

LANGUAGE, LEGITIMATION AND CONTROL:  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE AFTER '78

by

Debbie Posel

The language of the Botha government has shifted away from Verwoerdian ideological orthodoxy in certain noteworthy ways, some more dramatic and sensationalist than others. In 1978, Prime Minister Botha warned White South Africans to "adapt or die". Piet Koornhof, Minister of Co-operation and Development, assured an American audience that "apartheid was dead", and grandly declared "war on the 'dompas'". Of course, none of this has happened. Apartheid is alive and well, and the "dompas" lives on in peace. This kind of rhetorical flourish, then, has little real impact on attempts to promote the legitimacy of the South African state, except perhaps in certain overseas circles, where the pulse of apartheid is more faintly felt. The more interesting and important shifts in legitimacy rationale concern the criteria for so-called "effective government" (1), which substitute new standards and priorities for old ones. "Pragmatism" now comes before the stubborn adherence to principles for their own sake; "free enterprise" and "economic growth" take precedence over Afrikaner unity and an uncompromising racial separatism. The process of government is depicted as a "total strategy" in defence of "civilized values", rather than a moral crusade for the protection and preservation of racial identities. (2)

None of these catch-phrases is altogether new. Each has its own separate history of meaning and usage. What is novel from about 1978 onwards is, firstly, the extent to which they are repeated and underlined and, secondly, the ways in which their discrete meanings are extended and refined by virtue of their mutual interrelations. They are no longer discrete, isolatable formulae, but have begun to exhibit certain systematic connections in their meaning and application. To this extent, they can be seen as the rudiments of a new language of legitimation. (3)

Still, the result is not an uncontested or full-scale ideological shift. Orthodox ideological slogans and symbols coexist with the new, as symptoms of an as yet unresolved struggle within the state to define the terms of its legitimacy. As Stanley Greenberg points out, the South African state is in the throes of an "ideological ferment". (4)

There is at the level of thought an on-going redefinition of basic terms that turns legitimation into a fundamental battle-ground. (5)

Furthermore, these conflicts have continued to intensify, rather than abate, especially following the split in Nationalist ranks which culminated in the inauguration of the new right-wing Conservative Party.

This paper focuses on the ideological resources and political strategies and alliances on the part of the "reformist" contenders in this struggle. I am concerned to analyse the content of the new legitimacy language, and to account for its new found prominence. I have left a discussion of the battle itself, and the likelihood of ideological victory for the new discourse of pragmatic reform, for the seminar itself.

The argument of this paper is, therefore, structured as follows:

- 1) a brief analysis of post 1978 language of "effective government", according to three main themes;
- 2) an attempt to account for i) why a new legitimacy rationale became necessary, and ii) why it should have taken the specific form which it did.

### The New Language of Legitimation

In terms of the new language of "reform", the major yardstick of the legitimacy of the state is construed as instrumental rather than substantively moral. It is held to be more important that policies be "effective" than that they conform to fixed moral standards.

The dimensions of such "effectiveness" are elaborated in three related themes and sets of symbols:

- 1) "Technocratic" rationality, as I have labelled it.
- 2) "Total Strategy"
- 3) "Free Enterprise"

As I suggested earlier, the full (denotative and connotative) meanings of each of these themes is established in and through their interrelations. Of course, this is not to say that the users of this political language either perceive or manipulate the production of meaning in this fashion. The production of symbolic meaning is rooted in, but also supersedes, the intentions and control of individuals or groups. My method in the following discussion is therefore to analyse the content of each theme in relation to the others, rather than to track down the intentions of particular state ideologues.

### Technocratic Rationality

This legitimacy theme comprises a dual commitment, to pragmatic reason, on the one hand, and to the importance of technical expertise in solving the country's problems, on the other.

In terms of the first, the "effectiveness" of the present South African state derives from its realistic, pragmatic response to the facts of the country's local and international situation. According to an editorial in Die Beeld (a major pro-government Afrikaans newspaper), for example,

In these times of sowing suspicion against Nationalist leaders, it's good for Nationalists to realise that our policies of reality - our only salvation - are based on the facts and truths as the Nationalist Party faces them fearlessly, under Mr P W Botha and Mr F W De Klerk. (6)

It was in these terms that Botha defended Nationalist Party policy to the National Women's Club of Parliament, for example:

The acceptance of multinationalism, the recognition of minorities, the existence of various cultures, ideas and traditions is not an ideology, it is a reality. We did not create it, we experience it. It is a reality we have to take into account. (7)

Apparently, therefore, "multinationalism" (ethnic political, cultural and social segregation) is not a value or norm fostered by the Nationalist Party; it is an objective fact, the logical and self-evident response to which is a policy of segregation. In terms of this discourse, apartheid thus acquires the full weight of reality behind it; it is neither chosen for, nor subject to, moral or ideological considerations.

The process of "reform", too, is similarly depicted. The 1981 Election Manifesto of the Nationalist Party declares that

The economic realities ... require more skilled labourers than the 'White' population can supply ... These developments have necessitated various reforms in the field of labour relations, and constitutional developments, and in the normal day-to-day contact between people of different race groups in South Africa. (8)

The reforms designed to solve South Africa's economic, political and social problems are thus purported to be independent of any particular "ideology" or normative political stance. They are simply read off unequivocally and self-evidently, from the "facts" of the case.

Indeed, the role of so-called "ideology" or avowedly political principles is expressly underplayed, even denounced altogether. Challenges to government policy on "ideological grounds" are discredited as "petty party political point-scoring". (9) The unconditional adherence to any such principles is dismissed as rigid and backward-looking, a dangerous failure to take account of changing times and an obstacle to the business of "intelligent policy-making and purposive reform". (10) Thus, "ideological" principles are not only unnecessary, because the policies of reform simply record and react to facts; they are also dangerous.

This commitment to "policies of reality", not "ideology", goes hand in hand with technocratic standards of legitimate decision-making. For, the "reality" with which the state has to deal is depicted as complex and multifaceted, spawning many complicated "problems". Since the task of an "effective government" is to produce the objectively appropriate solutions necessitated by the facts of the case, the state ought therefore to call upon a wide range of specialists, able to contribute independent, reliable and expert advice, untainted by any "ideological" or political stance.

Problems of industrial decentralization and homeland "development", influx control and urban African housing, for example, are cast in these terms, as engendered by the facts of "economic growth" and "industrialization". Properly problems of political control, they are presented as if merely technical ones, the solutions to which can, and should, be devoid of "ideology" or political principle. (11) Such solutions are thus seen to devolve upon the advice and findings of business "experts", rather than on the results of popular political debate and choice.

The tacit effect of this new legitimacy rationale is thus to redefine the scope of the country's avowedly political agenda. Large areas of state control

such as its homeland policies or allocations to urban African housing are depoliticized by being depicted in pragmatic and technical terms, which disclaim their political contestability and import.

### Total Strategy

The new political language of "reform" upholds the "effectiveness" of the present South African state in its "total strategy" against a multifarious "total onslaught" on the country. The notion of a "total onslaught" seems to have entered the ideological arena by the early 1970s, propagated by the military, as the rather diffusely conceived threat of "international communism and its cohorts - leftist activists, exaggerated humanism, permissiveness, materialism and related ideologies". (12) This theme of a "total onslaught" against the state and a "total strategy" necessary to defeat it, is now dominant in many quarters of the state.

"Total strategy" is not simply an aspect of government policy; it is the symbol of, and justification for, the scope and style of state control as a whole. In the terms of the new discourse itself,

Total strategy ... can be described as the comprehensive plan to utilize all the means available to a state according to an integrated pattern in order to achieve the national aims within the framework of specific policies. A total national strategy is, therefore, not confined to a particular sphere, but is applicable at all levels and to all functions of the state structure. (13)

Not surprisingly, therefore, the full meaning of the current "total strategy" idea emerges in relation to the preceding theme of "pragmatic realism". For, the scope of "total strategy" is seen to encompass whatever is objectively "necessary" for the "effective" solution to the problems of the moment. The only appropriate constraint on the magnitude and content of this strategy should be "realism" in the face of the "facts". Otherwise the state is seen to need a free hand, unfettered by "ideological" principles, to pursue whichever strategies are deemed "necessary" by those acquainted with the facts and equipped with the appropriate expertise.

A large part of this "total strategy" is, of course, military. On this score, the two themes of "technocratic reason" and "total strategy" interlock in such a way as to approve a much enlarged role for senior military personnel in civil government, in their capacity as "experts" in matters of "total strategy", dealing only with the "facts" of the "total onslaught".

### Free Enterprise

The "total strategy" required for "effective government" is not wholly military, however. It also encompasses a commitment to "free enterprise", designed to deflate the appeal of the communist "onslaught" to South Africa's "non-White" population. The meaning of the term "free enterprise" is thus integrally bound up with the idea of "total strategy", and in turn with the standards of technological rationality.

Many commentators on South Africa's future have argued that the state would seek to extend its base of popular consent to certain African, Coloured and Indian groups (notably, a middle class and a labour aristocracy) by easing certain political restrictions on their economic opportunities, and adopting the gloss of a liberal free enterprise ideology to disclaim and conceal these strategies of control in the name of individual rights and happiness. (14) However, while many of these co-optive strategies are in evidence, they tend not to be obscured by such ethical screens.

For the vocabulary of "free enterprise" has developed along a different route, directed in part by the discourse of "total strategy". Thus the extension of the "free enterprise" system to sectors of the "non-white" population is depicted explicitly as a strategy of co-optation and control, i.e. in the terms of the official discourse itself, as part of the state's "total strategy" to subvert "leftist activism" in the country. In P W Botha's words,

We hope to create a middle class among all the nations of South Africa. Because, if a man has possession and is able to build his family life around those possessions, then one has already succeeded in laying the foundation for resisting Communism. If anyone has something to protect, to keep as his own, then he fights Communism more readily. (15)

In traditionally liberal variants of "free enterprise" ideology, the capitalist system is represented as optimally free of state intervention, being properly self-regulating, according to the politically neutral logic of the market. Again, however, the South African version of "free enterprise" is different. By means of its relation to the other themes of technocratic rationality and "total strategy", the idea of "free enterprise" provides a means of defending the fact of state intervention in the market, on the one hand, and a high degree of participation by big business in the affairs of the state, on the other. Since "free enterprise" is part of the state's "total strategy", the state can claim a legitimate vested interest in the promotion and regulation of the market, according to the "realities" of the moment. (16) At the same time, the intervention on the part of businessmen in governmental processes is justified as an appropriate contribution of "necessary" expertise and capital, neither of which is depicted as a political commodity. They are construed as merely instrumental contributions to technical problems of "growth" and "development". It is on such grounds that the Botha government openly urges businessmen to "play a more active role in helping to solve the development problems in Southern Africa". (17)

Having identified the interrelations between three main themes of the new language of legitimation, the next question to be addressed is: Why should there have been such marked changes in legitimacy rationale promulgated within the state, from 1978 onwards?

An answer to this question lies in the structural crisis (18) of the state which developed during the 1970s, producing the need for reforms of the sort which would undercut the legitimacy credibility of orthodox Verwoerdian ideology, at the very time at which the process of ideological legitimation had taken on a new, added salience in the prospects for the "management" of the crisis. A new language of legitimation became not simply an historical possibility but a strategic priority.

### Crisis of the 1970s

(My discussion of this period is extremely brief, and aims merely to highlight some of the main features of the crisis relevant to our inquiry into the changing language of legitimation.) (19)

The 1970s saw the Verwoerdian blueprint of apartheid fall increasingly out of joint with certain economic and political developments, to the point where, in the mid-1970s the state's economic and political stability was seriously threatened. Existing political and economic arrangements were shown to be inadequate for the effective renewal of state control and support.

For example, major problems were thrown up on the labour front. South Africa's labour policies were constituted at a time when Blacks were required largely as a source of cheap, unskilled labour. Skilled and semi-skilled positions, being still relatively small in number, could thus remain the preserve of Whites. However, as capitalism advanced to its monopoly stage, so its labour needs changed from those originally envisaged and protected by the state. Monopoly production in South Africa is often capital-intensive, and has seen the introduction of sophisticated technology, the operation of which requires a skilled and semi-skilled work force. As such production expanded, through the 1960s and 1970s, the White population was no longer able to meet the market's demand for skilled and semi-skilled labour. Even in the 1960s, in fact, this demand fast outgrew the supply from amongst Whites. However, as Dan O'Meara points out (20), serious adverse effects of this shortage were felt only from the early 1970s onwards. For, the 1960s saw an economic boom during which "the overall conditions of expansion and high profitability mitigated the adverse effects of such labour shortages". (21) The 1970s, on the other hand, were marked by a deepening recession, so that the still-growing shortage of skills then did begin to pose a significant threat to the interests of capital.

Satisfactory economic progress thus came to be seen to depend increasingly on an enlargement of the source of skills, from amongst the "non-White" population. This in turn required an erosion of job reservation on grounds of colour, the extension of training facilities, and the stabilization of conditions of employment and residence of such workers, because, once trained, they are more difficult and expensive to replace. In other words, then, the solution to the growing problem of a shortage of skills came to devolve upon the creation and stabilization of a labour elite amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians.

The 1970s also produced a large increase in the numbers of unemployed, which the rate of economic growth could not redress. (22) As the drive towards capital-intensive production advanced further during this period, so the unemployment problem was compounded, as the relative need for unskilled labour continued to decline.

Nor did the threats to the country's economic stability and prosperity stop there. The decade was one of mounting opposition and unrest, both on political and labour fronts. Numerous and widespread strikes, from 1972 onwards, underlined the inadequacy of wholly repressive controls over the predominantly African work-force, and served to expose the need for additional, co-optive controls to defuse dissent. A stable, consensual, skilled and semi-skilled labour force had become especially crucial, in view of the worsening shortage. It was thus all the more necessary to prevent spreading strikes and discontent within these ranks.

Nor was dissent confined to the economic arena. The growing urban African and Coloured population demonstrated intense and widespread resistance to apartheid, beginning with the 1976 Soweto riots.

This marked intensification of protest had a damaging effect on the already scarred economy. For, periods of unrest were followed by significant reductions in the levels of foreign investment in the country and an exodus of foreign capital already in the country. As a result, South Africa's existing balance of payments deficit was compounded by loss of the capital necessary to sponsor her imports. The state thus grew increasingly unable to afford the costs of prolonged unrest.

Developments in the 1970s, then, exposed the economic and political necessity for improvements in the state's capacity to deter unrest, as well as to meet the problems of unemployment and skills' shortage - all of which jeopardized continued economic growth and political stability. In this way, furthermore, the

decade had brought the interests of the government, military and monopoly capital together, in their common need for reforms which would "manage" the crisis. The interests of each would be served simultaneously, by measures which stabilized and co-opted an African middle class and labour aristocracy, eased the skills shortage, and streamlined influx control so as to create a permanent, stable, fully employed urban African population and evict the swelling ranks of the unemployed to the homelands.

Each of these strategies of reform, however, was at odds with the Verwoerdian blueprint, in terms of which Africans were to be denied trade union rights, and any permanent urban residential status at all. The 1970s thus laid the structural ground for the type of reforms which discredited the orthodox ideological legitimization of the state. The credibility of the new "reformist" state would thus depend on the promulgation of a new language of self-legitimation. Furthermore, the need for such credibility amongst new African, Coloured and Asian audiences had also been growing during this decade. The increasing limitations and costs of the state's near-total reliance on coercive control over these groups had become unmistakably apparent. The government was therefore subject to mounting pressure to extend its base of popular consent, by establishing its legitimacy to "non-White" elites. These calls were especially urgent from spokesmen for the military, local and foreign capital, all of whose interests would be favoured by an enlargement of the ambit of state legitimacy. General Malan (then Defence Chief of Staff), for example, stated plainly that "the lesson [of the unrest] is clear ... we must take into account the aspirations of our population groups. We must gain and keep their trust." (23)

The crisis of the 1970s thus exposes the structural conditions and strategic priority of a new legitimacy rationale for the state. However, it was only in 1978 that such change was inaugurated. The so-called "Muldergate" scandal during this year discredited the "verkrampte" faction within the state, and sponsored the ascendancy of the verligtes, under the leadership of P W Botha. More responsive than the Vorster regime to pressures for reform from the military and big business, it was this newly aligned state which undertook to "manage" the crisis it had inherited, by a series of "reforms". (24)

Having accounted for the emergence of a new language of legitimization within the state from 1978 onwards, it remains for us to consider why these changes took the particular form of a discourse of technocratically effective, pragmatic government.

An answer to this question lies, at least in part, in the functions which this new legitimacy language can play i) as an instrument on control over the political agenda, and ii) as a means of addressing different audiences with discrepant interests simultaneously.

#### Control Over the Political Agenda

The new language of legitimization defines the agenda of popular, public politics in a way which facilitates and supports the dominant alliance of interests within the post-1978 state, as well as the manner in which state control is exercised.

The 1978 realignments within the government have allowed for certain changes in the form of state control, giving public expression to the newly ascendant alliance of interests between verligte Nationalists, big business and the military. Firstly, overtly close collusion between the government and the military has grown. Secondly, the Vorster government's attempt to keep big business at arm's length, at least in public, has been reversed. The state and big business

collaborate publicly, setting themselves up as a "team". (25) (This is not necessarily an index of any real increase in political power on the part of monopoly capitalists, however.) Thirdly, power is highly centralized in select areas of the executive, which has reduced the government's answerability to Parliament, on the one hand, and the party rank and file, on the other.

Consider now how each of these features of the present South African state and its "reform" strategies is served by the new legitimacy rationale that has won prominence.

As our earlier discussion revealed, the Botha regime's reform initiative included certain strategies which had been expressly debarred by orthodox Separate Development policy, e.g. registration of African trade unions, stabilization of a permanent, albeit small, urban African population in "White" South Africa, and a plan for "power sharing" with Coloureds and Indians. Now, especially in view of the long history of dissension between verligtes and verkramptes within the Nationalist ranks, the verligte regime must have known that it could not rely on unqualified support, either within the party or amidst predominantly verkrampte sectors of the state, such as parts of the bureaucracy. It is not surprising, then, that decision-making within the state should have become increasingly centralized and indifferent to Parliamentary or party dissension. Executive power is concentrated in a series of Cabinet Committees, appointed and answerable to the Prime Minister only. As O'Meara points out (and analyses in greater detail), "the entire principle of Cabinet responsibility has been shifted into the office of the Head of government, dramatically increasing his power". (26)

The terms in which the new legitimacy rationale define the scope of popular (White) politics surely aid and abet this centralization of power in the executive. For, many of the planned reform strategies, such as those concerned with urban blacks, homeland development and industrial relations, are, in principle, highly contestable within party and electoral circles. Yet, by depicting these policies in the language of technocratic reason and "non-ideological" objectivity, the government can take the wind out of the sails of popular or party opposition. The democratic legitimacy of an elected government requires at least some measure of demonstrable popular ratification and support for political policies. The new language of legitimacy prominent in certain state circles protects the legitimacy of the state amongst its electorate, simply by narrowing the arena of its avowed politics.

The support and co-operation of the military and big business, however, seem to be a more important prize for the Botha government to win and keep.

Botha's style of government, facilitated by his reorganization of the executive, has greatly advanced the interests and role of the military in the arena of civil government. Members of Cabinet Committees (the power-house of the executive) need not be members of Parliament. Many senior military officers have thus been incorporated into these committees, which has led O'Meara, for one, to assert that "for the first time ... the military [has] a vitally important institutionalized role within the executive". (27) An article in the Financial Mail, too, reports a claim that "SADF representatives now take part in all interdepartmental meetings, regardless of whether direct SADF interests are involved". (28)

The interpenetration of civil and military spheres has been furthered, too, by the enhanced powers of the Department of Military Intelligence, which has largely ousted the Department of National Security. (29) Finally, the National Security Council, a body established in 1977 to spearhead the state's "total strategy" (30), is now the main advisory and planning body in the propagation of this strategy.

Again, the new language of state legitimation seems to have been instrumental in forging and sustaining this relationship between executive and military within the state. It defines the scope of the state's "total strategy" widely enough to cover anything deemed by military and government "experts" themselves to affect national security. The inclusion of military personnel into civil decision-making processes is promoted on the grounds of their politically and ideologically neutral expertise in such matters, and their autonomy in pursuing chosen strategies protected by the nominal depoliticization of these activities and concerns.

The Botha government has made some noteworthy efforts to win legitimacy and support amongst monopoly capitalists. Public overtures to business to engage in "continuous consultation" (31) with the government have been made through the Carlton Conference of 1979 and the Good Hope Conference of 1981, for example, attended by leading business people and state actors. More significantly, leading businessmen have been incorporated into Cabinet Committees themselves, in their capacity as experts on such matters as economic development, labour relations, inflation, etc. Also, "teams" of business and government representatives have been set up to deal with such problems as urban African housing, the promotion of capital accumulation amongst Africans, Coloureds and Asians, homeland development, e.g. the Small Businesses Development Corporation, Commission of Inquiry into African Housing. (32)

As I suggested earlier, it is hard to assess the extent of real power exercised by business representatives in these ways. But it seems certain that they now have a legitimate public political platform from which to advance their interests, to the extent that the government is willing.

This political incorporation of leading business people, which seems to form part of the state's attempt to win and legitimate the support of English and Afrikaans business, has been sponsored by the language of technocratic and pragmatic rationality, which depicts such "teamwork" as politically neutral, ideologically indifferent and objectively necessary. Neither the state nor big business, especially English-speaking, could have afforded to enter a relationship which was not effectively depoliticized in this way. As far as the state is concerned, any political collaboration with English big business would have jeopardized its ideological credibility in Afrikaner Nationalist circles which still remember "Hoggenheimer" (Harry Oppenheimer) as the symbol of the liberal capitalist threat to Afrikaner interests. Liberal business leaders, for their part, could not afford the threat to their party political credibility if seen to engage in a political alliance with the Nationalists. A language for mutual address which is purely technical and non-"ideological" has, therefore, been a necessary condition and instrument in the development of this relationship.

#### Strategies for Enlarging Consent

Traditionally, popular consent to the South African state had been confined to the exclusively White, predominantly Afrikaans, supporters of the Nationalist Party. Events of the 1970s, however, had starkly exposed the price of such a narrow base of popular support. It was shown to produce growing opposition from local and foreign capital, overseas governments, African, Coloured and Indian workers and community leaders. At the same time, existing support from the right wing of the Nationalist party could not be guaranteed, once non-Verwoerdian reforms were initiated.

This reform strategy on the part of the Botha regime seems thus to have included an attempt both to renew and to extend the base of popular consent, by newly promoting the legitimacy of the state.

In the strategic planning of South Africa, it is accepted in the defence of the country, only 20% can be achieved by military preparedness; the other 80% depends on spiritual preparedness. (33)

The "Broederbond", one of the state's ideological think-tanks, saw that the requisite legitimation strategy had to be one which would placate Whites, and Afrikaners in particular, in the face of changes which would erode certain existing White privileges (e.g. job reservation), and persuade them that their own interests were still being upheld. Yet, the terms of this ideological reassurance were also restricted by the nature of the other audiences to which the new language of legitimation was also to be spoken. For, firstly, the base of popular consent was to be extended to include sections at least of the African, Coloured and Asian population. Botha made the point plainly at a public meeting in Springbok. Speaking of South Africa's "non-Whites", he asked his audience rhetorically,

Must I estrange these people, or must I take them with me so that the country's security can be maintained? (34)

Legitimation of the state could never be won amongst these people as long as the language used by state actors smacks remotely of racism, or, indeed, of anything which betrays a persistent adherence to Verwoerdian principles and values. The minimum condition for exacting their consent is a promise of reform, which advances their interests and status.

Another audience to be addressed by the state's new language of legitimation, big business, accounts for a further set of constraints on the content of this language. As we have seen, certain reforms, which deviate from the orthodox apartheid blueprint (e.g. registration of African unions, erosion of job reservation) are clearly in the interests of most organs of monopoly capital. Big businessmen are therefore amongst the most strenuous proponents of a need for such adaptive strategies on the part of the state. For them, too, it is language of reform which can best make the state's case for its legitimacy. Furthermore, in order for the collaboration between organs of government and big business, in pursuit of these reforms, to remain publicly legitimate, the state required a language which could address such audiences as a business community alone. As we have already seen, unless the terms of their relationship side-stepped issues of party politics and principles, the party political credibility of both Nationalist and capitalist "team" members would be endangered.

Clearly, therefore, the chosen strategy of legitimating the state to all of these audiences simultaneously could be conducted only in a language which spoke of reform, while avoiding or repressing the issues of "ideological" principle altogether. If any references had been made to substantive principles or ethical norms, the open and collective collaboration with the government by capitalists of varying party political persuasions would have embarrassed and alienated many of the latter. Also, a language of "ideological" or political principle would inevitably have failed to achieve legitimacy success in Afrikaner and African, Coloured and Indian audiences simultaneously. For, if the political and "ideological" values in question were clearly congruent with traditional Verwoerdian ones so as to appease the Nationalist electorate, the newly courted African, Coloured and Indian audiences would have been alienated once more. To win their support on grounds of political or "ideological" principle would have required the endorsement of a newly non-discriminatory liberal ethic (at least), which the Nationalist right wing had repeatedly rejected.

We have seen how and why, during the late 1970s, the extended legitimation of the state had become a strategic priority. We can now recognize the ways in which the new language of technocratic reason, "total strategy" and "free

enterprise" was ideally suited to the job. For, its overall effect is precisely to repress issues of "ideological" or political principle, substituting an alternative instrumental yardstick of state legitimacy instead. It offers a defence of the present South African state as one committed to reform through "policies of reality" which have nothing to do with issues of "ideological" principle.

To conclude, I have argued, then, that the specific content of the new legitimacy rationale prominent in the post-1978 South African state can be accounted for, at least in part, by its contribution to the state's strategies of "crisis management". For, on the one hand, the new rationale embodies a language which facilitates and protects the dominant alliance of interests within the post-1978 state (viz. between verligte Nationalists, monopoly capital and the military). And, on the other hand, its aprincipled vocabulary can operationalize the state's strategy to extend the renew its legitimacy to different audiences with conflicting interests and priorities.

I am not arguing, however, that the production and use of a new language of technocratic reason, total strategy and free enterprise were thus a well devised and orchestrated conspiracy on the part of shrewd state ideologues. Adam and Gilio mee are correct in pointing out that

To conceive of an ideology as being consciously invented by a brain trust or some other deliberate conspiracy would be misleading. A legitimating rationale gradually emerges through constant repetition and refinement by opinion makers. A new formula 'catches on' while older interpretations fade out because it better reflects the changing needs of its adherents. (35)

My argument imputes neither full knowledge nor conspiratorial intent to the proponents of the new legitimacy rationale (although there is clearly a degree of deliberation and calculation in evidence, on the part of certain state actors at least). Rather, I have attempted to account for the fact that certain new "formulae" have "caught on" in many quarters of the state, largely in terms of the ways in which they reflect the needs and interests of the dominant alliance within the state.

Whether or not the new language of legitimation does, or ever can, succeed in fulfilling these needs is another question, of course - one which I will raise in the seminar itself.

-----oOo-----

#### Notes

- (1) Dynamic Change in South Africa, published by the SA Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, November 1980, p 20.
- (2) Ibid., pp 19, 12, 11.
- (3) The development of any first- or second-order language presupposes the constitution and communication of meaning according to rules or conventions of signification - a grammar, in other words. This notion of language is more

formally specifiable in semiotic terms, and in fact much of the subsequent discussion of relationally defined meaning tacitly draws on the methods of semiotics.

- (4) S Greenberg, "Legitimation and Control: ideological struggles within the SA state", unpublished paper, September 1982, p 2.
- (5) S Greenberg, "Ideological foundations of the Israeli and South African States", unpublished paper, April 1982, p 29.
- (6) Die Beeld, 23 March 1982.
- (7) Nat '80s, April 1981, p 8.
- (8) 1981 Nationalist Party Election Manifesto.
- (9) Evening Post, 16 April 1982.
- (10) Professor Gerrit Olivier, addressing the Conference of Manpower and Management Foundation of South Africa; Rand Daily Mail, 27 March 1982.
- (11) See, for example, comments on the housing shortage for urban blacks in The Citizen, 31 August 1982, and also Star, 12 August 1982: "The SA economy, battered as it will be by recession and competing priorities, will have to find resources of money and ingenuity for a mighty push in the coming decade to house millions of urban black families. And in this imperative, politics will play no part. [My underlining] This was the message from SA's top administrators and planners at a seminar organised by UNISA School of Business Leadership."
- (12) White Paper on Defence and Armaments Production, 1973, p 1.
- (13) White Paper on Defence, 1977, p 5.
- (14) For example, A Erwin and E Webster, "Ideology and Capitalism in South Africa" in L Schlemmer and E Webster (eds), Change, Reform and Economic Growth in South Africa (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1978), p 99.
- (15) Nat '80s, April 1981, p 8.
- (16) Dynamic Change in South Africa, p 20; see also South African Digest, 2 April 1982.
- (17) The Good Hope Plan for Southern Africa, published by Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, November 1981, p 28.
- (18) Following research done after this paper was written, I now question the concept of a "structural crisis", as it is used uncritically and without explication by Saul and Gelb, Dan O'Meara, and indeed my own paper. In another paper ("Theories of Crisis and a Crisis of Theory") I have argued that the concept of "structural" or "organic" crisis is often analytically superfluous. Appropriated unreflexively from the writings of Western Marxists, and lacking definition which accords with the specificities of the South African case, the term "crisis" adds nothing extra to their accounts of structural tensions, problems and contradictions. For that very reason, therefore, my account, as it stands, of political and economic tensions and contradictions during the 1970s would be unchanged in content by the excision of the concept of "structural crisis" from it.
- (19) This discussion draws heavily on the work of Dan O'Meara, in an unpublished paper on "Muldergate", and Saul and Gelb, The Crisis in South Africa: class defence, class revolution. This discussion of the period is often speculative and underresearched, as is theirs. Still, my point in this paper is not to establish details but rather to suggest broad trends which constitute the structural context in the light of which the new language of legitimation can be understood. It is with this problem of legitimation that my paper is more directly concerned.
- (20) O'Meara, op. cit., p 5.
- (21) Ibid.
- (22) G Moss, Total Strategy, Work in Progress, No 11, February 1980, p 1.
- (23) Rand Daily Mail, 13 June 1979.

- (24) A more detailed discussion of Muldergate can be found in O'Meara's paper.
- (25) The Good Hope Plan, p 24.
- (26) O'Meara, op. cit., p 38.
- (27) Ibid., p 39.
- (28) Quoted in Facts and Reports (Press Cuttings on Southern Africa), 12th Volume, N J May 14 1982, edited by Holland Committee on Southern Africa.
- (29) Moss, op. cit., p 9.
- (30) Ibid., p 10.
- (31) The Good Hope Plan, p 14.
- (32) Ibid., p 24.
- (33) "Master Plan for a White Country: the strategy", a Broederbond secret document, quoted in I Wilkins and H Strydom, The Super Afrikaners (London: Corgi, 1980), p 280.
- (34) South African Digest, 21 May 1982.
- (35) H Adam and H Giliomee, Ethnic Power Mobilized (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p 133.