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## **WHO RULES SOUTH AFRICA? THE INFOGATE SCANDAL**

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**Glen Segell**

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#### **Abstract**

At the height of the Cold War and of Apartheid (1971-1980) South Africa was rocked by a major political scandal for misappropriating state funds which it had masked for secret front organisations and media projects to fight a propaganda war. This included the purchase of The Washington Star newspaper in the United States and the creation of the domestic The Citizen newspaper. State President, B.J. Vorster and Cabinet Minister of Information Dr Connie Mulder were forced to resign. The main culprits Dr. Eschel Rhoodie (Secretary of the Department of Information) and the chief of the Intelligence Services (BOSS), General Hendrik van den Bergh together with Vorster and Mulder, illicitly used government resources. This article describes the events contextualised within the militarised state in South Africa providing analysis of the role of the so-called securocrats and their (mis)use of information at all levels that characterised civil military relations in the affair. This resulted in a move away from the police's influence on state security, and instead, prioritised the role of the State Security Council and its demands. In doing so the Infogate undermined any healthy civil-military relations.

#### **Keywords**

Infogate scandal; propaganda war; civil-military relations; securocrats; Washington Star newspaper, The Citizen newspaper, BOSS intelligence service; State Security Council

#### **Introduction**

The South African Infogate scandal also known as Rhodiegate or Muldergate scandal saw its birth in 1971 as the use of active measures (covert operations) in a media war approved by senior government officials as high as the Prime Minister B.J. Vorster. This wasn't the scandal. The toolkit of any conflict can include such covert media operations warfare both abroad and domestically, including propaganda and even in using journalists in espionage. Deception, disinformation, dissention and discrediting are descriptors of such operations to influence another state or one's own population by use of a local organisation or a proxy. In doing so there is a fine line between truth and slander, between perspective, opinion, and lie. Exaggeration can also be confused for active measures. Both defensive and offensive active measures coexist in any media operations.

The objective of the covert operations was within the bounds of supporting politics and policy. The intent was to influence the media, local and foreign public opinion and foreign leaders by wrapping a modicum of truth in a lie to support the mythology about Apartheid

and to garnish support of South Africa against Communist forces also known as “The total onslaught against South Africa” and the Rooi Gevaar (Red Danger). International events such as détente between America and Russia, the withdrawal of America from Vietnam, the growing conflict in Angola and South-West Africa (Namibia) and domestic events such as the 1976 SOWETO events all played a role in the psyche to need such media operations.

Despite the toolkit of warfare including covert media based operations both abroad and domestically it is unacceptable to use misappropriated government funding. This was the primary scandal of the Infogate. Normally evidence of the existence covert operations is hard to determine and even more so the success of media influence be it editorials (white operations) or propaganda (black operations) is hard to evaluate. Success depends not on the characteristics of the political struggle, on compromise or pressure, or on the timing of covert activities. The man in the street can be overwhelmed by “more of the same” to the extent of ignoring or disbelieving all media to the extent that it fails or it reinforcing his existing beliefs. Covert intentions of the owner of a newspaper or its staff verse the “measures of effect” that its content has cannot be easily ascertained even if it is suspected. It is when mistakes or financial accounting errors occur in the misappropriation of funding as happened in the case of Infogate scandal that the perpetrators are unmasked and the success of the operations questioned.

From the onset senior government officials as high as the Prime Minister B.J. Vorster misappropriated or knew about the misappropriation of government funding with legislation being passed to hide this and the activities of the protagonists. Projects included the purchase of The Washington Star in Washington D.C USA and the creation of a domestic newspaper The Citizen. It was to culminate in the resignation Vorster and Cabinet Minister Dr Connie Mulder. It was these two senior elected officials together with Dr. Eschel Rhoodie (Secretary of the Department of Information) and the chief of the Intelligence Services (BOSS), General Hendrik van den Bergh who were implicated in using government resources illicitly.

The secondary scandal that emerged from the use of misappropriated government funding and the passing of legislation to hide this and the covert activities present the question “how solid is a democracy or if it is even a democracy”? The answer to this provides an insight into who controlled South Africa. The unmasking of the perpetrators followed by the official Erasmus Commission (1979), the biographical accounts by those involved and media reports opened a window to the power struggle between individuals whose roles and friendships determined and undermined healthy civil-military relations. They show who predominated when and how in a behind the scenes power struggle within the militarised state in South Africa. The tensions and conflict between the Prime Minister, the Head of the Intelligence Services, The Minister of Defence and the Chief of the Staff of the military.

South Africa was a security state where the securocrats the name given to officials located in the security establishment - the police, intelligence services, and the military, that have the power to influence government policy in their favour - struggled against each other for control. By 1980 the true centre of power resided in the central security structures of the government led by the State Security Council. In doing so the Infogate undermined any healthy civil-military relations and shows the insecurity of the ruling National Party.

### **The protagonists and the threat environment**

The story of how government funding was misappropriated and healthy civil military relations undermined in the 1970s including pushing the Minister of Defence and the Chief of Staff of the military to the sidelines started in World War II when future Prime Minister B.J Vorster and the future head of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) Hendrik van den Bergh joined the Ossewabrandwag (Oxwagon Sentinel), a paramilitary organization modelled on the



Nazi SA which engaged in acts of sabotage against the British aligned South African government to undermine the war effort.<sup>i</sup>

After the war, van den Bergh rose rapidly through the police ranks. In 1963, he founded South Africa's first intelligence agency. He and Vorster (now Justice Minister under Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd) used new security legislation to crush growing resistance against apartheid. After becoming Prime Minister of South Africa in 1966, Vorster met with van den Bergh then the head of the South African Police Security Branch.<sup>ii</sup>

The topic of discussion was the Cold War. The Cold War was typified by regional security organisations focused on the European arena such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact. However South Africa being in Sub-Sahara Africa had no formal treaty ties. Until the end of the Cold War in 1991 Soviet inspired and led Eastern Bloc forces including Cuban and East German soldiers would support anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles in the neighbouring states of Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and South West Africa (Namibia).<sup>iii</sup> The main anti-apartheid forces within South Africa, such as the African National Congress (ANC) were also sponsored by the Eastern Bloc as a post-colonial struggle. There was active Soviet involvement identified as being led by KGB Colonel Joe Slovo.<sup>iv</sup> South Africa was engaged inter alia in counter-insurgency campaigns against these and with a political system that was not communist was considered part of the Western Bloc.

At this meeting, Van den Bergh convinced Vorster that the country's military intelligence was inadequate.<sup>v</sup> This led to the cabinet approval of a centralised security service. It was on 28 August 1968 that Lieutenant-General Hendrik van den Bergh, then Deputy Police Commissioner and Head of the Security Branch, was instructed to start planning the new security service and not the military. The organisation that van den Bergh was called The South African Bureau for State Security or BOSS (in Afrikaans: Buro vir Staatsveiligheid).

### **The establishment of the securocrats**

BOSS's official function was to investigate matters of state security, collect and evaluate any information received and distribute the analysis when necessary throughout the government. However and in addition to leading this new security service on 1 October 1968, van den Bergh was promoted to General and then appointed as Security Advisor to Prime Minister John Vorster. Attached to the Prime Minister office, he would be in command of all security and intelligence chiefs in the country including the military, and reported only to Vorster.<sup>vi</sup>

BOSS had a long list of “spooks” (secret agents) willing to see the covert activities to fruition. Van den Bergh proposed a “policy relating to national security intelligence” and was well known for atrocities. Although van den Bergh denied BOSS's use of hit squads against its enemies, he is nevertheless remembered for sanctioning the use of torture, assassinations, and other tactics against the government's enemies, and he once told a government commission, “I have enough men to commit murder if I tell them to kill. I don't care who the prey is. These are the type of men I have.”<sup>vii</sup>

By March 1969, the skeleton of a new security service begun to emerge with the release of the expenditures for 1969/70 when R5320500 was allocated to it, a 188% increase over the previous year with R4063000 allocated to the Prime Minister's office and van den Bergh. On the other hand and despite the active campaign that it was engaged in Angola the Military Intelligence's (MI) budget was reduced from the previous year's R830000 to R39000 which would lead to continuous struggle for power between MI and BOSS throughout the 1970s.<sup>viii</sup>

On 13 May 1969, Minister of the Interior S.L. Muller introduced the framework of the new intelligence service in the *Public Service Amendment Bill* which he said was responsible for “co-ordination” and would draw personnel from other security and intelligence organisations.

It outlined the control of BOSS would rest with the Prime Minister and that the civil service Public Service Commission would have no control over its powers, functions and duties. Government Notice No. 808 on 16 May 1969 announced BOSS's formation and came into being retrospectively on 1 May as a department under the Prime Minister.<sup>ix</sup>

On 19 May 1969 the *Security Services Special Account Bill* was introduced that saw the use of money allocated to BOSS as confidential and not subjected to an audit by the Auditor-General as with other government departments.<sup>x</sup> The *General Law Amendment Bill* was introduced on 4 June 1969 and passed into law on 30 June, with two clauses of interest to BOSS. One, the amendment of *Officials Secrets Act* to include BOSS and secondly, preventing the Prime Minister, Van den Bergh or cabinet ministers from giving evidence or producing documents in court that might prejudice State Security. This caused outrage throughout the South African legal community as it could no longer protect citizen's rights from the Government executive. It also enabled BOSS to operate with no checks and balances to prevent corruption.<sup>xi</sup>

Perhaps because of this outrage on 5 September 1969, Prime Minister John Vorster announced the formation of a commission led by Justice H.J. Potgieter to establish the guidelines and mission for intelligence gathering by Military Intelligence and BOSS. In practice however the Commission to Inquire into Certain Intelligence Aspects of State Security, known better as the Potgieter Commission was only tasked to investigate the clashes between the two organisations and define who had primary responsibility for intelligence gathering in South Africa.<sup>xii</sup>

### **The covert media activities**

Even though the Commission had not yet presented its findings BOSS commenced its first covert media related project using a front organisation at the beginning of 1971. Eschel Rhodie then Press Officer of the South African embassy at The Hague in the Netherlands clandestinely negotiated an agreement with a Dutch publisher by the name of Hubert Jussen. Jussen agreed to help with the establishment of a new magazine *To the Point*. This magazine was to be secretly financed by the South African government and was intended to counter some of the unfavourable press coverage South Africa was receiving overseas. This secret scheme had the approval of the Prime Minister, B.J. Vorster; the chief of the Intelligence Services, General Hendrik van den Bergh; the Minister of Information, Dr Connie Mulder; and Mr Gerald Barrie, the then head of the Department of Information.<sup>xiii</sup>

Because of the success of this project saw in July 1972 the appointment of Rhodie to the post of Secretary of Information, also known as the Dirty Tricks Department of the government. Shortly after his appointment he recruited as his deputies Les de Villiers and his own brother Denys.<sup>xiv</sup>

The Potgieter Commission took its time and only reported back on the 2 February 1972. Its findings were subsequently used to enact the *Security Intelligence and State Security Council Act* (Act 64 of 1972) on 24 May 1972. The Act formalised the functions and the brief of BOSS while another part of this act would also establish the formation of the State Security Council under the control of the cabinet and establish it as the government's national centre for operational security. As van den Bergh was a close ally of the Prime Minister, it was seen by Military Intelligence as a foregone conclusion that BOSS would achieve favour by the Act which it did which were far beyond the initial public announcement that it would be a "coordinating service". Due to the domination of BOSS, the State Security Council under Vorster would meet infrequently and would be purely advisory.<sup>xv</sup>

From 1973 onwards, by which time Rhodie was working in close cooperation with "the power behind the throne" General Hendrik van den Bergh, different types of front

organisations all masked from official government spending and the public eye were constantly being introduced. They were being run in part by Rhodie's Department of Information and in part by BOSS. All were all paid for clandestinely with government money. Due to the delicacy of the situation, money was often handed over in cash, without any receipt.<sup>xvi</sup>

International events such as détente in the Cold War between America and Russia, the withdrawal of America from Vietnam, the withdrawal of American support for anti-communist UNITA forces in Angola and the Watergate scandal were the background events that saw Vorster in October 1974 to initiate his own foreign policy version of "Détente" seeking support for a constellation of Southern African states who would be a united front against a common enemy, communism.

Implementing this saw infighting in various areas of the government for control of foreign and security policy. Foreign Affairs and the Department of Information argued over foreign policy in South Africa and abroad while BOSS and the military argued over the direction of security policy for the country. BOSS and the Department of Information would dominate due to the friendship of Vorster and van den Bergh thereby undermining health civil military relations.

An example was in February 1974 when Prime Minister Vorster gave official approval for additional front organisations at a meeting in Cape Town attended by Rhodie, Mulder and the Finance Minister, Nico Diederichs. Vorster agreed to Mulder's plan to shift over R 64 million from the defence budget to undertake a series of covert media (propaganda) projects. It had become evident that the conventional methods that the South African government used to express opinions, in the form of films, brochures and hand-outs, were no longer effective. Vorster therefore accepted that it was necessary to wage an all-out psychological assault on both domestic and foreign opinion.<sup>xvii</sup>

As the BOSS head Hendrik van den Bergh was a close ally of the Prime Minister, it was seen by Military Intelligence as a foregone conclusion that BOSS would achieve favour and be tasked with these activities. For example front organisations designed to counter South Africa's sporting isolation. The most prominent of these was the Committee for Fairness in Sport. Another was a scheme involving a group of influential businessmen abroad. The Club of Ten as the group was known, had the task of tackling the media, the United Nations, other institutions, individuals and countries for their double-dealing and hypocrisy where South Africa was concerned.<sup>xviii</sup>

Another example is the decision taken after a coup in Portugal in 1975 that led black liberation groups to be in control of its colonies of Angola and Mozambique. The government was divided with Defence Minister P.W. Botha and Chief of the Army Magnus Malan advocating an all-out invasion, and Prime Minister Vorster and van den Bergh favouring only a limited, covert operation.<sup>xix</sup> In the end, the latter option was chosen, though the South African intervention did not succeed. South African forces, in sight of the Angolan capital, were repulsed by a fresh influx of Cuban troops. The United States, which had covertly backed the operation, was forced to withdraw its support when the American Congress vetoed American President Ford administration's request for funding for UNITA; as a result, South Africa was forced to withdraw.<sup>xx</sup>

This close relationship between van den Bergh and Vorster bothered the Minister of Defence, P. W. Botha. BOSS had become increasingly powerful as the 1970s progressed where by some accounts the organization now wielded more influence than the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. The military intelligence services were barely noticeable. Given this there was no one who could dare to oppose the cover media projects, the front organisations operating them or when the lines of legality were crossed by the shifting of funds from the

defence budget to undertake the projects that would be masked or covered from the normal governmental audit process.<sup>xxi</sup>

And so towards the end of 1975, project Annemarie was conceived (Annemarie was the name of Rhodie's teenage daughter.) Vorster agreed to a government loan of R12 million, hidden from public knowledge or government accounting, to finance project Annemarie on the understanding that once it succeeded this money would be returned to the State's coffers.<sup>xxii</sup>

The man chosen to front this operation was Dr Louis Luyt, the fertilizer industry millionaire. The first salvo in what was to become something of a newspaper war was when Luyt attempted to buy up shares of SAAN (South African Associated Newspapers). To give credibility to his take-over attempt, he went on television to explain his new-found interest in publishing. He also took the opportunity to announce that he had two prominent overseas publishers supporting his bid for SAAN. Despite Luyt's overtures to some of SAAN's major shareholders, his takeover attempt was blocked. Luyt then announced that he intended to create his own independent newspaper, which would go on to the streets in the second half of 1976 to counter attacks on the government by the English press, particularly the Rand Daily Mail. The name he chose for this newspaper was The Citizen. This would be a front newspaper for the ruling party in government, funded by the taxpayer, yet all would be masked from the legislature and the public.<sup>xxiii</sup>

The cost of running the newspaper was estimated to be around R130000 per month, but it was expected that the paper would pay for itself as time went on. At the Rand Daily Mail, the news that another English-medium newspaper was to arrive on the scene was greeted with disbelief. The Rand Daily Mail itself was losing money and was being supported by the mass circulation weekend newspaper The Sunday Times. The owners of the Rand Daily Mail were also acutely aware that 25% of their readership had only a loose association with the newspaper and could be convinced to change. A struggle for survival was anticipated.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### **Unveiling the misappropriation of public funds**

At the beginning of 1976 trouble was brewing behind the scenes. The money used by the Department of Information was obtained through the budget of the Department of Defence but without their knowledge. It was assumed that a few R million would hardly be noticed in a budget that exceeded over R1 billion. In that year's accounting process, the defence account neglected to add the Department of Information money to the amount requisitioned from the Treasury. By the time the mistake was made apparent, there were no funds available for the covert projects. To make matters worse, the Minister of Defence, P.W. Botha, became aware of this and was unhappy about his department being used to finance secret projects. He was not at that stage aware that it involved front organisations or corruption. The first rumblings of internal discontent and scandal were surfacing.<sup>xxv</sup>

Maybe this could have been overlooked and hidden had the projects succeeded but unfortunately, The Citizen newspaper scheme was beset with problems. By the time the first edition of the newspaper was on the streets on 7 September 1976, Luyt, Rhodie and their associates had already been forced to surmount a number of crises. Even after the newspaper went into full production, matters didn't improve. By March 1977, the situation had become serious. The Citizen's growth was failing well short of expectations, and relations between Luyt and Rhodie had deteriorated, almost to the stage of open hostility. But the worst was yet to come.<sup>xxvi</sup>

By July 1977, rumours and speculation concerning financial malpractice in the Department of Information became so serious that a government audit of the department's books was ordered. There was also talk of The Citizen and the Department of Information being linked. Towards the end of 1977, Luyt decided to withdraw from the newspaper. In November 1977,

Les de Villiers, one of Rhoodie's deputies, also resigned from the Department of Information, a job he had held for 17 years, and joined a public relations firm, Sidney Baron, in New York. The Citizen was formally transferred to its new publishers, Jussens and VanZyl Alberts, in February 1978.<sup>xxvii</sup>

In the face of mounting criticism, in May 1978 Mulder had to answer for his department in Parliament. In response to questions tabled in the House, he declared categorically that The Citizen was not financed by government money. It was as a result of this lie that he would eventually be disgraced and disbarred.<sup>xxviii</sup> With the imminent probability of scandal van den Berg resigned in June 1978.

### **New political leadership ends the scheme of things**

It was the change in political leadership that would lead to a change in the entire scheme of such things. On 2 October 1978, Prime Minister B.J. Vorster resigned as Prime Minister to become State President but would resign in disgrace in May 1979 when the results of the Erasmus Commission of Inquiry into the Infogate Scandal were released in that year concluding that Vorster knew “everything” about the corruption and had tolerated it.<sup>xxix</sup>

On 9 October, the Defence Minister P.W. Botha was appointed as the new Prime Minister of South Africa. The rise of Botha to prime minister resulted in the increase of power to the South Africa Defence Force (SADF) and with that the Directorate Military Intelligence (DMI), who would strive to dominate security issues in the new government and decide its foreign policy and implementation.<sup>xxx</sup> The unhealthy civil military relations would thus persist into the 1980s but not by BOSS and the Department of Information.

In late October 1978, Deputy Defence and Intelligence Minister Kobie Coetsee was appointed by Botha to lead a commission of inquiry into intelligence gathering in South Africa and in particular who would be the lead agency. It was believed that it was predetermined that Military Intelligence and not BOSS would be the lead intelligence agency.<sup>xxxi</sup> This was indicated already on 20 November 1978 when BOSS was brought under tighter control as a cabinet portfolio called National Security managed by Botha who also held the Minister of Defence portfolio. BOSS was then renamed the Department of National Security (DONS) under Alec van Wyk.<sup>xxxii</sup>

At the same time in the autumn of 1978, the Infogate Scandal reached crisis proportions. The Minister of Finance, Owen Horwood, instituted an additional inquiry under the auspices of Judge Anton Mostert to probe exchange-control violations. Believing that the outcome of both inquiries was already predetermined, BOSS officials began to shred any document that that could be used against them.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Despite protestations from Botha and Horwood, Justice Mostert called a press conference to divulge details of the scandal. On Wednesday, 3 November 1978, under the heading “It's all True” the Rand Daily Mail broke the story of its opposition newspaper The Citizen as being a government plot.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Although in the eyes of the public The Citizen newspaper was largely discredited, Johnny Johnson, the then editor vehemently denied the accusation that the paper was little more than a National Party organ. In an editorial on 6 December, 1978 he wrote: “The Citizen was started and funded with Government money. But the Government did not direct The Citizen's editorial policy. That is the assurance I have already given as editor-in-chief of this publication. And it is an assurance, which I repeat today, when the newspaper is at the centre of a new storm of controversy. The Citizen, and I cannot emphasize this strongly enough, was not, and is not, a government propaganda medium of the National Party.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

Evidence provided by Mr Justice Anton Mostertof about the massive misuse of public money through Department of Information secret funds proved the involvement of government. The

person who had broken secrecy was Luyt who named the former Prime Minister Vorster, the Minister of Plural Relations Mulder and van den Bergh, head of BOSS as key figures in the secret project to finance The Citizen.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Botha instituted a judicial commission of inquiry into the whole affair of front organisations and masked funding under the chair of Mr Justice Roelof Erasmus. Rhoodie, who had already had his passport withdrawn, was summoned before the commission, gave testimony and then vanished. In February 1979, journalists tracked Rhoodie to ground in Ecuador. In March 1979, he moved to Britain where he attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to gain political asylum. In a BBC television interview with David Dimbleby on 21 March 1979, he strongly denied the accusations made against him, reiterating his claim that he was being made a scapegoat for the whole affair, and maintained that senior government figures, including Botha, were both aware of and had sanctioned the secret projects he had conducted as head of the Department of Information. Shortly afterwards, Rhoodie moved to France, where he was arrested by the French authorities and incarcerated for 88 days followed by extradition to South Africa.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The trial of Rhoodie began at the Pretoria Supreme Court on 22 September 1979 and he was found guilty on 8 October of five charges of fraud and sentenced to an effective six years' imprisonment.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Later in October 1980 Rhoodie was acquitted on all counts involving State monies by the Appeal Court in Bloemfontein. The following day, he gave a press conference declaring: "It was a handful of powerful politicians who used the apparatus of the State, not to mention a vast sum of taxpayers' money, to destroy me and my family, socially, politically and financially. These politicians launched a vendetta against the Rhoodie family in 1978, in an all-out effort to crush us, primarily to protect their own involvement in the government's secret propaganda war of 1971 to 1978. I reject totally the Erasmus Commission's whitewash of those ministers."<sup>xxxix</sup>

In March 1982 Rhoodie and his wife Katie emigrated to the United States. His book *The Real Information Scandal*, which was published in October 1983 contained sweeping allegations of big-name involvement in secret information projects. He further maintained that dozens of senior government officials were aware of the secret projects his department actively pursued, and that R75million had been allocated over a five-year period to finance these projects. Official figures released when the scandal broke accounted for only R64million.<sup>xl</sup>

Mulder, meanwhile, was being vilified by the media. He was first stripped of his Cabinet post, then his leadership of the National Party in the Transvaal province and was finally forced to resign his parliamentary seat. In the commission's interim report, Rhoodie was accused of misappropriating State funds.<sup>xli</sup> Botha and a number of other prominent government figures were completely exonerated with regard to any involvement in the secret projects of the information scandal. The final report of the Erasmus Commission was published in June 1979.<sup>xlii</sup>

### **New rule of South Africa**

Given the demise of BOSS and the resignation of its head van den Bergh and the State President Vorster due to the Infogate scandal the new Prime Minister P.W. Botha saw the need and the opportunity to change the policy making bodies in government.<sup>xliii</sup> He would centralize power with the prime minister and sideline the cabinet and parliament through the State Security Council (SSC).

The SSC was formed in South Africa in 1972 as a permanent cabinet committee to advise the government on the country's national policy and strategy concerning security, its implementation and determining security priorities. Due to the domination of BOSS, the State Security Council under Vorster would meet infrequently and would be purely advisory.

Botha changed this. At the pinnacle of his new structures, the SSC would report directly to him who also controlled access to it. Thus the SSC controlled all aspects of South African public's lives by becoming the Cabinet. It often took decisions which were then simply rubber-stamped by the cabinet. The SSC was exempt from the rule that Cabinet Committee decisions had to be subject to Cabinet ratification. Everything deemed connected to the security of the state now fell under its purview - from foreign policy to the price of bread.

For example on the 12 February 1979, the SSC under Botha issued guidelines for who could authorize five types of external operations by South African forces. Botha was looking for an alternative to the policing function of BOSS. He viewed Foreign Affairs as too overt and tainted by the Infogate Scandal and therefore saw a need to create a new agency based around research and analysis.<sup>xliiv</sup> Subsequently Botha appointed Niel Barnard to head the newly named National Intelligence Service (NIS). Barnard had to restructure the NIS to a role based on such analysis and evaluation, which meant that the old front organisations offensive operational and policing role with masked funding changed resulting in many of the old BOSS/DONS personnel leaving.<sup>xlv</sup>

Thus commenced Botha's first years in office that resulted in a complete reorganization of the apartheid state with the centralization of decision-making in the State Security Council. His final years in office were characterized by an imperial presidency no longer accountable to cabinet or colleagues, one that had embraced the securocrats' paradigm of a national security state to which all sectors of society, public and private alike, were subordinate

The start of this came on 16 August 1979 when he established the National Security Management System (NSMS) as the operational arm of the SSC which would integrate the efforts of the entire government and its assets towards protecting the state with the SADF, Police and Intelligence services as the core of the system and managed by the Security Council. It had a network of regional and local bodies that coordinated the actions of the SADF, the police (SAP) and civil defence units. The SAP was given responsibility for counter-insurgency in South Africa and Swaziland, and the SADF for incursions into the rest of southern Africa. Certain residential areas where there was a high incidence of anti-apartheid violence were specifically targeted. The military in general and Military Intelligence in particular, came to play a principle role in shaping the overall thrust of state policy.<sup>xlvi</sup>

It was only after FW de Klerk's rise to the role of State President on 20 September 1989 that the civilian elected Cabinet would be able to effect its constitutional role in the management of the country. In November 1989 de Klerk began to abolish the National Security Management System and would begin to reign in the power the military and security establishment had over the government's civilian decision making processes and the return of foreign diplomacy as opposed to regional destabilisation in southern Africa. He formed a Cabinet Committee for Security, with the State President and his ministers as members with decision making and co-ordination for national security now under civilian control. The military and police intelligence services were reduced to purely internal matters while the power of the NIS rose becoming responsible for external intelligence and as an advisor to the State President.

After the 1994 elections a committee called National Intelligence Co-ordinating Committee was formed to advise the South African president on security and intelligence as well as its implementation. In 1997 and 1998 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) gained access to the minutes of the SSC and was able to expose the full ramifications of its activities.<sup>xlvii</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has questioned who rules South Africa noting the differences between the governments' of B.J Vorster, P.W. Botha and then F.W de Klerk as a consequence of the Infogate scandal with an emphasis on it during the period of B.J. Vorster. The article has shown that the Infogate or Rhodiegate or Muldergate scandal commenced as covert activities in media operations domestically and internationally to influence public opinion and policies. This is as an acceptable toolkit of warfare.

Unacceptable was the misappropriation of government funding masked for secret front organisations and projects, and newspapers, the passing of legislation to hide this and to prevent an audit by the Auditor-General, and the domination without accountability of various government departments, the intelligence service and individuals. The Bureau of State Security under van den Bergh had an unhealthy domination of government decision making. The unveiling of these illicit activities resulted in the resignation of the State President, B.J. Vorster and Cabinet Minister of Information Dr Connie Mulder. The main culprits were the chief of the Intelligence Services (BOSS), General Hendrik van den Bergh and Dr. Eschel Rhodie (Secretary of the Department of Information).

The Infogate scandal contextualised within the then militarised state in South Africa shows how the so-called securocrats the name given to officials located in the security establishment - the police, intelligence services, and the military, struggled against each other for control and were dominating the scene and were (mis)using information at all levels. A consequence of the Infogate was the change in political leadership from Vorster to Botha that saw from 1979 the true centre of power residing in the central security structures of the government dominated by the State Security Council. It was only after the change of leadership from Botha to de Klerk in 1989 that the civilian elected Cabinet began to regain control of the management of the country. The bottom line is that the Infogate shows how any healthy civil-military relations didn't exist in South Africa between 1971-1989 in the period of B.J Vorster and P.W. Botha given the domination by securocrats led by van den Bergh of BOSS in the former and by the State Security Council in the later.

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