HAWKS AND DOVES -

THE PRO- AND ANTI-CONSCRIPTION PRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Edited by Michael Graaf
Hawks and Doves -

The Pro- and Anti-Conscription Press in South Africa

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PREFACE

This report is first and foremost a project undertaken by students. At the same time it is an attempt to make academic work relevant to issues and struggles in the community from which the students are drawn.

As students the authors were subject to the constraints of having to meet numerous deadlines, and frequently to sacrifice considerable private time in order to turn what was originally a series of individual essays, produced as part of a 'Theories of Media' course, into a presentable, coherent report - which we hope to be the case. Our Unit was in its second year of offering courses at the time the project commenced; it was and still is in the process of evolving a working style compatible with the interdisciplinary origins of its members and content of study. We also aim to promote a learning environment in which the student/teacher distinction becomes blurred - as much a necessity imposed by understaffing as a consequence of our commitment to democratising education.

It will be obvious that each chapter draws on the particular blend of theoretical tools chosen by its author; less obvious might be that an equally important source of guidance, in most cases, was organic contact with the 'client' organisation. Those who had not been active in the End Conscription Campaign prior to the project were thoroughly acquainted with it by the end, through interviews and informal interaction. A proper mandate was obtained from the client beforehand, and the project regularly came up for discussion in ECC regional meetings before its completion. Progress was reported on through the production period (April 1987-March 1988), and direct and indirect feedback from the ECC helped us determine research priorities.

It is hoped that the report will serve as a resource document in a number of ways: besides whatever guidance it can offer in the production of media (and in other activities), it stands as a record of a particular aspect of a struggle; it may well be of use in countering efforts to use the legal apparatus to stifle At Ease, and it might even usefully contribute to readers' general 'media literacy'.

The task of the editors has been primarily one of making material written (for the most part) under the pressure imposed by the norms of an essay at Honours level (yet in areas not dealt with in graduate years), accessible to a wider readership and useful to the client. We have tried to retain the substance of the researchers' work, and have supplemented it with such appendices as seemed helpful, as well as with linking passages between sections. The various chapters will not be of equal relevance or interest to different readers, but each stands on its own, so sections can be ignored without undue detriment to the appreciation of others.

All work done to produce the report and raise funds was voluntary, except the layout for which a freelance media worker was engaged.

There are gaps in the report's treatment of its subject; these are due to the withdrawal of some of the people present at the initial planning and allocation of areas of responsibility.

We hope that it will be obvious that this project is a stage in the process of developing our ability to respond to the contemporary community, and not just a final product.
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1. Militarisation, Hegemony and the South African Media, 1976-86

This section introduces the context in which the study is being performed, and highlights the importance of understanding the interconnection between economic and ideological aspects of militarisation.

A detailed account is given of the evolution of various structures of control and of the origins and propagation of the language and concepts which accompany these, with reference to parallels from other parts of the world. It should be noted that this passage, more than the other chapters, represents work which has been done accumulatively over some time, so that, for instance, examples used to illustrate points are not always as contemporary as they could be.
Two perspectives exist on the role the Military in South Africa. One argues that the military's direct influence is limited. This approach bases its argument on the percentage of state expenditure on defence and the number of people under arms in comparison to say, Israel (1). It tends to ignore the hidden expenditures and ideological links between the Military and other areas of the political economy (eg. education, industry, publishing, Public Works, Posts and Telecommunications etc). The 'Military', an all-embracing term, is elsewhere referred to as the "security establishment" involving a wide range of repressive apparatuses (2). While we agree that these all-embracing terms are problematic, given the diversity of institutions - SADF, NIS, SSC, JMC's and homeland security forces - we use the term 'Military' as a short-hand to refer to the composite security structure found in areas under the hegemony of the South African government. Where schisms between different agencies exist, these will be identified in the argument.

This paper will argue that the political power of the Military has grown extensively as a result of the extended crisis faced by the ruling class alliance since 1976. (This is not to say that South African only became militarized after 1976. White South Africa has traditionally used military violence as an means of rule). The view that the military influence has grown is difficult to prove empirically, mainly because of severe government restrictions on information. The first approach limits itself by working with verifiable statistics. The second relies almost exclusively on theoretical argument and infers trends from media reports, statements made by the Minister of Defence and Military publications.

We will argue that the militarization of the media in particular is occurring in a complex way through a series of realignments within the hegemonic bloc. We contend that

(a) The contents of the commercial media and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) reflect the rise and decline of 'fractional' interests and of 'fractional' disputes within the ruling hegemonic alliance; and
that some of the fractional conflicts will be fought out in the media itself. The ebb and flow of militaristic signification in the media (such as the terms 'total onslaught', 'total war', 'total strategy', 'preparedness', 'civil defence' and media military functions) reflect the growing influence of the military-police 'fractions' within the ruling alliance.

An understanding of the relationship between class fractions (3) and the media requires analysis and identification of:

(a) the various fractions of the South African ruling classes;

(b) 'fractional' disputes/conflicts and the growth and decline of 'fractional' power within the ruling alliance;

(c) the relationship between the various media and different 'fractions';

(d) the extent of control that any particular fraction(s) may have over any particular media institution and the effects thereof;

(e) the way 'fractional' disputes/conflicts are represented in media content; and

(f) the derivation of the militaristic rhetoric used in the media in terms of certain theories of military strategy.

No,
it's not
too late to talk
And top Nat MP says war is not the only way

TALK, says top Nat MP Mr Leon Wessels: 'break the circle of violence with peace lobbying'

TALK, says top PFP MP Mr Tian van der Marwe: 'no solution possible unless ANC are invited to take part'

NO, says top HNP MP Mr Louis Staffberg: 'if they kill our people we must kill more of them'

(b) Security Police General Johan Coetzee, speaking on SABC, 15 March 1982:

Statements that sabotage plots against the South African government were planned by so-called freedom fighters of the African National Congress are wrong. These plots have been masterminded by white agents, and black ANC agents were sent in as cannon fodder to do the dirty work. I think the claim of the ANC that they have support among the black people at grassroots level is false, and this is very amply demonstrated by the recent incident where they had to import people from the United Kingdom and from Belgium and from Canada to construct this conspiracy, to attack what was obviously a status target, the headquarters of the military. I think it demonstrates that they haven't got the support of the black people which they claim they have.
Ebb and Flow of Fractions in the Ruling Classes

The nature of South Africa's ruling class alliance has undergone a restructuring over the last decade, mainly due to a crisis in capital accumulation and an intensification of class struggles (4). Core fractions of the former Afrikaner ruling alliance have been ejected or have themselves left the centre stage; while new fractions have coalesced at the centre of a realigned political struggle.

Fractions that have lost influence include: the Afrikaner Calvinist churches; (white) farm owners; and white working class miners. Fractions which have increased their influence are: Afrikaner-dominated capital (especially Cape-based capital); the military - police - bureaucratic fraction(s) (primarily located in Pretoria); the urban petit-bourgeois fraction(s); and English-controlled capital's influence seems to be in a constant state of flux (5). The development of the tricameral parliamentary system since 1983 attempted to bring the Indian and coloured bourgeois and petit bourgeois classes and the black rural bourgeoisie (homeland) closer to the centre of power. The influence of multinational corporations on the hegemonic bloc, a strong factor following PW Botha's Carlton Centre conference in November 1979, waned after mid-1986 when the government declared a State of Emergency on June 12. English-dominated capital's influence within the hegemony seems to go through periods of cooperation and dissent depending on the nature of the crisis (6).

Disinvestment has altered the structure of capital within South Africa with a local capitalist class growing at the expense of multinational capital. This 'new' capital seems to have a close working relationship with the state (7). The gap between Afrikaans and English capital seems to be narrowing, with both now facing similar imperatives. English, Afrikaner and 'new' capitals are congealing around the PW Botha fraction of 'reformism'.

Military and Police Fractions

The Military and Police are increasingly exerting their solutions within the state (8). This can be attributed to a number of factors:

* First, the dynamics of managing the South African hegemony changed following the 1976 uprising:

(a) the use of coercion has increased dramatically, especially since 1985;

(b) ideological appeals formulated by intellectuals have moved off centre stage (as coercion is increasingly substituted as a method of rule); and

(c) the role of the media (as conduits for intellectual leadership-mESSAGES) has been redefined.
Minister of Defence General Magnus Malan, opening the headquarters for the military commando at the ISCOR parastatal electricity plant, 15 August 1981:

We must guard against an extremely dangerous false sense of security that as long as things appear to be going smoothly, the war is being decided in our favour. In any revolutionary war, where the military constitutes but one facet of the onslaught, a feeling of complacency is fatal. As Minister of Defence, I therefore consider it my duty to warn the people of South Africa that the revolutionary effort against us has now reached an extremely dangerous phase.

The primary aim of the enemy is to undermine, through maximum publicity. In this regard, we will have to obtain the cooperation of the South African media in not giving excessive and unjustified publicity to terrorists and thus playing into their hands.

* Second, the South African military-police fraction(s) have apparently learnt from their Rhodesian and Namibian experiences. In the cases of Rhodesia and Namibia the white hegemonic forces built up their security infrastructure in response to guerrilla attacks. In South Africa itself, the situation is different:

(a) the ruling alliance built a military and communication infrastructure to counter potential guerrilla warfare before the war even started;

(b) the military and police command hierarchies familiarized themselves in advance of the war with the theory and practice of revolutionary tactics;

(c) attempts were made to launch a (military) 'hearts-and-minds' exercise in the black-rule areas prior to the start of guerrilla warfare;

(d) attempts were made to psychologically prepare whites for battle through the media, schools, and other civil institutions;

(e) Armscor has been built into the third-largest industry in the country and the world's tenth largest arms exporter.*

The huge investment of resources that all this restructuring has entailed means that the military-police fractions are clearly getting their way in terms of the societal allocation of funds. The huge investments into the three Sasol petro-chemical plants, for example, appear to have more to do with military-strategic planning than with economic development.

* Third, the state has created a number of security institutions to help it deal with the crisis.

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*By the time of going to press, this had changed to position 5! (Daily News, 18-5-88)
Each of these has taken on a life of its own: those manning each of these structures have undergone a different learning process, depending upon the problems with which they were entrusted (20). The SADF's task of destabilizing South Africa's neighbours has, for example, resulted in a particular perception within that institution which has later influenced its approach to internal problems. The vigilantes as a method of destabilizing the internal left could be seen as a result of tactics learned in Mozambique in Angola.

* Fourth, as resources (increasingly) flow into the military-police hierarchies, powerful individuals within these structures will be scrambling to expand their own little 'empires'.

As was the case in Rhodesia, the Police, Military and para-military (eg. Armscor) institutions are attempting to recruit the most talented youth (21) in preparation for the final defence of apartheid. This in turn means more people with vested interests in maintaining the existing order, to ensure their continued employment (22). The circulation of an annual 'State of Threat Document' (bedreigningsdokument) influences the distribution of funds (23). There are signs that the military-police infrastructures have already taken on a 'life of their own': they are now such powerful fraction(s) that they no longer (only) serve the other fractions in the ruling alliance; they strongly influence both foreign and domestic policy (24). The African Defence Journal went so far as to state that "unlike other Western countries that have had to fight such wars -- most notably the French in Algeria and Vietnam, and the Portuguese in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau -- the SADF so far has not allowed politics to interfere with military policy ... This is due largely to the SADF's ability to work with and when necessary, manipulate the country's political system" (25).

The military-police fraction(s) do not rule South Africa. They are only one part of the hegemonic bloc, but do have a major capacity to influence government policy. This they do by exercising a veto over the civilian decision-makers (26) while the decisions taken within the wide range of military infrastructures are unlikely to be over-ruled by other government departments or the civilian decision-makers (27). A consensus exists on the need to preserve capitalism (or to use the preferred, less pejorative term used by the state and media, 'free enterprise'). Differences, however, remain. English big capital, for example, is against the government's increasing use of coercion.

Three different responses can be identified within the hegemonic bloc on the state's use of violence to restore 'law and order':

(a) The 'hard-liners' believe the military and police can win the war and restore the racial-capitalist hegemony. (The Conservative Party, the Herstigte Nasionale Party, the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging, and the right-wing of the National Party)

(b) Some seem to adopt the approach that the military and police cannot win in the long run, but must maintain the existing order for as long as possible. (Afrikaner capital and the National Party).
'Moderates' argue that the Military and Police should maintain 'law and order' so that sufficient reform can be enacted to dismantle apartheid while preserving capitalism. (Progressive Federal Party, verligtes of the National Party; big English-dominated capital).

What is significant is that the military and police disagree on policing tactics (28) which is why we refer to them as fractions, and not a fraction. The Police, under Louis le Grange, are 'hard line' and undisciplined, while the Military under Magnus Malan, follow a more 'moderate' and disciplined path.

THE MILITARIZATION OF THE MEDIA

The media reflect the inter-fractional disputes within South Africa. Alignments within the ruling alliance are continually shifting. Different issues elicit different responses amongst the different fractions at different times. These tensions are reflected in the media. If a degree of unanimity exists it is that the commercial press and SABC back (to a greater or lesser extent) the centre-to-verlig fraction of the National Party. The second State of Emergency has, however, increased tensions between the State and the liberal-commercial press.

Extent of Control of the Media

The commercial Press (Nasionale Pers, Perskor, Argus Company, South African Associated Newspapers) and the SABC are now backing - with slight differences - the same horse. This manifests itself in several ways:

(a) The neo-fascist right-wing (AWB, HNP and CP) are ignored, attacked or belittled;

(b) Conflicts between the different fractions within the ruling hegemonic alliance are downplayed in the media;

(c) Certain "hooray words" are uttered repetitively (though with different emphases in the different 'fractional' media). Those given positive treatment include: 'reform'; 'free enterprise'; 'moderate blacks'; 'the West'; 'civilised standards'; 'total strategy'; 'our boys on the border'; 'privatization'; 'Thatcher' and 'Reagan'. Those given negative treatment (boo words)(29) include: 'radicals'; 'communism'; 'socialism'; 'the Eastern Bloc'; 'the United Nations'; 'total onslaught'; and 'terrorists'; 'ANC' and 'UDF' and so on. Through a continual repetition of hooray and boo words the media present a unified image of South Africa as a reasonable and moderate society having to defend itself against an evil and malicious plot orchestrated from 'outside'. This deflects emphasis away from the massive internal opposition to apartheid. Since the Second State of Emergency declared in 1986, certain new 'boo' words have become apparent such as 'sanctions'; and 'Commonwealth'. The State even banned the use of certain descriptions, such as 'draconian measures' and 'minority white regime'.

Rand Daily Mail, 6 September 1984: The detailed secrets of the Russian limpet mine now Public Menace Number One were disclosed for the first time yesterday by police explosives experts. The public was urged to study the deadly explosive device which has been used to bomb five buildings on the flail in three weeks, leaving 16 people injured. A massive manhunt for the terrorists placing the bomb is continuing on a round-the-clock basis, police said. Teams of bomb disposal specialists assisted by sniffer dogs have been placed on 24 hour standby throughout the country to deal with any bomb or bomb scare. Do you know a limpet mine? Would you be able to recognize one? What would you do with it if you saw one? Major Paul Hatling, of the police explosives section had this advice for the public: Watch out for anything out of place, abandoned suitcases, parcels, strange metal parts, where they should not be, and do not be scared to inform the police, even if it turns out to be a false alarm Today's terrorist, says Major Hatling, works with professional equipment.

(c) 'Moderates' argue that the Military and Police should maintain 'law and order' so that sufficient reform can be enacted to dismantle apartheid while preserving capitalism. (Progressive Federal Party, verligtes of the National Party; big English-dominated capital).
(d) The massive internal support for the ANC, UDF and socialism is
downplayed. Support for either the ANC, the UDF or for socialism
is linked by the media to a deviant minority or is 'explained
away' as being due to "intimidation".

(e) Overt racism is avoided. The English commercial press (excluding
The Citizen and Natal Mercury) even avoids using racial
designations, although its selection of 'newsworthy' items does
reflect a clear white 'world view'(30). The Afrikaans Press and
SABC continue to use racial classifications. However, this is done
with a view to making race classifications appear 'natural';
'hurtful' racism is now avoided and masked under identity num-
bers and other distortions of statistical data. For example the
Afrikaans press claims the new form of identity document is to be
'non-racial' (31). However, the English liberal press is more
sceptical about government intentions on deracialisation.

(f) A growing influence of the military strategists' definition of
reality (i.e. an 'us-them' view) (32). This is frequently
reflected on the SABC(33). Fractional differences are apparent
here. The press owned by English capital, for example, tends to
be more positive toward the military and overtly hostile toward
the Police; while the press owned by Afrikaner interests is
somewhat less antagonistic toward the Police. Conflict also
occurs within the SABC. But all media are now popularizing the
'siege' mentality. Military correspondents cannot operate unless
they maintain good relations with the SADF. Afrikaans newspaper
editors have even called for the security forces to create
'positive' news for themselves, thereby cancelling the 'negative'
news of 'terrorists, by becoming pro-active news makers by
permitting a 'freer flow of information'(34).

The rhetoric of 'siege' has been popularised since the 1976 Soweto
disturbances. Although this unrest was due entirely to the repressive
nature of apartheid, the state sought to mystify the causes through the
adoption of the internationally used discourse of 'national
security'(35).

Language, Legitimation and Militaristic Rhetoric

South Africa woke up one morning in August 1979 to the discourse of
'total strategy', the 'total onslaught' and 'total war'. These
phrases were not new. Part of SADF terminology as early as 1973, they
were adopted by the Nazi war machine from the German Quarter-Master
General, Ludendorf, a military strategist during World War I. He in
turn had worked from the 18th century Prussian military writings of
Clausewitz(36). Moving via Britain during World War II, the idea of
'total war' was transported to the Americas. There the terms were
refined by the American military academies and the South American
dictatorships during the 1960s(37).

The notion of 'total strategy' as used in South Africa's military
academies has diverse roots of which the United States connection is
only one. The most important source seems to be Beaufre's An
Introduction to Strategy(38). Beaufre is read in conjunction with
texts dealing with the French experience in Algeria, the American
experiences in the Philippines and Vietnam, and the British experience in Malaysia. 'Total war', which embraces every aspect of life, is conceived of as a defensive action in the preparation of the nation in advance of the perceived 'onslaught'. 'Total strategy', as used by the SADF, seems to have some roots in the notion of 'total war'. Both terms are intended to legitimise the pre-emptive counter-attack by capitalism against socialism, and creates a sympathetic climate for the permanent arms economy(39). (In South Africa, this has manifested itself in the form of Armscor). From the perspective of the military, 'total war' demands a total response, a notion the South African military have now sold to white civilians. General Golbery of Brazil talked about a "national power". In South Africa it has been called the 'total strategy'. It is 'total' because, according to Golbery, it does away with the previous distinction between civilian and military categories and the distinction between peace-time and war-time disappears(39) it is a war between the 'Christian-Western world and the 'Communist-Eastern world' (40).

This redefinition of war changes in the military institution's relations to the state. The discourse of 'total war' -- a war that is economic, financial, political, psychological, scientific in addition to being a war of armed forces -- does away with the distinction between civilian and military categories. As Armand Mattelart states: "All of society has become a battlefield and every individual is in the camp of the combatants, either for or against. It is a total war because the battlefields and the arms used pertain to all levels of individual and community life, and because this war does not allow the very slightest space to escape from the gravitational pull of the conflict"(41).

It is not co-incidental that the 'total war' terminology came into vogue at the time of PW Botha's assumption to power. Botha had previously been Minister of Defence and took control of the Premiership by means of a 'bloodless coup' facilitated by the political chaos left in the wake of the Information Scandal. The idea of 'total war' had been resisted by the Mulder fraction of the National Party, which preferred propaganda to military options(42).

The military became a very powerful fraction within the state and the private sector is integrated into military planning (43). The increased power of the Military is demonstrated by the fact that information and decisions of the SSC may even be withheld from the full Cabinet itself. The significance of this restructuring of policy-making lies in the extent to which it has shifted executive responsibility away from Parliament, even the NP caucus, into the hands of a non-parliamentary group which includes senior military and police officers. The SSC's Secretariat has four branches: Strategy, National Intelligence Interpretation, Strategic Communications (involving psychological warfare or 'cultural action'), and Administration. Only the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Law and Order and the State President are statutory members. The moderating influence of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Information, as well as that of the Financial and Economic Ministeries which favour economic power and control of the communications system as a means of defence, was reduced (44). This strategy failed and coercive control of the media and the state prepared for sanctions in 1986. As the 'us/them' distinction shifted,
the multinational companies, and at times, even Reagan and Thatcher were excommunicated into the 'them' camp by the government, Afrikaans press and SABC.

The total strategy doctrine was made possible by forging an alliance with business and industry. In South America, the military state of the 1960s and 1970s answered the need to resolve the global retreat of capitalism. These regimes opened the door to the multinational companies which had penetrated the Third World on a massive scale just after the Korean War (1950-1953). The MNC's denationalised local economies and only those fractions of the bourgeoisie connected to foreign capital were able to adapt to the new dynamics.

Where popular resistance impedes the development of external markets through the MNC's, as occurred in Chile prior to and during the Allende administration, the military often act on behalf of international capital. This was not necessary in South Africa during or after the Vorster period because of a different set of historical and material conditions and because of the ascendancy of the military in political and economic decision making within the state, although General Magnus Malan has said that he saw democracy as a "snag" which restricted the full realisation of total strategy as a theoretical ideal.

Botha's 'bloodless' coup was followed in quick succession by the 1979 Carlton Centre meeting between government and business, a state commitment towards a free enterprise economy, the selling of SASOL shares to the public, followed by a number of other 'mini-Carlton' meetings.

By this means the state becomes little more than a surplus value producing factory for the MNC's. It guarantees the conditions necessary for the penetration of foreign capital and the establishment of an economy directed towards foreign markets either from the United States itself, or from its neocolonial industry to non-American markets.

The increasingly militarized state that has emerged under Botha also became more and more friendly towards multinational capitalist interests. This was partly due to the rapprochement between English and Afrikaner capitals marked by the period November 1979 to October 1984 and partly strategic. It seems likely that the 'total strategy' planners realized that they could not defend white privilege without substantial Western help. If they could 'sell off' a sufficiently large percentage of the economy to overseas capitalists, then presumably those same capitalists would, of necessity, bring pressure to bear on their own governments to defend the existing order in South Africa.

Between 1979 and end of 1985 South Africa permitted the unrestricted repatriation of profits and wages to the metropolitan countries, did nothing to prevent the massive devaluation of the rand. It continues to provide hefty tax incentives for firms locating in the 'border areas' next to the 'homelands'. In consequence, enormous amounts of capital have flowed out of South Africa. Of course, 'selling off' the South African economy to overseas capitalists requires that South Africa be seen as a stable and safe investment opportunity. For this reason internal opposition to capitalism and the existing order needs to be concealed and is suppressed by the military. Dependent countries
SABC, 23 February 1961, Bea Reed reporting from Namibia: extended an invitation to a party made up operationally solely of women of the media, to see the braaiviets outstanding feature of the party is that every man here is wearing a uniform of the hospitably where I am because of security reasons though I cannot tell you the exact spot ihe moonlight and I am looking at Angola, across this wide and very beautiful river in the Okavango River, As I stand here, I look South African Defence Force, and the Africa, I did not really believe that I would Republic lor the first time to South West As somebody who has come up from the MPLA (Angola n ruling party) and a chop in my fingers, looking at the land of sit calmly with suppose il I really looked into the bushes I guns across their shoulders, quietly is no sign ol watching for our safety and security There calm and realty a feeling ol peace in what is not a very peaceful world. I am very affected by it well, there are our lads up here on the borders of South West Africa and Angola, but why are they there and what are they doing there? But after a few days with the military forces, without any sort of obvious background) This is Bea Reed, on the border for 'Radio Today'

like South Africa thus become the military proxies of United States and European imperialism. This allows the imperialist states to avoid the dangers and costs of direct political and military intervention such as in Angola.

Militarization permits the over-exploitation of workers through facilitating higher profits than are normally earnable in capitalist democratic states. This is done through paying workers less than the costs of family reproduction as on the mines and through denying labourers access to generally accepted benefits, such as medical aid, pension and the like. In South Africa, the emphasis on unskilled labour keeps costs low. Paradoxically, in an economy which until the mid-1970s relied on cheap unskilled labour, and low productivity levels, it is the worker who is now blamed for his/her continued low wages. The state and business are thereby able to justify their low wages as the result of the low productivity of these same workers. This anomaly of course, works to the benefit of free enterprise, which lays the blame for poverty with individuals rather than the nature of the social formation. However, with the eruption of nation-wide resistance after October 1984, resulting in a low level civil war, the state was forced to take additional measures to counteract MNC nervousness, disinvestment and international pressure. The government seems to have misread the signs as instead of ensuring the development of a non-racial and more stable class society, it has moved to entrench the hierarchy of racial privilege but sought unsuccessfully to mystify the racist basis of the 'new dispensation' by re-coding apartheid discourse into liberal sounding terms which strike a sympathetic chord with Western democracies. The government now talks of 'protection of minorities' (i.e. Afrikaner privilege), 'democracy' (power-sharing but retaining control); 'negotiation' (recipients will be compelled to act in accordance with the wishes of the government), 'self-determination' (centralisation of control), 'reform' (reacting to specific capital imperatives to redesign and disguise exploitative conditions to ensure capital accumulation) and so on.

The state responded to disinvestment campaigns and criticism of the 1986 State of Emergency by declaring such discussions 'subversive' and by deploying the Military and Police to restore 'order' in the townships.

The military and police appear to be in agreement as to the handling of the media despite differences over other issues. The media have generally not been unwilling participants in the propagation of reassurances that threats to nation and society (and capital) can be countered. There are, of course, contradictions within the ruling hegemonic alliance which have an effect on media content. Certain elements of English capital and their media have been less co-operative than others due to their dislike of violent 'solutions'. The June 1986 declaration of the Emergency increased tensions within the ruling hegemonic alliance between the (militarist) hawks and the liberals (especially the liberal-capitalist fraction). Conflict between the military-police fraction(s) and the English liberal press intensified as measured by the number of editorials denouncing police behaviour, the government's suicidal attitude towards sanctions and restrictions on the press(50).
Legitimising Totalitarianism as Democracy

The central dilemma facing the state is how to legitimize and naturalise its authoritarian solution as the only 
democratic alternative available to South Africa? Their strategy is complex. 
Here we will consider only the role of the media.

The sustained attack by the government on the 'freedom of the press' 
in South Africa has often been explained in terms of the irrationality 
of Afrikaner politics(51). It is doubtful, however, that the govern­
ment intends to control the press in a Nazi-style dictatorship. The 
ruling hegemony only acts -- or threatens to act -- against the press 
during periods of crisis. At such times it deploys the alarmist media 
determinist logic found in Cluttorhuck(52) and restricts media cover­
age. This is consistent with the idealism of Beaufre's approach in 
which war is largely reduced to a psychological battle. Hence South 
Africa's total strategists, as Beaufrean idealists, stress the 
importance of the media and of public perceptions, and they pay less 
attention to economic and other material factors.

The media restrictions partly prevent black South Africans from 
realizing the extent of dissidence; partly to reassure domestic capital­
and white South Africans; and partly because the reporting of 
crises -- be they Sharpeville, Soweto '76, or the recent unrest -- 
by the English-language press finds its way into the international 
media. SAPA, Reuters, UPITN and other news agencies transmit images 
of disorder, of violence, and of brutal police action which have a 
negative effect on international investment in South Africa.

In order to 'sell' South Africa as a safe place for overseas 
capitalists to invest, the government realized the need to make it 
appear as if South Africa is ruled not by whites alone but by a 
multiracial alliance. This resulted in the attempt to engineer a 
facelift for apartheid. In the absence of a broad-based class alliance 
the state forged one in the form of the tricameral parliament.

To bring this about, the state and capital had to rally the white, 
Indian and coloured petty bourgeoisie into their 'national project' 
to win the 'hearts and minds' of this class and deploy it against the 
'total onslaught'. The reality of total strategy was semantically 
engineered and bludgeoned into the consciousness of the nation -- 
specifically the petty bourgeoisie. By this means the state coun­
tered its lack of democratic support. Because of the nature of the 
SSC, however, real power still lies with the white (particularly 
military and police) fractions of the state.

Since the early 1980s, the South African media have splashed the 
trappings of state pomp and ceremony. Newspapers, magazines, 
television and radio were full of Ministers handing out awards and 
medals at every opportunity. Military bands and red carpets cram state 
ceremonies with the purpose of (a) generating a common sense compliance 
with the necessity of total strategy; and (b) reassuring white South 
Africans that all is under control. Militaristic images were, however, 
not seen as sufficient in themselves to induce acceptance of the 
increasing authoritarianism by which the country was being governed. 
Semantic engineering and sloganeering filled the remaining gaps as the
state set about 'setting the climate' for the passage of a series of laws which, if and when applied, would ensure an ultra cautious press.

The prime salvo was fired by the Steyn Commission which reached new heights of jargonistic nonsense, irrational argument and metaphorical gobbledygook in 1982(53). Although the (then) Prime Minister claimed that the Report provided "irrefutable proof" of the onslaught against South Africa, conventional wisdom held that the Commission had 'gone over the top'. After much media fanfare, the Commission was forgotten. It's proposed legislation was unworkable, its proposals ridiculous. What then, was the function of this Commission?

If one locates the Commission within the context of the changing hegemonic alliance taking shape in South Africa at that time, its function was that of 'psychological warfare' to induce the media to consent to a further loss of autonomy. The South African Media Council set up in 1983 saw the realization of a self-censoring mechanism. Though the Council has proved to be less than a lap dog, the 'total strategy' planners had got their way.

The Steyn Commission effectively displaced attention from the passage of three Acts already in preparation. The Internal Security Act, the Protection of Information Act and the Registration of Newspapers Amendment Act each show evidence of a 'total strategy' perspective. As such they are evidence of the increasing influence of the military strategists within the ruling hegemonic alliance in the post-PW Botha take-over. By creating a straw man in Steyn, the government shifted the 'willed' ideological discourse in such a way that two of the Acts had a relatively muted passage through Parliament as far as press comment was concerned. (It is a debatable point if Steyn himself realized that he was being 'used' by the hawks within the National Party). The result was that the hawks within the ruling hegemony succeeded in increasing their structural capacity to manipulate the South African media and semantically engineer the way South Africans would be allowed to perceive their world.

Under the Internal Security Act the Minister may take action against an organization, publication or person who he deems may be engaged in advocating communism. This Act redefined the earlier definition of communism: the doctrine of Marxian socialism as espoused by Lenin and Trotsky, the Third Communist Comitern or the Communist Information Bureau. The new Act widens the old definition of communism by extending the list of forbidden authorities and by adding the vague phrase "any other recognised theorist". The Act is silent on what, in fact, constitutes "recognition". Where the previous act named the theorists, the new act left the names blank. The Steyn Report provides the background to who could be a recognised "name". By conveniently dividing up the world into good versus bad (capitalist versus communist, black versus white, Christianity versus Marxism etc.) any oppositional theorist, lecturer or reporter could be "named". Indeed, with the establishment of the Directorate of Media Relations in August 1987, a number of "revolution-supportive" newspapers have been accused of communist intentions: New Nation, South, Weekly Mail etc.

The new Act defined the 'enemy'in very wide terms. In the old Act, the propagator's action had to be directed at the establishment of a
despotic system based on the dictatorship of the proletariat. The new Act forbids the establishment of any form of socialism or collective ownership. Most alarming, is that the accused organisations need not even be aware of their alleged 'socialist tendencies'.

The second Act was the Protection of Information Act. This Act deemed certain categories of information "protected". These include "prohibited places" whereby it is an offence punishable by a maximum of 20 years imprisonment to approach, inspect, pass over, be in the neighbourhood of or enter any prohibited place for any purpose prejudicial to the security or interests of the Republic. Such places are not identified. While it is not an offence, say, to walk towards a prohibited place, it is an offence to be accused of walking TOWARDS a prohibited place. The onus is on the accused to persuade the judge of the difference. Because of the nature of the reporter's job, it is axiomatic that such individuals would always be considered intentionable.

Section 3 of the Act includes any matter which the communicator "knows or reasonably should know may directly or indirectly be of use to any foreign State or hostile organization " and which should not be disclosed "for considerations of the security or other interests of the Republic". The intent required for liability apparently consists not of a constructive desire to benefit the recipient of the prohibited information to the detriment of the state, but merely in the knowledge that the action will lead to disclosure. Such disclosure need not be to an official of the hostile state, but to any inhabitant thereof. The use of "indirect use" casts the journalist into a state of complete uncertainty about the use of any information whatsoever.

All three Acts were passed in 1982, just a year after the Steyn Commission had reported. Whether these powers will be used to their limit will depend on the extent of crises the ruling alliance will have to face and the extent to which foreign investment is threatened. By relaxing -- or appearing to relax -- the application of the laws in periods of stability, the government is able to create a sense that press freedom is not dead, and to still be able to surprise foreign commentators on the extent of press 'freedom' in South Africa. In the period of Emergency since 1985, these Acts have been superceded and newspapers have been denied access to the courts to test the state accusations against them.

The Steyn Commission might have 'gone over the top', but the climate it set to enable the above and subsequent repressive legislation to be passed was its most important function. The proposals set out by the Steyn Commission have been achieved: The 'facts' officially sanctioned by the SSC can now be enforced if necessary. In many ways, these Acts have gone a lot further than the Commission. Steyn was right, a media law was not necessary: the three other Acts did it all.

With the failure of the tricameral parliament to induce consent from the subordinate classes, in 1986 the government attempted to co-opt (so-called 'moderate') black 'leaders' onto a National Statutory Council, which failed. The underlying motive was to find a mechanism to incorporate into the hegemony class fractions irrespective of race which support capitalism.
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