III

PUTTING UP SCREENS:

THE ABSENCE OF TELEVISION IN

SOUTH AFRICA,

1945-1969

The most important thing we've learned,
So far as children are concerned,
Is never, NEVER, NEVER let
Them near your television set —
Or better still, just don't install
The idiotic thing at all.
In almost every house we've been,
We've watched them gaping at the screen.
They loll and slop and lounge about,
And stare until their eyes pop out.
(Last week in someone's place we saw
A dozen eyeballs on the floor.)
They sit and stare and stare and sit
Until they're hypnotised by it,
Until they're absolutely drunk
With all that shocking ghastly junk.
Oh yes, we know it keeps them still,
They don't climb out the window sill,
They never fight or kick or punch,
They leave you free to cook the lunch
And wash the dishes in the sink —
But did you ever stop to think,
To wonder just exactly what
This does to your beloved tot?
IT ROTS THE SENSES IN THE HEAD!
IT KILLS IMAGINATION DEAD!
IT CLOGS AND CLUTTERS UP THE MIND!
IT MAKES A CHILD SO DULL AND BLIND
HE CAN NO LONGER UNDERSTAND
A FANTASY, A FAIRYLAND!
HIS BRAIN BECOMES AS SOFT AS CHEESE!
HIS POWERS OF THINKING RUST AND FREEZE!
HE CANNOT THINK — HE ONLY SEES!

- Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.*[1]

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[1] R. Dahl. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, p.156.

1. Introduction

After the Second World War, television spread through most of the world. In South Africa, however, the medium remained conspicuously absent. Even when it became technically and economically possible for South Africa to introduce television, it was kept out of the country through what is often referred to as the NP government's 'ban on television'[2]. It was only in 1969 that the government decided to launch an official investigation into television, and South Africa's first television service followed in 1976.

What were the reasons for television's absence in South Africa before 1969? In popular literature, it is ascribed to one man, J. A. M. (Albert) Hertzog, who hated this modern invention so much that he stubbornly refused to allow a television service in South Africa. As part of his portfolio as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, broadcasting matters fell under Hertzog's jurisdiction. His influence, according to many writers, was so strong that as soon as he was replaced as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, the South African government agreed to introduce television. Journalist Matthew Hattingh wrote: 'It was not until John Vorster dropped Hertzog from the cabinet in 1968 that plans for television went through.'[3] Hattingh was echoed in a speech at the 2006 Golden Plumes Awards[4] by Prof. Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane, the first post-apartheid Vice Chancellor and Rector at the University of Fort Hare and a member of the SABC Board and the Heraldry Council.[5]

This view, although popular, is much too simplistic. Television had in fact been a topic of parliamentary debate for years before Hertzog became minister. In 1951, seven years before Hertzog took over the portfolio, one of his predecessors, J. F. Naudé, stated that there were no plans to introduce television in the near future.[6] Besides Hertzog, there were three other Ministers of Posts and Telegraphs during the

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[2] R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood. South African Culture and the World Beyond*, p.75.
[3] M. Hattingh, A Cracked Mirror for a Fractured Land, *Dispatch*, 1999-12-24.
[4] The Golden Plumes Awards were launched in 2006 to commemorate the pioneers in television broadcasting in South Africa.
[5] M. V. Mzamane, 'Celebrating Thirty Years of Television in South Africa'. Internet: http://www.tvsa.co.za/default.asp?blogname=shugasblogiwood&ArticleID=3920, 2006-12-20. Accessed: 2007-06-07.
[6] Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates (Hansard) 75*, 1951-04-06, col. 3882.

1950s and 1960s: Naudé (1950-1954), J. J. Serfontein (1954-1958), Hertzog (1958-1968) and M. C. G. J. (Basie) van Rensburg (1968-1970). None of them were eager to introduce television until Basie van Rensburg appointed the Meyer Commission in December 1969.

Furthermore, the statement that Hertzog's departure from the Posts and Telegraphs portfolio removed the main stumbling block in the way of television, is incorrect. Hertzog lost the portfolio in 1968, and it was only in December 1969 that the government appointed the Meyer Commission to investigate the desirability of television. There were many reasons for the Commission's appointment that were not directly caused by Hertzog's departure from Cabinet.[7] Therefore, although Hertzog was a staunch enemy of television and he had considerable say in whether or not his department would undertake such a project, it is doubtful that his opposition alone was the actual reason for television's absence in South Africa.

For media scholars, Hertzog was merely the mouthpiece for the government, who opposed television on the grounds that it would destroy South African (and particularly white Afrikaans) identity and culture. In his book *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond* (1994), media scholar Rob Nixon devoted a chapter, 'The Devil in the Black Box. The Idea of America and the Outlawing of TV', to the relationship between identity and the government's television ban. According to Nixon, the government repeatedly argued that 'TV would simultaneously further the aims of communism and American-style monopoly capitalism, both inimical to ethnic nationalist identities.'[8] Therefore, the NP opposed television because it would become an uncontrollable channel for these foreign ideologies.[9] Nixon's argument is upheld by media scholar Ron Krabill: '[T]he absence of television was the result of the ruling National Party's ideology of cultural purity combined with the appropriation of cultural imperialism discourses from leftist critiques in the West.'[10]

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[7] See Chapter IV, p.104.
[8] R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, p.46.
[9] R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, pp.43-76.
[10] R. Krabill, 'The Structured Absence of Television within the South African Mediascape prior to 1976'. Internet: www.newschool.edu/tcds/Ron%20Krabill.pdf, s.a. Accessed: 2007-06-06. This source is an extract from Krabill's Phd Dissertation: see R. Krabill, *Starring Nelson Mandela and Bill*

The preservation of identity and the government's fear of foreign ideologies were indeed an important argument, especially during the 1960s. To argue that it was the main or only reason, however, is to disregard the multiple other explanations offered for television's absence, both from the government and from television's advocates. In fact, the moral danger of television was really only highlighted from the 1960s, and even then it was not often cited as the main reason for television's absence.

Nixon and Krabill's argument also does not really account for the issue of government censorship. In the 1960s, the Publications Control Board (PCB) had the power to censor any form of public entertainment that offended the religion of any section of the South African public, brought South Africans into ridicule, harmed relations between South Africans or promoted communism.[11] Under the NP's rule, dozens of books and films were banned, and several undesirable scenes were cut from movies.[12] If the NP government were able to control the existing media, surely the material broadcast over South African television could be censored as well, and the effect of foreign ideologies could be curtailed.

A more satisfactory explanation for television's absence in South Africa can only be found after a thorough investigation and re-evaluation of the arguments for and against television. The one place where this subject was probably most heatedly debated was in the House of Assembly.

2. The television debates

On 6 April 1951, opposition member K. Ueckermann posted an official question to the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, J. F. Naudé. He wanted to know whether 'consideration is being given to the adoption of television by the SABC.'[13] Naudé replied that the SABC did not propose to introduce television in the near future, but assured the House of Assembly that the SABC was keeping abreast with

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Cosby: Television, Identity and the End of Apartheid, PhD dissertation, New School for Social Research, New York, 2002.

[11] President's Office, No. 26 of 1963: *The Publications and Entertainments Act*, 1963-03-28.

[12] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid. Race and Class in South African Film*, pp.14-15, 145.

[13] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 75*, 1951-04-06, col. 3882.

developments in television in other countries. Ueckermann's question was not unexpected: at the time, television was experiencing a period of rapid expansion across the world, and in 1944 the SABC had stated that television was one of its post-war goals.[14] But nor was the government's answer surprising, because television was still a new medium in most countries. The costs were high, the technology was still developing and the consequences on public life were not yet fully understood. The SABC was also still busy developing its radio services.

Furthermore, between 1944 and 1951, the political climate in South Africa had changed significantly. In 1944, the Second World War was drawing to a close and South Africans were starting to look towards their post-war future. Historian Saul Dubow argues that there were a number of distinct 'worlds of possibilities' in 1940s South Africa – in other words, different visions for the post-war future. One of these visions was held by the ruling United Party of Jan Smuts. According to Dubow, the United Party (UP) and their 'liberal and social-democratic' supporters envisioned a future South Africa built through modern, progressive ideas and socially and economically integrated with the rest of the modern world. In the years immediately following the war, the UP endeavoured to develop South Africa into a scientifically, industrially and socially progressive state, and they established organisations like the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).[15] According to historian Shirley Brooks, the UP government was strongly influenced by British ideas of post-war reconstruction and modernity.[16] Although television was probably not a top priority on the UP's agenda for post-war developments, it was part of the progressive society represented by Britain and sought after by Smuts's government.

Another 'world of possibility' was the Afrikaner nationalist hopes of a future of white supremacy. This was a future where white, particularly Afrikaner, cultural and economic interests were a priority, and in which white poverty had been eradicated. In 1948, the general election brought the National Party to power, and these Afrikaner

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[14] SABC, *Annual Report*, 1944, p.6.
[15] S. Dubow, Introduction, *in* S. Dubow & A. Jeeves (eds), *South Africa's 1940s. Worlds of Possibilities*, pp.2-9.
[16] S. Brooks, Planning for Leisure in 1940s Natal: Post-War Reconstruction and Parks as 'Public' Amenities, *in* S. Dubow & A. Jeeves (eds), *South Africa's 1940s*, pp.129-130.

nationalist hopes were realised.[17] By 1951, the NP had already begun to entrench white supremacy and to implement apartheid. If television had been a goal under the Smuts government, it was definitely not even on the NP's list of priorities.[18]

Nevertheless, for the next two decades, Ueckermann's question would be repeated many times, and television became the subject of an emotive debate in the House of Assembly. These debates contain the key arguments for and against television: on the one side of the debate, the NP government was adamant that the time was not ripe to introduce television. It would be unwise to do so, as television had many negative consequences. On the other side, the political opposition[19] refuted the NP's arguments against television, accused them of sinister prejudices, and advocated television as a great boon to society that would bring South Africans together and enable them to share in the world's great developments and events.

a. Putting up divisions and shields: the government's explanations

The government cited many different reasons for their position against television. These explanations can be divided into two groups: those that pointed out the many obstacles that made television improbable, such as high costs and inadequate resources, and those that detailed the adverse effects that made television undesirable. According to the opposition, all of these obstacles were surmountable. Nevertheless, although the NP repeatedly admitted that television could not be kept out of the country forever, they maintained that because of these obstacles, television's introduction should be postponed for as long as possible.

i. The economic cost and consequences

One of the first arguments against television was its very high cost. In 1952 J. F. Naudé officially declared that television was a matter for the future, because it was still too expensive.[20] At the time, the television stations in many countries were younger than six years and although the technology had begun to spread through the

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[17] S. Dubow, Introduction, *in* S. Dubow & A. Jeeves (eds), *South Africa's 1940s*, pp.2-7.
[18] See below, pp.76-83.
[19] See 'Definition of concepts', p.21.
[20] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 78*, 1952-05-09, col. 5539.

world, it was still a new medium that cost large amounts to establish. The SABC stated that it was improbable that South Africa would get a television service in the near future, because it would cost millions of pounds to put the necessary equipment in place, to import television sets and to produce high-quality programmes in large quantities.[21]

Furthermore, by 1960, the SABC's financial position was desperate. Operational costs increased after the SABC bought the land for its new headquarters in Auckland Park, expanded the 'Bantu services', and raised salaries, all without a corresponding income increase. The government had to assist, and gave subsidies for the production of programmes for the black population, as well as a loan to help with the installations of the FM radio services.[22] It was clear that, on its own, the SABC would not be able to introduce television at that stage.

The opposition did not dispute the high costs. But, they argued, there was a very simple solution to the problem: to approach private businesses.[23] Through advertising, a private company would get the capital to set up equipment, produce programmes and maintain television stations. However, the government insisted that this was out of the question. According to the existing broadcasting legislation[24], only the SABC could establish a television service and to do so, it would need the approval of the Governor General.[25] In other words, should television come to South Africa, it could only be run by the SABC and under government control. And as the government would not want television *not* to fall under the state's direction, they saw no reason to amend the act to provide for any other means of control.

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[21] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 83*, 1953-09-11, col. 3334; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 85*, 1954-05-11, col. 4983.
[22] G. Hayman & R. Tomaselli, Ideology and Technology in the Growth of South African Broadcasting, 1924-1971, *in* R. Tomaselli *et al.* (eds), *Currents of Power: State Broadcasting in South Africa*, pp.60-61.
[23] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 92*, 1956-05-29, col. 6443.
[24] President's Office, No. 14 of 1949, *Broadcasting Amendment Act*, 1949-04-05; President's Office, No. 3 of 1952, *Radio Act*, 1952-03-05.
[25] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 83*, 1953-09-11, col. 3352; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 85*, 1954-05-11, cols. 4982-4983.

By the end of the 1950s, UP member B. Wilson argued that the cost of establishing television was no longer of 'astronomical proportions'[26], and during the 1960s the NP's argument shifted. Instead of claiming that television was simply too expensive, the government now argued that the benefits of television did not justify the high expenses.[27]

Furthermore, the government had to consider not only the cost, but the 'economic burden'[28] (as Minister of Posts & Telegraphs Albert Hertzog called it) faced by small businesses, the press, and the public of South Africa. *That*, Hertzog argued, was the real problem with television. [29]

The high cost of advertising meant that only big companies could advertise on television. This would enable the big companies to squeeze out small enterprises, and would mean that companies who spent their money on television advertising had nothing left for newspaper advertising. As a result, many newspapers would lose revenue and close down.[30] This was a big concern for the NP, and remained an issue even after the government had finally decided to consider television.[31]

But one of the worst economic consequences of television, argued Hertzog, was the effect on the poor. 'The man who watches television is the one who will have to bear the costs of television, and he is the poor man.'[32] People who could barely afford to feed their families would feel compelled to buy television sets at great cost. Eight to ten years later, those sets would be technically obsolete, and the viewers would have to buy newer and better sets. Together with the licence fee, television would become a very expensive commodity for those who already struggled to afford basic living expenses. What is more, in order to afford the expensive advertising slots on television, businesses would be compelled to raise the prices of advertised products

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[26] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 101*, 1959-06-01, col. 7059.
[27] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, cols. 3649-3650.
[28] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3660.
[29] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, cols. 3660-3665.
[30] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3664.
[31] See Chapter V, p.123 and Chapter VI, p.153.
[32] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1960-03-24, col. 3665.

by between 10% and 25%. By advocating television, the opposition therefore wanted to 'lay a tremendous burden on the shoulders of the worker'[33], reasoned Hertzog.

In 1965, NP Member of Parliament (MP) C. P. Mulder confirmed this argument. Mulder reckoned that television was a luxury item that would have to be paid from the pocket of the taxpayer. 'This means that an additional amount of R5,000,000 will have to come from the pocket of the poor man annually in order to subsidize the rich man and enable him to acquire more luxury articles.'[34]

The opposition was not convinced. South Africa had a budget surplus of R128,000,000 in 1964 – how then could it not afford television, when even poorer countries such as Southern Rhodesia[35] could? In fact, as opposition member U. M. Weiss pointed out, Rhodesia's commercial television service was even making a profit.[36] And how could the NP maintain that there was no money, when Parliament had just approved R84,000,000 for 'unforeseen items'?[37]

Moreover, the government was able to afford thousands of rands per year to produce television films for overseas propaganda. Despite the NP government's numerous objections to television, the Department of Information had its own Television Section that produced a large number of television films for overseas broadcasts. Between 1958 and 1963, this Television Section had produced more than two hundred films for overseas consumption, particularly in the United States, Canada, Australia, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Finland, Switzerland, Sweden, Rhodesia, France and the United Kingdom. Millions of viewers saw these broadcasts, which included news, interviews, documentary programmes and topical items. The costs of these films amounted to tens of thousands of rands every year. Although the opposition did not in principle disapprove of these films, it did raise questions about the government's argument.[38]

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[33] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1960-03-24, col. 3665.

[34] RSA, *Hansard 13*, 1965-02-19, col. 1491.

[35] In 1978, Southern Rhodesia's name changed to Rhodesia Zimbabwe, and since 1980 it has been Zimbabwe.

[36] RSA, *Hansard 11*, 1964-05-25, cols. 6600-6601.

[37] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1620.

[38] RSA, *Hansard 8*, 1963-06-14, cols. 7884-7891; RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1619; RSA, *Hansard 23*, 1968-04-26, cols. 4149-4150.

In the 1960s, South Africa could most probably have afforded television. However, the government maintained that the money they had, had to be spent on other projects that deserved greater priority. The high cost of television was an obstacle that could have been dealt with, but the NP believed that television was so inessential that it was not worth the money and effort.

ii. Geographical coverage

South Africa's vast distances and mountainous terrain created major financial and technical obstacles in the establishment of television. But this could easily be solved, according to the opposition. In many countries, television was first established in the main population centres before it spread to the rest of the country. The same could be done in South Africa. Opposition members claimed that it would only be fair to introduce television on the Witwatersrand first, since it was South Africa's most populated area and the largest source of income tax.[39]

The government did not agree. In 1954, Minister J. F. Naudé declared: 'There would be great dissatisfaction if we provided this service on the Rand only and not to the rest of the country. There would be an outcry immediately. I sincerely hope that it will not be undertaken unless it is provided on a Union-wide basis.'[40] In 1960, the Prime Minister himself spoke about it. In a seminal speech on the introduction of television, H. F. Verwoerd stated: 'it is quite clear that we must proceed from the standpoint that we must have a national service or no service at all.'[41] The next year Minister Albert Hertzog confirmed this when he called it unfair to serve only a few cities with television.[42]

The argument that a television service would have to be established countrywide became a basic assumption among the National Party members, and for the rest of the

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[39] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 78*, 1952-05-09, col. 5539; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 83*, 1953-09-11, col. 3353; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 85*, 1954-05-11, cols. 4984, 5000.

[40] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 85*, 1954-05-11, col. 4984.

[41] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3006.

[42] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3661. The government had good reasons for not wanting to ignore the rural areas, since the rural Afrikaners made up an important proportion of their support base. See H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, p.438.

1960s it was maintained that such a national service would be much too expensive to introduce.[43]

iii. Programme resources

One very expensive aspect of television was the programmes. In 1953, Minister J. F. Naudé told the House of Assembly that the SABC was reluctant to introduce television until it was certain of a steady supply of good programmes.[44] This argument was also often used in the 1960s. The problem, according to the National Party, was not that there were no programmes to buy from overseas television stations. The issue was that the more affordable programmes were cheap 'cowboy' films, which had no real cultural value and were filled with crime and 'immoral behaviour'.[45]

Another problem was the equal treatment of Afrikaans and English, the two official languages at the time. The NP feared that, because English programmes were so readily available, a South African television service would either neglect the Afrikaans language, or Afrikaans programmes would have to be produced at a very high cost. The latter, reckoned Albert Hertzog, would be 'prohibitively expensive'[46]. The opposition recognised the fear that English would dominate over Afrikaans, but debated that television would actually give Afrikaans the opportunity to grow, as it would bring the best of Afrikaans culture into the homes of millions.[47] And if the Department of Information could afford to produce a large amount of television films for overseas propaganda, reasoned opposition leader Sir David De Villiers Graaff (see Figure 4), why could South Africa not make its own, Afrikaans programmes?[48]

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[43] When television was finally introduced in 1976, it was launched in the major urban centres after all. See Chapter V, p.130 and Figure 19, p.165.
[44] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 83*, 1953-09-11, col. 3353.
[45] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, cols. 3660-3661; RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6532.
[46] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3667.
[47] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3648.
[48] RSA, *Hansard 10*, 1964-04-27, col. 4959.

Figure 4: Sir David De Villiers Graaff.
Source: T. Cameron & S. B. Spies (eds), *An Illustrated History of South Africa*
(Johannesburg, 1986), p.276.

But bilingualism was not the only problem: the many African languages and Indian dialects would have to be served as well.[49] It would not be as simple as buying overseas programmes and translating them into the different languages of South Africa, because, as NP member J. J. Rall explained, you could translate the language, but not the images.[50] According to the NP, special care would have to be taken in what was shown to the black population, because cheap programmes would teach them how to commit crime and how to elude the police.[51] In fact, he continued, you could not show the same programmes to the different cultural groups in South Africa at all. In keeping with its policy of separate development, the NP believed that each cultural group had its different 'cultural requirements', and should therefore be served with its own, separate television service.[52]

Therefore, it was not that the government could not secure any good material for television. Programme resources did create an obstacle, but it was one that the NP would have been able to overcome. However, because of their concern for the Afrikaans language and culture and the potential decline of morality among South

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[49] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3667; RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6511.
[50] RSA, *Hansard 17*, 1966-09-20, col. 2464.
[51] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1960-03-24, col. 3659; RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6526.
[52] RSA, *Hansard 25*, 1969-03-19, col. 2858.

Africans[53], the NP would not go through the trouble of solving a problem in order to get a medium that they did not want.

iv. Manpower

South Africa's rapid economic expansion in the beginning of the 1960s involved an increase in technological production and created a great demand for technical labour. Initially, South Africa was not able to fulfil this requirement, and the country experienced shortages in manpower, especially regarding technicians.[54]

Television would demand a lot of technical staff. Before a country launched the medium, NP member J. C. Otto pointed out in 1963, it should determine whether it had the manpower to do so. Not only did South Africa's industries already have a shortage of artisans, engineers and technicians; if television were to be introduced, these technical workers would be attracted to work in this new industry, which would leave other sectors with an even greater shortage. South Africa could not even think of introducing television: just like its financial resources, the country needed its skilled technicians, engineers and scientists for projects of national importance.[55]

For the opposition, this was not really an obstacle. In countries like the USA, the United Kingdom, the USSR, France and Sweden, explained opposition member U. M. Weiss, television was actually used as a training tool to turn unskilled workers into skilled technicians. Therefore, instead of *draining* the existing skilled labour pool, television could *combat* the manpower shortage. In fact, Weiss challenged, if the government really was serious about promoting technical training, it would immediately introduce television.[56] Another solution was to import television technicians from abroad. Indeed, the latter would be in line with the government's immigration scheme, with which they tried to solve the manpower shortage by

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[53] See below, p.84.

[54] W. Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, p.163; F. A. van Jaarsveld, *Van Van Riebeeck tot P. W. Botha*, p.543; J. Muller, Cacophony of Consent: The Press in the Struggle for Educational Reform, *in* K. Tomaselli *et al.* (eds), *Narrating the Crisis: Hegemony and the South African Press*, p.143.

[55] RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, cols. 6516-6517; RSA, *Hansard 13*, 1965-02-19, col. 1513.

[56] RSA, *Hansard 11*, 1964-05-25, col. 6601.

inviting technicians from Britain and Europe to settle in South Africa.[57] Weiss believed that television would be an ideal attraction for these immigrants.[58]

However, until the end of the 1960s, the government argued that there was not enough manpower for a television service. This reasoning lost all credibility for the opposition when, in late 1967, SABC technicians visited Malawi to provide technical and programming aid. If there were enough technicians to use in Malawi, surely there was sufficient manpower to operate a television station in South Africa.

Figure 5: Prime Minister B. J. Vorster and Malawian President Hastings Banda.
Source: T. Cameron & S. B. Spies (eds), *An Illustrated History of South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1986), p.295.

The support for Malawi was part of B. J. Vorster's Outward Policy, in which he attempted to forge diplomatic and economic ties with other African states in order to counter South Africa's growing isolation. Apart from South Africa's immediate neighbours, who were economically reliant on South Africa, initially only Malawi responded favourably. Malawi's president, Hastings Banda (see Figure 5), was a pragmatist who realised that diplomatic ties with South Africa would be very advantageous to his country, especially since thousands of migrant Malawian mineworkers brought much needed South African valuta into Malawi.[59] In 1967, diplomatic ties and a trade agreement were formed between Malawi and South Africa. Assistance in Malawi included an US$8,4 million loan for the establishment of a sugar refinery and an US$11,2 million loan to help with the building of a new capital

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[57] Between 1961 and 1966, about 200 000 immigrants settled in South Africa under this government scheme. See F. A. van Jaarsveld, *Van Van Riebeeck tot P. W. Botha*, p.543.
[58] RSA, *Hansard 13*, 1965-02-19, col. 1517.
[59] F. A. van Jaarsveld, *Van Van Riebeek tot P. W. Botha*, pp.527-528; T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, p.539.

at Lilongwe. And, together with countries like the United Kingdom, the USA, Israel and West Germany, South Africa gave support to the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation.[60] As part of a policy that was created to better South Africa's image among and relations with other African countries[61], the mission to Malawi was therefore an important diplomatic move, while television in South Africa was, politically, not deemed essential at all.

v. Changing technology

'We do not know what science may discover to-morrow [*sic*] or the day after,'[62] declared Naudé's successor as Posts and Telegraphs Minister, J. J. Serfontein, in 1957. For many years afterward, the NP would maintain that to establish television right then would be foolish, as the technology was still developing. If South Africa introduced television and the technology changed, the expensive infrastructure would have to be updated at even greater cost. By waiting, South Africa could let the richer countries bear the experimental costs. And the longer South Africa waited, the cheaper television would become.[63]

An important aspect of this argument was the development of colour television. The USA had made its first colour broadcasts in 1951, and had established the first approved colour system, NTSC, by 1953. However, colour television was still beset with technical problems, and it took the majority of the American public more than ten years to subscribe to the new technique.[64] In his important 1960 speech on television, H. F. Verwoerd explained that only a foolish country would import black and white television at vast expense, when colour television would certainly take its place – at even greater cost – within a year or two.[65]

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[60] W. E. Mackie, South Central Africa: Malawi, *in* S. Head (ed.), *Broadcasting in Africa*, p.138; W. Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, p.226; T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, p.324; B. J. Liebenberg & S. B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20th Century*, pp.428-429; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1967, pp.8, 68.

[61] The SABC also gave assistance to other African countries, such as Rhodesia, Mozambique and Madagascar. SABC, *Annual Report*, 1970, p.9.

[62] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 97*, 1957-06-10, col. 7709.

[63] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, cols. 3004-3005; RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6511

[64] See Chapter I, p.37 .

[65] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3005.

De Villiers Graaff described Verwoerd's argument as 'one of the poorest arguments I have ever heard.'[66] If waiting for colour television was a valid reason, he contended, surely South Africa should never have introduced silent or black and white movies, when films with sound and in colour were due to follow? Nevertheless, the government maintained its position until the end of the 1960s.[67]

The NP never really explained what it considered to be sufficient development in television to warrant its introduction, because even after colour television spread to the rest of the world, it insisted that television technology was still maturing.[68] However, it did give the NP a convenient justification for keeping television at bay indefinitely. And their argument was not without merit: by waiting as long as it did, South Africa was able to evaluate different colour systems and to choose the most appropriate.[69] Today, thirty years later, South African television still uses the same colour system (PAL).

vi. Other priorities: a countrywide, multilingual radio service

Before the government and the SABC could consider a countrywide television service (and, as the government insisted, television would have to start on a countrywide basis or not at all), they had to ensure that the whole country was covered by a good radio service.[70] In 1960 Hertzog announced the installation of an FM system, which would bring South Africans a high quality radio service. FM (frequency modulation) towers would be erected across South Africa at an estimated cost of R25,000,000.[71]

FM radio was already in the offing since the end of the Second World War, when the SABC announced that its post-war plans included the introduction of FM (as well as television).[72] The SABC conducted numerous experiments with FM broadcasting, but although FM was already technically viable in the 1950s, it was not yet considered

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[66] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3024.
[67] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3024.
[68] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1627.
[69] See Chapter VI, p.140.
[70] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 83*, 1953-09-11, col. 3353.
[71] G. Hayman & R. Tomaselli, Ideology and Technology in the Growth of South African broadcasting, 1924-1971, *in* R. Tomaselli *et al.* (eds), *Currents of Power*, pp.61-67; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3644.
[72] SABC, *Annual Report*, 1944, p.6

economically feasible. Black listeners, which would be a large part of the target audience, could not afford FM receivers. At the time, radio stations were broadcast over short- and medium wave through AM (amplitude modulation), and the AM receivers were very cheap. By the end of the decade, however, a new transistor that would make FM radio more affordable was developed, and the government decided to install the new system as soon as they could. In 1961, work on the first FM tower began.[73]

For the opposition, the FM installations contradicted two of the government's main objections to television. The first objection was the high costs: while the government maintained that television would cost too much, they were now prepared to spend millions of rands on FM radio. The second objection was that television technology was still developing and, if South Africans had to buy expensive televisions, they would soon be forced to replace their sets with more advance models. It would therefore be very unfair towards the public to introduce television at that stage.[74] But, the opposition contended, the government was now prepared to allow a similar situation by forcing South Africans to buy new radio sets that were able to receive FM transmissions. Furthermore, the opposition pointed out that the new FM facilities, at a little extra cost, could be modified to transmit television, which would make television much more affordable.[75]

Albert Hertzog retorted that one of the main reasons for the FM facilities was to provide a service for the black population. A television service, on the other hand, would only serve the white population, since black people would not be able to afford television. For Hertzog, the opposition's attitude towards FM radio and television was proof that they only cared about the interests of the rich, white people, despite claiming otherwise. But whereas television would be a luxury for white people, it was very important to provide the black people of South Africa with FM radio. These broadcasts could serve as an educational and civilising tool that would promote

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[73] SABC, *Annual Report*, 1946, pp.8-9; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1947, p.10; P. B. Orlik, Southern Africa, *in* S. Head (ed.), *Broadcasting in Africa*, p.143; G. Hayman & R. Tomaselli, Ideology and Technology in the Growth of South African Broadcasting, 1924-1971, *in* R. Tomaselli *et al.* (eds), *Currents of Power*, pp.65-67.
[74] See above, p.75.
[75] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, cols. 3644, 3650.

goodwill and understanding between people.[76] More specifically, it would educate black *and* white people about the merits and the necessity of separate development.[77]

FM radio could also be used to further the segregation between the different black ethnic groups that the government was trying to forge. Because one FM transmitter can only broadcast in its close vicinity[78], the same bands could be used in different parts of the country to transmit different radio services. For example, in one part of the country, a radio channel could broadcast in Xhosa, while in a different part the same channel could broadcast a Northern Sotho station. By providing 'each black language group' with its own radio service, and by broadcasting each language only in the area designated for that specific language group (in other words, in the homeland areas), the government was able to promote their policy of separate development. This policy supported the idea that South Africa was really a country of many minorities (of which there were ten black 'national minorities'), instead of a country where a white minority ruled over a black majority.[79]

There was another, even more urgent reason for the FM service. In 1966, NP member M. S. F. Grobler stated that radio was of 'utmost importance to the non-White population,' because 'if we do not provide them with the best programmes they will tune in their radios to the alien and sometimes hostile programmes that are at present flooding our country from abroad.'[80] These foreign broadcasts were a very real concern for the government. With cheap short wave radios, black people could receive broadcasts from Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then Zaire), Egypt, and a number of other recently independent states. The Ghanaian station purposefully set out to liberate and unify the entire African continent, and in 1958 a radio transmitter was erected in Ghana that was able to penetrate the South African airwaves. The threat to the NP increased after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, when the newly banned liberation movements were forced into exile. By 1968, Radio

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[76] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3655. See also Union of South Africa, *Hansard 108*, 1961-05-02, col. 5735.

[77] G. Hayman & R. Tomaselli, Ideology and Technology in the Growth of South African Broadcasting, 1924-1971 *in* R. Tomaselli *et al.* (eds), *Currents of Power*, p.63; SABC, *Annual Report*, 1967, p.10.

[78] See 'Definition of concepts', p.20.

[79] D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.73; G. Hayman & R. Tomaselli, Ideology and Technology in the Growth of South African Broadcasting, 1924-1971, *in* R. Tomaselli *et al.* (eds), *Currents of Power*, p.66.

[80] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 17*, 1966-09-20, col. 2475.

Tanzania was hosting broadcasts by a number of liberation movements, including the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). These broadcasts were filled with liberation propaganda and, from Moscow and Peking, communist ideologies.[81] As NP member B. Coetzee explained in 1961:

> [T]here are more and more broadcasts from Africa to our border areas. We have Radio Accra, we have Radio Leopoldville, we have Radio Cairo and I understand there is a host of others who are continually inundating the Bantu of South Africa with propaganda from outside. We can expect those broadcasts to become more numerous; we can expect that flood of propaganda which flows over the radio from abroad to our Bantu to increase tremendously and that we should counter it.[82]

The FM broadcasts would be clearer, and therefore more satisfactory and attractive than AM. By making Bantu Radio available over cheap FM radios that were unable to receive short wave broadcasts, the government hoped to counter the lure of the 'hostile propaganda' from abroad.[83]

What the opposition failed to understand was that, for the NP, installing FM towers was not a luxury, but indeed a top priority. By *not* installing an FM service, the government faced a threat to their political position. By not establishing television, however, the government at that stage did not stand to lose anything. It was therefore not in the NP's interests to overcome the obstacles to television. By the end of the 1960s, the government would face a similar outside threat in terms of television, namely satellite broadcasts. When it became clear that their position was once again threatened from outside, the government finally decided to launch television.[84]

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[81] R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, p.64.
[82] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 108*, 1961-05-02, col. 5734.
[83] G. Hayman & R. Tomaselli, Ideology and Technology in the Growth of South African Broadcasting, 1924-1971, *in* R. Tomaselli *et al.* (eds), *Currents of Power*, p.66; R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, p.64-65.
[84] See Chapter IV, p.109.

vii. Other priorities: urgent works of national importance

Throughout the television debates, the government maintained that there were urgent works of national importance that needed precedence over a luxury item like television.[85]

A very big priority since the NP came to power in 1948 was to put apartheid into action. During the 1950s and 1960s, the NP government would spend millions of rands to implement apartheid legislation such as the 1950 Group Areas Act[86], which divided the country into separate areas for different racial groups, and the 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act[87], which divided the black population into distinct ethnic groups, each with its own independent Bantustan (homeland)[88].

For the NP government, these acts were important to ensure the supremacy of white people in South Africa.[89] For the opposition, the implementation of apartheid was a waste of money – money that could have been put to better use by establishing television. In 1960 De Villiers Graaff claimed that the estimate for a television service in the country's main centres, £4,000,000 was the same estimate for the realisation of the Group Areas Act in Paarl alone.[90]

Opposition member Helen Suzman (see Figure 6) was very outspoken about this matter: '[W]e can afford these things [television]. It is only necessary to cut out all these millions of rand which are spent on these ridiculous apartheid measures. Then we will have plenty of money to spend on television'[91], she argued in 1966, and again in 1969: 'there is wasteful expenditure in other directions which could easily pay for television'[92]. In this instance, she was referring to the quadruplication of civil services, one each for white, coloured, black and Indian people. All these services had

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[85] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 85*, 1954-05-11, col. 4983; RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6511; RSA, *Hansard 25*, 1969-03-19, col. 2874.
[86] President's Office, No. 41 of 1950: *The Group Areas Act*, 1950-06-24
[87] President's Office, No. 46 of 1959: *Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act*, 1959-06-17.
[88] See 'Definition of concepts', p.21.
[89] T. R. H. Davenport & C. Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, p.350.
[90] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3024.
[91] RSA, *Hansard 17*, 1966-09-20, col. 2467.
[92] RSA, *Hansard 25*, 1969-03-19, col. 2876.

their own departments, budgets, buildings and staff, and Suzman believed that it was a waste of money and manpower that could have been used for television.[93]

Figure 6: Helen Suzman.
Source: T. Cameron & S. B. Spies (eds), *An Illustrated History of South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1986), p.276.

However, these apartheid measures formed the cornerstone of the NP government's policy. The NP would implement apartheid, which was essential to their vision for South Africa (and essential to their political position), no matter what the cost.[94] Television, on the contrary, was an inessential service as far as the NP was concerned, and not worth the money or manpower.

Apartheid was not the government's only priority. South Africa had to develop economically in order to lift the living standards of the 'masses of our people'[95] who lived on the breadline. It was the government's duty, asserted Albert Hertzog, to give those people an income and a decent and pleasurable way of life. C. P. Mulder estimated that, with the annual cost of one television channel, 11,000 houses could be built for white people. Furthermore, the government had to develop South Africa so that it could produce riches. The industries needed to be developed not only for South Africa's sake, but also for the benefit of the West. If the Cold War hostilities between the East and the West led to a direct clash, reckoned Verwoerd, South Africa would have to increase its manufacturing capacity to provide essential goods for the West.

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[93] RSA, *Hansard 25*, 1969-03-19, col. 2876.
[94] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1620.
[95] RSA, *Hansard 10*, 1964-04-27, col. 1512.

For that eventuality, the country had to use its money and manpower to develop its industries, and not waste it on a luxury such as television.[96] The possibility that television could stimulate skills development, business and trade – as the opposition continuously suggested – was not even contemplated.[97]

Other priorities mentioned in the House of Assembly were to build up crude oil reserves, and to compensate for the country's periodic droughts by developing water resources.[98] Both these priorities were major preoccupations during the 1960s. Although South Africa had large and relatively cheap coal supplies, it had no natural oil, and the NP was anxious about oil supplies from abroad.[99] Water reserves was another area in which South Africa was vulnerable, and during the NP's rule many dams and water tunnels were constructed, including the Hendrik Verwoerd Dam (now called the Gariep Dam), which was completed in 1971.[100]

But one of the most important projects, according to Basie van Rensburg, was to guarantee South Africa's 'white future'[101], and to ensure the peaceful co-existence between the white and black inhabitants. In order to do that, millions had to be spent on South Africa's defence, as this would 'guarantee peace and safety for its inhabitants here in South Africa in a threatening world and a hostile world constellation.'[102]

During the 1950s and 1960s, a number of events contributed to the NP government's concern for South Africa's 'white future'. News from the civil rights movement in the United States had reached South Africa, fuelling fears that similar fights for social and political rights could ignite among South African black people.[103] These fears were further aggravated after the attempt on Prime Minister Verwoerd's life in 1960,

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[96] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1626; RSA, *Hansard 13*, 1965-02-19, col. 1512; RSA, *Hansard 10*, 1964-04-27, cols. 5018-5019.

[97] See above, p.73.

[98] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, cols. 1627, 1653.

[99] These anxieties proved justified in 1973, when the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) raised oil prices and banned trade with South Africa. Even though the country was able to circumvent the ban through trade with refiners and distributors such as Caltex, BP, Mobil and Shell, and through its local oil-from-coal plant Sasol, South Africa remained vulnerable in terms of oil. See W. Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, p.169.

[100] W. Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, p.170.

[101] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1653.

[102] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1653.

[103] R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, p.45.

the Sharpeville shootings in 1960, the rise of militant opposition to apartheid from liberation movements like Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and Poqo, and the spread of independence through Africa. In some countries, such as Algeria, independence was preceded by bloody wars. In the Belgian Congo[104], freedom came very abruptly. Political parties were unprepared, and soon the newly independent state collapsed, which lead to civil unrest.[105] In other cases, most notably Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika[106] and Northern Rhodesia[107], white communities were attacked, and many white people from former colonies came to live in South Africa, bringing with them the tales of terror from the rest of Africa. Furthermore, Communism threatened to take a foothold in Africa. In this threatening climate, Britain turned its back on white minority rule and promoted African nationalism, and the United Nations and Western countries became increasingly critical of apartheid. The NP realised that it could not rely on Western support to retain its power, and would have to ensure its own survival and supremacy on an increasingly hostile continent.[108]

According to historian William Beinart, politicians stressed that there were only two alternatives: to give in to integration and the submersion of white people, or apartheid.[109] In other words, as Afrikaans newspaper editor Piet Cillié explained, apartheid was a 'pragmatic and tortuous process aimed at consolidating the leadership of a nationalist movement in order to safeguard the self-determination of the Afrikaner'[110]. The implementation and consolidation of the apartheid system was therefore, for those who were opposed to integration, a very urgent priority. This was confirmed by NP member M. W. de Wet in 1969 when he stated that many millions of rands had to be spent to ensure the future of the white people in South Africa. When the very existence of white South Africans was at stake, argued the NP, how could they even consider using millions of rands for a luxury like television? '[O]ne really cannot mention this and television in the same breath'[111], De Wet admonished television's advocates in 1969.

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[104] Now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
[105] K. Shillington, *History of Africa*, pp.390-394.
[106] In 1964 Tanganyika and Zanzibar joined to form the Republic of Tanzania.
[107] Upon its independence in 1964, Northern Rhodesia's name changed to Zambia.
[108] F. A. van Jaarsveld, *Van Van Riebeek tot P. W. Botha*, p.541; B. J. Liebenberg & S. B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20th Century*, p.372.
[109] W. Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, p.142.
[110] Quoted in H. Giliomee & L. Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation-Building*, p.63.
[111] RSA, *Hansard 25*, 1969-03-19, col. 2874.

viii. The effect on sport, cinema, theatre and the press

Television is a powerful medium that would, it was argued, have an adverse effect on other forms of entertainment, particularly sport, theatres and cinemas. If sport matches were broadcast over television, people would stay at home to watch instead of going to the actual sport venues, and consequently promoters would lose revenue and would not be able to sustain their sports. A similar fate would befall cinemas, theatres and newspapers. In order to protect South Africa from these and other effects of television, Verwoerd stated that television should be kept away from the country for as long as possible. According to the opposition, however, this was not a reasonable excuse. 'We are not here to look after the interests of the cinemas and the theatres; we are here to look after the interests of the public,'[112] countered opposition member S. J. Tighy. Moreover, opposition member E. G. Malan dismissed Verwoerd's concerns as unfounded, because experience in Australia had shown that the broadcasting of sport events had in fact *not* led to a decrease in attendance.[113]

The possible effects of television on the press, cinemas and theatres, however, could not be denied. And although Tighy stated that this should not be the government's concern, there may have been a good reason for the government's interest: namely that a number of prominent NP members had private concerns in some of these enterprises.[114]

ix. Spiritual effects

The NP's regard of television as an evil medium that would destroy families, morals, law and order and finally Western civilisation, has received considerable emphasis.[115] In the twenty years of the television debates, this aspect was indeed important, especially under Albert Hertzog as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. It is also very

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[112] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 85*, 1954-05-11, col. 4952.

[113] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1961-03-09, cols. 3003-3004, 3086; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3664; RSA, *Hansard 17*, 1966-09-20, col. 2470; RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1631.

[114] See below, p.93.

[115] See for example R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, pp.43-76; R. Krabill, 'The Structured Absence of Television within the South African Mediascape prior to 1976'. Internet: www.newschool.edu/tcds/Ron%20Krabill.pdf, s.a. Accessed: 2007-06-06.

significant when seen in context with the government's ideologies of apartheid and Afrikaner Nationalism. However, it should not be over-emphasised, but be seen as one of many obstacles and undesirable consequences that the NP was not prepared to address in order to establish television.

The idea of television as an 'evil' was first raised in Parliament by NP member W. C. du Plessis in 1953. He was referring to the effect television would have on children: instead of playing outside, doing schoolwork or taking part in afternoon sport, they and their families would become slaves to television: 'The children, father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, and all their guests sit crowded together around the television set and stare at the little square screen.'[116]

However, despite Du Plessis's strong views, it was only in the early 1960s that television's possible spiritual dangers became a real consideration. In 1960, H. F. Verwoerd explained the government's position on television. Not all modern innovations were beneficial, he argued, and no sensible government would import a new innovation without knowing first what the associated dangers were, and how they could be countered.

> It is true that where a physical danger threatens a country, the Government of that country will try to keep such an invention permanently out of the country. That applies to poison gas, for example; it applies to the atom bomb for example…however wonderful and modern the invention may be, the physical danger attached to it makes it perfectly clear that you cannot use it. A similar attitude must be adopted when there are spiritual dangers or, when there is a possibility of harm to the community's social life.[117]

Although Verwoerd did not outright categorise television with dangerous inventions like poison gas and the atom bomb, he did argue that television was a new invention with possible social and moral consequences, and should therefore be regarded with circumspection until the effects were fully known and controllable.[118]

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[116] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 83*, 1953-09-11, col. 3340.
[117] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3002.
[118] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, cols. 3002-3003.

For the next decade, certain NP members, especially Albert Hertzog, would use the spiritual dangers of television as justification for its absence in South Africa, despite the opposition's scepticism.

One of the immediate consequences of television was that, in the first few years after its introduction, families would become such slaves to it that family relationships and household chores would suffer. Indeed, according to Albert Hertzog, television was the 'greatest destroyer of the family'[119]. When children came home from school, they would not be able to get away from the television. If their parents reprimanded them, the relation between parent and child would become strained, and the whole family would break up. Parents would not have time to talk to children, and children would not have time to think.[120]

A further consequence, according to the NP government, was that television, more than any other medium, was responsible for increases in crime and the decline of morals.[121] Television showed crime, violence, sadism, deceit and sexual immorality. What is more, according to Hertzog, the conditions in which people would watch television would increase the impact of the images. '[W]e know that in the circumstances in which one is watching them, one is in a very susceptible state; it is twilight, and one is with one's family... .'[122] It was not only children who were vulnerable to these images, but also the black population. In 1963, Hertzog blamed a

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[119] RSA, *Hansard 11*, 1964-04-25, col. 6611.
[120] RSA, *Hansard 11*, 1964-04-25, col. 6611. These arguments of Hertzog and his colleagues were neither unique, nor unacademic. Research on television's impact on children and families has been done for more than five decades. Although there is rarely any disagreement about the fact that television *does*, in some way or another, have an influence on children's development, there are many differing views on whether these influences are positive or negative. According to educationalists Marie Evans Schmidt and Daniel R. Anderson, there have been two opposing trends: on the one hand, there is the belief that television *viewing* has detrimental effects on children's cognitive development, regardless of the actual television *content*. Researchers such as Marie Winn (*The Plug-in Drug*, 1977) and Jane Healy (*Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think and What We Can Do About It,* 1990), for example, wrote that even an educational programme like *Sesame Street* reduces children's interest in reading and shortens their attention spans. Other educationalists, however, support the use of television as an educational tool. See M. Evans Schmidt & D. R. Anderson, The Impact of Television on Cognitive Development and Educational Achievement, *in* N. O. Pecora, J. P. Murray & E. Wartella (eds.), *Children and Television. Fifty Years of Research*, pp.65-66; J. M. Healy, Early Television Exposure and Subsequent Attention Problems in Children, *Pediatrics* 13(4), April 2004, pp.917-918.
[121] RSA, *Hansard 17*, 1966-09-20, col. 2466.
[122] RSA, *Hansard 11*, 1964-05-25, col. 6611.

wave of crime among black people on films that were 'training schools for crime'.[123] If they were to see crimes on television, with its hypnotic power[124], it would have an even greater effect, he argued.

For the NP, there was an even worse consequence to television. The opposition saw television as a wonderful means of bringing South Africans together, as it would bring home to each group the reality of the others, and so create a better understanding.[125] The NP government, however, saw this in a different light. Not only did television aggravate social problems like broken families and crime, but it also aimed at breaking down the divisions between languages, religions, and races. This was fuelled by liberalist and communist propaganda and would ultimately lead to the fall of Western civilisation.[126]

Infused as it was with these foreign ideologies, television did not allow for differences, which was an integral part of the NP's policy. Instead, the medium treated viewers as if they were all from the same community, without regional and cultural divisions. NP member J. A. Marais argued that 'television strengthens and confirms the conception of mass'[127]. This was part of the 'iniquitous propaganda' of communists, liberalists and leftists, who had taken hold of the media after the Second World War. This propaganda, as several NP members explained, presented the white man as the villain: the oppressor of the black man and the bringer of misery. The black man, on the other hand, was portrayed as the innocent victim of white crimes and was, ultimately, the hero.[128] Furthermore, television would raze individual thought, spiritual individuality and Western morals to the point where Westerners would gladly hand over their rule. Hertzog illustrated this point through the example of European countries in Africa:

> Is it not sad that the Belgians, influenced by this propaganda, morally collapsed to such an extent that they handed the Congo over at a totally undesirable time to the Bantu who were not ready for it? … Was it not

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[123] RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6526.
[124] RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6517.
[125] RSA, *Hansard 17*, 1966-09-20, col. 2472.
[126] RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6530.
[127] RSA, *Hansard 13*, 1965-05-19, col. 1501.
[128] RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 5617, 5630; RSA, *Hansard 17*, 1966-09-19, col. 2408.

pitiful to see how England, who has built up an Empire for 500 years, relinquished it without firing a shot?[129]

Leftist propaganda would have the same effect in South Africa: it would undermine the position of the white population and make the black man an even greater enemy. For the sake of white rule in South Africa, therefore, the government could not introduce television. White children had to be trained to become leaders, otherwise the white people would lose power – and if South Africa got television, children could not be leaders.[130]

There is no doubt that many Afrikaner Nationalists were truly concerned with the preservation of white Afrikaner identity and political power. But these arguments made little sense to the opposition. They did not dispute the hypnotic effect television would initially have, but they saw no reason why the content would have such an adverse effect on South Africans. Firstly, they contended, there was no evidence that television led to a moral collapse in the rest of the Western world.[131] Secondly, television would certainly be controlled by the SABC and the government, who would make sure that no harmful programmes were shown.[132] Thirdly, as opposition member Helen Suzman stated, 'it is a very brittle moral fibre if it can so easily be influenced by television programmes'[133]. Sir De Villiers Graaff believed that children were very unlikely to be corrupted by something like television if they had a proper home influence.[134] Finally, the opposition argued, if the government really believed that television was such an evil poison that would destroy Western civilisation, why would they willingly give this toxin to South Africa's friends in the Western World?[135]

The most important counterargument is that the government would surely be able to control what was seen on television, especially as the NP had clearly stated that any South African television service would be overseen by the government and would not

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[129] RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6531.
[130] RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, cols. 6525-6526, 6530.
[131] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3646.
[132] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3024; RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6513.
[133] RSA, *Hansard 17*, 1966-09-20, col. 2467.
[134] RSA, *Hansard 10*, 1964-04-27, col. 4959.
[135] RSA, *Hansard 20*, 1967-05-02, col. 5276.

be under the control of private enterprise. That does not mean that the NP's argument held no weight. No matter how strictly the government censored what was and what was not transmitted over television, they would not be able to predict and control how the viewers received the images. Different viewers can interpret the same television programme in varied, even opposing, ways, depending on factors such as their cultural background, age, ability to observe detail, level of understanding, existing knowledge and emotional state.[136]

Through the realisation that they could not control the reception of television, the NP revealed considerable insight into the new medium and its possible dangers to apartheid ideology. Two decades later, when television had finally come to South Africa, and when apartheid was already in decline, one programme in particular would illustrate how television content could be received differently, and how it could impact a whole society's perceptions.[137]

The Cosby Show (see Figure 7) was an immensely popular television series from the mid-1980s. This American sitcom depicted the fictional life of the Huxtables, a middle-class African-American family in their suburban home. The programme was first aired on South African television in 1985, and by 1987 it was the most popular programme on local television – even among staunch supporters of racial segregation and apartheid. There were people who complained about the show. The Conservative Party, for example, argued that a popular show about a black family would undermine belief in racial segregation. One MP went further to say that the show's star, Bill Cosby, brought the ANC's anti-apartheid message straight into South African homes. But most viewers, even supporters of the white right wing, enjoyed *The Cosby Show*:

> I like watching these American sitcoms ... take for instance the Bill Cosby
> Show, I mean there's a lot of family lessons to be learned out of it ... I utilize
> that you know, when I sit and watch it with the children, the children enjoy it

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[136] P. J. Fourie *et al.*, Television Theory, *in* P. J. Fourie (ed), *Introduction to Communication*, pp.154-158; H. Newcomb & P. M. Hirsch, Television as a Cultural Forum, *in* H. Newcomb (ed.), *Television. The Critical View*, p.511.

[137] By this time, it was not just television that was changing perceptions in South African society. The political climate was undergoing significant changes, and the NP had begun to steer in a new direction. This factor, together with a shifting social and cultural South African identity, meant that a programme like the *Cosby Show* was allowed to be shown on South African television in the first place, and it contributed to the impact of television. See Chapter IV, p.104.

and I laugh and I say 'Darling, you see how that is now a very interesting little lesson'.[138]

According to historian Jonathan Hyslop, this and other similar American programmes helped to convince apartheid supporters that apartheid was not necessarily the only or right way, and that desegregation was not necessarily a threat. On television one could see white and black families living side by side, without a threat to the middle-class whites' way of life. And if it is possible on television, who was to say that it couldn't be in real life?[139]

Figure 7: The Cosby family from *The Cosby Show.*
Source: www.tripletsandus.com/80s/shows/cosby.htm

Therefore, even with government control, messages of racial equality could still reach and influence South African viewers. However, there was an even more significant point to the NP's argument that television would break down Western civilisation: it revealed one of their biggest concerns, namely the preservation of power. During the 1960s, the NP government devoted themselves to retain white power in South Africa.[140] According to the opposition, however, the NP did not just fear the breakdown of the West's power, or the decline of white rule in South Africa – what they were really concerned with, was maintaining their *own* position as the ruling party.

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[138] Quoted in 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.

[139] 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.

[140] B. J. Liebenberg & S. B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20th Century*, p.399.

x. The little bioscope

One of Hertzog's first arguments against television was that it was nothing more than a miniature bioscope.[141] In terms of content, it offered little more than films, radio and magazines. So what, Hertzog and Verwoerd asked, did South Africa miss out on by not introducing television? No hardship was caused by its absence. As a little bioscope, it had no value other than entertainment, and there was no need to spend millions of rands on such a luxury.[142]

In other words, South Africa did not need television. This was a very important argument. In 1969, shortly before the government appointed the Meyer Commission to investigate television, Basie van Rensburg added a new dimension to this argument: 'the Government is not prepared to introduce a television service *unless technological development or other circumstances make it inevitable.*'[143] This is precisely what had happened in terms of FM radio: certain circumstances had made it inevitable to introduce the expensive radio technology. And it is also what would later happen with television: when satellite technology threatened the government's control over television, they decided to introduce the medium.

Although this argument did not receive as much prominence as certain others, it is definitely one of the key reasons for television's absence: the government did not need television to maintain their position, and therefore, as C. P. Mulder admitted, *they did not want it.*[144] Before the coming of satellite television, the government had nothing to lose by *not* introducing television.

b. Putting up a shroud: the opposition's accusations

Throughout the television debates, the opposition accused the NP of concealing its real objections to television. According to opposition members, the government was not really concerned about television's effects on the South African economy and

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[141] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 101*, 1959-06-03, col. 7224.
[142] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3001; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3658; RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6524; RSA, *Hansard 13*, 1965-02-19, cols. 1492-1493.
[143] Quoted in RSA, *Hansard 25*, 1969-03-19, col. 2838 (*My emphasis*).
[144] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1630.

public. In reality, the opposition claimed, the NP was fearful of how television would affect its *own* political and economic position.

i. Television's political effect

According to the opposition, one of the real reasons why the NP was afraid of television was that the medium would 'open people's eyes to certain things'[145]. Television would bring the opinions of leading overseas politicians into the homes of South Africans. As South Africa increasingly came under attack for its apartheid policies from other countries, and the Western world distanced itself from colonialism and apartheid, chances were good that the opinions of leading overseas politicians would be in conflict with the NP's views.[146] Bringing these anti-apartheid views right into the living rooms of voters, reasoned the opposition, would be detrimental to the NP's political position.[147]

The NP was therefore not afraid of the moral impact of television, but really of the political effect. The issue was not about the moral collapse of Western civilisation, but about the possible adverse effects of television on the NP's power in South Africa.

With her characteristic humour, Helen Suzman identified another possible political consequence of television, when NP supporters realised who it really was that they had been voting for:

> Can you imagine what would happen to the National Party if these hon. members were put on the television screen? How long would they last in power? Imagine the shock to the unsuspecting electorate of South Africa if they were suddenly confronted with the hon. members on the opposite side appearing in their drawing rooms, at close quarters. What a terrifying thought![148]

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[145] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 101*, 1959-06-01, col. 7058.
[146] T. R. H. Davenport & C. Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, p.318.
[147] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1633.
[148] RSA, *Hansard 25*, 1969-03-19, col. 2877.

ii. Personal financial interests

It was feared that the press could lose a lot of revenue to television advertising. Many newspapers would have to close down, and the government would lose an important support base in the Afrikaans press, as most Afrikaans newspapers were politically sympathetic towards the government.[149] But there was an even more personal reason. As the opposition pointed out, certain prominent NP members had personal interests in Afrikaans newspapers.[150] For example, during the 1950s, a prominent Afrikaans press company, Dagbreekpers, counted among its board members H. F. Verwoerd and Ben Schoeman, an NP Cabinet Minister. In the 1960s, Albert Hertzog himself was the director of a newspaper company called *Afrikaans Pers Bpk* (Afrikaans Press Ltd).[151]

Another sphere in which NP members had personal interests was the cinema industry. According to opposition member L. E. D. Winchester, a 'certain concern' had entered the industry in the mid-1960s and controlled many cinemas in the country. This concern, Winchester alleged, was 'favourably disposed' towards the NP government.[152] Winchester was referring to Ster Films, one of two major cinema companies in South Africa during the 1960s. In 1962 the Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Lewens Assuransie Maatskappy (South African National Life Insurance Company, SANLAM) acquired 90% ownership of Ster Films. As one of the cornerstones of Afrikaner capital, SANLAM was a strong supporter of the NP.[153]

Winchester raised another, very interesting, argument. He accused NP members of having personal interests in certain popular picture magazines. These magazines provided a visual form of entertainment and had a circulation of 75,000 a week. 'Not long ago,' Winchester told the House of Assembly, 'a leading personality told me that he was in favour of television, but that he could not advocate its introduction, as he was a publisher of this sort of magazine. I want to add that that leading personality

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[149] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 89*, 1955-06-10, col. 7478; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 101*, 1959-06-01, col. 7058.
[150] RSA, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3063.
[151] J. Muller, Press Houses at War: A Brief History of Nasionale Pers and Perskor, *in* K. Tomaselli *et al.* (eds), *Narrating the Crisis*, pp.130-131; P. J. Gibson (ed.), *Who's Who of Southern Africa*, 1968, p.447.
[152] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1631.
[153] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid*, pp.160-171. In 1969, SANLAM also took over Ster Film's rival company, Fox. In 1977, Fox (now called Kinekor) and Ster Films merged to form Ster-Kinekor.

happens to be a public representative of that party sitting on the other side of the House [the NP].'[154] The idea that the NP was more concerned about the personal financial implications of television than the moral effect on South Africans, was illustrated through these magazines. Winchester cited previous debates in which NP members argued that television would show too many crimes, and refuted these claims by referring to the large amount of murders, rapes and robberies depicted in these picture magazines.

Therefore, by introducing television, the NP government had much to lose: if viewers saw perspectives other than that of the NP on television, they could withdraw their support from the NP and its apartheid policies. Also, the personal financial interests of several members of the NP and their allies could be adversely affected by television.

c. Putting up a window to the world: the opposition's arguments for television

For the opposition, television's advantages far outweighed its drawbacks. Despite all the obstacles and negative consequences of television, there were great benefits that few other media could equal. By launching a television service, South Africa could reap the rewards of a powerful audio-visual tool and share in the magnificent developments of the twentieth century. If South Africa did not get television, however, she would be the laughing stock of the world.

The opposition's arguments for television created balance in the parliamentary debates: for all the NP's misgivings about the new medium, there were many positive outcomes to introducing television. Furthermore, the fact that these arguments could not sway the NP, gives even more prominence to the NP's position against television: they must have been very concerned about television if they were not prepared to overcome the obstacles, even in return for television's many benefits.

The arguments also shed light on the eventual introduction of television. When the government decided to establish television, they did so because of factors that could

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[154] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1632.

already be perceived or predicted in the 1960s. The opposition's arguments contain some of the seeds for the NP's change towards television that would, by the end of the 1960s, fulfil the NP's prediction that they would not introduce the medium unless circumstances had made it inevitable.

i. A matter of prestige: South Africa and the rest of the world

By the mid 1960s, almost a hundred countries had already introduced television. Not only was South Africa virtually the only Western country not to have television, but it was also behind African countries such as Ghana, Egypt, Nigeria and Northern and Southern Rhodesia. This was a great embarrassment for the opposition, who argued that South Africa could not consider itself as a leading nation if it lagged so far behind in modern technology. Instead of setting the tone for the African continent, the opposition maintained, South Africa was too backward to get television. [155] Furthermore, the opposition was convinced that the rest of the world was fully aware of this backwardness: 'The fact remains that we are making our country look ridiculous in the eyes of the rest of the world by this refusal to introduce television.'[156]

In his reply, Albert Hertzog likened the opposition's argument to their stance with regards to apartheid. In the matter of television, the opposition argued that the rest of the world had television, why not South Africa? In terms of apartheid, according to Hertzog, the opposition would say that the rest of the world did *not* have apartheid, so why should South Africa? For the NP, the opposition's standpoint on television *and* apartheid revealed a callousness towards South Africa: the opposition merely wanted what the rest of the world had, regardless of whether it was in the interests of South Africa.[157]

The argument reveals the opposing views on national pride of the UP and NP. For the UP, national pride was about standing tall among the world's nations and their new

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[155] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 101*, 1959-06-01, cols. 7058-7059; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 104*, 1960-03-09, col. 3026; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3646; Union of South Africa, *Hansard 108*, 1961-05-02, col. 5730; RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6510.
[156] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-02-07, col. 166.
[157] RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, col. 6524.

inventions and technologies. Because the NP would not allow one of the most modern technologies and symbols of technological progress, the UP accused them of being backward. For the NP, on the other hand, national pride was proven by being patriotic, self-reliant and independent of outside interference. The fact that the opposition wanted television, which the NP argued would compromise South Africa's cultural and ideological independence, proved to the NP that the UP was unpatriotic and did not have South Africa's best interests at heart.

ii. A great boon

The opposition was not completely blind to television's possible negative consequences, such as the high expense and its potential to be abused. However, they were convinced that the benefits of television far surpassed its disadvantages. Television, they regularly argued, was an invaluable instrument in education, and could be used as an aid in classrooms or as an informal teaching tool at home. The medium could be used, for example, to teach viewers about hygiene, child welfare and economic thinking, and could even be employed to combat illiteracy. In other parts of the world, television was especially valuable in teaching farmers in remote areas about soil conservation and farming methods. In the mines, they argued, it could be used to teach Fanagalo to miners within six weeks.[158]

Furthermore, television was a great boon to the elderly, the sick and those who could not leave their homes to go to sport events, the theatre or the cinema. For families who liked to enjoy their entertainment at home, television would be a great medium. In fact, in contradiction to the NP's argument that television destroyed family life, opposition member U. S. Weiss contended that 'nothing has helped so much as television to re-create family life.'[159] It also provided a great outlet for artists and writers of all language groups – especially Afrikaans. While the government feared that television would favour English above Afrikaans, the opposition believed that

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[158] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 107*, 1961-03-24, col. 3647; RSA, *Hansard 13*, 1965-02-19, col. 1507.
[159] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 108*, 1961-05-02, col. 5731.

television would stimulate Afrikaans to the point where it would soon be on equal footing to English.[160]

Among its many advantages were the possibility that television would attract foreign capital, immigrant technicians and other experts, and the opportunity to use it to better South Africa's image among the country's people.[161]

At first, the NP would not admit that television's advantages were significant enough to warrant its introduction. But in 1968, when he replaced Hertzog as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Van Rensburg conceded that television was indeed a great boon in the fields of education, commerce and industry, medicine, science and entertainment. Van Rensburg pointed out that, with the appropriate permit, institutions could use closed-circuit television for all of the above, except for entertainment. For Van Rensburg, this meant that the opposition's plea for television could only be based on its entertainment value.[162] And although Van Rensburg did not believe that television was evil, like his predecessor did, he maintained that television would not be introduced until it became absolutely inevitable in South Africa.

One benefit of television that Van Rensburg did not mention was the impact of seeing important global events on television. For the opposition this became increasingly important as the first moon landing drew near.

iii. Taking part in international events

In 1962, John Glenn became the first American astronaut to orbit Earth. Opposition member U. S. Weiss complained that while most of the world shared in this magnificent feat through television, South Africa was left in the dark.[163] Not only was television a great tool for education, science and entertainment, but it could include South Africa in some of the greatest triumphs of the twentieth century. During the

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[160] Union of South Africa, *Hansard 108*, 1961-05-02, col. 5731; RSA, *Hansard 4*, 1962-06-07, col. 7361; RSA, *Hansard 7*, 1963-05-22, cols. 6514-6515; RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1616.
[161] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, cols. 1616, 1633.
[162] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, cols. 1646-1651.
[163] RSA, *Hansard 4*, 1962-06-07, col. 7362.

1960s, many important events were televised throughout the world, such as the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill (1965) and the Olympic Games in Tokyo (1964) and Mexico (1968). South Africans also enjoyed the spotlight, particularly record-breaking swimmer Karen Muir and heart transplant pioneer Chris Barnard. But ordinary South Africans could not share in any of these events as television viewers, and for this the opposition blamed the 'infinite *verkramptheid*' of the NP and especially Hertzog.[164]

The NP argued that these events were indeed screened in South Africa: not on television, but in movie theatres. Moreover, radio was an excellent medium for conveying important events to a great number of listeners, and there was little that television could add.[165] The opposition disagreed. According to opposition member E. G. Malan, '[l]istening to a concert or to a theatre production over the radio to-day [*sic*] is like going to a concert hall or a theatre blindfolded' [166].

It was especially in terms of space travel that the opposition felt left out from the rest of the world. It is no wonder, because since the end of the Second World War and the launch of the first missiles, the USA and the USSR had been engaged in a race to send the first humans to the moon. The result was a series of 'firsts' during the 1950s and 1960s: the first manmade satellite (1957), the first spacecraft sent around the moon (1959), the first human in space (1961), the first woman in space (1963), the first spacewalk (1965) and finally, in July 1969, the first humans on the moon.[167]

The moon landing would become very significant in the television debates. According to media scholar Rob Nixon, it was a turning point that contributed very strongly to the government's decision to introduce television after all.[168] The impact of the moon landing had already been predicted in 1964, when U. S. Weiss stated: 'We are told that within the next 10 years the Americans or the Russians will have landed on the moon. Eighty-one countries will be viewing this on television but not South Africa

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[164] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-02-07, col. 167.
[165] RSA, *Hansard 17*, 1966-09-20, col. 2474.
[166] RSA, *Hansard 22*, 1968-03-05, col. 1616.
[167] CNN, 'Cold War Experience: Technology. The Space Race: An Interactive Timeline.' Internet: http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/experience/technology/space.timeline/frameset.html, 1998. Accessed: 2007-06-25.
[168] R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, pp.71-75.

unless the hon. the Minister is going to install it.'[169] When Apollo 11 did land on the moon in 1969, hundreds of millions of people did indeed witness it on television. Of course, the South Africans were not among them. But by then it had already become clear that television could not be kept out of the country for too long, and in March 1969 Helen Suzman prophesised that: 'it will not be very long before we in South Africa will be watching sports programmes, documentaries, Apollo trips to the moon, all these wonderful things that are happening in this day and age.'[170]

3. The role of the Broederbond

According to media scholar Ron Krabill, Albert Hertzog and Hendrik Verwoerd formed part of an 'ultra-right troika' that were vehemently opposed to television. The third member of the trio was P. J. Meyer, an influential and outspoken Afrikaner Nationalist. During the 1960s, Meyer simultaneously held the positions of SABC Chairman and the Chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond.[171]

The Broederbond was established in 1918 to promote the Afrikaans language and culture. By the 1930s, it was a secret organisation that allowed only white, Afrikaans speaking, Protestant Christian men as members. Historians and journalists[172] have written much about the Broederbond and their all-pervasive influence in the establishment of apartheid, the control of Afrikaner culture and even in decision-making in Cabinet. However, according to historian Hermann Giliomee, this was not the case, especially before Verwoerd came to power. The Bond could not succeed in unifying Afrikaners during the Second World War. Nor did it play a significant role in the development of apartheid policy. Instead, the NP leaders used the Broederbond as a sounding board and instrument to implement apartheid, and its influence was never

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[169] RSA, *Hansard 11*, 1964-05-25, col. 6602.

[170] RSA, *Hansard 25*, 1969-03-19, col. 2878.

[171] R. Krabill, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, pp.56-58.

[172] See for example P. W. Coetzer, Die Afrikaner-Broederbond en die Algemene Verkiesing van 1948, *Journal for Contemporary History* 27(3), December 2002; C. Bloomberg & S. Dubow, *Christian Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond in South Africa, 1918-48* (London, 1990); I. Wilkins & H. Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaner* (Johannesburg, 1978); D. O'Meara, The Afrikaner Broederbond, 1927-1948: Class Vanguard of Afrikaner Nationalism, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 3(2), April 1977; Time Magazine, 'Broederbond's Big Brother Act'. Internet: http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,915731,00.html, 1977-11-21. Accessed: 2007-12-27.

as strong as that of the Cabinet.[173] When the NP came to power in 1948, senior positions in the civil service were largely held by English-speaking people who did not support the NP. One of the ways in which the NP sought to consolidate its power was to appoint white Afrikaners to these positions. The Broederbond was entrusted with this task, and senior civil service posts were reserved for Broederbond members.[174]

But in 1956, Bond members complained that the NP had sidelined the organisation. The NP executive council retorted that the Bond's strength lay in promoting ideas, not in action. When Verwoerd came to power in 1958, however, he saw the Bond as an ideal instrument for unifying Afrikaners and so entrenching his apartheid ideology. Broederbond members came to play a significant part in South Africa's cultural development and the propagating of apartheid ideals. Among its thousands of members counted most Afrikaans newspaper editors, as well as church leaders, university lecturers and schoolteachers. By supporting and advocating the NP's policies and ideologies, the ideas of apartheid and Afrikaner Christian nationalism were able to reach South Africans in their homes, churches and schools.[175]

Broederbond members were therefore able to bring home to South Africans the anti-Afrikaner, anti-Christian and anti-apartheid qualities of television, of which the Broederbond's own chairman, Meyer, was a great enemy. It is ironic that, when the other two members of the 'ultra-right troika' were no longer in power and the Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to Television was appointed in December 1969, Meyer was asked to be its chairman. In 1971, one of television's greatest former enemies would recommend that South Africa did, at last, get television.

4. Conclusion

There were many obstacles to the introduction of television in South Africa. Some of these obstacles, such as the high cost of launching and maintaining television, the

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[173] H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, pp.372-373, 396.
[174] D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p.61; H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, pp.352-353.
[175] H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners*, pp.475-476.

country's large and mountainous terrain, a scarcity of manpower, South Africa's many languages and the constant developments made in television technology, would have made it difficult to introduce a service. Other obstacles affected the desirability of television on moral grounds, as it could adversely influence viewers, and would bring unwanted competition for other forms of news and entertainment. Although the opposition continued to refute these claims, the NP maintained that these obstacles were too numerous and too difficult to overcome. In truth, had the NP had the desire to establish television, these hurdles would not have stood between South Africa and a television service. Just as the NP government spared no resources in the implementation of apartheid, the production of propaganda for overseas consumption and the establishment of a high frequency radio station to counter propaganda from outside, they would probably have used whatever it took to establish television – had they *wanted* the medium.

But the NP did not want television, because they did not need it. There was therefore no reason to overcome any obstacles in establishing television, no matter how small some of these hindrances were. The NP repeatedly made their position clear: television was not an essential medium. It was merely a luxury that offered nothing that the existent media did not. What television did offer, the government either did not want, or could do without. The NP did not care for television's ability to bring people together, as the opposition argued. In fact, it was against the government's policy of separate development and would break down the screens the NP endeavoured to put up between South Africa's cultural and language groups. Furthermore, exposure to the rest of the world and its anti-apartheid ideologies might influence the way the government's supporters felt about apartheid, and could suggest to its enemies how racial discrimination could be fought. And through the implementation of apartheid, the NP had already shown that they would not yield to outside pressure.

As for the benefits of television in terms of education, science and medicine, the NP had managed to sidestep television by making these benefits available to permit-holders of closed-circuit television. Therefore, the NP did not stand to lose their power or position by *not* introducing television, like they did with FM radio in the early 1960s. On the other hand, if the NP *did* launch television, there would be a new

threat: to their political position, as television could open South Africans' eyes to outside influences, as well as to their financial position, as many NP members had personal interests in the forms of entertainment that would be hardest hit by the coming of television.

The reason that South Africa did not get television in the 1950s and 1960s is therefore simple: the NP government did not want television, because they did not need it to stay in power. They had nothing to lose by *not* introducing television, but they had something to lose if they *did*.

The television debates were also about more than just a new medium of communication. Television became the rope in a tug-of-war between two political opponents. The debates highlighted each side's different ideologies, ideals and visions for South Africa. While the opposition was world-orientated and wished for South Africa to be part of the global village, the NP was more insular and wanted South Africa to be completely independent and self-sufficient. For the opposition, national pride was very important, and the fact that South Africa did not have television embarrassed them. But the NP had a different view on national pride, and saw no reason to admit television into its existing media landscape. Furthermore, where the opposition stood for free enterprise, the NP believed in more central government control over the economy.

And while the opposition could afford to be more idealistic about South Africa and its future, the NP was faced with the practical responsibilities that power brought. For example, the opposition saw no difficulty in finding the money to establish television. The NP, on the other hand, had more important projects in mind that would cost millions of rands, but that would serve a more important purpose, they believed, than television. This purpose was to remain in power. By spending millions on local FM radio and large apartheid projects, the NP believed they could entrench their political position. But whereas the UP saw television as a possible way to get into power, the NP feared that the medium would damage the power they already had, and were working so hard to keep.

For each side, the other's attitude towards television came to embody what they most criticised in each other. According to the opposition, the government's refusal to introduce television flowed from the NP's backwardness. For the NP, the opposition's insistence on television, that carrier of foreign ideals, showed just how disloyal and unpatriotic the UP and PP were.

By 1969, however, the government felt compelled to take the first steps towards establishing a South African television service, and appointed the Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to Television.