for Information said yesterday. The Bureau was unable to give further details on the killing' (Mercury 29.10.86). Newspapers also qualified reports based on Bureau telexes by noting that 'The bureau is the only source of information on unrest and reports on actions involving the security forces' (The Star, 22.7.86). Following the funerals of the victims of the Soweto shootings, The Star noted in a front page editorial:

All the news The Star was aware of and able to gather about the events in Soweto was published yesterday. However it was impossible to monitor the crisis fully because of the legal curbs on newspapers, physical restrictions on reporters and witnesses' fear of the consequences of giving their names (The Star, 5.9.86).

In the report of the events situated next to the editorial, a cautionary note was included: 'Details (of the funerals) cannot be reported because of emergency restrictions' (Ibid).

Occasionally some newspapers were able to use linguistic devices to indicate occurrences without being in breach of the strict letter of the law:

About 40 people were trapped in the lobby of Khotso House in Johannesburg yesterday, following events that may not be published in terms of revised emergency regulations (The Star, 5.9.86).

The Cape Times in particular became a past master of lateral reporting. Take for example, excerpts from a report on the 'dispersals of a crowd of 150 chanting supporters outside a high treason trial' in Cape Town:

One man was bitten on the arm by a leashed Alsatian ... The Alsatians were handled by persons who may not be identified in terms of the emergency regulations (Cape Times, 24.10.86).
Later the same report notes that ‘In terms of the emergency regulations several vehicles, which were parked at strategic street positions, more than two dozen men and the dog handlers may not be identified’ (*Ibid*). Predictably, the Bureau was not impressed. In response to a telex from the *Cape Times*, a Bureau spokesman, Leon Mellet, challenged: ‘What are you trying to say. If you are trying to make out that the Alsatians on leashes were police dogs then refer the report to your legal advisors’ (*Ibid*). Once again, this serves as an example of the Bureau’s refusal to commit itself on the veracity of a reported incident.

**Going for the Gap: Making the most of contradictions**

At various times, newspapers indicated the degree to which they were forced to delete their copy. The *Weekly Mail* (20.6.86 and 8.8.86) published uncensored copy, and then after it had been read by a legal advisor, a black marker pen was used to delete all possibly offending material. After the August judgement, the unexpurgated text was reprinted (*Weekly Mail*, 22.8.86). This device produced a startling visual effect, as well as an arresting linguistic effect of incomplete sentences and non-sequiturs. It succeeded in drawing attention to the extent to which ordinary news stories were being censored, more successfully than a cautionary note followed by a neatly rewritten and apparently coherent report. *The Star* achieved a similar effect after the September 1986 media restrictions, when it left a 12 cm column black, with a screened caption ‘censored’ placed across it. The *Weekly Mail* left screened spaces in place of photographs, with the words ‘RESTRICTED - This photograph has been restricted in terms of Section 9(1) of the Emergency Regulations which prohibits photographs depicting damage to property’ (*Weekly Mail*, 29.8.86).

At the outset of the emergency, the *Sowetan* provided a two word editorial under the regular space of ‘Comment’: ‘No Comment’. For three successive days following the 16 June 1986 restrictions, the *Sowetan* left its leader box blank, except for the words:

All that we and other media have to contribute at this time when the country is facing its worst ever crisis has been effectively banned. We could have offered our readers a comment on the trivial, but that would have been an insult to them, and to us (*Sowetan* 17-19 June 1986).

However, editorials could not be suspended indefinitely, and this ploy lasted only three days. Percy Qoboza, editor of *City Press*, also stopped his regular column ‘Percy’s Itch’, but decided to climb off his ‘silent bandwagon’ in late August, because
the only ones who'll enjoy my silence will be the Government ... There is so much happening around here I'm starting to choke. If I don't let off steam, I'll choke to death (City Press, 21.8.86).

Not all English language newspapers uniformly and consistently made the effort to maintain awareness among their readers that information had been severely curtailed. Many journalists became accustomed to working under conditions of limited access to news. The Star (19.12.86) noted in an editorial that

One of the most insidious features of censorship is people’s tendency to become too easily habituated to it. Let alone the information-starved man in the street; even the media can start to believe that what may not be reported is no longer happening.

And indeed, there were accusations that some editors found the Emergency regulations a useful excuse not to cover what they had previously neglected anyway (Harber 1988). They, and no doubt numerous readers too, were rather relieved at not having to deal with the daily incidents of death, stone-throwing, detentions, and destruction in all its graphic reality. Fred Kockott, a Durban-based journalist who reported on political violence from the beginning of the State of Emergency, wrote in 1990 that:

For too long readers outside the townships - mostly comfortable in their modest or plush homes - have been lulled into a false sense of security and become bored with the faceless, body-count journalism. In all that time law and order has broken down, through government proclamations and emergency regulations, and through murderous bloodletting in the streets. And now we reap the consequences. More guns pass hands today than licences are granted to trade (sic). People believe we teeter on the brink of anarchy (Kockott 1990:12).

The repeated editorials eulogising 'public intelligence (and) the hunger for truth' (The Star, 27.8.86) and the dire warnings that disruptions to the 'free flow of news [...] could lead to rumours and alarm' (Daily News, 26.9.86), seem more expressions of faith, than of a likely outcome (Louw, Interviews, 1986/87). As the emergency dragged on, there was a tendency on the part of both newspaper producers and readers to normalise the situation.

Recalling a parallel state of affairs in the former Rhodesia, Julie Fredrickse notes that the Rhodesian journalists and editors who left blank spaces in protest against the imposition of strict government censorship, gradually gave way to the invidious phenomenon of self-censorship. Fredrickse suggests that as the 'news' became less informative, and the 'heavy-handed propaganda' more pervasive, news was no longer trusted, especially amongst blacks:

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In retrospect, it seems clear that white morale flagged precisely because of the media clampdown ... Among the black majority, this heavy-handedness had the effect of totally discrediting conventional mass media, and prompting the development of alternative forms of communication (Fredrickse, Sowetan, 20.6.86).

These comments hold true for the South African situation as well. Commenting on the Bureau's refusal to confirm or deny facts concerning events at black schools, Percy Qoboza noted that black people 'encounter these events almost daily' (City Press 26.7.86):

So if our people know what is happening what is the point of clamping down on that information? It is to enable the bulk of the white community to float through life with an Alice-in-Wonderland self-delusion that everything is under control - leaving them sitting ducks for the misinformation handed out daily by the SABC. ... Does it surprise anybody that so many white people, especially employers, are privately welcoming the state of emergency? They do this because there is no information reaching them. This circle of ignorance poses the greatest problems for the country's future.

Conclusion

A government in power can remain in power in two ways: through the consent of those governed, or through force and coercion. This basic proposition holds as true for state's relationship with the media, as for any other facet of political life. The nationwide resistance to Nationalist Party rule which began in September 1984, caused both ways to stand out in stark relief. In terms of coercion, a plethora of emergency legislation was added to the already existing security laws. This emergency legislation had four main functions:

* to hinder the activities of, and finally proscribe certain organizations deemed to be working against the interests of the state;
* to restrict or prohibit gatherings, meetings, protests and funerals;
* to extend the security forces' powers of arrest and detention; and
* to control the media and its portrayal of resistance against the state.

Only a small portion of the emergency legislation centered on the media. Further, only a small area of South African life was affected by media restrictions. This was pointed out most forcefully by the then Minister of Home Affairs and Communications, Dr Stoffel Botha (1987:146), when in October 1987 he told The Star's centennial conference:

There are certain events which may not be recorded because we judge it to be conducive to encouraging further uprisings and violence. However,
outside of specific cases where facts may not be published, the newspapers are given ample opportunity and scope to report on facts, and I therefore deny, with all respect, that there is a general suppression of facts.

However, that part of the news which was proscribed was precisely that which most vividly represented popular resistance to the government. Throughout the State of Emergency, the government worked in two complementary directions: to control the dissemination of news, and to define an alternative point of view. The Bureau for Information was pivotal in this double articulation, since it acted both to curtail news, as well as to produce its own version of events.

Of the five years during which the emergency regulations were in force, only the first eighteen months are covered in any depth in this thesis. Nevertheless, the restrictions which followed are alluded to for the sake of completeness. During these first few years, the emphasis in the objectives of the State of Emergency shifted, particularly with regard to the media.

In the First (partial) State of Emergency (July 1985-February 1986), the primary purpose of the media restrictions was to curtail reporting on the activities of the Security Forces, thereby providing them with a degree of immunity. A second objective was to block the negative images which the government felt would encourage further 'unrest' and abet foreign campaigns for sanctions. During this period, the strategy was to interpret the regulations in a fairly arbitrary fashion, and to attack individual journalists, particularly those stringing for foreign television stations.

During the second (national) State of Emergency declared in June 1986 and renewed annually until February 1990, the emphasis shifted to obstructing internal communication of resistance organizations. While individual journalists were still persecuted, the mainstream commercial press, particularly the English-language sector, was the focus of government attention. Towards the end of 1986 and for the next two years, the 'alternative' press became the chief victims of the government's zeal.

This mainly narrative account of the role of the Bureau of Information should not detract from an analysis of the underlying processes at work. The Bureau's conception of its role in 'perfecting the free flow of information' was derided by critics, and served to underscore the frightening situation where a state is able to enact media control strategies which have a negative effect on its own people and the outside world sees the events which occur in the country. A major portion of the strategy of the South African
government has been targeted at redefining the superstructure, the ‘image’ of South Africa, while continuing with policies that are destructive of its economic and social fabric. In the short term, individual media workers and publications can ‘go for the gap’ - i.e., exploit the contradictions which exist in the framing of media legislation, and the routines of media practice. For the most part, however, the majority of white South Africans, both media practitioners and readers, risk becoming inexorably sucked into an unwilling collusion of state controlled ignorance.

To return to Gramsci (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter), of the two mechanisms of social control available to the state - force and consent, the latter is always the preferred choice. Gramsci saw hegemonic rule as the normal form of political control in advanced industrialised societies, and domination only as the heavy artillery to be called in as back-up:

The apparatus of the state coercive power ... ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not ‘consent’ either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted ... in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed (Gramsci 1971:12).

The crisis of the South African state can be clearly traced through its media policy from the simultaneous application of coercion (restrictive legislation, harassment of journalists, obstructive bureaucratic procedures) and management (pre-selection of news, provision of ‘media campaigns’, ‘liaison services’); through to a foregrounding of coercion working in concert with self-censorship. In the chapters which follow, the result of these regulations, among other factors, will be traced out in the news broadcasts of the SABC, and the publications of the Bureau for Information.


As an addendum to this section, the media regulations following the period under review in this thesis will be briefly surveyed. In response to an advertisement calling for the unbanning of the ANC on the 75th anniversary of that organization, new restrictions were gazetted at midnight of 8.1.1987, restricting reporting or advertising calculated to improve or promote the image or esteem of a banned organization, or defending or justifying the resistance of that organization against the state (Government Notice 102, Government Gazette 10584: 8.1.1987). In the same issue of the Gazette, the definition of ‘subversive statement’ was amended to include the support of an ‘unlawful organization’ (Government Notice 101, Ibid. 10584: 8.1.87). The government justified
the new curbs as necessary to prevent the media from generating what it called a 'revolutionary climate'. Stoffel Botha, newly appointed Deputy Minister of Information, went so far as to assert that the legislation was necessary for the protection of democracy. The Bureau for Information commented: 'There can be no doubt that there are individuals within the established media and organs of the alternative media who strongly believe that the media should be overtly and covertly used to promote the objectives of the radical revolution' (quoted in Africa Report, March-April, 1987).

Argus and SAAN challenged the order on the grounds that it was ultra vires, and exceeded the powers given to the Commissioner of Police under the Emergency regulation (Rand Supreme Court 29.1.87). Their win was a hollow victory, since new enabling legislation, authorizing the Commissioner to impose publication control in respect of any matter he might determine, was promulgated hours after the decision (Government Notice 238, Government Gazette, 10605: 29.1.87). The same evening, the Commissioner used his new authority to reinstate the earlier restrictions, thus restoring the status quo. The legislation however is more significant than previous curbs in that it allowed the Commissioner to gazette any restrictions on any subject matter at any time - and do it legally, without fear of possible litigation on the grounds of exceeding his powers.

In subsequent court cases during April 1987, further provisions were overturned, only to be reinstated in the renewed State of Emergency on 11 June 1987 (Proclamation 97, Government Gazette 10772). On 28 August 1987, the Minister of Home Affairs, Stoffel Botha, was given new censorship powers, which enabled him to order the cessation of a publication for up to three months (Proclamation 123, Government Gazette 10880).

The State of Emergency was renewed on 10 June 1988, with slight alterations which had the effect of tightening up all remaining loopholes in the legislation (Proclamation 276 Government Gazette 11342). By this time, the media restrictions were considered litigation-proof, and they were renewed again, unchanged, on 9 June 1989 (Proclamation 88, Government Gazette 11948). They were finally repealed on the historic occasion of 2 February, 1990 (Proclamation 18 Government Gazette 12287). This was a fitting end to five years of press repression and censorship, but ironically, the importance of this move was entirely over-shadowed by President F.W.de Klerk's announcement of the unbanning the ANC, the SACP, the PAC and other banned
political organizations, and the release from detention of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners.
CHAPTER FIVE:
‘ADAPT OR DIE’: APARTHEID AND REFORM

Apartheid has become such a comprehensive term that for some people nowadays it seems to be nothing more than a handy epithet for abusing white South Africans.

Reform will continue in this country. It will have to; changing conditions require dynamic policy approaches. But it is necessary to be clear about the nature and direction of reform, especially at a time when all and sundry are demanding an end to an undefined apartheid. What the South African government means by the term was set out in a statement issued when a ministerial delegation from the European Community visited in August.

Comment 31.10.85.

The Road to the Rubicon

‘Apartheid’ is a system of legalised and coercive racial segregation, applied in South Africa in both the social and economic spheres. Numerous theorists have periodized South African history according to specific criteria. What is offered here is a simple and fairly arbitrary periodization which abstracts some of the main changes in the system known as ‘apartheid’, selected on the basis of how they affected the balance of power at the time of the Emergency. The four periods used are classical apartheid; economic reconstruction in the 1970s; ‘consociation’ and the Tricameral Parliament; and apartheid under the Emergency.

Classical Apartheid

By the time of Union in 1910, blacks throughout the four provinces which made up South Africa were subjugated to their white rulers. During this period, the approach was one of segregation. More than any other single piece of legislation, it was the Native Land Act of 1913 which institutionalized the comprehensive system of labour coercion on a racial basis, and which in 1992 remains as one of the unresolved pillars of the apartheid system. The purpose of the Act was to restrict the area in which blacks could legally reside: 13 percent of the nation’s land area was set aside for blacks, while 87 percent of the country was reserved for whites. Only blacks who were able to provide proof of employment were permitted outside the ‘reserves’. The Land Act had the effect of prohibiting any further purchase of land by blacks, it put a stop to the tenant and sharecropping systems through which a substantial body of peasantry had acquired a foothold of independence (see Bundy 1979). Most importantly, it provided
the labour-hungry primary industries of mining and agriculture with a captive pool of cheap migrant labour (see Eddie Webster 1978; Van Onselen 1982).

Until the Second World War a kind of pragmatic segregation was practised in South Africa that had much in common with other colonized states in Africa, Indo-China and Australasia. But the winds of change which blew across the world in the 1950s and 1960s scarcely touched Southern Africa. With the ascent to power of the National Party in 1948, segregation became institutionalised, codified and legalised as ‘apartheid’. Previously accepted social practices took on the mantle of doctrine, of ideology and theologized faith, enforced by law. Theorized and systematized chiefly by Afrikaner intellectuals, and implemented chiefly by Afrikaner civil servants, the system however was not challenged strongly by English-speaking South Africans. While not denying the courageous and principled stand of a small band of English-speaking liberals, the mainly English-speaking captains of industry were more than happy to acquiesce in legal provisions which set up a framework of exploitative racial capitalism, along the lines which had operated through convention before it was enforced by the Nationalist government (see Lewensen 1971; Rich 1984).

Under Hendrik Verwoerd the ultimate aim of ‘Grand Apartheid’ was to restrict the flow of blacks to the cities and restore (and in some cases construct) the tribal system. Verwoerd’s Native Laws Amendment Act (1952) stringently limited the number of blacks with a right to live permanently in the urban areas. Everyone else was supposed to return to their allotted tribal Bantustan (a new name for the ‘reserves’). Under the Bantu Self-Government Bill (1959), Verwoerd also sought to bolster the traditional institutions in the Bantustans by setting up a network of Bantu Authorities based on the rapidly disintegrating tribal chieftainships.

Classic apartheid, then, was a rational system of labour exploitation based on racial segregation: in Merle Lipton’s phrase it was ‘racial capitalism’ (Lipton 1985). But it was more than that. It was a systematic view of society dominated by racial division.

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1 Under Section 10 of the Act, only those who had been born there, or who had lived there continuously for fifteen years or who had worked for the same employer for ten years, qualified to live in the urban areas.

2 The ‘homelands’ were later called ‘Homelands’ (with a capital ‘H’), later relexified to ‘National States’ on having obtained a degree of ‘constitutional advancement’. Later, some became ‘independent national states’, a term hardly ever used and replaced with the acronym ‘TBVC’ States which refers to the four homelands which, in chronological order, opted for ‘independence’: Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei.
When racism vitiated capitalist growth, racism won out: ‘If South Africa has to choose between being poor and white or rich and multi-racial, then it must rather choose to be white’, Verwoerd is quoted as saying (Sparks 1989:201). However, this situation could not last indefinitely.

Cracks in the Dyke: Economic Restructuring in the 1970s

The interests of the dominant classes within Afrikanerdom and the white community at large began to change in the late 1960s. The reformist impulses originated mainly from the corporate interests of capital, articulated in Parliament through liberal opposition\(^3\). Radical groups provided little impetus in the formulation of reform agenda, largely because of the proscription of their main organizations - the ANC, SACP and PAC. Furthermore, the militantly anti-communist sentiments of the media, particularly the English-language opposition press, did little to publicize the views and aspirations of the black majority.

Reform can be said to have ‘taken off’ with the economic reconstruction of the 1970s. The South African economy was moving from a period of primary economic activities, particularly agriculture and mining, which required large numbers of relatively unskilled and unorganized, docile and cheap labour - factors which made migrant labour, subsidised by a rural home economy, so attractive. Now, with the rise of secondary industry the need was for a settled, urbanized and educated labour force - a ‘labour aristocracy’ (see Lipton 1986:85ff; Eddie Webster et al 1983). Not only had the structural determinations of the economy changed, but the cultural and ethical composition of Afrikanerdom also altered. By the mid-1970s at least 70 percent of Afrikaners belonged to a relatively secure middle class, which found it increasingly difficult to reconcile the blatant racism of classic apartheid with their professional norms (Gilliome and Schlemmer 1989:120). Within the National Party there was a significant split between the verligtes (enlightened ones) and the verkramptes (reactionaries), which resulted in the purges of the Nationalist right wing and the establishment of the Conservative Party under Andries Trechnicht. With the change in class structure came a change in priorities. For the urban middle-class, the ‘bittereinde’ (bitter end)

\(^3\) Initially, opposition to National Party policy was borne by the United Party, of which a splinter group became the Progressive Party at the end of the 1950s. A further split in the United Party saw its 'Young Turks' merging, as the Reform Party, with the Progressives to form the Progressive Reform Party. In turn, this alignment became the Progressive Federal Party and finally the Democratic Party (see Stadler 1986:165).
resistance to integration, no matter what the cost, made way for limited support for institutional changes controlled by a powerful, highly centralized state in which security was the main priority. A decisive factor in the need to come to terms with the possibility of change was the disappearance of the ring of protective colonised and white-ruled states. With the collapse of the Portuguese colonial empire in both Mozambique and Angola, and Rhodesia’s independence as Zimbabwe, South Africa became the last frontier against the perceived Communist-inspired onslaught, a realization that made it necessary to find black allies both internally and in the ‘neighbouring states’. This shift was reflected in political attitudes. Gillomée and Schlemmer (1989:1920) note that:

less was heard of the last ditch stands so reminiscent of Ian Smith’s final days in Rhodesia; the tendency was towards a convoluted set of strategies aimed at the diffusion through partial accommodation of black demands and aspirations.

Although within government circles there existed little agreement on how to achieve a measure of consent for the regime from among the underclasses, there was:

little disagreement about the objective to be pursued: stability and order in a period of economic restructuring and social change. It was increasingly recognised among white political leaders that there would have to be changes in the political institutions of apartheid if the social order was to survive (Stadler 1987:161).

It would be misleading to speak of a ‘reform strategy’ at this stage. However, certain key elements, some of which were mutually contradictory, can be discerned:

* Reform initiatives were aimed at curbing explicit white privilege through the replacement of racially-based discrimination with a technocratic free-market system;

* Simultaneously, there was an elaboration and refinement of apartheid. Social engineering was augmented by concomitant semantic engineering through the introduction of terms such as ‘own affairs’ and perfected concepts of ‘group’ rule;

* Finally, there was the gradual unravelling of the system of apartheid in which both internal and external pressures forced the government to abandon stated policy objectives and implement a series of ad hoc, internal measures, constituting piecemeal and reversible efforts to change the face of apartheid from ‘within the interstices of the party-legislative-bureaucratic structures’ (Stadler 1987:161).
These half-measures were responsible for the enormous logistical problems which continued to hound the political economy: bottlenecks in housing, education, skills acquisition, industrial and political rights.

The failure to achieve significant advance in the field of reform, exacerbated by strikes in early 1970s and the Soweto uprising of 1976, prodded the government into taking a more proactive approach to the problem. The form in which this occurred was characterised by the use of ‘expertise’ in fields outside those of the dominant hegemony to set up ‘Commissions of Enquiry’ for the orderly management of social problems⁴. For example, as a result of the Wiehahn recommendations, statutory job reservation was scrapped, and black trade unions were included in the statutory industrial relations system. Legislation also introduced the principle of equal payment for work of equal value and abolished segregation regulations under the laws relating to factories, shops and offices. These were fundamental advances, and ‘broke the rule that the hierarchical structure must be kept intact, with blacks always working under whites’ (Lipton 1986:59).

The changes should not be seen as magnanimity on the part of the government, but as the response of a regime manoeuvred into a corner by mobilized resistance to grant concessions, as well as a realization that a small, well-disciplined and trained work force was necessary to promote well-being of industry - build up a strong black middle class (see Lipton 1986:59-66). At the same time the government attempted to draw in the captains of industry and capital through the setting-up of consultative committees involving business leaders, and well-publicized but essentially ad hoc meetings, such as the Carlton and Good Hope Conferences between government and Business.

Change was also induced as a response to the double demands of international pressure, which insisted on a more humane social system than apartheid, and greater stability for multi-national investment (Gillomee and Schlemmer 1989:121). In response to these demands, capital-in-general adopted the Sullivan Code in the late 1970s, which was a set of principles regulating the conditions of employment of black workers.

The 1970s saw the gradual disappearance of the most offensive and visible features of ‘petty’ apartheid: segregated entrances to public buildings, Post Offices and liquor outlets, toilets, parks and waiting rooms. There was a gradual desegregation of

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⁴ Examples of these would include the Wiehahn Commission into labour relations, the De Lange Commission into education, and the Steyn Commission into the mass media. Of the Wiehahn Commission, Alf Stadler (1986:166) has written: ‘The use of “labour relations” experts was a telling attempt to shift state intervention in the area of labour control from coercion to “scientific management”’.

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other facilities: theatres, libraries, trains, buses. None of these accommodations threatened white sovereignty, but all were symbolically significant.

Consocial Apartheid and the institution of the Tricameral Parliament

The period from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s can be seen as the high-point of the reform initiative. The new constitution of 1983, ratified by the referendum of 1984, and the establishment of the Tricameral Parliament, did away with the Westminster system and established an executive presidency, elected by a college of MPs. The concentration of power in the Presidency, dubbed the 'Imperial Presidency' (Pottinger 1988), weakened the elected legislative bodies to the point where 'the notion of the sovereignty of parliament was all but abandoned' (Stadler 1987:167).

As the name implies, the Tricameral Parliament was made up of three chambers: (the previously existing) House of Assembly for whites; the House of Representatives for 'Coloureds'; and the House of Delegates for Indians. The 'President's Council' (which included Indians as well as Coloureds) had been instituted in place of the Senate in 1980 in order to advise the government on constitutional and other matters. In terms of the 1984 constitution it was made up of sixty members: twenty from the white chamber, ten from the Coloured, five from the Indian. Fifteen members were selected by the President, and ten selected by the opposition parties of all three chambers.

The constitution distinguished between 'own affairs', which were particular to each race group, and administered by the racially exclusive Minister's Councils; and 'general affairs', which were matters of common concern, administered by the multi-racial President's Council. In practice, the problem of deciding which issue was to be designated an 'own affair' or a 'general affair' was solved by the expedient of having the decision lie solely with the State President. The 1984 constitution created a great multiplicity and duplication along ethnic lines of departments resulting in a generally swollen bureaucracy. The 'own affairs' system can be seen as the culmination of the apartheid concept rather than its reform. There was no proportional allocation of funds, and the 'financial strings [were] still firmly held by the President and his cabinet' (Gillomee and Schlemmer 1989:130).
Policy Towards Blacks

The Tricameral system made no new provisions for blacks. As late as 1984, Chris Heunis, in his position as Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, said in Parliament:

The premise of the National Party is that black people in the urban areas [...] should be accommodated in a different way to [...] whites, coloured and Asians (*Hansard, 11.6.84: col. 11240*).

However, even at that stage, P.W. Botha and his advisers were convinced that the homeland policy would not accommodate the political needs of millions of urbanised blacks who had no personal or political ties to the homelands. The establishment of the Urban Councils was an effort to address some of the practical grievances of Africans living in the urban areas, as well as the preparation of structures through which to manage the massive wave of anticipated urbanization. But they did not necessarily guarantee the state’s legitimacy among urban blacks. Ironically, the maladministration of the Urban Councils was the trigger to the rent boycott in Vaal Triangle in September 1984, an event which in turn precipitated six years of violent resistance. In Alf Stadler’s (1987:171) assessment, the Urban Councils:

represent[ed] efforts to reform the institutions of local and regional government in the absence of common political rights at the national level, the racial basis of existing rights, and the authoritarian controls over political organization and action.

Reforms as Cosmetic Adaption and Socio-economic Change

The elimination of ‘petty apartheid’, through the integration of public amenities, proved to be less painful than the prior agonizing over such changes would have suggested. Frequently cited ‘cosmetic changes’ were the repeal of the Mixed Marriages Act and Section 16 of the Immorality Act (which forbade sex across the colour line). Both Acts were applied with ever-decreasing frequency after P.W. Botha came to power⁵. The repeals did not threaten white hegemony and gave impetus to the claimed legitimacy of the Tricameral Parliament since the whole question of mixed marriages had a compelling and significant ideological meaning to many in the Coloured community. This observation is true of many of the changes labelled as ‘cosmetic’.

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⁵ Prosecutions under Section 16 of the Immorality Act waned after P.W. Botha came to office in 1979. The number of convictions dropped from 247 in that year to 144 in 1985, the last year of its application.
These were very visible changes, and no more palatable than the long-term structural changes, which were often not immediately discernible. While it is true that they did not fundamentally change the power equation, the symbolic importance of these actions cannot be underestimated. Any change which recognised the inherent worth of blacks socially and economically (if not politically) as being on a par with whites, was an affront to an insecure white working class. Brian Pottinger (1988:169) is of the opinion that:

Botha lost at least as many votes to the far-right by allowing blacks into all hotels, desegregating the beaches and dumping the sex laws as he had by his recognition of black trade unions and his tentative moves to extend political rights to other races. At the symbolic or psychological level then, his moves were not cosmetic and only the malicious or the naïve would claim they were.

However, is was the larger socio-economic reforms which were really expensive, both in terms of money and political power: changes in housing, education and economic advancement. Once again as ten years previously, reform underwent the ponderous process of investigation by experts, the proposal of solutions, followed by the privatisation of the problem, before implementation was delegated to independent agencies. In general, there was a marked move away from a strong centralist and national-socialist approach to one of free-market individualism. This process will be discussed in greater detail in the case study on influx control and the provision of housing.

By the end of 1985 Botha’s social reform programme had more or less reached its limits. Those areas which remained - the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act and the Land Acts were crucial for the retention of the existing order. At the time of the declaration of the State of Emergency, the crucial areas of reform to be addressed were:

* urbanization and influx control;
* housing;
* education; and
* the informal sector.

In this thesis, I have chosen to highlight the case history of reform in urbanization and influx control as it was imaged on television between 1985 and 1986 (Chapter Six). Before proceeding with this however, attention will be given to one of the turning points in the symbolic matrix of South African political life: P.W. Botha’s opening address at
the Natal Provincial Congress of the National Party on Thursday, 15 August 1985, an address which went into the annals of history as the ‘Rubicon’ speech, a reference to Botha’s classical allusion at the end of his address, when he stated ‘We are today crossing the Rubicon. There can be no turning back’. Botha described his speech as a ‘manifesto’, but instead of crossing the Rubicon to greater reform, the speech was widely regarded as a retroactive step into a more defensive position. This perception was based on three factors: the very high level of expectation placed on the speech as a reformist initiative; the taciturn, defensive and bellicose attitude of Botha throughout the speech; and the disastrous consequences on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and for the value of the Rand currency subsequent to the speech.

The Road to the Rubicon

The indications are that Mr Pik Botha gave this message in Europe, where he met with representatives of Britain and West Germany: namely that the Emergency regulations for the ensuring of orderly reform are necessary and that the reform process will go ahead regardless. Mr Botha would not say what the content of his discussion was when he returned. In Washington, the Americans reacted positively.

(Cliff Saunders, Nuusosig 11.8.85).

A great deal of anticipation was expressed in the media after Foreign Minister Pik Botha visited a number of European Countries in an apparent effort to reassure them of the important reformist moves to be announced at the Natal Conference. Referring to these meetings, widespread newspaper reports afterwards insisted that:

There were claims, which were more or less publicly supported on more than one occasion by United States officials, that major announcements would be made that would show that South African was firmly set on the road to reform (Daily News 16.8.85:1).

On Thursday, a week before the Congress, television News (8.8.85) reported that ‘The Minister of Foreign Affairs is conducting talks with the US Government in Austria’. While the visuals showed Pik Botha genially talking to various people, newsreader David Hall-Green’s voice-over noted that these talks were the ‘first at high level between South

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6 All unsourced references are to Botha’s opening speech to the Natal Congress of the National Party, at the Durban City Hall on 15 June 1985. Three sources have been used: the videotape of the televised broadcast, an original script of the speech provided to journalists beforehand, and a verbatim transcript of the speech as delivered, reproduced by the State President’s Office and reprinted in several volumes, including Robert Schrire’s Adapt or Die: The End of White Politics in South Africa (1991:147-160). The published transcript includes all the extemporised additions ad-libbed by P.W.Botha, which would not be apparent without reference to the original script. These additions provide particularly illuminating insights into Botha’s personal political style, since they represent spontaneous reactions. Much of the bellicose and taciturn content of the speech, which became the most frequently quoted sound-bites, were not originally scripted into the speech.
Africa and the United States since Ambassador Nickel went to Washington recently for consultation (ibid.), a reference to the return of the US Ambassador in protest against the declaration of the State of Emergency the previous month. In retaliation, the South African Ambassador to the United States, Herbert Beukes, returned to South Africa. (The British, Canadian and Australian ambassadors also withdrew, and the latter two were not reinstated until the premiership of President de Klerk.) Vienna was chosen as a location for a mini-diplomatic summit since it was central to most of Europe, and served as a neutral setting for discussions with an American diplomatic corps. On the following evening, television’s Nuus (9.8.85) included a substantial report on the Vienna visit (Appendix 5). Ruda Landman told watching South Africans that

South African Minister of Foreign Affairs closes off a lighting visit to Europe. Mr Pik Botha was in Vienna, where he met with American, British and West German representatives to discuss the present State of Emergency in South Africa. This follows after a number of countries, including America, recalled their ambassadors for discussion. Newsmen wanted to know of Mr Botha when the State of Emergency will be lifted in South Africa.

It is significant that the snatch of ‘live’ interview included in the report contained no information about the up-coming conference, while ‘reform’ was mentioned only in passing: ‘At the same time, my government is looking very seriously at future reform movements’ (ibid.). Most of the longish monologue is a defensive justification for the State of Emergency, and mobilized four themes:

a. Extraordinary circumstances required extraordinary measures, despite any loss in popularity this might result from that: ‘I’m completely aware of the damaging effect this has abroad’.

b. Only a small portion of the country was under Emergency regulations, and the situation was being inflated disproportionately by foreign governments:

[...] the impression is being created that the whole country is in turmoil. This is not true. It is really not true. If you travel through South Africa today you will be hard put to find where it is. These regulations only apply in thirty six of the 265 districts.

c. The media were complicit in creating the impression of instability in the country:

The point is that the press of course is very much aware of where it takes place and the press is informed also in advance to be also at the street corners when people make plans to create turmoil (sic).

d. South Africa was not doing anything more than any other country would do in the circumstances:
It doesn’t matter which government is in power, it is our duty towards all our citizens irrespective of the colour of their skin, to protect them, their lives and their property. Every government - every government in Europe - would do exactly the same under the same circumstances.

The report ends with Pik Botha on the airport tarmac, where he shook hands with various men before boarding a small jet. The sequence connotes a man in a hurry, an international diplomat with a jet at his own disposal, an understanding which is reinforced by Ruda Landman’s voice-over intoning: ‘Mr Botha left Austria to go on to West Germany. He will hold discussions with senior officials of the West German Department of Foreign Affairs’ (ibid.).

Andre Le Roux of the SABC’s political desk provided a continuation of Pik Botha’s lightning diplomacy on Friday’s television News (9.8.85) from Jan Smuts airport outside Johannesburg. The hero had returned. In his introduction, Le Roux employed the frequently used convention of filming his stand-up against an easily recognisable location, in order to ‘situate’ his story. In this case he utilized the backdrop of the exterior buildings of Jan Smuts airport (underlining its international connections). This was despite the news conference having been held in one of the airport’s lounges. Reported Le Roux: ‘After discussion with US spokesmen, Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha said they were clearly satisfied with the message he took to Europe’ (News 10.8.85). The visuals cut to Pik Botha in his shirtsleeves, seated at the press conference, looking relaxed (considering his hectic four days) and genial. Conducted by ‘friendly’ (as opposed to combatant) journalists, the conference provided Botha with an opportunity to state his position without fear of contradiction or interrogation. Nevertheless, the Foreign Minister was particularly secretive, saying little more than ‘We discussed a wide range of subjects covering our bilateral relations’, a conventional diplomatic code-phrase which could mean anything, or nothing. Yet the overall impression of the report was one of quiet optimism and conciliation. Referring to South Africa’s Ambassador to the United States, Botha reassured the journalists (and viewers) that ‘Mr Beukes will return to Washington soon. I never recalled Mr Beukes as a sort of revengeful act on my part’. When pressed on the issue of the release of Nelson Mandela, his attitude became more intransigent. In response, he outlined a particularly convoluted plan, designed to allow the government a way out without losing face, while at the same time reiterating the importance of Transkei as a ‘National State’:

I certainly did not inform them that he would be released, as they put it, unconditionally. We were prepared to hand Mr Mandela over to

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President Matanzima [of Transkei] who requested his return. It would then have been up to President Matanzima to decide what he wanted to do with Mr Mandela. He would probably have released him. That was turned down. There is therefore no dearth (sic) on the part of the South African government of trying to release Mr Mandela. I think there are members of the South African government who believe that he has been in jail for many years and ought to be set free. The question now is how. It is a pity that we have the impression that he is in fact jailing himself at present (News 9.8.85).

Using the same location, Le Roux linked Pik Botha’s overseas briefings to the visit of an American Democratic Congressman, Stephen Solarz. In the spirit of international negotiation engendered by Botha’s forays, Le Roux elevated the importance of Solarz’s visit to ‘high level talks between South Africa and American representatives, albeit the American opposition’ (ibid.). Both Solarz and his negotiating counter-part, F.W. de Klerk (in his capacity as Chairman of the white Minister’s Council in the Tricameral Parliament), were provided with the opportunity to speak to the camera, but neither did more than affirm the ‘confidentiality’ of their ‘wide discussions’. This response offered little propagandistic capital, particularly as visually, the two men could not clearly be seen as they were shot in deep shadow against a startlingly bright background, with no light on their faces. It is left to Le Roux to recuperate the situation by editorialising on the perceived importance of the events of the past few days. This he did in a classic stand-up format, using the same location as he began with, a technique which provided a sense of narrative encompassment to the various disparate elements of his story:

**Le Roux:** It has become clear during the past week that a lot has been happening behind closed doors on the imminent constitutional progress in South Africa. The expectation is that the State President, Mr P.W. Botha, will make major policy announcements in this regard at the forthcoming Congress of the National Party in Durban (ibid.).

The Sunday evening *Nuusorsig* (11.8.85) was a wrap-up of the week’s most important stories. A report edited by Cliff Saunders included snatches of Pik Botha’s news conference in Vienna cited earlier, in which Botha justified the government’s declaration of the State of Emergency and argued that other countries would do the same in similar circumstances. The following sequence was the visual of Pik Botha taken from the news conference at Jan Smuts (see earlier bulletin), over which Cliff Saunders commented:

The indications are that Mr Pik Botha gave this message in Europe, where he met with representatives of Britain and West Germany: namely that the Emergency regulations for the ensuring of orderly reform are necessary and that the reform process will go ahead regardless. Mr Botha would not
say what the content of his discussion was when he returned. In Washington, the Americans reacted positively (Nuusoorlig 11.8.85).

The screen then displays a range of front page newspaper headlines:

WATERSHED WEEK!
BOTHA: THE WAY AHEAD
WêRELD, SUID-AFRIKA WAG GERIGTE VIR P.W.

These cross-media references had the dual function of indicating a wider level of expectation of the results of the Rubicon speech, and reinforcing these expectations through television coverage. Saunders suggested that these newspaper reports, together with remarks from the Minister of Health and Development, Dr Willie van Niekerk, that clarification on the status of blacks in the National States can be expected, have raised the expectations that important developments will be made (gedoen sal word) next Thursday at the Congress of the National Party in Durban. On that day, President P.W. Botha will open the first of the year’s Party Congresses.

Thus both in the print media and on television the speculation grew as the week progressed fuelled by press reports from Britain, attributed to the Home Office. However, from the above it can be seen that the television reports provided very little specificity as to the content of the expected reforms, compared to that in the print media, which spelt out the expected release of ANC leader, Nelson Mandela, and the scrapping of the homelands policy. In the event, Botha categorically refused any consideration of Mandela’s release (a subject which will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Eight), while the announcements on the homeland policy were considerably more vague than had been expected. One possible reason for the lack of television specificity was that this period saw a week of unprecedented violence in Durban, and most of the media attention was focused on this issue: most of Sunday’s Nuusoorlig (11.8.85), for example, was devoted to the Natal violence (see Chapter Nine), which may explain for why there was less speculation on television than in the press and overseas. A more likely analysis is that fuelling speculation might have been seen to be against the tenets of what the SABC considered to be ‘responsible reporting’.

By the Monday (12.8.85) preceding the Congress, a sense of caution at the anticipated level of change was being reflected throughout the media. In the television Nuus (12.8.85) that evening, newsreader Ruda Landman, backed by a chromokey of Stephen Solarz and P.W. Botha standing together in front of Union Buildings, reported that:
The State President met the visiting American congressman Mr Stephen Solarz this afternoon. [...] Mr Solarz, who is on a fact-finding mission of about ten days, leaves tomorrow. Mr Solarz said after his one hour meeting that he was pessimistic after his visit about the possibility of a peaceful solution. [...] He said what was necessary were discussions with the genuine (ware) black leaders, and that the ANC leader, Mr Nelson Mandela, should be freed. It was his impression after meeting with the President that neither of these two requirements for a solution will come soon. He nevertheless said that South Africans had to solve the problem for themselves. Mr Solarz said that South Africans would have to take account of the public opinion in America and that the position would only change when real changes away from apartheid were evident. Mr Solarz said that it was his impression that the State President will not really break away from the present dispensation at the coming congress of the National Party.

In the item which followed, Landman went on to report that Australia had decided to impose sanctions on South Africa, but would wait 'until Thursday for an indication from the State President on possible political changes' (ibid.). Further evidence of a more pessimistic attitude towards the possible expectations came on the morning of the opening of the Congress, where Chris Heunis, Minister of Constitutional Development, cast a damper on the possibility of major policy change by unequivocally denying the possibility that the Group Areas Act would be removed. His position appeared to be aimed at reassuring the reactionary elements within the Party:

Mr Heunis said that South Africans should not fear that the principle of maintaining, protecting and expanding separate communities, traditions, cultures and identities would be abandoned, and in so doing, lead to an integrated society. (SABC Radio News 13h15 - 15.8.85).

Despite the cooling off of expectations directly before the Congress, the Daily News (16.8.85:1) reported in the aftermath of the Rubicon speech that:

Diplomats were emphatic last night (15.8.85) after Mr Botha's speech that the information they had been given by South African officials had indicated that Mr Botha would make far more important announcements.

Why, then, was the Rubicon speech a failure in terms of expectations for reform? Part of the answer lay in the misrecognition of the conventions expected of an internationally televised media event of this kind, an assertion which will be examined in the next section.

Crossing the Rubicon: Thunder and Threats

An edited version of the State President's address to the congress this evening is to be televised on TV1 at 23 minutes to eleven. All the key points of Mr Botha's speech will be covered. The SABC will also provide television coverage for the major networks in the
United States, Britain and West Germany and these networks in turn will provide coverage to almost the entire Western World. Apart from coverage in the SABC’s radio news bulletins, the Corporation will also present excerpts of Mr Botha’s address on the Radio Today and Monitor radio programmes tomorrow morning. (Radio News 13:15.8.85).

In symbolic terms the Rubicon speech was one of the most notable political events of the 1980s. It occupied the full attention of the print media for weeks afterwards, and has become a reference point for almost every political analysis of South Africa in this period. Apart from the South African television transmission and radio broadcasts, the event was covered by a large corps of international television journalists. The BBC led its 8 pm News with a live report of the event. The major portion of the President’s remarks in English were broadcast live for more than thirty minutes, interspersed with comment and speculation from a panel in the BBC studios, consisting of a political commentator from The Guardian, the South African Ambassador, Dr Dennis Worrall, and a presenter. Later the same evening a second panel discussion featured Bishop Tutu, a Nationalist MP and a member of the (South African) Conservative Party (Sunday Tribune 25.58.85). Substantial excerpts were broadcast in America and Europe. P.W. Botha’s speech was not without significant content. It is quite apparent that he saw it as an important policy statement. Two thirds of the way through the speech, he noted that ‘Together with my policy statements earlier this year in Parliament, I see this speech of mine as my Manifesto for a new South Africa’. Botha also saw the address as having an important reformist content:

In my policy statements in January and June of this year, I indicated that there would be further developments with regard to the rights and interests of the various population groups in Southern Africa. Since then we have had to contend with escalating violence within South Africa and, pressure from abroad in the form of designs to coerce the government into giving in to various demands.

Despite previous speculations, and the acknowledged reformist content of his speech, the State President’s address proved to be a crushing disappointment. The positive progress it heralded was entirely overshadowed by the sense of missed opportunities and indignation at the President’s belligerence. Reported the Sunday Times (18.8.85:1):

Faulty communications, President Botha’s famed short fuse, pressures from more conservative party quarters, and demands by Constitutional Development officials that they should not be ‘boxed in’, all contributed to turning what could have been a public-relations tour de force at the National Party congress in Durban on Thursday into a damp squib.
Within the lexicon of South African political commentary, ‘Rubicon’ came to stand for an aborted reformist movement. When P.W. Botha opened Parliament on the 31 January 1986, his address was predictably dubbed ‘Rubicon II’. While the content of the speech remained substantially unchanged from that of five months previously, the received message was very different, and illustrated the way in which careful planning can affect the reaction to political messages. Firstly, the parliamentary setting was more appropriate for an international address than the use of a party-political platform. The setting was one of solemnity and restraint, themes which were echoed in Botha’s address. Parliament acted as a metaphor for western political discourse and legitimate government, placing South Africa in the same category as advanced western democracies. Secondly, Botha stuck very closely to his speech with no overt exhibitionism and jibes at the now non-existent hecklers. (Throughout this chapter, the extemporised sections of his speech are indicated in curled brackets). Thirdly, though his ‘programme’ of reform was given in terms which were as vague and unspecific as those used in the August 1985 speech, there was a sufficiently clear (though widely interpretable) direction for the print media to make some positive assertions on the speech. Notably too, Botha restrained himself from a direct attack on the press, which had caused so much alienation and resentment in the first speech. The January 1986 speech was followed up by a campaign of full-page advertisements in all the print media, a campaign which was administered by the Bureau for Information.

Both the August ‘Rubicon’ and the January 1986 ‘Rubicon II’ speeches were televised and broadcast live on SABC-TV1, and formed a substantial part of the News bulletin on those evenings. In the discussion which follows I will discuss some of the main features of the first speech, and the News bulletin which followed it, before considering of the main reformist themes articulated on television during the period under discussion.

**Addressing the Nation: the Rubicon I as Television Spectacular**

Superficially, the style of the speech was one of strength. Most of the speech was delivered in a stern, patriarchal and Calvinistic mode of address, reminiscent of a ‘dominee’ delivering a hell-fire sermon to his errant congregation (Alison-Broomhead
et al 1987). The frequent allusions to Christian Nationalism, particularly in the section referred to as his ‘credo’, reinforce his position as the chosen leader of his people.

The representation of P.W. Botha as a truculent demi-tyrant embodied the overall impact of the speech as one of weakness and defensiveness, an impression which was due not only to his words, but also his body-language. Botha commenced his address with acknowledgements to a litany of those in attendance he deemed to be important in a way that was both formal and conventional, picking out particularly his ‘geagte kollegas’ (honoured colleagues) the provincial leaders, representatives of the National Party Congress and ‘mede Suid-Afrikaners’ (fellow South Africans). Having positioned his constituency, he established himself as a reasonable, approachable man who listened to the opinions of others: ‘During recent months and particularly the last few weeks, I have received a great deal of advice’. However, his tense stance and nervous, sweeping eye-movements belied the confidence of his verbal message.

The thread of the Total Onslaught runs through the entire speech. His defensive posture can be seen as a reaction to the structural weakness of the South African economy, the demands for concessions by external powers and lobby-groups, as well as criticism from the right-wing sections of his own party. Botha responded by confronting any possible perception that he was giving ground, and by emphasising the continuity of the National Party’s policies, rather than attempting to provide an innovative and bold initiative.

The single most important structuring element through the Rubicon address was the clear delineation of an us / them divide. From the outset he excommunicated all those not in agreement with the stated policy of the National Party, particularly as elucidated by himself. Any perceived opposition - whether from the hecklers present in the Durban City Hall, the media, the right-wing or foreign governments - were treated with explicit defensiveness or derision. Black South Africans opposed to government structures were a particular target of his wrath:

> Our enemies - both within and without - seek to divide our peoples. They seek to create unbridgeable differences between us, and prevent us from negotiating peaceful solutions to our problems. Peaceful negotiation is their enemy. Peaceful negotiation is their enemy because it will lead us to joint responsibility for the progress and prosperity for South Africa (sic). Those whose methods are violent, do not want to participate. They wish to seize and monopolize all power. {Let there be no doubt about

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7 I am indebted to this study for some of the insights cited in this chapter.
what they would do with such power.} One has only to look at their methods and means. Violent and brutal means can only lead to totalitarian and tyrannical ends.

Their actions speak louder than their words. Their words offer ready panaceas such as one-man-one-vote, freedom and justice for all. Their actions leave no doubt that the freedoms that we already have - together with the on-going extension of democracy in South Africa - are the true targets of their violence. [...] The violence of our enemies is a warning to us. We, who are committed to peaceful negotiation, also have a warning to them. Our warning is that our readiness to negotiate should not be mistaken for weakness.

{I have applied much self-discipline during the past weeks and months. I have been lenient and patient. Don’t push us too far in your own interests.}

The us / them dichotomy corresponds to Goran Therborn’s discussion of the ‘ego’ and the ‘alter-ego’ where ‘Positional ideologies have an intrinsically dual character: in one’s subjection to, and qualification for a position, one becomes aware of the difference between oneself and the others’ (Therborn 1980:27). For Botha, the ultimate ‘alter-ego’ was the folk-devil construct he labelled the ‘revolutionary’. Towards the end of his speech, he added in further unscripted remarks:

{Revolutionaries have no respect for time, because they have no self-respect. Look what they have done to Africa, a continent that is dying at present. I can tell you, because I know what is happening in many of these countries. I have the facts and I am not going to hand South Africa to these revolutionaries to do the same to this lovely country.}

The division into ‘us’ and ‘our enemies’ was further established in the contrast Botha made between the ‘People [who] are praying for me’ (underscoring the Christian-Nationalist tenor of the speech); and the ‘advice’ he had received from ‘ill-wishers’. The Afrikaner ethnic character of the National Party was foregrounded throughout the speech. Botha appealed to the Afrikaner mythology of the down-to-earth integrity of the farm boy by invoking the idiom ‘ek weet ’n muishond by sy reuk’ (I know a skunk by its smell) to characterise his opposition. He denigrates the ‘others’ as ‘slanderers’, a point he establishes by quoting from the Afrikaner poet Langenhoven. Later, he again quoted Langenhoven to stress his heritage as an Afrikaner of learning and culture.
Framing and Meaning: Making Sense of Mediation

All through this section of his speech Botha paused frequently to lick his lips and shift his weight from one foot to the other. The effect of these mannerisms was to convey defiance and disregard for the subjects of his address. The partisanship of his audience was evidenced by the laughter and applause at each derisive remark aimed at 'outsiders'.

Despite the occasional heckling, the great majority of the audience was made up of loyal National Party supporters. The television sequences of Botha were as flattering to him as was possible. The opening sequence captured P.W. Botha in a medium close-up, slightly off centre. This camera angle was the most commonly used framing throughout the address. The composition of the sequence included the top of the dias, mounted with a microphone clearly bearing the letters SABC / SAUK, underscoring the mediated nature of the event. Botha was formally dressed in a dark suit and tie, offset with a shirt whose triangular whiteness directed attention to his face. The harsh lighting reflected on his bald pate and off his glasses, creating a shielding effect which distanced him from intimate eye contact with his audience. The formality and distance of this shot reinforced his preferred authoritative and patriarchal stance.

A second well-used shot was a wide-angled slow pan to the left, positioning the presidential dias, with its distinctive coat of arms, on the far left-hand side of the frame. Right below the dais the National Party's blue and orange logo, dominated by an upward pointing arrow, guided attention to Botha, flanked on his right by his wife and a hierarchy of National Party officials. After momentarily situating the arrangement, the camera zoomed in on Elize Botha, stylishly coiffured and formally dressed in black, her ample bosom set off with an elegant string of pearls. Her look of rapt attention was focused entirely on her husband. Later in the speech, the camera panned out to a wide-angle shot which encompassed the two people seated on either side of the podium, forming a pyramidal composition with P.W. Botha at the pinnacle. The light reflected off the three faces visually consolidated the powerful position held by the President in the Party hierarchy. The cameras then zoomed out further to include the whole of the

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8 In their analysis of the body language of the address, the Financial Mail (6.9.85:37) noted that [...] the feet are the major giveaway areas. All the tension and anxiety are transferred to the feet. There is always an increase in fidgeting and shifting of weight from foot to foot.
main table on the stage, decked with extravagant flower arrangements and draped with orange, white and blue bunting over crisp white linen.

These sequences of shots, which were repeated often during the speech, were saturated with semiotic value. The arrangement of the actors on stage - the State President flanked on each side by his wife and closest advisers, was reminiscent of Leonardo de Vinci's 'Last Supper' tableau. His wife - elegant, substantial, self-possessed, but wholly engrossed in his every word, every movement - represented the idealized picture of a traditional marriage in which the wife is seen to be a companion and helpmate, fully fulfilled in her husband's endeavours, in fact the very archetype of the national 'boerevrou' (Afrikanerwoman).

The iconography of the occasion includes the State President's personal crest carved into the oak podium - sturdy enough to last a couple of generations - connoting status, heritage and continuity. The colours of the National Party are also the colours of the South African flag, conflating allegiance to the National Party with a patriotic allegiance to the nation. All the structural lines of connection within the overall composition - the arrow of the National Party logo, the triangular form of the speaker and his deputies, the raised position of the dais - symmetrically point to the centre of the set-piece: the State President.

Perhaps the most unforgettable cameos in the whole speech were the several examples of medium close-ups of Botha adopting aggressive and domineering poses, such as the often repeated stance of him clutching the podium in both hands while glowering at his audience, or smirking in an apparently self-satisfied manner, repeatedly licking his lips. Then there was the clenched-fist posture, which he admonishingly used to emphasise a point. But long after the details concerning the content and circumstances of the whole 'Rubicon' debacle were forgotten in the public mind, the single most memorable image of the occasion was of Botha, the light reflected off his bald head and glinting glasses, leaning slightly forward, left hand tightly grasping the podium, his right-hand forefinger raised stabbing the air. Noted the Financial Mail (6.9.85:37):

The raised forefinger baton [...] is [...] threatening and menacing. The forefinger is raised as though it was a club delivering symbolic blows on the head of the viewers.

The News bulletin on the day following the Rubicon (16.8.85) featured reproductions of several front-page newspaper reports, all with photographs depicting variations of this
stance. This image could be regarded as the single most characteristic icon of the whole of P.W. Botha’s Presidency, and was reproduced in numerous cartoons, photographs and bookcovers.

Additions and Substitutions: Making a Bad Thing Worse

Much of the bellicose tone of the speech was not included in the original script but came from the extemporised additions inserted by P.W. Botha in the actual delivery of the speech. Most frequently, these additions were amplifications of the original script, as for example, in the case of his ‘credo’, when he outlines what he sees as the common interests of ‘the majority of South Africans as well as independent states, which form our immediate neighbours’. In the transcribed excerpts which follow, all the additions to the original script are indicated by curled brackets:

_Botha:_ We believe in the same Almighty God and the redeeming grace of His Son, Jesus Christ.

[Heckling: ‘White or black?’]

{I know what I’m talking about, because only a few months ago I stood before an audience of 3 million Black people, proving the truth of what I am saying now. I don’t know whether one of our critics ever saw three million people together in a meeting. I did.}

We believe and wish to uphold religious freedom.

[shouts from the audience]

{This is a country of religious freedom.}

We believe in democratic institutions of government.

{We believe the broadening of democracy.}

We believe our great wealth of divergent population groups must speak to each other through their elected leaders. {Not self-appointed leaders.}

We believe that our peace and prosperity is indivisible.

We believe in the protection of minorities.

[further shouts from the audience]

{Is there anyone in this hall who would get up and say he is not for the protection of minorities. Let me see how such a fool looks (sic).}

We know that it is the hard fact of South African life that it will not be possible to accommodate the political aspirations of our various population groups and communities in a known and defined political system.

{We will have to find own unique system because our problems are unique.}
In the quoted extracts above, Botha mobilized divine law to justify a political position, an ideological thread that has run through the whole history of apartheid, meshing it with a particularly calvinistic brand of Christian Nationalism (see Thompson 1985:34-35). The appearance of the rights to religious freedom, a theme which has traditionally been underdeveloped in South African political mythology (see Cochrane 1987:157), was used here to underscore the differences in religions and the co-existence of religious affiliation (freedom of religions) in order to exemplify the differences of ‘groups’ and ‘group values’.

The quotation also illustrates Botha’s predilection for responding to hecklers, an aspect which was seen as an important weakness of the Rubicon speech. Initially, these responses were fairly good-humoured, quick-witted banter delivered with a smile, but during the course of his delivery they became more aggressive. For instance, two-thirds of the way through the speech, the following exchange took place:

Botha: But let me be frank with you. You must know where you stand with me.

[unseen voice from audience challenges him]

Botha: {I have no unfulfilled ambitions in political life in South Africa. I am standing where I am because people asked me to stand.}

Heckling: ‘In the Wilderness!’

Botha: It is the right of the Party Congresses to state whether they agree with their leader or not.

Heckling: (indistinguishable)

Botha: {Show me your alternative.}

These and other similar examples indicate that although the written script may have carried one message, Botha’s body language on the day communicated quite a different message. The already turgid construction of the speech was made worse by the addition of gratuitous phrases and retorts. Throughout the speech, there are no quick snappy constructions.

From a perusal of commonly quoted political speeches and expositions from Julius Caesar to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, Max Atkinson (1984:124-163) notes that the two most common constructions in a ‘quotable’ speech are contrasts and three-point lists. Elsewhere, Botha does use both contrast and the classic three-point list:

A: ‘Destroy White South Africa and our influence,

B: and this country will drift into

1. faction strife,

2. chaos and

3. poverty’.
However, in his statement of faith quoted above, Botha uses a cumbersome 7-point list, which was twice as long as the ideal. Although he employed a strong rhetorical technique by opening each point with ‘We believe’, he lost any pithiness that may have been in the original script by adding ad-libbed comments. More destructively, the extemporisations, which are usually facetious responses to audience heckling, had the effect of undercutting any magnanimity embedded in the original design.

Reassessing the Rubicon

While there were substantive points of reform alluded to in the Rubicon speech, they were entirely over-shadowed by the resentment and anger that the presentation evoked. This observation is not meant to imply an uncritical media-centric view, but rather to point to the fact that the packaging of the message was inappropriate. P.W. Botha’s error lay in the confusion between the platform and the audience. Noted Peter Sullivan in the *Sunday Star Review* (25.8.85:1):

On Thursday last week the world was stunned when Mr Botha turned from the wide world window of gigantic television coverage to lecture to a small group of Natal National Party supporters in Durban. A conservative estimate puts the cost of buying that sort of television and newspaper coverage at about the size of South Africa’s national budget, give or take a million or two.

P.W. Botha displayed an inability (or unwillingness) to appreciate that television created a world audience, and not merely an address to a party political congress. He spoke to the party faithful, and told them what they wanted to hear, but he broadcast his message to the world forgetting Steyn’s dictum of using different voices to disseminate the same message to different audiences.

The Rubicon debacle was not the only occurrence which caused substantial damage. In the two weeks which followed the Rubicon speech, (Congress of South African Students) Cosas was banned, Dr Allan Boesak, Chairman of the International Synod of Reformed Churches, was arrested, television reportage of rough police action against protesters, all helped to precipitate an international crisis of confidence against South Africa. P.W. Botha’s Rubicon speech had a profound effect on this situation. While it was not the direct cause of the drop in the value of the Rand, it certainly did little to halt the fall. The State President made the fatal error of ignoring anxious bankers and businessmen to soothe the National Party.
Blaming Apartheid on History

In the past, apartheid was punted as the solution to 'intergroup differences'; by the mid-1980s, (old style) apartheid had been declared dead, an outdated relic of former colonial eras. In the Rubicon speech, P.W. Botha distanced the National Party from culpability for apartheid by saying:

The [National] Party stands for the just and equal treatment of all parts of South Africa, and for the impartial maintenance of the rights and privileges of every section of the population. But, the Party must also deal with the heritage of history. Certain situations in this country were created by history and not by other national parties.

Later in the same address he went on:

The underdeveloped part of the economy is mainly that of different non-White communities. {There are historic reasons for this, just as there are historic reasons for the plight of Africa in general.} (ibid.).

The strategy of blaming apartheid on history was not a new one. Piet Koornhoof, then Minister of Co-operation and Development, told a gathering in Washington DC (US) in 1979:

I can understand that many people have reservations about the Group Areas Act in South Africa, which stipulates that certain areas are set aside for occupation by certain groups of our population. But again, this has its roots in history (quoted by Graaf, Urbasch and Doria 1986).

Throughout the period under study, there were repeated invocations on both television News and radio Comment for the need to apply reform measures and replace the 'outworn concept of apartheid' (Comment 4.2.1986) in order to avert economic catastrophe and international isolation, as well as to 'restore the dignity' of blacks. Most of these calls followed the cue given by P.W. Botha in the opening of Parliament in January 1986, when he said 'We have outgrown [...] the outdated concept of apartheid' (Hansard 2nd session 9 Parliament, also reproduced by Binfo). This part of his speech was quoted by Comment on February 3, 1986, as was the approving reaction of George Schultz on Comment two days later (5.2.86).

Towards the end of the study period there are examples where neither the word 'apartheid', nor any of its synonyms, is used at all. A German television interviewer put the question to P.W. Botha:

Interviewer Looking at your country, there is a very strong polarisation in South Africa of those who want change and those who want to preserve apartheid by all means - where is your position?

Botha: I don't think you are right saying that there is a confrontation or
polarisation between those who want to preserve \textit{that which is in the past} and those who want to \textit{reform [...] a small minority of people cling to the far past, yes, but they are a small minority}. (\textit{Financial Mail} 5.9.86:57; emphasis added).

Not only did Botha skirt the issue of labelling \textit{apartheid}, but by reformulating it as ‘that which is in the past’, and then qualifying it as something belonging to the ‘far past’, he attempted to absolve the present government from responsibility for apartheid structures. At the same time, he juxtaposed the ‘past’ with the ‘present’, and repositioned the interviewer’s ‘change’ as ‘reform’. Thus Botha was able to shift the question in a way which naturalized the relations of domination, and semantically displaced the historical struggles around the concept of apartheid, and the role played by the National Party, and the Botha administration (see Tomaselli, Louw and Tomaselli 1990).

The Changing Nature of ‘Apartheid’

The existence of diverse groups, which will have to be accommodated constitutionally in a manner that will guarantee their protection, is then seen for what it is: an unchangeable fact that has to be taken into account in the reform process. On the other hand, the imperative that the expansion of democracy on which this country is set, means that reform is essentially a question of securing the rights and freedoms of the individual. (\textit{Comment} 13.8.86)

Central to the whole debate on ‘reform’ is an understanding of the constructed nature of apartheid, and how this has changed historically. The history of apartheid is at one level a history of the evolution of a semantic lexicon of differentiation and domination (see also Posel 1984). But this was more than simply semantic engineering, this vocabulary was the visible tip of a far larger iceberg of ideological and constitutional construction.

The new discourse reflected the government’s increased sensitivity to its opponents, an awareness of the power of the media. Even elements of the English-language commercial press who supported ‘reform’ acknowledged the political semantics as a form of ‘newspeak’, referring to it as ‘Bothaspeak’. The past fifteen years have seen an accelerated coming and discarding of terms, often with short life-spans as government officials use them with assurance during their currency, only to discard them when they are replaced by new phrases. At the height of the State of Emergency, for instance, much was heard of ‘multi-cultural and poly-ethnic society’, while only a few years previously the catchwords were ‘vertical and horizontal differentiation’ (Graaf, Urbasch
and Doria 1986). The representation of disparities in racial and socio-economic circumstances has been naturalised as ‘an unchangeable fact’ (Comment 13.8.85). Nowhere was this more apparent than in the discussions surrounding the polyethnic nature of the South African population. Formulae such as ‘diverse groups’ (ibid.) ‘nine black nations’; ‘our self-governing black states’ and ‘South Africa’s many minorities’ have replaced the familiar language traditionally associated with the apartheid system. The need constantly to go back and recuperate meaning from the utterances of government spokespersons, from news bulletins and editorial comments, points to the profound naturalisation of these terms in everyday parlance. As Stuart Hall cautions us, the ‘operation of naturalized codes reveals not the transparency and "naturalness" of language but the depth, the habituation and the near-universality of the codes in use. [...] This has the ideological effect of concealing the practices of coding which are present’ (Hall 1980:132).

The semantic engineering of apartheid is not new; rather, recent history has seen a greater sophistication of the process. ‘Segregation’ was the approach prior to, and at the time of Union (1910). Segregation mutated successively to ‘differentiation’; ‘parallel development’; ‘apartheid’; ‘separate development’; and by 1967, ‘separate freedoms’ (Scheepers-Strydom 1967: preface). Since 1967 there has been a gradual acceptance of the need to ‘widen democracy’ (Marais 1989), an idea which introduced a whole gamut of related terms, including ‘plural relations’; ‘plural development’; and ‘plural societies’. When amenities were desegregated they were referred to, among other titles, as ‘open hotels’ (later ‘international hotels’); ‘open theatres’; ‘multi-national sports’ (but never multi-racial sports). With the introduction of ‘consensual politics’, these phrases in turn were dropped in favour of terms such as ‘consociation’; ‘consociational politics’; ‘proportional development’; ‘segmental democracy’, and ‘poly-centrism’; ‘separate freedoms’; ‘national self-determination’, ‘multicultural co-operative existence’, ‘multinationalism’, ‘multi-culturalism’, ‘eiesoortige onwikkeling’ which translates to ‘own kind development’. These phrases were augmented by an assorted set of terms denoting various federalist notions.

Racial epithets also changed: ‘natives’ became ‘Bantu’ then ‘Black’, and later the appellation was dropped altogether in favour of the apparently non-racial labelling of ‘population groups’. The politics of names and naming is most evident in a cursory glance at the changing names for the government departments responsible for blacks. First established in 1872 as the ‘Ministerial Department of the Secretary for Native
Affairs’ (Civil Service List, Cape 1892:91), with Unification in 1910 it became the ‘Department of Native Affairs’. On the 23 October 1958, it was changed to the ‘Department of Bantu Administration and Development’. Twenty years later, on the 30 June 1978, it was renamed the ‘Department of Plural Relations and Development’, a short-lived appellation which was changed on 1 July 1979 to the ‘Department of Co-operation and Development’. This title contains no reference to the fact that the Department was concerned solely with the affairs of blacks, rather the nouns ‘Co-operation’ and ‘Development’ both stress positive connotations, and conceal the repressive function of the department in the control of blacks. In 1984 this department gradually broke down and its functions were transferred to other departments within central government, the homelands and self-governing territories.

The process of relexification which is at work here indicates the degree of ideological and constitutional juggling which has taken place within the symbolic expression of South African racial politics. As each term takes on a pejorative overtone, new ‘cleansed’ terminology is engineered to replace it. In the example of apartheid, the substitution of new euphemisms fulfilled two associated functions: firstly, the need to dissociate the previous term from negative connotations (‘separate development’ for baaskap (white supremacy); ‘plural relations’ for ‘apartheid’); and secondly, the need to reinforce or manufacture positive connotations (‘separate development’; ‘separate freedoms’). The purpose of these semantic innovations was to obscure the inherent contradictions in the institutionalised term, and by so doing obscure the relations of power and domination. This was done by foregrounding the positive aspects of the term, while minimizing the negative aspects. Although government departments based on colour were being phased out, they tended to re-appear in different guises, as those of ‘own affairs’ departments. Thus, while ‘discrimination’ (on the basis of colour) was indeed phased out, fragmentation (along ‘ethnic’ lines) remained.

The changes in designation of social processes and their associated institutions carried with them a thread of continuity: all were firmly embedded in an idea of pluralism. Donavon Marais (1989:294), discussing the transition from ‘plural development’ to ‘own affairs’ and ‘general affairs’, put the matter succinctly: ‘that which is thrown out through the front door is smuggled in through the back door’.

‘Reform’ was - and is - all about adapting to the inevitable necessity of accommodating the demands of the black majority, while retaining as the bottom line the asymmetrical power relations which protected the interests of the white minority.
Thus, ‘the reform process’ became an exercise designed to re-articulate the older black-white dichotomy into a new understanding of a multiplicity of individual ‘groups’ (within the borders of ‘white’ South Africa) and ‘nations’ (blacks living in the ‘self-governing states’). Far from doing away with ethnicity, the movement towards de-racialisation increased ethnic divisions as a logical extension of Verwoerdian doctrines, dividing South Africa’s population into different recognisable and ultimately independent ‘nations’. The ‘new dispensation’ was to share power in a way that the interests of each group would provide a system of checks and balances, and obviate the possibility of a ‘winner takes all’ scenario in which there would be a black majority government. P.W. Botha put it this way in the ‘Rubicon’ speech:

But I know for a fact that most leaders in their own right in South Africa and reasonable South Africans will not accept the principle of one-man-one-vote in a unitary system. That would lead to domination of one over the other and it would lead to chaos. Consequently, I reject it as a solution (P.W. Botha 15.8.85).

In a discussion prior to the setting up of the Tricameral Parliament, P.W. Botha was quoted as saying that ‘No single ethnic or cultural group in South Africa constitutes an absolute majority [...] South Africa is a country of minorities’ (Schrire 1991:58). Two years later, in the ‘Rubicon’ speech, he used essentially similar terminology, referring to South Africa as a ‘multi-cultural’ country, saying:

We are not prepared to accept the antiquated, simplistic and racist approach that South Africa consists of a White minority and a Black majority. We cannot ignore the fact that this country is a multicultural society - a country of minorities - White minorities as well as Black minorities and others such as coloured people and Indians. While the National Party accepts and respects the multi-cultural and poly-ethnic nature of South Africa’s population, it rejects any system of horizontal differentiation which amounts to one nation or group in our country dominating another or others.

All these changes affected the perception of what constitutes ‘discrimination’. In June 1979 the then Minister of Plural Relations and Development, Piet Koornhof, made the remark in Washington that ‘Discrimination is dead’. Back in South Africa he elaborated on this statement by saying that he believed in full citizenship rights for all population groups (quoted in S.A. Year Book 1982:203). Two years later he expanded:

The true fact is that we have fourteen different races in South Africa. Fourteen race-groups (volksgroepes), each of which has the right to decide for itself and to uphold its own identity and values. When we talk about a distinction between races (volkeredifferensiasie) then the colour of the skin is not the only norm, to the extent that it should be a norm. When
we talk of the (peoples) of Europe, then we do not talk about one nation, but we distinguish between Germans, Italian, Hollanders, etc. (Koornhof 1980:39 translated from Afrikaans).

The End of ‘Discrimination’

The clearest exposition of the government’s position on the question of what constituted discrimination - and therefore what constituted apartheid - was contained in a response to a fact-finding visit by members of a European Economic Community delegation early in September 1985. (This mission was a precursor to the Eminent Persons Group which toured South Africa in 1986). It is significant to note that it was the government’s statement, rather than the visit of the delegation that was the first item of the news bulletin that evening (1.9.85). The entire item is transcribed in Appendix Five, but the salient passage is reproduced here:

In its statement the government said it shared in the rejection of apartheid if by apartheid was meant the political domination by any one community over any other, the exclusion of any community from the political decision-making process, injustice or inequality in the opportunities available for any community and racial discrimination or the impairment of human dignity (TV News 1.9.85).

From this piece, a number of themes regarding reform can be discerned. Firstly, ‘the statement on discrimination’ was directly linked to the visit by the three EEC Ministers, an admission which sat uneasily with the government’s repeated insistence on finding a solution without outside interference. A second, and in this piece, more important question raised by this report concerns the nature of ‘discrimination’ and ‘apartheid’, terms which were integrally related to the concept of ‘group identity’. Thirdly, the statement outlined some of the content of the government’s ‘reform programme’. This programme included a constitutional framework which would provide ‘for the political participation of all communities at all levels in matters of national or common concern’, a reference to the elaboration of the Tricameral system of ‘own affairs’.

The editorial continues:

[...] apartheid, in the sense in which it is perennially at the centre of political argument in this country, is in practice defined in terms of its impact on people's lives and freedoms. Apartheid measures, as they are understood by ordinary people, are those that legally entrench certain rights and privileges for selected groups at the expense of others. The majority are denied such rights and privileges entirely or exercise them in inferior circumstances. [These need to be replaced with a] dispensation that secures democracy by guaranteeing fundamental individual and group rights' (ibid.).
Here, ‘apartheid’ is stripped of all racial connotations, and relegated to the realm of the personal: ‘apartheid [...] is in practice defined in terms of its impact on peoples’s lives and freedoms’. It is sanitised into an elitist arrangement in which the role of ethnic division is completely suppressed: the ‘rights and privileges’ of (unspecified) ‘selected groups’ are entrenched ‘at the expense of (unspecified) others’. Since racial differentiation has been officially disposed of, so too has discrimination on racial grounds. Differentiation was no longer a matter of skin colour, but depended on ‘group’ (read ethnic group) affiliation. Relexification was one way of redefining ideological terrain. Another was the syntactical strategy of exorcising negative connotations by omitting, rather than backgrounding, offending terms. Thus in (South African) English the preferred term was simply ‘group’, used as short-hand for ‘racial group’, and dropping all overt reference to the apartheid basis of ‘grouping’. Hence the concept ‘intergroup relations’ replaced the older ‘race relations’, or ‘Group Areas Act’ to designate legally entrenched racial division of residential and trading patterns. The Afrikaans term, ‘volksgroep’ carried with it more explicit connotations of racial / ethnic exclusiveness. Despite assurances on the death of apartheid and discrimination, minority groups can be seen on one level to be a continuation of the ‘swartgevaar’ (black danger) concept. The 1948 Election Manifesto, which saw in the first National Party government, stated:

The choice before us is one of these two divergent courses: either that of integration, which would in the long run lead to suicide of the Whites; or that of apartheid, which professes to preserve the identity and safeguard the future of every race.

Compare this statement with an excerpt from P.W. Botha’s ‘Rubicon’ speech: ‘I am not prepared to lead white South Africa and other minority groups on a road to abdication and suicide’; and later: ‘Destroy white South Africa and our influence, and the country will drift into faction strife, chaos and poverty’ (ibid.). The essential difference between the two statements is the government’s intention to protect all ‘minorities’ (particularly the white minority), while at the same time forging alliances with some ‘groups’ at the expense of others.

An important concern of the reform programme identified for the benefit of the visiting EEC Ministers was to be a review of the system of ‘influx control’ - a system of labour rationalisation which was a cornerstone of apartheid. Influx control cannot be seen apart from the question of urbanisation and the upgrading of infrastructures, so the statement also promised ‘an amount of a thousand million rand’ to be ‘set aside to
improve underdeveloped towns and cities over the next five years, an exemplary instance of McCuen's 'oilspot' theory on reform. In the following chapter, the narrative of the demise of influx control, as it was recorded by the government's information structures, and on television news, will be examined.

Reform: the Trench Warfare of the National Party

Antonio Gramsci frequently used military metaphors to explain political processes. He noted that in military war the strategic aim was the destruction of the enemy's army and the occupation of his territory. However, political struggle was far more complex.

Gramsci identified three forms of political warfare: the war of movement; the war of position; and underground warfare. Following these categories, it is possible to say that the ANC insurgents were engaged primarily in underground warfare: they hoarded weapons; they secretly prepared strikes and attacks; and they relied on the existence of a large reserve-force of sympathizers and collaborators, who although immobilized at the time would be potentially effective, and provide support and sustenance when the need arose (see Gramsci 1971:231). The United Democratic Front (UDF), through its campaigns of mass actions, strikes and boycotts, was engaged in a war of position.

The South African government was engaged in a war of movement, the most common form of battle between advanced industrial countries was a war of movement. Internally, such societies have a very complex structure, particularly resistant to the catastrophic 'incursions' of immediate crises - economic depression, and, in the case of South Africa, political demands by the unenfranchised. Against these demands, successive governments had over a period of fifty years built a myriad of defence systems: laws, customs and prejudices all acted as barriers to the 'incursions' of the black majority. White South Africans had built an edifice for themselves and they were not going to give it up easily:

The superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare. In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy's entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defence which was still effective. The same thing happens in politics [...]. The defenders are not demoralized, nor do they abandon their
positions, even among the ruins, nor do they lose their faith in their own strength or their own future (Gramsci 1971:235).

Gramsci's description of political trench warfare aptly explains the process of reform during (and after) the period examined by this thesis. The South African government abandoned one row of their defences, but the larger trench system remained intact. Only the outer edges of their perimeter were damaged. Falling back meant they were able to regroup, to adapt, and fight back yet again.
CHAPTER SIX:
COMMUNICATING THE REFORM PROCESS:
A CASE STUDY ON CITIZENSHIP, URBANISATION AND INFLUX

The Government has accepted the permanence of Black people in the RSA and has decided that all South African citizens should enjoy equal political rights, with the protection of minority rights and the retention of the option of independence for those communities which might prefer it, in an undivided RSA, within which government institutions already exist at various levels - and could still develop. The Government therefore states emphatically that influx control can no longer serve any constitutional objective.


A major thrust in the whole reform policy concerned the inter-related strategies of black urbanisation, housing and influx control. Related to these concerns was the question of citizenship for those people who were de facto, or nominally, assigned as residents of the homelands - i.e. the national or self-governing states. Comment (9.12.85) pointed out that:

Replacing influx control with an urbanisation policy can be traced back to the Riekert Commission report tabled in Parliament in 1979. One of its main recommendations was that a home and a job should be the chief criteria for a black person's presence in an urban area.

The question of black urbanisation became vital as a result of the recognition, in principle at least, that blacks had a legitimate right to reside within the borders of hitherto 'white' South Africa. In his speech at the opening of Parliament on 25 January 1985, P.W. Botha reaffirmed the government's recognition of the permanence of black communities outside the homeland territories (which he referred to as the 'independent and self-governing states'). Eight months later in the 'Rubicon' speech he repeated these intentions: 'We have already accepted the principle of ownership rights for blacks in the urban areas outside the National States' (P.W. Botha, 15.6.86). Addressing the Orange Free State National Party Congress in September, P.W. Botha made the most comprehensive statement on the citizenship issue to date. Comment (12.9.85) reported it this way:

The State President announced in Bloemfontein that steps were being taken to restore South African citizenship to black people permanently resident in South Africa and who lost their citizenship following the independence of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei. Negotiations will also be held on the citizenship of those living within the borders of the independent states and they will be presented with the choice of holding a dual citizenship. In practice therefore, all South
African black people will be in a position to have citizenship of this country. This is because the residents of the self-governing national states have always been South African citizens.

This paragraph would be incomprehensible without prior knowledge of the constitutional arrangements which categorised black people in ‘South Africa’, elsewhere referred to as the central government of South Africa. According to this logic, blacks (in its restricted sense, excluding ‘Coloureds’ and ‘Indians’), fell into three categories:

Firstly, those who de facto lived within the borders of ‘white’ South Africa, but who nominally were assigned as ‘citizens’ of one of the ‘independent states’, or ‘TBVC countries’. The latter was a formulaic contraction representing the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (in the order corresponding to the dates of independence).

Secondly, those who lived in and held ‘citizenship’ in these states, and who wished to obtain dual citizenship (in September 1985 the position vis-à-vis these people was still under ‘negotiation’); and

Thirdly, ‘all South African black people’. The qualification ‘South African’ excluded those in the TBVC countries, which, in terms of constitutional logic, were not considered to be South Africans, but which included residents of the ‘self-governing national states’, those homelands which had not accepted ‘independence’; i.e. KwaZulu, Kwandebele, Gazankulu, Kangwane and Qwa-Qwa.

A re-evaluation of the question of citizenship was the vital first step which allowed for the dismantling of influx control. Later in his Orange Free State speech (1.9.85), P.W. Botha stated that there would be no fourth Parliamentary chamber representing blacks, going on to say:

But I admit that the acceptance by my Government of the permanence of Black communities in urban areas outside the National States, means that a solution will have to be found for their legitimate rights. The future of these communities and their constitutional arrangements will have to be negotiated with the leaders from the National States, as well as from their own ranks (P.W. Botha 15.8.85).

The whole debate revolved around the formulation of ‘orderly urbanisation’, a framing which underlined the need for a gradualist approach to the problem:

Steps to promote orderly urbanisation and to eliminate negative and discriminatory aspects of influx control are receiving urgent consideration (P.W. Botha, Opening Parliament 25.1.85. Hansard 2nd Session, 8th Parliament:13).
The same phraseology was repeatedly used in the Report of the President’s Council Constitutional Committee (hereafter PC 1985), for example, they characterised their mission as ‘contemplating an orderly policy’ (PC 1985:59). In the Rubicon speech P.W. Botha expressed the opinion that influx control was too expensive:

On the question of influx control - I can only say that the present system is outdated and too costly. The President’s Council will probably report on this matter in the near future, while the government itself is considering improvements (P.W. Botha 15.8.85).

The President’s Council Report to which he alluded was requested on 26 March 1985, and published on 21 August 1985. The findings and recommendations of the Report were quite radical, certainly the tone was a great deal more reformist and liberal than the Rubicon speech. But the impact of the report was dulled by the timing of its release - one week after the ‘Rubicon’, at a time when there was a palpable sense of disillusion and cynicism over the government’s reform programme. The reason for the delay can only be speculated on. Perhaps it was genuinely not possible for the President’s Council to meet and he did not want to pre-empt their decision - however, since Botha had attempted to rail-road the Security laws through Parliament against the wishes of the President’s Council, this seems unlikely. A more likely scenario was that Botha felt that if it was published before the speech, he would have had less room for manoeuvre, and did not wish to be seen merely responding to a pre-set policy.

The Report focused on a number of related issues, the most important of which were: influx control in relation to blacks; housing; and black local government\(^1\). In its survey on trends, both international and local, the Report noted that ‘in-migration’, primarily of a rural-urban nature, was not the major contributor to urban population increase, but rather that the ‘natural increase has already become the most important source of urban population growth in the case of blacks as well as other population groups’ (PC 1985:48). This insight, concluded the writers, was ‘extremely important in the formulation of strategy’ (ibid.). Just why this was so important was not spelt out, but the logic ran counter to the previously accepted wisdom that freedom of movement into the cities would create a ‘swamping effect’. The Report suggested that accelerated urbanisation was inevitable anyway (‘it is realistic to expect continued migration to urban

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areas'; PC 1985:50), and the removal of coercive mechanisms to inhibit rural-urban migration would not make much difference.

The Report outlined the main legal mechanism through which the movement of black people from the reserves (homelands / national states) had historically been curtailed. It also outlined the policy of 'decentralization', in which eight 'decentralization points' had been identified, and 'an extensive system of varying incentive measures' was introduced. However, concluded the Report, all these plans had failed, resulting in a shift in emphasis in which the government was more concerned to put developmental money into the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) and Development Bank for small-scale, indigenised industry / distribution both in rural and urban areas. This strategy had 'so far elicited a positive response from the private sector because of its less political and ideological character' (PC 1985:64) - rare admission of the basic flaw of the previous strategies. A full six months later, the early morning editorial Comment (28.2.86) picked up the topic again:

Decentralising economic activity in South Africa is certainly needed for a variety of socio-political reasons and in the past decade decentralisation incentives have been greatly increased. But there is a distinct limit to what any country can achieve in establishing entirely new growth points; new centres of urbanisation.

The Report of the President's Council's Constitutional Committee noted that 'very little evidence dealing with the advantages of influx control came before the Committee' (PC 1985:139). Four related reasons why influx control should be abolished were identified:

**Firstly**, in practice, it did not slow down the rate of black rural-urban migration: 'The preponderance of the evidence before the Committee indicates that influx control

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2 Regional development policy had first been introduced in 1944. The report of the Social and Economic Planning Council (the Tomlinson Report) of 1955 established townships in Black areas. In 1960 the 'border industries policy' was established with 'the effect of urban concentration and the creation of new towns as limited because the development of border industries took place near existing urban centres' (PC 1985:62).

3 Reasons for the failure of the decentralisation strategy were given as (White Paper on a Strategy for Industrial Development, 1985): 1. the high cost of creating employment; 2. incentives were 'dissipated' by high costs incurred in running a business - off the electrical grid far from the market, reliance on unskilled labour, and enormous set-up costs.

4 Institute of Sociological and Demographic Research of the HSRC, part of Main Committee HSRC Investigation into Intergroup Relations: 1988, the South African Society, Pretoria.
has been of no use and does not work, and that it has been a direct and indirect cause of countless problems' (PC 1985:138)⁵.

Secondly, it was not humanitarian, and had proved to 'have given rise to the greatest discontent, resentment and racial tension among blacks, partly because of its discriminatory nature' (PC 1985:138)⁵. It infringed basic human rights including the freedom of movement: 'The degradation of human dignity inherent in the process cannot be justified' (PC 1985:139). Furthermore, influx control was discriminatory because it only applied to blacks and not other 'population groups'.

Thirdly, the system was unwieldy and costly. The Committee noted, ‘with great concern’, that between twenty and thirty thousand persons were arrested annually ‘for offences under influx control and related technical offenses’ (PR 1985:150), which exacerbated over-crowding in jails⁷.

Fourthly, because it used the criminal laws to enforce the measures, it brought the whole of the criminal law enforcement process into disrepute: 'The large-scale circumvention of the law produces contempt for the relevant Act and the authorities' (PR 1985:150); and later:

[... if influx control is used or applied for political purposes, it is not ethically justifiable to use criminal law to enforce it, because this creates antagonism to the whole legal system (PC 1985:155).

Against the very evident disadvantages of influx control, 'orderly urbanisation' exhibited a number of attractive features. Primary among these was the world-wide trend in the linkage between urbanisation and a decrease in fertility rates, and hence in population growth (PC 1985:154), a point which was also stressed in Human Sciences Research Council report the following year. Of more immediate concern, however, was the realization that a primary thrust of reform was to accommodate blacks on a

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⁵ ‘Offenders without Section 10 rights, or residence or work permits, are arrested, convicted and sentenced, but simply do not go back to their homelands. Even if they are sent back or go back, they simply return to the urban areas again. Evidence was obtained from some blacks [nameless] to the effect that they had been charged and sentenced four or five times but had stayed on. There was also evidence that in 1982 in the Western Cape 2750 persons were removed, and were back within a week. To some extent this inability to enforce the law turns it into a mockery and fosters contempt for it.’

⁶ ‘It is with great concern that the committee notes the present large number of arrests (between 20,000 and 30,000 per year) for offences under influx control provisions and related technical offences. The large-scale circumvention of the law produces contempt for the relevance of the Act and for the authorities. The degrading of human dignity inherent in the process cannot be justified.’

⁷ The report quoted the findings of the Hoëxter Commission on Legal Reform delivered the previous year.
sufficiently large scale to earn their support for the government. In practice, ‘reform’ had little impact on black antagonism towards the government. It was hoped that by extending urban rights to more blacks, the ripple effect of the reform process would draw more people into the ambit of government hegemony:

Only ‘legal’ urban blacks can derive advantage from certain recent reforms or improvements, such as the introduction of 99 year leasehold, and black Local Authorities. The ‘illegals’ who constitute a large proportion of the black urban community, cannot share in these reforms. [...] [T]he result is that the improvements in attitudes which was a large part of the object of these reforms does not extend to large part of the population. The elimination of influx control [...] would lead to a more general improvement of attitudes (PC 1985:156).

Arguments for the Retention of Influx Control

The Report stated that most important arguments for the retention of (at least some aspects of) the influx control / dompas system came from two sources: the Development Boards and the security lobby of the state bureaucracy - particularly from the police. The Development Board argued for a gradualist approach, stating that ‘you cannot simply open the sluice gates and say that people can come in. You would cause chaos. But if it is done on an orderly basis, you can do it’ (PC 1985:151). They justified their misgivings on the grounds that unrestricted migration would precipitate a major health hazard. However, here, as previously, the argument of the ‘sanitary syndrome’ thinly veiled a deeper concern for law, order and control:

It was also stated in evidence that squatter areas such as Crossroads are impossible to police properly, that any such place becomes ungovernable and is a breeding ground for unrest and crime, [...] police exploitation and civic disobedience, [as well as] the exploitation of the ordinary squatter by squatter lords (PC 1985:152).

The Development Boards also testified that increased urbanisation would lead to ‘insufficient employment opportunities, increased competition for scarce resources, and the lowering of the standard of living of those already established by the new-comers’ (ibid.). Recourse to the ‘sanitary syndrome’ has historically been used as a rationale for control and segregation. Stedman-Jones (1968) points to the way in which the endemic poverty and potential violence of the Victorian London’s ‘casual poor’ were viewed with alarm, and expressed in images both of contagion and as a threat to the enlightened expectations of progress and social order. In the same way, segregationist measures in the Transvaal Republic were motivated in terms of the need for health control measures,
but were in fact aimed at the elimination of economic competition (Tomaselli 1983:73). In common with both Victorian urban reformers and early South African segregationists, the Development Boards formulated their prescriptions for social policy not only in terms of epidemiology and sanitary science, but also as an exercise in moral philosophy.

Testimony given by the South African Police was blatantly in favour of retaining influx control as a primary means of coercive control. The police were quite explicit in their evidence:

Influx Control with its associated reference book system, offers a system for combatting crime and terrorism, because of the fact that every black person can be identified. The SAP testified that it is absolutely necessary for them to identify and individualise each person. They are in favour of blacks enjoying free movement and selling their labour, but they stated that the restriction on movement also held certain advantages when control had to be exercised (PC 1985:152-153).

Despite the arguments in favour of a retention of influx control, the President's Council accepted its Constitutional Committee's recommendations in September 1985. However, the coercive aspect of the Dompas as a method of identification, so clearly alluded to by the police testimony, was retained in a mutated form. This point will be returned to at a later point in the chapter.

Popularising Reform: the Role of Comment

The process of phasing out influx control exemplifies the process through which reform was implemented in the Botha era. Typically the pattern of reform was to identify an aspect of apartheid that required a more humane interpretation, discursively introduce it to the public domain (as influx control had been broached in Botha's opening speech to Parliament in 1985), then set up an investigation into the matter. This was in keeping with the approach to the orderly management of social problems. The President's Council Constitutional Committee represented a narrow spectrum of South African society: predominantly male (only one woman served), Afrikaans-speaking, and all members of the National Party. Although they attempted to widen the circle of

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8 In response to the White Paper on urbanisation, Chris Heunis, the Government guru on 'Constitutional Development', gave the following press-release (SAPA 23.4.86):
People in our rural areas should not live under the false impression that the grass will be greener and the lights brighter in the cities. They will be ill-advised to flock to the metropoles en masse because, as in the past, squatting, unhygienic conditions, overcrowding and the associated conditions which create squalor and misery, cannot be allowed in the public interest.
contribution by taking evidence from ‘experts’ in the field - including those from ‘liberal’ institutions such as the University of Cape Town and the Urban Foundation - these people can be seen as the organic intellectuals *par excellence* of the National Party. Antonio Gramsci conceived of organic intellectuals as those people who were able to conceptualise and articulate the collective consciousness of the class or party they represented. For Gramsci, each class ‘creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function, not only in economic but also in social and political fields’ (Gramsci 1971:3). Organic intellectuals arise from the concerns of the people whose ideas and needs they articulate. It is these people who consciously set out to articulate the ‘philosophy’ or ‘ideology’ of the ruling hegemony. However, the premise behind Gramsci’s approach is that ‘philosophy’, a term he used interchangeably with ‘ideology’, was not the preserve of the abstract cognition of a few intellectual professionals, but a concrete social activity in which all persons were engaged. Intellectual revolution cannot be achieved simply by confronting one ideology with another. This would be a collapse into fetishism, going against the whole tenor of Gramsci’s approach. Gramsci insisted that the social forces behind the philosophies, and more directly, the ideology that these forces have generated, needed to be confronted. These ideologies became part of what he refers to as ‘common sense’, a term he used to mean the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become ‘common’ in any epoch:

common sense is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space. It is the ‘folklore’ of philosophy, and like folklore, it takes countless different forms. Its most fundamental characteristic is that it is a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is (Gramsci 1971:419).

In the wake of the publication of the President Council’s Report, the SABC’s early morning programme *Comment* broadcast a number of editorials aimed at making the *Report* accessible to the general listening public. The purpose of these early morning programmes, as much as anything else, was to popularise the ideas formulated by the organic intellectuals of the National Party, and to make these ideas accessible to the imagined ‘average listener’, transforming the level of ‘philosophy’ into the level of ‘common sense’.

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The first analysis of the President’s Council Report was in the context of the view expressed earlier in the week by Dr Joop de Loor, Auditor-General and former Director-General of Finance, who suggested that:

The process of urbanisation would provide the main thrust of economic growth until the turn of the century. In past decades the country’s economic growth was stimulated mainly by mineral exports and import substitution. [...] Viewed in this light, the abolition of influx control, as South Africa has come to know it over the years, and the process of urbanisation which continues almost uncontrollably, is not merely a disruptive phenomenon, but a stabilising and, in the long term, beneficial development (Comment 13.9.85).

Comment goes on to explain the failure of influx control in strongly technicist terms:

There was a time in the country’s history when it was expected, and hoped, that the black national states would develop and prosper to the extent that they would accommodate and provide work for all their peoples. Over the years, particularly in the recent past, it has become obvious that this was a false expectation. It was not realized that such an undertaking would require far more resources than were available in South Africa, even if its people were prepared to make exceptional sacrifices (ibid.)

For thirty years, the government had insisted that blacks had no permanent place within the urban milieu of ‘white’ South Africa, and that influx control was necessary to retain order in the labour market. Now they were faced with the task of convincing white South Africans that influx control was unworkable and archaic:

The granting of freehold rights to blacks represents a further step in the reform process: replacing discriminatory legislation and obsolete control measures with policies reflecting present-day realities. As with many other apartheid ideologies, it has proved impracticable to regard blacks forever as ‘temporary sojourners’ selling their labour in the cities. They are inextricably part of the country’s economy, and also of the urban milieu. Provision is now being made for this reality (Comment 12.9.85).

The SABC’s reporting of the reform process in general, and the question of citizenship and the removal of influx control in particular, was characterised by a strong element of reassurance and understanding:

South Africans, finding it difficult to keep up to changes which they experience daily (sic), are nevertheless subjected to continuous warnings that time is running out and that too little is being done too late. [...] In other words, South Africa must stop just talking and begin acting. Clear evidence that South Africa is indeed acting, [has] emerged. (Comment 12.9.85).

If the Committee of the State President’s Council were the organic intellectuals of the National Party, then the SABC acted as their propagators, simplifying and elaborating
the sedimented layers of knowledge and folklore which made up the common sense of their identified audience.

Making Housing Accessible

The question of housing and tenure provides an excellent example of gradualist reform. A Commission of Enquiry into issues of black employment and urbanisation, headed by P.J. Riekert, reported in 1979 with the basic proposal that residence in urban areas should not be restricted to those with ‘Section 10’ rights. The latter granted urban residence to blacks who were born in urban areas, or who had lived there for 15 continuous years, or worked for the same employer for ten years. Rather, argued Riekert, access to, and residence in, urban areas should be tied solely to the availability of houses and jobs (Riekert 1979). If implemented, these provisions would have meant that influx control would be dependent on the capacity of cities to sustain newcomers, rather than a reflection of ideological provisions set down in 1945. Riekert also suggested that houses should be sold on a freehold basis, a suggestion which was not enacted until 1985.Only then did the government commit itself to restoring (and indeed encouraging) freehold rights for urban black communities. Comment (9.12.85) suggested that the recommendations of the Riekert Commission, which were ‘accepted in principle’ in 1979, were now being given effect:

The Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, Mr Chris Heunis, has said that the relevant legislation, to be enacted by Parliament next year, will make provision for a choice between leasehold and the slightly more costly freehold option.

In the wake of the Riekert Commission, the government proposed a 30-year leasehold, followed by a 99-year leasehold, transferable to next-of-kin. The move was seen by black radicals as divisive of ‘the struggle’, and interest was negligible, a point conceded in the same Comment:

Because of the reservations blacks had about leasehold, sales of houses in terms of this system did not live up to expectations. But freehold should ensure the necessary permanence, and will in all probability attract private sector financing (ibid.).

The event which triggered this editorial was ‘the granting of freehold rights to more South African blacks’, and the ‘recent announcement on common citizenship for all South Africans’, circumstances which, in the words of the commentator, gave ‘tangible expression [...] to the intention of replacing existing influx control measures with a policy of orderly urbanisation’ (ibid.). (It was also connected to outside pressure in the form

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of a rebuke by Herman Nickel, US Ambassador to South Africa, who said on his return from a recall to Washington that 'mere statements of intent were no longer adequate' (ibid.).

The editorial went on to say that the extension of freehold rights was the corollary to the removal of the provision that only persons who already had claim to urban rights were permitted leasehold:

Freehold rights for blacks will not be coupled to urban residence rights: any South African black able to buy a house in a proclaimed black area will be able to do so. In practice it means that a black person, whether a citizen or a legal immigrant, will acquire urban rights simply through the purchase of a house (ibid.).

This editorial drew directly on the Constitutional Committee of the President’s Council, which had noted that 'Leasehold has been seen by the black community as a kind of second-class ownership' (PC 1985:112); also that ‘housing, especially home ownership, is the cornerstone of stable communities’ (PC 1985:106); and finally, the Report had suggested that ‘in the long run this [i.e. freehold] would also strengthen the position of the black local authorities’ (PC 1985:113).

The Report also stressed the significance of private sector intervention, alluded to in the editorial. An elaborately constructed theory of South Africa as a dual-economy was posited in order to rationalize a system of site and service as the most viable option for housing:

South Africa is a rapidly developing country with first world standards and third world conditions. One of the greatest challenges of the future will be to reconcile the expectations and aspirations of these two worlds in the field of housing. Evidence before the Commission gave a strong impression that the housing standards laid down for a considerable part of the black population group are unrealistically high (PC 1985:123).

In response to these contradictory pulls, a system of site and service was recommended, together with the encouragement of ‘self-help building opportunities’, which were seen to be ‘to an increasing extent [...] the only way in which they [i.e. blacks] will be able to make their "sweat equity" contribution to the satisfaction of housing needs’ (PC 1985:123). Similar findings were made by a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) report in February of the following year. The Comment which followed this report explicitly illustrates the way in which technicist information was digested and re-spoken to the general public. Quoting the ‘Institute of Sociological and Demographic Research’, Comment (28.2.86) noted that 'large-scale informal housing including controlled squatting - is an unavoidable feature of the future urban landscape’. Furthermore, a ‘demographic
perspective that emerged from the study' stated that 'population growth, [was] an issue which contains more potential for future economic misery and political chaos than any other in national life' (ibid.). Bearing this in mind, the editorial directly addressed the perceived ideological inertia of a section of its listening public:

It will therefore come as an uncomfortable surprise to those who tend automatically to condemn the process of black urbanisation that is underway in the country, to learn that it is the most effective means of reducing the birth rate and thereby solving the problem [of population growth] (ibid.).

Further examples of the popularising function of Comment can be found in the summary of the HSRC's survey on inter-group relations published in July 1986, which was the subject of editorialising exhortation on the morning of July 24, 1986.

Visualising Influx Control: The Case of the Disappearing Dompas

In the White Paper on Urbanisation (1985: para 4.3.4) the government accepted almost all the recommendations of the President's Council Committee, that 'In future, freedom of movement to and within urban areas will apply to all citizens of the RSA on a non-discriminatory basis'. The decision led to the scrapping of thirty-four measures, including the infamous 'idle and undesirable black' law, and the vagrancy, loitering and squatting measures which would henceforth be subject to the laws of the country. Most importantly, it scrapped the power of the SAP to arrest black people for failure to produce documentation on demand. Instead, all South Africans were to have a common identity document.

Two weeks after the National Party's Orange Free State Congress in Bloemfontein, TV News (13.9.85) reported that 'the President's Council overwhelmingly accepted a recommendation of its Committee for Constitutional Affairs that influx control and the passbook system be scrapped'. A transcript of the report is reproduced in the Appendix 6. The report is an exemplary instance of 'balanced' reporting. Representatives of the National Party, the New Republic Party, the Progressive Reform Party and the dissenting voices of the Conservative Party were given an opportunity to express their reactions to the Report. Finally, the opinion of 'one [Parliamentary] member, Mr Ismail Omar' was presented 'in a lighter vein'. No party affiliation was presented for Mr Omar, because he 'represented' the interests of the (Indian) House of Representatives. The inclusion of this piece can be seen as having a double purpose: firstly, it did provide 'light relief', and humanises an otherwise very drab piece of
reportage; secondly, and more importantly, it provided evidence of a ‘balanced’ and unbiased style of reporting which included opinion from ‘other (population) groups’. Each response was presented as a voice-over, a mechanism which allowed the report to be contracted substantially. While Andre Le Roux emphasised the ‘historical significance of the debate’, little of substance was said: the opinions were rhetorical statements of intent rather than any appraisal of the import of the Report itself. With the exception of Connie Mulder’s position, all the stated views indicated a congruence of opinion between the National Party and its liberal opposition: the Progressive Reform and New Republic Parties. (Later that year the two merged to form the Progressive Federal Party). The isolation of the Conservative Party was further stressed by reference to Mulder as ‘Mr’ rather than ‘Dr’, a lapse in protocol regarded as a slight in a society which values academic titles so highly.

The general consensus of the opinions was that the recommendations should be accepted ‘without delay’, and ‘that the enforcement of influx control be stopped immediately’. The report implies a mood of optimism:

It is not known at this stage how and when Mr Botha would react. Councillors were however sure of a positive response, and they derived their expectations from Mr Botha’s earlier remarks in Durban to the effect that the measures would become outdated and also from his decision to restore South African citizenship to blacks (ibid.).

Dissenting Voices

Subsequent to the announcement of the repeal of the Dompas, the Sunday evening television discussion programme Network discussed the issue (15.9.85; see Appendix Six). The segment was chaired by Pat Rogers, a free-lancer with a controversial history as a liberal presenter of previous programmes, such as Midweek, which he had anchored in the early 1980s. The remarkable feature of the segment was the choice of guests, who were all part of Rogers’ personal network (personal communication): Eric Mafuna, a black advertising executive, and managing director of his own company; Robin Lee, of the Urban Foundation; and Enos Mabusa, the maverick Homeland leader of Kangwane, who was also a board member of the Urban Foundation and who had strong sympathies with the ANC. Most unusually, there was no spokesperson representing the government’s point of view, and the omission of a spokesman from the Ministry of the Interior can be seen as a structured absence. (The male gender is used advisedly here, since there was no example of a ministry
spokeswoman during the whole period under study.) All three panellists can be categorised broadly as anti-apartheid in their political approach. Thus the 'debate' was allowed to develop in an oppositional way, and did not address the question of whether influx control should, or should not be abolished, but was confined to a whether the dompas removal was a sufficiently effective political move at this stage.

Pivotal to the understanding of the whole programme was the place of the Urban Foundation, which is a private-sector agency set up by business interests after the 1976 Soweto uprising, in a bid to 'stabilise' urban communities. In evidence to the seminal President's Council Committee on Urbanisation (PC 1985), the Urban Foundation vigorously pushed to change Government policy towards the influx of blacks into the cities, arguing that it was more important to channel, rather than turn back, the flow of rural people to urban areas. The Urban Foundation was a prime example of the policy of 'rule by deferral' (Pottinger 1988:89) - it was the agency to which the government ceded much of the responsibility of privatised urban planning and housing provision, in keeping with its parallel contemporary strategies of economic reform through deregulation and privatisation:

The Foundation operated in a particularly delicate environment: their constituency was major business interests, while their target group was the polarised and often suspicious black community and their moderators the reluctant reforms in Pretoria. The Urban Foundation was ceaselessly accused by radical opposition of attempting to 'buy off the revolution' which was most certainly true. Yet in the interim they achieved much in nudging the South African government towards acceptance of a more rational urbanisation policy (Pottinger 1988:90).

In the debate, Eric Mafuna adopted the role of the devil's advocate, unprepared to negotiate with anyone. Mafuna interpellated himself as a 'business person', rather than 'a black', although Pat Rogers called on him as a black to speak for other blacks, particularly urbanized blacks⁹. Mafuna employed the discourse of English-dominated capital, identifying himself with 'responsible capital'. Throughout, he used advertising terminology, as in his choice of the word 'campaign'. For Mafuna, the most notable significance of the removal of the dompas lay in its symbolism, which, while he was at

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⁹ Not only was Mafuna careful to erase all racial overtones from his persona, but he was also self-consciously non-sexist: his use of the term 'businessperson' stands out in the flow of discourse from the rest of these programmes. In contrast to Mafuna, Mabuza was unable to impinge on the flow of the programme.
pains to demystify it, he identified as the central contradiction in this period of reform, describing it as:

A pinprick - really its a pinprick because its one of the visible manifestations of apartheid. In any campaign - for it to succeed, one of the things you do - you’ve got a visible symbol used to identify - to manifest the campaign. The Pass Laws was - the pass book itself was visually the culmination of apartheid in all its ramifications (Network 15.9.85).

While Mafuna set himself up as the provocateur, Robin Lee adopted the ‘voice of reason’, pointing to the positive aspects of the Report as he saw them. In response to Pat Rogers’ question whether this could be seen as ‘the end of the demolition of squatter camps and the end of forced removals’, Lee challenged Rogers’ discourse, recasting ‘squatter camps’ as ‘informal settlements’, a shift in emphasis which enabled him to shift the discussion into a more positive direction. Thus he was able to talk about ‘informal dwellings which they upgrade over time’; and the ‘massive provision of land’; concepts which would have been impossible to envisage when the subject under discussion was ‘squatter camps’:

**Robin Lee:** It depends on how you use the word ‘squatter’. I think if people are actually illegally occupying other people’s land, than there is a case for organizing the removing from that land. But if you are talking about informal settlements where people are living legally on site and erecting informal dwelling which they upgrade over time, then I think that a much more positive aspect of the Report and of the proposals. It does envisage a system of very massive provision of land (*ibid.*).

The debate provided a good example of the way in which individual producers could use the SABC to subvert the expected policy of providing a platform to government spokespeople, or at least of clearly presenting their point of view. Yet while the programme provided a forward indicator of the way in which the SABC was ultimately to move, by extending the boundaries of what was considered legitimate discourse and bringing previously excluded people onto television who would not otherwise have had a voice, it was before its time and the format was not repeated during the period under study. Soon after this, Pat Rogers retired from broadcasting altogether.

The Unspoken Question of the Fingerprints

The legislation formally removing the Dompas was not promulgated for another ten months, once again underlining the centrality of gradualism and caution which
characterised the Botha government. When the move finally was enacted, TV News included an interview with Gerry van Zyl, the Director General of Internal Affairs (TV News 24.6.86, see Appendix 6). The newsreader, David Hall-Green, opened the report by noting that:

The Identification Bill in terms of which all races will in future carry a uniform identity document, has caused confusion among many people (TV News 24.6.86).

Throughout the report, it was not directly specified what the origin of the ‘confusion’ was, or who in fact constitute the ‘many people’. However, Van Zyl’s remarks provided sufficient clues to be able to piece together the unsaid:

Van Zyl: Whites, Coloureds and Asians have in the main got valid identity documents supplied by my Department, and those documents will remain valid and they don’t have to apply for new documents. The Bill really entails bringing black people on a par with the documents to those that Whites, Coloureds and Indians already have.

This statement, taken together with the understanding that TV1 was aimed at Whites, Coloured and Asians, indicates that the ‘confusion’ arose from these ranks. The point of contention was whether everyone was required to obtain new identity documents; or whether the new documentation applied only to blacks. Through the medium of the news report, Van Zyl reassured viewers of the latter: ‘The Bill really entails bringing black people on a par with the documents to those that Whites, Coloured and Indians already have (sic)’ (ibid.). But the nub of the controversy lay with the provision that all new identity documents would include fingerprints. Van Zyl approached this question in terms of the technical challenge it presented, while at the same time indicating a flexible approach to the situation:

Van Zyl: That is quite a major task, and we haven’t given it all that much thought yet. But if one takes into account that some two million people visit our office once a year, and if we were to ask them only if they were able to supply their fingerprints, we will in a very short time have many million people’s fingerprints on record. Should we find that this is not effective, we can always think of other means (TV News 24.6.86).

At no time did he allude to any ideological dissention surrounding the question of fingerprints, except to say that they would not appear on the document itself. Indirectly he reassured the viewers of TV1 on the great unspoken question around which the report was really structured: whites, Coloureds and Indians would not have to present themselves to have their fingerprints taken for the new identity documents, as the new Bill related only to blacks, whose present identity documents, or *dompasses*, were now
obsolete. In this respect it should be recalled that in their testimony to the Constitutional Committee of the Presidents' Council, the South African Police emphasised the role of the dompas (ie. the old identification books for blacks) as a means of control. Thus the concomitant finger-print records which accompanied the new identity documents could serve the same purpose, with the target group being primarily black, while other racial 'groups' would be incorporated into the system in a piecemeal and gradual fashion.

The Identification Bill was introduced eight days later. The format of the television news report was constructed in a way to accentuate the historical importance of the event (Nuus 2.7.86, Appendix 6). Jill de Villiers' account of the progress of the new documents, recorded on location in Pretoria, was an exercise in reassurance of the success of the new system. To compensate for the obvious lack of interest at her chosen location ('Not that many people arrived here'), she reported that:

... in other places there was far more interest. Applications for the new documents started slowly, but interest is getting greater each day. At the moment about 8 000 applications are being received per day at the Department. In some towns and cities, the applications are faster [...] (TV Nuus 2.7.86).

Once again, the question of finger-printing was treated in wholly technicist terms: 'All that is required are photographs and a set of finger-prints' (TV Nuus, 2,7,86 #9). All allusions to the traditional coercive functions of finger-print records were suppressed - indeed, they were portrayed as nothing more than an adjunct to photographs. More interesting than the verbal dimension of the report, however, was the staged nature of the visuals. During de Villier's narration, a ceremony was contrived in which a black man received his new identity document. The piece ended with an improvised statement from a Mr Charles Tsebe, who stated:

and this means a great deal to us. There is a great difference from the old document which we had and we are very happy about it (TV Nuus 2.7.86 #3).

The two documents he held in his hands exhibited no obvious differences to the camera, and the reason for his happiness was not apparent to the viewer. Yet the quotation provided a neat sense of closure to the narrative, and argued by assertion that the exercise had been successful and well-accepted.

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Conclusions: Narrative Structures and Nodal Points

Contrasting the volume of television news coverage of political conflict to the comparative coverage of political reform, one is struck by the relative dearth of the latter. Part of the attempt to account for the difference must be the conditions under which the two processes occur. Violence is an ‘event’ - it happens at a particular time, to particular people and in a particular place. Someone is killed, a house is firebombed, etcetera. Reform, on the other hand, is a long, on-going and rather dull process. There is little to report, as negotiations behind the scenes drag on with nothing calamitous or extraordinary to show for it.

In everyday fashion, the processes of both apartheid and reform continue unabated. While politicians discussed the merits and demerits of the removal of influx control, nameless, faceless people left the rural areas, made the uncertain trek to the urban centres, erected shacks, looked for work or joined the ranks of the ‘informal sector’ or the unemployed. None of this is newsworthy. The process only becomes newsworthy when shacks are bulldozed down, or reports from think-tanks like the HSRC or the President’s Council are delivered. At times like these, the monotony of the process - which continues on a daily basis - is interrupted. These points of rupture provide stepping stones in the diagosis of the unfolding narrative.

The story of reform proceeded along a number of nodal points in the debate, such as the various semi-ceremonial occasions of various party-political congresses, as well as the publication of reports, notably the President’s Council Report and the HSRC report. The ‘Rubicon’ speech was delivered at the Federal Congress of the National Party (15.8.85); the anticipated removal of influx control, and a major announcement concerning citizenship were made at the Orange Free State National Party Congress (12.9.85); the publication of the President’s Council Report was followed by a rash of reportage on influx control; while the HRSC’s report on ‘Intergroup Relations’ in February 1986 reopened the question of informal housing and ‘controlled squatting’ (HSRC 1986). The 1986 annual Natal National Party Congress held in Durban on the 12 August 1986, also elicited three editions of Comment: on of the morning of the opening speech, and on the two days following it. In anticipation of the opening, Comment (12.8.86) editorialised that:

Consensus reached in Durban will be submitted to the electorate at large at a later stage. In the meantime, the Congress provides an opportunity for the governing party to strengthen and entrench the reforms of the past so that this might provide a solid foundation on which to build the next
round of reform action. As such, the Congress in Durban will provide the Government with a fresh mandate to continue (irrespective of, and in spite of, international pressures and sanctions) on the road of political change and constitutional reform.\(^{10}\)

A year after the ‘Rubicon’, *Comment* attempted to exercise some damage control. The excerpt quoted above attempted to smooth over the uneven passage of reform. The editorial submerged the awareness that change was essential to ward off further international pressure and sanctions. Reform was presented here as an inevitable and evolutionary process, the brainchild of the National Party. No recognition was given to the fact that reform was an untidy, uneven and hesitant process, beset with set-backs, which jerked forward in fits and starts. The SABC’s reportage of reform confirms the latter reading: nothing on the subject was heard for days or weeks, only to be followed by a surge of coverage on reform oriented stories. Political violence, on the other hand, was a daily occurrence, and the problem faced by the SABC, as well as the government’s information structures, was how to persuade the white electorate that reform was progressing under circumstances of instability and destruction. The next chapter considers the meaning of this political violence.

\(^{10}\) Other editions of *Comment* focused on the main theme of the Congress, for example (13.8.86): [D]ialogue and reform are an internal South African affair. South Africans themselves hold the key to their own future [...] The model for its future progress would not be found outside the country, and in the realisation of that fact it was up to all of the people of South Africa to face up to the challenge with faith and courage [...] At this time of unprecedented pressures to internationalise the country’s political situation, that perspective can hardly be emphasised too much. [...] For South Africans to move forward purposefully in resolving tough political problems, the first requirement is to come to terms with the fact that their future will not be decided by outsiders - that neither false promises nor blackmailing threats will change the political course of the country.
CHAPTER SEVEN:
DEFINING THE MEANING OF VIOLENCE

The [...] worsening violence and growing isolation of the South African government would almost certainly result in the government using more of its coercive power and consolidating its Afrikaner base by moving rightwards. The critical factor will be the level of violence against whites and changes in white standards of living. If more whites are killed, as seems likely after the ANC's threat to broaden the struggle into a 'people's war', and the economic costs become more punitive for the white population, the Nationalists government is likely to hunker down in defense of a siege state.

(John de St Jore, 1986:84.)

Compatriots, the entire of the black townships of our country (sic) from the northern Transvaal down to the Cape, are being engulfed by the flames of the revolution. The battle has now even spread to the rural and remote parts of our country. Daily, the confrontation between our heroic and death-defying people and the repressive forces of the apartheid regime, its troops and police, has continued unabated. More than 700 lives of our people have now been lost in this period of over one year, most of them the victims of the bullets of the apartheid killers.

(ANC 'Radio Freedom' Broadcast, 2 September 1985.)

Defining Violence

Political violence is difficult to define, because, like the term ‘terrorism’, any definition tends to be a normative one, telling us more about the view point of those who use it, than about the phenomenon itself. In Luigi Bonate’s terms (1979a:197), any definition is ‘more the result of a verdict than the establishing of a fact; the formulating of a social judgment rather than the description of a set of phenomena’.

Abraham Miller, an American military ideologue specializing in counter-terrorist strategy, is archetypal in his definition of political violence as ‘the systematic use of random violence against innocents in order to bring about political change through fear’ (Miller 1982:1). In a study that has been highly influential among ruling National Party policy makers, Richard Clutterbuck (1981:4) suggests that ‘political violence’, a term he never defines, encompasses three elements:

* violence in industrial disputes
* violence in political demonstrations
* violence in ‘terrorism’.

Both Abraham and Clutterbuck exemplify what Eliot and Schlesinger (1982:265) have referred to as the ‘official’ point of view on political violence. Two defining characteristics of political violence can be gleaned from the writings of counter-insurgency theorists.
Firstly, most ‘official’ concepts of political violence take for granted that political violence can only be used against the state. Violence used on behalf of the state is tacitly ignored, or seen in terms of ‘law and order’. In this thesis, I will discuss political violence as a multi-faceted concept. It is an unequal relationship between the authorised violence on the part of the state, and violence aimed at undermining the authority of the state.

Secondly, official views make a distinction between ‘terrorism’, by which is usually meant armed violence, and other forms of political violence. This distinction is mirrored in the South African state’s distinction between ‘terror’ and ‘unrest’; and in the ANC’s distinction between ‘insurgency’ and ‘mass action’; where ‘mass action’ is taken to mean the internal resistance to apartheid legislation (particularly the emergency regulations) while ‘insurgency’ refers to armed incursions by trained guerrillas. This distinction is fundamental, and one which I shall retain through this discussion. Officially, ‘acts of terror’ and ‘Incidents of Unrest’ were enumerated separately, and juridically they were treated under different legislation. These different normative values were also patently clear in the way in which they were portrayed in the media, both linguistically and visually.

Commentators for the state were quick to point out that much of the killing which had occurred since 1984 has ‘been at the hands of black people’, the so-called ‘black-on-black’ violence. Monitoring groups who have kept meticulous death tolls, also make a distinction between deaths at the hands of the ‘security forces’ and deaths at the hand of other blacks. While the whole notion of ‘Black-on-Black’ violence has important ideological implications which are readily seized on by the state, in any account of political violence it is necessary to pose the question: why do people who apparently have the same interests, i.e. the abolition of apartheid, turn on one another?

Opposing views on Political Violence

The framework in which violence is conceptualized has implications for the manner in which strategies are developed for confronting or using the violence for a larger end, and the way in which it is portrayed and explained in the media. In what follows, an attempt has been made to attribute the explanations of political violence and how it has developed within South Africa, to different ideological and political groups who were directly affected. Each of these sketches is limited, and should be seen as no
more than a metaphor created to articulate different points of view, which in turn fit into larger metaphors of violence.

The Government’s View on Violence

The government contended that the violence was a direct result of the ANC’s effort to make the country ungovernable. The South African government has repeatedly maintained that the State of Emergency was declared to ‘restore law and order’ and to ‘facilitate the on-going reform process’. According to this account, the extraordinary level of violence and killing which occurred within the black communities required the use of extraordinary provisions. The enormous numbers of detentions were justified as a ‘cooling off measure’, taking ‘trouble-makers’ out of circulation until the situation was ‘stabilized’.

The state’s view of policing was premised on the over-riding importance of the security of the state, which justified the harassment and suppression of anyone suspected of endangering that security. In these circumstances, the protection of citizens took second place to the protection of the existing order, and the usual functions of civilian policing became impossible.

Throughout the period covered by this thesis, the state used the tactics of division to sow dissension. The greatest threat to the state was seen as ‘radicalism’ and ‘communism’, traits which were often interchangeable in the discourse of government spokespersons, and usually applied to anyone seen as sympathetic to the Mass Democratic Movement. Ranged against these ‘radical elements’ were the ‘forces of moderation’, forces which included homeland leaders, conservative township businessmen and administrators loyal to the state patronage system, as well as vigilante forces, including of course, Inkatha. Adriaan Vlok, Minister of Law and Order, put it this way:

[...] the Police intend to face the future with moderates and fight against radical groups. [...] Radicals, who are trying to destroy South Africa, will not be tolerated. We will fight them. We have put our foot in that 88direction, and we will eventually win the Pietermaritzburg area. (Natal Witness, 27.2.1988).

State Violence

Throughout this thesis has emphasised that political hegemony is achieved as a balance between force and consent. Attempts at engineering consent were made
through the mechanisms of ‘negotiation’ and ‘reform’, as defined only in the government’s terms, terms which were unacceptable to the majority of South Africans. The state increasingly relied on force, the ‘fight against radical groups’, through the use of stringent police and military options. This force has been perceived by the majority of black people as state violence, and has been the root cause of counter-violence set up in opposition to the state. For analytical purposes, I have found it useful to divide state violence into three categories: individual violence; institutional violence; and structural violence.

*Individual violence* is characterised as acts in which specific persons are victimized, and individuals can be held accountable. Examples of such violence would include excessive police and military brutality in controlling demonstrations; and assault or undue force during arrest. Assault, torture and abuse during detention; as well as death threats and assassinations against community leaders and those who work on their behalf.

The defining characteristic of *institutional violence* is that culpability is moved away from individual agents to the responsibility of the state. Those who implement the acts of violence are just ‘just carrying out orders’. Institutional violence goes beyond the first category in that it systematizes violence, and gives it a legal form. The declaration of the State of Emergency, and the legislation which it incorporated, is a prime example. Detentions became an institutionalized form of coercion, and extra-legal regulations were enacted without due democratic or juridical process. The elimination of the free press and banishing of the international media, meant that it was not possible to report on the security forces, or publish the names of those assaulted or detained. Under this legislation, the security forces were shielded from scrutiny by the media, and were able to act with impunity. It is with regard to this level of state violence that the term ‘state terrorism’ is usually applied.

At the deepest level, state violence can be seen as *structural violence*, along with the socio-political system that is apartheid. While ‘Influx Control’ and ‘Job Reservation’ have been abolished formally, the homelands, and the attendant migrant labour with its disruption of family life, its single-sex hostels, and depressed wages, are still very much in evidence. The discourse of reform may tell us that ‘apartheid is dead’, but the forced relocations, poor housing, high urban crime rate, and endemic rural underemployment and child malnutrition remain. These and other inequities systematically tear away the fabric of social structures, leaving disrupted and impoverished communities in their
wake. This level of state-engineered violence is the most difficult to report on, since it is so pervasive. It is not possible to encapsulate it as a news event, or present it as a news item. Yet for the millions of black South Africans living under these conditions, structural violence is the crux of apartheid.

The Mass Democratic Movement's view on Violence

Among the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), made up of supporters of the African National Congress (ANC), the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), there was (and remains) the perception that the violence of the state (in its broadest sense) forced them into a situation of counter-violence. The on-going conflict was seen as a sustained effort by the security forces, with the police and Defence Force in active and covert collusion with homeland-based groups such as Inkatha or the Xhosa vigilantes, to destroy the MDM.

In the period before 1987, the primary thrust of the conflict was seen as a battle between the MDM and the state. The focus of the violence was gradually shifted to a parallel conflict between the democratic movement and Inkatha, in which the state has played an ambiguous, and, some say, provocative role.

The ANC viewed violence as 'an aspect of apartheid [that] has been used with varying degrees of ruthlessness to maintain the status quo' (Sechaba June 1990:3). The ANC distinguished five types of violence, the first four of which they attribute to the state, and 'directed exclusively against those seeking a transformation of this (South African) society':

* massacres and other violent action by the security forces;
* covert killings by agents of the state;
* death in police custody and detention;
* vigilante violence (ibid).

The fifth type is described as 'violence against perceived symbols of oppression' (ibid:3) which is described as 'a reaction to continued harassment and oppression' (Ibid:4).

Mass Action

Mass action was (and is) civilian resistance to the laws and oppression of the apartheid state. It has been characterised by a high level of popular participation, and erratic levels of organization which are vulnerable to state disruption. The methods employed by activists were very varied. In their 'Conflict Chronology', Indicator South Africa (1989:186-211) researchers drew a distinction between 'Non-Collaborative Politics'
and ‘General Civil Unrest’. The massive amount of information contained under the former category underlines the fact that most of the resistance was essentially non-violent in character. The most common tactics involved the withdrawal of support or legitimacy from institutions and structures which were seen to be associated with the state, or with the general political or economic oppression of blacks. Thus boycotts, such as rent, bus, consumer and school boycotts, have been at the heart of popular resistance. Politically, these have included non-co-operation with government functionaries, withholding rent, violation of bans on peaceful meetings, defiance of segregation orders on ‘public amenities’ such as beaches, restaurants, hotels, etc., and the shunning of black policemen. Economically, industrial / labour action has been marked by labour strikes, slow downs, sit-downs, work stoppages and stay always. Funerals of comrades killed in the violence have provided important occasions for demonstrating solidarity, an occasion to gather, lift morale and reaffirm a common purpose.

The distinction between non-violent and violent action or ‘general civil unrest’ is difficult to sustain, since much of the violence erupted from non-violent demonstration. These campaigns easily turned violent either out of frustration, revenge, or retaliation. Two target areas can be identified: retaliation against persons or establishments which were seen to be representative of the state, e.g. policemen, community councilors, beerhalls, and school buildings; and secondly, members (or suspected members) of organizations ideologically inimical to each other. While the guidelines were fairly clear-cut in the first form of resistance, in the second form of violence, internecine attacks became the established pattern after 1987, particularly with regard to the UDF / Inkatha clashes. In such volatile situations participants may also be influenced by agents provocateurs, while thuggery has been an important element.

Violent mass action was, at least during the period under study (1985-86), characterised by the use of primitive weaponry. Stone- or brick-throwing was the most common violent activity of the period, followed by the erection of barricades and arson. The disciplining of cadres through ‘people’s courts’, and the gruesome method of necklacing, in which the victim was incinerated with a petrol (gasoline) filled tyre around their neck, were the most serious forms of violence (SAIRR, 1986:515).

The State’s View of Mass Action as Political ‘Unrest’

Spokespersons for the state have characterised mass action by a strangely passive phrase ‘unrest’. The use of the ‘unrest’ image suggests that the matters can be resolved
by rigorous policing and firm prosecution of the guilty parties. This euphemistic term, in which civil resistance is characterised as the opposite of ‘rest’, or stasis, implied that the people engaged in such activities were not static, but it did not imply any sense of direction, purpose or goal. The word has a long association with counter-insurgency literature, ossified in the cliché ‘the Natives are Restless’, in which native races from South East Asia to North Africa were conceptualized as a stirring heaving mass, ready to commit unpredictable but dangerous atrocities against their colonial (or post-colonial) masters. ‘Unrest’ can also been seen as the opposite of ‘stability’, and the professed purpose of declaration of the State of Emergency was ‘a return to stability by restoring law and order; a return to normality; and the continuation of the reform process’ (Binfo 1987c:21).

In the state’s explanatory narrative on the causes of unrest, it was usually presented as having been precipitated by a few ‘ring leaders’ and ‘trouble makers’, usually influenced by ANC or communist puppet masters. These ‘instigators’, in turn, stirred peace-loving township folk to revolt and rebellion. Explaining the rise in the incidence of violence during April and May 1987, despite the ‘measures to counter the revolutionary tendency’ (Binfo 1987c:22) enacted through the State of Emergency, the Bureau for Information pointed out that:

Radical and revolutionary organizations are still engaged in disseminating propaganda in certain parts of the country with the resulting aim of creating perceptions which would activate the Black population into turning to unrest and violence’ (ibid).

In terms of the Emergency Regulations, an early definition of ‘unrest’ included ‘a public disturbance,
strike or boycott, the damaging of property, or assault or killing of persons, or of people and security forces involved in these incidents’ (Government Gazette 10004: 2.11.85). A later, more elaborated description lists

* any gathering in contravention of an order under [...] the Security Emergency Regulations, 1986, or of a provision of another law or of any prohibition [...];
* any physical attack by a group of persons on a security force [...] or a house or family of a member of a security force or local authority;
* any conduct which constitutes sedition, public violence or a contravention ... of the Intimidation Act, 1982 (Government Gazette 17.6.86 No 10293).

‘Unrest’ was not the state’s only term for political violence. In questions put to him by opposition Members of Parliament, the same Minister (of Law and Order, Mr
Adrian Vlok), provided two seemingly different answers to what is apparently the same question. On 18 February 1987, Minister Vlok said that the number of persons arrested 'in connection with unrest-related offences' was 11 006 (Hansard Q&A, 18.2.87:142). Two days later he stated that 4 982 persons were arrested in connection with 'riots' (Hansard, Q&A, 20.2.87:184-5). However, from the phraseology of the questions, it is apparent that the concept of 'riots' was confined to the action or intent of injuring persons or damaging property, while the concept of 'unrest' was so wide as to encompass any demonstration of opposition against the state. This distinction is similar to the one drawn above between violent and non-violent mass action.

**Violence of Insurgency**

Insurgency, or the 'armed struggle' as the ANC referred to it, was the violence of strategic warfare. An important distinction between 'unrest' and 'terror' was that the latter almost always emanated from outside the country. Trained guerrillas entered from neighbouring territories, particularly Mozambique and Zimbabwe, to meet up with a cell system.

In state parlance insurgency was referred to as terrorism, or 'terror', as it was more usually and starkly expressed. Terrorism was almost always directly associated with 'ANC-terrorists' or 'ANC-trained terrorists', with a further direct connection made between the ANC and communism, behind which stood the expansionist ambitions of imperialist Russia, and their 'fellow travellers' and cohorts, the Cubans. Such conspiracy theory is the hallmark of counter-insurgency doctrine. State ideologues frequently associated such activity with international terrorism, holding that it 'does not differ at all from the PLO, IRA and the Red Brigade' (Binfo 1986:21). In the process of monitoring political violence 'terror' appears to be regarded as a totally separate category of violence from 'unrest'. Evidence for this distinction is that different sets of data are kept for 'terrorist' and 'unrest' activities. The former figures were usually supplied by the Institute for Strategic Studies at the University of Pretoria (ISS 1986). Other independent monitoring agencies also keep their figures separate: the South African Institute of Race Relations refer to terrorist activities as 'identifiable incidents of insurgency' (South African Institute of Race Relations 1986:527); while *Indicator Project South Africa* monitored 'armed action by insurgents' as opposed to 'low level attacks during civilian unrest' (*Indicator SA* vol5/no2:21).
William Kentridge (1990:14) has noted that 'giving a name and a denotation to violence is not a semantic matter: for the groups involved the description they employ is a political choice'. Thus, the state refused to see the violence of resistance as 'war', since this would acknowledge a complete breakdown of the state's hegemony - its ability to contain social conflict. In South Africa only the South African Defence Force is legally entitled to wage war and it is the role of the South African Police to prevent any other groups from doing so. Therefore to refer to an area of the country as a 'war zone' amounts to an explicit criticism of the police on the grounds of incompetence and a witting or unwitting failure to perform their proper functions. In a succeeding chapter, attention will be given to the imaging of 'terrorism' and the demonization of the ANC terrorist. In the sections which follow, the imaging of political violence as 'unrest' will be considered, after an examination of the way in which the declaration of the first State of Emergency was reported.
CHAPTER EIGHT:
DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY

With the announcement of the partial state of emergency - the first in 25 years - the State President said the step had been carefully considered in the light of the negative effect it would have on the country. Nevertheless it was deemed necessary - not to repress instead of reform, but to restore peace and stability so that negotiations would continue. (Comment, 5.12.85)

At the time of the first State of Emergency, the SABC was the dominant articulator of the views and policy of the government. The Bureau for Information was only to be established in September of that year, and was not sufficiently geared up to act as an instrument of government policy until June the following year (1986). In discussing the reasons for, and the themes incorporated in the declaration of the first State of Emergency, I will draw only on the SABC’s television News, News Review, Radio News and the early morning radio editorial programme, Comment.

On 20 July, 1985, the State President, P.W. Botha, declared a State of Emergency in 36 magisterial districts. The announcement was made at an afternoon news conference, much of which was televised on the 6 o’clock news bulletin that evening (Appendix Six (1) for transcript). The State President’s speech had been anticipated by periodic announcements throughout the day on both radio and television, to the effect that he was to make a statement of national importance that evening.

In an unprecedented format, the declaration of the State of Emergency was repeated in its entirety ‘in both official languages’ (News 20.7.85), first in Afrikaans, then again in English. The setting of the speech was styled to convey the occasion as a matter of formal state business. Botha spoke from behind his State Presidential podium, an ornate oak structure featuring the presidential coat of arms carved on the front centre panel. Nationalism was to be an important ideological theme of the State of Emergency, and much of its iconography was depicted through the mobilization of the South African flag, either literally, or through the stylised use of its colours. In this first act of the State of Emergency, four flags were used: two were draped behind the podium, framing the State President between them, while a further two flags stood behind members of his cabinet seated on either side of him.

The podium was set slightly behind a circular table, at which six key members of his government were seated. On his right hand side (LHS of screen), he was flanked
by Louis Le Grange, Minister of Law and Order; Magnus Malan, Minister of Defence, and Adriaan Vlok, Minister of Police. On the left hand side sat General Johan Coetzee, Commissioner of Police; Alwyn Schlebusch, and ‘Stoffel’ Botha, Minister of the Interior. Together, these men constituted the inner core of the ‘securocrat’ lobby in Botha’s government, and their appearance *en masse* indicated both the institutional and ideological position from which the declaration of the State of Emergency was made.

The stylised setting of the announcement, the formality of the tone, the rhetorical structure of the speech (including the long quotation from the enabling legislation, and the repeated use of phrases such as ‘I want to give the assurance’: Appendix Six (2) #11 and #12), and the repetition of the whole performance in both languages, all contributed to underscore the seriousness and importance of the occasion.

The State President’s address was followed by questions put to him from journalists (‘newsmen’, in Kleinhans’ sexist terminology, despite the clear evidence of there being women journalists among them: *cf* Appendix Six (1) # 19; 20), after which General Johan Coetzee, Commissioner of Police, answered further questions. The transitions between the various parts of the report were made by Marius Kleinhans, a journalist from the SABC’s political staff, who provided the studio link (#12). Since Kleinhans was at the conference himself, and asked the first question put to the State President, a temporal dichotomy was set up between the ‘Then’ of the news conference, and the ‘Now’ of the studio link. He was, as it were, retelling the story. This intertextual reference brings into stark juxtaposition the different time scales which are usually obscured by the ethos of the news’s ‘immediacy’. In this respect, it is worth comparing the beginning of the bulletin, in which the news reader, Bea Reid, handed over to P.W. Botha as if the news conference was happening simultaneously.

**The News Conference**

The SABC’s report on the news conference which preceded the panel discussion discussed above, focused on questions asked by SABC reporters Marius Kleinhans and Douglas McClure. Only two other journalists were included in the programme, neither of whom were identified - Peter Sullivan of the *Pretoria News*, and an unseen woman journalist. The conference provided an opportunity for the SABC journalists to emphasize their sense of editorial independence and professionalism, and provided ‘evidence’ that the SABC journalists took their job seriously, even to the point of probing the State President and the head of the security forces. Nevertheless, their
attitude towards both men indicates a degree of subservience, which was also evidenced in the female journalist. More interesting, was the difference in the State President’s approach towards the two questioners, Marius Kleinhans (SABC) and Peter Sullivan (Pretoria News - Argus Group). The first questioner was answered in an accommodating fashion (ibid #14); the second, dismissively (ibid #16), as P.W. Botha turned his head away before he had finished his sentence. When Kleinhans asked his second question, P.W. Botha cut in and began to answer before the question was finished(#18).

There was also a distinct change in the tone of address between the ‘set’ speech which announced the State of Emergency, and the responses to journalist’s questions afterwards. In the latter particularly, P.W. Botha played the role of the ‘strongman’, who refused to be coerced by outside interference from doing what he felt was necessary: ‘I won’t for one moment shirk from declaring other districts if it is necessary’ (#20). This attitude became more pronounced as the year proceeded, and was at its zenith in the ‘Rubicon’ speech (see Chapter Four). In comparison, General Coetzee spoke in a very reticent, hesitant manner, and tended to qualify everything he said. In response to McClure’s rather fawning question (note the gratuitous use of ‘Sir’ mid-sentence):

**McClure:** Can we have your assurance, Sir, that as a result of this declaration the government will take every conceivable action possible to curtail future violence and rioting in the areas where the emergency has been declared?

Coetzee answered, very hesitantly:

I - I think it would be very unwise of me to add - eh - anything on to what the State President has said, but I think that the implication of - eh - just by reading through the provisions of this proclamation - (stumbles) of this nature - it is very obvious there are very - (looked around for word) - eh - stringent measures can be eh - at least - to say the least - make a nuisance value - but will also have the powers for the force - in the broad sense - to take the necessary action to ensure that law and order prevails. I think that just by implication, by reading through it, that is obvious. We will obviously try and do that to the best of our ability.

Coetzee’s inarticulate televisual presence contrasted starkly with the more polished approach adopted by the ‘professional’ communicators of the Bureau for Information who were brought in to handle the publicity surrounding the second declaration of the State of Emergency in June 1986. This observation attests to the growing realization within the government that shows of strength based on the themes of law and order were insufficient to ensure the legitimacy of the government in the eyes (and ears) of its constituency.
Violence, Law and Order

The first State of Emergency was set against the background of increasing violence. Symbolically, the law and order emphasis was attested to by the visible backup of seccoract Ministers, and the total lack of ‘reformists’ Botha chose to accompany him when he made his public announcement. P.W. Botha’s opening statement, a set-piece speech invoking the loyalty of ‘responsible South Africans’ to combat the increasing level of lawlessness, put the law and order issue into perspective. Speaking first in Afrikaans he began:

Every responsible South African in the past period has noticed with a growing concern the situation of violence and lawlessness which has broken out in certain parts of the country, especially the black townships (swart woongebiede), and has expanded and intensified. This violence and arson is particularly directed against the property and persons of law-abiding black people and takes the form of intimidation, arson, inhuman forms of assault and even murder. This situation cannot be condoned further. The government has therefore given great attention to this today (\textit{Nuus}, 20.7.1985, 6pm).

In his speech, Botha took a strongly a statist position: ‘The government has a responsibility to see that normal community life is returned’ (\textit{ibid} #2). This was echoed two days later by the radio editorial \textit{Comment}:

In these circumstances [of violence] the state has had no alternative but to act effectively and appropriately. It is its right, and above all, its duty, to protect the lives and property of all its people, and to do this by means of emergency measures, if less dramatic methods appear ineffective. This has now become imperative, and steps have been taken to place the police in a position to maintain law and order and to protect ordinary people. The vast majority of South Africans of all population groups insist that duty is effectively discharged (\textit{Comment} 22.7.85)

In terms of the government’s account, the step of declaring the State of Emergency was not taken lightly: ‘The President said careful consideration had been given to the negative effect it would have on the country’ (\textit{Comment} 22.7.85). The single most important rationale provided for the declaration of the State of Emergency was the restoration of law and order. Throughout both the formal address, and the question period afterwards, both P.W. Botha and General Coetzee stressed that the purpose of the State of Emergency is to stamp out ‘violence and lawlessness’ (\textit{Nuus} 20.7.85 #2); and stress that ‘the safety of all must be protected and law and order must be present’ (\textit{ibid} #5-#6).

In the \textit{News Focus} programme on the day following the declaration of the State of Emergency, General Coetzee read from a prepared script:
With these measures we intend to normalize the situation and inhibit the activity of the people - eh - the persons responsible for the unrest, and guarantee that the ordinary citizen goes to his work - his place of work - his church, his school, unaffected and unhindered by the unrest which prevails here. That in fact is the purpose of the Emergency. It will not affect all the activities - the normal activities of law-abiding citizens of all races and all groups in their own country. The government has decided to give certain particular powers to the forces. I think in addition to that as I've just said, the population of South Africa expects the law enforcement agencies to bring the situation under control and to bring normality back - tranquillity - law, order - and we intend to do just that (News Focus 21.7.85 #23).

Coetzee was very careful to emphasize the limited nature of the State of Emergency, and to suggest that its provisions would affect only 'persons responsible for the unrest'. This was in keeping with the government's belief that insurrection was entirely the result of an orchestrated campaign, and had no grounding in the conditions under which most black South Africans lived. What was needed, according to this line of thinking, was a strong repressive presence which would wipe out instigation and agitation, thus restoring 'normality'.

Amplifying on this, the SABC's morning commentator noted that the purpose of the State of Emergency was 'To bring an end to the ongoing violence of the past eleven months in Black residential areas' (Comment 22.7.85). This 'entails the granting of wide powers of detention and arbitrary arrest and search being given to the security forces' (ibid).

Directly after the State President's announcement, he and General Coetzee held a news conference.

**Following-up the State of Emergency**

In the follow-up to the announcement of the State of Emergency, News Focus (21.7.85) devoted a programme to the implications of the move. Most of the programme consisted of a reiteration of the points made by P.W. Botha and General Coetzee. The second half of the programme featured a panel discussion with Tom Boya, styled the Mayor of Soweto; Donald Masson, chairperson of the Afrikaanse Handelsintituut; Raymond Parsons, chairperson of the Associated Chambers of Commerce (ASSACOM); and Professor Mike Hough, Director of the Institute of Strategic Studies in Pretoria (a conservative government think-tank with close ties to the South African Defence Force).

At the time, it was unusual to have a black panelist on TV1 at all, so Boya's contribution is worth looking at in some detail:
Boya: I'd like to say this problem which we are having now has been with us in the townships now for some time. It is almost a year since we saw violence in the townships. In the past few months, this has escalated a great deal. With quite a lot of people which have died in the violence. And of course almost everybody really feels that this type of thing should come to an end. Now the proclamation was announced yesterday and we hope this will definitely bring relief to black townships, and people will be in the position not to have problems again like they did. And of course we expect the police also will be very, very carefully (sic) and if they have got to act, they have got to act in manner in which they should not be blamed afterwards [...] From the side of the government, I'd like to make a very strong point here: that there are genuine grievances which have been put forward by the people. Such as the removal of apartheid, the removal of discriminatory laws, influx control, one education system for all South Africans, the question of representation of black people at top government level, the removal of the Group Areas Act, and things of that nature. If the government can actually address itself to these problems and try and remove these unnecessary laws, things can change much quicker then actually we think.

And also what can help to relieve things at this moment is the question of Mandela being released from prison, and we think that the time has come - this is the right time when we should be talking with Mandela.

In the first section of his contribution, Boya was in general agreement with the discourse of the government: he concentrated on the facts that violence has escalated; people could not work without hindrance; and the need to restore law and order. In the second part, Boya attempts to create a distance between himself and the official government position in order to maintain his position of credibility among his black constituency. However, all the matters he brought up (the removal of discriminatory laws, equal education, and the end of influx control) were also part of the government's definition of reform. It was only when Boya moved onto the question of Mandela's release that the interviewer, Douglas McClure, stepped in. Before Boya had finished his last sentence, McClure interrupted him, and although McClure's face was unseen, his voice cut over that of Boya. The camera was quick to follow him:

**VISUALS**

1. Boya continues speaking

**AUDIO**

McClure (unseen): So it is a complex dynamic issue. It is not just one problem but a whole schema of problems.

The mention of Mandela was an out-of-bounds subject, and McClure was quick to close it down.
The announcement of the second State of Emergency almost a year later, was quite different in many ways. Firstly, it was not an unexpected move, and secondly, it was far more ‘professionally’ managed.

Events Leading to the Second State of Emergency

On the 4 March 1986, the State President announced the lifting of the first State of Emergency in the remaining areas in which it still applied. At the time, he announced that ‘it was the objective of the Government to deal with continuing instances of unrest without subjecting the population to the inconvenience of a state of emergency’ (Binfo 1986a:1). The negative effects of the State of Emergency were minimized and dismissed as ‘inconveniences’ in much the same way as General Coetzee had seen the emergency provisions as a ‘nuisance value’.

At this point, thinking that the period in which the country was ruled under a State of Emergency was at an end, I stopped recording the TV News / Nuus and Network / Netwerk. This was indeed an error, and resulted in a decision I later came to regret. In retrospect, the following months proved to be crucial to later political developments. In May 1986, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group [EPG] visited South Africa. Made up of seven persons from five continents, the group had been appointed as the result of a ploy by Mrs Thatcher to sidestep pressure for the imposition of economic sanctions against South Africa at a meeting of Commonwealth heads of government in Nassau, Bahamas, seven months before (Sparks 1990:351). In his somewhat acerbic assessment of the visit, Allister Sparks suggests that it was a face-saving compromise to prevent a split in the Commonwealth, but unexpectedly turned out to be ‘the most remarkable attempt at foreign mediation in the South African conflict so far undertaken’ (ibid.:352). Sparks credits this achievement to the energy and imagination of the two co-leaders of the Mission: former Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Fraser, and General Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria.

The Mission found that the great majority of South Africans of all races were eager for a negotiated settlement, and that, initially at least, there was a substantial body of common demands from all the major political players to make such negotiations feasible. This reading of the situation was based on a literal understanding of the National Party’s statements, despite the Group’s reservations that the government’s position was difficult to grasp since ‘it has perfected a specialized political vocabulary
which, while saying one thing, means quite another’ (CGEP 1986:81). Preparatory to negotiation, the group called on the South African government for five undertakings:

[...] to declare that the system of apartheid government would be dismantled and specific and meaningful action taken in fulfillment of that intent; to terminate the State of Emergency; to release immediately and unconditionally Nelson Mandela and all others imprisoned or detained for their opposition to apartheid; and to establish political freedom, specifically lifting the ban on the African National Congress and other political parties. [...] [T]he initiation by Pretoria, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, of a process of dialogue with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government (CGEP 1986:13).

The Mission also visited imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela in Pollsmoor Prison, who indicated his personal support for negotiation 'in the context of a suspension of violence on both sides', but required further consultation with the ANC in exile before making any commitment. The National Party government's official position had always been that it was only the ANC's commitment to violence which kept them from mutual negotiation. With negotiation as a real possibility, the government now faced a serious dilemma: to refuse the mediation would be to give the lie to their long-held standpoint, and to risk the serious threat of economic sanctions; while to accept it implied an accommodation with the ANC and other hard-line black political groups, and an abandonment of a quasi-settlement with 'black moderates'.

In the cabinet meeting of the 13 May 1986, the securocrats were dominant: not only was the EPG initiative to be scuttled, but, since one might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb, all the stops were now to be pulled out to crush the black revolt. The reaction of Great Britain, the United States or West Germany was no longer a consideration (Sparks 1990:353).

Two days later, on the same day the EPG had returned from Lusaka for a final meeting with the Minister of Constitutional Development, Chris Heunis, the SADF attacked ANC bases in Harare, Gaborone and Lusaka. This effectively ended the EPG initiative within South Africa.

The EPG tabled their final report on the 12 June 1986, ironically the same day as the declaration of the national State of Emergency. On the previous evening, television news reported the event by framing it within a larger report on the visit by a group of 'moderate leaders' to Britain:
Cruywagen: A group of moderates are visiting Britain and Europe on the eve of the publication of the Eminent Persons Group Report tomorrow. Today they meet Conservative members of the British lower House.

Keyter: Tomorrow the much-discussed report of the Eminent Persons Group will be officially published. And while tongues are talking very hard about sanctions against South Africa, the visit of four moderate black leaders from South Africa couldn’t come at a better time. The group consists of Bishop Isak Mnoko of the Independent African Church Association, the Mayor of a town near Port Elizabeth, Mr Livingstone Linde, a council member Mr Hermans Patu, and Cindi Leonsensis, of the Victims against Terrorism Organization of South Africa. They were met outside the lower House by Mr John Carlisle, Conservative member for North Luton. The group of four moderate black leaders

Keyer, VO: had the opportunity to speak to about 15 members of the lower house, but copies of this letter were also distributed by the leader of the Labour Party, Mr Neil Kinnock, the leader of the Liberal Party, Mr David Steele, and the leader of the Social Democratic Party, Mr David Owen. All four leaders of the group were exceptionally outspoken about the message they came to tell the parliamentary leaders, and also what the overall purpose of their visit to Britain and Europe.

Keyter: (in English): Bishop Mnoko, what do you expect to achieve whilst being in Britain and later on in Europe?

Mnoko: Well what we want to, what we envisage to achieve is to bring to the notice the British people

Mnoko: and the people in Europe that there is an alternative authentic voice to that of Bishop Tutu.

Keyter: Mayor Linde, could I turn to you now - what is your reaction - yours and your group’s reaction - to the report of the Eminent Persons’ Group coming out tomorrow?

Mayor Linde: Yes our reaction to that report and to that group - well, we termed them as one of the failure groups
that visited our country because their main failure when they visited South Africa was that they met certain individuals, certain people of interest in Southern Africa, were left out, and we did not feel such a report should be accepted by the European Community because it does not represent all views in my country. That is why we are here - we want to put our views across that the people can know: there is another alternative voice in South Africa which wants to settle the problems in my country on a peaceful change.

**

This report is particularly clear in defining who South Africa’s ‘friends’ are (Conservative Party members); while those ranged against them include the Liberal and Social Democratic Parties. The implication of the sequence was to allow South African representatives of the ‘moderate’ middle ground to discredit the EPG Report:

**Linde:** [...] we did not feel such a report should be accepted by the European Community because it does not represent all views in my country. That is why we are here - we want to put our views across that the people can know: there is another alternative voice in South Africa which wants to settle the problems in my country on a peaceful change.

The most pertinent point of the report is the definition of ‘moderate leaders’, which were seen to include low-profile government-appointed councilmen and ‘mayors’ of black townships (Linde was also featured in the News Focus programme following the declaration of the first State of Emergency) and white leaders of right-wing groups. The inclusion of a church leader of one of the African separatist churches friendly to the Government appears to be a heavy-handed attempt to blunt the effect of the rigorous criticism levelled at the government by mainstream church leaders in South Africa, and indeed, the mention by name of Bishop Tutu reinforces this reading:

**Mnonko:** [...] what we envisage to achieve is to bring to the notice of the British people and the people in Europe that there is an alternative authentic voice to that of Bishop Tutu.

The expedient of using these people to argue against the EPG’s Report, before it had even been published, allowed the SABC a mechanism for anticipating a critical response to the publication, without directly involving the South African government at this premature stage.
The Escalation of Violence and Fears of a Bloody June 16

Following the lifting of the partial State of Emergency in February 1986, there was a perceptible rise in the level of insurrection (see graph for fatality figures, Table 6.1). The death toll as a result of civil insurrection during the month of February was 103, in March it rose to 153, April 169, while in May 1986 it was estimated at 221, the highest in the twenty-one months since the watershed of September 1984 *(Indicator Issue Focus* 1988:12). It was clear to the Government that the 'unrest' was not going to abate of its own volition. Noted the Bureau for Information:

During the first five months of 1986 there was an alarming escalation in unrest. Between September 1984 and May 1986 the consequences of unrest included:

* 3 477 private Black houses badly damaged or destroyed;
* 1220 schools badly damaged or destroyed;
* over 7 000 buses and other vehicles damaged or destroyed;
* large scale intimidation;
* consumer and rent boycotts;
* disruption of Black education and democratically elected municipal government;
* the establishment of 'street committees' and kangaroo courts; and
* 573 deaths due to Black-on-Black violence, 295 of the victims being killed by way of the horrific 'necklace' method

(Binfo 1987b:2).

This list displays a number of discursive strategies we might expect from the Bureau for Information, such as the disparaging use of the term 'black-on-black violence' and the opportunistic emphasis on 'the horrific "necklace" method', both of which concepts will be further interrogated later in this chapter. Also notable is the questionable status of 'democratically elected municipal government'. The role of the town councils, councillors and mayors, is discussed later in this chapter. Suffice to say here that they enjoyed very little legitimacy among the majority of township residents. In the felicitous words of Cohen and Cobbett (1988:11)

The exercise of arbitrary power by the councillors only inflamed township residents who could also observe the emptiness of these cardboard Napoleons' claim to authority when the troops, sent in by the government, swept them aside to contain periodic displays of disorder.

The association of 'street committees' with 'kangaroo courts' in the same sentence taints the former with the atrocities of the latter, and particularly starkly exemplifies the use of multi-discursive concepts. Theorists of urban geography (notably Castells (1977); Lebas and Harloe (1981)) have pointed to the salience of urban social movements as sites for political struggle. In South Africa, the place of residence has always been the
locus of resistance against the state, and street committees were a positive expression of resistance and the reclamation of political initiatives at grass roots.

The deteriorating 'security situation' was one of the claimed reasons for the declaration of the second (National) State of Emergency. More important, from the government's point of view, was the anticipated level of insurrection expected to mark the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising, on 16 June 1986. Rumours of an all-out 'radical plan to disrupt society during the period 16 to 26 June' (Binfo 1987:2) surfaced around May 1986:

The ANC, the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO) and a host of other radical organizations planned:
* mass marches into White areas;
* student uprisings;
* countrywide stayaways; and
* large-scale intimidation.

These plans would certainly have exacerbated the unrest situation and would in all likelihood have led to widespread loss of life, injuries and destruction of property (ibid.).

In direct response, the Minister of Law and Order banned all gatherings to commemorate the 1976 Soweto Rebellion and / or the Freedom Charter launch until after the 30 June 1986 (Government Gazette 10268 GN1135). Planning for the long term, even tighter security legislation in the form of an amendment to the security legislation, referred to in the press as the Koornhof Bills, after their promoter, P.G.J (Piet) Koornhof, Chairman of the President’s Council, was introduced. The Bills resulted in a divided parliament when they were introduced into the white House of Assembly:

**VISUALS**

1. Riaan Cruywagen, with CK: VEILIGHEIDSWET (Security Legislation)

2. Louis de Villiers with super PERSGALLERY (Press Gallery)

**AUDIO**

**Riaan Cruywagen:** A final parliamentary debate about the passage of two Security Bills is on hand. The Bills on public safety make it possible to declare areas of emergency, and the other, on the law for internal security, will allow for detention without trial for 180 days, were discussed in parliament.

**De Villiers:** The Bills were laid on the table after the standing committee on Law and Order could not reach consensus among all parties on even their desirability to read. The second reading
on the Bill for Public Safety was passed by parliament earlier this month, but is back before the three houses after the standing committee rejected it. The most important development in the House of Assembly was the withdrawal by the Minister of Law and Order, of a provision which denies the courts the right to comment on legislation. The withdrawal was a concession to the other two houses to persuade them to pass the legislation.

**de Villiers, VO:** The Chairman of the PFP Caucus, Mr Ray Swart, gave notice that tomorrow he would propose a motion of no confidence in the government. In a statement, Mr Swart said that the Minister has shown himself to be arrogant and thick skinned.

**de Villiers, VO:** He said that the last story going around was that the Minister praised the police for their work in the KTC squatter camp, and said that he would answer any questions put to them. Swart said this statement should be seen against widely circulating and apparently substantiated claims that the police took sides in the fighting on the Cape Flats.

**de Villiers, VO:** Mrs Suzman proposed the Bill should be read six months hence, the strongest form of parliamentary opposition.

The Conservative Party supported the measure, as did the NRP. A division in the House now seems inevitable and it looks as if the President will eventually have to put the Bills before the President’s Council. It now looks unlikely that the Bills will become law before the 16th of June when political unrest is likely.

The strong opposition to the Government’s security policies from within sections of the white electorate, and the government’s paranoia over the anticipated level of violence on 16 June (1986), are both highlighted in this report. The Bills were passed on to the
President's Council in the hope of a quick passage. However, in an ironic situation, the Tricameral Parliament, that cornerstone of co-optive 'reform', proved to be the nemesis of the security / reform couplet, when both the 'Indian' House of Delegates and the 'Coloured' House of Representatives referred the bills back to the Standing Committee chaired by Koornhof, leading to a legislative impasse. This incident in turn, led to one of the most celebrated instances of direct government interference in broadcasting content, when the State President is reported to have personally telephoned the producer of Network to object to the presence of the leader in the 'Coloured' House of Representatives, the Reverend Allan Hendrikse, on a discussion programme following the parliamentary debacle. This incident was discussed in more detail in Chapter One. In political terms, however, the significance of the quashing of the so-called 'Koornhof Bills' was the need for the government to re-introduce stringent legislation through other means. Since the precedent of the State of Emergency had already been set, this mechanism provided a useful, though not uncontradictory, way around their dilemma.

The news bulletin of Monday 11 June 1986 (Appendix Six) concentrated the two themes which would be used to legitimize the second State of Emergency: the increasing level of violence both in terms of domestic 'unrest' and externally-originated 'terrorism'; and the failure of the international community to arrive at an acceptable solution to the impasse in South Africa - a failure which necessitated South Africa taking charge of its own destiny through the declaration of a State of Emergency.

During a joint sitting of the Tricameral parliament on 12 June 1986, in a speech televised live on TV1 of the same day, P.W. Botha announced the imposition of a second State of Emergency, this time on a national basis. Once again, the rationale cited was that the escalating level of violence meant that:

Since March 1986, the sporadic instances of violence have once again begun to increase, and have taken on such proportions that I am of the opinion that the ordinary laws of the land at present on the statute book, are inadequate to enable the Government to ensure the security of the public and to maintain public order (News 12.6.86).

Once again, the main themes identified in the declaration of the first State of Emergency were articulated: the increase in political violence; the need for extraordinary legal measures ('the ordinary laws of the land [...] are inadequate'); and the over-riding need 'to maintain public order'. However, on this occasion, Botha added a fourth reason, compounding the earlier theme of the ANC wishing to make the country ungovernable, and sabotaging the reform process:
[...] the Government possesses intelligence regarding plans which have been made by radical and revolutionary elements for the coming days, which pose real danger to all population groups in the country (News 12.6.86).

During the first State of Emergency the SABC had acted as the primary communicator between the government and the public. However, by the middle of 1986, the Bureau for Information was sufficiently well established to take over this task. The SABC took on the more technical position of relaying the communications strategy originated by the Bureau. On the evening of the declaration of the State of Emergency, the news reader, Michelle Alexander, introduced the Network programme: 'In view of the declaration of the State of Emergency, tonight's Network will be devoted to an interview with the Deputy Minister of Information, Mr Louis Nel' (Network 12.6.86, Appendix Three).

In the interview, Nel was at pains to point out that the 'unrest' was not going to go away without intervention, a theme which had also been expressed in the previous State of Emergency:

But if the events of the past months have proved anything, it is that extraordinary measures have become unavoidable. The unrest has been handled with commendable restraint, in the hope that peace would eventually be restored. But up to now, there has been no sign of this (Comment 22.7.85).

The consonance of expression between the various departments within the SABC can be gauged by comparing Comment's wording with an excerpt from News Review of the same day. Against a visual of youths stoning vehicles, Rusty van Druten supplied the following voice-over:

With the latest resurgence of violence in Soweto it has become obvious that the unrest in various townships is not going to recede of its own volition (News Review 22.7.85 # 2-3).

Louis Nel went on to argue that under the partial State of Emergency between July 1985 to March 1986, violence had dissipated in the policed areas, only to spring up elsewhere. Thus it was necessary to declare a total State of Emergency covering the whole country. In all other respects, noted Nel, the State of Emergency was precisely the same as the previous one. Most of his discussion centred on the controversial notion of the concept of the 'subversive statement'. Nel dismissed the suggestion that the State of Emergency would result in retaliation by the international community. Rather, he argued, 'the international world [...] are determined to apply further sanctions against South Africa'. This was an irrational response, the result of 'emotional feelings against South
Africa [...] encouraged by the violence in South Africa'. Once again, Nel stressed the notion of ‘law and order’ as the solution to the country’s impasse:

If we want to restore confidence in South Africa we must have peace and tranquility in South Africa. We must have law and order in our country and we must not have violence. I think in the short term we are going to have a reaction against it. But if and when we have reached peace and tranquility and calmness in our country than the reaction from abroad will actually be a favourable one (12.6.86 Appendix Three)¹.

Louis Nel’s reading of the international reaction to the declaration of the State of Emergency was reinforced by the American and British responses the following day. In this bulletin (Nuus 13.6.86), the emphasis was on those countries’ official suspicion of trade sanctions, rather then disapproval of the State of Emergency.

**VISUALS**

1. Riaan Cruywagen with chromokey of US flag

2. flag changes to photo of George Schultz

3. CU of Shultz in press conference

4. Cruywagen and CK as above, with photograph of Thatcher

5. CK as above, photo changes to Howe

6. CU of Howe (satellite)

**AUDIO**

Cruywagen: And on the international front a representative of the American President described the State of Emergency as a mistake. He said that economic sanctions could do more harm than good. In

Cruywagen, VO: his reaction to the State of Emergency, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Mr George Schultz, made an appeal to understand South Africa’s problems.

Schultz (in English, direct sound): I think that what we need to do in South Africa is to move towards peaceful dialogue and an end to Apartheid.

Cruywagen: In London, the British Prime Minister said she wanted to discuss the situation with the Commonwealth countries and the EEC before deciding what steps to take.

Cruywagen: The Secretary for the Foreign Office, Sir Geoffrey Howe, reasserted British opposition to sanctions. He said that country knew from experience that they didn’t work.

Howe (in English): If you look at the situation in South Africa, it is important to keep that careful, calm analysis in mind. [...] 

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¹ Stability, it should be remembered, is a quality which modernization theorists of the 1960s and 1970s prised as the most important political asset of Third World countries, even though this was usually attained by virtue of oppression rather than legitimacy. Nor is it coincidental that the most vehement proponent of the 'development with stability' model was Samuel Huntington, Richard Nixon's economic adviser on South East Asia.
Assessing the State of Emergency

The first partial State of Emergency covering thirty six districts set a precedent which was relatively easy to follow when escalating violence and the fear of mass action commemorating the 16 June anniversary loomed. This thesis deals only with the months directly following the second, national State of Emergency. Emergency regulations were to be renewed in mid-June each year until 1989. However, even with the lifting of the restrictions, ‘normality’ and ‘stability’ were not restored, as violence and deaths continued unabated.

While ‘law and order’ was the central rationale for the declaration of the State of Emergency, a number of other themes ran through the entire course of the narrative as presented by government spokespersons, and mediated through the Bureau for Information and the SABC. Two themes were of particular importance: the insistence that the government was in control; and the perception that the violence was predominantly a result of ‘black-on-black’ killing. These two themes are considered in later chapters.

‘We are in Control’

**Hall-Green:** President Botha says the government is fully in control of the unrest situation in the country and intends remaining so. [...] 

**P.W. Botha:** I wouldn’t have instituted it if I didn’t believe we are going to succeed. Surely we are succeeding. Secondly, if necessary we can even take stronger steps than we have taken so far. *(News, 13 June, 1986)*

Political legitimacy, or hegemony, not only needs to be contested and won, but also to be maintained. By its very nature, if a crisis of legitimacy was deemed to be of sufficient magnitude to precipitate a State of Emergency then it needed to be fought on all fronts. It is essential for a government facing such a crisis that they demonstrate that they are both willing and able to exert power, and that they are in control. For a government as concerned with the WHAM philosophy as was the National Party government under P.W. Botha, this was the very test of power.

Botha himself was careful to emphasize his government’s willingness to exert power: ‘I want to warn that there will be stringent measures against those persons and organizations who transgress the regulations’ *(News 20.7.85 # 12).* While the State of Emergency would not affect ‘the normal course of events (verloop) for ordinary citizens
[...] any person who wants to disturb the public law and order, will now, under the regulations which will be now be enacted, come up against the security forces' (ibid., #14). The Commissioner of Police, General Coetzee, also reiterated that 'stringent measures can be placed into operation' and the security forces would have the power 'to take the necessary action to ensure that law and order prevails' (News Focus, 20.7.85 #23). To underline these powers, Marius Kleinhans, as studio-link reporter, summarized the 'extensive powers' given to the 'security forces', which included arrest without a warrant. Detention without charge or trial could be extended from an initial two weeks with a written notice from the Minister of Law and Order. Kleinhans went on to point out that the security forces also had power over search and seizure, the closure of areas, curfews, and the control and distribution of news (News 20.7.85 #24).

If the declaration of the State of Emergency illustrated the willingness to exert power, then the reporting which followed it demonstrated the government's ability to put that resolve into action. The Sunday bulletin (News 21.7.85), just 24 hours after the declaration of the State of Emergency, provided evidence of decisive action having been taken. The bulletin opened without headlines (unusual in itself, but may also be due to the fact that it was a Sunday, and at this stage the graphics department functioned on a skeleton staff on Sundays). The opening sequence of the bulletin was a graphic silhouette of a policeman at a roadblock, the iconic meaning of which was delimited by the superimposition which read: EMERGENCY MEASURES ALREADY IMPLEMENTED. The newsreader, Shirley Veal, provided the following voice-over:

Veal: Good Evening. Road blocks and other emergency measures have already been implemented in some areas where emergency regulations are effected. Areas under the State of Emergency are situated mainly around the East Rand and in the Eastern Cape. Today police were reluctant to disclose details of how they were implementing the new emergency measures, but they emphasised that the security forces were determined to bring an end to the lawlessness which has led to the State of Emergency. Against the background of tighter security, sporadic unrest continued today with at least one death - a man shot at Mornville in the Eastern Province (News 21.7.85 #1).

The ostensible purpose of the News Focus (21.7.85) programme following the Sunday news was to survey the situation which led to the State of Emergency, yet no analysis was provided. Rather it was simply pronounced as 'lawlessness', thus moving resistance from the political to the criminal sphere. The opportunity of showing the security forces in a powerful position was not lost, with policemen dismantling barricades set up by the residents (ibid., #3), and a convoy of casspirs rolling down the road (ibid.,
Both these actions indicated the dominant position of the security forces. However, these images held within them the seeds of their own ambiguity, since the policemen, soldiers and armoured vehicles became the chief images of anti-apartheid iconography mobilized by foreign journalists. It was partly for this reason that photographic depictions of the ‘security forces’ (and their equipment) were banned in November 1985. (The other reason was to shield the security forces from domestic and international viewers, and allow them to act with relative impunity).

The realization that symbols of power and coercion were multi-discursive in nature also resulted in a reconsideration of the image and presentation of security personnel as government spokespersons. At the time of the first State of Emergency, the chief government spokesperson, apart from the State President, was the Commissioner of Police, General Johan Coetzee, who appeared on News Focus in his capacity as ‘Co-ordinator-in-Chief of the Security Forces during the State of Emergency’ (News Focus 21.7.85 #21). Both at the news conference televised on the 20 July, and during the discussion programme of the following day, General Coetzee appeared in full dress uniform, with pips on his shoulders and bars on his chest, drawing strong attention to his rank and standing within the security apparatus.

In contrast, information regarding the second State of Emergency was handled by the Bureau for Information, effectively displacing the military / security connections by using civilians as their chief spokespersons: Dave Steward and Casper Venter, both seconded from the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Ronelle Henning, previously employed as a journalist on a Pretoria newspaper (see particularly news bulletins between 11 June 1986 and end of July 1986). Henning was also a surprising choice since she was a woman - rather a young and glamorous one at that - and her lone presence among middle-aged men was too conspicuous to have been entirely fortuitous. Even those staff members seconded from the police, such as Leon Mellet, previously the chief public relations officer of the SAP, were discursively stripped of their rank and title, and dressed in ‘civvies’ (civilian attire). As an example, on 17 June 1986 (a week after the declaration of the State of Emergency) Mellet, dressed in a grey suit, was introduced to the television public as ‘The Bureau for Information spokesman, Mr Leon Mellet, said [...]’ (News, 17.6.85 #3). This move indicates that in mid-1986, the WHAM position was more influential than the blatantly securocrat position and war-psychosis of a year earlier. The security connections of the Bureau for Information were disguised not only on television, but in the administration too. The Chief Directorate of Planning in the
Bureau, Major-General P.H. Grunewald, seconded ‘for the duration’ (his words) from the SADF, never appeared on television, and came to his office wearing a business suit. His personal assistant, a young man of unknown rank, also seconded from the SADF, was likewise dressed in civilian clothing (personal interview).

Despite the public disavowal of securocrat obsessions, control was a real issue in the second State of Emergency. It was characterised by immediate and decisive action, as evidenced by the Sunday evening news bulletin on the day after announcement of the second State of Emergency (*Nuus* 13.6.86). Accompanied by a forebodingly symbolic chromokey outline map of South Africa in black surrounded by purple clouding, with diagonal red lettering pronouncing ‘STATE OF EMERGENCY’, the newsreader, Riaan Cruywagen, introduced the bulletin:

**Cruywagen:** Good Evening. The Bureau for Information said there is a clear decrease in the number of violent incidents since the declaration of the nationwide State of Emergency. Seven people have died so far. During the first of the Bureau’s news conferences on information regarding the State of Emergency, it was announced that steps were quickly taken against two newspapers which over stepped the regulations. (*Nuus*, 13.6.86).

The visuals then cut to the news conference centre of the Bureau for Information, Pretoria, where Dave Steward, the Bureau’s director, sat in centre of the table, flanked by two unidentified men. In an Afrikaans voice-over, the SABC’s reporter, Charl de Villiers reported that the state had ordered seizure of copies of two newspapers. Dave Steward continued in English:

 [...] certain steps have already been taken. The Minister of Law and Order has ordered the seizure of the *Weekly Mail* and the *Sowetan* of the 13 June. So I want to tell you this - we are not kidding. We are serious about this (*Nuus*, 13.6.86).

It was also at this news conference that the foreign press were warned not to use the phrase ‘white minority regime’, and told that if they persisted, ‘their presence in South Africa will be reconsidered’ (*ibid.*).

In the *Network* broadcast of the following day, the Deputy Minister of Information, Louis Nel, was asked by presenter John Bishop whether the security forces were able to handle ‘the situation’. Nel replied by blatantly stressing the theme of control: ‘We are not even using all the available manpower yet. We are in control’ (*Network*, 12.6.86).
Every Government in Europe would do Exactly the Same Under the Circumstances

It doesn't matter which government is in power, it is our duty towards all our citizens irrespective of the colour of their skin, to protect them, their lives and their property. Every government - every government in Europe - would do exactly the same under the circumstances.
(Pik Botha, Nuus 9.8.1985)

The use of coercion by the security forces was frequently justified by references to control mechanisms undertaken by foreign governments in their own countries. Detailed reporting of civil disturbances in other countries were provided to South African viewers. Particular attention was paid to what was discursively labelled 'the Birmingham riots' in England (News 8.9.85 and Nuus 9.9.85), while 'the Liverpool municipal strike' received attention the following week (News 20.9.85).

The most sustained reporting on foreign disturbances occurred at the end of September 1985, a period which coincided with strong foreign pressure in the form of incipient sanctions on South Africa. In a story running over nearly a week, a series of foreign riots were reported starting on the Saturday evening with a report on Brixton in London (News 28.9.85), picked up again on Monday (News 30.9.85) with an interwoven report on protests in Brixton, in Frankfurt, Germany, and Japan. The story continued on Friday (Nuus 4.10.85) with a follow-up on the Japanese riots. Transcripts of both Saturday's and Monday's news-reports, which are best read in conjunction, are reproduced in Appendix Eight. Aspects of these reports are worth pursuing here. On Saturday evening (News 28.9.85) the opening still was of a night scene, taken from the body of the news report, superimposed with the words: BRITISH RIOTS. The same still was used to introduce the Monday night news story, with a different super. The repetition of the shot serves visually to unite the two stories, bridging the time-gap between them. The labelling of the event, 'British Riots', located it not only geographically (in Britain - not South Africa), but also ideologically, as a 'riot', rather than a 'protest', 'disturbance', 'unrest' or some other paradigmatic choice. Against this still, the verbal introduction, provided by the South African newsreader, David Hall-Green, demarcated the parameters of interpretation by setting up the classic 'us-them' dichotomy: on the 'us' side there were 'hundreds of residents in the London suburbs', ordinary suburban people who needed to 'brace themselves' against the anticipation of 'further outbreaks of violence' by the 'rioters'. The visual footage opened with images of the officials in control of the situation as police cars and lights dominated
the screen. This was reinforced in the commentary, foregrounding the ‘police in riot gear’ over the ‘gangs of youths’ (ibid., #2). - a phrase which pejoratively connoted both their social immaturity and a criminal association. The inherent criminality of the action is repeated by the British commentator’s remarks that ‘a gang began petrol bombing a furniture shop’ (ibid., #3); ‘Today the police are also anxious to trace a group of squatters known to make use of the empty flats above the shop’ (ibid., #3); and ‘Shops, many of them TV and radio dealers, have been boarded up and windows replaced after widespread and systematic looting’ (ibid., #4).

The violence itself is said to have been caused by ‘the accidental shooting by the police of an innocent black woman’ (ibid., #2). While this allows for a degree of culpability by the police, this is mitigated by the qualification ‘accidental’. The victim, on the other hand, may have been ‘innocent’, but the designation of her being ‘black’ immediately sets her up as an outsider, and casts a racial interpretation on the disturbances as a whole.

The violence is also referred to in terms of contagion - ‘It was the first such outbreak of violence in four years, the second in British cities this month’ (ibid. #1); ‘scars of last night’s battles litter the streets’ (ibid., #4), images which suggest not only a pathological origin to the violence, but also its recurrent nature.

To summarize the dichotomies that are established in this report:

‘us’:
* residents of the London suburb
* police in riot gear
* Fireman [...] at the scene all night
* a 94 year old man who lost his life’s possessions
* bobbies on the beat
* playgrounds
* shops selling radios and Tvs

‘them’:
* gangs of youths who rampaged through the area
* a group of squatters known to make use of the empty flats
* barricaders
* looters

On the Monday evening (Nuru 30.9.85), foreign protests were the lead story. The narrative literally continued from where it left off, with the same still used to introduce the report as was used on Saturday evening, with the super contracted to ‘RIOTS’, the report included riots in both Japan and Germany. All three countries were seamlessly
integrated into a single story. Against the chromokey still described above, David Hall-Green began the bulletin:

Good Evening. While the violence in the London suburb of Brixton has continued, rioting has also broken out in Japan and in West Germany. Hundreds of people have been arrested in the rioting, and many, including police, have been injured.

The story on Japan discursively identified ‘protesters’ (ibid., #2) and ‘radicals’ (#3) rather than ‘rioters’, who ‘took part in a demonstration’, and ‘tried to stage a march’ (#3) rather than a ‘riot’. The reasons in this case are also more lofty: a ‘demonstration against a planned expansion of Narita Airport near Tokyo’ (ibid. #2). However, there is an immediate contradiction between the verbal and visual narratives. Although the Japanese footage depicted the well-equipped, well disciplined ‘protesters’ in blue overalls and red helmets, armed with fighting sticks, ranged against the well-equipped, well disciplined police with their plexiglass face visors and shields, which was very different from the mayhem shown in Brixton, there is also a degree of brutality not evinced in the suburban Brixton ‘riots’. In the Japanese case, demonstrators are shown to beat up the police with lethal-looking bamboo ‘spears’ (ibid. #3). The scene changed to the police retaliating with a water cannon (ibid. #4), and then cut back to the police / demonstrator encounter, in which the policeman was now in control (ibid. #5). The steps by which he came to have gained control were not shown, the verbal narrative papering over the cracks in the visual disjunction.

The report on the violence in Germany repeated the notion of contagion, ‘as rioting spread from the original demonstration in Frankfurt to seven other German cities.’ (ibid., #5). Once again, the visual tracks were more explicit in their law-and-order themes than the verbal. The videotape showed a helmeted policeman arresting a protester and escorting him to police van, where he was frisked. This was followed by scenes of policemen searching the coats of suspects, and two ‘punk’ types being escorted by police (ibid. #6).

While the ‘German’ visuals were still on-screen, the verbal narrative cut to Brixton, as David Hall-Green linked the two locations as well as the temporal divide between Monday (‘now’) and Friday (‘then’): ‘Running battles between youth and police also continued in London’s Brixton suburb’ (ibid. #7). The overlap in two stories indicated that they were conceived of as part of larger story. The coherence of the Japanese / German / Brixton sections is further ensured by a continuous voice-over by Hall-Green, acting both as newsreader and narrator.
The visuals in the British section were all shot from behind the police lines, as is evidenced from the predominance of views of the backs of policemen. This positioning framed the ‘rioters’ as an advancing menace as they directly approached the police and the camera. In terms of the verbal narrative too, the police were victims under attack, both physically and morally. The original British voice-over recounted that ‘The pattern was set in the early evening: police forming up where crowds gathered and then coming under attack’ (ibid. #7); ‘The mood was ugly and the tension grew as the night wore on’ (ibid. #9); ‘The police, in a hostile situation, had no time to argue’ (ibid. #12). Nevertheless, they were always shown to be in control: ‘Whenever the crowd grew large enough, the police moved in, often without restraint or mercy, to clear it ’ (ibid. #10); ‘The nightfall total of forty-eight arrests, mainly for public order offences’ (ibid. #11); ‘the police policy was to stamp out trouble the moment it started’ (ibid. #13); ‘There was the isolated incident of looting and deliberate arson, but the police were in large enough numbers to quickly stop it spreading’ (ibid. #14). Once again, as with the German material, the visuals stress the superiority of the police over the protestors (ibid. #8; 9; 11; 12; 13; 14 and 15).

In the second report, the racial overtone, though present, were sublimated. A black woman dressed in a track suit pulled away from the police, taunting them, and then was shown being forcibly manhandled by two policemen, while the voice-over explained:

This woman, in near hysterics, was screaming at the police after her sister had been arrested. The police, in a hostile situation, had no time to argue, so she was arrested and taken to the police station too (ibid. #12).

More directly, the ‘riots’ are immediately connected to internal debates over racial representation within the Labour Party, a connection which was made by the South African newsreader, David Hall-Green: ‘The continuing racial violence in Britain has also given rise to some heated debate at the annual conference of Britain’s Labour party’ (ibid. #15).

This analysis of the SABC’s coverage of foreign ‘riots’ has uncovered a number of themes, which, in different mutations, were also evident in concurrent coverage of domestic (i.e. South African) political violence. Chief among these were

* the riots were racial in origin or overtones;

* the division between ‘us’ and ‘them’, where ‘we’ were the ordinary citizens and the forces of law and order, while ‘they’ were looters, rioters and criminals;
* the police (or security forces), though under severe attack, were always in control;

* the riots were manifestations of social pathology and contagion.

It is the contention of this thesis that the inclusion of these reports in the SABC TV news bulletins should not be viewed in any directly conspiratorial way. These pieces were 'lifted' from the international satellite feed and cobbled together into two reports. The SABC reporters did not 'create' the reports, nor imbue them with particular symbolic meanings. These meanings, which the SABC editors recognized as consonant with the way in which they themselves looked at violence, were already embedded in the original videotapes. Nor is it suggested that the original journalists, in such disparate countries as Britain, Germany and Japan, were necessarily conscious of the ideological significations (and significance) of their work. What they recognized were saleable news values - graphic depictions of right and order pitted against lawlessness and crime - all filtered through the lens of the cultural and political preoccupations of the particular society from which they emanated. Thus, there are strong racial overtones in the British sequence which are absent in the German pieces.

What is particularly significant about these reports, is not so much the richly symbolic texture of the content, but rather the way in which the SABC selected them from an array of possible international satellite stories, and mobilized them to create a particular narrative at a particular period in South African political development. Roughly speaking, the 'story' went like this: other countries also have 'unrest', they also use their police forces to deal with the rioters, they also use stringent means to quell insurrection. In this respect, we are no different.

This reading of the selection process is supported by the predominance of two related (and at times contradictory) arguments within government circles which were current at the time. The first of these, associated particularly with P.W. Botha, was to the effect that South Africa was a sovereign state, and that other countries should not prescribe its policy and internal affairs. Early in August 1985, in answer to a journalist's question as to whether he was considering extending the State of Emergency to other areas, Botha sharply retorted:

I think we are quite capable of dealing with it. If necessary we'll do so. And I won't ask anybody from overseas to tell me where I'm going to institute it or where I'm going to leave it. This is South Africa's decision and South Africa's alone (News 8.8.85).
President Botha’s opening address to the Natal Party Conference later that month (the ‘Rubicon’ speech) was replete with references to ‘pressure from abroad in the form of measures designed to coerce the Government into giving in to various demands. Our enemies - both within and without - seek to divide our peoples’ (Broadcast in full on *Network* 15.8.8). Later in the speech he was more belligerent:

> We have never given in to outside demands and we are not going to do so now. South Africa’s problems will be solved by South Africans and not by foreigners. We are not going to be deterred from doing what we think best, nor will we be forced into doing what we don’t want to do (ibid.).

Concurrently, a second line of reasoning was to the effect that other countries also had their problems, civil disorders and the like, and they treated these very much in the way South Africa treated her problems. This argument was enunciated by Pik Botha on his return from his ‘lightning tour’ of Europe, just prior to the Rubicon speech:

> It doesn’t matter which government is in power, it is our duty towards all our citizens irrespective of the colour of their skin, to protect them, their lives and their property. Every government - every government in Europe - would do exactly the same under the circumstances (Pik Botha, *Nius* 9.8.1985).

Just days after the screening of the foreign riots sequences, the Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange, extended the argument to suggest that not only was South Africa doing what other countries did, but she was doing it better. In a report which included on-the-spot coverage of the opening of a new regional police headquarters, heavily encoded with ceremonial ritual (flags, inspection of the ranks, bestowal of service medals, and speeches), Le Grange was reported to have said that

> [...] South Africa is better than many western countries in the control of unrest. At the opening of the new Louis le Grange Square in Port Elizabeth he said that a number of countries had approached South Africa on the supply of equipment for the control of unrest. Some of these orders have already been exported (*Nius*, 3.10.85).

The ambivalent and sometimes contradictory relationship between South Africa and foreign countries was reflected in the way in which television news reported on these two themes, now looking into one, now the other, depending on which Minister occupied centre stage at the time. This realization refutes any conception of a tightly constructed ‘master plan’ ensuring ideological coherence within the SABC. Rather, it corroborates an understanding of the SABC in which there was general agreement with the main ideological tenets present in government philosophy, but the translation of these into reporting was a much more *ad hoc* and uneven affair.

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'Black-on-Black' Violence

The unrest soon developed into a confrontation between two groups in Black communities: those who favoured evolutionary reform, and revolutionaries committed to violence. The ensuing Black-on-Black violence was a horrifying result of this confrontation. The barbaric 'necklace' murders by Black revolutionaries of fellow Blacks shocked the nation - and the world.

Bureau for Information (1988:1)

One of the most important themes concerning the narrative of political violence over the whole of the State of Emergency, and certainly in the period under review, was that the majority of deaths were the result of 'black-on-black' violence. *News Focus*, 3 September 1985, chaired by John Bishop, included the following report:

**VISUAL**

1. black house engulfed in flames, camera moves around to inside, hand holding hosepipe, gutted home and possessions

**AUDIO**

*John Bishop, VO:* In 1976 the violence was aimed directly at government institutions. But for the past year, black anger has been targeted on fellow blacks who are perceived to be collaborators of the so-called system.

2. *Sowetan* newspaper HL: 'Black Wars'; *Stop BLACK-ON-BLACK VIOLENCE*

*Bishop, VO:* And even black newspapers, very critical of the government, have called for an end to the black wars.

The phrase 'black-on-black' quickly became current in news reporting, both in the commercial press and on television, because it provided a simple formulation of complex issues. The condensed meaning of 'black-on-black' led to its easy and ubiquitous use. It circumvented the necessity to come to terms with the broader issues surrounding the instigation and execution of violence. A primary implication of the black-on-black characterization was the shift in responsibility for the majority of deaths from the security forces to the members of the black communities themselves. This in turn allowed for the development of ethnic myths which defined the black protagonists of violence as being different from the (white) viewers of TV1, and therefore not subject to the same logic or sense of morality which governed those viewers. Political violence was viewed as being analogous to faction fighting. It was characterized as savage, criminal and vengeful, a function of the victims' being black in the world. A corollary of this was that since violence was self-perpetuating and outside the ambit of (mainly
white-directed) authorities the security forces were exonerated for their inability to control violence.

The amorphous nature of the phrase ‘black-on-black’ encouraged the reinforcement of the white prejudice that blacks were incapable of assuming the responsibilities of power and government. At the same time, an opportunity was created to enhance the image of the security forces by enumerating the number of occasions on which they ‘saved lives’. Saving lives, and restoring law and order in general, provided an important legitimation for the declaration of the State of Emergency.

At the heart of the whole construct of the concept of ‘black-on-black’ violence was the emphasis on the theme of ethnicity, and cultural and political plurality among South African blacks. The emphasis on the ethnicity of the killings carried several important implications, and in the course of monitoring broadcasts during the study period, several sub-themes concerning ‘black-on-black’ violence emerged.

To summarize then, this section will examine the following themes which were derived directly from the characterization of the violence as a ‘black-on-black’ phenomenon:

* a shift in the responsibility for the political violence from the government (and the security forces) to the black communities;
* a portrayal of blacks as savage;
* the motif that the security forces are doing their best to save lives;
* the violence is directed by children;
* what masquerades as political violence is in fact criminal violence;
* ‘black-on-black’ violence justifies the State of Emergency; and
* blacks are characterized by ethnic, political and cultural differences.

Before expanding on each of these themes, it is worth digressing to see who the ‘blacks’ in the ‘black-on-black’ couplet were. Initially, the concept of black-on-black violence was quite amorphous. In his speech declaring the first State of Emergency, P.W. Botha condemned the ‘situation of violence and lawlessness [...] especially in the black townships’ (News 20.7.85 Afrikaans / English #2). He set up a dichotomy between ‘law abiding black people ’ and unnamed ‘others’. Later that evening, the Commissioner of Police, General Johan Coetzee, referred to ‘ordinary citizens’ and ‘law-abiding citizens’ (News Focus 20.7.85), who were the victims of the violence. Chief among these ‘law abiding citizens’ were policemen and councillors, who were singled out as such in the News Focus programme the day after the declaration of the State of Emergency.
(21.7.85; #9-11). Against the visuals of a wounded woman, followed by a sequence of shots of a burning mass of wood, the burnt out shells of houses, burn-out door frames, cooking pots and other utensils in ashes, Rusty van Druten provided the voice-over:

van Druten: Black councillors as well as black policemen and their families have been viciously assaulted, seventy of their homes burnt down, and damage inflicted on their business premises in large numbers (ibid., 21.7.85).

Town councillors were a particular target of internecine violence, largely as a result of their association with state-imposed structures and perceived patronage and corruption. These town councils, together with their mayors and associations, were an attempt on the part of the government to impose a limited form of urban self government on black communities. The only way that the government could secure any degree of acceptance (if not legitimacy) for the councils was to assign to these bodies massive increases in resources. However, it has been has argued that the councils found themselves asked to implement large rent increases in situations where transport costs were subject to rapid inflation, schools were being shut by protest actions, unemployment was rising, and services deteriorating (Seekings 1988:59-77). The centrality of the issue of rents and the perception of councillors as sell-outs, were at the root of the first major violent confrontation which occurred in the Vaal Triangle in September 1984.

The discursive ‘others’ ranged against the ‘law abiding citizens’ were frequently referred to as ‘black radicals’, as in the following extract from P.W. Botha’s address to Parliament in April 1986 (reproduced in a Bureau for Information booklet): ‘From the start of the unrest in September 1984 until 22 April 1986, 508 people, mostly moderate Blacks, were brutally murdered by radical Blacks mostly by the so-called necklace method’ (Bonfo 1986:28). On the political level, it was assumed that blacks with different political affiliations were at war with one another. All these various levels of divisiveness are invoked in SABC’s radio Comment (9.7.85) the week prior to the declaration of the State of Emergency:

In Soweto the houses of four policemen were petrol-bombed, as was the house of Mr Steve Kgame, President of the Urban Councils Association of South Africa. At Duduza on the East Rand the vendetta between the UDF and Azapo has evidently precipitated a counter-campaign against radicals by groups known as vigilantes.

From August 1985, the division solidified into the broad category of Inkatha-affiliated Zulus versus ‘others’ in Natal. The dispute took on a political mantle and became discursively objectified as an Inkatha - UDF / ANC confrontation. At this
stage, Inkatha members were often identified in the commercial press, as well as the black townships (although not on the SABC) as 'vigilantes', sometimes with the appendage of gang-names, for instance, the 'A-Team'. But it was in June 1986, with the massive disruption in the Crossroads area of greater Cape Town directly preceding the declaration of the second State of Emergency, that the notion of vigilante violence became popularized. This brief analysis does little more than indicate the necessity of specifying precisely what is meant by 'black-on-black' violence at any particular historical point - a specificity which was usually missing from government use of the term.

Emphasizing Ethnic and Political Plurality among Blacks

Part of the apartheid mythology has been not only that blacks are different from whites, but that they are inferior. White South Africans before 1948 accepted as 'obvious' that they were members of a race that was superior to all others in Africa, in terms of religion, technology, politics and the arts, as well as the vast differences in power and wealth (Thompson 1985:101-102). This belief that human races were mutually inassimilable lies at the heart of racist consciousness, and although publicly disavowed in the 1980s, has left residual traces on the consciousness of the present generation.

Under apartheid the myth went further, to state that blacks themselves were ethnically divided into different 'tribes', with different languages, customs and political affiliations, and that these differences were inherent, fixed and static. As the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 put it: 'The Bantu peoples do not constitute a homogeneous people, but form separate national units on the basis of language and culture' (quoted in Kennedy 1980:88).

The division of blacks along ethnic lines saw its ultimate development in the Verwoerdian scheme of 'Grand Apartheid', in which South Africa would be divided into various 'homelands' for each 'tribe', while the central urban / industrial core, and the developed tracts of already-prosperous farm lands, would be allocated to whites only.
For Verwoerd, Werner Eislein’s functional anthropological view of tribes and nations as fundamental social entities was very congenial:

Intellectual conviction and Afrikaner expediency went hand-in-hand to form a potent combination that would give apartheid a coherence and purpose which had previously been absent. The belief that there was now one emerging black nation in South Africa was now conveniently disposed of. In fact, there were many, such as the Xhosa, the Zulu and the Tswana, so that for propaganda purposes it could be claimed that the whites (not merely the Afrikaners) were, after the Xhosa, the largest nation in South Africa (Kennedy 1980:88).

In time, the nomenclature changed from ‘tribe’ to ‘ethnic group’ then simply ‘group’, while the ‘homelands’, depending on their political ‘maturity’ developed into ‘self-governing states’, then ‘independent national states’ (see Posel 1984; Thompson 1985). The leaders of these homelands, or ‘national states’, independent or otherwise, were seen as ‘moderate black leaders’ with whom it was legitimate to negotiate change, discursively conceptualized as ‘reform’ and ‘constitutional development’. However, this stratum of tribal leadership had very little popular legitimacy, and for the most part, they were labelled as collaborators and ‘sellouts’. This came about in large measure as a consequence of the apparent expediency with which these leaders reaped the benefits of their cooperation with apartheid, together with suspicions of wide-spread corruption.

Mangosuthu Buthelezi has always been a wily politician, and one of the few homeland leaders to have escaped a lack of popular legitimacy as a result of his working within the system. His official biographer has argued that ‘he became a leader of his people within the official South African political context’ only because:

To do otherwise would not have been possible without abandoning the Zulu, something he, as their political leader already, could not have done (Temkin 1976:334).

As the Chief Minister of KwaZulu, however, he has always been careful to keep a critical distance from the National Party government, thereby retaining his reputation for being a fierce opponent of apartheid. For this reason, he never accepted the status of ‘independence’ for KwaZulu. Since KwaZulu was the largest and most populous of

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2 While Hendrik Verwoerd is usually credited with being the ‘architect of apartheid’, it was Werner Eislein, Verwoerd’s Secretary of Native Affairs (later re-titled Secretary for Bantu Administration and Development) who was responsible for the nationalist-scientific anthropology which informed the system of separateness. An important Afrikaner organic intellectual, Eislein believed that the stability of the tribal system was necessary since it ensured the organic whole which had traditionally given meaning to the life of the African (Kennedy 1980). Change was only possible if the tribal institutions and tribal authorities remained intact.
the 'national states', Buthelezi's refusal to accept independence alienated the National Party government by making it impossible to bring the ultimate design of Apartheid to fruition. As a result he was *persona non grata* on South African television for a number of years in the late 1970s and early 1980s. His adversarial stance regarding long-term government strategy made him a powerful candidate for the role of an alternative oppositional voice to that of the ANC.

Buthelezi's resistance to apartheid has been a double-edged sword, since his outspoken views against the imposition of economic sanctions on South Africa made him a valuable ambassador to foreign countries, particularly as his carefully preserved opposition to government structures afforded him an aura of independence from the official view. His value as an anti-sanctions lobbyist, and as an acceptable black spokesman providing a different voice to that of the ANC, suddenly made him a sought-after figure on the SABC News. (Conversely, his views on sanctions seriously damaged his reputation for independence among black South Africans, and have been an important factor contributing to the diminution of his position as a national-popular intellectual who might be able to weld together the disparate factions within black political allegiances.)

In 1985 Buthelezi travelled extensively, promoting the view that 'international sanctions and boycotts in South Africa will hurt blacks in South Africa more than whites' (*Nuus* 5.8.85). On 2 August 1985 he was in London, where, together with Helen Suzman (another staunch opponent of apartheid), he was present at a press conference held by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Accompanied by video-footage of the three of them together, the newsreader read the following report:

In London, the Chief Minister of KwaZulu, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, asked the British Prime Minister Mrs Margaret Thatcher to be firm in her stand on sanctions against South Africa. Chief Buthelezi and Mrs Helen Suzman met the British Prime Minister in her official residence for discussions. Chief Buthelezi said the EEC Ambassadors were now more than ever necessary in South Africa, because they could influence the situation. He said to Mrs Thatcher that he believed something would have to be done in South Africa, but not something that would discriminate against the victims [of apartheid] (*Nuus* 2.8.85).

Three days later, Buthelezi was in America. TV *Nuus* included an excerpt from the American NBC news programme *Meet the Press*. Directly facing the camera, Buthelezi argued:

*Buthelezi* American policy in the past has been not to have any policy towards South Africa. So there I thought that constructive engagement as
such cannot have any concrete way of improving the situation in South Africa. But at the same time I appreciated it myself as the first effort by the administration in America to wrestle with the prickly nettle of apartheid (ibid.).

In September 1985, Buthelezi addressed a Shaka Day rally in Stanger, Natal, an event which was extensively covered and well illustrated by television (see Appendix Eight). Together with King Goodwill, the Queen and the Queen Mother - all in ceremonial Zulu dress, and surrounded by all the trappings of traditional Zulu regalia - Buthelezi used the opportunity to express his views on Zulu superiority. He invoked his well-publicized views on passive resistance (see Temkin 1976:58), claiming that a 'large group of black people in the country do not believe in violence as a solution' (Nuus, 9.9.85 #1). Tactically, this was a powerful move, as Gandhi was well-known for having made his home in the area around Stanger at the turn of the century. Without actually naming them, Buthelezi spoke out against 'outsiders who wanted to divide the population'. He went on to suggest a degree of political opportunism among 'certain church leaders' who used funerals 'for their own political purposes' (ibid. #2).

Two weeks later, at a second Shaka Day gathering, this time in Umlazi, his speech was again given extensive coverage. The visuals were heavily iconic with Zulu maidens, youth camp brigade, indunas, white officials, royal party and tribal dignitaries, all attesting to the authenticity of the ethnic Zulu National state, and of the Zulu cultural movement, Inkatha. The reflexive presence of the news media in the form of television camerapersons, underscores the importance of the occasion as a news event.

On this occasion, Buthelezi was more direct in his accusations, naming the ANC as the 'enemy', and accusing them of responsibility for 'black-on-black' violence. Reporting the gathering on the News, Michael de Morgan read:

de Morgan: At a Shaka Day gathering at Umlazi, KwaZulu Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi has accused the foreign-based leadership of the ANC as striving for a bloodbath in South Africa, even at the cost of black lives. He noted that his organization was urging its supporters to kill fellow blacks, and re-affirmed his own opposition to violence (News, Wednesday 25.9.85).

Legitimising the State of Emergency

'Black-on-black' violence became an important legitimizing theme in the defence of the declaration of the State of Emergency. Three weeks into the State of Emergency, SABC-TV News ran a long story under the banner of SANCTIONS, in which they
interviewed the visiting US Congressman and 'advocate of punitive action against South Africa', Stephen Solarz. In a news conference with Pik Botha and Louis Nel (in his capacity as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs), Solarz was forced to admit that 'this country's problems are complex' (News 6.8.85), and that part of that complexity was the multiplicity of black ideological positions, and the fact that the ANC did not represent the whole of the black opposition to apartheid.

At the time, Mangosuthu Buthelezi was in Britain promoting his anti-sanctions stance, arguing that sanctions would do more harm than good for South African blacks. This reasoning provided the American Republican administration with a discursively acceptable position from which to hold out against the imposition of sanctions, to which they were opposed primarily on the grounds of economic self-interest.

The Stephen Solarz interview ran straight into a report of President Ronald Reagan's 'first news conference since the declaration of the State of Emergency', in which he 'defended his policy towards South Africa and warned of the dangers of economic sanctions' (Michael de Morgan, News, 6.8.85). At this point, the visuals cut to a satellite report of Reagan, sitting behind his desk in the Oval Office, backed with a shelf of framed family photographs, connoting both informality and intimacy. The press corps was arrayed in front of him. The whole atmosphere of the scene was one of studied informality - here is a family man speaking to his fellow-Americans, and taking them into his personal confidence. Reagan's easy manner, ready smile and expansive hand gestures reinforced this interpretation. (It is instructive to compare Reagan's 'style' with the defensive and bellicose style of P.W. Botha, as outlined in the previous discussion on reform; or the aggressive style of Pik Botha.) Reagan expanded on his reasons for advocating a policy of 'constructive engagement':

Just recently over the weekend, I listened to the words of Buthelezi, who is the leader of the Zulus, and they're a full third or more of the black population of South Africa. He has come out against the hostility of sanctions and so forth, and said what we have, that things of that kind would only hurt people we are trying to help. In principle I have to say what I've said - that a continuation of our present programme - I think is the best way that we can be of help to black citizens in South Africa (News 6.8.85).

Here, Reagan was arguing that there were 'many' black nations, and that the ANC only represents one portion of the black nations. Others, example, the Zulus, are equally important. This fracturing of the idea of black opposition to apartheid into a number of separate 'tribes' has its roots in that particular brand of nationalist-scientific
anthropology promoted by Werner Eiselein and Hendrik Verwoerd, among others. Such ethnically based divisions were given a contemporary context through the presented ‘evidence’ of ‘black-on-black’ violence.

In answer to the question put forward to him by a journalist as to what the American government was doing to enforce the lifting of the State of Emergency, President Reagan fuzzed over the issue by saying that his administration had ‘had some influence so far’, and that the South African government had ‘guaranteed that they want to make progress in that direction’ (ibid., #). He went on to suggest that the presence of ‘violence between blacks there’ legitimated the use of extraordinary measures, while ‘law enforcement’ action was directed primarily against ‘riotous behaviour’:

You’re talking though now about a governmental reaction to some violence that was hurtful to all the people. We have seen that violence between blacks there, as well as from the law enforcement against riotous behaviour. [shakes his head and looks concerned] I think we have to recognise sometimes when actions are taken in an effort to curb violence. This, together with the consideration that sanctions would not only be harmful for the black citizens there, they would probably be hurtful to the surrounding countries whose economies greatly depend on their trade and economic relations with South Africa (ibid.).

By paraphrasing the words used by Buthelezi, and by virtue of his not distinguishing between the political and the ethnic aspects of Inkatha’s role in the conflict, Reagan gave impetus to the idea that Americans might really be sympathetic to the ideas of South African whites after all (despite the clear evidence that President Reagan, while perhaps confused about the conflation of race and class in US politics, can never be seen as a conscious racist).

More Blacks were Killed by Blacks than by the Security Forces

An important function of the insistence on ‘black-on-black’ violence was the contention that the black community itself bore the largest responsibility for the deaths of fellow blacks. The corollary of this argument was that the security forces in large measure were absolved for the excessive number of deaths. This position was most clearly spelt out by the Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, early in the first State of Emergency. He put the ‘unrest situation’ in perspective in these terms:

Perhaps the most important point is it is not a confrontation between black and white. From September last year [1984] to July this year more than 160 black people were killed by their own people. Even the Sowetan newspaper this week reported ‘How long are these killings to be
perpetuated until some tough action from the state halts them' [...] (Nuus, Friday, 9 August, 1985 Afrikaans).

When people were killed by the security forces, reports of their deaths were usually conveyed in the passive voice, while people killed by other blacks were reported in the active voice, a point which will be developed later.

In a booklet entitled Talking to the ANC, the Bureau for Information reproduced part of an address to parliament by P.W. Botha in April 1986, under the heading of BLACK-ON-BLACK VIOLENCE. The speech was given particular emphasis by being set out in an outlined 'box', and printed in blue ink, as opposed to the rest of the booklet, which was printed in black ink. In the speech Botha noted that:

It has become common practice to report on the violence in South Africa by referring to the number killed in violent actions or unrest situations, without stating the cause of deaths or the circumstances in which people were killed. Invariably, the impression is created - and it would seem often willfully so - that these violent deaths are the result of a spontaneous uprising against the so-called apartheid system and subsequent Security Force or police action to quell such uprisings. The violence and deaths are then blamed on the police and Security Forces and put on the account of the Government (Binfo 1986: 27-30).

Apart from the suggestion that the security forces were not in fact responsible for 'the violence and deaths', Botha was making three further points: the media (those who 'report') were deliberately ('willfully') maligning the security forces; the 'uprising' against the state was not 'spontaneous'; and there was no such thing as a 'so-called apartheid system'. In order to set the record straight on these points, the booklet continued to quote Botha at length:

From the start of the unrest in September 1984 until 22 April 1986, 508 people, mostly moderate Blacks, were brutally murdered by radical Blacks mostly by the so-called necklace method. Of this figure, 205 were murdered since January 1986, that is during the first four months of 1986, most of them after the lifting of the State of Emergency in February (Binfo 1986:28)

The booklet quoted Botha further:

Since September 1984 no less than 1 417 Black-owned businesses, 4 435 private homes (including 814 homes of Black policemen), 28 churches, 54 community centres, several hundred schools and a number of clinics - all serving the Black community - were either totally destroyed or badly damaged by petrol bombs or other forms of arson or attacks. In addition, during the same period, several thousand private vehicles - again Black owned - were destroyed or severely damaged (ibid.).
The extensive use of statistics in this quotation is immediately striking, and serves to provide ‘proof’ for the contention that the ‘violence and deaths’ should not be ‘put on the account of the Government’. To add weight to this argument, the booklet includes a three-coloured graph of the monthly fatality figures, divided between the security forces and ‘Black radicals’. This graph is reproduced as Table 8.1. From the graph it is evident that with the exception of December 1985 and January 1986, when the absolute numbers of deaths inflicted was relatively small, the number of persons killed by the security forces was consistently higher for each month under the first State of Emergency. This of course, is the obverse of saying that most of deaths committed by ‘Black radicals’ occurred ‘after the lifting of the State of Emergency in February’. This observation is not an attempt to condone the deaths inflicted within the black community, but only to point out that the presentation of statistics by categories is an entirely arbitrary exercise.

The Bureau continued with the quotation from Botha, once more exonerating the security forces from any culpability for the deaths which resulted from ‘security action’:

The violence against which the police have to react is perpetuated by ruthless and unscrupulous people who make use of savage and barbaric methods to achieve their goals. In exercising their responsibility to protect the lives and property of innocent people, death as a result of security action is sometimes inevitable (ibid.:29-30).

The theme that more blacks were killed by blacks than the security forces was one to which the Bureau often returned in its news conferences, and on which the SABC faithfully reported, as in the following example:

Other than two exceptions, more black people where murdered in black-on-black violence (swart-op-swart geweld) then shot (doodgeskiet) by the Security Forces. A decrease of 33% was recorded among the injured. Here too, violence among black people makes up the majority (Nuus, 27.6.86).

These excerpts from P.W. Botha’s speech reveal one of the implicit premises of the argument used to justify not only apartheid, but also the policies of Western development agencies: that African people - ‘blacks’ - occupy a lower niche in the scheme of things than do ‘developed’ peoples - ‘whites’. Because they do not exhibit the properties of industrialised societies, black persons relate to these either as ‘savages’ or as ‘innocents’. If they were truly developed, the argument goes, then they would display a greater sophistication in the way they engage with modernity; the ‘facts’ show that they
do not do this effectively; therefore, these people do not show evidence of being fit for the modern world.

By using this somewhat simplistic *modus tollens* logical form, I do not wish to diminish as simple ‘irrationality’ or ‘deviance’ the force of this world-view in the context of its linguistic and cultural origins. More relevantly, it indicates the possibilities inherent in the paradigms of social science for the results of ahistorically conceived research programmes to deliver highly problematic results to policy-making organs. In this case, I caricature the argument in order to highlight the theme of ‘innocence’ and ‘savagery’ as a dualistic opposition in order to contextualize the way in which the SABC set about reinforcing stereotypes of black persons’ actions: the reporting of the ‘necklace executions’.

**Necklacing: the Epitome of Savagery**

In constructing the portrayal of black persons as a binary opposition of either innocents or savages, both the Bureau and the SABC focused particularly on the practice of ‘necklacing’; a particularly gruesome form of execution in which the victim, usually alive though severely assaulted, was encased in a rubber tyre, doused with petrol (gasoline) and then set alight. Death resulted from asphyxiation and severe internal burning - while the body was charred often beyond recognition. Because of the brutality of necklacing as a method of execution, it became the locus around which discussions of political violence focussed. The barbarity represented by necklacing was sensationalized by the commercial press. While television news used it more circumspectly, necklacing came to represent the pinnacle of violence between blacks, and became the central symbol around which the stereotype of the revolutionary folk-devil was forged.

The State of Emergency opened against one such savage melodrama. In what Heidi Holland (1989:208) has referred to as a ‘bizarre public relations stunt’, the 18h00 (6 p.m.) evening *TV News* on 20 July 1985 exposed the full horror of necklacing. On the 20h00 (8 p.m.) bulletin, P.W. Botha said ‘This state of affairs can no longer be

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3 See SAIRR Annual Survey, 1986: for a full and very graphic medical description of death by necklacing. Nothing that is said in this section about the opportunistic exploitation of the phenomenon by the Bureau for Information or the SABC should be taken to mean a condonation of this form of execution.
tolerated’, and announced the first State of Emergency, after which the same video footage was repeated:

**VISUALS**

1. Bea Reid in studio. No chromokey

2. Procession carrying coffin shoulder high - clenched fists - yellow tee-shirts; solemn procession - no dancing or toy-toying

3. Sequence continues as above - crowd scene taken from behind

4. Boesak, surrounded by other clergy, in full regalia, speaks from podium with three microphones - uses wide hand gestures (can’t hear what he says)

5. Beyers Naude from same podium - more restrained

6. Camera takes back of heads - people pushing and shoving

7. Camera careers all over - focuses in on a clearing - small pieces of something burning - too indistinct to see what - people pass in front of the camera - see woman collapse to ground - flames on head - back is bare - flames on clothes -

**AUDIO**

Reid: At Cradock near East London, the funeral took place of four community leaders who died last month in mysterious circumstances. Please take note that some scenes in the latter part of the video material may cause offence to sensitive viewers. The burials were those of Matthew Goniwe and three others.

[original soundtrack - no commentary]

Reid VO: The four disappeared on June 27 after leaving a UDF meeting in Port Elizabeth and their burnt and mutilated bodies were found four days later.

Reid VO: The President of the Reformed Churches and Patron of the UDF, Dr Allan Boesak, was one of the main speakers,

along with the Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, the Reverend Beyers Naude.

[no original sound track] At another funeral in Duduza on the East Rand, for seven other unrest victims, an angry mob surround a woman in the field, stoned and burnt her to death. The woman was alleged to be a police informer.

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stops struggling and lies still

8. woman lying prone -
(can't make out details -
very fuzzy pictures - greatly
enlarged)

Observers said her body was later mutilated by the crowd.

While this video sequence was shot, the camera was hand-held at shoulder level just behind the surge of the crowd. This positioned the viewer as a member of the crowd behind the outlines of moving heads, on the same level as the people being videotaped. From this vantage point, the viewer had a unique sense of participation - of 'being there' - a sense which is intensified as the camera swings crazily around trying to focus on the object of its gaze - the woman being burnt, which conveys the sense of being jostled in among the crowd.

During the period under review, only one further episode of death by burning was broadcast. On the 11 August 1985,
, three weeks into the first State of Emergency, a Ciskeian policeman was attacked and immolated at the funeral of Victoria Mxenge, a prominent civil rights lawyer in Durban. A transcript of the report is reproduced here:

**VISUAL**

1. *Newsreader, no illustrations*

**AUDIO**

*News Reader*: Good Evening. A Ciskeian policeman was killed and burnt by riotous mourners (opreorige begrafnissgangers) during the funeral of a Durban attorney Mrs Victoria Mxenge. About 5,000 people attended the funeral near King Williamstown. We warn viewers that the following images (beeldmaterieel) include gruesome scenes.

2. shot from above - people milling about parked white bach with khaki canvas hood

*News Reader VO*: The incident happened when a police vehicle was trapped in a crowd while

3. door opens and man in khaki uniform is pulled out

*News Reader VO*: the funeral procession was busy crossing the National road to the funeral ground.

4. truck pulls away - second man who pulled policeman out jumps in and slams the door - bach goes forward

*[background: direct sound of chanting]*

*News Reader VO*: One of the policemen fled into the crowd. The other dashed away, but was hit by stones (het weggejaag en het klipgooiery raak gekry).
through group of mini busses - followed by crowd - plenty of dust -

5. very jerky editing cut. Bare veld in front - group of people in background. Smoke rises behind them

6. CU of burning body - shot held for 4.8 seconds

7. long shot. large group of people fills about 3/5 of the screen. camera pulls up to medium CU - the whole screen is filled with people. Large tree with many people in it

8. medium CU at eye level of people carrying video cameras

9. medium CU: two men in yellow T-shirts with Helen Joseph standing between them, holding a microphone

10. seated on grass - Molly Blackburn and Di Bishop with man (her husband)

11. long shot: once again fills whole screen with people

12. Medium CU of coffin covered with white flowers. Cuts to CU of coffin, this time with no flowers, but covered with various mementoes. Minister reading from bible

13. News Reader with no illustration

News Reader VO: The policeman who fled was overcome by a group of youths and set alight.

VO: His burning body was left in the veld. - [followed by silence for rest of shot].

VO: The thousands of mourners from all over the country assembled / thronged (saamgedrom) at the burial ground from early this morning.

News Reader VO: Among the mourners who watched the proceedings were many foreign journalists.

News Reader VO: Mrs Helen Joseph and two Provincial Councillors

News Reader VO: from the Progressive Federal Party, Mrs Molly Blackburn and Mrs Di Bishop, were also seen among the mourners.

News Reader VO: Bishop Desmond Tutu and Dr Allan Boesak who were supposed to address the mourners, didn’t show up (het nie opgedaag nie).

VO: Mrs Mxenge was assassinated in front of her Umlazi home last week.

News Reader: In another incident of murder a black
man was murdered near Pretoria. His body was also burnt in the open.

The framing and language of the story emphasized the dichotomy of savage and innocent: the Afrikaans word ‘oproerige’ is translated as ‘rebellious, riotous insurgent; factious, mutinous; seditious’ (Kritzinger et al; 1972:464), while ‘begrafnisgangers’ translated literally as ‘funeral-goers’ or ‘mourners’ carries the connotations of sorrow, lament and melancholy. Juxtaposing the two words together appears paradoxical: at any rate, entirely inappropriate. The policemen, on the other hand, were entirely without blame - they were simply ‘trapped in a crowd while the funeral procession was busy crossing the National road’ (11.8.85 #2-3). On reflection, it is difficult to imagine that their presence at the well-advertised funeral was inadvertent, however devastating the results of that presence were.

Although this was not a necklacing case, certain similarities in the treatment of the report are worth pointing to. In both cases, the newsreader introduces the story without a chromokey illustration. This is unusual. The introductions both include ‘warnings’ to sensitive viewers: ‘Please take note that some scenes [...] may cause offence to sensitive viewers’ (20.7.85 #1); ‘We warn viewers that the following images (beeldmaterieel) include gruesome scenes’ (11.8.85 #1). In both constructions, the concern is entirely with the sensibilities of the viewer, and not with the rights or dignity of the subject or her / his family who may be watching. Secondly, in both cases the original ‘news event’ which brought the camera team to the scene - the Duduza funeral for seven ‘unrest victims’, and Victoria Mxenge’s funeral - takes a perfunctory second place to the highly charged events of the deaths.

It is the similarity of filming which is most striking - both video tapes were taken from within the crowd, both were hand-held and jerky, and the conventions of realism which have recently become vogue amongst post-modern documentarists and advertisers alike, were used here with awesome effect. However, their use is not entirely innocent: the image of the burning body lying on the ground is held on-screen for 4.8 seconds - a long time by news standards. For most of this time the shot is unaccompanied by any sound track and there appears to be at least an intuitive understanding here that the image is more powerful than the word: the viewer, whether ‘sensitive’ or not, cannot help but be greatly moved.
The emotional impact of this footage and the objections voiced by the white viewing public, were probably largely responsible (among other factors discussed earlier in this thesis) for the fact that such graphic footage was not used again in ‘unrest’ reports. The only other occurrence of the broadcast of images of a burning body in the period under review, was a very stylized piece which introduced a discussion programme on the ANC. In this case, there were a number of grammatical and ideological differences which will be discussed below. If visual depictions of burning bodies were confined to the period immediately following the declaration of the first State of Emergency, in the reports afterwards they are voiced, if not shown.

The Security Forces Save Lives

The frequency of necklace murders allowed the security forces an opportunity to gain legitimacy by publicizing the number of times during which they were able to save lives. Frequent reports of such instances appeared, especially after the second state of emergency. The following are examples of such reports:

* A black member of the Railway Police rescued a man from a necklace burning. He was taken to hospital with serious burn wounds. A large group of blacks ran away from the scene of the burning (Nueus, 27.6.1986).

* The Bureau for Information also announced that the security forces stopped two black men from killing another black man (Nueus 23.6.1986).

* Twelve people have been rescued from necklace murders since the beginning of the State of Emergency. Five were women. More than 60 blacks, four of them women, will appear in court shortly in connection with the incidents (Nueus, 25.6.86).

* This 48-year old father was also presented (aangestel) to the newsmen. He was released today from Tygerberg Hospital after for treatment for injuries after it was attempted to murder him by the so-called necklace method. The man, who may not be identified, told newsmen how the police saved his life (Nueus 27.6.86).

This last story was illustrated with a chromokey of a side view of a torso and arm, badly burnt. The man in question was never identified (probably in order to save him from further retaliation), and he was not given the opportunity to tell his side of the story on camera (even in a disguised or ‘protected’ form). He was little more than a prop in a public relations exercise.

Speculation on the discrepancy between the reported instances of lives being ‘saved’ in the two States of Emergency, suggests two possibilities: either the security forces did not make saving lives a priority in the first State of Emergency (which is
possible, but highly unlikely); or, more effort was made to publicize these events in the second State of Emergency (which is more probable). The predominance of examples of people being ‘saved’ at this particular period appears to have been part of a larger campaign of using the phenomenon of necklacing to discredit all resistance to Government policies. On Wednesday, 25 June 1986 the SABC’s chief crime reporter, Chris Olkers, announced that:

**Olkers:** In an effort to restrict (bekamp) the so-called necklace murders, which are usually committed by black youths who name themselves the ‘young comrades’ [English], the South African Police announced that they will from now on make substantial rewards to people who provide information on incidents of violence in which the necklace murder method is used. Lieutenant Pierre Louw of the South African Police spoke to Television News (*Nius*, 25.6.86).

The report then cut to an interview with Lieutenant Pierre Louw, a consummate public relations man. The publicity value of the exercise was underscored by the prominently displayed SAP logo on the wall. The undoubted seriousness of the situation was worked against by Louw’s supercilious attitude and body language. Leaning back in his chair, Louw smirked as he told the camera and through the camera, the audience:

**Louw:** A reward of R1 000 will be paid by the South African Police for any information which leads to the arrest and conviction of any person who is connected with the following incidents:
- in the first place the production or use of fire or acid bombs;
- agitation, intimidation or incitement to the committing of violence;
- and any individual who takes part in violence in which people are seriously injured and this naturally includes any incident in which anyone is seriously injured or murdered through the use of the necklace method (*Nius*, 25.6.86).

As the camera turned back to him, Chris Olkers nodded in agreement, signalling his sympathy with the sentiments expressed by Louw. Lieutenant Louw went on to use the opportunity of promoting the image of a caring police force by sermonizing against the ‘barbarity’ of the ‘misdeeds’ (misdade), while at the same time sympathizing with the plight of ‘ordinary citizens in the black areas’. However, the ‘we’ of the South African Police Force is conflated with the ‘we’ to whom he addressed himself: the ‘employers’, that is, the white / coloured / Indian viewers of TV1:

**Louw:** I think *we* in the South African Police are aware of the suffering suffered by ordinary citizens in black areas (swart woongebiede) in recent times. *We* are aware of barbarity with which these misdeeds are done. And *we* take note that our black youth is deprived of a meaningful education, and thereby the rightful place in the community (samelewing) and the future of this country. Therefore we are making a call to our
public: that they provide us with the information which they are aware of. In particular we appeal to employers to persuade their employees to give us this information. People with information can phone the following numbers [...] (Nius, 25.6.86).

The 'we' who were the subject of the address were contrasted with two implied groupings of people, both of whom were black: on the one hand there were the benign blacks, 'the ordinary citizens in black areas', who were indicated by the use of possessive pronouns, 'our black youth'; 'their employees', a construction which indicated a sense of paternalism and condescension, reinforced by Louw's supercilious and smirking attitude towards the camera. On the other hand were the unnameable perpetrators of 'barbarity' and 'misdeeds', those of whom the employees would have had information.

A second theme in this passage was the emphasis placed on the youthful nature of the perpetrators of violence. This concern coincided with intense criticism from the international community levelled at the South African government for its large-scale detention of youths and children.

Children

The role of children in the political process has been a distinctive feature of South African oppositional politics. Ramphele and Wilson (1989:1) note that:

Ever since the Soweto revolt in 1976, black children in South Africa have been at the cutting edge of their country's history. They began by protesting against an inadequate and racist educational system, and in subsequent years, fought on a broader front for political change that would both stiffen the resolve of their elders and lead to the transformation of the society in which they were trapped. There are few countries in the world, at any time in history, where children have found themselves so much in the front line of a determined and violent struggle for change, or where so much historical weight has been placed on such young shoulders.

Children had been detained routinely under security legislation since 1977 (Thomas 1990:439). From the imposition of the first State of Emergency until the end of the year (July-December 1985), 2 016 children, officially acknowledged as under the age of 16 years, were detained under security legislation, representing approximately 25% of the detainee population (Chikane 1986:334; Webster 1987:152).

During the first eight or nine weeks of the second State of Emergency (June - August 1986), an estimated minimum of 3 000 children under the age of 16 were arrested and detained (Ramphele and Wilson 1987:1), and by November 1986, the
number had risen to 4 000 (The Star 27.11.1986; The Guardian (London) 7.12.86). Official figures as of the 15 October 1986 were 2 677 children, which included 254 children under the age of fifteen (Weekly Mail 13.3.87). The treatment of detained children and youths the during the mid-1980s received world-wide attention. In the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the government, particularly through the Bureau for Information, should have moved actively to negate the publicity surrounding this.

The role of children in insurrectionary revolt was emphasized from the outset of the first State of Emergency. The News Focus programme following the declaration of the State of Emergency (21.7.85, Appendix Six) included a video sequence of a deserted school yard, scanning an array of burnt-out buildings and vehicles in the background (ibid. #13). Over these images, the narrative voice intoned:

Schools, administration buildings, business premises, buses and private vehicles have been attacked by mobs of agitated youths and school children.

The emphasis on the youth of the perpetrators was reinforced by what was not said. The same bulletin carried visuals of youth toyi-toying (News Focus 21.7.85 #7); and a close-up of a young boy with a raised fist salute (ibid. #18). Both sequences were accompanied only by the original sound track, without further explanation or commentary.

The early morning radio Comment of the following day was more explicit yet:

Riotous youths - many of them school children between the ages of 10 and 16, who are idle because they refuse to go to school - are waging a reign of terror in the townships. They have burnt down schools, administration buildings and houses. Trains, buses and cars have been stoned, and business premises have been looted and set alight. There is irrefutable evidence that youths were actively involved themselves, and were often the ringleaders, with [sic] the killing of community leaders and the burning of some of their bodies in the streets. Rioting, attacks and arson become a form of entertainment for these youths. [...]

What government in the world would discuss intricate political issues round the conference table with children who rightly belong at school, and primary school to boot. It has been very clear since the start of the school boycotts that these children want to discuss anything but matters relating to education (Comment 22.7.85).

The ostensible subjects of this passage were ‘youths’ and ‘children’, but metonymically, all blacks were implicated. This understanding is the obverse of the paternalism pointed to at the end of the previous section. Classical apartheid saw blacks as perpetual children, in need of help and discipline. Without such discipline, blacks would revert to
their natural and instinctive capacity for violence. Thus, when *Comment* speaks of the inappropriateness of the government negotiating 'political issues round the conference table with children', the point was also being made about the reluctance of government negotiating with all blacks who were prepared to make demands - regardless of their age or status.

As the State of Emergency proceeded, the government was clearly embarrassed at the negative publicity surrounding the arrests and detentions of children, who were now euphemistically relexified as 'persons under 18', as in the following 'Unrest Report' from the Bureau for Information:

In Daveyton, a group of approximately 6 people damaged the roofs of private homes and threatened the residents with arson. The SAP succeeded in arresting two of those responsible, one a man older than 18 years, the other under 18 (*Nuus* 11.08.86).

In a blatant attempt to justify the detention of children, the Bureau for Information published a booklet entitled *The Young Revolutionaries*. The booklet included three full-colour photographs of necklace victims. Under the heading of 'The sub-culture of the "comrades"', the Bureau (1988a:7) argued that:

Testimony given by 'comrades' (some of it reflected in subsequent pages) shows that their common tactics and methods testify to an orchestrated and organized strategy. The tools they have been instructed to use are violence and intimidation; their methods are the brutalization of their fellow human beings.

[...]

Their ultimate weapon of terror is the 'necklace'. A motor-car tyre is placed around the neck of the victim (sometimes a political opponent, sometimes a 'sell-out', sometimes the victim of personal vendetta, sometimes a random victim), filled with petrol (gasoline) and set alight. The 'necklace' death is excruciating - and a fearsome warning to others. This is the sub-culture of the 'comrades'.

The Bureau's account functions on the mythological basis of emptying history, by providing an entirely ahistorical account, and by implying that necklacing was a ubiquitous habit of all youthful protesters. In publishing the photographs and the highly charged commentary, the Bureau employed all the tactics of shock and sensationalism of which it had consistently accused the foreign media. In contrast to this dastardly world of the 'comrades', the booklet included glossy full-colour photographs of detention facilities, including ultra-modern ablution facilities, dental, medical and chapel facilities. A 'prototype of a communal cell with bunk beds' (as compared to the more usually
available floor mats) completed the picture of an idealized setting for the rehabilitation of juveniles.

The booklet was a direct response the BBC television documentary *Suffer the Little Children*, and indeed, the linguistic constructions suggest that at least some of the projected audience of the booklets would be foreigners. Peculiarly South African words have the American / internationalist equivalent inserted next to them: ‘petrol (gasoline)’; ‘sjamboks (whips)’.