

Joe Thloloe and Thami Mazwai

Q: What is the difference between the older regulations and the ones that have been handed down recently.

Joe: The laws have been changing gradually from the first time they were imposed in 1985. Each time they were challenged in court and the government would go and rewrite them to comply with the court's decision, and that is how we got to the final set that was produced in 1988. And that one was very tight, even the lawyers couldn't challenge those...they're very well written. Basically they're saying exactly the same thing, that you cannot publish subversive statements, you cannot quote a member of a restricted organization. That you cannot quote...you cannot write anything that either enhances the image of or improves the score that various newspapers have been closed down for a number of weeks.

Q: They tell you what improves the image of an organization...

We had a very interesting case where they warned us because we were supposed to be enhancing the image of the PAC and the ANC. And some of the stories we were quoting were very ludicrous. The one story was a wire story from Associated Press saying there had been a meeting between Oliver Tambo of the ANC and the Archbishop of Canterbury Runcie. It was a straightforward story saying there had been this meeting. We were not quoting Tambo because we knew we couldn't quote Tambo. We were not saying what Tambo had said. But in the end because we had published this story saying there was this meeting, we're accused of enhancing the image of the ANC. The same thing goes for a piece that I wrote on a visit to Harare in Zimbabwe, where a tour guide showed us the place where a leader of the ANC and the PAC were buried. They were lying side by side in the graveyard. And I just wrote this particular sentence with no comment, nothing. I said the guide showed us where John Pukela was buried, where Joe Qwabi was buried. And because of that we were supposed to be enhancing the image of the ANC and the PAC. So that again, it's a very subjective interpretation that they give.

Q: Do these new regulations affect black journalists more than they effect white journalists?

Thami: I would say that they effect both, although the people they would be severe on would be a black journalist. Because black journalists are basically in the frying pan, they're in the oven. They're part and parcel of what is happening. What the govt does not want known, things are happening in the townships and we see these things happening. We don't interview people. So that's why they would effect black journalists most. But I don't think that it was the aim of government...as far as the government is concerned, any journalist who writes certain types of stories is a danger to the state. But in effect, the people who do write these stories happen to be black journalists because they stay in

the townships and these things effect them directly.

Q: What happened in the Soweto uprising. Tell us the kind of thing you could do then and what you could report now.

Thami: Well. Joe was in jail, so perhaps I could be of assistance here. In 1976 the police were... gave regular statements and we were able to get into any area, unrest area. And we were basically able to report on every thing that happened. Today we can't go into an area of unrest. The police do not talk. Instead they give their reports to Pretoria. And what you get is an edited version. And that edited version has been very politicized. It's a politician giving that statement. Rather than a policeman who was present when certain things happened. And what is more serious. in 1976... the type of action that is being used today is more severe than the type of action used in '76. The police are more ruthless now. And as a result, they're trying to hide the type of action that they take. They're trying to make sure people don't know about it.

Joe: I think in '76 journalists achieved much more than they achieved in the recent unrest. One of the very graphic stories we had in '76 was of a journalist hiding inside a waste drum. And he stayed in there while he hid and listened to the police giving instructions to hostel dwellers to go and attack the community. And that's one of the best pieces of writing I've ever seen. And today we can't do that. When the unrest takes place you've got to take the opposite direction, you can't be in a place of unrest. So that even if you're there by some accident, you will not be able to write what you actually saw, what you actually heard. It's only the edited versions from Pretoria that you can publish.

Q: So that if something like Sharpeville happened now, you would only get the official version. Is that right?

JOE: If Sharpeville happened now, you wouldn't be able to get the full story of what happened. You wouldn't be able to get the eyewitness stories. You wouldn't be able to get journalists in the thick of the fighting. All you would get would be the official version from Pretoria. And it normally starts with a group of people who are stoning the police and the police retaliated and ten people were killed. If you look at what happened at Sharpeville, you had some very graphic reporting there. Pictures of people lying on the ground after being shot dead. Stories of how it all happened. Very graphic. The journalists were on the scene and they were doing their work. But today you will never be able to get that type of journalism. Not in South Africa.

Thami: It's an offense to take a picture of somebody who has been killed in unrest. If you a photographer and you see somebody has been killed during unrest, you got to take a picture of a child playing somewhere in the corner.

Q: What about arson and death squads...

JOE: I think one of the examples I can think of is the editor of a paper in Pietermaritzburg, Cabem Mzike. He was covering the fight between UDF-COSATU on the one hand, and Inkatha on the other. And he was under tremendous pressure from both groups, trying to tell him what to write and what not to write. And in the end he's left the country because he fears for his life. We've had a number of incidents where journalists are threatened. Where even the Sowetan, the publication we work for, where people tried to organize boycotts of the Sowetan because they wanted us to project a particular line. Fortunately for us we managed to resist it. But these are pressures that come both from the community as well as the authorities.

Thami: I would say that there are five levels of censorship in the country. There's the governmental level. Then two, there's the owners of the newspapers who will tell you, look you're free to write anything but make sure you check with your lawyers. Then you have the level of the white reporters, white sub-editors who will always censor what black reporters will write. Then you have the level of community organizations, who will want you to push a particular line, like Joe has given an example. And the last level which is the most vicious, is the level of self-censorship. Where you try and be all things to all people. So it's these five levels that effect us in our operations.

Q: Does your emotional attachment to the story justify your white superiors perhaps taking your reports skeptically?

Thami: Well I think that the white reporters have been doing that for ages. Apartheid has been alive and kicking for ages. The white man has been there in S.A. and they've been justifying what has been happening there because of their.....I mean professionally they've been justifying it, they did not write about these things, they did not expose the evils of apartheid except at that moment of indignation when he will write about some evil. So because of that, now when we come and expose these things, they are not worried about whether this is true or not. But its now more the effects that this has on their personal integrity. They allowed all this to happen because we are now that we are emerging they feel very worried. The second reason I would say A, b, c, and d. So you find right now, in the past white journalists used to bask in the glory, they used to write about what's happening in South Africa, they used to write about the evils of apartheid. Now when black journalists come and write about it because they live in the situation, of course you find there is this natural resentment. So it's an accumulation of all these issues that makes the white journalist resentful of the black journalist. And I think they know what we're writing is the truth. But I think they're getting exposed for the role they have played all along. And two. They now being made to take the back seat. They're no longer the champions of black liberation, something that they always pretend to be.

Joe: I want to say that if you don't get emotionally involved in what you are writing, then it's pointless trying to write anything. So that in the end, we are emotionally involved but we are able to balance what we write against the facts. I think that's the major issue - can what we write be matched with the facts. And every time we're found to match with the facts.

Thami: Black journalists seldom. I can't say never, they seldom, they don't exaggerate. But you'll find that the case of exaggeration will come from white journalists who try to be more blacker than black people. So that's where you have the exaggeration.

Q: Last time you spoke you also extended this to foreign journalists coming in. Are they reluctant to use black journalists as sources?

Thami: I think that white journalists, the way I see it, white journalists are guided by what local newspapers report on. But certainly foreign journalists have come to South Africa already with pre-set minds, already having taken a judgemental view. Apartheid is bad. The ANC is the best organization, the PAC is not to be taken as a very bad organization. And they gauge what is happening in South Africa in terms of their standards, in terms of what is happening in Europe, in terms of what is happening in America. They try and transpose their Americas and their Europes in South Africa. And that is a problem with white journalists. Perhaps they've looked at the policies of the ANC and the PAC, and they've hardly bothered to look at the terrain and they've just given a judgement that the ANC is good, the PAC is bad and they try and interpret everything that happens in the country in terms of those standards. The good ANC, the bad PAC. And of course that is a very serious problem with the foreign media. And at times you find that they tend to do more harm than good in the country. Because some of the distortions that I see when I'm outside here, are actually uncalled for. We had a situation when Mthopeng...the President of the PAC was released. And when he was released there was another guy Gwala was released. And you find that the overseas newspapers tried to equate Mthopeng with Gwala, when one is a national leader and the other is hardly a local trade union leader. But you can also see... foreign journalists have got such an agenda, which is very unfortunate...on top of the press restrictions that you find in the country, they have their own. I don't know what can be done, they either have to either get black journalists as people who are going to assist them in trying to explain the situation to them. That this is happening because of a,b,c, or d. This organization says this because of a,b,c,d. And I think there is an urgent need for overseas journalists to work with black journalists, because only black journalists can tell them what is happening in the country. Let them forget about trying to read the local press, the local press is controlled by white people. And white people will always make sure the news is manipulated to present a certain picture to the viewer whether he is in the country or outside.
end tape 1

JOE: You find most of the correspondents...South African correspondents of overseas publications, are white. That's in Europe or here in America. There are very few publications that have black correspondents inside the country. The whites who are writing for these publications are not in the townships. So that what they are writing is in fact second or third hand. So that there's no way you can get an accurate picture of what is happening inside the country from such people. The people who can give you first hand information are the black journalists who are inside the country, who know what is happening in the black townships. And these are the people the foreign media is ignoring.

Q: Last time you spoke about the responsibility of foreign journalists....what should they be doing?

That's a very difficult problem because when you go in there to interview Sicelo Dlomo, and he tells you he was tortured in jail, if you're a South African journalist, you would not publish that because you know under the Prisons Act he may not say anything about what happened to him while he was in detention. And 8 under the Police Act he may not say anything about the police. The onus is always on the person who is telling the story to prove that it is true. So that a South African journalists would have been much more subtle in telling Sicelo Dlomo's story. We always imply there was torture, we always say these things. But we say it without the normal comeback that you got in Sicelo's case. Now he got on television and said that he was tortured in jail. And after the South Africa Police saw this clip, they went and interviewed him. And they said that he had told them that he had lied to CBS. I think it was CBS at the time, and when he was supposed to respond to the police saying that he had lied to CBS, he was found dead. There was a whole lot of coincidences there, if you want to call them that, that make it a very difficult decision do you just go into South Africa to take a once-off and come back with the story, and forget about what happens to your source or do you get a South Africa journalist who will be able to inter-
pud at the point where your source will be safe. It's a very difficult question. There was another case of Dr. Ribeiro. Dr. Ribeiro was on a Sunday morning TV program I think, where he was talking about the injuries to people who have been detained by the police, and again he too is dead. Also a few months after the publication of this particular program. It's a very difficult moral problem, do you go in for a once-off or do you try to be much more subtle about it.

I accept that it's very difficult, the audience always wants a direct story, the person telling the story himself. But I think we need to use more imagination trying to find means of telling the story without jeopardizing our sources. I think it's very important to use our imagination to find ways around this issue.

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Q: What about the structure of ownership of the media....

I think television and radio are owned by the state. Those we can safely exclude from any discussion of the open media in the country. You have a few very big companies that own most of the newspapers in South Africa. You've got the company we work for, Argus, you've got Times Media. These are the two English language giants. You've got Perskor and Nasionale Pers, two Afrikaans giants. These big companies are white owned companies, so that it is white interests they are looking after. And besides looking at white interests, you are also looking at profits for themselves essentially. So the telling of the story is secondary to them. To the owners of these companies. What is important is their profits and as I say, white interests. If a company like the Argus would give us a little more rope, because they know the audience we are writing for expects a little more radical writing than we would get in other Argus publications, so that we are given a more leeway. But again, just enough to be able to get the customers. To be able to get people buying the paper. To be able to continue getting profits out of the publication. But not enough to satisfy the black customer. Now it is because of these constraints that some people thought, what would happen if we owned our own papers, would we be able to tell it much better. It is as a result of that you have these new publications like the New Nation, South, the Indicator, the Weekly Mail. The problem with these publications at this point is that...at least with most of these publications is that they are established by groups that have got very limited interests. So that they become party organs rather than general newspapers. So that even with these so called alternative media, we've got the problem of limited interests that they are serving. We don't have black owned newspapers that are general newspapers that satisfy the general public that we don't have.

Fhami: you've got to look at Argus and so on as business entities and you've got to look at the state of business in the country. Whilst white South Africa would be prepared to talk about giving rights to black South Africans, but when it comes to economic control of the country's resources, they are just decidedly anti-whether they're both the liberal or conservative white, are decided that no type of economic power will ever be given to black people even in the next century. So when you have this at the back of your mind, then you will be perhaps able to understand how even with these black newspapers that are owned by the major companies, how far would they allow black control.... blacks to control these newspapers. They could do it perhaps with Ilanga in Natal, the newspaper that was bought by Gatsha Buthelezi. But it is significant to note that the Argus company has a very lucrative management contract and also they are controlling advertising, they are controlling nearly everything. The newspaper is in fact still being controlled by the Argus company, in terms of all the editorial functions. So this perhaps will also give you an idea, it's no longer...it's a question of the power structure in the country, it must always stay in white hands.

Joe: I always ask myself the question - if we got enough people to invest in a black publication, would this publication last in South Africa. It's doubtful that it would last. The first thing that is required is this massive deposit the government demands before you set up a newspaper. I think it's about R20,000. Very few people can afford to have 20,000 just lying around doing nothing in the governments coffers. But after that the chances of the publication getting banned, if it's an independent publication, are very high. So that the chances of losing that 20,000 deposit are very high. And very few people are prepared to risk that.....

Thami: Any publication depends on advertising. Now the people who've got.....who buy advertising are white people, are white business. Can you ever imagine white business supporting a black newspaper, a newspaper which is threatened with being in the country. Of course not. You just would never have any black newspaper surviving. What you are going to have, you are going to have these apologists like the Sowetan, City Press, where you have a black editorial staff. But when it comes to the actual control, the economic control, where the power lies, you find where the gravy is, you find that it's still a white control.

Joe: So that the independent papers that are there are established by certain political interests. They know they are going to lose money, they know they are going to lose... they may not survive for very long. But they are prepared to invest in that for political reasons. And that is why the publications tend to be party organs instead of general newspapers.

Q: What's your overall reaction about coverage of South Africa in the US?

Joe: I would say it's very sketchy. I get so frustrated every day trying to find out what is happening in South Africa. I don't know whether the problem is with the editorial decision makers back here in the United States or if it's the correspondents in South Africa. For one, I believe that 1984, 1985, 1986 made the decision to avoid to avoid a particular type of story from South Africa, violence, the police beating up innocent blacks, etc. because the government says those cannot be published, and because that type of violence has in fact...is on the decline now, that type of picture will not be on the screens. So it's very difficult for editorial decision makers to decide on the right story to tell about South Africa. So it's just pushed to the side and something else more exciting is pushed. As I say, the coverage of South Africa becomes very patchy.

Q: Do you find that reflected in people's general awareness of South Africa here?

Thami: To take what Joe was saying a little further, in addition to the news being sketchy on South Africa, you still find that they're very sectarian. There is alot that these foreign corres-

pondents in South Africa could say...background material... but they're not saying it because perhaps ideologically it's unacceptable to them. And I've been in touch with people at home, and I've received reports about certain things that are happening and you would find that there is a lot of interest to them. Perhaps the readers here wouldn't like to know anything about them. But again I would refer to the release of Mthopeng. I found that whilst the whole media was at the Mthopeng house, the Mthopeng press conference...but what...but nothing got onto the TV here. But this was a national leader in South Africa being released now why didn't.... why didn't the TV stations, the three major TV stations just carry a one minute clip, but they did not. And you find that there's so much they could carry. But they don't carry because ideologically there are certain things that they don't want to see happening. But those things are happening, so there is that sort of problem.

Joe: The story that people expect from South Africa is that story of violence. And they don't look to understand what is happening there. They don't know what in fact is happening. You talk to somebody about Apartheid and all he thinks about is white policemen beating up children. That's all they think about. The way the story was portrayed on television, in the newspapers I think was wrong right from the beginning, and that explains the ignorance. People are surprised when you walk in and you've got your children and your family. They are surprised that there is normal family life in South Africa.

Thami: They expect the children to have been killed by now.

Joe: I think it's the way the story was defined right from the beginning that you have this ignorance in the public and it's getting worse now that that story is no longer on the screens.
and tape 2.

Joe and Thami, Tape 3

Thami: What also blows me is that apartheid has been given a new interpretation by the international media. As far as they are concerned the struggle against apartheid, perhaps is a type of racial struggle where you want equal rights, civil rights, where you want equal to white people. And I don't understand, because I don't think that's the struggle that is being fought in the country. People are not fighting for human rights and civil rights or whatever. They're fighting for the right to shape the course and the future of their country. I'm referring to the indigenous people. So you find that now white Europe and America see our struggle as a struggle in which we want certain rights in other words, the only crime the white man in South Africa has done is that he's refusing us a few human rights. Had he given us those few human rights everything would be O.K. Now I even question the presence of the white man on his own terms, he should be in that country on my terms. That is the struggle we are fighting in the country. So you actually find the media itself is misinterpreting the struggle.

Q: The South African government seems to have an image it wants to impose upon the world. Is that the case and why is that the case?

Joe: South Africa is a very strange country. The government wants to part of the Western world. They want to be accepted as a Western type democracy. And this bothers them tremendously. That is why as far as the media is concerned, they will always be saying, can you quote any country in Africa that has media as free as we have here in South Africa. Because they believe they are part of this great democracy, of freedom, of press... of the press. And again they get very worried when the media portrays them as being violent, as being undemocratic, as being pariah of the world or something. They believe that the actions taken by citizens of America for instance, are because of what the media is saying about South Africa. The limited sanctions that came into force in America in 1986, they believe it is because of the media that those sanctions got passed, and if this continues, the image gets worse, then more sanctions will be imposed. And that is their major problem. They want to be accepted by the Western world, they want to continue trading with the Western world. They want that intimacy with the Western world, and that is why they are worried about the image. But at the same time they are not prepared to relinquish any power to the indigenous peoples of the country, and that is their dilemma.

Q: Can you talk about the manipulation of the communist conspiracy.....

Joe: The South African government has always tried to equate the struggle for liberation with communism. It goes back years, even before the nationalist party got into power. Because of the relationship between the ANC and the South African Communist Party, and much later the relationship between the PAC and the Chinese,

the government has been able to climb on the story that these are Communist controlled organizations, the struggle is manipulated by communists. In fact they are saying there is only a tiny fraction of the black community that is interested in the liberation struggle. The majority are just being manipulated by these ruthless people who use the necklace, who threaten people, who do whatever. So it's all a big communist conspiracy. People like Margaret Thatcher and Reagan have actually accepted the story. And they see the struggle in South Africa in fact as a struggle against communism and therefore they will back the white South African government in its fight against the communists. That is why you find America involved with South Africa in Angola. Although they want to say they're only involved with Savimbi but whichever you look at it they're involved with South Africa in Angola, in Namibia. And I believe that the sanctions bill that was passed in America in 1986 tied the sanctions to an investigation of the ANC, to see to what extent it is communist controlled. They want to blunt the liberation struggle by saying it is a communist struggle. And knowing that America is decidedly anti-communist, almost every American I've met is decidedly anti-communist. They're hoping to whip up that feeling to get support for white South Africa.

Q: So this is just a gigantic propaganda campaign on the part of South Africa. Would you agree with that?

Joe: It is definitely a propaganda campaign. There is no way you can tell a man that is oppressed, that he needs to fight for his own liberation. And you coerce him to fight for his own liberation. This is a spontaneous struggle by the people fighting oppression. And trying to say that it is being manipulated by Moscow or Peking is ridiculous. And the government knows it.

Thami: There is also the communist bogey inside the country with the ordinary white community. And they are using that very successfully. So you find that the ordinary white man in South Africa, when he looks at these organizations, the ANC, the PAC, he sees them as communist organizations. And he is not prepared to see them as organizations that are fighting for the liberation of their people. Because as far as the white man is concerned, yes well we might be delaying in this other privilege but the fact that he goes to Russia and China for assistance, it shows that he's a communist, and they want to take the country away from us and give it to the Russians and the Chinese. And that's what the ordinary white man argues in the country.

Joe: You talk to ordinary decent white people in the country and they will tell you very honestly that Tutu is a communist hiding behind a clerical collar...because of the stories they've been fed by the South African government. They don't believe he's a Christian trying to fight for Christian values, very few whites believe it.

Q: So when that is fed to the South African public, what form does that take?

Joe: The major propaganda machine is the radio. There's a fascinating program they have every morning at seven. It's supposed to be political comment. Every day...in fact in you want to measure the government's consensus, you just listen to that program. They will be attacking Tutu almost without fail almost every day. Or they will be attacking Boesak. But it looks like they get their cue from Pretoria. It's then picked up by the black TV stations and radio etc. The other ones who are always painting this picture of Tutu's being very bad people, and they will be publishing the good stories about the Bishop Moekoenas. Bishop Mokoena is a favorite on South African TV, South African radio. So they build their own people and want to destroy others using that medium. As far as the newspapers are concerned, the Afrikaaner publications that are read by blacks are very few. The Citizen and things like..... But in the end they are not able to use the written media, they use mainly radio and television.

Q: And the interviews with foreigners.....do you ever hear anything bad about South Africa on the media?

Joe: There's an occasional pretense at allowing criticism on radio and TV. But as I say, most of the time it's painting one picture only...South Africa is doing well, except for a few communists who are messing us up. And they have this knack of finding Americans who are completely out of this world...who will come into the country and tell us about the evils of communism. Who will tell us how lucky we are to be living under white rule.

Q: You say it's a knack or do you think it's really structured?

Joe: I suspect it's structured. They go out looking for these people all over Europe, all over America. Right wing evangelists etc.

Q: What kind of an impact do you think that has?

Very little. In fact none whatsoever on blacks. But it just helps to bolster white confidence I think. When moral sags, a Falwell comes into the country to bolster that moral I think. But they have no impact whatsoever on the black communities.

Thami: In fact the church is a very powerful medium. They are using the church very effectively in this communist bogey. These are Calvinists. the Afrikaaners are Calvinists and they're got this belief in the church that god gave them that country and they are a very religious people. So now the government and the power bloc in white South Africa is manipulating the churches to go big on this anti-communist theme. And they have faithful followers. millions of these whites...as soon as the minister gets into the pulpit and he say this. it's Amen Hallelulah. They dare not question him.

Q: Could you describe what happened with the necklace story....

Joe: The necklace story was in one way frightening and in another

it was understandable. Frightening in the sense that when you saw the first pictures of necklacing, it was the most horrible scene I've ever seen. When they torched a woman in the East Rand, I think footage of that killing has been on every network in the world. But the government used these pictures to start saying that the people who are supposed to be fighting for liberation are the people who are necklacing you. So they were putting fear amongst the people saying kick out these horrible killers from your communities. In the outside world, the same pictures were used, but this time they were used to fight the liberation organizations saying if you support the ANC, if you support the PAC, this is what you are supporting. And as I say that was very frightening footage, and it was very effective. It alienated communities outside the country from liberation organizations, and internally it made people to start weeding out people engaged in the liberation struggle. But in a way as I said, it was an understandable phenomenon. The campaign, the necklace campaign was directed at people who were seen to be selling out. People who were seen to be making apartheid succeed. So that the police were the victims, soldiers, and police informers. The problem was a rumor would get somebody killed. That was no way that people could sift the information they got. It was understandable in the sense that it was a people trying to fight apartheid, and without thinking they picked up the very first weapon they could find. But as I say, it was fighting, and the government used that effectively, both inside the country and outside the country.

Q: Does the government use state security to cover up corruption

Joe: I haven't had any direct experience of that.

Thami: I think the way in which they operate. The people in middle management, that is people in the army, the police, the state departments, you get the feeling that anything that is going to shake, that is going to rock the boat, is seen as a threat to the security of the state so you are going to get...I mean they are going to be ultra-reactive and actually associate you...try and associate you with plots against the government. That would be at middle level and lower level. At higher levels I think that one would not be able to...that would not be easily discernible because those would be aware of the danger of...as an example one would look at the protection that the community councillor, the councillor, the town councils enjoy. Whilst some of the town councillors were being protected because of their, they were and still are an endangered species from the radical forces in the townships. But the way in which the police have actually also looked the other way when there were these obvious cases of corruption where people do not get arrested. And that gives me an idea that they are not very keen to be investigated these things because...I mean they are not very keen to be investigated things...we had one official of the JMC's in the Soweto council he was virtually confessing, giving an interview to us as to what was actually happening in the town councils and he says that even the officials in the Transvaal end of tape 3

Tape 4

So the officials in the Transvaal Provincial Administration were not keen to do anything and in fact the attitudes seemed to be, why do you want to give the enemies of the country ammunition. And this is what they were saying to newspapers, to certain reporters, you want to give our enemies ammunition, so in other words, because we've got enemies internationally and because this is going to provide ammunition for the let's keep quiet about this corruption, after all what's a little corruption between friends. That is the attitude you get....and also I told you, if you remember, a few years ago the Botha government tried to pilot a bill known as the Advocate's General Act, and the motive of this act was that in the case....this was after Muldergate. where there are these cases of....these cases where there is obviously misuse of government funds and so on, then obviously it must not be reported in the media but it must be reported to a judge who must investigate it and so on. So you actually have these linkages between corruption in government and state security where if at all you are going to expose corruption in government, you are seen as fueling the campaign against South Africa. Why must you expose such things you see. That is the one link that I see which has emerged over the few years I have been a journalist.

Q: You're saying that investigative reporting is not really possible....

Investigative reporting is very limited. Let us look at how the Baragwanath Hospital, where it was an obvious case of.....where there was the usual.....treatment of.....the way Baragwanath Hospital was being run. But you could see how the government reacted to the exposure, that they did not see this as the ordinary...as the exposure of bad conditions in a hospital. The government got involved, everybody got involved, and everybody was defending what was in actual fact indefensible. And this is what you see throughout.....really every facet of life in the country, this is what you see, where you are going to expose anything about separate development, how bad it is and then you are seen as....I mean the enemies of the Republic. Even on the pensions thing, the queues, the little queues we have of pensioners, the reaction of Mabuzo when certain things were being exposed was the press is being unreasonable, this is the situation and then you go and have an interview with Mabuzo and you find that he has this attitude that you guys, you are fighting the government, you don't even want to see the good we are doing. That's how they argue. So you find that when you are a journalist, the first question you ask yourself is, how are they going to see my investigation? You get worried about that. Now when we spoke about self-censorship earlier on, something I wanted to add is that the most traumatic thing about this emergency regulations is that you tend to say what is it that I am going to write which the government does not like. You operate from that. So even now when you got to investigate that story, it's a question of is the government going to see this investigation as an honest investigation, and more often than not they are not going to see it as an honest

investigation, no way because you are exposing apartheid. So there is this link between state security and just normal professional activity by journalists, by lawyers, by doctors, by everybody.

Joe: I think it is difficult to answer your question, because we start from the premise that the government always gives you what it wants you to know. The Police Act says you cannot write anything about the police...unless they confirm it. The Defense Act says the same thing about the army. The Prisons Act says the same thing about the prison conditions. There's a whole veil of secrecy. They don't have to say specifically, we cannot give you that information because of state security. They don't have to say that. All they do is refuse to confirm whatever you want them to confirm. So there's been no specific case where they have said you may not publish this because of state security. The only times they've done this is information for instance about guerrillas, where they've told the newspapers, don't publish this information for the next forty eight hours whatever, because of state security, we believe we cannot release that information. But generally, all they do is refuse to confirm whatever information you might have.

Q: Can you describe the censorship system in SA.....

Joe: The education system in the country is designed to produce very docile blacks....who will be prepared to do the most menial jobs and not go for anything ambitious. The entire education system is based on the philosophy of separate development. If you learn history, you are taught a type of history that makes you know your place as a black in this big structure. That your place is secondary to that of whites. You are told for instance the indigenous blacks, the indigenous Africans don't have a prior claim in South Africa because whites and blacks came into the country simultaneously...I mean whites moving from the south and black from the north. Even when the whole education program was designed, Verwoerd mentioned specifically that he is tired of the missionaries educating blacks to the point where they believed they could do skilled work. And he said they should forever be taught to know their place in our society as our servants. So that from the primary level right up to university level, all the basic tenets of apartheid - separation, race, and white leadership are drummed into us.

Thami: And that's the attitude the newspaper owners have. Some time ago the Hillbrow hospital which was a white hospital, it was then known as the Johannesburg General....there was going to be a new one that was built so this one was going to be a white elephant, it was not going to be used...so it was....now because white patients...whites would be moved out of there, this old hospital to a new hospital, it was given to blacks, and the then manager of the Sowetan was excited about that. He expected us to write a leader in which we are saying that something good is being done. You can imagine a used hospital being given to blacks and we're to write an editorial showing how wonderful the

government is. It has allowed whites...blacks to go and...to use a hospital in town and they....this was the temper of his argument. That again blacks would now be able to go into town and so on....but he forgot a few fundamentals....this was an old hospital in the first place, and if it's no longer suitable for whites then.....it can be suitable for blacks? The facilities there, even up to this day are mediocre compared to the facilities you find in the white hospitals. So it is this attitude you find in South Africa, look...you must perpetually accept us as your protectors, as people who have civilized you, as people who are going to show you the way. That is what Joe is driving across.

Q: Do you think that's as true in the 80's as it was in the 60's, as far as education.....

Joe: Yeah it is. Up to the sixties fortunately, we had the missionaries educating blacks. So that they were independent of the state and they could teach us much more than we are getting from the state now. But I think in the 60's... we were about the last group that was being phased out, products of the missionaries. From about '56....'55. '56. you had this new group coming in under this new syllabus, the Bantu education syllabus. That is when you started seeing this deterioration in black education, both the quality and the quantity of the education just plummeted. At this point you now get the products of Bantu education, the 1976 group that rioted, were in fact the first products of Bantu education, and they were saying we've had enough of this.

Q: It didn't achieve what it set out to do...

Joe: On the contrary, it produced a very....a very militant generation. The first products of Bantu education, when they started these separate universities in 1960. Universities like and these.... it was the products of these universities that created black consciousness inside the country. And they are the ones who were very militant who came out opposing the white system there. The Steve Biko's, the Abram Tiro'sthey were products of these tribal universities. And they were the people who fought the system more than anybody else at the time. So that in fact the government created an animal, a Frankenstein they didn't expect.

Q: Is there a united front among journalist of all colors against censorship?

Joe: You have the various organizations that are fighting censorship. But they've also come together as a united front... Save the Press campaign.

Thami: Although there was this Save the Press Campaign. But here again you find the politicalI would say the suspicions have again raised their ugly heads. Because whilst we were hoping that this would be a united front, but already it has got cracks peculiar to the political life in South Africa. For instance, it has been dominated by white liberals. This Save the Press Campaign.

Again here you find that black journalists, the people who are at the end of the big stick, they are being shoved to the background. And this happened when the Weekly Mail was facing a threat. Significantly, the Save the Press Campaign was started when the Weekly Mail was facing a threat, a white newspaper was being threatened. So you had all this flurry. Then again you find that the standards that are being used are standards that come from these white journalists. Now their view is that papers like the Sowetan and the City Press... those papers are part of the establishment, so they are not as severely effected by the restrictions as would the New Nation and the Weekly Mail would be. But already they are qualifying, they are using their own sort of value judgements. So these are some of the things now that are creating problems. A good campaign but I don't think it would have lived long enough... and then there was the Media Workers Association of South Africa, to which all black journalists belong. It was invited to the said campaign more as an after-thought when somebody remembered that by the way we have black journalists... and you find that the hostilities between the Association of Democratic Journalists and MWASA keep on rearing their ugly head. Now the ADJ consists of about seven black journalists and fifteen white journalists, that is their membership. And then you have MWASA which consists of the bulk of the industry. There was this Save the Press Campaign, but already it has been bogged down by ideological parleying in the liberation movement.

Q: As a black reporter do you have a problem of access to whites?

Joe: I have interviewed a number of whites including cabinet ministers, etc. But very strange, my access to the government has always been to officials who deal with black affairs. I have tried a few times to arrange an interview with PW Botha, and he's always busy, he's unable to meet me, etc. There's no official position that we will not talk to black journalists, but there will always be an excuse why he will not talk to me. But I've spoken to the Minister who's in charge of black education, I've spoken to the Minister who's in charge of labor, I've spoken to quite a number of officials... So officially there's no bar on black journalists interviewing white officials.

Q: If we take the case of New Nation and Zwelakhe, why were they considered threats?

Joe: Zwelakhe's case is particularly interesting. When he was detained, an application was made to have him released, the government insisted that he was not being detained because of his duties as a journalist, they claimed it was because of his association with the National Education Crisis Committee. He had gone there to the NECC conference to go and address them, and because of that address he was then associated with that organization. But lo and behold, when he was discharged... I mean released from prison, he was stopped from working as a journalist, which seems to suggest that he was being detained for his role as a journalist. It's irony I think.... end tape 4

Tape 5

Joe: As I said the irony then was that he is now stopped from working as a journalist, which indicates that he is being punished because he is a journalist. Now as far as his newspaper is concerned, it's was part of a pattern. What's happened is that I believe the government is moving in from both edges, from the right and from the left. It started with the New Nation on the left, New Nation, South and Weekly Mail. And on the extreme right it went for a publication called Die Stem, an Afrikaans conservative publication. Now I believe there's a movement from the edges to the center, so that by the time the government moves to the center, the publications will already be censoring themselves...that seems to be their aim. The Weekly Mail, South, New Nation, the Sowetan and a few other publications were warned more or less at more or less same time that they were publishing subversive material. And as I say they picked on the New Nation to start demonstrating their strength. As I say I don't believe it was isolated because Zwelakhe was involved in it. But I think it's a movement from the edges. I believe since the beginning of this year they have gone for some more publications on the left, Grassroots, New Era, Work-in-Progress. I'm not too sure what the fourth one is. But they have already received warnings and it's very likely that the same process is going to happen with them.

Q: Has either of you been arrested for journalistic activities?

It's very difficult to disentangle these things. You can't say I was arrested for journalistic activities or for non-journalistic activities. The government always insists you are not being arrested for journalistic activities, and that's what they have always been saying. But in '76 when I was detained, I was President of the Union of Black Journalists at the time and we had just published a newsletter which was a collation of the first person reports of all the journalists, black journalists who were involved in the 1976 riots...June 16th riots. And I think it was a very telling document. Because it was for the first time that all the stuff had been brought together. The government started by banning that publication. And then they went to the homes of the officials of the Union of Black Journalists, getting all the copies they could lay their hands on. And finally they came and collected me and locked me up. It was a whole pattern that indicated that that publication was what they were worried about.

Q: Were you charged with something?

Joe: No. I wasn't charged. They just lock you up and forget about it. And this time I was locked up under what's called preventative detention. Just kept me in the cells for four months and let me go after four months. If you look at a person like Brian Sokutu, he's in detention right now, he's a journalist, then the government has been saying, he is not being detained because of his activities as a journalist, but after more than two

years in detention. the government is now trying to get him to give evidence against some people in the township. Now where do you separate the evidence he's supposed to give from that of a journalist. He's supposed to be a journalist who had been reporting on things that were happening in his township. Now he's supposed to give evidence about those things. And the government will still insist that he is not being detained because of his activities as a journalist. So it's very hard to disentangle these two.

Thami: Well I think that my.....they can't deny that they arrested me for being a journalist. and I served eighteen months imprisonment for being a journalist. I was arrested when I was having an interview with and they then detained me for eight months and thereafter they wanted me to give evidence against him on the basis of what he had told me. And of course I refused and I was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment. And I served it. I was in jail for twenty six months, so I don't think they can deny that.....I am a victim of a systematic campaign against black journalists. And then I've been detained several times. and always it was when I was out on assignment.

I've been detained several times for short periods of course, and always I was detained whilst I was out on assignment. But I think that the most.....what really can best illustrate this is perhaps when you look at black journalism over the past ten years. About seven black journalists are in exile.... Enoch Duma, Ned Serache, (names others) are in exile. And about eight black journalists have served terms of imprisonment. I referring to Joe Thlolo, myself....those are the names that come to mind. Then those that have been detained, several of them have been detained.... Willie.... Gabu Tugwana, Joe, myself....one has got to look at how many black journalists have not been detained and you can have your question answered. Percy Goboza, Aggrey Khasste, you first got to look at all the prominent journalists and say, has this one been detained or not detained, and you'll find that nearly all of them, eighty per cent of them have been detained and you find that now so.....the question to be answered is why is it that most black journalists have either been detained, served terms of imprisonment, or been harassed in one way or the other. Not only this but there are at least seven journalists, black journalists who are in exile...and this from a community of plus or minus two hundred journalists over the years. I'm not talking of a journalist population of two hundred. But since 1976 one can say that there's been a population of two hundred journalists which is a very low population, but these are the casualties. It does show that there is some campaign against this community. I think that is the evidence that we've got to use. What has happened to them, those who have gone into exile. The number who have been detained. Those who have even served terms of imprisonment. Then we have two who have even been killed I referring to the killing two years ago of he was killed right in the police cells. This is the evidence that we can bring forward to show that there is a systematic campaign against black journalists by the government, although of course the gov't

will deny.

Q: Is there such a thing in South Africa as pleading protection of sources?

Joe: They subpoena you under section 207 of the criminal procedures act. There a magistrate demands you give the information and if you don't give the information you go to jail for minimum three months and he can continue sending you to jail until you give him the information. A number of journalists have been subpoenaed under this law, like Zwelakhe Sisulu was subpoenaed under that law. Jon Qwelane several times, Maud Motanyane....few journalists have in fact been summoned. There's no way you can protect your sources. But when they use section 207 subpoena, that's a very gentle way of doing it. The normal method is to lock you up under the detention laws and interrogate you. It's Section 27, it used to be Section 6. And they can interrogate you for as long as they want to until you answer satisfactorily, as the law says. And they determine if the information you're giving is satisfactory.

Q: Does this have a chilling effect on the people you interview?

Joe: It does. People will always be wary of giving sensitive information to journalists because they're aware that in the end their names will come up. In fact, very recently we had a very frightening case when journalists went out to interview people in the East Rand, and after that interview they had written stories about them, the police came and demanded to get the names of the informers from the journalists. And they threatened to lock them up under Section 207. But from some source or other the police seem to have gotten hold of the list of these informers. They went to the....sources and intimidated them. But in the end, all the sources write affidavits to the newspaper saying that the information published was not true, and the journalists were facing prosecution for publishing false information against the police.

Thami: When I was in court...I pleaded that as a journalist I did not see myself morally obliged to give evidence. And the magistrate said I did not have a just and lawful reason. He said under the law. South Africa's law does not make provisions for journalists to be indemnified. And then he always said that there was no just reason for me to refuse to give evidence. And he then sentenced me to eighteen months. So I think that answers your question.

Q: Does that have a chilling effect on your work?

Joe: In a way, because there's always this red light flashing in the back of your mind. If somebody gives you some information, you're always worried - will I one day be asked to give evidence about this information. So you also tend to shy away from certain information from certain sources, because you know you might have to be answering questions later on.

Q: Do you ever say to people, don't tell me that, it might be too dangerous....

Joe: I haven't had to do that. But it is possible to say that.

Thami: When I've done it. As soon as I talk to somebody, and I see him veer dangerously into giving me the works, I say "look old chap. I've been to jail. I don't want to go back to jail. I've said it and I'll continue saying it because there are certain things one gets to know and those things I'm not going to publish in any case. For instance, if I told a youngster that telling me this and this and this....and I know I'm not going to publish that story. Why should I still allow him to tell me. But when he gets arrested, he's going to tell the police that he told me, and the next thing that the police will be giving me a subpoena for me to go and give evidence against that youngster. So for his safety and my safety I normally say, "look old chap, just stop right there. don't go further than this, and it's safe for both of us.

Q: How does that square with your education as a journalist?

Joe: I think in South Africa, you come into journalism knowing the limitations. I know for instance, I have no illusions, I know that I can go to a certain point and I can't go beyond. I've always debated with myself - is this now the time to get out, and so far I've been saying o.k.. I suspect I've been useful up to this point, so I'll continue. But with the worsening...the struggle intensifying inside the country, the time is definitely going to come when I'll find it easier to get out of journalism.

Thami: I think that you have a...I sometimes get into a situation where I know where the story I have is the truth. But because of the laws, I can't publish the story. And then I find that now I am losing...my conscience bugs me....that here these people came to me because I was the last resort to expose this evil, now what are they going to think of me tomorrow. Because they're not going to believe the government. It's their thinking their estimation of me is going to be based on my inability to publish the story. Then you just find that you get frustrated and you feel like I would have been better off in some other profession. You do get these feelings.

Q: Is this happening to many journalists?

Joe: This sense of frustration, I think it is. In the past three years it's been cyclical. Once a new set of regulations is published, then you feel very depressed and we seriously think of pulling out. But then after a while we sort of rally around and we find there is a way of telling the story in spite of the regulations. Then we take heart and continue. Then another set comes in that closes the loopholes we had found, then you get us walking around with long faces again. That's been our story for the last three or four years. //end tape 5

Joe Thloloe and Thami Mazwai

Q: What is the difference between the older regulations and the ones that have been handed down recently.

Joe: The laws have been changing gradually from the first time they were imposed in 1985. Each time they were challenged in court and the government would go and rewrite them to comply with the court's decision, and that is how we got to the final set that was produced in 1988. And that one was very tight, even the lawyers couldn't challenge those....they're very well written. Basically they're saying exactly the same thing, that you cannot publish subversive statements, you cannot quote a member of a restricted organization. That you cannot quote....you cannot write anything that either enhances the image of or improves the score that various newspapers have been closed down for a number of weeks.

Q: They tell you what improves the image of an organization...

We had a very interesting case where they warned us because we were supposed to be enhancing the image of the PAC and the ANC. And some of the stories we were quoting were very ludicrous. The one story was a wire story from Associated Press saying there had been a meeting between Oliver Tambo of the ANC and the Archbishop of Canterbury Runcie. It was a straightforward story saying there had been this meeting. We were not quoting Tambo because we knew we couldn't quote Tambo. We were not saying what Tambo had said. But in the end because we had published this story saying there was this meeting, we're accused of enhancing the image of the ANC. The same thing goes for a piece that I wrote on a visit to Harare in Zimbabwe...where a tour guide showed us the place where a leader of the ANC and the PAC were buried. They were laying side by side in the graveyard. And I just wrote this particular sentence with no comment, nothing. I said the guide showed us where John Pukela was buried, where Joe Qwabi was buried. And because of that we were supposed to be enhancing the image of the ANC and the PAC. So that again, it's a very subjective interpretation that they give.

Q: Do these new regulations affect black journalists more than they effect white journalists?

Thami: I would say that they effect both, although the people they would be severe on would be a black journalist. Because black journalists are basically in the frying pan, they're in the oven. They're part and parcel of what is happening. What the govt does not want known. Things are happening in the townships and we see these things happening. We don't interview people. So that's why they would effect black journalists most. But I don't think that it was the aim of government...as far as the government is concerned, any journalist who writes certain types of stories is a danger to the state, but in effect, the people who do write these stories happen to be black journalists because they stay in

the townships and these things effect them directly.

Q: What happened in the Soweto uprising. Tell us the kind of thing you could do then and what you could report now.

Thami: Well, Joe was in jail, so perhaps I could be of assistance here. In 1976 the police were... gave regular statements and we were able to get into any area, unrest area. And we were basically able to report on every thing that happened. Today we can't go into an area of unrest. The police do not talk. Instead they give their reports to Pretoria. And what you get is an edited version. And that edited version has been very politicized. It's a politician giving that statement. Rather than a policeman who was present when certain things happened. And what is more serious, in 1976... the type of action that is being used today is more severe than the type of action used in '76. The police are more ruthless now. And as a result, they're trying to hide the type of action that they take. They're trying to make sure people don't know about it.

Joe: I think in '76 journalists achieved much more than they achieved in the recent unrest. One of the very graphic stories we had in '76 was of a journalist hiding inside a waste drum. And he stayed in there while he hid and listened to the police giving instructions to hostel dwellers to go and attack the community. And that's one of the best pieces of writing I've ever seen. And today we can't do that. When the unrest takes place you've got to take the opposite direction, you can't be in a place of unrest. So that even if you're there by some accident, you will not be able to write what you actually saw, what you actually heard. It's only the edited versions from Pretoria that you can publish.

Q: So that if something like Sharpeville happened now, you would only get the official version. Is that right?

JOE: If Sharpeville happened now, you wouldn't be able to get the full story of what happened. You wouldn't be able to get the eyewitness stories. You wouldn't be able to get journalists in the thick of the fighting. All you would get would be the official version from Pretoria. And it normally starts with a group of people who are stoning the police and the police retaliated and ten people were killed. If you look at what happened at Sharpeville, you had some very graphic reporting there. Pictures of people lying on the ground after being shot dead. Stories of how it all happened. Very graphic. The journalists were on the scene and they were doing their work. But today you will never be able to get that type of journalism. Not in South Africa.

Thami: It's an offense to take a picture of somebody who has been killed in unrest. If you a photographer and you see somebody has been killed during unrest, you got to take a picture of a child playing somewhere in the corner.

Q: What about... open and death squads...

Q: Has that to do with the state becoming immune to press and public pressures? Or have people become numb?

I think it has to do with all those kinds of things. I also think it has to do with the fact that violence has a dynamic of its own, and that those who are locked directly in a struggle with each other, who are direct combatants, have more pressing things to deal with than to bother about who's right and what...in the heat of that conflict. Of course that hasn't been a generalized conflict here, it waxes and it wanes, and certainly at this point in time it isn't relevant. But what is relevant is the kind of scarring that has gone in its wake...that as you say, people do become immune. I find that we have become immune. Things that we would have considered eminently newsworthy a few years ago, would scarcely warrant a mention anymore. I think we've seen too much horror.

Q: Hasn't a certain segment of the press grown stronger in the face of increasing censorship?

When people ask if a certain segment of the press has grown stronger in the face of increasing censorship they probably refer to the alternative press. And certainly it's true that we have more publications that are not dependent on the commercial funding and the kind of rules that apply to a self-sufficient, commercial media than we've had previously. The question is whether these kinds of newspapers might not have been stronger still, had they not had the kind of opposition they have had. I think it's something we really can't answer. It's just very difficult to answer.

Q: It has been said that the government has used the press to carry out its own propaganda war which has been largely successful. Would you agree with that assessment?

I would certainly agree that the government is well aware of the fact that the media can be used to suit its own ends. And certainly they have acknowledged that in regaining control of resistant areas, they have both a hearts and minds approach, and an outright repressive approach. And this more than anything is something we have learnt, is that censorship is not simply a hole, censorship is not simply a silence, censorship is a systematic distortion. The distortion occurs to some degree by eliminating simply by eliminating certain kinds of messages. It is made even more distinct by supplementing that with what the government would consider its own desirable kinds of messages. I think it's very important to realize that television, insofar as it relates to news and documentaries, is entirely in the hands of a government controlled institution. And that radio, in a country where most people are illiterate, and radio has an enormous influence, is again overwhelmingly in the hands of the government. And these media are certainly being used to put forward the government's own vision of reform, the government's own vision of what it wishes people to believe. And certainly it doesn't end there either. It's very hard to say who's always responsible for

the kinds of pamphlets, the kinds of newsletters that are beginning to appear in black townships. But there is a proliferation of these kinds of things. And to add to that the state has created of course its Bureau of Information, which is a vast bureaucracy. Geared particularly at beaming the message abroad and certainly at countering the kinds of initiatives taken by anti-apartheid organizations. Certainly they've given enormous attention to the churches, who have taken a particularly strong stand against apartheid and who have been very much the focus of the Bureau and the Bureau's kind of counter information. Yeah, so I think that really important to bear in mind.

Tape 3

Q: Most journalists are pessimistic about the future of press freedom in South Africa. What is your view?

The immediate future I don't think looks good. We don't see any signs that the state of emergency is about to be lifted. And I think it will take a long time for us to recover from the kind of dearth of information, and from the kinds of patterns that have set-in in people's thinking. I think it is going to be fairly difficult to recover.

Well, one thing that you find is that there is very little investigative reporting done anymore. Because so little is answered and so little information is given, and information is so strictly controlled, and given out in platitudes and the shortest most terse kinds of statements possible. This doesn't encourage an atmosphere of investigation, of questioning and of the like. This is an authoritarian society. It is a police state, and people don't question in those conditions. The risks of investigating are high.

Q: Can you talk about the first state of emergency in 1985 and how things changed quite radically in 1986.

The first state of emergency was imposed in 1985 when many areas of the country were literally in flames. You had the situation for instance, near Johannesburg where one political funeral would end in shootings and generate another funeral. This was the time when you had the beginning of very severe attacks on people who were suspected of being police informers. This was the time when townships were literally awash with tear gas. And the first concern seemed to be to get rid of the image. To stop those kinds of scenes of insurrectionary violence from flashing around the world. To stop people across the world from seeing unarmed civilians facing heavily armed contingents of soldiers and police. And for a long time this indeed was the main interference that we had with the media. It seems to be particularly geared with South Africa's image abroad, and not so much with interfering with the internal dynamics of organization and mobilization. That came in the second phase of the state of emergency.