

Democracy Denied:
The Press in South Africa

GLEN FREEMAN

Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Sciences
University of Cape Town
1999

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1. INTRODUCTION

The horrors of apartheid are documented for all to see. Some are chronicled because the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) gathered the testimony of both the perpetrators and the victims of those horrors. Other events were recorded shortly after they took place, through the efforts of diligent news reporters. However, many atrocities of apartheid were not recorded, due in part to an oppressive regime and (some might say) media negligence. Some branches of the media openly supported apartheid; some lent it tacit support. Still others were passionately outspoken against apartheid and its inherent injustices. In all cases, though, the apartheid government attempted to suppress the ability of the media to get the full story into the public eye.

This work is an examination of the media in South Africa (SA). Here it shall be seen that SA was not a democratic state while under National Party (NP) rule. This statement is obvious as the vast majority of SA citizens were denied the franchise. But democracy eluded even those enjoying life within the narrow confines of white democratic rule, as they were denied the information necessary to make informed decisions. The control of information by political players will be a key area of focus.

This topic was chosen because SA has entered a new phase of government, that being a liberal democracy. Fears have been expressed in SA that democracy may slide into a dictatorship, or at least a tyranny of the majority in which the will of the masses (in this case a racial group, the blacks¹) will be imposed upon the minority at the expense of their current liberties. If democratic consolidation is to take place in SA, the media

and other members of civil society must play a role in that consolidation. One way in which to prepare for the future is to examine the past: the media is no exception.

This work is a case study of the media in SA. It will begin by defining the media and clarifying how the media is connected to political studies. The importance of the media in a democracy will be outlined, and some concepts of media control will be explained. As well, several classifications of media systems will be highlighted, and the one most appropriate to examining the SA situation will be emphasised.

Next, focus shall shift specifically to the press in SA. Two sub-sections will be evident: first, the history of the press in SA. The English, Afrikaans, and Black media will be viewed from their humble beginnings until the advent of apartheid law. This task is undertaken in order to show the reasons behind the conception of each media group, as well as their dynamic in relation to the government. Second, the press during NP rule will be audited. This section will focus on methods used by the NP to control the media, from press commissions to laws. Included here will be an examination of the newspaper coverage of the death in detention of Steve Biko. This story is covered in order to show the slants taken by various press groups, as well as what the NP permitted to be written. Also in this section will be the control of the media during the various states of emergency in the 1980s.

The future of the media in SA will then be discussed, with an eye on several 'pros' and 'cons.' The conclusion of this work will attempt to encapsulate the theme, as well as briefly discussing the future of the media in a post-apartheid South Africa.

This paper is obviously a qualitative work, drawing primarily upon the research of others. As with all social scientific research, this paper is not without bias. However, every attempt at impartiality and neutrality was made. Initially the questions 'why did apartheid survive for such a long time?' and 'why weren't the people outraged at what was happening in SA?' were asked. It became clear the media was a significant part of the answer, so dozens of books were read and thousands of newspaper pages were scoured in order to make some sense of the SA situation. The following pages are a result of those questions and the ensuing research.

1.1 THE MEDIA

As this work begins, it is necessary to answer two questions: first, what is the media?; second, why (in the name of political studies) is the media an important area of focus?

1.1.1 MEDIA DEFINED

The 'media' has been broadly described as "any form of communication by which people are informed, educated and entertained."² This could conceivably incorporate anything from ancient drumbeats to papyrus scrolls, 'traditional' media such as books and newspapers to 'new' media ranging from "high-definition television to computer based videotex, hypertext, and multimedia systems to cellular telephones and videophones to music on compact discs."³

Such a broad range definition is hardly appropriate for this work. For purposes of this paper the definition of 'media' will be limited, avoiding where possible the

entertaining aspects, concentrating on that which is designed specifically to 'inform and educate' the public—the news media. While there is no denying that television, radio, and the like serve as bearers of news, this work will concentrate on the print media, specifically the world of newspapers. At times, news sheets and other printed matter will be included in this definition: however, where the words 'media,' 'news,' 'reports' and the like are used, the primary intended meaning is newspapers.

1.1.2 THE MEDIA AS POLITICAL

To address the second question (why in the name of political studies is it important to focus on the media?) the answer may simply be 'because the two are inseparably linked.' In non-democratic states the news media is virtually always under the strict control of the ruling party, prohibiting real knowledge of the machinations of that government from reaching the masses. In democratic nations, blatant, coercive control of the media is seen by many as barbaric and is often a form of political suicide—it is not a practice usually tolerated. In fact, if coercive control of the media *is* tolerated, the political system is something less than entirely democratic (as examined later).

The media is not a branch of international relations, domestic politics, and so on: rather, as it plays a role in ascertaining facts, it is vital in all fields of political studies. The media is not involved in politics in some vague, unfathomable way—it has real, tangible political power. Newspapers are able to "transmit a continuous account of politics"⁴ to the general public in a manner which is otherwise unachievable. Not only does this 'continuous account' transmit news necessary for the public to make informed decisions, but it also introduces the public to key political figures. Exposure

in the media makes politicians recognisable, which translates into public support (or condemnation). Newspapers may have the ability to 'make-or-break' political figures; a fact of which politicians are fully aware.

Furthermore, the media has political power as a result of their agenda-setting role. It is virtually impossible for newspapers to relay all of the information they receive, therefore members of the media act as political gatekeepers—telling some political stories, omitting others—all of which “helps to shape the information flow to the public.”⁵ Those events which receive media attention are ultimately deemed by the public as important; those which do not receive media attention are more likely to be seen as unimportant, if the public is cognisant of them at all.

The media's political power often stems from their “editorial offerings.”⁶ Newspapers print editorials, political columns and cartoons, background stories, all of which raise questions, draw conclusions, and make the public think in a critical manner. “What emerges from all of this is persuasion,”⁷ which equals political power. In addition, the media attains political power through the influence they exert on political actors themselves. Politicians pay attention to the content of newspapers, because they recognise the inherent power of the media to shape public opinion. “Consequently, the media influence the politicians themselves”⁸ as politicians gauge that public opinion and make political decisions—while the media informs the public about political actions, it also informs politicians of public sentiments and perceptions.

1.1.2.1 NEWSPAPERS

Clearly all media can have a political nature. However, for a number of reasons, emphasis in this work is placed on newspapers. First, research done in the United States suggests that early in a political campaign, newspapers play a more significant role in setting public agenda issues and shaping opinion than other forms of media. This is primarily due to the fact that the “array of issues emphasised by newspapers is a better match for the public’s agenda than is true of television,”⁹ particularly as they concern local political issues. Apartheid, though a national programme, was consistently a part of South African political campaigns.

A second reason to emphasis newspapers comes from Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan separates media into two categories; ‘hot’ and ‘cool.’ A hot medium of communication “extends one single sense in ‘high definition,’” high definition being “the state of being filled with data.”¹⁰ Hot media is rich in detail and transmitter-supplied definition, leaving the receptor little to add from personal experiences or knowledge.¹¹ Conversely, a cool medium has little actual information flowing from the transmitter to those receiving the information. With more than one sense involved in the process (and with little information is being transmitted), “much has to be filled in by the [receiver...] and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience.”¹² Newspapers are hot, according to McLuhan: they project a high volume of information to one sense. The television is cool: it involves several senses, but provides a minimum of information. Further, the print media have been “explosive” in the way they alter discourse,¹³ and have facilitated in making “men think logically and independently.”¹⁴ Electronic technology (television) “appears to create boredom.”¹⁵

More importantly (and practically) television arrived late in SA—first broadcast early in 1976. Obviously without television there could be no TV news. In addition, even though television has today become a force in the nation, during apartheid “more than 20 million people in South Africa [did] not have electricity in their homes, so that a television [was] an extraneous influence on the Black population.”¹⁶ Newspapers, on the other hand, were found free in public libraries, had single copies shared among large groups of people, were read, re-read, and stored for future reference.

Furthermore, newspapers are significant because their relation to reality is both iconic and symbolic. An iconic relation to reality is “able to represent in miniature or in essence the reality being communicated. The audience must do very little decoding.”¹⁷ Individuals react to icons (such as pictures) in the manner they do because they perceive that the icon is like reality.¹⁸ A symbolic relation to reality is different, in that “the association between symbol [in this case printed words] and referent is more arbitrary than that between icon and referent.”¹⁹ While McLuhan argues that papers are a hot media rich in detail (leaving the receptor little to add from their personal experiences), the symbolic nature of words sometimes insists that readers *do* add to the meaning of those words from their own knowledge. For example, bold headlines placed on the top of an odd numbered (right-hand) page are deemed by the reader as more important than small headlines on an even numbered page. Size and position of words therefore have symbolic meanings within the symbolic nature of words themselves. The symbolic nature of words is usually overt, understood by readers. The size and position of those words, on the other hand, has a covert meaning.²⁰

1.1.3 THE MEDIA AS DEMOCRATIC

It is clear that the media and politics are inseparably linked. However, there is also a link between the media and a specific type of political system: democracy. Since the earliest roots of democracy until the modern day, there have been at least four general political assumptions that relate to the sphere of communications. They are: first, that citizens are well informed; second, that citizens are generally interested in politics (as a consequence of the socialisation process); third, that citizens are able to speak and participate in decision making equally; and fourth, that all decisions are open to public discussion.²¹ It is a basic premise that the theories of democracy are founded “on the notion of the informed individual citizen.”²² Without a system of communications to facilitate the exchange of information from politician to citizen, citizen to politician, and from citizen to citizen, democracy is a hollow shell. “Democracy is contingent upon an informed public with the means to learn what the government is doing, the right to criticise what the government is doing, and the mechanism for effectively expressing opposition by voting to oust our highest officials from office.”²³

So important is the role of the media that a ‘free press’ or ‘access to information’ are enshrined in most liberal-democratic constitutions across the globe. The United Nations (UN) Declaration of Human Rights (ratified by the General Assembly in 1948) states in its preamble that “the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.”²⁴ The document solidifies the importance of those rights in Article 19, which reads: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any

media regardless of frontiers.”²⁵ As people have access to information, they will be able to determine for themselves whatsoever things are ‘true’ or ‘factual.’ The result is that individuals will be able to make decisions based upon that knowledge.

In a nation such as SA, the media plays an additional significant political role. SA, from 1948 until the democratic elections of 1994, was a one party dominant state. The legal political opposition was weak and fragmented between several parties; there was never any genuine threat that the NP would lose control of the levers of government. During this time, opposition parties simply ceased to offer a “credible alternative” to the NP.²⁶ The government of SA and the NP actually became seen as one, not only by Nationalists, but also by those in opposition positions, so much so that “consultation between Government and Opposition virtually ceased.”²⁷

Likewise, the NP’s true opposition—blacks—were exempt from practising in SA politics altogether. They were not, however, prohibited from reading newspapers. The media, therefore, assumed the role of political opposition to the government during the apartheid years. The Afrikaans press functioned as an internal opposition, squarely behind the NP in principle, but concerned about the methods employed by the NP.²⁸ The English-language press “became opposition by default.”²⁹ The English media could not be seen as a true representative of the African voice, but resisted some tenants and practices of apartheid and was sufficiently disliked by the NP so as to be seen as an external opposition to the government.

The media is therefore a valid and vital area of concentration for political scientists. In every political system tremendous effort goes into controlling the media. In non-

democratic nations that control is often oppressive (such as the use of violence), while other, less obvious means are utilised in democratic states. Two forms of press control are examined in the following pages, those being censorship and propaganda. Censorship is not often used in democratic states (at least, not used without some resistance), while propaganda is found in virtually every political system.

1.1.3.1 CENSORSHIP

Censorship is an ancient form of control still used today, which is exercised primarily by political and religious leaders.³⁰ Censorship itself encompasses issues including “spoken and printed words, photographs, paintings, and other types of visual art, as well as symbolic speech, such as armbands and flag burning.”³¹ For purposes of this work, censorship will be defined as the prevention of publication or transmission of printed material considered undesirable for the public to possess or to be exposed.

Censorship can also be seen as “a form of surveillance: a mechanism for gathering intelligence that the powerful can use to tighten control over people or ideas that threaten to disrupt established systems of order.”³² One of the first recorded incidents of censorship is Plato’s account of the death of Socrates. Claiming he was attempting to seek truth, Socrates was charged with “corrupting the children and offending the gods,” and eventually died for the right of free speech.³³ As shall be seen, censorship was likewise used by the NP to tighten control when the established order (apartheid) was threatened in SA.

Censorship is either pre- or post-publication. Post-publication censorship most often takes the form of government actions (agents taking newspapers off the streets, for instance) but can take the form of public flack (to be defined later). Pre-publication censorship—also known as prior restraint—can take several forms. Among them are oppressive laws that threaten action against undesirable materials, extra-legal actions (such as threats or violence), or the denial of certain rights and privileges to those who exceed government boundaries. Both pre- and post-publication restraints have a “chilling effect” on members of the media, and often induce self-censorship³⁴—not writing a story because one feels they may not ‘get away’ with it.

Censorship is seen by many as a monumental evil—with certain exceptions. In most communities there are accepted laws limiting obscenity.³⁵ As well, libel is commonly banned. Furthermore, some feel it is necessary to have restrictions on the press during times of war. Censorship during military conflict began with the U.S. Civil War, when the government retained control over all press activities, including access to the battlefield. This is related to the concept of ‘total war.’ “Total war required unprecedented central co-ordination of the economy, an unprecedented concern with civilian ‘morale,’ since civilians had to be mobilised as a force of economic production, a source of ‘manpower’ and a political constituency for a tremendously costly enterprise.”³⁶ As shall be seen, this was a theme in SA, when some claimed the nation faced a ‘total onslaught,’ justifying the government in their controls.

1.1.3.2 PROPAGANDA

Another manner in which politicians attempt to control the press is through the use of propaganda. The term itself, while initially used by the Roman Catholic Church to refer to “the dissemination of its doctrine,”³⁷ has come to include any technique used to influence mass public opinion. This work will reserve the term ‘propaganda’ for the “spreading of subversive, debatable” attitudes.³⁸ The word ‘propaganda’ may today conjure images of men wearing dark suits, locked in the smoke-filled room of a government building, conspiring to control the minds of citizens. In fact, the term received a negative connotation only after Joseph Goebbels used his position as the Nazi Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda in March of 1933.³⁹ But today “propaganda does not often come marching towards us waving swastikas and chanting ‘Sieg Heil’; its real power lies in its capacity to conceal itself, to appear natural, to coalesce completely and indivisibly with the values and accepted power symbols of a given society.”⁴⁰

In order to better identify and understand propaganda, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman have outlined a ‘propaganda model.’ In their model are identified “essential ingredients” which fall under five headings. According to Chomsky and Herman, the following are indicators of propaganda:

1. the size, concentration of ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
2. advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
3. the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and experts funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
4. flack as a means of disciplining the media; and;
5. anti-communism as a national religion and control mechanism.⁴¹

Chomsky and Herman argue that where large sections of the media are owned by wealthy individuals for the purpose of making money, and where advertising is the

principle source of that money, propaganda is more apt to occur than in smaller, 'people-centred,' not-for-profit community papers. Additionally, where the media rely on government and big business as primary sources of information, propaganda seeps in. Finally, Chomsky and Herman discuss 'flack' and anti-communism. Flack is referred to as negative responses against the media as a result of a media statement or program. These actions may either be undertaken on a large scale or by individuals with substantial resources, including (among other things) letter-writing and phone-calling campaigns, petitions, threats, violence, lawsuits or other punitive action, and so on, the result of which is "both uncomfortable and costly to the media."⁴² Where flack and anti-communism are common in a society, propaganda tends to make its way on to the pages of newspapers.

As shall be seen in the pages of this work, SA under apartheid had a system of propaganda that followed Chomsky and Herman's model almost to the letter. Two companies—the Argus and the South African Associated Newspapers [SAAN] groups—"owned 90% of all English language daily newspapers and all of the Sunday newspapers."⁴³ Revenue was derived almost entirely from advertising, so much so that most newspapers could not survive even a short time without it. More and more during the apartheid years, laws were passed forcing the media to rely on the government as the sole source of information for many stories, in some cases criminalising the use of additional sources. Flack was used by the government and its supporters as a means of keeping the media 'responsible,' and anti-communism reached almost religious proportions, so much so that the term 'communist' was used "as a trigger-word for the releasing of hostile emotions amongst those politically inclined to the right."⁴⁴ Furthermore, the NP was successful in ensuring that any

newspaper “opposing apartheid [was] by definition a communist”⁴⁵ publication, and a possible threat to the nation.

1.2 CLASSIFICATION OF MEDIA SYSTEMS

It is now necessary to outline different classifications of media systems, and choose one as a framework for discussion. While there are dozens of classifications of media systems, only four will be examined in the following pages. Schramm’s bipolar theory was selected as it was one of the first attempts to classify media systems. Siebert-Peterson-Schramm’s four theories are included because they were widely accepted for a significant period of time. Ziegler and Asante’s three divisions are examined because of their attempt to introduce a culturally neutral model more appropriate for studying the African situation. Last, Lowenstein’s two-tiered model is included as its flexible quality allows a more complete examination of the media situation in SA.

1.2.1 SCHRAMM’S BIPOLAR THEORY

One of the earliest theorists on media systems, Wilbur Schramm, asserted in the 1950s that media systems (like the political scenery of the day) were bipolar: there was a US and a Soviet view of the press. Schramm stated that it is the view of the US model that “people must and should hold different ideas and values,”—a belief which he claimed permeated the US media, which in turn “encourage the arts of compromise and majority rule.”⁴⁶ Conversely, wrote Schramm, Soviets were apt to believe “that compromise is a sign of weakness, that there is one right position to be found in Marxist interpretation and to be depended, propagated and enforced.”⁴⁷

While such a rigid, bipolar model may have been appropriate in cold war days, it is no longer the dominant school of thought in a post-cold war world. Schramm must have realised this fact long before the fall of the Soviet Empire, as he collaborated with Fred Siebert and Theodore Peterson to produce a more widely accepted media typology.

1.2.2 SIEBERT-PETERSON-SCHRAMM'S FOUR THEORIES

Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm developed “four theories of the press”⁴⁸ which include authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist approaches to the role of the media. The authoritarian theory holds that “the state has the determining power in society, and mass communication must support the government in power for the purpose of national advancement.”⁴⁹ As the individual is dependent on the state, the media must be channelled in a way that is a positive force in society.

The libertarian theory allows that “humans are rational beings with inherent natural rights. A free press functioning in a competitive market as called for in the ideal *laissez-faire* will therefore result in pluralism and a ‘marketplace of ideas.’”⁵⁰ The government should not need to control the media, according to the libertarian theory, because Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ will ensure a self-righting process⁵¹—there will naturally be opposing viewpoints, different levels of quality, and so on.

The social responsibility theory is, according to the authors, a type of evolution of libertarianism. It holds that “the press—which enjoys a privileged position—has an obligation to carry out certain essential functions of mass communication [...] such as

the 'people's right to know.'"⁵² In this theory, those who work in the media are public servants of sorts, and must be committed first and foremost to the liberal media principles of impartiality, objectivity, fairness, the search for 'truth,' etc.⁵³

The final theory—Soviet communist—necessarily holds in high esteem the principle of unity. The media in this model is "an instrument of the Communist party, to be used for propaganda and agitation."⁵⁴ To this end, strict controls must be imposed on the media, who may otherwise not choose to toe the communist party line.

A weakness of the above four theories—as outlined by the authors themselves—is that the descriptions of each are "not fully comparable."⁵⁵ The libertarian press system is discussed at a theoretical level: the Soviet communist system is more a description of the actual performance of Soviet-bloc nations and their relationship with the media. Such is not a weakness, though, that completely discounts the value of these models in examining the news media world-wide.

However, these four theories of the press are perhaps not the most appropriate for an examination of the media in Africa. According to Dhyana Ziegler and Molefi Asante, such "Eurocentric formulations" must be put aside while discussing the African situation, as:

[...] they grossly skew the nature of media institutions to the European example. For instance, no African nation is conceivably within the social responsibility model which is considered the "best" example of a responsible media. However, from an African viewpoint, the media in a few nations would deny their social responsibility.⁵⁶

1.2.3 ZIEGLER AND ASANTE'S THREE DIVISIONS

Ziegler and Asante thus proposed a new grouping of media systems by which the African media in particular can be classified. Their system contains three divisions, specifically designed to counter the European bias inherent in previous models. In this recent typology, Ziegler and Asante “prefer to believe that media are either (1) unrestrained, (2) restrained or (3) directed.”⁵⁷

An unrestrained media is one in which journalists “operate according to their own values, norms and objectives.”⁵⁸ One presumes that an unrestrained media would take on at least one characteristic of a profession, that being a self-governing, self-regulating media body that oversees the group as a whole. A restrained media is not one that is restrained by choice, but one in which news agencies are controlled by the state. In such a system, the media’s “philosophy, functions, operations and content are under the immediate oversight of the government.”⁵⁹ Under a directed media, a government’s national developmental objectives influence the press—in effect, “the philosophy of the media is guided by the government’s developmental policies.”⁶⁰ Ziegler and Asante contend that most nations in Africa have a directed media. When examining the third world, this tripartite classification is more appropriate than either the ‘American-Soviet’ or the ‘four theories’ models.

Ziegler and Asante’s model may be more suitable than Schramm’s bipolar theory and Siebert-Peterson-Schramm’s four theories, but is not ideal for studying the media in SA. For instance, the media in SA could be hypercritical of the NP in one instance, and almost silent in another similar situation. With such a degree of variability, it is difficult to justify the use of only three modes—unrestrained, restrained, or directed.⁶¹

1.2.4 LOWENSTEIN'S TWO-TIER MODEL

Ralph Lowenstein proposed a more appropriate model with which to examine the media in African, including the sometimes enigmatic SA. His approach is two-tiered, the first level based upon media ownership, the next on press philosophy.⁶²

Lowenstein's first tier attempts to classify the dominant media ownership in a nation, using private, multiparty, and government as categories. 'Private' infers that individuals or non-governmental corporations own the media, and that revenues are generated by means of advertising, subscriptions, and so on. 'Multiparty' means that competitive political parties may own the media outright, either through party funds or party member funds. 'Government' in this model states that the media is owned by the government or (in the case of a one-party dominant state) the party in power. Here the media is subsidised using public funds or government-collected licensing fees.⁶³

Lowenstein then classifies media systems based upon the press philosophies found in those categories above. The second tier of classification includes authoritarian, social-centralist, libertarian, and social-libertarian. 'Authoritarian' means that negative government controls are imposed to stifle media criticism and maintain the ruling elite. 'Social-centralist' implies that positive government controls are implemented in order to "harness the press for national economic and philosophical goals."⁶⁴ 'Libertarian' is an absence of government controls, leaving the media in a "free market place of ideas" where the system will regulate itself.⁶⁵ Finally, 'social-libertarian' is one in which all viewpoints are heard. It allows for minimal government control to "unclog channels of communication and assure operational spirit of libertarian philosophy."⁶⁶

The two-tiered model is different from the others in that it separates the element of ownership from the actual philosophy of the media. It is therefore possible using Lowenstein's model "that different media in the country will reflect different ownerships and philosophies."⁶⁷ It allows for a more flexible and descriptive examination of the media, is more suitable than the other models for studying the South African situation, and shall be used as a base for this work.

1.3 SUMMARY

The media is a form of communication used to educate and inform citizens, a role vital in the democratic process. Newspapers are important players in the political world for a number of reasons, primarily because of their ability to transmit information about politics to the public in a way that would be otherwise impossible. Newspapers are also important in one-party dominant systems such as SA for their role as opposition to government. Because of the encompassing nature of the media, it cannot be slotted into any one category of political studies; rather, the media cuts a horizontal swath across the vertical fields of which the science is comprised.

Newspapers have very real power: because political actors (politicians and so on) recognise that vast power, in many instances they attempt to control it. Two methods used to control the media are censorship and propaganda. It may be difficult to distinguish propaganda in areas where "the media actively compete, periodically attack and expose corporate and government malfeasance, and aggressively portray themselves as spokesmen for free speech and the general community interest,"⁶⁸ but

Chomsky and Herman's Propaganda Model can be of assistance when examining a nation such as SA. The fact that means are used to control newspapers does not negate the importance of the media, for "whether a nation's news is censored and disseminated only with official sanction or is [... free], the media are still as essential to government and the act of governing as a third leg is essential to a stool."⁶⁹

There are many classifications of media systems, most of them with a first-world bias. While each typology seems to build upon the knowledge of others, improving as new ideas are brought forth, Lowenstein's two-tier model is currently the most appropriate model with which to study the South African situation. Lowenstein's classification shall be referred to throughout this work.

1.4 NOTES

¹ Note that 'black,' 'white,' etc., are not capitalised; 'Afrikaans,' 'Xhosa,' etc., are. Such is accepted practice in North American English. No offence is intended in the use of these words.

² David Mauk and John Oakland, American Civilization: An Introduction, p. 316.

³ Susan Hornig Priest, Doing Media Research, P. 214.

⁴ Arthur Seigel, Politics and the Media in Canada, p. 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁹ David H. Weaver *et al.*, Media Agenda-Setting in a Presidential Election, p. 45.

¹⁰ Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media, p. 22.

¹¹ Harry H. Crosby and George R. Bond, The McLuhan Explosion, p. 7

¹² McLuhan, p. 23.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Crosby and Bond, p. 43.

¹⁵ McLuhan, p. 26. See also Neil Postman's Amusing Ourselves to Death.

¹⁶ Patrick Nagle, 'Government effectively puts the lid on South African discontent,' in Getting the Real Story, Sperling and McKenzie, eds., p. 91.

¹⁷ Leonard W. Doob, Communication in Africa, p. 60.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Graeme Burton, More Than Meets The Eye, p. 30.

²¹ Slavko Splichal and Janet Wasko, Communication and Democracy, p. 5.

²² Edwin R. Black, Politics and the News, p. 9.

²³ Warren K. Agee, ed. The Press and the Public Interest, p. 175.

- ²⁴ 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights,' Digital Freedom Network, <http://www.dfn.org/index-ne.html>.
- ²⁵ Cited in Lauri Hannikainen and Kristan Myntti, 'Article 19', p. 274.
- ²⁶ Elaine Potter, The Press as Opposition, p. 26.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 27.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Gail Blasser Riley, Censorship, p. 7.
- ³¹ Ibid., p. 3.
- ³² Sue Curry Jansen, Censorship: The Knot that Binds Power and Knowledge, p. 14.
- ³³ Riley, p. 4.
- ³⁴ Eric Barendt, Freedom of Speech, p. 115. Some in the media form a 'why bother' attitude, knowing their work will be censored anyway. This may, in fact, be the most effective form of censorship.
- ³⁵ For instance, many democracies have laws that limit ideas or images encouraging rape.
- ³⁶ Daniel C. Hallin, 'The Media and War', in John Corner, Philip Schlesinger, and Roger Silverstone, eds. International Media Research: A Critical Survey, p. 208.
- ³⁷ Harold D. Lasswell, 'Propaganda', in Propaganda, Robert Jackall, ed, p. 13.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 13.
- ³⁹ Z. A. B. Zeman, 'The State and Propaganda', in Propaganda, Robert Jackall, ed, p. 176.
- ⁴⁰ Richard Peck, A Morbid Fascination, p. 17.
- ⁴¹ Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, A Propaganda Model. In some points Chomsky and Herman reveal a political bias. Not many would attempt to portray Stalin's USSR as a defender of press freedom, but theirs was not an 'anti-Communist religion.'
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Loraine Gordon, ed. Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979, p. 168.
- ⁴⁴ John C. Laurence, Race, Propaganda and South Africa, p. 172.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 176.
- ⁴⁶ Cited in Dhyana Ziegler and Molefi K. Asante, Thunder and Silence, p. 103.
- ⁴⁷ Cited in Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Cited in Gunilla L. Faringer, Press Freedom in Africa, p. 86.
- ⁴⁹ Cited in Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Cited in Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Ibid. Faringer is referring to the theory that free competition improves quality and supply of product (in the case the media, "an increased number of voices and a pluralism of opinions.") Faringer notes that reality is different, allowing conglomerates to swallow smaller companies.
- ⁵² Cited in Ibid., p. 86-87.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 87.
- ⁵⁴ Cited in Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Cited in Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Ziegler and Asante, p. 104.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 103.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 43.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 43.
- ⁶¹ Annette Seegers, private e-mail to Glen Freeman, p. 3.
- ⁶² Dennis L. Wilcox, Mass Media in Black Africa, p. 104.
- ⁶³ Ibid., p. 105.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 106.
- ⁶⁸ Chomsky and Herman, A Propaganda Model.
- ⁶⁹ Walter Cronkite, 'Disturbing the Politicians' Peace', p. ix.

2. THE PRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

SA is an interesting case for many reasons. Not only is it an African nation which was settled by two vastly different European cultures, but the indigenous population was denied democratic rights until long after the initial wave of African independence ended. The history of the press in SA is different than that of other African nations, as are the methods used and the extent to which the government attempted to control the press in more recent years. This chapter shall probe these issues in the following manner: first, the history of the press in SA will be examined. Next, the press during the NP years shall be studied.

2.1 HISTORY OF THE PRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The media in SA has a somewhat dual history. English newspapers and their interaction with the British colonial powers dominate the earliest history of the press. But the Afrikaans-language press soon thereafter enters the scene, and plays a vital role. A third player, the black African press, does not play as great a role in the history of SA's media, nevertheless, understanding the reasons behind this fact is important.

In this section, the history of the English, Afrikaans, and black newspapers will be discussed as separate units, from their inception until the watershed year of 1948. This will be done in order to highlight the origins of each media group, examine some of the struggles they faced, and the actions they took with regards to the government. This will enable us to better understand the way those different media factions functioned later during apartheid, and may give an insight into their future role in SA.

2.1.1 HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PRESS

The purpose of this section is four-fold. Here it will show that: first, while they were concerned with politics, the original (and most successful) newspapers in SA were commercial interests; second, from the beginning there was government opposition to a free press, although the press resisted government controls; third, there was a move away from independent papers toward managed news corporations, and finally; there was a subsequent move away from the media opposing government controls, toward co-operating with the government in an attempt to avoid conflict.

Among the earliest newspapers on the African continent was the government sponsored *Cape Town Gazette*. First published in 1820 with the intent of disseminating information supplied by the colonial Commonwealth, the *Gazette* remained unopposed for more than three years. Then, early in 1824¹, British-born printer George Greig solicited the help of 1820 Cape settler and poet Thomas Pringle. Pringle agreed to assist in establishing SA's first commercial newspaper—the *South African Commercial Advertiser*—with the support of James Fairbairn, who was brought to Cape Town from the UK specifically for that purpose. It was Greig's wish in establishing the *Commercial Adviser* "to supply news of trade and commerce, to act as an advertising medium and to publish literary material."² Greig's interests were of a financial nature: his primary goal was to run a successful business venture.

Even before the *Commercial Advisor* was first published it faced government opposition, in the form of Cape Governor Lord Charles Somerset. Greig submitted a

proposal for his venture to Somerset, who rejected it outright. Then, in a defiant move which would set the tone for media and government relations for at least the next half-decade, Greig went ahead and published the *Commercial Advisor* against the dictates of Somerset. Greig discovered a loophole in the existing law requiring publishers to secure prior government consent—it applied to periodicals, not newspapers.³ Greig took advantage of the legal oversight and printing of the *Commercial Advisor* began immediately, a move certain to annoy Somerset. As a result of this early conflict with government (and with the prodding of Pringle and Fairbairn), Greig altered the charter of his newspaper. Greig now asserted that his stance was to “vigorously support the liberty of the Press [...]”⁴ while still maintaining a profitable enterprise.

At the earliest possible opportunity, Somerset made an attempt to censor the *Commercial Advisor*. Somerset was furious that the paper was planning to publish the court proceedings of a libel case brought by the Governor himself against individuals accusing him of running a corrupt administration. The *Commercial Advisor* ceased publication “until the position of censorship had been clarified” while at the same time Greig “defiantly affirmed his refusal to publish a newspaper under the conditions of pre-publication censorship.”⁵ Instead of an immediate victory as the result of capitulation on the part of Somerset, Greig was deported from the colony and the *Commercial Advisor* was closed—but not defeated. Upon returning to the UK, Greig lobbied the Colonial Secretary and was soon thereafter granted special permission to return to Cape Town and resume publication of his now-famous paper.

In 1827, Somerset made another attempt to stifle the *Commercial Advisor*, this time the result of an article quoting a *London Times* story critical of a Cape Town colony

official. The paper was again banned. This time, however, several influential public figures emerged in a show of support for both the *Commercial Advisor* in specific and press freedom in general. Funds were raised, and Fairbairn was sent to London to “plead the Presses’ case.”⁶ In October of 1828 Fairbairn returned to Cape Town with permission to resume publication of the *Commercial Advisor*, as well as something more significant: he received a promise from the Colonial Secretary that a SA press ordinance—based on British law—would be introduced,⁷ thereby ending the actions of government agents like Somerset bent on controlling the media for personal reasons.

The Colonial Secretary followed through with his promise and the Ordinance of April 1829⁸ was enacted, legally assuring press freedom and newspaper rights. According to the Ordinance, “publishers were to deposit £300 plus £300 in guarantees with the government and they were then free to publish, subject only to defamation laws.”⁹ This was a landmark event in the press history of SA, putting the rights of citizens to receive information ahead of the rights of the government to suppress news which may be embarrassing or ‘undesirable.’ So important was this Ordinance—obtained as a result of indefatigable lobbying on the part of Greig, Fairbairn, and Pringle—that it has been referred to as “the Magna Carta of the Press in South Africa.”¹⁰ Thus it was that the local government attempted to place authoritarian restraints on the first privately-owned press in SA, but through the efforts of diligent newspapermen, the media was granted the opportunity of thriving in an libertarian system.

As shall be discussed later, several Afrikaans newspapers began circulation after this period. One result of this growth in competition among newspapers¹¹ was increasing animosity between English and Afrikaans-speaking people. One British administrator

is quoted as saying “the Boers who, being extremely ignorant” have supported a Pretoria newspaper “that has uniformly devoted itself to creating disaffection and ill-feeling towards everything English.”¹² In 1857, one man began a newspaper which he claimed would counter existing hostilities. In that year, Cape Government printer and MP Saul Solomon agreed to print the *Cape Argus* with MP Bryan Darnell. Darnell’s objective for the paper (aside from the financial) was initially “to secure free expression for the opinions of all, with view to reconcile rather than to stir up party differences.”¹³ Darnell, seeing the paper was not as profitable as he had hoped, chose to get out of the media business, and sold his stake in the *Argus* to Solomon in 1863.

The *Cape Argus* grew large that in 1866 a public company—the Argus Printing and Publishing Company—was formed to oversee publication and expansion of Solomon’s newspaper, marking the beginning of “the end of independent editor-owners and the beginning of managerial newspapers”¹⁴ in SA. Solomon, a ‘negrophilist’ who supported a responsible government as opposed to strict colonial rule,¹⁵ retained controlling shares of the *Cape Argus* and the Argus Company. The *Argus* gained in circulation and soon had both financial and political success. In 1872, nine years after Solomon took the paper’s helm, “full self-government was conferred upon the colony and for this the *Cape Argus* [...] was] in some measure responsible.”¹⁶

But the unchallenged success of the *Argus* was short-lived, as in 1876 the *Cape Times* came off the press. The *Times* challenged the *Argus* on a number of fronts, including pricing (the *Times* was one-third of the price) and in politics (the *Times* preferred a conservative approach to Imperial politics, while remaining “progressive in South African matters”¹⁷). To counter this challenge, Solomon appointed Francis Dormer—

who almost immediately changed the paper's political course—to be the *Argus*' editor in 1877. Solomon's once 'pro-native' *Argus* took a less tolerant line against blacks with Dormer at the helm, and the paper increasingly supported UK Government policy as it pertained to the colony. While for several years the *Argus* was successful both financially and politically, Solomon was having financial difficulties in other ventures, and was forced to sell his paper.

Dormer was willing to take control of the acclaimed *Argus*, but lacked sufficient funds to acquire the paper alone. He turned to business giant Cecil Rhodes, who injected capital and allowed Dormer to buy the *Argus* in 1881. This infusion of money by Rhodes and other mining magnates continued, and "by 1895 gold and other mining interests were conspicuously over-represented in the Argus Group's shareholding."¹⁸ These mining interests not only brought a necessary infusion of money, but also instilled in the newspaper group a sense of sound business and management practices. Thus it is that the "English-language papers' long marriage of convenience with mining financial interests"¹⁹ began—a fact which bears a great deal of significance when examining SA's media in later years.

The English media was not exclusively business-centred, though. As discussed earlier, the very nature of newspapers is political, and therefore governments at various times attempt to control what (or even if) a newspaper publishes. Such was the case with the contentious interaction between Lord Somerset and the *South African Commercial Advisor* in the early nineteenth century, and such was the case again in the last decade of the same century—this time between Transvaal President Paul Kruger and a Johannesburg paper, *The Star*. Kruger and the Volksraad passed law No. 26 of 1896

to protect the government against attacks by the local newspapers. The law not only made it mandatory for the names of printers and publishers to be disclosed, but also

[...] gave the President [of the Transvaal Government], acting with the advise and consent of the Executive Council, power to prohibit, wholly or temporarily, the circulation of printed matter, the contents of which, in his opinion, might be in conflict with good morals or dangerous to the order and peace of the Republic.²⁰

The Star had recently been added to the Argus stable, and at the time was being edited by R. J. Pakeman. Pakeman, incensed by the government attempt to censor the news “sharpened his criticism”²¹ instead of toning his rhetoric down. On 24 March 1897, Kruger signed a warrant ordering *The Star* closed for a period of three months “on the grounds that the contents of the said newspaper [were in Kruger’s] judgement dangerous to the peace and quiet of the Republic.”²² Fully expecting to be shut down—and well prepared for the occurrence—*The Star* reported the events of the day in its own evening edition. The following day a new paper hit the stands; *The Comet* was printed at the same press by the same staff, with the identical look and feel of *The Star*, which immediately had a greater circulation than its predecessor commanded.²³

Not placated with the success of the new *Comet*, Pakeman and *The Star* (with the assistance of Argus Company lawyers) filed grievances in the courts, citing two points: first, Kruger’s Law 26 contradicted Article 19 of the Grondwet of the State, which guaranteed press freedom; second, that even if Law 26 were valid, it “gave power only to suppress what had already been printed, but not what was yet to be printed.”²⁴ The judge hearing the case refused to accept the first argument but sided with the Argus Company on the second. Although *The Star* renewed printing the day after their victory in court—its owners elated that they were able to defeat the government in a

court of law—it must have been somewhat disheartening for those working at the paper (and all those with an interest in freedom of the press in SA, for that matter) that *The Star* was allowed to resume publication not because of an inalienable right to publish, but merely because the application of the law crafted by Kruger was faulty.

Over the next few years, several noteworthy events took place in the development of the English press. In 1902 the *Rand Daily Mail* was founded by popular British novelist Edgar Wallace. The *Sunday Times* began publication in 1906, using the *Rand Daily Mail*'s printing facilities instead of purchasing their own press. The *Sunday Times* had fantastic financial success—returning a profit of 7,000 percent to stockholders in the early years of investment²⁵—benefiting both the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail*. Eventually, the *Cape Times*, *Rand Daily Mail*, *Natal Mercury*, and the *Sunday Times* joined forces in establishing the South African Associated Newspapers (SAAN), in opposition to the powerful Argus Company.²⁶ Soon, virtually all of the major English language papers had aligned with one or the other media groups, moving away from independent news toward aligned, managed news corporations.

Perhaps most significant for limiting the freedom of the pre-apartheid press was not the work of businessmen or government officials, rather actions taken by newspaper representatives themselves. In the late 1930s, the English-language newspapers and their criticism of Adolph Hitler and his National Socialist Party outraged General Hertzog. Through the External Affairs department, Hertzog laid the groundwork for a Bill which would make it illegal to criticise foreign heads-of-state. Hertzog's Press Control Bill (were it passed) would be so encompassing as to make it "impossible for

SA newspapers to have published a speech by Franklin Roosevelt denouncing the European dictators.”²⁷

In an unprecedented move, a conference of English newspapers was convened in July 1939, including representatives from both the Argus Company and the SAAN. In an attempt to prevent Hertzog from imposing an omnibus censorship law upon the nation’s newspapers, the representatives “approved a code of discipline to be self-imposed upon them all, to discourage practices considered to be ‘contrary to good morals or the public interest.’”²⁸ The fact that World War II soon broke out, Hertzog resigned, and his Press Control Bill never saw the light of day could not change the fact that SA’s English media had blinked. Instead of fighting the government (as had regularly and successfully been done in the past), the media co-operated to avoid a battle. What might be misinterpreted by some as an effort to form a social-libertarian media was in fact a blatant form of self-censorship; the goal was not to secure press freedom, but instead to avoid costly confrontation and continued ill-feelings with the government. The English-language media had now united and taken a stance of passive self-survival—an ominous step for a nation whose people were about to enter several decades of apartheid rule.

2.1.2 HISTORY OF THE AFRIKAANS PRESS

In this section three points shall be made clear: first, the Afrikaans media was started for political and social reasons, as opposed to financial, and; second, that those reasons included developing the Afrikaans language, overcoming fissures that may drive Afrikaans speakers of different social classes apart, by building upon Afrikaner

nationalism, promoting Afrikaans politicians, and so on. Third, while they may have shared grand political goals, Afrikaans papers were not monolithic in nature.

The roots of the Afrikaans press are intertwined with the history of the Dutch press in SA—the languages are similar, as were many of the goals of both the Dutch and the Afrikaans media. Unlike the English-language media (whose roots were planted in business), the Afrikaans press was primarily ideological, intended from the beginning “to give expression to the growing political aspirations of the Afrikaners.”²⁹ As was mentioned earlier, the Ordinance of 1829 fostered a climate in which a large number of newspapers began publication. Many of those newspapers were printed in English and Dutch, while a few were printed in Dutch only. One such exclusively Dutch paper was *De Zuid Afrikaan*. *De Zuid Afrikaan* was started in 1830 by P. A. Brand, a farmer whose specific purpose in starting a newspaper was to compete with the popular *Commercial Adviser*. However, Brand was not interested in competing financially, only in competing politically. Fairbairn, the *Commercial Adviser*’s editor, was concerned with two political issues: first, freedom of the press, and second, race relations, especially the “brutality of the Boers toward the slaves. [...] Brand, a Dutchman of slave-owning stock, started *De Zuid Afrikaan* with the purpose of opposing the *South African Commercial Adviser* on [...] these issues.”³⁰ In the pages of *De Zuid Afrikaan*, Brand downplayed the significance of a free press and attacked British missionaries for their attempts at educating and ‘civilising’ black Africans.

In the 1840s, Cape community leader J. H. Hofmeyr began two Dutch-language newspapers, *Het* (later *Die*) *Volksblad* and *Volksvriend*. Like *De Zuid Afrikaan*, Hofmeyr’s papers stressed the importance of maintaining distinct racial identities.

Where *Het Volksblad* and *Volksvriend* were different from *De Zuid Afrikaan* was in their view of white South Africans. Brand and his *De Zuid Afrikaan* were suspicious of the English, while Hofmeyr stressed the need for South Africans of European descent to co-operate for the good of the nation.³¹ But these differences were not so great that they could not be overcome, and in the 1870s *De Zuid Afrikaan* and *Volksvriend* merged with a pro-Afrikaner agenda, ensuring the survival of the Dutch press and becoming “more closely drawn into the struggle for ‘taal’ and ‘Volk.’”³²

Something else happened in the 1870s which was key in the history of the Afrikaans press: “The first paper printed in Afrikaans, as distinct from Dutch [...]”³³ was launched mid-decade. In the mid-nineteenth century, English had become the official language of the SA Parliament, to the dismay of the Dutch speaking Boers. Their concerns and linguistic aspirations had found a home in the merger of *De Zuid Afrikaan* and *Volksvriend*, but only partly. Hofmeyr and Brand (and their newspaper) “supported the continuation of High Dutch as a literary language,”³⁴—keeping Afrikaans in the kitchen—while the Boers supported the promulgation of this truly South African language. For this cause the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (the ‘Society of True Afrikaners’) was formed in 1875. In 1876 the society began a newspaper of their own, *Di Patriot*, the first ever Afrikaans-language media publication. “Thus *Di Patriot* set out not only to perpetuate Afrikaans as a spoken language and to represent the interests of the group, but to create a literature and a written form for the spoken language of the Boers, Afrikaans.”³⁵

From the beginning, the Afrikaans press had a primary agenda of promoting Afrikaner nationalism. This was undoubtedly in an attempt to see Afrikaans survive and flourish

as both a language and as a culture. Although, Johan Muller asserts that there was a very real fear at the turn of the nineteenth century that lower-classed Afrikaners would unite with the black working class, necessarily effecting not only the Afrikaans language and culture, but destroying the power base enjoyed by that group's elite. Muller points out that in 1900, only 10 percent of all Afrikaners lived in cities or towns, the vast majority living a rural life. By 1926, that number had changed drastically, with 46 percent of the Afrikaner community residing in cities. Giliomee and Schlemmer explain that by "1939 some 300 000 whites were considered to be living in 'terrible poverty.' The great majority were Afrikaners."³⁶ Adds Muller:

[...] the greatest threat was the possibility of proletarianised, unemployed whites seeking common cause with proletarianised blacks in a militant non-racial workers' movement. Economic mobilisation through the channel of an ethnic nationalism was the resultant strategy. Newspapers were needed to voice this strategy, and every important Afrikaner newspaper was founded in this period for this purpose.³⁷

While Afrikaans newspapers may have been instrumental in uniting Afrikaners of different classes under one 'ethnic nationalist' umbrella, they were not monolithic. In fact, Muller points out three distinct periods in the "messy and confusing history of Afrikanerdom"³⁸ at which time competing Afrikaner political groups affected Afrikaans newspapers, and vice versa. These periods include the years surrounding 1915, those around 1934, and 1939 until the election of the Nationalist government.

In 1910, the Transvaal, Orange Free State, Cape and Natal regions formed the Union of SA, an entity semi-independent from the UK. Prior to the first period identified by Muller, Afrikaner politics became somewhat more fractious than before. In 1912, Hertzog had a falling-out with Louis Botha, splitting Afrikaner opinion. Later, Afrikaners with a hard-line nationalist agenda split with Jan Smuts after his decision to

join forces with the UK in the Great War of 1914³⁹—these factors (*inter alia*) lead to the formation of the NP in 1914. While this political manoeuvring was taking place, newspapers increasingly acted as mouthpieces for various Afrikaans parties.

Die Volksblad was one such Afrikaner newspaper, founded in 1915 in Bloemfontein. Likewise, *Ons* (later *Die*) *Vaderland* was first published in Pretoria that same year, with Hertzog and his supporters holding the majority of the company's shares. Perhaps more significant, though, was an upstart paper which appeared out of Cape Town named *De* (later *Die*) *Burger*.⁴⁰ *Die Burger* was only made possible through the generous infusion of capital by several wealthy Afrikaans wine farmers, arranged by advocate Willie Hofmeyr. De Nasionale Pers Beperk (or Naspers)—the newspapers parent company—was registered in May of 1915, and *Die Burger* began publication soon thereafter. Dr. D. F. Malan, a Dutch Reformed Church minister with political aspirations, was drafted by the team to act as the paper's maiden editor. A few short months later the first Cape NP Congress was convened under the direction of General Hertzog, during which time Malan was named as the party's first Cape franchise leader.⁴¹ Malan stepped aside as *Die Burger*'s editor, but retained the right to remain one of the paper's primary contributors, setting the tone for its editorial content.⁴² *Die Burger*'s editorial content was far more loyal to Hertzog and his ideas than to the opposing views of either Botha or Smuts, although it claimed the right to "criticise the government or an individual minister if it thought this necessary."⁴³

The period surrounding 1934 saw more political wrangling, again reflected in the Afrikaans newspapers. Hertzog's NP and Smuts' South African Party had somehow overcome their differences to eventually form a powerful United Party (UP), until

“Malan led his ‘gesuiwerde’ or purified nationalists—(G)NP—out of the pact.”⁴⁴ *Die Burger* and *Die Volksblad* sided with Malan and his (G)NP. The large Transvaal daily newspaper *Die Vaderland* rallied behind Hertzog and his UP, and therefore “the nationalists were left without a press ‘voice’ in the Transvaal.”⁴⁵ Willie Hofmeyr—a Malan supporter—managed to secure financial backing for a publishing company called Voortrekkerpers. In 1937 *Die Transvaler* began publication, with social psychologist and Stellenbosch University professor Henrik Verwoerd as the paper’s Cape editor.⁴⁶ Verwoerd ignored his financial supporters (calling for the deportation of Jewish people, among other things⁴⁷), but found an enthusiastic following among the large, poorly paid Afrikaner working class. The nationalists ‘voice’ in the Transvaal was heard loud and clear, to the dismay of Hertzog and the UP.

As mentioned in the section on the history of the English press, General Hertzog was no champion of the media. His contempt was not reserved solely for those newspapers printing in the English-language medium, though. In 1937 Hertzog came uncomfortably close to restricting the rights of the Afrikaans press, years before considering attacks on the freedom of English newspapers. Hertzog was “so maddened by criticism of himself and his UP by his erstwhile Nationalist colleagues”⁴⁸ that he announced that he was seriously considering censoring the newspapers. In doing so, Hertzog told an Orange Free State UP Congress that the goal of the proposed law would be “to stop lies and distortions.”⁴⁹ Upon considering the opinions of his advisors, however, Hertzog reconsidered and the entire scheme was dismissed.⁵⁰

The third period—from 1939 until the NP assent to power—was again marked with political wrangling, but during this time the Afrikaans press largely “kept a low

profile, supporting its local leaders and parties and only occasionally getting into interprovincial battles.”⁵¹ The period saw Hertzog and Smuts split again. Smuts chose to take SA to war against Germany and fight with the British. Hertzog was opposed to supporting the UK in their efforts. Leaving the UP, Hertzog and his followers joined forces with Malan, creating the Herenigde Nasionale Party (HNP).

At some time during this period, the elite among the northern and southern Afrikaners realised that despite their mutual distrust, “only a national [...] mobilisation would enable them to stabilise their own position.”⁵² The Reddingsdaad Bond (RDB) therefore attempted to undertake two tasks: first, to “inculcate a notion of ‘common interest’ in the ‘volk,’” and second, to “patch up the proliferating differences in Afrikaner politics.”⁵³ The RDB lobbied the media, funded papers that supported their agenda, and were ultimately successful. Larger, influential papers were convinced that SA would be better off with Afrikaners at the helm, and they began supporting a Nationalist force. This promotion by the newspapers was crucial for the Nationalists; so important that some analysts assert that the NP “would never have gained power in 1948 if it had not been for the close and continued support of the Afrikaans papers.”⁵⁴

2.1.3 HISTORY OF THE BLACK PRESS

This section shall show that the so-called ‘black’ media in SA was (except for a brief period) never truly indigenous. While there were some successes for blacks in the field of media, attempts by blacks to either own or effectively use the media for political purposes were met with firm resistance. Most successful ‘black’ newspapers were in fact white owned, white controlled business ventures with little interest in the

political aspirations of blacks. Missionaries and other white-dominated interests (termed 'outsiders' by Doob⁵⁵) dominated the black media, while 'insiders'—"people from the same group as the audience"⁵⁶—were more effective communicators.

SA's blacks got a press voice only after both English and Afrikaans newspapers had already been established. The history of the black media in SA dates back to as early as the mid-1830s, when (as was common in Africa) European missionaries began writing for the indigenous population. The Wesleyan Mission Society of Grahamstown is credited as printing the first serial publication aimed at an indigenous African population, entitled *Umshumayaeli Wendaba*.⁵⁷ Exclusively in Xhosa, this work lasted until 1841, after which time there was a considerable gap before the next black newspaper began publication. In the late 1870s, the Lovedale Mission sponsored *Isigidimi SamaXosa* and printed it in both English and Xhosa.

Although begun by missionaries, *Isigidimi SamaXosa*'s claim to be an 'insider' press was justified in that John Tengu Jabavu (a black South African) edited it. Outspoken and aggressive, Jabavu's tenure at the *Isigidimi SamaXosa* was short-lived—he was discharged shortly after he printed an article criticising members of the Cape Parliament.⁵⁸ Dismissal was only a setback, as in 1884 Jabavu began his own paper, *Imvo Zabantsundu* (or *Native Opinion*). *Imvo Zabantsundu* therefore became the first exclusively black newspaper in SA. Printed in both English and Xhosa, this 'insider' newspaper boldly espoused "African political and educational advance."⁵⁹

The 1880s to the 1920s are referred to as the 'Independent Period' of the black African press.⁶⁰ While it is true that the black press in SA was reasonably strong during this

period, it was never as successful as the English or the Afrikaans media. Widespread economic and political repression on the part of both colonial powers—the British and the Afrikaners—meant that although the African population was large in relation to whites, those blacks who could either afford to regularly purchase the news, or who could actually read the contents of a paper, were relatively few. By 1914, five major African newspapers had emerged to serve the black population. They were: *Izwi la Bantu*, begun by an African National Congress (ANC) founder, the Rev. Walter Rubusana; *Ikwezi le Afrika*, a Church of England sponsored paper; *Imvo* and *Ilanga Lase Natal*, both started by Methodist minister Dr. John Dube; and *Abuntu Batho*, an outspoken supporter of the ANC. By the 1960s however (during a time referred to as the ‘white-owned period’ of the black press, which shall be discussed later), all but two of these vernacular newspapers had perished—*Imvo* and *Ilanga Lase Natal* being the only pair to overcome the seemingly insurmountable odds.⁶¹

The black media, despite its relative lack of power and circulation, was responsible for some landmark events, among them the mass political actions sponsored by *Abuntu Batho*. Under *Abuntu Batho*’s initial editor, Dr. Pixley Isaka ka Seme, the ANC launched a political campaign “against the Lands Acts of 1913 depriving Africans of land rights outside the reserves and against the proposal to extend the pass system to women.”⁶² While the campaign itself was unsuccessful, it is significant that the ANC recognised the importance of newspapers as a political tool—so significant that *Abuntu Batho* was utilised as a key ingredient in the ANC’s earliest political campaign. Perhaps this is why the government *du jour* attempted to control what was being said in the newspapers—particularly those newspapers with an African audience.

In the Native Administration Act of 1927, the Governor General retained the power to prevent the flow of certain doctrines among the 'Native' population. In part, the Act declared that "Any person who utters any words or does any other act or thing whatever with intent to promote any feeling of hostility between Natives and Europeans shall be guilty of an offence [...]."⁶³ The Riotous Assemblies Amendment Act of 1930 went one step further, allowing the government to banish anyone without due process if they were suspected of circulating inflammatory or racially inciting material. The 1930 Act (in part) read:

Wherever the Governor General is of the *opinion* that the publication or other dissemination of any documentary information is calculated to engender feelings of hostility between the European inhabitants on the one hand and any other section of the inhabitants of the Union on the other hand, he may prohibit any publication or other dissemination thereof.⁶⁴

The forerunners of many oppressive apartheid laws, the Native Administration Act of 1927 and the Riotous Assemblies Amendment Act of 1930 served to increase hostilities among racial groups instead of easing them (as was the stated intent), and opened the door for widespread censorship well before the NP took power.

Abantu Batho succumbed and ceased publication in 1932, five years after the Native Administration Act became law, and just one year after a new venture—the Bantu Press Company—was launched. Started by two white South Africans in 1931, the Bantu Press was a non-profit company "established to increase the scope of non-White publications and to guide their political and commercial development."⁶⁵ Their first publication—*Bantu World*—was quite well received, and after changing the name of the paper to *The World* and publishing daily, it became SA's most widely read non-

white newspaper. However, for all intents of purpose, the Bantu Press Company (an 'outsider' organisation) failed miserably in its mandate.

The Bantu Press Company paved the way for what is called the 'white-owned period' of black African newspapers⁶⁶, making it increasingly attractive for white business ventures to enter the arena, and thereby making it more difficult for an 'insider' press to take root. Furthermore, from an historical perspective (and largely due to circumstances beyond their control), this was a watershed period when an 'insider' black press began to have little special relevance in SA.⁶⁷ While a number of Africans put forth valiant efforts in order to see an indigenous press take root, their hands were bound by two stronger, wealthier, better organised colonial powers who had little or no interest in seeing blacks succeed. However, while Africans may have thought it was difficult to run a free, indigenous press before 1948, things would only take a turn for the worse as the NP seized the reigns of power, altering existing statutes and instituting new laws which would make freedom of expression through the media far more difficult than had ever before been the case in SA.

2.1.4 SUMMARY

The earliest history of the press in SA is one of tension between private owners and government representatives. The English press arrived on the scene first, and was established for commercial purposes. This did not negate its political nature, though. The English media desired a purely libertarian system, and time and time again fought to counter government attempts at imposing authoritarian rules. The Argus Group (as opposed to the *Argus* newspaper) was established in late-1800s when mining magnates

such as Cecil Rhodes injected large amounts of capital into the company. Later, the SAAN organised, and independent English papers became the exception. In the 1930s—in an attempt to appease an angry Hertzog and avoid government regulations aimed at restricting the press—the large newspaper groups capitulated and chose self-regulation (in some ways becoming a social-centralist media) instead of lobbying for an libertarian system, as was their historical prescient.

The Afrikaans press was born of ideological and cultural necessity rather than the desire for financial gain. The Afrikaans media were primarily anti-British, linguistically anti-English (or at least pro-Afrikaans), supported Afrikaans nationalism and the separation of the races. It was as though their ownership was multi-party, under the Afrikaner umbrella. Different papers were controlled by those with different political ideals, and those papers were used as a means to both express those ideals and to garnish support. In the end, the Afrikaans press largely united to support the NP, which benefited tremendously from that support. The Afrikaans press seemed to be social-centralist—working for national economic and philosophical goals.

The relationship between Afrikaans media and the government was vastly different than was the relationship between the English press and the government. The English press played an adversarial role when dealing with the government, constantly struggling to thwart government attempts to limit civil liberties, especially those infringing free speech. Afrikaans newspapers were not 'anti-government,' rather they enthusiastically supported a particular Afrikaans political party. Nor did the Afrikaans press see themselves as champions of freedom, instead they viewed "restrictions on the

freedom of the individual [as] acceptable if necessary for the greater cause of constitutional freedom for the community and the interest of national security.”⁶⁸

Which is not to say that all Afrikaans newspapers passively accepted Hertzog’s proposed restrictions: they did not. However, “the freedom sought by the Nationalist editors was not the same as that which English editors regarded as their birthright.”⁶⁹

In addition, the Afrikaans press had a smaller circulation, were relatively poorly financed and had comparatively meagre coverage of world events than did their English counterparts. “But political partisanship rather than news was their mission and Afrikaner cabinet ministers [... were] well represented on the boards of directors of the Afrikaans papers.”⁷⁰ In this sense, the English newspapers were effective in pursuing their goal of financial success, while the Afrikaans media were likewise successful in their political pursuits.

The black press was neither as successful nor as strong as the English and Afrikaans press. As with the black media in other Africa nations, SA’s black press grew from the efforts of European missionaries. This was, in a sense, private ownership: however, it was commonly owned by outsiders, even if it was staffed by insiders. Financial support was limited, as were the rights of black editors and reporters. The black media recognised the political power of the media early on, and attempted to harness that power in a social-libertarian manner. However, they were restrained at every turn by the government, surviving only under an authoritarian media system. Finally, much of what came to be known as the ‘black press’ was in fact white owned, and functioned as a business rather than a political tool. As a result of this white

ownership, in many cases the black press represented white interests first, and served only to entertain members of the black community.

2.2 THE NATIONAL PARTY-ERA PRESS

Contrary to the “widespread assumption that by 1948 a grand apartheid blueprint existed which the [... NP] then systematically and progressively implemented,”⁷¹ apartheid and the laws imposed to facilitate its success were not a system, an ideology or a coherent blueprint. They were “rather a pragmatic and tortuous process aimed at consolidating the leadership of a nationalist movement in order to safeguard the self-determination of the Afrikaner.”⁷² The NP was undoubtedly pleased with the efforts of the Afrikaans papers, which were by in large “established to bring Nationalists to power, and once having achieved that, to keep them there.”⁷³ However, the same could not be said about their non-Afrikaans media counterparts.

Many English papers (which were more widely read by South Africans than the Afrikaans papers) did not take the NP victory lightly, and stepped up their attack on both their policies and their politicians. Likewise, papers that catered to black readers were understandably less than adoring of the NP platform. The NP therefore—over time—deemed it necessary to strengthen existing laws and impose new controls over what the media was allowed to print. Although laws imposing limitations on the media in SA were already in existence, the aggressive application of those laws combined with the introduction and passage of new censorship legislation was accelerated after the NP victory in 1948. This section shall examine the media during the NP years, beginning with the Press Commission in 1950. Focus shall then shift to

actual laws, designed by the NP to increasingly make it more difficult for the media to function, and thereby making it more difficult for South Africans to get an accurate picture of some of the events which were taking place in their country. Next, this work shall scrutinise the media's coverage of the death in detention of Black Consciousness Movement leader Steve Biko, after which an attempt will be made to explain Muldergate—the SA information scandal. The Steyn Commission will then be given a cursory examination, as shall the Alternative Press. Finally, the media under the mid- to late-1980s State of Emergency shall receive attention.

2.2.1 THE PRESS COMMISSION

The NP began to take matters into their own hands (parliamentarily speaking) as soon as they ascended to power. Aside from the cornucopia of laws which were being considered (and which shall be discussed), the NP also undertook another program which was effective in putting the Afrikaans press on a more equal footing with the English-language press. The NP government, in order to “counterbalance the English newspapers’ financial superiority,” began to grant the Afrikaans press houses printing contracts “for everything from telephone books to school texts,”—even if an English printer came out with a lower bid—thereby “indirectly [subsidising] the Afrikaans-language press.”⁷⁴ Both the English and the Afrikaans media saw this very much as what it was—a partisan NP reward for loyalty.

Another partisan act on the part of NP was the establishment of a Press Commission in 1950. With Afrikaner Judge J. W. van Zyl at its helm, the Commission was expected to recommend specific actions be taken to make newspapers opposed to NP policies

more 'patriotic,' thereby legitimising what amounts to government censorship. The fact that the new government set up a Press Commission a mere two years after their ascent to power "revealed the Nationalists' concern with the Press, particularly the English-language Press."⁷⁵ Upon introduction of the proposal of a Press Commission and subsequent enquiry, Dr. A. J. van Rhijn read to Parliament:

That whereas this House is of the opinion that a free Press is essential to a free democratic society, and whereas it is convinced that a self-disciplined freedom ultimately constitutes the best safeguard for the maintenance of the freedom for the Press, and that all activities and tendencies to undermine and abuse such freedom which exist or are taking root in this country should therefore be combated, it accordingly requests the government to consider the advisability of appointing a Commission ...⁷⁶

The Commission was established as a result of efforts by "rank-and-file Nationalists"⁷⁷ to impose State control on the increasingly hostile English print media. The Commission was given a mandate to examine the following areas:

- (1) The measure of concentration of control, financial and technical, of the Press in South Africa and its effect on editorial opinion and comment and presentation of news:
- (2) Accuracy in the presentation of news in South Africa as well as beyond its borders by correspondents in the Union, having particular regard to (a) selection of news, (b) mixing of fact and opinion, (c) use of unverified facts or rumours as news or as the basis of comment, and (d) reckless statements, distortion of facts or fabrication and the use of any of these as news and the basis of comment:
- (3) Tendencies towards monopoly or the concentration of control in regard to (a) collection of the news for internal and external dissemination, and (b) the distribution of newspapers and periodicals, and generally the extent to which the publication and distribution of newspapers are linked:
- (4) Existing restraints on the establishment of new newspapers and the desirability or otherwise thereof:
- (5) The adequacy or otherwise of existing means of self-control and discipline by the Press over (a) editors, journalists and correspondents serving local newspapers and periodicals; (b) correspondents of overseas newspapers and periodicals; (c) free-lance journalists serving the local or overseas Press:
- (6) The incidence of sensationalism and triviality in the makeup of newspapers:
- (7) The extent to which any findings under the above heads militate for or against a free Press and the formation of an informed public opinion on political issues.⁷⁸

The Commission took 13 years to examine the above points, producing a final report that was “scores of thousands of words and many volumes” in length.⁷⁹ Summarising the contents of the report, media analyst Anthony Giffard announced that the commission “did extensive content analyses of the major news agencies and concluded, after this laborious effort, that just about everything that came out was negative, biased, distorted, etc. The categories they used [...] were ‘very bad,’ ‘bad,’ and ‘sort of marginally acceptable.’ Nothing was good or positive in any sense.”⁸⁰ Still, while the magnitude of the Commission’s report may have been impressive, and while the commission concluded that there was ‘nothing good or positive’ with the English-language press in SA, the report itself failed to win any friends among the still-governing NP. The Commission, in fact, addressed only one of the seven points asked of them; those areas concerning the monopolistic tendencies, concentration of control, and distribution of SA newspapers—points which reflect that the commission may have been engrossed in attempting to explain the “greater financial success and resources of the English-language Press compared with [...] Afrikaans newspapers.”⁸¹ Regardless, the report was widely criticised by those who had hoped for recommendations to censor the media, and “no government action followed” as a result.⁸² The fact remains that for more than a decade, the threat of government censorship loomed, possibly acting as a catalyst for self-censorship during that time.

2.2.2 APARTHEID LAWS

Promoting the Afrikaans press was considered critical for the NP, as it succoured the language, the culture, and the political ideals of the majority of Afrikaners. Likewise, hampering the general body of the non-Afrikaans media—or more specifically, those

media forces working against the principles and policies of the NP—was an important task for the NP government. This they did by imposing a plethora of laws, many of them “so loosely drafted as to make it increasingly difficult to know when an offence was being committed,”⁸³ each in some way limiting the rights of SA citizens to read from the pages of unfettered newspapers. Indeed, some laws pertaining to the media were purposely drafted to be vague, allowing the NP and law enforcement a “paradoxical usefulness of fuzzy law” which gave the an “arbitrary power [...] and the insecurity that went with it.”⁸⁴

It has been said that all governments desire to control the news. That being the case, “it would be wrong to allege that only the Nationalists hanker after press control or that censorship in [SA] began with their accession to power in 1948. [...] The Nationalists, however, are not only making greater use of old [censorship] laws, but [added] some sterner ones. Quite clearly, their main political objective is political censorship.”⁸⁵ As well, the NP started controlling the press early in their political history, and did so with an enthusiasm and tenacity difficult to parallel.

Far from having a specific law labelled ‘Press Censorship,’ the NP brought about press controls “bit by bit, and many South Africans are not aware of how far the government [went] to ensure that they [were] allowed to read less and less about more and more subjects.”⁸⁶ Some of the more than 100 laws regulating the SA press shall be examined in the following pages.⁸⁷

SUPPRESSION OF COMMUNISM ACT OF 1950: Gave the Governor General (and later the State President) the power to ban any publication which promoted “any of the objects

of communism.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, if the State President deemed it necessary, this Act could be applied to preclude any publication, with no appeal to the courts of law. As the definition of ‘communist’ was vague, this Act gave the President alone power to decide what could be banned, giving “the state and its appointed agents the power to outlaw anything opposed to the Nationalist government.”⁸⁹ This law targeted trade unions, black-led political organisations, and often newspapers that covered those stories. Amendments to this act (to be known as the Riotous Assemblies and Suppression of Communism Act of 1954) prohibited papers from printing the words of banned persons “whether dead or alive” unless granted permission to do so by the Minister of Justice.⁹⁰ In 1962, this Act was altered to make it an offence to quote those people who were ‘listed’ as opposed to banned. The amended Act further allowed the government to ban publications “deemed to incite hostility between groups, and thus had the potential to affect any publication concerned with social change.”⁹¹ According to critics, this Act was not so much aimed at ‘communists’ as it was “a convenient title used to justify the beginning of the era of direct state censorship.”⁹²

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT OF 1953: Made law before the NP won power, this Act was amended as a result of rioting in the Cape Province. Altered to terminate ‘irresponsible’ newspapers reports which incited mass action, it restricted editors from writing anything that could in turn spark protest. The Act was so vague that “it became possible for a newspaper to print an editorial on the pass laws, which if it resulted in any individual destroying his pass, could render the newspaper liable to a sentence ranging from five years imprisonment to a whipping of ten strokes.”⁹³ It was primarily an intimidatory law, which was effective in curtailing the reporting of speeches calling for strikes and government protests. Under laws such as this, “direct

censorship of political opinion becomes an unnecessary and clumsy weapon with which to silence criticism.”⁹⁴

PUBLIC SAFETY ACT OF 1953: This act empowered the government to declare a state of emergency in the event of any unrest, suspending any legislation the government saw fit, and included the power to seize publications printing “subversive” statements.⁹⁵

According to Christopher Merrett:

When the Public Safety Act was passed in 1953, it was thought by many to be a measure for use only in wartime. [...] Those who designed the censorship aspects of the Emergency believed that the demands of the liberation movement for democracy in a unitary, non-racial, non-discriminatory state justified a response akin to a low-key civil war in which control of news and ideas was fundamental.”⁹⁶

The NP made good use of this law after the Sharpeville crisis in 1960 and again in the mid- to late-1980s, when newspapers were banned and reporters were jailed.

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ACT OF 1955: Limited a journalist’s right to protect their sources of information. Failure to name a source could result in two to five years imprisonment, with provisions to return a journalist to prison until he or she was no longer “recalcitrant.”⁹⁷ Dozens of reporters were tried, found guilty, and incarcerated under this law, which was amended some thirty times in order to tighten legal loopholes before finally being replaced with the Criminal Procedure Act of 1977.

OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT OF 1956 and DEFENCE ACT OF 1957: By 1956, more than five thousand separate items, people, or organisations had been banned for various reasons.⁹⁸ Censorship was a fact of life for newspaper reporters even before these Acts were implemented, but these Acts furthered the NPs cause. The Official Secrets Act

made it possible to hold reporters liable for a fine of R1,500, seven years in jail, or both, for the publication of “any information relating to munitions of war or any code, password, sketch, plan, model, article, note, document,” and so on, which could be deemed “useful to the enemy.”⁹⁹ While the Act itself relates to “munitions of war,” amendments to the Act (in addition to the General Law Amendment Act of 1969) outlawed anyone from publishing or indirectly communicating information “relating to munitions of war or any military, police or security matter,”¹⁰⁰ thereby widening the scope of the law. The story is told of a young soldier who was shot and killed while fighting in the SA military in a neighbouring country. While friends and relatives gathered for his funeral, the press was not allowed to publish any story relating to his death—doing so would either violate this Act or the Defence Act of 1957, which disallowed the press from publishing information which may “alarm or depress” the public.¹⁰¹ The Defence Act in effect prohibited journalists from acquiring firsthand information involving any defence matters whatsoever, if so desired by the Minister of Defence.¹⁰² These Acts in combination were taken so seriously that when a golfer in Port Elizabeth witnessed a pair of pants and a tie falling from a jet trainer, the media was compelled to get Defence Department permission to run the story.¹⁰³

RIOTOUS ASSEMBLIES ACT OF 1956: Also inherited by the NP, this law was altered to allow the government to ban any publication considered to be “calculated to engender hostility between one racial group and another.”¹⁰⁴ If, therefore, a paper printed a story concerning Indians’ grievances against whites, coloured people’s animosity toward blacks, and so on, the reporter, editor, and newspaper could all be fined or imprisoned under this Act.¹⁰⁵ It further outlawed the advertising of banned meetings. When, in 1974, the *Daily News* carried a story warning people to stay away from an

area where a banned meeting was going to take place as “there might be trouble,” the Argus Company was found guilty of contravening the Act.¹⁰⁶

POLICE ACT OF 1958 and PRISONS ACT OF 1959: The Police Act was still another law put on the books before NP rule, yet modified by the NP so as to make it stronger. Both Acts limited reporting on police and prison actions. A 1979 amendment to the Police Act made it punishable to print “any ‘untrue matter’ about the police without having ‘reasonable grounds’ for believing it to be true. The onus [was] on the newspaper, but the exact meaning of ‘reasonable grounds’ [was not] determined.”¹⁰⁷

Observers believe that the adapted law was in response to the death of Steve Biko at the hands of police authorities. The Prisons Act stopped journalists from printing stories about (or photographs of) “prisoners, prisons, or any prison administration” without the written consent of the Prisons Commissioner.¹⁰⁸ The Prisons Act stopped stories about horrible conditions in SA prisons from reaching the public, and largely gave prison officials a blank cheque to treat prisoners as they wished.

GENERAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT OF 1962: Otherwise known as the ‘Sabotage Act’ by NP officials, this Act was regarded as a ‘gagging clause’ by the press.¹⁰⁹ It expanded the definition of sabotage to include “politically motivated trespass and embarrassment of the administration of the State,”¹¹⁰ and allowed penalties ranging from five years imprisonment to death—penalties which could be extended to minors. As it pertained to newspapers, the Act prohibited the publishing of any words of any person banned, whether those words were uttered within SA or not. The Act furthermore gave the government the right to request a R20,000 deposit for registration (thereby effectively prohibiting opposition papers from springing up), disallowed any newspaper from

registering under more than one name¹¹¹, and made provisions for the government to cancel the registration of any paper which did not publish at least once in a month, allowing the government to close papers which had labour trouble, were banned for a period of time, and so on). This Act, in conjunction with the Suppression of Communism Act, enabled the government to limit most anti-apartheid media.¹¹²

PUBLICATIONS AND ENTERTAINMENT ACT OF 1963 and PUBLICATIONS ACT OF 1974:

This Act did not so much limit the rights of newspapers to attack the NP as it did stem the flow of materials that were interpreted as “indecent, obscene, offensive or harmful to public morals”¹¹³—in other words, it was aimed primarily at pornography. However, the Act also called for action against “anything which brought anyone in the Republic into ridicule or contempt,”¹¹⁴ so vague as to limit political satire, editorials, and so on. Members of the Newspaper Press Union (NPU) were exempt from this law, but those not under the NPU umbrella were certainly subject to enforcement.¹¹⁵ An amended Publications Act of 1974 added two main elements to that which was censored, namely anything which “is harmful to relations between any sections of the inhabitants of the Republic” and that which “is prejudicial to the safety of the state, the general welfare, or the peace and good order” of SA.¹¹⁶ The 1974 Act also attempted to improve the image of censors by removing the right to appeal to the courts (and, in theory, sparing censors from the ridicule of having their decisions overturned) and by making it an offence to insult or belittle the new appeal board.¹¹⁷

TERRORISM ACT OF 1967: Literally dozens of reporters were detained under this Act. Section 6 of this Act made it possible for the police to incarcerate any ‘terrorist’ at any

time for “indefinite detention without trial, in solitary confinement, for the purpose of interrogation.”¹¹⁸ Under the Act, a terrorist was defined as:

[...] any person who, with intent to endanger the maintenance of law and order in the Republic or any portion thereof, in the Republic or elsewhere commits or conspires with any person to commit, or incites, instigates, commands, aids, advises, encourages, or procures any other person to commit any [of ...] the following acts: [...] to further or encourage the achievement of any political aim, including the bringing about of any social or economic change, by violence or forcible means or by intervention of [...] a foreign agent, [...] to cause encourage, or further feelings of hostility between the White and other inhabitants of the Republic, [...] or] to embarrass the administration of the affairs of the State.¹¹⁹

This law struck fear into the hearts of critical individuals across the nation, as the vague yet draconian nature of the Act meant that any person who so offended the government could be detained until authorities saw fit to release them.

NEWSPAPER AND IMPRINT REGISTRATION ACT OF 1971: As the name suggests, this Act required the registration of all periodicals that published at least monthly. Much like clauses in the General Law Amendment Act, this law could be used to deny registration to papers which failed to publish at least once in that month-long period. The *Post* and the *Weekend Post* lost their registration due to a workers strike over pay, and were refused re-registration under this Act.¹²⁰ As mentioned, all newspapers *must* register under this Act; this worked in conjunction with the General Law Amendment Act, allowing the government to require a deposit of R20,000 to all papers registering, and later worked in conjunction with the Internal Security Act of 1974, which upped the potential registration fee to R40,000,¹²¹ stopping radical papers before they started.

PUBLICATIONS ACT OF 1974: This replaced the Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963, and was designed to be “a tougher Act, a more complex Act, a more foolproof

Act, to introduce more secrecy and control.”¹²² Again, members of the NPU were not subject to this Act, but the primary target of this Act was not NPU members (who, with exceptions, fell in line with regulations). Instead, it was passed “for the purposes of suppressing the critical media.”¹²³ Introduced by Justice Minister J. Kruger, the Act increased the State’s censorship powers and ability to seize and ban publications, and removed the right to appeal decisions to the Supreme Court.¹²⁴

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ACT OF 1977: Replaced the Criminal Procedure Act of 1955, and increasingly threatened the right of a journalist to protect his or her source of information. Perhaps the most infamous of apartheid’s censorship laws, this Act contained Section 205, which had the appearance of being designed specifically with intimidating reporters in mind. “Courts did not recognise journalists’ right to protect the confidentiality of their sources,”¹²⁵ and reporters who refused to reveal the source of their stories were liable to be jailed, for as long as the courts deemed necessary. One editor of the day said, “I must confess the ‘205’ process certainly frightened me.”¹²⁶ Reporters could be held in secret, without legal representation—and commonly were. While other nations have laws similar to Section 205, in SA it was often used for the express purpose of harassing and frightening journalists.¹²⁷

ELECTORAL ACT OF 1979: This Act stipulated that “anything of a political nature” printed in a newspaper had to bear the full name and address of the author.¹²⁸ It almost guaranteed prior restraint, as those not desiring a midnight visit from zealous supporters of apartheid were leery of being too critical.

ADVOCATE GENERAL ACT OF 1979: Had this Act been in place years earlier, the Information scandal (examined later) would never have been brought to light. Opposed by newspapers regardless of their language of publication or political leanings, this Act prevented investigative reporting of government departments, specifically affecting “information about the findings of investigations into corruption.”¹²⁹ The government desired to put into effect an even *more* encompassing Act, which would have put an end to investigative journalism completely, but a united newspaper opposition caused the government to rethink their strategy.¹³⁰

INTERNAL SECURITY ACT OF 1982: This Act, which replaced and updated several previous security laws, was described by a human rights commission as “a monument to the way loopholes and avenues of expression could be closed down one by one, until space for legitimate political opposition vanished altogether.”¹³¹ It broadened the already vague definition of a communist by adding the phrase “and any other recognised theorist.”¹³² New laws allowing the government to ban, detain, or harass journalists were added to this Act, and old laws which allowed the same were refined and enforced so as to make them virtually impossible to skirt. This Act was used most commonly in the 1980s to suppress dissent by banning reporters and newspapers.

PROTECTION OF INFORMATION ACT OF 1982: According to sections within this Act, journalists were restricted from approaching any ‘prohibited place,’ which included military establishments, factories of any sort, ships, radio stations, and so on.¹³³ As there were no lists of ‘prohibited places,’ members of the media could be arrested at any time, in any place, and thus discover that they were ‘off limits.’ The Act further made it illegal to give or receive government documents without prior authorisation,

and tightened existing laws regarding any security matter whatsoever. As a 'security matter' was open to interpretation, this Act had the appearance of being designed to "create one of the crudest forms of self-censorship in the history of the South African press."¹³⁴

REGISTRATION OF NEWSPAPERS AMENDMENT ACT OF 1982: This Act allowed the government to unilaterally cancel the registration of any newspaper that refused to "subject themselves to discipline by a body concerned with journalistic standards."¹³⁵ In essence this Act made it "compulsory for everyone to belong to a voluntary board."¹³⁶ Many papers were already members of disciplinary bodies such as the NPU; the more independent part of the media (those more critical of the NP) were not. It was up to them to join those organisations—or to cease publication. This Act shows the faith the government had in groups like the NPU to keep their members in check.

2.2.2.1 BREAKDOWN OF APARTHEID LAWS

The laws pertaining to media restriction in SA were reactionary and Darwinist in nature. The NP commonly adapted existing Acts and tabled new laws which made it ever more difficult for the press to function in a critical manner. Loopholes discovered by the more diligent members of the press were tightened; penalties for defying the law were increased. When laws were purposely broken, after which the government increased penalties, attempting to make reporters not *want* to fall outside of the law.

Christopher Merrett identifies two distinct time periods during the time that these laws were being devised and imposed on SA newspapers and their readers: the years from

1960 to 1974 he terms the 'Security State' years,¹³⁷ while 1974 to 1985 is described as being the 'Resistance and Repression' period.¹³⁸

2.2.2.1.1 'STATE SECURITY' YEARS

During the Security State years, the different cultural/linguistic cells of the media acted in markedly different manners; the Afrikaans press, instrumental in the 1948 NP victory, dedicated much of its coverage and editorial content during this period "in the consolidation of the Afrikaner power base."¹³⁹ Afrikaans press, following Lowenstein's typology, almost seemed to be government owned—certainly they had a solidarity of sorts. Of course, private companies had controlling shares in the Afrikaans media, but the NP held a financial stake in all of the large players. Likewise, their dependence upon the NP for lucrative contracts increased loyalty to the proverbial government hand that was feeding the Afrikaans media.

Regarding Lowenstein's other, more philosophical level of classification, the Afrikaans press acted in a part authoritarian, part social-centralist mode: authoritarian in the sense that the Afrikaans media at this time most often stifled criticism of the NP, at least on important matters, thus maintaining the ruling elite. The bulk of the opposition raised by the Afrikaans media during this time was aimed at the application of apartheid policy, as opposed to the principles involved.¹⁴⁰ However, this was undertaken by choice, and therefore is not purely authoritarian.

The system was social-centralist in the sense that the Afrikaans media was working for what they deemed the economic and philosophical good of the nation. The Afrikaans

media was influenced by the national developmental objectives of the NP government, supporting the notion that there was “freedom within commitment”¹⁴¹ to apartheid’s laws even if that meant legally limiting what newspapers could print.

The English press during the Security State years was privately owned. It was also struggling under authoritarian NP press rules, although the government attempted to make the system seem libertarian at best, social-centralist at worst. As already seen, there were Acts of government severely limited what newspapers could print. The NP was desperate to be seen as legitimate by the outside world, therefore these laws were chiefly fashioned in order to get the media to self-censor the news, which is what the English press did during this time. As an act of protest, editors printed statements such as ‘Cannot Be Published’ and left blank sections in their papers.¹⁴²

A voluntary Press Council was established in 1962 with the specific goal of imposing “self-discipline” in an attempt to appease the government and forestall potential censorship.¹⁴³ The English press did oppose the government’s more heinous actions, although the NPU agreed that there were “complex racial problems” in SA, and that reporters should keep in mind the “general good and safety of the county and its peoples” by minding what they print.¹⁴⁴ The NPU, in 1967, further bowed to government pressure when it agreed to Press Identity Cards—given to reporters who met government criteria—awarding them certain privileges for their co-operation.¹⁴⁵ Some papers refused to be dictated to, and were dealt with harshly. While Tomaselli, Tomaselli, and Muller purport that the English press at no time made an attempt to threaten the social and economic conditions laid out by apartheid, they agree that “its limited resistance to Government policy [was] met with fairly severe repression.”¹⁴⁶

But the most severe repression was reserved for the black press. The black press was successful in some ways during the Security State years. Due to increased literacy and purchasing power among black South Africans, the number of black papers and their circulation rose steadily. By 1967 more than 30 papers were specifically serving the black community, including *The World*, which commanded the fourth highest circulation of any SA newspaper.¹⁴⁷ Although the black media was privately owned, it operated under an authoritarian system. None of the black papers were fully owned and operated by blacks, as “it was impossible for any independent African newspaper to survive the competitive power of the white-controlled Bantu Press.”¹⁴⁸ Black journalists, furthermore, were suppressed both as blacks *and* as journalists, a fact that doubly handicapped their efforts. Where black reporters and newspapers did speak out against apartheid, the government had very little patience, detaining, banning, and otherwise intimidating them on what seemed a regular basis. More tolerated by the government were ‘extras,’ mainstream newspapers’ supplements which began during this period, aimed at a black audience and featuring sports, sex scandals, and very little in the way of real news. According to politically active blacks, these ‘extras’ were a “monumental insult”¹⁴⁹ to the intelligence of Africans.

2.2.2.1.2 ‘RESISTANCE AND REPRESSION’ YEARS

There were several significant events during Merrett’s ‘Resistance and Repression’ years of 1974 to 1985 which relate to the media, two of which shall now be covered in depth. First, Black Power activist Steve Biko died while in police detention in 1977, under suspicious circumstances. In examining this event, this work will juxtapose the

reports of four newspapers, one Afrikaans, one black, one of the liberal English mould, and one government sponsored (yet only surreptitiously at this point). Second, the information scandal which came to be known as Muldergate will be studied.

2.2.3 THE BIKO STORY

The Steve Biko story is perhaps more relevant than most other examples due to the fact that it captured the attention of the world's media. Without doing an in-depth survey, it is safe to say that the single event during apartheid which was most covered by the international media was the death in detention of Biko. In his life, Biko was (outside of SA) an unknown entity. In his death he became a martyr, an emotional touchstone and symbol of all that was wrong with apartheid. Popular music called his name on European radio. School children in Canada read his story in textbooks. Americans watched a famous actor portray his life and death on the silver screen—all adding to international outrage against apartheid, and perhaps exemplifying why the NP wanted to prevent the truth about apartheid from reaching South Africans and foreigners. But while people in far off lands were reading that Biko was murdered, those in SA were given a much different story. The purpose of this section is to examine what it was that South Africans were reading about Biko and his death.

2.2.3.1 *DIE BURGER*

Cape Town's *Die Burger* (the official paper of the NP) reported the death in detention of Steve Biko in what might be seen as an 'objective'¹⁵⁰ fashion—certainly more matter-of-factly than other more aggressive cells of the press. They printed an account of the tragic event that was very 'matter-of-fact' and unemotional. But the paper also

took statements made by government officials as the undisputed truth, which was not at all professional.

On 14 September 1977, *Die Burger* announced on the right-hand side of page one in a relatively small headline: "Biko dead after hunger strike; wide reaction."¹⁵¹ The article—one column wide, 300 words in length—stated that "Steve Biko, Chairman of the Black People's Convention and former Black Power activist, died in jail two nights ago in Pretoria after a seven day hunger strike. The circumstances surrounding the death of Biko, founding member of the black student movement SASO, has drawn sharp criticism from left wing elements both in and outside of South Africa."¹⁵²

The article continued by paraphrasing US Ambassador to the UN, Andrew Young, who likened the death of Biko to the deaths of American icons John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr. *Die Burger* then explained that Biko had been taken into custody for contravening a restricting order which made it an offence for him to leave the district surrounding King Williams Town. His further detention after being taken into custody was explained as a result of Biko's "connection with unrest activities in Port Elizabeth" as well as the "composition and distribution of pamphlets sanctioning violence and arson."¹⁵³

Die Burger quoted a statement by Justice Minister Kruger, who claimed Biko had refused to eat or drink since 5 September 1977, despite being supplied with nourishment. Using Kruger's statement as its only source of information, the article continued by explaining how well Biko was treated while in detention. After it was apparent that Biko "looked ill," a District Surgeon was summoned to examine the

prisoner. The doctor “certified that there was nothing wrong with [Biko]”¹⁵⁴ and the interrogation continued. The next day, the same physician was called to again examine Biko, after which the Chief District Surgeon performed an examination. According to the government account found in *Die Burger*, neither doctor could find any physical ailments, yet they recommended that Biko be transferred to a prison hospital for an intensive examination. There he was treated for two days, upon which he was returned to the Walmer Police Station in Port Elizabeth. Soon thereafter, “Biko had still not eaten and looked ill,”¹⁵⁵ and the decision was made to transfer him to Pretoria for further treatment. According to the article, Biko was received in Pretoria, treated by a District Surgeon, and died soon after.

The *Burger* article, in closing, made it known that hours after his death was made known to the public, a service led by SA Council of Churches minister Dr. Wolfram Kirsner and attended by approximately 400 people was held in Johannesburg. Biko’s death, wrote *Die Burger*, sparked reactions from local black leaders, business representatives, black journalists and other members of civil society. Likewise, opposition politicians expressed their remorse, while human rights groups such as Amnesty International demanded that independent investigations be carried out immediately—and thus closes *Die Burger*’s first day of coverage of the death of Biko.

Die Burger’s second day of reporting on Biko’s death took a similar tone, in that again the government was the sole source of information. In a page three article titled ‘Min. Kruger: Customary investigation of Biko’s death,’¹⁵⁶ Kruger is quoted as saying, “I am open-minded about the case,” after which he declares that “under no circumstances will I entertain such a request [for an independent investigation]. I am not prepared to

insult the South African legal system in this way.”¹⁵⁷ The article further acknowledged the international reaction to Biko’s death, but added that “despite the huge foreign reaction,”¹⁵⁸ Kruger’s office had received only one telegram regarding the matter—from Pinelands representative Dr. Alex Boraine.

On 16 September 1977, the third day of covering the Biko story, *Die Burger* published two relative articles. The first, found on the front page, declared “Biko definitely fed intravenously, says Kruger.”¹⁵⁹ In this article, Kruger assured South Africans that everything within the power of the medical profession was done to ensure Biko’s good health. The second article published in the same edition—found on page five—was titled “Biko: Woods says reasons are untrue.”¹⁶⁰ The article quotes Donald Woods, East London *Daily Dispatch* editor and close personal friend of Biko. In it, Woods claims that Kruger’s suggestion that Biko killed himself by refusing to eat is “ridiculous,” saying Biko was a strong, healthy young man. Woods then suggested that the government was at least guilty of negligence.¹⁶¹

The following day, 17 September 1977, *Die Burger* again carried Biko on its front page. This time the headline read “Biko’s death: Kruger explains”¹⁶² in which Kruger addressed some of Woods’ concerns. “I at no stage suggested that Mr. Biko starved himself to death,” the Justice Minister announced. Kruger added that the South African and international reaction to the death of Biko was “very premature,” and he suggested that “everybody should adopt the same attitude that I have—to wait for the report from the doctors.”¹⁶³ Kruger was then quoted as saying that Biko was a criminal, about to be charged with writing and distributing pamphlets encouraging social unrest.

The 19 September 1977 edition of *Die Burger* contains yet another story concerning Biko, the last to be printed on the front page of the paper. Under the headline "Bodies in blood urged in Biko pamphlet,"¹⁶⁴ the article paraphrases the pamphlet which Biko was alleged by the SA Police Force to have written and distributed (although no corroborating evidence whatsoever is cited in the *Burger* article). The pamphlet calls for blacks to rise up and burn the houses of white South Africans. Likewise, it used words like "revolution" and "comrade," and advocated murder in order to "incite violence" and overthrow the SA government.¹⁶⁵

2.2.3.2 THE WORLD

The World was a daily newspaper printed in Johannesburg and owned by the Argus group, which was designed specifically for a black audience. The editorial staff was comprised primarily of black Africans, as were most of the reporters and technical staff. While a white corporation owned *The World*, the paper was largely given a free hand by the company, and was limited only by the law. As a result, *The World* was the most widely read black newspaper in SA. At the time of the death of Biko, Percy Qoboza was the paper's chief editor.

On the first day of reporting the Biko story, *The World's* headline read "Biko Death: US Lashes Out."¹⁶⁶ The bulk of the article was comprised of quotes from a US State Department statement, including the assertion that the US government felt that Biko was "another victim of apartheid and the South African security legislation which supports that system."¹⁶⁷ The article also stated that the US government expressed "deep concern" over the "circumstances in which this occurred," and that a full,

impartial, international investigation should be undertaken in order to examine those circumstances.¹⁶⁸ US Senators charged that Biko's death was an "outrage," the social and political consequences of which should not be underestimated.¹⁶⁹ *The World* continued, quoting one Senator as saying that after meeting Biko, he was "convinced of his intelligence, his moderation and his importance as a key spokesman for the African population which admired and respected him."¹⁷⁰ The article furthermore quoted "an angry" Helen Suzman, Progressive Federal Party Justice Spokesperson, who lashed out at Justice Minister Kruger for "anticipating the findings of the inquest" by statements he made "giving the impression Biko had died as a result of a hunger strike."¹⁷¹ The article closes by stating that the real cause of Biko's death "could be found in Section 6 of the Terrorism Act," and again quoting Suzman, who said, "this tragic death should lead to a public outcry."¹⁷²

However, *The World* was not finished with Biko in that edition of the paper, as they dedicated the whole of page three on 14 September 1977 to his memory. Headlines on that page read "Tributes to a great man: Biko was a man of peace,"¹⁷³ "Shock waves at his death echo round South Africa,"¹⁷⁴ "Steve—the statesman,"¹⁷⁵ and "Sadness descends on Soweto." *The World* ran an article (written by white newspaper editor Donald Woods) saying that Biko had "wisdom, humour, compassion, understanding, brilliancy of intellect, unselfishness, modesty, courage [...]. Steve Biko was the greatest man I have ever had the privilege to know." Woods additionally stated that he would love to publish all of Biko's words and ideas, but "the government through its banning orders silenced all public statements of his and even in death he may not be quoted. [...] Whatever the cause of death [...] I hold responsible those who were associated with his detention."¹⁷⁶ *The World* finished their first day tribute to Biko by

allowing this declaration: "As no crime has ever been proved against him in court, [...] we must assume him to have been innocent of the allegations made against him."¹⁷⁷

The World changed their tone slightly for the first relevant article on the second day of covering the Biko story. Instead of focusing on Biko's death, *The World* began by examining the words of NP officials. *The World* wrote that NP Congress delegates in Pretoria "laughed as Minister of Justice, Mr. Jimmy Kruger, explained what steps had been taken between Mr. Steve Biko's falling ill and his death."¹⁷⁸ Kruger told the NP Congress "that everything that should have been done for Mr. Biko had been done for him."¹⁷⁹ His remark that Kruger did not want to trample on Biko's "democratic right" to starve himself to death was then met with "ripples of laughter" by the Nationalist delegates.¹⁸⁰ Pages later, in the same edition, the editorial staff again focussed on Kruger's word, and added the following editorial touch. Under the headline "Detentions leave us cold, Jimmy,"¹⁸¹ editor A. Duigan wrote:

"I am not pleased nor am I sorry. Biko's death leaves me cold." These callous words are the dismissal Mr. Jimmy Kruger, Minister of Justice, gives to the man who stands revered as one of this country's greatest black leaders. No doubt the Minister expects the hundreds of thousands of blacks who regard Mr. Biko as a martyr who died for the cause of liberation to humbly accept this as the end of the whole matter. What ignominy! What arrogance! What a convenient ducking of responsibility for the whole ghastly business!¹⁸²

Virtually every edition of *The World* for weeks carried stories about Biko, including covering student protests, vigils, police attacks, tear gassing and arrests of unarmed mourners, outrage, foreign reaction, attacks against Kruger as well as calls for his immediate resignation, and so on. *The World* also covered another story—the early morning bombing of none other than *World* editor Qoboza.¹⁸³ While the article did not explicitly declare as much, *The World's* aggressive coverage of Biko's death was accepted to be the motive behind the attack. But *The World* continued unrepentant,

stating that at Biko's funeral "Thousands of emotion filled mourners rose as one and sang *our national anthem*, Nkosi Sikelele i' Afrika."¹⁸⁴ One cartoon printed in *The World* showed a giant black man tied down with thread and staked to the ground, with Lilliputian-like white men in safari suits saying "Now, behave yourself, or we'll be forced to have you die of a hunger strike!"¹⁸⁵

Kruger, apparently tired of *The World*'s lack of respect for the government, "lodged an urgent complaint with the SA Press Council, accusing *The World* of 'unfair and malicious comment.'"¹⁸⁶ Unfazed by the government actions, the paper printed a demand aimed at the NP—that they have the police "charge or release" Joe Thloloe, Willie Bokala, and Moffat Zungu, three *World* journalists who had been in detention without trial, Thloloe for as long as 225 days.¹⁸⁷ *The World* then printed a retraction of sorts, admitting, "we referred to [Kruger's] behaviour in calling for an urgent sitting of the Press Council as 'a scandalous public demonstration.' The use of the word 'scandalous' was not justified and is regretted."¹⁸⁸ This was to be the last *World* editorial, as the Nationalist government on 17 October 1977 banned the paper, its editors Qoboza and Aggrey Klaaste, as well as Donald Woods and a host of other individuals and organisations for "contributing to a subversive situation."¹⁸⁹

2.2.3.3 CAPE TIMES

The *Cape Times* was seen as a liberal, moderately outspoken, anti-apartheid daily newspaper. On the day the world was informed that Biko was dead, that story shared equal space with a two-column wide, full-length photo of Italian actress Gina Lollobrigida—in the area to promote Italian automobiles—drinking a glass of fine Stellenbosch wine. Less prominent on the page is a headline reading "Biko died after

hunger strike—Kruger,”¹⁹⁰ beside a one inch square picture of the dead Black Consciousness Movement leader. The article begins with the first two paragraphs paraphrasing Justice Minister Kruger as saying that the 30-year-old activist “refused meals and water from September 5 and [...] was examined by various doctors.”¹⁹¹ The third paragraph then informs readers that “Mr. Biko was the twentieth person to die while held under security legislation by the police in the past 18 months.”¹⁹² Biko’s biographical information follows, as does the continuing assertion by Kruger that Biko chose to die—much in keeping with *Die Burger* and the yet to be examined *Citizen* accounts. Also contained in the story, though, is a table of quotes attributed to prominent people. Among them are UN Ambassador Andrew Young (“Major loss for South Africa”), PFP leader Colin Eglin (“Death will have repercussions”), KwaZulu Minister Gatsha Buthelezi (“Nobody detained is safe”) and Archbishop J. P. Fitzgerald (“Appeal for full inquiry”).¹⁹³

Page two of the same edition dedicated much more coverage to the story than did page one. Under the sub-heading of ‘Biko death,’ the page one story continued with a more sympathetic, less government-published tone. The article informs readers that Biko was a “father of two small children,”¹⁹⁴ something which is not mentioned in any other account examined in this work, and something which gives Biko a human face. Biko should be added to a “list of martyrs” according to Christian Institute Chair Beyers Naude, who is further quoted as saying, “we pray that what Steve stood for should multiply in us so that one day we should embrace each other as brothers and sisters, so that one day we should march to the freedom of all.”¹⁹⁵ Another page two article, “Shock, grief at death of Biko,”¹⁹⁶ quotes public leaders in the UK, the US, and SA as saying the incident was a “crime,” a “tragedy,” and calling for an “immediate, open

and independent inquiry.”¹⁹⁷ The article also quotes Dr. Alex Boraine, who said that “I am convinced that Steve didn’t just die—he was killed by the system.”¹⁹⁸

The most scathing coverage was to be found in the paper’s editorial. It states that Biko helped to found the Black Consciousness Movement, an organisation attempting to instil self respect and dignity into the minds of young blacks, “akin to the Afrikaner Nationalist political and cultural revival which followed the South African War.”¹⁹⁹ Biko is praised as being an articulate leader, a gifted intellect, and a robust personality. SA’s “notorious” laws, on the other hand, are criticised as invoking the scorn of civilised countries. The editorial explains that the nation’s security—based upon injustice—“is delusory and [will be] short-lived.”²⁰⁰

Day two of the Biko story sees the *Cape Times* announcing that a Grahamstown school teacher was calling on “clergymen, academics, and others” to join in an eight-day fast “to prove that Mr. Biko could not have died in an eight-day hunger strike.”²⁰¹ The article likewise explains the actions of the anti-apartheid women’s organisation, the Black Sash, and their intent to distribute wreaths with Biko’s name on them in cities around the nation. Under this is a separate article outlining Kruger’s controversial statement to the Transvaal NP Congress. “I am not glad and I am not sorry about Mr. Biko,” Kruger stated. “He leaves me cold. I can say nothing to you about any person who dies [...] I shall also be sorry if I die”²⁰²—at which time there was laughter in the Congress. Then, as though to balance the first story of this edition, the *Times* printed an article quoting “leading medical men” as explaining that even a “young, fit and healthy man would die within four to seven days without fluids [...] The doctors

agreed that with all favourable factors, the longest a man could survive without any fluids in South African conditions would be seven days.”²⁰³

The 16 September 1977 edition of the *Cape Times* had perhaps the most information on the death in detention of Biko than any other edition. The principal story on page one read “Biko was drip-fed by vein—Kruger,”²⁰⁴ and explained Kruger’s version of the events surrounding Biko’s death. Kruger stated that while he is not himself a doctor, several medical practitioners intervened and attempted to keep Biko alive. Kruger continued that police officials are “rather sensitive about possible suicides,”²⁰⁵ and that special attention was given to Biko to ensure his health. Page two contains three articles related to the Biko story. The first article explained that a person could be kept alive for weeks by means of intravenous intervention; the second article warned of the risks of the health risks of going without food or water in a protest fast; the third article continued the international praise for Biko, as well as the call for an independent inquest. On page three, an additional story told of a meeting of more than 1000 people, at which *Daily Dispatch* editor Donald Woods²⁰⁶ was the keynote speaker. Woods demanded that NP authorities give answers to the following questions:

Why within the space of three days did the two versions of Mr. Biko's death differ? Why did the first version state that he had died in hospital and now the latest that he was found dead in his cell? [...] Why had Mr. Kruger waited until after the death to accuse Mr. Biko of inciting violence, yet had not prosecuted him while he was alive? Why was Mr. Biko referred to 'five or six' doctors when they found nothing wrong with him? Who are these doctors? Why is it taking so long to release the post-mortem findings? Could not at least the unequivocal physical findings be released?²⁰⁷

The editorial page carried still more Biko-related articles, ranging from a *Times* editorial explaining the difference between black power and black consciousness,²⁰⁸ an

editorial written by Woods stating that Biko should have been allowed to express his feelings openly, that South Africans could judge the merits of his opinions without having them sifted through a NP filter,²⁰⁹ and a letter to the editor demanding an end to the “tragedy” of detentions.²¹⁰

The 17 September 1977 *Cape Times* front page article quoted a Progressive Federal Party member as saying that Kruger’s most recent public statement—insisting that he at no time indicated that Biko starved to death—was causing “complete and utter confusion in the public mind.”²¹¹ A page two story shows that Woods is so convinced that Biko was killed that he would “resign his job and quit journalism if the post-mortem findings supported the hunger-strike theory.”²¹² Then, in an informally written article, a *Times* columnist writes that:

the death of Mr. Biko leaves him cold, says Mr. Kruger. He can have no grasp at all of the impression which this kind of talk creates [...] or any feelings at all for the sense of loss which has stricken Mr. Biko’s family. In the Eastern Cape, a wife grieves and a six-year-old boy runs to the telephone whenever it rings. His father has been away from home so much lately. The death of Mr. Biko leaves him cold, says Mr. Kruger. The rest of us can only shudder.²¹³

2.2.3.4 THE CITIZEN

The Citizen was a daily English-language newspaper established under the direction and with the assistance of certain elements within the NP strictly for purposes of propaganda,²¹⁴ and can therefore not be respected as an accurate representative of the English press. However, *The Citizen*’s account of the death in detention of Steve Biko is included in this work for the simple reason that in its pages we read what the apartheid government apparently wanted SA citizens to read.

This is clear from the first *Citizen* headline dealing with the subject, a front page, bold-print declaration: “Biko Was On Hunger Strike—Kruger.”²¹⁵ The article backs up the headline by stating that Biko in fact “died in detention in Pretoria [...] after being on a hunger strike since September 5.”²¹⁶ The article continued by explaining why Biko was detained (“for the drafting and distribution of pamphlets which incited arson and violence”²¹⁷) and that police were in no way responsible for Biko’s death, as even “a specialist [...] could not diagnose anything physically wrong with him” while he was in their custody.²¹⁸ Kruger was the sole source of information for the article.

To their credit,²¹⁹ *The Citizen* printed an article on day two of the media coverage (15 September 1977) which asked questions of Kruger, but received no adequate reply. Again, a bold headline adorned the front page, this time declaring “Kruger Silent On Biko Claims.”²²⁰ In this article, Kruger is quoted as saying that he was “not at this stage prepared to say anything at all”²²¹ in reply to a *Washington Post* article which insinuated that Biko had been killed at the hands of police interrogators. *The Citizen* quoted the *Post* when they in turn quoted Millard Arnold, Director of the SA Project of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under the Law. Arnold stated that a member of his group had attended the autopsy on Biko, and he “hinted in a guarded telephone conversation that ‘the evidence reveals that Biko died as a result of police brutality caused by torture.’”²²² However, the article was tempered by a sidebar placed before the article that described a London protest against Biko’s death. Protesters were called ‘Socialists’ and the entire campaign was billed as “a publicity stunt.”²²³

The front page headline on 16 September 1977 announced that “Biko Was Drip-Fed—Kruger.”²²⁴ The article again asserted that police did everything they could to keep

Biko alive, despite his hunger strike. A related page one story tells of a mass-arrest of Fort Hare University students. A total of 1,510 of the universities 1600 registered students were detained by police, explains the article, after an illegal assembly. At the assembly, a makeshift memorial service in honour of Biko, students were witnessed dressing in black, dancing, and singing “the Xhosa national anthem.”²²⁵

On 17 September 1977, *The Citizen* ‘scooped’ everyone with the revelation that Biko was in fact a bloodthirsty terrorist.²²⁶ In what appears to be the boldest print possible, *The Citizen* exclaimed that a “People’s War Plot [had been] Revealed.”²²⁷ The article followed that the “Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) – of which the dead detainee, Mr Steve Biko, was the declared ‘father’—has been actively preparing for a ‘People’s War’ against South Africa.”²²⁸ According to the newspaper, Kruger had made a “secret manifesto” in the form of a pamphlet available “for *The Citizen*’s inspection.”²²⁹ The article refuted the internationally accepted belief that Biko was a “leading Black moderate” and continued that Biko’s “manifesto” was based on “classical Marxist theory” designed “violently to smash” the not only the SA economy, but the entire international capitalist system.²³⁰

The editorial contained in this same edition of *The Citizen* likewise addressed the Biko affair, although in a different manner. The editor quotes East London *Daily Dispatch* Editor Donald Woods as saying “We must exploit the death of Steve Biko for the right purposes. He would have wanted us to channel our reaction in a cold, precise, unrelenting way [...] we must move against them on all fronts as a united people, bearing in mind that they are a tiny, pathetic minority.”²³¹ The editor of *The Citizen* then countered Woods’ comments by stating:

We can understand the distress which Mr Donald Woods [...] feels about the death in detention of Mr Steve Biko, a close friend. However, Mr Woods should not let his grief run away with his good sense [...] We hope that Mr Woods will calm down, for nothing can be gained by exploiting Mr Biko's death for any purposes. Similarly, instances which are seeking to exploit the tragedy should cool it.²³²

Subsequent editions of *The Citizen* carried articles which insisted world opinion was being swayed by a “growing propaganda onslaught” comprised of “sensational reports” which had no basis in fact.²³³ Further articles insisted that “leftist elements” were exploiting the death of Biko “in order, among other things, to encourage further interference in South Africa’s domestic affairs,”²³⁴ and quoted authorities such as South African Party leader Myburgh Streicher as saying that “When People [sic] are detained for security reasons and die while in detention, those who have no interest in State security will utter the most vocal criticism.”²³⁵ After this coverage of the death in detention of Biko, *The Citizen* printed a letter to the editor which reads:

Allow me to congratulate you most sincerely on your sane and balanced handling of the Biko affair. This was in marked and welcome contrast to the treatment adopted by certain other newspapers. It has notably increased the reputation of *The Citizen*, already at a high level [...]²³⁶

The Citizen was not yet through with the Biko story though, and followed this glowing praise of their ‘sane’ coverage with undocumented front page speculation that Biko’s death was his own doing—that he suffered from “a failure of the kidneys initiated or aggravated by dehydration resulting from fluid fasting.”²³⁷ One month later, *The Citizen* revealed the “true facts about the autopsy findings” on Biko.²³⁸ Before the autopsy was actually made public, *The Citizen* announced that:

According to impeccable medical sources, the autopsy report shows:

- That there were no visible signs whatsoever of any violent blow, either to the skull or to any part of the body.
- There was brain damage – but this resulted from what in forensic terms is known as a “contra-coup”. This means damage to the brain on the opposite

side of the contact point, suffered as a result of a moving head coming into contact with a "solid, unyielding, immovable" object, possibly the result of a fall or bump.

- There were no signs of violence externally on the head.
- The report shows that the skull has no cracks in it at all – "not even the flesh is cracked."
- There were no broken ribs.
- There were "very light" abrasions on the rib cage with slight bleeding from two small bruises, but there can be – so I was told – "no suggestion that these were the cause of death."
- Tests to establish whether Mr Biko had been subjected to any forms of electrical shock treatment shortly before his death were negative.
- There was grave kidney failure and uremia [sic] (uremia is the condition of having too much waste product urea in the blood).²³⁹

With this evidence in hand, *The Citizen* reported that Kruger acknowledged Biko died of brain injuries. *The Citizen* also quoted Kruger as saying that "a man can damage his brain in many ways [...] I don't know if [Biko's injuries] were self-inflicted. But I often think of banging my own head against a wall."²⁴⁰

2.2.3.5 SUMMARY

While *Die Burger* coverage of the death in detention of Biko seems matter-of-fact, the government's word was taken as absolute in every article (therefore, according to Chomsky and Herman's model, making it ripe for propaganda). Articles which supported the claim that Biko was a violent threat to the security of whites, who starved himself to death, were printed on the paper's front page for all to see. Articles which suggested that Biko might have been a good person or that the police were in any way culpable were found on the inside pages, if at all. In this way the Afrikaans press supported the NP and the police force after the death of Steve Biko, by both the words they wrote and the words they neglected to write. No attempt at investigative journalism was made: the 'truth' was simply that which the government declared.

The World was far from balanced in its reporting of the death in detention of Steve Biko. It relied heavily on quotes and reports from subjective sources (such as Donald Woods), and for the most part ignored the government's account of events. Whether *The World* was fair in their journalism or not is another question altogether—is it 'fair' to thumb one's nose at a tyrant? Regardless, *The World* was not attempting to emulate the reporting of the Afrikaans press, government propaganda papers such as *The Citizen*, or the liberal reporting of the English media for that matter. *The World* was much like the black press of other African nations in their earlier attempts to rid their countries of colonial 'outsiders.' *The World* saw itself as a voice for the black South African, a journal with liberation instead of liberalism in mind, and to that extent, *The World* was a success. Unfortunately, to that extent, the voice of *The World* was silenced by those intent on keeping apartheid in place.

The *Cape Times* was generally in support of those who saw Biko's death as a tragedy. However, in keeping with the opposition tradition of the English-language media in SA, the *Times* reported both the official government version of the event—giving it priority in several instances—as well as opposing accounts. While the editorial content was entirely one-sided, the actual news stories at least had an aspect of impartiality—neither of which would please NP officials wanting to suppress the truth.

Some might say that the media was simply sloppy in their investigative journalism. Indeed, one may ask "why does a noble political goal justify not checking sources?"²⁴¹ *The World* was closed for their 'noble political goal,' while the *Cape Times'* economic instincts gave them good reason not to dig too deep in finding the truth. *Die Burger* had no reason not to trust government sources, and with this fact in mind did a

reasonable job in their coverage. Finally, *The Citizen* was instituted not so much as a newspaper but as a mouthpiece of the NP, a propaganda tool. Doing an honest, in-depth investigation into an event like the death of Biko would be likely to turn up the truth. Obviously, the truth would be an embarrassment for the police and the NP itself, which was not in *The Citizen's* charter. Regardless, the "highly partisan and unprofessional" media practices that developed under apartheid were not in the long run good for SA or the cause of democracy.²⁴²

As was their mandate, *The Citizen* followed Chomsky and Herman's Propaganda Model almost to the letter, but two 'essential ingredients' are more obvious than others. First, *The Citizen* relied almost completely on "information provided by government [...] and experts funded and approved by [...] agents of power,"²⁴³ without doing investigative reporting of their own. Second, they wholeheartedly supported the government's use of "anti-communism as a national religion and control mechanism."²⁴⁴ *The Citizen*, in this and other stories, went so far as to use "the words 'Communist' and 'communism' in a way that at times [was] identical to the use by earlier generations of Europeans of words such as 'Bolshevik,' 'heretic' and even 'witch.'"²⁴⁵ The manner in which *The Citizen* covered this and other stories was so one-sided, in fact, that several opposition newspapers began not only to wonder why such was the case, but to dedicate some of their investigative journalism toward examining the paper. It would be an understatement to say that these investigative results were interesting—they actually shocked the nation.

2.2.4 MULDERGATE

During the time the Biko story was being examined by SA's newspapers, Kruger stated that "I sincerely believe in freedom of the Press [...] but there are people in South Africa who can't write a straight story—they are politically committed."²⁴⁶ This was an interesting choice of words, considering the events that were about to unfold. No work on the media in SA would be complete without an examination of the information scandal which has come to be known as 'Muldergate.' In short (and *inter alia*²⁴⁷), Muldergate was an ill-fated attempt by the apartheid government to influence SA public opinion through the covert ownership and editorial control of a daily Johannesburg-based newspaper known as *The Citizen*.

English newspapers—it was felt among the Afrikaans and ultraconservative-English communities—had lost objectivity and were intensely critical, even antagonistic in their coverage of the elected NP government. As early as 1952, a State Information Office annual report noted a "resurgence of an organised press campaign" against SA both domestically and abroad, adding that "those who are ever ready to besmirch [SA had] seized upon [...] the resistance movement of non-Europeans to put forth a flood of propaganda based on ignorance, prejudice and hostility towards the union."²⁴⁸ One-time Foreign Minister Eric Louw further stated that local and international press reports had "concentrated entirely on criticism and gave no credit for what the [... NP] government had accomplished on the positive side for the African."²⁴⁹

Those sentiments swelled until, in the early 1970s, the Department of Information determined to take action against this liberal-media threat.²⁵⁰ After all, the tide was turning against white rule in SA, as Richard Nixon's apartheid-friendly administration had run its political course, and a less amicable Jimmy Carter would soon be steering

US foreign policy. Likewise, Angola and Mozambique gained their independence from Portugal and were courted by Cuban and Soviet communists—meaning that SA no longer had a buffer to the north.²⁵¹ This, added to the fact that black South Africans were beginning to more effectively organise against apartheid, created a hostile situation for the government to manage:

The country was in effect at war, the Nationalists felt. And in time of war the rules of war must apply. Not only should the military and armaments industry be built up, but also the propaganda machinery. Since South Africa's enemies were waging an all-out propaganda war against the country, the Nationalists felt justified in using any means to counter them.²⁵²

One of the cogs in the 'propaganda machinery' was a government-run newspaper—*The Citizen*—seen by those to the right of the political spectrum as a counter to the critical English media, an attempt to “print the objective facts to English-speakers objectively.”²⁵³ It was eventually seen by other South Africans as an illegitimate action in which the NP “engaged in lies, deception, and distortion to promote its policies.”²⁵⁴

SA's information scandal did not start with *The Citizen*. The NP's “secret propaganda war”²⁵⁵ began in earnest in 1972, when Interior and Information Minister Cornelius Mulder appointed Eschel Rhodie as the Secretary of Information. In May 1973, after careful deliberation by Information Department officials, a government bid to purchase the *Natal Mercury* for Rand 7 million—using public funds—was tabled. SA businessman Lawrence Morgan was used by the department as a front, in order to keep the action clandestine.²⁵⁶ Sensing that something was not right with Morgan's bid, the Durban-based, family-controlled morning daily newspaper rejected the offer, and controlling shares of the *Natal Mercury* were sold to the (SAAN).

This was not enough to thwart those Nationalists bent on improving the “quality of news” in SA.²⁵⁷ Instead, Louis Luyt—an Afrikaner millionaire—was enlisted to assist in the government’s plan. Under the direction of Mulder and Rhodie (and financed with public money), Luyt attempted to purchase controlling shares in SAAN, which had in its stable some of the most outspoken English papers, including the *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Cape Times*. SAAN was in difficult financial times when Luyt made a generous (and sudden) bid to purchase the flailing conglomerate. Luyt declared that SAAN publications had damaged SA in the eyes of the world, and, while denying NP involvement (or the association of any political organisation, for that matter), Luyt stated that if he were to take control of SAAN, the media conglomerate would eventually tilt “a bit more to the right.”²⁵⁸

The English establishment rallied around SAAN, treating Luyt’s move as an Afrikaner attack on liberal values—a potentially “devastating blow [...] dealt to the cause of press and public freedom in South Africa.”²⁵⁹ The community pulled together, and instead of Luyt controlling SAAN, a group of English businessmen purchased a 20 percent stake in the company. This, with the *Argus*’ 33 percent holding, was enough to insure that SAAN would stay under the control of English interests well into the future. While the sale of SAAN shares to Luyt would surely have fetched more in the way of revenues, the organisation felt that “money alone [was] not enough.”²⁶⁰

In the world of the media, though, money is significant. Shortly after the failed SAAN bid, an unconquered Luyt (coaxed by determined NP officials) announced that he would commence his own morning daily newspaper (secretly using public funds) to be in direct competition with the *Rand Daily Mail*. This was, in effect, “an ambitions

contingency plan” launched by the Department of Information; “If it could not buy up the opposition [SAAN], at least it could counter with an English-language daily of its own.”²⁶¹ *The Citizen*’s inaugural issue was thus launched on 7 September 1976, in order—according to Luyt—to give the largely Afrikaans NP government a voice in the English community.²⁶² Luyt’s sentiment somewhat echoed the earlier declaration of Frank Waring, a high-ranking NP executive who explained to the British press that “the people who cannot understand Afrikaans cannot balance their views by reading pro-government newspapers”²⁶³—a concern which the NP intended to resolve.

Give an English voice to the government is precisely what *The Citizen* did. Page after page, article after article, *The Citizen* supported NP policies and actions. Occasionally *The Citizen* did assail the government over contentious issues, but where the paper went on the offensive, their intent was “to wound slightly, not disembowel.”²⁶⁴ More commonly, *Citizen* editors chose to “focus on the positive, on process-oriented and developmental news, rather than on negative, event-oriented reports.”²⁶⁵ One such instance of ‘positive, developmental news’ was written in October 1977. *The Citizen* quoted a Dutch journalist who claimed to have knowledge of prisons world-wide. According to the report, SA’s prison system was “among the best in the world.”²⁶⁶ The foreign journalist’s comments were touted in the article as proof that SA’s inmates were treated fairly. However, no evidence whatsoever was set out in *The Citizen* article: no mention was made as to the basis of this opinion. One can only guess which SA penitentiaries were visited, which prisoners observed, what ‘the best’ referred to,²⁶⁷ which nation’s prisons were held up to comparison, and so on. But such facts were unimportant to *Citizen* staff of the day—the story showed SA in a positive light, and was printed for all her citizens to read.

Some South Africans eventually began to read between the lines, questioning *The Citizen's* objectivity and its independence. Bumper stickers appeared reading "Pay your taxes—buy *The Citizen*."²⁶⁸ After the September 1977 death-in-detention of Steve Biko, the voices accusing *The Citizen* of being controlled by the NP were no longer a whisper but a roar. One such vocal accuser was East London *Daily Dispatch* Editor Donald Woods, who accused *The Citizen* of pandering to the NP government. In their own defence, *The Citizen* printed an editorial stating that Woods was:

[...] keeping up his highly emotional campaign over the death in detention of his friend, Mr Steven Biko. In his latest outburst, [...] he has criticised *The Citizen* for "creating the absurd impression that the basic cause of the Black Consciousness movement leaders' death was nephritis. One hopes that when the truth comes out such newspapers will swallow their misleading words and headlines." Ditto for you, Mr Woods.²⁶⁹

Rand Daily Mail reporters Mervyn Rees and Chris Day²⁷⁰ took the government-funding rumours to a higher degree with their revelation that approximately 30,000 copies of *The Citizen* were being dumped under cover of the night.²⁷¹ Instead of the 90,000 circulation claimed, *The Citizen* had a daily circulation of only 60,000.²⁷² The *Rand Daily Mail* printed the story suggesting that the NP was funnelling public money to the cash-strapped *Citizen*. Instead of admitting to the truth, *The Citizen* shot back with an angry statement: "We dismiss with contempt the rotten smear by the Left-wing *Rand Daily Mail* about the finances of *The Citizen*."²⁷³ Added to the fray was the testimony of Mulder and other high-ranking government officials, insisting that "the Department of Information and the Government do not 'give funds to *The Citizen*.'"²⁷⁴

Eventually, rumours of reckless spending in the Information Department lead to a financial audit. Rhoodie attempted to block the audit using the Official Secrets Act as

a cloak, then ordered sensitive documents destroyed when his attempt failed and Auditor General Gerald Barrie began his inspection. After Barrie accused the Department of “irregularities,” Rhoodie claimed they were fighting a “no-holds-barred propaganda war against [SA’s] enemies in which normal rules cannot be applied”²⁷⁵—while maintaining that no financial support was given to *The Citizen*. In addition, after the *Sunday Express* printed a story directly accusing the NP government of illegally funding the paper, *Citizen* editors backed Rhoodie’s assertions of the paper’s independence and challenged the *Express* to “prove its unequivocal report.”²⁷⁶

Days later, on 2 November 1978, Judge Anton Mostert did just that. Mostert had been appointed by the government to investigate irregularities which had occurred in SA’s foreign exchange.²⁷⁷ As a result of the investigation, Mostert “discovered that large sums of money had been loaned through Swiss banks in order to support secret projects by the Information Department, including [...] *The Citizen*.”²⁷⁸ During his investigation Mostert listened to the testimony of several people, among them Luyt. While under oath, Luyt confessed that he was not the *de facto* owner of *The Citizen* but merely a front man—that contrary to *Citizen* editorials, statements from the Department of Information, and State President John Vorster himself, *The Citizen* was illegally funded using public money. To back his claim, Luyt produced “an agreement typed on Department of Information stationery and stamped ‘Most Secret,’ [in which] Rhoodie loaned Luyt \$14 million to finance *The Citizen*.”²⁷⁹ In addition, the investigation uncovered an ‘Editorial Charter,’ to be signed by each and every member of *The Citizen*’s editorial staff. In part, the Charter read:

The paper shall undertake to publish nothing that will endanger the political, social or economic positions of the white population [...] shall not tolerate communism or further its aims [...] shall not undertake or publish anything that

will endanger the [current] constitutionally chosen Government [...] and] will at all times strive for the retention of the identity and their own political authority of the white population.²⁸⁰

Luyt's confession and Mostert's subsequent discoveries were met with jubilation from English-language newspapers, but infuriated the Afrikaans press which had—to this point in time—trusted the government and left the story untold. One Afrikaans paper—*Beeld*—went so far as to say that the NP actions were a betrayal of Afrikaans Calvinist principles, demanding both government resignations and a full independent inquiry: "Immediate withdrawal from public life will certainly not be enough," a *Beeld* editorial said, "but it is a first essential requirement."²⁸¹

Before Mostert made the facts surrounding Muldergate public, Vorster retired from the office of Prime Minister.²⁸² His successor, PW Botha, attempted to suppress the damning information, ordering Mostert not to release evidence he had gathered. Mostert resisted "the Prime Minister's pressure to silence him,"²⁸³ announcing at a press conference that he had "endeavoured to discover what particular interest of the State [would be] furthered by suppression, albeit temporary, rather than disclosure of the evidence. I have been able to find none."²⁸⁴ Publicly humiliated (and scorned by the usually supportive Afrikaans press) Botha had little choice but to announce a full-scale commission to examine the scandal, headed by Justice Rudolf Erasmus. Titled the 'Commission of Inquiry into Alleged Irregularities in the Former Department of Information,' the Erasmus Commission's final report found that over the years, running *The Citizen* alone cost the state more than US\$37 million, much of which came from the Department of Defence through the Bureau of State Security.²⁸⁵ It was concluded that the SA "Department of Information had been conducting a secret propaganda war to sell apartheid to the world. The multi-million-dollar campaign had

press in this African country, which appeared to be doing a remarkable job as government watchdog.

Under [Allister] Sparks' editorship, the *Rand Daily Mail* exposed a major scandal in the Government's information services—the 1979 'Muldergate Scandal'—which led to the fall of President John Vorster and his heir apparent, Information Minister Connie Mulder. For this Sparks was named joint International Editor of the Year by the authoritative New York media magazine, *World Press Review*.²⁹³

Although those in the government who were involved in Muldergate tried frantically to cover it up—including legal and extra legal means—the press was, with the assistance of an independent judiciary, still able to expose the crime.²⁹⁴ This in turn allowed the NP to claim that the government had *allowed* the press to function in its role as a watchdog. After the exposure, NP Chief Information Officer Volk Delpont declared (despite bannings, oppressive laws, and intimidation) that “We enjoy a helluva lot of freedom of the press here. We have no reason to complain, especially when compared to the rest of the world.”²⁹⁵

Many domestic and international observers agreed with this appraisal. American scholar Richard Pollak submitted that the “citizens of Cape Town and Johannesburg, of whatever colour, receive much more information about themselves and the rest of the world than their counterparts in Moscow, Peking, and the rest of the Communist bloc.”²⁹⁶ However, Pollak also allowed that South African's defending apartheid “advance this argument with unalloyed passion, as if the shutdown of the *World*, the detention of Percy Qoboza, and the constant harassment of journalists in general somehow become benign when considered in a worldwide perspective.”²⁹⁷ A *Sunday Times* article gave guarded praise, as well. Stephen Mulholland wrote that if “South

Africa can let it all hang out this way, it can rightly claim that it is not, racial matters aside, a totalitarian state, even if it is an authoritarian one.”²⁹⁸

While SA received recognition as a nation where press freedom thrived, it is important to note that in this case, the media was attacking corruption, not NP policy. Pollak rightly surmises that “disclosure of the Muldergate scandal [was] a side issue to the true corruption in South Africa: apartheid.”²⁹⁹ In the months following the exposure of Muldergate, Zwelakhe Sisulu went so far as to say, “the English press gives the government credibility. They can say, look at how we are criticised.”³⁰⁰ In fact, if the *Rand Daily Mail* had criticised apartheid or authoritarian NP policies with the ferocity that it attacked (in this case) government corruption, it is not clear—considering previous bannings—that they would have been permitted to continue publication. But apartheid was not under media scrutiny; lying to support apartheid was.

Mathews suggests that Muldergate, heavy-handed laws used to control information, and so on, were the seeds of downfall sewn by the NP themselves.³⁰¹ As mentioned, 1974 to 1985 was seen as ‘Resistance and Repression’ years. Not only did the Biko and the Muldergate stories break, but this time saw the beginning of a great change in the Afrikaans press. Due primarily to the information scandal, the Afrikaans press began to question their unfaltering support of the NP. In fact, several changes in the law were opposed by the Afrikaans press as being too severe. As well, this time was a “coming of age”³⁰² for black journalists, although black reporters and their papers continued to be hammered by the NP. Dozens of black reporters were jailed after the Soweto riots, several more black papers were banned, and the Black Consciousness-sympathetic Union of Black Journalists was outlawed.

2.2.5 THE STEYN COMMISSION

Also during this time of Resistance and Repression, Judge Marthinus Steyn was appointed by the NP to oversee an 'Inquiry into the Reporting of Security Matters Regarding the SA Defence Force and the SA Police Force.' The Steyn Commission—in 20 months—produced an almost 1,400 page report divided into sections bearing titles such as "The Threat of Stupid and Selfish Attitudes," "The Dangers of Indecision, Inaction and Back-tracking," and "Pariah-making as a Lunacy Generator."³⁰³ The Commission was biased from the beginning, which is clear from these words recorded in the final report:

We are told that the press is a 'watchdog.' But just what does that mean? To whom does the watchdog belong? Whom is it watching and for what reasons? If the press is a watchdog, presumably it is protecting something. Just what is that? Is it the people's watchdog, watching the government, and keeping the government from doing harm to the people? [...] Who gave the watchdog this task? Did the 'people' buy this dog for this purpose?³⁰⁴

Such a statement does little to suggest that the Commission was neutral. Regardless, all interested parties were called to submit statements. After hearing the testimony of hundreds of pro-government witnesses, academics, and Afrikaans and English media representatives (the black press protested and refused to appear), Steyn recommended that "a legally enforced 'professionalisation' of journalism under a vague code of conduct"³⁰⁵ be implemented. Professionalisation included a mandatory registration of journalists, who would have to meet specific criteria and pass certain exams in order to practice as a journalist in SA. In addition, any journalist convicted of 'subversive activities'—either before or after implementation of the proposed registration—would be disallowed from writing in newspapers. This would allow the NP almost absolute

freedom to “sift out those reporters who they found ‘undesirable’ for one reason or another.”³⁰⁶ Steyn stated that SA was under a ‘total onslaught’ from sinister forces, and in such a case the press must act as a “servant of the state, in which the right to know was subordinate to the ‘national interest.’”³⁰⁷ Afrikaans and English newspapers sided together, against the government, and Steyn’s proposed register did not materialise. Instead, after five months of negotiation, the NPU agreed to set up a media council of their own, with the power to reprimand and fine members, but not to ban journalists from writing. Thus we see a “continuing pattern in press-government relations: the government savagely criticises the press and then threatens new crippling press controls, but when the NPU agrees to ‘put its house in order’—i.e., censor itself—the government once again backs down. Until next time.”³⁰⁸

2.2.6 THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

It is interesting that during this time of severe threatened (and real) government repression, an alternative media was able to not only sprout but also take root and grow. The 1980s saw an anti-apartheid press rise up, which “effectively competed for control of communications with the government.”³⁰⁹ How they survived is somewhat of an enigma. Under the PW Botha (pre-state of emergency) government, the press “was by and large well-behaved. The only annoyance was a pesky faction known as the alternative press.”³¹⁰

The alternative press—assisted by a “technological revolution in which the letterpress, photo-typesetting and offset litho were replaced by relatively inexpensive photocopying, and later the personal computer and fax machine”³¹¹—proved to be

difficult to control. Smaller alternative newspapers were printed by community organisations, trade unions, women's groups, church organisations, students associations, and so on.³¹² The effect that the alternative 'David' had on a government 'Goliath' has not yet been examined, however it is widely believed that their impact was tremendously significant.³¹³ And perhaps the alternative press was considered when the NP placed SA under State of Emergency rule in the mid-1980s.

2.2.7 THE PRESS DURING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

As a result of widespread violence and unrest, the NP declared a state of emergency in 36 primarily black areas around the nation on 21 July of 1985.³¹⁴ While police were able (under emergency laws) to prevent any publication commenting on the state of emergency, this was not strictly applied at first.³¹⁵ Seven months after its declaration, during a time of relative quite, the partial state of emergency was lifted. Then on 12 June 1986, Prime Minister PW Botha claimed that "ordinary laws on the statute book [... were] insufficient to enable the government [...] to maintain public order,"³¹⁶ and a nation-wide state of emergency was imposed. While the laws in SA were anything but 'ordinary,' emergency regulations were needed (in part) for the NP government to impose "strict media control [...] thereby ensuring a blackout on information, as in wartime."³¹⁷ Although SA already had more than one hundred permanent laws in place designed (at least in part) to censor the flow of information, "the restrictions imposed under the [1986] state of emergency greatly affected the flow of news about resistance and the police and military action to it."³¹⁸

Four state of emergency regulations were fashioned specifically with controlling the media in mind, those being: Regulation 9, which prohibited taking or publishing photographs or any recordings of areas of 'unrest,' as well as the conduct of any security forces member; Regulation 10, penalising any person who published or distributed a 'subversive statement' with a fine of R20,000 or 10 years in prison (as was standard with apartheid press laws, this regulation was vague and subject to the interpretation of either state security or government officials); Regulation 11, declaring the Minister of Law and Order able to seize any copies of any publication which he considered to contain a subversive statement, or which contained information that the Minister deemed detrimental to public safety; Regulation 12, awarding the Minister of Law and Order the additional right to seize all subsequent copies of any publication he judged to be subversive.³¹⁹ In the 30 days from the 12 July 1986 declaration of a state of emergency until 11 August 1986, 22 journalists had been detained, in conjunction with the deportation of four foreign reporters.³²⁰ It was at this time that an NP official stated, "we do not have censorship. What we have is a limitation on what the newspapers can report."³²¹

Under the 1986 state of emergency, the NP imposed pre-publication censorship. Before they could be printed, articles were to be approved by an office known as "the Inter-departmental Press Liaison Centre, which operated 24 hours a day and was coordinated by the Bureau of Information. Anyone who distributed material before first submitting it for approval was liable to a fine [...] or 10 years in prison."³²² This prior constraint continued until May 1987, when the government declared it no longer necessary. At the onset of the 1986 state of emergency, newspapers printed blank holes in their copy showing the censor's hand, until such actions were decreed subversive

(and thereby a punishable offence) by the police. However, the Natal Supreme Court soon sided with an independent claim and ruled that “the definition of a subversive statement was too vague and therefore had no effect in law.”³²³ In another court victory, a group of English-language newspapers challenged the regulations pertaining to the press, a result of which was the Natal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court setting aside Emergency Regulations 11 and 12. The respite was only temporary, though, as the government revealed new, more severe regulations on 3 September 1986—just two weeks after the previous regulations were struck down.³²⁴

In December 1986, oppressive censorship laws were altered yet again. The new regulations made use of ‘publication control’—which worked hand-in-hand with pre-publication censorship. Under publication control, ‘subversive’ news and editorials could only be printed with the permission of the state. This regulation in essence replaced Regulations 11 and 12, which had been overturned by the Natal Courts: the minister could once again seize newspapers at his discretion.³²⁵ This law, as were most under the state of emergency, was “arbitrary, capricious and degrading.”³²⁶

The state of emergency was renewed on 11 June 1987. Under the existing regulations, several additional papers were banned for one month, the *Sowetan*, the *Weekly Mail*, and the *City Press* among them. Their crime was supporting a ‘Christmas Against the Emergency Campaign,’ organised by the United Democratic Front (UDF), the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and so on.³²⁷ In January 1987, 22 newspapers printed an advertisement produced by the UDF, SACC, COSATU, and various other organisations, calling for an end to the banning of the ANC on the occasion of its 75th anniversary. Police

issued restrictions against all 22 papers, citing the *Government Gazette*, which prohibited during the state of emergency the publication of any material designed to “‘improve, or to promote, the public image’ of any organisation banned under the Internal Security Act; or ‘to amend, to defend, to explain or to justify an action, policy or strategy of such an organisation, of resistance against or subversion of the authority of the State.’”³²⁸ To this, the *Argus* and SAAN launched a successful court appeal. Hours later the NP released an amended regulation, allowing police the power to seize or prohibit any publication containing “any news, comment or advertisement on or in connection with” anything he found to be “subversive.”³²⁹ Again the loopholes were tightened, this time with the precision of a seasoned practitioner.

Early in 1987 the NP attempted to further co-opt the NPU by requesting the media group police the ‘alternative press,’ subjecting NPU regulations upon all non NPU papers. They refused, and the result was the imposition of even more stringent penalties. On 28 August, any paper considered to be printing ‘subversive propaganda’ could now be banned for three months, and face pre-publication censorship.³³⁰ In addition, during this time Home Affairs Minister Stoffel Botha was given the task of shutting down any newspaper not conforming to government policy—primarily the alternative media, which by now had a sizeable following. So successful were his efforts that being banned soon became known as being “stoffeled.”³³¹ Stoffel announced that his word alone would decide what constituted ‘subversive propaganda,’ and that “the courts would not be allowed to decide whether he had made a correct decision [...], aiming towards immediate and unchallengable power to silence, and possibly to cripple financially, publications which offered a challenge to the emergency and the media straightjacket.”³³² The *Cosatu News, South, Weekly*

Mail, and *City Press* received word that they were on a list to be 'stuffed,' but the *New Nation* was the first to be banned under these regulations. Their appeal to the Rand Supreme Court was dismissed, the judge declaring "the emergency was subject to political control rather than legal judgement"³³³—the courts were now on side.

The state of emergency was again renewed, this time on 10 June 1988. All censorship laws were re-imposed, with one addition. Penalties were increased, with the maximum banning period for newspapers being extended to six months.³³⁴ In addition, all journalists working for a news agency were now required to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs. If a news agency failed to have its reporters registered before 31 July, the government would close the agency. By this time there were so many laws in place—applied in such an arbitrary fashion—that newspapers were uncertain as to the perimeters of the law. Said editor Anton Harber: "We have talked with the Minister, with his lackeys, with all sorts of people, and we've never been able to find out where [the perimeters of the law] are. We also know that if we find out where they are, the Minister can wake up one morning and change them, since it's purely at his will."³³⁵

However, it was apparent that not everything was done at the Minister's will. More than 60 freelance journalists refused to register under the Minister's news agency registration plan, even if all legal appeals failed. As a result of their campaign, national and international attention was gained. Furthermore, "it was not clear whether all news gathering would be effected"³³⁶ by their actions. On 21 July the Minister declared that he "never intended" for the registration to extend to all journalists working with news agencies, and the regulation concerning the registration programme was repealed. Not only did this act of solidarity clip one branch from the

ever-growing tree of NP censorship, but it also became clear to the government that their strategy of selectively banning newspapers was not silencing the alternative press. "Banning newspapers caused a storm of local and international protest and the papers had been able to continue after the ban had ended."³³⁷ As the state of emergency was drawing to a close (and in the face of increasing media opposition) the NP began rethinking their strategy.

By the time the state of emergency was renewed on 9 June 1989, the NP had shifted their censorship strategy away from oppressive threats and banning toward a tactically more acceptable method of control. The government would now as a rule take individual newspapers to court, taking action against them by charging them with violating permanent Acts *and* state of emergency regulations. By September of that year, several individual editors and reporters had been charged, and were facing fines of up to R20,000 or a jail term of up to 10 years—or both.³³⁸ One person to fall prey to this NP strategy was Max du Preez, editor of the alternative Afrikaans paper *Vrye Weekblad*. Du Preez was given a suspended sentence of six months and a fine of R1,000 for quoting banned ANC leader Joe Slovo. "I think the government's strategy is to bleed us to death," said a perceptive du Preez of a separate court action being taken against his paper. "We are being sued by the state president, and this is the first time in SA's history, that a newspaper has been sued by a state president for libel."³³⁹

Then, in February of 1990 President FW de Klerk surprised most of the world with his announcement that the ANC, Pan African Congress, the South African Communist Party, and the UDF would be unbanned and invited into the political arena. At that time, de Klerk also lifted "the onerous censorship imposed on the press during a three-

year state of emergency,”³⁴⁰ but chose to leave in place pre-state of emergency press laws. According to one journalist, the “impulse to crack down still [existed]”³⁴¹ in the security forces, but reporters and all democratic-minded South Africans could suddenly see a light at the end of the long, dark tunnel.

2.4 SUMMARY

The media in SA has three distinct histories; one English, one Afrikaans, and one black. The English media was started for financial reasons, and opposed government control so long as it did not dampen profits. When it became obvious that the government had the potential to damage their bottom line, the English press relented and co-operated with the government. They continued to resist so long as it was financially viable. The Afrikaans press began for political reasons, and supported various Afrikaner political parties from their advent. The Afrikaans media helped to build a language and a culture, and worked to keep that culture distinct and in a position of advantage. The black press was never truly black for any great length of time. Rather, it was white owned, and run with profit in mind. Where the black press did concern themselves with politics, they were hampered by oppressive governments, long before the NP took power.

The NP continued a trend which had already begun by imposing strict press control bills. However, the NP did it with an adeptness that would be difficult to parallel. While the NP did not demand media support, they became increasingly impatient with dissent. The NP set a trend of using commissions staffed with party supporters to pave the way for laws which increased media restrictions. When newspapers and

reporters did not fall in line with those laws they were fined, threatened, or banned (as was *The World*). The NP resorted to extra-legal means to shore media support when it covertly opened *The Citizen*.

The Citizen and other papers covered the news in their own unique ways. As illustrated by examining the Biko story, the Afrikaans paper *Die Burger* was biased in favour of the government's account, giving little space and credence to opposing views. *The World*, a black paper, also lacked objectivity. However, their lack of 'professional' journalistic practices went against the wishes of the NP, and the paper was shut down for their efforts. White owners insisted that had they known the seriousness of the black editor's actions, they would have sacrificed him in order to keep generating revenues. The English *Cape Times* was most matter-of-fact of all media. However, in a case such as the death of Biko, a more in-depth investigative approach would have been suitable. However, the English press primarily stayed neutral, and therefore stayed in production. The government-owned *Citizen* was fully one-sided and followed the Propaganda Model thoroughly.

The truth behind *The Citizen* was discovered during 'Muldergate,' and that cog of the propaganda machine ground to a halt. Even with its strict laws and various press commissions the NP was unable to completely control an increasingly resistant press: indeed, an alternative press gained momentum. As well, the Afrikaans papers themselves began to limit their support of the NP, perhaps because of the corruption exposed in the information scandal. Instead of cleaning up government, the NP designed laws which appeared to be fashioned to prevent future government embarrassment, which did not sit well with the Afrikaans media.

Because of their waning control over the media (or rather, increased media resistance), the NP felt that extra means were necessary to shore up power. In 1986 a nation-wide state of emergency was declared, with controlling the press as one of the key items on the agenda—making the press system even more restrained than previously was the case. Finally, for various reasons and after more than 40 years of political domination, the NP began negotiations with opposition groups for a peaceful transition to democracy, part of which included lifting limitations on press freedoms.

2.5 NOTES

¹ There is confusion as to when the *Commercial Advertiser* first published. Rene de Villiers in *English-Speaking South Africa Today* quotes an article written in 1823, whereas Elaine Potter in *The Press as Opposition* gives the start date of January 7, 1824. Others who mention this paper are vague as to when it was launched. Still, it was some time after the *Gazette*.

² Elaine Potter, *The Press as Opposition*, 1975, p. 32.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. As Potter notes, this new position of guardian of liberal rights was not congruent with Greig's earlier capitalist mandate. While not wishing to judge the Greig's motives, one must wonder if his willingness to adapt a liberal stance was not a good business practice in itself.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

⁸ Rene de Villiers, *English-Speaking South Africa Today*, p. 344. Ratified in April of 1829, this act is sometimes called the Ordinance of 1828.

⁹ William Hachten, *Muffled Drums*, p. 239.

¹⁰ De Villiers, p. 344.

¹¹ The English and the Afrikaans press had different target audiences (linguistically and ideologically), but competition for readers to increase circulation did exist.

¹² Cited in Potter, p. 36. This statement would hardly contribute to the cause attempting to ease Afrikaner 'disaffection and ill-feeling towards everything English.'

¹³ Cited in Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁹ Hachten, p. 240.

²⁰ De Villiers, p. 344.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 345.

²³ Ibid. It is likely that government action against the paper's criticism simply served to increase *The Comet's* circulation.

- ²⁴ Ibid., p. 345.
- ²⁵ Hachten, p. 240.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ De Villiers, p. 346.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Hachten, p. 241.
- ³⁰ Potter, p. 33.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Hachten, p. 240.
- ³⁴ Potter, p. 34.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Hermann Giliomee and Lawrence Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation-Building*, p. 31.
- ³⁷ Johan Muller, 'Press houses at War: A Brief History of Nasionale Pers and Perskor,' in Tomaselli, Tomaselli, and Muller, *Studies on the South African Media*, p. 119, 120.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 120. Note that these periods are all pre-apartheid.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ The paper shall be referred to by its later name, *Die Burger*, to avoid confusion.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 121.
- ⁴² William Hachten and C. Anthony Giffard, *The Press and Apartheid*, p. 180.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Muller, p. 120.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 124.
- ⁴⁶ Hachten, p. 241.
- ⁴⁷ Muller, p. 125.
- ⁴⁸ De Villiers, p. 345.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Only to be resurrected as a Press Control Bill that would transcend linguistic divides.
- ⁵¹ Muller, p. 128. Perhaps the Afrikaans media's lack of past spirit was a result of Hertzog's threats, perhaps a desire to see an Afrikaner party take a political majority on the national level.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 126.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 127.
- ⁵⁴ Hachten, p. 242.
- ⁵⁵ Leonard W. Doob, *Communication in Africa: A Search for Boundaries*, p. 18.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 144.
- ⁵⁸ Hachten, p. 242. It seems that for MPs of the day (all white) being criticised by the media was bad. Being criticised by the black media, though, was intolerable.
- ⁵⁹ Hachten, p. 242.
- ⁶⁰ Hachten and Giffard, p. 146.
- ⁶¹ Hachten, p. 242. As shall be seen, even these two stalwart papers folded as the pressure increased.
- ⁶² Ibid., p. 242-243.
- ⁶³ Cited in Karen Martin and Kevin Moorhead, *Legislation Which Restricted the Press During the Apartheid Years: FXI Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, May 1997, <http://wn.apc.org/fxi/whats.htm>. Accessed 5 January 1998. Unfortunately, there are no page numbers on this extensive document. However, categories are clearly marked and information is relatively simple to find.
- ⁶⁴ Cited in Ibid. Emphasis added.
- ⁶⁵ Potter, p. 48.
- ⁶⁶ Hachten and Giffard, p. 147.
- ⁶⁷ Potter, p. 47.
- ⁶⁸ Hachten and Giffard, p. 181.

- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Hachten, p. 242.
- ⁷¹ Giliomee and Schlemmer, p. 63.
- ⁷² Cited in Ibid., p. 63.
- ⁷³ Hachten and Giffard, p. 178.
- ⁷⁴ Richard Pollak, Up Against Apartheid, p. 13.
- ⁷⁵ Elaine Potter, The Press as Opposition, p. 102.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 102.
- ⁷⁷ De Villiers, p. 346.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 346-347.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 347. Two other reports preceded the final report, but according to Potter (106) they were "not much more revealing."
- ⁸⁰ Anthony Giffard, 'Muldergate Scandal Exposed Government Propaganda Campaign,' in Sperling and McKenzie, eds. Getting the Real Story: Censorship and Propaganda in South Africa, p. 142.
- ⁸¹ Potter, p. 103.
- ⁸² De Villiers, p. 347.
- ⁸³ Potter, p. 114.
- ⁸⁴ Asmal, Asmal, and Roberts, Reconciliation Through Truth, p. 78.
- ⁸⁵ Alex Hepple, Censorship and Press Control in South Africa, p. 7.
- ⁸⁶ Humphrey Tyler, 'South Africa press balks at strictures,' *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 August 1980, p. 7.
- ⁸⁷ This section (concerning laws) makes extensive use of a 1997 Freedom of Expression Institution submission to the TRC. Written by Martin and Moorhead, the submission itself makes extensive use of government legislation and SA authors such as Harvey Tyson—all materials that are not commonly available outside of SA. This section would have been significantly more difficult without the work of Martin and Moorhead.
- ⁸⁸ Potter, p. 114.
- ⁸⁹ Cited in Martin and Moorhead.
- ⁹⁰ Potter, p. 115.
- ⁹¹ Martin and Moorhead.
- ⁹² Ibid.
- ⁹³ Potter, p. 117.
- ⁹⁴ Cited in Ibid., p. 118.
- ⁹⁵ Martin and Moorhead.
- ⁹⁶ Christopher Merrett, A Culture of Censorship, p. 116-117.
- ⁹⁷ Martin and Moorhead.
- ⁹⁸ Hachten and Giffard, p. 159.
- ⁹⁹ Martin and Moorhead.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid..
- ¹⁰¹ Anthony Mathews, The Darker Reaches of Government, p. 144.
- ¹⁰² Martin and Moorhead.
- ¹⁰³ Potter, p. 122-123.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 120.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁶ Martin and Moorhead.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁸ Potter, p. 123.
- ¹⁰⁹ Martin and Moorhead.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid..
- ¹¹¹ Before this Act, *The Guardian* had registered under several names, and when banned under the Suppression of Communism Act, was able to reappear without delay.
- ¹¹² Martin and Moorhead.
- ¹¹³ Ibid.

- ¹¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁵ Hachten and Giffard, p. 160.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 162.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 161.
- ¹¹⁸ Martin and Moorhead.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.
- ¹²¹ Ibid.
- ¹²² Cited in Ibid.
- ¹²³ Ibid.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid.
- ¹²⁶ Cited in Ibid.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid.
- ¹³⁰ This is important—where newspapers united and stood against government incursions, the government changed their proposed policy, much like in the early history of SA's press.
- ¹³¹ Martin and Moorhead.
- ¹³² Ibid.
- ¹³³ Ibid.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid.
- ¹³⁶ Ibid.
- ¹³⁷ Merrett, p. 41.
- ¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 79.
- ¹³⁹ Tomaselli, Tomaselli, and Muller, p. 87.
- ¹⁴⁰ Tomaselli, Tomaselli, and Muller, p. 90. Italics theirs.
- ¹⁴¹ Hachten and Giffard, p. 181.
- ¹⁴² Hachten and Giffard, p. 58.
- ¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 50.
- ¹⁴⁴ Merrett, p. 66. This sounds as though elements within the English media were attempting to install as less restrained, more directed media.
- ¹⁴⁵ Potter, p. 127. While the NPU was comprised of English and Afrikaans journalists, the majority were English. The majority agreed with these self-censoring steps.
- ¹⁴⁶ Tomaselli, Tomaselli, and Muller, p. 70.
- ¹⁴⁷ Hachten, p. 237.
- ¹⁴⁸ Cited in Tomaselli, Tomaselli, and Muller, p. 47.
- ¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 74.
- ¹⁵⁰ Objective in the traditional 'just-the-facts' sense idealised by many reporters.
- ¹⁵¹ 'Biko dead after hunger strike; wide reaction,' *Die Burger*, 14 September 1977, p. 1, 4. Translated by Duncan Oelschig, 15 November 1997. Keep in mind that small headlines are symbolically less important than large.
- ¹⁵² Ibid.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁶ 'Min. Kruger: Customary investigation of Biko's death,' *Die Burger*, 15 September 1977, p. 3. Translated by Duncan Oelschig, 15 November 1997.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁹ 'Biko definitely fed intravenously, says Kruger,' *Die Burger*, 16 September 1977, p. 1. Translated by Duncan Oelschig, 15 November 1997.

¹⁶⁰ 'Biko: Woods says reasons are untrue,' *Die Burger*, 16 September 1977, p. 5. Translated by Duncan Oelschig, 15 November 1997.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² 'Biko's death: Kruger explains,' *Die Burger*, 17 September 1977, p. 1. Translated by Duncan Oelschig, 15 November 1997.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ 'Bodies in blood urged in Biko pamphlet,' *Die Burger*, 19 September 1977, p. 1. Translated by Duncan Oelschig, 15 November 1997.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. As mentioned, this is the last Biko-related article to be printed on *Die Burger*'s front page. While other stories followed, they were infrequent and relatively insignificant for purposes of this work.

¹⁶⁶ 'Biko Death: US Lashes Out,' *The World*, 14 September 1977, p. 1,2.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Donald Woods, 'Tributes to a great man: Biko was a man of peace,' *The World*, 14 September 1977, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ 'Shock waves at his death echo round South Africa,' *The World*, 14 September 1977, p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ Wendy Woods, 'Steve—The statesman,' *The World*, 14 September 1977, p. 3.

¹⁷⁶ Donald Woods, 'Tributes to a great man: Biko was a man of peace,' *The World*, 14 September 1977, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ 'Shock waves at his death echo round South Africa,' *The World*, 14 September 1977, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ 'Nats Laugh Over Biko's Death,' *The World*, 15 September 1977, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Percy Qoboza, 'Detentions leave us cold, Jimmy,' *The World*, 15 September 1977, p. 6.

¹⁸² A. Duigan, 'Detentions leave us cold, Jimmy,' *The World*, 15 September 1977, p. 6.

¹⁸³ 'Editor's Home Bombed,' *The World*, 19 September 1977, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ '20 000 bid farewell to Steve Biko,' *The World*, 26 September 1977, p. 6. Emphasis added.

¹⁸⁵ Oliphant Cartoon, *The World*, 3 October 1977, p. 4.

¹⁸⁶ 'Kruger Acts On *The World*,' *The World*, 12 October 1977, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ 'Charge or release...', *The World*, 12 October 1977, p. 1.

¹⁸⁸ Percy Qoboza, 'Mr. Kruger and *The World*,' *The World*, 17 October 1977, p. 4.

¹⁸⁹ Hachten and Giffard, p. 135. Argus Group manager John Marquard stated that the action taken against *The World* was drastic, and had Kruger asked him to tone down the rhetoric there would have been no need to shut down the paper. "Just one call to me would have settled the matter," he said. *The World* did not have 'better' journalists than *Die Burger*. The government made it extremely difficult to uncover facts, and virtually impossible to print them. This, according to Dr. Annette Seegers, "leads [over time] to the decline in journalistic skill," a legacy of apartheid to this day. The papers printed similar 'facts' from opposite points of view, emphasising some and downplaying or eliminating others.

¹⁹⁰ 'Biko died after hunger strike—Kruger,' *Cape Times*, 14 September 1977, p. 1.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 2

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 2

¹⁹⁶ 'Shock, grief at death of Biko,' *Cape Times*, 14 September 1977, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ 'A generation of martyrs,' *Cape Times*, 14 September 1977, p. 6.

- ²⁰⁰ Ibid.
- ²⁰¹ 'Call to fast in protest over Biko,' *Cape Times*, 15 September 1977, p. 1.
- ²⁰² 'Kruger: Biko death leaves me cold,' *Cape Times*, 15 September 1977, p. 1.
- ²⁰³ 'Without fluids, death comes soon,' *Cape Times*, 15 September 1977, p. 2.
- ²⁰⁴ 'Biko was drip-fed by vein—Kruger,' *Cape Times*, 16 September 1977, p. 1.
- ²⁰⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁶ Donald Woods can hardly be hailed as one with journalistic objectivity. A friend of Biko, Woods often used his position as a platform to express his political ideas. As Dr. Annette Seegers said this is only "legitimate, of course, if you take the view that, under apartheid, the ends justify the means." His was, though, a voice echoed by a majority of the SA population.
- ²⁰⁷ 'Biko death: Editor tells of secret code,' *Cape Times*, 16 September 1977, p. 3.
- ²⁰⁸ 'Black consciousness,' *Cape Times*, 16 September 1977, p. 6.
- ²⁰⁹ Donald Woods, 'Thoughts can't be banned,' *Cape Times*, 16 September 1977, p. 6.
- ²¹⁰ Margaret Malherbe, 'Biko: End the detentions,' *Cape Times*, 16 September 1977, p. 6.
- ²¹¹ 'Kruger: I never said he starved,' *Cape Times*, 17 September 1977, p. 1.
- ²¹² 'Woods offers to quit if Biko did die of hunger,' *Cape Times*, 17 September 1977, p. 2.
- ²¹³ Gerald Shaw, 'Biko—and the failure to understand,' *Cape Times*, 18 September 1977, p. 8.
- ²¹⁴ This fact is covered in depth in the section entitled 'Muldergate.'
- ²¹⁵ 'Biko Was On Hunger Strike—Kruger,' *The Citizen*, 14 September 1977, p. 1
- ²¹⁶ Ibid.
- ²¹⁷ Ibid.
- ²¹⁸ Ibid.
- ²¹⁹ And, from a cynical viewpoint, perhaps to the credit of a propaganda machine that did not want *The Citizen* to be seen as biased toward the government.
- ²²⁰ Aida Parker, 'Kruger Silent On Biko Claims,' *The Citizen*, 15 September 1977, p. 1
- ²²¹ Ibid.
- ²²² Ibid.
- ²²³ Ibid.
- ²²⁴ 'Biko Was Drip-Fed—Kruger,' *The Citizen*, 16 September 1977, p. 1.
- ²²⁵ '1510 Black demos appear in court,' *The Citizen*, 16 September 1977, p. 1.
- ²²⁶ Aida Parker, 'People's War Plot Revealed,' *The Citizen*, 17 September 1977, p. 1.
- ²²⁷ Ibid.
- ²²⁸ Ibid.
- ²²⁹ Ibid.
- ²³⁰ Ibid. This sort of reporting follows perfectly the 'Propaganda Model.'
- ²³¹ 'Cool it,' *The Citizen*, 17 September 1977, p. 6.
- ²³² Ibid.
- ²³³ Aida Parker, 'Biko: Cabinet Is Worried,' *The Citizen*, 19 September 1977, p. 1.
- ²³⁴ 'Biko: Streicher hits leftists as others demand Kruger's resignation,' *The Citizen*, 20 September 1977, p. 2.
- ²³⁵ Ibid. One must wonder if Mr. Streicher's views have been altered somewhat since the ANC assumed power in South Africa.
- ²³⁶ A. Mehliiss. 'Biko's death was kept in perspective,' *The Citizen*, 23 September 1977, p. 14.
- ²³⁷ Aida Parker, 'Biko Had A Kidney Illness,' *The Citizen*, 26 September 1977, p. 1.
- ²³⁸ Aida Parker, 'Biko: The True Facts Revealed – Autopsy report shows: No visible sign of blows, No shocks or broken ribs,' *The Citizen*, 27 October 1977, p. 1.
- ²³⁹ Ibid. The "impeccable medical sources" were unnamed.
- ²⁴⁰ Aida Parker, 'Biko died of brain injuries—Kruger's admission,' *The Citizen*, 10 November 1977, p. 11. The correct spelling of the ailment mentioned is *uraemia*.
- ²⁴¹ E-mail from Professor Annette Seegers to Glen Freeman, p. 6.
- ²⁴² Ibid.
- ²⁴³ Chomsky and Herman, A Propaganda Model.
- ²⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁴⁵ John C. Laurence. Race, Propaganda and South Africa. p. 171.

- ²⁴⁶ Aida Parker, 'Biko Died of Brain Injuries – Kruger's admission,' *The Citizen*, 10 November 1977, p. 11.
- ²⁴⁷ This account will not explain the foreign aspects of Muldergate. Instead, it will focus on the domestic aspects of the information scandal.
- ²⁴⁸ Cited in Hachten and Giffard, p. 230.
- ²⁴⁹ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 231.
- ²⁵⁰ That the English-language newspapers were liberal is not in question – the question is whether they were actually a threat to the stability of the nation, as was the NP claim.
- ²⁵¹ Anthony Giffard, 'Muldergate Scandal Exposed Government Propaganda Campaign,' in Sperling and McKenzie, eds., p. 142.
- ²⁵² Hachten and Giffard, p. 234.
- ²⁵³ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 244. 'Objective' is an interesting choice of words on the part of Mulder, considering the 'objectivity' of the *Citizen's* Editorial Charter which he signed, and which will be discussed later.
- ²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229.
- ²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- ²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 236.
- ²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 231. While the NP wanted to improve SA's "quality of news," there was no programme to improve the quality of *journalism* in SA. 'Quality of news' implies that officials wanted 'good news' (supporting NP policies) to balance critical stories.
- ²⁵⁸ Cited in Hachten and Giffard, p. 238.
- ²⁵⁹ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 239.
- ²⁶⁰ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 240.
- ²⁶¹ Pollak, p. 21.
- ²⁶² Mervyn Rees and Chris Day, *Muldergate*, p. 10.
- ²⁶³ Cited in Hachten and Giffard, p. 232.
- ²⁶⁴ Said by University of Alberta Professor J. Paul Johnston in his 'Media and Politics' course, 16 March 1998.
- ²⁶⁵ Cited in Hachten and Giffard, p. 232.
- ²⁶⁶ Gordon Winter, 'World telling lies about SA prison system: It's a shining example, says Dutch journalist,' *The Citizen*, 8 October 1977, p. 11.
- ²⁶⁷ Is "the best" prison the one which has no escapes? One that has high-quality food? 'The best' does not necessarily refer to the way in which prisoners are treated.
- ²⁶⁸ Rees and Day, p. 100.
- ²⁶⁹ 'Ditto, Mr Woods,' *The Citizen*, 7 October 1977, p. 6.
- ²⁷⁰ Rees and Day were seen as the most tenacious reporters following the information scandal. Their paper gave them unlimited funds, and were able to follow Rhodie to Europe and South America, attaining exclusive interviews from the Secretary of Information who was now running from SA authorities. See Rees and Day's *Muldergate: The Story of the Info Scandal*.
- ²⁷¹ Rees and Day, p. 11.
- ²⁷² Not only was this defrauding advertisers who believed they were reaching 90,000 people, but it begged the question 'Whose money is keeping *The Citizen* afloat?'
- ²⁷³ Cited in Pollak, p. 22.
- ²⁷⁴ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ²⁷⁵ Hachten and Giffard, p. 242-243.
- ²⁷⁶ Pollak, p. 22.
- ²⁷⁷ Strict foreign exchange laws had been enacted by the NP in order to stem the exodus of capital from SA.
- ²⁷⁸ Giffard, p. 146-147.
- ²⁷⁹ Pollak, p. 22.
- ²⁸⁰ 'Citizen's Editorial Charter Exposed,' *Rand Daily Mail*, 3 November 1978, p. 1.
- ²⁸¹ Cited in Pollak, p. 25.
- ²⁸² Vorster resigned "in disgrace" from politics on 4 June 1979. See Pollak, p. 32.
- ²⁸³ Rees and Day, p. 100.

- ²⁸⁴ Cited in Ibid., p. 96.
- ²⁸⁵ Pollak, p. 118. The total cost of the Information Scandal may never be known.
- ²⁸⁶ Hachten and Giffard, p. 230. *The Citizen* also watered-down the news, focussing on non-political aspects of black life such as sports—an area which was not necessarily censored.
- ²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 230. Luyt was left unscathed, and went on to bigger and better ventures.
- ²⁸⁸ Pollak, p. 34. Rhodie was freed on appeal, and never again saw the inside of a jail.
- ²⁸⁹ Muriel Horrell, ed., *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1981*, p. 100.
- ²⁹⁰ Cited in Pollak, p. 69. The additional 14.6 % of the political broadcasting were neutral facts and information, such as the location of polling stations, and so on.
- ²⁹¹ Hachten and Giffard, p. 201.
- ²⁹² Laurence, p. 44.
- ²⁹³ 'Allister Sparks: Biographical Information,' Discussion Forum, <http://www.kit.nl/kvc/sparks1.html>, accessed 2 February 1998.
- ²⁹⁴ Hachten and Giffard, p. 230.
- ²⁹⁵ Cited in Pollak, p. 18.
- ²⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 18.
- ²⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 18.
- ²⁹⁸ Cited in Hachten and Giffard, p. 261.
- ²⁹⁹ Pollak, p. 18.
- ³⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 18.
- ³⁰¹ Mathews, p. 37.
- ³⁰² Pollak, p. 87.
- ³⁰³ Dumisani S. Kumalo, 'South Africa's threatened press,' *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 August 1982, p. 23.
- ³⁰⁴ Cited in Asmal, Asmal, and Roberts, p. 93.
- ³⁰⁵ Hachten and Giffard, p. 82.
- ³⁰⁶ Loraine Gordon, ed. *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1980*, p. 288.
- ³⁰⁷ Merrett, p. 85.
- ³⁰⁸ Hachten and Giffard, p. 86.
- ³⁰⁹ Tomaselli, Tomaselli, and Muller, p. 89.
- ³¹⁰ Irwin Manoim, 'Quiet exit for the Stoffeler,' *Electronic Mail and Guardian*, 23 April 1998.
- ³¹¹ Merrett, p. 89.
- ³¹² Ibid.
- ³¹³ Several contributors to Sperling and McKenzie's *Getting the Real Story* noted that the alternative press was "an important catalyst" (p. 41) for change. As well, Jackson dedicates a chapter to the alternative press in *Breaking the Story*. However, as far as this writer is aware, no study has been published which would aid our understanding of how they survived or their role in overthrowing apartheid, if any.
- ³¹⁴ Compared to other periods examined in this work, this period gets relatively little space. At the time of writing, little was available on this subject—a period which demands a more thorough examination by the academic world.
- ³¹⁵ Anthony Giffard, 'Government tries to force bad news about South Africa off the front pages and TV news,' in Sperling and McKenzie, p. 89.
- ³¹⁶ Jim Corrigan, *Subverting Apartheid: Education, Information and Culture Under Emergency Rule*, p. 12.
- ³¹⁷ Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Rule of Fear: human rights in South Africa*, p. 15.
- ³¹⁸ Corrigan, p. 8.
- ³¹⁹ Regulations paraphrased from Corrigan, p. 12-13.
- ³²⁰ Corrigan, p. 13.
- ³²¹ Merrett, p. 115.
- ³²² Anthony Giffard, 'Government tries to force bad news about South Africa off the front pages and TV news,' in Sperling and McKenzie, p. 89.
- ³²³ Corrigan, p. 14.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

³²⁶ Patrick Nagle, 'Government effectively puts the lid on South African discontent,' in Sperling and McKenzie, p. 91.

³²⁷ Corrigan, p. 16.

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

³³¹ Manoim, 'Quiet Exit for the Stoffeler.'

³³² Corrigan, p. 20.

³³³ Ibid., p. 21.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

³³⁵ Anton Harber, 'Foreign support is vital to the survival of the alternative press, says co-editor of one of South Africa's leading opposition papers,' in Sperling and McKenzie, p. 43.

³³⁶ Corrigan, p. 22.

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

³³⁹ Max du Preez, 'The government cracks down on South Africa's first anti-apartheid newspaper published in Afrikaans,' in Sperling and McKenzie, p. 60-61.

³⁴⁰ 'De Klerk Hits the Accelerator,' *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 February 1990, p. 20.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

3. THE FUTURE OF THE PRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The history of SA's media is a long and complex one. The subject of a TRC investigation, dozens of people have given hundreds of hours of testimony and many more pages of documents. Different groups have different views as to what actually happened, some saying the English-language press is as culpable as the Afrikaans press in defending apartheid. One-time banned editor Jon Qwelane charged "all the mainstream newspapers—English and Afrikaans—with collusion with apartheid and having a hand, directly or indirectly, in the subsequent murder of tens of thousands of black people by the apartheid army and police."¹ Others say the English press did everything within its power to bring to light the atrocities of apartheid, declaring that what they did "was not self-censorship. It was a conscious government move. [...] It would cost us half a million a day to be closed down. Well, there aren't many days that we could lose half a million and survive."²

In addition, Afrikaans news organisations such as Nasionale Pers declined to make any submissions to the TRC whatsoever, stating that "the newspaper group had not committed any human rights violations and therefore had nothing to confess."³ But in "a stunning *mea culpa*," more than 100 Afrikaans reporters broke ranks, submitting individual applications and accounts of the dark days of apartheid.⁴ One journalist admitted that Afrikaans papers "were closely aligned to the National Party, which effectively paralysed their critical function. We've been close to the beast and we should tell [the TRC] what it was like. Let's acknowledge it, we often didn't report as well as we should have."⁵ With such divergent accounts of the past, it would be difficult to say with any degree of certainty what the future holds for SA's media.

Gordon Jackson notes several additional factors that must be considered when debating possibility of press freedom in SA's future. As impediments to press freedom, Jackson has listed political instability, the government's human rights legacy, intolerance of free expression, and an ill-defined commitment to press freedom. SA is currently in a tenuous situation, with violence, economic turmoil, and political parties expressing frustrations at the ANC's lock on power. "Regardless of the goodwill brought to the political process, or domestic and international pressures to devise a new political order, enormous barriers lie in the way of attaining a just, stable [...] political order."⁶ In Jackson's words, if the political house of cards comes tumbling down for any reason whatsoever, freedom of the press may be a casualty.

Authoritarianism in SA is gone but not forgotten. While "the apparatus of state censorship has fallen into virtual disuse,"⁷ since the ANC took power, several laws (such as the notorious Section 205) are still on the books. It is possible that should violence flare and the political situation in SA become unmanageable, the new government could invoke some of these past laws, claiming to need them until the situation improves. "The government homage to press freedom that marked the apartheid era would be echoed, and the situation would—from the press's perspective—simply be a matter of watching the same play with a different cast."⁸ Indeed, in a *deja vu* like statement, ANC leader Thabo Mbeki has accused the media of dwelling on negative things and distorting government developments. Calling the press "our enemies," Mbeki said that they "want to deny that any [success] has happened and if this does not succeed, they try their best to hide the truth both from ourselves and the rest of the world."⁹

In addition, not all South Africans share the tolerance for freedom of expression that white liberals do; "nor have whites presented a compellingly attractive record as to why these values are worth embracing anyway."¹⁰ Just as many equate capitalism with oppression because of their experiences, so too many view liberal values (such as freedom of the press) as "part of the baggage of white domination."¹¹ This is obvious from the statements of Nelson Mandela, who "described the press as 'still controlled by white conservative proprietors' who are 'embittered [...] and out of touch with black society,' and who co-opt black journalists to do their 'dirty work.'"¹²

Finally on Jackson's list of possible factors impeding press freedom is an ill-defined commitment to that freedom. The new SA constitution enshrines press freedom, as does the ANC charter. But, Jackson quotes an ANC official as saying, "we will not tolerate anti-Semitism, or Nazi propaganda in the media,"¹³ to which Jackson wonders 'who will define these terms?' and 'what else will be added to the list of undesirable material?' As well, "academics and publishers, groups formerly firm in their opposition to censorship, have [...] collaborated with education authorities to expunge racially offensive words from new editions of Afrikaans classics,"¹⁴ hardly a sign that 'free speech' will be tolerated. ANC Women's League Chair Winnie Mandela has gone one step further, stating that 'unflattering stories' are not welcome, that she and her group will 'find ways to shut the press down' if such stories are printed.¹⁵

As negative as the above points would seem for a free press, Jackson is able to outline six factors favourable to the consolidation of press freedom in SA. They include a

lengthy tradition of press freedom, a broader culture base, an established press, independent ownership, ideological diversity, and world and domestic expectations.

Regardless of past attempts by the NP to suppress freedom of the press in SA, the earliest history of the media in SA is one of victories against an oppressive government. From the early 1800s when Pringle and Fairbairn fought with Lord Somerset to keep their *Commercial Adviser* free, through the apartheid years, to this very day, certain members of the media have demanded the freedom to transmit information to the people. The members of SA's alternative press are a new breed of 'freedom of information' fighters, built upon this solid tradition. Even the Afrikaans press has changed from the days when the NP was supported without question. It is clear that "despite the problems of public apathy and decades of abuse heaped on the press, the idea of free expression is not alien to South Africans."¹⁶

Added to this tradition is the point that the press is acting within a broader cultural base in SA. The institutions that make up civil society are reasonably strong among the various groups in SA. Churches, trade unions, universities, women's organisations, cultural associations and so on, all stand outside government. As well, most have in the past lent support to the liberal ideas in which freedom of expression is a considerable component. "The press therefore is not the only voice seeking to secure freedom of expression."¹⁷ With the combined efforts of these groups, it would be difficult indeed to re-impose strict censorship laws, even for a time.

Tying into the point that SA has a lengthy tradition of press freedom is the fact that the press there is also firmly established. SA reporters are seasoned professionals, and

have "vast reservoirs of experience and skills in producing newspapers."¹⁸

Furthermore, they have years of experience in coping with a government hostile to the aims of the media; lessons which would be quickly applied should any future government attempt to suppress those freedoms.

As well, the media in SA is independent—not necessarily economically,¹⁹ but politically. Several African nations bought-out independent newspapers or nationalised them outright, but this is not the case in SA. The ANC has shown a high regard for a free market economy, including the private ownership of media outlets. Politically, some papers are pro-government, while others are less so. Regardless, their independence from government makes papers an important force in press freedom. Linked to this is Jackson's next point, that there is great ideological diversity among SA newspapers. The press there is almost bipolar, with publication ranging from the extreme left wing to the extreme right, with every spectre in the middle represented. There are even newspapers for the homeless, which must qualify to be classed as Lowenstein's 'social-libertarian,' one in which most (if not all) viewpoints are heard. "Such diversity [...] both reflects press freedom and helps sustain it."²⁰

Finally, Jackson notes that world and domestic expectations will play a significant role in keeping the press free. People have paid attention to apartheid, and are continuing to pay attention as the situation in SA unfolds. Those people fully expect the new SA to be a better place (with regard to liberties) than was apartheid SA. Likewise, SA is somewhat dependent upon international groups such as the International Monetary Fund, whose assistance comes tied to conditions—one of those being a more open, liberally democratic society. "At home, too, many [...] have high expectations of an

improved human rights record.”²¹ So far as the press is concerned, these high expectations have been met, with most censorship laws being revoked, and Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi assuring the public that “authorities would not use the infamous Section 205 of the Criminal Procedures Act against journalists until it is reviewed.”²² The South African high court has also overturned NP defamation case law, no longer forcing journalists to prove “absolute truth as a defence in defamation cases against them, just that they took reasonable steps while researching the story.”²³ The weight of the above factors combined is significant, and acts as a monumental deterrent to the suppression of press freedom.

One point in the favour of the freedom of the press that Jackson neglected to mention is the fact that the Internet and other technologies have become “increasingly important tools for reporting and for circumventing censorship and repression.”²⁴ A full half of the Johannesburg *Star*’s 200,000 readers use the Internet. Nigerian journalist-in-exile Babafemi Ojuda publishes “on the run, hiding from the police, because of constant threats from the Nigerian government [...] even after the government seized his newspaper’s equipment.”²⁵ While access to the Internet is still prohibitively expensive for many Africans, costs are coming down and equipment is being introduced to schools and libraries, making it more accessible. Regardless, the Internet has a democratising influence throughout Africa. “With the Internet you don’t need to worry about what your white boss will think, or your black boss, for that matter. Get on NetNoir and other discussion groups, and get your message out.”²⁶

In order for the media to play a role in democratic consolidation in SA, members of the press must place one thing above race, class, and ideology: the search for facts. As

South Africa's journalists continue to try their new-found freedoms, as they continue to fight for the right to dispense information to a truth-hungry public, they will play a key role in facilitating the exchange of ideas from politician to citizen, from citizen back to politician, and among citizens themselves. Members of the press have walked a tightrope in the past. On one side, leaders like Bishop Desmond Tutu have told black newspaper reporters that "you have an obligation to give the truth, and nothing but the truth, but from a black perspective [...] you have an obligation to work for the liberation of our people. You *must* be involved in the Black Consciousness Movement."²⁷ On the other side, NP leaders like Justice Minister Kruger said (in this case of *The World* editor Percy Qoboza, upon naming him as a banned person) that he "took a direction that was totally unacceptable—a Black power line which I could not accept."²⁸ That tightrope is still in place, and the chasm that it spans must continually be crossed by the media in order for SA to be truly democratic. Despite serious negative factors hampering the freedom of the press, there is every reason to believe that SA's media will be successful in their task.

3.1 NOTES

¹ Jon Qwelane, testimony given at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Media Hearings, 17 September 1997, p. 494.

² Harvey Tyson, 'To run a decent newspaper, you've got to break the law, says a senior editor,' in Sperling and McKenzie, *Getting the Real Story*, p. 70, 72.

³ 'Beeld journalists in TRC submission,' *Argus On-line*, <http://164.88.55.123/Archives/August97to.../9708/18/beeld.html>. Accessed 2 November 1997.

⁴ 'Attacks '97: South Africa,' Committee to Protect Journalists, <http://www.cpj.org/pubs/attacks97/africa/south.html>. Accessed 29 March 1998.

⁵ 'Beeld journalists in TRC submission,' *Argus On-line*, <http://164.88.55.123/Archives/August97to.../9708/18/beeld.html>. Accessed 2 November 1997.

⁶ Gordon Jackson, *Breaking the Story*, p. 188.

⁷ J. M. Coetzee, *Giving Offence: Essays on Censorship*, p. 7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 'Freedom of Expression News from SA - April 3 1988,' Freedom of Expression Institute, <http://wn.apc.org/fxi/Weekrep/wk010498.html>. Accessed 29 May 1998.

¹⁰ Jackson, p. 188.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 189.

¹² 'Attacks '97: South Africa.'

¹³ Jackson, p. 189.

¹⁴ Coetzee, p. 7.

¹⁵ SABC 2 News Broadcast, 5 May 1997.

¹⁶ Jackson, p. 184.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Conglomerates own a large portion of the SA media, opening Chomsky and Herman's door of opportunity for propaganda.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 186.

²¹ Ibid., p. 187.

²² 'Attacks '97: South Africa.'

²³ 'Few gains for media freedom in Southern Africa,' The Mail and Guardian Online, <http://www.mg.co.za/mg/news/99jun2/22jun-media.html>. Accessed June 22 1999.

²⁴ 'Internet helps journalists circumvent censors,' The Freedom Forum, <http://www.freedomforum.org/newsstand/forum%5Fnews/1997/12i.asp>. Accessed June 22, 1998.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ John Webster, ed., Bishop Desmond Tutu—the Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness, p. 81-82. Emphasis added.

²⁸ 'Black Vote 'Silly'—Kruger,' *The Citizen*, 10 November 1977, p. 11.

4. CONCLUSION

The media is a fundamental component of politics. It has tangible political power in every nation, regardless of the political system under which it operates. The media is furthermore consequential in every field of political studies, as journalists assist in gathering information necessary to establish facts within those fields.

A media unfettered by undue laws or influences is requisite for a nation to be deemed truly democratic. 'Freedom of the press' is not a concept designed to protect a handful of journalists, but a key element in the theory that citizens in a democracy must have access to information if they are to be making 'good' decisions. In short, "communication is the life line of democracy."¹

With that fact in mind, one can see that even for white South Africans, SA was never more than a democracy in name. Under NP rule newspapers were not allowed to step too far out of line. If any members of the media *did* overstep the tastes of the government (as did *The World* in their coverage of the Biko story), they were somehow controlled, by means of prior restraint (as was *The World*) or otherwise. While all governments may desire to control the manner in which they are portrayed in the media, and while media control in SA existed before the apartheid government, the NP was so zealous in their desire to be seen as a legitimate, democratic government that they purged the free flow of information from the nation. Although the media was primarily privately owned (following Lowenstein's two-tiered model), it was also authoritarian. More than a hundred laws relative to media control were passed or

made more efficacious by the NP (some of which were examined in this work), fully 'blindfolding editors and walking them through a minefield.'

But newspapers were not merely victims of the NP. The early English press also faced government opposition, which they stood against and overcame time and time again. It was not until 1939 when the SAAN and Argus Company conglomerates chose to impose self-censorship rather than stand against Hertzog's proposed censorship bill, opening a Pandora's Box of successful government control. At that time the large players in the English press decided that financial security was more important than media freedom, a point of which ensuing politicians took advantage. Thread by thread, more stifling laws were imposed, until the bonds were too strong to be broken without fear of sharp government reprisal—more a 'self-defence' philosophy than any of Lowenstein's classifications.

The Afrikaans press chose early on to support the NP and their principle of a strong Afrikaner nation. They therefore supported some limitations on press freedom, in an almost social centralist mode (the difference being that 'social-centralist' is concerned with the good of the entire nation, not simply one cultural body within that nation). What the Afrikaans press did not accept was their government deceiving them and attempting to cover up blatant corruption. The NP implemented and funded *The Citizen* as a tool for propaganda. *The Citizen* vowed in a charter to uphold the government of the day, and support fully the cause of racial segregation (and, although 'owned' by Luyt, a government paper using Lowenstein's definition). *The Citizen* gave English speakers exactly what the NP wanted them to read, thus complementing the NP's censorship policies and shoring up political support by deceiving the public.

This illegal act was denied by the NP, as was financial corruption surrounding the paper, and Afrikaans reporters began to feel that the NP betrayed them and their Calvinist principles. This may have been the beginning of the end of the Afrikaans media's untried support of the NP.

The almost continual state of emergency from the mid- 1980s until the end of the decade eliminated the need for propaganda: censorship was the order of the day. The majority of the press was privately owned, while some branches were government funded. Nevertheless, all 'social-centralist' doubt was erased; the press laboured under an authoritarian system of media during the state of emergency. Dozens of papers were banned, as were editors, journalists, and others seeking to dispense factual information. By this time, though, it appears almost as if the nation was getting tired of NP censorship laws. Propaganda in the form of a covert government newspaper had failed, censorship was being challenged by a feisty alternative press, and even the faithful Afrikaans press was challenging the NP. Then, early in 1990, the rules of the game were changed.

During the apartheid era, censorship and propaganda clouded and confused political issues so thoroughly that few could call themselves informed citizens with a sound political knowledge based in fact. Blacks were excluded from the rights of democracy because of the colour of their skin, but whites were denied democracy because the NP's authoritarian attempt to control information.

The future of the press in SA, despite several negative factors, is as bright as the days of Pringle and Fairbairn. Ownership of the press is by-and-large private, with multi-

party and government sponsorship permitted. The philosophy of the nation's press is social-libertarian, where even weak, unpopular voices are permitted to shout as loud as they are able. Such a system will allow South Africans to 'shop' for knowledge freely. If South Africans continue to be ill informed on the controversial topic of their nation's politics—if democracy eludes that great nation in the future—it will not be for the lack of media information.

4.1 NOTES

¹ Warren K. Agee, ed., The Press and the Public Interest, p. 175.

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