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# IDEOLOGY AND CENSORSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICAN FILM

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The duty of the Publications bodies is, they must ask the question, 'What does the average man in the street with a Standard Seven education think?' ... The Publications Bodies, the adjudicators, must decide what the moral standards are of the general community, the bulk of which is not sophisticated...

Judge Lammie Snyman (1)

Judge Snyman's statement, like many others issued by the Directorate of Publications (previously the Publications Control Board) spokesmen, appear to deliberately set out to confuse cause with effect. This patronizing attitude serves to further reinforce the popular misconception that a paternalistic group of government appointed 'experts' are employed to decide for the majority what they may or may not see, read or hear.

This rather simplistic interpretation of the purpose and ideals of the Directorate of Publications, supported in the main by serious critics (see, eg., Schiess, 1970) and Members of Parliament (see Hansard), is primarily the result of an inadequate understanding of the role and functions of the state censorship machinery. The official reasons offered in defence of censorship, like Snyman's comments above, hide a deeper insidious objective, that of reinforcement of the dominant ideology in order to control reflections and interpretations of social experience. Such rationalizations are designed to mask the actual ideological goals of censorship which are aimed at the maintenance of apartheid society. Censorship is one of a number of state apparatuses employed by National capital to maintain its dominant position over labour or the working class.

## Objectives

This paper sets out to demonstrate that censorship functions to induce people to live their relationship with each other in terms of the messages communicated by the dominant (i.e. white) ideology.

The first section will discuss the role of ideology in society while the second will deal with the relationship between censorship and ideology with special reference to the South African film industry.

## The Nature and Structure of Ideology

Bennet (1979, p.116), building on Althusser (1970), defines ideology as consisting of those myths through which individuals are reconciled to their given social positions by falsely representing to them those positions and the relationships between them. This body of knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes are posited to form part of some inherently significant, intrinsically coherent plan or process. Ideology inexorably permeates all human activities: it is found in political attitudes and judgements, cynicism, in honesty, in resignation and rebellion. It governs family behaviour, social relations, attitudes to the environment and contributes to interpretations of the 'meaning of life'. Ideology is unconscious, invisible and always present. In short, our experience of life is governed by ideology and is

inseparable from it. The consequence is that ideology deforms perceptions of reality and is an intrinsic component in the existence of any society.

The content of this ideological reality consists of two kinds of systems which contribute to the perpetuation of any society.

According to Harnecker (1976, p.76) these are:

1. The system of ideas and the social representations (ideology in the strict sense); and
2. The system of attitudes and social behaviour (customs)

### The System of Ideas and Social Representations

This dimension includes the political, juridical, moral, religious, aesthetic and philosophical ideas of a given society. The content of this knowledge is expressed in the form of different views of the world and of an individual's perception of his role in it. Ideologies are not dispassionate, scientific representations of the world, but interpretations filled with imaginary elements: rather than describe reality, they express desires, hopes and nostalgia. Ideological perceptions are not static, but tend to adapt according to changes in scientific knowledge. Perhaps the greatest change in world view followed the acceptance of Gallileo's scientific discovery that the world revolves around the sun and not, as previously thought, that the sun was conceptualized to revolve around the earth. This shift in perception destroyed the notion that the universe was man-centred and resulted in man re-locating his ideological perspective of his role in the cosmos. A similar change of perception occurred after Darwin, and it can only be left to the imagination to comprehend the sort of change in ideological perception which might result from the general acceptance of the historical fact that blacks were resident in South Africa long before the arrival of van Riebeck and his party. The present ideological orientation stems from the belief that blacks and whites only met at the Fish River during the 1770's. This conviction continues to be mythified in the conservative historical literature (3) as well as the numerous documentary and propaganda movies which have been made since 1896 through to the present (4). A more contentious example is the verkrampte Afrikaner's attitude towards the origin of the coloureds and his possible integration into white society (5). Films reflecting the ambiguous class position of this group are inevitably interfered with by the Directorate of Publications which ensures that the cinematic roles in which they are cast adequately reflect their class positions as assigned by the prevailing dominant ideology. Nevertheless, this ambiguity has, at times, even permeated the censors as evidenced in their reasons for demanding that Jans Rautenbach remove a scene from Die Kandidaat (1968) in which the question of whether Coloureds were Afrikaners or not was discussed. The adjudicators felt that as coloureds might one day become Afrikaners, this sequence could give offence and should, therefore, be excised. In Katrina (1969), a film which deals with interracial relations between a coloured woman and a male Afrikaner, the producers were forced to cut in an ideologically palatable ending, while Springbok (1976) which deals with a coloured rugby player who passes for white and earns Springbok colours appealed with success against the ban imposed on it.

The ideological orientation demanded by the censors, despite the often contradictory decisions which may occur within the confines of the Board, ultimately function to govern the beliefs, attitudes and conduct of both blacks and whites in the pursuance of their designated duties and conditions of existence. For example, the ideology of the Homelands represents an acceptance by their black leaders of the dominant white ideology that by setting aside certain areas for each ethnic group, they are maintaining their heritage and cultural

identity. Not all Homeland leaders accept this ideology however. Gatsha Butalezi, for example, argues that by confining themselves to the reserve areas and forfeiting their citizenship rights to the wider South African society, they are depriving themselves of the benefits of that society to which their labour has substantially contributed. This failure of the dominant ideology to convince the Zulus of 'their place' has resulted in a greater measure of formal and informal government coercion (see, eg., Temkin, 1976)

### The System of Attitudes and Social Behaviour

The second ideological dimension, that of the system of attitudes and social behaviour is made up of all the habits, customs and tendencies to react in a certain way. Ideological perspectives in their strict sense may be re-defined to cope with change in economic or social realities, but less easy to change are the habits, attitudes and customary ways of living followed by the individual. For example, although economic pragmatism has this year resulted in the elevation of South African Chinese to "honorary white status", many whites still conceptualize these people as being 'inferior'. In this case ideology in the strict sense was easily redefined to take advantage of an expected export based financial gain, but it takes longer for this new content to become generally articulated and be accepted as part of the lived relationship between people. A more pertinent example may be drawn from the film industry itself. Prior to 1974, differential censorship was applied to black, white, coloured and Indian audiences. A movie considered suitable for white children might have been banned for black adults. The 1974 Publications Act, however, did away with this provision (6). This resulted in the same movies being seen by both white and non-white audiences but at different venues. The wider socio-economic implications of this move were not yet acknowledged since cinema facilities remained strictly segregated. (7) This segregation is gradually, though by no means completely, being eroded. The first sign of integration initially appeared in the form of segregated drive-ins in which black and white audiences simultaneously viewed the same movie from different sides of a dividing wall. Later, it was felt to be safe to do away with the wall and even toilet and take-away eating facilities became multi-racial. It was only this year, however, that four wall cinemas applied for multi-racial permits for their city cinemas (8). Government response is still being awaited by Metro, though Ster Kinekor have been refused permission.

Influences brought to bear on the dominant ideology are in part propelled by economic considerations and the demands of capital. In the case of cinema, the desire of exhibitors to open their doors to all-comers is not an altruistic move, but rather an attempt to maximize their market potential. Such a move is only possible in view of the religious, moral and philosophical changes which have occurred within the dominant ideology since the resignation of John Vorster as Prime Minister. Changes which have occurred in ideological content are both an acknowledgement of the changing class structure of black society as well as representing a strategy to co-opt the rapidly expanding black middle class into the fold of the dominant ideology. The objective of adapting apartheid ideology to take cognizance of structural changes occurring in the economic base of South Africa is planned to bring about an entrenchment of this emerging black middle class as an instrument of repression against the working class, which will continue to provide cheap labour which nourishes this country's economy. In other words, by giving this newly arrived middle class an opportunity to maintain their social position vis-a-vis the broad mass of black society, such concessions presently being enacted by the PW Botha administration work to manipulate this group into keeping the rest of the black working class in their place. It is by such means that the dominant ideology has co-opted the black middle

class as a force of repression.

### Ideological Structure and Economic Determination

We have seen that ideology has its *own* content, its own laws of operation and development. Any ideological product such as, for example, cinema, is the result of two kinds of determinations, one internal to the ideological structure itself, and the other external (the Juridico-political).

The internal determination might be likened to the process of self censorship. It is highly unlikely, for example, that any exhibitor would have applied for multi-racial permits prior to 1974. The reasons for this are two-fold: first, the government would not have granted permits at that time for the prevailing ideology militated against such a decision ; and second, the publicity generated by such a move might have had an adverse effect on the corporate image of the exhibitor in terms of the existing non-integrationist ideology which in turn, might have had a deliterious influence on the box office.

It is the external determination, however, which is decisive in the final instance for this represents the web of political constraints and juridical methods of enforcement sanctioned by the state in law.

#### 1. External Determinations - the juridico-political functions of censorship

In addition to economic and ideological structures, every society possesses a combination of institutional apparatuses and norms designed to regulate the operation of society as a whole. Such devices are called the juridico-political agents of enforcement. This determination is external in nature and performs a double function- (1) that of technical administration; and (2) political domination. The administrative function is subordinate to and is at the service of the function of political domination. Against this definition of the state there cannot exist administrative tasks that are neutral or non-political. The major function of state apparatuses, censorship included, is to maintain a position of ideological and political dominance over all the other classes which are dependent on it. The most effective instrument available to government in the maintenance of its dominant position is racism, which for many years formed the basis of differential censorship. Some examples from Hansard will demonstrate the truth of this observation in unambiguous terms:

In 1963, the Minister of the Interior stated:

" ... the Hon Member for Houghton is simply reaffirming her political faith that no distinction should be drawn on the grounds of race or colour. She has of course been harping on this same string for many years, and the tune is one which does not appeal much to right thinking people ... (we) know what sort of film it would be to show to a race that has not yet reached the level of civilization that we have reached. We know that things which they cannot understand should not be shown to them and that there are some films which can be exhibited much more safely to a white child of fourteen years of age than an adult Bantu ....the film industry and the Board of censors have met each other on a certain basis throughout the years and certain standards have been built up." (Hansard, 1341, 14th February, 1963).

The Minister of Police and Justice, Mr J T Kruger, complained of the bad

influence Sidney Poitier's In the Heat of the Night (1968) would undoubtedly have on the morale of the white South African Police Force:

" The Heat of the Night was a film telling the story of a stupid white policeman who worked with a particularly clever non-white detective. These two always worked together to the detriment of the whites and to the advantage of the non-whites. If this is not something injurious to race relations in this country, I do not know what is?"  
(Hansard, 4723, 1968).

And again, Mr Kruger on Africa Addio, a film banned throughout Africa and condemned as a fake by most Western countries:

"Africa Addio confirmed to us what we already know about Africa ... we know what would happen in Africa if the Black people were to take over the country".  
(Hansard, 3422, 1970)

These statements and many others like them clearly enunciate the dominant ideology's system of attitudes and consequent styles of social behaviour. What they are intended to mask, however, is the objective character of the economic system. The origins of the colour bar, for instance, were not an irrational response to some deep seated ideological beliefs or prejudices, but rather, as Johnston (1976, p. 74) expresses it, " . . . a response to a specific class problem, produced by the system of production and the class structure from which the problem itself was derived". In the film and other aspects of life, this is manifested in a situation where the roles and functions of each group are determined by ideology and is dependent upon their economic class position in society. The maintenance of South Africa's peculiar form of capitalism depends on the availability and control of a large force of cheap labour and upon the dominant ideology which reconciles those in control of the means of production to their God given role and 'higher' form of civilization. In other words, the perpetuation of apartheid depends upon the degree of control that the ruling group is able to exert on the social system as a whole - that is, on both the dominated and the dominant. Film is only one component of the media mix (schools, radio, TV, press, churches etc.) which is utilized by National capital in the spread of the dominant ideology.

In terms of this hypothesis, censorship should not be seen as a monolithic straitjacket which is imposed on the society from the outside, but rather as a manifestation of the values and ideology of the most powerful elements of the society it serves. Censorship is a formal state apparatus engaged in the function of social and ideological control.

This societal manipulation is effected through the control of information transmitted, through the content of a movie, for example Fig.1. Control may be cybernetically defined as political intervention which restricts deviation from socio-economic goals or objectives to within socio-ideologically defined limits. The control process is based on a feedback loop through which the output of a system or its actual performance (eg., reflections of social experience in film is linked to its input (laws and legislation) in such a way that variations in output (or content) from some pre-set norm or goal (eg., the portrayal of the Afrikaner as a God fearing person) results in compensatory behaviour that tends to restore the system output (or cinematic reflection of social behaviour) to that goal. This self-adaption is known as homeostasis and is brought about by the action of sensory mechanisms (cultural watchdogs, pressure groups etc.) which have a capacity to anticipate

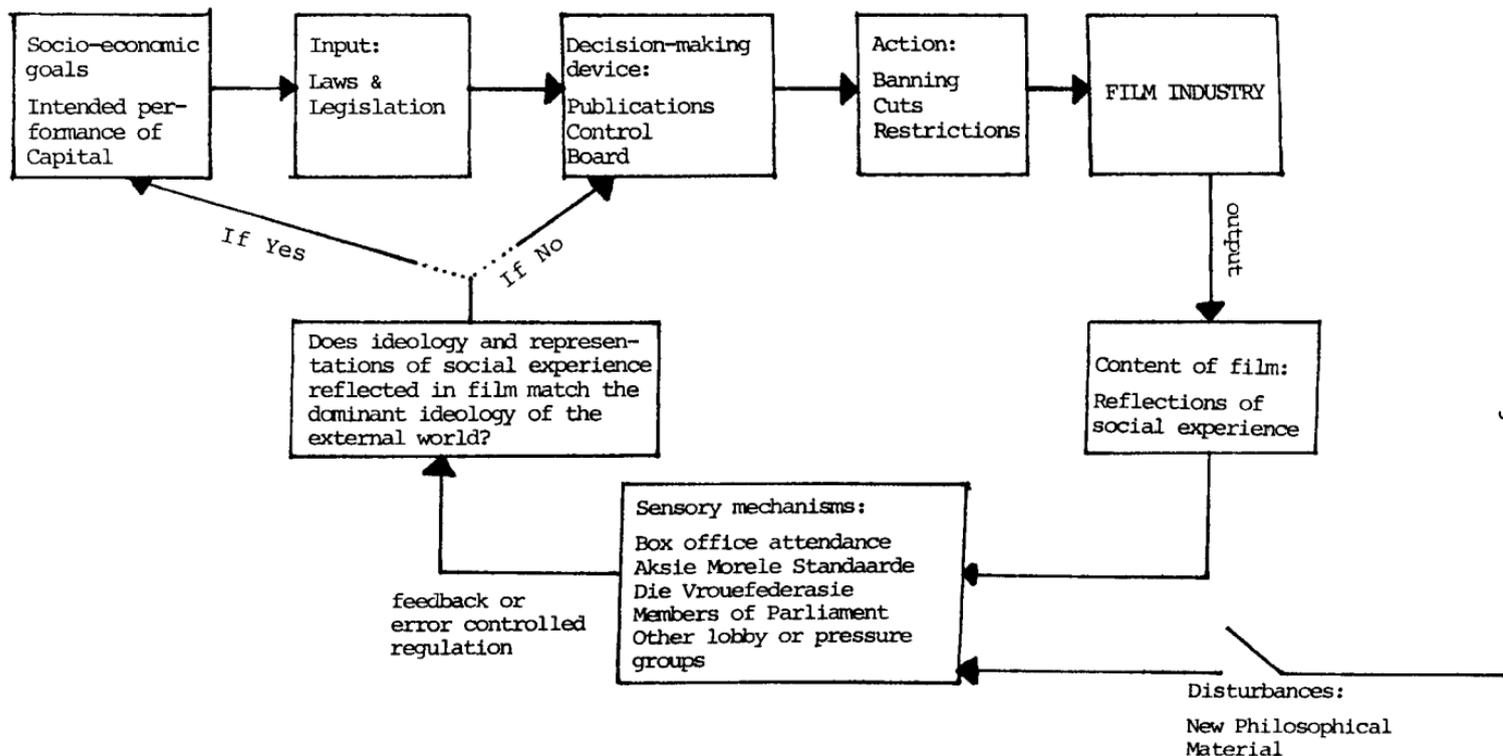


Fig. 1, Censorship as a Cybernetic System of Information Control

and monitor disturbances (such as the introduction of new philosophical material) which may arise from the system's environment. Information is then fed to the decision-making device, which in the present instance is the Directorate of Publications, which may decide to specify further action (such as additional cuts) which will effectively deal with the disturbances monitored by the sensory mechanism and return errant ideological output to within acceptable socio-economically defined limits. The whole process is guided and entrenched by the juridico-political system which is able to draw on state machinery (laws, methods of enforcement etc.) to ensure the continuance of the prevailing ideological philosophy. If the variety or regulatory capacity of the decision-making device (Directorate of Publications) is not at least equal to that of the disturbances, it will cease to function effectively. It will have to modify its structure if it is to successfully contain and meet a variety of new disturbances which may otherwise cause the demise of the existing ideology or status quo. This occurred, for example, in 1974, when the 1963 Publications and Entertainment Act was replaced with legislation designed to better cope with the disturbances which could not be adequately matched by the increasingly incredible and arbitrary manner employed by the juridico-political machinery at the time. A well documented example of public incredulity at the renowned antics of the censors concerned Jannie Kruger's remarks to film director Mario Schiess:

"Hoe durf jy 'n film Onwettige Huwelik noem hierin Suid-Afrika? Hier in Suid Afrika is daar nie iets soos 'n onwettige huwelik nie" (9)  
"(How dare you title a film Unlawful Wedding here in South Africa? Here in South Africa there is no such thing as an unlawful wedding ).

Judging from Snyman's recent remarks reported in the press and stated on "Microphone In", a further alteration of the Directorate of Publications is necessary to cope with new voluminous disturbances in the form of foreign "permissive" publications. (10)

In cinema, the control mechanism works in two ways: firstly, it may totally prevent the seeping through of new philosophical material considered unsuitable for South African audiences. This is effected either through outright banning or censorship cuts. Bertolucci's 1900, for example, was banned because the Appeal Board found that the uprising of Italian peasants against the land-owning classes was presented in a favourable light. The film was therefore determined by the Board to promote the aims of communism and thus was seen to constitute a contavention of the Internal Security Act No.44 of 1950. The very fact that the Directorate of Publications can identify a parallel between Italian conditions of the last century and the present South African situation suggests that this film must be considered dangerous for the maintenance of the status quo in this country. Hence the disturbance is removed entirely. On the other hand, a movie like Terrorist (1976) succeeded on appeal. In this case the Directorate of Publications ordered cuts and additions which had the calculated result of manipulating the theme and reorientating it in terms of the accepted ideology. An end title had to be cut in stating that the surviving terrorist was later taken into custody by the South African Defence Force. According to the Appeal Board: "The emphasis is thus changed from a successful to an unsuccessful terrorist attack". Perhaps the classic example of ideological control by the Censors was the treatment experienced by director Sven Persson's Land Apart (1974). This feature length documentary film made in 1973 predicted the impending riots and uncompromising mood of black South Africans which broke in Soweto in June 1976. Although the Committee passed the film, the Minister of Police

and Justice overturned this decision claiming that the content was prejudicial to the safety of the state. After extensive negotiations which spanned the old Act, the new Act, and which were subject to gross interference by the Department of Information, Land Apart was released two years later as The South Africans, after the commencement of the riots it had predicted (11). Most of the prophecies of the original however, had already come true and the majority of the interviewees were either in goal, banned, exiled or dead. In these instances the Directorate of Publications behaves as a decision-making device which sets out to control the ideological content of cinema and

specifies action which brings any erring philosophical material which seeps through into line with the expectations of the dominant ideology and the demands of capital. It is significant that when I wanted to screen The South Africans at Wits University (in 1980) I was told by the producer that this would not be possible because "That film has been a terrible embarrassment to my company. We have a lot of Defence contracts you know".

The second control device comes into operation where an ideologically incorrect decision has been made by the Publications Directorate and where new unacceptable philosophical material has been allowed through. This creates a disturbance and the social system or audience either makes adjustment to accommodate the new influences, or information is fed back by cultural watchdogs such as Aksie Morele Standaarde, Die Vrouefedarasie, Members of Parliament etc. to the Directorate of Publications which is then forced to review its original decision. This system, for example, eventually adjusted to, and accepted the new information introduced regarding the sexual mores of the boeredogter in films like Debbie (1965) and the host of imitations that followed. Wild Season (1967) and Die Kandidaat (1968) ran the gauntlet of cultural rejection and at times, Directorate of Publications wrath, but were eventually accepted in a modified state by the dominant ideology. Numerous examples exist in respect to imported movies. Seven Beauties (1975) Godspell (1973) and the Rocky Horror Picture Show (1976) were all banned subsequent to release, while Tommy (1975) had post-release cuts imposed. The Omen (1976) continued with pre-release cuts despite a vast "letters to the editor" campaign by Aksie Morele Standaarde.

The Directorate of Publications is sensitive primarily to those in control of political power, however small their numerical proportion. Judge Snyman himself says, "Of blacks I have no knowledge at all" and that it was for parliament to decide if blacks should be appointed to the censorship boards. Hence decisions will be made in respect of the wishes of the dominant ideology, irrespective of protests from the more populous but politically weak majority. Films which might be considered offensive to the black population, such as those made by white producers for indigenous audiences, are rarely restricted (12). Indeed, an Italian production, Africa Addio, re-released after the 1976 riots, which deliberately shows up black people throughout Africa in a bad light, continued to be screened despite vigorous protests from the black community and liberal white elements. Significantly, the film was restricted to white audiences only although the advertising poster was banned. The release of (13) Autobiography of Miss Jane Pitman, a powerful film dealing with the life of an American civil rights activist, to white audiences only, suggests a move towards a more sympathetic acceptance of a superficial social integration as far the dominant group is concerned. This discriminatory decision, however, also implies fear that black audiences, should they see the film, may interpret it as definite proof of such liberalizing trends, and consequently demand a faster pace of change, a situation which the dominant ideology may not be able to adequately deal with at the moment without experiencing extreme stress and

strain.

In general, films which the black middle class might find insulting, such as those specifically made for local black audiences, are not removed from the circuits. The reason is that they fulfill a basic ideological function in preparing people, particularly the working class which constitutes the bulk of their viewers, to act out their designated roles as labour units assigned to them by the economy. Such films, in some cases assisted by direct government funding (14), perpetuate the myth that the black person is an ignorant creature, while at the same time reinforcing the prejudices of the dominant class in their perception of their role of domination as 'natural' in terms of their God given superiority and moral duty to civilize and save the black man from himself. Hence the fact that the Directorate of Publications allows film like Africa Addio to be seen.

### The Flaw in Apartheid Ideology and the Need for Censorship

Despite the extensive arsenal of state apparatuses incorporated within the juridico-political system for coercive control, apartheid ideology has not been totally successful in subsuming differing concepts and opposing ideologies (eg. black consciousness) into the social formation as a single entity. Although we have argued that the institution of censorship should be seen as a manifestation of the dominant ideology, this does not mean that total homogeneity exists amongst all whites who make up this class. By virtue of their class determination, however, they can, to all intents purposes, be seen as supportive of the prevailing ideology. Within the black population too, one group represented by the Homeland leaders are accommodated within the dominant ideology, while the other main sector have rejected it, sometimes violently.

Unlike feudal society where everyone knew their place, in apartheid society serious strains and tensions occur continuously which threaten the status quo. Such disturbances must be eliminated or at least controlled if the system in power is to perpetuate itself. The major structural flaw in apartheid is its ideological fragility and its consequent inability to withstand critical disturbances either from within or from without the system. In order to minimize the impact of such infringements, the state, which can be regarded as the coercive arm of society, has had to increase its mechanisms of control through the increasingly stringent application of state ideological machinery (as well as in terms of brute force within the wider society). Against a background of apparent large scale liberalization of this country's racially based restrictions, the much vaunted return to a free enterprise economy, the lifting of bannings of locally written books (15), a seeming marked easing of cinema censorship, the opening of theatre to all races and the appointment of a verligte head to the SABC, it is the logical conclusion of my argument that such moves are ideologically based, propelled by adjustments occurring in the national economy as it shifts from a labour intensive industry to a capital and skills based mode of production. As such, it is obvious that such liberalization on the fringes of apartheid must be paralleled by a stronger intensification on the part of government to maintain the dominant position of white nationalism. This trend has been wilfully overlooked, by even the opposition press which is itself part of the dominant group, by stating that apartheid is "dead" and that a new "dispensation" is around the corner. What they do not seem to realize is that they are now, more than ever, agents of the government in their mediation of the ruling ideology. No structural changes have taken place in the South African political-economy, or are even likely to.

Homeland consolidation is continuing at a pace faster than ever before. Proposals that extra territory over and above the provisions of the 1936 Land Act should be made available to these black "states" have already been mooted by the cabinet. The granting of municipal status to satellite towns like Soweto is no more than an attempt to harness the support of the growing black middle class in terms of the structural bases of apartheid. South Africa has progressed a long way down the Grand Apartheid road. This path must be measured in terms of structural development, not petty discrimination (or the recent easing thereof), to convince the ruling population of its God given task. In other words, censorship is here to stay. It will simply change its form and adjust its decisions to match the variety of disturbances which impinge upon the apartheid system from the outside world. Because recent Directorate of Publications judgements place less emphasis on nudity, sex or the use of four letter words, this does not necessarily indicate a more 'enlightened' approach to censorship, but rather an adjusting cybernetic system of control. This system is able to increasingly take cognizance of liberalized sexual mores and subsume such behaviour into its general workings without experiencing the debilitating disturbances which might have once been the case. This is clearly demonstrated by the expanding capacity of the system to accommodate the otherwise serious disturbances which might have been caused through the screening of pornographic material or movies banned in South Africa in neighbouring countries, including places like Boputhatswana. However, it is notable that few films of dubious political content are shown in these states, for to do so would introduce information in variance with the dominant ideology of which the Homelands form part.

It is unfortunate that most criticism of censorship as it is applied in South Africa is offered simply at the level of sex and nudity. This over-emphasis tends to obscure the more vital function of the Directorate of Publications, that of the maintenance and reinforcement of the ideological stance of the dominant party.

This brings us to a discussion of how the allied state apparatuses of censorship assist in creating a climate of self-censorship and how ideology comes to assume a greater importance on the direct control of images seen in South African films than the fact of censorship itself.

### Ideology and the Climate of Censorship

The fear of censorship works at all levels of the production and distribution process. Four basic types of constraint can be identified:

1. Financiers will not invest capital into a venture which they perceive might fall foul of the censors. This has obvious implications for an industry based on the profit motive.
2. The consequence is that producers will tend to clear questionable aspects of their script with the relevant authorities such as the Police, the Security Police, Defence Force, Administration Boards, educational authorities etc. I have already pointed out that such administrative bodies by definition, perform a political function. It is not therefore surprising that advice given will be in accordance with government policy. Clearance is generally obtained at the preproduction stage and is thought to provide the producer with insurance against possible embargoes or restrictions being placed on their films by the Directorate of Publications when finally submitted for release. Some producers have even submitted scripts as publications to the Board itself, as in the case of Springbok (1976). The script

was found "undesirable" by the Committee. A strong minority report, however, encouraged the producer to appeal. The plea was successful and production went ahead. On submission of the film, it was approved subject to numerous cuts. On appeal, all but three cuts were replaced.

Screenwriters too, have to plough the minefield of interlocking units of legislation - the Suppression of Communism Act, the Official Secrets Act etc. - all vaguely worded, as they link up with the Publication Control Act section 47 (2) (e) in their attempts to force producers not to bring the police or other government machinery into contempt, or jeopardise the security of the state, the general welfare, or the peace and good order. I have already described how the Directorate of Publications is able to interfere with themes, storylines and interpretations, and it is not, therefore, surprising that even the dedicated film makers in this country find themselves pre-censoring their films and checking them out with administrative bodies which ally themselves with the dominant ideology. The existence of any film which contains even a hint of criticism must be interpreted as a miracle even down to innocuous satires like Kootjie Emmer (1977) and Skelms (1980). Some industry spokesmen will argue that local producers are simply passing the buck and that they are either incapable or afraid of making films outside of the perceived ideological limitations. However, when one considers the cost of feature film making, and the past record of the Directorate of Publications, it is to be expected that producers take every possible precaution to minimize their risks of restriction or banning.

3. Those films which are able to escape the constraints of capital and which move into ideologically sensitive territory or which are at variance with the dominant ideology still have to obtain distribution from companies which not only ally themselves with capital and the dominant ideology, but which are, in fact, themselves an intrinsic component and contributor to that ideology. Reception from distributors to The South Africans, for example, was hostile. The film was rejected by JJ Marais, chairman of Satbel, even before he had seen it. Although the managing director of Ster liked the film and Dr Wassenaar, managing director of the holding company, Sanlam was receptive, the official reason for rejection hinged on the observation that a previous political film, Die Sestig Jaar van John Vorster (1976) had lost money. Ster argued that since The South Africans was also of a political nature it had little chance of box office success in the light of the poor performance of John Vorster. The film was eventually screened at independent cinemas and hawked around university campuses in 16mm format despite the occasional presence of security policeman.

This brings the analysis to a discussion of the effects of this kind of action on audience response, and so to the fourth constraint operating on the producer not to go beyond accepted limits;

4. This concerns the cumulative effect of the actions of the Directorate of Publications in conjunction with other state machinery. The prime result is an audience and industry unwilling to support movies which are analytical and introspective of the South African situation. Cinematic honesty is permissible for imported film, but not local offerings. Any film maker who tries to explore local issues and stories is considered to be acting irresponsibly by an industry conditioned on cliché's and slogans. "Give the public what it wants" is the marketing cry of film executives, producers and directors. What the public wants, however, is what the Directorate of Publications intends it to have. This intention, as we have argued, is governed by the dominant ideology. Therefore what the public gets, is not what it wants, but what it has been conditioned to want. At a deeper level of analysis, these

'wants' may be reconceptualized as needs. These needs are determined by ideology and the most important social need of a society is security. This is provided through the reinforcement of its ideological philosophy. Security in cinema is supplied by genre movies, the predictable formula film. Such treatments are far more comfortable than cinematic explorations which expose the prejudices, the stereotypes, and the actual material motives of a society. So indiscernable is the ideology of local film makers from their experience of life that few are even aware of the incestuous circle which governs audience wants. Some exceptions to this rule are Jamie Uys' Dingaka (1964), Rautenbach's Die Kandidaat (1968) and Jannie Totsiens (1970), and Ross Devenish's Boesman and Lena (1973) and The Guest (1977). Although these treatments offer an identifiably authentic reflection of the characters and events they seek to portray, such cinematic honesty is alien to the average white audience for the characterizations, motivations and reflections offered do not match the racial and ethnic stereotypes or general interpretations offered by their apartheid ideology. Yet when compared to the critical cinema of other countries these films pale in their conservatism. Only the stereotypes are smashed, and although social roles in such movies are identifiable within the social formation of apartheid, the social structure itself is not necessarily questioned. Such films are statements by their directors on the victims of history, the apartheid society, not a critique on causes or origins. Although these movies are granted Directorate of Publications clearance, the intimidatory nature of the social structure of the industry successfully eliminates most of the contenders, thus maintaining stability within the system.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, it appears that the Directorate of Publications has been successful in its objective to control the flow of new unstabilizing information into the minds of South Africans. Together with other state apparatus, the incapability of local film makers to stand apart from their ideological determinations, the Directorate of Publications has been directly instrumental in fully preparing the average South African white and many of its non-whites to withstand the consequences of its political and economic strategies: the so-called "total onslaught". Our roles are pre-determined by the political economy, our actions politically delimited and our responses ideologically pre-empted.

But it appears that this is not sufficient, for Judge Snyman is recently reported to have complained that the present censorship system "doesn't work". He apparently wants a return to a modified 1963 Act where the appeal is directly to a cabinet minister supported by a few members of Parliament. This plea underlines a concern in respect of "permissive" material. It appears, however, that Judge Snyman has misread the prevailing ideology and misunderstood the objective of government strategy in loosening the moral constraints of South African society (16) while at the same time tightening the economic bases of apartheid. The result is an apparent 'enlightenment' of the Directorate of Publications which is measured by the number of swear words remaining in Apocalypse Now (1980) or the square centre meterage of Bo Derek's breasts seen in the film "10" (1980).

Again, Judge Snyman's statement that apart from the few Westernized blacks, the majority are inarticulate people who are not interested in the whole matter of censorship, underlies the very ideology that I have been referring to throughout this paper. That fact that they are inarticulate and disinterested is the direct result of government policy which is explained away

by the dominant ideology that only the white man can help the black people from their inevitable social, cultural and political demise.

Finally, in contrast to the many critics of censorship, I foresee many difficulties in the argument for a more liberal censorship, since censorship is not an imposition on society, but rather an expression and reflection of the dominant political grouping in this country. At best, we can try to understand it better, at worst, we have to live with it for the fact of censorship is a direct indictment of the fragility of the society its members claim is the last bastion of Christian civilization in the 'Free World'.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This statement was made at the Johannesburg Film Society's presentation of the Neil Smith award for the best film screened in Johannesburg in 1979. Parts of Snyman's speech were reported in SA Film and Entertainment Industry, Vol. 3, No. 4, April 1980.
2. The maintenance of a capitalist economy in South Africa depends on the availability and control of a large force of cheap labour. This has been achieved through the sustained depression of the living standards of black labourers. Wolpe (1970), Legassick (1974) and others have illustrated how this objective was brought about initially through the economic depression of the reserve areas, and more latterly, through the mechanisms of ideology and legitimate violence.
3. See, for example, Fowler, C. de K. and C.J.J. Smit: History for the Cape Senior Certificate and Matriculation. Maskew Miller, Cape Town, especially pp. 462 - 506
4. Nearly all locally made films portraying the history and people of South Africa show a neat migration of northwards moving whites and southwards moving blacks through an 'empty' interior eventually meeting en mass at the Fish River during the 1770's. This grossly oversimplified interpretation of this historical migration can be seen in films made from 1896 onwards, The Denver African Expedition (+ 1912) and Swervers van die Sandveld (+ 1940). Perhaps the most blatant and dishonest distortion of history, statistics, processes and results is seen in the Department of Information propaganda documentary Solution to the Dilemma of a Plural Society. This film shows the usual black/white collision at the Fish River, then adds in to this map the Homeland territories and the British Protectorates of Bechuanaland, Swaziland, Basutoland etc. The visual then animates these black areas spatially to show that blacks were apportioned fully one-half of the subcontinent, and whites the other half. This ideologically determined logic, which cannot be supported in even the most conservative history book, serves to deny the more accurate 13% (black) 87% (white) division of land in South Africa. Even if one accepted the film's point of view, this rationale effectively excluded mention of the quality of the land assigned.
5. The Coloured group is the result of miscegenation between early white Cape Settlers and elements of the indigenous population. Some Afrikaners still deny the role of their descendants in the birth of this ethnic population.

6. Prior to the 1974 Act about 1 in 3 films passed by the Board for whites were banned from black viewership. The 1974 Act, however, covered itself should it want to ban films for blacks only in the future in its provision that it could ban films to "...Persons in any other category specified by the Committee". Since 1974, two films have been restricted to whites only : Africa Addio and Autobiography of Miss Jane Pitman. When initially released in 1970, Africa Addio was banned for black audiences. This ban was not revised with its re-release in 1976 and nor did the distributor appeal for general release to all races. Autobiography of Miss Jane Pitman is the only film submitted since the application of the 1974 Act which has been banned for black audiences only. It was originally passed with cuts, but a resubmission this year led to the reinstatement of the cuts, but remained banned for black audiences.
7. A few exceptions to this rule did occur but were minute in number. Prior to 1974, the fact of a mixed theatre to a large extent determined the type of film showed for differential censorship reduced possible options which could be seen by both whites and non-whites.
8. Applications by Ster Kinekor included Golden Acre in Cape Town and Cinorama in Johannesburg.
9. Other examples are The Baby Game (1973) . The producer was told that babies are not dumped on the doorstep in South Africa. Neither do S.A.A. pilots drink alcohol or have a girl in every town. The film was passed on appeal. Three Bullets for a Long Gun experienced difficulty partly because the Board claimed that there were no "banditos" in South Africa or Warmbaths where the film was shot. The film was passed on appeal when the producer cut in a beginning title stating that the story was located in Mexico.
10. See The Star, 8 April, 1980. "Microphone In" was broadcast on the English Service on 9 April, 1980
11. Land Apart has a long and involved history of confrontations with the state censorship machinery and other government departments including the Dept. of Information, the Bureau of State Security and the police. On initial submission in 1974 the film was passed by the Committee. The chairman of the Board, Mr Jannie Kruger, however, demanded a special screening whereupon he banned it. A personal appeal was made to Kruger who responded that he would make an exception and accept a resubmission with specified changes. The changes were made and Kruger banned it again. According to the stated procedure, two years had to lapse before the film could be again submitted or it could be resubmitted immediately under a different title and substantially altered content. Persson decided to follow the latter course and, assisted by Les de Villiers of the Dept. of Information in the face of considerable opposition from Eschel Rhoodie, resubmitted in 1976. On this third submission, it was again passed by the Committee. Mr Pretorius, the new chairman, however, demanded further cuts relating to Marais Steyn, who had, by now, crossed the floor and was a Nationalist Party Minister. Pretorius, however neglected to lodge his complaint timeously and the producers were able to force a compromise with the Board and the film went on circuit. The Dept. of Information was, throughout this period, extremely opposed to the film and it is ironic to note that the 1974 appeal made to the Minister of the Interior could not hope to pass because this position was filled by Connie Mulder who was also the Minister of Information.
12. One exception was Messenger of God. Protests were lodged by the Indian community. The film, however, would have been of little interest to the average white cinemagoer.

13. Of the six separate designs on display, four were banned. One of these had been used for many years to advertise the film. The banned posters carried the slogans: "After the Black takeover"; "Massacre in Kenya"; "Africans in mass murder"; and "Africa Addio brings you what the newspapers dare not print".
14. These funds were channelled through the Dept. of Information to Heyns Films which employed a black director, Simon Sabela, to execute films for black audiences.
15. The two watershed cases concern Nadine Gordimer's Burgher's Daughter and Andre Brink's Magersfontein O, Magersfontein.
16. It will be remembered from our earlier argument that the state is propelled by the economy which is also primarily determinate of ideology. Other examples of this loosening up are the Prime Minister's repeated statements that he is willing to review the Immorality and Mixed Marriage Acts.

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