

Transmitting the Transition: Media Events and Post-Apartheid South African National Identity

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ABSTRACT

Transmitting the Transition: Media Events and Post-Apartheid South African National Identity

South Africa came late to television, and its enjoyment of the medium was diminished by the fact that just as a national television service was acquired, the rest of the world began to shun the country because of apartheid. While the ruling National Party feared the integrative effects of television, they did not foresee the negative impact that exclusion from globally unifying broadcasts would have on political rule. Television helped to facilitate the sporting and cultural bans and played an important, mostly unexamined role in the transition to democracy.

While South Africa was barred from participating in some of television's greatest global attractions (including sporting events such as the Olympics and contests such as Miss World), with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison – one of the world's most memorable media events – came a proliferation of large-scale live broadcasts that attracted the gaze and admiration of the rest of the world. At the same time, the country was permitted to return to international competition, and its readmittance played out on television screens across the world. These events were pivotal in shaping and consolidating the country's emerging post-apartheid national identity.

Using Dayan and Katz's theory of "media events" – those historic and powerful live broadcasts that mesmerise mass audiences – this thesis assesses the socio-political effect of live broadcasting on South Africa's transition to democracy and the effects of such broadcasts on post-apartheid nationhood. The thesis follows events chronologically and employs a three-part approach: firstly, it looks at the planning behind some of the mass televised events, secondly, it analyses the televisual content of some of the events; and thirdly it assesses public responses to events, as articulated in newspapers at the time.

Live broadcasting was used first by the rest of the world as a means of punishing apartheid South Africa and then by the emerging NP-ANC alliance as a means of legitimating the negotiation process. In particular, media events served as a powerful means of securing support for the country's first democratic president, Nelson Mandela. At the same time, the apparent transparency of live broadcasting helped to rejuvenate the poor reputation of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, perceived as a government mouthpiece under apartheid and, like South Africa itself, in need of an image overhaul. The thesis argues that just as print media had a powerful influence on the development of Afrikaner nationalism, so the "liveness" of television helped to consolidate the "newness" of the post-apartheid South African national identity.

*for Madeleine and Juliette,
for whom this will all be history*

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Timeline

This timeline focuses on some of the relevant occurrences leading up to the main televised events discussed in the thesis as well as a few additional political events that help contextualise South Africa's history. It is not representative of the country's national chronology in any way.

21 March 1960	In what becomes known as the Sharpeville massacre, police open fire on marchers protesting against pass laws, killing 69 and injuring 186.
8 April 1960	The ANC and the PAC are banned in South Africa.
August 1960	The Summer Olympics are held in Rome; Apartheid South Africa participates in the Games for the last time until 1992.
11 July 1963	The Rivonia treason trialists are arrested and later sentenced to life imprisonment.
20 July 1969	American astronauts land on the moon and the event is broadcast live across the world.
15 December 1969	The South African government sets up the Meyer Commission to investigate the desirability of acquiring a national television service.
23 March–7 April 1973	The South African Games are held in Pretoria.
5 January 1976	The first television broadcast is screened in South Africa.
16 June 1976	The Soweto uprising begins when police open fire on around 10 000 students protesting against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools.
1976	Twenty-six African countries boycott the 1976 Montreal Olympics in protest against apartheid.
1977	South Africa participates in Miss World for the last time until 1991.
12 September 1977	Stephen Biko dies in detention in Port Elizabeth.
24 July 1978	Miss South Africa Margaret Gardiner is crowned as Miss Universe.
9 October 1978	PW Botha becomes prime minister of South Africa
25 July 1981	The SABC attempts to broadcast the first live rugby match from abroad to citizens, but protests in Hamilton lead to the match's postponement.
29 July 1981	The wedding of Prince Charles of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer is broadcast to audiences around the world, including in South Africa.
20 August 1983	The UDF is launched in opposition to the introduction of the Tricameral Parliament.
September 1984	PW Botha becomes state president of South Africa.
11 December 1984	Archbishop Desmond Tutu is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
February 1985	President PW Botha offers Nelson Mandela and several other political prisoners conditional freedom.
10 February 1985	Nelson Mandela's daughter, Zindzi, reads out her father's reply to Botha's offer at Soweto's Jabulani stadium.
18 March 1985	Ted Koppel's <i>Nightline</i> , airing from South Africa for a week, features a live debate between Desmond Tutu and Pik Botha.
15 August 1985	PW Botha's "Rubicon speech" is broadcast live to audiences in South Africa, America and Britain.
November 1985	COSATU is formed.
May 1987	The CP replaces the PFP as the official opposition in South Africa's general election.
10 July 1988	The Mandela Birthday Tribute concert is held at Wembley Stadium.
20 September 1989	PW Botha resigns in August and FW de Klerk becomes state president in September.
October 1989	FW de Klerk releases Walter Sisulu and several other political prisoners.
2 February 1990	FW de Klerk announces the unbanning of several liberation movements, including the ANC, and the impending release of various political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela.

11 February 1990	Nelson Mandela is released from Victor Verster Prison.
April 1990	The Mandela "Release" Concert is held at Wembley Stadium.
9 August 1991	Police clash with AWB members at what becomes known as the "Battle of Ventersdorp".
20 September 1991	The government and 18 political parties establish CODESA and sign a declaration of intent.
28 December 1991	South Africa participates in Miss World for the first time since 1977.
February 1992	The CP defeats the NP in the Potchefstroom by-election.
22 February–25 March 1992	South Africa participates in the Cricket World Cup for the first time.
17 March 1992	The National Party holds an all-white referendum to establish support for reform.
13 April 1992	Nelson Mandela announces his separation from Winnie Mandela.
17 June 1992	Over 45 people are killed in what becomes known as the Boipatong massacre when IFP supporters attack residents of Slovo Park squatter camp.
June 1992	The ANC withdraws from CODESA in protest against the Boipatong massacre.
7 July 1992	The South African national football team plays its first international game in two decades, beating Cameroon 1–0.
25 July 1992	South Africa participates in the Olympic Games for the first time since 1960.
15 August 1992	South Africa plays its first international rugby match since 1981.
7 September 1992	Twenty-nine protestors are killed when the Ciskei Defence Force opens fire on ANC protestors in Bisho.
September 1992	The government and the ANC sign a record of understanding and CODESA talks resume.
12 December 1992	South Africa hosts Miss World at Sun City.
10 April 1993	Chris Hani is assassinated and senior CP member Clive Derby-Lewis and Polish immigrant Janusz Waluś are arrested for his murder.
19 April 1993	Chris Hani's funeral is broadcast live throughout South Africa.
7 May 1993	The Afrikaner Volksfront is established by 21 right-wing groups demanding self-determination.
25 June 1993	The Afrikaner Volksfront and the AWB storm the Kempton Park World Trade Centre where negotiations are taking place.
25 July 1993	Eleven people are killed and 58 are injured when APLA cadres open fire on the St James Church congregationalists in Cape Town.
1 May 1993	Five people are killed when masked gunmen attack the Highgate Hotel in East London.
25 August 1993	American Fulbright scholar Amy Biehl is murdered in Gugulethu, Cape Town.
10 December 1993	FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela jointly win the Nobel Peace Prize.
30 December 1993	Four people are killed when APLA cadres attack the Heidelberg Tavern in Cape Town.
11 March 1994	Forty-five people are killed in Bophuthatswana when President Mangope calls for assistance from white right-wing groups to quell resistance to his decision to withdraw from the forthcoming election.
28 March 1994	In what becomes known as the "Shellhouse massacre", at least 55 people are killed when IFP members march to the ANC Shell House office in protest against the forthcoming election.
14 April 1994	A live televised election debate is held between presidential candidates Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk.
27 April 1994	South Africa holds its first democratic election and the ANC wins 62.6% of the vote.
10 May 1994	Nelson Mandela is inaugurated as president of South Africa.
25 May–3 June 1995	The Rugby World Cup is held in South Africa. South Africa wins.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
ANC	African National Congress
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
AR	Audience Rating
AVF	Afrikaner Volksfront
AWB	Afrikaner Weestandsbeweging
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCV	Contemporary Community Values channel
COM	Campaign for Open Media
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
CP	Conservative Party
DP	Democratic Party
FA	Freedom Alliance
GNU	Government of National Unity
HNP	Herstigte Nasionale Party (Reconstituted National Party)
IBC	International Broadcasting Centre
ICC	International Cricketing Council
IEC	Independent Electoral Committee
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IRB	International Rugby Board
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MWASA	Media Workers Association of South Africa
NOCSA	National Olympic Committee of South Africa
NMT	New Media Technology
OOC	Olympic Organising Committee
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
PSB	Public Service Broadcaster
SAARF	South African Advertising Research Foundation
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACOS	South African Council on Sport
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
Sanef	South African National Editors Forum
SAP	South African Police
SAPA	South African Press Agency
SARB	South African Rugby Board
SARFU	South African Rugby Football Union
SARU	South African Rugby Union
SCSA	Supreme Council for Sport in Africa
TEC	Transitional Executive Council
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCB	United Cricket Board
UDF	United Democratic Front

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Introduction

Who can assess the social, political and economic impact of TV on South Africans?

It will probably be more significant than we think.

– Financial Mail, 1975¹

In the mid-1980s, South Africa's apartheid government was feeling pressure from all sides. Support for the disinvestment campaign was mounting as foreign reporting on the state's violent attempts to quell unrest increased; the rand, which had previously been a strong currency, slumped; Britain and the United States began adopting employment codes for companies operating in South Africa; and the country was excluded from virtually all global competition.

The ruling National Party (NP) also faced internal challenges. Activists increasingly heeded the ANC's call to "make the townships ungovernable"; the newly formed Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)² and the United Democratic Front (UDF)³ were gathering strength, organising mass stayaways and strikes that disrupted the economy; and, in 1987, steps taken towards reform met with resistance from many white South Africans, and the Conservative Party (CP)⁴ overtook the Progressive Federal Party (PFP)⁵ in the national election. South Africa's position was succinctly summed up by *Time* magazine in August 1986: "Pressurising South Africa: If not now, when? If not this, what?" The country had become the pariah of the international community.

¹ Cited in Randall Harrison and Paul Ekman, "TV's last frontier: South Africa", *Journal of Communication*, 26 (1) (Winter), 1976, 106 (originally: "All you ever wanted to know about TV but were afraid to ask", *Financial Mail*, Special Supplement, 14 March 1975, 36).

² COSATU is a powerful trade union federation in South Africa, launched in 1985. The organisation arranged many effective strikes as a means of mobilising opposition to apartheid.

³ The UDF was a powerful anti-apartheid coalition that united hundreds of community-based organisations, including a number of churches and worker and student bodies. It was formed in 1983 and remained active throughout the 1980s.

⁴ The Conservative Party was formed in 1982 by NP members who were opposed to reform. It became the official opposition to the NP in 1987 when it surpassed the Progressive Federal Party (PFP).

⁵ The PFP, established in 1977, was a liberal, white-supported party that favoured power-sharing over apartheid in South Africa. It merged with a number of smaller parties to form the Democratic Party in 1989.

In 1987, two years after PW Botha's televised "Rubicon speech" had failed to impress the world, his communications advisor, Jack Viviers, reportedly came up with a plan. In order to revive the country's flailing international reputation, Viviers believed that South Africa needed to engineer its own version of the moonlanding, since that event had "changed global perceptions of America".⁶ Because the moon had already been conquered, Viviers devised an alternative: to haul icebergs from Antarctica to South Africa's West Coast. He proposed that the huge blocks of fresh water then be used to irrigate the arid western Karoo, magically creating a lush paradise and "earning the South African administration the envy and respect of the world".⁷ This, he told colleagues, could be South Africa's moonlanding.

By all accounts, Viviers's proposal was never taken seriously, and today of course the idea seems laughable. But the former journalist was right about South Africa's status needing a paradigm overhaul as well as about the effect of the televised moonlanding, even if he was hopelessly off target about what would work to secure similar benefits for the apartheid state. South Africa needed a true "crossing of the Rubicon", or at least a symbolic event that would convince the rest of the world that the country had embarked on an irrevocable path of reform.

The country did eventually get its own version of the moonlanding, but it came in a vastly different package from the one imagined by Viviers. The broadcasting of Nelson Mandela's release from prison – after 27 years' incarceration – is remembered by many as one of television's greatest moments. The release led to the dismantling of apartheid and paved the way for South Africa's reintegration into the "family" of Western nations, a return that was visibly played out through a number of mass televised events, particularly sporting mega-events. It helped to shuffle off South Africa's pariah status and sowed the seeds for the country's rebirth as the "rainbow nation".

All of this astonished the rest of the world, earning South Africa the respect that Viviers and Botha's government had hoped for. South Africa's transformation from

⁶ Dave Steward, personal communication, interview conducted by candidate, 31 March 2011.

⁷ Peter Murphy, "Almost sober", *Hotpress magazine*, no date, (Available at: <http://www.hotpress.com/archive/434814.html> – viewed 4 January 2011), no page number.

apartheid state to democratic nation was lauded as a “miracle”, and a host of new national symbols and metaphors rapidly accumulated support from citizens.

Media events – those rare, powerful and historic-seeming broadcasts identified by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz⁸ – played an important role in this process. During the transition period (1990–1994), when the national broadcaster seemed actively involved in securing mass support for the country’s reform, the increase in live broadcasting and the proliferation of media events helped to develop the new civil religion of post-apartheid South Africa.

This thesis tracks the role of live broadcasting in the lead-up to South Africa’s transition and during the period itself, looking at the ways in which media events worked to secure support for South Africa’s transformation, as well as media events’ role in the development of a post-apartheid national identity, what I refer to in Chapter 5 as the “televised birth of the rainbow nation”.

For the most part, the chapters follow historical events chronologically, but there is inevitably some crossover, particularly between Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 6, for example, focuses on popular media events and discusses South Africa’s return to the Olympics in 1992 after the analysis of Mandela’s inauguration in 1994 in Chapter 5, which focuses on state-driven media events. Where chronological structure seemed out of place, I have grouped events of a similar nature in the same chapter.

The first chapter, “Media Events and South African National Identity”, looks at Dayan and Katz’s theory of media events and the ways in which it applies to national identity and to some of the televised occasions that facilitated South Africa’s transformation from an apartheid state into a democratic nation. The chapter examines the two main critiques of the theory and explains why South Africa serves as a fitting case study via which to explore media events theory.

Chapter 2, “Apartheid and Absence: South Africa’s Exclusion from the Media Events of the 60s, 70s and 80s”, discusses the advent of television in South Africa, arguing that the arrival of the medium coincided with the country’s exclusion from many of the major broadcasting events of the latter half of the twentieth century. Media events

⁸ Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

became a prime site for highlighting South Africa's pariah status and, on several occasions, their power was harnessed by the anti-apartheid movement. The chapter argues that the pleasure associated with media events converts to displeasure at exclusion from such events, and that this was one of the primary factors leading to white acceptance of reform in South Africa.

Chapter 3, "The Shamanising Ayatollah: Mandela and the Dismantling of Apartheid", examines the lead-up to what is arguably the country's most important media event: the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. The chapter shows how this rare televised occasion drew power from several preceding media events, all of which worked to imbue Mandela's image with extraordinary charisma and symbolic capital. The chapter argues that this process was not, however, easy to direct. The mass televised broadcasts associated with Mandela illustrate the extent to which media events, as with many forms of power, are inherently difficult to control and "own".

In Chapter 4, "Disrupting the Centre: 'Liveness' and the Negotiation of Disaster During the Transition", we look at "liveness" from a different perspective, examining the *unplanned* broadcasting of disaster during the turbulent period between Mandela's release and the country's first election on 27 April 1994. Although these broadcasts were not transmitted "live", according to Dayan and Katz's definition, they are equally powerful televised moments in South Africa's history. A number of smaller media events – direct addresses and the live broadcasting of funerals – helped to "contain" some of the uncertainty of the period, and again we see Mandela's status benefiting from these. The chapter argues that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) became an active player in the transition process at this point and that media events theory requires a broader definition of "liveness" to include the unplanned broadcasting of history.

In Chapter 5, "The Televised Birth of the Rainbow Nation: The Election and Mandela's Inauguration", I analyse some of the state-sponsored attempts to generate support for a "new" South Africa through mass televised events such as the election and the inauguration. The chapter argues that, although hegemonic and to a certain extent integrative, these events were still highly contested and they favoured the emerging NP–ANC alliance to the detriment of other political stakeholders.

Chapter 6, “Consolidation: South Africa’s Return to the Global Fold and the Making of Madiba”, revisits South Africa’s interaction with popular global televised events and tracks the country’s return to the international stage via occasions such the 1992 Olympics. Since these are occasions of overt displays of nationhood, analysis of the events provides a good means of tracking the emerging post-apartheid national identity. The final event discussed – the 1995 Rugby World Cup, held in South Africa – illustrates the way in which Mandela managed to generate support for the new rainbow nation through deft handling of national symbols. The chapter argues that Mandela’s image and post-apartheid national identity drew strength from one another, helping to consolidate the myths and symbols associated with the “new” South Africa.

The question of socio-political change is complex, and at no point does this thesis mean to suggest that the televised events acted as a substitute for real political change in South Africa, or that they were solely responsible for the country’s reform. The real agents of change were of course the men and women who devoted their lives to the fight against apartheid, many of whom had a canny understanding of how to use television to achieve their political aims. That said, as discussed in the Chapter 2, and as pointed out by Ron Krabill and Rob Nixon,⁹ the National Party (NP) was right to fear the revolutionary effects of the medium on Afrikanerdom, although television’s role in South Africa’s reform was realised very differently to the way those who feared it predicted. It was much more diffuse and difficult to control. Even though the medium was government-controlled, and the guidelines for the national television service were based on the arguments of those opposed to television, TV still became a useful weapon in the fight against apartheid. Media events served as the central arena for this battle.

⁹ Ron Krabill, *Starring Mandela and Cosby: Television and the End(s) of Apartheid* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press: 2010); Rob Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem, and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond* (London: Routledge, 1994).

1

Media Events and South African National Identity

The study of the ritual significance of live televised events can be traced back to the early 1950s. Kurt and Gladys Lang's groundbreaking analysis of the broadcasting of the MacArthur Day Parade in Chicago in 1951 compared the experiences of television viewers with the accounts of those who were present at the parade, finding that television viewers were actually more enthralled by the experience.¹ While General MacArthur's homecoming from the Korean War did not constitute a global media event, it was important in founding the study of live televised events. The British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC's) broadcast of Queen Elizabeth's II's coronation on 2 June 1953, however, can be considered an extraordinary moment in television's history and it provided the next event for analysis, which was taken up by Edward Shils and Michael Young.² After considerable debate in parliament (with Churchill opposing the idea out of fear that the presence of cameras would disrupt the sanctity of the occasion),³ the Queen insisted on her subjects' right to participate in the event. Television sales skyrocketed with the announcement of the impending broadcast and an estimated 20 million viewers⁴ watched the event around the world. Applications for BBC television licences rose by 50% in the aftermath, and the event is often credited with having "made" the BBC.⁵

¹ Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "The unique perspective of television and its effect: A pilot study", *Official Journal of the American Sociological Society*, 18 (1) (Feb), 1953, 3–12.

² Edward Shils and Michael Young, "The meaning of the coronation", *Sociological Review*, 1 (2), 1953, 63–81.

³ For more on the controversy over the broadcasting of the coronation, see Arthur Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol. 4, Sound and Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁴ Roger Parry, *The Ascent of Media: From Gilgamesh to Google via Gutenberg* (London & Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011), 296.

⁵ Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), 80.

How do we explain the mass interest in such events? Lang and Lang found that, for television viewers, MacArthur's homecoming better fulfilled expectations of the occasion and that the "significance attached to the video event overshadow[ed] the 'true' picture of the event".⁶ The coronation has been noted mainly for its integrative effect on society;⁷ Shils and Young concluded that "the Coronation was the ceremonial occasion for the affirmation of the moral values by which the society lives. It was an act of national communion"⁸ made possible by television technology.

The celebratory "communion" of the events was also enabled, in part, by the fact of their "liveness". The ability to share in and witness proceedings *as they unfold* has marked several key moments not only in television's history but also in the history of the twentieth century. Other mass televised events such as JF Kennedy's funeral (1963), the moonlanding (1969), and Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer's wedding (1981) also constitute major moments in national and global memory. Lang and Lang went on to study several subsequent mass televised events including the Kennedy–Nixon debates to the congressional hearings of the Watergate scandal, arguing that in both cases live television played an important role in political change.⁹

A related work, Daniel Boorstin's 1964 book, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America*, critiqued the proliferation of events constructed solely by media agents in American culture.¹⁰ Boorstin focused on the ways in which media create versions of reality – "pseudo events" – that have little to do with people's everyday experiences, and his approach led to the development of a different tradition – marginal to this study – focusing on pseudo-events and spectacle and influencing later theorists such as Guy Debord.

⁶ Lang & Lang, "The unique perspective of television", 3.

⁷ Henrik Örnebring, "Revisiting the coronation: A critical perspective on the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953", *Nordicom Review*, 25 (1–2), 2004, 176.

⁸ Shils & Young, "The meaning of the coronation", 67.

⁹ In the case of the Kennedy–Nixon debates, they concluded that, although the debates did not lead to dramatic shifts in allegiance, they tended to work in Kennedy's favour and made it easier for America to accept the final election results (Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, *Television and Politics*, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2002 [1984]). In the case of the Watergate scandal, they argue that television took an "active role in the conflict", helping to "move impeachment sentiment along" (Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "Polling on Watergate: The battle for public opinion", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 44 (4), Polls and the New Media: A Symposium, Winter 1980, 532).

¹⁰ Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1964]).

While these studies have proven to be insightful analyses of the role of live broadcasting, most remain unique to the contexts that produced them. They examine specific events and do not provide a general theory of live television events. It was not until the publication of Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz's pioneering 1992 book *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* that these powerful broadcasting events were analysed as a kind of television "genre", aiding scholars in a variety of disciplines (including sociology, history, media studies, politics and anthropology) to understand the symbolic influence of such events on society as well as the sometimes contradictory ways in which television helps to unify societies. Dayan and Katz posit that in addition to the banal, everyday consumption of television, a unique, ritualised and extremely powerful genre emerged during the first forty years of broadcasting. Based on intensive research, beginning with an examination of Egyptian President Anwar-Sadat's 1977 televised visit to Jerusalem, and continuing with similar events throughout the 1980s, they make a case for the study of rare, preplanned live broadcasts that operate as a modern conduit for public and historical ceremonies. In line with Shils and Young, they argue that the mass interest in certain televised events can be explained by the pleasure derived from sharing in an expression of society's "sacred centre".¹¹

What Are Media Events?

Media events, as Dayan and Katz term them, are typically remote (i.e., they occur outside the studio), they monopolise broadcasting channels by enthralling mass national (and sometimes global) audiences and they are credited with exceptional historic value. The events, which conquer "not only space but time", "have the power to declare a holiday, thus to play a part in the civil religion" of a nation.¹² Importantly, "even when these events address conflict, as they do, they celebrate not conflict but *reconciliation*", differing markedly from the "daily news event, where conflict is the inevitable subject".¹³ As such, media events can be seen as extremely effective nation-building tools; in the

¹¹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

words of the authors, “these broadcasts *integrate* societies in a collective heartbeat and evoke a *renewal of loyalty* to the society and its legitimate authority”.¹⁴

While real-life ceremonial events (such as the 1953 coronation) provided early content for these kinds of broadcasts, the genre is not limited to such subject matter, and the televising of ceremony alone does not necessarily constitute a media event; instead the events themselves serve as a kind of modern-day ceremony in the Durkheimian sense. Media events are thus rituals that work to hold society together. Their ceremonial nature extends to their viewing context; frequently, media events are highly social occasions, often accompanied by the special preparation of food and after- and/or before-parties.¹⁵ In fact, as some studies have found, the act of viewing a media event alone can be distinctly alienating as it somehow inhibits participation in the event.¹⁶

Their ceremonial nature is also realised in their structure. The authors distinguish between three different narrative types or “scripts”: the Contest, the Coronation and the Conquest,¹⁷ all linked to Max Weber’s forms of authority – rational-legal, traditional and charismatic – in some way.¹⁸ Added to this, and frequently excluded from discussions of the theory, is a rare sub-genre of the Conquest, the shamanising media event,¹⁹ arguably the most powerful form of media event.

The first type, the Contest, includes events that “celebrate”, ironically, some kind of conflict, competition or clash – usually a challenge between two men or teams, with a set of rules accepted by all parties. The viewer is positioned as the absent “judge” of the event, which is mediated by a non-partisan TV presenter. Because Contests are usually recurrent or cyclical events, they are also the most frequent form of media events, and sporting competitions provide the most pervasive examples. Other forms include election debates and televised senate hearings. Scholars soon started to use media events theory to

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 [original emphasis].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁶ See Jérôme Bourdon, “Some sense of time: Remembering television”, *History and Memory*, 15 (2) (Fall/Winter), 2003, 23. A participant in a study on remembered television events recalls the oddness of watching the final of the Football World Cup alone at home in 1978: “I was alone and I really got excited, but there was something weird about it, you know, knowing that we were millions of people on the earth watching at the same time.”

¹⁷ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 25–53.

¹⁸ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

¹⁹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 147–87.

shed light on specific sports mega-events and vice versa. Recently, for instance, a collection of essays on the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games edited by Monroe Edwin Price and Daniel Dayan uses the mega-event to examine the changing nature of the media events genre.²⁰

Post-apartheid South Africa enjoyed a proliferation of Contest-style media events, including a one-off pre-election debate (see Chapter 5) and a glut of sporting matches whose impact was increased because of the country's exclusion from such events under apartheid (see Chapters 2 and 6).

The second type of media event, the Coronation, includes the live broadcasting of ceremonial occasions, such as weddings, inaugurations and funerals, which are bound by the rules of tradition. Their fascination stems from the magic of ritual; "they deal in the mysteries of rites of passage", pitting "society and culture against nature".²¹ The TV presenter usually adopts a reverent tone, while the viewer is positioned as a witness to the ceremony. Princess Diana's wedding (1981) and funeral (1997) provide some of the most memorable examples of this script in the Western world, and numerous scholars have found media events theory useful in uncovering their significance for British society.²² In the South African context, the inauguration of Nelson Mandela (see Chapter 5) falls into this category.

Conquests, the third script, are the rarest form of media event because they are unique (i.e., once-off) and because, unlike Contests and Coronations, they tend to break rules. Typically, they involve the charisma of a televised hero, who crosses geographical or symbolic borders to reach some goal and proclaim "a new symbolic order".²³ The audience withholds disbelief, while the television presenter adopts a bardic tone. The 1969 moonlanding provides the most famous example of this script. In South Africa, there were various attempts (not always successful) at staging Conquest-style media events, including PW Botha's failed Rubicon speech (see Chapter 2) and FW de Klerk's

²⁰ Monroe Edwin Price and Daniel Dayan (eds.), *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

²¹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 36.

²² For more on the significance of Diana's funeral, see Roger Silverstone, *Why Study the Media?* (London: Sage, 1999), 68–77.

²³ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 39.

parliamentary address on 2 February 1990 (see Chapter 3). In some ways, the South African election played out as a kind of conquest media event.

Shamanising media events constitute an even rarer form of this kind of broadcast. While the other three scripts are hegemonic or “reinforcing” – reminding “societies to renew their commitments to established values, offices and persons” – shamanising events are “transformative”²⁴ and “seek to influence a future reality”.²⁵ The function of the shamanising media event differs from the “restorative” function of Contests and Coronations; even if they may be hegemonic in origin, they “involve a discernable change in both the symbolic and the real”.²⁶ Also, unlike the sporting contest or wedding ceremony, for example, shamanising media events do not rely on any external event:

The ceremonies contain their events within them: they are the event ... There is, of course, a general context from which the event takes its meaning and a genre of ceremonial protocol that is called upon. But as far as specific events are concerned, the ceremony is the event and the event is the ceremony.²⁷

Dayan and Katz mention here Sadat’s 1977 visit to Israel and Pope John Paul II’s visit to Poland in 1979 when it was still under communist rule. Both cases involved historic “firsts”: Sadat was the first Arab leader to visit Israel, while John Paul II was the first pope to visit a communist country. Mandela’s release from prison after 27 years’ incarceration (see Chapter 3) also falls into this category. In Dayan and Katz’s analysis, these are the televised occasions that have the potential to trigger longer-term political effects.

While there is considerable debate over the validity of Dayan and Katz’s approach to media events (discussed below), few would disagree that they are worthy of study. Firstly, as the authors point out, they attract the largest audiences in the modern world. Importantly, these are audiences with “veto power”;²⁸ for a television broadcast to qualify as a media event, mass audiences are required – something that is often forgotten in

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

discussions on their relationship with power. Audiences must willingly accept, promote and celebrate their importance, and media events can thus serve as barometers of national and global feeling. Because of this, Dayan and Katz assert that media events are essentially a phenomenon of democratic societies; totalitarian states are limited to ceremonial “establishment initiatives” which in democratic societies might not proceed without appropriate endorsement.²⁹ For this reason, perhaps, the theory has also proved rich in analyses of sporting and cultural events associated with the Western-democratic world, such as the Olympics³⁰ and Miss World.³¹ Because of their link with democratic nations, case studies also often emerge from societies in transition. Since the mounting and reception of media events can reveal much about the political context in which they are produced, scholars have focused on media events’ role in Germany’s reunification,³² for instance, and the invention of a new Russian tradition.³³ This may also well be because, as Dayan and Katz point out, dramatic examples of shamanising media events are “provided by the live broadcast of the mass demand for political change in Eastern Europe in the fall of 1989”,³⁴ and their own work draws on events in countries such as Czechoslovakia. South Africa’s transformation offers another fruitful context in which to examine the workings of media events.

Secondly – and this is no doubt part of their magic – media events “realise the full potential of electronic media technology,”³⁵ collapsing boundaries of time and space. “Liveness,” Wendy Davis argues, “is a feature of all television images”,³⁶ and media events, Jérôme Bourdon points out, are moments of “maximum liveness”,³⁷ fulfilling, or

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 70–71.

³⁰ See Maurice Roche, *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2000).

³¹ See Norbert Wildermuth, “Media events and gendered identities in South Asia: Miss World going ‘Desi’” in Nick Couldry, Andreas Hepp and Friedrich Krotz (eds.), *Media Events in a Global Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 156–71.

³² See, for instance, Friederich Krotz, “The German unification 1990 as a media event and its development until today”, Paper presented at the IAMCR annual conference, 2000, Singapore.

³³ See, for example, Stephen C Hutchings, “Saint Petersburg 300: Television and the invention of a Russian (media) tradition”, *Television and New Media*, 9 (1) (Jan), 2008, 3–23.

³⁴ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 147.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶ Wendy Davis, “Television’s liveness: A lesson from the 1920s”, *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 4 (7), 2007, 37.

³⁷ Jérôme Bourdon, “Live television is still alive: on television as an unfulfilled promise”, *Media, Culture & Society*, 22 (5), 2000, 534–35.

almost fulfilling, television's underlying promise of transmitting reality directly. Paddy Scannell's comment on the liveness of television accounts for the mesmerising nature of media events:

The liveness of the world returns through the liveness of radio and television – their most fundamental common characteristic. This liveness is here understood as the specific temporality, the phenomenal now of broadcasting; and this now is magical.³⁸

While live transmission is not the only characteristic of media events, it is perhaps the most important. Liveness, as the subtitle of Dayan and Katz's work suggests, has the power to historicise events almost instantly³⁹ – a function that is surprising; as John Fiske points out, "liveness, presence and immediacy, in most conventional senses, are implicitly opposed to history as closed, absent or past".⁴⁰ Of course, broadcasters consistently make claims for the future "historic" importance of their content. While Fiske dismisses this, saying, as early as 1992, that "there is *too much* history, as nearly everything is historical at one point or another",⁴¹ media events offer up true historic moments, thereby contributing to the promotion of national consciousness (discussed below) and aiding events-oriented historical processes. The question of liveness threads throughout this thesis and is linked to both audience pleasure and attempts to legitimate broadcasting (and state) authority in South Africa in the post-apartheid period.

Thirdly, according to Dayan and Katz, media events have the power to "create their own constituencies", albeit "momentarily".⁴² In the South African transition context, this function is of paramount importance. The several "mini-nations" created by apartheid's policy of separate development were (and still are) required to unite on a social, cultural and political level. The integrative possibilities promised by media events

³⁸ Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life*, 172.

³⁹ The idea of "instant history" is also referenced in Dayan and Katz's other works on media events. See, for instance, "Television events and instant history" in Anthony Smith (ed.), *Oxford Illustrated History of Television* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴⁰ John Fiske, "Television and its historical pastiche" in James Schwoch, Mimi White and Susan Reilly (eds.), *Media Knowledge: Readings in Popular Culture, Pedagogy and Critical Citizenship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* [original emphasis].

⁴² Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 15.

were implicitly accepted by the South African government, as can be seen by its bids to host sporting mega-events (such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup, the 2004 Olympics, the 2006 FIFA World Cup, the 2007 Cricket World Cup and, most recently, the 2010 FIFA World Cup).

The significance of Dayan and Katz's work was recognised almost immediately, with various reviews anticipating the usefulness of the theory. George Gerbner described *Media Events* as "the first full-fledged scholarly treatment of a phenomenon that merits continuing attention and study",⁴³ while Robert Snow claimed it was "a major contribution to the effort to legitimize the study of television within the discipline of sociology".⁴⁴ But perhaps more important than the reviews is the future research that *Media Events* has encouraged. As David Kertzer anticipated, the theory provided "an important stimulus to future research, a challenge to social scientists to bring the study of television into the mainstream of political analysis".⁴⁵

Critiques of the Theory

Much of the subsequent research has developed from what Dayan and Katz were *not* able to examine in *Media Events*, from what they left out or overlooked. In addition, technological developments have led to changes in broadcasting structures, altering the way in which mass televised events are staged, and various scholars have taken the theory forward to develop new ritual genres.

Early reviews of the book were quick to identify some of the limitations of their approach. Two major, interlinked critiques emerged. The first focuses on what George Gerbner termed their "optimistic"⁴⁶ approach to the supposedly independent relationship between broadcasters and political officeholders in democratic societies. Snow, for instance, argues that "[i]n discussing how it may reshape reality they ignore the question of ideology and focus on how the performance of events through television alters

⁴³ George Gerbner, "Book Review", *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, special issue on "Citizens, Protest and Democracy", 528 (July), 1993, 197.

⁴⁴ Robert P Snow, "Media Events: Book Review", *Social Forces*, 73 (2) (Dec), 1994, 79.

⁴⁵ David I Kertzer, "Media Events: Book Review", *The American Journal of Sociology*, 98 (4) (Jan), 1993, 974.

⁴⁶ Gerbner, "Book Review", 197.

particularly the emotional experience of the event”,⁴⁷ while Susan Davies bewails the fact that, in her view, political power is absent from the discussion at a time when “an understanding of societies as structured by power relations or riven by inequalities seems more or less unavoidable”.⁴⁸ Davies and Snow are no doubt reacting to Dayan and Katz’s claim that the manipulative potential of media events and the vulnerability of their audiences are diluted by the separation between broadcasters and government in democratic societies.⁴⁹ As Marxist, feminist and political economy theory have shown, state abuse of power is but one form of political manipulation.

A more sustained critique of this view comes from Nick Couldry, whose chapter “Rethinking media events” in *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach* argues that the weakness of media events theory stems from Dayan and Katz’s “desire to make it work for neo-Durkheimian ends”.⁵⁰ While Couldry’s reading of Dayan and Katz is more nuanced than some of the early reviews and he recognises that the authors are “hardly naive about the ideological conflicts involved in constructing media events”,⁵¹ he is nevertheless sceptical of the claim that media events “always have positive, hegemonic effects”⁵² and argues that this is only so because Dayan and Katz place extra (and unnecessary) limitations on their definition of the genre.

Couldry’s call for a rethinking of the theory arises from his discomfort with the idea that mass televised events act as conduits for modern ritual. Describing their approach as “functionalist”, he sides “with those who are suspicious of ‘events’ as the source of deeper truth”⁵³ and doubts the integrative effects of events such as the funeral of Princess Diana.⁵⁴ He calls for further unpacking of the relationship between broadcasters and the construction of societal myths: “Media events,” he claims, “are in crucial respects *constructions*, not expressions, of the social order, processes which construct not only our sense of a social ‘centre’, but also the media’s privileged relation

⁴⁷ Snow, “Book Review”, 78.

⁴⁸ Susan G Davies, “Book Review”, *The Library Quarterly*, 63 (1) (Jan), 1993, 129.

⁴⁹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 19.

⁵⁰ Nick Couldry, “Rethinking media events” in Nick Couldry, *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach* (London: Routledge, 2003), 55–74.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

to that centre.”⁵⁵ He makes a case for a broader, less ambitious redefinition of media events as “those large-scale event-based media-focused narratives where the claims associated with the myth of the mediated centre are particularly intense”.⁵⁶

While it may be true that Dayan and Katz do not establish a set of identifying principles via which media events are staged, they do in fact encourage the study of such, even if they don’t explore specific instances themselves. In their section on why scholars should take note of the genre, they posit that, although media events are not the same as the “staged events of revolutionary regimes”, “the question of hegemonic abuse must be asked continually”, especially since the events are mainly “establishment initiated, and only rarely, one suspects, do broadcasters say no”⁵⁷ to their transmission. The suggestion is that the manipulative potential of media events is perhaps more subtle, and their theory does not, in my view, preclude analysis of power. On the contrary, understanding the aesthetic demands and potential effects of the genre aids such analyses. As Dayan has emphasised elsewhere, “[by] stressing the ritual dimension, you tend to narrow your corpus, but you get a better focus on the symbolic power of gestures”.⁵⁸

The question of the integrative effects of media events is more controversial and more difficult to determine. As is often the case with media effects claims, it is near impossible to establish direct causal links because of the wide range of additional influencing factors. The use of sociological ritual theory doesn’t necessarily make it easier. As Couldry points out, the problem with neo-Durkheimian analyses of ritual is that it is difficult to prove that society is held together by a shared set of values:

The fact that societies are stable (in the sense that they are not in the throes of civil war) does not necessarily mean that they have a shared set of values ... or (even if they do) that it is these values, rather than something else entirely (inertia, coercion in its various forms, despair – the list of possible causes is endless!) that ‘holds them together’.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 56 [original emphasis].

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵⁷ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 18–19.

⁵⁸ Esther Chin, “Bearing witness – Between the professional and the personal: An interview with Daniel Dayan”, *PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication*, 2 (1) (Jan), 2010, 37.

⁵⁹ Couldry, “Rethinking media events”, 65.

Indeed, others, Couldry included, wonder about the integrative effects of media events in diverse societies. Robert Compton notes that “Dayan and Katz exclude an examination of how media events, as they narrowly define them, are situated within a broader system of news production and civil society – a civil society stratified along social cleavages such as class, race and gender”.⁶⁰ And in their introduction to *Media Events in a Global Age*, Couldry, Hepp and Krotz ask what happens to the supposedly unifying effects of media events once one moves beyond national frameworks:

The problem with this account of media events if understood from this perspective [i.e., that they are rituals based on a common set of values holding society together] lies in the implicit understanding of societies being stable and marked – an assumption that is highly doubtful if we consider contemporary, fragmented ‘late’ or ‘post’-modern societies, and has perhaps always been doubtful.⁶¹

South Africa in the early 1990s provides an interesting case study, as it tests this critique of media events. The transition period catches the country at a unique time, when the racially divided groups created by colonialism and apartheid were required to unite under a shared national identity within a democratic context, just as the country was opening its borders and airwaves to global competition. In many ways, the country needed nationalism just when nationalism was going out of fashion.⁶² As Gerhard Maré put it: “[T]he contemporary world is characterised by the conflicting, if related, pressures of globalisation and fragmentation, while South Africa has to deal with these same issues overlaid onto the apartheid social contours and erosions.”⁶³ The role of media events in responding to these challenges is potentially fascinating.

Suffice to say, Dayan and Katz reserve claims about the truly transformative effects of media events for the very rare shamanising genre. The broader claims about the

⁶⁰ James Robert Compton, *The Integrated News Spectacle: A Political Economy of Cultural Performance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 20.

⁶¹ Couldry, Hepp and Krotz (eds.), “Introduction” in *Media Events in a Global Age*, 5.

⁶² David Chidester, Phillip Dexter, Wilmot James (eds.), “Preface” in *What Holds Us Together: Social Cohesion in South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2003), vii.

⁶³ Gerhard Maré, “The notion of ‘nation’ and the practice of ‘nation-building’ in post-apartheid South Africa” in Mai Palmberg (ed.), *National Identity and Democracy in Africa* (Cape Town; Mayibuye Centre; Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2000), 244.

effects of the genre are limited to the momentary consideration of the *possibility* of change: “Even if the situations in which they are immersed are short-lived and do not institutionalize new norms, at least they provoke critical awareness of the taken-for-granted and mental appraisal of alternative possibilities.”⁶⁴ Moreover, while the effects of the liminality of media events may offer transformative possibilities, Dayan and Katz acknowledge that these might be flitting and argue that, except in very rare cases, they tend to remain at the level of reaffirmation. They curtail overly grand claims for media events with various provisos throughout the book:

The message is one of reconciliation in which participants and audiences are invited to unite in the overcoming of conflict or *at least in its postponement or miniaturization*.⁶⁵

They call for a cessation of hostilities, *at least for a moment*, as when the royal wedding halted the street fighting in Brixton and the terror in Northern Ireland.⁶⁶

Thus the media have the power not only to insert messages into social networks but to create the networks themselves – to atomize, to integrate, or otherwise to design social structure – *at least momentarily*.⁶⁷

It is characteristic of such events that they bring former antagonists to reconsider, or *at least to suspend*, their antagonism.⁶⁸

Conquests require their audiences to adopt a ‘commissive’ role. They are converts, *at least for a moment*, to a new definition of the possible.⁶⁹

Even so, as Scannell points out, Dayan and Katz provide little empirical evidence to suggest that these moments of integration actually exist, and the book lacks “historical depth”.⁷⁰ Dayan and Katz claim that the reason for this is because “very few events have been studied empirically from the point of view of their effects”.⁷¹ It is thus left to

⁶⁴ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 20.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 12 [my emphasis].

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 [my emphasis].

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 15 [my emphasis].

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 132 [my emphasis].

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 138 [my emphasis].

⁷⁰ Paddy Scannell, “Media Events: Review Essay”, *Media, Culture & Society*, (17), 1995, 152.

⁷¹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 188.

subsequent case study analyses to test the assumptions about the events and to provide more detail on how media events operate in specific national and historical contexts.

A number of critics have also argued for the inclusion of mass televised events that are *not* integrative in their effect, leading to the second broad critique of the theory, more firmly located within the discipline of media studies. This critique argues that the categories of media events are too “narrow” as they overlook the ritual (and political) significance of *unplanned* live broadcasting events, events that are equally powerful and attract equally large audiences. Kertzner suggested that “one obstacle to Dayan and Katz’s approach in judging the political impact of the live broadcasting of political events is their restriction of media events to those that are staged, that is, that have official organizers and a timetable”.⁷²

James Carey went on to make a case for the significance of television formats that serve not as unifying ceremonies but as rituals of excommunication, shame and status degradation.⁷³ Similarly, Tamar Liebes conceptualised the genre of “disaster marathons” – ongoing, live reporting on unfolding disaster – a genre that shares a high number of characteristics with media events – in that it monopolises and interrupts everyday viewing, but which focuses on unplanned and unexpected events.⁷⁴ In 2007 Katz and Liebes co-wrote a supplement to *Media Events*, arguing that changes in broadcasting technology necessitated a revision of the original theory. Because of increasing audience disenchantment and segmentation, they argued, television was experiencing a rise in the live broadcasting of war, terror and disaster. Scholars of media events thus need to take account of what they term “disruptive” events, “co-productions of broadcasters and anti-establishment agencies”.⁷⁵ Dayan, too, has examined the afterlife of media events and the

⁷² Kertzner, “Book Review”, 974.

⁷³ James W Carey, “Political ritual on television: Episodes in the history of shame, degradation and excommunication” in Tamar Liebes and James Curran (eds.), *Media, Ritual and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998), 42–70.

⁷⁴ Tamar Liebes, “Television’s disaster marathons: A danger for democratic processes?” in Liebes & Curran (eds.), *Media, Ritual and Identity*, 71–86.

⁷⁵ Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes, “‘No More Peace!’: How disaster, terror and war have upstaged media events”, *International Journal of Communication*, 1, 2007, 157.

effect of growing audience cynicism on the genre.⁷⁶ The key element in all these reworkings is that of preplanning.

Chapter 4 of this thesis looks at some of the other television events that were important during the South African transition, particularly the *unplanned* televising of disaster and violence. Granted, the period examined precedes the development of television technology that allowed for immediate broadcasting (and the instances examined were usually broadcast *after* they occurred), but all the signs of the forthcoming changes identified by Katz and Liebes are evident in the symbolic meaning of these televised moments.

Media Events Today

The overall consensus is that the heyday of media events – and the idea of televised media occasions promoting unified effects – was linked to a particular era of broadcasting that is fast vanishing or has indeed vanished. Technological developments – including multichannel broadcasting, which has segmented audiences, and the increased ubiquity of television cameras, which allows for an increase in the live broadcasting of unplanned events – mean that classic media events seldom capture the attention of audiences as they used to. The book anticipates this, and both authors, in separate accounts, have written about the ways in which the broadcasting of integration (of which media events forms a part) is on the wane, arguing that television is following the path of radio in becoming a medium of segmentation. Katz argues that:

The television of ‘sharedness’ – of nation-building and family togetherness – is no longer with us, having made room for a television of hundreds of channels, of ‘niche’ broadcasting, of portability, one that is part of a system that integrates with the Internet and the other new media.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ See Daniel Dayan, “Beyond media events: Disenchantment, derailment, disruption” in Price & Dayan (eds.), *Owning the Olympics*, 391–401.

⁷⁷ Elihu Katz, “Introduction: The end of television” in Elihu Katz and Paddy Scannell (eds.), *The End of Television? Its Impact on the World So Far*, Special issue of *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 625 (Sept), 2009, 7.

Dayan notes that there is an ever-increasing number of “‘almost’ media events”,⁷⁸ putting the genre at risk of banalisation. This in turn has led to audience “disenchantment”, while technological developments such as the mobile phone have led to increased audience distraction. Scannell’s review also pointed out that the genre’s lifespan would be threatened by the “pay-per-view and pay-per-channel phenomenon”, going so far as to say that media events might already “be a part of ‘the world we have lost’ – a trace memory of the past rather than the shape of things to come”.⁷⁹

While there is something nostalgic about Dayan and Katz’s account, it remains to be seen whether the genre can adapt to take account of its challenges, including technological changes, the competition from more conflict-driven television formats, economic changes affecting television access, as well as the growing “disenchantment” of audiences. US President Barack Obama’s 2008 victory speech, which attracted mass global audiences, seems to suggest a mutation of the genre to draw on the collected strength of a variety of New Media Technologies. The Chilean miner rescue operation in 2010 was frequently likened to the moonlanding and many noted the integrative effects of the 22-hour broadcast, which combined both the disaster marathon and the media event. The wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in 2011 also attracted large television audiences, peaking at 24 million in the United Kingdom.⁸⁰ But whether these events will occupy a place in global collective memory remains to be seen.

It is perhaps true to say that media events theory is most useful to scholars looking at the historical context of national broadcasting, as Dayan has subsequently pointed out.⁸¹ This thesis uses the theory to aid analysis of South Africa’s recent broadcasting history. South Africa came late to both television (see Chapter 2) and democracy, giving it only a small window period during which to bask in the integrative effects of broadcasting genres associated with democratic processes and nation-building. In addition, because of television’s late arrival, it is likely that broadcasting trends were

⁷⁸ Daniel Dayan, “Beyond media events”, 27.

⁷⁹ Scannell, “*Media Events*: Review Essay”, 155.

⁸⁰ Ben Quinn, “Royal wedding television audience hit 24m peak in UK”, *Guardian*, 30 April 2011 (Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/apr/30/royal-wedding-television-audience> – viewed 10 January 2011), no page number.

⁸¹ As interpreted by Couldry, Hepp & Krotz (eds.), “Introduction”, 9.

slightly out of date in the country, giving it a slighter longer period during which to experiment with the power of media events. At the same time, the SABC was appeared to be striving for national unity, experimenting with subtitles and multilingualism within broadcasts and attempting to cater for a wider, more unified national audience. Although M-Net, the country's first subscription television service, was launched in 1986, it was too expensive to pose too much of a risk to the broadcaster. The assumption, thus, is that in the early 1990s television (and media events specifically) aided the country in overcoming the challenge of a lack of national identity and worked as a unifying force. This is another reason why South Africa's recent history provides a potentially fascinating case study for media events theory.

Media Events and National Identity

While, as Michael Billig argues, studies in nationalism have tended to focus on extreme and "peripheral" forms of the phenomenon, studies on the link between national identity and the media have highlighted ubiquitous, everyday media forms. Billig's own theory of "banal nationalism" highlights the ways in which national identity is constantly "flagged" in the everyday symbols and deictic language used by national media, keeping nationhood alive in modern Western countries.⁸² And Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined communities" links the development of national consciousness in Europe with the rise of what he terms "print capitalism" and the habitual consumption of newspapers.⁸³ In some ways, as Katz himself has pointed out,⁸⁴ media events theory serves as a supplement to Anderson's work. Like Dayan and Katz, Anderson's "imagined community" is based on the assumption that mass, simultaneous consumption has an integrative effect:

The obsolescence of the newspaper on the morrow of its printing ... creates this extraordinary mass ceremony: the almost precisely simultaneous consumption ('imagining') of the newspaper-as-fiction. ... The significance of this mass ceremony – Hegel observed that newspapers

⁸² Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

⁸³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London & New York: Verso, 1991 [1983]).

⁸⁴ Elihu Katz, "The end of television", 12.

serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers – is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion.⁸⁵

But, unlike the daily consumption of newspapers, performed in the “lair of the skull” (private, but paradoxically mass), the viewing of media events is rare rather than everyday because their content is historic.⁸⁶ Anderson’s “mass ceremony” would equate to watching national news on a daily basis – a habitual ritual closer to Billig’s theory rather than a ceremony in the sense described by Dayan and Katz. Katz’s subsequent work on the effects of multichannel broadcasting suggest that this form of “daily communion” is also on the wane.⁸⁷

While Anderson is in agreement with Billig about the omnipresent nature of national flagging in everyday television formats such as the news and the weather report, his comments on sporting occasions such as the Olympic Games suggest a special role for media-event style broadcasts in the development of a sense of nationhood:

The rise of the Inter-Nation Olympic Games historically occurred close to the arrival of the League of Nations. They seemed like a harmless substitute for war. But television changed everything, giving a new kind of importance even to intra-nation athletics. The enormous amount of watching time devoted to sports shows us the modern importance of a continuous parade of perfect national bodies – healthy, strong, fast, powerful, elegant, beautiful and often ‘winning’.⁸⁸

It would seem that media events offer occasions for heightened national identity formation, multiplying the potential effects of the everyday consumption of television on national consciousness. Not only do they offer a more extreme form of mass, simultaneous consumption, they are also often occasions at which national symbols are

⁸⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.

⁸⁶ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 8.

⁸⁷ See Elihu Katz, “And deliver us from segmentation”, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 546 (July) 1996, 22—33.

⁸⁸ Benedict Anderson, “The goodness of nations”, Speech delivered at the Centre for the Book, Cape Town, September 2006, attended by candidate.

displayed and celebrated, often to the rest of the world. This is particularly true of the most common script, the Contest, which explains why studies on media events and national identity have tended to focus on sporting mega-events. These events also serve as prime sites of interplay between national and global interests.

In addition, media events are pivotal in the creation of collective memory, which various scholars have identified as one of the core prerequisites of nationhood, even if what is required is often, as Ernest Renan's famous 1882 definition pointed out, a somewhat selective memory of the past.⁸⁹ Writing about the link between collective memory and sport, Grant Jarvie identifies three requirements as integral to the formation of collective identity: "a sense of continuity between the experiences of successive generations"; "shared memories of specific events and personages which have been turning points for a collective or national history"; and "a sense of a common destiny on the part of those groups sharing those experiences".⁹⁰ Media events are uniquely placed to meet all three of these requirements. Not only do they often serve as historical highlights, frequently engaging with historical destiny, but, as Dayan and Katz point out, their viewing context provides an intimate experience of events, because "[f]amily members experience the event together, thus strengthening group memory and generational ties".⁹¹

Indeed, the growing discipline of "memory studies" has identified a number of these broadcasts as pivotal in the formation of collective memory, both global and national. Dayan and Katz's assertion that "media events and their narration are in competition with the writing of history in defining the contents of national collective memory"⁹² is borne out by several studies. Bourdon's analysis of the television memories of forty life stories found that viewers recalled "the strong and pleasant emotions connected with the sense of participating in mass ceremonies (re)instating major social norms".⁹³ Ingrid Volkmer's broader examination across cultures and generations found

⁸⁹ Ernest Renan, "What is a nation?" in Homi K Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990 [1882]), 8–22.

⁹⁰ Grant Jarvie, "Sport, nationalism and cultural identity" in Lincoln Allison (ed.), *The Changing Politics of Sport* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1993), 76.

⁹¹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 205.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 213.

⁹³ Bourdon, "Some sense of time", 21.

that television news, and media events specifically, contributed not only to a sense of national history but also to the formation of global collective memory.⁹⁴ In the long term, media events can thus be seen as important contributors to the creation of a national mythology and the sense of a shared past; in the shorter term, their viewing bolsters the processes of globalisation.

In spite of these obvious connections, as Scannell pointed out in his review of *Media Events*, the authors do not pursue “the question of the historical development of nationalism, and the use of ceremony and spectacle to forge national identities”.⁹⁵ In addition, further studies have tended to focus on media rituals that reaffirm national identity, even though several of the events identified in the book deal with the renegotiation of nationhood. Sabina Mihelj notes that “the main focus is on media rituals which affirm and re-enact existing national institutions and balances of power. The fact that media events may also be involved in processes of national identity transformation or deconstruction is largely ignored”.⁹⁶ South Africa during the period under review provides a fertile site for the exploration of these possibilities, as the terms “old”, “new” and “post-apartheid” South Africa imply.

Approaching Media Events

Studies have found that South Africans rapidly developed a strong sense of civic nationalism in the early 1990s.⁹⁷ Because of the country’s divisive history, this is somewhat surprising; Mahmood Mamdani remarked that few would have predicted that the violence in Africa in 1994 would be in Rwanda and not South Africa.⁹⁸ Given media events’ role in the formation of a civil religion, I am interested in what these events can

⁹⁴ Ingrid Volkmer, *News in Public Memory: An International Study of Media Memories Across Generations* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

⁹⁵ Scannell, “*Media Events*: Review essay”, 152.

⁹⁶ Sabina Mihelj, “National media events: From displays of unity to enactments of division”, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 11 (4), 2008, 472.

⁹⁷ Arlene Grossberg, Jaré Struwig and Udesb Pillay, “Multicultural national identity and pride” in Udesb Pillay, Benjamin Roberts, Stephen P Rule (eds.), *South African Social Attitudes: Changing Times, Diverse Voices* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006), 59; see also Rob Mattes, “Hypotheses on identity and democracy; Community, regime, institutions and citizenship” in Simon Bekker & Rachel Prinsloo (eds.), *Identity? Theory, Politics, History*, Volume 1 (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 1999), 151–80; and Maré, “The notion of nation and the practice of nation building”.

⁹⁸ Cited in Suren Pillay, “The radical imagination of peace”, *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 5 (1), 2005, 24.

tell us about South Africans' relationship with "the centre" during the transition – arguably the most turbulent time in the country's history – and I believe that the different ways in which intranational groups consumed and celebrated televised occasions is potentially revealing.

But, as critics have pointed out, while Dayan and Katz's work elucidates the potential effects of mass televised events, there are few guidelines about how to go about studying them. Their chapter "Reviewing media events" provides some clues about where to start. In it, they propose several points of interest, including the "inside" effects on participants of the event (including organisers and principals, broadcasters and viewers) as well as the "outside" effects on institutions (including public opinion, political institutions, leisure, religion, public ceremony and collective memory). Many (but not all) of these are discussed at some point in this thesis. Mandela's release, for instance, lends itself to a discussion on the effects on the South African broadcaster or collective memory, while an event such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup has generated much debate about the effects on viewers.

In an attempt to gauge the effect of media events on post-apartheid South African national identity, and also to "fill in" some of the historical detail lacking from Dayan and Katz's original work, I have tried to place all of the events discussed within their historical context. Media events do not of course happen in a vacuum, and I argue that the power of certain events (such as Mandela's release) builds upon the mounting influence of previous high-profile media occurrences, some of them media events or "mini" media events in themselves. I have tried to gather information about the planning and intended effects of each event and then compared these to viewer responses insofar as they are expressed in national (and international) newspapers at the time. To a certain extent, viewership figures, obtained from the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF), have also been useful in determining citizens' investment in televised occasions.

Henrick Örnebring⁹⁹ points out that classic media events studies focus exclusively on broadcasting, yet tend to use "media" as a general term. He proposes looking to a

⁹⁹ Örnebring, "Revisiting the coronation", 81.

broader range of media when studying their construction. There are two good reasons for this: one is that other media forms clearly contribute to the construction of media events; media events frequently interact with print media symbiotically (although they sometimes disagree on the meanings of occasions) and newspapers are partly responsible for ensuring mass viewing by celebrating the occasion in the days leading up to the broadcast. As Compton points out, “a crucial aspect of these media events is the extent to which cultural performances so thoroughly resonate throughout the mediascape”.¹⁰⁰ The second is that analysing other forms of media provides a gauge of varying public reactions to media events, since newspapers also often analyse their meaning in post-event coverage and reproduce iconic imagery of the event. If one is interested in examining multiple discourses around an event, as Örnebring argues one should, then newspapers in particular provide good empirical material. This is especially true when engaging in a historical study such as this.

Certain events – particularly those involving speeches and symbols of national significance – lend themselves to content analysis, and I have tried to assess the effect of these on the growing acceptance of South Africa’s new post-apartheid identity by identifying national metaphors and iconic images that originate from media events. YouTube – which can be seen perhaps as a kind global visual archive – has been useful in determining the relationship between media events and collective memory, and many of the events I discussed have been uploaded by viewers wishing to remember significant televised occasions.

Also of use was Friedrich Krotz’s application of Pierre Bourdieu’s work on “capitals” to media events theory.¹⁰¹ Arguing for the importance of assessing the political interests behind media events, Krotz suggests that media events organisers frequently invest some form of capital – be it economic, cultural, social and/or symbolic – in the hope of generating a return. Looking at the “capital” investment and gain of media events illuminates the risks associated with their staging. Because they require buy-in from other media platforms and from audiences, their effects are not guaranteed. In the South

¹⁰⁰ Compton, *The Integrated News Spectacle*, 20.

¹⁰¹ See Friedrich Krotz, “Creating a national holiday: Media Events, symbolic capital and symbolic power” in Couldry, Hepp & Krotz (eds.), *Media Events in a Global Age*, 101–103.

African case, there are several examples of failed media events or media events that generated unexpected forms of capital (see Chapters 2 and 3). This model can be seen in the country today even; there was much discussion over the state's economic investment in the 2010 FIFA World Cup and whether the symbolic and economic return of hosting the mega-event was justified by the monetary outlay. With each event discussed, I have tried to assess the forms of "capital" invested and recouped.

Various scholars have noted the link between some of the larger media events and South Africa's transformation to democracy. Kirsten Skare Orgeret, for instance, has written about Nelson Mandela's inauguration as a Coronation;¹⁰² Eric Louw has noted the effects of the Mandela freedom concerts, as well as Mandela's televised release;¹⁰³ and Ron Krabill and Charmaine McEachern have both written about South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a media event.¹⁰⁴ But this is the first full-length historical study of the role of live broadcasting during the transition. The hope is twofold: (1) that Dayan and Katz's theory will elucidate more about the symbolic role that live broadcasts played in this fascinating and critical stage in South Africa's history, and (2) that the South African context will shed light on media events theory.

¹⁰² Kristin Skare Orgeret, "His master's voice and back again? Presidential inaugurations and South African television – the post-apartheid experience", *African Affairs*, 107 (429), 2008, 611–29.

¹⁰³ Eric Louw, *The Media and Political Process*, 2nd Edition (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2010), 123; "Mandela: Constructing global celebrity as a political tool" in Robert Clarke (ed.), *Celebrity Colonialism: Fame, Power and Representation in Colonial Cultures* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 291–307.

¹⁰⁴ Ron Krabill, "Symbiosis: Mass media and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa", *Media, Culture & Society*, 23 (5), 2001, 567–85; Charmaine McEachern, *Narratives of Nation Media and Representation in the Making of the New South Africa* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002).

2

Apartheid and Absence: South Africa's Exclusion from Media Events of the 60s, 70s and 80s

An event is seen from a given place; this place and its distance from the centre of the event tells you (and others) who you are.

– Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz ¹

Much of the power of the live broadcasting events of the early 1990s stemmed from apartheid South Africa's non-participation (and restricted participation) in the global televisual spectacles of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The joyous embrace of the country's new post-apartheid national identity should be seen in the context of South Africa's growing exclusion from televised international events during television's heyday.

Initially, South Africa's "separate development" from the rest of the world was self-inflicted, determined by internal rather than external politics because of the NP government's so-called "ban on TV". With no television service in the 1950s or 60s, the country missed the integrative effects of global media events such as JF Kennedy's funeral and the moonlanding.

When, in 1969, increased sophistication in satellite technology presented an even greater threat than a national television service, giving citizens the option of acquiring international television, the National Party (NP) capitulated, but SABC TV still only began broadcasting in 1976, about two decades later than most developed nations.

¹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 95.

The arrival of television presented new challenges to Afrikaner hegemony. Increasing globalisation altered the make-up of nation states, making it more and more difficult for older forms of ethno-nationalism to survive. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Anderson points out that the rise of the inter-nation Olympic Games occurred at much the same time as the arrival of the League of Nations and that, in the process of normalising the nation state, “television changed everything, giving a new kind of importance even to intra-nation athletics”.² Not only did television serve as a primary means of raising awareness of fellow citizens within the nation, it also transcended domestic boundaries and increased awareness of other nations, often providing a platform for nations to compete against and display themselves to each other. In the South African context, Jonathan Hyslop argues that the socio-political changes of the 1970s and 80s meant that “for all but the most recalcitrant whites, explaining themselves to imagined external interlocutors became a central concern” and “nothing did so much to create this desire for accounting than the coming of television”.³ While media events are primarily studied for the integrative effects of their viewing in a national context, this period of South Africa’s history demonstrates the ways in which they also began to function globally as instruments of exclusion.

The need to “account” and to secure global approval helped to effect and consolidate the political transition. There were various reasons why television helped to disarm white resistance to change.⁴ Firstly, white South Africans’ growing exclusion from the international community precipitated a bitter sense of shame and resentment; secondly, television helped to widen the chasm between English and Afrikaner interests, making it harder for Afrikaner nationalism to endure; thirdly, exposure to the televised products of other countries (particularly when they involved South Africa) sowed distrust in the national television service and sparked the desire for a public rather than state broadcasting service; and, fourthly, television fostered white South Africans’ “ability to conceive of themselves as part of the same nation as Black South Africans”.⁵

² Anderson, “The goodness of nations”.

³ Jonathan Hyslop, “Why did apartheid’s supporters capitulate? ‘Whiteness’, class and consumption in urban South Africa, 1985–1995”, *Society in Transition*, 30 (1), 2000, 39.

⁴ Of course, resistance to change also resulted in widespread emigration.

⁵ Krabill, *Starring Mandela and Cosby*, 15.

Media events were particularly influential in these processes. The popularity of key international contests such as the Olympics grew in conjunction with the evolution of television and they soon became the most powerful means of projecting national identity in the global sphere. Yet, access to these platforms was limited and controlled, establishing television as a prime site not only for the articulation of changing senses of national identity but also of entrenched political ideologies, giving power blocs such as the United Nations the means to publicly “punish” and “reward” countries when they disapproved or approved of their domestic policies. Television became a stage for the playing out of political grudges and the staging of alliances. Thus, even after finally acquiring a television service, South Africa found that it was excluded from a number of popular celebrations of national identity, events that were more often than not televised. As the civil rights movement gained momentum in other countries, and as escalating numbers of African states achieved independence, the country was set apart as a pariah state, as the “polecat” of the world.

In addition, South Africa’s ability to enjoy the cultural products of Britain was diminished by the trade-union Equity ban, making it difficult for the NP to satisfy the cultural appetite of the English-speaking white community at a time when it was growing more and more reliant on their votes.⁶ Increasing (white) emigration suggested dissatisfaction with the politics, economy and culture of the country and saw the loss of much needed skills.

There were a number of key media events that exacerbated the situation, including the Olympics and a variety of other sporting contests, the Miss World and Miss Universe contests and the 1981 royal wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer. While South Africa attempted on several occasions to stage its own media events, for the most part such endeavours were limited and ineffective, though they succeeded in temporarily quelling the thirst for international competition. In addition, failed media events, such as PW Botha’s Rubicon speech, exposed the NP’s ineptitude at orchestrating global displays as well as their limited understanding of international perceptions of the country.

⁶ Hyslop, “Why did apartheid’s supporters capitulate?”, 38.

As televised events, fuelled by technology, became an increasing part of everyday life elsewhere in the world, so the exclusion from such events – and the inability to stage them – became more and more humiliating for South Africans, who began to feel themselves as “set apart”, cut off and shamed.

‘Out of this World’: Television, Exclusion and the Moonlanding

The conservative NP was famously suspicious of television. JAM (Albert) Hertzog, the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs from 1959 until 1968, was the medium’s most outspoken critic, referring to it as the “little bioscope” and the “evil black box”. Although the Reithian model of television – to educate, inform and entertain – is frequently seen as an ally in the fostering of national consciousness,⁷ Rob Nixon points out that the NP government feared that it would do the opposite, and that the party shared with theorists such as Albert Schiller an anxiety that television would operate as a Trojan horse for cultural imperialism and global homogenisation.⁸ In the 50s and 60s, debate focused on a number of different challenges to the acquisition of a television service, including the scarcity of programming resources (which would result in a reliance on the cultural products of other nations), the high costs involved,⁹ the potentially corrosive moral effects on urban black South Africans,¹⁰ and the possible Anglicisation that would accompany the medium. For the most part, the Nationalists opposed television because they feared it would become an unmanageable vehicle for American values and communist ideology.¹¹

The “ban on TV” quickly became a weapon in the opposition’s arsenal, with the United Party using the slogan “Want TV? Vote UP” in the 1966 election.¹² As increasing numbers of citizens experienced the pleasures of television via contact with other

⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 123.

⁸ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem, and Hollywood*, 51.

⁹ See Carin Bevan, “Putting up screens: A history of television in South Africa, 1929–1976” (MA Thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 2008).

¹⁰ Robert Horwitz, *Communication and Democratic Reform in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 68.

¹¹ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*.

¹² *Ibid.*, 70.

countries and as escalating numbers of other African countries acquired television ahead of South Africa, popular support for a national television service grew.

The turning point came with what was arguably the world's first global media event: the moonlanding. Missing a spectacle watched by a large proportion of the industrialised world¹³ sowed acute discontent among South Africans, and Rob Nixon, Carin Bevan and Ron Krabill¹⁴ all argue that dissatisfaction over South Africa's exclusion from the moonlanding was a major reason for the eventual introduction of television.

Apart from the recorded twenty tourists who flew to London to view the event in a hotel as part of a special chartered "moon tour", most South Africans had to make do with radio, a medium that was not as satisfactory as the 1969 SABC report made out.¹⁵ Some were lucky enough to see moving images of Neil Armstrong's first steps when, as consolation for the absence of television, the *Rand Daily Mail* (an outspoken advocate for TV) and Tedalex (a visionary electronics company) arranged for free public screenings of recordings of the moonlanding dubbed "Moon" or "Space" television. The week-long screenings were extremely popular – after four days the *Rand Daily Mail* estimated that 67 000 people had attended;¹⁶ Rob Nixon puts the eventual figure at over 100 000¹⁷ – yet only sections of the moonlanding were screened and they were limited to (whites-only) locations in Johannesburg and Pretoria.¹⁸ Even for those who were able to attend Moon television, the viewing experience was compromised by the fact that the visuals were screened three days after the event and therefore lacked the immediacy, excitement and unifying power of the live broadcast. Bevan notes that the South African public was well aware of this deficiency, since newspaper articles referred to "the fact that overseas audiences would be able to see a step-by-step account of the two-and-a-half-hour moon

¹³ The estimated viewing statistics vary widely; while Lang and Lang estimate that audiences at the moment of landing on the moon reached 130 million (cited in Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 126; originally: *The Battle for Public Opinion*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), Nixon puts the total viewing audience at 800 million (*Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 73).

¹⁴ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*; Bevan, "Putting up screens"; Krabill, *Starring Mandela and Cosby*.

¹⁵ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 75.

¹⁶ Cited in Bevan, "Putting up screens", 114.

¹⁷ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 74.

¹⁸ Locations were organised for black South Africans, but with only two screenings, the auditorium was overrun and the shows were cancelled (Bevan, "Putting up screens", 114).

walk, *as it happened*, on their television sets”.¹⁹ Nixon goes so far as to say that viewers felt “defrauded” by the viewing.²⁰

The experience of “missed experience” must have been exacerbated by the tumultuous terms the print media used to welcome the event: the *Sunday Times* described the day of 20 July 1969 as “the most momentous in history”; the *Star* declared that “none of us will be quite the same again”, while *Hoofstad* claimed that it was “undoubtedly the most sensational technical accomplishment of man”.²¹ Indeed, South Africans would not be quite the same again. Days after the event, one commentator summed up the sense of collective disappointment in a letter to the *Cape Argus*, asking, “What have we missed, what are we missing, what will we miss?”²²

Elsewhere in the world, the event played out as a media event Conquest as defined by Dayan and Katz. Defined as the “live broadcasting of ‘giant steps for mankind’”, Conquests are the rarest form of media event. They typically involve heroes “pushing back frontiers” and transcending the laws of nature and society, and television commentators resort to the use of biblical quotations and epic prose.²³ Of course, the magnitude of the moonlanding also illustrated television’s potential and was a triumph not only of space technology but also of communication technology. Bevan notes that the miracle of the moonlanding was twofold: the success of setting foot for the first time ever on a celestial body was accompanied by the technological accomplishment of broadcasting the event live, as it happened, to millions of viewers around the world. This is integral to Dayan and Katz’s definition of the media event genre of the Conquest: “Life is not the same after a televised Conquest because of the great achievement itself and because of the broadcasting of the great achievement”.²⁴

The event came at a time when white Afrikaner identity was entering a period of flux.²⁵ With collapsing tradition and the emergence of an urban middle class with new material and leisure interests, exclusion from this pinnacle of human achievement

¹⁹ Bevan, “Putting up screens”, 118 [original emphasis].

²⁰ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 74.

²¹ All cited in *South African Digest* (week ended 25 July 1969), 1.

²² Cited in Bevan, “Putting up screens”, 118.

²³ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁵ Hyslop, “Why did apartheid’s supporters capitulate?”

coincided with a more cosmopolitan and progressive sense of identity. Just two years earlier, South Africa had distinguished itself as a world leader in medicine, with Christiaan Barnard's pioneering human heart transplant, and months before the moonlanding he performed the operation again, for the first time on a woman. These achievements attracted a great deal of positive international media interest for the country. Dozens of cameramen and journalists arrived in Cape Town to interview participants for foreign television viewers and Barnard soon became known as the "film star surgeon". Without television, however, South Africans were unable to fully participate in the flurry of (mostly positive) interest in events on their home soil, a situation that likely resulted in a degree of frustration. With the moonlanding, the return of the global media's gaze to events in the United States also likely heightened South Africans' sense of exclusion from world events. At the same time, a fear of being perceived as "backward" was attached to missing the screening of the Apollo 11 mission. The humiliation of being "reduced to twiddling the dials on their wirelesses" threatened white South Africans' "technological self-assurance and their sense of racial superiority".²⁶

Two days after the moonlanding, *Cape Argus* columnist The Wanderer launched a poll inviting readers to vote for a national TV service. An overwhelming 96% were in favour,²⁷ and the United Party capitalised on the disgruntlement, calling for a referendum on the issue.²⁸ The moonlanding, more than any other event before it, exposed what Jonathan Hyslop describes as the state's "attempt to create an image of technical modernity while at the same time quarantining whites from external influences",²⁹ and citizens rejected the NP's paternalism. A Bob Connolly cartoon from the *Rand Daily Mail* (see Figure 2:1) poked fun at the idea that those who had been "infected" by the experience of watching space television would transmit the liberalising effects to more conservative South Africans. Nixon puts it succinctly:

²⁶ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 74.

²⁷ Bevan, "Putting up screens", 118.

²⁸ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 74.

²⁹ Hyslop, "Why did apartheid's supporters capitulate?", 37.

For many whites – already rendered paranoid by the growing force of their exile from world affairs – South Africa’s inability to partake of such a singular moment of ‘global’ community came to seem like an exasperating self-inflicted disinvitation. A *Rand Daily Mail* editorial captured this sense of let-down perfectly with the snappy headline ‘Out of this World’.³⁰



Figure. 2.1: Bob Connolly cartoon from the *Rand Daily Mail*, critiquing Afrikaner fears about the potential effects of watching the moonlanding (25 July 1969)

The moonlanding also appears to have shifted the state’s own perception of global politics. In spite of the universal humanist “giant step for mankind” discourse, the political saliency of the accomplishment was well understood, suggesting that media events affect even those who do not watch them. Just one year before, live transmissions crossed the Iron Curtain for the first time when Yuri Gagarin’s outer-space orbit was broadcast to millions of viewers in the USSR and Western Europe, penetrating, for the first time, “the televisual manifestation of the Iron Curtain” and “depicting Soviet space heroes and military prowess”.³¹ The moon served as the winning post in the

space race, and the moonlanding marked the triumph of (American) capitalism over (Russian) communism in their efforts to claim world supremacy during the Cold War. Although the defeat was entirely symbolic – no

national territory was gained,³² no armies were defeated and no leaders were usurped – across the world, including in South Africa, the (de)feat was celebrated as a kind of military victory.³³ South Africa positioned itself as an American ally and State President Jacobus “Jim” Fouché sent “warmest congratulations on an achievement unparalleled in

³⁰ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 73.

³¹ James Schwoch, *Global TV: New Media and the Cold War, 1946–69* (USA, University of Illinois Press, 2008), 118.

³² As decreed by the United Nations Outer Space Treaty of 1967.

³³ Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin explains part of the reason for this: Nasa’s proposal that a UN flag be erected on the moon’s surface was firmly dismissed by Congress and there was a last-minute “hustle” to prepare the American flag on a telescopic flagpole (Reginald Turnhill and Edwin Buzz Aldrin, *The Moonlandings: An Eyewitness Account*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 213).

the history of mankind” on behalf of the Republic, and newspapers across the country bowed to America’s dominance. *Die Vaderland* noted:

Although the emphasis was on the universal value of this moon endeavour right from the start, the fact remains that the United States achieved it; that she could not only mobilise the human ingenuity, but also the means to carry it out. Thereby the United States irretrievably confirms its leadership in the world.³⁴

Beeld narrativised the moonlanding as a kind of tortoise-over-hare victory: “That it can be Americans landing on the moon first, nobody would have believed a few years ago ... The first Russians circled the earth when America was still struggling to boost her first man only just over the threshold of space.”³⁵

America’s dominance was understood as a necessary condition for world peace and *Die Transvaler* stated that “the triumph of Apollo 11 will also facilitate the future orderly development of mankind”.³⁶

The political ramifications of the moonlanding are important because not only did the space race triumph signal America’s global dominance in the political sphere, it also marked the nation’s triumph over satellite technology. As James Schwoch points out, the second lesser-known achievement of the moonlanding was the “inauguration of a televisual American-led satellite network”:

Just nineteen days before mission launch, the final International Telecommunications Satellite Corporation (INTELSAT) satellite needed for live worldwide television (TV) networking became operational over the Indian Ocean, meaning that American television coverage of Apollo 11 could be globally distributed as it happened, live via INTELSAT, to all the national TV networks of the world. Virtually every nation in the world telecast at least some of the Apollo 11 moon mission ... [T]he 1969 moonlanding was not only the culmination of the superpower space race and a global triumph for American science, it was also a global triumph for American television.³⁷

³⁴ Cited in *South African Digest* (week ended 25 July 1969), 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁷ Schwoch, *Global TV: New Media and the Cold War*, 1.

Throughout the period of NP opposition to television, America had been perceived alongside the Soviet Union as a one half of a dual threat to Afrikaner culture and the continued power of the nation state, whereas the moonlanding appears to have resulted in an “if you can’t beat them, join them” change of heart and a repositioning of perceived adversaries. As Nixon points out:

In 1968, just a year before the moonlanding, the American student revolts had fuelled the cause of *laager* nationalists who sought to prevent TV from spewing American decadence into South Africa. Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin, and Michael Collins unwittingly helped turn that view around.³⁸

To compound matters for opponents of television, 1969 was also the year in which developments in satellite technology gave rise to the possibility of citizens acquiring (at very little cost) their own TV sets and satellite dishes and tuning in to international broadcasts. This, together with the disenchantment about the moonlanding and the appointment of a new Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, led to the establishment of the 12-person Meyer Commission in 1969, which was tasked with investigating the “desirability or undesirability” of a national television service in South Africa. Perhaps to quell the profound frustration in the wake of the moonlanding, before even commencing with its inquiry the Commission focused on the “desirability” of TV and spoke of the medium’s arrival as a foregone conclusion, declaring that it would have to be multilingual, that it would not be an extension of the film industry and that it would be strictly controlled.³⁹ It would take another six years before the Commission’s recommendations would be implemented, however.

Everybody Wants to Be on TV: Sports boycotts and Media Events

On the night of the opening broadcast on 5 January 1976, the apartheid government announced its vision for television not only to educate, inform and entertain, but also to serve as a means of cementing some form of national identity. Prime Minister BJ Vorster’s televised address to the nation focused on the SABC’s understanding of

³⁸ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 73.

³⁹ “TV probe announced”, *South African Digest* (week ended 12 December, 1969), 4.

television as medium through which to “converse” with the international community: “It is a big task, not only to bring the world to South Africa, but also (and perhaps especially) to show South Africa to the world as it is in its rich diversity and everything it has to offer.”⁴⁰

Initially, television was strictly controlled, and transmission was restricted to English and Afrikaans broadcasts in a scattering of urban (mainly white) areas. With viewing hours limited to 37 hours per week until 1980, when the hours increased to 42, few events were considered important enough to warrant the expense of live interruption of this routine, although it is clear from SABC annual reports that what was referred to as “direct transmission” was seen as a marker of the national service’s progress. The SABC was quick to ensure that key national and global events, principally sporting events, were relayed live. In television’s first year, in addition to the opening of parliament, a number of sporting events enjoyed direct transmission, including the controversial All Black Rugby Tour, the Olympic Games opening ceremony, the Cape to Rio yacht race, the world boxing championship between Victor Galindez and Pierre Fourie, the Grand Prix and the world snooker and bowls championships.⁴¹

But Vorster’s vision “to show South Africa to the world” was compromised by an increase in sporting bans, which in effect barred the country from participating in global identity displays, driving home its pariah status. Much has been written about the political effects of the sports boycotts,⁴² but what is often overlooked is that the sporting bans advanced as communication technology developed. Political pressure on South Africa increased as more and more sporting events were broadcast live globally. Thus, while the eventual arrival of television meant that South Africa could enjoy live

⁴⁰ Cited in Bevan, “Putting up screens”, 164.

⁴¹ SABC *Annual Report*, 1976, 97.

⁴² See Douglas Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); Paul Martin, “South African sport: Apartheid’s Achilles heel”, *The World Today*, 40 (6), 1984; John Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997); John Nauright, “‘A besieged tribe’? Nostalgia, white cultural identity and the role of rugby in a changing South Africa”, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 31 (1), 1996, 69–86; Courtney W Mason, “The bridge to change: The 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, South African apartheid policy and the Olympic boycott paradigm” in Gerald P Schaus and Stephen R Wenn (eds.), *Onward to the Olympics: Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games* (Canada: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007).

transmission of the Olympic ceremony, it also served to highlight the country's absence from the event and the pleasure of global integration remained elusive.

Sport enjoys a privileged amount of media coverage, particularly television coverage, although live broadcasting really only began to flourish after the Second World War, following a "post-war thirst for pleasure and leisure".⁴³ Since then, the relationship between sport and live transmission has developed substantially, so that it is now a fairly routine occurrence as well as a lucrative industry involving a variety of stakeholders, including sponsors, advertisers, broadcasters, managers and the players themselves. For this reason, the broadcasting of mega-events such as the Olympics is a much studied affair.⁴⁴ Although smaller-scale sporting events were the earliest to be broadcast live, the Olympics – as the first sporting contest involving countries from all five continents – was the first to command a truly global audience. In participatory terms, televised events such as the Olympics offer a platform to nations "unrivalled by any cultural and political body, even the United Nations",⁴⁵ resulting, Dayan and Katz argue, in the coming together of the Third, Second and First Worlds⁴⁶ and "giving a big push to the introduction of television in the Third World".⁴⁷

Live television coverage of the Olympic Games was first made available in 1956 (from Melbourne), but it was only really in 1972 in Munich – after various negotiations over broadcasting rights – that they attracted global television audiences, partly because of fascination with the unplanned elements of the media event, the Munich terrorist attacks,⁴⁸ anticipating the role that terror, disaster and war would play in television's future.

But by the time South Africans were able to enjoy live coverage of the proceedings in 1976, they had already been banished from the Games. In 1960, in spite of

⁴³ Rob Steen, *Sports Journalism: A Multimedia Primer* (Oxon and London: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 152.

⁴⁴ See Schaus & Wenn, *Onward to the Olympics*; Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young, *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup* (New York: SUNY Press, 2006); Miquel de Moragas Spà, Nancy Kay Rivenburgh and James F Larson (eds.), *Television in the Olympics* (London: John Libby and Company Ltd, 1995).

⁴⁵ Tomlinson & Young, *National Identity and Global Sport Events*, 2.

⁴⁶ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 16.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁴⁸ Michael Payne, *Olympic Turnaround: How the Olympic Games Stepped Back from the Brink of Extinction to Become the World's Best Known Brand* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group 2006), 292.

international outcry following the Sharpeville massacre, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) permitted South African teams to participate, but thereafter the country's involvement came under fire. Under pressure in the wake of the 1956 sports policy⁴⁹ and after widespread condemnation of its 1960 all-white team sports policy, which declared that white and black South Africans must compete separately in the country, South Africa made attempts to put forward a more representative team in 1964, selecting (via racially separate trials) seven non-white Olympic representatives to join a team of 69. Nevertheless, in 1963, under pressure from the South African Sporting Association (SASA), led by Dennis Brutus, the IOC withdrew South Africa's invitation to participate in the 1964 Tokyo Games, after the government refused to comply with the committee's ultimatum that nothing short of a public dismissal of racial discrimination (in newspapers and on radio) would secure it a place in the Games. The NP refused.

In a bid for readmittance to the 1968 Games, South Africa overhauled its sports policy, declaring that white and black South Africans could now compete alongside and against each other outside the country's borders but not within. They promised greater representation of black and coloured⁵⁰ athletes, but once again insisted on separate trials. A commission led by the IOC's Lord Killanin visited the country and recommended South Africa's inclusion in the Games on the basis that progress was being made. Yet, boycott threats erupted from African-American athletes, the USSR and, following decolonisation, a wave of Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA) nations. The SCSA insisted that the black South African Olympians would be nothing but "trained monkeys ... shown at the fair".⁵¹ In total, no fewer than 39 countries threatened to boycott the Games,⁵² and host country Mexico, in a show of support for developing African countries, insisted that the invitation be withdrawn. The IOC eventually

⁴⁹ The policy stipulated that black and white South Africans had to compete separately within the country and that only white South Africans could enjoy the privilege of representing the nation in international sporting events.

⁵⁰ The term "coloured"

⁵¹ Cited in *Time*, "The Olympics: Boycotting South Africa", 8 March 1968 (Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,900012,00.html> – viewed 5 January 2011), no page number

⁵² *Ibid.*

announced that the Mexican government could not guarantee the safety of the South African team, and the Springboks did not compete.

In 1968, another blow came from the United Nations General Assembly, which proposed a resolution calling for all countries to break sporting ties with South Africa.⁵³ By 1970, the message was clear – “No normal sport in an abnormal society”⁵⁴ – and the IOC indefinitely expelled South Africa for violating the Olympic charter, which had always decreed that selection should not be discriminatory in any way. The country’s earlier hopes of actually hosting the Games seemed increasingly distant and increasingly absurd.

South Africa’s Olympic swan song coincided with the surge of media attention given to the Games from 1960 onwards. Studies have shown that, because of the growing “allure ... of being where the action is”, the total number of audiovisual media representatives at the Olympics grew from 1 442 in 1960 to 15 740 in 1988 in Seoul.⁵⁵ South Africa missed out on several years of inclusion in what was popularly dubbed the “greatest show on earth”.

In an attempt to compensate white athletes for their exclusion, the government supported the establishment of the South African Games, and the country’s first supposedly multinational athletic sporting event was held in Bloemfontein in 1969. But the attempt to bring the mountain to Mohamed was a poor substitute for the real thing; because of South Africa’s insistence on separate games (the black South African Games were held in Pretoria in 1970), a number of African countries threatened to boycott the upcoming 1972 Olympic Games if countries participated and, in the end, only a few athletes from West Germany, Britain and New Zealand competed – many of whom claimed they were competing as individuals rather than representatives of their nations.

Dubbed the “mini Olympics”, the 1973 event was a far grander affair, largely because the apartheid government made some important concessions. Held in Pretoria between 23 March and 7 April, a number of sporting bodies were invited, and international athletes were enticed by allowing all races to participate and compete

⁵³ Richard Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 13th edition (Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California, 1979), 125.

⁵⁴ The slogan has been attributed to Hassan Howa of the non-racial South African Cricket Board of Control.

⁵⁵ Moragas Spà *et al.*, *Television in the Olympics*, 39–40.

against each other. For the first time on South African soil, interracial sporting contact was allowed and the contest was billed as an “open international”. The domestic teams, however, participated as South African rather than Springbok teams, as the Springbok colours were reserved for white teams⁵⁶ and only black athletes belonging to the white federation of their representative sport were allowed to participate, effectively excluding any black sportspersons who had attempted to level the playing field in their country by joining non-racial sporting bodies that rejected government policy.⁵⁷

These domestic details were overlooked, however, and the Games were considered relatively successful, even by official opposition parties in the country: over 800 South African and nearly 700 (mainly Western) international athletes from 33 nations participated.⁵⁸ The government Department of Information report of 1973 compared all aspects of the event with the Olympics and noted proudly that on the tournament’s second day, a public holiday, some 21 000 spectators attended – the largest athletics spectator crowd ever to attend an event in the country.⁵⁹ The South African media, particularly the English-language press, hailed the Games as a turning point for the integration of sport.⁶⁰ Though the desired effects of the Games – and their substitute Olympic status – were diminished by the continued absence of television in the country, the print media responded almost *as if* the Games had played out as a media event. Jon Swift, a columnist for the *Star*, described them as “essential to the development of South African sport”, while another *Star* columnist, John Kennedy, noted joyously that spectators shouted “Come on, South Africa!” for both white and black South African boxers. Even Colin Eglin, leader of the Progressive Party, stated that, “while the debate of the Government’s motive and intentions would no doubt continue, the Games themselves had made an important dent in the psychology of apartheid”.⁶¹ This outcome suggested sport’s potential to unite South Africa’s diverse citizens under a national

⁵⁶ Muriel Horrel, “Laws affecting race relations in South Africa: (to the end of 1976)” (South African Institute of Race Relations, 1978), 386.

⁵⁷ Lincoln Allison, *The Politics of Sport* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 135.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Department of Information, *South Africa 1974: Official Yearbook of the Republic*, 1974, 35.

⁶⁰ Allison, *The Politics of Sport*, 135.

⁶¹ All cited in George Vandergriff Wright Jnr., “Racism in sport: An update”, *Africa Today*, 21 (2), 1974, 13.

banner – a characteristic that would be utilised to great effect in the post-apartheid era, when the new government wished to consolidate political power in popular arenas (see Chapter 6).

At this point, however, non-racial national unity was not the result sought by the apartheid government. In addition to soothing the disappointment of South Africa's exclusion from the Olympics, "the intent of the South African Nationalist Party in sponsoring the Games," George Vandergriff Wright, Jr. noted at the time, "was to lobby the officials of the international sporting competition for readmittance into international competition".⁶² Yet both these aims remained elusive. The event could never compete with the international Olympic Games. It lacked televisual support, for one, so although the event drew crowds, relatively few South Africans could actually be "where the action was". Moreover, the Games were not widely broadcast internationally, so although foreign athletes competed, without mass viewership their role was limited and the kind of national identity display that had come to be associated with the Olympics did not take place.

In addition, there was some vehement backlash. Stan Wright, a black United States Olympic track and field coach commented in the American magazine *Track and Field News*:

I was sitting in the VIP section (of Pilditch Stadium) and I'm looking at this section for the Bantus or blacks. That's the hypocrisy of it. I'm a black guy, plus I'm a VIP from another nation, so I get treated differently. But the black guy who's native to that country exists under the apartheid rule. He could not buy a ticket to sit where he wanted by choice.⁶³

The international condemnation and the "undesirable" domestic side effects of the event meant that apartheid South Africa did not attempt any major multinational events on home soil again.⁶⁴ Citizens had to make do with news of other countries competing in international sporting events.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Cited in *ibid.*, 13–14.

⁶⁴ Julie Cart, "A separation of country and competition: South Africa: After decades of isolation, the nation wants to rejoin sports world", *Los Angeles Times*, 6 May 1990 (Available at:

South Africa's absence was often conspicuous, however, and it became more so when television eventually arrived; in 1976 boycotters used the Games to demonstrate their political dissatisfaction with countries that had competed in other sports contests with the pariah state. Rugby was identified as the Afrikaner's Achilles' heel, and even though the IOC pointed out that a number of other countries had competed in other sports contests against South Africa, the SCSA politicised New Zealand's participation in the 1976 Montreal Olympics. A traditional nemesis of the South African rugby team, the All Blacks had forged ahead with their June 1976 tour in the wake of the tragic Soweto uprising – witnessed by South Africa⁶⁵ and the rest of the world via a number of graphic, now iconic, visual images. In response, the SCSA insisted on boycotting the Olympics unless New Zealand was ousted. The IOC repeated its earlier declaration that rugby was not an Olympic sport, compelling a total of 26 African countries to shun the Games. The official opening ceremony television commentator was obliged to remark to the entire world, including South Africa, that “unfortunately, politics struck again and almost twenty countries – most of them African – have boycotted over other countries' links with South Africa.”⁶⁶ Thus, although excluded from athletic competition, South Africa was still, in a sense, a major player in the Games, and the SCSA succeeded in upping the ante of the anti-apartheid movement. As Mason points out, while the results of the boycott were often indirect, they were still powerful:

Although the South African Government and sport policy was not directly altered by the African boycott of the Montreal Olympic Games, two very important implications resulted from black Africa's unified proclamation: first the high profile of the Olympic Games ensured that the word ‘apartheid’ appeared in many newspapers and on television worldwide ... Second, the African-led boycott may have had a more direct implication on the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. The united stand of black Africa was seen throughout

http://articles.latimes.com/1990-05-06/sports/sp-408_1_1960-south-africa/5 – viewed 28 March 2011), no page number.

⁶⁵ Ron Krabill points out that the newly established SABC was ill-prepared for the Soweto Uprising and underestimated the power of images of violence. The broadcaster's decision to televise some of the images of the uprising had inadvertent effects that led to the beginnings of the end of apartheid (*Starring Mandela and Cosby*, 57).

⁶⁶ See: “Montreal 1976 Olympics – Opening Ceremony Highlights” on YouTube (Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmpLL_VMAtc – viewed 5 January 2011).

the world ... significantly rais[ing] the morale of the black youth protestors.⁶⁷

Similar patterns of exclusion and expulsion occurred in other sports. In 1970, when the Springbok cricket tour of England was cancelled, following widespread protests led by boycotter Peter Hain, a “Rest of the World” team (comprising the best non-England cricketers) was hastily assembled, allowing five South African players to compete alongside top players from Australia, the West Indies, Pakistan and India. Although the match was initially recorded as an official test in *Wisden Cricketers Almanack*, the status was revoked three years later.

Next to rugby, cricket was the biggest thorn in the apartheid state’s side, as it received much support from white South Africans, who widely believed that the Springbok team would prove to be the best in the world if only it were given a chance to compete. The belief was not wholly unjustified. Although not permitted to compete internationally on an official level, the South African team had a series of successes during the so-called rebel tours held between 1982 and 1990. Yet, as with the “Rest of the World” match, none of these successes was ever officially recognised by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Football, too, was not exempt from politics, although the football boycott did not receive as much attention in the South African press. Although there was growing interest in England’s professional leagues, locally, football was seen as “*the sport of the disenfranchised black masses*”⁶⁸ and their interests were not widely covered in the mainstream media. Of course, the sport’s popularity with black audiences also complicated matters for the boycotters, as they risked ending up hurting those in whose interests they were acting. Nevertheless, from 1963, South Africa was excluded from the FIFA World Cup – an event that was fast overtaking the Olympics in attracting mass audiences. The government’s proposal to enter all-white and all-black teams in the 1966 and 1970 World Cups was, unsurprisingly, rejected.

⁶⁷ Mason, “The bridge to change”, 292.

⁶⁸ John Bale and Mike Cronin, *Sport and Postcolonialism* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2003), 125 [original emphasis].

Sports of a more individual nature tended to be better at skirting the effects of the boycott, because they didn't require teams representative of the nation. International golfers, for instance, would not compete on South African soil but many still competed at the annual Million Dollar Challenge staged at Sun City – a luxurious casino resort in Bophuthatswana, one of the supposedly independent Bantustans or homelands, established by the apartheid government for the Tswana-speaking people in 1961. Competing in Bophuthatswana allowed sportspersons to compete without appearing to contravene the United Nations sporting ban.

Formula 1 was one of the last sports to abandon apartheid South Africa. The race was sponsored by the *Citizen* (the most pro-NP English-language newspaper) for many years and thus had direct ties with government. The boycott movement eventually caught up with the sport in 1985 when Renault and Ligier shunned Kyalami, drawing attention to the hypocrisy of the other contestants' participation. Although the Formula 1 Association was still considering future races in South Africa, their interest waned when several television companies refused to broadcast events.⁶⁹

Although it is difficult to determine the full effect of the sporting boycott on apartheid politics, it is clear that it at the very least relaxed white South Africans' opinion on mixed sport. *Die Burger* noted that in 1968, only 17% of whites favoured mixed sport; by 1976, the year in which the country received television, this figure had risen to 63%.⁷⁰ Thus it seems likely that the desire to participate in sporting mega-events worked in favour of reform.

(Dis)Invitations: The British Equity Ban and the Royal Wedding

In addition to isolation in sports, the British Equity ban similarly compromised South Africa's ability to keep up with the rest of the world, diverting transnational media flows and causing widespread grievance among South Africans with British heritage. The Equity ban was first established in the 1960s by the Actors' Equity Council, which banned exports to South Africa of all recorded material involving British Equity

⁶⁹ Keith Collantine, "F1 and racism: the 1985 South African Grand Prix", "F1 Fanatic: the Formula 1 Blog", 5 February 2008 (Available at: <http://www.f1fanatic.co.uk/2008/02/05/f1-and-racism-the-1985-south-african-grand-prix/> – viewed 29 March 2001), no page number.

⁷⁰ *South African Digest* (week ended 26 November 1976), 13 (originally: *Die Burger*).

members; it was extended to television in 1978, forcing the SABC to look elsewhere for resources. The SABC manoeuvred its way around the ban by importing programmes from other countries, and even by sometimes adapting British programmes. Bevan notes, for instance, that the animated children's programme *Rupert the Bear*, which featured voices of Equity members, was dubbed from English ... into English.⁷¹

Importing American shows helped to staunch some of the disappointment with cultural exclusion, and in the 1970s and 80s, hugely popular shows such as *Dallas* and *The Cosby Show* were favoured among white South Africans.⁷² But the ban presented a seemingly insurmountable hurdle in 1981 when South Africa was very nearly excluded from the heart of the world's next largest media event after the moonlanding: the wedding of Charles and Diana. As Dayan and Katz point out, there were few grey areas with the broadcasting of the ceremony: "In the case of the royal wedding, either you are in the church (that is, a guest of the royal family) or you are outside the church."⁷³

The BBC and commercial television initially stood by agreements with Equity; many Equity members were to perform during the ceremony at St Paul's Cathedral and, in what was quickly called "the blackout", it was reported that South Africans would be barred from the 70-minute marriage ceremony. The ban meant that viewers would be restricted to pre- and post-ceremony footage, essentially ruining the wedding experience, which, by definition, requires witnessing. To make matters worse, even the radio broadcast was in jeopardy because of Equity member Richard Burton's role as commentator.⁷⁴

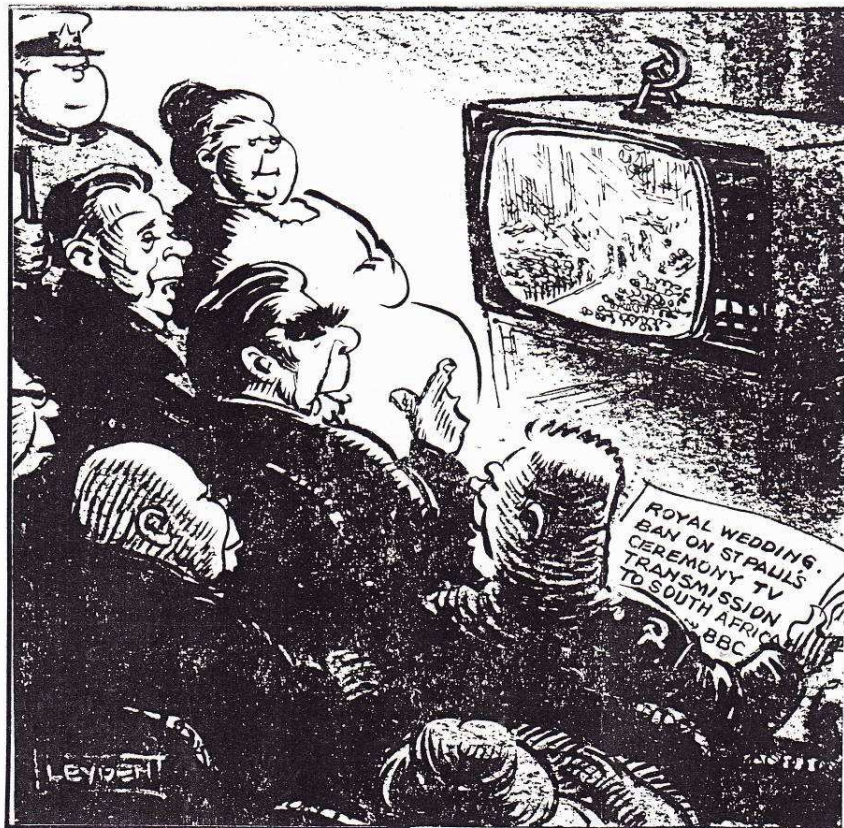
South Africans greeted the possibility of missing the wedding with much distress. That the USSR had been granted broadcasting rights added insult to injury, drawing attention to South Africa's increasing distance from the Western world, in spite of its Christian leanings (see the cartoon from the *Daily News*, Figure 2.2).

⁷¹ Bevan, "Putting up screens", 167.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 95.

⁷⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, Editorial: "Contradictory ban", 14 July 1981, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 17 July 1982), 26.



'Lucky for us we are such God-fearing religious people and staunch supporters of the Royal cause, Comrade Brezhnev'
The Daily News

Figure 2.2: A cartoon by Jock Leyden from the *Daily News*, highlighting the perceived hypocrisy of South Africa's "disinvitation" from the televised royal wedding, July 1981

South African editorials pinned the blame on the "noisy minority outscreeching the silent majority",⁷⁵ singling out Vanessa Redgrave (labelled an "extremist political agitator" in the *Citizen*) as the ringleader. The *Sunday Express* called the blackout "downright ridiculous"⁷⁶ and the *Rand Daily Mail* stated "that South Africa will be the one and only country to be treated in this way makes it all the more bitter".⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *Citizen*, Editorial: "The blackout", 13 July 1981, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 17 July 1981), 26.

⁷⁶ *Sunday Express*, Editorial: "It's absurd", 12 July 1981, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 17 July 1981), 25.

⁷⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, Editorial: "Contradictory ban".

The possibility of missing the wedding also drew attention to Afrikaner–English tensions in the country. The English-language newspaper the *Cape Times* ran a cartoon ridiculing Afrikaner interest in the wedding and emphasising the extent to which South Africa was becoming anglicised (see Figure 2.3).

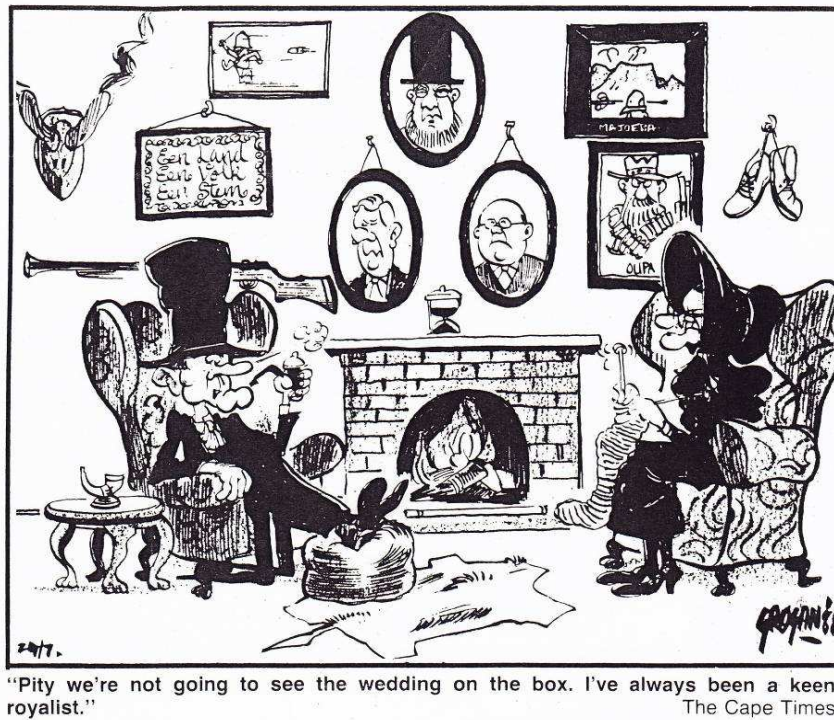
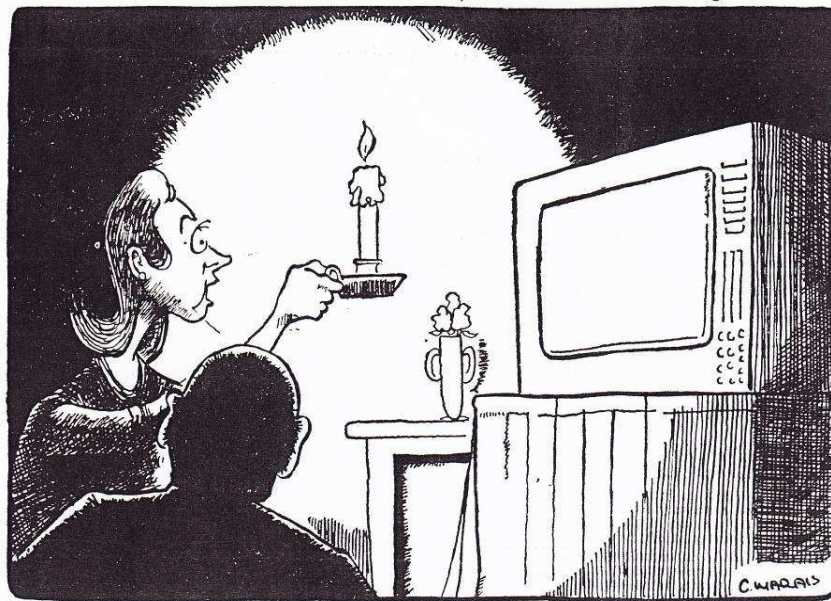


Figure 2.3: A Tony Grogan cartoon depicting the irony of Afrikaner interest in the royal wedding, *Cape Times*, 24 July 1981.

In it, a conservative Afrikaner couple sit in a living room adorned with photographs of famous Afrikaner nationalists (including HF Verwoerd, who as editor of *Die Transvaler* had famously refused to cover the royal visit of 1947). Ironically, the couple express their disappointment about missing the televised wedding. Another cartoon visualises the collective sense of being “left in the dark” (see Figure 2.4), by now a familiar experience for the increasingly isolated country.



Is it Equity or Escom (the electricity supply commission)

Die Volksblad

Figure 2.4: A Charl Marais cartoon from *Die Volksblad*, July 1981

Eager not to see a repeat of the disappointment associated with missing the moonlanding, the SABC entered into negotiations. Satellite technology had of course developed to the extent that material could be pirated, and it would have been impossible for the BBC to prevent South Africa from receiving the wedding without cutting off the rest of southern Africa.

There was no need, however, as an agreement was reached. Because of the country's historical links with Britain and its status as a former Commonwealth member, and because the massive worldwide media interest in Lady Diana Spencer gave Britain the opportunity to stage an event whose power would transcend national boundaries, a compromise was reached and South Africans were (partially) permitted to take their place alongside the rest of their world in the viewing of the live spectacle. While footage of the ceremony was shown, the music played by Equity members was withheld – a problem that the SABC, by now adept at the practice of dubbing, easily circumvented by playing prerecorded music performed by non-Equity members. Original singing was excluded from the broadcast, however, so that one of the wedding highlights, Kiri te Kanawa's rendition "Let the Bright Seraphim" from Handel's *Samson* was lost. *The Economist* noted the snub at the time:

The luckless South Africans, royal wedding mad, were deprived of this delight. Equity and the Musicians' Union insisted that the products of their labour should not be used to entertain the country of apartheid. The South African Broadcasting Corporation agreed to freeze the picture at the moment any of their members were seen or heard, leaving only the bare bones of the service, and the crowd scenes for their viewers.⁷⁸

The viewing experience was not quite as disrupted as *The Economist* made out, however; most South Africans had little awareness of what they were missing, and, as was the case elsewhere in the world,⁷⁹ the wedding unfolded as a "Coronation" media event,⁸⁰ interrupting ordinary routine and demanding attention.⁸¹ Coronations are "all ceremony";⁸² they "deal in the mysteries of rites of passage"; their tension stems from the question of whether or not organisers can pull them off, whether they will run smoothly or not.⁸³ In the case of the royal wedding, suspense was boosted not only by a number of pre-wedding media rituals, but also by the arrest, just one day before the wedding, of two royal footmen who were in possession of explosives.⁸⁴ Dayan and Katz note that the wedding itself allowed England to enter into a "liminal period", seducing citizens (and the world) into dreaming about what reality should or could be instead of what it actually was.⁸⁵

Interestingly, this effect was also noted by the newly established *Sowetan* – an anti-apartheid publication freely distributed to inhabitants of Soweto. In a cynical editorial written on the day of the wedding, the *Sowetan* maintained a careful distance from proceedings: "Britain sorely needs this kind ethereal nonsense to take her mind off the harsh realities of the day," declared editor Joe Latakomo. The editorial advised against getting caught up in the magic of the wedding, when South Africa is "left a dour,

⁷⁸ "When royalty no harm meant", *The Economist*, 1 August 1981, 21.

⁷⁹ There were some exceptions: *The Economist* noted that Greece (still snubbed by the lack of an invitation for the "King of the Hellenes") chose not to watch the event live, while Yugoslavia was the only Eastern European country to sign on ("Television; Walking on the Moon", 1 August 1981, 22).

⁸⁰ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*.

⁸¹ Personal memory reinforces this; my school lessons were interrupted so that the pupils could watch the wedding.

⁸² Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 26.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁴ *The Economist*, "When royalty no harm meant".

⁸⁵ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 104.

plodding prosaic nation” with “another toilsome week ahead”.⁸⁶ The implication, in the spirit of black consciousness, was that black South Africans should resist the hegemonic seduction of the (white) wedding and remain focused on their reality and their struggle to change it. South Africans belonging to this group are good examples of those who those who do not “abandon their distant role of spectator” in response to a media event. As Dayan and Katz point out, media events do not always work; some people “refuse to suspend disbelief” or they “snub” them and engage in oppositional or alternative readings.⁸⁷

White South Africa, however, lapped up the fairytale narrative, with the *Beeld* editorial showing little restraint: “Today South Africa rejoices with millions of people all over the world about a bond which is going to be solemnised between a real live prince who found his dream princess”.⁸⁸ The newspaper – arguably the most progressive of the Afrikaner-language papers – also hinted at the extent to which anti-royalists were overwhelmed by wedding fever, as well as the gendered nature of media events. A cartoon (see Figure 2.5) features several women gazing at the new princess on television, while a disgruntled male rugby supporter looks on.

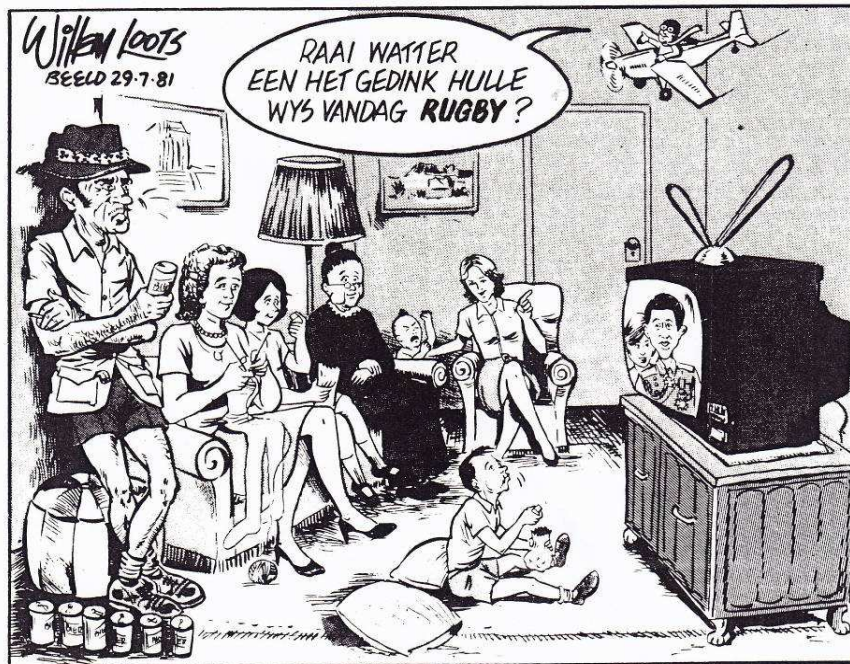
Indeed, *Die Volksblad* (a staunch NP supporter) was clearly a little overwhelmed by the national response, declaring that “there is no unhealthy adulation, but simply lively interest, and because of that we join enthusiastically and without any feelings of guilt in the spectacle of the Great Marriage”.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Sowetan, Editorial: “The royal wedding”, 29 July 1981, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 21 July 1981), 27.

⁸⁷ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 141.

⁸⁸ *Beeld*, Editorial: “A little love”, 28 July 1981, translated and reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 21 July 1981) 27.

⁸⁹ *Volksblad*, Editorial: “The Wedding”, 15 July 1981, translated and reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 24 July 1981) 27.



Guess who thought they were screening rugby today?

Beeld

Figure 2.5: A Willem Loots cartoon from *Beeld*, 31 July 1981.

The royal wedding provides a prime example of the ways in which a media event can be variously received by intranational groups, and it is tempting to speculate about the effect of power relations on the enjoyment of the event. Because South Africa's historical link with Britain was complicated by the Anglo-Boer War, the celebration of the glorious traditions of one of the world's oldest nations came with reservations, particularly for Afrikaners whose power can be said to have been under threat. Nearly missing the wedding drew attention to English–Afrikaner tensions by reminding South Africans of their marginalised status in the world – a situation for which English-speaking South Africans increasingly blamed Afrikaners. The fact that the SABC treated the broadcast of the wedding as a priority suggests an increase in the social capital of English-speaking white South Africans. At the same time, the least powerful group in the country actively resisted the intoxicating effect of the wedding.

Spoiling the Fun: Hijacking Media Events

Isolation and disinvitation were not the only methods of harnessing the power of media events in the fight against apartheid. Protesters also staged a number of visual spectacles, sabotaging media event opportunities and disrupting televised ceremonies in order to articulate their political viewpoints in a popular arena.

The inherent risk involved in live broadcasting is part of its attraction; there is a certain suspense attached to even the best-planned occasions, and disruption throws things off course in ways that often reveal the intended allure of the event. Dayan and Katz use extreme examples (such as the Munich Olympics) to demonstrate the appeal of media events to advocates of revolutionary causes, but the end result is similar. Though anti-apartheid demonstrators cannot be situated alongside terrorists, hijacked events transcend the reconciliatory spirit of the televised ceremony and become news events. The transition compels broadcasters to “look uneasily to their contracts”,⁹⁰ uncertain whether they should revert to their role as journalists or remain faithful to the politics of the media event agreement.

In the South African context, sabotaging televised contests forced commentators to note the demands of those opposed to apartheid, and to bring South Africa’s racist policies to the attention of viewers. Hijacking events also led to increased isolation, as hosting Springbok teams became more and more expensive, even dangerous.⁹¹

Cricket and rugby matches were most frequently targeted. Nixon points out that sport’s “prime-time profile” attracts mass audiences whose nationalist sentiments are roused, making it a “particularly seductive sphere” for boycotters who are able to turn the “special relation that has arisen between sport and television to their advantage” by staging “interventionist spectacles”.⁹² To this end, a variety of tactics were employed, including littering rugby fields with fish hooks, destroying cricket pitches before play, and, if play went ahead, releasing smoke and paint bombs, flashing mirrors in players’ eyes and blowing whistles indiscriminately.⁹³

⁹⁰ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 74.

⁹¹ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 146.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 145.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 146.

On more than one occasion, eager sports fans were left in limbo in front of their televisions waiting for expected play to begin or for disrupted play to continue as broadcasters tried to restore calm. Two events in 1981 demonstrated the power of attacking would-be media events, both part of the controversial Springbok rugby tour to New Zealand: the July 1981 match in Hamilton and, later that year, the test at Eden Park in Auckland.

New Zealand remained South Africa's fiercest rugby opponent, and in spite of the 1976 Olympic boycott, the rivals frequently played against each other. But the televised shambles of 1981 put an end to New Zealand's long-standing involvement with the Springbok rugby team. In July 1981, amid intense political controversy in New Zealand because of Paul Muldoon's loose interpretation of the Gleneagles agreement,⁹⁴ the Springboks toured the country. Widespread demonstrations preceded each match, most memorably on 25 July, in the same week that South Africa's application for readmission into world cricket was rejected by the ICC. Hundreds of protestors overwhelmed the rugby stadium at Hamilton, forcing the cancellation of the second match of the tour. The match had the distinction of being South Africa's first ever live rugby broadcast from overseas, undoubtedly attracting large audiences in the country.⁹⁵ TV1 had shifted outside of normal broadcasting hours,⁹⁶ adding to the excitement of the match by requiring fans to wake up early to catch events live. The disappointment was profound. In gowns and slippers, South African audiences watched unfolding images of the protest instead of the long-awaited contest. The following Monday, The *Vaderland* editorial was at a loss for words, stating: "It's difficult to describe what happened on the rugby field at Hamilton on Saturday".⁹⁷ Though many of the newspaper editorials interpreted the event

⁹⁴ In 1977, Muldoon had signed the Gleneagles agreement unanimously agreed upon by Commonwealth countries as part of their opposition to racism. Though the agreement was widely understood to mean breaking sporting ties with the South Africa, it was loosely worded, giving Muldoon the chance to break the spirit of the law. At one point for instance, the agreement stipulates that it was up to each individual government's "to determine in accordance with its law the methods by which it might best discharge these commitments".

⁹⁵ David Ross Black and John Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation: Sport, Culture, Politics and Power in the Old and New South Africas* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 86.

⁹⁶ SABC *Annual Report*, 1981, 50.

⁹⁷ *Vaderland*, Editorial: "More than mere sport ...", 27 July 1981, translated and reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 31 July 1981) 23.

as an unruly and unfair intervention – “the roughshod riding over of the silent majority by the rowdy minority”⁹⁸ – they also agreed that it was somehow a turning point. *Die Vaderland* concluded that the event “contains a lesson that South Africa dare not overlook”,⁹⁹ while the SABC deplored the fact that “attempts to regain entry into international sport have for too long been a losing battle”.¹⁰⁰

Apart from the anti-climax of deferring the match, the disrupted media event must have awakened ordinary South African viewers to the gravity of the situation, and to foreign perceptions of the country’s policies, at a time when they sought more outside affirmation. As Black and Nauright point out, “while these events traumatised New Zealand ... [South African] whites must have been rudely awakened to the depth of animosity felt by the New Zealanders towards their boys”.¹⁰¹

Games involving the Springboks often required riot police, which had the further effect, Nixon notes, of recreating – via television – an “atmosphere of a police state in countries unaccustomed to such levels of public violence”.¹⁰² Already associated with brutal images of quelling insurrection, South Africa’s link with added images of police shields, barbed wire, truncheons and dogs – in what is ordinarily a festive atmosphere – enhanced its reputation as an oppressive state.

Additional protests erupted in September on the fourth anniversary of black activist Steve Biko’s death¹⁰³ in what became known as the “flour bombing”. South Africa was playing the All Blacks at Eden Park, Auckland, and there was mayhem again, when protestors threw rocks and overturned cars outside the stadium.¹⁰⁴ A Cessna 172 aircraft flew over the grounds, dropping flour bombs, pamphlets and pink flares. The game proceeded, to the astonishment of the commentators, who alternated between

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ SABC, “Hamilton”, 27 July 1981, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 31 July 1981), 19.

¹⁰¹ Black & Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation*, 86.

¹⁰² Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 147.

¹⁰³ Stephen Biko was the charismatic founder of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. He died in police custody in 1977 under mysterious circumstances.

¹⁰⁴ Jan Stradling, *More than a Game: When Sport and History Collide* (New South Wales: Pier9, 2009), 160.

commenting on the play and remarking on the behaviour of the protestors.¹⁰⁵ The protest had the potential effect of turning the integrative media event into a conflictual news event. But, careful not to break Dayan and Katz's "contract" of the media event (which in this case was to keep politics out of sport), the New Zealand commentators chose not to return to their roles as journalists; though they identified the visuals, they made no references to Biko or apartheid. The message was not lost on the crowd, however: balloons, bearing Biko's name, drifted hauntingly down towards the field in his honour, and the cameramen obliged the protestors by focusing on the mesmerising sight.

The demonstrators did not succeed in stopping play, which in the end probably worked in their favour, as the pilot, Marx Jones (jailed for six months for his part in the protest), later concluded.¹⁰⁶ South Africans' experience of New Zealand animosity (once again channelled via live television) must have been intensified by the Springboks' eventual defeat: All Black Allan Hewson took a penalty kick in extra time (awarded because of the delays caused by the Cessna) and the Springboks were doubly humiliated.

The experience heralded the end of international competition for a number of years, and the last decade of apartheid was characterised by increased pressure and isolation. The United Nations 1980 "register of sports contacts with South Africa", naming and shaming any sportspersons who competed with the country, kept would-be competitors in check. South Africa was excluded from the first two Rugby World Cups, and although "rebel" cricket and rugby tours provided temporary relief, they were always contentious and frequently damaged to participants' reputations and careers. Former England captain Mike Gatting, for instance, was banned from test cricket for three years on account of the 1990 rebel tours. In addition, although it was generally considered safer to stage sporting media events within the country's borders, apartheid opponents took up the habit of rooting for the opposing team whenever the Springboks played. Famously, even in the post-apartheid era, Trevor Manuel announced his support for the All Black rugby team because of his inability to identify with South Africa's all-white team.

¹⁰⁵ A section of the game has been uploaded to YouTube; see "Classic Encounter – 1981 Flour Bomb Test" (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkZMIySG75c> – viewed 7 January 2011).

¹⁰⁶ See interview on YouTube: "Flour Bomb Test 1981 Interviews" (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsOHsn6kYfc&feature=related> – viewed 7 January 2011).

Out of Miss World: Apartheid and the Politics of Beauty Pageants

Similar exclusionary and disruptive strategies were used at other televised competitions, most notably the beauty contests for the titles of Miss Universe and Miss World, spectacles whose popularity also grew with the advent of television. The Miss World pageants (initially) attempted to exploit the subjunctive mode of media events, evoking “thoughts of what might be or what should be, rather than what is”.¹⁰⁷ Yet, while on the surface beauty contests may appear as frivolous spectacles removed from the realm of politics, like sport they have been unable to transcend the political events of their time. On the national stage, the choice of a reigning beauty sheds light on the nation state’s relationship with cultural and religious values, as well as its attitude towards race; on the international stage, dominant political viewpoints not only determine which countries are eligible to compete, they also influence voting patterns. South Africa’s relationship with both Miss World and Miss Universe revealed the world’s discomfort with its lily-white national identity.

The Miss World pageant started in 1951, with officials promoting the idea of a “world family” and describing the contest as “all the world on one stage”.¹⁰⁸ South Africa started competing after the first Miss South Africa pageant was held in 1956 and had early success with Penny Coelen’s crowning as Miss World in 1958. Under pressure to allow black contestants to compete, in 1970 South Africa decided to send two representatives, one white (Miss South Africa) and one black (Miss Africa South).

Unsurprisingly, as with the separate sporting trials, the move met with protest, and the 1970 contest organisers had to fend off criticism not only from feminist groups who labelled the competition as a “cattle market” but also from anti-apartheid demonstrators. The young liberal Peter Hain, active in galvanising support for sport boycotts, well understood the political uses to which media events could be put and was already much hated by many white South Africans. Hain rallied support from the militant youth wing of Britain’s Liberal Party and argued that allowing two contestants from

¹⁰⁷ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 119.

¹⁰⁸ Ros Coward, “The beauty myth”, *Guardian*, 25 November 2002 (Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/nov/25/gender.comment> – viewed 12 January 2011), no page number.

South Africa to compete was an implicit acceptance of the country's policy of apartheid.¹⁰⁹

It appears that the feminist protestors made the biggest fuss, disrupting the contest by throwing smoke, stink and ink bombs onto the Royal Albert Hall stage. Comedian Bob Hope, who was to crown Miss World, tried to lighten the atmosphere by making jokes about how pleased he was to be participating in this particular cattle parade, yet his stage appearance was briefly interrupted by whistles, rattles and pamphlet-throwing until pageant officials managed to restore calm. The 5 000-strong audience booed the protestors, and Hope declared that anybody wanting to disrupt such proceedings had "to be on some kind of dope".¹¹⁰

The feminist and anti-apartheid protests were "advertised" in advance, helping to draw attention to the contest, and Miss World 1970 reportedly became "the single most-watched television broadcast of the entire year in the United Kingdom".¹¹¹ Although the effect of the protest was hardly felt in South Africa (again, without television, the country could not share in the live broadcasting of the event), the protestors' tactics were beamed live to an international audience of 25 million.¹¹² The anti-apartheid protesters rode on the coat tails of the feminist outcry, as world attention turned to the political and ideological implications of the competition and noted the awkwardness of South Africa's dual entry. Pageant director Eric Morley had intended to quell protests against South Africa's participation by allowing the two participants to compete, but the presence of a black and white beauty queen not only raised awareness of the country's racial policies, but it also arguably affected the eventual crowning. There was much speculation about the winners of the 1970 competition, as it was also the year in which the first black Miss World was crowned – Miss Grenada, Jennifer Hosten. Moreover, South Africa's black contestant, Miss Africa South, Pearl Jansen, was first runner-up, trumping Miss South Africa, Gillian Jessup, who was fourth runner-up. Although the pageant claimed to adopt

¹⁰⁹ Donald West, "Miss World 1970 Master Class One, no date (Available at: <http://www.oocities.com/televisioncity/9699/mcmw70a.html> – viewed 3 January 2011), no page number.

¹¹⁰ Part of the event can be viewed on YouTube; see: "Miss World Bob Hope Bloopers" (Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reCX3_OAkV8 – viewed 12 January 2011).

¹¹¹ Neville Hoad, "World Piece: what the Miss World pageant can teach about globalization", *Cultural Critique*, 58 (Fall), 2004, 60.

¹¹² Catherine Elwes, *Video Art: A Guided Tour* (London; New York: IB Taurus, 2005), 120.



Figure 2.6: Tom Phillips: “Oh Miss South Africa”, 1975.

a non-political mantle, in the wake of the outcry judges seemed intent on communicating their own non-racial stance – a move that viewers did not receive well. After the final crowning, switchboards on London newspapers were reportedly jammed by phone calls from viewers complaining that the contest had been rigged and that the results were “racist”.¹¹³

Media interest in Jansen focused on her identity as an oppressed South African, drawing attention to her “coloured” classification in her home country. In years to follow, South Africa’s dual entry for Miss World was increasingly publicised and satirised. For instance, in 1975 artist

Tom Phillips drew attention to the respective social contexts of Miss South Africa South and Miss South Africa in an ironic artwork titled “Oh Miss South Africa”, juxtaposing a white blonde woman with a Zulu maiden. It soon became clear that South Africa’s continued involvement with the Miss World contest had an expiry date. Although success came again in 1974 when Miss South Africa Anneline Kriel was crowned Miss World,¹¹⁴ in 1976, the presence of a black Miss Africa South and a white Miss South Africa drove nine countries to withdraw in protest, and in 1977 ten countries boycotted the contest. Thereafter, Miss World organisers refused South African contestants, until 1991, after the release of Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC (see Chapter 6).

With South Africa out of Miss World, Miss South Africa hopefuls turned to Miss Universe, the American version of the British Miss World. There was brief respite when, in the following year, Margaret Gardiner was crowned Miss Universe before an estimated

¹¹³ *Jet*, “Black women dominate ‘Miss World’ Contest”, 10 December, 1970, 47.

¹¹⁴ Anneline Kriel was crowned only after Miss United Kingdom was disqualified, so South Africans did not enjoy a “media event” crowning.

global television audience of millions,¹¹⁵ to the delight of South Africans who could now watch her crowning live on television.

There were various innovations and ironies of the 1978 pageant that made for iconic and surreal television; it was the year in which electronic voting was first used, allowing audiences to view scores as they were cast and adding to the suspense of the live broadcast. But, more importantly, the competition once again tended towards a Utopian vision of racial harmony. The reigning Miss Universe was Janelle Penny Commissiong from Trinidad, the contest's first black queen, meaning that the ceremonial handover of the crown – the very heart of the pageant – involved a surreal moment of interracial handover. Natasha Barnes described the viewing experience:

Just as no one predicted Trinidad's victory the year before, no one could have dreamed what was going to happen next: the 1978 crown was going to go to Miss South Africa, a white representative of Vorster's government, whose troops had mauled black Soweto schoolchildren two years before and whose citizens were virtually banned from all global sporting and entertainment events.¹¹⁶

The event organisers, instead of punishing South Africa, used the competition to “stage” their political fantasy for the country's future – a vision that involved black and white embrace and which was well articulated by Gardiner herself when she replied to her final question that what she'd learnt from the pageant was that “all nationalities can get along together”.¹¹⁷

This move, together with the earlier Miss World decision to crown a black Miss World in the wake of anti-apartheid protest, suggests the overlap between different media event scripts; while one would expect Miss World, as a competition, to fall into the category of media event Contest, it has many of the qualities associated with Dayan and

¹¹⁵ According to Nielson ratings, the pageant was watched live by over 34 million viewers on the CBS network (Bill Gorman, “Miss Universe Pageant viewership, 1974–2007”, tvbythenumbers.com, no date – Available at: <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2008/07/13/miss-universe-pageant-viewership-1974-2007/4403/> – viewed 20 December 2011).

¹¹⁶ Natasha Barnes, *Cultural Conundrums: Gender, Race, Nation, and the Making of Caribbean Cultural Politics* (USA: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 69. The final moments of the event have been recorded on YouTube; See: “Miss Universe 1978 – Crowning” (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1CzGp89GI8> – viewed 17 January 2011).

¹¹⁷ Cited in *South African Digest* (week ended 28 July 1978), 1.

Katz's scripted Coronation. Like the Academy Awards, it may find its roots in Contest,¹¹⁸ but it has since evolved into a Coronation. With its parades and crowning, the pageant, as the early feminist protestors were apt to note, involves more ceremony than the media event Contest, which is more concerned with the playing out of a set of agreed-upon rules,¹¹⁹ although there is obviously some interplay between the two. The Miss World and Miss Universe events were better suited to creating a Utopian spectacle – employing the subjunctive mode of the media event Coronation – than castigating South Africa for its political stance. There is thus more focus on what South Africa *could* be than on its current reality. This is in keeping with their genre: “Coronations,” Dayan and Katz state, “more than other events, keep their distance from reality, since time and place and ceremonial symbols must all be kept unpolluted.”¹²⁰

In the wake of the crowning, media speculation about the appropriateness of the winner focused on Gardiner's national identity. Despite the fact that, on her return to South Africa, a relieved local media reported that she said she had “experienced little political pressure”,¹²¹ the international press did not turn a blind eye; in one interview she was asked if she would ever marry a black man. She famously answered, “I am willing to marry any man that I love”,¹²² giving insight into her ability to negotiate the political paradoxes of her reign.

This form of Utopian staging could not continue indefinitely, however, and South Africa's relationship with the Miss Universe organisers grew increasingly fraught. In 1985, despite the organisers' apparent commitment to a non-political show, Miss South Africa, Andrea Stelzer, pulled out of the competition after Miami anti-apartheid protestors threatened mass demonstrations. The withdrawal was met with much outcry from the South African media. A *Beeld* editorial described the protestors as “petty”: “The mentality of South Africa's enemies, who try to get at the country even by threatening the life of a young girl is a constant source of amazement.”¹²³ The *Citizen* described the

¹¹⁸ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 27.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 37.

¹²¹ Cited in *South African Digest* (week ended 15 September 1978), 11.

¹²² Cited in *Jet*, “South African Miss Universe says she'd marry a black”, 14 September 1978, 24.

¹²³ *Beeld*, Editorial: “How Petty”, 20 May 1985, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 24 May 1985), 461.

incident as a “lousy intervention by mindless racialisists-in-reverse who cannot stand anything South African, even a beautiful girl”,¹²⁴ and a cartoon in the *Transvaler* (see Figure 2.7) captured the frustrated mood of the era, sweetening the disappointment of Stelzer’s exclusion by alluding excitedly to the forthcoming rebel cricket tours.¹²⁵

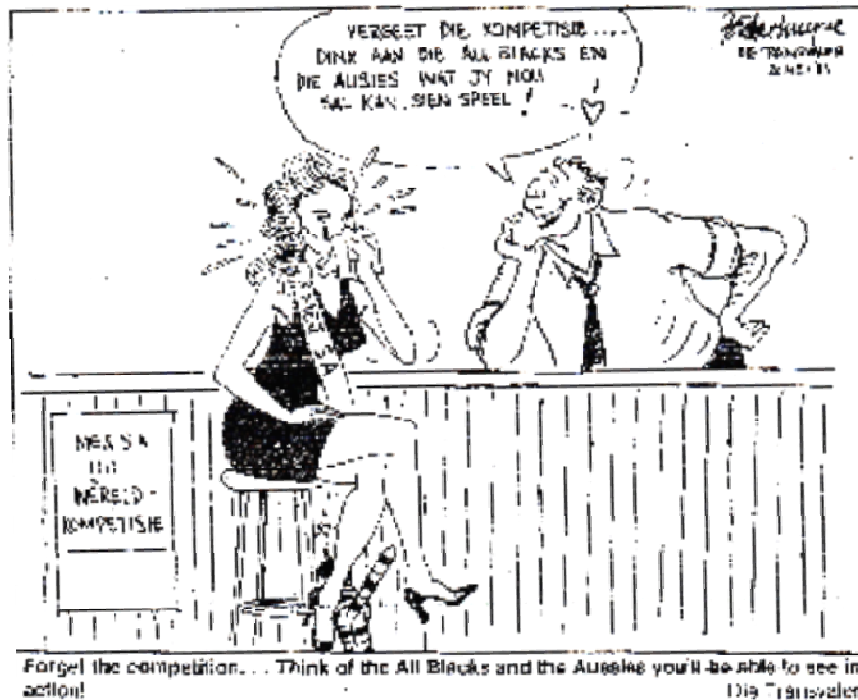


Figure 2.7: A Frans Esterhuyse cartoon from *Die Transvaler*, 20 May 1985.

The cartoon suggests the extent to which sport and beauty intersected; though sport was definitely perceived to be more important, all forms of televised global competition mattered to South Africans, and the defensive tone of the editorials reveals an underlying hurt at international hostility.

Stelzer went on to use her German ancestry to find her way back into international competition and in 1988 she won Miss Germany. This allowed her to compete in the

¹²⁴ *Citizen*, Editorial: “Exit Miss SA”, 20 May 1985, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 24 May 1985), 461.

¹²⁵ The cartoon’s predictions were, however, only partly realised; while the Australian rebel tour took place, the All Black tour was cancelled.

1989 Miss Universe pageant and she made it to the semi-finals. She was, however, refused entry to the 1988 Miss World Pageant because of her South African heritage.

National Identity Swaps and Media Event Flops: Banning Basil and Budd

Two other examples of this tactic – acquiring a new national identity in order to achieve international recognition – illustrate both the power of the sporting ban and white South Africa’s contradictory response to it. At different points in South Africa’s sporting history, Basil D’Oliveira and Zola Budd both became British citizens to further their careers, but were treated differently by the media. While D’Oliveira’s “South Africanness” remained indeterminate until 1994 when post-apartheid cricket administrators tried to reclaim the “(once rejected) native son”,¹²⁶ Budd was lauded as a sports representative of the country throughout her career, although the South African media’s fascination with her international performance came to a sorry end, again highlighting some of the risks of live broadcasting.

Basil D’Oliveira is widely credited with raising global awareness of the plight of black South African sportspersons, and what became known as the D’Oliveira Affair is said to have kickstarted the sports boycott.¹²⁷ As a coloured cricketer, D’Oliveira’s aspirations were frustrated in South Africa on account of his race, and so he emigrated to England where he was selected for the English national team in 1966. Allegedly anticipating that South Africa would refuse the British team entry for the 1968–9 tour if the side included D’Oliveira (the year before the All Blacks had been refused entry because of their inclusion of Maori team players), the Marylebone Cricket Club did not select him. As D’Oliveira himself put it, the “non-selection represented the best of both worlds for the Nationalist Government – there was no chance of me becoming a national hero on the cricket field and the tour would implicitly put the seal of approval on their apartheid policies”.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Grant Farred, *Midfielder’s Moment: Coloured Literature and Culture in Contemporary South Africa* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 140.

¹²⁷ Jon Gemmel, *The Politics of South African Cricket* (London: Routledge, 2004), 146.

¹²⁸ Basil D’Oliveira, “A view from Basil D’Oliveira”, no date (Available at: <http://basildoliveira.com/the-doliveira-affair/a-view-from-basil-doliveira/> – Accessed 19 December 2010), no page number.

Since he was undeniably one of England's most talented players at the time, controversy broke out, escalating when D'Oliveira was finally picked to join the side after another player was injured. By this stage, the anticipated arrival of D'Oliveira in South Africa had stirred up support from coloured supporters, and South African president BJ Vorster refused the team entry, stating that South Africa was not prepared to receive a team chosen by anti-apartheid selectors.

For the most part, the South African press remained indifferent to D'Oliveira's adoption of a new national identity, only calling on him to voice support of rebel tours to South Africa in the 1980s.¹²⁹ Zola Budd's attempt to achieve international recognition was received differently.

Budd achieved fame in 1984 when, at seventeen, she broke the women's 5 000-metre world record. Because she had run in South Africa, however, the International Amateur Athletic Foundation never ratified the record. At the suggestion of England's *Daily Mail*, she acquired – in just two weeks – British citizenship through her grandfather, a move that received a mixed response from both South Africa and the United Kingdom. Yet, with the increase in anti-apartheid opposition, Budd's support in her home country grew.¹³⁰ She was affectionately claimed as a South African *boeremeisie*, as “our Zola”¹³¹ (both she and Andrea Stelzer, in spite of their attempts to shuffle off their South Africanness, had indigenous roses named after them).¹³²

There was intense interest in her 1984 Olympic performance, and Budd carried the weight of the South African nation – hungry for international competition and excluded from Olympic contest for over sixteen years – on her shoulders. The 3 000-metre women's track final was broadcast live in South Africa. Together with the frenzied coverage that preceded the event, the decision to make a kind of media event of the race must have encouraged viewers to invest immense national pride in Budd's performance, even though she was running for Britain. Yet, the risks associated with live broadcasting

¹²⁹ “Sports isolation condemned”, *Star*, 31 October 1986, reprinted in *South African Digest*, 1986, 1029.

¹³⁰ Allison, *The Politics of Sport*, 140.

¹³¹ Even today, Zola Budd is referred to in affectionate terms (see, for instance, Vincent Graff, “Our Zola Budd was right”, *IOL Lifestyle*, 23 February 2011 (Available at: <http://www.iol.co.za/lifestyle/our-zola-budd-was-right-1.1030899> – 20 December 2011), no page number.

¹³² In post-apartheid South Africa, in some parts of the country minibuses are referred to as Zola Budds, because of their zippiness.

were well demonstrated by the incident, and the SABC may well have decided *not* to “go live” had it known what would follow.

Halfway through the race, the barefoot Budd collided with American favourite Mary Decker, tripping her up to distracting boos from the crowd and going on to finish a dismal seventh.¹³³ The media had billed Budd as Decker’s rival in the race, even though the eventual winner of the competition had broken Decker’s record a few months earlier. Decker had the Los Angeles crowd behind her, while in South Africa, viewers sat riveted in front of the television, hoping for a vindicating victory. The subsequent disappointment must have exacerbated the disappointment already felt on account of South Africa’s overall exclusion from the Games. The Sunday Times summed up the reaction of many white South Africans:

For South Africans, too, a dream collapsed. Zola, the barefoot waif, had given us interest in the Games unparalleled since our expulsion from the Olympic movement.

With almost feverish desperation we willed the 18-year-old to carry out frustrated aspirations – albeit under foreign colours – all the way to the medals podium.¹³⁴

Interest in Budd’s athletic performance nevertheless persisted; and South Africans – instead of shunning her as a loser – continued to embrace her as one of their own, perhaps (mis)identifying with the resounding boos channelled via international television. The 1985 SABC report notes proudly that it was “able to obtain live coverage of Zola Budd’s big races at very short notice”¹³⁵ and the *Argus* represented her in a cartoon as having speedily outsmarted the sporting boycott when she officially claimed the world record in Lisbon in 1985 (see Figure 2.8). Internationally, however, her career was beset with controversy and she was suspended from international sport in 1988 when several African nations claimed that she had competed in an event in South Africa. The South

¹³³ The race has been posted on YouTube. See: “1984 3000m final – Maricica Puica” (Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JziXi_NS3YY – viewed 12 January 2011).

¹³⁴ *Sunday Times*, Editorial: “Never mind, Zola”, 12 August 1984, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 17 August 1984) 22.

¹³⁵ SABC *Annual Report*, 1985, 56.

African media firmly opposed the decision, addressing its imagined adversaries directly in a burst of frustration. The *Citizen*, for instance, said to Budd's enemies:

You have inflicted the grossest persecution on a young and world-renowned athlete, and if you have destroyed her international career – and we doubt whether she will ever run again overseas – you will stand condemned as bigots, blackmailers and political bullyboys.¹³⁶

Zola Budd – young, slight, barefoot and female – became the symbol of South Africa's perceived persecution.



Figure 2.8: A Mynderd Vosloo cartoon from the *Argus*, depicting Zola Budd's eventual breaking of the 5 000-metre world record in 1985, 18 February 1985.

Basil D'Oliveira's treatment in the South African media was relatively cool in comparison (that is, until the post-apartheid era when he was included in a list of the century's greatest South African cricketers). This was partly because D'Oliveira's emigration was an attempt to transcend South Africa's self-imposed sporting policy (rather than the globally imposed sporting ban), partly because his inclusion in an opposing national team made it difficult for South Africa to still claim him as one of the nation's own, and partly because of his race. In keeping with the country's policy of separate development, talented black athletes were relegated to the sidelines (except in

¹³⁶ Cited in "Sports people; defending Budd", *New York Times*, 12 May 1988.

the cases of Errol Tobias and Avril Williams – rugby players whose inclusion in the Springbok national side was arguably motivated by administrators’ desire to return to international competition).

While D’Oliveira represented South Africa’s self-imposed restrictions, Budd embodied the way the country had been ostracised. Despite intense pressure from South Africa to continue competing,¹³⁷ she returned to her home country, suffering from mental exhaustion, no doubt exacerbated by the ramifications of the failed Olympic media event, and retired from competition until the early 1990s, when the political climate in South Africa was assured of change.

‘Why Can’t We Have Television Like This?’:

Live on *Nightline* and Failing to Cross the Rubicon

Political pressure on the South African government mounted throughout the 1980s; the anti-apartheid movement was assisted by the leakage to Western countries of emotive television images of unrest in townships,¹³⁸ international sanctions against the country threatened the economic stability of the state; internal resistance found fresh strength in the newly formed UDF, and white emigration statistics soared. Since 1960, when whites had made up 20% of the total population, their demographic base had diminished, and by 1985 they constituted merely 15% of the total population.¹³⁹ In an attempt to prevent South Africa’s decline, numerous political concessions were made. In his 1985 parliamentary address in February, State President PW Botha offered Nelson Mandela conditional freedom (see Chapter 3) and sought, unsuccessfully, to appease opposition by claiming that political representation for black South Africans was on the horizon, although he was unclear about what this meant exactly.

Internally, there was also growing pressure to “talk”, with various editorials calling for the exchange of ideas between black and white parties. “Dialogue” – albeit hypothetical – began to play out in the media, with editorials and columns contextualising

¹³⁷ Allison, *The Politics of Sport*, 140.

¹³⁸ Eric Louw, *The Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 102

¹³⁹ Cited in Horwitz, *Communication and Democratic Reform*, 90 (originally: Hermann Giliomee and Lawrence Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation-Building*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1989, 115).

political debate and even answering urgent questions on behalf of liberation parties, whose direct comments were banned.

For the most part, this approach was not reflected on television screens, as the SABC shied away from current affairs programmes and moved towards a steadier diet of pure entertainment with increased importation of American situation comedies and soap operas as well as the introduction, in March 1985, of the late-night sports and entertainment TV4 channel,¹⁴⁰ which soon became more popular than TV1.¹⁴¹ There was one notable exception to this trend: a series of five political debates between state representatives and opposition leaders¹⁴² screened on Ted Koppel's US show *Nightline* in March 1985, which the SABC agreed to broadcast to South African audiences too.

The *Nightline* series made for groundbreaking television for both the United States and South Africa. For Americans, it was the first time the show had reported from a "remote" location (indicating the growing interest in South Africa's domestic affairs), and for South Africans it was the first time that political adversaries had faced each other on a public platform. Johannes M Botes points out that, where other third-party efforts had failed, *Nightline* succeeded in establishing a space for dialogue, providing "both sides with a face-saving mechanism to open communications between them in an informal way".¹⁴³ By all accounts, it was an experiment for the government, who agreed to the broadcast (at the last minute) in the hope that it would afford them the opportunity to counter some of the negative coverage of the country.

There were, however, still checks and balances in place. While the debates and interviews were screened live to American audiences, the SABC decided against live broadcasting and put a twelve-hour delay in place, presumably because of the risk of humiliation in front of domestic audiences. In the end, the broadcaster left the debates intact, but, to the disappointment of viewers, who were eager to get a sense of how the country was being represented overseas, they censored taped background inserts showing

¹⁴⁰ Krabill, *Starring Mandela and Cosby*, 97.

¹⁴¹ Horwitz, *Communication and Democratic Reform in South Africa*, 68.

¹⁴² Other participants included President PW Botha and Sheena Davis of the Black Sash (a women's civil rights movement).

¹⁴³ Johannes (Jannie) M Botes, "Television debates as a form of pre-negotiation in protracted conflicts: *Nightline* in South Africa (1985) and Israel (1988)", *International Negotiation*, 9 (1), 2004, 161–92.

unrest and inequality.¹⁴⁴ *Rapport* suggested at the time that while there were probably “good reasons” for the censorship, broadcasting the complete programme “could have contributed to a better understanding by South Africans of how their country is portrayed abroad”.¹⁴⁵ This was becoming an increasing concern for citizens.

The opening debate was between Pik Botha and Desmond Tutu. Although the two were not in the same studio the debate was still live. As Dayan and Katz point out in reference to Kennedy and Nixon, the “reality” of debate is “not diminished for its being on the air, and in the living room”.¹⁴⁶ In this case, Pik Botha was filmed in Cape Town while Desmond Tutu was recorded in Johannesburg with Ted Koppel mediating from a separate studio in Johannesburg. While Pik Botha had emerged as the “unphotogenic”¹⁴⁷ NP’s favoured television personality, Tutu, who had already won the Nobel Peace Prize, was ascending the global ladder of political stardom. Ted Koppel later recalled that Botha had gauged that, in the midst of international footage of the various states of emergency, “some good things about South Africa would also come out”.¹⁴⁸ He used the opportunity to address, not just his debating opponent, but audiences at large. His opening comment confirmed the extent to which the apartheid government saw television, specifically American TV, as a means of addressing “the world”:

We want to be part of the world because we believe we are not as bad as the world is trying to make us out to be. It would be interesting to make an objective list of status and standards of civil rights all over the world, in the respect of all the important fundamental rights like an independent judiciary, freedom of the press, democracy, regular elections, and a free enterprise system. We would very much like to go for such an analysis worldwide. We feel that we are the target of selective morality and selective indignation. We do not say that what has happened here is adequate. We realise the need for change and reform. But we believe we are right now being singled out for special punitive action as a result of selective morality.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Steven Gish, *Desmond Tutu: A Biography* (Connecticut: Greenwood Biographies, 2004), 109.

¹⁴⁵ *Rapport*, Editorial: “TV – debate”, 24 March 1985, reprinted and translated in *South African Digest*, (week ended 29 March 1985), 285.

¹⁴⁶ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 17.

¹⁴⁷ Steward, personal communication.

¹⁴⁸ Cited in Botes, “Television debates as a form of pre-negotiation”, 182.

¹⁴⁹ *Nightline*, 18 March 1985.

But Botha's appeal was no match for the Nobel laureate, who was much more in tune with global perceptions of the country as well as internationally established political norms. Tutu disarmed both South African and American audiences by appealing to democratic and Christian values:

South Africa claims that it is part of the Western community of nations; therefore it has been judged by those conditions. But let me just say: we are talking about a country that says it is democratic. It is a country that excludes in its most recent constitution 73 per cent of the people. I'm a Bishop in the church of God. I'm a Bishop of one of the most important Dioceses in South Africa. I'm 53 years old. You would, I suppose, say that I'm reasonably responsible. In my own country I do not vote. According to this government I'm not a South African. My travel document says of my nationality that it is indeterminable at present so that blacks have been turned into aliens in the land of the oppressed. Just last year, 16 000 blacks were arrested because they tried to sell their labour, and therefore, because they did not have the right pass, they were not allowed to sell their labour. Men are made to leave their homes, to live in single-sex hostels for 11 months of the year. This Christian country destroys black family life deliberately. This Christian country has destroyed stable black communities, uprooted three and a half million blacks. And we are saying we seek to change the system. It's no use talking about selective morality.¹⁵⁰

Tutu's performance on *Nightline* must have jarred with contemporary representations of him in his home country. Both Tutu's biographers point out that he was vilified by the South African media,¹⁵¹ a trend that presented a problem for the apartheid state when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. For the most part, the SABC reflected the "no comment" response of PW and Pik Botha; the first radio broadcast to carry news of the award positioned it as the last news item, and television news included a mere ten-second insert with no footage of celebrations.¹⁵² Rian Malan describes the overall effect of television footage of Tutu in the country:

After Bishop Desmond Tutu won the Nobel Prize for Peace, it became impossible to ignore him entirely, so the SABC tried to portray him as an agitator, too. That was rather hard, given the Bishop's generally moderate demeanour. The SABC did

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ John Allen, *Desmond Tutu: Rabble Rouser for Peace: The Authorized Biography* (London: Simon and Schuster Publishers, 2006), 19–20, 214; Gish, *Desmond Tutu: A Biography*, 97–98.

¹⁵² Allen, *Desmond Tutu: Rabble Rouser for Peace*, 213.

its best to catch him wearing shades, which gave him a cool and predatory look, and saying something that could be construed as incendiary. To get the quotes they wanted, they often had to cut him off midsentence. The good Bishop would vanish from the screen in the midst of a subversive formulation, or the sound would die away, leaving him to mouth silently from the screen, a goldfish in a bowl.¹⁵³

But the sparkling persona who appeared on South African screens in 1985 must have seemed more like the beloved Bill Cosby figure than a dangerous radical, and Tutu's lively, lucid and unedited presence on *Nightline* seemed to have a profound impact on white South Africans. Ted Koppel claims that Tutu's opening monologue was cited in "nearly every South African news report on the debate",¹⁵⁴ and Botes argues that the speech empowered Tutu by giving him "direct access, via *Nightline*, to the public sectors that either influenced him or indirectly had the power to influence his predicament".¹⁵⁵

Though some South African editorials were loath to admit defeat, arguing that the debaters had tied, international publications thought otherwise. The *New York Times* rejected Botha's subsequent attempts to associate Tutu with violence: "The last 25 years of television have taught us that images carry their own truth. It was impossible to associate Bishop Tutu with violence, active or implied ... Mr Botha, one thought, lost that debate."¹⁵⁶

Tutu's Nobel award had catapulted him into relative political stardom. At the time of the debate, he was also the most frequent representative of South Africa on the show.¹⁵⁷ He brought with him a significant amount of moral capital, and foreign audiences were growing accustomed to him. The show highlighted the disjuncture between foreign and domestic readings of the country, which, in turn, focused attention on the state-controlled broadcaster and increased the South African public's hunger for media transparency. As Dayan and Katz point out, "media events breed the expectation of openness in politics and diplomacy". The Nixon–Kennedy debates, they argue, "put

¹⁵³ Rian Malan, *My Traitor's Heart: Blood and Bad Dreams: A South African Explores the Madness in His Country, His Tribe and Himself* (London: Vintage, 1990), 159.

¹⁵⁴ Ted Koppel and Kyle Gibson, *Nightline: History in the Making and the Making of Television* (New York: Times Books, 1996), 80.

¹⁵⁵ Botes, "Television debates as a form of pre-negotiation", 181.

¹⁵⁶ Cited in Allen, *Desmond Tutu: Rabble Rouser for Peace*, 152–53.

¹⁵⁷ David Croteau and William Hoynes, *By Invitation Only: How the Media Limit Political Debate* (California: Common Courage, 1994), 87.

steady pressure on the political system to arrange for similar confrontations”.¹⁵⁸ In the South African case, this is strongly reflected in the print media’s response to the *Nightline* debate. One editorial declared that “[t]he most significant feature of the Pik Botha–Desmond Tutu debate ... was that it was made possible through the cooperation of the state-run television service here”.¹⁵⁹ Another praised the SABC as the actual “winner” of the debate, because of its courage in screening the material:

The South African Broadcasting Corporation came out with the greatest kudos, in fact ... Here was no selective presentation. Both men were allowed to trade their political punches, blow for blow – the Foreign Minister sometimes snapping at his Nobel Peace Prize opponent with frustrated impatience; the Bishop occasionally rolling his eyes or pursing his lips in characteristic disbelief at what he was hearing ... It was all the things you wanted to know about South Africa, but which SATV has been loath to show us in the past.¹⁶⁰

Others, realising, seemingly for the first time, the selective nature of South African news reports, expressed frustration. *Die Transvaler*, an ardent NP supporter, asked, somewhat naively: “Why has the SABC never presented this kind of television? We have had to go and buy it from the Americans and interest among South Africans is intense.”¹⁶¹

Reactions to the show forecast both television’s evolving role in political negotiation and South Africans’ increasing frustration with the SABC’s blinkered approach and constant critique of “‘sensationalist’ Western news-gathering practices to justify the pro-apartheid new [sic] bias in its own coverage of the insurrection”.¹⁶²

While South Africans may have begun to understand that broadcasters can select which versions of reality they wish to reflect, they were not yet accustomed to subtler treatment of visual images and the ways in which “liveness” can create an illusion of transparency. As a visual medium, television is of course suited to the suspension of disbelief, since it appears to offer unmediated access to reality. It follows from this that

¹⁵⁸ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 203.

¹⁵⁹ *Daily Dispatch*, Editorial: “Revealing TV debate”, 21 March 1985, reprinted in *South African Digest*, (week ended 29 March 1985), 285.

¹⁶⁰ *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, Editorial: “Pik v Tutu”, 21 March 1985, reprinted in *South African Digest*, (week ended 29 March 1985), 286.

¹⁶¹ *Transvaler*, Editorial: “A useful discussion”, 21 March 1985, reprinted in *South African Digest*, (week ended 29 March 1985), 286.

¹⁶² Horwitz, *Communication and Democratic Reform*, 70.

live broadcasting – with its minimal editorial intervention – distils this power and operates as the most seductive form of television.

Apartheid South Africa, which might be considered a quasi-totalitarian state, followed a mix of broadcasting traditions. Direct transmission was reserved for what Dayan and Katz refer to as “establishment initiatives”,¹⁶³ the commemorative occasions typical of totalitarian societies, while the desire for acceptance by the Western world was reflected in the frequent bids for inclusion in television events associated with democratic societies (e.g. sporting contests, political debates and Conquest media events). The widespread welcome of *Nightline*’s approach had much to do with its seeming “liveness”; even if, as Croteau and Hoynes’ analysis of the show’s political debate has shown, *Nightline* came with its own liberal agenda.¹⁶⁴ Liveness nevertheless creates an illusion of transparency, which in turn elevates the status of the broadcaster. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 illustrate how the SABC of the post-apartheid era employed live broadcasting as a means of legitimising its new position and securing the trust of a cynical South African public.

Not all reactions to the *Nightline* broadcasts were positive, however. PW Botha – after hearing himself declare to the thousands of viewers watching the show, “I am going to keep order in South Africa and nobody in the world is going to stop me” – dismissed the show as “negative and one-sided”.¹⁶⁵ He complained of factual errors in the series, and the experience no doubt resulted in his increasing suspicion of foreign media portrayals of domestic problems – a factor that came to a head later that year.

Pik Botha, on the other hand, had come to realise that his country could no longer operate in a communication vacuum and he continued to seek to repair the country’s badly damaged image in the international press, stressing the government’s acceptance of the need for change. His efforts eventually led to South Africa’s next major television moment, a failed media event described as the “worst political communication by any country at any time”.¹⁶⁶ PW Botha’s Rubicon speech.

¹⁶³ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 70–71.

¹⁶⁴ Croteau & Hoynes, *By Invitation Only*.

¹⁶⁵ Cited in Africa America Institute, *Africa Report*, 30, 1985, 78.

¹⁶⁶ Dave Steward, “From the Rubicon to February 2nd 1990” (*PoliticsWeb*, 11 February 2010, <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page72308?oid=160215&sn=Detail&pid=72308> – Accessed 30 January 2011), no page number.

Pik Botha's endeavours to improve South Africa's international standing were compromised by increasing unrest, and on 20 July 1985, a few months after the *Nightline* series, the government declared its first state of emergency in 36 magisterial districts, giving more powers to the police, the military and the state president. In response, Oliver Tambo, the leader of the ANC in exile, reissued his call, via foreign media, for the masses to make the country "ungovernable", and foreign journalists reported widely on the civil unrest in the country.

The government's own communications policy did little to help matters. While they were well aware of South Africa's poor reputation in the international media, they had an unsophisticated approach to managing the country's image. Jack Viviers, who had come up with the "iceberg plan" (see Introduction), was Botha's chief communications advisor at the time. According to Dave Steward, who would become FW de Klerk's communications advisor, under PW Botha the government "had no conception of communication".¹⁶⁷ The Rubicon speech made this humiliatingly obvious.

An informal "cabinet meeting" was held at Sterrewag observatory on 2 August to determine a response to the increasing violence, and it was here that the seeds of the Rubicon speech were planted. There is still little consensus on what was actually decided at Sterrewag. Historian Hermann Giliomee claims that, despite interviews with several attendants, the true course of events is still unknown.¹⁶⁸ According to a newspaper report at the time, it appears that some sort of discussion was held on the following possibilities: the abolition of the homelands, the expansion of cabinet to include homeland leaders and the initiation of talks with the "true leaders" in exile.¹⁶⁹

What is clear is that, despite the fact that PW Botha had reportedly said very little at the meeting, Pik Botha represented it as a breakthrough. He embarked on a foreign affairs mission to resuscitate South Africa's reputation, meeting with British, American and German representatives and alerting them to the imminent possibility of significant

¹⁶⁷ Steward, personal communication.

¹⁶⁸ Herman Giliomee, "Great expectations: Pres. PW Botha's Rubicon speech of 1985", *New Contree*, 55, (May), 2008, 1. My account of events leading up to the Rubicon speech draws heavily on Giliomee's meticulous investigation into the affair.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

reform, stating several times, according to Werner Scholtz, a South African diplomat who attended the briefings: “Gentlemen, we are crossing the Rubicon.”¹⁷⁰

There have been numerous suggestions as to why Pik Botha over-represented the situation. The first is that he had genuinely misinterpreted the president’s commitment to the proposals put forward at Sterrewag. The second is that he was engaging in a reactive form of damage control and did not foresee the possibility that an announcement of reform without follow-through would lead to disaster. The third, offered by Giliomee, is that Pik Botha interpreted the president’s silence at Sterrewag as indecision and gauged that creating anticipation of change would persuade him to agree to the recommendations. There is also, of course, the possibility that his portrayal of events was simply misinterpreted by the foreign ambassadors.

Various speechwriters collaborated to write a draft for PW Botha’s address to the NP Natal Congress, announcing pioneering policy changes¹⁷¹ embedded in stirring rhetoric. At the same time, the print media, foreign and local, began to set the stage for a media event of mammoth proportions. *Newsweek* drew on moonlanding discourse, referring to the forthcoming speech as a “giant step” away from apartheid. *Time* told the world to “expect the most important statement since Dutch settlers arrived in the Cape of Good Hope 300 years ago,”¹⁷² and international broadcasting networks clamoured to secure coverage of Botha’s address, the first time that live broadcasting had been bestowed upon a South African premier.¹⁷³

Behind the scenes, however, it seems that PW Botha had a change of heart, to the apparent astonishment of his advisors. Whether or not he had ever approved the Sterrewag proposals or whether he felt over-pressured by Pik Botha’s enthusiasm and the media’s expectations remains a point of substantial debate and it is unlikely that an agreed-upon version of events will ever emerge. Several accounts of what happened

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ As with all that preceded it, there is substantial debate over the original content of the draft. Pik Botha’s claim that it contained significant declarations to dismantle apartheid, beginning with the promised release of Mandela, has been widely accepted. Others have insisted that there were no such references in the original speech.

¹⁷² Cited in Giliomee, “Great expectations”, 32.

¹⁷³ Raymond Ackerman and Denise Pritchard, *Hearing Grasshoppers Jump* (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2004), 196.

mention PW Botha's reaction to media speculation, and comments made in the actual speech suggest that media conjecture about the announcement played a pivotal role in the state president's about-turn.

Days before the Natal Congress address, the essence of the speech was reportedly leaked to the South African press, and, according to Jan Heunis, Giliomee and Botha's biographer Daan Prinsloo, it was this, more than anything else, that enraged Botha, leading him to denounce the speech as "Prog".¹⁷⁴ The speech itself supports this reading. With more than a hint of sarcasm, Botha chastised the media's predictions about what was to be broadcast:

Most of the media in South Africa have already informed you on what I was going to say tonight, or what I ought to say, according to their superior judgement.

Of all the tragedies in the world, I think the greatest is the fact that our electorate refrained so far to elect some of these gentlemen as their government. They have all the answers to all the problems. And these answers differ from day to day and from Sunday to Sunday.¹⁷⁵

The phrase "what I was going to say", even with the proviso "what I ought to say", does suggest that the content of the original speech was altered. Whatever the reason, Botha went on to deliver to an international television audience of over 200 million people, an amended version, with some of the rhetoric but little of the substance, retreating to the stereotype of the finger-wagging "ugly, irredeemable Afrikaner".¹⁷⁶

The rest of the speech was an odd mix of widely convergent discourses. On the one hand, Botha made several defiant statements, particularly when addressing overseas audiences: "South African problems will be solved by South Africans and not by foreigners"; "It would also be wrong to place a time limit on negotiations. I am not going to walk into this trap – I am responsible for South Africa's future"; "Many of the present perceptions of the South African situation overseas are, of course, erroneous. Nobody

¹⁷⁴ Jan Heunis, *The Inner Circle: Recollections from the Last Days of White Rule* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2007), 79. "Prog", short for "progressive", is a term that was usually used derisively to refer to white South Africans in favour of reform.

¹⁷⁵ PW Botha, Address delivered at the opening of the NP Natal Congress, Durban, 15 August 1985.

¹⁷⁶ Giliomee, "Great expectations", 35.

would deny that we face problems that demand solutions, but every country has. I can name you quite a few countries who have more problems than South Africa.”

On the other hand, the president spoke as if he were announcing a sea change in policy, repeating the phrase “we believe” in one section of the speech to great effect:

We believe and wish to uphold religious freedom ...
We believe in democratic institutions of government ...
We believe our great wealth of divergent population groups must
speak to each other through their elected leaders ...
We believe that our peace and prosperity is indivisible ...¹⁷⁷

The speech concludes with the stirring words: “I believe that that we are today crossing the Rubicon. There can be no turning back.”¹⁷⁸

Patti Waldmeir described the result as a “spectacular failure of packaging” as “the old president’s twisted, hectoring visage dominated TV screens making it difficult to hear what he said”,¹⁷⁹ and Steward blames the failure on an inability to read audiences:

PW Botha showed an absolute lack of understanding of modern political communication. Instead of addressing his real audience of hundreds of millions of TV viewers in the West, he addressed the NP faithful. Instead of language that his real audience could understand, he used the rough and tumble idiom of South African political meetings. Instead of a short, well rehearsed statement containing the message he wanted to convey, he delivered a long, rambling speech.¹⁸⁰

The aftermath of the Rubicon speech was catastrophic: the rand dropped sharply, US Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, prohibiting new investment and loans, and a number of banks refused to roll over South Africa’s debts, forcing the country to default and declare a unilateral moratorium on debt. Gerhard de Kock,

¹⁷⁷ Botha, Address delivered at the opening of the NP Natal Congress.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Patti Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of the New South Africa* (New York: Rutgers University Press), 54.

¹⁸⁰ Steward, “From the Rubicon to February 2nd 1990”.

Governor of the Reserve Bank, famously remarked that the speech cost the country a “few million rand per word”.¹⁸¹

The response from the South African press was mixed. Some reflected the international media’s reaction and were clearly disenchanted. The *Natal Witness* described the speech as a “damp squib”,¹⁸² the *Sunday Times* urged PW to “forget about the *verkrampes*”,¹⁸³ and Port Elizabeth’s *Evening Post* claimed that the speech “offered little cause for hope that the South African crisis is anywhere nearer resolution”.¹⁸⁴

Other, pro-NP editorials defended Botha, blaming the English-speaking press and the international media for creating false expectations. *Oosterlig* described it as a “strong and positive speech”,¹⁸⁵ while *Volksblad* expressed disappointment in reactions to the speech, claiming that “greatness should be rewarded with magnanimity” instead of the “disappointingly neutral to sceptic” first responses to which the speech had been subjected.¹⁸⁶

But the failed expectations also led to further calls for talks. The *Evening Post*, for instance, claimed that “The talking must start”¹⁸⁷ while even *Volksblad* conceded that there was “urgent need” for “meaningful Black–White discussions”.¹⁸⁸

These calls were not heeded, however. On the contrary, the Rubicon disaster likely affected Botha’s subsequent decision to clamp down on foreign media presence in the country. The reasoning behind this decision was hinted at in the speech itself, with Botha chastising journalists for promoting “revolutionary” agendas:

I have a specific question I would like to put to the media in South Africa:
How do they explain the fact that they are always present, with cameras et

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Natal Mercury*, Editorial: “Damp squib, but ...”, 17 August 1985, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 23 August 1985), 773.

¹⁸³ *Sunday Times*, Editorial: “It’s time PW had courage to forget about the *verkrampes*”, 8 August 1985, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 23 August 1985), 772.

¹⁸⁴ *Evening Post*, Editorial: “The talking must start”, 16 August 1985, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 23 August 1985), 771.

¹⁸⁵ *Oosterlig*, Editorial: “A manifesto for South Africa”, 16 August 1985, reprinted and translated in *South African Digest* (week ended 23 August 1985), 772.

¹⁸⁶ *Volksblad*, Editorial: “Across the Rubicon”, 16 August 1985, reprinted and translated in *South African Digest* (week ended 23 August 1985), 773.

¹⁸⁷ *Evening Post*, Editorial: “The talking must start”, 771.

¹⁸⁸ *Volksblad*, Editorial: “Across the Rubicon”, 774

cetera, at places where violence takes place? Are there people from the revolutionary elements who inform them to be ready? Or are they perhaps representatives of the reactionary groups in the ranks of certain media?¹⁸⁹

The NP remained particularly suspicious of “sensationalist” visual media and the role of cameras in fomenting discontent in the country. Botha’s view was largely shared by the NP government. According to Dave Steward, then a foreign diplomat, the UDF, which well understood the role the media played, “would play to the cameras at every opportunity”, which culminated in the “imposition of draconian media quotations and regulations” in an attempt “not to stop the basic flow of information, but to stop the pictures”.¹⁹⁰

Increasing township violence continued to dominate global news coverage, and on 2 November, some three months after the Rubicon speech, two months after US president Ronald Reagan instituted sanctions and at the opening of the high-profile case of the Sharpeville six, Botha placed a ban on the use of cameras and sound equipment in areas of unrest unless journalists had received special permission from the police. Penalties were as high as ten years’ imprisonment and there was a gradual tapering off of coverage on events in the country.¹⁹¹

Seeking further control, the government imposed further censorship on all domestic and foreign publication and barred foreign reporters from the country. This ban, implemented in 1987, effectively “knocked racial unrest off the world’s evening news”; the following year, it was reported that the number of stories about South Africa declined by two-thirds in the United States.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ PW Botha, Address delivered at the opening of the NP Natal Congress, Durban, 15 August 1985.

¹⁹⁰ Steward, personal communication.

¹⁹¹ Eleanor Singer and Jacob Ludwig, “South Africa’s press restrictions effects on press coverage and public opinion towards South Africa”, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 51 (3), 1987, 315–34.

¹⁹² Erik Hedegaard, “Dark content: Getting South Africa news”, *Mother Jones Magazine*, September 1989, 49. Danny Schechter tried to balance this trend through the production of a documentary-style programme called *South Africa Now*, launched in 1988 (Roger Cohn, “Television; ‘South Africa Now’ ponders its uncertain future”, 18 November 1990, *New York Times*, Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/18/arts/television-south-africa-now-ponders-its-uncertain-future.html?src=pm> – viewed 28 December 2011, no page number).

Conclusion

The original plan for television to operate as a means of “showing South Africa to the world” was gradually scuppered, as the NP and the SABC realised they had little control over the country’s global image. In addition to socio-economic sanctions, the role of boycotters and the activities of anti-apartheid activists, the media events genre – those televisual moments that define, alter and create history – played an enormous part in bringing the country to the political impasse of the late 1980s.

Firstly, the various boycotts and bans resulted in internal pressure from a dissatisfied white elite, weary of South Africa’s shameful status and eager to enter the world of international competition which was played out principally through media event contests. Secondly, exposure to the events of other countries awakened South Africans’ sense of the way in which the rest of the world viewed the country; this in turn led to an increased desire for more transparent broadcasting. Thirdly, the state’s inability to execute its own media events resulted in further humiliation; while this resulted in increased censorship, ultimately, it helped to foster the stalemate of the late 1980s, which subsequently led to the negotiated transition.

With the resignation of PW Botha and the inauguration of FW de Klerk came a new approach to television, with leaders who better understood the craving for global acknowledgement and the need for the appearance of transparency, both of which could be achieved through carefully staged live broadcasts. The bulk of the television broadcasting era intersected with the heyday of apartheid, resulting in a partial (and often frustrated) experience of television’s power and pleasure. But the events of the political transition dovetailed with the tail end of this era, and South Africa made up for lost time, as a proliferation of memorable media events characterised the next period of the country’s history.

3

The Shamanising Ayatollah: Mandela and the Dismantling of Apartheid

Conquests represent the eruption of the charismatic model onto the political stage.

– Daniel Dayan & Elihu Katz¹

Though the presence of a charismatic leader is not a requisite for all media events, the enactment of Max Weber’s “charismatic authority” is one of the active ingredients in Conquests,² the rarest media event type. The seemingly swift erosion of apartheid led to South Africa’s global reacceptance, which in turn led to its return to international competition and its reintroduction to the world stage, visibly played out through a series of influential media events (see Chapter 6). Many of these events drew power from the presence of a captivating figure who was to become the country’s first democratically elected president: Nelson Mandela. Just as South Africa had been isolated from global events, so Mandela, imprisoned for over 27 years, had become an enigmatic figure, made all the more fascinating because of his role in anti-apartheid activism as an “absentee performer”.³

This chapter looks at what is arguably the most important televised media event in South Africa’s history: Nelson Mandela’s release from prison.⁴ The release provided the

¹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 44

² *Ibid.*

³ Louw, *The Media and Political Process*, 123.

⁴ This thesis uses the term “Mandela” to refer, in many cases, to the Mandela phenomenon, i.e., the symbolic meaning evinced by his public image and not the individual himself. With Thabo Mbeki, Joel Netshitenzhe and Jakes Gerwel as speechwriters and spokespersons (see Mark Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: The*

perfect platform for the “eruption” of Mandela’s presence onto the political stage, and it perfectly embodies the features of Dayan and Katz’s shamanising media event. But, as dramatic and unexpected as the release might have seemed, it was of course built upon a series of “mini” media events. In South Africa, PW Botha’s 1985 offer of conditional release once again exposed the apartheid state’s naïve understanding of political communication, inadvertently providing the ANC with the opportunity to craft a scripted reply that enhanced Mandela’s “moral capital”.⁵ Globally, the staging of the 1988 Nelson Mandela birthday tribute concert brought Mandela into the popular realm, and his image drew on the strength of the multitude of celebrity performers. These, and other smaller events, helped to establish worldwide suspense around his incarceration and subsequent liberation, setting him apart from ordinary human beings and endowing him with seemingly remarkable powers. The historic influence of the release is due to two factors. As Louw points out, “[t]he apartheid government effectively generated support for the Mandela by trying to demonise him”.⁶ This in turn encouraged the anti-apartheid movement to use Mandela as part of a deliberate, and as we shall see, sometimes uncontrollable, strategy whereby he became a symbol of the unjust fate of all South Africans.

The “Mandela Problem” and the Making of the Messiah

Although the conditions of late apartheid provided fertile ground for charismatic leadership, which frequently “emerges in contexts where a serious socio-economic crisis exists and large groups of people experience distress”,⁷ Mandela’s global appeal finds its origins long before the end of apartheid. By the time of his release, his persona had already gained considerable symbolic meaning through a series of smaller media events. His mythologisation can be attributed, ironically, to the conditions of his incarceration, during which time it was illegal to publish his image and words. Hand-drawn

Dream Deferred, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2007, 659), what might seem like acts or words attributable to Mandela the individual are in fact the sum total of a team of political strategists. Where possible, the involvement of specific individuals has been noted.

⁵ John Kane, *The Politics of Moral Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 132.

⁶ Louw, “Mandela: Constructing global celebrity as a political tool”, 295.

⁷ Ari Sitas, “Madiba magic: The Mandela decade”, *Indicator SA*, 18, 1 March 2001, 21.

reproductions and illegal reprints of his likeness were thus circulated en masse by trade unions and other grassroots organisations.⁸ Louw points out that the UDF, which generated a great deal of anti-apartheid material, denied formal associations with the ANC (because of its banning) but nevertheless used Mandela iconography to signal its allegiances.⁹

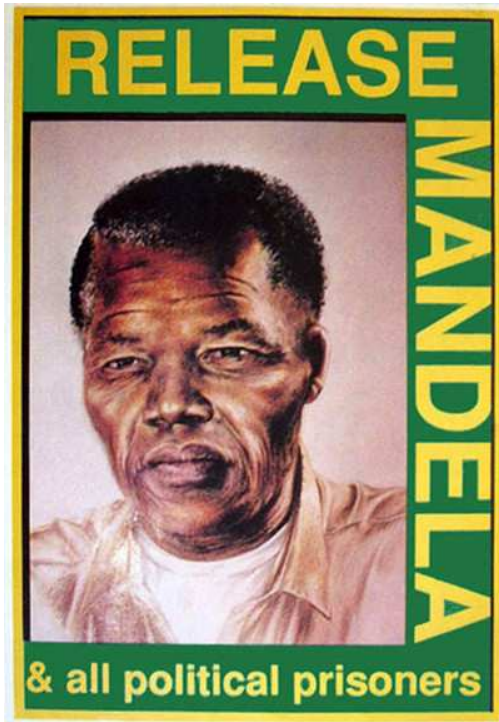


Figure 3.1: Poster of Mandela's likeness distributed by COSATU, 1989 (from the South African History Archive collection)

This led to the gradual iconisation of his image, which became a kind of logo for the struggle movement, and later for post-apartheid South Africa. During this period, principally as a means of castigating the apartheid state, various human rights organisations bestowed awards and honours upon him *in absentia*,¹⁰ thus keeping his image alive in the global imagination.

Mandela's elevation accelerated with the onset of the 1978 Free Mandela campaign, prior to which he had appeared as a great ANC leader, but one among many. The Free Mandela campaign had in fact been initiated by Ahmed Kathrada after Mandela's first arrest in 1962, but it was taken up again with vigour by the anti-apartheid movement abroad. As Thabo

Mbeki has pointed out, the tactic was unusual for the ANC, which tended to focus on collective leadership rather than the promotion of "anointed personalities",¹¹ and, as we shall see, there was uncertainty about the extent to which Mandela should serve as a poster boy for the struggle.

⁸ Rob Nixon, "Mandela, messianism and the media", *Transition*, 51, 1991, 45.

⁹ Louw, "Mandela: Constructing global celebrity", 299.

¹⁰ Kane, *The Politics of Moral Capital*, 132.

¹¹ Thabo Mbeki, "Letter to the ANC", 2008, published on Talk Radio 702 Online (Available at: <http://www.702.co.za/news/mbekiletter.asp> – viewed 2 November 2008).

Winnie Mandela was a central part of the strategy – perhaps because she herself had a good understanding of how to attract media attention – and she served as the visibly persecuted, “inseparable”¹² and feminine half of the symbol – sometimes, particularly towards the end of Mandela’s imprisonment, without the desired outcomes, when there were various unsuccessful attempts to keep her in line with the ANC’s aims. Winnie’s rhetoric was sometimes at odds with the ANC’s projected image, and by extension Mandela’s reputation. At a speech in Munsieville near Johannesburg in 1986, for example, she publicly endorsed the controversial practice of necklacing,¹³ stating, “Together, hand in hand, with our boxes of matches and our necklaces, we shall liberate this country.” The comment was widely quoted (Winnie claimed out of context) in the South African and international media and it created negative publicity for the ANC, which had been at pains to point out that necklacing was not official practice. Oliver Tambo stated at a summit of non-aligned nations that, although the organisation was unhappy with necklacing, it would not condemn persons who had been driven to extremes by the situation in South Africa. Thus, the organisation never publicly distanced itself from Winnie’s comments. Oliver Tambo did apparently send instructions for Winnie to be “gagged”¹⁴ in an attempt to prevent further tarnishing of its (and Mandela’s) reputation. John Kane notes her ambiguous effect on Mandela’s global image: “If he avoided the category of the wholly mythical, it was largely by virtue of his conjugal attachment to the all-too-visible Winnie, whose abundant reality seemed to argue some sort of actuality for his own corporeal, if mysteriously isolated, existence.”¹⁵

Mandela’s and, to a lesser extent, Winnie’s elevation were thus part of an exceptional and fairly deliberate effort to campaign for the release of political prisoners and “to present to the world ... the brutality of the apartheid system”,¹⁶ and although

¹² Jacques Derrida, “The laws of reflection: Nelson Mandela, in admiration” in Jacques Derrida and Tlili Mustapha (eds.), *For Nelson Mandela* (New York: Seaver Books, 1987), 13.

¹³ Necklacing was a method of lynching that became common during South Africa’s struggle against apartheid in the 1980s and 1990s. It involving forcing a petrol-filled tyre around a victim’s neck and setting it alight. Necklacing sentences were frequently used to punish black community members who were suspected of being apartheid spies or collaborators.

¹⁴ Anné Marië du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela: A Life* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005), 220–21.

¹⁵ Kane, *The Politics of Moral Capital*, 133.

¹⁶ Mbeki, “Letter to the ANC”.

some have viewed Mandela as an “icon who outgrew his country”,¹⁷ in many respects, his image was in fact “encoded” abroad: “Once the global establishment press in New York, Washington and London started featuring Mandela as a martyr and potential problem-solver, the work of local journalists opposed to apartheid became easier. The publicity allowed them to circumvent the clamps on the press by the NP government.”¹⁸

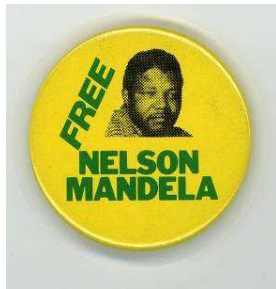


Figure 3.2: Button produced by the AAM in London, no date (from private collection of Richard Knight)

The work of local journalists was also made easier by the fact that, unlike the campaigns abroad, the struggle did not require Mandela’s mythologisation in South Africa, where mass support for the ANC was already secured.¹⁹ Chapters 4, 5 and 6 detail how the “celebration” of Mandela continued after his

release, when it became plain that his popularity and accumulated “moral capital”²⁰ made him marketable on the global stage as the ANC’s candidate for the presidency. At the launch of his book *Communication Power* in 2009,

Manuel Castells spoke of the human face as the simplest and most powerful media message.²¹ In Mandela’s case, the mystery surrounding his changing appearance seemed to stand the party in good stead. Much like Che Guevara’s image, posterised images of Mandela’s face, along with the slogan “Free Mandela”, were easily reproduced in pamphlets, as graffiti, on buttons and T-shirts and they acted as a kind of visual shorthand for the anti-apartheid movement. After his release, Mandela’s face gradually came to embody two important political values: forgiveness and hope, both of which engendered trust, which Castells identified as the most important media message in politics.²²

Possibly, the constraints and challenges of underground communication, which necessitated strategic campaigning, gave Mandela and the ANC some insight into the power of symbolic gestures, particularly in their understanding of global media

¹⁷ Shaun Johnson, “Mandela: The icon who outgrew his country”, *Independent on Sunday*, 25 April 2004 (Available at: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4159/is_/ai_n12754503 – viewed 20 October 2007), no page number.

¹⁸ Sitas, “Madiba magic”, 23.

¹⁹ Raymond Suttner, “(Mis)Understanding Nelson Mandela”, *African Historical Review*, 39 (2), 2007, 124.

²⁰ Kane, *The Politics of Moral Capital*.

²¹ Manuel Castells, Address given at launch of *Communication Power*, Centre for the Book, Cape Town, 27 August 2009, attended by candidate.

²² *Ibid.*

platforms. While the apartheid state remained insular in its outlook, the ANC was reliant on overseas partners and developed a sense of the requirements of effective global communication. Later, some argue that this gave them the advantage over other political parties during the transition period.²³ Even before the anti-apartheid movement gained momentum, Mandela had appealed to an international audience,²⁴ deftly disseminating his political views via whatever media opportunities came his way. His first television interview with a British reporter from Independent Television News came in the wake of what was perceived as a failed stay-at-home strike in May 1961. Though the interview did not cause much of a stir in Britain at the time, because it was also the last interview he would give in over twenty years, it became stock footage for future mobilisation.

His decision to represent himself in court in 1962 and 1964 also gave him a rare opportunity not only to articulate the political vision of his party to national and international journalists,²⁵ but also to address the world as the country's rightful leader. Raymond Suttner points out that at the trial "Mandela did not speak as a 'dissident', that is, a representative of a minority view, but projected a national vision,"²⁶ and his final statement from the dock received an overwhelming response in the international press; he and his fellow Rivonia trialists were hailed in the *New York Times* as the "new George Washingtons and Ben Franklins".²⁷ Mandela was of course acutely aware of these possibilities. In his biography of Mandela, Anthony Sampson remembers how, when he was a young journalist, Mandela asked him to assess the speech's potential impact on overseas opinion.²⁸

Because the South African media was, from 1960 onwards, forbidden from printing the words of leaders of banned organisations, the global media (in collaboration with the anti-apartheid movement) played an increasingly important role in the political

²³ Eric Louw and Naren Chitty, "South Africa's miracle cure: A stage-managed TV spectacular?" in Abbas Malek and Anandan P. Kavoori (eds.), *The Global Dynamics of News: Studies in International News Coverage and News Agenda* (Stanford, Connecticut: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1999), 285.

²⁴ Elleke Boehmer, *Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁶ Suttner, "(Mis)Understanding Nelson Mandela", 121.

²⁷ Cited in Nixon, "Mandela, messianism and the media", 44.

²⁸ Anthony Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorised Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 192.

battle for power, a situation which resulted in some bizarre forms of national and global broadcasting.

For Botha's government, the anti-apartheid movement's strategy resulted in what was increasingly termed the "Mandela problem",²⁹ as more and more Western countries made demands for his release. Mandela and the ANC utilised this to their advantage by refusing to bargain about release conditions and adopting an uncompromising position on what his freedom should signal. This was made clear in 1985 when Mandela's response to the state's conditional offer of freedom was read out at a UDF rally. The event, although obviously not televised live in South Africa, attracted much international media attention and was shown in televised news inserts across the world.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, five months before the disastrous Rubicon speech, in his 1985 parliamentary address PW Botha offered to release Mandela on condition that he renounce the armed struggle. "All that is required of him now," Botha declared, "is that he should unconditionally reject violence as a political instrument." The parliamentary addresses were routinely broadcast live via SABC TV and radio, and were beginning to attract foreign media as well. Botha no doubt expressed the offer in this forum in an attempt to cast the NP in a more reasonable light in the eyes of international audiences. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela suggests the tactical planning behind the presentation of the offer: "I had been warned by the authorities that the government was going to make a proposal involving my freedom, but I had not been prepared for the fact that it would be made in Parliament by the president."³⁰ This was in fact the sixth offer of conditional freedom; previous offers had been dependent on Mandela's going to reside in the Transkei and were rejected since the ANC did not recognise the legitimacy of the homelands.³¹ The conditions of this final offer were inspired by the president's visit to right-wing German leaders, mainly Franz Josef Strauss, and an excited Botha told his cabinet on return that offering Mandela this form of conditional freedom provided a perfect solution, because if Mandela refused (as Botha fully expected he would),³² then,

²⁹ Martin Meredith, *Mandela: A Biography* (Michigan: Hamish Hamilton, 1997), 355.

³⁰ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Macdonald Purnell, 1994), 509.

³¹ JC Buthelezi, *Rolihlahla Dalibhunga Nelson Mandela: An Ecological Study* (Canada: Trafford and Amashenge Publishing, 2002), 284.

³² Graham Leach, *South Africa: No Easy Path to Peace* (London: Methuen, 1987), 132.

according to cabinet minister Kobie Coetsee, Botha believed “the whole world would understand why the South African government could not release him”.³³ The president hoped that Mandela’s refusal would shirk off the martyr mantle and expose him as a violent terrorist.

Some members of Botha’s cabinet were sceptical. Kobie Coetsee, Minister of Justice, and Louis le Grange, Minister of Law and Order, both felt that the ploy would backfire.³⁴ They were right; the plan failed dismally. This was partly because Botha’s offer was not couched in the required rhetoric. As Coetsee pointed out, the offer needed to be phrased in a positive way, but their reported attempts to have Botha read a more acceptable version of the offer were rejected (as would be the case with the Rubicon speech later in the year – see Chapter 2). Instead Botha’s political intentions were patently clear. In his typically bombastic fashion, the president was quoted as saying, “It is therefore not the South African government which now stands in the way of Mr Mandela’s freedom. It is himself.” More importantly, however, while the state may have had control of the broadcaster and attempted to use it to inflate the importance of the offer, the anti-apartheid movement outwitted the NP by conceptualising a historic response that attracted media attention, disarming international (and local) audiences and giving the ANC the moral high ground.

Botha’s offer was presented to Mandela at Pollsmoor Prison, where he had also apparently listened to the parliamentary address live on the radio.³⁵ As Botha expected, the leader and fellow activists quickly decided to reject it.³⁶ Winnie Mandela travelled to Pollsmoor to receive her husband’s official response, a trip that was widely reported in the media, amidst much speculation that Mandela would accept in spite of the fact that the ANC had already denounced the offer in Lusaka. The legal implications of Mandela’s statement were then studied by Arthur Chaskalson and George Bizos, with journalists

³³ Cited in Allister Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country: The Inside Story of South Africa’s Negotiated Transition* (Sandton: Struik Book Distributors, 1994), 49.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 509.

³⁶ Nelson Mandela Foundation, “Foundation marks 25 years since Nelson Mandela rejected PW Botha’s offer of conditional release”, 2011. (Available at: http://www.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/news/article/foundation_marks_25_years_since_nelson_mandela_rejected_pw_bothas_offer_of/ – viewed 1 August 2011).

reportedly phoning incessantly for the official reply. According to Bizos, Winnie, who “stage managed events to achieve maximum effect”,³⁷ was determined to read out Mandela’s response the following day at a UDF-organised rally planned in honour of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was returning from Oslo after having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Because of Winnie’s banning order, which prevented her from speaking and appearing in crowds, she decided, according to Bizos, at the eleventh hour, that their 25-year-old daughter, Zindzi, should read out the response. It seems possible, however, that the decision to use Zindzi was made at Pollsmoor and that Mandela had always intended for her to read the reply, since the speaker’s identity is built into the very fabric of the speech. Whoever was responsible for the approach, it proved to be a canny decision that achieved the desired dramatic effect.³⁸

On 10 February 1985, at Soweto’s Jabulani Stadium before a crowd of over 9 000 people, Zindzi was ushered onto the stage by the new Nobel Peace Prize winner, where she read out Mandela’s words, repeating the poignant phrase “my father says ...”, words that were all the more meaningful because for the first two decades of Mandela’s imprisonment it had been illegal to publicise his comments. The state began to make allowances in the mid-80s and the “My father says” speech, as it became known,³⁹ was the first occasion in over twenty years when the silenced prisoner’s thoughts were voiced in public.⁴⁰ The speech, jointly drafted by Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada, Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba and Andrew Mlangeni at Pollsmoor Prison, was a dazzling piece of rhetoric:

³⁷ George Bizos, *Odyssey to Freedom* (Cape Town: RandomHouse and Umuzi, 2007), 369.

³⁸ For a recording of Zindzi Mandela’s delivery of the speech, see:

<http://www.cvet.org.za/displayvideo.php?vid=230>.

³⁹ Nelson Mandela Foundation, “Foundation marks 25 years since Nelson Mandela rejected PW Botha’s offer of conditional release”.

⁴⁰ The speech is widely acknowledged as the first occasion when the world *heard* from Mandela since his imprisonment, but the print media had published commentary some months previously. The state had in fact begun to relax visiting and other restrictions against Mandela ten months earlier and the South African press had been given permission to quote from Mandela’s interview with a British politician (Jamie Murphy and Peter Hawthorne, “Mandela declines offer of freedom”, *Time*, 25 February 1985, Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,961237,00.html#ixzz1TZ7Kizzb> – viewed 30 July 2011), no page number.

I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom. Too many have died since I went to prison. Too many have suffered for the love of freedom. I owe it to their widows, to their orphans, to their mothers and to their fathers who have grieved and wept for them. Not only I have suffered during these long, lonely, wasted years. I am not less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free. I am in prison as the representative of the people and of your organisation, the African National Congress, which was banned.

What freedom am I being offered while the organisation of the people remains banned? What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offence? What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort? What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area? What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp in my pass to seek work? What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected? Only free men can negotiate.⁴¹

The benefits for the movement were multiple. Firstly, addressing a planned mass rally secured the ready attention of the international media.⁴² Secondly, the response fed off the symbolic capital that was fast being accrued by Desmond Tutu (see Chapter 2), who was quoted in the international media as saying, “There is no hope in this country until the government talks to the real leaders ... You have just heard from one of those leaders.”⁴³ Thirdly, the use of Mandela’s daughter as spokesperson pulled at the heartstrings of the audience, simultaneously invoking the notion of sacrifice and demonising the apartheid state.

The South African print media did not anticipate this response and, for the most part, bought into Botha’s strategy. *Die Volksblad* opined that if Mandela refused the offer “the world will see who is pursuing peace sincerely and who is prepared to move. It will also see who is hampering that striving and movement with fruitless clinging to an ideology of violence, personal ambition and concern for its ANC power base”.⁴⁴ *Rapport*

⁴¹ Nelson Mandela, Speech given in response to PW Botha’s 1985 offer of conditional freedom, 10 February 1985.

⁴² Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle*, 93.

⁴³ Cited in Murphy & Hawthorne, “Mandela declines offer of freedom”.

⁴⁴ *Volksblad*, Editorial: “Mandela’s choice”, 3 February 1986, reprinted and translated in *South African Digest* (week ended 8 February 1985), 115.

saw Botha's offer as "sincere",⁴⁵ and the *Sunday Times* called it a demonstration of "praiseworthy willingness".⁴⁶ Interestingly, most did not wholly condemn Mandela's rejection, seeing it as a step towards further negotiation – which many papers were now promoting – with *Beeld* even suggesting that an alternative, less rhetorical response had been sent to PW Botha privately.⁴⁷ The international media (and liberal South African media), on the other hand, responded with scepticism to Botha's offer and glorified Mandela's response. The *Star* called Botha's offer a "Trojan horse",⁴⁸ while the *Rand Daily Mail* questioned the president's offer, asking, "Was it a ploy, couched in such terms that Mandela had little choice but to reject it?"⁴⁹ *Time* magazine described Mandela's stage-managed rejection in dramatic terms:

Dressed in the yellow T-shirt of the United Democratic Front, a rapidly growing antiapartheid movement, Zindzi Mandela, 25, at the side of Johannesburg's Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, stood silently for a moment in Soweto's Jabulani Stadium. Then she began to read to the 9,000 people gathered before her a message prepared by her father, Nelson Mandela, in his prison cell.⁵⁰

The "My father says" speech ended up being one of the key mobilising moments of the struggle. The circumstances leading up to the speech gave the ANC the opportunity to capitalise on global sympathy, and the state revealed its lack of understanding of the politics of global communication. Instead of demonising Mandela, as Botha had hoped, the conditional offer of freedom only succeeded in giving the prisoner "a veto over his

⁴⁵ *Rapport* editorial, "Mandela", 3 February 1985, reprinted and translated in *South African Digest* (week ended 8 February 1985), 112.

⁴⁶ *Sunday Times*, Editorial: "An offer Mandela shouldn't refuse", 3 February 1985, reprinted in *South African Digest* (week ended 8 February 1985), 112.

⁴⁷ *Beeld*, Editorial: "Mr Mandela's statement", 13 February 1985, reprinted and translated in *South African Digest* (week ended 15 February 1985), 123.

⁴⁸ *Star*, Editorial: "ANC: the dialogue must continue", 8 February 1985, reprinted and translated in *South African Digest* (week ended 15 February 1985), 138.

⁴⁹ Cited in Murphy & Hawthorne, "Mandela declines offer of freedom".

⁵⁰ Murphy & Hawthorne, "Mandela declines offer of freedom".

own release”.⁵¹ “In effect,” as Waldmeir points out, “[Botha] handed over control of the biggest political problem facing his government to the enemy.”⁵²

The “Mandela problem” intensified later in the year when the leader’s ailing health posed a challenge. The state responded nervously to health complications, first in 1980, when Mandela was diagnosed with tuberculosis, and then again in December 1985, when medical examinations uncovered an enlarged prostate and urinary blockages. In both cases, the authorities gave orders for him to be treated immediately, signalling their fear of the likely consequences of his death in prison.

The anti-apartheid movement (via the Mandela family) utilised the 1985 incident to great effect, since it gave them the opportunity to emphasise the injustice of political imprisonment. Mandela’s family’s journey to Cape Town to visit him before the scheduled surgery was dramatically reported, and his daughters, Zindzi and Zenani, were widely quoted in the international press alongside their mother.

Time magazine aptly described the effective way in which personalising the anti-apartheid movement contributed to the “Mandela problem”, referring to Mandela alongside other historic figures of the twentieth century: “Put an inspirational leader in prison, and the movement he leads may turn into a crusade. That happened to Mahatma Gandhi in India and to Martin Luther King Jr. in the U.S.”⁵³

Mandela, the Rock Star: Apartheid, the Cultural Boycott and Popular Music

In the latter half of the 1980s, the anti-apartheid movement strategy attracted the attention of the music industry, and Mandela’s image gained further symbolic meaning via popular culture. Just as the sporting ban helped to increase the reach of the movement’s political message, so the music industry targeted new, younger supporters. While the British Equity ban had isolated South African audiences from certain foreign products, the effects were limited to South Africa; expansion of the movement required mass events

⁵¹ Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle*, 93.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Bruce Nelan, “Nelson and Winnie Mandela” in *Time*, Monday, 5 January 1987 (Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,963172-1,00.html> – viewed 10 November 2008), no page number.

outside of South Africa in order to reach large foreign audiences. Personalising the anti-apartheid movement resulted in a series of televised mass music concerts, first held as general protests against apartheid and then, arguably more successfully, in Mandela's honour. The growing appeal of celebrity culture fed into this, sometimes sitting awkwardly alongside the rhetoric of protest.

At first, the politicisation of pop remained "in house", in a manner of speaking, with the release of the song "Sun City". Inspired by charity singles such as "We Are the World" by USA for Africa and "Do They Know It's Christmas" by Band Aid, the multi-performer track was organised by the group Artists Against Apartheid,⁵⁴ founded by Jerry Dammers, of Special AKA, who wrote the hugely popular 1984 song "Free Nelson Mandela".⁵⁵ Unlike the charity singles, the message of "Sun City" was political rather than philanthropic and it was aimed at fellow musicians rather than audiences in general. A total of 303 tracks were mixed down to create the final version and a highly politicised music video accompanied its release.⁵⁶ The "project" highlighted the hypocrisy of artists who continued – in contravention of the spirit of the cultural boycott – to perform at Sun City, a luxury casino in the Bophuthatswana homeland. Dubbed "Sin City", the casino served as a pleasure park for white South Africans wanting to escape the political realities of the country. Since Bophuthatswana allowed gambling and titillating sex shows, it provided white South Africans with a fantasyland where they could forget their country's Calvinist legislation and pariah status. As was the case with the sports boycott, the United Nations kept a list of artists who travelled to South Africa or who collaborated with South African artists. As the boycott gathered momentum, artists who overlooked the conditions usually damaged their professional reputations. (As seen in Chapter 2, this was also the case with sportspersons.) Because Sun City was located in Bophuthatswana, artists could perform there without contravening the conditions of the UN-sanctioned cultural boycott adopted in 1980. Although no Sun City performers were actually named

⁵⁴ Artists Against Apartheid is still in existence and now supports the cultural boycott of Israel.

⁵⁵ The single was released with a great deal of accompanying information in the form of sleeve notes about Mandela and other political prisoners (Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 190).

⁵⁶ The music video has been uploaded on YouTube; See: "Artists Against Apartheid (Sun City)" (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKCJWjqjQww> – viewed 22 July 2011).

in the song, “Sun City” was a direct indictment on such individuals.⁵⁷ The track featured 54 popular artists, each individually repeating the word “I” and then together singing “ain’t gonna play Sun City”. Artists Against Apartheid managed to secure some big-name musicians, including Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, Ringo Starr, Lou Reed, Peter Gabriel, U2’s Bono and Keith Richards. Unsurprisingly, it received little to no airtime in South Africa, largely because the two more liberal independent radio stations – Capital and Radio 702 – were partly owned by Southern Sun shareholders, who also had interests in Sun City.

Beyond South Africa’s borders, the song had moderate success: it managed to raise over a million dollars for the anti-apartheid movement and it was partially effective in penetrating new audiences – the video, for instance, was frequently played on MTV.⁵⁸ Yet, although lauded in pop history as one of the great political pop songs, at the time the track was not nearly as successful as “We Are the World” and “Do They Know It’s Christmas”, or “Free Nelson Mandela” for that matter; it only reached no. 38 in the United States and no. 21 in the United Kingdom. Thomas Vernon Reed argues that the political message scared radio stations, unlike the “more politically vague famine relief efforts”.⁵⁹ The song’s lack of airtime was also likely because of the specificity of the message, which required audiences to have a grasp of the socio-political significance of Sun City and South Africa’s Bantustan system. As the later concerts show, personalisation of the message through the figure of Nelson Mandela was more successful in reaching audiences. Furthermore, perhaps because of the unique relationship that exists between musical performance and “liveness”, it was the live broadcasting of mass Live Aid-style events that really broke down barriers. That said, negotiations behind the Mandela concerts also revealed the sometimes uncomfortable relationship between politics and popular culture; as Reebee Garofalo claims, “they embody all the contradictions that enable us to see the possibilities and pitfalls of mass

⁵⁷ Artists who performed at Sun City included Frank Sinatra, Dame Kiri te Kanawa, Elaine Page, Queen, Elton John, Linda Ronstadt, Julio Iglesias, The O’Jays, Ray Charles, Boney M, Black Sabbath, Rod Stewart, Tina Turner, Dionne Warwick, Laura Branigan and Thomas Anders (from Modern Talking).

⁵⁸ Thomas Vernon Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 171.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

culture”.⁶⁰ In addition, the concerts can perhaps be identified as one of the sources of the ambiguities that later attended the figure of Mandela himself.

Artists Against Apartheid followed up “Sun City” with a mass concert in London in 1986: Freedom Beat. The concert was free and took place on Clapham Common, attracting an audience of around 250 000 people. Although it succeeded in attracting some high-profile performers, including Sting, Sade, Peter Gabriel and Boy George, the concert was a haphazard affair and it lost money, partly because it did not sell broadcasting rights.

The concert was nevertheless important since it served as the forerunner to the hugely successful 1988 Nelson Mandela seventieth birthday tribute, which brought together the magic of live musical performance, the simplification of the anti-apartheid message via the enigmatic figure of Mandela, and the interest of global broadcasters. It was the first of many global media events held in Mandela’s honour. For this next concert, Jerry Dammers collaborated with Tony Hollingsworth, who was at the time developing a reputation as a major festival and events organiser, particularly those held in aid of socio-political causes. Hollingsworth recommended that Dammers begin by securing a high-profile act/celebrity in an attempt to attract the participation of additional performers. Dammers only managed to do this a year later, when Simple Minds expressed their conditional commitment to the concert. Discussion then focused on the kind of event that should be organised. While Dammers envisaged a repeat of the Clapham Common festival – essentially a non-televised concert – Hollingsworth had already conceived of a much more spectacular affair, a media event that would exploit television and link the concert to Mandela’s forthcoming 70th birthday. Over the years, Mandela’s birthday had become a key feature of the Free Mandela campaign; the anti-apartheid movement “celebrated” the date of his birth as a means of drawing attention to the plight of political prisoners in South Africa,⁶¹ and the idea of a music festival provided a perfect opportunity to broadcast the anti-apartheid movement’s message. Hollingsworth saw the possibilities offered by television and mass culture; he wanted the

⁶⁰ Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin’ the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1992), 56.

⁶¹ James Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media, 1972–1979: A Struggle for Representation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 97.

event to “be a campaign calling for [Mandela’s] release – the first step in ending apartheid”, and he wanted it to “be produced as a global television event... one that was created via a concert”.⁶²

Initially, this proposal did not receive the full blessing of the anti-apartheid movement; and some juggling of stakeholder interests was required. As Dayan and Katz point out, television events involve three partners – organisers, broadcasters and audiences – and it is “useful to think of such events as constituting a kind of ‘contract’ whereby each side undertakes to give something to the others in order to get something in return”.⁶³ In this case, there were additional participants and much negotiation was required. Stakeholders included Hollingsworth, representing the production team; the anti-apartheid movement, representing the ANC’s political ambitions; the celebrity performers, each with individual career pursuits; the broadcasters, who were mainly interested in the commercial viability of the event; sponsors, seeking brand visibility; and, finally, audiences, the eventual measure of the success of the concert. The proposed focus of the show was hotly debated throughout 1987.⁶⁴ Mike Terry, head of the movement, initially resisted the proposal because it did not sit comfortably with the policies of the ANC, which strove to emphasise collective leadership. This was somewhat surprising, because the anti-apartheid movement had for some time been utilising Mandela to articulate their wishes, but they appeared to be uncomfortable with the extent to which the concert wished to “celebrate” him. They were also no doubt sceptical about the corporate branding of the event, and turned down Pepsi Cola’s offer to act as the main sponsor of the concert.⁶⁵ The anti-apartheid movement proposed a different focus, apparently based on Mandela’s wishes.⁶⁶ Firstly, they wanted the concert to focus on all political prisoners, not only on Mandela; secondly, they wanted the event to spotlight apartheid as a whole; thirdly, they wanted the event to campaign for sanctions against

⁶² Cited in Peter Elman, “Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute” (Available at: <http://tonyhollingsworth.com/index.php?q=content/nelson-mandela-70th-birthday-tribute> – viewed 7 August 2011), no page number.

⁶³ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 54.

⁶⁴ Christian Lahusen, *The Rhetoric of Moral Protest: Public Campaigns, Celebrity Endorsement, and Political Mobilization* (New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 102.

⁶⁵ Robin Denselow, *When the Music’s Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), 280.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

South Africa.⁶⁷ Hollingsworth argued that over-politicising the message would scare away performers, broadcasters and audiences, thus minimising the potential impact of the event. He emphasised the importance of an affirming message, especially if the concert was to be aimed at a wide range of countries, including some where there might be little knowledge of, or indeed support for, Mandela. “The made-for-television event should not be ‘angry’,” Hollingsworth argued, “but a “positive” birthday tribute, calling only for Mandela to be freed:⁶⁸

If you are to take it [the message] to a mass of people and use the popular medias, you have to use every string you can, in terms of popular presentation. Create the logo, create the man as logo, appeal to everybody’s softest point, about him being seventy and his birthday and him being imprisoned. Make all those emotional points ... That was the hardest thing for the political community ... to accept; the idea that it was as soft as a birthday tribute. ... So it’s a very soft way to do it. It wasn’t ‘Sanctions Now’. It wasn’t anything hard-hitting like the Anti-Apartheid Movement had been doing in the past.⁶⁹

Eventually, it was agreed that the concert should be limited to a birthday tribute, with more overtly political campaigning providing the context.⁷⁰

Behind-the-scenes negotiations with performers revealed, perhaps, the most complex tensions. Booking artists was no easy feat, and Hollingsworth details the convoluted negotiations that took place.⁷¹ The first big-name act to agree to the concert, Simple Minds, insisted that they would perform only if another high-profile group also agreed. Dire Straits was the second group to take the bait, but only on condition that Hollingsworth secured further interest without mentioning their commitment to the event. Several top performers only agreed to perform at the last minute, once they were assured that they would be in good company. Furthermore, while some of the celebrity entertainers were happier with the idea of a birthday tribute as opposed to a protest contest, Simple Minds were displeased with the “watering down” of the political message

⁶⁷ Elman, “Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute”.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Lahusen, *The Rhetoric of Moral Protest*, 103.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Elman, “Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute”.

and the mainstreaming of the performance cast⁷² and their discontent threatened to derail the whole process. As Garofalo points out, “the degree of ‘fit’ between artist and issue is one variable that can affect the public perception of a mega-event”,⁷³ and there were some obvious contradictions in the decision to involve performers who had previously broken the cultural boycott (e.g. The Beach Boys, Tina Turner, Queen and Cher). There was also widespread criticism of the production team’s decision to book Whitney Houston, since she was well known for her apolitical stance and it was felt that associating her with the event would lessen its impact.⁷⁴ As luck would have it, Houston turned out to be greatly admired by the imprisoned political elite in South Africa, and Ahmed Kathrada wrote a letter to the anti-apartheid movement, which they forwarded to *Rolling Stone* magazine, where he was quoted as stating: “You lucky guys! What I wouldn’t give just to listen to Whitney Houston!”⁷⁵ In the face of this, her lack of political commitment no longer mattered.

Some of these tensions were resolved by allowing individual acts the freedom to make more overt political statements within the framework of a tribute concept, and most performers eventually agreed that the benefits of involving less politicised acts outweighed the contradictions.

The seduction of broadcasters was dependent on two factors: firstly, the event required the commitment of high-profile celebrities, as this would in turn safeguard the interest of commercial advertisers and sponsors; and, secondly, the focus and atmosphere of the show could not conflict with the viewpoints and image of networks or sponsors.⁷⁶ The involvement of big-name stars such as Dire Straits and George Michael helped to attract a five-star cast, while securing a deal with the BBC attracted further networks, because the broadcaster’s respectable reputation bestowed legitimacy on the event.⁷⁷ The precariousness of these negotiations was revealed by the fact that within hours of the BBC’s announcement of its decision, the South African consulate and 24 Conservative

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Garofalo, *Rockin’ the Boat*, 33.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Cited in Garofalo, *Rockin’ the Boat*, 59.

⁷⁶ Lahusen, *The Rhetoric of Moral Protest*, 103.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

members of the British parliament protested against the proposed broadcast, claiming that participants would in effect be soliciting money for armed rebellion in South Africa.⁷⁸ This was not entirely negative for the BBC, who, as Hollingsworth explains, was at the time struggling to assert its independence from Margaret Thatcher's government.⁷⁹ The protests also created further publicity for the event⁸⁰ and no doubt compensated for concerns that the initial concept had been overly depoliticised. The BBC's level of commitment increased with the growing bill of top performers (from five to 11 hours). Hollingsworth eventually managed to get buy-in from 67 broadcasters around the world, and many African countries were given a free licence. On 11 July 1988, just over a week before Mandela's birthday, an estimated 600 million viewers watched the event, excluding African audiences,⁸¹ 200 million more than the Live Aid concert.

The televised experience varied greatly depending on broadcasters' treatment of the event.⁸² Hollingsworth deliberately set up two stages (one with star acts and one with up-and-coming artists) to ensure a continuous supply of footage so that broadcasters would not need to add material between events. This, Hollingsworth claims, was also part of a strategy to reduce the possibility of broadcasters imposing their own narrative structure on the event.⁸³ Most broadcasters televised the event live, using the feed provided by the production team, affording the production team ultimate editorial control. The importance of this is exemplified by the differences between watching the event in Rome versus the experience of viewing it in the United States, where the show was not broadcast live due to time differences. The Italian broadcast came out in complete support of the political objectives of the event. The programming was sponsored by *Il Manifesto* (an independent left-wing newspaper) and shown on Channel 3, the communist channel. A local political campaign was established, and the screening of the televised event was accompanied by a rally with a series of anti-apartheid speeches given by Italian and African political leaders. Critics generally agree that the political aims of the mega-

⁷⁸ Garofalo, *Rockin' the Boat*, 57; Elman, "Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute".

⁷⁹ Elman, "Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute".

⁸⁰ Garofalo, *Rockin' the Boat*, 57.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 60.

⁸³ Elman, "Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute".

event were only partially realised in the United States,⁸⁴ where the conservative network, Fox Television, owned by Rupert Murdoch, broadcast a reframed version of the concert. The broadcaster insisted on billing the show as the “Freedomfest” concert, rejecting Hollingsworth’s plea to at least add “for Nelson Mandela”.⁸⁵ The broadcast was “saturated with advertising, often by firms doing business in South Africa”.⁸⁶ Coca Cola, which bought advertising time from Fox when it was rumoured that Pepsi was going to sponsor the event,⁸⁷ was one such case and it was singled out as being one of the main reasons for the altered spirit of the show,⁸⁸ with many commentators speculating about the sponsor’s relationship with Whitney Houston, when the singer, who was under contract to Coca Cola, performed in front of a black backdrop instead of the usual banner of Mandela posters. (Hollingsworth claims that this was actually a misperception and the seeming censorship was due to an electrical problem.⁸⁹) The eleven-hour concert was edited down to five hours, with many of the artists’ more strident introductions to songs being cut altogether. Peter Gabriel gave a particularly politically charged introduction to his rendition of “Biko”:

Reading the press, people ask why we single out South Africa. South Africa is the only country in the world that has racism enshrined in its Constitution. This is a message from all of us, from all of you, to the sons and daughters of the South African government, that it’s time for a change. This song was written ten years ago for another man beside Nelson Mandela who had the courage to stand up and fight for what he believed in, to fight for his people no matter the cost to himself. He was imprisoned, tortured and killed in a jail. For Stephen Biko ...⁹⁰

These, and other such statements, were excluded from the Fox broadcast, to the outrage of some performers. Steven van Zandt (aka Little Steven), who was one of the drivers

⁸⁴ Garofalo, *Rockin’ the Boat*, 57; Elman, “Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute”, no page number; Lahusen, *The Rhetoric of Moral Protest*, 105.

⁸⁵ Elman, “Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute”.

⁸⁶ Garofalo, *Rockin’ the Boat*, 57.

⁸⁷ Denselow, *When the Music’s Over*, 280.

⁸⁸ Robert Keating, “Anatomy of a cause concert”, *Spin* magazine, September 1988, 108.

⁸⁹ Elman, Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute”.

⁹⁰ A recording of the performance has been uploaded on YouTube. See: “Peter Gabriel – Biko – Honor Steve Biko – Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute 1988” (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2Ru2MFYh4A> – viewed 23 December 2011).

behind the “Sun City” project, was reportedly appalled when he watched a recording of the Fox broadcast on his return to the United States, describing it as “a totally Orwellian experience”⁹¹ and stating in a *New York Times* editorial that “the show was neutered, the issue downplayed and the message muzzled” – a view that was repeated in a number of reviews of the broadcast.⁹²

The broadcast suggests the limits of politics in the popular realm and the ways in which television altered the nature of “cause concerts”. Critics noted, at the time, the overt differences between earlier festivals such as Woodstock:

The model for today’s cause concerts isn’t the rent party or Woodstock-type festival, but the rock ‘n’ roll commercial. The sponsors of both events recognize rock’s power to direct that motivation. Through context, television shapes the meaning of music. In one context a rock song about idealized love sells soft drinks; in another, it beats down apartheid.⁹³

The event, like Live Aid before it, typified one of the defining characteristics of Dayan and Katz’s media events, namely the “celebration of voluntarism – the wilful resolve to take direct, simple, spontaneous, *ostensibly nonideological action*”.⁹⁴ As with “Sun City”, the Mandela tribute exemplified the extent to which humanitarian causes – as opposed to overt political rallying – better suit popular display.

While there were of course other US broadcasters, Hollingsworth nevertheless decided on the trade-off because Fox offered a much higher viewership.⁹⁵ In spite of the heavy editing, and contrary to some of the criticisms of the concert, a few of the performers’ heartfelt dedications to Mandela were still broadcast, and as Hollingsworth pointed out, the editors could hardly cut out the on-stage visuals, including 30-foot banners of Mandela’s image atop slogans such as “Isolate Apartheid” and “The Struggle Is My Life”. The Fox anchor also introduced the broadcast in aggrandised terms, describing Mandela as the Anti-Apartheid Movement’s “most visual and spiritual”

⁹¹ Cited in Elman, “Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute”.

⁹² Garofalo, *Rockin’ the Boat*, 57.

⁹³ John Leland, “Talking ‘bout a revolution: Rock’s summer of conscience”, *Spin* magazine, September 1988, 27.

⁹⁴ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 21 [my emphasis].

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

leader.⁹⁶ That Mandela should be described as “spiritual” is interesting; there was in fact little knowledge of his religious beliefs, and the description anticipated some of the connotations – of saintliness, messianism,⁹⁷ martyrdom – that would later attend his image.

In Britain, the event was considered a success, and Robin Denselow, music critic and presenter of the BBC broadcast, later described it as “the biggest and most spectacular pop-political event of all time ... a more political version of Live Aid with the aim of raising consciousness rather than just money”.⁹⁸ In the week after the concert, membership of local anti-apartheid groups trebled, and a survey revealed that 75% of the population aged between 16 and 24 were aware of Mandela’s plight and supported his release. The effects of the concert even reached South Africa, where police broke up a concert held at the University of Cape Town in commemoration of the prisoner’s birthday,⁹⁹ and recordings were smuggled into the country by South Africans returning from abroad. Furthermore, Hollingsworth claimed that one of the campaign’s main aims – to “stop television and radio news referring to Mandela as a ‘black terrorist leader’”¹⁰⁰ – had been realised, and the concert altered media references to the liberation movement:

Before the concert, Mandela was routinely referred to on the BBC and in other media as the leader of a ‘terrorist’ organization; after the concert and its attendant publicity, Hollingsworth claims, this kind of representation was no longer possible. Even making allowance for a promoter-activist’s exaggeration, there is no doubt that events like the Mandela concert played a key role in transforming the image of Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC), not only in Britain but worldwide.¹⁰¹

The effects of the concert went beyond this, however, and were important to Mandela’s reception in the years to come. The mega-event did much more than simply erase the “terrorist” label; it bestowed a significant amount of symbolic capital upon the ANC

⁹⁶ Cited in *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Nixon, “Mandela, messianism and the media”.

⁹⁸ Denselow, *When the Music’s Over*, 276.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁰⁰ Elman, “Nelson Mandela 70th birthday tribute”.

¹⁰¹ Reed, *The Art of Protest*, 173.

leader. Dayan and Katz point out that media events radically redefine the status of central actors, sometimes in ways that cannot be controlled by event organisers or performers. In the case of the Mandela concert, the anti-apartheid movement's nervousness about the extent to which the concert hinged on the personal fate of Mandela was perhaps due to their sense of Dayan and Katz's point:

Live broadcasting enhances the status of the principals, conferring both legitimacy and charisma during the events and after. The fact of addressing a world constituency places a new set of aims and responsibilities on the leader's shoulders. Once validated by public response, what might have been a shrewd projected image *may envelop the actor himself*. Media events make 'celebrities' of the supporting cast as well, whether they are astronauts, assassins such as Jack Ruby, or philanthropist-entrepreneurs such as Bob Geldof of Live Aid.¹⁰²

The "Free Mandela concert" undoubtedly helped to shape several celebrity careers; the previously unknown Tracy Chapman's career was ostensibly launched by the concert.¹⁰³ But in the end most of its power was channelled towards the object of its celebration, Mandela himself, who, although absent, nevertheless accumulated legitimacy and charisma. The concert also demonstrated the success of using the machinations of global television (particularly live broadcasting) in legitimising the goals of the anti-apartheid movement. As Eric Louw points out:

The anti-apartheid movement skilfully mobilised Nelson Mandela to evoke sympathy. But unlike other sympathy performers who achieved celebrity status, Mandela did not perform the role himself. Instead, during the 1980s he was cast into the role of an absentee performer, his role scripted and played out by anti-apartheid activists. The 1988 Free Mandela concert demonstrated the power of global television to popularize a celebrity who was not even present. That Mandela was in jail turned him into an extraordinarily powerful 'celebrity' because his own character and performance abilities did not get in the way – Mandela could be scripted as the ultimate polysemic persona. He became 'pure imagery' – a mass media image constructed from photographs taken prior to imprisonment, onto which was grafted an

¹⁰² Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 192 [my emphasis].

¹⁰³ Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 281.

heroic mystique and the notion of a hero-victim fighting tyrannical villains.¹⁰⁴

The potential problem with Mandela's "polysemic" image or persona is that it could become vulnerable to forces beyond the organiser's control and could be used to realise alternative agendas. As we shall see, in future years the popularisation of Mandela became something of a mixed blessing. Although it gave him a massive amount of political power, both locally and globally, and helped to facilitate South Africa's return to the global stage, it also resulted in repeated misunderstanding and misinterpretations of his political ambitions, as well as a tendency to overlook his flaws.

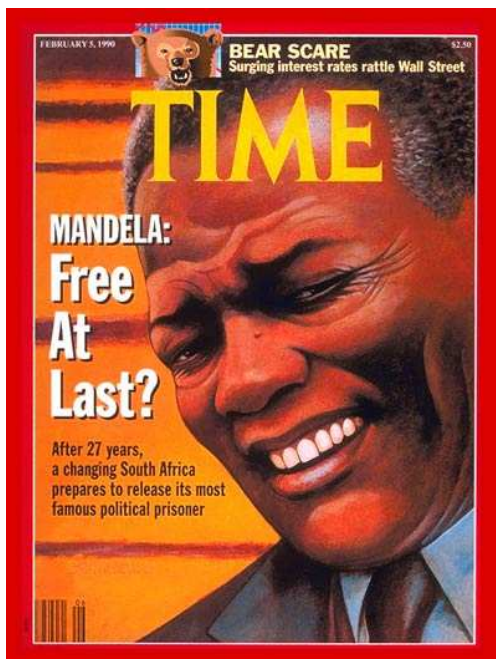


Figure 3.3: *Time* magazine cover, 5 February 1990.

The Shamanising Ayatollah: Mandela's Release from Prison

After major media events such as the birthday concert, calls for Mandela's release escalated. The change in presidency in September 1989, after PW Botha suffered a stroke, and the fall of communism, saw a change in approach that heralded the end of apartheid. The new state president, FW de Klerk, immediately set about instituting reform, releasing Rivonia trialist Walter Sisulu from Pollsmoor Prison in October

1989. This was a strong sign of the government's commitment to reform, since

Sisulu was a high-ranking ANC official and SACP member who had been actively involved in planning Umkhonto we Sizwe operations.

The change in presidency also saw a change in communications management, and De Klerk's communications team, led by Dave Steward, better understood the politics of global media and maximised efforts to secure good press for the NP government and the

¹⁰⁴ Louw, *The Media and Political Process*, 123.

country. The precursor to Mandela's release came with another major televised event: FW de Klerk's parliamentary address on 2 February 1990 in which he announced the unbanning of a number of political parties and the release of political prisoners. In the wake of the release of Sisulu, the world was anticipating the announcement of Mandela's release. For this reason, perhaps, some international television networks planned to broadcast the address live¹⁰⁵ and, according to Dave Steward, "there was greater media attention on South Africa at that time than at any other time in [its] history".¹⁰⁶ De Klerk later explained how he planned to take advantage of the situation: "I knew the world's press was there, not because they wanted to hear me speak, but because they wanted to witness the release of Nelson Mandela." De Klerk knew that the address would be televised live across the country and that the global media would be present. He later explained some of the planning that went into the event: "We had planned for February 2 in great detail, and it is remarkable it didn't leak ... My objective that day was to convince both our friends and our foes alike that we had made the paradigm shift."¹⁰⁷

The televised parliamentary address has many of the elements of the media event: it was preplanned and live; it played out as an interruption of ordinary routine and it served a "transformative function".¹⁰⁸ The BBC news insert from that day reported that the "streets erupted into rejoicing ... after watching President de Klerk's speech on television".¹⁰⁹ De Klerk had perhaps hoped that the parliamentary address would play out as a kind of Conquest media event, the message of which is that "great men and women still reside among us, and that history is in their hands. Some people get up in the morning, decide to do or say something and the world tomorrow is a different place".¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Thabo Mbeki, "Ten days that changed it all: Looking back on February 1990", *Star* special supplement, 2 February 2010, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Steward, personal communication.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Ivan Fallon, "FW de Klerk: The day I ended apartheid", *Independent*, 2 February 2010 (Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/fw-de-klerk-the-day-i-ended-apartheid-1886128.html?action=Gallery> – viewed 28 December 2011), no page number.

¹⁰⁸ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 20.

¹⁰⁹ BBC news, 2 February 1990 (Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/2/newsid_2524000/2524997.stm – viewed 28 December 2011).

¹¹⁰ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 37.

What was missing from this event, however, was what Dayan and Katz refer to as “charismatic seduction”¹¹¹ and the “aura of a hero”.¹¹² Although De Klerk’s speech was lauded and the televised event constituted a key moment in national memory,¹¹³ it did not go down in history as a global media event, and there are ongoing and often resisted attempts to cement De Klerk’s legacy as the man who ended apartheid.

This was largely because the De Klerk speech was swiftly eclipsed by the broadcasting of the release itself, the exact date of which remained unannounced until a press conference held one day before, on 10 February. Interestingly, in spite of the fact that foreign broadcasters clamoured to receive the news, the SABC did not broadcast live from the press conference because the timing clashed with a cricket match,¹¹⁴ but with the eyes of the world upon them, the NP’s new communications team did not need their assistance. After decades of exposure to the Free Mandela campaign, the global gaze was focused on events in South Africa. The event was made all the more suspenseful because nobody knew what he looked like. Famously, in the week preceding the release, the cover of *Time* magazine carried an artist’s impression of Mandela’s predicted appearance (see Figure 3:2). The historic nature of the event was also boosted by the fact that, as evidenced by Mandela’s response to Botha’s conditional offer of release, he had always insisted that his freedom should signal the collective liberty of “his people”. The uncertainty about the exact time of Mandela’s release also served to heighten excitement. In the week after De Klerk’s announcement, global channels emphasised the magnitude of the impending event. Mandela was described (by an unknown Afrikaner) as “the Messiah to lead us out of the wilderness” on Ted Koppel’s ABC *Nightline* show,¹¹⁵ which was broadcast for the entire week from South Africa, and “Waiting for Mandela” was a standard headline in the days leading up to his release, preparing the ground for

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹³ A commentator on an online forum recollects the event thus: “I remember being in a Macbeth rehearsal in – of all places – the kickboxing hall in the Summit Club in Hillbrow. We stopped and watched the speech on the TV in the corner and went home stunned. Kind of a where-you-were-when moment” (see: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/may/01/whatdeklerkdid> – viewed 30 January 2010).

¹¹⁴ Steward, personal communication. The address was carried on the national news, however, and it received a high AR rating.

¹¹⁵ Cited in Nixon, “Mandela, messianism and the media”, 47.

some of the central metaphors of the “new” South Africa (e.g. birth, rebirth, miracle and dawn).¹¹⁶

While Scannell claims that Mandela’s release does not quite fit any of Dayan and Katz’s media event categories,¹¹⁷ closer examination of the broadcasting context suggests that it is in fact a “shamanizing” or “transformative” media event, a special form of “Conquest” (see Chapter 1). While other media event narratives can be seen as extraordinary and seemingly magical, shamanising media events are even more astonishing, as they involve a “discernible change in the realm of the symbolic and the real”.¹¹⁸ While “Coronations” and “Contests” are “unquestionably hegemonic”¹¹⁹ in their celebration of establishment initiatives, shamanising media events typically serve as “harbingers of change”,¹²⁰ “mobilizing an entire society to accept its acceptability”¹²¹ and making “formerly unthinkable solutions thinkable”.¹²² Much of the criticism of media events theory overlooks this category (see Chapter 1); the shamanising format refutes the interpretation of media events as “times when large societies are ‘together’ but when this togetherness is experienced as something positive”.¹²³ Shamanising media events are ceremonies “more likely to be conceded than initiated by elites”;¹²⁴ they are usually mounted “in the midst of a long-standing problem”; and they often involve “guest-leaders”, who do not yet have “any formal power over the society they are addressing”.¹²⁵ “On the world stage, transformative events are often gestures of reconciliation. In the smaller arena of national politics, they are more likely to take the form of challenges”.¹²⁶ This last point is particularly evident in the differences between national and international responses to Mandela’s release. In South Africa, high levels of establishment anxiety accompanied the televised release.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Scannell, “*Media Events: Review Essay*”, 156.

¹¹⁸ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 147.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 160.

¹²³ See, for instance, Couldry, “Rethinking media events”, 62.

¹²⁴ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 170.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 178–79.

Television had in many (mainly unintended) ways been priming South Africans for the inevitability of change,¹²⁷ and in the months between FW de Klerk's inauguration and his announcement of Mandela's release, De Klerk had "made certain that every careful step he took toward what he called 'a new South Africa' was broadcast, often live, and reported in press without censorship".¹²⁸ The occasion of Mandela's release, which De Klerk "anticipated the mass media would give its full attention to",¹²⁹ presented him with the opportunity to communicate his commitment to political reform to the world, an opportunity that Lee Edwards describes as his "most important act of mediapolitik".¹³⁰ But the event also presented the state-controlled SABC, not yet up to speed with De Klerk's vision, with an apparent challenge, referred to in government circles at the time as the potential "Khomeini" or "Ayatollah factor",¹³¹ i.e., the fear that Mandela's release would act as a catalyst for violent revolution. The challenges facing the broadcaster were exacerbated by poor planning and unpredictable logistical challenges on the day. According to André le Roux, the political editor at the SABC, by 9 February, the broadcaster still had little idea of the exact time of the release and so planned to present it as an edited news insert later in the day.¹³²

The SABC managers changed their minds when the prison authorities informed them that Mandela would be released at three o' clock in the afternoon with "military precision" and that he would be exiting the prison in a motor car with tinted windows.¹³³ It was assumed that a mere few minutes of live commentary would be required before he was driven to Cape Town's Grand Parade. The decision to "risk" live broadcasting was perhaps also influenced by the SABC's sense that, as Dayan and Katz point out, "television may be said to 'contain' public events", since "social movements take place

¹²⁷ See Krabill, *Starring Mandela and Cosby*.

¹²⁸ Lee Edwards, *Mediapolitik: How the Mass Media Have Transformed World Politics* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 272.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ John Carlin, *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game that Made a Nation* (New York: Penguin: 2008), 75.

¹³² Cited in "SAUK-base wik, weeg en wroeg oor storie van die eeu", *Beeld*, 13 February 1999, no page number. (Available at: <http://152.111.1.88/argief/berigte/beeld/1999/02/13/4/3.html> – viewed 2 August 2011).

¹³³ On the day, Mandela, at the request of journalists, exited the car at the prison gates and walked out, with Winnie at his side.

outside the home, not inside”.¹³⁴ Indeed, the late announcement of the plans for his release was intended to cut short the ANC’s time to prepare mass rallies and demonstrations.¹³⁵

The SABC’s plans were thrown into disarray when Mandela’s release was delayed. With no back-up footage, the resulting coverage – stilted, uninspired commentary, widely considered to be of poor quality¹³⁶ – exposed the insular apartheid state’s limited understanding of how to deal with unpredictable events of global magnitude. Le Roux later described some of the constraints under which the news team was working:

We waffled about the weather and talked about how long 27 years was. The top management at the SABC were very jittery about the impact the release would have on the national psyche – by that, they meant the white psyche. As a result, we had to keep the thing going without talking too much about what was actually happening.¹³⁷

Clarence Keyter, the hapless commentator chosen to report on the release, had the unenviable task of ensuring that the event “redounded to the government’s credit”¹³⁸ with few resources at hand. Not only did he have to report in his second language, but he was also strictly forbidden from interviewing any of the awaiting crowd or journalists, as SABC authorities were worried that doing so would give a voice to ANC followers.¹³⁹ In this respect, the event had much in common with the treatment of the Pope’s visit to Poland. Dayan and Katz point out:

When the broadcaster is less free, he takes his orders from the organizer, as Polish television did when the Pope first came to visit in 1979. Reflecting the mixed feelings of the Polish government, the official hosts,

¹³⁴ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 59.

¹³⁵ Du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela: A Life*, 232.

¹³⁶ Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London: Sage, 1998), 256.

¹³⁷ Cited in “Top TV moments: Nelson Mandela’s long walk to freedom”, *Observer*, 12 September 1999 (Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/sep/12/nelsonmandela.theobserver> – viewed 2 August 2011).

¹³⁸ Nixon, “Mandela, messianism and the media”, 50.

¹³⁹ Cited in *Beeld*, “SAUK-base wik, weeg en wroeg oor storie van die eeu”, 13 February 1999, no page number.

Polish television followed the Pope on his journey through the country but understated the euphoria of the crowds that thronged to see him.¹⁴⁰

In his attempts not to elevate Mandela in any way, Keyter resorted to describing the surrounding winelands in glowing terms: “There is a warm wind blowing in Paarl ... The sun is not just for the growing of grapes but the sun is shining on South Africa”.¹⁴¹ As the delay stretched on, in a “serious case of misplaced eulogy”,¹⁴² he referred to Victor Verster as “the most beautiful prison in the world”!



Figure 3.4: First official photograph of Mandela in 27 years, released by De Klerk's government, 9 February 1990 (from Mail & Guardian online, “News in Photos”).

Foreign news reporters did not fare much better. Lee Edwards claims that the CBS's Dan Rather and NBC's Tom Brokaw “were so excited that they got some facts wrong, misstating that Mandela's release from prison and his Cape Town address were not seen live by white South Africans” and that while the release was being screened around the world, the SABC broadcast a film of white people at a party.¹⁴³

Harking back to the moonlanding, Keyter also helped to establish one of the central images associated with Mandela, repeatedly speaking about the release in terms of a journey: “A free man taking his first steps into new South Africa ... walking strongly, step by step further into freedom ... Mr Mandela has walked his first steps into a new South Africa.” In many respects, the idea of Mandela's “long

¹⁴⁰ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 58.

¹⁴¹ Cited in the Reuters, “South Africa's new era; broadcast in South Africa”, 12 February 1990, *New York Times* (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/02/12/world/south-africa-s-new-era-broadcast-in-south-africa.html>) – viewed 28 December 2011), no page number.

¹⁴² Nixon, “Mandela, messianism and the media”, 50

¹⁴³ Edwards, *Mediapolitik*, 269

walk” has replaced the Afrikaner nationalist mythology of “the *trek*”. Interestingly, Mandela directed some of this symbolism himself when he laid down some of the terms for the release. Though he was unable to negotiate the timing of the event, he bargained successfully over the location. De Klerk wished for Mandela to be flown up to Pretoria to make his first public appearance, but Mandela insisted on inviting the public to witness him exiting the Victor Verster prison grounds.¹⁴⁴ The symbolism of this act is played out in the title of his best-selling biography, *Long Walk to Freedom*.

Ron Krabill points out that, in the case of Mandela’s release, the “less than stellar coverage” can be attributed to a fear of the organisational machinery that polices producers, editors and journalists.¹⁴⁵ The state, via the SABC, in addition to strictly forbidding commentators from glorifying the event, seemed intent on claiming some kind of ownership of Mandela’s release. De Klerk made certain that everyone knew who was responsible for the event by a holding a global news conference the morning before, and the first photograph of Mandela in 27 years was taken at Tuynhuys alongside De Klerk on the Friday night and released by the president’s office on the Saturday night. Perhaps in a last-ditch attempt to assert its authority, the SABC also did not allow the event to disrupt ordinary broadcasting entirely, and, in what must have been a frustrating move for South African viewers, the live transmission was interrupted for the regularly scheduled evening news. Because Mandela was seen as “an unknown entity to thousands of South Africans”,¹⁴⁶ a specially prepared bio-documentary directed by Wynand Dreyer was shown. The documentary, which included interviews with individuals across the political spectrum (including Helen Suzman, Margaret Thatcher and Fatima Meer) seemed designed to placate white minority fears by emphasising Mandela’s “common sense” (Thatcher) and the “enormous contribution” (Suzman) that Mandela was likely to play. The rest of the news included a swathe of official statements from homeland leaders commending FW de Klerk for his actions. A PR coup included a statement from Bishop Stanley Mogoba, leader of the Pan Africanist Congress, who went so far as to say that De Klerk “has saved this country”. The news report illustrates Dayan and Katz’s observation

¹⁴⁴ Steward, personal communication.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 578.

¹⁴⁶ SABC, News at Six, 11 February 1990.

that daily news events are primarily conflict-driven. In spite of what in retrospect appears like a fairly chaotic affair, Keyter's live commentary does not emphasise any of the apparent chaos of the awaiting crowd, the police presence or the shouts of viva. Instead he steers the interpretation towards calm: "Total jubilation. Total excitement. People running alongside the car. Pushing, touching the car ..."¹⁴⁷ In the later news insert, however, the commentary is drawn to conflict, and the celebration of the release is juxtaposed against the drama of his delayed address: "And later in the day, Mr Mandela's anticipated address to a mass rally at the Grand Parade delayed when his cavalcade *failed* to get through the assembled crowd" (news anchor's emphasis). The insert also later turns to the looting in downtown Cape Town, where a field reporter comments: "Unfortunately, the whole scene was marred at six o'clock this evening after people broke into a bottle store and started raiding it." After the news insert, however, the SABC switched back to the live broadcast, "missing only the opening tributes".¹⁴⁸

The state broadcaster chose Hendrik Verwoerd, the identically named grandson of the architect of apartheid, as the anchorman in the news studio,¹⁴⁹ no doubt in an attempt to symbolise the current government's progressiveness. In the end, these attempts were not wholly successful; not even De Klerk, "for all his shrewd appreciation of the power of the media, was prepared for the apotheosis of Nelson Mandela".¹⁵⁰ The international press cropped the NP leader out of the first released photo, and Mandela appears alone on many (though not all) of the Sunday-morning papers and, in spite of the SABC's best efforts to downplay the event, the poor quality of the broadcast did not seem to matter; Mandela's release is widely considered to be one of the most memorable moments of live television, both in South Africa and abroad. The live transmission of the event probably achieved the highest audience rating (AR)¹⁵¹ in South Africa's television history¹⁵² and it

¹⁴⁷ SABC, Live Broadcast of Mandela's Release, 11 February 1990.

¹⁴⁸ Edwards, *Mediapolitik*, 270.

¹⁴⁹ Nixon, "Mandela, messianism and the media", 50.

¹⁵⁰ Edwards, *Mediapolitik*, 268.

¹⁵¹ According to SAARF, "ARs are calculated by summing the products of numbers of viewers and relevant times spent viewing (within the period concerned) and dividing by the product of the total number of potential viewers and the length of the period concerned. An AR is thus, in effect, a time-weighted average of audience size, indicated by an index which varies between 0 and 100. However, because visitors are included, a maximum AR greater than 100 is theoretically possible as visitors are not included in the base. Theoretically, visitors to metered households compensate in part for panel members who view in non-

attracted millions of viewers worldwide. It also fares favourably in surveys on the most watched and most memorable television events of all time. According to a *Guardian* poll, the televised release is considered second only to the moonlanding,¹⁵³ and the event came seventh in a 2009 survey of Scottish viewers' most remembered television moments.¹⁵⁴

Seemingly unmediated, uninterrupted broadcasting is in fact integral to the media events phenomenon. Rob Nixon states that "when Mandela arrived, the occasion turned into an oddly un-mediated un-American political event",¹⁵⁵ linking it to Mandela's own "oratorical style" which brought to mind a "pretech era". The spellbinding effect he describes, however, has just as much to do with the occasion's manifestation as a shamanising media event as it does with Mandela's own delivery, which is generally considered to be quite poor.¹⁵⁶ Instead, Dayan and Katz's definition of the central ceremonial figure of shamanising media events – the myth-making "guest-leader" – uncannily describes Mandela's position on the day: "He is a messiah figure, a mediator of extreme oppositions, a realistic dreamer, both utopian and practical, shrewd and imaginative."¹⁵⁷

Mandela's mediation of his image, both on the day of his release, when tensions ran high,¹⁵⁸ and during and after the course of his presidency, has remained shrewd and

metered homes. Informant numbers in the tables exclude visitors. No visitors are classified as main purchasers."

¹⁵² The SAARF report for that week's viewing notes that the broadcast achieved 35 ARs, "the highest rating attained by any programme since the adjustment to the AMPS Meter computer software was made in the middle of November 1989". The AR is reflective of white viewers only (South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) Viewing Report, 5–11 February 1990).

¹⁵³ "Television's 100 greatest moments", *Birmingham Post*, 13 September 1999 (Available at: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-60465568.html> – viewed 22 July 2010), no page number.

¹⁵⁴ The other contenders were the 9/11 terrorist attack on the twin towers in New York (2001) – 41%; the moonlanding (1969) – 23%; the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) – 8%; Barack Obama's election (2009) – 7%; the funeral of Princess Diana (1997) – 5%; the assassination of John F Kennedy (1963) – 4 per cent; Mandela's release (1990) – 3%; Archie Gemmill's goal against Holland in the 1978 World Cup – 2%; Live Aid appeal (1985) – 2% Charles and Diana's wedding (1981) – 1% (Thaindian Times, "9/11 terror attacks voted most iconic TV moment of all time", 10 July 2009, Available at: http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/911-terror-attacks-voted-most-iconic-tv-moment-of-all-time_100216011.html#ixzz0e7Zgz1Xh – viewed 30 January 2010).

¹⁵⁵ Nixon, "Mandela, messianism and the media", 51.

¹⁵⁶ Desmond Tutu famously claimed: "He can be a very poor speaker. Even deadly dull" (cited in "Those things they said", *Independent*, 31 November 1999).

¹⁵⁷ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 181.

¹⁵⁸ Mandela's long-expected and delayed arrival on a blistering hot Sunday at the Grand Parade in Cape Town led to heightened tensions; rumours that he had not been released started to circulate and a number of

imaginative. He well understood what his return to public life signified, as is implied by the introductory words of his first words to South Africa: “I stand here before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people.” Instead of rousing rhetoric, most of the speech consists of a long list of praise of numerous anti-apartheid grassroots organisations and leaders, perhaps accounting for its underwhelmed reception.¹⁵⁹

Unlike the SABC, Mandela’s intention was to mark the occasion as historic, but in terms that hailed the masses. Yet, ironically, like the SABC, Mandela was unable to fully dictate the terms on which the event should be interpreted. This is, again, a distinct feature of the media event. Foreign channels and the print media framed the occasion (and Mandela’s speech) according to their own agendas. This is typical of shamanising media events: once broadcast, other readings, particularly those of the real elites, get “the upper hand”.¹⁶⁰ Nixon points out that Mandela’s litany of thanks to struggle organisations was excised in favour of a “one-nation, one-leader brand of Messianic politics”.¹⁶¹ Such reactions, it might be argued, did not give sufficient credit to the masses who actually “freed Mandela”,¹⁶² in spite of Mandela’s attempts to invoke them. In subsequent news broadcasts one of the most quoted soundbites, together with Mandela’s description of FW de Klerk as “a man of integrity”, came from the speech’s conclusion, in which Mandela repeated the already famous lines from his 1964 Rivonia trial.¹⁶³

I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

kiosks were looted, leading to clashes with the police. According to Carlin, Mandela was held up by Winnie Mandela, who had been delayed in Johannesburg by a hair appointment (*Playing the Enemy*, 77).

¹⁵⁹ Boehmer, *Mandela: A Very Short Introduction*, 71.

¹⁶⁰ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 153.

¹⁶¹ Nixon, “Mandela, messianism and the media”, 52.

¹⁶² Suttner, “(Mis)Understanding Nelson Mandela”, 125.

¹⁶³ The popularity of these words is also attributable to Mandela’s own tendency to repeat them at media-friendly occasions. He repeated the lines again in a statement after casting his first vote on 27 April 1994.

The quote was most likely chosen because of its emphasis on racial reconciliation and martyrdom, two central concepts that the media attached to Mandela. The BBC evening broadcast referred to him in similar terms:

At the prison to greet him, thousands of South Africans, black and white, pinning their hopes on a hero, until today a revered symbol of the fight against apartheid; from today a political leader they believe commands enough support from black majority and white minority to negotiate an end to white rule.¹⁶⁴

The South African print media (less affected by political control than the SABC) followed up the event with equally grand headlines. *Beeld*, which two years earlier had called for Mandela's release in an editorial, greeted it with an excited "Here He Is!" and the *Cape Times* recalled Martin Luther King with "Free at Last!"¹⁶⁵

He was met with similar adulation in the international press; *Time* magazine described him as "Hero. Unifier. Healer. Savior",¹⁶⁶ and reports and broadcasts also tended to anticipate a collaborative relationship between Mandela and De Klerk, stressing that they shared the same vision of a peaceful South Africa.¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, both the BBC and *Time* magazine claimed that Mandela toned down the "militancy" of his first speech within a matter of days. After a press conference the day after his release, the BBC claimed that "on the vital political issues, Mr Mandela seemed more conciliatory today than in yesterday's speech, deliberately making clear he sees no conflict between his continuing commitment to armed struggle and an equal commitment to peaceful solutions".¹⁶⁸ Similarly, *Time* quoted very carefully chosen sections of his address to a

¹⁶⁴ BBC news, 11 February 1990 (Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/11/newsid_2539000/2539947.stm – viewed 28 December 2011).

¹⁶⁵ *Beeld*, 12 February 1990; *Cape Times*, 12 February 1990.

¹⁶⁶ Jill Smolowe and Scott MacLeod, "A hero's triumphant homecoming", *Time*, 26 February 1990 (Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,969484,00.html> – viewed 28 December 2011), no page number.

¹⁶⁷ For instance, the 11 February BBC news insert read as follows: "With the rally degenerating into chaos and violence at the fringes of the crowd this is hardly the atmosphere of calm and dignity which both Nelson Mandela and President de Klerk want to herald the new South Africa."

¹⁶⁸ BBC, News Insert, 12 February 1990.

Soweto rally two days after his release, concluding that the speech “adopted a markedly different tone”.¹⁶⁹

This is only partly true. Although the speech does contain some reconciliatory sentiments about addressing white fears, Mandela again saluted the Communist Party and emphasised the potential need for a continuing armed struggle, both elements of his initial speech that *Time* claimed caused alarm among white South Africans.¹⁷⁰ It would appear that his vague (even contradictory) comments on nationalisation accounted for the interpretation of a change in tenor. In the speech, Mandela acknowledged that much debate had been sparked by ANC policies on nationalisation, but was unclear about whether the continued commitment to redistribution of wealth would be sought via nationalisation:

The ANC is just as committed to economic growth and productivity as the present employers claim to be. Yet we are also committed to ensure that a democratic government has the resources to address the inequalities caused by apartheid.¹⁷¹

There was much focus on Mandela’s call for nationalisation upon his release, and journalists frequently asked him whether he had modified his views in any way, framing it as a belief standing in the way of a satisfactory settlement and the reasonable logic of the Washington Consensus, which Naomi Klein claims the NP later used to its advantage in negotiations.¹⁷² For instance, at an international press conference held on 13 February 1990, a reporter asked Mandela: “You have spoken a couple of times this morning of your sensitivity to the concerns of the white population. Have you modified in any way your views on the redistribution of wealth?” Similarly, in an interview with a Johannesburg television service held on 15 February 1999, a reporter framed the question thus:

¹⁶⁹ Smolowe & MacLeod. “A hero’s triumphant homecoming”.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Nelson Mandela, Speech given at Soweto rally, 12 February 1990.

¹⁷² Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Macmillan, 2007), 200.

Upon your release, sir, you said you are looking forward to the type of political settlement that will satisfy both sides, whites and blacks. After saying that, you came up with a philosophy of nationalisation that made most of the people you wanted to address in the settlement a bit shaky. Can you, sir, explain the intentions behind the nationalisation philosophy?¹⁷³

Nixon notes that after Mandela's release, the term "dignified" was overextended in US coverage, arising perhaps from racial bigotry; he asks: "Would reporters have fussed with such boundless amazement over the dignity of a European or American politician – Mitterrand, say, or Bush – as if they had been expecting Idi Amin to come crashing in?"¹⁷⁴ A similar point can be made of the emphasis on Mandela's "pragmatism", another trait frequently invoked in the foreign media, and one tied to his anticipated acceptance of popular global economic policies. The news reports went on to lay down some of the terms of South Africa's negotiated transition with remarkable foresight, even though, at that stage, South Africa's future path was by no means clear.

Within months, the event had come to stand for the end of apartheid in much the same way as the televised images of the fall of the Berlin Wall came to signify the end of communism. The more radical elements of Mandela's speech were downplayed; instead he was glorified as a forgiving and reasonable saviour in spite of both his and the SABC's attempts to direct the event differently, and his successful negotiation with FW de Klerk was in some ways represented as a foregone conclusion.¹⁷⁵ While the aggrandising of Mandela was of course welcomed by the ANC, the party was still anxious to ensure that De Klerk followed through with reform. In some ways, the global interpretation of the release overruled national attempts to control it. Louw argues that the release served as a "sort of 'cathartic moment' in which US liberals and African-Americans could imagine themselves to be experience the idealised world they wanted, where racial harmony prevailed".¹⁷⁶ In the domestic context, it was more contested.

¹⁷³ Nelson Mandela, Interview with Johannesburg Television Service, 15 February 1990 (Available at: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/interview-johannesburg-television-service> – viewed 9 January 2012).

¹⁷⁴ Nixon, "Mandela, messianism and the media", 52.

¹⁷⁵ This is implied by another much quoted section from Mandela's speech: "Today the majority of South Africans, black and white, recognise that apartheid has no future."

¹⁷⁶ Louw, "Mandela: Constructing global celebrity", 303.

Free at Last? The Release Concert

Fifty-four days after the televised release, Mandela was again at the centre of a global media event – a second pop extravaganza – popularly called the “Release concert” but officially and somewhat oddly titled “Nelson Mandela: An International Tribute for a Free South Africa”. The concert, a follow-up to the birthday tribute, was held at Wembley Stadium, and Tony Hollingsworth was again one of the main organisers. The planning around this event suggests that there were various attempts to direct, and regain control, of Mandela’s image. Realising the magnitude of Mandela’s global image, the ANC had set up an International Reception Committee to capitalise on the political opportunities presented by his release. The committee, convened by Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, reasoned that a pop mega-event would provide a good opportunity for Mandela to articulate the ANC’s political demands to a mass global audience. The ANC was now determined to see democracy installed in South Africa, and needed to remind the rest of the world that the struggle did not end with Mandela’s release; they needed to continue to pressurise the apartheid government. To ensure that the political spirit of the event was not neutralised in any way, the committee, together with Mike Terry and the anti-apartheid movement, was more involved in the organising of the second mega-event.¹⁷⁷ There were a number of challenges involved in the planning. According to Hollingsworth, Mandela’s lawyer, Ismail Ayob, contacted him even before Mandela’s release, when rumours of liberation were rife, in order to discuss the possibility of a post-release concert. The prospect was risky, since Mandela had not yet agreed to the event himself, his release date was uncertain, and the success of the show would obviously depend on his appearance. Furthermore, there were three conditions, all designed to ensure the politicisation of the event, that could prove difficult in negotiations with performers and broadcasters and unappealing to audiences: firstly, Mandela should be given an unlimited amount of time to deliver a speech; secondly, the speech should not be

¹⁷⁷ Garofalo, *Rockin’ the Boat*, 61–62.

edited on television,¹⁷⁸ and thirdly, there should be no attempt to profit from the show; instead the production team should simply aim to break even.¹⁷⁹

Hollingsworth was not too concerned about the non-profit objective, perhaps because, like others, he assumed “that the real headliner of the event, Nelson Mandela, appearing live at Wembley, would make the concert irresistible to broadcasters the world over”.¹⁸⁰ (In the end, the concert did make a profit, amassing £100,000, which was donated to charity.)¹⁸¹ But the issue of the speech was more problematic, not only because lengthy politicised speeches lacked entertainment value, but also because Mandela’s oratory style did not lend itself to televised address. Hollingsworth had seen “footage of Mandela giving a speech soon after his release from prison and was extremely worried that his old-fashioned style would put off an international television audience”.¹⁸² According to his version of events, he contacted Danny Schechter, who had produced the highly respected show *South Africa Now* in the United States and commissioned him to try to give Mandela some public speaking tips and to persuade him to adopt a speaking style better suited to a modern audience.¹⁸³

As it turned out, this would be the least of Hollingsworth’s concerns. While in Sweden, Mandela encountered a number of activists and African leaders who resisted the idea of his appearing at Wembley, since the Thatcherite government did not support sanctions against the country – an argument that Mandela found convincing. A decision not to appear would, of course, be disastrous for the concert’s organisers and, potentially, Mandela’s reputation. Some 72 000 tickets had already been sold – selling out faster than any other event in the history of Wembley Stadium.¹⁸⁴ Schechter found himself in the awkward position of having to secure Mandela’s commitment to the event, at a time when “a rock concert was hardly uppermost in [Mandela’s] mind ... when he had so much to do to get negotiations started in an environment that was increasingly uncertain

¹⁷⁸ Peter Elman, “Nelson Mandela: An International Tribute for a Free South Africa” (Available at: <http://tonyhollingsworth.com/index.php?q=content/nelson-mandela-international-tribute-free-south-africa> – viewed 12 August 2011), no page number.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Garafalo, *Rockin’ the Boat*, 62.

¹⁸¹ Elman, “Nelson Mandela: An International Tribute for a Free South Africa”.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Garafalo, *Rockin’ the Boat*, 62.

and violent in South Africa”.¹⁸⁵ Schechter further suggests that Hollingsworth’s vision did not always coincide with those close to Mandela and that there was a good deal of personal politics and clamorous rallying following the leader in the days after his release:

Apparently, there was a power struggle underway as their [*sic*] often is among the activists vying to play a key role and have special access to a man of power. Many wanted his blessing as if he was their Pope. Their power was the power of a courtesan in the Castle, deciding who could see the King. Frankly, some resented an independent non-political professional show producer [Hollingsworth], maybe because he was white, maybe because he was not reporting to them.¹⁸⁶

According to Schechter, after much pressurising, Mandela eventually agreed to appear at Wembley. He went on to receive a thunderous eight-minute standing ovation before giving a 30-minute speech, in which he thanked anti-apartheid activists, the audience and performers. He then continued, for some time, to lobby for further action against the South African government, declaring that “the apartheid crime against humanity remains in place”. Hollingsworth described his speech as “slowly delivered, deliberate, theatrical, ponderous. It was delivered in the same style he would have used 27 years earlier, talking to a rally from the back of the lorry.”¹⁸⁷ There was, however, very little that could be done to alter the broadcast. For security reasons, the exact timing of Mandela’s speech was not released, which made it difficult for broadcasters to prepare alternative material, and ensured that the anti-apartheid movement’s original request – that the speech be screened in its entirety – was respected.

The four-hour concert was screened by 63 broadcasters, including the BBC. Even South Africa’s SABC was going to broadcast the concert, but eventually decided against it because of opposition from the ANC, which was still strongly supportive of continued sanctions and sporting and cultural boycotts. (As we shall see in Chapter 6, however, this approach changed fairly rapidly.)

¹⁸⁵ Danny Schechter, “Honoring Nelson Mandela”, *Huffington Post*, 26 June 2008 (Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/danny-schechter/honoring-nelson-mandela-a_b_109313.html – viewed 12 August 2011), no page number.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Cited in Elman, “Nelson Mandela: An International Tribute for a Free South Africa”.

As with the birthday tribute concert, however, the United States was the weak link in the chain, failing to broadcast the event at all. There are varying accounts of why this occurred. Hollingsworth's version attributes the failure to the expectation that the country would hold its own event, claiming that "the prospect of the US event led the US networks to ignore the Wembley event".¹⁸⁸ Concert promoter Bill Graham planned to stage a US welcome for Mandela, also a concert, a few weeks after the Wembley reception, but the concert never happened and he only succeeded in "splitting the artists about which event they would attend",¹⁸⁹ as some artists held out for the US event. (Graham did succeed in holding a mass event at the Oakland Coliseum, selling over 60 000 tickets, but the occasion was more of a rally than a rock concert and it did not attract the same kind of media interest as the Wembley event.)

Reebee Garofalo suggests that part of the reason for the US's non-participation had to do with bad event planning on the part of Radiovision, the firm contracted to sell television rights in the country, suggesting that Radiovision did not give potential buyers enough time to promote the event.¹⁹⁰ Some of the US outlets complained that broadcasting rights costs were overpriced; yet others claimed they were not approached at all. Considering the eventual £100 000 profit alongside the non-profit objective, this would appear to be a shortcoming on the part of the event planners, who did not abide by the anti-apartheid movement's original conditions of the event contract.

But most accounts conclude that the US networks rejected the concert because they thought it was "too political".¹⁹¹ Danny Schechter, who was also attempting to raise support for the broadcast, claimed that the broadcasters lacked "consciousness" and did not see the significance of the concert, a view that was supported by the US weekly, *Variety* magazine.¹⁹²

Another potential reason for the lack of interest on the part of US broadcasters is timing. Attempting to stage another media event in the wake of the captivating release

¹⁸⁸ Elman, *Nelson Mandela: An International Tribute for a Free South Africa*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Garofalo, *Rockin' the Boat*, 63.

¹⁹¹ Lynn Norment, "Stars shine in London to aid Mandela's fight to win freedom", *Jet Magazine*, 7 May 1990, 55.

¹⁹² Garofalo, *Rockin' the Boat*, 63.

may have seemed too soon to broadcasters, who might have been concerned about audience buy-in.

Mandela's participation in the Wembley release concert helped to cement his global popularity and the concert foreshadowed many of his later "performances" at pop mega-events, suggesting that he himself approved of the benefits of the shows. In the years to come, he would be linked to several mass music events, frequently speaking at the Aids-awareness 46664 concerts. Other birthday tributes (such as the 2008 Hyde Park 90th birthday concert) have also been held, and the date of Mandela's birthday, 18 July, is now celebrated worldwide and has been adopted as an annual international day by the United Nations.

Conclusion

Mandela's incarceration and the anti-apartheid movement's decision to personalise the movement through his persona, a strategy that climaxed with the 70th birthday tribute, prepared the ground for South Africa's most important media event: Mandela's televised release. This, in turn, greatly boosted Mandela's "moral capital", although not always allowing him direct control of his image, demonstrating the extent to which media events may be hegemonic but are seldom, if ever, totalitarian. In the case of the release, neither the SABC nor Mandela were fully able to secure their preferred reading of the events, while the success of the Mandela concerts hinged on a number of sometimes awkward trade-offs, culminating in a dilution of the original vision for the event. On the global stage, Mandela's starring role in media events nevertheless did much to promote him as the world's preferred candidate in the country's first democratically held elections, an extraordinary about-turn for an individual the world once considered a terrorist enemy of the state.

The next chapter discusses events in South Africa, where political uncertainty and escalating levels of violence complicated matters for Mandela and the ANC. The domestic acceptance of Mandela's new leadership role was greatly assisted by live broadcasting. Once again, we see live broadcasting playing an important role in the country's history.

4

Disrupting the Centre: “Liveness” and the Negotiation of Disaster During the Transition

Live television, to a certain extent, likes unexpected events to occur as this is the best way to demonstrate that it fulfils its commitments.

– Jérôme Bourdon¹

As argued in the previous chapter, even before Mandela’s release a combination of factors gave him and the ANC a head start in the race for global recognition. The apartheid state’s decision to imprison Mandela in the first place gave the anti-apartheid movement the opportunity to use him as a powerful symbol of the struggle. Furthermore, the release itself acted as a launchpad for the development of a special relationship between Mandela and media events, one that arguably gave him the power to restore calm in the turbulent period that followed his release.

The period between his release in February 1990 and his inauguration in May 1994 was tumultuous, characterised by unprecedented violence between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)² and ANC supporters in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, assassinations, sporadic bombings, white right-wing insurgency, massive white flight³

¹ Bourdon, “Live television is still alive”, 537.

² The IFP was only established in, but it grew out of earlier Zulu cultural organisation such as the Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement (INCLM) formed in 1975. The party was founded and headed by Mangosuthu Buthelezi (who is still leader today) and it drew support from Zulu nationalists. In recent years, however, support has dwindled.

³ An estimated 70 000 South Africans are thought to have left the country between 1989 and 1992 (*The Economist*, “Home sweet home – for some”, 13 August 2005).

and turmoil within the ANC itself, with various factions accusing negotiators of betraying the ideals of the struggle. The period played out in the media via images of violence – footage of the aftermath of bombings and shootings – punctuated by mini media events, revolving around FW de Klerk and Mandela attempting to control the unrest. In addition, there were several efforts to disrupt the negotiation process, through attacks on centres of power, including the media. Just as anti-apartheid activists had hijacked some of the sporting events of the 1980s, so those opposed to the transitional process attempted to disrupt the developing alliance between the NP and the ANC. Judging from the number of attacks on the SABC and on newspaper houses, it appears that the local media was perceived to form a part of the alliance.

Along with the unbanning of the ANC and Mandela's release, restrictions on foreign journalists in the country were lifted, and South Africa once again featured high on the foreign news agenda in the United States and Europe. According to Reuters photographer Graeme Williams, images of disaster were initially rejected by newsrooms overseas for being too violent but they fast became valuable commodities.⁴ Trade in footage of violence thus led to increasing numbers of photojournalists and cameramen in areas of unrest, boosting the media's status as a political actor.

Unsurprisingly, the best remembered moments are not images of aftermath but of unexpected disasters captured "live" on film and then quickly relayed as news inserts. Though these recorded disasters do not constitute media events in themselves, the visual and filmic imagery of negative and unpredictable moments in history constitutes an equally powerful television genre, and we see in this period not only a struggle for supremacy in the negotiation process, but also a jostling to control and frame images of disaster, whose unpredictability renders them vulnerable to a variety of interpretations. Although we speak of "capturing" or "catching" unexpected events on film, thereby implying that reality is frozen in some way, the metaphor belies the lengthier process of coding and decoding that lies ahead. Just as images of necklacing could be harnessed for both pro- and anti-apartheid causes in the 1980s, so images of widespread violence in the early 1990s posed a challenge (and opportunity) to political parties, although, as this

⁴ Graeme Williams, personal communication, interview conducted by candidate, 4 September 2011.

chapter will argue, in most cases the ANC enjoyed a moral high ground that directed the global interpretation of much of the footage. The role of policing – acts of which were frequently recorded – takes centre stage in the interpretation of these images, and, to a certain extent, the political battle for control of the security forces is played out visually on TV.

The general instability of the period was exacerbated by the changing role of the SABC, which at the time was under scrutiny from various newly formed media-monitoring organisations, as well as the now-audible voices of previously banned political parties. Part of the SABC's attempt to reflect the changing climate (as well as its bid to prevent the possibility of propagandistic misuse under a future regime) involved transforming TV2/3 (the African language channels) into a single commercial black channel, the Contemporary Community Values channel (CCV). In addition to restructuring, the broadcaster also changed its approach to news reporting. It was widely believed that white South Africans had been sheltered from images of violence under apartheid, and throughout the 1990s the SABC used "live" footage of disaster as a means of improving its new status in a changing South Africa. Just as De Klerk's communications team recognised the link between perceptions of transparency and live broadcasting, so the SABC appreciated the extent to which the televising of unexpected events could legitimise its role in the "new" South Africa. The news reports from this era are also markedly self-referential, noting (and sometimes illustrating) the extent to which journalists clashed with political players, as a means of emphasising their impartiality.

This chapter discusses several events identified as turning points in the South African transition: the Battle of Ventersdorp, the 1992 referendum, the Boipatong massacre, the Bisho massacre, Chris Hani's assassination, the storming of the World Trade Centre, and the Battle of Bophuthatswana. Though there were of course other (violent and non-violent) incidents of great import in the period, the events discussed all involved the "live capturing" of disaster – a trait that inflated their political weight at the time and also bestowed them with historical significance. Not only was the footage used in the many official inquiries into violent events, particularly investigations into the role of the police force, but, as Bourdon points out, national histories of live broadcasting also

“often include a chronicle of famous accidents, scandals, insults, fights, which are often rebroadcast as specials, thus gaining a special status in viewers’ memory”.⁵

Disaster as Media Event

One of the major criticisms of Dayan and Katz’s media events theory is that it omitted to examine major news events (see Chapter 1), the kinds of shocking occurrences that capture global and national attention (e.g. Kennedy’s assassination).⁶ Indeed, the broadcasting history of the period between South Africa’s two major media events – Mandela’s release and inauguration – demonstrates the extent to which our understanding of the significance of “liveness” in the broadcasting of history cannot be limited to preplanned, hegemonic and celebratory events, but must be extended to include the spontaneous broadcasting of historical tragedies. Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes in fact go on to conclude that, in the early years of the new millennium, the live transmission of disaster, terror and war upstages traditional media events, stating that “events of the ceremonial kind seem to be receding in importance, maybe even in frequency, while the live broadcasting of disruptive events such as Disaster, Terror and War are taking center stage.”⁷ While the previous chapter suggested that the issue of ownership of public events is always slightly indeterminate, the question of “who’s in charge”⁸ is the key differentiating trait between what Katz and Liebes term “integrative” and “disruptive” events. They question the extent to which establishments and the media are able to maintain control over traumatic events that are broadcast live.

The forms of “disruption” discussed in this chapter cannot be considered typical televised “disaster marathons”⁹ – the genre that develops out of the ongoing live broadcasting of tragic or catastrophic events. Although some of the South African events of the early 1990s are filmed live, so to speak, they are not actually broadcast live in the sense of a media event (although, interestingly, as we shall see, critics confuse categories

⁵ Bourdon, “Live television is still alive”, 537.

⁶ Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life*.

⁷ Katz & Liebes “‘No more peace!’”.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁹ The term “disaster marathons”, coined by Tamar Liebes, suggests the lengthy, even obsessive, period of time that broadcasters devote to the coverage of traumatic events (Liebes, “Television’s disaster marathons”).

of liveness). This is largely because television technology was not yet as mobile and ubiquitous as it would become. Moreover, because television programming was still scheduled, the events are carried in prime time news reports rather than as they happened, coverage of which involves a good deal of preplanning. Nevertheless, these disruptive broadcasting events foreshadow the role that disaster, war and terror would come to play in television's future; they demonstrate the extent to which politicians and broadcasters clamoured for control of such footage; and they constitute important narrative turning points in South Africa's recent history and in the formation of a new national identity.

Silencing the Right Wing: Ventersdorp, De Klerk and the 1992 referendum

As seen in the previous chapter, while celebrated abroad, Mandela's release and the reforms introduced by De Klerk left many (particularly white) South Africans feeling uneasy. Although a multi-party forum, CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa), had been set up to pave the way for fully democratic governance in the country, progress was slow. There was increasing violence in the townships, extreme right-wing groups were gaining prominence and the leader of the white Conservative Party, Dr Andries Treurnicht, marked De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech as the beginning of the "Afrikaner's Third War of Liberation" after British annexation and the Anglo-Boer War.¹⁰ From July 1990, sporadic bombings targeting locations symbolic of reform started to erupt. The bombers chose sites such as a disused school intended for 400 children of returning ANC exiles, a museum, several NP offices, a magistrate's office, progressive schools on the verge of opening their doors to black pupils, two post offices (in Krugersdorp and Verwoerdburg), the headquarters of the Congress of South African Trade Unions and a police training centre. Black-frequented sites were also bombed, including a taxi rank and shebeen, giving the attacks an overtly racist slant and attracting media attention.

Rumours of Mandela's assassination gained momentum when Max du Preez's anti-apartheid Afrikaner newspaper *Vrye Weekblad* uncovered a right-wing plan to execute Mandela and De Klerk as well as a host of cabinet ministers (notably Defence

¹⁰ Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (London: C Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2003), 633.

Minister Magnus Malan and Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok). Two Afrikaans-language SABC newsreaders, Marietta Kruger and Riaan Cruywagen, were also on the hit list, suggesting that the broadcaster was perceived as a central instrument of the transition.¹¹ (There were similar attacks on Afrikaner media centres of power; in 1990 a bomb was placed outside the offices of *Beeld*, the paper that two years earlier had nailed its colours to the mast by calling for the release of Mandela; and one year later the offices of *Vrye Weekblad* itself were bombed in the midst of its exposure of the existence of a covert government hit squad operating out of a farm known as Vlakplaas.) According to an affidavit given by the informer Jan Johannes Smith, a former security policeman who infiltrated a group of right-wing militants, the assassinations were planned as a prelude to a right-wing coup.¹² In response, two extremist organisations, the notorious terrorist group the Wit Wolwe (White Wolves) and the Farmers' Army, offered a reward for Smith's capture.¹³ Between 1990 and 1992, dozens of white supremacists were arrested, linking the bombings to a handful of extremist Afrikaner organisations, including the Orde Boerevolk (Order of the Boer People), the Wit Wolwe and other radical groups, most of which were in turn linked in some way or another to the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB, Afrikaner Resistance Movement).

Throughout the late 1980s and 90s, the AWB attracted increasing media exposure, largely because of its charismatic leader, Eugene Terre'Blanche, whose persuasive oratory skills were frequently likened to those of earlier fascist leaders. (He himself was addressed simply as "The Leader" in AWB circles.) The group also had a relatively large membership (by 1992 it boasted between 5 000 and 10 000 members)¹⁴ and its striking red-and-black neo-Nazi branding attracted photojournalists, resulting in an array of images that was simultaneously frightening and mocking. Although the media

¹¹ Christopher S Wren, "The Mandela visit; Pretoria arrests 11 whites reportedly tied to plot to kill Mandela", *New York Times*, 23 June 1990 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/06/23/nyregion/mandela-visit-pretoria-arrests-11-whites-reportedly-tied-plot-kill-mandela.html> – viewed 1 September 2011), no page number.

¹² David Ottoway, *Chained Together: Mandela, De Klerk and the Struggle to Remake South Africa* (New York & Toronto: Times Books and Random House, 1993), 197.

¹³ United Press International, "Blasts demolish offices of South Africa's ruling party", *Los Angeles Times*, 24 June 1990 (Available at: http://articles.latimes.com/1990-06-24/news/mn-981_1_national-party – viewed 1 September 2011), no page number.

¹⁴ Ottoway, *Chained Together*, 198.

tended to caricature the AWB and its leader, Terre'Blanche seemed unable (or unwilling) to change his media image, and he and his followers remained hostile towards Western and liberal media platforms.¹⁵ While Max du Preez described him as the “South African politician who best understood how television worked”,¹⁶ his description of Terre'Blanche suggests that the leader's grasp of media framing was limited to cosmetic issues such as which camera angles made him appear taller. Terre'Blanche sometimes attempted – often to his detriment – to use the media to puff up his political importance, and the AWB became notorious for its disruption of public events.

One of the more successful attempts to dramatise the AWB's power was a conflict, captured live, between followers and police in Ventersdorp on 9 August 1991. Ventersdorp was Terre'Blanche's hometown and an AWB stronghold, and De Klerk was due to speak at Kommando Hall, an act that right-wingers perceived as provocative. Realising the potential for violence, what was originally planned as a public meeting was rescheduled as a private NP meeting for party supporters only.¹⁷ But, by then, it was too late, and the heavy police and media presence, together with the fact that De Klerk entered the town via helicopter, suggest that the NP and news agencies anticipated some sort of altercation. According to photojournalist Graeme Williams, who was present at the scene, “it was obvious what was going to happen”.¹⁸ This was most likely because of the AWB's much publicised (and successful) attempt to break up an NP meeting in Pietersburg in 1989 when Pik Botha was due to speak, a tactic for which the organisation was developing a reputation. In 1991, however, although the policemen clearly expected trouble, they were unprepared for the anger of the some 2 000 AWB supporters armed with rifles, pistols, tear gas canisters and knives.¹⁹ The event marked a historic encounter between the NP's police force and the paramilitary group, as it was one of the first occasions on which white policemen opened fire on white crowds. The policemen, who

¹⁵ See, for instance, Nick Broomfield's documentary *The Leader, His Driver and the Driver's Wife* (Lafayette Films, 1991).

¹⁶ Max du Preez, *Pale Native: Memories of a Renegade Reporter* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2003), 244.

¹⁷ SAPA, “Terre'Blanche calls for De Klerk to answer at his amnesty hearing”, 10 May 1999 (Available at: <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/media/1999/9905/p990510a.htm> – viewed 20 September 2011), no page number.

¹⁸ Williams, personal communication.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

had orders to “shoot to kill”, shot dead one AWB member and injured 36 others.²⁰ In the SABC news report the following evening, billed “Ventersdorp: Reaction”,²¹ comments from a variety of political representatives were given, all attempting to apportion blame for the incident. De Klerk stated, “It is a tragic moment for democracy in South Africa, but it is not a moment at which we can stop and stand still. We must move forward to democracy through negotiation”, while the AWB’s Piet “Skiet” Rudolph utilised discourse usually associated with black liberation movements, claiming, “It is quite obvious that by his [De Klerk’s] actions he has intensified our struggle”. Mandela, whose response to later events such as Boipatong and Bisho was not broadcast by the SABC, was also shown, declaring, “This culture of political intolerance on the part of the AWB is directly responsible for the tragedy.” The comments were followed up with sensational visual footage of angry members chanting “AWB”, while police dogs and white protestors clashed in a reversal of the stock apartheid footage of the 1980s in which black activists clashed with white policemen. Terre’Blanche was shown addressing policemen, demanding (in Afrikaans), “Where is De Klerk? I want to talk to him?” alongside images of bloodied protestors. Interestingly, the report diverted attention away from the NP–AWB conflict by focusing on black Ventersdorp residents, detailing how one of the AWB protestors was accidentally killed by a minibus taxi, whose occupants were then “attacked by the mob” and shot at, and also commenting on how the AWB “went on the rampage”, slashing car tyres, smashing windscreens and firing indiscriminately at passing taxis. In one clip, black residents were shown running, terrified, through the town centre. The aftermath of the incident was also detailed, with visuals of smashed police vehicles painted with the NP abbreviation transformed into a communist symbol as well as black patients, presumably victims of the violence, in hospitals. The incident is further

²⁰ There is some confusion over the fatalities. Most accounts claim that three AWB demonstrators died, but there is little clarity on how they were killed. The SABC news report the following evening claimed that there were two fatalities and that only one protestor was shot while another died in an accident involving a taxi that lost control in the ensuing mayhem. Danie Meyer claims that one protestor was shot and two died as a result of the minibus accident (*African Security Review*, 8 (1) 1999, 44). *Time* magazine cites three fatalities, one of whom was a black bystander and not a right-winger at all (Scott MacLeod, “South Africa: Extremes in black and white”, *Time*, 9 March 1992, Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,975037,00.html#ixzz1ZRbMJZh4> – viewed 30 September 2011).

²¹ SABC, News at Eight, 10 August 1991.

influenced by the news insert that follows it, “Right-wingers make use of extreme tactics to force a coloured woman from her home.” The SABC’s attempts to characterise the AWB as racist extremists were somewhat undermined by the slew of comments from white right-wing organisations, all blaming the NP for inciting violence by holding the meeting in the first place, a perception that was bolstered by the televised footage of De Klerk being escorted to a helicopter in a riot control vehicle.

Because of the AWB’s sensational media profile and the existence of footage of the conflict, the Ventersdorp incident received worldwide coverage. The fact that the confrontation was captured live led to an aggrandising of its importance (as was the case with many of the events of the transition); although in reality, the incident was little more than a half-hour protest that turned violent, its popular title in the media, the “Battle of Ventersdorp”, recalls earlier Boer struggles for self-determination and ties in with later right-wing attempts to memorialise the occasion, making martyrs of the dead (even though there is some confusion over how they died). Although the AWB did not exactly stage the conflict – the event “erupted from spontaneous combustion rather than careful planning”²² – the images of mayhem and footage of chanting right-wingers served their purposes well. The AWB itself saw the encounter as hugely significant; Piet Rudolph, the AWB’s secretary general, claimed that it was a turning point for the organisation,²³ and, in response to the incident, the general secretary of the Conservative Party (CP), Ferdi Hartzenberg, used the event to emphasise their claims that De Klerk was an illegitimate negotiator, stating on national television that “without the majority of the white people in South Africa, no agreement can last and be maintained in this country”. The loss of life and media coverage only served to encourage right-wingers, and as the *New York Times* pointed out at the time, although De Klerk’s decision to speak in Ventersdorp may have been meant as a challenge to the far right, the clash most likely cost him support among conservatives.²⁴

²² Ottoway, *Chained Together*, 198.

²³ *Ibid.* 199.

²⁴ Associated Press, “Two killed as apartheid supporters battle police at De Klerk speech”, 10 August 1991 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/08/10/world/2-killed-as-apartheid-supporters-battle-police-at-de-klerk-speech.html> – viewed 3 September 2011), no page number.

Yet, much like Terre'Blanche himself, many of the right-wing attacks had more bark than bite and they lacked careful strategising; they were intermittent and carried out by fragmented groups. Marina Ottoway argues that "an attempt to catalog and list all these groups would be futile not only because their importance was limited but also because like the pieces of a kaleidoscope they tended to endlessly split and reassemble in new combinations".²⁵ The greater fear was that the extremists would unite with more moderate but similarly dissatisfied Afrikaners and that their political alliances would secure the loyalty of the security and defence forces. There was a great deal of speculation about these possibilities and although Treurnicht tried to distance the CP from the bombings and attacks, there were claims that he knew about them all along.

In an attempt to snuff out the attacks and to redefine the perception of their seriousness, De Klerk announced in his parliamentary address in January 1992 that a multiracial referendum would precede any major changes in the country. As seen with the Battle of Ventersdorp, however, what was really needed to silence dissenting white South Africans was an all-white referendum, and the opportunity to hold one arose a few months later when the NP was defeated by the CP in a series of by-elections in constituencies that were previously considered to be safe NP areas.²⁶

The most serious of these was the Potchefstroom defeat, when the CP attained a surprising 56% victory on 19 February 1992. The result was a blow for several reasons: it was widely perceived that, without the working-class and agricultural elements of towns such as Ventersdorp, this middle-class town would give a true reflection of the feelings of Afrikaners; De Klerk had acquired his education in the university town; and Potchefstroom was also the only constituency in which the NP had increased its majority over the CP in the previous election. The victory gave Treurnicht's increasingly vocal Conservative Party, which at the time held a third of the seats in parliament, the opportunity to call the negotiations into question, threatening to derail CODESA. In response, De Klerk took a dramatic risk, declaring on 20 February 1992 that a referendum would be held for the white electorate to determine whether or not he had a

²⁵ Marina Ottoway, *South Africa: The Struggle for a New Order* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1993), 79.

²⁶ Christopher Landsberg, *Quiet Diplomacy: International Politics and South Africa's Transition* (Cape Town: Jacana Media, 2004), 115.

mandate to continue negotiations on their behalf. He promised that, in the event of a “no” vote, he and the NP would resign, forcing a new all-white parliamentary election. Treurnicht initially accepted the challenge and then reconsidered, fearing that the NP would have the greater advantage because of its perceived ability to manipulate the state broadcasting service.²⁷ The CP then agreed to participate on condition that there would be equal access to television and radio and that they would have the right to help phrase an “honest and clear” referendum question,²⁸ with the power of veto over its formulation.²⁹ When the NP refused these demands, the CP nearly split over the issue, but eventually capitulated. The NP went on to devise the question: “Do you support continuation of the reform process which the state president began on February 2, 1990, and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiation?” The answer options were a simple “yes” or “no”.

While the referendum in essence posed a broader question that influenced a number of political stakeholders (even if, as the ANC rightly noted, those most affected by the outcome were unable to participate), it played out as a contest between the CP and the NP, who emerged as the two principal campaigners. The campaign was the first of its kind in the country. De Klerk “undertook a successful American-style, countrywide ‘hearts and minds’ tour to convince voters through personal contact to vote Yes”.³⁰ This was supplemented by advertisements in national newspapers and television advertising. There was much media focus on the referendum, and the international community came out in overwhelming support of a “yes” vote, acting as powerful agents in South Africa’s transition. For the first time since its victory in 1948, the NP government welcomed foreign interference, using global opinion effectively in its pre-referendum campaigning.³¹ Both the United States and England warned that a “no” vote would see the imposition of hard-line sanctions and further isolation. Sweden, Denmark and

²⁷ Arthur Kemp, *Victory or Violence: The Story of the AWB of South Africa* (Burlington: Ostara Publications, 2008), 155.

²⁸ Cited in Christopher S Wren, “De Klerk’s job on the line in white vote”, 21 February 1992, *New York Times* (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/21/world/de-klerk-s-job-on-the-line-in-white-vote.html> – accessed 26 August 2011), no page number.

²⁹ Johan van Rooyen, *Hard Right: The New White Power in South Africa* (London & New York: IB Taurus, 1994), 151.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

³¹ Landsberg, *Quiet Diplomacy*, 116.

Norway all promised a further lifting of sanctions in the event of a “yes” vote, and even Switzerland – in an unusual departure from its policy of neutrality – threatened to impose sanctions if the white electorate stalled negotiations.³² Campaigning for the election happened to coincide with South Africa’s controversial participation in the 1992 Cricket World Cup (see Chapter 6), held in Australia, and it was widely expected that the Springboks would not be permitted to compete in the semi-finals should the white electorate vote “no”. De Klerk also warned that forthcoming visits from the Australian and New Zealand rugby teams would most likely be cancelled if the referendum results were not positive, harnessing the popular support for sport to achieve his political aims.

The better-resourced “yes” campaign was spearheaded by the NP and supported by the Democratic Party (DP),³³ the international community, sports personalities, a number of prominent artists and celebrities, many large companies as well as most of the major newspapers. The campaign adopted a three-pronged approach: some messages echoed the threats and promises of the international community; others associated a “no” vote with extreme right-wing paramilitants, exploiting the negative media image of organisations such as the AWB; and others took advantage of the poor economic and political situation by suggesting that a “yes” vote would result in future prosperity. For example, one advert made use of an image of an overgrown cricket pitch to show the negative consequences of a “no” vote.³⁴ (As John Nauright points out “the return of South Africa to international sport was a tangible carrot in which immediate results could be seen.”³⁵) Some advertisements and posters sported a balaclava-clad, gun-wielding figure in a threatening pose alongside a Swastika-like symbol and slogans declaring, “Free with every CP vote, the AWB and all they stand for”³⁶ and “*You can stop this man*”. And a number of (mainly DP) posters utilised positive messages, simply encouraging whites to vote “yes” for “jobs” and “peace”.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ The Democratic Party – previously known as the Progressive Party, the Progressive Reform Party and the Progressive Federal Party – served as the main opposition to the NP until 1987, when the CP took its place. Most of DP’s supporters were liberal white English-speaking South Africans and the party supported the notion of power-sharing under a federal constitution.

³⁴ Adrian Guelke, *South Africa in Transition: The Misunderstood Miracle* (London & New York: IB Taurus, 1999), 141.

³⁵ Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 164.

³⁶ Van Rooyen, *Hard Right*, 154.

The “no” campaign was led by the CP, supported, most likely to their detriment, by the AWB, the Boerestaat Party (the Boer State Party) and the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP – the Reconstituted National Party). Former president PW Botha also came out in support of a “no” vote, claiming that negotiations would see South Africa being governed by an ANC–SACP alliance.³⁷ Importantly, since it alleviated the perception that “no” campaign only secured white support, the campaign also secured the implicit blessing of Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the popular Zulu leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Although he did not come out in overt support of the “no” vote, he used the referendum as a means of attacking the NP–ANC alliance, claiming that the government was “in bed” with the ANC, a charge that became central to the CP’s campaign,³⁸ which played on minority fears of ANC rule and characterised De Klerk as a “sell-out”. In opposition to the “yes” campaign, the CP printed posters with slogans such as “Stop Nat sellout to ANC”, and “*Nee vir ANC*” (“No to ANC”) and “*FW weer glo? Nooit!*” (“Believe FW again?” Never!). Just as the “yes” campaign capitalised on the desire to join the international community, so the CP made the most of Afropessimist predictions of chaos and misrule, printing advertisements declaring that a “yes” vote would see South Africa joining the ranks of the impoverished “communistic” countries in “darkest Africa”.³⁹ The SABC covered a news conference in Pretoria, in which Treurnicht, HNP leader Jaap Marais, AWB Eugene Terre’Blanche and Boerestaat leader Robert van Tonder all called for unity among white opposition.⁴⁰ By this stage, however, the display of all-white, all-male Afrikaner speakers was at odds with the changing South African zeitgeist – a trend that Treurnicht seemed to anticipate by attempting to include other potentially dissatisfied intra-national groups. A “yes” vote, he argued, would not mean an end to unrest, because “there would still be whites, Zulus, and other nations in South

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Cited in Annette Strauss, “The 1992 referendum in South Africa”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 31 (2) (June), 1993, 340 (originally: *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, Kimberley, 13 March 1992).

⁴⁰ Some of the coverage of the conference has been uploaded on YouTube (although the date is erroneously referred to as 1989 instead of 1992); see: “SAUK: HNP, BSP en AWB pleit om Regse eenheid – 1989” (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjgjH3mHxRk> – viewed 28 December 2011).

Africa who would demand self-determination”.⁴¹ (As it turns out and as this chapter later discusses, he was correct in this prediction.)

The “yes” campaign responded by employing “scare tactics and doomsday scenarios with great effect”,⁴² playing on more immediate fears of the potential unrest that a “no” vote might trigger. An NP spokesperson declared that “a ‘no’ vote would send a message to blacks that whites were not interested in their problems and did not need them” and that “if you want to say something, go back to the armed struggle and mass action”.⁴³ Similarly, a print advertisement claimed that if a “no” vote prevailed citizens wouldn’t “have to wait for the results of a white general election to find out how they [presumably fellow black South Africans] will react. It guarantees chaos.”⁴⁴ The campaign also spoke to moderate fears of aggressive forms of Afrikaner nationalism and, in an allusion to AWB leader Eugene Terre’Blanche, a *Business Day* editorial claimed that the radicals would not be satisfied with Treurnicht as their leader, since they wanted a “charismatic leader, a *führer* or a *duce*”.⁴⁵

The “no” campaign was dealt a further blow when South African branches of major multinational corporations such as Anglo American, Barlow Rand, BP, Caltex, First National Bank, Toyota, Delta Motor Corporation, Murray & Roberts, Shell and Standard Bank all deviated from the traditional practice of keeping politics and business separate and appealed to their employees to vote “yes”.⁴⁶ Some predicted that a “no” vote would result in job losses for their employees. For instance, the chairman of Volkswagen speculated in *Business Day* that the sanctions that would accompany a “no” vote would jeopardise the jobs of many of those dependent on the company.⁴⁷

In addition, although the ANC was uncomfortable with the idea of a racially exclusive referendum, Mandela used his influence to back the “yes” campaign, mainly by

⁴¹ Cited in Strauss, “The 1992 referendum in South Africa”, 341 (originally: cited in *Beeld*, 17 March 1992).

⁴² Van Rooyen, *Hard Right*, 153.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁴⁴ Thomas A Moriarty, *Finding the Words: A Rhetorical History of South Africa’s Transition from Apartheid to Democracy* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 73.

⁴⁵ Cited in Strauss, “The 1992 referendum in South Africa”, 344 (originally: *Business Day*, 11 March 1992).

⁴⁶ Strauss, “The 1992 referendum in South Africa”, 343.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (originally: *Business Day*, 12 March 1992).

assuring nervous whites that negotiations would not result in civil servant job loss for whites and/or rampant nationalisation. In an interview published in the *Star*, he claimed that “President Robert Mugabe’s plans to nationalise farm land in Zimbabwe had no bearing on the situation in South Africa” and that the “whole policy of nationalisation was under review”.⁴⁸ He was joined in his support for the “yes” vote by many other prominent black leaders.

With the support of the international community, the South African media, the majority of black South Africans as well as big business, the “yes” campaign enjoyed an overwhelming victory, winning nearly 70% of the vote. Voter turnout was just over 85% – the highest for an election or referendum in decades⁴⁹ – and the only constituency out of 15 in which the “no” vote dominated was Pietersburg (now Polokwane) in the northern Transvaal, with 57%.

De Klerk ensured maximum exposure of his post-referendum speech, delivering it from the steps of Tuynhuys – the presidential residence in Cape Town – leaving nobody in any doubt about the legitimacy of his authority. The speech itself described the occasion as historic, lauding the white electorate for their role in “closing the book on apartheid”:

It does not happen often that in one generation a nation gets the opportunity to rise above itself. The white electorate has risen above itself in this referendum. The white electorate has reached out, through this landslide win for the YES-vote, to all our compatriots, to all other South Africans, and the message of this Referendum is: Today, in a certain sense, is the real birthday of the real new South African nation.⁵⁰

The 1992 referendum was a triumph for De Klerk for two reasons. Firstly, most analysts agree that it had the desired effect of demoralising white conservatives, compelling them to reassess their proposal for an independent Afrikaner homeland or *volkstaat*⁵¹ as well as

⁴⁸ Cited in Strauss, “The 1992 referendum in South Africa”, 347 (originally: cited in *Star*, 10 March 1992).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁵⁰ FW de Klerk, Referendum Results Speech, Tuynhuys, Cape Town, 18 March 1992.

⁵¹ The proposal for the establishment of a *volkstaat* or “people’s state” came from Afrikaner nationalists wishing to maintain self-determination in the “new” South Africa.

the logic of continuing to shun negotiations about the country's political future.⁵² In addition, as David Ottoway points out, "the results totally undermined any sense of moral legitimacy for the armed resistance the right-wing might have thought it enjoyed among whites,"⁵³ and the AWB fell silent for some time after the referendum. When Terre'Blanche sought to reassemble right-wing groups at a special congress in Klerksdorp three months later, his threats and promises sounded "exceedingly hollow".⁵⁴ Although the referendum did not quite close the chapter on right-wing opposition – in fact their more dramatic attempts to overturn reform were still to come – they were increasingly portrayed as blustering buffoons in the media and it was clear that although they posed a terrorist threat, the chance of full-scale rebellion against the process was diminishing.

Secondly, Ottoway claims that the referendum served as a display of strength at the negotiating table. ANC officials "were terrified by the whole referendum spectacle" because "they saw for the first time just how masterful de Klerk and his party could be in campaigning" and "they realised what they were likely to face when it became time to compete with the NP in the New South Africa".⁵⁵ The president used the opportunity – in post-referendum negotiations and in the speech itself – to insist on greater co-operation from black South Africans, stating,

[T]he result also asks acceptance by the leaders of all the other population groups and also asks them to reach out in the knowledge that it is only through co-operation, only by meeting one another, only through giving and taking, that we shall be able to negotiate an accord on which long term stability and security and prosperity may be built.⁵⁶

De Klerk gained confidence from the result since it positioned him as the undisputed leader of the white half of the negotiating team, not a claim Mandela could make in the midst of escalating conflict between ANC and Inkatha supporters in KwaZulu and in East

⁵² Guelke, *South Africa in Transition*, 78.

⁵³ Ottoway, *Chained Together*, 203.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 200.

⁵⁶ De Klerk, Referendum Results Speech.

Rand townships such as Kathlehong, Tembisa, Thokoza and Vosloorus, as well as increasing unrest in the homelands. A *Financial Mail* report described the shifting power balance at the time:

De Klerk appears to be confident ... and is apparently once again negotiating from a position of strength ... But for Mandela ... some hard decisions loom: how much longer can he tolerate open defiance of the official position from regional and junior leaders? If he fails to muzzle or expel them, his own credibility will be affected – and De Klerk's could well be enhanced.⁵⁷

Boipatong: A Massacre Eclipsed by Its Aftermath

Indeed, Mandela's authority faced a host of challenges; in addition to the negative publicity around his wife's 1992 trial for the earlier kidnapping and assault of Stompie Sepei, unrest in the townships continued and internal conflict between hardliners and moderates within the ANC compromised the party's position. In addition, just as right-wing insurgency had unsettled the standing of the NP, so Zulu nationalism unnerved the ANC, which needed to legitimise its status as *the* heavyweight in the negotiating team, particularly since its following was based on estimates of support rather than statistics gathered at a nationwide poll. In an attempt to put pressure on the NP to force an interim government, the ANC called for mass action in the form of a stayaway on 16 June 1992, in memory of the Soweto uprising. Rallies were held around the country, and estimates suggest that over 80% of the black population participated. The mass action also served as a means of deflecting attention away from the ANC's internal divisions and encouraging a public display of ANC unity. According to James Simpson, the NP government and the IFP opposed the ANC's call for mass action, warning that it could encourage unrest, and, even before the scheduled day, "all three jostled for position on the political stage by blaming any violence that might occur during the mass action on their opponents".⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Cited in Strauss, "The 1992 referendum in South Africa", 358.

⁵⁸ James GR Simpson, "The Boipatong massacre and South Africa's democratic transition" (MA thesis, African Studies Centre, Leiden University, 2010), 18.

As it happened, the mass action of 16 June did coincide with an outbreak of violence. Though conflict between Inkatha and the ANC had been intermittent since the late 1980s, matters came to a head in an ANC township on the evening of 17 June 1992, a day after the stayaway, when heavily armed men killed 46 ANC members in what became known as the “Boipatong massacre”. The perpetrators were Zulu hostel dwellers from the neighbouring township of KwaMadala, whom the ANC claimed were members of Inkatha. The so-called “black-on-black” violence of events such as Boipatong initially played into the NP’s hands, strengthening their appearance of unity in the face of fragmented opposition. In addition, increasing violence strengthened the perception (not unfounded) that, as leaders, Buthelezi and Mandela were unable to control their own supporters. But while Boipatong might have been framed as a threat to the ANC’s authority, and/or a direct result of its own call for mass action, in the end it proved to be far more damaging to Inkatha and especially the NP. Boipatong is remembered as a pivotal moment of South Africa’s transition, not only because of the high number of deaths of unarmed persons (including a pregnant woman and a baby), but also because of shocking accusations against the South African Police (SAP), which the ANC claimed assisted in the attack. The accusation drew strength from what was termed the “Inkathagate” scandal of July 1991, when the *Weekly Mail* revealed, in the midst of NP protestations to the contrary, that the SAP had secretly been providing funds to Inkatha. The charge of police complicity in Boipatong thus built upon this existing controversy.

Before this reading became prevalent, however, there were a number of contesting interpretations of the sequence of events, and, as with all incidents of violence, Boipatong was susceptible to a variety of explanations. Simpson and Rian Malan⁵⁹ argue that the meaning of Boipatong remained unfixed until ANC leaders ushered township residents towards an interpretation that served its political purposes. “The Boipatong massacre,” Simpson argues, “left in its wake a new opening, an empty metaphor waiting to be infused with symbolism. Interested parties plunged into this opening, colliding with each other on the political stage in a bid to saturate it with their own meanings.”⁶⁰ Indeed, Joe Slovo, Cyril Ramaphosa, Desmond Tutu, FW de Klerk, Winnie Mandela and Nelson

⁵⁹ Rian Malan, “A question of spin”, *Frontiers of Freedom*, Second Quarter, 1999, 26–35.

⁶⁰ Simpson, “The Boipatong massacre”, 18.

Mandela all made their way to Boipatong shortly after the attack in an attempt to both quell and capitalise on the violence. Though other parties also tried to use the killings to improve their political standing, the ANC, Simpson goes on to conclude, was the first to capitalise on the situation:

The ANC was quick to take control of the media's interaction with the people of Boipatong. On the morning of the 18th, ANC officials went around Boipatong instructing residents not to talk to police or outsiders. Those wishing to make statements were asked to report to a local school, where they found representatives of the HRC [Human Rights Commission] and Peace Action. Both organisations monitored township violence and included ANC-supporting members. Journalists arriving in Boipatong were guided around the township and introduced to witnesses, including witnesses who backed claims of police complicity.⁶¹

While Inkatha was singled out as the main aggressor, this accusation was problematic. Some months earlier Buthelezi and Mandela had signed a peace accord, and Buthelezi officially distanced his party from the killings, leaving the unsatisfying impression that the attack was yet another example of the kind of “revenge” violence that was coming to characterise interactions between IFP and ANC members. In answer to a query about Inkatha's role later posed by *Time* magazine, Buthelezi denied any official links:

We are interested that the people who were responsible be tracked down and punished. I have never orchestrated violence, or taken one decision for anyone to be killed even on one occasion. The fact that members of Inkatha have been sucked into the violence is something that I regret.⁶²

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶² Scott MacLeod/Ulundi Mangosuthu Buthelezi, “Buthelezi: I have never orchestrated violence”, *Time*, 6 July 1992 (Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,975913,00.html#ixzz1XSwp6avw> – viewed 11 September 2011), no page number.

Initial police investigations concluded that there was no evidence of party involvement,⁶³ but because most KwaMadala residents were also IFP members it was widely believed that Inkatha was responsible. But this accusation was elided by the more serious allegation that police vehicles had transported and aided the perpetrators. Subsequent investigations contradicted this charge and the actual sequence of events remains mysterious to this day. An independent inquiry set up to investigate police activities condemned police inaction but did not find that they had been actively involved in the killings.⁶⁴ Several years later, the TRC Special Hearings into the incident shed no further light on who had masterminded the massacre,⁶⁵ with only one out of 16 amnesty applicants linking the killings to senior IFP officials and police members.⁶⁶ Simpson insists that “charges of state complicity were highly contentious at the time that they were made and ... this evidence remains decidedly inconclusive”.⁶⁷ While this may be so, and while the ANC may well have been tactical in its exploitation of the massacre, events *after* Boipatong played into the ANC’s hand, and the charge of police collusion was boosted by the NP’s own actions a few days later.

In response to the developing narrative, De Klerk embarked on a visit to the township on 20 June, planning to hold a news conference and meet with bereaved family members in a show of support for victims. But what was most likely planned as a public relations affair ended in disaster. Having been warned not to enter the township, De Klerk travelled in an armoured vehicle accompanied by a bus carrying members of the press. But what he found upon arriving did not match his expectations for the visit. An antagonistic community awaited, bearing placards with slogans such as “To hell with De Klerk and your Inkatha murderers”, “We want police protection not murders”, and “De

⁶³ “Police blame Zulu migrants for massacre”, *Washington Post*, 27 June 1992 (Available at: http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1992-06-27/news/9202160673_1_boipatong-massacre-van-der-merwe-massacre-victims – viewed 10 September 2011), no page number.

⁶⁴ PAJ Waddington, “Report of the inquiry into the police response to, and investigation of, events in Boipatong on 17 June 1992” (Available at: <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02039/04lv02133/05lv02139/06lv02146> – viewed 10 September 2011), no page number.

⁶⁵ SAPA, “Boipatong amnesty hearings: more intrigue than information”, 13 August 1998 (Available at: <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/media/1998/9808/s980813a.htm> – viewed 11 September 2011), no page number.

⁶⁶ In spite of this, 13 applicants were granted amnesty, amidst much controversy.

⁶⁷ Simpson, “The Boipatong massacre”, 3.

Klerk, kill apartheid, not us”.⁶⁸ The situation was so dire that the president was unable to exit his vehicle and deliver his planned address. After he departed, violent confrontation broke out between the police and community members. While police admitted to shooting one man (who was allegedly about to attack a policeman with a panga), Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)⁶⁹ leaders claimed that three persons lost their lives.⁷⁰ Community members became enraged after the shooting, and shots were fired when a police officer attempted to remove the slain man, generating a return volley of shotgun fire.

In his later reaction to events, De Klerk despaired that news of his visit had been “leaked to the press”⁷¹ – hardly the case, since journalists were always intended to record his actions. The ANC had already issued responses to what they termed his insensitive “crocodile tear” visit beforehand;⁷² his decision to enter Boipatong was no secret. De Klerk also bemoaned the fact that the response to his visit had been “efficiently planned”, and here perhaps he was right. The ANC and the PAC, accustomed to staging protest for media purposes, appeared to have groomed the community for the president’s visit, generating highly charged negative press coverage.

Indeed, De Klerk’s public image took a beating. The full series of events was shown on television news that evening with visuals of De Klerk driving through the angry crowds chanting “Go Away! Go Away!”, escorted by police Casspirs, unable to even exit his vehicle, alongside signs reading “*De Klerk, jy is ’n moordenaar*” (“De Klerk, you are a murderer”). In an emotional clip, an unnamed grieving woman angrily denounces his visit, asking, “What is it going to help of De Klerk coming here? Is it going to awaken all those people who have died here?”⁷³

⁶⁸ Sparks, *Tomorrow Is Another Country*, 110.

⁶⁹ The Pan Africanist Congress was a banned anti-apartheid organisation formed by breakaway ANC members in 1959. The party was influenced by the Africanist ideals of Kwame Nkrumah.

⁷⁰ SAPA, “Boipatong police fire on crowd”, 20 June 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9206.22> – viewed 10 September 2011), no page number.

⁷¹ Susan Thomas, “Secret of my visit leaked to the press, says De Klerk”, SAPA, 20 June 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9206.22> – viewed 11 September 2011), no page number.

⁷² ANC, Press Release: “We demand action, not De Klerk’s crocodile tears”, 20 June 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9206.22> – viewed 10 September 2011), no page number.

⁷³ SABC, News at Eight, 20 June 1992.

De Klerk tried to recover his dignity by holding a press conference in Vereeniging immediately after the event, where he condemned the violence sparked by his visit, chastised the ANC for suggesting that the government was responsible for the initial massacre and announced the possibility of reinstating a state of emergency. Interestingly, he commented also on the potential effects of the televising of his visit, asking rhetorically: “How can we expect them to act differently, if they see on television, leading members of the ANC associating themselves with posters saying De Klerk or Kriel [Hernus Kriel, Minister of Law and Order] wanted for murder?” But these political tit-for-tat comments were out of touch with the tragic events of the previous few days; arguably, what was required at the time was a simple expression of sympathy for those who had lost loved ones. The press conference thus served to diminish De Klerk’s stature, linking him with earlier oppressive eras and the rhetoric of leaders such as PW Botha.



Figure 4.1: Police clash with Bopaitong residents (photo: Greg Marinovich), 20 June 1992

But it was perhaps the violent televised conflict between the police force and the community following De Klerk’s visit – unplanned, unpredictable and uncontrollable – which was most damaging and which coincidentally reinforced the ANC’s

narrative of earlier events in the township. Much of the interaction was captured by photojournalists, caught on camera and

televised on the news insert. Photojournalist Greg Marinovich took several photographs of police intimidation and described the process of positioning himself in order to acquire what became the best remembered image of the violence (see Figure 4.1): “I had stupidly been on the wrong side – with the residents – but somehow I got behind the police line and photographed them firing round after round at the fleeing people.”⁷⁴ Marinovich’s description suggests a preconceived idea of how events should be framed, one that didn’t

⁷⁴ Greg Marinovich and João Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War* (London: William Heinemann, 2000), 80.

favour police presence in the township. Indeed, the televised news report concludes with horrific footage of the slain man who allegedly sparked the conflict between policemen and community members as well as visuals of bloodied and weeping residents caught up in the violence that followed De Klerk's visit. The reporter also speculates about the necessity of the police decision to open fire. The insert illustrated the very real problem of community perceptions of police brutality.

The news report was also at pains to demonstrate the role of the (mainly white) SABC reporters, and anchor Veronica van der Westhuizen notes, alongside an image of a reporter and resident embracing, that journalists who were trapped in the shooting "burst into tears". She also remarks on the role that reporters played in helping residents injured by police, a comment that is accompanied by a visual clip of a journalist kneeling over a community member. The SABC's own attempts to emphasise their standing in the community of Boipatong, the president's harsh press conference response and the sensational "live" footage of policemen clashing with wailing residents all combined to create a PR disaster for De Klerk and the NP.

The official inquiry into Boipatong made use of recordings in an attempt to determine the sequence of events, concluding, somewhat unsatisfactorily, that either the policemen or community members were less than truthful about what had happened:

They [the police] assert that no casualties have been traced from this incident and that television pictures showing casualties lying on the ground had been fabricated by members of the crowd feigning death and injury. The police also allege that members of the press were actively inciting the crowd.⁷⁵

The images of what appeared to be police brutality (whether staged or not) added weight to Mandela's complaint that De Klerk's police cared little for black security and led credence to the eyewitness accounts of police involvement three nights prior. Tainted by decades of footage of police action against anti-apartheid uprising in the townships, the images of policemen opening fire on angry, unarmed blacks recalled the oppressiveness of the apartheid state and cemented the ANC's interpretation of the massacre. While the

⁷⁵ Waddington Report, no page number.

core events of Boipatong had occurred three days earlier, these remained under cover of darkness because they were never recorded or filmed, and, in the end, it was the “live” images of De Klerk’s aborted visit to the township that came to be associated with the massacre. The actual events of Boipatong were overshadowed by the “live” recording of the later occurrences.

Mandela’s visit to Boipatong the following day contrasted starkly with De Klerk’s excursion to the township. He received a jubilant welcome from around 2 000 supporters at a militant rally where he announced his decision to suspend talks with the NP government. In spite of his triumphant reception, however, Boipatong still presented a problem to the ANC, largely because residents sought official approval for further revenge attacks. Youths at the rally shouted out demands for arms and held up placards declaring, “Mandela, give us permission to kill our enemies.”⁷⁶ The reaction in Boipatong illustrates some of the challenges facing Mandela during the negotiating period: firstly, he was required to engage in peace talks and project an image of future leadership to the global community, but this rhetoric often conflicted with the more radical demands of his impatient supporters; secondly, reporters grew increasingly aware of this and began to question his leadership ability.⁷⁷

Marching Towards Negotiation: The Bisho Massacre

While the CODESA talks had been precarious for some time, the Boipatong Massacre was one of the main reasons why Mandela suspended talks. But later events such as the Bisho Massacre awakened the ANC to the need to push ahead with negotiations even though the incident saw blame again being apportioned to the NP government. While the televising of the “massacre” fed into existing negative perceptions of the apartheid-established Bantustans, and once again fostered international sympathy for the ANC, the party also began to realise that there were limits to this form of framing. The ANC’s part in what was termed the “Bisho massacre” emphasised the need for an expiry date to the violence in South Africa.

⁷⁶ Hilka Birns, “ANC suspends talks with the government”, SAPA, 21 June 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9206.22> – viewed 10 September 2011), no page number.

⁷⁷ For instance, in a press conference following his Boipatong rally, he was quizzed about supporters’ calls for a more militant political approach (see Hilka Birns, “ANC suspends talks with the government”).

In early September 1992, the ANC sent a memorandum to De Klerk demanding that Brigadier Oupa Gqozo – the dictator-leader of the Ciskei, one of the apartheid government’s supposedly independent homelands – be replaced with an interim administration that would oversee the area’s reincorporation into South Africa. Many of the homeland leaders, wishing to retain their political power as state leaders, did not want to participate in negotiations. De Klerk refused the ANC’s request, claiming that the Ciskei was a self-governing state over which he had no jurisdiction. On 7 September 1992, a group of around 80 000 ANC, SACP and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) protestors demonstrated at a stadium just outside Bisho, the Ciskeian capital. The protest ended in bloodshed when a group of radicals, led by Ronnie Kasrils, broke away in transgression of the demonstration agreement and entered Bisho. Ciskei Defence Force soldiers opened fire on the marchers, killing 28 ANC supporters and one of their own soldiers, and injuring over 200. While the subsequent inquiry into the killings condemned Kasrils and others for their irresponsible leadership (and the ANC became concerned about its apparent loss of control over the mass action campaign), Gqozo’s defence force was strongly condemned for firing at the crowd without sufficient provocation.

This sentiment was not highlighted in the broadcasting of the event. The SABC TV1 8 p.m. broadcast referred to the incident as a clash between the Ciskei army and “oprukkende” (“riotous”) ANC supporters and opened with a statement on the government’s attempts to restore calm in the region:

Die regering het ’n kompanjie soldate in Ciskei ontplooi om nywerhede te beskerm en plundery te voorkom na vandag se voorval waarin 23 mense dood is. Die kantoor van die Staatpresident sê die stap word gedoen met inagneming van die veiligheidstoestand in Ciskei en met die toestemming van die land se regering.

(“The government has deployed a company of soldiers in Ciskei to protect industries and to prevent plundering after today’s incident in which 23 people were killed. The office of the State President said the step was taken in light of the security situation in Ciskei and with the agreement of the country’s government.”)⁷⁸

⁷⁸ SABC, News at Eight, 7 September 1992.

Before showing images of the violence in Bisho, reports (on both CCV and TV1) had been careful to screen several government officials' views on the event, including statements from De Klerk, Pik Botha and Hernus Kriel, all of whom blamed the ANC for the tragedy. De Klerk claimed that "the role of the South African government has been one to avoid just this", while Pik Botha expressed concern about how the violence would be received by the outside world – an increasing concern during the transition period. Kriel was more direct, stating: "*Die ANC moet die direkte skuld vir die mense wat dood dra*" ("The ANC must carry the direct blame for the people who died"). Although most of the casualties were ANC members, only one ANC official – Steve Tshwete – was interviewed.

While the SABC had made an effort to emphasise its impartiality in its coverage of De Klerk's post-Boipatong visit, there was much criticism of its reporting on Bisho, with the Campaign for Open Media (COM) releasing a full report on the broadcaster's framing of the event, claiming the "while Gqoza was murdering peaceful marchers, the SABC was murdering the truth" and arguing that the broadcaster had been unclear about who was responsible for the massacre.⁷⁹ The COM and the Anti-Censorship Group claimed that both the English and Afrikaans TV1 broadcasts as well as the CCV news insert had been selective in airing reactions to the event, paying little attention to the ANC's position even though the party had made itself available for comment. "By omitting crucial facts and eye-witness versions of the event, SABC news has manipulated the incident into a politically-motivated indictment of the ANC, and has barely stopped short of absolving the Ciskei government of all responsibility for the sections [*sic*] of its army."⁸⁰ While the COM's media-monitoring methodology later came under fire from several fronts, these criticisms of the broadcaster's treatment of Bisho were widely shared; the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) also protested against the SABC's framing of Bisho as "communist-inspired and demonic", demonstrating outside the

⁷⁹ Campaign for Open Media, "SABC and the massacre" (Available at: <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02424/04lv02730/05lv03005/06lv03006/07lv03030/08lv03036.htm> – viewed 30 September 2011), no page number.

⁸⁰ Bronwyn Keene-Young/Anti-Censorship Action Group, "Bisho Massacre: Campaign for Open Media statement on SABC coverage", 8 September 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9209.09> – viewed 30 September 2011), no page number.

broadcaster's offices and claiming that the media had encouraged the public to believe that the organisers of the march were ultimately responsible for the deaths.⁸¹

In spite of the SABC's apparent attempts to criticise the ANC, Bisho ended up redounding to the party's credit, particularly on a global level. While the COM report made much of the broadcaster's efforts to create an ideological context for the reception of the images of disaster by opening the news inserts with official government comment, arguably these official comments were no match for the visual imagery of the massacre that followed. Since 1976, the broadcaster had been notoriously suspicious of the audience effects of visual imagery, and the SABC's decision to screen these *at all* should be seen in this context.

Images of injured, bloodied protestors evoked widespread sympathy for the ANC, capturing, as it did, the aggression of the armed Ciskeian Defence Force, the panic of unarmed protestors running for cover and the slain victims of the aftermath. Moreover, as with Boipatong, there was little the NP could do to dispel the perception of the violence in Bisho as a catastrophe of its own making, the direct result of its separate development policies. Even the CP blamed the government – although for different reasons – determining that the NP should never have allowed the ANC to demonstrate in the first place.⁸² As Adrian Guelke points out, the widespread international perception of the homelands as illegitimate gave the ANC the moral high ground, again weakening the NP's position:

The televising of the demonstration and its aftermath ensured an extremely hostile response in the outside world, for the most part directed against the South African government since international opinion had long held (rightly or wrongly) that the Ciskei's independence was nominal.⁸³

⁸¹ SAPA, "ICT march protests against SABC coverage of Bisho Massacre", 17 September 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9209.18> – viewed 20 September 2011), no page number.

⁸² SAPA, "Government is responsible for Bisho massacre: CP", 30 September 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9210.01> – viewed 19 September 2011), no page number.

⁸³ Adrian Guelke, "Violence and the South African transition", *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 4, 1993, 62.

In addition, at the funeral, which also received widespread international coverage, the message was clear: mourners used the occasion to express their view of events, with some carrying arresting posters with images of De Klerk and Oupa Gqozo and the caption, “The Butchers of Bisho ... They must go now” (see Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2: Mourners protest at a mass funeral held in honour of Bisho casualties, 18 September 1992 (Photographer: Selywn Tait)

The massacre had the added “benefit” of strengthening Mandela’s position within his own party, silencing internal resistance to collaboration and giving him more freedom to press ahead with negotiations. The ANC was also beginning to realise that global exposure to images of violence, while initially strengthening their

position at the bargaining table, were beginning to eat away at the South African economy, meaning that there would be little left for the ANC to inherit should the situation continue. This, together with the loss of life in Bisho, compelled Mandela to relax the demands he had been making before agreeing to the resumption of talks with the NP government. Many critics identify Bisho as a turning point of the transition, since it forced De Klerk and Mandela to “recognize their mutual dependency” because “if violence went out of control, both would be losers”.⁸⁴ Shortly after the tragedy, the two resumed talks in earnest.

Chris Hani’s Assassination and the Making of a President

After Bisho, De Klerk and Mandela found themselves evenly matched; as Frederik van Zyl Slabbert remarked, “neither could land a block-out blow and, in the end, they had to lean on one another to stay upright”.⁸⁵ Events in 1993 saw a shift in the power balance

⁸⁴ Sparks, *Tomorrow Is Another Country*, 152.

⁸⁵ Paraphrased in *ibid.*

when Chris Hani was assassinated. Mandela's role in the aftermath of Hani's death revealed the extent to which De Klerk depended upon him and silenced those who were doubtful of his leadership capability. Mandela's response to the killing also demonstrated the extent to which he had begun, very successfully, to project a dual image, charming global (and white) audiences on the one hand and appealing to black militants on the other. The event was a turning point for the ANC in the negotiation process.⁸⁶

On the morning of 10 April 1993, Hani, the popular leader of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and chief of staff of the ANC's military wing, was gunned down outside his home in Boksburg. While there had been numerous assassinations since the ANC's unbanning, this was the first high-profile execution. In addition, while much (but not all) of the violence between 1990 and 1993 had been intraracial, Hani's death was the first major interracial political attack, and it fed into white fears of black revenge. Hani was a hugely charismatic figure, considered to be the most popular leader after Mandela, and his murder, clearly designed to devastate the negotiating process, sparked widespread fear of civil war.

It was clear after De Klerk's poor reception at Boipatong that there was little he could do to appeal for calm and, after several outbreaks of violence (with a death toll of four), the NP government had no choice but to turn to Mandela and the ANC to quell anger over the shooting. To a certain extent, Mandela complied, delivering a direct televised address to the nation on 13 April 1993, a few nights after Hani's murder, as well as a series of radio announcements. Although the televised address does not constitute a "media event" as such, figures indicate that it attracted a large national audience, and the speech has been identified as a pivotal moment in identity-formation in post-apartheid South Africa.⁸⁷ In addition, the broadcast was frequently referred to as a "live" address, suggesting that it was seen as sharing some of the characteristics of live broadcasts, particularly a sense of historic importance. As with media events, televised national addresses are occasions that call for the simultaneous attention of the nation, they

⁸⁶ Louw & Chitty, "South Africa's miracle cure", 284; Meredith, *Mandela*, 484–98.

⁸⁷ Kenneth S Zagacki, "Rhetoric, dialogue, and performance in Nelson Mandela's televised address on the assassination of Chris Hani", *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 6 (4), 2003, 709–36.

interrupt ordinary broadcasting schedules and they are perceived as pure channels of communication.

Bourdon points out that the “direct address” – and its associative effects of immediacy and intimacy – has been important from the first days of television, and we are familiar with its codes as used by news presenters: the “look to the camera”, the use of personal pronouns “I” and “you” and sometimes the addition of the word “live” (as in “we are coming to you live”).⁸⁸ Though we are accustomed to viewing politicians and heads of state in televised interview situations, it is unusual to encounter them engaging in direct televisual address, and such instances identify themselves as important. Apart from monarchs, there can have been few individuals other than presidents given the authority to address the nation in this way – not only in South Africa but in the world. While such broadcasts from heads of state were fairly common during the apartheid era,⁸⁹ public broadcasters (into which the SABC was fast transforming), give in to such requests only during crises. That Mandela – five years earlier labelled a terrorist by the broadcaster – was given this privilege is testimony to the changing nature of the SABC, the metamorphosis of his national image and the magnitude of the crisis sparked by Hani’s death.

The framing of Mandela in the address boosted his statesman-like image: against the backdrop of a bookcase, his bespectacled and suited appearance is best described as presidential. He spoke in racialised but conciliatory terms, framing Hani’s assassin as a white foreigner, Polish immigrant Janusz Waluś, and praising the actions of a white Afrikaner witness, whom he adroitly situated as a key person in securing justice for Hani’s death:

Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the very depths of my being.

A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation teeters on the brink of disaster. A white woman, of Afrikaner origin, risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice, this assassin.

⁸⁸ Bourdon, “Live television is still alive”, 541.

⁸⁹ PW Botha, for instance, delivered a televised presidential address when announcing the implementation of the 1986 state of emergency and also when he announced his resignation in 1989.

The cold-blooded murder of Chris Hani has sent shock waves throughout the country and the world. Our grief and anger is tearing us apart.

What has happened is a national tragedy that has touched millions of people, across the political and colour divide.

Our shared grief and legitimate anger will find expression in nationwide commemorations that coincide with the funeral service. ...

Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for – the freedom of all of us.

Now is the time for our white compatriots, from whom messages of condolence continue to pour in, to reach out with an understanding of the grievous loss to our nation, to join in the memorial services and the funeral commemorations.⁹⁰

The address relegates the right-wing insurgency at the time to a small sector of the population (projecting it onto one man, and an outsider at that). At the same time, praising the actions of an Afrikaner woman helped to create a sense of a potentially inclusive nationhood under his leadership, and in this sense the address appears to have been written with nervous white audiences in mind.⁹¹ Mandela's vision of South Africa after Hani's death – his description of the assassination as a "national tragedy" and his appeal to all South Africans, black and white – attempted to transcend racial and political identities.⁹²

Yet, the address also reveals uncertainty about who exactly belongs to the nation. There is a hint that the address is partially intended for black South Africans in his description "*our* white compatriots"; by implication "*our* nation" belongs to black compatriots. Although Mandela is clearly striving to achieve a form of inclusive speech that addresses all South Africans, the interests and needs of different groups at this time frustrate these attempts. This is particularly evident when one compares it to his funeral speech (see below), which is more obviously directed at the militant black youth and employs anti-apartheid struggle rhetoric.

⁹⁰ Nelson Mandela, Televised address to the nation on the assassination of Chris Hani, 13 April 1993.

⁹¹ The SAARF report for that week indicates that in the days after Hani's assassination the news attracted high ARs among white viewers. Black viewership figures were not yet available (SAARF Viewing Report, 12–18 April 1993).

⁹² Zagacki, "Rhetoric, dialogue, and performance", 730.

While Mandela's address had a calming effect on white South Africans, it did not, in fact, put an end to the violence. A further 34 people were killed over the next few days, and the AWB provoked ire by placing its flag opposite the cemetery where Chris Hani was to be buried.⁹³ In response, the SABC decided to broadcast Hani's funeral live and in its entirety on CCV and Radio 2000. This was an unprecedented step; not only was live funeral broadcasting usually reserved for heads of state but funerals of slain "comrades" had also accumulated immense symbolic significance for black South Africans under apartheid. Richard Wilson points out that funerals were particularly powerful occasions, interweaving narratives of liberation and martyrdom:

In the 1980s in particular funerals of activist became a form of political theater where anti-apartheid groups sought to make as much as possible out of the death of fallen comrades. With their coffins lined up in rows, and surrounded by dancing and singing activists, mass funerals became incredibly important stages to display to the outside world the brutal nature of apartheid.⁹⁴

While foreign journalists descended upon such occasions en masse, the South African media, particularly the SABC, paid them scant attention. Thus, the decision to broadcast the funeral live must have served as a signal not only of shifts in political power but also of the SABC's implicit support of such shifts. Guelke notes the change in the ANC's status with the broadcaster as a result of the assassination:

Whereas at the start of the year, the ANC had been treated as somewhat marginal by a considerable section of the press and by television and radio, its status changed dramatically as a result of the crisis. The most obvious manifestation of the change was the hours and hours of live television coverage given to the funeral of Chris Hani. This was followed two weeks later by live coverage of the long funeral service for the veteran ANC leader, Oliver Tambo.⁹⁵

⁹³ "10 days that shook our country", *Sowetan Live*, 24 February 2011 (Available at: <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/goodlife/2011/02/24/10-days-that-shook-our-country> – viewed 11 September 2011), no page number.

⁹⁴ Richard Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 116.

⁹⁵ Guelke, "Violence and the South African transition", 64.

The ANC recognised this and appealed to its followers “to provide every possible co-operation to the media and help them to carry out their duties”.⁹⁶

In contrast to his conciliatory televised address, however, at Hani’s funeral Mandela articulated the ANC’s demands in divisive racialised terms, placing the responsibility for Hani’s death squarely on De Klerk’s shoulders:

Those who have deliberately created this climate that legitimates political assassinations are as much responsible for the death of Chris Hani as the man who pulled the trigger, and the conspiracy that plotted his murder ...

And nowhere has this attitude of seeing us as the enemy been more clearly demonstrated than in President de Klerk’s actions since the assassination of Chris Hani.

His first response was to call a meeting of the State Security Council. His second response was to deploy 23 000 more troops, telling white South Africans that they had enough troops for them to feel secure. But why deploy troops against mourners?

They say we cannot control our forces. We are not cattle to be controlled. And we say to De Klerk: it is your forces that lost control and, completely unprovoked, shot innocent marchers in Protea.⁹⁷

It is you who have allowed the bullyboy tactics of the AWB to go unchallenged. We, the victims of violence, have been blamed for the very acts that take our lives. Yet you treat the far right with kid gloves, allowing them to publish hit lists when it is a crime to do so. Your police do not protect marchers from gunmen who mow them down, as in Vanderbijlpark.

Black lives are cheap, and will remain so as long as apartheid continues to exist. And let there be no mistake: there have been many changes, and negotiations have started, but for the ordinary black person of this country apartheid is alive and well.

Thousands of us die from TB every year, our children still play in open sewers, and die from preventable diseases. Education is still a privilege. Our homes remain the tin shacks and overcrowded townships. And no black South African has the vote.

They talk of peace as if wanting peace is pacifism. They paint a picture of us as militant youth, or mindless radicals. ...

We want an end to white minority rule now. We want an election date now.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ ANC, Press Release: “ANC call for the protection of journalists”, 15 June 1993 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1993/news9304.16> – viewed 11 September 2011), no page number.

⁹⁷ Mandela is referring to the murder of Sam Tambani, a National Union of Mineworkers national executive committee member who was shot by Protea policemen when they opened fire on a crowd protesting against Hani’s murder.

The funeral speech doesn't project the same vision of inclusive nationhood as the televised address, clearly opposing the interests of the state ("you" and "they") and "the people" ("we" and "us"), who for the most part are racially split. This is not to say that the funeral address is a call to arms; in fact it is strategic in its references to the racist expectations of those who hoped for the assassination to derail negotiation processes. By summoning these stereotypes, Mandela calls for a channelling of anger through fortitude and restraint. But what these addresses show is the subtle privileging of certain beliefs according to race: for white South Africans, the assurance of reconciliation, and for black South Africans, the promise of shared resources. As Louw has pointed out, Mandela had always been skilful at working across two discourses; during the apartheid era "he used Marxist-Africanism, an in-house discourse that hybridised Black Nationalism and Marxism; but he switched to social-democrat discourses when liberal journalists were his key audience".⁹⁹ Mandela's varying responses to Hani's assassination illuminate some of the divisions of the time, suggesting that different groups called for different messages at different times. Even when attempting to communicate a single national message, context and audience demand different responses, making for an uneasy, sometimes contradictory interpellation of national identity.

One of the central symbols that addressed this problem – the metaphor of the rainbow nation – was introduced at the funeral although not by Mandela but by Desmond Tutu. The metaphor is effective as a national trope because it speaks directly to the different needs of race groups. Its biblical roots in the redemptive parable of Noah emphasise the notion of reconciliation and appeased vengeance, while in Xhosa folklore the rainbow embodies hope and a bright future.¹⁰⁰ Both interpretations place it within a mythic dimension – important because, as Benedict Anderson has suggested, successful nationalisms are inextricably linked to a belief in the future as well as our religious

⁹⁸ Nelson Mandela, Address given at Chris Hani's funeral, 19 April 1993.

⁹⁹ Louw, "Mandela: Constructing global celebrity", 295.

¹⁰⁰ Gary Baines, "The rainbow nation? Identity and nation-building in South Africa", *Mots Pluriels*, 7, (July), 1988 1.

instincts.¹⁰¹ The rainbow's association with "new" miraculous beginnings also ties in with transition rhetoric about the "new" South Africa.

Tutu had first used the phrase "the rainbow people of God" during the march of church leaders to parliament in Cape Town in 1989.¹⁰² He brought the term back with him from the United States¹⁰³ where Jesse Jackson's National Rainbow Coalition possibly served as an influence.¹⁰⁴ It is worth noting here that Tutu is much loved by the world's liberal media, and the metaphor perfectly encoded what the world wanted to believe about South Africa.¹⁰⁵ Most remember the term as being coined at Hani's funeral, largely because, as Philippe-Joseph Salazar points, out the "fiction", the as-if-ness, of a non-racial nation was ironically brought closer by the assassination.¹⁰⁶ This sense of the impending "freedom" or democracy is reflected elsewhere in Tutu's speech when he declared that "nobody can stop us on our march to victory". Indeed, the assassination finally tipped the balance in the ANC's favour.

Whether this is because Mandela's pleas were directly responsible for putting an end to the outbursts is besides the point as well as difficult to prove, in spite of Desmond Tutu's impassioned belief that the country would have "had gone up in flames" if Mandela had "not gone on television and radio".¹⁰⁷ Suffice to say Mandela's comments were boosted by extensive media support, including the live broadcasting of the funeral as well as the allowance for a week of mass mourning. Hani's martyrdom was another PR disaster for the NP, one that was exacerbated first by violent police reaction to angry protesters at Vanderbijlpark and Protea, and later by the discovery that their insistence that the assassination had been the work of a lone fanatic was incorrect, when Clive

¹⁰¹ Anderson, "The goodness of nations".

¹⁰² Helga Dickow and Valerie Møller, "South Africa's 'rainbow people', national pride and optimism: a trend study", *Social Indicators Research*, 59 (2), 2001, 175–202.

¹⁰³ JM Coetzee, "The 1995 Rugby World Cup" in *Stranger Shores, Essays 1986–1999* (London: Vintage, 2002), 352.

¹⁰⁴ There are also prior instances where the term infiltrated public consciousness; for example, Albie Sachs's DCS Oosthuizen Memorial Lecture given at Rhodes University in 1991 was titled "Black is beautiful, brown is beautiful, white is beautiful: towards a rainbow culture in a united South Africa" (cited in Baines, "The rainbow nation?", 1998).

¹⁰⁵ I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer of a paper published in *National Identities* (2010) for this insight.

¹⁰⁶ Phillippe-Joseph Salazar, *An African Athens: Rhetoric and the Shaping of Democracy in South Africa* (Mawah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 12.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Zagacki, "Rhetoric, dialogue, and performance", 710.

Derby-Lewis, a senior CP member, was arrested for masterminding the assassination. Foreign news reports followed these events closely, crediting Mandela with quelling civil unrest. Ultimately, the assassination provided an opportunity for a show of leadership,¹⁰⁸ particularly in the eyes of white South Africans; Martin Meredith claims that no other event “revealed so clearly to the white community how important Mandela was to their future security”,¹⁰⁹ and Richard Stengel observes that Mandela’s restraint demoralised the white right-wing by undermining their “cohesion, even their reason for being”.¹¹⁰ Further blows were delivered after the death of Treurnicht, who died during a heart operation on 22 April, in the midst of Derby-Lewis’s arrest and two days before Oliver Tambo’s death. In spite of the fact that, to appease conservative white South Africans, Treurnicht’s funeral was, like Tambo’s, broadcast live (on TV1 rather than CCV, however), the event was overshadowed by Hani’s and Tambo’s funerals, which attracted larger crowds, worldwide media attention and international delegations.

Storming CODESA: South Africa’s World Trade Centre Attack

The right wing, however, continued to engage in disruptive attacks, and the formation of the Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF) the month after Hani’s death presented an additional threat to the transition. The AVF was an umbrella body for disaffected Afrikaner groups led by Constand Viljoen, former chief of the South African Defence Force, and three other military generals. The generals brought with them a wealth of military expertise as well as the potential loyalty of the armed forces. Moreover, the group was said to have found “common political ground” with the IFP and with homeland leaders resisting reintegration.¹¹¹ The formation of the AVF thus posed the possibility of a more united opposition. In spite of its potential, however, the group’s legitimacy was consistently undermined by the actions of its AWB members, and once again these events played out before television cameras.

¹⁰⁸ Kane, *The Politics of Moral Capital*, 143.

¹⁰⁹ Meredith, *Mandela: A Biography*, 484.

¹¹⁰ Richard Stengel, “White right: The South African nexus”, *The New Republic*, 29 May 1995, 15.

¹¹¹ Bill Keller, “South African rightist rally behind ex generals”, *New York Times*, 6 May 1993 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/05/06/world/south-african-rightists-rally-behind-ex-generals.html?src=pm> – viewed 17 September 2011), no page number.

The AVF's first attempt to reverse the thrust towards change involved a protest of around 3 000 members on 25 June 1993 outside the Kempton Park World Trade Centre (WTC), where CODESA talks were taking place. Symbolic of the heart of the transition, with a ready supply of journalists on hand, the WTC had become a popular site for demonstrators from across the political spectrum, and the protestors (made up of AVF and AWB members) had been given permission to air their grievances, as long as they were unarmed and remained within the demarcated area to the east of the WTC. The SAP initially deployed 200 policemen to monitor the demonstration but increased the number to 700, after reports of support for the protest grew. While the demonstration began fairly peacefully – some of the participants even braaied with their families outside the building¹¹² – events got out of hand when a breakaway group of armed AWB members crashed through the glass entrance to the building in an armoured vehicle. According to the inquiry into the event, members of the AWB assaulted policemen who attempted to stall their movement into the building, shouted “filthy verbal abuse” at WTC staff, damaged property, spraypainted their demands on the walls of the building, and occupied the Negotiating Council Chamber.¹¹³ Two cabinet members, Minister of Defence Roelf Meyer and Mineral and Energy Affairs and Public Enterprises Dawie de Villiers, successfully bargained with AVF representatives for the Afrikaner supporters to leave the premises, promising that no arrests would be made that day, and the event ended without any serious injury.

Cameramen, who, because of the location, were already present in great number, recorded the incident, and, in a broadcasting moment that comes closest to Liebes's “disaster marathon”, a special midday news report was held in the immediate aftermath of the invasion. Interrupting usual viewing patterns, the news report features interviews with politicians present at the scene together with footage of AWB members occupying the negotiating chambers. Because of the potential severity of the situation, the SABC agreed to broadcast an impromptu direct televised address, in which De Klerk appealed

¹¹² Nick Broomfield, *His Big White Self* (Lafayette Films, 2006).

¹¹³ Goldstone Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation, “Report on the inquiry into the events at the World Trade Centre on 25 June 1993” (Available at: http://web.archive.org/web/20060924080626/http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/transition/gold_worldtrd.html – viewed 16 September 2011), no page number.

for calm and stressed that the government was “in control”.¹¹⁴ Appealing directly to viewers, the president stated:

The situation gives rise to grave concern. I was informed immediately when trouble started. From then onwards, from minute to minute, I was kept informed. General van der Merwe is with me; the Minister of Law and Order is with me, and we immediately arranged for reinforcements to be sent. The reinforcements have already arrived and further reinforcements are continually arriving. Therefore the situation is basically under control. It is being stabilised at the moment. I want to give the assurance that the government is in control.¹¹⁵

The special news insert, the employment of the direct address mode, and De Klerk’s use of phrases such as “at the moment”, “immediately” and “from minute to minute” all served to create a sense of urgency and liveness, marking the event as historic. In retrospect, the invasion has a comical air to it, and there was little to need for the extremities of a direct televised address, but the AWB’s disruptive tactics must have seemed alarming at the time. Zarina Maharaj, whose husband Mac Maharaj was inside the WTC on the day, recalls the experience of watching the news later that day:

During that period, the children and I were watching TV one evening. Suddenly footage appeared of the World Trade Centre as it was being stormed by the AWB ... Intent on derailing the negotiations, Terre’Blanche and his cohorts had driven an armoured vehicle through the glass walls of the WTC, a shattering sight! Once inside they ran through the place as if possessed, looking for the negotiators and their personnel, whom they had threatened to take out.

It was quite frightening watching them go on the rampage, especially as we had to wait on tenterhooks, not knowing whether they would find any of the negotiators or their staff.¹¹⁶

The SABC news report centred on the issue of police control, with reporters stating that “the police appeared helpless” and various interviewees claiming that the government had lost control of the situation in South Africa. The underlying suggestion of these

¹¹⁴ SABC, Special News Report on Invasion of World Trade Centre, 25 June 1993.

¹¹⁵ FW de Klerk, Televised address on the World Trade Centre attack, 25 June 1993.

¹¹⁶ Zarina Maharaj, *Dancing to a Different Rhythm: A Memoir* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006), 180.

reports, in light of what had occurred at Boipatong and Bisho, was that the NP's police force was treating white protestors differently. De Klerk's direct address anticipated this criticism and he emphasised that police inaction was deliberate, claiming:

The police is [sic] acting in the very same manner as they acted when there was serious risk after the late Mr Hani's death. They are acting so as to prevent the flow of blood ... The law is not being applied differently because today we have to deal with white South Africans in mass action.

In spite of De Klerk's assurance, once again, the official inquiry into the event condemned police inaction, a judgment that was very much influenced by the recorded imagery of the attack:

One sees from the video films that the perpetrators met with no effective resistance at all. The fact that, according to the SAP, some 600 policemen were present at the relevant times, the manner in which they were deployed and commanded is a matter which requires to be fully investigated by the SAP. The fact is that they were completely ineffective.¹¹⁷

Viljoen insisted that the AVF knew nothing of the attack, claiming that it was a spontaneous outbreak of anger, but while the inquiry absolved AVF leaders of orchestrating the invasion, it concluded that AWB members had clearly planned the invasion in advance. The NP used the invasion to attack Viljoen's credibility, with its Youth Action Wing releasing a statement claiming that he had observed the events "like a helpless spectator" and clearly lacked the ability to control right-wing insurgency.¹¹⁸

This would not be the last time that the AWB's hotheadedness discredited the AVF.

¹¹⁷ Goldstone Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation, "Report on the inquiry into the events at the World Trade Centre on 25 June 1993".

¹¹⁸ SAPA, "Gen Constand Viljoen's credibility tarnished", 27 June 1993 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1993/news9306.28> – viewed 17 September 2011), no page number.

Black Backlash and White Fears: The APLA Terror Attacks

The latter half of 1993 saw an increase in interracial attacks, with several high-profile terror attacks carried out by a new political player, APLA (Azanian People's Liberation Army), the military wing of the PAC. Because these were the first attacks in which relatively high numbers of white civilians were targeted, they were highly publicised in local and international media. In addition, foreigners were often caught up in the violence.

The first APLA attack occurred in November 1992, when gunmen burst in on a wine-tasting event at the predominantly white King William's Town Golf Club and opened fire on diners, killing four and wounding 17. This was followed by a similar attack on the Highgate Hotel in East London in May 1993, when five were killed and seven injured by balaclava-clad men wielding AK47s and hand grenades. One month after the invasion of the World Trade Centre, APLA cadres opened fire on attendants of a congregational service in Cape Town, killing 11 and injuring 58. Around 150 Russian seamen were also attending the service, and four were killed. The target of the St James Church massacre – a place of worship and sanctuary – heightened the perception of its brutality.

At the time there was confusion over who was responsible for many of the killings, with the PAC denying knowledge of the attacks and some suggesting third-force involvement.¹¹⁹ Though top PAC leadership distanced itself from the acts, claiming that a race war was politically counterproductive, in some cases APLA cadres were arrested, while investigations into others uncovered APLA tactics. In addition, the killings were linked to the decidedly brutal discourse of PAC supporters. Notorious for their "One settler, one bullet" slogan, popularised in the 1980s, the PAC became known worldwide after the murder of 26-year-old American Fulbright scholar and Stanford graduate Amy Biehl on 25 August 1993. Biehl's youth, gender, nationality and liberal views catapulted her to the status of a martyr for non-racialism. She had protested against apartheid and

¹¹⁹ The Highgate Hotel attack remains mysterious, with the charge of third-force involvement gaining momentum in recent years, especially after a 2007 *Carte Blanche* investigation into the incident. Karl Weber, one of the victims of the attack, has subsequently joined the PAC.

spent time registering voters in preparation for the first election scheduled for the following year. In addition, she was giving a friend a lift to her home in the black township of Gugulethu when the attackers struck. A group of angry township youths, all teenagers, hauled Biehl from her vehicle and stoned, kicked and stabbed her to death while shouting the PAC slogan “One settler! One bullet”. The suspects, apprehended soon after the attack, later claimed that they were motivated to kill Biehl after having attended a rousing PAC rally.

While the anonymity and hazy objectives of the attacks in some ways undermined them and changed their status from political attacks to terror attacks, they sowed great anxiety among white South Africans. *Citizen* editor Johnny Johnson claimed that there was a marked increase in letters received from white South Africans at the time, stating in a SAPA report on white anxiety, “It’s the most worrying period I’ve ever experienced. People are very angry and scared.”¹²⁰ The increasing reports and images of violence and escalating emigration figures hastened the need to move swiftly towards a general election and to see a legitimate government installed. All leaders roundly condemned the killing, and, in the midst of this violence, De Klerk and Mandela agreed on an election date, a move that was seen as irreversible in spite of the continued non-cooperation of Buthelezi’s IFP as well as homeland leaders.

The international community recognised the leaders’ efforts by jointly awarding them the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1993. The international prestige of the prize served as encouragement to all South Africans to support their negotiating efforts and to participate in the forthcoming elections. While more in-depth interviews with the two revealed the extent to which they still distrusted one another, the joint award, accompanied by several photo opportunities and tactful acceptance speeches, put on a necessary show of unity that belied the true situation, as was starkly illustrated a few weeks later when APLA struck again, this time killing four people at the student-frequented Heidelberg Tavern in the Cape Town suburb of Observatory.

¹²⁰ Cited in Rodney Pinder, “White fears on the current violence”, SAPA-Reuters (<http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1993/news9305.03> – viewed 16 September 2011), no page number.

The Final Stand: The Battle of Bophuthatswana

In spite of the sporadic white-targeted attacks, Mandela maintained that the conservative white right wing remained the biggest threat to the smooth running of the forthcoming election. In an interview with *Time* magazine, he noted that the 800 000 voters who had voted “no” in the 1992 referendum had a substantial portion of the civil service, the police force and the defence force behind them and had threatened to take up arms in the event of an ANC win.¹²¹ In March 1994, on the eve of the election, fear of the white right wing threat was greatly diminished during a disastrous attempted coup in Bophuthatswana in which the homeland defence force soldiers gunned down three AWB members before television cameras. As with the broadcasting of earlier events, live recording of the event elevated its importance in the transition period and played a role in determining the official version of events.

In spite of the fact that his support was dwindling, Bophuthatswana’s President Lucas Mangope was clinging to power and refusing to participate in the election the following month. Similarly, the AVF was still in two minds about whether to participate in the elections, wanting to have its *volkstaat* granted first. Having survived an attempted coup in 1988, Mangope’s announcement that he would not participate in the elections sparked a civil service strike, which was soon joined by policemen. By 9 March, the situation had spiralled out of control, with widespread looting in the capital of Mmbatho, staff seizing control of the Bophuthatswana Broadcasting Corporation (headed by Mangope’s son) and students taking over the university. At this point, Mangope called upon Constand Viljoen to assist the Bophuthatswana Defence Force, stipulating that AWB soldiers should not be called on because of their unpopularity in the area. When Terre’Blanche got wind of the plan, however, he dispatched his commando units to the homeland, contravening instructions from the Volksfront executive to remain on the border of the area. When the AWB groups arrived at the air-force base, they discovered that they were unwelcome and only agreed to depart after lengthy negotiations with

¹²¹ Mandela, “Mandela and De Klerk speak out”, *Time*, 14 June 1993 (Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,978692-1,00.html> – viewed 16 September 2011), no page number.

General Jack Turner of the Bophuthatswana Defence Force. As they left, they reportedly drove through the streets, abusing journalists, shouting out racial abuse and shooting indiscriminately into the crowds, killing civilians. A convoy of trucks opened fire on a group of protesting civilians at a manned roadblock, causing the Bophuthatswana soldiers to retaliate. The driver of the last vehicle in the convoy, a blue Mercedes Benz, was shot and, after the car drew to a halt, journalists recorded the brutal scene that followed.



Figure 4.3: AWB member Alwyn Wolfaardt shortly before being executed in the Battle of Bophuthatswana, March 1994 (Photo: Kevin Carter/Corbis Sygma)

While the driver (Nic Fourie) lay slumped on the ground, journalists and the Bophuthatswana soldiers conversed with the remaining passengers (Alywn Wolfaardt and Fanie Uys) who asked for medical assistance. A Bophuthatswana policeman, Ontlametse Bernstein Menyatsoe, asked the two if they were AWB members and

demanded to know what they were doing in “his country”. In anger, Menyatsoa proceeded to shoot the pleading men in front of cameramen,¹²² some of whom erroneously assumed that their presence would deter further violence.¹²³ Numerous accounts refer to the “live” televised execution of the men, although, in reality, the national broadcaster was more sensitive with editing of the footage; the 6 p.m. SABC news that evening showed the slumped bodies of the men and referred to their being “gunned down execution style” and “killed in cold blood”, but it did not screen the

¹²² Menyatsoa later received amnesty for the killings.

¹²³ See Scott MacLeod, James Natchtwey, Kevin Carter, Cobus Bodenstein and Gideon Mendel, “Pictures at an execution”, *Time*, 28 March 1994. Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,980394,00.html> – viewed 16 September 2011), no page number.

moment of their actual death.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, Fanie Uys's identity was released on the news before his widow had been informed of his death and the full footage was shown in later documentaries. One of the iconic photos from the incident – in which Wolfaardt holds up his arms in a posture of surrender moments before his death – was splashed across newspapers the following morning (see Figure 4.3).¹²⁵ Such images, together with the television footage, shocked South African audiences and remain imprinted in the national psyche. Allister Sparks sums up the impact of the imagery:

[F]or white rightists everywhere this traumatic experience made a tremendous impact. The image of their execution, in all its awfulness, had blown away an ancient myth that had grounded generations of colonialism and racial domination ... The bubble of adventure, the heroic re-enactment of historic Boer myths was punctured in a day of blood and humiliation.¹²⁶

Sparks concludes that the incident is the “ultimate irony in the tale of paradoxes – it was the very worst of white racists who finally cleared the way for South Africa’s one-person, one-vote election”.¹²⁷ Indeed, the effect of the failed military intervention and the televised execution were immediate: both Mangope and Viljoen capitulated within 24 hours and agreed to participate in the upcoming election.

The news report that evening also focused on journalists’ own role in Bophuthatswana, dramatising their status. Reporter Estelle Pienaar noted that SABC journalists attempting to gain entry to the airforce base were accosted by right-wingers manning the entrance, who “swearing at” [*sic*] and “threatened” the news crew and “started assaulting a radio journalist”. By referring to the clash between journalists and AWB members, the report distanced the broadcaster from the right-wingers’ actions, clarifying its political stance.

¹²⁴ SABC, News at Six, 9 March 1994.

¹²⁵ Ironically, Kevin Carter, the Reuters photojournalist who took the photograph, felt that he had missed the “money” shot of the actual execution (see interview in *Time* magazine, “Pictures at an execution”), no page number.

¹²⁶ Sparks, *Tomorrow Is Another Country*, 214.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

While Terre'Blanche insisted that the AWB had entered the region with the intention of assisting Mangope's bid to retain independence, the commission of inquiry, set up two years later, concluded that there was "overwhelming" evidence to suggest they had entered "with the avowed intention of shooting its black citizenry".¹²⁸ Once again, we see television playing a pivotal role in determining the official version of history. Because the AWB generals appearing before the commission refused to give sworn statements, evidence against the AWB was also gathered from interviews in other documentary news programmes; Terre'Blanche's comments in another programme, Max du Preez's *Agenda*, are mentioned in the report. In his summary of events, Terre'Blanche insisted that the incident had been a "*skitterende oorwinning*" ("glittering victory") for the AWB, because it suffered only five casualties in comparison to the "opposition's" 50. The report notes that these casualties were mainly "innocent, unarmed citizens".¹²⁹

Conclusion

The renewed global interest in South African politics and the growing market for images of the transition ensured that the early 1990s was one of the most photographed and televised periods of the country's recent history. "Liveness" takes on a different significance in this period, with a broadcaster eager to demonstrate its transparency through the inclusion of footage that would previously have been censored. In its attempts to achieve this, footage of unexpected events became valuable. In addition, as seen with the live broadcasting of funerals of ANC leaders and the direct televised address of Nelson Mandela, the SABC sought to broaden its target market for media events, thus extending the net of national belonging. Just as "classic" media events have been seen to boost the status of national broadcasters (Scannell credited the 1953 coronation with having "made" the BBC),¹³⁰ so coverage of unexpected events can work to overhaul broadcaster reputations.

¹²⁸ PH Tebbutt, "Commission of inquiry into the incidents that led to the violence in the former Bophuthatswana on 11 March 1994, and the deaths that occurred as a result thereof" (Available at: <http://www.polity.org.za/polity/govdocs/commissions/1998/tebbutt/tebbutt7.html#8> – viewed 20 September 2011), no page number.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life*, 80.

The footage acquired by photojournalists and cameramen was also important in establishing a historical narrative of the time, often inflating the significance of events, as is seen by their appellations: “battle”, “massacre” and “storming”. As was the case with Boipatong, the presence or non-presence of photographers also sometimes changed the way in which events were interpreted and remembered, and footage also played an important role in the official investigations into the causes of violence. The need to control the framing and interpretation of such images was consequently of paramount importance, and for the most part we see the ANC establishing its dominance, mainly because of a previously acquired moral high ground. For the most part, reports held little sympathy for the idea of new independent nations, and Afrikaner and Zulu aspirations were cast as an ethnic threat to the civic nationalism of the ANC–NP alliance. Because of this, perhaps, journalists and media outlets were also perceived as centres of power, subject to attack from both sides. The SABC, eager to dissociate itself from its state broadcaster image, took the opportunity to use these attacks as a means of boosting its own status in the country.

5

The Televised Birth of the Rainbow Nation: The Election and Mandela's Inauguration

The appeal to unity always leaves some people out.

– Dayan and Katz¹

In their analysis of the role of live broadcasting in Czechoslovakia's transition to democracy, Dayan and Katz conclude that "the broadcasts proclaimed that television itself was free to say and show what needed saying and showing".² Similarly, the SABC's attempts to rejuvenate its image through an association with "liveness", first through a no-holds-barred approach to televised footage of disaster (see Chapter 4), drew also, and simultaneously, on broadcasting conventions that had come to be associated with Western democracy. These included the televising of live political debate, popularised by the concept of the live talk-show in broadcasts such as *Nightline*, *Larry King Live* and *Tonight*, the BBC's coverage of the House of Commons discussions (broadcast live since 1989) and the American convention of the pre-election presidential debate (first held in 1960).

In an attempt to persuade audiences (both local and global) that the country was transforming into a democratic state, the broadcaster thus displayed all of the television conventions of the world's leading democratic nations. "Liveness" holds the appeal of projecting an image of transparency, and De Klerk, like Mikhail Gorbachev, pushed for live broadcasts in the belief that it would strengthen his image as a liberal global leader.

¹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, X.

² *Ibid.*, 52.

As with the British and American conventions, however, these live broadcasting formats offer both opportunity and risk, which modern politicians need to understand in order to harness their power. Added to this, politicians require the cooperation of broadcasters in order to access the television platform. From a domestic perspective, De Klerk and Mandela were evenly matched as television personae. While De Klerk, as state president, dominated national television in the early 1990s, Mandela held more global appeal than the apartheid president and, as seen in the previous chapter, the SABC's approach to Mandela altered dramatically during the transition period. This was no doubt in part due to the transformation of the broadcaster itself. According to Louw and Chitty, from 1993 onwards there were significant staffing changes at the SABC, "aimed at achieving a mix of pro-ANC and pro-'reform' NP people in the key decision-making positions".³ This resulted in a number of live broadcasts specifically designed to promote the ANC–NP alliance and the forthcoming democratic election, including the historic, and once-off, presidential debate between Mandela and De Klerk before the first election.

While live broadcasting in this period allowed for greater national participation, exposing audiences to some of the negotiations powering the transition, this still only involved parties in favour of the forthcoming elections. As with the negotiations, the "new" SABC privileged certain parties and individuals, principally NP and ANC representatives who were offered up as the country's future leaders to the exclusion of others.

The election itself culminated in the inauguration of Mandela, a massive Coronation media event that concluded the transition process initiated by his release and laid the foundation for the emergence of a new post-apartheid national identity. Just as the "nationalist intelligentsia relied heavily upon the newly emergent Afrikaans print media to mobilise and construct their 'imagined community'",⁴ so what became known as rainbow nationalism owes much to the ways in which the mass media operate. But the latter also benefited from the (for South Africa) relatively new medium of television.

³ Louw & Chitty, "South Africa's miracle cure", 291.

⁴ Louw, *The Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid*, 32.

Debating the Future: Live Talks as Media Events

Since the much welcomed *Nightline* debate held between Pik Botha and Desmond Tutu in 1985 (see Chapter 2), the state broadcaster had gradually ventured into the arena of televised political debate, though prior to 1990 these were limited to “white” parties, and thus focused on the tension between the left-leaning DP, the right-leaning CP and the governing NP. The most famous televised debate of the period was the landmark live 1988 debate between CP leader Andries Treurnicht and De Klerk, then Minister of Education, in which De Klerk defended the NP’s more moderate position a few days before hotly contested by-elections in conservative areas in southern Transvaal. The release of Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC and other parties saw an explosion of mediated political debate on radio and television involving representatives from a fuller political spectrum. In the week before Mandela’s release, *Nightline* hosted another historic debate, which was again broadcast to South African viewers, this time involving returning ANC exile Thabo Mbeki, Buthelezi and Pik Botha. But the SABC also began to televise and stage its own talks, playing a pivotal role in broadcasting and facilitating the debates of the transition.

The first major debate to be televised in the post-apartheid period came with the official opening of CODESA. In a bid to emphasise its political transparency, the broadcaster had opted for several hours of direct transmission of the opening of the CODESA speeches on 20 December 1991. The first day of talks on had been tense, with the NP and the ANC arguing about the controversial issue of the disbanding of the armed struggle. While the NP insisted that no negotiations could succeed while the ANC kept its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), in operation, the ANC claimed that in the current political atmosphere the government’s police force could not be relied on to control violence, and disarming MK would be tantamount to political suicide. Talks had continued until late in the evening, but no resolution was reached. De Klerk had reportedly informed the ANC’s negotiating team that he would be raising the issue the following day at the plenary session, which was to be broadcast live to the nation, a message that never reached Mandela.⁵ At the same time, De Klerk had requested

⁵ Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle*, 177.

permission to speak last at the conference, a privilege that the ANC had been reluctant to grant but which Mandela reportedly persuaded the party to allow.⁶ While the majority of the speeches had been conciliatory, “applauding the spirit of the talks”,⁷ in his closing speech, De Klerk attempted to undermine the integrity of the ANC (and in turn boost the legitimacy of the governing NP) by again raising the issue of Umkhonto, claiming that the ANC’s stubbornness on the issue was a major stumbling block in the negotiations:

From the government’s perspective there is one major obstacle in the way of rapid progress at CODESA. I regret having to refer to it here but that is, unfortunately, unavoidable. It has to do with the lack of progress by the ANC in coming into line with other political parties and movements. It wishes to remain different. The heart of the problem is the following: The ANC has not yet given up what it itself has defined as the ‘armed struggle’ ... there has still not been sufficient progress in spite of ongoing efforts on the part of the government.⁸

It was a tactical error on De Klerk’s part: Mandela was outraged by what he viewed as the president’s cynical abuse of the privilege of having the last word, and, in what must have been an unexpected retort, he returned to the podium and delivered an impromptu but blistering 15-minute response, defending the ANC’s position on MK, describing the NP government as an “illegitimate, discredited, minority regime” and exposing what he interpreted as De Klerk’s tactical use of the broadcast occasion to gain the upper hand:

I was discussing with him until about 20h20 last night, he never even hinted that he was going to make this attack. The members of the government persuaded us to allow them to speak last. They were very keen to say the last word here. It is now clear why they did so. And he has abused his position because he hoped that I would not reply. He was completely mistaken.⁹

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Scott Kraft, “De Klerk signs pledge to end South African white rule”, *Los Angeles Times*, 21 December 1991 (Available at: http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-21/news/mn-606_1_south-africa – viewed 10 October 2011), no page number.

⁸ FW de Klerk, “Opening statement at CODESA”, 20 December 1990.

⁹ Nelson Mandela, “Response by Nelson Mandela to the opening statement by State President FW de Klerk” (Available at <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=3977> – viewed 10 October 2011), no page number.

De Klerk, reportedly “livid” and “pounding his hand on the table”,¹⁰ also insisted on the right to reply, claiming that the government had reached “an absolute stalemate” in talks with the ANC about the arms cache and that the issue was so important it risked “inhibiting” progress at CODESA.

Mandela, who also understood the need for conciliatory gestures on live TV, made an effort to temper his response with a less acerbic conclusion, stating that he was nevertheless “prepared to work with [De Klerk] to see to it that these democratic changes are introduced in the country”. At the same time he crossed the floor to shake the president’s hand, “making sure that the gesture was captured by the same TV cameras which recorded his earlier tirade”.¹¹ The gesture was overshadowed by the outburst, however, and the full drama of the exchange was broadcast live across the nation on radio and television. International newspapers were quick to report on the “bitter parting exchange of words” between the leaders, claiming that the disagreement pointed to a “rough road ahead”.¹² The *Washington Post* declared dramatically that it was unclear how the “quarrel, which involved some of the sharpest public exchanges ever between the two men, would affect prospects for the talks”.¹³

The televising of the opening of CODESA was nevertheless lauded as a means of enhancing democracy, since it gave viewers the impression that they were glimpsing behind-the-scenes exchanges between leaders. Willy Currie argues for the potentially positive effect that live television has on political processes:

Nelson Mandela’s dramatic response to De Klerk’s attack on the ANC revealed the power of TV to bring people close to the dynamic of negotiations, as opposed to the formal speeches which wound their dull way through the day. The spontaneity of Mandela’s outburst made it all the more regrettable that the subsequent negotiations through the working groups at the World Trade Centre were closed to cameras.¹⁴

¹⁰ David B Ottoway, “De Klerk proposes blacks join interim rule”, *Washington Post*, 21 December 1991 (Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/s_africa/stories/deklerk122191.htm – viewed 10 October 2011), no page number.

¹¹ Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle*, 177.

¹² Kraft, “De Klerk signs pledge to end white South African rule”.

¹³ Ottoway, “De Klerk proposes blacks join interim rule”.

¹⁴ Willy Currie, “Chapter 3: The people shall broadcast! The battle for the airwaves” in P Eric Louw (ed.), *South African Media Policy: Debates of the 1990s* (Colorado: iAcademic Books, 2001), 57–58.

While this may be so, there was also the possibility that the constant presence of cameramen would have influenced the direction of talks negatively, and the benefits of live broadcasting needed to be weighed against its potential costs. In addition to monetary costs (which in the mid-1990s were still high), there are several risks of live broadcasting in political communication, well illustrated by the arguments made against the presence of cameras in the British House of Commons before televising parliamentary debate became standard practice. While live broadcasting's association with transparency might enhance the appearance of democracy, it does not necessarily deepen democracy itself. Those opposed to media access in the House of Commons argued that it would render procedures vulnerable to the "cult of personality" and that it would further marginalise already marginalised political parties by creating the perception of a two-party adversarial system.¹⁵ The CODESA talks were similarly susceptible to such forces. Indeed, the exchanges between De Klerk and Mandela, the two most known "personalities", received the most media attention in the wake of the televising of the CODESA plenary session, even though a number of other speakers had presented viewpoints.

In addition to borrowing from the British model of televising multi-party debate, the SABC also loaned formats associated with the United States. Although the political landscape of South Africa in no way resembled the US environment, the democratic ideal was equated with the American model, and the South African transition involved a fair number of American imports. One of these was the current affairs show *Agenda*, which featured live interviews with a range of political representatives (including more marginalised figures such as Terre'Blanche) and played an important role in expanding dialogue. There was also the expectation that democratic elections would be preceded by a "presidential debate", an American tradition since the 1960s. The South African version of the American debate was never to be repeated after 1994, partly because subsequent elections were not exposed to the same amount of international scrutiny (and thus did not

¹⁵ Bob Franklin, *British Television Policy: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), 194–95.

use global discourses to the same degree) and partly because South Africa effectively went on to become a one-party state. In 1994, however, the NP was still considered to be important, if only because it represented the old regime giving way to the new.

The SABC's first live American-style election debate of the transition period was between Pik Botha and Thabo Mbeki in March 1994. Unsurprisingly, the debate focused on responsibility for the current violence and the role of the police force, with both opponents remaining "calm but apparently friendly throughout".¹⁶ While some activists interpreted Mbeki's response as "too nice",¹⁷ his demeanour fulfilled Western expectations of the live televised debate – measured, "gentlemanly" argument. The Botha–Mbeki debate was in fact broadcast as a warm-up to a larger media event: the debate held later between presidential candidates Mandela and De Klerk.¹⁸ In addition to local coverage on both TV1 and CCV, the debate was broadcast in 102 countries, with CNN devoting a full 90 minutes to the event, which was reportedly watched by millions of viewers.¹⁹

The debate was held during a tense political atmosphere, with the worrying failure of a political summit involving Buthelezi, Mandela, De Klerk and Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini. The international mediators of the summit, Henry Kissinger and Lord Carrington, left the country on the morning of the scheduled debate after no resolutions could be reached on the actual topic of mediation. It was against this backdrop of intolerance, which the *Baltimore Sun* claimed overshadowed the anticipation of the debate somewhat,²⁰ that Mandela and De Klerk took to the stage, in part to rally for

¹⁶ Reuters, "Violence dominates first live TV election debate", 28 March 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0329> – viewed 7 October 2011), no page number.

¹⁷ Noor Niefertagdien, "Coloureds and South Africa's first democratic elections", History Workshop presented at the University of the Witwatersrand for the "Democracy Popular Precedents Practice Culture" series, 13–15 July 1994, 18.

¹⁸ The video is available for viewing online at: <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/AfricanC&showFullAbstract=1#> (viewed 10 October 2011).

¹⁹ Figures cited range from 40 million (Gene Mustain and Michael O Allen, "Face-off in S. Africa: Mandela, de Klerk share debate stage", *A Writing Life: Michael O. Allen*, 15 April 1994, Available at: <http://www.michaeloallen.com/?p=1075> – viewed 19 October 2011) to 800 million (Kenneth Sithole, "Freek Robinson motivates Boekenhout to focus on values", Boekenhout, University of Pretoria website – Available at: <http://web.up.ac.za/res.asp?ipkCategoryID=8933&ArticleID=1883&language=0> – viewed 13 October 2011).

²⁰ Michael Hill, "Mandela/De Klerk clash gently in TV debate", *Baltimore Sun*, 15 April 1994 (Available at: http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1994-04-15/news/1994105114_1_nelson-mandela-klerk-south-africa – viewed 7 October 2011), no page number.

their respective political parties, but mainly to foster support for the impending election. While the two had come to blows on television before, this was the first occasion where they were acknowledged as principal opponents, and the debate – preplanned, live and remote – had all the qualities of Dayan and Katz’s Contest media event. Described as the “country’s first full-throttle sally into American-style television campaigning”,²¹ as with all Contest media events, although the debate had the appearance of conflict, it served a reconciliatory function. Contest media events – drawing on Weber’s rational-legal authority – involve disciplined opponents competing according to set rules:

Presidential debates ... meet the criteria of periodicity, agreed rules, evenly matched opponents. The debates pose the dramatic question, ‘Who will win?’ Their message is that the rules reign supreme, that the rules are more important than the will or status of the opponents, that the best man will prevail, that the winner will have another chance. They transpose conflict from an actual but vaguely defined field of battle, one where direct confrontation rarely takes place, to a framed arena in which the rivals face each other to sharpen, but circumscribe, their differences. ... Contests communicate that the other side, too, deserves to be taken seriously.²²

The televised debate – designed to communicate that the “other side, too, deserves to be taken seriously” – served to strengthened the NP–ANC alliance, to the detriment of other parties participating in the election. The debate moderator spoke of De Klerk and Mandela’s partnership in the future regime as a foregone conclusion when he introduced them as “almost certain to be part of South Africa’s new Government of National Unity”. Objecting to the political use of television, a few days before the scheduled broadcast, the Democratic Party lodged a complaint with the Independent Media Commission, calling for the cancellation of the debate on the grounds that it would prejudice minority parties, concluding that “the DP feels deeply prejudiced by the direction provided by the Nat/ANC dominated SABC board, and calls for redress”.²³ The grievance illustrates the extent to which, although celebratory, media events are not without controversy, since

²¹ Mark Gevisser, “Clash of the television titans”, *Mail & Guardian*, 8 April 1994.

²² Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 36.

²³ Reuters, “DP wants Mandela/De Klerk debate cancelled”, 13 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0414> – viewed 6 October 2011), no page number.

they infrequently allow for marginal voices to be heard, as the opening quote to this chapter suggests.

This is particularly evident in the so-called “presidential debate”, rooted in American political communication, which in turn has grown out of a two-party-dominated political system. Recognising the influence of American politics on the forthcoming election, the ANC sought the counsel of a number of top US communications advisors involved in Bill Clinton’s successful 1992 campaign. Although, as Anthony Sampson points out, the ANC had a wider array of politicians who could “perform” in English on television than the NP,²⁴ their leader’s poor public speaking skills presented a challenge, particularly with live broadcasting. As noted by Hollingsworth at the time of the release concert (see Chapter 3), Mandela’s delivery was drawn-out, pedantic and stiff, and he had a tendency to exceed his allotted speaking time. To help matters, the ANC sought coaching from Clinton’s former advisor, Frank Greer, who had also worked with Czechoslovakia’s Václav Havel earlier in the year. Greer told Mandela to keep smiling, to talk faster and to avoid wagging his finger, as this was sure to remind viewers of PW Botha. His overarching advice was to shake off the image of the political prisoner and to “be presidential”.²⁵ On this front, what Mandela lacked in oratory skills, he made up for with physical stature. His height and perfect posture were accentuated in person and at mass rallies, but this asset would not necessarily translate on television. Mark Gevisser described him in an article introducing the debate as “the Father of the Nation: regal, statesman-like and almost saintly. The problem is, though, that he talks at the measured and pedantic pace of a provincial schoolmaster, and is stiff and uncomfortable on television.”²⁶ Mandela, although initially reluctant to rehearse, practised with journalist Allister Sparks the day before the debate, a session that did not go well, since, according to Stanley Greenberg, Mandela failed to remain cordial in his approach, repeatedly raising the issue of the government’s “Third Force” and coming across as “defensive” and “arrogant”. The session was recorded, using a split screen to gauge reaction and response, and when the team reviewed the video clips it was clear that

²⁴ Sampson, *Mandela*, 487.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Gevisser, “Clash of the television titans”.

Mandela sounded “hectoring” when speaking and “slumped and inattentive” while his opponent spoke; in short, Sparks “slaughtered” him.²⁷ The advisory team urged Mandela to avoid ad-hominem attacks and to remain positive, and a follow-up rehearsal on the morning of the debate was more successful.

The debate followed a fixed structure, borrowing from the US tradition, with De Klerk and Mandela each opening with three-minute statements, after which a panel of journalists – Tim Modise of Radio Metro, Ferial Haffajee of SABC radio, Lester Venter of SABC television and John Simpson of the BBC – was permitted to pose questions to the candidates. Candidates were given a certain amount of time to respond and then opponents could rebut the response. De Klerk won the coin toss (the traditional way of determining who speaks first), and his opening words were smoothly delivered and he managed to keep to time. In spite of this, he was always going to be at a slight disadvantage, because history had given the ANC the moral high ground; in foreign reports, for instance, De Klerk was often referred to as Mandela’s “jailer”. According to Greenberg, every time De Klerk attacked the icon, he ended up scoring points for the opposition, arguing that “when the party of the oppressor attacks, you get a protective reaction from the people who were oppressed”.²⁸ This was a severe constraint for De Klerk and other NP politicians. Because of this, perhaps, the president was less direct in his attacks on Mandela and the ANC throughout the exchange. Yet, his attempts to project an image of himself as the leader who had dismantled apartheid ended up sounding smug and self-congratulatory. In his opening address, De Klerk strove to downplay Mandela’s role in South Africa’s transition:

As the state president it had been my privilege to lead the process that brought us to this historic moment. In that process I have been assisted by leaders from a number of parties – also Mr Mandela here – and I pay tribute also to them. *I* promised, when I took office, to guide South Africa to a new era. *I* promised to end apartheid. *I* promised to release Mr Nelson Mandela.²⁹

²⁷ Stanley B Greenberg, *Dispatches from the War Room: In the Trenches with Five Extraordinary Leaders* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), 142.

²⁸ Cited in Sampson, *Mandela*, 488.

²⁹ FW de Klerk, “Opening statement of 1994 television election debate”, 14 April 1994.

The statement served only to strengthen the perception of De Klerk as the jailer of the oppressed. Similarly, a later comment, “We [the NP] ended apartheid”, did not have the desired effect, since the NP was also seen as the party that had installed the political system in the first place; as apartheid was detested around the world as an oppressive regime, there were no points scored for ending it. De Klerk attempted to circumvent this problem by consistently alluding to the NP’s makeover, referring to it as the “new” NP in the “new” South Africa at the beginning of a “new” era.

For this reason, Mandela’s markedly more modest-sounding opening words struck a chord. Showing awareness of the reach of the debate, the ANC leader invoked the “good work” of the entire nation in bringing South Africa to its present juncture:

I am humbled to represent the work and struggle of so many people who made democracy a reality in our country. It is their good work that inspired me every day during those 27 years of my prison life. It is that good work that inspires me tonight ... Those of you are watching this discussion at home, look to us to exercise effective leadership.³⁰

Mandela’s opening also spoke directly to the medium of television, addressing audiences and families at home in an attempt to personalise his message. But his delivery was much slower than De Klerk’s, and the moderator interrupted him before he could conclude, creating an impression of the ANC leader as elderly and incompetent.

The remainder of the debate did not go according to plan, and Mandela was unable to restrain himself from attacking De Klerk or keep his finger-wagging in check. “From that point on,” Greenberg recalls, “Mandela was totally on the offensive, hostile and disparaging, in ways more pointed – some in the press said ‘pedantic’ – because he spoke so slowly.”³¹ At one point, De Klerk even remarked: “I find the sudden aggression of Mr Mandela strange.” Mandela’s mood was not helped by the fact that, as with the Botha–Mbeki debate, responsibility for violence dominated the discussion, with Modise kicking off with a question about the police force’s perceived inability to maintain law and order. The topic, and De Klerk’s response to it, appeared to put Mandela in attack

³⁰ Nelson Mandela, “Opening statement of 1994 television election debate”, 14 April 1994.

³¹ Greenberg, *Dispatches from the War Room*, 145.

mode, since he and De Klerk had never been able to resolve their disagreement over the NP's response to "black-on-black" violence in the country. He repeatedly raised the now-tired issue of Inkathagate and claimed that De Klerk had been "less than candid about putting the facts before the public".

Mandela was also markedly weaker on matters related to the economy, speaking in broad terms about the "end of the days of the gravy train" and stating that the ANC leaders would not "live like fat cats". While these statements held emotional appeal, on detailed economic plans, he could only refer to the fact that the ANC had a Reconstruction and Development Programme in place, but he seemed unable to explain its rationale. In response to a question on how the ANC would deal with the current economic crisis, Mandela declared that he would cut his presidential salary, to which De Klerk quipped: "If he thinks that the salary of politicians is enough to solve the economic problems of South Africa, he's in for a big surprise." The president went on to predict that the ANC's plans would result in a doubling of South African income tax within the first year.

Both candidates, speaking haltingly in their second language, lacked the flair required of effective TV personae, while limited editing and few camera angles mimicked the direct address mode rather than the more interactive style that had come to characterise American television debate since the landmark Nixon–Kennedy encounter in 1960. (Even this early broadcast made use of more dynamic editing and intimate close-ups.) Speaking against dull-blue backdrops in fitted suits, De Klerk and Mandela addressed the camera directly, referring to each other in the third person (except on one or two heated occasions). In addition, there were few opportunities for television audiences to gauge the opponent's reaction to his adversary's comments, apart from a few clips showing both speakers alongside each other and only one or two moments when corner split-screen inserts, usually delayed, played alongside the candidate speaking. The SABC broadcast contrasted greatly with that of global networks of similar events from the same period; the 1992 Clinton–Bush–Perot debate, for instance, included much more shot-reverse-shot editing and many more visuals with candidates addressing each other in the same frame. To international audiences, the debate was thus a slight let-

down. The *Chicago Tribune* declared, “Great television it was not”;³² similarly the *Independent* concluded, “Clinton versus Bush it was not.”³³

More interesting than the visuals was the audience commentary that infiltrated the broadcast, reminding television viewers that what they were watching was in fact live. Here, once again, the risks of live broadcasting were apparent; the theatre/studio audience frequently responded to both leaders’ opening comments, with heckles, murmurs and titters of approval and dissent. For instance, De Klerk’s description of the NP as “the most representative non-racial party in South Africa” was met with a mixture of agreement and disapproval, while a voice called out “Nonsense!” when Mandela suggested that corruption was endemic in the NP government, compelling Robinson to call for quiet. Mandela’s comments appeared to receive less applause and more heckling than De Klerk’s, raising the question of how the theatre audience had been selected. By all accounts, the NP and the ANC were designated an equal number of seats (25 each), but the NP audience members seemed to be more vocal, highlighting moments when Mandela was weak. This may have had something to do with the form and setting of the debate. Held at the Johannesburg Civic Theatre – a building previously associated with whites-only cultural productions – the debate was moderated by the Afrikaans-speaking SABC journalist Frederick “Freek” Robinson, known to white South African television audiences since the mid-1980s. The venue and moderator thus situated the exchange within the cultural domain of the NP and this may have influenced the subdued “cheering” of the ANC contingent.

In spite of these drawbacks, Mandela managed to conclude on a good note, inadvertently revealing what was perhaps De Klerk’s greatest weakness: his inability to convince audiences of his sincerity. As Gevisser noted at the time, while De Klerk had the advantage of “decades of parliamentary experience” he carried “the aura of sanctitude” and his “newly acquired good-ol’-boy affability [did] not always ring quite

³² Liz Sly, “De Klerk, Mandela clash in uneasy opposition”, *Chicago Tribune*, 15 April 1994 (Available: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1994-04-15/news/9404150293_1_african-national-congress-leader-klerk-nelson-mandela – viewed 16 October 2011), no page number.

³³ John Carlin, “South African Elections: De Klerk and Mandela grapple in TV debate”, *Independent*, 15 April 1994 (Available: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/south-african-elections-de-klerk-and-mandela-grapple-in-tv-debate-1370103.html> – viewed 16 October 2011), no page number.

true”.³⁴ De Klerk, less aggressive than Mandela, spoke frequently of the need for reconciliation: “We need each other in the government of national unity,” he said at one point. “We will not have peace before there is reconciliation. This election is not about the past but about the future.” But such messages did not always sound authentic, perhaps because the ANC was tipped to win the elections, and reconciliation was sorely needed by the NP (and the mainly white electorate it represented). Mandela’s comments, on the other hand, were more spontaneous seeming, his olive branches more unprompted. At one point, acting like an “incumbent president towards a junior partner”,³⁵ Mandela turned to De Klerk and said, “Sir, you are one of those I rely upon to face the problems of this country together.” His final gesture disarmed both the president and audiences around the world. In the closing minutes of the debate he took De Klerk’s hand, to the president’s apparent surprise, and stated, “I am proud to hold your hand. Let us go forward together, let us work together to end division and suspicion.” Many media accounts picked up on the gesture, identifying it as the highlight of the exchange.

Towards the end of the debate, both leaders returned to the amicable spirit of the Contest media event, and reports claimed that they appeared more focused on reassuring the country of stability and unity than on undermining one another.³⁶ In keeping with the Contest “script”, subsequent reports (both foreign and local) likewise stressed unity over conflict; the *New York Times* claimed that the two “squared off”,³⁷ the *Baltimore Sun* stated that they “clashed gently”,³⁸ while the *Star* declared that the “TV battle” ended “in harmony”.³⁹ Various reports also quoted political analysts’ assessment that the debate had ended in a draw.⁴⁰

³⁴ Gevisser, “Clash of the television titans”.

³⁵ Rodney Pinder, “Mandela comes out punching in election debate”, Reuters, 15 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0415> – viewed 16 October 2011), no page number.

³⁶ Bill Keller, “Mandela and De Klerk square off on TV”, *New York Times*, 15 April 1994 (Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/04/15/world/mandela-and-de-klerk-square-off-on-tv.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> – viewed 16 October 2011), no page number.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Hill, “Mandela/De Klerk clash gently in TV debate”.

³⁹ “TV battle ends in harmony”, *Star*, 15 April 1994, 1.

⁴⁰ Reuters, “Cape analysts declare television debate a draw”, 15 April 1994; Reuters, “Mandela/De Klerk debate ends in stalemate – analysts”, 15 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0415> – viewed 16 October 2011), no page number.

Reports also used the debate as a means of laying the ground for change, anticipating a new regime and preparing racial groups for a transition in leadership. As the *New York Times* claimed, the debate “was less the highlight of an election campaign than a glimpse of the next Government”.⁴¹ De Klerk was described as “the last white leader in 300 years of minority domination”,⁴² and journalists interviewed both black and white families on their viewing experiences of the debate in anticipation of racial reconciliation and a more inclusive South African citizenship.⁴³

News reports claimed the debate attracted the largest South African television audiences ever.⁴⁴ But, although it was the most-watched show that week on TV1, this claim seems exaggerated. Interestingly, viewership figures show different levels of interest among population groups. The debate outstripped other programmes for English- and Afrikaans-speaking viewers that week, receiving an AR of 35. Apart from the news that preceded it that evening, the debate was also the only programme to receive an AR above 30. Statistics for African-language viewers show different patterns, and the debate did not feature as the most-watched programme for Nguni- and Sotho-speaking viewers on either TV1 or CCV. While it also received an AR of 35 on CCV, it was trumped by *Bophelo ke Semphekgo*, the hugely popular Sepedi drama series (which received an AR of 37), and *Kululeka*, a voter education programme (receiving an AR of 36). In addition, several other programmes received similar ratings to the debate (with ARs above 30) throughout the week.⁴⁵ The viewing statistics suggest that the debate did not fascinate black audiences to the same extent as their white counterparts. This was perhaps because it was by then common knowledge that the ANC would win the election; several widely publicised pre-election surveys estimated that the party’s future win hovered around the two-thirds mark.⁴⁶ Towards the end of the debate, De Klerk even conceded that the ANC

⁴¹ Keller, “Mandela and De Klerk square off on TV”.

⁴² Pinder, “Mandela comes out punching in election debate”.

⁴³ See, for instance, Reuters, “White families say De Klerk slightly ahead in debate”, 15 April 1994, and Reuters, “Black families see nothing new in television debate”, 15 May 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0415> – viewed 10 October 2011), no page number.

⁴⁴ Pierre Claassen, “Elections-Debate”, SAPA, 14 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0415> – viewed 6 October 2011), no page number.

⁴⁵ SAARF Viewing Report, 11–17 April 1994.

⁴⁶ For a summary of the various pre-election surveys, see Roger Southall, “The South African elections of 1994: The remaking of a dominant-party state”, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32 (4), 1994, 637–38.

would most likely be the winning party and needed a strong opposition. The outgoing president's influence was thus less interesting to black South Africans, whereas Mandela was still something of an enigma to fearful white South Africans, whose future in post-apartheid South Africa was uncertain. The debate – a political platform situated squarely within their cultural realm – offered an opportunity to size up their future president. For international audiences, too, the debate offered a foretaste of the future of the last African country to achieve black rule.

In light of the fact that paid-for television adverts were banned from the first election, the debate was seen as “one of the few times TV played a prominent role in the hard-fought race”,⁴⁷ even if it held more interest for white South Africans and international audiences.

The “Miracle” Nation: South Africa Goes to the Polls

The SABC was generally praised for its free and fair coverage of the election, reflecting international monitors' observations of the election itself. Without television advertising, most parties spent the bulk of their campaigning budget on radio and print advertisements, and the campaigning style was a combination of road shows, personal canvassing and massive newspaper and poster advertisements, boosted by extensive survey operations. The campaigns of the various parties were for the most part issue-driven. The NP campaign focused on its conversion to the “new” national party and stressed the need for a strong opposition party. The ANC strategy crystallised around two slogans: “Now is the time”, drawing on their historical status as a liberation organisation, and “A better life for all” – devised by Greer and Greenberg – which was more forward-looking and sought to emphasise their ability to govern.

At times, however, both parties employed tactics that conflicted with the discourse of reconciliation used when addressing national and global audiences, resorting to racial typecasting when communicating with their constituencies. There was much uproar over the NP's campaigning in the Western Cape in particular. While in national

⁴⁷ Bob Drogin, “Mandela/De Klerk clash in South African TV debate”, *Los Angeles Times* (Available at: http://articles.latimes.com/1994-04-15/news/mn-46366_1_south-africa – viewed 10 September 2011), no page number.

addresses, such as the pre-election debate, party leaders tended to employ the language of national unity, their attempts to secure the coloured vote saw them returning to the blatantly racist “*swart gevaar*” (black peril) tactics first used in 1948. Playing on coloured fears of majority rule, they employed slogans such as “Stop the comrades!” The tactic was most prevalent in the publication of a comic book speculating that under an ANC government, “Kill a coloured ... kill a farmer” could easily become a new political slogan. The party managed to distribute over 75 000 copies before the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) finally banned the publication. Mandela attempted to expose the hypocrisy of the NP’s discourse by pulling out a copy of the comic book during the live election debate on national television, accusing De Klerk and the NP of “promoting racial hatred”.

The ANC’s campaign in the Western Cape initially mirrored its national focus on “A better life for all”, but, in response to the NP’s strategy, they, too, turned to negative campaigning. Slogans such as “A vote for the NP is a vote for fear”, “Stop the National Party”, “This is the reality of 46 years of National Party rule” and “Don’t let them stain your hands with the blood of our children” were accompanied by dramatic photos of apartheid police brutality and the graves of struggle activists.⁴⁸ The strategy, however, met with little success, as election results later revealed.

Other areas were more problematic for the NP. While the ANC was able to fall back on its massive organisational power (kept alive during exile by organisations such as COSATU and the UDF) to galvanise voters, holding successful mass rallies and community meetings in rural and township areas, the NP, which had in the past relied on a communication infrastructure that addressed minority groups, found it difficult to penetrate these locations. The NP accused the ANC of embarking on an intimidation campaign and of using strong-arm tactics to prevent their leaders from campaigning in certain constituencies, including the Transkei, where they blamed ANC election candidate General Bantu Holomisa for their inability to hold public meetings. De Klerk’s visit to Postdene, a Northern Cape township outside of Postmasburg, ended ignobly when

⁴⁸ Matt Eldridge and Jeremy Seekings, “Mandela’s lost province: The African National Congress and the Western Cape electorate in the South African 1994 elections”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 22 (4), 1996, 526–27.

he was hit by a stone thrown by an ANC supporter. As was seen with events such as Boipatong (see Chapter 4), NP leaders were unwelcome in ANC strongholds, making it difficult for them to rally support or to defend themselves against ANC claims. Instead, they had to resort to legal action – for instance when Holomisa reportedly claimed that they were planning on faking votes, and when Allan Boesak spread rumours about NP corruption⁴⁹ – a protracted process that could not, in the time left before the election, undo the damage of such accusations.

There were several incidents of pre-election violence – last-ditch attempts to derail the drive towards democracy. Shortly after events in Bophuthatswana (see Chapter 4), tensions between the ANC and Inkatha exploded on 28 March 1994 in what was referred to in the media as “Bloody Monday” and, later, the “Shell House Massacre”, when ANC snipers shot at thousands of Zulu protestors marching into downtown Johannesburg to demand that the soon-to-be former KwaZulu homeland be allowed to transform into a sovereign kingdom. Although reports on the exact sequence of events differed dramatically,⁵⁰ there was general consensus that the blame lay at the feet of Inkatha and the Pretoria regime. A *New York Times* editorial concluded that “the larger responsibility for this tragedy lies with Mangosuthu Buthe”, described as a “wrecker” who “has made common cause with white racists who oppose what South Africa’s men and women of good will have sought for generations”.⁵¹ Although Mandela’s image was tarnished a year later when he confessed to having instructed the snipers to “shoot to kill”,⁵² at the time, the media was in full support of the push towards the election date.

Right-wingers engaged in similar attempts to change the course of history. The largest bomb ever to explode in Johannesburg was detonated outside ANC offices just three days before citizens were due to go to the ballot, killing nine people; election

⁴⁹ SAPA, “Intimidation – NP”, 13 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0414> – viewed 16 October 2011), no page number.

⁵⁰ Elaine Windrich, “The Johannesburg massacre; Media images of the South African transition”, *Africa Today*, 43 (1), 1996 (Southern Africa in the Postapartheid Era), 79.

⁵¹ Editorial, “Culprit in South Africa”, *New York Times*, 30 March 1994 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/03/31/opinion/culprit-in-south-africa.html> – viewed 10 October 2010), no page number.

⁵² Brendon Boyle, “Mandela: Why I gave shoot to kill order”, *Independent*, 8 June 1995 (Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/mandela-why-i-gave-shoot-to-kill-order-1585387.html> – viewed 31 December 2011), no page number.

campaigners were murdered while encouraging communities to vote in Natal and the death toll steadily mounted in the weeks preceding the election (for instance in just one week, between 6 and 13 April, a total of 103 people died in countrywide violence).⁵³

Fears of further post-election violence were allayed when, dramatically, days before the election, Buthelezi, who had consistently refused to participate in the election, capitulated, claiming on 19 April that he had “finally managed to negotiate a secure role for his majesty the king of the Zulu Nation and the guarantee of the future existence of the Zulu kingdom”.⁵⁴ In reality, no significant concessions had been made; more likely, Buthelezi realised that the election was going to go ahead regardless of his requests for further negotiations – for the election to be postponed and for an independent homeland – and that choosing not to take part would seriously jeopardise his political future. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there was little media support for proposals for *volkstaats* or independent Zulu nations. Buthelezi’s inept handling of the media and his alliance with much maligned right-wing parties cost him dearly; he was consistently mocked and grotesquely satirised in cartoons at the time, because, as Louw and Chitty point out, the “IFP was concerned with an internal audience not a global one – they spoke to the IFP’s own constituency in language that jarred the sensibilities of those accustomed to the gentler, preferred discourses circulating within global cities”.⁵⁵

Buthelezi’s decision was lauded around the world, adding to the “miracle” narrative associated with the election, boosted by leaders’ own responses to the deal; Mandela called it a “leap forward”,⁵⁶ De Klerk claimed it removed “one of the last main causes of tension and violence”⁵⁷ and ANC chief negotiator Cyril Ramaphosa described it as a “miracle”.⁵⁸ CNN reported on “celebrations” breaking out in Zululand in reaction to the decision, describing it as “the moment that an anxious South Africa had been waiting

⁵³ SAPA, “Violence – HRC”, 13 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0414> – viewed 26 October 2011), no page number.

⁵⁴ Cited in Liz Sly, “Zulu leader capitulates on elections”, *Chicago Tribune*, 20 April 1994 (Available at: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1994-04-20/news/9404200146_1_zulu-chief-mangosuthu-buthelezi-election-day-new-constitution – viewed 26 October 2011), no page number.

⁵⁵ Louw & Chitty, “South Africa’s miracle cure”, 288.

⁵⁶ Cited in CNN, “Inkatha joins election”, 19 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvX59RoxSgo> – viewed 26 October 2011).

⁵⁷ Cited in CNN, “Inkatha joins election”.

⁵⁸ Cited in Sky News, “SA relieved as IFP joins election”, 19/20 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM0CwNJYask> – viewed 26 October 2011).

for”.⁵⁹ Sky News claimed that the electoral process had been “saved by a sticker” (referring to the special ballot stickers printed to accommodate the party’s late entry) and showed images of children on the streets of Thokoza, claiming that they could “play out in the open again for the first time in days”.⁶⁰ The reality was nothing like this, and press releases from 20 April, the day after the announcement, tell a very different story.⁶¹ Some of the worst violence of the period broke out on the East Rand. While some reports did mention continuing attacks in Thokoza and Katlehong townships, these were downplayed, and the IFP’s decision was narrativised as the solution to pre-election violence.

While Buthelezi’s decision prompted Ferdi Hartzenberg, the new leader of the CP, to briefly reconsider the party’s decision not to enter the elections, in the end the party refused to participate and the IFP was the only late entry. Special Inkatha party stickers had to be printed for the already-printed ballot papers, and the late entry caused logistical problems with election stations in the KwaZulu-Natal area and the East Rand, where there were complaints about voters not having ID documents. Voting hours had to be extended in several parts of the country – a concession that Buthelezi dismissed as “meaningless”.⁶²

As Louw and Chitty point out, by the time of the election, the ANC and the NP were effectively jointly ruling the country through the Transitional Executive Council (TEC)⁶³ and the “election and Mandela’s inauguration were consequently largely public relations hype designed to sell the NP–ANC Government of National Unity (GNU) deal to the black masses (and, marginally, to the anti-apartheid activists around the world who could now be provided with their emotional payoff)”.⁶⁴ In spite of the “post-hoc” nature

⁵⁹ CNN, “Inkatha joins election”.

⁶⁰ Sky News, “SA relieved as IFP joins election”.

⁶¹ See, for instance, SAPA, “Battle rocks South African township after poll deal”, “Mortar shell fired at Tokoza hostel” and “Gunbattle explodes in South Africa Tokoza township. 20 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0420> – viewed 26 October 2011), no page numbers.

⁶² Reuters, “Voting – Buthelezi”, 27 April 1994 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1994/news0427> – viewed 26 October 2011), no page number.

⁶³ The TEC was a multi-party coalition, dominated by NP and ANC members; it effectively ruled South Africa from December 1993.

⁶⁴ Louw & Chitty, “South Africa’s miracle cure”, 284.

of the election, it was exalted in the media, with the lead-up to 27 April and the coverage of the election process providing an epic prelude to the inauguration.

In addition to running voter education programmes across 22 radio stations and on two of the three television channels, the SABC set up four broadcasting units in order to devote 24 hours of live coverage to the election process,⁶⁵ once again employing “liveness” to create an atmosphere of transparency and to match the historic magnitude of the event. Indeed, anchor Max du Preez remembers the live reporting of the day as one of the highlights of his early television career, seeing it as a privilege to be part of the “historical process”.⁶⁶ Of course, the violence that occurred in the days leading up to the election increased the tension around the live broadcasting because of the possibility of further disaster. Yet, in spite of several hoax bomb threats, voting was relatively peaceful, and the voter turnout of over 19.5 million people exceeded expectations.

Reports recalled some of the metaphors of reconciliation and miracle that had attended Mandela’s release, drawing once again on the notion of “waiting” and playing



Figure 5.1: Images of long, racially diverse queues became iconic symbols of South Africa's long-awaited democratic election in 1994 (Photo: Denis Farrell)

on Mandela’s 27-year wait in prison. The election was visualised through images of long, racially diverse queues, symbolic of the triumph of non-racialism, but also of the extent to which South Africa still needed to modernise.⁶⁷ For instance, while the ABC report on voting for the elderly (held on 26 April) celebrated the momentous occasion for black citizens who were voting for the first

⁶⁵ Theo Vorster, “Helping the miracle happen – South African Broadcasting Corporation’s coverage of South Africa’s democratic elections”, *Communication World*, September 1994 (Available at: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m4422/is_n8_v11/ai_16077413/?tag=content;col1 – viewed 2 January 2012), no page number.

⁶⁶ Du Preez, *Pale Native*, 245.

⁶⁷ Charmaine McEachern, “The Media Truth Commission: Brokering a healing history” in William H Miller (ed.), *Advances in Communications and Media Research* (New York: Nova Publishers, 2007), 55.

time, the report also pointed to some of the practical problems that resulted in queues, such as lack of pencils and ballot papers.⁶⁸

Overall, however, the images of queues were lauded as a triumph of the people and came to represent the day in both local and international media, later becoming a national trope of sorts.⁶⁹

For once there was peace across the land. Despite kilometre-long queues, administrative blunders and disappointments, the party mood rarely sagged. White and black made friends in the long queues, swapping stories and bottles of refreshments. They stood patiently from dawn to dusk while the bureaucrats and politicians squabbled. The strategies, computers and cellular phones had failed. Only the unflagging human spirit made it a day to be proud of.⁷⁰

The *Weekend Star* declared the results a “Dream Outcome”;⁷¹ the *Sunday Times* announced dramatically that South Africa was now “One Nation”.⁷² These triumphant declarations of the demise of apartheid and the achievement of racial unity were premature conclusions in light of the ongoing conflict in KwaZulu-Natal and the by-and-large ethnically divided election results. Because of the so-called “coloured vote”, the Nats managed to win the majority in the Western Cape and managed to prevent the ANC from achieving a two-thirds majority, whereas the IFP won KwaZulu-Natal and over 10% of the vote.

Crowning the King: Mandela’s Inauguration

The inauguration that followed provided for yet another major televised display and in many respects concluded the drama of the struggle against apartheid in the international

⁶⁸ See ABC News, “South Africa’s first free elections, 1994” (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFD-0Um9FjI&feature=related> – viewed 2 January 2012).

⁶⁹ This image was later appropriated in a number of advertisements. For instance, the International Marketing Council (IMC) released their “We’ve done it before” advert in 2007, in which long queues of black and white citizens are meant to conjure up the spirit of 1994. Similarly, a 2006 SABMiller advert depicts a long line of ordinary South Africans tugging on a rope in order to draw the various continents closer, until the Sydney Opera House and Statue of Liberty drift into Table Bay.

⁷⁰ *Mail & Guardian*, “I have waited all my life for this day. No long queue is going to stop me”, Friday, 29 April 1994.

⁷¹ “It’s a dream outcome”, *Weekend Star*, 7 May 1994, 1.

⁷² “One nation”, *Sunday Times*, 8 May 1994, 1.

media. While Mandela's release had created unease for the SABC at the tail end of the apartheid era, the broadcaster (now appointed to cover the event by the TEC) was well prepared for the inauguration and had by this stage not only aligned its vision of a united, multiracial, reconciled South Africa with global expectations but was also able to exert more control over its media portrayal around the world. This was made possible through the development of an extensively equipped International Broadcasting Centre (IBC), which allowed foreign journalists (understandably bewildered by the complexity of events in the country) to use readily available SABC-produced footage and to cover the elections and subsequent inauguration without ever having to leave their comfortable editing suites, except perhaps to take advantage of one of the special deals offered by the onsite tourist operators.⁷³

The IBC was run by former officers of SALTIE (the South African Army's public relations/propaganda unit), who were as such ideally placed to synthesise their knowledge of foreign affairs public relations and experience of working with state bureaucracy.⁷⁴ André le Roux was, as the main editor of footage, able to give expression to his previously frustrated desire to glorify Mandela's release (see Chapter 3) in a televisual extravaganza of the inauguration, which Louw and Chitty argue was conceived of as a means of attracting foreign investment to regenerate South Africa's poor global image.⁷⁵ On a national level, the symbolism of the event suggests that organisers also saw the inauguration as a unifying nation-building spectacle, with the potential to engender loyalty to the new South African state.

The event was broadcast on a big screen on the Botha Lawn beneath the Union Buildings, allowing an audience of 60 000 to share in and celebrate the occasion. This televised display, which received a fair share of coverage in reports, was also no doubt devised as a means of generating further spontaneous-seeming festive footage to contrast with the solemnity of the swearing-in ceremony. The crowd, replete with thousands of multicoloured reproductions of the new flag, gave the broadcaster the opportunity to help viewers at home to imagine their fellow citizens and to guide them in their reactions to

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 293.

the ceremony. On a global level, the crowd came to stand for all South Africans, engineering scenes of joyous and united celebration.

The inauguration played itself out as what Dayan and Katz refer to as a “Coronation” – a ceremonial media event that reminds “societies of their cultural heritage”⁷⁶ and highlights “areas of continuity between traditional structures and rational-legal ones, thus demonstrating the persistence of traditional forms in modern societies”.⁷⁷ Weddings, funerals and state-organised ceremonies fall into this category, which typically involves events that “invite the public to take stock”⁷⁸ and to “pledge allegiance to traditional forms of authority”.⁷⁹

In the South African case, this intent was complicated by the need to represent both tradition and the credible invention of new tradition, and to ask audiences to pledge fresh allegiances by accepting the enactment of a transfer of power. The inauguration tackled this challenge mainly by merging old Afrikaner nationalist emblems with struggle and new national symbols. The singing of the old national anthem, “*Die Stem*”⁸⁰ (retained at Mandela’s insistence⁸¹), alongside “*Nkosi Sikelel’iAfrica*” linked the apartheid and post-apartheid eras, while the abundant presence of the new national flag heralded a new beginning. The depiction of cultural heritage, however, was more self-consciously African, emphasising the new ownership of the state;⁸² Ladysmith Black Mambazo⁸³ gave a Zulu *capella* performance, while the crowd engaged in *toyi-toying*.⁸⁴

The transfer of power was expressed not only through the location of the ceremony, the Union Buildings in Pretoria, but also through the symbolisation of military

⁷⁶ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 37.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁰ Though the first verse of “*Die Stem*” was retained, some of the wording of the second part was changed to fit in with the ideal of unity (Eliree Bornman, “National symbols and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa”, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30, 2006, 385).

⁸¹ Carlin, *Playing the Enemy*, 147–48.

⁸² Orgeret, “His master’s voice and back again?”, 614.

⁸³ Ladysmith Black Mambazo’s musical style, popularised to white South Africa by Paul Simon’s “Diamonds on the Soles of Their Shoes” (1986), has frequently been appropriated by rainbow nationalist texts and became common in adverts that used the nation as their central metaphor.

⁸⁴ The *toyi-toyi* is a form of dance that was frequently used during protest marches under apartheid. It became a means of easing tension and emphasising the protesters’ common identity (Orgeret, “His master’s voice and back again”, 615). During the post-apartheid era, it is used for both protest and celebration.

and rational-legal authority, in line with Max Weber's and Antonio Gramsci's claims that the successful transfer of authority is tied to legal legitimacy and ownership of the state's coercive capacity. Mandela was sworn in by Chief Justice Michael Corbett, dressed in traditional judicial robes, while several white apartheid military generals stood behind the new president in a show of support. The ceremony concluded with a military salute and a visual display of coercive might from South African Air Force planes, which flew overhead in formation, releasing a trail of smoke in the colours of the new national flag. Lest this be interpreted as overly aggressive, the military symbols were offset with the release of a flock of white doves, symbolising the miraculous reconciliatory achievement of the new Government of National Unity (GNU).

The central focus was of course Mandela, the figure of unity around whom these diverse symbols revolved, perhaps the only person able to contain the contradictions of the ceremony. Visually elevated and flanked by white apartheid politicians (including De Klerk) and an *imbongi* (praise poet) dressed in traditional Xhosa attire, Mandela absorbed the awkwardness of some of the alliances. The merger of discordant symbols was harmonised through the official adoption of the miracle discourse, elucidated in Mandela's address, which outlined a new national identity linked to rebirth, reconciliation, unity, non-racialism, victory and the myth of the "rainbow nation".⁸⁵

Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal. The national mood changes as the seasons change.

We are moved by a sense of joy and exhilaration when the grass turns green and the flowers bloom.

That spiritual and physical oneness we all share with this common homeland explains the depth of the pain we all carried in our hearts as we saw our country tear itself apart in a terrible conflict, and as we saw it spurned, outlawed and isolated by the peoples of the world, precisely because it has become the universal base of the pernicious ideology and practice of racism and racial oppression. ...

The time for the healing of the wounds has come.

The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come. ...

⁸⁵ Desmond Tutu went on to reiterate the new national label of "rainbow nation" on a series of television slots (Baines, "The rainbow nation?", no page number), including a thanksgiving service to celebrate the peaceful 1994 election before global television cameras (Helga Dickow & Valerie Møller, "Five years into democracy: Rank and file perspectives into South African quality of life and the 'rainbow nation'", *Les Cahiers d'IFAS*, 1 March, 2001, 50).

We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world. ...

Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world.

Let freedom reign.

The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement!⁸⁶

While the notion of triumph courses through the address, the nation's defeated enemy is described in abstract terms (as "racism", "oppression", "deprivation"). Interestingly, perhaps because of the very obvious connection to many of the beneficiaries of the power-sharing deal, not once does Mandela use the term "apartheid" in his address. The transference is most evident in the comments on the security forces, whom he praises for having played a role in "securing our first democratic elections and the transition to democracy, from bloodthirsty forces which still refuse to see the light". The enemy, "the bloodthirsty forces" over which the nation has triumphed is defined, then, not as apartheid but as those opposed to the negotiated transition. The media, which has a tendency to exhibit "collective amnesia about current events",⁸⁷ also displayed a remarkably short memory. Although some of the current contradictions were noted, few reports analysed them, commenting on the irony of the situation in wondrous rather than critical terms; that Mandela should be standing alongside representatives of the government that imprisoned him for 27 years was depicted as a miraculous triumph, achieved against all odds. The BBC, for instance, referred to the Union Buildings as "the place where apartheid was conceived and administered", but made no attempt to highlight the presence of persons linked to that administration. (In fact, only Winnie Mandela's presence was singled out as awkward in the insert.) Similarly, an SABC news insert pointed out that Mandela had "pledged to be faithful to the same republic which once jailed him for high treason",⁸⁸ and described the event as "the greatest story ever",⁸⁹ a claim made for other scripted media events.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ The speech was in fact written by Thabo Mbeki (Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred*, 656).

⁸⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television and Journalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 6.

⁸⁸ SABC, News at Eight, 10 May 1994.

In some ways, the uneasiness of the symbolic merger suited the Coronation narrative, which deals with the “mysteries of rites of passage”. Dayan and Katz point out that “the tension of Coronation has to do with the magic of ritual: ‘Will it work?’ Or will it be undermined by some ceremonial slip?”⁹¹ In the post-apartheid context, particularly in the wake of pre-election turmoil, and against the odds of its divided history, this tension was heightened. The execution of the ceremony was unanimously considered to be successful, and it was really only after the inauguration that South Africa’s standing as “the miracle nation” entered into the global imaginary.⁹² It required the official ritual of a scripted Coronation, in which Mandela – who by this stage had accumulated a saintly image as a kind of “miracle maker” – was installed “before God”, in the presence of the world’s leaders, and, via television, the world.

This global “witnessing” was highlighted in reports on the event, which emphasised South Africa’s shedding of its pariah status, quoting UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s comment that “South Africa regained its rightful place in Africa, in the UN, and the family of nations”. The celebratory reception of the “new” South Africa gives credence to Benedict Anderson’s claim that nations “wish to be recognised and respected by ‘other nations’”.⁹³ The inauguration was reportedly graced with the presence of more heads of state than had been together at any time since John F Kennedy’s funeral, and the parade of celebrated leaders provided a “visual demonstration of South Africa’s triumphal return to the world of nations”.⁹⁴ South African newspapers took particular pride in this, declaring that “We’re on top of the world”,⁹⁵ and “The World [is] at Mandela’s Feet”.⁹⁶

Because it had yet to establish the terms of its shared nationhood, the presence of other nations also provided South Africa with other identities against which to pit its own. In this respect, Fidel Castro and Yasser Arafat were singled out by the local and

⁸⁹ Orgeret, “His master’s voice and back again?”, 615.

⁹⁰ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 7.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁹² See, for instance, Sparks, *Tomorrow Is Another Country*; Guelke, *South Africa in Transition*; Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle*.

⁹³ Benedict Anderson, “The goodness of nations”.

⁹⁴ Orgeret, “His master’s voice and back again?”, 614.

⁹⁵ “We’re on top of the world”, *Star*, 10 May 1994, 1.

⁹⁶ *Sowetan*, “The world at Mandela’s feet”, 10 May 1994, 1.

international media, which took the opportunity to emphasise global reconciliations in its own attempt at enemy-sublimation. Both were framed as the defeated (but now relatively harmless) former enemy in many reports. Castro had played a direct role in South African and African history because of the presence of Cuban troops in the Angolan War, and *Business Day* noted that “Years of enmity end as Castro meets De Klerk and defence chief”,⁹⁷ while the *New York Times*, one of the few publications to treat the inauguration with caution, noted that Castro was the only foreign dignitary to receive cheers of “Viva!” from the crowd.⁹⁸ South Africa’s racial reconciliation became a microcosmic metaphor for the larger issue of the country’s integration into the global democratic world. Indeed, *Time* magazine’s description of the event likened it to the destruction of the Berlin Wall:

Here was a spectacle of true transformation. For the first time, South Africans of all races were citizens. Apartheid was gone, reduced to rubble, as if in one of those slow-motion demolitions that bring down massive obsolete monstrosities to make way for new construction.⁹⁹

Some of the underlying drama of the election and inauguration, such as the Berlin Wall analogy and the casting of Castro and Arafat, suggest that South Africa’s transition to democracy played itself out as another chapter in television’s enactment of the global victory over communism, a trend in media events at the time.¹⁰⁰ In spite of this narrative, which took on the appearance of a “miracle play, where a cancerous body politic was healed through the intervention of the invisible hand of the world market and electoral therapy”,¹⁰¹ South Africans did not constitute one nation, a reality made clear by

⁹⁷ “Years of enmity end as Castro meets De Klerk and defence chief”, 11 May 1994. *Business Day*.

⁹⁸ Bill Keller, “South Africa’s new era overview: The overview; South Africans hail president Mandela”, *New York Times*, 11 May 1994 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/11/world/south-africa-s-new-era-overview-south-africans-hail-president-mandela-first.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> – viewed 26 October 2010), no page number.

⁹⁹ Lance Morrow, “Birth of a nation”, *Time*, 9 May 1994.

¹⁰⁰ See Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 53.

¹⁰¹ Louw & Chitty, “South Africa’s miracle cure”, 278.

continuing post-inauguration violence in KZN (which received less critical coverage after the inauguration),¹⁰² eruptions in prisons across the country and continued white flight.

The viewing statistics for the inauguration also show noteworthy disparities, indicating that some South Africans invested more in the new nation than others. While audience figures for black South Africans suggest mass viewership (peaking at an AR of 35 and 34 for Nguni- and Sotho-speakers), these were not matched by their white counterparts, which peaked at an AR of 25 and 26 for English- and Afrikaans-speakers respectively,¹⁰³ who were perhaps alienated by the Africanist aesthetic of the event. The figures suggest that while Mandela and the ANC had succeeded in attaining general acceptance of his leadership, they still had to engender loyalty from minority groups.

Mandela and his advisors responded to this challenge almost immediately. For instance, in his first State of the Nation speech on 24 May 1994, also broadcast live, Mandela quoted sections from a poem by the late Ingrid Jonker, the darling of the Afrikaner literati, inviting Afrikaners to identify with the “new” nation. His use of Jonker’s poem “*Die Kind*” operated as an instance of rhetoric that Philippe-Joseph Salazar claims was “even better than real images” because it offered an “internal vision of nation-building”.¹⁰⁴ The choice of poem is important as it serves as a kind of cenotaph,¹⁰⁵ inscribing the unknown dead into South Africa’s vision of itself. As Benedict Anderson points out, the tombs of Unknown Soldiers serve as “arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism”, as they are “saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings”.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to the popular and fantastical visions of the inauguration and many subsequent rainbow nationalist texts, which lacked the imagination to conjure up suitable images of the past (such as the Rugby World Cup 1995 opening ceremony – see Chapter 6) the speech serves as a rare moment in the

¹⁰² Nicola J Jones points out that although diminishing reporting is linked to a decrease in violence, incidents such as the Shobashobane massacre near Port Shepstone in December 1995 and January 1996 and the Nongoma massacres from January to June 2000 were largely overlooked by the media (“News values, ethics and violence in KwaZulu-Natal: Has media coverage reformed?” *Critical Arts: A South–North Journal of Cultural and Media Studies*, 19 (1), 2005, 152–53).

¹⁰³ SAARF Viewing Report, 9–15 May 1994.

¹⁰⁴ Salazar, *An African Athens*, 24.

¹⁰⁵ Rita Barnard, “Contesting beauty” in Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael (eds.), *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa, 2000), 356.

¹⁰⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 9 [original emphasis].

history of nation-building discourse in the country. The idea to open the address with an Afrikaans poem was in fact Thabo Mbeki's,¹⁰⁷ but, as discussed in the next chapter, Mandela became a master at placing himself at the centre of inclusive media-friendly spectacles.

Conclusion

Television played an increasingly important role in the development of South Africa's post-apartheid national identity, with live media events once again plotting important narrative turning points. Symbolically, the timing and framing of the pre-election period had much in common with the situation in Eastern Europe. Dayan and Katz's description of the role of television as integral to the coming of democracy there is equally appropriate to the South African situation:

[T]elevision served as a herald, reporting on the revolution in progress; it served to temper the threat and anxiety of outside intervention; it offered itself as evidence that civil liberty and freedom of speech were now reinstated; it moderated the debate between old and new leadership; it celebrated the 'decoration' of the Communist party and the promise of free elections.¹⁰⁸

Yet, in spite of the NP's supposed "decoration", the outgoing party was not in fact as marginalised as some might have expected. Mandela appointed FW de Klerk as a deputy president (alongside Thabo Mbeki) and several NP cabinet ministers retained their posts or were redeployed in other cabinet positions (including Pik Botha, Roelf Meyer and Derek Keys). But the push towards the election and inauguration left smaller parties by the wayside. The CP's decision not to participate left it with no parliamentary representation, whereas the Democratic Party and the Pan Africanist Congress hardly fared better; both achieved less than 2% of the vote. Similarly, although the IFP's win in KwaZulu-Natal was hailed as a victory and Buthelezi was appointed as Minister of Home Affairs, his political shelf life clearly had an expiry date and he grew increasingly frustrated with the ANC's attempts to defuse the IFP's political power base by forming

¹⁰⁷ Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred*, 656.

¹⁰⁸ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 52.

an alliance with the Zulu monarchy, thus splitting Zulu cultural and political ambitions. His exasperation was most memorably displayed in September 1994 when he and his bodyguards burst in on a live *Agenda* television interview and accosted Sifiso Zulu, a supposed Zulu “prince” whom Buthelezi regarded as an ANC puppet. His actions were strongly condemned by several political parties and media organisations and he increasingly found himself out in the cold.

While mass support formed the most obvious base for political power in the new era, leaders’ statuses also drew from their ability to partner with media institutions and to utilise television platforms to their benefit. De Klerk and Mandela both had strengths and weaknesses as television “performers”; De Klerk lacked believability whereas Mandela projected a wooden image; De Klerk enjoyed more exposure on national television because of his position as state president for most of the early 1990s but Mandela’s global profile overpowered De Klerk’s, largely because of the series of media events that had worked to elevate his public image. As Greenberg points out, “Mandela’s charisma derived from his whole life, that moment in history and his personal relationship with the audience, not from the eloquence of his words or delivery.”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, by the end of the transition period, boosted by the spectacular inauguration – a massive media event – Mandela emerged as the true post-apartheid king on the global stage, but one who still needed to secure the loyalty of minority groups in the nation.

¹⁰⁹ Greenberg, *Dispatches from the War Room*, 142–43.

6

Consolidation: South Africa's Return to the Global Fold and the Making of Madiba

Sport often offers the only arena in which nations can redress feelings of marginality and bask, however fleetingly, in the sensation of a being a global force.

– Rob Nixon¹

Sport speaks a language which reaches areas where a president and politician cannot reach.

– Nelson Mandela²

While the election and inauguration presented the transforming South African state with the opportunity to formalise the identity of the new nation, other, popular media events of the transition were equally helpful in consolidating a new national identity. While the previous chapter looked at state-controlled political events, this chapter returns to some of the popular televised occasions involved in South Africa's transformation during the transition period.

A few years before the election and for the first time in decades the country was permitted to participate in international contests such as Miss World (in 1991), the Olympics (in 1992) and the Cricket World Cup (also in 1992). Thus, even before the

¹ Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, 135.

² Cited in Max du Preez, *Louis Luyt: Unauthorised* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2001), 177.

apartheid government had officially been voted out of power, global organisations “rewarded” South Africa for taking steps towards democracy – first by allowing it to participate internationally and later allowing it to host mega-events within the country itself. While withholding media events had served as a means of “punishment” during the apartheid era, they now played a role in rewarding South Africans for supporting reform. Various political parties tried to take ownership of these events, positioning themselves as the gatekeepers to reward as a means of increasing their own popular appeal.

There was extensive debate within the ANC over whether to support the country’s return to the global stage and organisations such as COSATU and individuals such as Hassan Howa protested against what they saw as the premature and inappropriate celebration of a new post-apartheid national identity. Indeed, these celebratory contests occurred, somewhat incongruously, alongside highly violent events such as Boipatong and Bisho and even within volatile regions such as Bophuthatswana.

In addition, South Africa’s participation in these events, although widely celebrated, showed signs of awkwardness and made explicit the lack of a shared national identity. The transition period was characterised by a number of debates on national symbols and sporting quotas, all of which fed into larger discussions on issues such as national heritage and affirmative action. The question of divided loyalty – apparent in the viewing patterns of media events such as the inauguration discussed in the previous chapter – were also evident in the debates that led up to South Africa’s readmittance to international competition. The behaviour of sportsmen and fans – often highly visible, and nationally embarrassing, on global television – laid bare the faultlines of the emerging nation and emphasised white recalcitrance in particular.

On account of this, on several occasions the ANC was tempted to withdraw support for the country’s return to media events, but it quickly found that once South Africa had set foot on the global stage, it was extremely difficult to withdraw. In the end, the party was more or less compelled to support South Africa’s readmittance to the family of nations.

Mandela, however, remained a firm supporter of South Africa’s re-entry to international competition and, from early in the 1990s, he played an important role in resolving the tensions around national symbols. The period of his presidency rapidly

went on to solidify his reputation as a unifier who presided over the reconciliatory metaphor of the rainbow nation. His presidential image borrowed readily from sport, an arena set up to recreate warring nations, in which the highest call of patriotism, to fight for one's country, can symbolically (and lightheartedly) play itself out. Referred to as the "people's president", he was much adored by the nation and the world. Mandela's status was boosted by the fact that he was seen as the key to South Africa's much desired reconciliation with the rest of the world; perhaps more than any other individual, he helped to rid South Africa of its pariah status. This was largely because he was careful to lend support to global media events for which white South Africans were hungry.

There were several key international events that played a role in directing the emerging national identity of post-apartheid South Africa before the 1994 election, including Miss World, the 1992 Olympics, the 1992 Cricket World Cup and the Wallaby and All Black tour of the country in 1992. In 1993, South Africa was awarded the honour of hosting the 1995 Rugby World Cup, and it was this event, more than any other, that helped to iron out some (but not all) of the contradictions of the country's new identity.

Waiting in the Wings: South Africa Returns to Miss World

The first competitive body to permit South Africa's return to the global fold was Miss World, with whom post-apartheid South Africa and Mandela went on to forge a new and lasting relationship. The South African delegate from 1991, Diana Tilden-Davis, a tall blonde bombshell from a wealthy family, whose half-sister, Janine Botbyl, had won Miss South Africa three years earlier, was hardly representative of the changes that were supposedly taking place in the country. While her crowning as Miss South Africa in August did not raise too many eyebrows, when she came third in the international Miss World Contest later that year, there was much uproar over the fact that she had been allowed to compete in the first place. While for years, the domestic contest had simply been dismissed as a whites-only cultural spectacle (there had never been a black winner), international competition again raised the question of Miss South Africa's suitability as her country's representative. South Africa's participation in the competition, for the first time in 14 years, meant that the country was judged not only according to international standards of beauty but also international values. The gaze of the world once again turned

to the Miss South Africa selection process and the *Los Angeles Times* reported that only 50 of the 500 Miss South Africa 1991 contestants were black, all of the 12 finalists were white and only one of the nine judges was black.³ (This was not strictly speaking true; Amy Kleinhans, who would go on to become the first “non-white” winner of the contest the following year, was first runner-up.)

The ANC Women’s League objected to South Africa’s inclusion, not only because they saw the contest as “degrading”⁴ to women but also because they did not believe that Tilden-Davis represented the majority of women in the country. Some black publications also noted the discord; a *Sowetan* editorial, for instance, claimed that although it wished it “could share in the joy of Miss South Africa ... sadly, her good performance (in the Miss World pageant) leaves many black South Africans cold”.⁵

The ANC nevertheless tolerated the Miss World contest invitation, realising that denying white South Africans their hunger to compete internationally could damage the organisation’s attempts to build a reputation as a liberal global party capable of governing the country. For the most part, the local media welcomed South Africa’s readmittance to the competition (splashing triumphant photos of Tilden-Davis with Foreign Minister Pik Botha across its pages in the days before she left for Atlanta), and the SABC broadcast the final pageant live to the nation at four in the morning and then reran it that evening for viewers who might have missed it.⁶

Tilden-Davis’s victorious crowning as second runner-up attracted further controversy after she reportedly told Miss Nigeria during the competition that the lack of black contestants in the Miss South Africa contest was due to the fact that most black girls fell pregnant by the time they were 15 and were thus disqualified from entering. The remark highlighted her unsuitability as the country’s ambassador and, although she later denied making the comment, it was widely reported, first in the *Sowetan* and then

³ Scott Kraft, “Culture: Beauty and the Beast of Apartheid in S. Africa”, *Los Angeles Times*, 28 January 1992 (Available at: http://articles.latimes.com/1992-01-28/news/wr-1084_1_south-africa-s-entrant – viewed 1 November 2011), no page number.

⁴ Cited in *ibid.*

⁵ Cited in *ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

internationally, and drew attention, once again, to the awkwardness of South Africa's participation in international competition while its politics were racially skewed.

The scandal did not dishearten the contest organisers, however. Either they were confident that a new political era was about to dawn, or the contemporary political situation did not matter to them. Either way, the following year, somewhat surprisingly, husband-and-wife duo Eric and Julia Morley, owners of the Miss World copyright, decided that South Africa could in effect host the competition for the following three years, an honour that would attract the gaze of over 80 participating nations. The extraordinary decision came as a result of a three-year deal struck with Sol Kerzner, CEO of Sun International, which owned Sun City. Kerzner paid a one-off sum for the chance to host and produce the show, and received television rights in return. As Zoë Heller pointed out at the time, the contract was mutually beneficial, based on the shared "empathy of pariahs".⁷ Sun City's location in Africa and Kerzner's talent for staging spectacle promised to rejuvenate the pageant's waning popularity; the Morleys had been unable to get a British terrestrial channel to televise the contest since 1988, and the 1991 contest in Atlanta lost them money. The Morleys were hopeful that the contract would restore Miss World's reputation, surmising that the makeover would ensure its return to BBC or ITV.⁸ In return, the high viewership and glamour of the contest would secure three years of global marketing for Kerzner's Sun City.

But, as seen in Chapter 3, Sun City had a dubious reputation as a white pleasure resort, and Bophuthatswana was a troublesome political hotspot during the transition period, when the area's indeterminate political status became a source of great anxiety for inhabitants (and apartheid puppet leaders), resulting in massive unrest (see Chapter 4). While the South African government still recognised Bophuthatswana as an independent homeland, the rest of the world did not (Miss Bophuthatswana was not even allowed to enter the contest) and, as seen by events in areas such as Bisho earlier that year (see

⁷ Zoë Heller, "Welcome to South Africa", *Independent*, 21 November 1993 (Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/welcome-to-sa-televisually-and-politically-incorrect-in-this-country-the-miss-world-contest-is-in-exile-in-bophuthatswana-this-year-the-81-lovely-contestants-arrived-three-weeks-early-for-photoopportunities-involving-cutesy-black-children-in-the-townships-and-social-evenings-for-operation-hunger-1505756.html> – viewed 1 November 2011), no page number.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Chapter 4), the homelands were a major cause of political grievance among political parties. The decision to hold the event there was thus politically insensitive, to say the least. The pageant organisers attempted to overcome this perception by emphasising Miss World's humanitarian role – “Beauty with a Purpose” had been the motto of the contest since the 1970s – and they arranged various photo shoots with poverty-stricken African children and donated a portion of the profits to Operation Hunger.

These attempts to revive Miss World's reputation could not escape the discomfiting fact that Sun International – the pageant's effective partner – was engaged in a battle with COSATU over its exploitation of black labour. COSATU demanded that the hotel group recognise the South African Commercial, Caterers and Allied Workers Union in Bophuthatswana, something the corporation had managed to avoid doing under apartheid because of Bophuthatswana's status as an independent homeland, but which it was now under pressure to change. Realising the potential for attracting worldwide attention, COSATU threatened to disrupt the competition.⁹ Similarly, the ANC planned a march on the Saturday morning of the pageant from the southern Free State township of Botshabelo to Thaba'Nchu in Bophuthatswana. Using the anticipated media event as a platform to air their grievances, the march was planned to demand free political activity in the area, the release of all political prisoners in the homeland and the cancellation of the Miss World contest,¹⁰ which they saw as inappropriate in light of current events. Fearing a repeat of events in Bisho, the government declared the march illegal and heavily armed border patrols were set up.

In anticipation of hosting the media event, held for the first time on African soil, the judges of the local Miss South Africa competition were more politically correct when selecting the country's representative, and Amy Kleinhans, the first ever “non-white” Miss South Africa, was crowned.¹¹ But despite being a step in the right direction, Kleinhans's representation was compromised by the fact that post-apartheid South Africa was stuck in an interregnum of sorts. She chose to appear under the Miss World and Sun

⁹ SAPA, “COSATU threatens to disrupt Miss World contest”, 16 November 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9211.17> – viewed 1 November 2011), no page number.

¹⁰ SAPA, “Police threaten to stop ANC march”, 11 December 1992 (Available at: www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9212.14 – viewed 2 November 2011), no page number.

¹¹ In terms of South Africa's racial classification system, Kleinhans was classified as “coloured”.

International banners instead of the South African flag, claiming diplomatically, and in the apolitical spirit associated with the pageant, that contest brand and hotel group “deserved the recognition for staging this wonderful event”.¹² More likely, of course, she was aware of the negative symbolism of the *oranje-blanje-blou*, as the flag was affectionately known to Afrikaner nationalists, and her decision drew attention to the country’s indeterminate national identity during the transition period. Her stance led to increased debate about the suitability of the flag, and the PAC capitalised on the event, releasing a statement in support of her choice. Describing her as “the great daughter of the soil” they claimed her decision was “correct, brave, honourable, informed and wise” because the South African flag was “not an independent flag but a combination of the British colonial and Dutch colonial flags”.¹³ The South African national anthem was another awkward symbol emphasising the country’s non-nationhood. Instead, the two-hour pageant featured a rousing, upbeat version of “*Nkosi Sikelel’iAfrika*” – dubbed “South African’s national anthem in waiting”¹⁴ – as part of the entertainment.

In spite of the politically insensitive choice of location and Miss South Africa’s contradictory nationhood, the event was a sterling success. Miss South Africa was a semi-finalist, a strong police presence managed to keep protestors at bay, and the live broadcast was watched by over 800 million viewers in 73 countries, more than ever before in its history.¹⁵

In 1993, somewhat surprisingly, the ANC looked more favourably upon the event, investing in South Africa’s participation early on. This had much to do with the party’s prior negotiations with Miss South Africa organisers and with the eventual winner of that year’s national contest. The ANC Youth League, led by Peter Mokaba, contacted the sponsors of the Miss South Africa contest (the *Sunday Times* and *Rapport*) to dispute the politics of the competition when only three black finalists (out of twelve) were selected. The sponsors responded by condescending to set up a training fund to give future “non-

¹² Sun International, Press Release: “Miss SA refuses to carry SA flag”, 12 December 1992 (Available at: www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9212.14 – viewed 2 November 2011), no page number.

¹³ SAPA, “PAC supports Miss SA’s stand”, 14 December 1992 (Available at: www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9212.14 – viewed 2 November 2011), no page number.

¹⁴ Sun International, Press Release: “Miss SA refuses to carry SA flag”.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

white” finalists special grooming for the contest, a move that the Youth League described as “a major breakthrough for the oppressed masses of our people” in a secret memo sent to the ANC.¹⁶ The memo was leaked to the press, which in turn resulted in complaints of political interference, particularly when Jacqui Mofokeng was selected as the first ever black Miss South Africa. *Rapport* was reportedly inundated with irate calls from television viewers within minutes of the judges’ announcement, and letters pages in the subsequent week declared that the contest was “rigged” and a form of “window-dressing”.¹⁷ Mofokeng also endured a slew of disparaging remarks, challenging her to declare that she really was as beautiful as the white semi-finalists and claiming that her crowning was a form of tokenism.¹⁸

But Mofokeng’s crowning – which was swayed, the judges claimed, by her politically enlightened comments on violence in the townships and not her race – paved the way for a closer relationship between the Miss World Contest and ANC leadership. In spite of the fact that the pageant was again held in conflict-ridden Bophuthatswana, and again attracted would-be protestors, this time the ANC endorsed the Contest. Mandela came out in Mofokeng’s defence, “gratefully” seizing the opportunity to pose in photos with her and claiming that she was “a good ambassador” to South Africa.¹⁹ To some, supporting the Miss World Contest and taking up the cause of a beauty queen might have seemed incompatible with the image of an African liberation movement, but, as Bill Keller of the *Los Angeles Times* pointed out at the time, such actions “proved that the African National Congress has an uncanny sense of what matters to South Africans”.²⁰ During the transition period, the ANC increasingly associated itself with global media

¹⁶ Kraft, “Culture: Beauty and the Beast of Apartheid in S. Africa”.

¹⁷ Cited in John Carlin, “Queen of black and white Africa”, *Independent*, 25 November 1993 (Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/queen-of-black-and-white-africa-the-first-black-miss-south-africa-is-hot-favourite-to-take-the-miss-world-title-on-saturday-jacqui-mofokeng-tells-john-carlin-how-education-not-titillation-is-her-aim-1506472.html> – viewed 10 November 2011), no page number.

¹⁸ Michael Hill, “Black isn’t beautiful, South African callers complain”, *Baltimore Sun*, 10 August 1993 (Available at: http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1993-08-10/news/1993222001_1_mofokeng-south-africa-pageant – viewed 10 November 2011), no page number.

¹⁹ Cited in Carlin, “Queen of black and white Africa”.

²⁰ Bill Keller, “Apartheid’s end transforms beauty show”, *New York Times*, 16 September 1993 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/09/16/world/apartheid-s-end-transforms-beauty-show.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> – viewed 2 November 2011), no page number.

events to boost its own popularity and reputation. Rita Barnard argues that Miss World offered too great a marketing opportunity for a government in waiting:

It is in the light of the symbolic politics of visibility – the transformation of South Africa in the national and global gaze – that we might view the ANC’s sanction of the three Miss World pageants held in Sun City (from 1992 to 1994). Despite the notoriety of the resort – which, like the Springbok rugby team, was a major target for international boycotts – the pageant, with its estimated global audience of 1.2 billion, was irresistible as a stage for recasting South Africa’s image. While the ANC Youth League’s lobby took care to emphasize their more politically correct demands (such as the training-school for black contestants, competitively disadvantaged by their economic circumstances) in negotiations with the contest’s sponsors, their investment in these matters would have made no political sense whatsoever were it not for the possibilities offered by the beauty contest for symbolic and spectacular representation (especially once a black woman was chosen to represent Miss South Africa).²¹

By 1994, the gamble with Kerzner had paid off and the Miss World brand benefited from South Africa’s reputation as the world’s “miracle nation” and Mandela’s spectacular inauguration (see Chapter 5). South Africa’s newly liberalised status also provided the Miss World organisers with an opportunity to expand into new markets, which it sorely needed to do, since, for some years, the contest’s popularity had been on the wane in the West.²² (This factor no doubt also influenced the judges’ choice of winner in 1994, Miss India, and in the previous year, Miss Russia.) The move, by all accounts, was successful, as figures indicate an increase in viewership from 1.2 billion to 1.8 billion between 1992 and 1995.²³ In 1994, Mandela personally congratulated all of the finalists in Pretoria, stating, “It is a wonderful thing for South Africa to play host to young ladies from more than 80 countries,”²⁴ and marking the beginning of a long-standing association with the

²¹ Barnard, “Contesting beauty”, 356.

²² Melissa Butcher, *Transnational Television, Cultural Identity and Change: When STAR Came to India* (London: Sage, 2003), 245.

²³ Maxwell Sibanda, “Miss World finals unfair to Africa”, *Daily News* (Available at: <http://www.dailynews.co.zw/index.php/entertainment/37-entertainment/5188-miss-world-finals-unfair-to-africa.html> – viewed 30 October 2011), no page number.

²⁴ Nelson Mandela, “Message to the 1994 Miss World pageant” (Available at: <http://faisygroup.blogspot.com/2011/09/aishwarya-rai-miss-world-1994.html> – viewed 5 December 2011), no page number.

contest. (To this day Mandela sends an official message to the Miss World finalists.) By 1995, with South Africa's final staging of the contest, the former pariah of the world had become the nation to host the contest the most times outside of Britain.

Batting for Change: South Africa and the Cricket World Cup

When it came to sport, the ANC was quicker to take advantage of the hunger for international acceptance to further its political aims, and cricket was the first sport to benefit. ANC sport spokesperson Steve Tshwete led the process that culminated in the formation of the United Cricket Board (UCB) – a multiracial body representing South African cricketing interests – in December 1990, and the party lent support to the UCB's attempts to gain worldwide acceptance for the team. On 10 July 1991, because of the changes ushered in by De Klerk and because of the UCB's own proactive attempts to nurture the sport at grassroots level, South Africa was formally readmitted to the ICC, just in time, many hoped, to allow for the country's participation in its first ever Cricket World Cup the following year. As seen in Chapter 2, South Africans believed that their team could prove itself the world leader in cricket if only it were given the chance to compete internationally. Much of the cricketing world, it seems, was equally keen to test South Africa's talent; the British government openly supported the country's readmittance, and India was the first country to resume international cricketing relations with the team. The South African bid for global exposure at the World Cup had much marketing potential,²⁵ as there was intense interest in the team's abilities after so many years of isolation; many even thought of the 1992 World Cup as the first "real" World Cup. As English entrepreneur Don Bailey claimed, cricket "needed" South Africa as the "Springboks would fill grounds everywhere".²⁶ Presumably the interest extended to television viewership, increasing business opportunities for television rights. Australia and New Zealand, the co-hosts of the contest, openly supported South Africa's

²⁵ Aurelia Chapman, "The ties that bind: The relationship between politics and cricket in South Africa, 1989–1992" (MA thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2005), 56.

²⁶ Douglas Booth, "Accommodating race to play the game: South Africa's readmission to international sport", *Sporting Traditions*, 8 (2) (May), 1992, 192–93.

participation from an early stage and were able to secure a lucrative deal from the official sponsors of the competition, Benson & Hedges.

Although it was generally assumed that South Africa would compete after joining the ICC (particularly since the World Cup Committee backed readmittance), there was some reluctance on the part of the ICC, largely because of resistance from the West Indies and Pakistan. There were obvious problems with the country's re-entry: it was politically risky (there was always the chance that De Klerk's government could backtrack on reform), racially insensitive (images of black victims, still suffering under apartheid-created systems, dominated international news) and overly hasty (after all, Mandela could not yet vote in the country). Norman Cowans, a Jamaican-born English cricketer, announced in July 1991 that he would not play the country until apartheid was abolished, and West Indian Clyde Walcott complained that the ICC decision was rushed.²⁷ But, for the most part, the return to international sport had widespread support and those who voiced their political opposition to readmittance risked being labelled "spoil sports".

The bid to play was greatly assisted by the ANC itself, led by Mandela and Tshwete, who positioned the ANC as the party that had "the power to offer South Africa an entry ticket to the World Cup".²⁸ As Aurelia Chapman points out, politics and sport became intertwined during this period and, ironically, the ANC emerged as the champions of the country's reacceptance:

They purposefully used sport as a tool to negotiate a new South Africa. It was a way in which to communicate with White South Africa. By supporting the South African cricket team, they were winning the hearts of many Whites and other South Africans.²⁹

Mandela's backing had the potential to sway opposition, and Ali Bacher, president of the UCB, arranged a meeting between the ANC leader and Clive Lloyd, the former captain of the West Indian team (one of the teams most opposed to South Africa's inclusion) – a

²⁷ Jack Williams, *Cricket and Race* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 108.

²⁸ Stephen Wagg, "National Identity in South Africa" in Stephen Wagg (ed.), *Cricket and National Identity in the Postcolonial Age* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 51.

²⁹ Chapman, "The ties that bind", 60.

meeting that was also attended by a large Swedish delegation together with media representatives. When Mandela answered “definitely, yes” in answer to a Swedish journalist’s question about whether he supported the country’s bid to play in World Cup, news of his endorsement travelled around the world.³⁰

Mandela, a keen sports fan and a boxer in his youth, used his symbolic capital to support reintegration at every opportunity. Before readmittance to the ICC, he phoned the Jamaican prime minister to request the country’s backing,³¹ and in support of South Africa’s participation at the World Cup, he wrote to the ICC, arguing that if South Africa was permitted to play it would “enhance the process of unity in sport as well as the spirit of national reconciliation” in the country.³² For some, the idea that an all-white cricket team could reconcile South Africa was absurd and counterproductive; Nigel Carter argued in the *Caribbean Times*, for instance, that the ANC’s move was “a huge political clanger”.³³ Yet, Mandela’s approval effectively silenced reservations. It was difficult to argue against the wishes of the very persons the boycott had been designed to support, and, as Douglas Booth points out, non-racial sportspersons were “loath to question publicly the headlong rush to international sport or to challenge all-white national teams out of respect to Mandela”.³⁴

Eventually, in October 1991, the ICC capitulated, announcing, to much jubilation, that the country could compete. Kepler Wessels came out of retirement to captain the team, a move that emphasised South Africa’s reintegration into world sport because, like Zola Budd and Basil D’Oliveira, Wessels had left South Africa in order to compete internationally under the banner of another nation (see Chapter 2). Having previously played for test cricket for Australia, he had a wealth of international sporting experience, and his return to South Africa was seen as a reclamation of sorts. Indeed, the South African team was referred to in media reports as “cricket’s prodigal son” returning from “the wilderness”. The team did not disappoint, excelling in its international debut match on 26 February 1992, defeating Australia by an impressive nine wickets. Nobody

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Booth, *The Race Game*, 192.

³² Cited in Booth, “Accommodating race to play the game”, 197.

³³ Cited in Williams, *Cricket and Race*, 109.

³⁴ Booth, “Accommodating race to play the game”, 204.

appeared more delighted that Tshwete, who was photographed, tears rolling down his cheeks, embracing the Afrikaner Wessels in the dressing room after the match. Photographs of Tshwete embracing the white Afrikaner Wessels, other members of the team and even the previously outcast Mike Gatting (who had earned international condemnation for ignoring the boycott and undertaking “rebel tours” to South Africa – see Chapter 2) dominated media reports, boosting the perception of sport’s ability to integrate racial groups within South Africa and also its role in reconciling South Africa with the rest of the world. As Chapman points out, the iconic photo “did as much for the cause of South African cricket, if not more, than anything else the UCB had tried to do in the past”.³⁵

Although the next two matches were less impressive – with losses to New Zealand and Sri Lanka – the South African team went on to play the West Indies, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, England and India, losing only to England and earning themselves a place in the semi-final. It was at this point that the global contest became deeply influential on political occurrences back home.

The ANC was not the only party to capitalise on the World Cup. After the Australia win, De Klerk broadcast a congratulatory message to the team on the main national news,³⁶ declaring, “Your victory is a victory for all of us over years of isolation and rejection”.³⁷ As seen in Chapter 4, the contest became a political tool when it coincided with the all-white referendum. Just as South Africans had been given a taste of the gratification of international competition, De Klerk hinted that the country’s participation in the semi-final (against rival England) depended on a positive response to proposed change. In a form of political communication that seems both brilliant and inconceivable in today’s world of professional sport, political banners, purchased by South African businessmen supporting De Klerk’s campaign, were displayed around the field at some of the matches involving the country’s team,³⁸ securing a mass audience that was highly impressionable. At the Sri Lankan match, for instance, South Africans

³⁵ Chapman, “The ties that bind”, 64.

³⁶ Edward Griffiths, *Kepler: The Biography* (Johannesburg: Pelham Books, 1994), 206.

³⁷ Cited in Booth, *The Race Game*, 191.

³⁸ From Chapman, “The ties that bind”, 67 (originally: “*Stem ja, sê advertensiebord langs sportveld in Nieu-Seeland aan Suid Afrikaners*” in *Die Burger*, 3 March 1992).

were urged to “vote yes”, at the very same time as they engaged in the pleasure of watching their team compete internationally³⁹ – one of the concrete and immediate “rewards” of reform. This practice was eventually discontinued, however, when on the eve of South Africa’s match against Zimbabwe, a telephone caller complained, arguing for an equal platform for the “no” campaign, and the Australian Capital Territories cricket authorities removed the banner to avoid becoming involved in political controversy.⁴⁰

But this did not put an end to cricket’s involvement. The team members, realising the importance of the referendum, released a statement publicising their political views, revealing that all 13 would vote in favour of reform,⁴¹ and special embassy arrangements were made so that the players could vote. In addition, after Jonty Rhodes established himself as *the* South African player in several matches, the campaign made use of his heroic image, printing adverts on the eve of the referendum, asking South Africans to “imagine how far he would go with the ‘yes’ vote”.⁴²

Although it is impossible to measure the impact of the World Cup on the referendum outcome, many critics claim that the desire for international acceptance in the cricketing world (and the Wessels–Tshwete photo specifically) positively influenced the results.⁴³ The NP campaign cleverly used the Cricket World Cup media event platform (and all of the pleasure associated with it) for political leverage. At the same time, the ANC established itself as the gatekeeper to the country’s return to international competition.

There were, however, risks associated with the televised return to international sport, and although the ANC was willing to rally for the country’s return, compromises had to be made. Stephen Wagg argues that while national symbols were incapable of being truly representative in post-apartheid South Africa, sport “could potentially draw

³⁹ The billboards can be glimpsed on YouTube videos of sections of the match. See, for instance, “World Cup 1992 Sri Lanka vs South Africa” (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzbOsk68Bu4> – viewed 2 January 2012).

⁴⁰ Chapman, “The ties that bind”, 68–69 (originally: Colin Bryden: *Return of the Prodigal: South Africa’s Cricketing Comeback*, Johannesburg: Sunday Times and Jonathan Ball, 1992, 123).

⁴¹ Chapman, “The ties that bind”, 70.

⁴² Christopher Merrett, “Sport and nationalism in post-liberation South Africa in the 1990s: Transcendental euphoria or nation building?” *Sport History Review*, 34 (1), 2003, 37.

⁴³ Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities*, 174; see also Wagg, “National identity in South Africa”, 51.

people from all sectors of society together”.⁴⁴ (Indeed, the racially unifying effects of sport were seen as early as 1973 with the South Africa Games – see Chapter 2.) Yet, while this may be so, teams also serve as embodiments of national symbols and, as with Kleinhans’s Miss World flag controversy, there was some discomfort around who or what the cricket team should represent. Because of the negative associations of the Springbok symbol (after all, for decades, only white sportsmen were permitted to achieve Springbok status), there was much resistance to the idea of the cricket team competing as Springboks – a factor that the ANC and cricket officials could not overlook, even if most white South Africans supported the Springbok symbol. For this reason, the team manager Alan Jordaan explained the players’ rejection of all of the symbols associated with apartheid – the Springbok, the flag and the national anthem; instead the team played as the Proteas (South Africa’s national flower), used the UCB’s banner (as it had when it competed against India) and elected not to sing the national anthem, because of the “sensitivity” around these issues.⁴⁵

There was, however, little officials could do to prevent South Africans in the crowd from waving the “old” South African flag or from holding up controversial boards in defiance of the spirit of reconciliation – acts that often ended up embarrassing the country on television. At one match, for instance, a South African supporter held aloft a defiant banner declaring, “South Africa: World Champions, 1971–1992”.⁴⁶ Such acts undermined attempts at using sport to unify before an estimated global television audience of one billion in 29 countries.⁴⁷

Similarly, the issue of racial representation undermined the ANC’s endorsement of the country’s return to cricket. When the inclusion of two black team players was announced, there was outcry. The *Citizen* called the decision “ridiculous” while the *Financial Mail* claimed that the UCB had “undermined the principle of fairness”.⁴⁸ These reactions, together with discord over national symbols, compromised the sport’s ability to

⁴⁴ Wagg, “National identity in South Africa”, 51.

⁴⁵ South African Institute of Race Relations, *Race Relations Survey*, 1993, 431.

⁴⁶ Booth, *The Race Game*, 191.

⁴⁷ “World Cup Cricket 1992”, CricketCircle.com (Available at: <http://cricket-world-cup-2007.cricket.deepthi.com/world-cup-cricket-1992.html> – viewed 5 December 2011), no page number.

⁴⁸ Cited in *ibid.*, 92 (originally: Editorial, “Green and gold”, *Citizen*, 10 February 1992; “Is the tongue forked?”, *Financial Mail*, 3 January 1992).

serve the interests of racial reconciliation and also emphasised the uncertainty around the emerging nations. Ultimately, the country's return to international cricket was fraught with contradictions that revealed many of the racial tensions that would later come to characterise post-apartheid South Africa.

From Boipatong to Barcelona: South Africa Returns to the Olympics

Perhaps because cricket was traditionally the sport of white English-speaking South Africans (whose investment in the apartheid state had always been limited), there was less controversy over national symbols than with other sports. When it came to the country's next international global contest, however, the problems with post-apartheid national identity were even more visible. The furore over apartheid symbols reached a head when South Africa was invited to participate in the Olympic Games for the first time since 1960.

Talk of South Africa's participation commenced early in 1991, and the IOC restored South Africa's membership on account of the repeal of a number of apartheid laws. In July, an official invitation was suggested as a reward for the country if it made sufficient progress towards the racial unification of its various sporting bodies. To this end, the National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NOCSA) was formed, under the leadership of former sports activist Sam Ramsamy, who had campaigned for South Africa's exclusion from sporting events in the past. Some were sceptical of this move; Joe Ebrahim, president of the South African Council on Sport (SACOS),⁴⁹ for instance, said that the IOC was "out of touch" and that the scrapping of the Population Registration Act did not make him a full citizen.⁵⁰ The PAC accused NOCSA and Ramsamy of giving in to white South Africans and international pressure, while Treurnicht's CP accused the NP government of selling out to black South Africans, claiming that tolerance of interracial sport amounted to the acceptance of black majority rule.⁵¹ For the most part, however, the news was celebrated, with newspapers screaming "We're back!" around the

⁴⁹ SACOS was a cricketing body that represented mainly Indian and coloured sportsmen during the apartheid era.

⁵⁰ Christopher R Hill, *Olympic Politics* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), 231.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

country.⁵² Even the president of the National Olympic Committee of Africa, the Congo's Jean-Claude Ganga, applauded the move, describing the readmission as "a political decision to help point them (the South Africans) in the right direction" and anticipating the effects of the decision in overly simplistic and emotional terms: "We will know we have succeeded," said Ganga, "when we see a black South African win a race and watch the whites cry when they see their flag raised and their anthem played."⁵³ As it turned out, this was a hopelessly optimistic view of events.

The ANC played it safe initially. Although the party accepted the IOC's conditional invitation, they had reservations about the speed with which South Africa was being granted full international status. Tshwete stated that "integration of sports must begin at the bottom, and this is not something that can be conveniently hurried", but he also dismissed the idea that all sanctions should be maintained until full civil rights were restored.⁵⁴

Eventually, on 7 November 1991, it was officially announced – via live broadcast on national television – that South Africa would be permitted to compete.⁵⁵ But celebration over the world's acceptance of the country turned sour when NOCSA announced later that month that the South African athletes would not be competing in the Springbok colours, that the flag would be replaced by a specially designed neutral Olympic flag, and that Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" would be played for South African gold medallists instead of "*Die Stem*".⁵⁶ NOCSA tried to sweeten the news with the launch of a national competition to choose a new mascot to replace the Springbok, but white South Africans were not so easily placated and were virtually unanimous in their condemnation of the decision.

⁵² Booth, *The Race Game*, 191.

⁵³ Cited in Rone Tempest, "South Africa readmitted to Olympics", *Los Angeles Times*, 10 July 1991 (Available at: http://articles.latimes.com/1991-07-10/news/mn-1896_1_south-africa – viewed 23 November 2011), no page number.

⁵⁴ Cited in William Oscar Johnson, "The presence of Nelson Mandela marked the momentous return of a former pariah", *Sports Illustrated*, 3 August 1992 (Available at: <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1004057/1/index.htm> – viewed 29 November 2011), no page number.

⁵⁵ Christopher S Wren, "An era ends, another begins: South Africa to go to Olympics", *New York Times*, 7 November 1991 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/07/sports/olympics-an-era-ends-another-begins-south-africa-to-go-to-olympics.html?src=pm> – viewed 23 November 2011), no page number.

⁵⁶ Lincoln Allison, *The Changing Politics of Sport* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 166.

FW de Klerk came out in support of the dearly loved Springbok, claiming that it had “nothing to do with apartheid,”⁵⁷ that it had “a proud history” and that it was “shortsighted to disregard these facts and trample a proud tradition underfoot”.⁵⁸ Realising the immense popularity of the “Bok” – the symbol’s term of endearment – he was also quick to deflect any blame that might have been directed at the NP on account of the condition, stating, “This is one thing for which you cannot blame the government or the National Party.”⁵⁹ The CP, of course, did just that, claiming that the NP of being ultimately responsible for the turn of events, stating that the Springbok’s culling was “the logical outcome of the road” taken by De Klerk.⁶⁰

The Springbok’s popularity among white South Africans quickly became evident. In a poll conducted by the *Sunday Times*, a national English-language paper, a startling 7 452 out of 9 000 surveyed readers (around 80%) stubbornly claimed that athletes should forego the opportunity to compete at the Olympics rather than abandon the country’s national symbols. *Rapport* found that its readers were similarly outraged.⁶¹

In addition, the national hunt for a new mascot was treated with disdain. While Allan Hendrickse, leader of the mixed-race Labour Party, took the search seriously, suggesting that the Springbok be replaced by the zebra, his suggestion was rejected because of the overly distinct nature of the black and white stripes, which might be seen as alluding to separate development rather than racial harmony. Other mascot suggestions were more tongue in cheek. *Vrye Weekblad* offered up the hippopotamus, claiming that it would likely be “the only animal upon which this divided country could possibly agree”. In a letter to the *Citizen*, a reader from Botswana suggested the ostrich since the “bird best portrays your national character over the last four decades and more”.⁶²

⁵⁷ Cited in Booth, *The Race Game*, 211.

⁵⁸ Cited in Scott Kraft, “Usual symbols of South Africa won’t be at the Olympics”, *Los Angeles Times*, 19 November 1991 (Available at: http://articles.latimes.com/1991-11-19/news/wr-178_1_south-african-flag/2 – viewed 23 November 2011), no page number.

⁵⁹ Cited in *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Cited in Christopher S Wren, “Is a springbok by any other name as swift?”, *New York Times*, 20 November 1991 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/20/world/is-a-springbok-by-any-other-name-as-swift.html?src=pm> – viewed 23 November 2011), no page number.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Cited in Kraft, “Usual symbols of South Africa won’t be at the Olympics”.

Additional disappointment arose with the team announcement, both because of the fact that over 80% of the team was white (only 11 players of the 96-member team were black) and because national discussion among whites on quotas and team selection was vehemently opposed to the idea of selection based on anything other than merit, in spite of the fact that few resources had been pumped into black sport over the decades. Ganga's hope that the Olympics would serve as a unifying event – with black South African athletes doing their white compatriots proud, making them “cry when they see their flag raised and their anthem played” – seemed more and more distant. Few blacks would actually be competing and the beloved anthems and flags had been dumped.

As violence in the country escalated, further problems arose. One month before the Olympic athletes were due to leave for Barcelona, the Boipatong Massacre plunged the country into disarray, suspending talks at CODESA (see Chapter 4). It seemed increasingly inappropriate for South Africans to enjoy the “relief at being once again part of the international community”⁶³ when events at home were still so clearly abnormal. In response, Desmond Tutu called for South Africa to be suspended or to voluntarily withdraw from the Olympics, declaring that “those who choose to insulate themselves from the suffering and grief caused by this horrific slaughter must realize they cannot have both a Boipatong and a Barcelona”.⁶⁴ The issue of the team's participation was more controversial than with the Cricket World Cup because it hinged on the suspected activities of De Klerk's police force (with many believing that the ANC had in fact fomented the violence) and not on the combined voice of the white electorate. Furthermore, Tutu's standing in the global community added greater thrust to the threat.

Although Steve Tshwete chastised Tutu for not consulting with the ANC before going public with his views,⁶⁵ the ANC soon found itself embroiled in a debate over the wisdom of abandoning the sports ban. In a series of mixed messages it, too, made noises about opposing the country's participation in the Barcelona Olympics (and other international sporting competitions) unless there was significant political progress, calling

⁶³ Eric Louw in Moragas Spà *et al.*, *Television in the Olympics*, 129.

⁶⁴ Cited in Bill Keller, “Tutu urging Olympic ban on Pretoria”, *New York Times*, 23 June 1992 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/06/23/world/tutu-urging-olympics-ban-on-pretoria.html?src=pm> – viewed 11 November 2011), no page number.

⁶⁵ Hill, *Olympic Politics*, 234.

on athletes to boycott the Games. The PAC accused the party of “blowing hot and cold” over the issue,⁶⁶ and, as Booth points out, the ANC soon realised that “they could not turn the boycott on and off like a tap”.⁶⁷ It became clear that using sport as a post-Boipatong bargaining tool would result in deep displeasure on the part of the white South African electorate especially – which the ANC was, after all, trying to woo. It was also evident that, after decades of exclusion, there were few athletes willing to boycott the Games, and viewers were hungry to see how athletes such as Zola Budd would fare. Black sports fans also stood to lose, since the Cameroonian football team was due to tour the country, and reimposing the moratorium would have meant the cancellation of the much anticipated tour. Eventually, Mandela intervened to ensure that the Cameroonian tour took place.⁶⁸

The ANC met with various sporting bodies and reached a compromise. In a document titled “Position of South African sports bodies on how to assist in hastening the establishment of democracy and peace in our country”, NOCSA agreed to “use all forums to publicise the call for democracy” including utilising the lighting of a torch at Jan Smuts Airport (now OR Tambo International) as “lighting the flame for peace and democracy” and requesting athletes and NOCSA officials to wear stickers “when giving media interviews, especially TV interviews to South Africa and abroad”.⁶⁹ The measures were all intended to draw attention to the fact that events in the home country were far from settled.

Once participation in the Olympics was assured, however, the measures were more or less overlooked; reports tended to focus on the existence of the conditions rather than their symbolic meaning. The *New York Times*, for instance, reported that athletes did not take the condition to heart, stating that most South African Olympians “tended to

⁶⁶ SAPA, “ANC blowing hot and cold”, 2 July 1991 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9207.03> – viewed 29 November 2011), no page number.

⁶⁷ Booth, *The Race Game*, 193.

⁶⁸ Black & Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation*, 114.

⁶⁹ ANC, Press Release: “Position of South African sports bodies on how to assist in hastening the establishment of democracy and peace in our country”, 1 July 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9207.02> – viewed 29 November 2011), no page number.

agree with the white rugby player who told reporters that he would wear a pink tutu if that was what it took to get him back in international competition”.⁷⁰

The unsuccessful attempt to politicise South African’s return to the Olympics was partly because the country’s situation was far too complex to be explained in a media event context, and partly because of the ANC’s own failure to distance itself from the Games. Instead, largely because of the overwhelming presence of Mandela, the unifying and reconciliatory discourse of the Olympics remained prominent. As an in-depth study on the reporting of the event found,

[i]ronically, the international media offered a chorus of celebration for the return of South Africa and demise of apartheid in their commentaries without any reference, whatsoever, to the continuing domestic crisis in the country. Rather, the presence of South Africa was presented – and symbolized by commentators through the stadium presence of Mandela – as a victory already won.⁷¹

Yet, while the ANC may have failed to use the Games as a means of voicing its domestic grievances, the event did situate Mandela as the *de facto* leader of the country. De Klerk did not receive an official invitation to the Games;⁷² instead it was Mandela who sat beside the other heads of state, and his presence at the Olympics was singled out as a highlight. Described by the *Los Angeles Times* as “impossible to miss”,⁷³ the ANC leader was associated with South Africa by nearly all broadcasters,⁷⁴ and most newspapers quoted his reconciliatory statements, which harmonised with the Olympic vision, whose 1992 slogan was “friends forever”:

All I want to say is that our presence here is of great significance to our country, a significance which goes beyond the boundaries of sport. Our

⁷⁰ Bill Kellar, “South Africans head to Olympics with few stars and few chances”, *New York Times*, 13 July 1992 (Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/13/sports/olympics-south-africans-head-to-olympics-with-few-stars-and-few-chances.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> – viewed 29 November 2011), no page number.

⁷¹ Moragas Spà et al., *Television in the Olympics*, 229.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 228.

⁷³ John Jeanson, “Forgive and forget, Mandela urges”, *Los Angeles Times*, 26 July 1992 (Available at: http://articles.latimes.com/1992-07-26/sports/sp-5307_1_south-africa – viewed 29 November 2011), no page number.

⁷⁴ Moragas Spà et al., *Television in the Olympics*, 151.

country has been isolated for many years, not only in sports but in other fields as well. We are saying now, 'Let's forget the past. Let bygones be bygones.' I want to tell you that we respect you, we are proud of all of you and, above all, we love you.⁷⁵

Would a statement against the actions of the NP back home have received the same amount of coverage? Most likely not. As we have seen, while broad symbolic gestures work well in a media event context, there is little space for intricate political infighting. This was clearly well understood by Mandela; while his statement contradicted the harder line that the ANC had been taking in the aftermath of Boipatong, it secured his reputation as the country's true leader and charmed international audiences. As was the case with Miss World, Mandela went on to forge a lasting relationship with the Olympic "brand", appearing in subsequent years in the IOC's "celebrate humanity" advertising campaign.⁷⁶

Yet, in spite of Mandela's claims of national unity, as with the Cricket World Cup, dissenters in the crowd waved the near-banned South African flag.⁷⁷ All of the well-meaning debate over appropriate national symbols that had preceded the event was undermined when the incident was broadcast by RTO '92⁷⁸ and officials were unable to stop it.⁷⁹ The presence of global broadcasters, of course, turned what was an isolated incident into a memorable moment – watched as it was by millions of viewers – thereby playing into the hands of the spoilers.

In addition, the global power and pleasure of the Olympics relies, largely, on television access, and in South Africa in 1992, this was racially skewed in favour of

⁷⁵ Cited in Johnson, "The presence of Nelson Mandela marked the momentous return of a former pariah".

⁷⁶ The advert can be viewed on YouTube; see: "Celebrate Humanity – Olympics – Nelson Mandela" (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAjKoYIwsfA> – viewed 2 January 2012).

⁷⁷ Cora Burnett, "South Africa" in Matthew Nicholson, Russell Hoyer and Barrie Houlihan (eds.), *Participation in Sport: International Policy Perspectives* (New York & Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2010), 128.

⁷⁸ Radio Television Olimpica (RTO '92), formed in 1992, was the first host broadcaster to be part of the Olympic Organising Committee (OOC). In the past, broadcasting was assigned to a domestic rights holder or a consortium of international broadcasters. This trend of merging broadcasting with the OOC continued until the new millennium.

⁷⁹ Moragas Spà et al., *Television in the Olympics*, 228.

whites. According to Eric Louw, at the time only 25% of South Africans owned television sets and the languages of the broadcasts (English, Afrikaans and Xhosa) were limited to 36% of the population, meaning that the Olympics was aimed at a “Westernised” South Africa.⁸⁰ The reality would likely have been better than this, however, since many Nguni-speaking black South Africans would also have been able to understand Xhosa. The issue of exclusion was nevertheless picked up by global media reports. The *Los Angeles Times*, for instance, reported that “black townships don’t have a high percentage of TVs because of lack of electricity” and thus only a lucky few were able to enjoy the symbolic display of the black South African flag bearer, marathoner Jan Tau, in the opening procession.⁸¹

Full participation in the event was also threatened by an ongoing dispute between the SABC and the Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA). Since May 1992, the mainly black MWASA members had been striking for higher wages, and the responses and threats employed by both the SABC and the union drew attention to the racialised viewing patterns of the nation and the fact that there were few media events that truly united all citizens. The SABC claimed that the strike had reduced its ability to operate, but, somewhat suspiciously, the first services to suffer were those enjoyed by black South Africans. CCV-TV programming and radio services in African languages were decreased,⁸² urging MWASA to complain about the broadcaster’s general “insensitivity” to black viewers, who, they argued, could not get the news or their favourite sports coverage.⁸³ In response, the union threatened to approach the IOC in an effort to have broadcasts of the Olympics blacked out.⁸⁴ As in the past, the global event was perceived as a means of punishing white South Africans and drawing attention to the grievances of black victims in the country. While the dispute was settled before the start of the Games, in the end the Cameroonian match – played three weeks before the

⁸⁰ Referenced in *ibid.*, 229.

⁸¹ Jeansonne, “Forgive and forget, Mandela urges”.

⁸² SAPA, “SABC advert says its wage offer is reasonable”, 12 July 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9207.13> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

⁸³ SAPA, “Deadlock in MWASA, NACTU–SABC talks”, 10 July 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9207.13> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Olympics – wasn't broadcast by the SABC because of the strike, and MWASA members also prevented its transmission by the Bophuthatswana Broadcasting Corporation.⁸⁵

These and other events suggest that the Olympics played a more important role in the global narrative of apartheid's demise than in the country's own processes of reconciliation. Thus, while the country's return to the Games was celebrated in reports around the world, on the domestic front it revealed awkward differences rather than unity. Ultimately, the Olympics, like the Cricket World Cup, was a mixed experience for the emerging nation, not only because the team performed poorly (bringing home only two silver medals) but also because celebration over global inclusion was tempered at every turn by the political reality back home and by polarised racial disagreements. Moragas Spà *et al.* conclude that the return to Games was a mixed blessing:

The result was that, rather than a unifying experience, the Games provided one after another reminder of the painful transition the country had been going through. As such, the Olympics became part of the domestic crisis – the struggle among groups to define just what South Africa should be. In this sense, South Africa's return to the Games in 1992 was ultimately bittersweet.⁸⁶

The Last Outpost: Winning over Rugby Fans

The ANC's dithering over Olympic participation was most likely also influenced by concurrent events in rugby. As numerous critics have pointed out, when it came to transformation in sport, rugby – although initially a frontrunner in negotiations over ending isolation – dragged its heels.⁸⁷ Targeted by boycotters under apartheid (see Chapter 2) and generally regarded as the sport of the Afrikaner, South Africa was nevertheless never formally expelled from the International Rugby Board (IRB). But, on the domestic front, transformation was slow. Talks between the whites-only South African Rugby Board (SARB) and the non-racial South African Rugby Union (SARU) broke down early in 1991, largely because Danie Craven, president SARB, tended to act unilaterally and because of the board's lack of commitment to development in

⁸⁵ SAPA, "Bop TV crew threatened by MWASA members at soccer game", 12 July 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9207.13> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

⁸⁶ Moragas Spà *et al.*, *Television in the Olympics*, 228.

⁸⁷ Black & Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation*, 100.

disadvantaged communities.⁸⁸ Talks were only resuscitated when Mandela and Tshwete intervened, leading to the establishment of SARFU (South African Rugby Football Union), a more racially representative national sporting body, in March 1992. The first “reward” for progress in the sport came with the announcement of an international tour in July and August, with tests against both New Zealand (the All Blacks) and Australia (the Wallabies), who were the reigning world champions.

The ANC had initially considered disallowing the first international rugby tour in the wake of Boipatong, but as with the Olympics, the organisation capitulated, with the proviso that visiting teams visit Boipatong, games be preceded by a minute’s silence in memory of victims of the massacre, and none of the national symbols associated with apartheid be used. Yet, while small pockets of supporters flouted similar conditions with the Cricket World Cup and the Olympics, things were different with sporting contests held on home soil where white South Africans dominated the crowds.

The most memorable display of defiance came on 15 August 1992, the date of South Africa’s official return to world-class rugby since the disastrous 1981 tour of New Zealand (see Chapter 2). The Springboks were again playing the All Blacks and the incident was again marred by controversy. The occasion was expected to raise awareness – through messages visibly displayed on programmes and banners – of sport’s commitment to peace and democracy in South Africa and its condemnation of violence.⁸⁹ Instead, as Nauright notes, the game “presented whites with a cultural event entrenched in social and individual memories which provided comfort as political power was being negotiated away”.⁹⁰

In the time allocated for a minute’s silence for the victims of Boipatong, the Ellis Park crowd of 70 000 reacted by spontaneously starting to sing “*Die Stem*”,⁹¹ leaving the commentator at a loss for words. Instead of remarking on the incident, he simply pretended it didn’t happen, stating, “Having observed that, they’re now having the

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 108–109.

⁸⁹ SAPA, “ANC concerned about violation of agreements”, 15 August 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.17> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

⁹⁰ Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 175.

⁹¹ The opening moments of the match have been uploaded to YouTube; see: “The 1992 return match – teams, anthems and haka” (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky2rtZg7wAk> – viewed 2 January 2012).

national anthems.” This was also contrary to expectations, as it had been announced earlier that no national anthems would be played; but at Transvaal Rugby Football Union (TRFU) President Louis Luyt’s instruction the old anthem came blaring through the loudspeakers, clearly disorientating some of the Springbok players. As the cameras swept over the team, instead of belting out the verse with pride, it is clear that some team members seemed confused about whether to sing or not. (Indeed after the match, Springbok captain Naas Botha summed up their position, claiming that while it had been “*lekker*” (nice) to sing the anthem, his team would rather not do so if it became “a problem”.⁹²) The commentator, however, did not hold back, stating, “Well, if you’re South African, if you don’t have a lump in your throat you’re not human.” Fans also starting waving the “old” flag, reportedly when it was announced that De Klerk and his wife had arrived at the match. According to reports, in spite of special requests, “spectators with South African flags ran onto the field and police had their hands full in trying to remove them”.⁹³

Widespread debate broke out among political parties and in the media. The ANC was outraged, claiming that the crowd’s behaviour suggested “that they were identifying themselves with the call made by the Conservative Party and Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging for defiance of the [sporting] Agreement”⁹⁴ and the organisation threatened to withdraw support for the rest of the tour, a move that would likely have resulted in the cancellation of remaining matches. Tshwete, who had been so influential in advancing the country’s return to international sport, reportedly voted for the subsequent match against Australia to be cancelled. He was most likely also responding to the personal humiliation he must have felt when several spectators approached him, asking him to sign their *oranje-blanje-blou* flags.⁹⁵

⁹² SAPA, “Anthem an act of peaceful mass action: NP”, 16 August 2011 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.17> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

⁹² Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 175.

⁹³ SAPA, “South African flags fly at rugby match”, 15 August 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.17> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

⁹⁴ SAPA, “ANC concerned about violation of agreements”.

⁹⁵ Booth, “Recapturing the moment?”, 186.

The CP came out in support of the crowd's reaction, and Andries Treurnicht congratulated the spectators for rejecting what he termed "sports terrorism".⁹⁶ The NP, on the other hand, found itself in a difficult position, as it needed to appeal to more conservative white South Africans as well as its partners in the negotiation process. It ended up condemning the crowd's behaviour, but also referring to it as a "peaceful display of mass action".⁹⁷

Perhaps more telling were the reactions from national newspapers. The Afrikaans-language *Rapport* applauded the defiance of the spectators, describing them as patriots proudly announcing, "Here is my song, here is my flag. Here I stand and I will sing it today."⁹⁸ Similarly, as Nauright notes, the discourse in English-language papers demonstrated the extent to which the crowd's behaviour reflected the tenacity of the wider white South African public. The *Citizen* sported headlines for editorials and letters such as "Anthem brought lump to throat", "Good sense" and "We've had enough", while the *Star* argued that the singing of the anthem could not be expected to stop when large white crowds were gathered.⁹⁹ This argument likely stemmed from the widely quoted comments of former New Zealand coach Ivan Vodanovich, made in defence of the crowd's behaviour:

When 70 000 people get together they will sing. It does not matter who is in power, there will be nobody in the world that can stop them from singing. They will sing if Nelson Mandela is the state president, if FW de Klerk is State President they will sing and if I am state president they will still be singing. It is certainly going to be very hard to stop them. It is impossible for someone to tell such a huge crowd not to do this or not to do that.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ SAPA, "Conservative Party proud and grateful for anthem", 16 August 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.17> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

⁹⁷ SAPA, "Anthem an act of peaceful mass action: NP".

⁹⁸ Cited and translated in Douglas Booth, "Recapturing the moment: Global rugby economics and the politics of nation in post-apartheid South Africa" in Timothy John Lindsey Chandler and John Nauright (eds.), *Making the Rugby World: Race, Gender, Commerce* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 186.

⁹⁹ Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 172–73.

¹⁰⁰ Cited in Jan de Koning, "ANC demand 'unrealistic', rugby fans out to have a good time" SAPA, 19 August 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.20> – viewed 5 November 2011), no page number.

SARFU, eager to see the tour continue, was quick to release an official statement denying its involvement in the playing of the anthems and distancing itself from the fans' reaction. It called "on the public of South Africa not to embarrass or in any way destroy our relationships with Australia and New Zealand as they are completely innocent in this unfortunate affair".¹⁰¹

But even Wallaby and All Black teams could not avoid getting caught up in the sporting debates. When the Wallabies arrived at Cape Town airport in anticipation of their first international match against the former pariah state, they were greeted by protestors bearing placards reading "Go home Aussies" and "Stop racist tours".¹⁰² Similarly, in what was probably an unrelated incident, when a man was reportedly shot by a security guard outside the stadium after the All Blacks' first match in South Africa – played against the provincial Durban side on 1 August – Halt All Racist Tours (HART) sent a fax to captain Sean Fitzpatrick requesting that the All Blacks compensate the family in some way and accusing the team of being pawns for De Klerk's government: "He (De Klerk) has used the All Blacks as publicity bimbos on television, radio and in newspapers across South Africa and outside the country to reflect positively on himself as kingmaker of their tour."¹⁰³

But De Klerk was not the only politician trying to position himself as "kingmaker of the tour". In fact, while De Klerk's reforms might have provided the initial trigger for the country's return to international sport, negotiations over the continuation of the tour were more directly linked to the ANC; Joe French, president of the Australian Rugby Football Union, reportedly assured Steve Tshwete that if the ANC withdrew its blessing the tour would be cancelled,¹⁰⁴ and amidst all of the controversy over national symbols and crowd behaviour, it was Mandela who continued to preach the message of sports reconciliation. Just prior to the infamous match, he had met with the Australian captain,

¹⁰¹ SAPA, "SARFU distances itself from the rugby incident", 16 August 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.17> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

¹⁰² SAPA, "Protesters greet Wallabies at Cape airport", 19 August 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.20> – viewed 5 November 2011), no page number.

¹⁰³ SAPA, "All Blacks captain asked to donate fund to black family", 15 August 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.17> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

¹⁰⁴ Francois Krige, "Wallabies will not get involved in 'internal squabbles'", SAPA, 18 August 1992 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.20> – viewed 5 December 2011), no page number.

claiming, ironically, one day before the Ellis Park display of defiance, that sport had finally been “normalised” in the country.¹⁰⁵ He gave no official response to the crowd behaviour, and the ANC threats to cancel the remaining tours were never directly linked to him. This was possibly because, by this point, Mandela’s status has benefited greatly from the “personalised power” of a series of successive media events. As Dayan and Katz point out: “The heroic status bestowed by media events gives leaders an increased freedom of decision and action, a sense of liberation from everyday dependence on their advisor, parties, bureaucracies – even from the policies – to which they are normally committed.”¹⁰⁶

The 1995 Rugby World Cup and the Making of Madiba

In addition to his role in leading South Africa out of the sports-boycott wilderness, early in his presidency Mandela identified inclusive (and highly visible) nation-building efforts in order to tackle the problem of divided loyalty and as a means of stalling white flight, particularly with regard to Afrikaner culture. He publicly reassured Afrikaners of the sanctity of their language on a number of occasions, and Anthony Sampson makes the point that Mandela was also “in no hurry to rename the streets, suburbs and airports which commemorated Afrikaner heroes like Botha, Strijdom or Malan, the old hate-figures of the black majority, or to rename the Verwoerd Building, which housed government departments in Cape Town”.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps most famously, in the first year of his presidency, he travelled, with journalists in tow, to the Afrikaner enclave of Orania¹⁰⁸ to visit the home of the widow of Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid and posed alongside a small statue of Verwoerd after the meeting. Thabo Mbeki notes that Mandela saw his principal role as having to “reassure white society” to “maintain the greatest possible cohesion in the society so that it doesn’t break apart”.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ SAPA, “Mandela meets the Wallabies”, 15 August 1991 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1992/news9208.17> – viewed 30 November 2011), no page number.

¹⁰⁶ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 213.

¹⁰⁷ Sampson, *Mandela*, 503–4.

¹⁰⁸ Orania is an all-Afrikaner enclave in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. Forty Afrikaner families bought the town in December 1990, the year the ANC was unbanned. See <http://www.orania.co.za/> for the official website.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred*, 658–59.

But it was arguably sport that gave him the most leverage in this task, and his role in South Africa's first sporting mega-event significantly boosted his status among white South Africans. The Rugby World Cup of 1995 has firmly rooted itself in the nation's memory as one of the pivotal turning points in its reconciliation. While the sport remained somewhat divisive in the early 1990s, in January 1993, before South Africa had even set an election date, the IRB announced that the country had won the honour of hosting the Rugby World Cup in 1995 – the world's fourth-largest televised sporting event.¹¹⁰ As with Miss World, this meant that the global gaze would be fixed upon South Africa – a privilege that would have been unthinkable even five years earlier.

One of the problems, of course, was that rugby supporters still clung to the divisive symbols associated with Afrikaner nationalism and, in spite of the establishment of SARFU and the adoption of a new national flag and anthem in the period between the RWC announcement and the commencement of the tournament, little had changed since the Ellis Park debacle of 1992. While SARFU unveiled an interim logo incorporating a Springbok, a rugby ball and four proteas (considered a "major concession" on their part), the debate over the Springbok's continued existence was essentially deferred until after the Rugby World Cup, largely because of the symbol's marketing potential.¹¹¹ While this may have been so, the Springbok tended to conjure up a range of other problematic symbols that did little to foster racial unity. Writing for the *Sowetan* just prior to the World Cup, journalist Sharon Chetty's description of the test between South Africa and Western Samoa sums up prevailing perceptions:

Holding aloft the old South African flag, the rugby die hards sought momentary refuge in the confines of Ellis Park. [When] *Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika* started up you could count the numbers who bothered to even keep still. But when *Die Stem* was played they stood to attention and sang with gusto – their voices in unison. Barring the good natured vendors ... the number of darkies at Ellis Park could be counted on one hand. ... Rugby it seems is the last white outpost ...¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 177.

¹¹¹ Booth, "Recapturing the moment?", 187.

¹¹² Cited in Booth, "Recapturing the moment?", 187 (originally: *Sowetan*, 20 April 1995).

The trajectory of events during the World Cup, three months later, brought about seemingly radical changes in response, particularly in the “black” press,¹¹³ and the opening-game victory against Australia, the reigning title-holders, “engendered perhaps the first palpable sense of nationalism among South Africans”.¹¹⁴ That South Africans found common pride in such a historically controversial sport as rugby (with a nearly all-white team) was deemed an “impressive feat”,¹¹⁵ made all the more meaningful because the game was watched by an estimated worldwide audience of 300 million television viewers.¹¹⁶

As Lynette Steenveld and Larry Strelitz¹¹⁷ point out, World Cup constituted another media event – a Contest with elements of the shamanising script – and it is frequently identified as a key historic moment in South Africa’s nation-building history by academics and citizens alike. Contests “pit evenly matched individuals or teams against each other and bid them to compete according to strict rules”;¹¹⁸ they are a “training ground for the construction of social institutions based on rules”;¹¹⁹ and they invite audiences to act as both partisans and judges.¹²⁰ In 1995, the stakes were extremely high, as audiences were assessing not just the team’s performance in the various games but also the display of South Africa’s new national identity, which also required the fostering of new allegiances.

SARFU was well aware of this, and Albert Grundlingh points out how, after the announcement that the country would be hosting the event, the organisation had been

¹¹³ The terms “black” and “white” press are of course not exclusive, as the racial make-up of newspaper readers changed throughout the 1990s. The perception of a black and white press nevertheless remained (and to a certain extent continued to do so today). In 1995, the *Cape Argus*, for instance, printed excerpts from the *Sowetan* and *City Press* referred to as “From the Black Press”, while Mathatha Tsedu still referred to these papers as the “black press” in 1998 (“Questioning if guilt without punishment will lead to reconciliation: The black press relieves its own horrors and seeks justice”, *Nieman Reports*, 52 (4) (winter), 1998, 56–58). By implication, papers such as the *Argus* and the *Star* were considered “white”.

¹¹⁴ Booth, *The Race Game*, 471.

¹¹⁵ Robert Mattes, “Do diverse social identities inhibit nationhood and democracy? Initial considerations from South Africa” in Mai Palmberg (ed.), *National Identity and Democracy in Africa*, 3rd ed., vol. 3 (Sweden; Cape Town: Nordic Africa Institute, HSRC Press, Mayibuye Centre of the University of the Western Cape, 1999), 282.

¹¹⁶ Booth, “Recapturing the moment?”, 189.

¹¹⁷ Lynette Steenveld, & Larry Strelitz, “The 1995 rugby world cup and the politics of nation-building in South Africa”, *Media, Culture & Society*, 20 (4), 1998, 609–29.

¹¹⁸ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 33.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

repackaging its ideology, especially with the appointments of Edward Griffiths as SARFU's CEO and Morné du Plessis as the team's manager.¹²¹ While Griffiths, an English-speaking sports journalist from Zimbabwe, worked impressively as a spin doctor for the event, Du Plessis had previously declined captaincy under apartheid because of the boycotts and thus had the necessary liberal background to serve as the team's manager. Griffiths saw the Springboks as being in the "entertainment industry"¹²² and understood that the team needed to appear "humble, excited and unashamedly proud of their democracy".¹²³ Du Plessis took special trouble to improve the Springboks' etiquette in addition to their sporting prowess. The team was given coaching on how to sing "*Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrica*",¹²⁴ with lessons in pronunciation from an African-language expert from Stellenbosch University.¹²⁵ They were also taken on a trip to Robben Island, where Mandela had been imprisoned for 18 years,¹²⁶ and players, with journalists in tow, visited African townships in support of the *Masakhane* ("let us build together") campaign.¹²⁷ In addition, the selection of Chester Williams, a coloured wing referred to as the "black pearl" in the media, helped to dilute the whiteness of the team. Williams's selection was compromised, however, when he was injured and replaced by Pieter Hendriks, returning the team to its all-white status. When Hendriks was eliminated because of dirty play, it meant that Williams, who had since recovered, could return to the tournament, and it was rumoured that Griffiths offered Hendriks a bribe of R15 000 not to appeal against his expulsion.¹²⁸ Whether true or not, Williams's return was widely celebrated and he rapidly became an "emblem of achievement" for rugby and the nation,¹²⁹ indicating the extent to which multiracial representation in the media event mattered to the authorities.

¹²¹ Albert Grundlingh, "From redemption to recidivism? Rugby and change in South Africa during the 1995 Rugby World Cup and its aftermath", *Sporting Traditions*, 14 (2) (May), 1998, 69.

¹²² Cited in *ibid.*, 70 (originally: *Sunday Times*, 19 November 1995).

¹²³ Cited in *ibid.* (originally: Edward Griffiths, *One Team, One country: The Greatest Year of Springbok Rugby*, Johannesburg, Viking, 1996, 114).

¹²⁴ See Carlin, *Playing the Enemy*, 173–74.

¹²⁵ Grundlingh, "From redemption to recidivism?", 71.

¹²⁶ Carlin, *Playing the Enemy*, 188. The Beijing Olympic committee took this one step further; their efforts extended to the distribution of etiquette booklets and posters, briefing the general public on how to behave around foreigners.

¹²⁷ Grundlingh, "From redemption to recidivism?", 71.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

As with the other mega-events hosted in the country, coverage of trade union activity was strictly controlled, and groups seeking to use the event to air their grievances to the outside world were discouraged from doing so for the sake of the “national interest”.¹³⁰ Threats from the Post and Telecommunication Workers Association (POTWA), for instance, were widely condemned.¹³¹

The event was launched with a carefully staged opening ceremony. It is here, traditionally, that the host nation’s identity is unveiled during World Cup contests. For post-apartheid South Africa, this was an important historical moment. As hosts of the event, which had the distinction of being the first Rugby World Cup in which all games were played in a single country, as well as the first World Cup held in Africa, South Africa’s global transformation from pariah state to “miracle” nation was once again broadcast to the rest of the world, and this time in more popular terms than the officiousness of the inauguration. The timing and narrative of the 1995 event provided nation-builders and the media with the opportunity to inscribe it into a new South African epic tradition. A mixing of cultural practices, in keeping with what would become the “unity in diversity” preamble of the new Constitution, characterised the event. The Zulu song “*Shosholoz*”,¹³² popularised on air in the days leading up to the occasion, was chosen as the unofficial fan anthem for the event. The song choice was fitting, as many white male conscripts (fervent rugby supporters) had sung it during their time as national servicemen.¹³³ Thus, while foreign audiences may have seen it as “African”, and while it allowed for black South Africans to feel included in the spectacle, for many white males it would also have represented continuity with their past in the apartheid army. Culturally diverse artists were also selected to perform. The World Cup anthem, “The World in Union”, was sung by the white English-speaking singer PJ Powers with the backing of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, who had performed at Mandela’s inauguration, and the lyrics echoed the official slogan, “One team, one country”:

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹³¹ SAPA, “Labour-POTWA”, 18 April 1995; SAPA, “Labour-POTWA-NP”, 18 April 1995 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1995/news0419> – viewed 8 December 2011).

¹³² Although popular in South Africa, the Ndebele song actually originated in Zimbabwe; it was sung by migrant labourers working on the South African mines.

¹³³ I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer of an earlier version of this chapter for this observation.

Gathering together
One mind, one heart
Every creed, every colour
Once joined, never apart

The “oneness” espoused by the song is fairly standard nationalising discourse, but in the context of South Africa’s early democracy, it takes on a deeper symbolic meaning, and lines such as “We must take our place in history” read as if they were written specifically for the occasion of South Africa’s return to the world stage.

But, like the inauguration, the World Cup opening ceremony struggled to reconcile South Africa’s divided cultural and political heritage, to the extent that it avoided the issue altogether, electing, as JM Coetzee points out, to be “history-less” instead: “It presented a dehistoricised vision of Tourist South Africa: contented tribesfolk and happy mineworkers, as in the Old South Africa, but purified and sanctified by the Rainbow”.¹³⁴

Further contradictions of the ceremonial representation were highlighted by “off-stage” events in relation to the “Coon” or Cape Carnival. The decision to include the carnival, no doubt as a means of representing the coloured strand of the rainbow nation, is controversial in itself, since the coon image has an uncomfortable history of popularity with white audiences and has long been abused by racists.¹³⁵ Jacqueline Maingard points out that on the day the Cape Carnival sequence appeared unrehearsed, and as “an inauthentic copy abstracted from its original practice”.¹³⁶ She attributes this to the subversive potential of carnival, realised because of organisational assumptions about the meaning and structure of what, in spite of its popularisation, is actually a deeply embedded cultural practice. Although professional troupes “had been approached by rugby organisers to perform at the opening”, they were “undercut by a loose amalgam of

¹³⁴ Coetzee, “The 1995 Rugby World Cup”, 353.

¹³⁵ See Veit Erlmann, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).

¹³⁶ Jacqueline Maingard, “Imag(in)ing the South African nation: Representations of identity in the rugby world cup 1995”, *Theatre Journal*, 49 (1), 1997, 19.

untrained African township children, enticed with promises of food and clothes”.¹³⁷ The children later claimed that they had not been rewarded for their efforts and went on to protest at the next rugby match at the gates of the Cape Town stadium where the opening ceremony had been staged. Maingard notes that

the confusion suggests that the stadium organizers assumed that a carnival would be by definition disorganized and amateur whether performed by established troupes or street children, and they therefore appropriated only the surface images rather than the full practice of the Cape carnival.¹³⁸

The climax of the World Cup ceremony, meant to display a single encapsulating image of South Africa, is deplored by Coetzee: “The solution has an air of desperation about it: cute black *pikkies* in mine overalls and helmets”.¹³⁹ The choice was most likely quite deliberate. The use of children has a long history of association in nationalist imagery, and while the image may have skirted all the contradictions and difficulties of South Africa’s past, it presents a clever embodiment of its future: black, but non-threatening and full of potential. As Grundlingh points out, “the public representation of society might have been a parody, but it was not a departure from the norm as far as such sporting occasions are concerned”.¹⁴⁰ Most likely the ceremonial displays of numerous nations are afflicted with similar inconsistencies.

In spite of its shallow showiness, the opening ceremony was generally considered a success, and the national importance of the mega-event escalated throughout the tournament. The new South African flag, which had debuted at Mandela’s inauguration, was waved enthusiastically¹⁴¹ and fans, most of them in green Springbok attire, refrained from engaging in any confrontational acts of defiance. This was due, in part, to the deliberate mobilisation of the players and supporters for the purposes of nation-building, but the event’s significance was also boosted by South Africa’s sterling performance

¹³⁷ Lisa Baxter, “History, identity and meaning: Cape Town’s Coon carnival in the 1960s and 1970s” (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1999), 99–100.

¹³⁸ Maingard, “Imag(in)ing the South African nation”, 19.

¹³⁹ Coetzee, “The 1995 Rugby World Cup”, 355.

¹⁴⁰ Grundlingh, “From redemption to recidivism?”, 74.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 79–80. Highlights of the game as well as the flag-waving crowd can be viewed on YouTube; see “Rugby World Cup 1995 South Africa vs. Australia” (Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R97o2BfMHvM> – viewed 2 January 2012).

throughout the tournament. After its opening-game victory over Australia, the Springboks went from strength to strength, happily winning all of their games, which led to escalating interest in their standing in the competition.

Thus, by the time of the final match against the All Blacks, the nation's eyes were firmly fixed on the Boks, and Nelson Mandela took advantage of the occasion to overhaul the image of the Springbok and to secure white support for his own image by entering the stadium before the match adorned in Pienaar's no. 6 Springbok jersey. The crowd was delighted – erupting into chants of “Nel-son, Nel-son” – and Mandela's presence did much to restore the racial imbalance of the team. When the Springboks defeated their rivals (in extra time thanks to a last-minute drop goal), the response around the country was euphoric and by all accounts “unprecedented”.¹⁴² Mandela again appeared in the Springbok jersey to hand over the trophy to Pienaar and his embrace of the white Afrikaner captain serves as perhaps the most memorable image of reconciliation of the era (see Figure 6.1).

In a rare historical moment of national unity, celebrations spontaneously erupted in the streets in both black and white areas throughout the country; Pienaar's subsequent



Figure 6.1: The iconic photo of Mandela congratulating Springbok captain Francois Pienaar (photo: David Rogers/Allsport)

comment “We didn't have 60 000 South Africans supporting us today ... we had 43 million ...” was emblazoned across newspapers nationwide; and the political ramifications of the event caught the attention of international authors and film directors.¹⁴³

Although Grundlingh argues that the Springboks probably needed Mandela more

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁴³ John Carlin's written account of Mandela's involvement in the Rugby World Cup, *Playing the Enemy*, attracted the attention of Morgan Freeman, who persuaded Clint Eastwood and Matt Damon to take the story to the big screen. The film, *Invictus*, directed by Clint Eastwood and starring Freeman as Mandela and Damon as Pienaar, was released in 2009.

than Mandela needed the Springboks,¹⁴⁴ the new president's image also benefited from the association. Rita Barnard makes the point that Mandela's image was frequently rejuvenated by photo opportunities with beautiful women – the beauty queens of the Miss World contests, as well as female celebrities such as the Princess of Wales and the Spice Girls.¹⁴⁵ As the chief representative of the nation, Mandela's advanced age presented a challenge. "The real nation," Benedict Anderson comments, "is always young"¹⁴⁶ and as the "face" of the new rainbow nation, the ageing Mandela had to continue to inspire hope in its citizens. Similarly, while Mandela's popularity may have exceeded that of the Springboks (and other sportsmen with whom he frequently posed) his own image was invigorated by their youthful presence. Indeed, he emerged as the real "star" of the show, and the Rugby World Cup directors went on to attribute the success of the event, which attracted an increase in overall viewership of 55% compared to the previous World Cup, to Mandela.¹⁴⁷

Although not extensively covered in the US media, British and Australian coverage also celebrated the final game, and the *Sydney Morning Herald* made great claims for the effect of the World Cup, stating that "South Africa became 'one team, one country' yesterday".¹⁴⁸ Desmond Tutu announced his (surprised) support for the Springboks in rapturous terms:

I did not expect this, but I am proud to wear [a Springbok jersey], when a few years ago, even a few months ago, it was an anathema.... this thing, that was a very divisive and ugly symbol, could in fact have magically been used by God to weld us together. No one of us could ever in their wildest dreams have been able to predict that rugby could have this magical effect.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Grundlingh, "From redemption to recidivism?", 77.

¹⁴⁵ Barnard, "Contesting Beauty", 355.

¹⁴⁶ Anderson, "The goodness of nations".

¹⁴⁷ SAPA, "Success of World Cup due to Mandela", 3 October 1995 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1995/news1004> – viewed 8 December 2011), no page number.

¹⁴⁸ Greg Growden, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 June 1995.

¹⁴⁹ Cited in the *Star*, 21 July 1995.

The religious overtone is to be expected from Tutu, but it is also reflected in general media coverage,¹⁵⁰ which tended to quote the adulatory responses of black South Africans in particular. The *Sunday Times* front-page article quoted Isaac Chokwe's statement, "I did not care about rugby before ... I did not even like it. But now I am a believer".¹⁵¹ In some cases, the apparent celebratory response from black citizens "was the news",¹⁵² made possible perhaps by the "black" press's embrace of events.

The black press's "conversion" is partly attributable to what Booth refers to as "linguistic nationalisation"¹⁵³ – important because "defeat of the other", although central to the creation of a national epic,¹⁵⁴ only goes so far in explaining the event's effect on an emerging South African nationalism. Whereas previous attempts to nationalise the Springboks had not met with much success,¹⁵⁵ the coining of the term *Amabokoboko*¹⁵⁶ in the *Sowetan* "gave blacks a stake in the emblem for the first time".¹⁵⁷ (The term was coined by Mike Tissing, under the editorship of renowned nation-builder Aggrey Klaaste, after the opening match against Australia.) Jane van der Riet notes that later media publications also began fusing struggle rhetoric with sports discourse,¹⁵⁹ so that even the normally reserved *City Press*, which earlier in the month had resolutely maintained that "there was no reason to retain the Springbok emblem",¹⁶⁰ gave in to "Viva Amabhokoboko! Viva South Africa!" on the Sunday after the final.

¹⁵⁰ See Jane van der Riet, "Triumph of the rainbow warriors: Gender, nationalism and the rugby world cup", *Agenda*, 27, Reproductive rights, 1995, 98–110.

¹⁵¹ Cited in Van der Riet, "Triumph of the rainbow warriors", 104 (originally: *Sunday Times*, 25 June 1995).

¹⁵² Carlin, *Playing the Enemy*, 245.

¹⁵³ Douglas Booth, "Mandela and the *Amabokoboko*: The political and linguistic nationalisation of South Africa?" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34 (3), 1996, 459–77.

¹⁵⁴ The importance of victory is evidenced by Thabo Mbeki's distinction between the nation and the team in his post-match comment on the 1998 Soccer World Cup, which South Africa lost to France (Torgeir Fjeld, "Soccer Rites" in Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael (eds.), *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa, 2000, 403).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 471.

¹⁵⁶ *Amabokoboko* combines the Xhosa plural prefix *ama* with the Afrikaans for deer (*bok*).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Sarah Britten, *The Art of the South African Insult* (Cape Town: 30 Degrees South Publishers, 2006), 55.

¹⁵⁹ Van der Riet, "Triumph of the rainbow warriors", 101.

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Booth, *The Race Game*, 218 (originally: *City Press*, 4 June 1995).

The overwhelming response to the match suggests that the World Cup served as yet another shamanising media event, with Mandela playing the central role as charismatic leader, crossing frontiers and conjuring real change.

But although the 1995 Rugby World Cup was perhaps an extremely powerful Contest media event, the transformation associated with it was fleeting, perhaps even overstated. As Grundlingh points out, while there was much celebration of black support for the event, the “dynamics” of that support have seldom been explained and it is possible that the renationalisation of the Springbok was interpreted differently by black and white South Africans. On the one hand, Mandela’s donning of the Springbok jersey was interpreted as a form of ownership of the team – a portrayal that benefited from his already paternal image.¹⁶¹ *The Economist*, for instance, went on to refer to “Mandela’s ‘Boks”,¹⁶² and an association between the two was forged. This had, by all accounts, been Mandela’s intention all along; he later told John Carlin in an interview that he wanted to create the perception that “the Boks belonged to all of us now”.¹⁶³

For white South Africans, however, Mandela’s interaction with the Springbok team (and with the symbol itself) was interpreted not so much as a form of ownership as a profound reconciliatory gesture. Carlin sums up some of the symbolic effects of the game:

What surprised and gratified [Mandela] was the degree to which he had ended up being the focus of attention. For he understood that behind the spontaneous clamour from the white Ellis Park crowd – that ‘Nelson! Nelson!’ – lay eloquent and convincing evidence that his hard toil had paid off. In paying homage to him, they were rendering tribute to the high value of ‘non-racialism’ for which he had endured twenty-seven years in prison. They were crying out for forgiveness and they were accepting his, and through him, black South Africa’s generous embrace.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Grundlingh, “From redemption to recidivism?”, 78.

¹⁶² “Mandela’s ‘Boks (1995 World Cup Rugby)”, *The Economist*, 1 July 1995.

¹⁶³ Cited in John Carlin, “How Nelson Mandela won the Rugby World Cup”, *Telegraph*, 19 October 2007 (Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/features/3634426/How-Nelson-Mandela-won-the-rugby-World-Cup.html> – viewed 9 December 2011), no page number.

¹⁶⁴ Carlin, *Playing the Enemy*, 250.

Though it is difficult to be cynical about this response, there are some obvious problems with it. Something of Noam Chomsky's "irrational jingoism"¹⁶⁵ appears to have attended the reception of the event. Some critics have pointed out that the media was careful to note that black South Africans celebrated the victory,¹⁶⁶ perhaps overstating the shared magnitude of the event. As was the case in other arenas, the civil religion appears to have been interpreted differently, with black South Africans staking a claim on national resources, while white South Africans sought comfort in the much desired reconciliatory symbolism of the event.

Viewing statistics and national pride surveys lend some support to this reading. Although many more (almost double) Nguni- and Sotho-speakers watched the final in comparison to other games in the tournament, these figures still paled in comparison to those for English- and Afrikaans-speaking viewers.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, while the game most certainly increased national pride, the degree to which it mattered for different race groups differed. While, overall, sporting achievements (at 24%) outperformed other categories in a 1996 survey – followed by the rainbow nation metaphor (17%) and then world acceptance/recognition (13%), the categories showed discrepancies for racial groups. For white citizens, sporting achievements ranked at a whopping 60%, followed by world acceptance (20%) and then the rainbow metaphor (6%); while coloured and Indian citizens tended to mirror their white counterparts, for black South Africans, the rainbow metaphor led (19%), followed by politically established institutions and programmes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (16%) and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (15%).¹⁶⁸ Sport tied with the degree of pride elicited by the RDP. The outcomes suggest vastly different degrees of investment in sport for the purposes of nation-building.

Indeed, the unifying after-effects of the event were short-lived, as is evidenced by the resurfacing of calls for the replacement of the Springbok emblem. A mere four

¹⁶⁵ Cited in Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*. Zeitgeist Films, 1992.

¹⁶⁶ Van der Riet, "Triumph of the rainbow warriors", 102.

¹⁶⁷ At the broadcast's peak, ARs were as follows: 37 (English-speaking), 31 (Afrikaans), 17 (Nguni) and 16 (Sotho) (SAARF Viewing Report, 19–25 June 1995).

¹⁶⁸ Dickow & Møller, "South Africa's rainbow people: national pride and optimism".

months later, Aggrey Klaaste, a pioneering proponent of non-racial nation-building, claimed that “the Springbok reminds me too much of the old South Africa when the race wars were everywhere including on the sportsfields”¹⁶⁹ and, to this day, debates over the future of the Springbok continue.¹⁷⁰ The attachment to apartheid national symbols also flared up from time to time and during a 1996 All Black tour some Bloemfontein fans again waved their old South African flags in the crowd.¹⁷¹ The appearance of unity among the players was also questioned; after the excitement of the tournament subsided, reports of locker-room racism emerged. Chester Williams later claimed that the sense of unity elicited by the event lasted for only a week, after which his teammates (particularly fellow wing James Small) were racially abusive.¹⁷²

In addition, Mandela’s symbolic captaincy of the team was brief. Although after the World Cup he fought for the retention of the Springbok rugby symbol – in spite of “every single member” of his organisation being “up in arms”¹⁷³ – by 1998 it was evident that his “ownership” of the Springboks would not be tolerated by rugby officials; when government wished to set up a commission to investigate accusations of racism in rugby hierarchy, the move was opposed by Louis Luyt, and Mandela was subpoenaed as a witness to justify the appointment of the commission.

For white South Africans, many of whom now reflect on the Rugby World Cup with sentimental nostalgia, it seems possible that the event succeeded only in shoring up fears of marginalisation under black rule. Nauright points out that “the support of President Mandela for the 1995 Rugby World Cup allowed whites to mask their cultural

¹⁶⁹ Cited in Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 157 (originally: *Cape Argus*, 10 October 1995).

¹⁷⁰ See, for instance, reporting on Luke Watson’s comment on the Springbok in Sebastian Berger, “Race row over Springbok emblem”, *Telegraph*, 27 October 2008 (Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/3269307/Race-row-over-Springbok-emblem.html> – viewed 5 December 2011).

¹⁷¹ Grundlingh, “From redemption to recidivism?”, 79.

¹⁷² See Mark Keohane, *Chester: A Biography of Courage* (Cape Town: Don Nelson, 2002).

¹⁷³ Mandela, cited in Du Preez, *Louis Luyt*, 182. In 1996, he and Steve Tshwete overruled a National Sport Council (NSC) commission of inquiry recommendation that the “deeply offensive” Springbok be dropped, persuading the NSC to retain the emblem to help foster reconciliation (SAPA, “Rugby’s Springbok retained”, 30 March 1996 (Available at: <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1996/news0401> – viewed 5 December 2011), no page number.)

insecurity a little better” even as they remained “deeply concerned about the prospects for a post-Mandela-led South Africa”.¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

After decades of isolation bearing the burden of its pariah status, South Africa’s return to the global fold was widely celebrated, particularly by white citizens, and media events became a strong source of national pride. As the opening quote to this chapter notes, international mega-events allowed South Africans to bask, albeit for a brief period, in the sensation of being a global force. The pleasure associated with media events served as a kind of “reward” for reform in the country, and various political parties, particularly the ANC, capitalised on their power over South Africa’s participation in televised contests.

Yet, as soon as sporting and cultural boycotts were dropped, the ANC found it difficult to maintain its influence, again highlighting the power of global forces in South Africa’s transition. Media events, although hegemonic, sometimes take on a life of their own, are difficult to direct and their consequences are frequently unpredictable.

The global televised events of the early 1990s were also problematic because of their prematurity, coinciding as they did with political violence in the country as well as heated and racialised debates over national symbols. In a sense, the South African nation that returned to the global stage was not yet a nation, and the country’s “debut” performances were hampered by the larger questions over what the “new” South Africa should be like. The need to stage spectacles based on shared political values arguably hastened the move towards an accepted sense of nationhood.

Many of the tensions over national identity were resolved with the 1994 election and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela, when the metaphor of the so-called rainbow nation took effect, and some of the post-1994 events (such as the Rugby World Cup) helped to consolidate these metaphors and symbols. The new national symbols that eventually emerged suggested that there was much that was old about the “new” South Africa, with one of the more divisive emblems, the Springbok, enjoying a renewed popularity in spite of its historical association with white identity and apartheid.

¹⁷⁴ Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*, 166.

As an immensely powerful symbolic figure, Mandela's symbiotic relationship with media events continued to flourish, and his reputation was enhanced on a global level (and among white South Africans) first because of his role in ending isolation and eventually because of his appearances in many of the televised broadcasts that resulted from his backing. Mandela's symbolism suited the media event genre perfectly. Associated with humanitarianism and reconciliation, his presence most likely served to strengthen the desired interpretation of events such as the Olympics and Miss World. At the same time, the president's ageing image was rejuvenated by the youth and perfection of sporting teams and beauty queens.

Conclusion

In the contest for ownership, media events lend themselves to a rich grammar of appropriations. They fall prey to entities that are neither their organizers nor their publics. They may be subverted (denounced), diverted (derailed), or perverted (hijacked). They may be used as Trojan horses or placed under threat of a sword of Damocles. These multiple tensions and the event's charisma ask the question of 'legitimate ownership' and appropriation. Can anyone own a public event?

– Daniel Dayan¹

In February 2010, the South African media united in a series of celebrations over the 20-year anniversary of Mandela's release from prison. Newspapers published special commemorative supplements including images and remembered accounts of the 11 February 1990 as well as interviews with key politicians; UNESCO declared the Groot Drakenstein (formerly Victor Verster) Prison a heritage site; and an independently funded film festival, "Free at Last", invited viewers to "relive 11th February" by watching documentaries and raw footage of the day in venues around the country. The release has clearly gone down in national history as one of post-apartheid's defining moments, and certainly South Africa's great television moment. Realising this, and capitalising on the "marketing" potential of the occasion, the ANC-led government synchronised the anniversary of the release with the annual State of the Nation address, and, together with the SABC, embarked on an overt attempt to channel the power of the original event towards the controversial presidency of Jacob Zuma. The broadcaster screened three hours of celebratory live footage before the direct transmission of Zuma's first State of the Nation address. During these hours, SABC journalists interviewed crowds and struggle stalwarts as, in typically nationalist fashion, they re-enacted Mandela's journey from the Groot Drakenstein Prison to the Grand Parade. These seemingly spontaneous celebrations, although they did not constitute media events themselves, give some insight

¹ Dayan, "Beyond media events", 30.

into the powerful effects of the initial event and the extent to which ownership of the power of the televised release – South Africa’s symbolic turning point – remains highly desirable. In 2010, during the 20-year celebrations, De Klerk spoke instead of the 2 February as a momentous historical moment, but to the world, and to the South African media, Mandela’s release is treated as the more memorable day as it has become associated with the nation’s freedom, just as Mandela’s narrative forms the central strand of the new national mythology.

Because of their power, the question of ownership is central to media events. As the opening quote suggests, in spite of their seemingly integrative effects, media events can sometimes be vulnerable to a variety of readings. The South African context sheds light on the precarious nature of media events; as Dayan and Katz have noted, although vulnerable to exploitation, mass televised events depend on the approval and co-operation of a variety of participants. Because they are difficult to stage, media events serve as a subtle and therefore potentially more powerful means of maintaining hegemonic power. Similarly, because they can appear spontaneous, they can serve as powerful drivers of socio-political change.

As we have seen, in the case of Mandela’s release (as well as for the pop music concerts held in his honour) several organisations clamoured for ownership of the event, though in the end, no single party was able to fully dictate the terms of its interpretation, which remained true only to the aesthetic requirements of the media event genre. As the South African case illustrates, the work of Dayan and Katz goes a long way in helping to predict the likely readings and potential effects of televised events of this nature.

Would the release have accumulated such symbolic power had it not been televised live? Most likely not. The moving images of Mandela’s final steps to freedom, combined with the knowledge that the rest of the world’s gaze had shifted, at precisely the same moment, to our little corner of the earth, meant a great deal to South Africans – more than the NP anticipated.

While the apartheid government, quite rightly, feared the racially integrative effects of television, nobody predicted the role that exclusion from worldwide media events would come to play in South Africa’s political transition. Just as the country acquired its much desired television service, so the sporting and cultural boycotts took

root, meaning that TV could serve as a powerful instrument of punishment and banishment. At points, media events were also “diverted” and/or “perverted” to suit the agenda of anti-apartheid activists, as was the case with the Hamilton rugby match, and as was illustrated by the protests held in the wake of violent conflicts such as Boipatong. There are few studies on the potential of media events to serve the political interests of non-participants, but, as the South African case illustrates, this is one of the factors that renders them vulnerable and bears out Dayan and Katz’s claim that they are seldom totalitarian.

For this reason, perhaps, the apartheid government’s attempts to use television for its own purposes – first by staging its own media events and, when this proved unsuccessful, through imposing various forms of censorship – tended to backfire. The NP was ultimately unable to control the country’s image abroad, and the increased sense of South Africa’s pariah status added to the mounting dissatisfaction with the political situation in the country, contributing to the change in white South Africans’ attitudes to the possibility of a future beyond apartheid. The impasse of the late 1980s led to a reversal of opposition for reform. While in 1987, the CP overtook the liberal PFP, becoming the government’s official opposition, by 1992, De Klerk had managed to persuade nearly 70% of white South Africans to vote “yes” in favour of transformation. While there are of course many factors responsible for this shift, several are relevant to the role that media events played in South Africa’s reform.

The first came in the form of Nelson Mandela – an apotheosis of the NP’s own making. Just as their attempts to control television backfired, so their efforts to banish Mandela from political life led to his resurrection as a messiah figure with enormous charismatic power and “moral capital”. Mandela’s international celebration benefitted greatly from the power of television and from media events specifically. Beginning with the release concert, peaking with his watershed televised release from prison and consolidated with the 1995 Rugby World Cup, Mandela’s status swelled with each successive televised event. While globally he was depicted as a kind of saint, responsible for South Africa’s “miracle” transition and reconciliation (see, for instance, *Time* magazine’s cover from 9 May 1994), locally, he tended to take on royal status: “Mandela,” Anthony Sampson comments, “often seemed more like a king than a

politician”.² Mandela went on to develop a unique relationship with media events, one that he appeared to foster personally, and which was likely part of his seemingly deliberate attempts to charm the media.³ His 1998 marriage to Graça Machel, the widow of former Mozambican president Samora Machel, also increased his kingly status and was, as Philippe-Joseph Salazar has pointed out, another instance of reconciliation.⁴ Although the matrimonial ceremony was a private affair, it would surely have rivalled Charles and Diana’s wedding as one of television’s major media events if it had been broadcast live. Even the live coverage of the fundraising wedding banquet, held the following day, managed to attract a television audience of around 150 million viewers worldwide.⁵ In addition, the 46664 pop concerts⁶, drawing on the existing legacy of the

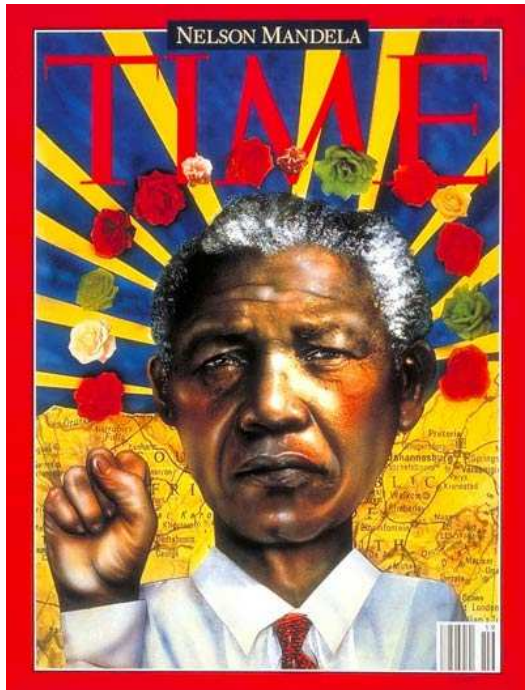


Figure 7.1: *Time* magazine’s depiction of Nelson Mandela on the eve of his inauguration

birthday and release concerts, have continued the trend of combining humanitarian causes with popular culture in the new millennium.

But an even bigger Mandela media event awaits. In anticipation of Mandela’s death and funeral, broadcasters have already started installing television cameras in Qunu, Mandela’s home village, where he is likely to be buried. The funeral of the man frequently voted as one of the world’s greatest leaders is set to manifest as yet another mass global media event, one that will likely match some of the recent televised occasions that have enraptured global audiences, such as Obama’s victory speech, and one that will

² Sampson, *Mandela*, 504.

³ Pippa Green notes that Mandela tended to “sweet talk” journalists, but that this was part of his broader plan to secure unity and stability in South Africa (Personal communication, interview conducted by candidate, 19 August 2009).

⁴ Salazar, *An African Athens*, 37.

⁵ “Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel wed in South Africa”, *Jet*, 3 August 1998, 15–18.

⁶ The title 46664 takes its name from the prison number (prisoner number 466 of 1964) that was given to Mandela when he was imprisoned on Robben Island.

likely see a number of parties competing for ownership of the event. These broadcasts suggest that the world has not yet seen the last of the media event genre – though it has of course mutated somewhat to take account of technological developments – and it will be interesting to evaluate the effects of Mandela’s funeral. The occasion is likely to serve as a deeply unifying event for South Africans, even if it is complicated by the fact that kings and royals usually require a “descendant” or “heir”.⁷

The second televisual trend relevant to the period links to the issue of “liveness” and disaster and not to media events specifically, although, as many critics have pointed out, and as Dayan and Katz have conceded, the broadcasting of unplanned, non-integrative events shares many of the characteristics of classic media events. During the South African transition, this is seen in the effects of the broadcasting of some of the violent clashes in the period leading up to the first democratic election. Televised footage of events such as Boipatong and Bisho were extremely influential on political processes and shaped the way in which history has been remembered. Not only did they provide trusted footage for official inquiries into events, but their televising and visual nature also fostered their mythologisation. Although primarily packaged as news inserts, in combination with some of the planned media events of the time, these broadcasts nevertheless attracted large audiences and ultimately helped to curry support for the ANC–NP alliance.

Katz and Liebes⁸ have argued that footage of disaster is even more vulnerable to polysemic interpretation than traditional media events, but the South African case suggests that context will strongly influence the ways in which audiences read footage. Much of the coverage of violence during the transition was damaging to the NP, while the moral standing of the ANC, and its global reputation at the time, meant that it tended to benefit from the broadcasting of unplanned disaster.

The televising of disaster, captured “live” so to speak, like the transmission of planned live media events, also helped to improve the poor reputation of the SABC. In many respects, the early 1990s served as a golden period for the broadcaster, whose reputation has subsequently declined because of poor financial management and the

⁷ Ian Glenn, my supervisor, brought this observation to my attention.

⁸ Katz & Liebes, “No more peace!”.

widespread perception that it has not fulfilled its public interest mandate. Increasingly, the SABC has been accused of serving as a mouthpiece for the ruling ANC, but at the time, the broadcaster served, perhaps for the only time in its history, a more independent agenda.

The transition period also saw some unique broadcasting occasions, as the ruling alliance used media events associated with the liberal Western world to emphasise, to South Africans and the rest of the world, that the country was in the process of transforming to democracy. Televised events such as the election debate and the efforts made to cover the CODESA talks live clearly contributed to the atmosphere of participatory democracy sought by the SABC and the NP–ANC coalition. While this trend was most likely not strategically orchestrated, it reveals the extent to which early post-apartheid South Africa sought outside approval and tailored its national image to suit global expectations.

Awareness of global perceptions was also evident in the initially complicated response to South Africa’s return to the global stage, close analysis of which reveals many of the early conflicts over national symbols and what the “new” South Africa should mean. Approval was eventually secured, largely because of the desire to return to international competition. This in turn led to swifter acceptance of new national symbols – visibly displayed and often celebrated on television sets across the world. The gradual unveiling of the nation’s new identity took on greater significance because of the decades of exclusion that preceded it.

Afrikaner nationalism sought to “build a nation from words”,⁹ harnessing the power of print media to establish the myths and narratives of its national identity. Like earlier, European versions of nationhood, Afrikanerdom drew meaning from the events of the past.

Post-apartheid South Africa, on the other hand, was at pains to break from its divisive past, which after all recounted the history of a nation at war with itself. Instead,

⁹ See Isabel Hofmeyr, “Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902–1924” in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1987).

the “new” South Africa (as its appellation suggests) sought to emphasise its reborn status and its location in the present, and it relied heavily on the symbolism of contemporary visual imagery. For this reason, perhaps, television played an important role in the creation of the new post-apartheid mythology. The South African case suggests that “liveness” is frequently equated with transparency and “newness”. Media events, more than any other television genre, literally brought the nation together and played a pivotal role in the country’s transformation and the consolidation of the rainbow nation’s new identity.

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