

## REPORTING ON THE STATE OF EMERGENCY (1985-1990) IN *DIE KERKBODE*

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### Abstract

*The years of the annually re-introduced State of Emergency point to a time of crisis in which positions became clearer and actors more visible in the South African transformation process towards democracy. As the official publication of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) editorials in Die Kerkbode reflect theology, strategies and arguments of the DRC leadership. The analysis depicts its ecclesiology by interpreting the church as a prominently cultural institution with strong concern for identity and survival of the Afrikaners. Thus, the DRC leadership legitimized the South African government of the time in the enforcement of that principle and became almost completely uncritical towards it. The focus on the Afrikaners' survival prevented the DRC leadership of viewing the 'blacks' as human beings with needs, aspirations, etc. This non-perception blocked the DRC leadership's view on the gross violations of human dignity executed by the South African government and generated paternalism towards the non-revolutionary blacks.*

### 1. Introduction

Looking at history means exploring various forms of interpreting and recording the past in the light of the present. Here I would like to consider the way the annually re-instituted State of Emergency (1985-1990) was interpreted and recorded by the official publication of the Dutch Reformed Church, i.e. *Die Kerkbode*. I chose that period because it points to a time when the South African government felt that current legislation was not sufficient any longer to deal with the situation in the country. By the State of Emergency as a commonly recognized indication of crisis the reality of the country became clearer and in the face of obvious polarization people were compelled to increasingly position themselves.

When I look at the reports in *Die Kerkbode* on the events of that time I choose to illuminate the interpretation and recording of these crucial years by one rich, yet also limited source that I will elaborate on later. The editorials give a general indication of the line along which the publication as a whole could be expected to be edited. I will confine myself to the analysis of direct comments on the socio-political developments by the editors, Rev Tappies Möller and Dr Fritz Gaum. Firstly I will examine the potential and limitations of *Die Kerkbode* as a source. Secondly I will comment on the editorials written about the State of Emergency using the method of critical hermeneutics which originates in the literary 'response-theory', commonly referred to as 'reception-theory' (cf. Jaus, Iser etc.).

### 2. The potentialities and limitations of *Die Kerkbode* as the official DRC-publication

*Die Kerkbode* documents, reports, and comments on DRC policies in different columns and genres. Apart from simply delivering news and publishing official DRC statements and declarations, there are editorials, articles of discussion on selected topics and the letter

column which can be regarded as most prominent. Ministers and interested members constitute the readership and largely also the authorship of letters. Apart from taking into account the implied readership and how this affects the message and the meaning of the items, it appears useful to examine how the editors understood the role of *Die Kerkbode* within the DRC.

In the period 1985 -1990 under discussion both acting editors, Rev Tappies Möller (1970-1986) and Dr Fritz Gaum (1986- ) were close to or part of the church leadership in various ways.<sup>1</sup> Möller commented on this personal union: 'But for me as editor it was important to serve the church in various gatherings because it enabled me to get to know first-hand what happened on the church terrain as well as to be fully conversent with the thinking and opinions of the churchleaders, ... I could move close to the heartbeat of the church.'<sup>2</sup> Thus, Möller regarded his personal union as editor and member of the church leadership as a unique source of information.

He later spelled out the implications for his work as the editor: 'Furthermore, how can he question or criticise the decisions and points of views of the church in public in which he himself had a share and helped to formulate ? It should not surprise anybody that I appeared loyal towards the church-leadership in the way I handled *Die Kerkbode*.'<sup>3</sup> He evaluated the personal union as a favourable condition to implement the ethos of *Die Kerkbode* as DRC publication:

In this respect it is important to understand that *Die Kerkbode* is the property and the official organ of the DRC and that consequently it does not only stand under the control of the church leadership, but is also assumed to execute the thinking and principles of the church leadership: an editor must expect to land himself in trouble if he estranges himself and the paper from the church leadership and expresses himself in ways that stir conflict or cannot be perceived as in the interest of the unity of the church.<sup>4</sup>

These comments give a hint as to what one can expect from *Die Kerkbode* as a source: first-hand information from the DRC leadership and comments which reflect loyalty to the official DRC. It is along that line that Dr Fritz Gaum assured the readers of 'faithfulness towards the DRC and loyalty to its decisions of the General Synod' in his first editorial.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, he recognized quite democratically that the publication itself with its

1. Rev Tappies Möller: 1975-1979 Skriba, 1979-1983 Moderator of the Western-Cape-Synod of the DRC, 1978-1982 Skriba, 1982-1986 Assessor of the General Synod of the DRC; Dr Frits Gaum: 1990-98 General Secretary of the General Synod of the DRC, 1995-99 Moderator of the Western-Cape Synod of the DRC
2. GSJ Möller (1999) *My sestien jare by Die Kerkbode*, Kaapstad: Die Tydskriftemaatskappy van die Ned Geref Kerk, 9, (alle Übersetzungen von der Autorin): 'Maar vir my as redakteur was dit tog belangrik om in die kerk se verskillende vergaderings te dien, omdat dit my uiteraard in staat gestel het om dan eerstehands kennis te neem van wat op die kerklike terrein gebeur asook om ten nouste vertrouwd te raak met die denke en oortuigings van die kerkleiers... Ek kon ná aan die hartklop van die kerk beweeg en dit het my insig gegee oor hoe ek die spreekbuis van die kerk behoort te hanteer.'
3. s.a., 9: 'Buitendien, hoe sou hy die besluite en standpunte van die kerk kan bevraagteken of in die openbaar kritiseer waaraan hyself deel gehad en self help geformuleer het? Dit moes niemand verbaas dat ek as redakteur lojaal teenoor die kerkleiding opgetree het in die hantering van *Die Kerkbode* nie.'
4. s.a.: 'In dié verband is dit belangrik om te onthou dat *Die Kerkbode* die eiendom en amptelike orgaan van die Ned Geref Kerk is en gevolglik nie net onder die beheer van die kerkleiding staan nie, maar veronderstel is om die denke en beleid van die kerkleiding uit te voer: 'n Redakteur moet ver wag om in die sop te beland indien hy hóm en die blad van die kerkleiding vervreem en hom op wyses uitlaat wat stryd in die kerk kan ontketen of wat nie as in belang van die eenheid van die kerk kan beskou word nie.'
5. *Die Kerkbode* 6 Augustus 1986, 6.

editorials was one of various voices within the DRC: 'As opinion-forming he has to do so, but self-understandingly not with the pretension to represent the voice of the church, but yet one voice *within* the church.'<sup>6</sup> As such it is interesting to take note of the criteria for opinion-forming which he outlined as follows:

We accept that there is difference of opinions within the church and will make space for an open, calm and responsible exchange of opinions amongst the readers.<sup>7</sup>

Gaum qualified the way in which, according to his view, opinion-forming has to take place using the three adjectives 'openhartig (open), besadigd (calm) and verantwoordelik (responsible)'.<sup>7</sup>

In his editorials, commenting on critical letters/declarations, one can identify the meaning of these qualifications: 'openhartig' was restricted to the individual's role in the church. He disregarded actions and statements of office-bearers within the DRC which were critical of the official DRC policy. Thus the editor used precisely that argument against Willem Nicol, Johann Kinghorn and Clifford Heys in his editorial in *Die Kerkbode* of 20.05.1987 after they had attended the WCC conference in Lusaka. The same argument was employed against Bernard Lategan and Johann Kinghorn when they signed the Damaskus document (*Die Kerkbode* 28.07.1989). 'Besadigd and verantwoordelik' implied, in addition, that any statement/letter possibly causing polarisation within the DRC should not be written.

Taking into account that both editors were part of or close to the church leadership at the time and defined their editorship somewhere between loyalty to the official DRC and giving space to differing voices for opinion-forming in a restricted way, major critical statements, beyond official church politics of the DRC, could not be expected to appear in *Die Kerkbode*.

### 3. Methodology

Firstly I would like to comment briefly on the methodology of critical hermeneutics. Drawing from reception-theory this methodology marks a shift of emphasis from the source-message-relation towards the message-receptor-relation (BC Lategan, 1984, Current issues in the hermeneutical debate, in: *Neutestamentica* 18, pp.1-17.) In a simplified way one can summarize: this reader-orientated approach presupposes an *implied reader* to whom the author gives *reading instructions*. It is left to the real reader then to produce meaning. *Gaps* are deliberately left to be filled by the reader, *rethoric questions* mark the area at stake, a specific *world* is outlined with certain options for *actions*. Reading is seen as a creative process. Critical hermeneutics does take into account the linguistic structure of the text, its authorship, the circumstances, but it poses - in addition and above all - the question of power by asking for the action possibly drawn from the world proposed in the text. I am deeply indebted to Prof Bernard Lategan who taught us in a workshop at the University of Hamburg how to apply the methodology of critical hermeneutics.

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6. *Die Kerkbode* 22 Julie 1988,6: As meningvormende kerkkoerant moet hy dit doen, maar dan vanselfsprekend nie met die pretensie om die stem van die NGK te wees nie, maar wel 'n stem in die NGK.
7. *Die Kerkbode* 21 Januarie 1987, 6: 'Ons aanvaar dat daar in die kerk meningsverskil oor sake bestaan en gee graag ruimte vir 'n openhartige, besadigde en verantwoordelike meningswisseling tussen lesers.'

#### 4. The interpretation and perception of the State of Emergency period (1985-1990) by the editors of *Die Kerkbode*

Most comments on the political situation in South Africa in the period 1985-90 can be found in the editorials about the institution of the State of Emergency and its annual re-introduction. Issues linked to it like strikes, boycotts, sanctions, disinvestment and detention without trial appeared now and then without being tackled systematically. They were discussed mostly in the context of the broader South African church landscape. Bodies like the South African Council of Churches and even institutions of which the DRC was/is a member like the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches or the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (DRC-membership until 1984) differed to various extents. Thus, gatherings by the Federal Council and the Reformed Ecumenical Synod got extensive coverage and were accompanied by editorials and letters discussing their decisions/declarations etc.<sup>8</sup> In addition clerical individuals like DRMission Church moderator Dr Allan Boesak, Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr Beyers Naudé, Prof Nico Smith and later on SACC president Frank Chikane got negative publicity on their opinions and actions linked to the issues. Political ministry was one argument frequently used against them.<sup>9</sup>

I will restrict myself to the editorials concerning the State of Emergency in the period 1985-1990.

#### 5. Editorials on the first State of Emergency

The first editorial explicitly on the State of Emergency<sup>10</sup> was the only one out of eleven written by Rev Tappies Möller (31 July 1985). It was placed on the front page below an article quoting the General Synodical Commission announcing a fund out of which victims of the unrests should be supported. Formulations like 'Nobody in South Africa will like to see that a State of Emergency was proclaimed' and 'As things have developed it is clear that the government did not have a choice, but to turn to drastic means,' describe the implied readership in agreement with the view that developments, i.e. extensive unrest in somehow remote black residential areas, had forced the government to announce a State of Emergency.<sup>11</sup> The problem was identified indirectly by spelling out the task of the government to re-establish order, to safeguard the community and to protect lives and

8. cf. 'Vereeniging-beraad' 1989 orchestrated by the RES about the issue of apartheid and its implications.

9. cf. the alleged alliance of the DRC with the government in a campaign to silence Tutu and Boesak after the banning of 17 organizations including the UDF in Feb. 1988. Furthermore, the legitimacy of talks between the church and the ANC (1987) as well as the involvement of the DRC with the government via its various chaplaincies (1988-1990) were featured and sometimes hotly debated.

10. The State of Emergency is commented on in eleven editorials: one in 1985 (commented on above), two in 1986, three in 1987, two in 1988, two in 1989 and one in 1990. Most editorials are written in reaction to either the re-introduction of the State of Emergency or the installment of additional regulations. Yet, in 1988 and 1989 the editor of *Die Kerkbode* chose to publish his annual editorial on the topic already in May (18.05.1988, 26.05.1989), just before the State of Emergency was re-introduced then in June (10 June 1988, 9 June 1989). It is obvious that after the re-introduction in 1987 the State of Emergency had already become a fixed topic of the political agenda at that time of the year. The editor used the publication to prepare its readers for the governmental decision to come and to give some indication to the government along which lines he sees the DRC willing to support its decision.

11. 'Niemand in Suid-Afrika sou graag wou sien dat 'n noodtoestand afgekondig word nie. Soos sake egter ontwikkel het, is dit duidelik dat die owerheid geen keuse gelaat was as om drastiese maatreëls te neem nie.'

property. Undefined masses threatened to torpedo the orderly processes already instituted to solve the problems concerning the black people.

Various gaps<sup>12</sup> can be seen: the concerned community, the lives and properties to be protected as well as 'the problems concerning the black people' were referred to in general terms and remained rather shallow. The contents of the gaps seems to have been of less importance than the fact that orderly processes needed to be employed contrasted to mass action.<sup>13</sup> Prominence was not given to the people causing the unrest or to their reasons. Accordingly the actors of the editor's world consisted of an alliance of the DRC, the government, South African Christians, responsible authorized (black) leaders and black policemen.<sup>14</sup>

The black community appeared divided between those who stirred the unrest by mass action and had to be suppressed, and those who fulfilled the government's task to re-establish order (according to the Bible, cf. Rom 13). Action therefore to be taken, was for the government and the police to re-establish order and peace, for Christians to work for a peaceful atmosphere and pray, for black authorized leaders (councillors elected by the weakly attended municipal elections in 1983) to enter into negotiations with the government. If that was achieved the editor could imagine a lifting of the State of Emergency and the return to living in 'rus en vrede'. Thus the editor envisaged a world that just needed to turn back to peace and order though as a condition for further negotiations. The true problems behind the unrest (such as insufficient political representation, bad living conditions, inferior education etc.) did not appear as the focus of attention – it was only the violence and the unrest.

In succeeding editorials Rev Tappies Möller drew the picture of a dualistic world: one part consisted of the evil on whose side violence (*Die Kerkbode* 21.08.1985) and Communism (*Die Kerkbode* 28.08.1985) reigned. Unfortunately to his mind, even Christians joined campaigns to end conscription, i.e. to contribute to the weakening of the security forces. Everybody who criticized conscription and the security forces had to be seen as part of the evil.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, chaplaincy was pictured as a wonderful opportunity to spread the Christian message among the young men in the army and the underdeveloped people on the borders. A government that enabled the church in such an extensive way to spread the gospel had to be welcomed - in contrast to communist governments who were seen as a threat to the proclamation of the gospel.<sup>16</sup>

12. For such gaps Gordon Mitchell's statement 'failure to comment on certain issues implies tacit support' applies equally. Cf. Gordon Mitchell (1988), *A Theology of Militarism in the Chaplains' Service of the South African Defence Force*, in *JThSA* 65, 44

13. 'Dit is immers sy eerste en vernaamste taak om orde te handhaaf, die gemeenskap te beskerm en die veiligheid van lewens en eiendom te verseker... Ons kan nie bekostig dat die ordelike prosesse om ons staatkundige probleme mbt die swartmense te probeer oplos, deur onverantwoordelike massas gefnuik word nie.'

14. 'Saam met die owerheid wil die Ned Geref Kerk 'n beroep op almal – maar meer bepaald die Christene van Suid-Afrika – doen om saam te werk dat die situasie spoedig tot rus kom. Onderhandelings met verantwoordelike gematigde leiers kan alleen vrugbaar geskied in 'n gees van kalmte.'

15. 'Daarom vind ons dit tragies dat 'n kampanje ... teen dienspelig en teen die kapelaansdiens gevoer word. Die organisasies wat hieraan meedoën, speel in die hande van die bese magte waarvan hierbo melding gemaak is.'

16. Gordon Mitchell (1988) traces convincingly orthodox evangelical, Kuyperian neo-Calvinist and Neo-Fichtean romantic nationalist thought-patterns as identified earlier by David Bosch (1984) in pamphlets and prayer-guides of the South African Defense Force. Similar arguments can be detected in this editorial with its implicit juxtaposition of the Christian South African government and foreign Communist governments. Furthermore,

## 6. Editorials (by Dr Fritz Gaum) about the State of Emergency 1986-1990

The remaining ten editorials in the succeeding years on the State of Emergency were written by the then new editor Dr Fritz Gaum. He started off with two editorials in the same edition (10.09.1986,4) titled 'Op pad na 'n nuwe bestel' (En route to a new order) and 'Noodtoestand' (State of Emergency) setting the agenda for all succeeding comments. Therefore it is worthwhile to have a closer look and to identify the agenda. The widespread unrest was 'in our country' where the political system lacked the inclusion of black people.

Thus the aim of the action was envisaged as a swerve towards a new political dispensation which guaranteed 'rus en vrede' to all population groups. Yet, the actors of the process were defined as white parliamentarians only - working out a new system. It was along the same line that the editor chose to exclusively explicate the meaning of self-love (opposed to neighbourly love) as the right of identity and survival (of the white community?) while rethorically applying the principle of neighbourly love and the Golden Rule.

Yet nothing is spelt out on the rights of other population groups and how to equate that with the systematic violation of human dignity of blacks by the South african government.<sup>17</sup> Thus, no significant change for the white community in South Africa was regarded as necessary. The implied readership agreed with the legitimacy of the continuing State of Emergency as counter-action to 'attempts ... to overthrow the state in a revolutionary way.'<sup>18</sup> The nature of these attempts remained invisible. The church's role was seen as constricted to appeals to, firstly parliament and government to work urgently towards a new system, secondly to government and the security forces not to misuse their extended powers such as detention without trial, and thirdly to its congregations to pray for the government. Thus, full support was given to the status quo.<sup>19</sup>

In the following section I will examine the remaining editorials with three questions in mind:

- Firstly, what is the stance of the editor on the legitimacy of the state of emergency?
- Secondly, who are the revolutionary forces?
- Thirdly, how is the role of the church defined?

## 7. Legitimacy of the State of Emergency

It was upheld right to the end in 1990 that a State of Emergency was an abnormal state of affairs that could not be permanent.<sup>20</sup> Bearing that principle in mind, the annual re-introduction of the State of Emergency became more and more questionable. Until 1988 the

missionary and pietistic thoughts find entrance combined with a kind of 'paternalism' which J Kinghorn discribes as the 'embodiment of the ethical norm of justice' in the Afrikaner nationalist's mind, cf. J Kinghorn (1997) *Modernization and Apartheid: The Afrikaner Churches*, in R Elphick, R Davenport, eds, *Christianity in South Africa. A Political, Social & Cultural History*, Cape Town, 135-154 (145).

17. Once again the the adaption of Kuyperean theology as 'isolation-for-survival'-theology can be traced here, cf. David Bosch (1983), 27.

18. 'Niemand wat enigsins ingelig is, kan daaraan twyfel dat grootskaalse pogings die afgelope tyd aangewend is om die staat revolusionêr omver te werp nie. In so 'n tyd het die staat sekerlik die reg om noodmagte te gebruik ten einde homself en die gemeenskap te beveilig en lewens te beskerm.'

19. This attitude can be labelled 'technicist' according to Peter Buckland (cf. J Mouton, J Muller): 'This particular rhetoric of 'change' and 'reform' will continue to constitute powerful instruments for the maintenance of the *status quo*.'

20. *Die Kerkbode* 31.07.1985, 17.07.1987, 18.05.1988, 24.02.1989, 26.05.1989.

editor supported the government, unequivocally drawing legitimation from the argument of an attempted revolutionary overthrow. It was on 02.03.1988, after the banning of 17 organizations in February, that slight criticism of the government was detected. In a short editorial Dr Fritz Gaum asked the government to reveal more information about its reasons for the new regulation and to make sure that the afflicted organizations were indeed aiming to introduce a Marxist state. On 18.05.1988 he pondered on the possibility of a partial lifting of the State of Emergency in a situation he perceived as a deadlock between the state and terrorism. A long continuance of the State of Emergency was regarded as dangerous in view of the danger of misuse.

Thus he asked the government to check whether normal legislation would not provide sufficient protection. It is probably in that year that the editor was most critical about the State of Emergency.<sup>21</sup> In 1989, though falling back into the rhetoric of understanding the necessity of such a regulation, the editor seemed to be more positive that it would be lifted in near future.<sup>22</sup> Thus one can say that the editor, through the years, never expressed doubt about the legitimacy of the State of Emergency.

Yet within that framework he always warned the government and the security forces not to misuse their extended powers. On 24.09.1986 an article appeared in *Die Kerkbode* about statements by the then minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange, assuring the editor that all irregularities were investigated. On 17.12.1986 Dr Fritz Gaum stated prophetically, though on a subconscious level:

'This will then be a sad day when the Afrikaner churches, who in this respect acknowledge the integrity of the government and the security forces, have to find out that their trust has been misused.'<sup>23</sup>

The days of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in the 1990's must have brought on such a time.

## 8. Who are the revolutionary forces?

In succeeding editorials the subjects of the revolutionary overthrow became more visible and were described in more specific terms: in an editorial in response to the disclosure of the ANC's sabotage and terror campaign in December 1986 the editor identified the revolutionaries with the ANC and anyone who employed violent means in order to introduce a communist government in South Africa.<sup>24</sup> The two mainly used arguments against the revolutionary forces were pinpointed here: their use of violence as opposed to talks and their aim to establish a communist and therefore unchristian state.

Again the implied reader is the person who goes along with that view: 'Every informed person in the country knows by now that the ANC thinks that he has smelled blood and that he will try to take over now.'<sup>25</sup> Language is revealing the subconscious level:

21. In *Die Kerkbode* 08.07.1988 the editor criticizes the South African government for the permanent presence of the South African Defence Force in Angola. He apparently clashed with the then moderator JA Heyns on the issue, cf. *Die Kerkbode* 15.07.1988. Maybe, that caused the more cautious style of the succeeding editorials.

22. *Die Kerkbode* 24.02.1989, 26.05.1989, 16.02.1990.

23. 'Dit sal dan ook 'n droewige dag wees as die Afrikaanse kerke, wat in hierdie saak die integriteit van die owerheid en die veiligheidsmagte aanvaar, moet vind dat hulle vertrou beskaam is.'

24. *Die Kerkbode* 17.12.1986, 6.

25. 'Elke ingeligte persoon in die land weet teen die tyd dat die ANC dink hy het bloed geruik en dat hy Suid-Afrika nou met alle mag wil probeer oorneem.'

for the revolutionary forces a metaphor adopted from the animal kingdom was used, whereas the government was described by nouns like 'honesty, prudence, trustworthiness' (17.12.1986,6) and 'caution' (22.04.1987), i.e. highly moral values.

Thus, the subject of the revolutionary overthrow was pictured as a blood-smelling animal that used its instincts and physical power, i.e. violence, to get what it wants: a 'communist government' (17.12.1986,6) or a 'Marxist state' (02.03.1988,6). The government on the contrary needed to keep that animal in check and was subsequently entitled to use as means the State of Emergency to protect lives and to safeguard the community. By doing so it was seen as acting according to morally high (Christian) standards as opposed to violence. Here language seems to reveal the subconscious level of relationship: the revolutionary forces were not pictured as people who speak and listen and to whom one can listen and speak. At the best they could be regarded as terrorists (*Die Kerkbode* 18.05.1988) who were causing chaos and anarchy (*Die Kerkbode* 24.02.1989).

This view coincided with an absence of analysis of the grievances and claims of the revolutionary forces and/or the black community in *Die Kerkbode*. Now and then the editor referred to 'justified claims and grievances' (*Die Kerkbode* 22.04.1987) and 'suffering and injustices in South Africa' (*Die Kerkbode* 16.02.1990). But they appeared opposed to the revolutionary action. Thus, the revolutionary forces were seen apart from the ordinary black community and its needs. The picture of the world of the DRC, drafted by the editor, excluded the so-called 'revolutionary forces' as legitimate subjects and ignored their experiences. It seemed to take 'no account of reality which is witness to the fact that people standing within other traditions are highly moral, truth-seeking, socially responsible people.' The fact that the government appeared qualified as Christian, as opposed to the communist and therefore godless revolutionary forces, obscured the eye of the editor and prevented him from regarding members of the revolutionary forces as human beings.

## **9. The role of the church during the State of Emergency**

The role of the church with regard to the government appeared as threefold: firstly warning the government and the security forces not to misuse their extended powers, secondly reminding the government that a State of Emergency remained abnormal and could not be permanent, thus, urging parliament and government to work for a new political system, and thirdly praying for the government and the security forces in these respects.<sup>26</sup> While the appeal to create a new political system was fading during the years, another aspect appeared on the horizon. The church was seen as a body that should help to build better relations as a presupposition to clarity on the political future (17.07.1987,6). It should act as a peacemaker by encouraging and mediating talks between the government and its subjects about justified grievances and claims (05.08.1987, 4; 24.02.1989, 6) and by denouncing violence as a vehicle of change unequivocally (s.a.). And of course, the church was seen by the editor as the only place where a change of heart could materialize which was regarded as another inevitable condition for change (24.02.1989,6).

Negatively the role of the church was limited by its nature and capacity: only the government was seen in possession of enough information to judge when the time had come to lift the State of Emergency. Warning of its misuse was the only action the church was supposed to take up (*Die Kerkbode* 02.03.1988; 26.05.1989). Monitoring the events in

26. *Die Kerkbode* 10.09.1986 (4), 17.12.1986 (6).



the black residential areas, as other churches proposed and implemented, was dismissed as an option (*Die Kerkbode* 17.12.1986). With regard to the media emergency legislation coverage on unrests and police operations would have been illegal.

## 10. Evaluation

Looking at the years of the State of Emergency *Die Kerkbode* offers a fascinating picture on how the different levels of the DRC related to the political turmoil. As the official DRC publication and its editors being part of or close to the leadership, the editorials reflected the thinking and theology of the DRC leadership in a more detailed way.

The editorials were mainly concerned about polarization within the DRC, not so much about polarization amongst South African Christians and/or an already polarized South African society. With regard to polarization amongst South-African Christian communities the editors acknowledged that there were severe tensions amongst churches, but those more sympathetic to the 'revolutionary forces' were regarded as misused by the ANC as puppets of communist forces.<sup>27</sup> A slight rethoric move towards unity at least within the DRC family was provoked by the status-confessionist-stance on apartheid by the DR Mission Church as reflected in the General Synod 1986 and the document Church and Society. But otherwise the DRC leadership was ambiguous in its commitment to work against the polarization amongst South African Christians and churches. The unity-rethoric was accompanied by attacks on controversial, yet authorized church-leaders such as Tutu, Boesak or Chikane on the one hand and by alliances with more moderate churchleaders such as Sakkie Mentor on the other hand. By that the DRC leadership played an active part in deepening the division and polarization amongst churches in South Africa.

Concerning polarization within society the DRC leadership did not remain silent on the issues surrounding the political and economic developments. Yet, its analysis of the situation differed from others immensely. In its view South African society was not divided along colour- and therefore all sorts of other lines, but polarization was taking place between the majority of South Africans including the black communities and a small percentage of 'revolutionary forces' controlled by international communism. Consequently, one had to fight 'their' violence and the proclamation of a State of Emergency appeared more than justified. It is obvious, why the 'grievances' of the black communities remained shallow in the statements and editorials. The explicit concern lay with the State President, the South African Police, the South African Defence Force, for whom prayers were needed, and therefore with the white population of the country. An adoption of Kuyperean theology enabled the church leadership on the one hand to demonize communism, liberalism and humanism vibrant in the ANC and the depersonalized 'revolutionary forces' as offshoots of the Enlightenment. In contrast the Afrikaner government was regarded and understood itself as truly Christian. Yet, whereas Kuypere had hoped that the revival of Calvinism would bring about wealth for all in a natural and spontaneous way by Calvinist individuals all over the show, the Afrikaner church-leadership used the same paradigm in a much more narrow framework, i.e. to ensure Afrikaner survival.

It was in this vein that Dr Frits Gaum explicated the meaning of self-love as the right of identity and survival of the Afrikaner in his first editorial on the State of Emergency (10.09.86). David Bosch named the phenomenon in his famous article 'The roots and fruits

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27. Editorial in *Die Kerkbode* 22.04.1987

of Afrikaner civil religion' isolation-for-survival as opposed to the Kuypertian isolation-for-mission. The DRC isolated itself from all other Christians and population groups to fulfill its mission, i.e. to seek for the survival of the Afrikaners and their identity. This theology inhibited the DRC leadership to have a thorough look at what was happening in the country, to really listen to the grievances of the black communities and to challenge the political leadership and its own constituency. Thus, it was restricted to call upon the government not to misuse its powers given by the State of Emergency without examining the roots of the same State of Emergency. It felt obliged to support and legitimize the Afrikaners' right of identity and survival. This focus caused ignorance towards the unscrupulous enforcement of the principle by the government and the subsequent gross violations of the human dignity of other population groups – they became deprived of their right of identity and survival in the process. The analysis suggests that on a psychological level the fear of communism built on ideology did not leave room to regard the 'revolutionary forces' as people with aspirations, needs, morality etc.. By analogy the black communities were perceived as carriers of grievances who needed to be economically uplifted. This paternalistic attitude reflected an unwillingness or incapability to meet people on an equal level. Prof Christina Landman's finding that the DRC leadership tended to restrict itself to the discussion about principles and viewed black people and women only in their function within the system proves true in *Die Kerkbode*.<sup>28</sup>

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28. Ch. Landman (1991) The anthropology of apartheid according to official sources, in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 76, pp 32-45.

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