

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: A METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION FOR ANALYSIS OF EDITORIALS ON THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, *DIE KERKBODE* 1986 – 1989

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### Abstract

*This article will give a critical analysis of a number of editorials of Die Kerkbode, published during the late 1980s when strict media regulations were imposed as part of the states of emergency in South Africa. The analyses will be done from a perspective of applied linguistics, specifically an approach referred to as critical discourse analysis. The nature of the data we are interested in here calls for interdisciplinary consideration, and therefore I shall refer to some extra-linguistic processes and perspectives as well. The article will be organised as follows: Firstly I shall indicate the position of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the field of Linguistics. Secondly I shall explain the usefulness of CDA for analysing media language. Thirdly a number of theoretical notions useful in this kind of analysis will be explained. Fourthly, illustratively, a closer reading of a number of editorials will follow. From 1985 to 1989 successive states of emergency largely dictated the structure of political and societal patterns in South Africa, and had a particular impact on the media. Of course the state of emergency affected more than only the social and political spheres – it is impossible to consider all the implications of such a powerful and necessarily authoritarian instrument of government in one go. The interest of this conference generally is in how the church, more specifically the DRC, responded to the particular social and political turmoil that brought about the changes of 1994. This article is interested in the forms of language used in the church media, in this case the official NGK publication when it referred to the declaration and effects of the various states of emergency.*

### 1. Critical discourse analysis in the field of linguistics

Since 1957<sup>1</sup> formal Linguistics took an interest in language as a human-specific mental capacity, considering the properties of language and specifically the basic units of meaningful communication no larger than the sentence. Areas such as pragmatics, text analysis and discourse analysis<sup>2</sup> subsequently developed in the process of finding explanations for aspects of communication that are apparently situated outside of formal grammar, in the larger text or in the context of language use. Also, gradually interest grew in language as a social phenomenon, as an instrument that expresses and shapes societal and cultural identity. Since the 1970s a number of linguists turned their attention beyond the form of sentences and larger units of communication to the functions of texts in society. Particularly, their interest was in how language is used to establish and maintain power relations in society. They continued a critical tradition that dates back to the 1930s when

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1. This refers specifically to the introduction of generative grammar through the publication of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*.
  2. Cf. Levinson (1983), De Beaugrande & Dressler (1981), Brown & Yule (1983).

the Frankfurt School, which developed a scientific perspective different to the one proposed by positivism, was established. The work of these linguists became known as *critical linguistics*, although of late the label *critical discourse analysis* is more consistently used.

## 2. CDA as framework for analysing media language

### 2.1 Critical Theory

Critical Linguistics is rooted in a more general *critical theory*<sup>3</sup>, i.e. a theory concerning the structure of society, and the kind of knowledge which gives a proper understanding of the nature, the establishment and changes in societal structures. This theory was developed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the previous century in the Frankfurt School - a group of German philosophers and social scientists which includes Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas. The idea of a critical theory was generated in reaction to a form of positivism or empiricism according to which only statements, which are potentially true, can be regarded as knowledge. Such a perspective on what constitutes knowledge, excluded normative and metaphysical beliefs, preferences, attitudes, etc. from the realm of rational discussion and evaluation. The conviction of the Frankfurt School that scholars in human sciences should reflect on and develop such important parts of our form of consciousness, motivated them to consider new approaches to the study of social phenomena.

Critical theories are afforded special standing as guides for human action. They are aimed at producing enlightenment and emancipation. Such theories seek not only to describe and explain, but also to root out a particular kind of delusion. They define *ideology* as 'delusion', as 'false consciousness', i.e. as a false constellation of beliefs, attitudes, dispositions, etc. For certain members of the Frankfurt School *ideology* is a world-picture, which stabilizes and legitimizes domination. Critical theory intends to create awareness in agents of how they are deceived about their own needs and interests. It aims at bringing them to identify what their true needs and interests are. Such knowledge will guide them in bringing about social transition from an initial state of frustration and bondage to a final stage of satisfaction and freedom.

### 2.2 Critical linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis

Kress (1990:84-97) gives an account of the theoretical foundations and sources of Critical Linguistics (CL). He indicates that the term CL was 'quite self-consciously adapted' (1990:88) from its social-philosophical counterpart, as a label by the group of scholars working at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s. By the 1990s the label Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) came to be used more consistently for this particular approach to linguistic analysis. Kress (1990:94) shows how CDA by that time was 'emerging as a distinct theory of language, a radically different kind of linguistics.' He lists the criteria that characterize work in the Critical Discourse Analysis paradigm, illustrating how these distinguish such work from other politically engaged approaches to discourse analysis.

Fowler et al (1979) is often referred to as providing the early foundations of Critical Linguistics. Later work of Fowler (1991, 1996) shows how tools provided by standard linguistic theories (a 1965 version of Chomskyan grammar, and Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Grammar) could be used to uncover linguistic structures of power in texts. Not only in news discourses, but also in literary criticism Fowler finds that systematic grammatical devices function in establishing, manipulating and naturalising social hierarchies.

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3. For a more elaborate introduction to *Critical Theory*, see Held (1980).

Fairclough (1989) sets out the social theories underpinning CDA, and as in other early critical linguistic work, a variety of textual examples are analysed to illustrate the field, its aims and methods of analysis. Later Fairclough (1992, 1995a, 1995b) explains and elaborates the advances in CDA, showing not only how the analytical framework for researching language in relation to power and ideology developed, but also how CDA is useful in disclosing the discursive nature of much contemporary social and cultural change. Particularly the language of the mass media is scrutinized as a site of power, of struggle and also as a site where language is often apparently transparent. Media institutions often purport to be neutral in that they provide space for public discourse, that they reflect states of affairs disinterestedly, and that they give the perceptions and arguments of the newsmakers. Fairclough shows the fallacy of such assumptions and illustrates the mediating and constructing role of the media with a variety of examples.

Van Dijk's earlier work in text linguistics and discourse analysis (1977, 1981) show the interest he takes in texts and discourses as basic units and social practices. He traces and describes the origins of linguistic interest in units of language larger than sentences and in text - and context-dependency of meanings. Van Dijk turns specifically to media discourse, giving not only his own reflection on communication in the mass media (Van Dijk 1985), but also bringing together the theories and applications of a variety of scholars interested in the production, uses and functions of media discourses.

By the end of the 1980s critical linguistics was able to describe its aims, research interests, chosen perspective and methods of analysis much more specifically and rigidly than earlier on. Wodak (1989) lists, explains and illustrates the most important characteristics of critical linguistic research as they had become established in continued research. The relevance of investigating language use in institutional settings is reiterated, and a specific focus on the necessity of a historical perspective is introduced. A variety of research projects into discursive practices in institutional contexts that would assist in developing an integrated theory of critical discourse analysis followed<sup>4</sup>. To Wodak CL has to uncover and demystify certain social processes by making explicit and transparent the mechanisms of manipulation, discrimination, demagoguery and propaganda. Language changes do not only make manifest social change; such changes can actually trigger social change.

CDA takes an interest in all forms of discourse where unequal power relations are evident. This predicts a very specific interest in public (as opposed to private or personal) instances of communication. Scholars in this field started out by considering primarily linguistic communication. However, recent contributions (cf. Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) have drawn attention to the use of extra-linguistic media of communication that are not to be overlooked in considering relations of power in communication. For example, in considering the visual form of *Die Kerkbode* of the 1980s in comparison to more recent editions and to other church media, one would pay attention to matters such as the use of colour, the selection of visual material, and the relation between such visual material and the text.

### 2.3 CDA in media analysis

Considering public domains in which verbal communication is a central activity, the focus of CDA appears to be of two kinds. Firstly CDA takes an interest in discourses within

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4. These include studies written up with telling titles such as 'Wir sind alle unschuldige Täter' (Wodak, et al 1990), 'We are dealing with people whose origins one can clearly tell just by looking' (Wodak, et al 1993), and 'Notwendige Maßnahmen gegen Fremde' (Matouschek, et al 1995).

institutions, and secondly its interest is in discourses on the intersection of institutional and everyday life, where institutional products have an impact on lay persons in everyday situations<sup>5</sup>. Turning to the media as a public institution, one could, on the one hand, consider modes and patterns of communication between 'insiders' in the media, i.e. between journalists working alongside each other, between editors and journalists, between editors and the media managers, and so on. On the other hand one could consider modes and patterns of communication between the media producers and their consumers, i.e. between viewers and the TV producers, between readers and the newspaper industry, and so on.

Three significant aspects of language in the news can be mentioned here:

- Fowler (1991) considers generally the notion of *bias* in news reporting, the selection criteria that determines what perspectives, events, ideas, and so on are newsworthy, strategies that construct consensus between media writers and readers. He underscores the widely accepted perspective that no report is objective or neutral. There may be varying degrees of openness about the position of the author or publisher; ultimately, the interests of the text producer determine what propositional content is selected and how it is presented. This is as applicable to church publications as to any other form of media.
- Fairclough (1995a) moves from a general perspective on discourse as a form of social action to specifically considering discourse in the media. He draws attention to the power of the mass media, and sets out to provide a framework for readers to analyse media language. The nature of the power of the media is that it is established and exercised through language and discourse. Fairclough wants language to be recognised as an important element in contemporary processes of social and cultural change. His analyses of media discourses disclose certain 'orders of discourse' that he presents as an important organisational aspect of language use in public domains. (cf. par.3.1 below)
- Scollon (1998) considers newspaper news stories and television news stories as instances of social interaction. In mediated discourses he finds that the primary social interaction is among journalists and 'subsidiary personnel' such as producers, directors or printers who produce displays or 'spectacles'. This he distinguishes from the social interaction, which involves reading/watching the presented display. Four kinds of participants are identified: Presenters, editors and sub-editors, reporters, newsmakers and readers/viewers. Their roles are differently described as follows: *Presenters, editors and sub-editors* have the power to delegate authorship and principalship rights to reporting journalists. *Journalists* are not equal partners of editors in the publication process and therefore rarely have unrestrained freedom in introducing topics, determining focus, style, and so on. They have identity, (e.g. through by-lining) and little voice (they generally do not speak as first persons in news discourses). *Newsmakers*, in contrast, have voice but rarely more than carefully controlled identity, and *readers* are constructed as 'little more than the aggregate of social or demographic characteristics.' (p.ix) These distinctions will be useful when we analyse specific media discourses a bit later.

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5. Cf Wodak (1996:3).

### 3. Theoretical notions

#### 3.1 Orders of discourse

Fairclough introduced the notion of orders of discourse into CDA. The term refers back to Foucault's use of it in his 1970 inaugural lecture, where he points out that all societies follow discursive rules. This he finds to be an indication of the 'primary disorder and violence of discourse', the powers and dangers of which need to be subdued by sets of rules and conventions. (Wodak 1996:24,25) Fairclough (1995a:55) used the term to denote the set of discursive types incorporated in the communicative conventions of a social institution or social domain. Since 1972<sup>6</sup> much attention in text analysis and discourse analysis has been on the systematicity and regularity of large communicative units of language.

#### 3.2 Disorders of discourse

The term 'disorders of discourse' refers intertextually to the notion 'orders of discourse'. Wodak (1996) turns attention to the systematicity and regularity of communicative mishaps of various kinds. Manipulation of the media, prohibiting or constraining certain kinds of media discourse, gives rise to one such kind of disorder. We have examples of discourses where 'in place of clarity and comprehension ... there is proof of confusion and throwing up barriers to communication.' Wodak (1996:4) refers to these as '*disorders of discourse*'. They are found to result from gaps between distinct and insufficiently coincident cognitive worlds: the gulfs that separate insiders from outsiders, members of institutions from clients of those institutions, elites from normal citizens uninitiated in the arcane of bureaucratic language and life. What we find is a 'frame conflict' between participants whose worlds of knowledge and interests collide with one another. Those who possess linguistic as well as institutional power invariably prevail.

One of the aims of CDA is to identify and describe the underlying mechanisms that contribute to disorders in discourse. This area of research also considers possible changes in discourse patterns – disorders could, and indeed at times do, become more orderly through using various communicative devices such as reformulations, different styles or different modes. Alternatively, reformulations or changed style and mode could simply conceal power structures more skilfully and thus continue the established disorder tacitly.

#### 3.3 Hallidayan Grammar

CDA often refers to the three meta-functions of language identified in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. Michael Halliday (1985) introduced the study of language structure as an expression of its functions. Similar to the critical discourse analysts who rely on his understanding of *grammar*, Halliday regards language as social behaviour, as something that speakers can *do* in order to perform particular functions, such as transferring information or expressing experience, mediating relations between interactants and creating a text, which can fulfill its function as a message. The interest in and recognition of the importance of context in producing and interpreting discourse is shared by CDA. The context affects which grammatical and structural choices participants in a discourse make, thus context structures text. Simultaneously, the choices that participants make in discourses are constructive of the context, thus text also structures context.

The principle of *choice* is primary in systemic functional grammar: the structure of a text itself and every element of the structure represent a systemic choice. The language system allows a variety of possibilities on each level, the textual, syntactic, lexical, and so

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6. This refers to the recognition and description of regular textual elements by Dressler & DeBeaugrande in 1972 (English edition, 1981).

on. In discourse a selection is made from the range of possibilities. The faction of the text determines this selection. From the socio-cultural context in which language operates, it derives three comprehensive functions<sup>7</sup>, which are

- the function of establishing, maintaining and giving specific identity to relations between participants in social interaction (the *interpersonal* function),
- the function of transmitting information between participants (the *ideational* function),
- the function of providing texture, of organising the discourse in a manner relevant to the situation (the *textual* function).

### 3.4 Conversationalisation and Marketisation

Fairclough works with the assumption (1995a:5) that any part of any text will simultaneously be representing, setting up identities and setting up relations. He points to the dilemmas text producers have when there are certain tensions between what they want to represent, what the audience expects or will be willing to accept, and so on. There are two trends in modern media communication that he highlights as strategies used by producers to resolve their dilemmas, namely those of conversationalisation and marketisation. Referring to a perceived tension in the mass media between, e.g. giving information and entertaining the audience, critical discourse analysts indicate a marked shift in media practices in the latter two decades.

Conversationalisation refers to a process by which the structure of formal written texts is changed so that it resembles conversation between equal participants more closely. Conversationalisation does not necessarily represent a shift in power relations. It could be merely a strategy of those with power to recruit people as audiences and to manipulate them socially and politically. According to Fowler (1991:14) 'the ideological function of conversation is to naturalize the terms in which reality is represented'. Nevertheless, Fairclough finds that conversationalisation does represent a degree of cultural democratisation. For example, it raises the status of the language and experience of ordinary people by recasting it in their terms, thus rejecting elitism and mystification.

Marketisation refers to a process by which social identities and relations are valued in terms of a market-model. The construction of audiences as consumers and of producers/editors as entertainers is seen (1995a:12,13) as a normalisation and naturalisation of consumer behaviour and consumer culture. There is a diversity of voices, but overwhelmingly the consumerist system is endorsed and re-endorsed. Marketisation undermines the media as a public sphere, diverts attention away from political and social issues and so helps to insulate existing relations of power and domination from serious challenge. Readers are construed as spectators rather than as participating citizens.

### 3.5 Reception theory

Reception Theory is a critical theory that developed in literary analysis. It takes a critical approach which gives prominence to the role of the reader in interpreting texts. It considers the question whether a text can exist without the reader, whether meaning does not in fact only materialize in the process of reading. Awareness of the constructive function of the reader in determining the meaning of a text has been explored in a variety of ways that have collectively been labelled 'reader-response' criticism. This label does not denote a single theory, but rather a collection of approaches where the reading process and the reader him/herself is scrutinised. (Fish 1999)

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7. Cf explication and discussion of the metafunctions in Kress 1976: xixff.

The work of the two most well-known proponents of reception theory, Jauss and Iser, serve to introduce this particular exponent of critical theory. Jauss (1982 (1967)) introduced a shift of interest from the author to the reader in the early 1970s. His consideration of literature as discourse between the text and the reader was taken further by Iser (1974, 1978). Interestingly, this coincided with the development elsewhere of a critical approach to discourse analysis.

Reception Theory took a specific interest in literature as a form of art, considering questions of literature in history, the form and meaning of literary artwork, processes of understanding literature, and the social functions of literature. This theory gradually came to consider the late twentieth century blurring of firm boundaries between texts classified as literature (dramas, essays, short stories, etc) and other texts such as annual reports, business letters, theatre posters, advertisements, newspaper reports or editorials. Recently, literature studies have been extended to include analysis of such texts. Many of the concepts and categories introduced or elaborated in reception theory appear to be useful for analysis of these previously disregarded forms of discourse.

Stanley Fish is regarded as the leading exponent of reader-response criticism in America. He holds that meaning is located not primarily or singularly in the formal features of a text, nor in the intentions of the author, but to a great extent in the reader's response. Fish (1980:525ff) finds that both authorial intention and formal features are determined by the interpretive assumptions and procedures the reader brings to the text. He maintains that much of the disagreement on the actual meaning of a given piece is based in an agreement that a number of readings are possible. If a single text can have a variety of meanings, then readers are actually invited to recognise more than one meaning, and they have the prerogative of deciding on one particular meaning or of accepting that numerous, even contradictory, meanings can be present simultaneously. The meaning that is communicated in such circumstances rests not with the author, nor in the text itself, but with the reader. Traditional procedures of textual analysis, Fish finds, ignore or underestimate the reader's activities in the process of creating meaning.

### 3.6 Conflict in Social Anthropology

Within the framework of social anthropology Briggs (1996) collected considerations of various texts that illustrate the narrative structure and function of discourses which articulate conflict. Of the various aspects that he highlights two are of particular interest here, namely

- In opposition to a widely accepted view of conflict in social relations, conflict in interaction is not seen as an abnormality, a kind of pathology that should be avoided. That there is always a drive towards some kind of resolution of conflict is contested.
- The constructive function of conflict in expressing and shaping identities, is established.

## 4. Illustrative analysis

The texts of five editorials have been selected for analysis, namely those published on 10 September 1986, 17 December 1986, 22 April 1987, 18 May 1988 and 24 February 1989. The above sketch of theoretical considerations and analytic tools will be referred to in my reflection on these particular media discourses.

#### 4.1 Language and power, language and ideology

In considering the ways in which language relates to power CDA often focuses on how media language works ideologically. The term *ideology* is used here to refer to propositions that generally figure as implicit assumptions in texts, that contribute to producing and reproducing relations of domination. Media language functions in various ways in representing the world, in constructing social identities and in constructing social relations. So for example, looking at the language of editorials in *Die Kerkbode* in the sensitive years of 1985-1990, one would consider how language is used

- in *representing the events* leading to and resulting from the State of Emergency, in representing *groups* such as the government, the DRC, its members, anti-apartheid organisations of various kinds, detainees, conscientious (and other) objectors to conscription, and so on,
- in *constructing the social identities* of individuals and groups involved in and responding to the State of Emergency, and
- in *constructing social relations* between various individuals and groups in this context.

#### 4.2 Fairclough's orders of discourse

The printed media represents a strong and influential public institution. Such an institution has its own 'order of discourse', i.e. certain regular patterns have been established, certain rules apply that regulate the communication process inside of the institution and between the institution and the interested audience. Different types of discourse are included in the order of discourse – a whole network of structures, each with its own function, exists. Relevant for us here is (i) the position of a church publication within the larger institution of printed media, and (ii) the generic features of editorials generally, and of a church publication specifically.

#### 4.3 Wodak's disorders of discourse

There is disorder in discourse when communication is in some way vague, ambiguous, manipulative, reproductive of unequal relations, reproductive of social stereotypes and prejudices, and so on. Our question would be whether the particular editorials exhibit features that testify to some such 'disorder', or conversely, whether they in some way contribute to dissolving existing disorder. Here Briggs' suggestion that articulating conflict is in itself not a disorder, is useful. It is the concealing of conflict, or naturalisation of one perspective as if it is the only reasonable one, that constitutes a disorder.

#### 4.4 Hallidayan meta-functions

Following the procedure suggested by Halliday we consider the larger, overall structure of a particular discourse first; levels that work with smaller linguistic units are attended to later.

Here two aspects of structure are considered, namely the information structure, and the textual structure. The aim is to relate structure to function by investigating what the functions of the text are, and then which discursive structure is chosen to ensure that the text fulfils its function. To analyse function, CDA relies on the meta-functions of discourse as Halliday has identified them. The three metafunctions considered in analysing the selected editorials are

- an *ideational* function of communicating certain *content* (What *information* is to be conveyed in the editorial?)



- an *interpersonal* function of establishing *relations between the various participants* in the discourse (Who are the participants, which identities are reflected/constructed, what kinds of relations are established?)
- a *textual* function of *creating a text* of a particular kind that enables communication of the content and arrangement of the relation (What choices were made on various linguistic levels to express content, attitude, relations, etc?)

When one representation is selected over other available ones, or when identities or relations are constructed in one way rather than another, the analyst will ask a general set of questions, namely

- What are the social origins of this option? Where and who does it come from?
- What motivations are there for making this choice?
- What is the effect of this choice on the various interests of those involved?

Here the systemic view of a text as a set of options is notable: text producers select particular options from the system of options available, they make formal choices that constitute choices of meaning, a selection of options. The author chooses how to represent a particular event or state of affairs, how to relate this to whomever the text is directed at, what identities to project, and so on. These choices of form are linked to choices at a different level, namely those that determine what genres will be drawn upon, what discourses will be used. This encourages the analyst to be sensitive not only to what is given in the text, but also to absences from the text. It is important to bear in mind that self-conscious linguistic choice is a relatively marginal aspect of the social processes of text production and interpretation. The choices are often made intuitively and relatively mechanically. Then more than otherwise they reveal the position of the author.

#### 4.5 Conversationalisation and marketisation

Our question in the analysis of the selected editorials would be whether the NGK in *Die Kerkbode* follows the trends of conversationalisation and marketisation. It appears that in attempts to steer clear from contentious social issues, conversationalisation is indeed perceivable and marketisation is more obscure. However, an alternative form of marketisation should be considered, namely one that presents a particular kind of spirituality as natural and desirable. The editorials construct and endorse a kind of spirituality that avoids confronting issues represented as 'political'. The editor would justify such avoidance by putting emphasis on the needs of ordinary people, more specifically DRC members, to be comforted in times of great stress and uncertainty. This spirituality focuses on the responsibility of the church

- to work for reconciliation, and
- to comfort and console its people. There is a tacit assumption of consensus, which in effect is a constructed consensus, on who is to be reconciled to whom and for what, as well as on who is to be comforted and for what. The ambiguity of such needs and responsibilities in times of great social injustice is either denied, or deliberately obscured (some may even say 'embraced'). No distinction is made between the need for comfort e.g. of on the one hand, detainees and those akin to them, and on the other that of policemen and soldiers and those akin to them. Nor are the needs considered of a group who recognise and have become weary of, if not outraged at, the constructed 'total onslaught'. Should the church blindly offer comfort without considering questions of justice? To avoid any probing into the causes of suffering, unrest and protest and to avoid seriously considering other solutions than those suggested by

government, testifies to an intention to stabilise and reproduce a particular kind of spirituality. This is telling of the position of the text producers.

#### 4.6 *Die Kerkbode* editorials in the larger framework of the order of printed media.

*Die Kerkbode* is similar to other printed news media in that it is a public instrument that uses regular channels of printing and circulating news. This is even more so now than before, as it has been taken into the fold of *Nasionale Pers* and is partly circulated through regular daily newspapers such as *Die Burger*. It is different to other printed news media in that it does not wish or pretend to be an independent instrument. It is the official publication of the DRC, and as such will very limitedly voice alternative views in editorials. It is also different in that it is addressed largely to its own members; only in a limited degree is it an 'open letter' to people outside of the DRC. Thus, when it assumes what the interests, convictions, perceptions, concerns, and so on of its readers are, it will be those of the average DRC minister and church member. Most probably such a publication feels obliged primarily to serve the interests of such a readership.

The position of *Die Kerkbode* as representative voice of the DRC, directed at such a specific readership, will necessarily be reflected in the discursive structure of the publication.

#### 4.7 Generic features of editorials

Editorials generally fulfil a limited *ideational* function in that they rarely introduce new information. More often they refer to events, the details of which have already been reported elsewhere in the publication. The editorial then gives an analysis and expresses opinions representative not simply of the editor in his/her personal capacity, but of the owners, producers, directors, and main shareholders of the publication. Such news comment most often fulfils an *interpersonal* function of establishing the identity of and relations between various participants.

Here the participants can be identified as

- owners, shareholders, directors – the church leadership (the editor belongs to this group), representatives of Afrikaner business who sponsor the publication
- journalists – in the case of *Die Kerkbode* news is mostly selected by the editor – various contributors, invited by the editor, write articles or columns on a freelance basis
- newsmakers – these vary of course – often people related in some way to the church; in the editorials on the State of Emergency newsmakers are people who also became newsmakers in the regular newspapers – e.g. the State President, Min of Law and Order (Vlok), members of government and of the security forces, detainees, the ANC, and so on. Interestingly and significantly, in the five editorials closely scrutinised, mostly these 'newsmakers' are referred to in generalised, relatively anonymous terms – very rarely explicit reference is made to individuals. One exception is noted, namely a reference to Minister Vlok (1989).
- Readers – these are implied. The audience is not directly addressed, although not only lay members, but government officials, the directors of the publication (greatly respected) are implied.

Editors typically select structures that will put across their own point of view, that will support their beliefs and put down what they stand against. This is not exceptional, nor necessarily offensive. What interests the analyst is *how this is done*. Often, a text appears on the surface to be tolerant of dissenting opinions or critical of particular actions, but a

closer reading reveals attitudes and convictions that contradict the surface statement. What, for example would be the reason for writing 1 or 3 below, when the editor had the choice of using 2 or 4 respectively?

- 'As ons vra dat die noodmagte met omsigtigheid toegepas moet word ... gee ons nie te kenne dat dit nie gebeur nie.' (10-10-86)  
[*If we ask that emergency powers are to be exercised with care ... we are not implying that this is not the case.*]
- Noodmagte moet met omsigtigheid toegepas word, en daar is gerugte dat dit nie gebeur nie.  
[*Emergency powers have to be exercised with great care, and there are rumours to the contrary.*]
- 'Vir die kerk is dit vanselfsprekend 'n saak van kommer dat mense sonder verhoor aangehou kan word. ... Maar, en dit aanvaar die Ned Geref Kerk ook, Suid-Afrika beleef 'n tyd dat ongewone optrede meermale noodsaaklik is.' (24-2-1989)  
[*Obviously it is a matter of concern for the church that people can be detained without trial. ... But, and this the DRC also accepts, South Africa is experiencing a time when exceptional conduct is often necessary.*]
- Die kerk protesteer daarteen dat mense sonder verhoor aangehou word. Maar SA beleef 'n tyd waarin ongewone optrede onvermydelik is omdat ...  
[*The church protests against the practice of detention without trial. But SA is experiencing a time when exceptional conduct is inevitable due to ...*]

#### 4.8 The meta-functions once again

4.8.1 On an *ideational* level, the topic (summarised in the headlines, elaborated on in the text) is the same in all the selected editorials – throughout the five years in which the state of emergency lasted, this remained an important enough 'extra-religious' issue for it to be discussed in the official publication of the DRC. This is interesting if one considers that news reporting on this topic elsewhere in the publication never appeared in a manner similar to the regular newspapers. *Die Kerkbode* did not have reporters out in the field collecting news, following up stories, investigating, trying to be there first, and so on. So the editorial comment did not relate to new information published by the newspaper itself. Yet it commented and expressed the position of the church, assuming not only shared knowledge of the circumstances, but also the views that it believed its readers to have. The consensus among readers is established with phrases such as

- 'Niemand wat enigsins ingelig is, kan daaraan twyfel dat ... (10-10-86)  
(*No basically informed person can doubt that ...*)
- 'Elke ingeligte persoon in die land weet teen dié tyd ... (17-12-86)  
(*Every informed person in the country knows by this time ...*)
- 'Ons aanvaar dat goeie redes bestaan ... Daar moet begrip wees vir die owerheid se kommer ... (22-4-87)  
(*We accept that good reasons exist ... There has to be understanding for the concern of the authorities ...*)
- '... laat 'n mens besef dat ... Van die Ned Geref Kerk se kant is daar begrip vir die feit ... (18-5-88)  
(*... makes one realise that... As far as the DRC is concerned there is understanding for the fact ...*)

In September 1986 reference is made to the emergency announced 'n paar maande gelede' (*a few months ago*); in December 1986 reference is indirectly made to the new emergency regulations announced a few days earlier. In this editorial it does not start out referring to the regulations that particularly affected the media – although the front page carried a report under the heading 'Verantwoordelike kerkpers nie geraak deur media-beheer' (*Responsible church press not affected by media restraints*). The editorial uses the heading 'Terreur-aanslag en noodmagte' (*Terror onslaught and emergency powers*), and refers first to the State President's disclosure of an ANC conspiracy to conduct a terror campaign ('skrikbewind'), giving the church's response to this state of affairs. Contrary to a general media discursive convention of using the term 'alleged' in such references, here it is mentioned as a certainty, as a 'not unexpected' state of affairs. (17-12-86)

Concerning the *information structure* I would like to highlight one general point: there is a gradual shift from justification of the state's chosen course of action in the early years of the emergency (cf. 10-10-86, 17-12-86), towards careful reference to the abnormality of rule through emergency laws, and the possibility of misuse of such power in 1988 and 1989. However, every reference to possible excesses by the security forces is mitigated by elaborate expression of the understanding the church has for the predicament that the state is in.

Contrasting what is said to *what is not said*, two matters are apparent: Firstly, virtually no concrete reference is made to specific people or incidents. In Dec 1986, for example, the regular media carried reports of the numbers of people detained in terms of the emergency laws, the names were given of prominent people detained without any clear accusation against them that could lead to a trial. And there were strong suggestions that a large number of children were being held in questionable circumstances. Also in Dec 86 there were the widely reported murders of the Ribeiro family, there was an admission of SA military raids into Swaziland. Such specific circumstances were covered by vague phrases such as 'Wat die afgelope twee jaar in ons land gebeur het' (*What has been happening in our country during the past two years*), 'die ANC dink hy het bloed geruik' (*the ANC thinks he has smelled blood*), 'hierdie omstandighede' (*these circumstances*), 'maatreeëls wat hulle ter wille van die land se veiligheid nodig ag' (*measures that they regard to be necessary for the security of the country*) (17-12-86). Secondly, inappropriate conduct of security force members is represented as a very unlikely possibility.

Concerns, reports or accusations published in other media are not taken up directly. Implications of excessive conduct of the police and the military are veiled in terms such as 'die alomteenwoordige gevaar van magsmisbruik' (*the ever-present danger of power abuse*), 'groot verantwoordelikheid om met eerlikheid, versigtigheid en betroubaarheid om te gaan met die buitengewone magte' (*huge responsibility to deal with the exceptional power in an honest, careful and reliable way*), 'owerheidsinstansies ... moet daarop gewys word dat die Christelike eise van naasteliefde en geregtigheid nie deur die noodtoestand opgehef word nie' (*authorities ... need to be reminded that Christian requirements of neighbourly love and justice are not suspended by the state of emergency*). In answer to concerns expressed elsewhere about conditions in which detainees were held, there is: 'uit onlangse navraag ... blyk dit ... dat goed omgesien word na die aangehoudenes se godsdienslike behoeftes' (*recent enquiry<sup>8</sup> ... has revealed that religious needs of detainees are taken care of well*). In specifically suggesting proper care for detainees, the reference is

8. Notably, no substantiation is given. We are not told who enquired, who gave such information, what 'well taken care of' entails, or what is done about other, possibly more immediate needs such as ensuring humane treatment during interrogations, allowing proper legal representation, and so on.

not to their dignity or right to just and humane treatment, but to the fact that conduct should be of a kind that will avoid 'verdere verharding van gesindhede' (*further hardening of attitudes*).

4.8.2 On an *interpersonal* level the tenor of the editorials is generally one that calls on readers to trust the authorities (one of the 'newsmakers') in the way that the church does. Note also the effect of regular use of passive forms, and of the impersonal *one* or the collective *we*-form of agent pronouns.

- 'Daar kan aanvaar word dat die afkondiging van 'n noodtoestand in SA geregverdig was.' (10-9-86)  
(*It is to be accepted that the announcement of a state of emergency in SA was justified.*)
- 'Oor die korrektheid van die owerheid se inligting ... hoef skaars getwyfel te word.' (17-12-86)  
(*There hardly needs to be any doubt ... as to the validity of the authorities' information*)
- 'Ons aanvaar dat daar goeie redes bestaan ...' (22-4-87)  
(*We accept that good reasons exist ...*)
- "'n mens (het) begrip vir die owerheid se onwilligheid ...' (18-5-88)  
(*one can understand the reluctance of the authorities ...*)
- 'Suid-Afrika beleef 'n tyd dat ongewone optrede meermale noodsaaklik is.' (24-2-89)  
(*South Africa is experiencing a time when exceptional measures are often imperative*)

The identity of various groups is given in overgeneralised terms as if not people but 'powers' are set against each other: 'veiligheidsmagte' (*security forces*), 'die owerheid' (*the authorities*), 'rewolusionêre magte' (*revolutionary powers*), 'magte wat chaos en anargie in ons land wil stig' (*powers that want to bring chaos and anarchy to our country*). Groups *against* whom the emergency regulations are specifically instituted, are never referred to in personalised terms. Rather than referring to people who endeavour to overthrow the government, 'grootskaalse pogings ... om die staat rewolusionêr omver te werp' (the enormous *attempts* at bringing down the state revolutionarily) is itemised; rather than referring to people such as parents of detainees, there is "'n georganiseerde veldtog om aangehoudenes vry te laat' (*an organised campaign to release detainees*).

Towards the end of the state of emergency, when there is clearer reference to the dubiousness of many emergency effects such as detention without trial, recognition of the circumstances that motivated ordinary citizens to resist government at the time, is covered by '...dinge in Suid-Afrika wat mense diep ongelukkig maak. Daar is onreg en lyding' (*... things in South Africa that make people deeply unhappy. There is injustice and suffering*). No elaboration, no substance is given.

A question we are left with, is whether the way in which groups and their interests were linguistically constructed, would have significantly contributed to readers developing new or better understanding of any of the social and political processes of the time. If there is an interpersonal function for editorials, even in church publications, to facilitate change or develop (rather than reinforce and perpetuate) the views or opinions, the attitudes and actions of readers, how would these editorials that chose to refer to political circumstances, have achieved that?

Or is there some disorder in the discourse?

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