
More Than 'Just a Bump in the Road?'

*A Source Analysis of the Effects of the Muldergate Scandal on South Africa's
International Image in the 1970s and 1980s.*

Ben Bailey

Supervised by Dr. Heather Wolfram

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates how the Muldergate scandal affected South Africa's international image. In his book *Selling Apartheid*, Ron Nixon claimed that the Muldergate scandal had a negligible effect, stating that it was "just a bump in the road." Nixon then concluded his chapter on Muldergate without further explanation or justification. I have investigated how the Muldergate Scandal was portrayed by foreign media, and sought to gauge the foreign public response to it. I did this by examining articles from three London newspapers between the 1960s and 1980s. I will show that the events of the Muldergate Scandal were made public through these newspapers, and despite the copious information available, the scandal did not have a significant impact on the Apartheid Government. This confirms Nixon's "bump in the road" claim.

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Abbreviations.

BOSS – Bureau of State Security
 ANC – African National Congress
 OCR – Optical Character Recognition
 SAAN – South African Associated Newspaper

Afrikaans Words.¹

Verligte: Literally translated as ‘enlightened ones.’ A group of comparatively more liberal and left-leaning members of the National Party.

Verkrampte: Literally translated as ‘cramped ones.’ Members of the National Party who took a hardline approach devoted to the idea of white supremacy.²

Apartheid: The political system of segregation instituted in South Africa from 1948-1991.
 It had two colloquialised sub-categories, Petty and Grand Apartheid.

Petty Apartheid: Apartheid in practice at an everyday level. Examples include: segregated toilets, benches, and doors.

Grand Apartheid: Apartheid in practice at a national level, usually applied through legal policies.
 Example: The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, passed in 1949.

Bantustan: A rural area of self-government for black South Africans to live in, as designated by the Apartheid Government. Bantustans tended to be puppet states located on unwanted rural lands of little economic value.

¹ For continuation of flow and ease of reading, all non-English words will be written without italics.

² For further reading on the nature of the *verligte* and *verkrampte* divide, see Sanford Ungar, *Africa: The People and Politics of an Emerging Continent* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 239.

Part One: Unraveling the Enigma.

*“What is remarkable is that the scandal did little to hurt the **international image** of South Africa. Through the scandal, the world had been given a glimpse of the lengths to which the country would go to protect itself, and it gave further political ammunition to the still-growing anti-Apartheid movement. All the same, the Apartheid Government managed to end the 1970s by holding off economic sanctions and other punitive actions against it. Muldergate was just a **bump in the road**. The Apartheid propaganda machine continued to roll on.”* [emphasis added]³

- Ron Nixon, 2015.

In 1978, South Africa’s Apartheid Government faced its worst political scandal since the beginning of Apartheid.⁴ The Information Scandal, dubbed ‘Muldergate’ after the Minister of Information Cornelius ‘Connie’ Mulder, revealed the existence of South Africa’s secret propaganda war, waged to sell Apartheid’s racist ideologies to the West. It was managed by the Department of Information and headed up by Eschel Rhoodie, the Secretary of Information. Muldergate exposed the widespread corruption, bribery, extortion, self-enrichment, and misappropriation of government funds that was rife within the National Party.⁵ It shook the very foundations of white South Africa, and radically reshaped the already divided National Party. Muldergate tarnished the righteous image these hyper-Calvinist leaders spent years portraying to their devout supporters.⁶ Muldergate resulted in Prime Minister Vorster’s ignominious retirement, the ‘early retirement’ of Secretary of Information Eschel Rhoodie, the fall from grace of Connie Mulder, and the public revelation of the manipulative disposition of General Hendrik van den Bergh, the former head of

³ Ron Nixon, *Selling Apartheid: South Africa's Global Propaganda War* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2015), 100.

⁴ For the purposes of the essay I will capitalise ‘Apartheid,’ for I refer to it as the system of institutionalised racism by the South African Government. For a good definition of the characteristics and nature of Apartheid, see Merle Lipton, “Reform: Destruction or Modernization of Apartheid,” in *South Africa in Crisis*, ed. Jesmond Blumenfeld (London & New York: Croon Helm, 1987), 34-56.

⁵ For consistency and simplicity of language, all references to the events of the ‘The Information Scandal’ or the ‘Muldergate scandal,’ will simply be called Muldergate, with no italics or inverted commas to assist overall reading.

⁶ For more on the effects of Muldergate see: Allister Sparks, foreword to *Muldergate: The Story of the Information Scandal*, by Mervyn Rees and Chris Day (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1980) XIV; Dan O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Ohio: Ohio University, 1996), 230; Richard Bissell, *South Africa and the United States: The Erosion of an Influence Relationship* (New York: Praeger, 1982).

BOSS. Before Muldergate, Mulder was one of the leading candidates to succeed Vorster as Prime Minister. Many scholars and commentators have acknowledged that Muldergate was the deciding factor that culminated in Mulder's loss in the upcoming election to fellow National Party candidate, Pieter Willem (P.W.) Botha.⁷ In *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994*, Dan O'Meara claimed it was P.W. Botha's ascension to Prime Minister that "accelerated both the process of reform and the final sundering of the National Party."⁸ This shows that O'Meara viewed Muldergate as foundational for the demise of Apartheid. Considering O'Meara's claim, how could Nixon state that Muldergate was "just a bump in the road," hardly affecting Apartheid's "international image?"⁹ What is even more confounding is that Nixon does not substantiate his claim with evidence.

This dissertation examines Muldergate's portrayal within London's media. The events of Muldergate were covered by the three newspapers I selected. This small sample of English newspapers suggest that the events of Muldergate were more than sufficiently covered by the English general media. I dedicate the greater parts of chapter one and two to proving this. Chapter three provides reasons for the West's underwhelming reaction to Muldergate. This reaction allowed the scandal to become "just a bump in the road." All chapters are structured thematically, rather than chronologically, to reduce unnecessary repetition. This dissertation challenges the current historiographic trends in studies of both Muldergate and Apartheid. There has been a

⁷ For ease of understanding, I will always refer to Prime Minister Pieter Willem Botha as P.W. Botha, as to clearly distinguish him from R.F. 'Pik' Botha, who was also a member of the National Party and candidate in the 1978 election.

⁸ O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 230.

⁹ Nixon, *Selling Apartheid*, 100.

decrease in scholarly interest in Muldergate since the 1980s. A large volume of books were written about both Muldergate and Apartheid in the 1980s, as it was recent news, appealing to political and social scientists alike. By the late 1990s, scholarly interest in Muldergate had faded, and this trend continued into the 2000s. A very simple search for 'Muldergate' within the University of Canterbury's library database across three decades, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, showed the quantity of works written on the topic has decreased. The results revealed 99, 64, and 35 works respectively. Although this is a crude measurement device, it is indicative of the trend of decreasing scholarly interest in Muldergate. This logic follows if one considers that Muldergate is in a state of limbo, too old to be of interest to social scientists, and too recent to appeal to historians. This means that my research has focused on works published in the 1980s as well as news media, as much of Muldergate's source material was produced by journalists. There have been numerous works, such as Nixon's, that examined Apartheid propaganda in the media, and even works that have examined the relationship between Apartheid and the media. However, there has been little primary research done testing Nixon's "bump in the road" claim through foreign opinion as displayed in London's media. By researching in London newspapers, I sought to uncover how Apartheid has been viewed by overseas nations, and to show that Muldergate did precious little to hurt South Africa's international image.

The Apartheid Government placed great importance on how the British media portrayed them. In *The Press and Apartheid: Repression and Propaganda in South Africa*, William Hachten and Anthony Giffard noted that in 1959, "the South African Information Department prepared an analysis of British newspapers, which purported to show that three-quarters of their items about

South Africa were concerned with 'negative subjects' which created 'an unfortunate impression in the British reader.'"¹⁰ This shows that before the events of Muldergate, the Apartheid Government valued how they were portrayed by the British media. In *South Africa and the International Media, 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation*, James Sanders, who has written on media responses to Apartheid, argued the importance of studying British media when he stated, "[a]lthough the central thrust of the Department of Information's program of manipulation was aimed at the U.S. media, Britain remained 'in terms of psychology, if not so much in real terms, of the greatest importance to South Africa'."¹¹ This reinforces the idea that the Apartheid Government was greatly concerned by their portrayal in the British media. After all, it was the negative press about Apartheid that led the Department of Information to initiate their propaganda war. The newspapers I examined are all London dailies, being the *Times*, the *Telegraph*, and the *Daily Mail*. In *Newspaper Power: The New National Press in Britain*, Jeremy Tunstall claimed that London's newspapers were influential throughout England, stating, "[t]he British press is an extreme case within Europe, in the extent to which it is dominated by national newspapers published in one city. The leading publications are all London daily newspapers."¹² London's dailies have a wider range of influence than just one city.

These newspapers' past issues are fully accessible online through Gale Newsvault. The University of Canterbury database provided access to the *Times* digital archive, whereas access to the *Daily*

¹⁰ William Hachten and Anthony Giffard, *The Press and Apartheid: Repression and Propaganda in South Africa* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin, 1984), 231.

¹¹ James Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 210.

¹² Jeremy Tunstall, *Newspaper Power: The New National Press in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 2.

Mail and the *Telegraph* was through Christchurch City Libraries. Along with newspapers, there were other sources of information about Muldergate made available to the public. The South African reporter Mervyn Rees from the *Rand Daily Mail* released a full-length book in 1980 detailing the two years he spent researching Muldergate.¹³ Along with Rees's investigative journalism, those implicated in Muldergate testified to the media. The most vocal of these was Rhodie, who even published books sharing his perspective of the Muldergate scandal.¹⁴ The existence of these books all reinforce my claim that the information regarding Muldergate was widely available to the public.

Using digital archives instead of physical copies provides both advantages and challenges for the contemporary historian. In 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives,' Adrian Bingham claimed that "digital searching enables newspaper content to be explored far more rigorously and sensitively" than previously.¹⁵ He also stated that "historians can be far more confident that content will not elude them, and that they will track down obscure and potentially revealing articles."¹⁶ By using digital archives, historians have the potential to examine sources more accurately and thoroughly than when they only had access to hard copies. Along with the benefits of digitisation, there are also challenges to negotiate. Bingham noted the dualistic nature of using search engines when he stated, "keyword searching can be very effective if used properly, but it is also in some ways a rather blunt instrument. The absence of a particular word does not necessarily mean that a

¹³ Rees and Day, *Muldergate, The Story of the Information Scandal*.

¹⁴ See, Eschel Rhodie, *PW Botha: The Last Betrayal* (Melville: S.A Politics, 1989).

¹⁵ Adrian Bingham, "The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians," *20th Century British History* 21 (2010): 228, accessed July 19, 2017. doi:10.1093/tcbh/hwq007.

¹⁶ Bingham, "The Digitization," 228.

subject is not discussed, it may merely indicate that alternative terminology has been used.”¹⁷ By utilising a variety of keyword searches, I sought to avoid accidentally bypassing important articles within each database. I used a mix of single word searches for specific terms relevant to my study, as well as partial phrases to provide a more general search. It was soon apparent that there were numerous articles on Apartheid, South Africa, and Muldergate. For example, a simple search for ‘Muldergate’ in the *Times* historical archive revealed 19 articles, and a search for ‘Rhodie’ revealed 28 articles. However, a more general search for ‘South Africa’ within 1978 revealed 1,655 articles. This created a new challenge for digital research. The sheer volume of information available means that it now takes more work to review and examine these sources. Another concern when using digital sources is the efficiency of the OCR software applied. If the software was unable to recognise characters or punctuation, then works could have been missed. In ‘Open Source Optical Character Recognition for Historical Research,’ Tobias Blanke, Michael Bryant, and Mark Hedges discuss OCR and its ability to digitise historical documents. They noted that although OCR software had previously struggled to recognise handwriting, this has changed with the invention of tablet computers. They also noted that OCR tended to struggle to recognise aged historical documents.¹⁸ The printed newspapers that I have been examining would have provided little difficulty for OCR software to digitize, therefore reducing the likelihood of technical errors outside of my control.

¹⁷ Bingham, “The Digitization,” 230.

¹⁸ Tobias Blanke, Michael Bryant and Mark Hedges, “Open Source Optical Character Recognition for Historical Research,” *Journal of Documentation* 68 (2012): 661, accessed October 10, 2017, doi:10.1108/00220411211256021.

Along with acknowledging the challenges and benefits of using digital archives, it was important to understand the popularity of the newspapers I was researching. Circulation statistics provided some insight into each newspapers' level of influence. In *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analyzing Print Journalism*, Bob Franklin differentiates between the 'mid-market' and the 'quality' newspapers.¹⁹ Image one, below, shows that the *Times* and the *Telegraph* had the highest readership among the 'quality' newspapers in 1985, the date closest to Muldergate. Although the *Sun* had the highest circulation numbers, it was a tabloid rather than a broadsheet, and not seen as a 'quality' newspaper.²⁰ Kevin Williams, in *Read All About It: A History of the British Newspaper*, defined the *Times* as "part of the establishment" and a "reputable newspaper."²¹ Along with the *Times*, the *Telegraph* was the market leader of the quality papers, taking two thirds of their sales.²² I have incorporated the *Daily Mail* in my thesis as an example of a 'mid-market' paper, although I have not referenced it as frequently as the *Times* and the *Telegraph*. This is because it had fewer articles on Muldergate than the 'quality' papers. In 'But if It's in the Newspaper, Doesn't That Mean It's True?' Sally Hoskins noted that "[r]eporters often reinterpret and summarise information from primary sources (journal articles) or simplify findings from long-term scientific studies. The writing may reflect the reporters' gaps in understanding, changes in the editing process, or even subtle biases."²³ I have sought to address the "gaps" or "biases" within

¹⁹ Bob Franklin, ed., *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 7, accessed July 19, 2017. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.

²⁰ Franklin, *Pulling Newspapers Apart*, 7.

²¹ Kevin Williams, *Read All About It: A History of the British Newspaper* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 205, accessed July 19, 2017. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.

²² Williams, *Read All About It*, 205.

²³ Sally Hoskins, "'But If It's in the Newspaper, Doesn't That Mean It's True?' Developing Critical Reading & Analysis Skills by Evaluating Newspaper Science with Create," *The American Biology Teacher* 72 (2010): 415, accessed September 21, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.canterbury.ac.nz>.

newspapers by examining large quantities of articles, seeking out general trends, and examining the information within individual articles. It is also worth noting whether the source material was an article written by a journalist, which represented the opinion of the newspaper as whole, or was a letter written to the newspaper as an opinion piece by a third party. I have sought to ignore opinion pieces wherever possible, unless they provided useful insights. There was a trend within newspapers for many of the articles about Apartheid to have been written by the same one or two journalists. This means that reading about Apartheid within one newspaper means you are reading a narrow scope of work. Although there is little that can be done to address this, I have sought to eliminate some of the human error by comparing the information revealed in the newspapers with the information provided by a wide range of secondary sources. Hopefully, this reduced the likelihood of posting a quote or example from a newspaper that does not line up with commonly accepted historiographic facts. My research sought to show that the events of Muldergate were made common knowledge to the public through articles written by journalists published in the three newspapers I examined.

Image 1.²⁴**Table 1** *UK daily newspaper circulations 1965, 1985 and 2007*

<i>Newspaper title</i>	<i>Circulations (in 1,000s)</i>		
	<i>1965</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>2007</i>
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	4,957	3,252	1,554
<i>Daily Record</i>	—	—	404 ^a
<i>Sun</i>	1,361	4,065	3,043
<i>Daily Star</i>	—	1,435 ^b	778
<i>Daily Express</i>	3,981	1,875	765
<i>Daily Mail</i>	2,425	1,828	2,294
Total popular/mid-market	12,724	12,455	8,838
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	1,352	1,221	894
<i>The Times</i>	258	480	636 ^c
<i>Guardian</i>	276	487	371
<i>Independent</i>	—	—	245 ^d
<i>Financial Times</i>	152	229	452
Total quality	2,038	2,417	2,598
TOTAL all papers	14,762	14,872	11,436

Notes

a The *Daily Record*, the 'Scottish Mirror' is now recorded separately by ABC.

b Launched 1979.

c Sales of *The Times* rose sharply following the 'price war' launched by Rupert Murdoch in July which reduced cover price of the paper to 10 pence.

d Launched 1986.

Along with gaining an understanding of the circulation numbers of newspapers, it was important to examine the political partisanship, or bias, of each newspaper. As Apartheid was predominantly a race-based issue led by an extremely conservative right-wing government, it follows that the more liberal a newspaper was, the more opposed towards Apartheid it would have been. Logically, one would expect that their articles would reflect this. Likewise, one would assume that the more conservative a newspaper was, the more likely it would have been to write articles

²⁴ Franklin, *Pulling Newspapers Apart*, 8.

sympathetic towards Apartheid, potentially downplaying the events of Muldergate. This made the information revealed in the *Times*, the *Telegraph*, and the *Daily Mail* more surprising. All are considered to have a conservative leaning, being either right or center-right. Williams stated that the *Telegraph* was “strongly conservative” in nature, but also tended to be independent.²⁵ In *The British Press*, Mick Temple stated that two-thirds of the *Telegraph* readers planned to vote Conservative in 2005.”²⁶ Ivor Gaber’s 2014 article, ‘The ‘Othering’ of ‘Red Ed’, or How the *Daily Mail* ‘Framed’ the British Labour Leader,’ showed that the *Daily Mail* was conservative as it sought to label the liberal politician Ed Miliband as a communist.²⁷ The *Daily Mail* took a similarly conservative stance during Muldergate. Despite their conservative stance, these newspapers revealed the events of Muldergate to the public. The fact that conservative newspapers wrote negative articles regarding Muldergate and Apartheid reinforces the overall negative perception Muldergate would have received from a mix of both liberal and conservative newspapers. By combining an examination of the political leanings and circulation numbers of ‘quality’ and ‘mid-market’ newspapers, I have gained an understanding of the overall perception of Muldergate portrayed by London’s newspapers. The following two chapters will show that the events of Muldergate were made widely available by these newspapers.

²⁵ Williams, *Read All About It*, 206.

²⁶ Mick Temple, *The British Press* (Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education, 2008), 191, accessed July 19, 2017. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.

²⁷ Ivor Gaber, "The ‘Othering’ of ‘Red Ed’, or How the *Daily Mail* ‘Framed’ The British Labour Leader," *The Political Quarterly* 85 (2014): 471-479, accessed September 21, 2017. doi:10.1111/1467-923X.12114.

Part Two: The Process.

Chapter One: Exposure.

In this chapter and the next, I will show that the events of Muldergate were widely covered by the newspapers I examined. Chapter one shows the coverage of the events leading up to Muldergate, and chapter two shows the events during and after Muldergate. Chapter one covers the existence of the propaganda war, the methods it incorporated, the Apartheid Government's attempts to purchase newspapers, and their subsequent establishment of the *Citizen*. It also mentions the other misappropriations of taxes committed by the Department of Information. Chapter two shows the Apartheid Government's attempts to cover up Muldergate, especially the dismissal of Judge Mostert. It also tells of the loss of power of the leading officials involved and of P.W. Botha's reforms in the early 1980s.

Examining Apartheid's portrayal in the 1960s provides an understanding of how the news of Muldergate would later be received in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the years before Muldergate, Westerners already disliked Apartheid, evidenced by the protests and boycotts of South African products. A *Times* article on 7 January 1960 shows an official boycott on South African goods organised by Liverpool's City Council.²⁸ A follow-up article detailing the impact of this boycott was later published in the *Times* on 12 January 1960.²⁹ Boycotting South African goods was a way for those who disagreed with Apartheid to attempt to influence government opinion. There were numerous other articles written about boycotting South African imports.

²⁸ Our Correspondent, "Apartheid Boycott by Council," *Times*, January 7, 1960, 6. For the sake of clarity, all newspaper references will be cited in full as many have similar titles and were written by the same journalist.

²⁹ Our Special Correspondent, "City's Boycott Starts Storm," *Times*, January 12, 1960, 8.

These were written in the *Times* on 14, 20, and 28 January 1960, as well as 20 and 29 February 1960, amongst others.³⁰ The efficiency of boycotts and sanctions was debated, and there were numerous letters written in to the newspapers arguing either for or against these.³¹ This shows that many people thought about how to effectively influence government opinion a way from supporting Apartheid ideals. Alongside articles about boycotting South African goods, there were articles showing contempt for Apartheid's effect on international sport.³² There were also articles that were simply negative towards Apartheid and South Africa, for example the *Times* article on 4 April 1960 titled, 'South Africa's Insane and Evil Policy.'³³ Another example was the *Telegraph's* article on 7 September 1966, titled 'Architect of Apartheid.' This was a particularly scathing article about the then Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd. He was described as a hypocrite who combined "such hateful actions with such absolute faith in his own virtue," as well as being a man with "so odious a public policy with so model a private life."³⁴ This shows that even before Muldergate, Apartheid and its leaders were strongly disliked.

³⁰ "Labour Party's Plans for Campaign on Africa," *Times*, January 14, 1960, 8; Our Labour Correspondent, "Labour Agreement on Form of Apartheid Boycott," *Times*, January 20, 1960, 7; Our Labour Correspondent, "South Africa Boycott Call by T.U.C.," *Times*, January 28, 1960, 10; "L.C.C. Conservatives 'Opposed Boycott,'" *Times*, February 20, 1960, 4; "Nine Arrested After South Africa Boycott Rally," *Times*, February 29, 1960, 10. See also, "Interruptions at Boycott Meeting," *Times*, March 14, 1960, 8; "London Rally Votes for Continuing Boycott," *Times*, March 28, 1960, 3; "Apartheid Boycott," *Daily Telegraph*, January 16, 1960, 15; "Goods Boycott 'A Warning,'" *Daily Telegraph*, January 18, 1960, 19; An Industrial Correspondent, "Co-Ops Advised Not to Remove South African Goods," *Daily Telegraph*, January 21, 1960, 22; An Industrial Correspondent, "Boycott Vote by Big Co-Op," *Daily Telegraph*, January 26, 1960, 11.

³¹ See, Cyril Osborne, "South African Boycott," *Times*, January 19, 1960, 11; A Cooper, and David Ennals, Vice-Chairman, "Folly of the S. A. Boycott," *Daily Telegraph*, January 22, 1960, 12. Patrick Van Rensburg, "Boycott of South African Goods," *Daily Telegraph*, January 16, 1960, 8; "An Unwise Boycott," *Daily Telegraph*, January 15, 1960, 12; Lawrence Holden, and V. Lamb, "Better Than the Boycott," *Daily Telegraph*, February 11, 1960, 12; John Dugdale, "Boycott of South African Goods," *Times*, January 23, 1960, 9; Nicholas Mansfreight, and Martin Ennals, "Boycott," *Times*, January 30, 1960, 9.

³² See, "Not to Play Against South Africans," *Times*, April 7, 1960, 12; Our Special Correspondent, "Mixed Greeting for Test Team," *Times*, April 18, 1960, 6; Our Correspondent, "Boycott Test Matches," *Times*, January 8, 1960, 6.

³³ "South Africa's 'Insane and Evil Policy,'" *Times*, April 4, 1960, 4. See also *Daily Telegraph* Reporter, "Writer Stands by His Views on Apartheid," *Daily Telegraph*, July 27, 1966, 17.

³⁴ Peregrine Worsthorne, "Architect of Apartheid," *Daily Telegraph*, September 7, 1966, 14.

In the 1970s, the Department of Information claimed that South Africa had become involved in a propaganda war against the global Anti-Apartheid Movement, and the rising influence of Communism, both of which sought to undermine their belief in white supremacy for Southern Africa. They argued that Apartheid was under attack from a relentless global enemy with “limitless funding.”³⁵ In Hacten and Giffard’s observation of wartime convention, they stated that it was common for the “propaganda machinery” to be “built up” amidst conflict.³⁶ The Department of Information assumed this responsibility, appointing Eschel Rhoodie as Minister of Information in 1972. This marked the beginning of the propaganda war. In a *Times* article on 10 May 1978, journalist Nicholas Ashford, quoting Mulder, stated, “[n]o rules applied when the survival of South Africa was at stake.”³⁷ A similar article about South Africa’s propaganda war was released the previous day, 9 May 1978.³⁸ The Department of Information believed that through their propaganda campaign, they could influence popular opinion to decrease sanctions against South Africa. This would increase trade and stimulate economic growth, decrease political pressure to remove Apartheid, and decrease their growing sense of isolation amongst Western nations.³⁹ A *Times* article on 30 September 1980 showed that Rhoodie claimed the propaganda war would require him to act “unconventionally.” He would also require “exceptionally wide discretion in respect of spending money.”⁴⁰ As Rhoodie believed he was in a war, and his role was a matter of national security, he argued that he should not have to account for the funds he spent.

³⁵ Nicholas Ashford, “Dr. Mulder Shows Little Remorse,” *Times*, May 10, 1978, 7.

³⁶ Hacten and Giffard, *The Press and Apartheid*, 234.

³⁷ Nicholas Ashford, “Dr. Mulder Shows Little Remorse,” *Times*, May 10, 1978, 7.

³⁸ Nicholas Ashford, “How the ‘Secret Fund’ Scandal has Rocked South Africa,” *Times*, May 9, 1978, 18.

³⁹ For a list of reasons for South Africa’s fear of increased global isolation, see Nicholas Ashford, “Why Window Dressing Will Not Satisfy South Africa’s Militants,” *Times*, April 20, 1976, 12.

⁴⁰ Nicholas Ashford, “South Africa Scandal May be Revived,” *Times*, September 30, 1980, 6.

The Department of Defense's account was used to fund his propaganda war as large amounts could be moved without raising suspicion, and they were protected from national auditing. This became what was commonly known as the "secret fund." In a *Sunday Telegraph* article on 18 March 1979 titled 'South Africa Bribed Britons,' it was noted that the Department of Information's propaganda war was secretly government funded with taxpayers' money.⁴¹ Another *Times* article on 9 May 1978 showed that Vorster not only approved of the "secret fund," but also took full responsibility for it, claiming that it was of the "highest national interest."⁴² Similar articles mentioning the Department of Information's "secret fund" were mentioned in the *Telegraph* on 19 June 1978, 17 November 1978, 6 and 11 December 1978, 31 January 1979, and 13 and 22 March 1979.⁴³ In a *Daily Mail* article on 5 June 1979, journalist Peter Younghusband wrote, "in 1974 nearly £4 million was transferred from the Special Defense account to Switzerland."⁴⁴ Rhodie also used Swiss bank accounts and front companies to avoid auditing. This shows that London's newspapers widely covered the existence of the secret fund.

The propaganda campaign used a variety of mediums to sell Apartheid ideologies. There were conventional approaches such as posting pro-South Africa advertisements in newspapers, magazines, television, and radio, and hiring public relations firms to lobby for South African

⁴¹ "South Africa 'Bribed Britons,'" *Sunday Telegraph*, March 18, 1979, 40.

⁴² Nicholas Ashford, "Mr. Vorster Admits He Approved Secret Fund," *Times*, May 9, 1978, 9.

⁴³ Nicholas Ashford, "South African Police Chief Refused Visa," *Times*, June 19, 1978, 1; Our Staff Correspondent in Johannesburg, "Secret Fund 'Spent on High Living,'" *Daily Telegraph*, November 17, 1978, 5; Bruce Loudon, "'Muldergate' Scandal May Cause Split in National Party," *Daily Telegraph*, December 6, 1978, 4; Bruce Loudon, "South Africa 'Complicity in Theft and Fraud,'" *Daily Telegraph*, December 6, 1978, 1; Bruce Loudon, "South Africa's 'Secret Projects,'" *Daily Telegraph*, December 11, 1978, 4; Ray Kennedy, "Vorster Faces Recall in 'Muldergate' Scandal," *Daily Telegraph*, January 31, 1979, 4; Christopher Munnion, "Botha Considers New 'Gag,'" *Daily Telegraph*, March 13, 1979, 4; David Adamson, "Muldergate Letter Seen on TV," *Daily Telegraph*, March 22, 1979, 4.

⁴⁴ Peter Younghusband, "Muldergate," *Daily Mail*, June 5, 1979, 4.

interests in Western nations.⁴⁵ There were also more illicit approaches, such as paying journalists to write positive articles about South Africa, Apartheid, the success of the Bantustans, and their progress in South West Africa (Namibia). There were also more obscure measures such as funding 'business' trips for journalists to see 'the real' South Africa for themselves. They would holiday in whites-only luxury resorts, visit National Parks, meet with top politicians and businessmen, and play golf with the famous Gary Player.⁴⁶ Following encounters with the prosperity and luxury indulged in by white South Africans, journalists were encouraged to write positive articles detailing their experiences, portraying South Africa as an African paradise, and Apartheid as a successful institution to be respected, admired, and emulated. Ray Kennedy noted this in a *Times* article on 17 April 1978 titled 'South Africa Offered Journalists Money.'⁴⁷ Similar sentiments were repeated in *Telegraph* articles on 18 and 21 March 1979.⁴⁸ Top British and American politicians and businessmen were also provided with such 'business' trips. In his *Daily Mail* article on 26 March 1974, titled, 'Bribes Scandal Man: Vorster Lying,' George Gordon wrote that the bribery allegations affected "half a dozen countries and a number of top politicians."⁴⁹ Likewise, after experiencing the best white South Africa had to offer, British and American politicians were encouraged to return home and argue favorably for reduced sanctions and increased trade with South Africa. The propaganda campaign also promoted Apartheid's belief in separate development, and journalists were commissioned to write articles claiming that Apartheid was

⁴⁵ For more on the Department of Information's propaganda methods, see Julian Burgess et al., *The Great White Hoax: South Africa's International Propaganda Machine* (London: Africa Bureau, 1977).

⁴⁶ Peter Younghusband, "Muldergate," *Daily Mail*, June 5, 1979, 4.

⁴⁷ Ray Kennedy, "South Africa Offered Journalists Money," *Times*, April 17, 1978, 1.

⁴⁸ "South Africa 'Bribed Britons,'" *Sunday Telegraph*, March 18, 1979, 40; see also, David Adams on, "Document 'Tells of Bribes,'" *Daily Telegraph*, March 21, 1979, 36.

⁴⁹ George Gordon, "Bribes Scandal Man: Vorster Lying," *Daily Mail*, March 26, 1979, 4. See also Christopher Munnion, "South Africa Bribes 'Paid to British Politicians,'" *Daily Telegraph*, March 19, 1979, 1.

good for black South Africans. On 5 September 1977, journalist Eric Marsden wrote an article for the *Times* titled, 'For all the Harshness of Apartheid, Life is Not All That Bad for Blacks.'⁵⁰ Amongst obvious spelling errors and poor grammar, the article quoted statistics and information provided to him by Eschel Rhoodie and the Department of Information. Throughout, are statements such as 'according to Dr. Rhoodie,' 'Dr. Rhoodie said,' or 'according to a survey done by Eschel Rhoodie and South Africa's Department of Information.'⁵¹ Although there is no evidence to state that Marsden was paid by Rhoodie to write such an article, one cannot help but harbor such suspicions.

As part of their propaganda campaign, the Department of Information sought to counter the anti-government articles written by newspapers both overseas and in South Africa. The *Times* article, 'Whitewashing A Bolted Horse,' released on 9 November 1978, noted, "the Government has confirmed that it cannot trust the news to sustain its case; it must try to control news and comments at home and to distort it overseas."⁵² This desire to control the English-language news led the Apartheid Government to attempt to purchase the *Washington Star* as well as SAAN, who owned many of South Africa's English language newspapers and were often critical of the Afrikaans-speaking Apartheid Government.⁵³ The Apartheid Government's dislike of South Africa's English-language newspapers was justified, as eventually it was the *Rand Daily Mail* that exposed Muldergate. The Apartheid Government sought ownership of an English-language newspaper in South Africa to counter the left leaning articles being produced. Owning SAAN would have

⁵⁰ Eric Marsden, "For All the Harshness of Apartheid, Life is Not All That Bad for Blacks," *Times*, September 7, 1977, 7.

⁵¹ Eric Marsden, "For All the Harshness of Apartheid, Life is Not All that Bad for Blacks," *Times*, September 7, 1977, 7.

⁵² "Whitewashing A Bolted Horse," *Times*, November 9, 1978, 17.

⁵³ Peter Younghusband, "Muldergate," *Daily Mail*, June 5, 1979, 4.

provided the additional benefit of allowing the Department of Information to censor the anti-government sentiments widespread throughout the English-language press. Once this failed, the Department of Information launched their own English-language newspaper, called the *Citizen*. From the beginning, the *Citizen's* existence caused much controversy in South Africa, from its alleged ownership by fertiliser magnate Louis Luyt to its unusually high sales records, as well as the disconcerting fact that it was a pro-government English-language newspaper.⁵⁴ The exposure that the *Citizen* was government funded, with Luyt being little more than a figurehead, was a pivotal aspect of Muldergate. It revealed how much time and money the Apartheid Government was willing to spend to deceive the nation and influence popular opinion. The amount of money spent on the *Citizen* is a contentious issue, with conservative estimates varying from £7 million to £17 million.⁵⁵ Ironically, funds that were supposed to be spent on the *Citizen* were instead used by Luyt to support his struggling fertiliser company.⁵⁶ The fact that charges were never laid against Luyt reinforced the public opinion that he was an instrument of the Apartheid Government. Articles mentioning the *Citizen* and the funds that were spent on it were in the *Telegraph* on 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, and 18 November 1978, and numerous other times.⁵⁷ Interestingly, on 10 May 1978,

⁵⁴ Our Staff Correspondent in Johannesburg, "Secret Fund 'Spent on High Living,'" *Daily Telegraph*, November 17, 1978, 5.

⁵⁵ Bruce Loudon, "Botha Acts Against 2 Papers," *Daily Telegraph*, November 18, 1978, 1. See also Bruce Loudon, "'Muldergate' Scandal May Cause Split in National Party," *Daily Telegraph*, December 6, 1978, 4. It is worth noting that some sources quote the figures in Rand, whereas other sources use Pounds. For a more extreme estimate of the money spent on the citizen see, Gordon Jackson, *Breaking Story: The South African Press* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), 75. Jackson stated that R32 million was spent on the *Citizen*.

⁵⁶ For articles on Luyt as a front-man for the Department of Information see: Bruce Loudon, "Mulder Quits Party Post in South Africa Row," *Sunday Telegraph*, November 12, 1978, 2; Bruce Loudon, "Bomb Attack on 'Muldergate' Judge Misfires," *Daily Telegraph*, November 13, 1978, 4.

⁵⁷ "Whitewashing A Bolted Horse," *Times*, November 9, 1978, 17; Bruce Loudon, "Mulder Quits Party Post in South Africa Row," *Sunday Telegraph*, November 12, 1978, 2; Bruce Loudon, "Bomb Attack on 'Muldergate' Judge Misfires," *Daily Telegraph*, November 13, 1978, 4; Bruce Loudon, "Vorster Sees Judge," *Daily Telegraph*, November 16, 1978, 4; Nicholas Ashford, "Press Disclosures Over Newspaper Funding Fuel Pretoria Scandal," *Times*, October 31, 1978, 7; Nicholas Ashford, "Botha Paper Joins Attack on Pretoria Scandal," *Times*, November 2, 1978, 8; Nicholas Ashford, "Judge Defies Government on Corruption in South Africa," *Times*, November 3, 1978, 1. Nicholas Ashford,

Mulder publicly denied any ownership of the *Citizen* in parliament. The truth of his involvement was revealed only a few months later.⁵⁸

Along with the *Citizen*, Muldergate revealed numerous other misappropriations of taxpayers' money committed by the Apartheid Government. Not only did the Department of Information wage a secret propaganda war, they also embezzled government funds for personal use. This shattered the virtuous image that the National Party sought to portray. The funds were misappropriated in numerous ways, usually through Swiss bank accounts. In his *Times* article on 9 May 1978 titled 'How the Secret Fund Scandal Has Rocked South Africa,' Ashford outlined some of the ways the Department of Information used taxpayers' money for personal gain. These included a luxury holiday to the Seychelles with Louis Luyt and other members of cabinet, purchasing luxury flats in Cape Town, and flying more than 4,000 miles across America to evaluate the services of a typist.⁵⁹ This 'business trip' conveniently coincided with a tennis tournament; tennis was one of Rhodie's favorite sports. Along with these misappropriations, government funds were spent on box tickets to rugby games, which a *Telegraph* staff correspondent called "the ultimate status symbol of white South African culture."⁶⁰ On 4 November 1978, Ashford wrote, "[t]he secret use of public funds for 'patriotic purposes' is one thing, but the blatant misuse of tax-payer's money, often for personal use, is another, so too is the laundering of funds through Swiss bank accounts,

"South Africa Scandal May be Revived," *Times*, September 30, 1980, 6; George Gordon, "Bribes Scandal Man: Vorster Lying," *Daily Mail*, March 26, 1979, 4; Peter Youngusband, "Muldergate," *Daily Mail*, June 5, 1979: 4; Our Staff Correspondent in Johannesburg, "'Muldergate' Official Loses Passport," *Daily Telegraph*, December 4, 1978, 6.

⁵⁸ Peter Youngusband, "Muldergate," *Daily Mail*, June 5, 1979: 4.

⁵⁹ Nicholas Ashford, "How the 'Secret Fund' Scandal has Rocked South Africa," *Times*, May 9, 1978, 18.

⁶⁰ Our Staff Correspondent in Johannesburg, "Secret Fund 'spent on High Living,'" *Daily Telegraph*, November 17, 1978, 5.

or the use of public money to buy a private box at a rugby ground, or to finance a third-rate film.”⁶¹ This showed that London’s media exposed the Department of Information’s illicit use of taxpayers’ money. However, few journalists demonstrated shock or surprise at the revelation of the misuse of taxpayer’s funds. Before Muldergate, Apartheid was disliked, and this did little to change that.

⁶¹ Nicholas Ashford, "A Whitewash in South Africa?" *Times*, November 4, 1978, 14.

Chapter Two: The Aftermath.

This chapter shows that the effects of Muldergate were also covered by London's newspapers. Following the exposure of Muldergate, the guilty parties desperately attempted to conceal as much as possible. This is best demonstrated through the dismissal of Justice Anton Mostert, the judge who initially revealed the information of Muldergate to the South African media. On 5 June 1979, Younghusband wrote, "Mostert, refusing a desperate appeal to keep quiet from Prime Minister Botha, then in office, announced publicly...that the *Citizen* was indeed a Government project, financed secretly and run by the Department of Information."⁶² In the same article, Younghusband stated that "Mostert was sacked for his rebellious announcement."⁶³ Instead of making Muldergate disappear, this worsened the situation, as it made the Apartheid Government appear guilty. In a *Telegraph* article on 11 November 1978, journalist Bruce Loudon noted the public outcry in South Africa in response to this, stating, "[m]ore than 2,000 [people] crowded into the Johannesburg City Hall to protest against the dismissal of Judge Anton Mostert as a commissioner investigating illegal foreign exchange transactions."⁶⁴ On 14 November 1978, Loudon noted that Mostert was dismissed by P.W Botha for "going too far" in his interference with the Erasmus commission.⁶⁵ However, the Erasmus commission did not exist at that time, and P.W. Botha never specified what he meant by "too far." These unconvincing reasons did little to improve the situation. Despite acquiring the position as part of the cover-up, Erasmus continued

⁶² Peter Younghusband, "Muldergate," *Daily Mail*, June 5, 1979, 4.

⁶³ Peter Younghusband, "Muldergate," *Daily Mail*, June 5, 1979, 4. See also, Nicholas Ashford, "Judge Defies Government on Corruption in South Africa," *Times*, November 34, 1978, 1; Eric Marsden, "Two Opposition Parties Refuse to Cooperate in the Silencing of South African Judge," *Times*, November 9, 1978, 9.

⁶⁴ Bruce Loudon, "'Name Third Man' Call in South African Funds Scandal," *Daily Telegraph*, November 11, 1978, 5.

⁶⁵ Bruce Loudon, "Botha Denies That He Interfered with Judiciary," *Daily Telegraph*, November 14, 1978, 4.

Mostert's work and thoroughly investigated the illegal activities of the Apartheid Government. In a *Times* article on 4 November 1978, Ashford wrote, "It is undoubtedly the attempted cover-up rather than the wheeler-dealing in tax-payer's money, the lying, the deceit, and by-passing of parliament which is the most disturbing aspect of the affair, and which finally persuaded Mr. Justice Mostert to speak out. As the *Rand Daily Mail* commented this morning, it was not the Watergate break-in which had such devastating consequences for the United States so much as the cover-up by top government people right to the president."⁶⁶ Regardless of whether the cover-up attempts were worse than the scandal, they did little to improve the image of the Apartheid Government in London's newspapers.

Another effect of Muldergate publicised by London's newspapers was the subsequent fall from grace for Rhoodie, Mulder, Vorster, and van den Bergh. Vorster, whose retirement was already looming, shamefully concluded his time as Prime Minister and took on the ceremonial role of State President. His retirement was shown in the *Times* article, 'This year's News in Brief,' on 14 November 1979, as well in the *Times* 'Diary' on 31 December 1979.⁶⁷ Along with Vorster, Mulder's political career was ruined. As the scandal was nicknamed after him, Mulder would forever be connected to it. In a *Sunday Telegraph* article on 12 November 1978, Loudon noted that Mulder "suddenly resigned" from his position as head of the Department of Information.⁶⁸ Similar articles about Mulder's career finishing were written in the *Telegraph* on 31 January 1979, and 7 April

⁶⁶ Nicholas Ashford, "A Whitewash in South Africa?" *Times*, November 4, 1978, 14.

⁶⁷ "The Year's News in Brief," *Times*, November 14, 1979, 2; "Diary," *Times*, December 31, 1979, 1. See also, Ray Kennedy, "Vorster Quits in Disgrace," *Daily Telegraph*, June 5, 1979, 1; Nicholas Ashford, "Cape and Transvaal Wings of the National Party Square Up in Struggle over Vorster Succession," *Times*, September 22, 1978, 7.

⁶⁸ Bruce Loudon, "Mulder Quits Party Post in South Africa Row," *Sunday Telegraph*, November 12, 1978, 2.

1979.⁶⁹ Likewise, Ray Kennedy's *Times* article on 30 April 1979 showed the conclusion of Mulders' political career. He stated that Mulder was "under threat of prosecution for his refusal to testify to the Erasmus commission of inquiry investigating the department's activities."⁷⁰ The Department of Information was also dismantled.⁷¹ Along with Mulder and Vorster, Rhoodie disgracefully resigned and fled the country for fear of imprisonment. He was unsuccessful in avoiding the South African Government, and was eventually sentenced to prison. In a *Daily Mail* article on 9 October 1979, Gordon wrote that "Doctor Eschel Rhoodie began a six-year jail sentence last night," and, "Dr. Rhoodie, who fled from South Africa when the scandal broke, was found guilty of five counts of fraud, involving more than £35,000."⁷² Six months later, Rhoodie successfully appealed the ruling, was released, and had his possessions returned. A *Times* article on 15 October 1980 noted that Rhoodie's estate was estimated to be worth £222,000.00.⁷³ The minor punishment he received and his successful appeal showed that the Apartheid Government was not intent on punishing its own. This reinforced the idea that his sentence was a mere formality, and part of a greater cover-up.

Before their dismissals, Mulder and Rhoodie did not retire unobtrusively. London's newspapers covered the political infighting displayed by the guilty party. After fleeing overseas, Rhoodie recorded tapes providing evidence of the internal corruption of the propaganda war. He used

⁶⁹ Ray Kennedy, "Vorster Faces Recall in 'Muldergate' Scandal," *Daily Telegraph*, January 31, 1979, 4; Ray Kennedy, "South Africa's Ruling Party Expels Dr. 'Muldergate,'" *Daily Telegraph*, April 7, 1979, 6. See also, Eric Marsden, "Dr. Mulder Resigns and Mr. Botha Dismisses Scandal Inquiry Judge," *Times*, November 8, 1978, 1; Christopher Munnion, "Rhoodie 'Says That Vorster was in Muldergate Team of Four,'" *Daily Telegraph*, March 10, 1979, 7.

⁷⁰ Ray Kennedy, "America Passed Spy Plane Photos to South Africa," *Times*, April 30, 1979, 4.

⁷¹ See, "Index," *Times*, June 16, 1978, 1; Eric Marsden, "Mr. Vorster Abolishes His Much-Criticized Information Section," *Times*, June 16, 1978, 6.

⁷² George Gordon, "Rhoodie Takes His Muldergate Secrets to Jail," *Daily Mail*, October 9, 1979, 4.

⁷³ Our Correspondent, "Pretoria Returns Money to Dr. Rhoodie," *Times*, October 15, 1980, 9.

these tapes as a form of insurance to blackmail the other members of the National Party. He threatened to release the tapes if the South African Government sought to capture him or force him to testify in court. He also made public the fact that if he died of a 'mysterious accident,' his lawyer would release the tapes on his behalf. In a *Telegraph* article on 6 March 1979, David Kennedy, quoting van den Bergh, stated that "the Rhodie tapes would have caused 'irreparable harm to South Africa', and implicated top political figures."⁷⁴ It is impossible to know exactly how much of this was true and how much was a desperate act of deception by a frantic van den Bergh seeking to unite with Rhodie and implicate the other members of the National Party.⁷⁵ Rhodie attempted to use these tapes to blackmail P.W. Botha into returning his passport, and the possessions the Apartheid Government had seized from him, as well as provide him with pardon and a public apology.⁷⁶ In a *Telegraph* article on 21 March 1979, David Adamson showed that Rhodie claimed to have "documentation containing summaries of secret projects in the last five years," and that some included the signature of Vorster.⁷⁷ Similar articles were written in the *Telegraph* on 13 and 22 March 1979.⁷⁸ Rhodie also sought to implicate Mulder in his schemes. Christopher Munnion's *Telegraph* article on 23 March 1979, titled, 'Rhodie Threat to Vorster: 'To Bring down Temple'' showed how Rhodie threatened to implicate the other key members of the National Party if they tried to arrest him.⁷⁹ It described the infighting displayed by these key members of Muldergate. Along with this, many of those implicated in Muldergate claimed they

⁷⁴ Ray Kennedy, "Muldergate Challenge to Botha," *Daily Telegraph*, March 6, 1979, 4.

⁷⁵ For examples of the alleged scheming by Rhodie and van den Bergh, see, Christopher Munnion, "Passport of Ex-Boss Chief Held," *Daily Telegraph*, March 15, 1979, 1. For an article on Botha's relationship with Prime Minister Vorster, see Peter Youngusband, "The Sinister Powers of BOSS Man," *Daily Mail*, December 7, 1978, 4.

⁷⁶ Ray Kennedy, "Muldergate Challenge to Botha," *Daily Telegraph*, March 6, 1979, 4.

⁷⁷ David Adamson, "Document 'Tells of Bribes,'" *Daily Telegraph*, March 21, 1979, 36.

⁷⁸ Christopher Munnion, "Botha Considers New 'Gag,'" *Daily Telegraph*, March 13, 1979, 4; David Adamson, "Muldergate Letter Seen on TV," *Daily Telegraph*, March 22, 1979, 4.

⁷⁹ Christopher Munnion, "Rhodie Threat to Vorster 'To Bring down Temple,'" *Daily Telegraph*, March 23, 1979, 4.

were being used as “scapegoats.” Van den Bergh and Rhoodie were the most vocal in this regard. This was shown in *Telegraph* articles on 8 and 10 December 1978, amongst others.⁸⁰ This political infighting was thoroughly documented by London’s newspapers and did little to improve the Apartheid Government’s international image.

Along with the political infighting following Muldergate, there were also numerous calls for P.W. Botha to resign from his new role as Prime Minister. These were mostly from opposition political parties. This was covered by the *Telegraph* in articles on 11 November 1978, 7 and 8 December 1978 as well as 13 March 1979.⁸¹ P.W. Botha rejected these claims, arguing that he was not involved with Muldergate or the propaganda war.⁸² In the end, the calls for him to resign were outvoted 130 to 30.⁸³ Along with stating his own non-involvement, P.W. Botha claimed that if any members of his new cabinet were implicated in Muldergate, he would resign.⁸⁴ After surviving the calls for his resignation, P.W. Botha initiated a series of Apartheid reforms. He reshaped the political cabinet, usually replacing verkrampste with verligte members. An example of this was covered by the *Times* article ‘Pretoria’s Top Security Job Goes to Young Don,’ released on 15

⁸⁰ Our Staff Correspondent, "Ex-Head of Boss: I'm a Scapegoat," *Daily Telegraph*, December 8, 1978, 4; Bruce Loudon, "Botha: I Am Nauseated," *Sunday Telegraph*, December 10, 1978, 2; Peter Youngusband, "Don't Call Us Thugs — Botha," *Daily Mail*, December 8, 1978, 4; John Miller, "Move to Silence Rhoodie," *Daily Telegraph*, March 7, 1979, 4; Nicholas Ashford, "Dr. Rhoodie Accuses Quartet," *Times*, October 1, 1980, 6; Christopher Munnion, "'Muldergate': Calls Grow for Botha to Resign," *Sunday Telegraph*, March 11, 1979, 2.

⁸¹ "'Name Third Man' Call in South African Funds Scandal," *Daily Telegraph*, November 11, 1978, 5; Bruce Loudon, "Poll Pressure on Botha After Scandal Report," *Daily Telegraph*, December 7, 1978, 4; Bruce Loudon, "Botha Rejects Call to Resign Over 'Muldergate,'" *Daily Telegraph*, December 8, 1978, 4; Bruce Loudon, Christopher Munnion, "Botha Considers New 'Gag,'" *Daily Telegraph*, March 13, 1979, 4.

⁸² Bruce Loudon, "Botha Rejects Call to Resign Over 'Muldergate,'" *Daily Telegraph*, December 8, 1978, 4.

⁸³ Bruce Loudon, "Botha: I am Nauseated," *Sunday Telegraph*, December 10, 1978, 2.

⁸⁴ Christopher Munnion, "Botha Denies Muldergate Cover-Up," *Daily Telegraph*, February 8, 1979, 6.

November 1979.⁸⁵ P.W. Botha's reforms removed some aspects of petty Apartheid.⁸⁶ In his article 'Coups, Wars and Some Hope,' Roy Lewis noted that "[P.W] Botha hastened liberal measures such as legalising African trade unions in a desperate attempt to regain control over the pace of events."⁸⁷ This shows that the media covered not only P.W. Botha's reforms, but also the motives behind them. Another example of this was in the *Times* article on 29 January 1981, which stated, "[f]or the rest, Mr. Botha has made great play with the modification of Apartheid in practice. The reality is less impressive than the propaganda. It irritates the party verkrampte's, but they know that behind this screen, Mr. Botha has increased state control over political expression by everybody else. The black press has been silenced, and the freedom of the white, mainly English-language, press is being progressively circumscribed."⁸⁸ Overall, London's media documented the different aspects of P.W. Botha's reforms.

In the past two chapters I have shown that the events of Muldergate were covered by the three newspapers I examined, making the information of Muldergate widely available to the British public. Chapter three provides reasons to explain how Muldergate could have been "just a bump in the road."

⁸⁵ Ray Kennedy, "Pretoria's Top Security Job goes to Young Don," *Times*, November 15, 1979, 12.

⁸⁶ Ray Kennedy, "Pretoria's Top Security Job goes to Young Don," *Times*, November 15, 1979, 12.

⁸⁷ Roy Lewis, "Coups, Wars and Some Hope," *Times*, December 29, 1979, 6.

⁸⁸ "Mr. Botha Seeks Endorsement," *Times*, January 29, 1981, 15. See also Nicholas Ashford, "Powers of Censorship for South African President," *Times*, February 1, 1977, 7.

Chapter Three: The Why.

This chapter shows that despite the lack of evidence provided by Nixon when he claimed that Muldergate was “just a bump in the road,” his assertion was, in fact, correct. It provides an interpretation of global events that allude to, and reinforce, the validity of Nixon’s claim. As Apartheid was a system of racial discrimination that placed whites at the top, and everyone else beneath, the term “rolling on” will be used to describe the maintenance of Apartheid’s race-based policies by the South African Government. This needs to be considered in the light of P.W. Botha’s reforms. Were these reforms superficial, or did they fundamentally change the nature and structure of Apartheid? This section will show that P.W. Botha’s reforms were primarily about power consolidation, not the dissolution of Apartheid. They also provided the additional benefit of enabling the West to claim that Apartheid was slowly fading away, thus justifying their inaction amidst cries for sanctions. There were also other global factors that enabled Muldergate to be “just a bump in the road.” The rise of sensationalist media in the 1970s and 1980s affected how Muldergate was received. As Muldergate was a slowly unravelling political scandal that took over a year for the information to become fully available, it did not conform to the criteria of a popular scandal established by the tabloids. This resulted in a general lack of interest in Muldergate. The time delay also negated the impact of the scandal as there was no “moment” of revelation. As Apartheid was already disliked, and the government was assumed to be corrupt, when the news of Muldergate was revealed, it did little to damage Apartheid’s already negative reputation. To many, this was simply a confirmation of things that they already believed. The overwhelming fear of Communism was also used as a shield by the Apartheid Government. They argued that Apartheid was a “bulwark against Communism,” and that if they lost power to the ANC, South

Africa would become a communist nation. The West also displayed a general lack of interest in developing nations, except when it came to sports and business. A data analysis of articles that appeared in the *Times* revealed that the most popular topics for news articles about South Africa and Apartheid, both before and after Muldergate, were sports, business and finance. These topics had more newspaper articles written about them than politics and social justice issues. This displayed, as well as reinforced, the West's overall lack of interest in Muldergate.

Following Muldergate, P.W. Botha's reforms consolidated his power and reasserted white dominance. Although these reforms incorporated the rhetoric of progress and change, they had little effect on the day-to-day lives of black South Africans. In *Breaking Story: The South African Press*, Gordon Jackson noted, "[m]ost blacks viewed the new dispensation with disdain, regarding it as simply a new way of packaging white control."⁸⁹ Jackson argued that P.W. Botha's reforms were a continuation of Apartheid ideals. To many black South Africans, it made little difference that a *verligte* was running the country instead of a *verkrampte*, both were seen equally disdainfully. In 'Government-Initiated Reform in South Africa and Its Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy,' Kevin Danaher said, "[t]he white government had no intention whatsoever of altering the fundamental aspects of Apartheid."⁹⁰ In 'Culture as Communication: The Rise of the Left-Wing Press in South Africa,' Don Pinnock noted that P.W. Botha's reforms were "to eliminate those racially discriminatory clauses in the existing Apartheid legislation that attached opprobrium

⁸⁹ Jackson, *Breaking Story*, 21.

⁹⁰ Kevin Danaher, "Government-Initiated Reform in South Africa and Its Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy," *Politics & Society* 13 (1984): 196, accessed July 19, 2017. doi:10.1177/003232928401300203.

abroad but made little or no difference with respect to ensuring white privilege.”⁹¹ Although some minor changes to petty Apartheid were made, overall, there was little change for the majority of black South Africans. The National Party intended to maintain Apartheid as much as possible. Danaher stated that P.W. Botha’s reforms were to “gain better control over the African workforce, in order to cultivate more skilled workers while keeping the majority locked up in rural labor reserves (‘bantustans’).”⁹² This demonstrated a continuation of Apartheid principles, as the white minority continued to oppress the black majority. It was also a consolidation of white power. Another reform that presented itself as egalitarian, but in effect was the opposite, was P.W. Botha’s creation of a tricameral legislature. Despite P.W. Botha’s claims that a tricameral parliament empowered each race with agency over their own affairs, all power was still firmly within the grasp of the white minority.⁹³ In *Politics in South Africa: From Vorster to De Klerk*, Keith Maguire showed how this applied, stating, “[P.W.] Botha’s first years as Prime Minister and then as State President were marked by a shift in power away from the legislature and towards the executive.”⁹⁴ By retaining power within the executive, P.W. Botha created a powerless parliament. Danaher claimed that P.W. Botha’s reforms created a “dictatorship in all but name.”⁹⁵ P.W. Botha’s language was indicative of his emphasis on the power of the executive, firmly enforced by the military. He used the phrase ‘Total Onslaught’ to describe the position South Africa was in, claiming the country was being attacked by an overwhelming enemy and that the only adequate

⁹¹ Don Pinnock, "Culture as Communication: The Rise of the Left-Wing Press in South Africa," *Race & Class* 31 (1989): 19, accessed September 7, 2017, doi:10.1177/030639688903100202.

⁹² Danaher, "Government-Initiated," 178. For further reading of how some white South Africans saw black South Africans as little more than a source of labour, see, Eschel Rhodie, *P.W. Botha: The Last Betrayal*, 2.

⁹³ Keyan Tomaselli, "Race, Class and the South African Progressive Press," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10 (1986): 54, accessed September 7, 2017. <http://www.sciencedirect.com>.

⁹⁴ Keith Maguire, *Politics in South Africa: From Vorster to De Klerk*, ed. Ian Derbyshire (Edinburgh: W & R Chambers 1991), 27.

⁹⁵ Danaher, "Government-Initiated," 190.

response was his 'Total Strategy.' In *The Language of Domination, 1978-1983*, Deborah Posel argued that 'Total Strategy' enabled the government to claim, "a legitimate vested interest in the regulation of the market according to the said 'realities' and 'problems' of the moment."⁹⁶ By creating an enemy, the government could justify their interference with and attempts to control different aspects of society. P.W. Botha's reforms allowed the West to ignore anti-Apartheid cries, as they waited for the slow destruction of Apartheid. They did not have to experience any discomfort by executing their threats to place sanctions on South African goods and services. Despite dismantling some cosmetic features of petty Apartheid, overall, P.W. Botha's reforms firmly consolidated power in the hands of the white minority.

Another factor that contributed towards confirming Nixon's "bump in the road" claim was that many Westerners already thought that the Apartheid Government was corrupt, and little could be done to worsen Apartheid's reputation. O'Meara noted that issues of corruption were hardly new in Apartheid South Africa.⁹⁷ He stated, "[f]or four out of five South Africans, Muldergate was no aberration but rather the norm in, and future confirmation of, a thoroughly corrupt society."⁹⁸ This view extended into the rest of the world too. In 'Beyond the Information Scandal: When South Africa Bought into Global News,' Chris Paterson and Vanessa Malila argued that the Apartheid Government was unable to improve its image through their vast propaganda campaigns, and Muldergate did little to change global perspectives. They stated, "[w]estern perceptions of South Africa continued to worsen, in the longer term there is little to indicate that

⁹⁶ Deborah Posel, "The Language of Domination, 1978-1983," in *The Politics of Race, Class & Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, eds. Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (London and New York: Longman, 1987), 423.

⁹⁷ O'Meara, *Forty Lost*, 231.

⁹⁸ O'Meara, *Forty Lost*, 231.

the propaganda efforts organised by Eschel Rhoodie significantly altered the stigma of the Apartheid policy of governance.”⁹⁹ There was already a stigma attached to Apartheid before the propaganda war. In ‘Political Corruption: Before and After Apartheid,’ Jonathon Hyslop traced the story of political corruption throughout different phases in South Africa’s history. He noted that before the 1970s, in the period from 1948-1972, the government was corrupt and generally sought to benefit the white Afrikaans speaking South Africans. He discussed how their polices were established to benefit Afrikaners, and how they created a large white middle class that enjoyed unprecedented levels of prosperity.¹⁰⁰ He described the corruption in the 1970s as a “scramble for personal enrichment” that was “reflected at the highest levels.”¹⁰¹ He noted that through Muldergate, the world was given a glimpse into this corruption.¹⁰² Many people thought the Apartheid Government was corrupt before Muldergate, so the events of Muldergate did little to worsen their already negative reputation.

The rise of sensationalist journalism affected how the news of Muldergate was received. Williams examined the emergence of “tabloidisation,” “sensationalist journalism,” and the “cult of personality” in the 1970s.¹⁰³ He stated, “[m]ost of Fleet Street’s best-selling newspapers went tabloid, incorporating changes in the size, values, and production methods.”¹⁰⁴ Williams claimed that the *Sun* created a “formula” for tabloidisation that many other newspapers copied, effectively

⁹⁹ Chris Paterson and Vanessa Malila, “Beyond the Information Scandal: When South Africa Bought into Global News,” *Ecquid Novi* 34 (2013): 11, accessed July 2, 2017. doi:10.1080/02560054.2013.772531.

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Hyslop, “Political Corruption: Before and After Apartheid,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31 (2005): 781, accessed June 27, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.canterbury.ac.nz>.

¹⁰¹ Hyslop, “Political Corruption,” 782.

¹⁰² Hyslop, “Political Corruption,” 782.

¹⁰³ Williams, *Read All About It*, 197-198.

¹⁰⁴ Williams, *Read All About It*, 197-198.

“set[ting] the agenda for Fleet Street as a whole.”¹⁰⁵ This formula incorporated “pushing the newspaper content relentlessly downmarket” and has been blamed for contributing towards the overall “dumbing down” of the mass media.¹⁰⁶ Tunstall said, “[t]he most popular items tend to be things which are not really part of journalism as traditionally understood – the television guide, the strip cartoons, and the stars (of both horoscope and entertainment).”¹⁰⁷ Tunstall claimed that this led to a change in newspapers’ content, as articles requiring investigative journalism were replaced with trite entertainment pieces.¹⁰⁸ In chapter 10 of *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*, Ros Coward provided an example of the difference between tabloids and quality papers, showing the effect of sensationalised journalism. He stated, “the *Times* and *Daily Telegraph* still carried the antiquated court circular informing about royal engagements, while the *Sun* and *Mirror* jostled for the latest shot of Prince Harry falling drunkenly out of a nightclub.”¹⁰⁹ Although this was in 2007 and not 1978, it exemplifies the sensationalist journalism characteristic within tabloids. The increasing popularity of tabloids contributed towards the overall disinterest in Muldergate; Williams noted a correlation between the increasing popularity of tabloids and a decreasing interest in global politics.¹¹⁰ The effects of Muldergate were less likely to receive a strong reaction from the general British population, because they had been conditioned to receive news in a sensationalised format. Although Muldergate was a scandal, it was political, not sexual, and did not involve celebrities. Hyslop talks about the “usefulness” of the “moment” of a scandal,

¹⁰⁵ Williams, *Read All About It*, 197-198.

¹⁰⁶ Williams, *Read All About It*, 197-198.

¹⁰⁷ Tunstall, *Newspaper Power*, 218.

¹⁰⁸ Williams, *Read All About It*, 206.

¹⁰⁹ Ross Coward, *Pulling Newspapers Apart*, ed. Bob Franklin (London: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 126, accessed July 19, 2017. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.

¹¹⁰ Williams, *Read All About It*, 199.

which did not happen for Muldergate because information was slowly released over a period of around a year.¹¹¹ The lack of a moment of scandal is a useful indicator of Muldergate's underwhelming effect on Apartheid's international image.

Another reason that Muldergate was “just a bump in the road,” was that Britain was more concerned about South African sports than any other aspect of South Africa, especially politics. In the table below, I examined the first 100 articles in a key-word search and counted how many articles were related to sports, politics, business and finance, and children suffering. This showed what topics the media prioritised. The majority of articles about both South Africa and Apartheid in both time periods were about sports, followed by business articles. There are almost no articles on children suffering, either through diseases, poverty, famine, or malnourishment. This is indicative of newspapers' priorities, showing that social issues were the least important. The only exception to the trend are the 32 articles relating to politics between 1980 and 1985. This number is inflated because there were many articles written about the newly independent Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe's opinions of Apartheid, and whether or not he would impose sanctions on South Africa. Overall, sports, business and finances were more important than politics and social justice issues. This was shown in a *Times* article on 8 January 1980, titled, ‘Sport on the Altar of Politics.’¹¹² The article complained that politics was interfering with sports. At least to that author alone, sports were more important than politics. Another example of how South Africa was best associated with sports was shown by a *Times* article on 4 January 1980 titled, ‘The Soviet Invasion

¹¹¹ Hyslop, "Political Corruption," 774.

¹¹² "Sport on The Altar of Politics," *Times*, January 8, 1980, 11.

of Afghanistan.¹¹³ Although this article was not about South Africa at all, it briefly mentioned South Africa as an example of how politics was interfering with sports. A *Times* article on 10 January 1980, titled 'Playing the Political Game,' had nothing to do with South African politics at all, instead it was about how Apartheid's racial policies were affecting sports.¹¹⁴ Articles such as this strongly suggest that the readers of the newspapers I examined were more concerned with sports than South African politics.

Image 2.

The <i>Times</i> Digital Archive, first 100 results, recorded on 11 September, 2017.				
	1970 to 1977		1980 to 1985	
	"South Africa"	"Apartheid"	"South Africa"	"Apartheid"
Sport.	30	56	30	34
Business and Finances. (Includes: Mining and Exchange Rates)	35	1	28	4
Politics.	4	9	10	32
Children suffering. (Includes: Poverty, Hunger, Disease, and Refugees)	1	0	1	0

¹¹³ John Powell, Dele Jyamu, and Robert Tesian, "The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan," *Times*, January 4, 1980, 11.

¹¹⁴ Ronald Butt, "Playing the Political Games," *Times*, January 10, 1980, 14.

The Apartheid Government sold their racist policy to the West by packaging it as anti-communist. To many Westerners, Apartheid was the lesser evil of the two. One of P.W. Botha's 'Total Strategy' claims was that it was a necessary response to the 'Total Onslaught' of Communism.¹¹⁵ In *Politics and Society in South Africa*, Daryl Glaser noted how the Apartheid Government sought to label the ANC as a communist organisation, thus discrediting it in the eyes of the West.¹¹⁶ In *The Anti-Apartheid Reader: The Struggle Against White Racist Rule in South Africa*, David Mermelstein showed this method when he stated, "[n]ot only does the African National Congress, the symbol of black resistance, have Communists in its inner circle, it is indebted to the Soviet Union for its military aid."¹¹⁷ This was used by the Apartheid Government to gain favor in the eyes of the West. In *South Africa and the Logic of Regional Cooperation*, James Hentz noted that Malan sought to "ally with the Western powers by offering South Africa as a bulwark against the spread of Communism and as an outpost of white domination."¹¹⁸ In 'South Africa's Propaganda War: A Bibliographic Essay,' Galen Hull stated, "[i]n March 1965, three full-page advertisements appeared in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. The first, on 21 March, emphasised South Africa's role as a rich, anti-communist ally that had attracted one hundred thousand immigrants in the last three years."¹¹⁹ These quotes show how the Apartheid Government sold themselves to the West as anti-communist. Likewise, Mermelstein noted the

¹¹⁵ Roger Beck, *History of South Africa* (Westport: Greenwood, 2000), 163, accessed June 28, 2017. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.

¹¹⁶ Daryl Glaser, *Politics and Society in South Africa* (London: SAGE, 2000), 212, accessed June 28, 2017. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.

¹¹⁷ David Mermelstein, ed., *The Anti-Apartheid Reader: The Struggle Against White Racist Rule in South Africa* (New York: Grove, 1987), 9.

¹¹⁸ James Hentz, *South Africa and the Logic of Regional Cooperation* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2005), 23, accessed September 19, 2017. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.

¹¹⁹ Galen Hull, "South Africa's Propaganda War: A Bibliographic Essay," *African Studies Review* 22, (1979): 82, accessed July 2, 2017. doi:10.2307/523897.

Apartheid Government's claim, "[i]f the white regime falls, communist rule becomes an immediate possibility."¹²⁰ The Apartheid Government used the threat of communist expansion to consolidate white power and maintain their policy of racial superiority. In his review of *Selling Apartheid*, Christian Makgala recalls how Nixon identified a link between the fall of Communism and the end of Apartheid.¹²¹ Nixon claimed that these were correlated, and said that once Communism fell, the South African Government had lost one of its main selling points for Apartheid. Likewise, in *South Africa in World History*, Iris Berger noted, "[w]ith the collapse of the Soviet Union, the South African Government lost its rhetorical rationale for opposing reforms – namely that it was holding the line against Communism."¹²² This shows that many Westerners who did like Apartheid saw it as the lesser evil, one to be tolerated until the end of the Cold War.

¹²⁰ Mermelstein, *The Anti-Apartheid*, 9.

¹²¹ Christian Makgala, review of 'Selling Apartheid: South Africa's Global Propaganda War,' by Ron Nixon, *African Historical Review* 48 (2016): 173, accessed July 2, 2017. doi:10.1080/17532523.2016.1227588.

¹²² Iris Berger, *South Africa in World History* (Cary: Oxford University, 2009), 123, accessed September 19, 2017. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.

Part Three: Conclusion.

In this dissertation, I have examined Nixon's claim that Muldergate was "just a bump in the road," having a negligible impact on South Africa's international image. I have examined how South Africa was portrayed by London's media, revealing how the information of Muldergate was made widely available to the British public, and uncovered how it affected the public opinion of Apartheid. To negate any claims to ignorance, I needed to confirm that Muldergate's events were widely available to the public. I did this by examining newspapers. I have shown that the events of Muldergate were available in just three newspapers, all of which possess conservative reputations. This showed that it is even more likely that the information of the Muldergate scandal was widely available across all of London's newspapers. The first two chapters were devoted to showing that all the events of the Muldergate scandal were made public through these three newspapers. The lack of public outrage at the scandal confirmed the poor reputation that Apartheid already had. The newspapers revealed the existence of the Department of Information's propaganda war, its funding, and the methods employed. They showed the attempts to purchase SAAN and the *Washington Star*, and following these failures, the establishment of the *Citizen*. They showed the Apartheid Government's attempts to hide the events, especially the dismissal of Justice Mostert for revealing the scandal to the South African media. They showed the numerous misuses of taxpayer money, the bribing of politicians and journalists, the fall of Rhodie, Mulder, Vorster, and van den Bergh, as well as their subsequent infighting. The newspapers showed the Apartheid Government's internal corruption, the scramble for personal enrichment, P.W. Botha's ascension to Prime Minister, and his subsequent power-consolidating reforms that were used to reaffirm and sustain Apartheid. Despite all the

information about Muldergate being widely available, both Muldergate and South African politics were still relatively unimportant to Britain. In chapter three I suggested some reasons why this was so.

I examined global trends that affected how Muldergate was received, reducing its impact on the Western world. The growing influence of tabloids and sensationalist newspapers, exemplified by the *Sun*, trained their readership to consume a type of news that Muldergate did not conform to. The scandal was political, occurred in a foreign nation, and was not sexualised. The information was slowly released, meaning that there was no big “moment” of scandal. Along with this, Apartheid already had a negative global image, and the existence of corruption within the Apartheid Government was little surprise to many South Africans and Westerners alike. P.W. Botha’s reforms only altered petty Apartheid enough to exude the image of a slowly-dismantling system. This enabled the West to justify their non-involvement, as they could claim that Apartheid was resolving itself. The data analysis showed that the West was more concerned with sports than politics. Most of the mentions of the protests about Apartheid were in articles about sports. The West also saw Apartheid as the lesser evil when faced with Communism as the alternative. They would rather have had racist South Africa than communist South Africa. All these factors enabled Muldergate to be “just a bump in the road.” P.W. Botha’s reforms kept Apartheid going. He consolidated white power in the executive, and despite his rhetoric of change, his reforms had little effect on the day-to-day lives of black South Africans. Following Muldergate and into the 1980s, the Apartheid machine rolled on.

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