

VII
EPILOGUE:
TELEVISION COMES TO SOUTH AFRICA

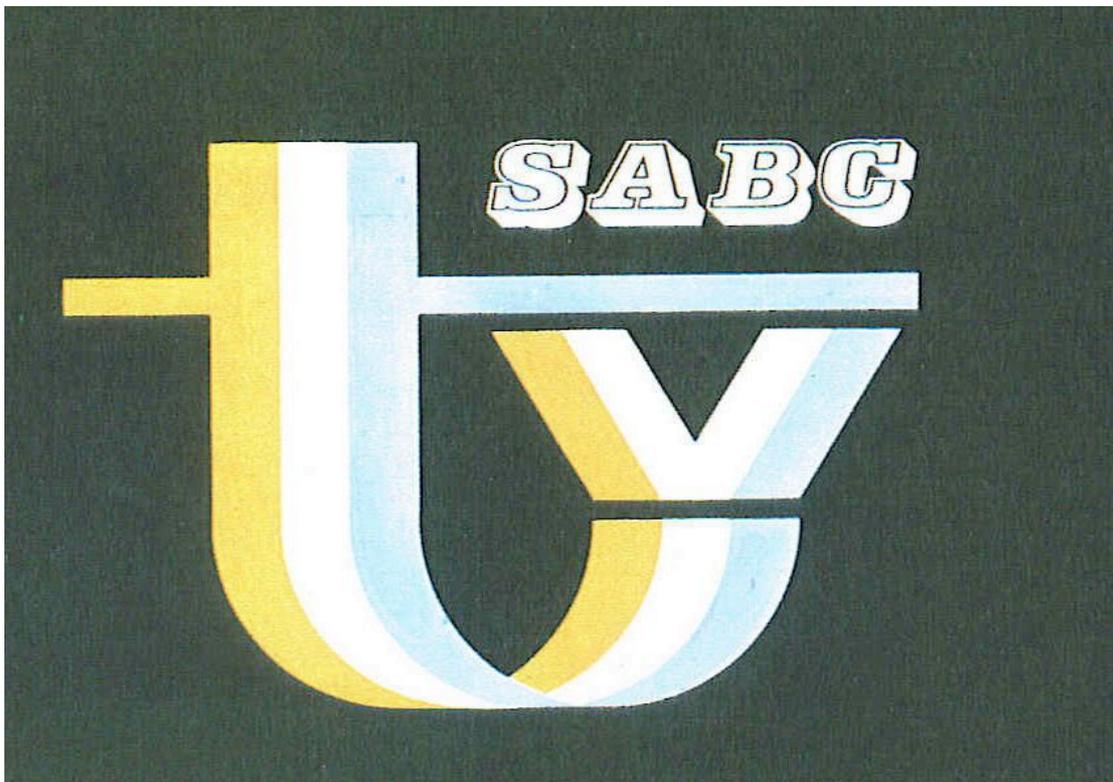


Figure 17: SABC-TV logo, 1976.
Source: SABC, *Annual Report*, 1976.

1. Introduction

On 5 January 1976, South African television officially opened. Thousands of South Africans tuned in to see exactly what they had been missing for more than two decades. And after the opening night, television quickly developed to become a broadcasting service comparable to the older and more established services elsewhere in the world.

2. Opening night

At exactly six o'clock, the service was dramatically opened with a countdown, followed by a lively fanfare. Then, South African television's first continuity presenters, Heinrich Maritz and Dorianne Berry, welcomed viewers.¹

'It is 5 January, 1976,' Maritz announced in Afrikaans. 'We welcome you to the opening night of the full television service of the SABC. For us, it is an exceptional event, and we are pleased to let you share, from tonight, in the results of the past five years' planning and preparations.'² Berry continued, in English: 'And because tonight is just that little bit special, we thought it might be appropriate to deviate slightly from our planned programme pattern – just to give you an idea of the variety and scope of our new service.'³

The first show on South African television was listed as *A Special Programme in the Wielie Walie Speelkamer*⁴ in which Haas Das introduces the Characters and Co-workers of the Children and Youth Programmes.⁵ Haas Das, a hare puppet, was the newsreader who brought news from *Diereland* ('Animal Land'). Within a few weeks, *Haas Das se Nuuskas* ('Haas Das's News Box', see Figure 18) became the most popular television programme in South Africa among children and adults.⁶ The *Wielie*

¹ Pumamouse Website, 'South African Television Soundfiles: Opening, SABC TV (5 January 1976)'. Internet: <http://pumamouse/quaksatsounds.html>, s.a. Accessed: 2006-09-02.

² Pumamouse Website, 'South African Television Soundfiles: Opening, SABC TV (5 January 1976)'. Internet: <http://pumamouse/quaksatsounds.html>, s.a. Accessed: 2006-09-02 (*My translation*).

³ Pumamouse Website, 'South African Television Soundfiles: Opening, SABC TV (5 January 1976)'. Internet: <http://pumamouse/quaksatsounds.html>, s.a. Accessed: 2006-09-02.

⁴ 'Playroom'

⁵ *Radio en TV met NOU*, 1976-01-05 (TV Skedule), pp.42-43.

⁶ Personal Information: Louise Smit, Producer of Children's Programmes, Pringle Bay, 2003-09-01.



Figure 18: *Haas Das se Nuuskas.*

Source: L. Smit, *Haas Das en Moeder Raaf* (Kaapstad & Pretoria, 1977), p.3.

Walie Speelkamer would also become the scene for a very popular Afrikaans children's programme, *Wielie Walie*. When it was taken off the air in 1996, it was the longest running television programme in South Africa's history. The presenters of the first special *Haas Das/Wielie Walie* programme were Carike Keuzenkamp, who had already appeared in *Kraaines* during the Test Television phase, as well as Estelle Rossouw and Gert van Tonder.⁷

The next programme was another children's show, namely *The Everywhere Express*, in which Andy Dillon and Kathy Kahn introduced the forthcoming children's programmes to the English audience. *The Everywhere Express* had already been aired during Test Television. After the children's programmes were introduced, viewers were given a glimpse of what they could expect on SABC Television (SABC-TV) in terms of documentary programmes and dramas.⁸

Other highlights of the evening's line-up included news, sport, music, comedy and drama. The first episode of *The Bob Newhart Show*, in which American comedian Bob Newhart played the role of a psychologist, Dr Robert Hartley, was aired. The documentary *Kamera I*, which was already known to audiences from the days of test television, featured an interview with SABC chairman P. J. Meyer. Newscasts in both English and Afrikaans were broadcast, presented by Michael de Morgan and Cor Nortjé respectively. There was also a variety show specially recorded for the opening

⁷ *Radio en TV met NOU*, 1976-01-05 (TV Skedule), pp.42-43.

⁸ *Radio en TV met NOU*, 1976-01-05 (TV Skedule), pp.42-43.

night, as well as a classical music concert performed by world-renowned pianist Arthur Rubinstein. The first Afrikaans drama was *Dubbele Alibi*, starring Nic de Jager and Sybil Coetzee.⁹

At eight o' clock, Prime Minister B. J. Vorster officially opened the service with a short bilingual address. 'After years of thorough preparations, we have now reached the stage where television becomes a part of our daily lives,' Vorster explained. '... It is still too early to say or even to predict what influence it is going to have on our daily lives. But what *is* clear, is that we are dealing with a medium that, as it has already been experienced by all other countries, can have a powerful influence, whether for good or for bad.'¹⁰

Vorster then outlined his vision for South African television:

The approach should still be that we want to use the medium to provide fresh and correct information, and healthy entertainment, and to be part of the education of the nation ... Objectivity and balance should still be our keyword. It is a big task, not only to bring the world to South Africa, but also (and perhaps especially) to show South Africa to the world as it is in its rich diversity and everything it has to offer.¹¹

The possibility of using television as a government propaganda tool was thus clear from the beginning. But what grabbed the interest of South Africans on opening night was mainly the entertainment. While many viewers enjoyed the news, it was the variety show *Knicky Knacky Knoo* that stole the spotlight. When interviewed in the streets the morning after the opening, Mr H. J. Fischer stated: '*The Knicky Knacky Knoo Two show [sic] was equal to the best overseas television*'¹². 'I like the Knicky Knacky Knoo show, because it had nice jokes'¹³, seven-year-old Desmond Clue agreed.

⁹ *Radio en TV met NOU*, 1976-01-05 (TV Skedule), pp.42-43.

¹⁰ Quoted in TV-Redaksie, Dis Deel van S.A. Lewe, sê Premier, *Die Burger*, 1976-01-06, p.4 (*My translation*).

¹¹ Quoted in TV-Redaksie, Dis Deel van S.A. Lewe, sê Premier, *Die Burger*, 1976-01-06, p.4 (*My translation*).

¹² Anonym, Street Survey: What Readers Think of 'Full-time' TV, *Argus*, 1976-01-07, p.19.

¹³ Anonym, Street Survey: What Readers Think of 'Full-time' TV, *Argus*, 1976-01-07, p.19.

And even more popular than real-life newsreaders Michael de Morgan and Cor Nortjé, was Diereland's newsreader. 'Haas Das! Is it necessary to say anything more? Basil Brush, his cute British friend, can forget about it'¹⁴, wrote *Die Burger*.

3. South African television: an overview

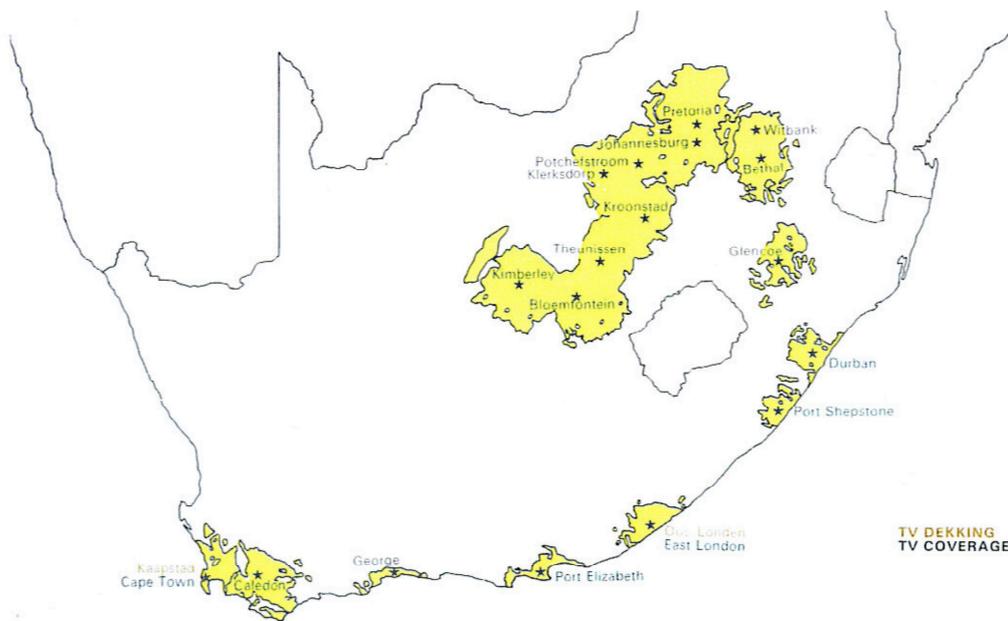


Figure 19: Television coverage map, 1976.
Source: SABC, *Annual Report*, 1976, p.103.

After the opening night, SABC-TV became very popular. By the end of the first year of television, 650 000 licences had been issued, and more than 1,5 million viewers tuned in every evening.¹⁵ For the first four years of South African television, the service was broadcast for about 37 hours a week, with equal treatment of Afrikaans and English. In April 1980, transmission time was extended to 42 and a half hours per week.¹⁶

SABC-TV offered a great variety of television programmes, including locally produced programmes like *The Knicky Knacky Knoo show*, a variety show, and dramas like *The Villagers*. But it was often the children's programmes that became

¹⁴ C. v. R., Haas Das Eerste Groot TV-Persoonlikheid, *Die Burger*, 1976-01-07, p.3 (*My translation*).

¹⁵ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1976, p.93.

¹⁶ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1980, p.11.

the most popular among both children and adults. It is also with the children's programmes that SABC-TV proved its craft and innovation in terms of new techniques. With the televising of *Liewe Heksie*, which had been popular for many years among readers and radio audiences, the producers developed a new technique with Latex-dolls. In *Wielie Walie*, the character Mol Majeur was used to refine the world-first technique of micro motion, which enabled thousands of fine movements. And in terms of animation, the children's programme *Uz Adibalz an Fings*¹⁷ used an animation method that had been devised and developed by the SABC.¹⁸



Figure 20: Scenes from popular children's series on South African television: *Liewe Heksie*, *Oscar*, Karel Kraai from *Wielie Walie*, and *Heidi*.

Sources: V. Vels, *Liewe Heksie en die Tent* (Kaapstad & Pretoria, 1978), p. 6;

http://www.shopasave.co.za/index.php?Type_Code=ProductInfo&Itemcode=D06293; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1976, p.94; <http://www.mangaitalia.it/board/viewarticle.php?articleid=37491>

For many years, local productions made up more than 60% of total television broadcasts. Nevertheless, imported programmes soon counted among the most popular shows. In the 1970s and 1980s, *Dallas* and *The Cosby Show*, for example, were some

¹⁷ 'Us Animals and Things'

¹⁸ Anonym, What Readers Think of 'Ful-Time' TV, *Argus*, 7 January 1976, p.19; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1979, p.71; Personal Information: Louise Smit, Producer of Children's Programmes, Pringle Bay, 2003-09-01; Personal Information: Verna Vels, Former Head of Youth and Children's Programmes, Safritel, Johannesburg, 2003-08-23.

of the most watched programmes on South African television.¹⁹ Dubbed programmes like Heidi were also very popular, as were certain co-productions²⁰ like Casimir and Oscar.²¹

In 1978, the British Actors' Equity ban was extended to television programmes recorded on film. The ban had first been put on South Africa in the 1960s in protest against apartheid policies, and stated that Equity members would not perform in South Africa if they were not allowed to play to multi-racial audiences. When the boycott was extended to television, it meant that programmes using a performance by any Equity member could not be broadcast over South African television. This created difficulties in the procurement of shows from overseas, as Britain was an important source of material. However, the SABC managed to find their way around the ban by importing programmes from other countries and even by adapting British programmes, for example the animated children's programme, *Rupert the Bear*. To get around the ban, the SABC dubbed the programme *from English into English*, as it featured performances by Equity voice artists.²²

By 1979, the broadcasts covered more than 80% of the white population, and 42% of the black population. However, there was still only one service and one channel, namely SABC-TV. It was only at the end of 1981, on 31 December, that the separate black services were introduced. The existing SABC-TV channel was now known as TV1, and the black television service consisted of two services: TV2 for Nguni languages (Zulu and Xhosa) and TV3 for Sotho languages (Sotho, Northern Sotho

¹⁹ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1979, p.67; J. Hyslop, Why Did Apartheid's Supporters Capitulate? 'Whiteness', Class and Consumption in Urban South Africa, 1985-1995, *Society in Transition* 31(1), 2000, p.40.

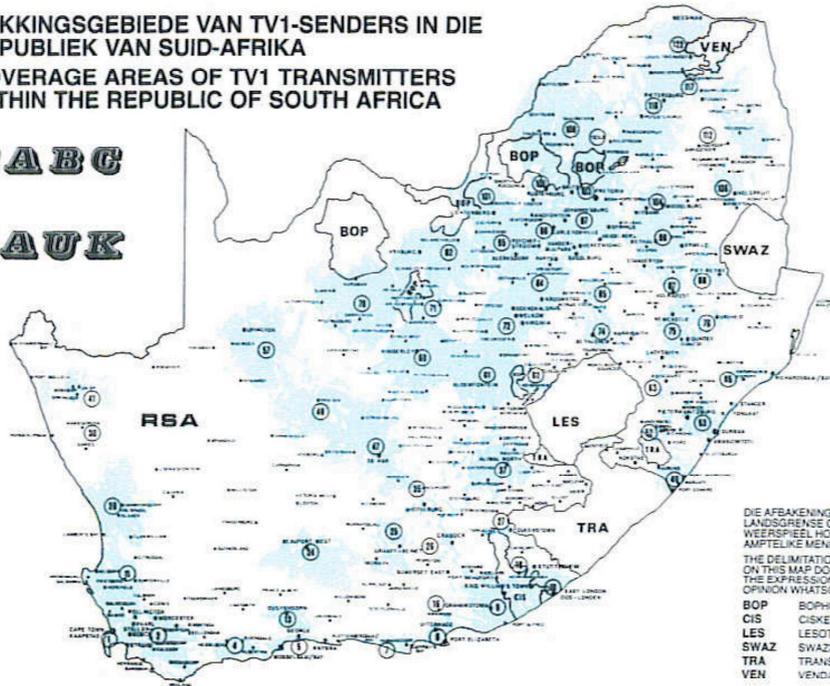
²⁰ A co-production is a television programme made in association with other broadcasting companies, in this case corporations from other countries.

²¹ Personal Information: Verna Vels, Former Head of Youth and Children's Programmes, Safritel, Johannesburg, 2003-08-23; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1979, p.67.

²² SABC, *Annual Report*, 1978, p.57; Anonym, The Day Equity Pulled the Plug on Our Best of British.... *SABC Radio & TV*, Oct-Dec 1995, p.35; Equity, 'Equity History'. Internet: <http://www.equity.org.uk/AboutUs/PDF/EquityHistoryPanels.pdf>, s.a. Accessed: 2007-09-07.

**DEKKINGSGBIEDE VAN TV1-SENDERS IN DIE REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA
COVERAGE AREAS OF TV1 TRANSMITTERS WITHIN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

SABC
SAUK

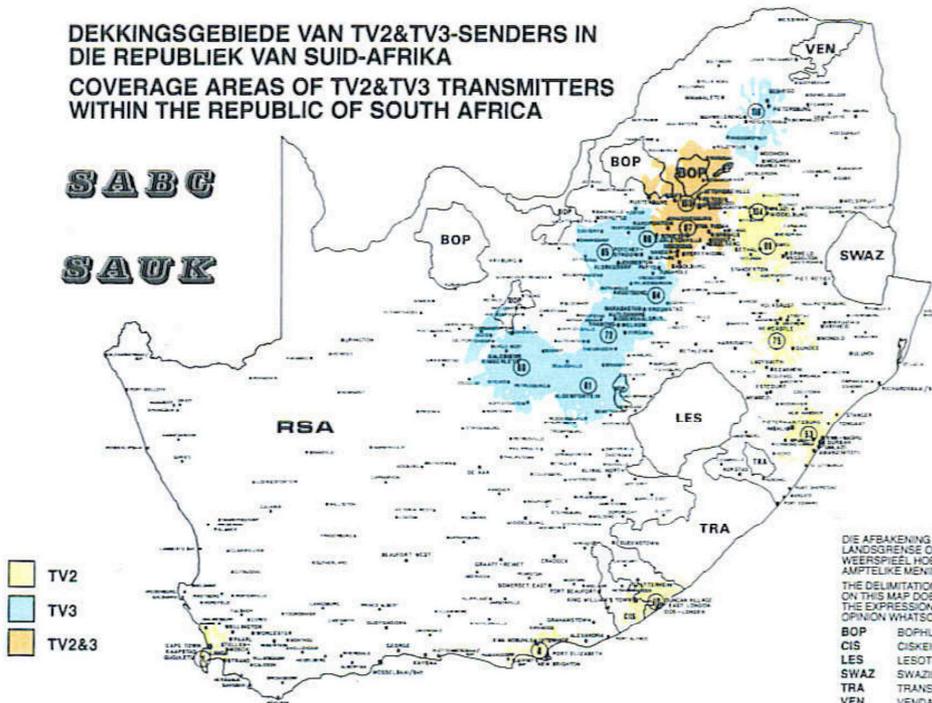


DIE AFBAKENING VAN LANDSGRENE OP HIERDIE KAART WEERSPEEL HOEGENAAMD GEEN AMPTELIKE MENING NIE
THE DELIMITATION OF BORDERS ON THIS MAP DOES NOT IMPLY THE EXPRESSION OF ANY OPINION WHATSOEVER

BOP BOPHUTHATSWANA
CIS CISKEI
LES LESOTHO
SWAZ SWAZILAND
TRA TRANSKEI
VEN VENDA

**DEKKINGSGBIEDE VAN TV2&TV3-SENDERS IN DIE REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA
COVERAGE AREAS OF TV2&TV3 TRANSMITTERS WITHIN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

SABC
SAUK



TV2
TV3
TV2&3

DIE AFBAKENING VAN LANDSGRENE OP HIERDIE KAART WEERSPEEL HOEGENAAMD GEEN AMPTELIKE MENING NIE
THE DELIMITATION OF BORDERS ON THIS MAP DOES NOT IMPLY THE EXPRESSION OF ANY OPINION WHATSOEVER

BOP BOPHUTHATSWANA
CIS CISKEI
LES LESOTHO
SWAZ SWAZILAND
TRA TRANSKEI
VEN VENDA

Figure 21: Coverage areas of TV1, TV2 and TV3, 1984.
Source: SABC, *Annual Report*, 1984, p.69.

and Tswana). For the first year, these services were broadcast over one channel, with equal distribution of the 27 hours of weekly transmission time. Unlike the first channel, which was opened with announcements and normal programmes, the black channel was launched with a grand gala opening (see Figure 22). The services were structured in such a way that it broadcast to areas where there were bigger concentrations of the different languages, and where there was electricity. On 31 December 1982, the two services were split into two separate regional channels, each broadcasting for 27 hours a week and covering the main Nguni regions (TV2) and Sotho regions (TV3).²³ (See Figure 21.)

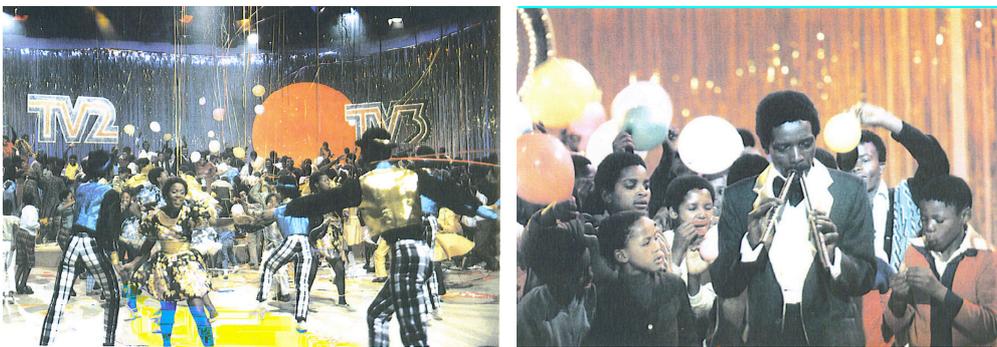


Figure 22: The launch of TV2 and TV3 on 31 December 1981.
Source: SABC, *Annual Report*, 1981, p.56.

The official policy for TV2 and TV3 was ‘to act as a window on the national as well as the international scene, to entertain the black viewer to the best of its ability, to inform, enlighten and educate’²⁴. According to the SABC, it was crucial to capture, through television, the ‘traditional’ cultures and usages of South Africa, as these were ‘quickly falling into disuse’²⁵. As such, ‘traditional’ ways of life were an important subject on TV2 and TV3. An immensely popular programme that focused on ‘traditional’ culture was *Shaka* (see Figure 23), the epic story of the founder of the Zulu Kingdom. *Shaka* was received well among black *and* white South African viewers, and despite growing overseas criticism of South Africa and its racial

²³ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1981, p.6; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1982, p.8; D. P. van Vuuren, Die SAUK se Televisiedienste, in J. B. du Toit (red.), *Televisie – Skyn en Werklikheid*, p.113; SAUK, *Dit is die SAUK*, p.16.

²⁴ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1980, p.13.

²⁵ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1978, p.13.

policies, the show was sold in over fifty countries, including the USA and West Germany.²⁶

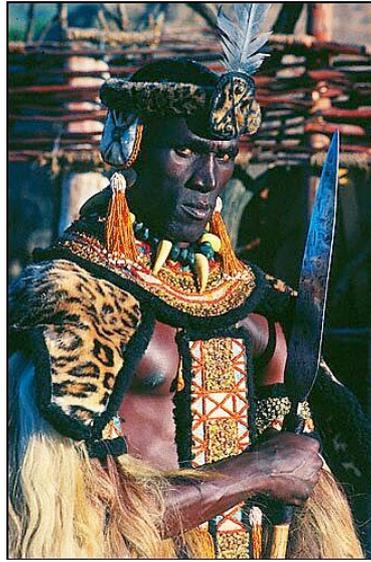


Figure 23: Actor Henry Cele in the internationally renowned series, *Shaka*.
Source: <http://www.sohoblues.com/solidgoldportraits/previewpages/previewpage2.htm>

Children's programmes on the black services included TV3's *Mulwana la Mutla* ('Rabbit and Friends'), which told the story of Rabbit, who owned his own cinema. On TV2, another Rabbit moved to the city in *UMPungushe noNogwaja*. In the city, his new friend Jackal taught him about things like dentistry, making sweets, and disposing of one's garbage.²⁷ Many local and important shows were dubbed into the black languages, including *Spiderman* and *Thunderbirds*.²⁸

In 1985 an extra entertainment service was introduced to accommodate growing audiences. The service, TV4, was broadcast after nine o'clock in the evening on the TV2 and TV3 channels. TV4's programme line-up included sport broadcasts (such as Wimbledon Tennis and Formula 1 motor racing), documentaries on for example George Washington and Marilyn Monroe, and popular series such as *Misdaad in*

²⁶ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1986, p.9. The series *Shaka Zulu* has been the subject of a number of academic studies, and has received criticism for its stereotyping and 'traditionalising' of Zulu culture. See for example G. M. Merham, *Political Discourse and Historical Television Drama: A Case Study of Shaka Zulu*, D.Litt & Phil. Thesis, University of South Africa, 1989; C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Power of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge, 1998); D. Wylie, Shaka and the Modern Zulu State, *History Today* 4, May 1994.

²⁷ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1982, pp.56-58.

²⁸ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1980, p.63. *Thunderbirds* had already been broadcast in Afrikaans, as *Redding Internasionaal*.

Miami (the dubbed version of *Miami Vice*), *M*A*S*H*, *Family Ties* and *Dynasty*.²⁹ In 1986, South Africa's first commercial television station was launched: M-NET was a pay channel that could only be received through a decoder. For two hours per day, however, non-subscribers had a glimpse of the channel through Open Time. Another television channel in South Africa was Bop-TV, the service of the Bophuthatswana homeland.³⁰

On 1 November 1985, the SABC launched what it considered to be its third broadcasting medium, after radio and television. Teledata was a series of electronic magazine pages, transmitted over television. Viewers needed decoders to tune into Teledata throughout the day, but an uncoded service was broadcast in the mornings. Teledata had several main categories, including news, business news, sport, weather forecasts, programme schedules for television and radio, travel and transport information, and leisure. Information included listings of current investment rates, the daily prices of meat, vegetables and fruit on all major markets, and sport schedules. Educational material was also developed for Teledata, and included a series on first aid and a Trivial Pursuit game. In 1988, *Teledossier* was added to help the police in fighting crime. By alerting the public to criminals wanted by the police, viewers could take an active role in accosting these perpetrators. According to the SABC, the police considered *Teledossier* to be very successful.³¹ Interestingly, the Teledata service came much closer to the predictions for television made in the 1920s than television itself: according to a number of South African journalists writing on television in 1929, the medium would be very useful in tracking stock exchange prices, and could be used as a tool against crime.³²

In the early 1990s, the SABC restructured its channels. In October 1991 Topsport Surplus (TSS) was introduced as a supplementary channel to accommodate the sport programmes that could not be fit into TV1's schedule. In 1992, TV2, TV3 and TV4

²⁹ D. P. van Vuuren, Die SAUK se Televisiedienste, in J. B. du Toit (red.), *Televisie – Skyn en Werklikheid*, p.113; *Huisgenoot*, 1987-07-02 (TV-Programme), pp.130-131; *Huisgenoot*, 1987-08-06 (TV-Programme), pp.153-154.

³⁰ M. Botha, The History and Development of Film and Television, in P. J. Fourie (ed.), *Introduction to Communication. Course Book 6: Film and Television Studies*, pp.48-49.

³¹ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1985, p.70; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1986, p.74; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1988, p.50; D. P van Vuuren, Die SAUK se Televisiedienste, in J. B. du Toit (red.), *Televisie – Skyn en Werklikheid*, pp.113-114.

³² See Chapter II, p.53.

were consolidated into a multi-cultural channel called Contemporary Community Values Television (CCV-TV). In February 1994, National Network Television (NNTV) replaced TSS.³³

An interesting aspect of South African television was the relationship between the state broadcaster and the government. Before 1970, broadcasting matters fell under the administration of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs, and the SABC had to report to the Minister. But after 1970, and especially after the introduction of television, the broadcasting portfolio changed hands many times. In 1970, it was appointed to the Department of National Education.³⁴ In 1979, the portfolio was handed back to the Department of Posts and Telegraphs, before falling under the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information from 1980 to 1985. In 1986 broadcasting shifted position again: for the next two years, it was the responsibility of the Minister in the State President's office entrusted with administration and broadcasting services. Over the next decade, broadcasting changed hands several times, between the Ministers of Information, Broadcasting and Cinema Industry; Home Affairs; National Education; and the Interior and Environmental Affairs. From 1994, the portfolio was once again under the administration of the Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting.³⁵ In future studies of South African television, exploring this issue further may reveal a considerable amount about the place of television in the government's policy, and how the government viewed and perhaps attempted to use the medium. It raises a number of interesting questions: why did the portfolio change hands so frequently, and to such diverse departments? Did the government not know what to do with and how to properly control broadcasting (and particularly television)? What (if anything) do these changes say about the priority given to the administration of broadcasting?

From the start of South African television, the government had indeed attempted to keep tight control over the medium. According to Verna Vels, former Head of Youth

³³ SABC, 'This is the SABC'. Internet: http://vcmstatic.sabc.co.za/VCMStaticProdStage/CORPORATE/SABC%20Corporate/Document/This_is_the_SABC_text.doc, s.a. Accessed: 2007-08-27.

³⁴ See Chapter V, p.134, footnote 45.

³⁵ SABC, *Annual Reports*, 1970-2006.

and Children's Programmes at the SABC, the NP government kept a hawk's eye on especially news and actuality broadcasts.³⁶

The SABC has been accused of being a direct propaganda tool of the NP government. At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) inquest into the media and its role in supporting apartheid, it was found that the South African media had played a crucial part in reflecting and moulding public views. The SABC in particular, it was found, had shown a distinct bias towards the apartheid government, and its news bulletins had fostered the idea that apartheid was 'natural and inevitable'³⁷. Moreover, according to the TRC, the SABC was an 'inciter of violence', had willingly co-operated with security forces, and had failed to report adequately on human rights violations committed during apartheid, most notably the death of Steve Biko in 1977.³⁸

In terms of its programmes, the SABC for the first few years maintained a policy of using white people in white programmes.³⁹ But during the 1980s, this racial policy became more lenient. In fact, already in 1979, the SABC started using Indian and coloured Christian ministers as regular presenters on the religious broadcasts with which SABC-TV/TV1 closed every night.⁴⁰ In 1987, the children's programme *Pumpkin Patch* became one of the first TV1 productions to use a non-white presenter.⁴¹

However, it was only in 1993 that the SABC changed its policies and structures to such an extent that it reflected the country's changing socio-political climate. After much deliberation and fierce dispute, the SABC's first democratically elected board

³⁶ Personal Information: Verna Vels, Former Head of Youth and Children's Programmes, Safritel, Johannesburg, 2003-08-23.

³⁷ TRC, 'Final Report, Volume 4, Chapter 6: Institutional Hearing: The Media'. Internet: <http://www.polity.org.za/polity/govdocs/commissions/1998/trc/4chap6.htm>, 1998-10-29. Accessed: 2007-09-03.

³⁸ TRC, 'Final Report, Volume 4, Chapter 6: Institutional Hearing: The Media'. Internet: <http://www.polity.org.za/polity/govdocs/commissions/1998/trc/4chap6.htm>, 1998-10-29. Accessed: 2007-09-03.

³⁹ Personal Information: Verna Vels, Former Head of Youth and Children's Programmes, Safritel, Johannesburg, 2003-08-23.

⁴⁰ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1979, p.69.

⁴¹ Personal Information: Louise Smit, Producer of Children's Programmes, Pringle Bay, 2003-09-01.

was announced in 1993.⁴² This board consisted of men and women, and included members from different races. Initially, Dr van Zyl Slabbert was chosen as chairman of the board, but he resigned soon after taking office. In August 1993, acting chairperson Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri was elected to officially take over from Slabbert, and she became the first black *and* first female chairperson of the SABC.

For the next few years, the new SABC board strived to restructure the Corporation and to change it from a state broadcaster to a responsible, impartial public broadcaster.⁴³ TV1, the former white channel, changed its ‘white face’⁴⁴ in an attempt to become more representative of its viewers. New broadcasting policies were formulated to reflect and promote the cultural diversity of South Africa, particularly where language and religion were concerned. Where the SABC had formerly ascribed to policies of separate development and had only catered for Christian religious programming, the ‘new SABC’ would cater for all the major languages and religions in South Africa.⁴⁵ On 4 February 1996, the SABC launched its new channels, SABC1, SABC2 and SABC3 to replace TV1, CCV-TV and NNTV. The racial bar between the services was lifted, and instead each channel had its own character and intended market.⁴⁶

In 1993, new broadcasting legislation⁴⁷ provided for the creation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), which was tasked with the regulating broadcasting activities and which would function independently from the State, the government and party politics. In this way, it was hoped that broadcasting would be regulated democratically, and not become a tool of state and government propaganda as it had in the past.⁴⁸ In the same year, the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South

⁴² The first democratically elected SABC board consisted of: Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri (Chairperson), Colin Hickling (Vice-Chairperson), Herman Bailey, Brigalia Bam, Fikile Bam, Leon Bartel, Anna Boshoff, Dr Erra Cilliers, Prof. Arnold de Beer, Dr Antonie Gildenhuys, Tshepo Khumbane, Dr Enos Mabuze, Prof. Fatima Meer, Billy Modise, Prof. Njabulo Ndebele, Bishop Winston Ndungane, Prof. Abram Nkabinde, Prof. Pieter Potgieter, Dr Gordon Sibiyi, Sheila Sisulu, Dr van Zyl Slabbert (resigned), Franklin Sonn, Dr Ruth Teer-Tomaselli, Prof. Alex Thembela, and Prof. Christo Viljoen. SABC, *Annual Report*, 1992/1993, pp.4-5.

⁴³ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1992/1993, pp.3-4.

⁴⁴ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1992/1993, p.21.

⁴⁵ SABC, *Annual Report*, 1994, pp.5-7.

⁴⁶ SABC, ‘This is the SABC’. Internet: http://vcnstatic.sabc.co.za/VCMStaticProdStage/CORPORATE/SABC%20Corporate/Document/This_is_the_SABC_text.doc, s.a. Accessed: 2007-08-27.

⁴⁷ President’s Office, No. 153 of 1993: *The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act*, 1993-10-18.

⁴⁸ President’s Office, No. 153 of 1993: *The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act*, 1993-10-18.

Africa (BCCSA) was founded as an independent judicial tribunal to which members of the public could direct complaints against broadcasters. The BCCSA established a code of conduct with which all broadcasters had to comply. Both the BCCSA and the IBA (which was later replaced by ICASA, the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa) were products of the steps taken to make broadcasters democratic and accountable to the public.⁴⁹

New broadcasting legislation also provided for the creation of a free, independent broadcaster. In 1998 the channel was launched as e.tv. In the same year, Bop-TV was formally integrated with the SABC services after the former homelands were abolished. The channel ceased to exist in 2003. Also in 2003, the SABC became a commercial, limited liability enterprise, SABC Ltd, in which the state held 100% shares.⁵⁰

Despite the transformation of South Africa and its media, however, South African television has not been free from criticism. In 2005, for example, an episode of e.tv's investigative journalism programme *Third Degree* was found to be imbalanced and in contravention of BCCSA's code of conduct.⁵¹ And in 2006, the SABC once again came under attack for attempting to stifle opposition and freedom of speech, and for openly supporting the African Nationalist Congress (ANC) government.⁵² But the democratic structures put in place to keep broadcasting in line have played an important role in exposing such transgressions and in allowing criticism.

4. Conclusion

In the thirty years since its introduction in the country, South African television has developed from a feared and shunned 'little bioscope' to an accepted mass medium in

⁴⁹ BCCSA, 'The BCCSA as an Independent Judicial Tribunal'. Internet: <http://www.bccsa.co.za/>, s.a. Accessed: 2007-09-03; ICASA, 'About ICASA – Overview'. Internet: <http://www.icasa.org.za/Content.aspx?Page=17>, s.a. Accessed: 2007-09-03.

⁵⁰ SABC, 'This is the SABC'. Internet: http://vcmstatic.sabc.co.za/VCMStaticProdStage/CORPORATE/SABC%20Corporate/Document/This_is_the_SABC_text.doc, s.a. Accessed: 2007-08-27.

⁵¹ BCCSA, 'Case No: 2005/38 e.tv - 3rd Degree - Programme not Balanced'. Internet: http://www.bccsa.co.za/templates/judgement_template_300.asp, 2005. Accessed: 2007-09-03.

⁵² See for example F. Haffajee, 'Mail and Guardian Online: Inside the SABC Blacklist Report'. Internet: http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=286556&area=/insight/insight_national/, 2006-10-13. Accessed: 2007-09-03.

millions of homes. It has evolved from a state-controlled, racially-divided service to a diverse, multi-racial medium that, though not free of criticism, can be challenged and held accountable. It is a medium that has played an integral part in South Africa's social, cultural and political life. There are many aspects of South African television that still need to be explored further in order to fully comprehend its history, nature and role as a powerful mass medium.