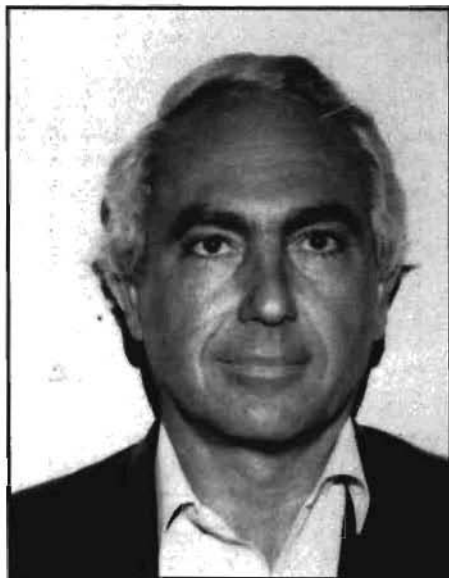


# Pre-Election coverage by SABC-TV of the 1989 General Election. A Case Study in News Construction

John van Zyl

This article is based on the findings of a group of eleven specialists (WITS) who were commissioned by IDASA to monitor SABC-TV news coverage of the run-up to the 1989 general election. The report attempts to be a "case-study" in the construction of television news, employing discourse theory and the semiotics of film and communication in preference to the traditional quantitative approach. The encoding procedures of TV news were the main focus of the analysis which sought to demonstrate above all the shifting perspective within which news is constructed and how the signs and codes of news are closely related to those of fiction. It is freely acknowledged that the monitoring group occupied a position critical of the State and espoused a non-racist, non-sexist, unitary political dispensation for South Africa, along the lines of the Freedom Charter.



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## PREAMBLE

Early in 1989 the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) commissioned me to monitor the South African Broadcasting Corporation Television (SABC-TV) news coverage of the run-up to the 1989 general election. Subsequently, a team of 10 senior film and television students and I monitored the nightly "Network/werk" programme during July, August and the first five days of September.

An interim report was issued at the end of July, and a second interim report just

before the election on 6th September. A final report was written up in December, 1989, when it was already apparent that some political reforms were afoot.

This paper was written in March 1990, when the highly significant changes of February 2nd had taken place — the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), as well as the release of Nelson Mandela being the most significant.

What had started out as a document that would demonstrate the Nationalist-apartheid bias of SABC-TV news and the way it served

the state propaganda machine had now taken on a new significance. By March 1990 it was no longer necessary to prove that pre-February 2nd news had served the cause of apartheid. It was taken for granted that it had, and in the climate of the new dispensation SABC-TV news openly featured the ANC, the PAC, and other anti-apartheid groups.

This shifted the focus of the report away from demonstrating how SABC-TV news was used to create a climate for the election that would favour the Nation Party. Instead the report now became a case-study in the construction of television news.

What it sought to demonstrate above all was the shifting perspective within which news is constructed and how the signs and codes of news are closely related to the signs and codes of fiction.

Significantly, it questions the privileged status of news as somehow being "objective", "true", or even "impartial."

## METHODOLOGY

It was decided at the outset that a quantitative method would not be used, even though the probable lack of empirical data might appear to be detrimental to the substance of the report.

For instance, it appeared to the monitoring group that the obvious empirical method of measuring the amount of screen-time given to each political party contesting the election was not very useful. Firstly, it did not take into account the NATURE and CONTEXT of the time measured. For instance, a speech by a person opposed to the Nationalist Party might be a given extensive screen-time because the content seemed self-destructive (the maxim of giving a man enough rope to hang himself!).

Or a short pacifist speech by another oppositional party just after an act of sabotage might similarly be seen as damaging to that party.

Secondly, it does not take into account the PLACEMENT of the measured time. Lead stories have a greater impact than subsequent stories.

Thirdly, it undervalues the GROUPING of the stories measured. Three stories on police

action internationally will give a local story of police violence a different character, making it appear natural and inevitable.

Finally (and crucially) one cannot measure the news that is SUPPRESSED or ignored. For instance, most newspapers carried stories of the violence in Natal during the pre-election period, but SABC-TV virtually ignored it.

On a more theoretical level, we argued that meaning exists only within a system. Taking our cue from semiotics, we proposed that the meaning of an element is determined by both its SYNTAGMATIC relation to other items with which it is in combination and its PARADIGMATIC relation to the absent set of elements that can be substituted for it.

Therefore, the traditional quantitative approach was rejected, although it was acknowledged that some empirical data would be useful to help contextualise the analysis.

## DISCOURSE METHOD USED

The monitoring group devised a method that eclectically combined elements of discourse theory and the semiotics of film and communications.

Its major tenets are the following:

1. A discourse method assumes that news is not simply a complete (or incomplete) description of facts, but a particular reconstruction of reality according to the norms and values of some part of society, usually the part that has power.
2. It assumes furthermore that news involves KNOWLEDGE (short-term memory) and BELIEFS (long-term memory). Knowledge is the selective record of what happens on a daily basis (like accidents, conferences and statements — conventional "news"), and beliefs are the result of the "cultivation" of certain cognitive maps or world-views through persistent emphasis and patterning (see Gerbner, "Cultivation Analysis"). The "Total Onslaught" propaganda campaign was the result of such cultivation and eventually acquired the status of a belief.

It is worth bearing in mind that a culture

cultivates not only patterns of conformity (beliefs) but it also cultivates patterns of alienation and rebellion after its own image.

For instance, because in this study SABC-TV consistently suppressed any information derived from spokespersons of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), the MDM was cultivated as a site of protest (rather than, say, the Inkatha movement which was kept visible).

Critically, cultivation analysis reminds us that the media not only tries to tell us WHAT to think, but also what to think ABOUT. So the effects of media items, like television news, lie not so much in what they make us "do", but what they contribute to the meaning of all that is done.

A good example would be the fictitious story of the capture of "12 armed ANC terrorists" a few days before the election. At that time it was necessary to foreground the threat of the ANC to justify detentions and the state of emergency. After the election this item was dropped and subsequently proved to have been untrue.

3. Finally, discourse analysis relies heavily on the post-Saussurean semiotics of the 1970's that stresses language's status as cultural production. Language does not mirror the world but constructs it. The work of Lacan (echoing Nietzsche's dictum that 'language secretes ideology') is crucial to this position. Lacan argues that neither words nor images communicate an acknowledged reality neutrally, but instead offer a perspective through which reality is constituted.

Furthermore, meaning is produced in an exchange between a "subject" and a set of signifiers. This is not the place to explicate the concept of the "sliding signifier", except to remark that, in summary, it infers that meaning is always provisional and changes as new elements are added to the signifying chain. These changes open up new possibilities for what may come and affect what has already been.

The subject may "punctuate" the signifying chain at times to construct a meaning, but ultimately there is an endless dialectic between the subject and meaning, and each affects the other.

## IMPLICATIONS

1. This discourse method rejects as impossible a value-free, objective or scientific analysis of the news. An "analysis" must inevitably be an "interpretation." It therefore freely acknowledges that the monitoring exercise was undertaken by a subject (the group) that occupied a position critical of the State and espoused a non-racist, non-sexist, unitary political dispensation for South Africa along the lines of the Freedom Charter.
2. Furthermore the method believes that "news" is a stretch of narrative discourse with its own signs, codes and conventions, some of which it shares with other narrative forms like the novel or drama.

In the same way that documentary film is often FORMALLY indistinguishable from feature film (e.g. they share background music, editing techniques etc.), news is often indistinguishable from story-telling.

Speech Act Theory teaches us that it is the sort of attention that the subject pays the stretch of discourse that is being addressed that determines whether it be seen as factual or fictional. In other words, the stretch of discourse has no INHERENT ontological status. It is not because news is true that we believe it; it is because we believe certain items of communication encoded in a particular way to be news that we see it as true.

That is why the encoding procedures of SABC-TV news were the main focus of the analysis, since from that, we could deduce the ideal viewer that was being interpellated, and from that what function the news was serving as part of the Ideological State Apparatus. If some sort of provisional agreement could be reached about the effect of the news on voting patterns, it would be a bonus, but we were not very sanguine about that. The words

of Deng Shoa Peng had to be called to mind. When asked what the effect of the French Revolution had been, he answered "It is too soon to tell!"

3. The news was interpreted according to democratic journalistic principles which believe that all sections of the population should have access to the media, that "openness" is to be preferred to so-called "impartiality" or "neutrality".

The principles aroused by Channel Four in its actuality and news programmes were regarded as a near ideal model to follow:

THREE ASPECTS OF THE DISCOURSE METHOD:

CRITICAL EVENTS ANALYSIS.

THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE.

THE FLOW OF APPROVAL.

## A. CRITICAL EVENTS

These are events conventionally seen as newsworthy, coming in easily over the "threshold of newsworthiness" (like earthquakes or summit meetings). Or else they are events that are made to appear newsworthy by professional media practitioners, public relations officers or politicians at critical times either through use of state-controlled media or the media at large.

Headlines and lead stories on SABC-TV news do more than simply relate bits of information to viewers. This information is firstly prioritised by its placement, and then dramatised and politicised by the language used, the images shown and the intensity through which both are cultivated.

Critical events in television news are those items that appear regularly and are significantly placed for maximum effect (obviously quantitative analysis could determine exactly how many times a critical event has appeared). Critical events can even be found in educational programmes where a white learns a Black language and then practises it on Blacks in subordinate positions (Blacks are naturalised as inevitable in service or domestic posts).

Significant critical events constructed F W de Klerk as a world leader, the ANC as violent and voiceless, and the National Party as the party of the middle, holding the

centre between rightwing CP and AWB elements and leftwing MDM and extraparliamentary groupings.

## B. THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE

People, events and institutions can be marginalised through negative reporting and through being ignored into silence. These stories do not make it over the "threshold of newsworthiness" since "the door has been closed".

Individuals like trade-union leaders and the IDASA leadership, organisations like MDM, COSATU, NACTUR, ANBCO, SAYCO, the ANC and the PAC were seldom mentioned, never accessed and descended into the Spiral of Silence.

Interestingly, this neglect by SABC-TV encouraged the rise of the "alternative press" of the "Weekly Mail", "Vrye Weekblad", "New Nation", "South" and other journals, which all tried to redress this Spiral of Silence.

(This is analogous to the way that SABC-TV's neglect of sociopolitical documentaries encouraged the rise of an oppositional film documentary movement).

## C. THE FLOW OF APPROVAL

Through the constant repetition and placement of certain concepts, images and situations (as well as the omission of others), a certain mindset or attitude is cultivated. Obviously, 'critical events' and 'the spiral of silence' would be part of this strategy.

For example, SABC-TV cultivated the impression that the outside world was better disposed to South Africa in 1989 than in 1988 through the placement of interviews, news about foreign visitors and the Namibian negotiations. Items such as these need not be untrue but repetition gives them an unwarranted status.

## ELECTION ON TELEVISION OR A TELEVISION ELECTION?

In "Television and the February 1974 General Election" Trevor Pateman makes an important point:

“ ‘Television coverage of the Election’ has become more and more misleading. Television can only COVER an election when the campaign has an existence INDEPENDENT of the presence of television ... My first thesis is that we do not have television coverage OF an election: we have A TELEVISION ELECTION.”

Pateman sees newspapers as reporting the election and the various election campaigns, while television is the vehicle for the campaigns.

It can safely be said that most white voters experienced the 1989 election as a television event. Most received information about the state of the nation and policies from ministerial statements rather than personal contact with party canvassers.

Pateman makes this point:

“In terms of EFFECTS, television may not be as important ... but in terms of EXPERIENCE, the fusion of television and the election seems sufficiently clear for me to be able to write “the Television Election Campaign.”

In South Africa in 1989 SABC-TV organised special election debates during the news programmes, the election featured heavily on the news itself and the ruling Nationalists relied on major speeches being reported at length, even to the extent that important points in speeches were made in English or Afrikaans to feature in the news of that evening.

If the election were to be seen purely as NEWS it would have been essential that the local news presenters and interviewers should have been seen as neutral.

Pateman writes, “The obligation — legal, professional and ideological — to present the Election in a neutral way (fair, balanced, objective, impartial) requires that the personnel of the television organisations who appear on screen — newsreaders, interviewers, chairmen etc. — be seen as above or outside the party struggle, and this is more easily achieved if they are seen as mediators representing the struggle.”

Pateman makes the point that depending on the degree to which the presenter appears to be a PARTICIPANT rather than an

OBSERVER, he or she loses the privileged ideological position they hold in the audience’s eyes and are reduced to the level of the participating politicians.

It was obvious that SATV news readers and chairpersons assumed the role of participants by asking prepared or leading questions of Cabinet ministers (sometimes adopting a ‘hostile’ tone to mask the innocuous nature of the question) or by being aggressive towards opponents of the NP. The Johan Pretorius’s interview with Dr Zach de Beer of the DP was a good example of this hectoring style of interviewing.

## THE REPORT

### A. CRITICAL EVENTS

#### 1. The MDM resistance campaign

This event became critical because it was the first time that SABC-TV news recognised the existence of the MDM formally and popularised the term “MDM” (it had previously been familiar only to readers of the alternative press). A logo was designed that was easily recognisable and this preceded all references to the MDM. SATV thereby united (perhaps inadvertently) the various factions that normally reside loosely under the umbrella title and gave it a persona.

Interestingly, the MDM was constructed as a leaderless, voiceless mob without a clear ideology and without a democratic mandate from the people. No leaders were ever accessed to the news and no statements about policy were ever repeated.

In this way the MDM was carefully constructed to cater to the deep, atavistic fear of many white South Africans: that of uncontrollable Black mob violence.

It became even more of a critical event as Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok repeatedly characterised the MDM as “radical”, engaged in an “armed struggle” and part of “mass militant action.”

#### 2. Events of defiance

The Defiance Campaign was first referred to as “Protest Action”, and then as the

"Violence Campaign" and finally became "a violent onslaught on the white voters by the ANC/MDM/SACP alliance."

By not giving the Defiance Campaign a coherent leadership, it could be shown to be a helpless pawn in the hands of the SACP. During the hospital sit-in no-one from the NAMDA was accessed. The numerous press statements by NAMDA spokesperson Dr Max Price about the limited and peaceful nature of the sit-ins at hospitals was ignored by SABC-TV. Statements of rejection of "MDM violence" by CASA and its spokesperson Mr Ishmael Omar were reported.

The result was that the inherently peaceful demonstrations appeared to have been violent demonstrations checked and controlled by police action.

Significantly, the news about the proposed sit-ins was followed immediately by news of three minor bomb-blasts in Johannesburg so that they appeared to be part of the same movement.

The repeated appearances of Minister Vlok commenting on the "violence" of the sit-ins criminalised the action rather than politicising it and probably contributed significantly to creating an atmosphere of fear in white voters before the election.

### **3. The MDM and violence**

During the two months under review the MDM increasingly became associated with violence and was fitted neatly into the established Nationalist "swart gevaar" electioneering tactic. Towards the end of August Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok appeared repeatedly on the news. This culminated in a 7 minute slot on Saturday evening, 29 August.

In earlier broadcasts he had "warned" the MDM to shun violence, but in this broadcast he announced stern measures to curb the violence.

The exact nature of the violence was never spelt out, as it was always alluded to through the use of graphics. This is a legacy of the State of Emergency that was proclaimed in June 1989. Immediately after the proclamation, the State did not dare to show

extensive live footage of the violence in the townships in case voters became too alarmed or outside opinion became too incensed. So footage became truncated and symbolic (marching crowds, fists, flames) or else became reduced to stylised graphics.

This convention had now become entrenched and made it possible for Vlok to refer to violence without there being evidence for it. In the middle of August the MDM became the "so-called MDM", then the "self-styled MDM" (which was very ironic since it had been popularised-by SABC-TV in the first place!)

The criminalising of the Defiance Campaign and of the MDM was followed by unsubstantiated reports of ANC incursions into South Africa. The capture of "12 ANC terrorists and the uncovering of a terrorist network" was announced by F W de Klerk at the end of August. A graphic that resembled something like a small hockey team lining up for a group photo accompanied the item. (It subsequently did not make the news again and has never been referred to again, so one must assume it was a blatant lie).

This item was followed symptomatically by the statement that all polling booths would be cordoned off and voters searched to eliminate the threat of violence.

SABC-TV neatly side-stepped the inevitable conclusion that South Africa had become a violent country controlled by the police by stating repeatedly that the police only took action reactively, never initiating it.

They were "forced to use tearsmoke to disperse a crowd", police "had to" break up a march etc. The police were shown to be in control, disciplined and preventing violence from occurring, never as the investigators of violence.

### **4. Meeting between P W Botha and Nelson Mandela**

This meeting between State President P W Botha and Dr Nelson Mandela became a critical event by being reported as a "major breakthrough" by Justice Minister Kobie Coetzee. It is significant that the announcement did not come from P W Botha himself

and that F W de Klerk was seen as not being involved.

An ANC spokesman in London was shown as being very negative about the meeting, stating that the prospects for negotiations in South Africa were getting worse. This made it look as if Nelson Mandela and the ANC leadership in exile were in disagreement. Overseas reaction was reported as being favourable and this created the impression that South Africa's new policy of negotiation had swung overseas opinion in its favour. This obviously supported the Nationalists' carefully cultivated election image of itself as the party of the middle, rather than right-of-centre by most measurements.

It was noticeable that file footage of Mrs Winnie Mandela, the death of the young activist Stompie and the arrest of the Mandela football team was juxtaposed to the story of the meeting, thereby maintaining an element of violence below the theme of negotiation. In August the "negotiation" theme was developed and there was a relaxation in the vilification of the individuals or groups travelling to Lusaka to consult the ANC.

If anything, this relaxed sense of impending internal negotiations favoured the Democratic Party. However, after P W Botha's resignation political commentators suggested that the National Party was losing ground to the Conservative Party and the anti-MDM campaign was intensified by SABC-TV.

The impression was created that F W de Klerk is attempting to pull the ANC into a negotiating stance together with other elements like Inkatha and homeland leaders, rather than identifying it as the rallying-point of Black opposition.

## 5. The SWA-Namibian elections

The preparations for independence and the elections became a critical event because of the markedly anti-SWAPO stance of the news. SWAPO and the ANC became united into one anti-white movement. The release of anti-SWAPO detainees was highlighted, injuries received by individuals were shown in detail and anti-SWAPO banners with

inscriptions like "SWAPO is a mass murderer" featured prominently.

Stories of infiltrators, arms caches and violations of the 16th parallel were reported without any reporter getting comment from SWAPO.

The DTA was mentioned with approval as well as a new party formed by ex-SWAPO detainees. There was clearly an attempt to draw a parallel between the Namibian elections and the South African elections. But the end result was quite confusing as the Namibian elections appeared to be both a model and also a warning to South Africans.

## 6. Diplomatic Initiatives

The visits of Mr Herman Cohen and Dr Perez de Cuellar became more critical when they were used to support the concept of negotiations. They also highlighted the "positive" responses of the outside world to the resolution of the Namibian conflict and the potential for negotiation in Southern Africa.

Another carefully orchestrated television event was the series of meetings with leaders of the Frontline States that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had set up for F W de Klerk. Each meeting was reported at length by SABC-TV. This included meetings with Joachim Chissano, Mobutu Sese Seko, Kenneth Kaunda and Metseng Lekhanya.

The encounters constructed De Klerk as an international statesman, able to negotiate with the voluble critics of South Africa. In a clever sleight of hand, internal negotiation with "approved" black leaders was also seen as negotiation with foreign black leaders. This had the added bonus of making South Africa appear to be on better terms with international leaders.

These visits were also necessary to counter the repeated charges that CP spokesmen levelled at the NP during the election debates, namely, that South Africa was being dictated to by foreign opinion.

In terms of real results these visits must be seen as being part of the pre-election ideological offensive rather than concrete negotiations.

## OTHER MINOR CRITICAL EVENTS

7. The FNB rugby tour featured together with promises of future tours.
8. Cliff Saunders added to the view that South Africa was no longer as isolated as before by interviewing the Malawian Minister of Home Affairs.
9. Mozambique's move away from Marxism.
10. The expulsion of the Chinese family from the house in Pretoria owned by the CP member of parliament Frank le Roux.
11. The resignation of P W Botha followed by the prerecorded interview of De Klerk and Pik Botha by Andre le Roux.
12. The hunting trip of President P W Botha.
13. The initial AWB/CP alliance and the fall from grace of Eugene Terre'Blanche.
14. Economic news was handled in a very low-key way, obviously as this is a sensitive election issue.

## THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE

1. The presence of Hein Grosskopf in Lusaka was not mentioned.
2. The visit of prominent Afrikaans writers to Victoria Falls to meet the ANC was ignored.
3. Various meetings by the Five Freedom Forum and IDASA with the ANC were not reported or played down. Obviously the Nationalists wished to be seen as initiating negotiations with the ANC on their terms, starting with the release of Nelson Mandela.
4. The anti-capital punishment lobby was not mentioned.
5. The anti-conscription/alternative service negotiations were not mentioned.
6. The four-day visit of Breyten Breytenbach became a non-event.
7. Crucially, suppression of any comment from any extra-parliamentary groups or leaders. The long list includes any spokesperson from IDASA, COSATU,

COSAW, NUM, or any church allied to the struggle.

8. Suppression of any visuals of peaceful protest at hospitals, schools and beaches.
9. Suppression of the nature and extent of violence in Natal except for inadequate graphics and verbal statistics.
10. Suppression of police action at the University of the North and at the University of the Western Cape.
11. Suppression of police action at Mama's Pies in Jeppetstown when 19 striking workers were injured by gunshots.
12. Suppression of news about the "Trojan Horse" trial.
13. Suppression of news about the COSATU/NACTU meeting.
14. Playing down criticism of the Moss gas project.
15. IN GENERAL, almost total suppression of news about protests in the Western Cape, and police action on the campuses of Wits and UCT.

## THE FLOW OF APPROVAL

1. An impression that the world was better disposed towards South Africa. Selected political figures like JN Reddy and Herman Cohen were repeatedly accessed and quoted extensively to support this impression, while boycotters were ignored.
2. The sense that the Right and the Left are in disarray. The break-up of the AWB/CP alliance and the problems of the DP with the tricameral parliament were foregrounded to the neglect of similar NP infighting and allegations of corruption.
3. The sense that "negotiation" is the consensus of opinion amongst all parties.
4. The sense that labour unrest is restricted to a few trade unions (like the Metal Workers) while others, like the NUM, have settled their grievances.
5. The sense that unrest and violence are under control in Natal, by suppressing



news about the ongoing unrest and numbers of deaths.

6. The continuous valorisation of the police force by focusing on the smashing of child-abuse rings, car theft rings and drug rings. This is supported by many items of an insignificant nature (like a medal parade) to keep the police and the military in the public eye. Even "Good Morning South Africa" now has a slot called "The SAP and Science".

Hardly a broadcast passes without a reference to the police and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the police have taken the place of the military as the prime source of the State's power.

The Minister of Police appeared on television far more often than the Minister of Defence.

SATV neatly side-stepped the inevitable conclusion that South Africa had become a violent country controlled by the police by stating repeatedly that the police took action reactively. They were "forced to use tearsmoke to disperse a crowd", police "had to" break up a march etc. The police were shown to be in control, disciplined and preventing violence from occurring, never as the instigators of violence.

## CONCLUSION

The innovatory 18 pre-election debates that were held during "Network/werk" tended to confuse White viewers rather than enlighten them. Nats featured in all 18, and had 10 DP and 8 CP candidates as debating opponents. Those debates that were measured with a stopwatch tended to be least productive and were gradually eliminated.

The debates confused because too often they were not about significant ideas, but rather paraphrased electioneering speeches. This was partly due to the strict control SABC-TV exercised over topics. The debates tended to reinforce the cultivated image of the NP as the party of the reasonable middle.

The discussions are to be welcomed as a gesture towards open debate on television, but the significant fact is that the majority of

South Africans, disenfranchised Blacks, were not given a voice in the debates. This made them irrelevant on the most basic level.

Overall, television news was carefully orchestrated to hold up the MDM Defiance Campaign as a warning of Black violence to white voters, to cultivate the image of F W de Klerk as a capable international statesman taking over the reins from an ageing, un-predicable P W Botha.

More specifically, television news denied the existence of any coherent Black opposition to apartheid as well as the existence of any articulate Black political leaders capable of formulating an ideological stance. Communism and socialism were not placed on any agenda.

Whether the television campaign had any effect on the election results is impossible to determine. Common sense would have predicted that the nature of the news would have scared voters towards the right and the CP. In the end the CP fared worse than expected and the DP better than expected, with the NP losing some seats to both left and right.

Most Nationalist voters probably did not expect any major structural changes (such as the unbanning of the ANC and the SACP) and simply read the television news as fulfilling their expectations.

Now, in March, 1990, it is difficult to overestimate the nature of the changes that have taken place over the past six months since the election.

Discourse analysis reminds us that evaluation of the pre-election television coverage must be influenced by the fact that the ANC now regularly features in news bulletins, that a debate has been screened between a representative of the ANC and the PAC on issues like nationalisation, that the leadership of the ANC, COSATU and other oppositional groups are accessed regularly and a "Network" programme on the so-called Coloured people virtually apologised for the harm done by apartheid.

This has highlighted the way that in July and August 1989 SABC-TV could still address an assumed acquiescent and cohesive

body of viewers. Inevitably, the violence of Rightwing reaction at this moment has shattered this image of the ideal White viewer.

The fact that major changes have taken place, both off-screen and on-screen,

enables the critic to see clearly the agenda-setting campaign that was so consistently waged during the pre-election television coverage a mere six months ago.

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