

BURNING THE MESSENGER

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SPECIAL INSERTS FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

Ragged Right, our sparkling insert on typography and design in association with Thomson Newspapers in Canada and Times Media Limited in South Africa
State of the Nation Report from the *Sowetan* and *Vrye Weekblad*

Letters — *Off The Cuff* — *ThumbSuck* — *Obituary: John Hildyard*

editorial

OVER the past two years the *Rhodes Journalism Review* has set out to seed and encourage discussion on a wide range of issues pertinent to media freedom and the free flow of information in southern Africa.

Some of these discussions have had far-reaching effects, in particular the debate on media ownership in South Africa. For example, two years ago, when this *Review* seeded the debate by publishing a 16-page analysis of media 'monopolies', there was no suggestion of any change in ownership patterns. Last month, however, the first unbundling began with the Argus company offering to sell off part ownership of the *Sowetan* to the community.

We still have some way to go in this regard, and in particular in making the country's electronic media more accessible and less partisan. However, now the SABC itself is encouraging debate about its future control and management. This was unthinkable two years ago.

These are watershed changes, and while we don't claim credit for any of this, *Review* certainly has been instrumental in confronting these issues and in encouraging rational discussion around them.

Pursuing this editorial line has not always endeared us to advertisers, some of whom, as major publishers, have been on the receiving end of severe — and often unjustified — criticism in *Review's* pages. Yet, they are still advertising, which reinforces our belief that

independence is not necessarily jeopardised by adopting editorial positions hostile to advertisers.

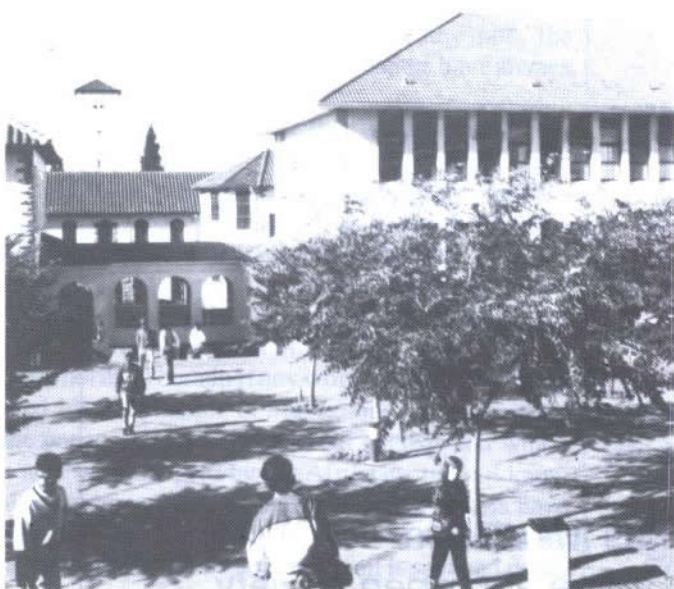
We believe the mere fact that these advertisers are still with us speaks volumes about their integrity as publishers. It also suggests editorial independence can, and often does, flow from market-driven media.

We have no doubt that had *Review* started its life as a subsidised journal, it would not have enjoyed the freedom it now has to pursue important media issues in an even-handed manner. Thus a good deal of credit for promoting media's role in a democratic South Africa must be shared by *Review's* advertisers. And the debate has reverberated elsewhere in southern Africa because throughout our region it has been small bands of dedicated journalists who have had to carry the torch of freedom where politicians, bureaucrats and a host of state functionaries in obeying orders or enforcing unjust laws have not been up to the task.

We wish to thank the *Index on Censorship* in London and journalism reviews in Nigeria, Canada, the United States and Britain with whom we now have expanding relationships.

Special thanks to Thomson Newspapers in Canada for *RaggedRight* and Times Media Limited for sponsoring its reproduction for *Review* subscribers. And to *VryeWeekblad* and *Sowetan* for *State of the Nation Report* which also goes to subscribers. But most important, we thank our contributors and we salute the torch-bearers for holding the flame aloft. ●

We've grown big by staying small.



To measure the greatness of a university, some would count the students. We'd rather make sure the students count. This is exactly why, at Rhodes, you won't find yourself one of tens of thousands, but one of three and a half thousand. A number with numerous advantages. Such as a ratio of one lecturer to twelve students ... residences a few minutes' walk from lectures ... the privacy of single rooms ... and easy access to all 32 sports, from surfing to skydiving.

Inevitably, all this, and more, has given Rhodes a great name. Which is why you might wish to write it after yours.

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IN my opinion the most immediate, indeed the most important, challenge facing the media today is one of credibility — and here I don't mean only the SABC.

The so-called mainstream newspapers (i.e. the major English-language national and regional newspapers owned by the Argus and Times Media Limited groups), suffer a two-fold credibility gap from the perspective of the black community.

The first problem of credibility which the mainstream newspapers have is that, to all intents and purposes, they are widely viewed as being the agents of big capital. This perception, right or wrong, has been given credence by the concentration of ownership in too few but economically powerful hands, and cemented by the undeniable fact that there is pretty little to choose from by way of diversity between newspapers owned by Argus and TML. When you consider that both groups are firmly in the clutches of the all-embracing Anglo-American empire, then you perhaps begin to see why this near-monopoly of the English-language press is largely perceived to serve white economic power interests.

Next, the mainstream English-language press is seen as serving white political power interests. The argument has been that the English-language press in the past opposed government policy not so much because editors and their newspapers believed in fundamental change for its sake, but rather that they would oppose the political injustices and imbalances to the extent that such opposition did not threaten white privilege.

Segregating news on a racial basis

Liberals will be only too familiar with this line of thought, because for years it was used to scoff at their efforts in opposing apartheid and, at any rate, the majority of English-language newspapers have always fought the liberal cause.

Perhaps it was inevitable that, granted the highly polarised and ruthlessly segregationist nature of the South Africa of past decades, someone in the English-language newspaper groups would dream up the idea of segregating news strictly on a racial basis. And so, 'apartheid' editions of the same newspapers were born, going variously by the titles of "Africa" or "Township" or "Extra" editions.

I am not at all certain if any worthwhile purpose was served by the practice of segregating editions of the same paper, a practice which still persists and which has now been adopted by the Afrikaans press. I know all the arguments both managements and editors have always advanced to justify the creation and existence of the separate editions, but, when all is said and done, separate can never be equal — at least not in the eyes of those for whom such editions are intended. I suppose you could turn this argument around and say: "Oh, but at least those papers with special editions are

Jon Qwelane

Media in South Africa suffer credibility problems from the black perspective, but there are a number of ways in which they can put their houses in order

only being half segregationist; what about newspapers which are totally black such as *City Press* and *Sowetan*? They are 100 percent segregationist." That may well be so in theory, but that would be missing the point. In any event, those selfsame newspapers are owned by the same people and publishing companies which are guilty of the sin of separate editions.

Two other branches of the media suffer a lack of credibility for an entirely different reason. The so-called alternative media and the SABC are in the same camp as organs of political partisanship.

A gross disservice to democracy

Anyone who has followed SABC television and radio reports since the early part of 1990 will readily agree that there has been some noticeable, almost tangible, change in comparison to the preceding era of "Total Onslaught" thinking. Yet that change is not nearly enough: the corporation is still heavily biased towards the National Party and President De Klerk's government. News is still slanted to favour the government and, in these days of endless and mindless violence in the black community, it is also slanted heavily in favour of the government's security forces.

The alternative newspapers, on the other hand, have faithfully served the cause of extra-parliamentary forces, in this case the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party and their allies.

This is not to deny that alternative newspapers have performed some sterling work in their own right, especially during the dark days of the emergency when censorship was every pressman's shadow, and when the mainstream "establishment" press suffered a paralysis of inaction. Indeed it is newspapers such as *Vrye Weekblad* which blew the lid on the horror of police murder squads.

But the open flirtation between the alternative press and the extra-parliamentary outfits does about as much good as the close relationship between the SABC and the government; such collaboration rapidly diminishes the true functions of the press, and lessens to a very great degree the fundamental right of society to be informed in the strict sense of the term.

There is another form of credibility gap which we suffer as media people, and which is self-inflicted.

There is a disturbing, yet very fashionable, trend among journalists nowadays to place themselves firmly inside the camps of political organisations and parties. Chances are that if you gave me some names of practising journalists I could easily and correctly place at least 60 percent of those names in one political camp or other.

This is a gross disservice to the ideal of democracy to which we all aspire, and the reasons are not very difficult to find. Journalists who have become travelling ambassadors for political parties and organisations have lost their right to be seen and labelled as

PLEASE TURN OVER

journalists; they are no more than propagandists for their organisations and parties. While the main culprits in this regard are black journalists, an increasing number of whites are jumping on the bandwagon.

All too often we moan about harassment and intimidation in the execution of our tasks, and much of the time it is true that faceless censors and unruly mobs want us to toyi-toyi to their tune. But there is hardly ever smoke without fire: we are being harassed and intimidated in our communities and by elements loyal to political organisations because in many cases we ourselves first planted the idea in their minds that we could be pliable political tools sincerely serving a determined purpose.

Clearly that is about as sensible as hitching a lift on the back of a tiger: you are safe for as long as you remain perched on its back. As soon as you disembark you are pretty certain to end in the tiger's belly.

Colleagues who bend over backwards to ingratiate themselves with politicians and organisations do our society, black and white, a gross disservice in another way: they are less likely to question their political masters if they overstep the mark, and are more likely to gloss over their shortcomings than expose them. And the politicians, comfortable in the knowledge that they have the journalists "in the bag", are more likely to do as they please. The continent of Africa is replete with examples of this sort of thing.

I for one am very wary of seminars which focus on harassment and intimidation of journalists, especially when the key participants are confirmed and articulate masters of bias, and conveniently omit to spell out their true role in this unsavoury state of affairs.

To sum up, let me first acknowledge unreservedly that despite the ills I have outlined — and they are by no means spelt out in full — both the mainstream and alternative media have performed some admirable tasks in the past: the Info Scandal, the Biko affair, the horror of the death of Stompie Moeketsi, the police murder squads and the CCB, the Matthew Goniwe disclosures, and many other exposés.

Yet we need, as the press, to do a lot more. I have a few suggestions to offer in order to address some of the issues I have touched on, as an attempt to meet the challenges facing the press in a changing society:

1. Let us have a press which probes endlessly. All too often we set out to sensationalise an issue, and leave it halfway through with no solutions. A ready example was the glaring lack of follow-through in the months after Winnie Mandela's witnesses retracted their evidence and publicly confessed to perjury. None of the media, to my knowledge, vigorously pursued Justice authorities to find out about the latest state of play. Another example was the Matthew Goniwe case. After sensationalising disclosures of State Security

involvement, there was a deafening silence in that quarter. The Codesa deadlock was yet another example, with newspapers screaming "Crisis" and "Deadlock" and "Showdown" and nothing more. To play our proper role we must inform, and to get information we must probe.

2. My second suggestion, in addition to having a probing press, is to address more adequately the needs of our changing society. First is the fact that residential areas and therefore entire communities are undergoing irreversible changes which mirror the New South Africa. Here I am talking specifically of the formerly "whites-only" suburbs which are beginning to lose their previous racial identity forever. Rather than continue endlessly with separate editions, pretty soon we shall have to face the fact that it is going to be very difficult determining readership — particularly economically active readers — in racial terms only.

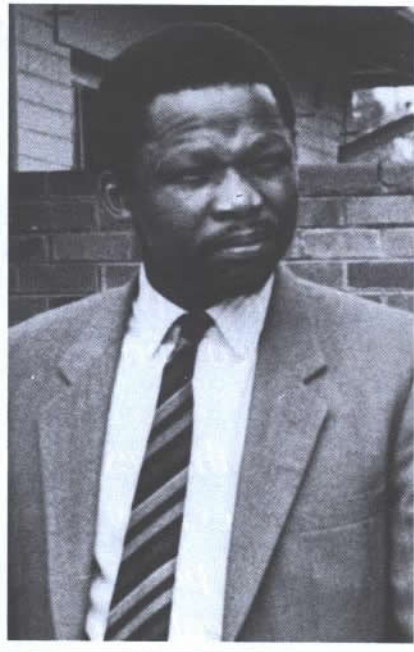
3. Already there have been rumblings about nationalising the SABC and having all sorts of people appointed — God knows by whom — to its board. In my opinion that may be desirable on paper; in practice it is not. I spent quite some time in Namibia reporting on that country before its independence, and

for some time afterwards. The South West African Broadcasting Corporation was worse than anything you ever saw, yet since independence it is almost unspeakable. Rather the SABC must move swiftly and run itself along the lines of the BBC, with total independence of the corporation being the operative principle.

4. The alternative press must grow up and become newspapers. They may well have served a valuable role in the past, giving a platform and voice to liberation movements when those were banned and the mainstream media largely shied away from challenging the laws forbidding the press to quote banned individuals and organisations. In a more relaxed political atmosphere, the alternative media, indeed all media, must now apply the same vigour of the past to exposing corruption and injustices wherever these occur — inside and outside government.

5. Monopoly, especially in the English-language Press, must be meaningfully reduced, and ideally boardrooms should reflect the components of our entire society. But this is not an argument for affirmative action because I simply do not believe in that concept if merit is not the sole criterion for evaluation. What I am saying is that there are quite a few people of colour in the professions today whose contributions to boardroom discussions and decisions could spell the difference between a healthy and vibrant press and one which is prescriptive and fumbling. ●

A former deputy editor of The Star, JON QWELANE is editor of Tribute magazine in Johannesburg.



Jon Qwelane

“
Journalists who have become travelling ambassadors for political parties and organisations have lost their right to be seen and labelled as journalists; they are no more than propagandists for their organisations and parties
 ”

Whatever happened to good old dwarfs?

It appears some people agreed with my suggestion that more journalists should be awarded academic baubles for their contributions to truth, democracy, religious tolerance and all the other noble pursuits of the latter-day scribblers, but there is surely a limit to how far the accolades should go.

A colleague down in the Eastern Cape tells me a rumour has been circulating among progressive democrats (i.e. re-treaded Marxists), that in the new South Africa, Rhodes University will be re-named Ruth First University after the late journalist bearing that name.

A committed humanist, Ms First built her journalistic reputation by recording the excesses of racial domination in southern Africa, but she was not equally renowned for penetrating exposés of psychiatric wards, re-education camps, racial pogroms, religious persecutions or any of the other sporting preoccupations of the Stalinist gulags supported by the South African Communist Party, of which she was an active member.

Can anyone seriously suggest such an obviously one-eyed watchdog as an appropriate figure to oust the old imperialist running dog, Cecil John, from his colonial perch down in Grahamstown?

In my view no sensible society should consider naming anything after anybody until they have been dead for at least 1 000 years. This would provide ample time for the deconstruction process to run its miserable course and for the army of bad biographers to debunk every childhood hero.

Adopting that principle for the new South Africa would mean neither Boer, Brit nor 'Nguni-speaking indigenous person' (the politically correct nomenclature for such peoples) should be honoured by naming institutions after them, as none of them were around 1 000 years ago. Thus I propose a new government in South Africa should rename Rhodes University the Khoi-San College in memory of the original occupants of this land — if only to keep the peace.

My Eastern Cape colleague tells me all other suggestions are welcome. Send them to the Vice-Chancellor, Ruth First University, PO Box 94, Grahamstown. But don't expect an early reply!



By Thomas Fairbairn

INVENTIVE of *The Weekly Mail* to try and make a virtue out of bugging former CCB agent 'Staal' Burger's private premises. The newspaper invoked a defence of acting in the public interest, a neat piece of Machiavellian logic which separates journalism from ethics. If Richard Nixon ever wants a retirement job in South African journalism, I'll know where to send him.

And *Rapport* gets a brickbat for buying the rights to Barend Strydom's life story after he walked through the prison gates a free man under that bizarre amnesty for 'political prisoners'. Let's hope political expediency and *Rapport's* largesse don't trigger a career for Mr Strydom or worse, a whole new industry for the Wit Wolwe.

THE creeping tyranny of gender correctness is leaving its snail's trail through local reporting. Already dread words such as *spokesperson* and the equally nauseating *chairperson* abound in certain newspapers, while awkward *he/she* constructions festoon the pages of others. One would have hoped, however, that long-suffering readers would be spared the buffoonery of *policeperson* (for *policeman*) and *herdperson* (for

herdboy), but alas, both of those gender benders have been spotted in local news reports.

On that tender subject, perhaps the gender police should take a closer look at the ANC leader's name as 'Nelson Mandela' is clearly a sexist construction.

The *son* in *Nelson* is a male sexist term and should be replaced by *child*. The *Man* in *Mandela* also needs attention — *Person* would be more appropriate. And the *la* in *Mandela* is offensive to South African males being the French feminine, and thus sexist, article. It should be replaced by the neutral form, *the*.

A far more appropriate name for the probable future President of the non-sexist, non-racist, all-inclusive, pluralist, democratic and unitary state we are all being told we want to live in would thus be: *Nelchild Persondethe*.

THE dear language is taking a pounding all round I'm afraid. Not only is it drowning in a sea of acronyms, it is also being subjected to the newspeak of care crusaders inventing new labels to suit the therapy culture washing over us from the United States. As a result, we get oddities such as short people being renamed the "vertically challenged". Whatever happened to good old dwarfs? I liked dwarfs as a child and I like them now, but I doubt children of the care generation feel the same warm glow towards the 'vertically challenged'. I certainly don't.

VENI, vidi, vici. What more suitable epitaph for former TML supremo, Stephen Mulholland who packed up and followed the triumphant Wallabies back to Australia? When he was appointed editor of *Business Times* in the distant past, a snide comment appeared in a leading financial journal of the day suggesting that with Mulholland's appointment, the JSE should prepare for a bull-market.

Well, if TML's performance under Mulholland was anything to go by, never were truer words spoken in sneer.

MY congratulations to the *Rhodes Journalism Review* for winning acclaim at the Specialist Press Association awards ceremony in Johannesburg. Perhaps now your skinflint editor can pay me a contributor's fee! ●



COURTESY: MAYIBUYE

BURNING THE MESSENGER

*ANC supporters converged on the offices of three newspapers in Port Elizabeth and burnt copies of the papers in the street. Editor-in-chief, **DEREK SMITH** explores this extraordinary attack on his editorial policy*

B EING pulled off the tennis court on a Saturday afternoon to be told that the three newspapers you oversee are to be summarily boycotted tends to focus the mind. Negatively.

The league game is desperately close and you're into the deciding set. Like Drake with the armada fair in sight, you stoop to finish the game. I am not sure if history tells us who won the bowls, but let me confess for the record that the tennis was lost. Game, set, match.

But the agonising goes on. Why? Why would the ANC and its alliance partners, without warning, talks or consultation, announce such drastic action against a stable of newspapers which for so long have identified themselves with the anti-apartheid struggle? Was it something we said?

Yes it was, as the *Evening Post* report of the announcement subsequently makes clear. Before a mass-action crowd of thousands in the Port Elizabeth market square, ANC regional chairperson Linda Mti spelt it out:

"We, the oppressed people, will withdraw our buying power from the *Evening Post* and the *Eastern Province Herald*. We will not allow them to be sold in

“
The show
climaxes
with a
pyrotechnical
display of
newspaper
burning and
as the
remnants
smoulder on,
the crowd
moves off
on its next
assignment
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our areas, especially the *EP Herald* which has been distorting our events, not publishing our statements and printing editorials which have been against the ANC and other peoples' organisations.

"Our reporters have no say in the management we are calling for the restructuring of these two institutions. Our people must be in the management of the two newspapers."

Yes, well, we sometimes complain about the management, too. But "our reporters" seems a bit much. We thought they were *our* reporters.

Then comes the soul-searching amid attempts to try to get together to talk the matter over. How have we distorted events? What statements didn't we publish? But complaints against our editorials are accepted.

Guilty as charged. We have written many editorials critical of ANC actions. Of course, we have also written many others supporting the ANC view. And, with equal vigour, we have panned everyone else in the public eye from the Nats to the Boerestaaters.

There is some solace in a statement from ANC headquarters referring to recent guidelines issued by Nelson Mandela. Effectively he says the liberation movement must learn to accept criticism. If democracy is the goal, tolerance comes with the territory.

Nevertheless, there is more trouble ahead. On a dismal Wednesday following the boycott announcement, several hundred demonstrators arrive in the street outside Newspaper House. A loud-speaker blares, rousing speeches are delivered and a nervous editor-in-chief, flanked by staffers from all departments, is handed two copies of a memorandum listing the sins of his newspapers.

The show climaxes with a pyrotechnical display of newspaper burning and as the remnants smoulder on, the crowd moves off on its next assignment.

News editor André Erasmus dubs it the 'Baakens Street Braai', but it is difficult at that moment to see the funny side. Not only is there a clear commercial threat to the welfare of the newspapers and the staff who man (sorry, people) them, but it takes a sterner constitution than mine to conceal the nervousness we are all feeling. Posters demand that 'Derick Smith must resign' and go back to Rhodesia (which he left 33 years ago). All very personal.

The points in the memo turn out to be somewhat different to those made at the mass meeting.

The demands include an end to biased reporting and continuous bashing of the ANC-led alliance; balanced and proper coverage of news; a restructuring of the *EP Herald* and *Evening Post*; an apology; affirmative action to address imbalances of race and gender in the employment and promotion of staff; the *Evening Post* to work towards promoting

harmonious relations in the community; democratisation and more consumer participation in determining policy; and a clear social responsibility programme to plough back profits for the upliftment of our people.

We wrack our brains. What bias? What imbalances? What "balanced and proper" reportage of news? We already pride ourselves on our equal opportunity employment policies and our balanced coverage. But perhaps it's true — if you stand in the middle you get run over.

A meeting is held some time later but we remain in the dark. Little progress is made and no examples are given on which we can act. But knowing that the *Post's* 'Extra' edition, which concentrates on township news, has been a long-standing sore point, we announce that it is to be discontinued. Soon (in the event, on October 5) a new edition, combining Extra and Stop Press, hits the streets.

For the rest, we make it clear that we welcome input from the community. If we are not serving our market, let us know. We take criticism from readers seriously and will act if lapses are pointed out. But on one matter we remain adamant: we will not abrogate our democratic right to freedom of expression.

However, the meeting fails and we are left none the wiser on specifics. It is agreed that I will submit a further document stating our attitude towards the sentiments expressed in the preamble to the memorandum.

Our answering memo is duly deliv-

ered to the ANC offices but in the heat of mass action, it remains low on the priority list and the *Herald* hears nothing for several weeks.

In the interim, *Evening/Week-end Post* editor Neville Woudberg manages to organise an informal discussion with certain leaders of the alliance to explain the workings of a newspaper.

The get-together is friendly and, given the undertaking to get rid of the Extra edition, the boycott of the *Post* is lifted about a month after it began.

However, the action against the *Herald* continues and we have to sweat it out for a further month before a four-man delegation arrives to inform us that the Broad Forum has suspended the boycott of the *Herald* as well.

Our plea at this meeting is the same as it was at the first — please speak to us if there are problems and give us a chance to put matters right before taking drastic action.

Our plan now is to hold regular meetings to ensure that we understand each other and, hopefully, this arrangement will create a happier environment in which to operate.

But the memories of burning newspapers and placards declaring "Derick Smith must resign" will not be easy to forget. Nor will I forget the GM surveying the scene and pronouncing it "terrible".

I couldn't have agreed more. After all, everybody should know that Derek is spelt with two E's and no C. ●

Media must reflect the changing society says ANC Eastern Cape

IN opting for a boycott, we (the ANC Eastern Cape Region) wished to express our observations on the unbecoming attitude adopted by the *Eastern Province Herald* and *Evening Post* newspapers.

This attitude had become intolerable. We believe that newspapers should, without bias, grant an automatic right of reply regarding information or opinion published about any person or institution.

Apartheid and the structure of ownership of the papers in this country, have meant that the majority of the people have no media of their own.

If the owners of the media do not allow the free flow of information or inculcate a culture of open debate, but instead drive the communities apart through false reporting and misinformation, those who are targets of this misinformation and disinformation have to seek other ways of righting these wrongs.

The media has the right to criticise the ANC and its allies,

but we cannot take vilification and the 'no-nonsense' stance adopted by the *Herald* and *Post* against our campaigns which did not suit them. Whereas the boycott has been resolved through meetings, it remained, however, our right to choose the form of struggle against the attitude of Times Media Limited in the region. We chose the boycott.

As we see it, the media in general and the print media in particular, should reflect the changing society by promoting the norms, values and morals that are embodied in the vision of a new South Africa.

Otherwise, the media can become the backbone of the old South Africa, particularly if it continues with the misinformation about the struggle, as was the case throughout the years. Their readers, especially the white readers, have a fundamental right to know what is really taking place.

— *Unsigned opinion piece by the ANC Eastern Cape Region, published in Mayibuye, September 1992.*

FACING THE CHALLENGE OF AN AILING INDUSTRY

Whither the world's troubled newspaper industry, is the question being asked by editors as advertising budgets come under pressure and competition from electronic media hots up. But it's not all doom and gloom as GUY BERGER surveys the world scene

WITH quiet courtesy, a gentle Japanese at the World Newspaper Congress in Prague this year asked about the circulation of my newspaper, *South*.

"Twenty thousand a week," I replied, "What's yours?"

"It's 14,5 million every 24 hours," came the reply from a representative of the world's biggest daily newspaper, *Yomiuri Shinbun*.

This incredible paper prints in eight factories across Japan. It hires 100 000 delivery boys — and if any of the lads wants a career in newspapers, *Yomiuri* has six training colleges to prepare them.

An earnest Tunisian publisher posed a question to the Japanese: "Are you able to recycle some of your newsprint?" he asked. *Yomiuri* has this in the bag too: it issues subscribers with a packet that contains exactly a month's worth of papers.

And yet the Japanese newspaper industry — like its counterparts elsewhere — is not doing too well.

Arranged by Feij, the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers, the conference gave a glimpse — and a gloomy one too — into the serious financial pressures on the press around the globe.

Fiej director general Timothy Balding paraphrased Woody Allen in assessing 1990 as a crossroads for the world's newspapers. One path leads to utter hopelessness; the other to total extinction. In short, advertising revenues worldwide are slipping away, while sales are stagnant or worse. This is a complete reversal of strong growth since 1987.

In advertising, the global recession is largely to blame. A representative from *Dagens Nyeter*, Sweden's biggest morning paper, told the Fiej conference how the slump in job recruitment ads had cost that publication a full third of its advertising income.

New competition for adshare from cable TV and direct marketing is also hitting newspapers heavily.

But while ad revenues shrivel, the figures show that publications are becoming much more reliant on adverts for their income. So newspapers internationally are becoming adpapers, and editors are gazing into continuously shrinking newsholes.

But at least the heightened commercial pressure on papers has not extended into editorial to the degree that it has in Russia. In Moscow recently, *South's* senior reporter Rehana Rossouw found that editorial is entirely up for sale. The cash-strapped Russian press now

Advertising revenues worldwide are slipping away, while sales are stagnant or worse. This is a complete reversal of strong growth since 1987



only covers a press conference if the organisers pay for it. And the publications themselves can only get information from public officials if they are prepared to pay.

You want an interview with the state attorney investigating the KGB archives on JFK? Only hard currency will get it. Otherwise, wait 'till he publishes his private book on the topic — and an advance copy will cost extra dollars.

The Russian economic crisis has also seen a collapse of sales in the erstwhile Soviet Union. But sales are also shrinking in most other countries — a potentially more fateful trend than the collapse in advertising revenues.

In only 10 of 30 major countries surveyed by Fiej was there a rise in the numbers of copies sold per 1 000 inhabitants in 1991. It is especially bad in Britain, according to a Midlands publisher who told Fiej how his paper's old readers were dying off while young people simply ignored newspapers. "All that is left for us is some sheep: the ultimate marketing challenge," he quipped.

The decline in sales has, of course, aggravated the general fall in revenues. And the effect of the general downturn has been to trim the number of titles published in countries such as the USA, Brazil and Greece. Only South Korea, India and Israel have seen a significant increase in press diversity in recent years.

Publishers worldwide are looking for new solutions to these problems:

- ☛ There are exciting campaigns to reorientate papers to attract young readers, even catching them at school.

- ☛ Innovative supplements are drawing in untapped advertising, and there are increasing links with electronic media.

- ☛ From South Africa, Times Media Limited's Roy Paulsen — who has since been elected as new president of the Newspaper Press Union (NPU) — told Fiej about the advertising success of research into "the 30/30 principle".

The research proves that advertisers are most effective when they put at least 30 percent of their advertising budgets into print and synergise this with electronic media.

- ☛ Fiej research released at the conference also revealed increasing outside subsidies available to newspapers.

PLEASE TURN OVER >>

☞ In almost half of 30 countries Fiej surveyed, newspaper sales are VAT free. In Sweden, according to publisher Ake Ahrsjo, this provision required a little personal arm-twisting in his country. Approached by editors in their constituency, Swedish MPs soon fell into line to support the "no taxation on information" concept.

☞ At least one third of the countries Fiej surveyed have laws that limit concentration of newspaper ownership and about half restrict cross-ownership of print and electronic media.

☞ In nearly half the states surveyed, newspapers receive public subsidies in the form of cheaper postal rates, while a third get telephone rebates. A seventh get newsprint subsidies.

☞ In 12 countries (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Greece, India, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden), there are direct public subsidies and the amounts have risen far above inflation since 1987.

With South Africa's press also suffering financially these days, it was surprising that those kind of public subsidies did not feature at the NPU's September conference in Swaziland.

The NPU is now, for the first time, a member of Fiej, having been accepted at the Prague conference.

If much of the world newspaper industry is having it bad financially nowadays, African publishers battle against a double burden that includes draconian press controls

This followed the alternative press joining the NPU, and the creation of a unified South African press sector.

In this spirit, Nasionale Pers' chief executive officer, Ton Vosloo, representing the NPU at the Fiej conference, piloted a conference resolution that won support from the world press industry for press freedom and diversity in South Africa.

The Prague conference also meant a first for South African press people to meet African colleagues from countries such as the Cameroon and Kenya.

If much of the world newspaper industry is having it bad financially nowadays, African publishers battle against a double burden that includes draconian press controls.

Alerting the Fiej conference that the problems facing the press can be as much political as economic, the African delegates focussed minds.

Beyond the business issues, however, the Africans reminded the conference about what the press is finally all about. ●

DR GUY BERGER, editor of South, is a former lecturer in the Department of Journalism & Media Studies at Rhodes University.

Our chair of learning is for everybody



Murray & Roberts firmly believes that education is the way to a better South Africa. To this end we support a broad range of activities to promote a culture of learning.

- Financial support of tertiary education, including two University Chairs: UCT, construction management and Rhodes, environmental education. Students in architecture are offered a workshop-cum-competition challenge via the M&R Des Baker Awards.
- We support pre-varsity bridging courses at certain Technikons.
- Through Sunflower Projects and AMS, we are involved in stimulating a variety of informal businesses where the emphasis falls on building self-reliance.
- Sunflower Projects also operates parallel literacy and numeracy programmes.

- The Group supports upliftment and educational programmes which contribute towards alleviating pressure on scarce natural resources.
- In recognition of the special role sport plays in cross-cultural unification, the M&R Jack Cheetham Memorial Award is presented annually to sports administrators. We sponsor the Rugby Union's Youth Development Week and support the United Cricket Board's youth initiatives.

- In the cultural sphere we sponsor the Male Voice Choir Festival and support the African Youth Ensemble as well as the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra. These are just some of the ways in which we are committed to building a better future for both our own employees and the wider communities within which we operate.

We have learnt that by combining our skills with the natural talents of our fellow South Africans, we can all move forward into the future with confidence.



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GROWING MILKWOODS DOWN UNDER

Times Media Limited's Stephen Mulholland has gone to Australia to head the Fairfax Newspaper Group. GUS SILBER caught him in jovial mood on the day of his farewell party in Johannesburg and found principles are mixed with the profit motive

IN Harrison Street, Johannesburg, rushing from the Carlton Centre to Times Media Limited, I find myself stuck on the fringes of the biggest traffic jam in weeks. My first instinct is to turn around and run in the opposite direction. My second is to lean against a traffic light and watch it all go by. I lean.

It is lunch-time and the crowd is buoyed on waves of singing, the melody rising and swamping everything in its path. Behind their idling engines, motorists and bus drivers look on with mild curiosity. No one hoots.

I watch the forest of clenched fists open into clicking fingers as dances break out among the marchers. Red flags ripple in the breeze. Retrench the Bosses. Forward to a Working-Class Democracy.

I wait another 20 minutes for the tail of the march. I cross the road.

"For those of us, like me, who are not naturally light-hearted, of sunny disposition or given to easy optimism, living in South Africa is often akin to labouring under a dark and heavy cloud."

For Stephen Mulholland, who wrote those words in a leader article in *Business Day* three days after FW de Klerk's Big Speech of 1990, the cloud has lifted once again. But, this time, the view below is of Sydney, Australia, home of the Opera House, the Harbour, and the head office of Fairfax Newspapers Plc.

The new managing director of Fairfax is 56. We see him on the cover of *Leadership* magazine, Volume Eight, Number Five, at the height of his tenure as chief executive officer of Times Media Limited.

Jacketless, hands on hips, he faces the camera with an almost boyish air of self-satisfaction. His Irish eyes are smiling. His lips are pursed. He is wearing a red

tie with dark diagonal stripes and a blue pinstriped shirt with bold white collar and cuffs.

People have always admired Stephen Mulholland's shirts. They have become his trademark, the barcode of his down-to-work business ethic. Jackets do not suit the man.

Last year, jacket off, Mulholland exhorted the milling throng at TML's Christmas party to strive for even greater results in the coming financial year. He fingered the cut of his hand-made silk shirt.

"I would like to keep on dressing in the style to which we have all become accustomed," declared the managing director of Times Media Limited. Not everyone was 100 percent certain that Stephen Mulholland was joking.

Not naturally light-hearted, or of sunny disposition, I ask a few people who have worked for and with Stephen Mulholland if they would like to say a few words about the experience. Everyone talks in glowing terms.

"A pyrotechnic temper." "A man possessed by a flame." "A very volatile personality." "Dynamite." "He'd fire you up." "He fired me."

The legend of that temper, the quick fuse and the flare-up, precedes Mulholland wherever he walks. He is what the scientists call a Type A personality. Intensely competitive, driven, fearless, demanding. Yet, when I get to interrupt his schedule on the 10th floor of 11 Diagonal Street (home to TML), Stephen Mulholland is in a Type B mood.

Affable to the point of serenity, quick to laugh, he gazes out of the window often, searching for a word, a place, a time. His small desk is cluttered, with three telephones as paperweights. For now, they are quiet.

Stephen Mulholland was a year old when his family moved from Liverpool to South Africa in 1937. His father, a hard-drinking Irish stonemason, had come to help build the Voortrekker Monument. Then the family moved to Durban. A small house in Point Road, on the wrong side of the docks.

"We are all complex and have many dimensions to our personalities. The other reality is that we change as time goes by. Now I come from a rough background. We were poor. I grew up on the beach. You know, we would settle our problems in manners other than verbal."

Silence. The rustle of a silk shirt. Beyond the door, secretaries are frantically co-ordinating the logistics of the Farewell Party. Mulholland gazes out of the window.

"My father died early of... of excesses, and when he was alive, he was not always the ideal father. So I had a sense of loss in my life, a sense of grievance. And maybe that caused me to be easy to anger. In my defence, I can say that I have always been a giving person. I know that I have done things that I regret, in the sense of raising my voice, or being hard on someone. But I do hope I've been able to smooth some of the edges."

Jeremy Gordin, who was business editor to Mulholland on the *Financial Mail*, recalls the day the editor threw a chair at him from across the room. It missed.

"There was some problem with a story that just wasn't coming together," says Gordin. "When it finally arrived, I handed it to Mulholland and said, 'Well, here it is, but I'm afraid it's up to shit.' He just said, 'f... it', and threw the chair."

Gordin, now editor of TML's *Executive* magazine, lights a match and sticks it in the bowl of his pipe. "You have to understand," he puffs, "there hasn't been

“I’m not a manager, I’m a retreaded journalist. I kept telling these guys from Fairfax, ‘look you’re not going to be getting a normal businessman.’ The way I see it, managers manage numbers and leaders lead people. I like to think I’m a leader.”

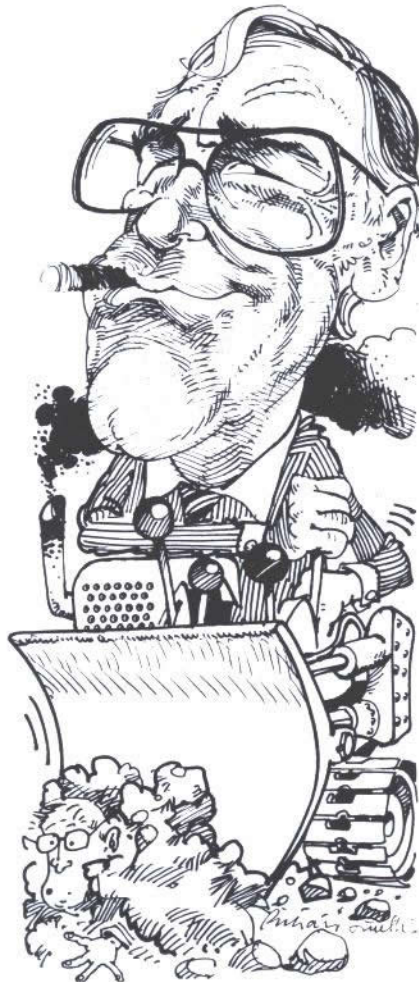
a time when I haven’t liked the guy. Hell, he would run me ragged, he would piss me off. But you know what it is about Mulholland? It’s the feeling that, when you’re in his company, you’re playing for the A-Team, despite your secret fears that you wouldn’t even make it to the B-Team.”

Three-hundred sit-ups every morning, weights, stretches, and a couple of lengths of the Zoo Lake pool. Stephen Mulholland is in training. He works best under pressure, and at TML, six years after Gordon Waddell asked him to take the job, the pressure is beginning to cool off. The machine runs smoothly. There are managers.

I ask Stephen Mulholland about his “philosophy of management”. He laughs. “I’m not a manager. I’m a retreaded journalist. I kept telling these guys from Fairfax, ‘Look, you’re not going to be getting a normal businessman.’ The way I see it, managers manager numbers and leaders lead people. I like to think I’m a leader.”

I ask one of Mulholland’s managers what he thinks. Roy Paulsen is deputy managing director of TML, and he says: “I don’t think Stephen Mulholland is essentially a manager. He’ll probably tell you that himself. He’s more of a journalist, an editor, and that comes across in the way he thinks. His approach to running a company is intuitive rather than considered. Of course, he’s very volatile and not the easiest of people to work with. But one thing he has succeeded in doing is changing the culture of TML. And whether Steve stays or goes, that stays.”

Corporate culture is an intangible asset, a sense of esprit that pervades a workforce and the products that carry the logo. Every corporation has a culture. The trouble begins when a culture doesn’t



RICHARD SMITH

have a corporation.

In 1985, South African Associated Newspapers (SAAN) shut down the *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Sunday Express*. Dozens of journalists were retrenched. Many emigrated to Australia. The editor of the *Financial Mail*, however, was offered a promotion. He said he would think about it.

“I had no inclination or ambition to do anything other than edit the *Financial Mail*,” recalls Mulholland, not altogether convincingly for a man possessed by a flame. “It was a terrific job. I had freedom, I had access to whomever I wanted to see, I travelled every year to meetings of the International Monetary Fund. I could see no reason to leave my job. But they made it worth my while.”

On April 1, 1986, in a complicated rescue deal involving Johannesburg Consolidated Investments and the Argus Company, Mulholland officially took up his appointment as managing director of SAAN. In a report to shareholders the previous day, the company had claimed a loss of more than R20-million.

Exactly one year later, SAAN — now Times Media Limited — was able to report a profit of R10-million. Mulholland is quick to dismiss any suggestion that he alone was responsible for the turnaround.

“Gordon Waddell was the father of TML,” says Mulholland. “Terry Moolman of Caxton and John Featherstone of Argus were the... what do you call it, you know, the...”

The midwives?

“...yes. Moolman and Featherstone were the midwives, and I just stood on the sideline, leading the cheers.”

Today the culture of TML is characterised by a vigorous spirit of enterprise,

PLEASE TURN OVER 13

diversification and competition. Mulholland leans back in his chair and quotes Dr Johnson. "A man is no more innocently employed than in the pursuit of money."

There are a lot of innocent people in the employ of Times Media Limited. Mulholland's driving principle in this regard has always been merit. You get what you work for, and then you get a little extra for effort. Result: happy people, happy company.

Pat Sidley, former president of the South African Union of Journalists, worked for Mulholland when he edited *Business Times*. What was he like? Sidley grits her teeth. "Pleasant." That has always been a major part of the problem.

"From a union point of view," says Sidley, "Stephen Mulholland is the worst kind of boss on earth. He has the ability to seduce the loyalty of employees on an individual level."

Gwen Gill, the fearless consumer rights crusader of the *Sunday Times*, worked as Mulholland's secretary when he was the paper's news editor. I phone and ask whether she has anything to say, now that her former boss is leaving for Australia. "Yes," she says. "I'll tell you about the time he made me cry."

A few years ago, Gwen Gill was chapel father at TML. A quaint term, now replaced by the blandly non-sexist "union organiser". A member of the union called Gill with a complaint. It was the 25th of the month, and certain salaries had not been paid into accounts. Gill said she would take it right to the top. She called Stephen Mulholland.

"He hit the roof," says Gill. "He seemed to think I was implying that TML didn't have the money to pay its salaries. But I was used to him. I just said: 'Don't you shout at me like that,' and I forgot all about it."

Half-an-hour later, Gill was summoned to Mulholland's executive office. She smiled to herself. So typical.

"Good old Steve, I thought. He always does this. He lets off steam, and then he apologises. He's like a lion looking after its young. Hit out first, and fix it up afterwards."

"So I get up to the boardroom, and I sit across from him. And then he really shouts at me. All this business about his doing his best for the company, and us making accusations. Well, I tell you, I

just burst into tears right then and there." That was years ago. Stephen Mulholland has been forgiven. But he will not be forgotten. "You can't help but admire him," says Gill. "He's a stonemason's son, and he pulled himself up by his own bootlaces."

Growing up rough in Point Road, Stephen Mulholland swam, cutting through the water like a shark. Sixteen years old at Durban High School, he thrashed the South African record for the 220 yards freestyle. A schoolmaster's letter earned him a place at Purdue University, Indiana, USA. He studied journalism.

"I have this vision in my mind," says Mulholland. "A small boy sitting on a bus in Durban, reading a newspaper. Just like a grown-up. There was never any doubt in my mind that I was going to be a newspaperman."

That, and swimming. "The cutting-edge sport," Mulholland calls it. In 1960, as an All-American champion, he qualified for the Rome Olympics. But his American time wasn't accepted in South Africa, and he couldn't afford a ticket back home. So he stayed, got a green card, almost got married, and served Uncle Sam at Fort Knox in Kentucky.

The black sergeant moved slowly down the line, glaring at the newly-shorn recruits. "Where're you from soldier?"

Mulholland took a deep breath. "Durban Sir."

"Durham? Durham, South Carolina?"

"No Sir. Durban."

"Where the hell's that?"

"It's... South, Sir."

"South of what?"

Mulholland swallowed hard. "South Africa, Sir"

"South Africa, huh? I'd better be real good to you, soldier. I might have some kinfolk down there!"

Stephen Mulholland laughs. I have just asked a broad question about the state of the profession of journalism in South Africa. "It's not a profession. It's a job, a graft, something like that. A profession is an acquired body of specialist knowledge, as in doctor, lawyer, architect. Journalists don't have that. They absorb by osmosis."

Some of them don't even do that too well. It still rankles Mulholland that anyone could accuse him of putting profits above principle or bulldozing a sand-

dune in front of his holiday house in Natal. But these stories have persisted, despite repeated denials, corrections, and Letters to the Editor.

Just the other day, the *Financial Times* of London profiled the new managing director of Fairfax Newspapers as "a man who puts profit above principle." The source, once again, was that piece in the *Cape Times*.

Mulholland had been addressing a conference on Press Freedom. "I would put profit above journalistic principle," he was quoted as saying. A tape-recording later confirmed that the quote was accurate, except for one word. *Not*. It's supposed to come just before *put*.

The other story has persisted because it seems to fit the public image of Stephen Mulholland: a man who will not hesitate to re-arrange the beach if it blocks his view of the ocean.

"I did not knock down that dune!" says Mulholland, his lips re-arranged into a scowl. "The fact of the matter is that we used a front-end loader to shore up the dune with beach sand. I wanted that dune to protect the house from the sea-wind. That's where it stands today, covered with milkwoods. You don't grow milkwoods in a hurry."

Now there's something else. Mulholland is the man who urged South Africa to vote "Yes", and now...

"I never told people to stay in South Africa," says Mulholland. "I just helped raise money to support a vote for Yes. But I have always supported the freedom of individuals to do whatever they choose. My reason for going is absolutely divorced from politics. Look, I'm physically and mentally better when I'm working under pressure. I'm switched on and turned on, energised and invigorated. I'm not a baby. I'm 56. I suppose you could call it my last hurrah."

Framed on the wall of an office at Times Media Limited is a letter appointing Stephen Mulholland to the post of cadet reporter on the *Daily News* in Durban. The date is 1955, the salary is £20 a month.

The new managing director of Fairfax Newspapers Plc probably doesn't need reminding. But he's taking it along. Just in case. ●

GUS SILBER is a freelance writer and author. This article first appeared in *Style*.

Searching for the mother of all cartoons



FRED MOUTON

Resident cartoonist of Die Burger

WHAT is an ideal cartoon? Well, for starters, you must know what you want to say — then you need to understand how you are going to make that statement graphically.

That's the difficult part. The drawing is the easy bit.

Thinking up a cartoon, particularly when you have to come up with the goods every day, is very, very difficult. I mean you have to beg your brain to come up with a worthwhile cartoon each day, and that's never easy. And, to think up a *really* smart cartoon — that's incredibly hard. But, of course, there is the rare occasion when you draw the *ideal* cartoon — perhaps one day even the mother of all cartoons.

But for the most part I try to create a reasonable cartoon each day and, in all modesty, now and then I come up with a smart one — not one that's all that funny, but rather “clever” or really “sharp”.

With time, you also develop a style of your own and thoughts of your own, although the editor has the final say. If you work in a thought or idea of your own, and it compliments the whole, editors will never complain.

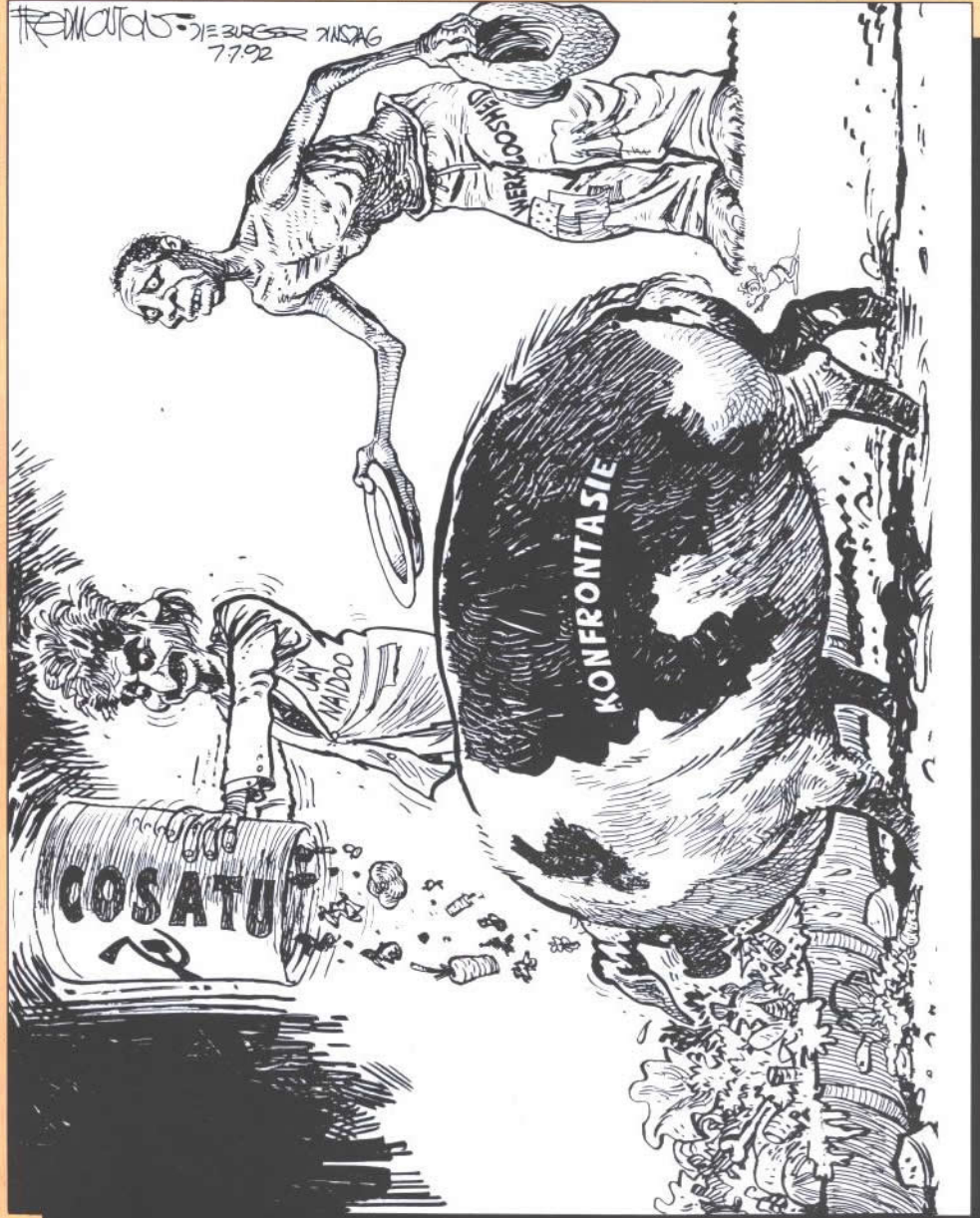
What effect do cartoons have on South African readers? I don't really know. There has never been any research into the matter, but I would like to believe that a good cartoon sometimes makes people think, widens their horizons or forces them to say to themselves: “Good grief, I never looked at it from that angle before.”

Every day I look at an idea, a story or an event from a different angle. It must never look like an illustration of a story or article. I always try to think up an idea that nobody else would think of — that's why it's so difficult. And, of course, when I think about what I am about to do, I always ask myself: “Will the people in the street understand what you're trying to convey?” — cartoonists always have to remember that readers do not sit in on the cartoon conference. So, whatever idea develops for the day's cartoon, readers always come first.

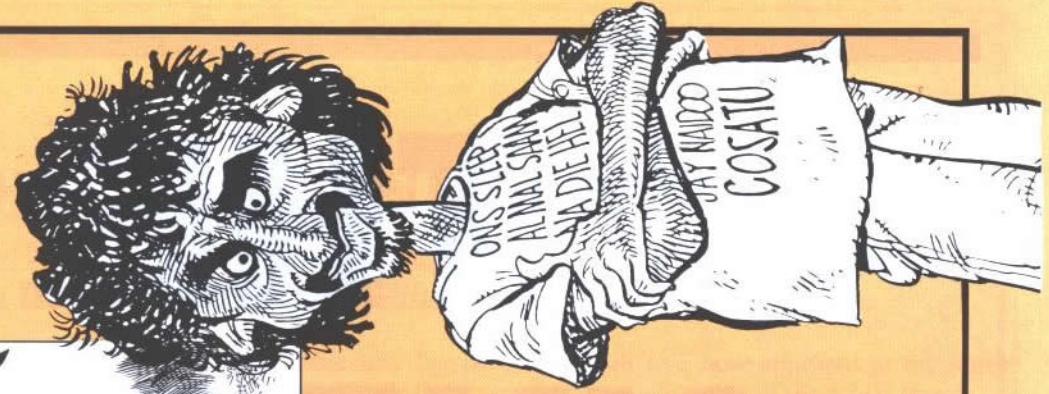
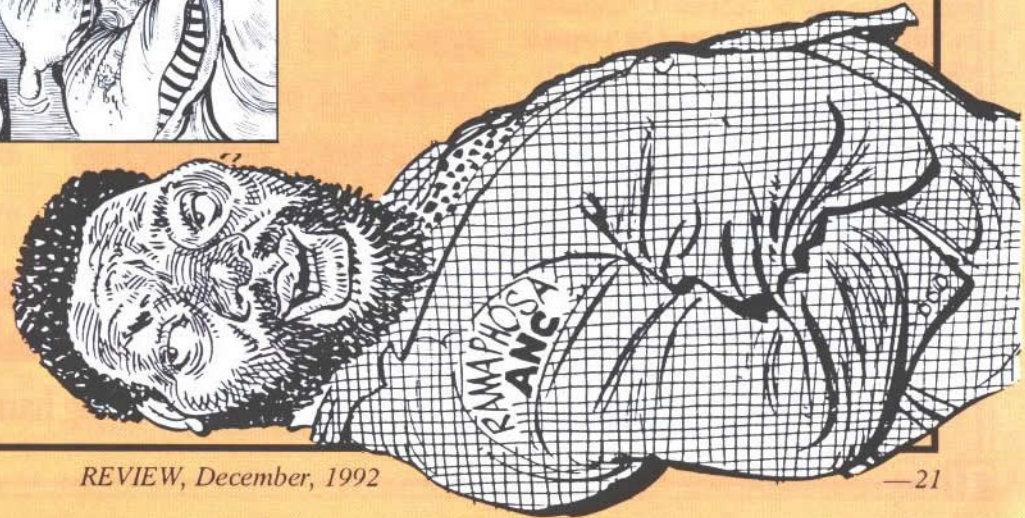
With experience you also learn to simplify your drawing so that there is no distraction from what you are trying to say, so there's no clutter around the essential message. And, if you can draw a cartoon without a word bubble, you're getting close to perfection. ●

PLEASE TURN OVER ➤

**“I would like to believe that
occasionally a cartoon
broadens peoples’ horizons”**



REMOOTS!



IS THAT YOU BWANA EDITOR?

Editing newspapers in Africa can be a humbling experience as evidenced by these reminiscences from DONALD TRELFOED, editor of The Observer in London

MY first editorship was of the *Nyasaland Times*, now the *Times of Malawi*, when I was 25. I spent a good deal of my time in the mid-sixties moving around this part of Africa in pursuit of stories on UDI in Rhodesia, the resulting civil war and sanctions-busting.

So it's 29 years since I first sat in an editor's electric chair — more than half my lifetime. I mention this, not because it entitles me to claim that I've learnt very much in that time about the Press or its proper role in the world. In fact, I realise now, looking back, that I learnt all I really needed to know in my first few days in the hot seat all those years ago.

I'd been sent out to Africa by Roy Thomson. I only met him once. He peered at me up close through his thick pebble glasses, shook me by the hand and said: "You make a dollar for me, boy, and I'll make a dollar for you!" My brief in Malawi was a simple one: to keep the paper alive, which meant making it acceptable to the country's leader, then and now a somewhat peppery individual called Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda. I found all hell breaking loose, with the country engaged in a civil war — Banda versus a group of rebel ministers led by a man called Chipembere.

Journalistic integrity required that we should report the civil war fairly, but this wasn't easy since Banda had passed a law making it a criminal offence, punishable by five years in jail, for an editor to publish any story "likely to undermine public confidence in the government". So I made my first principled decision as an editor: I decided to back the side that was going to win! I gave my vote to Dr Banda, reporting his speeches with big headlines and big pictures.

But I also felt an obligation to report the rebel speeches and sent reporters into a remote tribal area hundreds of miles from the capital. I had their story translated from the local dialect, subbed it right down, and published it very briefly and (as I thought) inconspicuously under Banda's speech.

When this was done and the paper came out I was surprised to see that it was selling like hot cakes on every street corner. The Africans were bending over the front page, ignoring Banda's big picture and headlines, and reading the little item about Chipembere — and thereby giving me my first important lesson about journalism: *news is what governments don't want people to read.*

The episode didn't end there and I soon learned my second lesson in journalism — about the political pressures on an editor. The phone suddenly rang for me in my office — I was to report without delay to Dr Banda. He was livid, waving his arms about, threatening me with expulsion, and he sent me away with this stark warning ringing in my ears: "Keep out of my politics, white man!"

When I got back to my office, still shaken from this encounter, the phone rang again. The conversation went like this:

"Is that you, Bwana Editor? Chipembere here. I didn't like the coverage of my speech today."

"I gave you more coverage than was good for me, Mr Chipembere."

Silence on his part, then:

"Well, Bwana Editor, I would expect the powers that be to bring pressure to bear on you. But you mustn't think they're the only people who can bring pressure to bear."

Silence on my part, then (rather nervously):

"What do you mean, Mr Chipembere?"

"I'm sure you wouldn't like me to organise a boycott of your newspaper among the Africans. And I'm sure Lord Thomson wouldn't like anything to happen to his precious printing machinery."

Silence on my part, then (hesitantly):

"I'm sure you're above that sort of thing, Mr Chipembere."

Long silence on his part, then (rather firmly I thought):

"I wouldn't count on it, Bwana Editor."

After that sort of experience you'll appreciate that the occasional run-in with the law is mere child's play in comparison,

though I've now appeared as an editor before virtually all Britain's courts — from a magistrate's court to the Old Bailey, to the House of Lords and the European Court.

Not all my memories of that period in Africa are so menacing. I once went on a circulation tour, using a small plane, to the remote parts of the country and visited a small border town called Karonga.

I particularly wanted to visit Karonga, because we seemed to be selling a remarkable number of newspapers there. So many in fact, that the local agent, an African, had qualified several times for the bicycle I was offering as a reward for enterprise.

I found this wizard salesman in his small hut by the lake, and he told me his secret. The retail price of the paper was threepence. As an agent, he got it wholesale for twopence, then separated the sheets of the paper and sold each double-page spread for a penny to the local fishermen, who used them to wrap up their fish. It was the only source of paper in the area. With any bits that were left over, he cut out the pictures, especially pictures of Dr Banda, and sold them to the villagers as decorations for their huts. He was making a fortune: and not a single copy of the paper, as far as I could see, was being read!

Now, every editor has to get used to the idea that his paper will wrap tomorrow's fish and chips — but not today's, and not before the paper has even been read.

What could I do about this appalling situation? I decided to do nothing and flew out of Karonga the next day, leaving the agent secure with his secret monopoly. After all, he was happy enough, his customers were happy, I was happy to be selling so many papers.

One of the things this humbling experience taught me was that people sometimes buy newspapers for reasons that editors never think of, so we shouldn't take ourselves too seriously. ●

THIS is an extract from a speech delivered to the SAUJ in Durban.

FROM THIS ▶



TO THIS ▶



The old and the new: From broadsheet to tabloid; from a sober blue mast-head to a powerful buy-me red; from a coventional front page to a colourful poster Page 1

■ **The rebirth of a newspaper:** On May 17 the Sunday Star made one of the most radical changes in South African newspaper history. It changed its size, its typography, its outlook, its target, its philosophy. Editor Dave Hazelhurst tells of the roller-coaster ride.

JUST a year ago when I became editor, the Sunday Star was in trouble. We were losing money; our sales, after an initial drop at the beginning of the year, had become stagnant in the low eighties; and it was widely speculated that we were about to close. We were still within the target set at our birth seven years before – an upmarket paper aimed mainly at affluent whites, selling between 75 000 and 130 000 a week – but it was clear that unless we found a cure, the sickness would be terminal.

The more I researched, the clearer it became that the Sunday Star's malaise was part of the world's, part of the frightening flight from print in this country and internationally. The figures said it all: No paper in this country had increased its circulation anywhere near in keeping with the population and literacy explosion.

Why? Here I'll deal with the Sunday Star only, for although I'm sure there are some universal truths, other newspapers might have other problems. Summing up the bad points that emerged from our

WHY AND HOW

research and focus groups over seven years: Our reports were too long; we looked too similar to the Sunday Times and, indeed, to the daily Star; we were regarded as authoritative but too distant; people respected us, but didn't love us; their Sundays were busy and they found long reports formidable; in short they could take us or leave us. We then called in the world's foremost newspaper designer, Dr Mario Garcia, from the Poynter Institute in the United States. There isn't the space here to detail his work with us, but perhaps his most important contribution was to get me to re-examine all the legacies of the past and to throw away those that I had worshipped but were no longer relevant.

The redesign of the Sunday Star was, then, a combination of all our own research, scores of international studies and papers, extensive and intensive work with Garcia and our art director Gail Irwin, workshops with our staff and my

own gut feeling. The greatest hurdle I cleared was to realise we were, too often, producing newspapers for ourselves, newspapers that would impress our fellow journalists; we were writing for ourselves and other writers and academics, which is fine if you have enough of them to buy you, but we didn't.

So we decided on a complete redesign. And by that I don't mean layout – we redesigned our approach to news, the way we wrote stories, the architecture of the stories, the layout, our typography, our use of colour – and we redefined news.

The aim of all of this was simple: Design wasn't there for designers; colour wasn't there to dazzle; headlines weren't there to be clever; pictures and graphics weren't there to merely to be looked at; layout wasn't there to impress layout subs.

Design was there to get people to read the writers.

The content was paramount – the rest, the candyfloss and pizzazz that would get the stories read. Our design was based on three cornerstones:

- **News you can handle:** The tabloid – most of our readers told us they preferred a tabloid and they, unlike journalists, didn't see it as downmarket.
- **News that touches your life:** We saw no point in running long, important stories that made us feel good but weren't going to be read.
- **News you can see:** Graphics and pictures used aggressively throughout the paper with lots of colour.

How we're doing it ▶

Five major platforms

The parts of the hole

These are some of the main elements we try to put on each page, and with stories that cry out for them

1 *No typographical pyrotechnics*
The architecture of our pages is aimed at guiding the reader rather than dazzling the eye. We wanted the excitement of a Lost City without losing the reader.

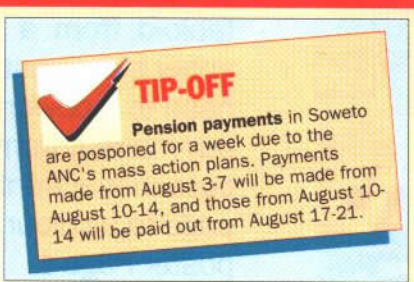
2 *More graphics to help the reader*
Sometimes words just aren't enough to make stories easily understandable. Where necessary, we use graphics aggressively.

3 *Like life, as much colour as possible*
No one watches black-and-white TV out of choice. And no one objects to a blaze of flowers. Sometimes we go overboard, but we're getting it right.

4 *Breaking down long stories*
Research has shown beyond question that most "non-dedicated" readers are put off by long stories which look formidable. They don't read them. So why do it? We still run long stories that deserve it, but we break them up.

5 *Guiding readers from start to finish*
Through the use of icons, arrows, numbers and colour, we show readers exactly where to go on a page.

THE TIPOFF



■ Readers want guidance. We give it wherever we can in this form. If, for instance, we carry a story about drug problems we tell people where they can get help.

THE SUMMARY



■ This does what it purports to do – it tells the reader exactly what the story is about and enables the reporter to use a lot of imagination in writing the story.

THE TREEPOSTER



■ We all see treeposters every day. We've turned them into a typographical element to tell readers about coming events and to brighten dull areas.

THE ICON



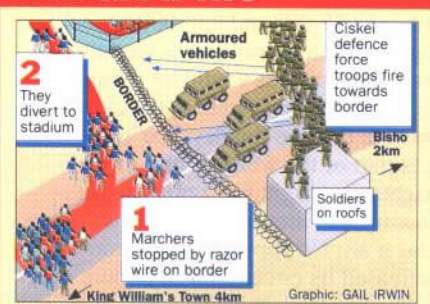
■ One of the most important elements. Research shows that if, for instance, you use the Coca-Cola logo in a finance story 29% more people on average read the story. Icons lure readers and at the same time break up stories and pages. They can also be used to guide readers through a page or story.

THE FACTFILE



■ These give essential, zany, interesting facts about stories – and enable reporters to write without mundane facts interrupting the flow.

THE GRAPHIC

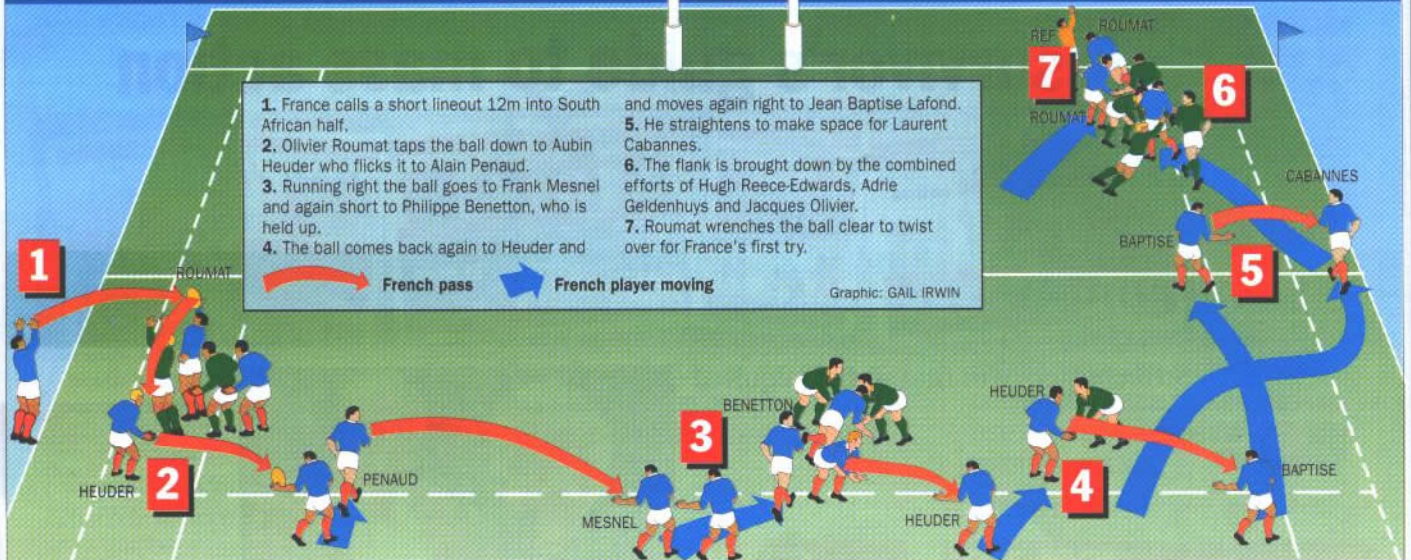


■ They're one of our main thrusts, there to explain and complement stories. Surveys show they're one of our most popular features

Seeing it as it was, is, and can be

New ways of telling the news, summing up events, making complex situations understandable and displaying different sections

The fine art of 15-man rugby



KYK WEER ... the French ran rings around the Boks with this try – and a graphic shows how they did it

1 THE TALE OF THE TAPE
 Nigeria has seen 5 videos of SA. SA has only seen 2 of Nigeria.

2 THE INVISIBLE COACH
 Six weeks before game, coach and assistants sent out of country.

3 NO TEAMWORK
 Squad has not trained together since last game. New members face trying task.

4 CLUBS FIRST, SA SQUAD SECOND
 Botsava Cup seen as more important than World Cup.

5 LAST CHANCE LOST
 Friendly against Botswana cancelled. Perfect practice opportunity gone.

6 THE STATE OF PLAY
 Hot, dry, earthy pitch completely alien to SA players.

SundayMoney PULL OUT

BUYING TIME
 Everybody knows the best time to buy is when nobody else can afford to do so. For a lot of commodities that time is now—if you have the excess cash. **See Page 5**

INSIDE

2 GIANT SPEAK
 Section on... (text partially obscured)

4 MOVING STORY
 ... (text partially obscured)

6 THE A TO Z OF TIMESHARING
 ... (text partially obscured)

7 COMING HOME
 ... (text partially obscured)

10 BIG SCREEN, BIG BUCKS
 ... (text partially obscured)

11 NINE WAYS TO WIN
 ... (text partially obscured)

12 ELABORATE PRECAUTIONS
 ... (text partially obscured)

ALSO
 ... (text partially obscured)

CALL US
 ... (text partially obscured)

COMPUTING: WHY E-MAIL IS REGARDED AS A GROWTH AREA

MATCH AT A GLANCE

RESULT
 South Africa ... (0) 0
 Congo ... (0) 2
 Venue: Ellis Park, Johannesburg

SUMMARY
 South Africa paid the price for using negative tactics against robust opponents.

MAN OF THE MATCH
 South Africa: Mark Anderson
 Congo: Brice Samba

SHOTS
 On: South Africa 2, Congo 4.
 Off: South Africa 2, Congo 4.

HEADERS
 On: South Africa 2, Congo 4.
 Off: South Africa 2, Congo 4.

CORNERS
 South Africa 0, Congo 1.

OFFSIDE
 South Africa 2, Congo 4.

FOULS
 South Africa 0, Congo 1.

▲ **NEW LOOK ...** we turned high finance into Hi, finance! with eye-grabbing covers.

◀ **HOW TO ...** and how not to. We show the mistakes SA's World Cup coach made.

FULL DETAILS ... all you need to know. ▶
 The reporter concentrates on writing.

Revamp rewarded



By Ebbe Domnisse

ONE of the most comprehensive exercises in re-designing a South African newspaper was recently rewarded when Die Burger received the top prize in this year's Frewin competition.

The Cape Town-based newspaper, the oldest Afrikaans daily extant in South Africa, won the Frewin trophy for typographic excellence.

Two of its sister papers in the Nasionale Pers stable also performed exceptionally well, thus focussing attention on notable redesigns lately undertaken by Afrikaans dailies. Beeld (Johannesburg) was placed third in

the Frewin competition (for newspapers above 50 000 circulation), while Volksblad (Bloemfontein) came in hot on the heels of the Natal Witness in the McCall competition (less than 50 000 circulation).

The revamp which earned Die Burger the top South African accolade for newspaper design was initiated almost three years ago in January, 1990.

It was an exercise planned as part of the 75th anniversary of the flagship paper of the Nasionale Pers group, owner of the only Afrikaans newspaper chain in the country.



The first issue of the "new" Burger appeared on 3 January 1991.

In 1958, Die Burger had become the first Afrikaans paper to win the Frewin trophy and wanted to regain its former pride of place. It had already pioneered important editorial changes in South African newspapers, including replacing advertising on its front page with news.

A younger generation at the paper was keen to keep abreast with new developments in the fields of layout, colour and graphics.

The first issue of the "new" Burger appeared on the third of January 1991 - the first publication day after New Year of the last decade of the twentieth century. Die

Burger thus celebrated its 75th anniversary with a new look, specifically designed to make it more competitive and relevant in the electronic era.

I led the redesign team. As we were unable to find anyone suitable in South Africa to assist us, we contacted Rolf F. Rehe, director of Design Research International based in Indianapolis, USA.

He is the author of several authoritative books on typography and design and had undertaken the redesign of several newspapers around the world, including the Miami Herald, La Nacion in Argentine, Hoy

The former 10 columns of Die Burger's broadsheet layout.



Ebbe Domnisse, Editor of Die Burger and author of this article, led the re-design team.

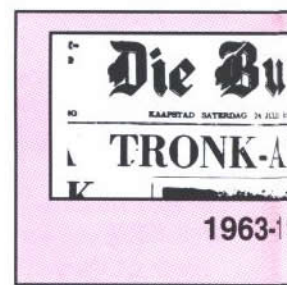
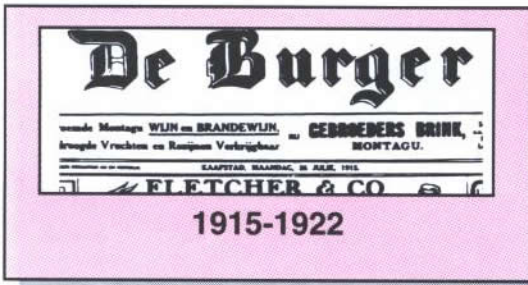
DIE BURGER

Wenner van Frewin-trofee



Agt-en-sewentigste Jaargang

Heerengracht 40 Kaapstad



in Ecuador, Handelsblatt in Germany, Berlingske Tidende in Denmark and Het Laatste Nieuws in Belgium.

Rehe, who had never visited Africa, arrived in Cape Town early in January 1990, just in time to share the tumultuous political developments which followed President F.W. de Klerk's headline-grabbing and far-reaching initiatives. He made several subsequent visits, also advising Beeld in Johannesburg, who joined in the project.

Rehe immediately struck up a solid working relationship with Die Burger's editorial staff, as well as with all other departments, including our computer boffins. His command of German enabled him to develop a working knowledge of Afrikaans, which he used to great advantage in developing the redesign of a major Afrikaans daily in the complex South African situation.

Jonathan Crowther was appointed from Die Burger's senior editorial

staff as Design Editor to coordinate developments among all departments of the newspaper, drawing especially on the talents of chief sub-editor Marie-Louise van Heerden. Enthusiasm for the new developments was evident all-round.

The objective we set, was a thorough redesign of all aspects of the newspaper, gradually phasing these in over a period of 9 to 12 months in order not to alienate loyal readers (we average about 75 000 buyers). We also hoped to attract a new, younger readership by virtue of a more modern and exciting layout, which included the extensive use of colour, screens and graphics to achieve a reader-friendly look.

The first change we introduced was an immediate switch quickly to a modular layout, the most pleasing and efficient design for a modern newspaper. The broadsheet layout which consisted of 10 columns was reduced to 7. The

NAMEPLATE

The nameplate was redesigned to incorporate colour.

USE OF COLOUR
Extensive use of colour, screens and photos.

GRAPHICS
Extensive use of news-graphics for more visual impact.

MODULAR
A modular layout, the most pleasing and efficient design.



BURGER

Bes versorgde koerant 1992

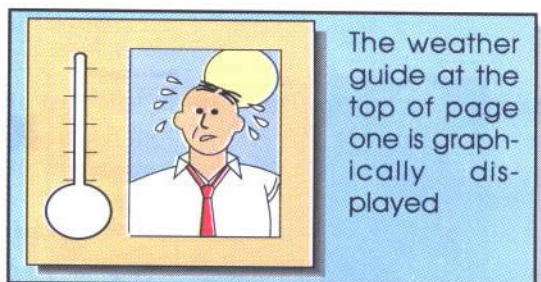
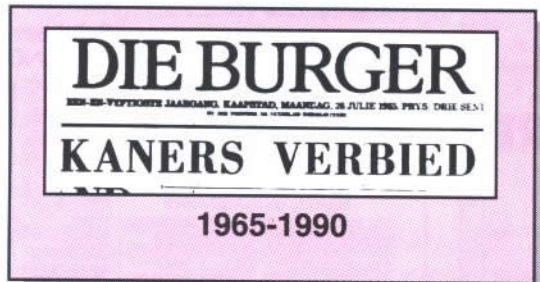
LAAT

Die Burger's new nameplate (left), in blue with a black shadow. Formerly all mastheads were black.

The progression of mastheads since 1915 is shown below



Vrydag 18 September 1992 80c (BTW Ingesluit)



The weather guide at the top of page one is graphically displayed



NEWS
Instant news, announcements, competitions and references.

HEADLINES
Headlines were replaced with Franklin Gothic Condensed.

HEADINGS
A modern typeface Rotieren is used for all headlines.

TEXT TYPE
Nimrod a modern and more legible typeface is used.

resulting 12 pica columns were considered more fitting for a serious newspaper. The old Bodoni headlines were discarded and replaced with Franklin Gothic Cond., for lead stories and Rotieren for all other headlines. The new text type is Nimrod, a modern typeface specifically designed for newspapers and much more legible than the New Times bodytype previously used.

A major change - the new nameplate in blue with a black shadow - was received with virtually no adverse comment. Blue was chosen for the stylish typeface because it embodies trust, credibility and optimism. The black shadow gives a feeling of depth. The coloured nameplate replaced an equally elegant black one introduced in 1965 for the paper's fiftieth anniversary. The new nameplate is the fifth in the history of the paper, which started out on 26 July 1915 with an old-fashioned Gothic

design, popular at the time.

The heart of the revamped newspaper is the leader page with its exceptionally pleasing classic design. The leaders, under Die Burger's masthead, are set in a bigger type to express authority. Next to Fred Mouton's widely acclaimed cartoons is a column entitled "Ander Sê" (Others Say), which mostly reflects other editorial opinions, from both here and abroad. The regular political columns by Dawie or by foreign correspondents appear below the cartoon. The bottom half of the page is taken up every day by readers' letters, with Die Burger affording more space to readers' views than any other daily in the country.

While these changes were made, new sections were developed. "Sport-Burger" (sports pages) and "Sake-Burger" (financial pages) were given more prominent display. "Joernaal" caters for arts, entertainment and the environ-



One of Die Burger's colourful sports pages.

ment, while "Forum" on the op-ed page is reserved for in-depth contributions.

Other sections are "Jong Burger" (youth section), "Woon-gids" (living supplement), "Vroue-Burger" (women's section) and "Nuus-Oorsig", an overview of the week's news published on Saturdays. All these sections adopted a new, uniform style which stressed interconnectedness even in their diversity.

Advertising was better placed, preferably using the modular layout. This was received without any adverse comment from advertisers, who welcomed being able to promote their products in a visually more pleasing environment.

On launch day, January 3 1991, the newspaper published a 16-page supplement, "Die Burger on its way to 2000", in which our new design was fully

explained. Reader reaction was strongly positive, with a number of community leaders expressing their pleasure about the new look. Die Burger also published letters from satisfied readers, several of whom were impressed by our innovative use of graphics.

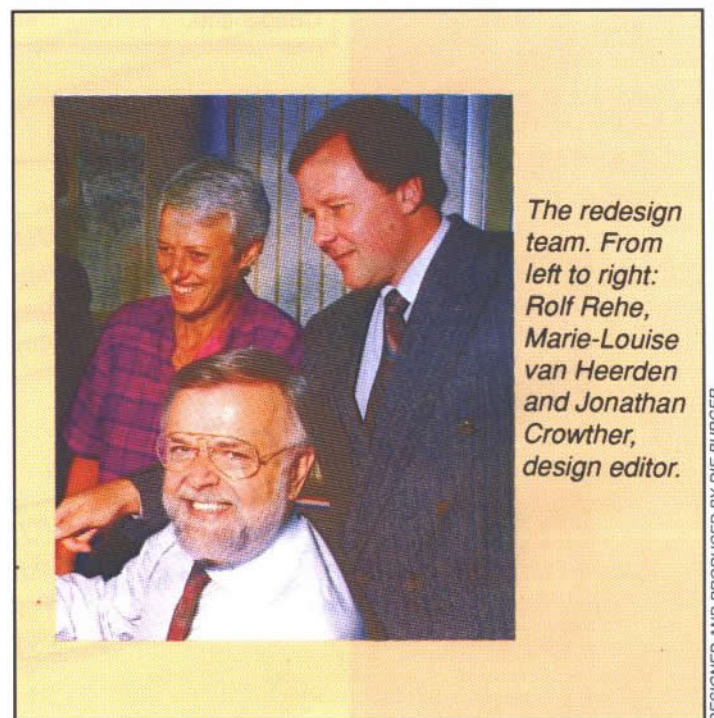
Circulation, which at first increased slightly (the ABC figures for January-June 1990 was 77901 on weekdays, 86515 on Saturdays) has fallen back lately (for the same period in 1992 it was 74178 on weekdays, 82177 on Saturdays). This was indicative of the severe economic depression which is affecting all newspapers throughout the country, as well as a price hike in April 1992.

Nevertheless, the redesign has made Die Burger a newspaper which we think is superbly geared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Revamp rewarded



The leader page with its pleasing classic design.



The redesign team. From left to right: Rolf Rehe, Marie-Louise van Heerden and Jonathan Crowther, design editor.

PRESS BASHING AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

How free have the media become in South Africa with the changing political landscape? TONY HEARD surveys some of the editors

SOUTH African editors are unanimous that restrictions have eased considerably for the press. But they point to major problems and concerns. However, Ken Owen editor of the *Sunday Times* adds the rider: "The space for journalists has widened faster than their capacity to use it. We still report in the dogged, defensive style of the past; reporters lack aggression; we all lack the flair.

"The virtual destruction of South African journalism — the terrible loss of skills — is now exacting its toll. The present generation lacks a sense of what is possible, and lacks role models."

Intimidation a problem

The worst problem is intimidation, specially of black journalists, by what is laughingly known as 'the community'... Richard Steyn, editor-in-chief of the Johannesburg *Star* warns that, although the press is certainly freer than before, the provision whereby the authorities can demand sources continues to be invoked.

"Areas of difficulty include the reporting of politics in right-wing white and most black communities. Journalists and photographers perceived to be from unfriendly newspapers continue to be harassed, threatened and sometimes attacked. While the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party pay lip service, at top level, to press freedom, their supporters show little sympathy for dissenting views."

Koos Viviers of the *Cape Times* of Cape Town (who was deputy editor of the now-defunct *Sunday Express* in Johannesburg when it was first to open up the Information Scandal and as an editor in the Eastern Cape fell foul of PW Botha's security laws) gives two explanations why the independent newspapers tend to set the pace in exposés: First, they have the sources, who trust them; and second, they are known to "run with the story" — as did the *Sunday Express* and *Rand Daily Mail* in the Information Scandal days. (Bizarre, but both were closed by their mining-industry owners not long after.)

Viviers says newspapers are acting as if there are no restrictions, except the ordinary laws of defamation, etc. This openness he welcomes, but warns that all norms cannot simply be thrown overboard.

Areas of difficulty include the reporting of politics in right-wing white and most black communities. Journalists and photographers from unfriendly newspapers continue to be harassed, threatened and sometimes attacked



Richard Steyn
The Star

He feels that in the repressive period the country lost too much journalistic talent and now, as it were, has to "re-invent the wheel" in strengthening investigative reporting. Because of community pressures, black journalists, he feels, are learning fast to fight for their independence and their profession. John Patten of the *Natal Mercury* (Durban) recalls a recent remark by an ambassador that he regarded the South African press as freer now than it had been for more than half a century, and probably freer than it would be for another half century. This suggests, says Patten, that the press is living through an Indian summer — a brief respite — before the onset of more restrictions under a new dispensation.

He says public service resistance to press probings was bad five years ago, and remains bad today.

"Although the style of the administration has become more open, civil servants perceive the new South Africa as threatening to their livelihood and careers, and do little to assist in revealing information relating to sins of the past or areas where changes in public service practices are needed," says Patten.

He sees difficulties in the way of the press in getting to the bottom of serious allegations against government, and also in relations with the unbanned parties.

"The ANC has generally shown a willingness to co-operate, but it does wish to control the press." The ANC also suffers from a "certain lack of organisation" — understandable in the circumstances.

A greater openness

Jim Jones of *Business Day*, Johannesburg, concedes that there is greater openness on the part of the police when it comes to legitimate police activity (as opposed to covert operations). "In other government departments the lack of speedy (and honest) responses to inquiries is still as prevalent as it was, but this is a syndrome common to bureaucracies throughout the world."

Unfortunately, Jones says, similar symptoms have been displayed by the ANC. In many respects "the ANC and other left-wing parties" are so disorganised as to make it impossible for a reporter to reflect their viewpoints with complete certainty. He says the ANC has also taken to suggesting newspapers remain quiet

PLEASE TURN OVER 

“Although the style of the administration has become more open, civil servants perceive the new South Africa as threatening to their livelihoods and careers, and do little to assist in revealing information relating to sins of the past or areas where changes in public service practices are needed”

John Patten — Natal Mercury

on certain issues in the interests of the country, or the safety of individuals.

“Another alarming phenomenon has been news people being directly threatened by political activists on the ground. This has become a serious problem for some black reporters who are asked to declare their political affiliations after being placed in compromising situations.”

A strong culture of secrecy

Anton Harber co-editor of the *Weekly Mail* says: “The only law we take account of is libel law. Of course all the other laws are still in the books and it may not be very healthy for the rule of law for everyone just to be ignoring them — but this is what’s happening.”

Harber feels that the high level of intolerance of criticism from individuals within the resistance movements has receded.

His major concerns?... first, a “strong culture of secrecy and lack of accountability” on the part of government ministers (when it comes to matters such as political killings); and second, that “something has to be done about control and ownership of the media”. If the media does not address the problem “we will be tempting a future government to intervene.” (Harber was referring to the suggestion that too many newspapers are owned by too few interests).

Ebbe Dommissie editor of *Die Burger*, Cape Town, comments that, with the De Klerk reforms, the full spectrum of political activity is reported in South African newspapers. He says the government is opening up a whole range of subject matters that were previously kept away from the public eye — and he instances easier access to prisons, the changes to the Police Act, and movement “regarding the protection of a journalist’s sources”. Corruption and maladministration could be “freely reported”, and there is a more liberal approach to movies and TV material, he says.

But he warns, interestingly: “The law of unintended consequences is also taking its toll. So much is happening over a broad spectrum of politics and social activities, including the on-going violence, that all editors have their work cut out to find enough space for all the relevant stories. And this in a time of severe recession, where the newsholes of all papers are much smaller.”

Although much restrictive press legislation is still on the statute books these new times mean that one can ignore much of this with impunity. More subtle pressures remain, however, in the form of threats of legal or other action coming from government departments



**Guy Berger
South**

Andrew Drysdale of *The Argus*, Cape Town, says the official “heavy breathing” — intimidatory tactics, threats of prosecution and the closure of newspapers, etc — has all but disappeared.

“Press bashing ain’t what it used to be.”

In the new situation, “a great many people are anxious to share experiences, exchange views and even agree to differ”. This helps the media.

“The danger, when things get bumpy — especially when politicians start elbowing for influence and power — is that a new tyranny could be directed against the press under the pretext of its being unsympathetic, inadequate, biased, monopolistic, or whatever. As it is, some political players are already arrogantly demanding priority attention, or else...”

Drysdale says the harassment and threats to black journalists in particular is “hugely worrying” and needs to be taken up time and time again with political organizations.

“Indeed, the international press needs to be kept alert to the possibility of further violations,” he says.

“I suspect that the difficulty, certainly in some instances, is that there are political activist factions among some black journalists which has called into question their impartiality and commitment to the fundamental values of objective journalism.”

More subtle pressures remain

Dr Guy Berger, editor of *South* (Cape Town) says: “Although much restrictive press legislation is still on the statute book, these new times mean that one can ignore much of this with impunity. More subtle pressures remain, however, in the form of threats of legal or other action coming from government departments, in particular prisons and defence, as *South* has experienced in recent times.”

Berger speaks of a prevailing culture of bureaucratic secrecy and of “politicians being above scrutiny”. He says there are also strong pressures from opposition and other groups (eg. warring taxi associations) involved in conflict situations and with vested interests in types of coverage.

“Inhibiting free expression in an indirect way are the skewed market forces caused by apartheid policies. Newspapers target the huge audience of poorer and black readers only at the risk of commercial failure, because advertisers remain focused on those markets

with substantial buying power, and which still remain largely white," says Berger.

The views of the editors are, I believe, useful in assessing the current mood and future prospects in South Africa.

But the fundamental problem remains: Will the media be able to use the new freedoms, once gained? Will it be a mere Prague Spring of 1967, or a more durable Lisbon Spring of 1974?

Moreover, habits of freedom, once lost, are difficult to re-establish. And, when a new government takes over it will be under pressure from its followers — if only because of the enormous problems of reconstruction after the ravages of apartheid — to curb the scribes, to hang the messenger. For example, earlier this year a panel of South African editors and reporters at an occasion sponsored by the American University in the USA seemed pretty pessimistic about a free press in the future.

What can be done to underpin free expression in this important part of Africa?

For one thing, the country needs an independent foundation or institute dedicated solely to the free flow of the news. But it needs far more. It needs a constitutional entrenchment which guarantees, absolutely, freedom of expression and of the media. It needs a workable freedom of information act, which will curb

**I don't
believe
constitutional
guarantees
will be
adequate...
Perhaps we
in the press
will need the
support
of free
newspapers
abroad**



**Jim Jones
Business
Day**

bureaucratic excess. It needs to nurture a culture of openness in a formerly closed society.

And it needs the international community's interest and involvement.

The words of two South African editors are apt, and with them I close.

Jim Jones: "I don't believe constitutional guarantees alone will be adequate... Perhaps we in the press will need the support of free newspapers abroad. We will have to strengthen our personal relationships with foreign newspapers so that any attempt to limit freedom of expression will be published abroad and thereby be deterred."

Richard Steyn: "The international community, and bodies like the International Press Institute (IPI) and FIEJ should continue to keep South Africa under close scrutiny, as in the past. Politicians of all parties, not only the white government, should be called to account. All the major political associations are sensitive to international opinion, so the IPI and FIEJ have important roles to play in ensuring that the various parties live up to the high ideals espoused from public platforms. They should also support the movement towards a new South Africa by coming here and giving us their expertise." ●

TONY HEARD is a former editor of the Cape Times.

The soul truth, daily.

Sowetan
Building the Nation

NEWS PICTURE of THE YEAR

SOUTH Africa has become a conflict photographer's dream, providing images almost daily which make the front pages of newspapers around the world.

Already local photographer Greg Marinovitch has won a Pulitzer Prize for his pictures of a man being torched, and other photographers working in South Africa are finding a great deal to record.

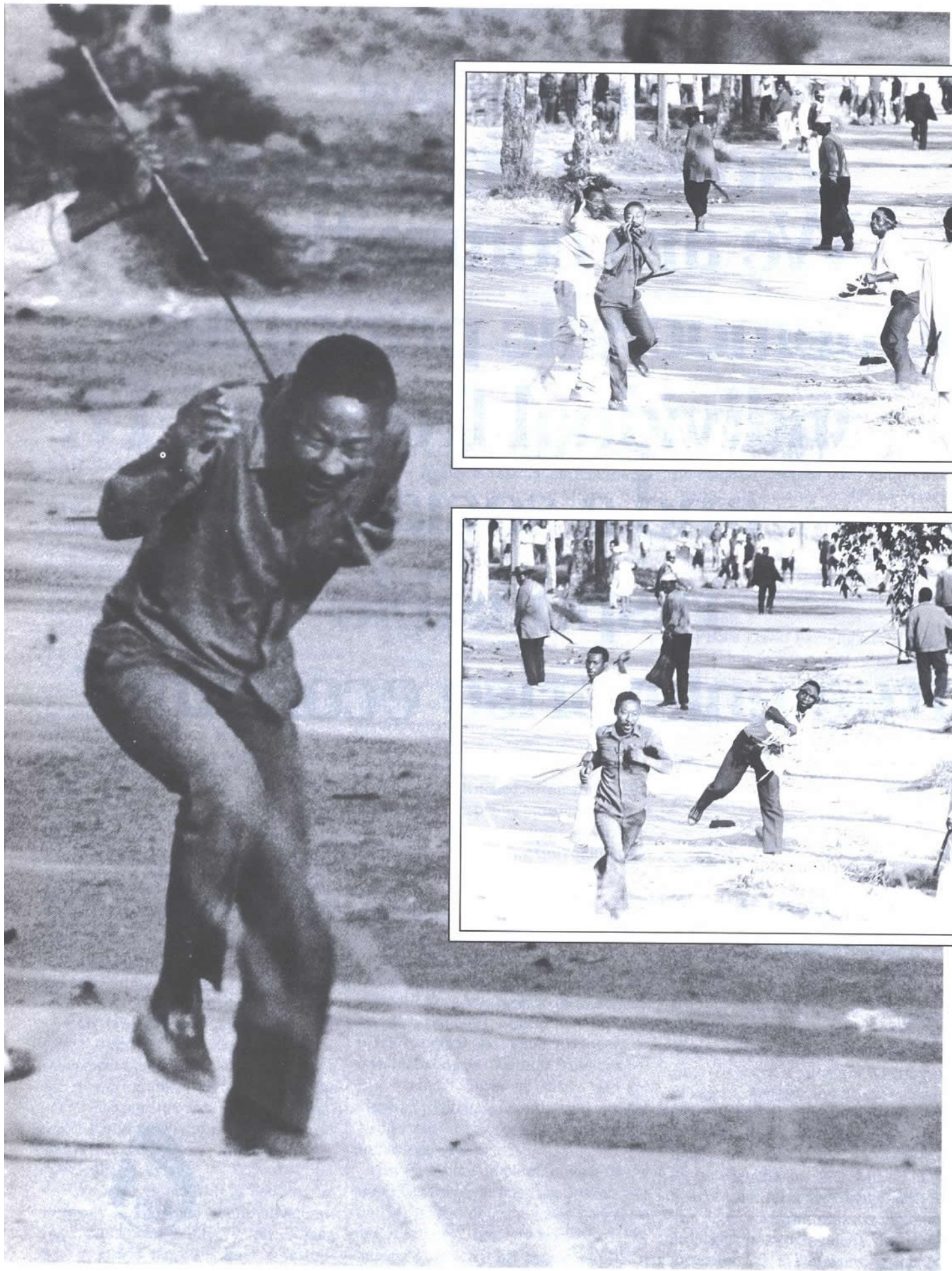
The images on these two pages, for example, won *Rapport* photographer **ROB EDGECOMB** the *Ilford News* Photograph of the Year award, and no sooner had they been published in South Africa than they were syndicated world-wide.

It may be a sad commentary on the state of affairs in South Africa, but for the men and women who daily put themselves at risk to bring these images to newspaper readers, it is a professional challenge that is being met with considerable skill and courage. We salute them.

Review has chosen these photographs as the best news sequence of 1992.

RIGHT: The moment of reckoning as a political rival is skewered with a home-made assegai. The spear is withdrawn as the victim runs for his life. But only death wins this race.





WAITING FOR DEAD MEN'S SHOES

What will the new SABC board look like? If a seminar for prospective nominees held in Johannesburg is anything to go by, it will be made up mainly of party political appointees. MARK GEVISSER reports

MR Chair," said Professor Njabulo Ndebele, vice-rector of the University of the Western Cape, "I fear we are behaving as if we were already the SABC board."

So animated was the horsetrading at a recent Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) seminar for potential directors of the SABC board, that Ndebele's caution went unheard. Round the table were sitting 27 people, nominated to be there by the "progressive" political parties at Codesa. Among them: law professor John Dugard, sociologist Fatima Meer, broadcaster Pat Rogers, editor Zwelakhe Sisulu, the South African Communist Party's Pravin Gordhan, former editors Anthony Heard and Raymond Louw, and a cross-section of others drawn from universities, organisations and the media.

They were talking about what they would do if they were on the board, and through the many suggestions about making the SABC democratic and representative, one word came through loud and clear: "FIRE!" Some advocated a scorched earth policy, some advocated removing "key ideologues", but all saw the need for heads to roll.

Funds for the pow-wow were raised from the Australian trade union movement by the ANC, which then gave the money to the IAJ to organise the event. Despite the fact that the Democratic Party also nominated some attendants, it felt very much like an ANC-alliance event.

"We need to build up a body of informed opinion about public broadcasting," explained the ANC's Pallo Jordan who attended most sessions as an observer, "because, at some point or an-

other, we'll be called to restructure the SABC, and we don't want to be found scratching our heads and wondering what to do."

IAJ director, Allister Sparks added that "in no way is this a shadow board. But the reality is that the current SABC board contracts expire in March. So I approached the parties at Codesa, and asked them who they might nominate. All this seminar is doing is giving those people suggested the background they might need if indeed they are nominated."

And so the appointees — many of whom had clearly never thought about broadcasting before — spent four days learning about the vagaries of spectrum management, the role of directors and plans for an independent telecommunications authority.

They also listened to an impressive array of foreign public broadcasters from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the British Broadcasting Corporation and the American Public Broadcasting Service.

In the presence of such fine and forward-looking company, SABC-TV News editor-in-chief, Johan Pretorius came across as inspired as the SATV test pattern. Like a *bete noire* to the slaughter, he gave the tired excuse that "we are being criticised and hammered by everyone, including the National Party, for being biased." Sure, he said, "we are carrying baggage, of course, and it might also be that we have certain mindsets, but so has everyone else."

So what's the problem? countered the floor. Get rid of the baggage. Jordan said the SABC had done "a grave disservice to the country", not only because of "the manner in which it has been controlled", but also because "of the sheer lack of

quality of the product." Not mincing his words, Jordan called SABC fare "drek".

This is a predictable response from the ANC. But, astonishingly, the foreign PBS broadcasters spoke with as much vehemence about their South African colleagues: "SABC gave public broadcasting a bad name," said Peter Manning, controller of the ABC. "Advertising has made it lose its mission. Listening to Johan Pretorius was like listening to a dead man. It's time to start again from scratch. We're talking about total and utter reconstruction."

PBS's David Fanning added that "the SABC has lost the trust of its audience, and I don't know if it's something they'll get back."

But the challenge, cautioned Sparks, is to make sure that a new SABC doesn't lose trust as quickly. "The day after a new board is announced," he said, "there will be viewers around the country who will be looking for hijacking in the opposite direction and who will go 'Aha! I told you so!' at the first sign of bias."

There was consensus that a new SABC must play a "transformative" role. But the problem is the following: when the National Party decided to introduce television, it too had a "transformative" mission — it wanted to use the nation's airwaves to effect its agenda of changing South Africa into a rigid apartheid state. Now we have a situation where a new group of people, tomorrow's leaders, have their own agenda of transformation. Their goals might well be nobler and more valid than those of BJ Vorster and his telehenchman, Piet Meyer but, as Sparks said, there is a dangerously thin line between being proactive and being propagandistic, particularly when "transformation" is a key-word in the ANC lexicon.

Ditto with another word that came up often: "healing". If a public broadcaster is to "heal", who is to provide the diagnosis and the treatment? What the ANC-appointed members of a board might see as "healing", the Nat hangovers might see as rubbing salt in the wound.

"Is the function of television," asked Rogers, "to encourage and promote change, or is it to criticise and analyse, even if that means scuttling reconciliation and negotiation?"

Let's assume that a government of national reconciliation is formed next year and an SABC journalist uncovers a scandal that will bring the government down and return this country to the badlands of the interregnum. If the SABC is bound by a code of promoting reconciliation, would — and should — the story be run?

In this society, where the rights to information and freedom of speech have been so seriously abrogated, television and radio can transform merely by broadcasting information that is unbiased, fair and comprehensive. The consensus was that truth, just by being told, transforms. And that truth, no matter how much it hurts, heals.

But a question remains, lurking in the subtext of Ndebele's earlier comment: will a new board be chosen, as Jordan stated, according to the rules of "transparency and accountability", or will this nation's airwaves, a "national asset" as one person described them, be traded off between the parties in closed Codesa-like rooms?

While there was consensus in Codesa's Working Group 1 that appointees must not be officials of political par-

ties, even having political parties nominate potential members is highly problematic.

The IAJ seminar was preparing for the possibility that other parties will be asked to nominate members to an expanded SABC board. But if this board is to consist of political appointees, the risk is they will spend most of their time advocating the policies of their nominators rather than fostering an independent public broadcaster.

"Certainly," said Sparks, "having political parties nominate members is far from ideal, but it is the closest to reality at present. As an interim measure, it might be the only possibility." ●

MARK GEVISSER writes for *The Weekly Mail* where this article first appeared.

With Buller Hildyard there was no easy way out

IN the years past the benchmark 40, there is little comfort in being addressed as "My Boy".

But, that seemingly patronising familiarity from the figure of Buller Hildyard, hunched over a desk or a J&B, was more his own acceptance of you than a slight.

In the typically unconventional way of this doyen of sports editors, it was an accolade.

And, perhaps more than any other journalistic legacy he left behind after his death at the age of 61 in October, 'Buller's Boys' will be his epitaph.

You only have to look at the list of award-winning sports writers who had been his 'Boys' to find one simple proof of that.

For a young man learning the trade, Buller often set impossible standards. But, in setting them, he was human enough to understand that those standards could not always be met.

It was not so much reporting or writing brilliance that he demanded, but integrity of intention and honesty of effort.

With Buller, there was never an easy way out.

I remember — red-faced still — falling into the trap all young sportswriters must do at some stage of their development.

I was finally given a Currie Cup rugby match to cover and had begun the preview with an "all roads lead to Ellis Park tomorrow" intro.

Just 10 minutes before deadline, Buller jerked his head in my direction. It was unspoken summons enough.

"I am going to cover the Transvaal-Natal golf at Country Club tomorrow," he said. "How do I get there from here?"

He sat stoically through a verbal roadmap and then asked: "Do I go near Ellis Park?"

"No," I said and started going through the directions again.

Buller stopped that dead by taking the preview I had agonised over for days and unemotionally ripping it in half.

"Then all roads don't lead to Ellis Park," said Buller. "Rewrite it!"

There was too, the time I had been sent on a cold night to cover a bottom-of-the-table mid-week soccer match that was so inept, so lacking in football skill that even the handful of fans went home at halftime.

There was no score at the final whistle and I used the chance to write what I thought was a humorous commentary on the proceedings.

Buller, in a break from his normal practice of running match reviews inside the newspaper, used it on the back page.

Then he cornered me. "You're buying," he said and stomped out of the sports office at *The Star*.

This, you knew, was the time serious stuff was to be discussed and debated, and Buller's judgement — always fair but always without appeal — was to be pronounced.

"I like the way you wrote that," he said, settling over his drink. "But you forgot one very important thing... there were 22 players out there ready to break a leg and you belittled them. Don't ever do that again." I hope I never have.

Farewells, especially to someone you admired, respected and liked are never easy. In the case of John Edmund Buller Hildyard, they are — and I hope I speak for all the 'Boys' — virtually impossible. ●

By **JON SWIFT**, just one of many South African sportswriters who passed through the hands of John Edmund Buller Hildyard who moved from sports journalism to edit first *The Saturday* and then *The Sunday Star*.

A FLEDGELING PRESS UNDER SIEGE

*Delivering the second annual Raymond Ackerman Freedom of the Press lecture at Rhodes University, **TREVOR NCUBE**, editor of the *Financial Gazette* in Harare outlines the growing government pressures on the independent press in Zimbabwe*

THE press in Zimbabwe, as a vital prerequisite of a democratic and tolerant culture, is going through a make-or-break period. Unfortunately, the intolerant authorities seem to think that the press is damaging their chances of remaining in power for as long as Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda did, or to hold on for as long as Life-President Kamuzu Banda has managed in Malawi.

In essence this is what Press Freedom has come to mean in Africa — a threat to the political establishment and a fermenter of social discord and discontent. Is this a true picture — I wonder?

To understand the press in Zimbabwe today, it is essential to look at its history.

In the old Rhodesia, the press was a direct off-shoot of the South African press. Indeed, Cecil John Rhodes had a direct financial interest in the Argus Printing and Publishing Company of South Africa.

The first operations of the Argus group in what is now Zimbabwe commenced in June 1891 with a duplicated weekly called *The Zambesian Times* edited by a South African named William Ernest Fairbridge at Fort Salisbury. This was later to be incorporated into *The Rhodesian Herald*, set up in 1892 and owned by the Argus Printing and Publishing Company of South Africa.

In 1926, the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company was formed in Salisbury as a separate body from the Argus Company, to publish both *The Rhodesian Herald* and *The Bulawayo Chronicle* which had been set up in 1894.

It is instructive to note that, in a largely African populated country, the Argus newspapers were directed at a minority European readership. While some might

argue that Africans were at this stage still illiterate and uncivilised natives or Kafirs, there were some papers directed at this audience. Unfortunately most of them were banned, perhaps for leading the natives too far too quickly, and those of importance were the *Chapupu*, which was started in 1958 and banned in 1962, and the *Zimbabwe Sun* which was banned in 1964.

However, it is interesting to note that as the African readership and hence advertising market grew, the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company took over the national *Observer* and *The New Star* in order to cater for this market segment. In the main, however, the Argus Press reflected the views, hopes and aspirations of its white readership and the white ruling elite.

The period of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence — from 1965 to 1980 — is an interesting phase for anyone interested in Press Freedom. Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front ran a virtual one-party state, with the press as a crucial supporting pillar in the maintenance of white minority rule over the black majority. The press aided and abetted the denial of basic human rights to the majority of citizens.

During this period the press, though allegedly opposed to the act of UDI itself and to white supremacist policies of the Rhodesian Front, never advocated nor supported the liberation forces.

Thus, while a fierce battle for political power raged on in the countryside and at some stages even in the cities, the Press was instrumental and pivotal in lulling the white citizenry into a false sense of security. With casualties and loss of life on both sides of the political fight, the Rhodesian press painted a picture of disorganised rag-tag nationalist or terrorist

forces who were dying like flies at the hands of an invincible and well-oiled Rhodesian Army.

The press also depicted the nationalist leaders as a bunch of communist thugs out to nationalise the wealth of the whites accumulated over a period close to a century. This helped galvanise solid white support for the RF cause. In the process, blacks were aware of some victories on the battlefield and soon sections within the white community also became aware of the increasing numbers of casualties — lost fathers, brothers and sons. And for what reason, they began to ask.

Granted, there was some censorship, but the fact of the matter is that the press at the time had done a disservice to the white community — witness the shock and disbelief when Smith succumbed to nationalist pressure and settled for negotiations.

If the truth be told, there was a relative degree of democracy and Press Freedom within the settler society. For instance, Smith was criticised quite vociferously. There was, however, a deliberate suppression of nationalist viewpoints.

It is partly because of the uncompromising posture taken by the largely Argus owned white press as regards the nationalist cause that Robert Mugabe's government sought to punish it for perceived past misdemeanors by buying its controlling interests in the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company.

Thus, at independence in 1980, it was widely felt within the victorious nationalist movement that the press had to change. Indeed, the feeling was that political independence would not be sufficient on its own if, for instance, the same people who ran *The Rhodesian Herald* and *The Bulawayo Chronicle* during the

UDI period continued to do so under Mugabe.

To effect this grandiose scheme of having a sympathetic press on its side, the new government set up the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust to take over the 45 percent South African ownership of the newspaper company. This was done with financial help from the Nigerian government.

The rest of the shareholding, which was in private hands, was left intact, with the result that to this day the Old Mutual and other companies and individuals have a substantial stake in Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited which is quoted on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange.

Zimpapers, as the company is known, presently owns two dailies based in Harare and Bulawayo, one weekly in Mutare, two Sunday papers and one vernacular paper. There are also other smaller publications.

The idea behind the trustee ownership, a novel idea in itself, was originally aimed at insulating the press from direct government ownership and control. The Trust was supposed to act as a buffer between the government and the press.

In reality this never happened as the government, through various ministers of information and other prominent members of the cabinet, took an active interest in the day-to-day activities of the newspaper group from leader writing and editorial policy to hiring and firing of editors. The Trust was thus reduced to mere rubber stamping of decisions taken elsewhere and up to this day, the Trust does not act independently of the government.

The position of the Trust has been further compromised by the appointment of party activists to the Trust itself and the board of the newspaper group. Mr Elias Rusike who was CEO of Zimpapers, in his book *The Politics Of Mass Media — a personal experience*, had this to say: "On the appointment I was told that I would report to the Chairman of Zimpapers board. But in practice I was being summoned to the Ministry of Information to explain why that story was published and why the President's story did not go on the front page." It is sad to know that

this is how the largest newspaper group in Zimbabwe is run.

As a result of this unfortunate situation, Zimbabwe has found itself with government-controlled newspapers, with editors who have been appointed not for what they know but who among the influential cabinet ministers they know.

This has also led to what has been termed the 'Minister said syndrome', where the official press has made its main



Trevor Ncube and Kathy Ackerman

business the reproduction of ministers' speeches and those of the President. Whatever the President says makes headlines, no matter how ridiculous or mundane it may be.

Those editors who have tried to stand up to their professional ethics have been quickly dealt with. First to fall out of favour with the government was the veteran journalist and politician, Willie Musarurwa, who received the boot for allegedly being anti-PAC among other reasons. The government also took the view that under his editorship, the *Sunday Mail* had acted like an opposition newspaper.

The decision to fire him was made by government through the Minister of Information, Post and Telecommunications in 1985.

The next victim was Willie's immediate successor, Henry Kuradzikwa who was lucky in that he was 'promoted' to a non-editorial job in 1987 after running a story about the alleged poor treatment of Zimbabwean students in Cuba. Mr Mugabe publically promised the Cuban government: "I shall deal with him personally", and indeed, he did.

Perhaps the most celebrated case is that of Geoffrey Nyarota, editor of the

Chronicle, who was also promoted upstairs in 1989 following the publication of a series of stories on what now has become popularly known as the 'Willowgate Scandal'. This involved the uncovering of a scam where government ministers and other officials were buying vehicles from the Willowvale assembly plant in Harare and reselling them at several times the officially controlled price.

This incident left an indelible mark on the state of the press in Zimbabwe. It was after this that the then Minister of Information, Witness Mangwende charged that Zimbabwe could not afford the luxury of investigative journalism, which would risk "tearing up the fragile social and political fabric of our new society".

This was despite the fact that a judicial commission of inquiry had found the *Chronicle's* reports of corruption to be accurate.

These attacks on an already largely hamstrung official press left a yawning information gap.

Indeed, these actions effectively put paid to whatever attempts at professionalism and investigative journalism there was at Zimpapers. A new breed of journalists, content with taking down speeches and reporting on them religiously and as faithfully as possible, and praise-singers became the norm rather than the exception. This led to serious information starvation which itself was central to the emergence and proliferation of independent newspapers and magazines in Zimbabwe.

The other factor that was critical to the emergence of the independent press was the political decay and economic decline that came as a result of a sycophantic press that was content with singing praises and not truly reflecting the wishes, desires, problems and frustrations of the entire population. The public wanted these frustrations ventilated, a task which was taken up by only a few independent papers.

The public wanted to speak out about the negative effects of socialism, the dangers of a one-party state dictatorship to which we were headed at great speed.

PLEASE TURN OVER

The independent papers of importance were the weekly *Financial Gazette*, together with the monthly magazines *Parade* and *Moto*. These were later joined by the weekly *Weekend Gazette*, which went daily on October 5, and *Horizon*, a monthly magazine which came onto the scene in 1991.

It is important to note that while independent papers and magazines were mushrooming all over, the ruling party was not to be left out, for it soon established its weekly *Peoples' Voice*. This joined the monthly *Zimbabwe News*, which concerns itself with party ideological issues. I must add that this magazine is still much more communist than Marx, Lenin, Mao and Castro put together. Luckily it is now a lonely voice of insanity in the wilderness and the party for which it purports to speak has made an ideological *volte-face*.

The issues that have concerned the independent press, apart from a mere objective and critical handling of news, are human rights violations, corruption, democracy and political pluralism and freedom of the press — all critical issues in any civilised society.

It is because of the independent press's focus on these rather uncomfortable issues that it has come under increasing verbal attack from the government and there are ominous signs that these verbal attacks might develop into something that could jeopardise the existence of a free and independent press in Zimbabwe.

On the other hand, there are signs that the existence of a vibrant independent press has nudged the docile official press out of its long slumber.

By and large the official attitude to the independent press has been that it is an opposition press bent on unfairly criticising the government and giving considerable space to the views of government critics and political opposition parties. Government has claimed that it would like to see more objective reporting from the independent press, but what they really mean is that they would like to see more sympathetic reporting in our news columns. They talk of constructive criticism, which in essence means "don't criticise us". Criticism of government has been equated to lack of patriotism and tantamount to treason.

Some government officials, however, have made public their displeasure with

the official Press and their preference for the independent press. More have done so in private.

President Mugabe, however, attacked the independent press recently when he commissioned a party printing press. He spoke to the effect that a propaganda war was "hotting up", orchestrated by what he called the "yellow and gutter press" with foreign funding.

With the independent press becoming more vocal, this displeasure has become very combative and threatening to the survival of a vibrant independent press in Zimbabwe.

A July Cabinet meeting, part of whose proceedings were leaked to us, serves to depict vividly the hardening attitudes in some government circles as regards the independent press. Top of the agenda — together with dispatching our Transport Minister to negotiate the free movement of our maize shipment from what the official press calls "apartheid South Africa" — was a lengthy discussion on a possible ban on the independent press.

Among the options that were bandied about was a complete ban of the independent press, which did not receive enough support. Various strategies of how to make the operations of this section of the press unviable were then discussed. These included:

- instructing parastatals to cease advertising in the independent press so as to undermine their financial viability;
- frustrate the operations of the independent press through foreign currency and newsprint allocations;
- making sure the independent press did not get adequate telephone lines;
- making sure there was no hurry in putting newsprint on the Open General Import licence system.

It appears no firm decision was made.

While for the most part the attack on the independent press has been on a verbal level, my latest encounter with the authorities indicates that the future is no longer where it used to be and things might actually get nasty. There might be no future to talk about at all as far as a free press is concerned in Zimbabwe.

The encounter to which I refer was as a result of *The Financial Gazette* carrying a story regarding details of a parliamentary select committee which was set up to investigate alleged corrupt dealings involving some senior government min-

isters and a vice-President who allegedly received favours from a corrupt businessman.

The reporter and I were summoned before Parliament and asked to reveal our source. Contrary to what appeared in the press at the time we did not reveal the sources of our story. In fact, one of the sources confessed to the chairman of the committee and was then compelled by the chairman to make the confession in front of the whole committee. The publisher of *The Financial Gazette* and myself appeared before the same committee after that confession.

We have no illusions at all about the intentions of these intimidatory actions against the newspaper, the reporter, myself and the publisher. This has nothing to do with government or parliament's desire to get the sources, but is rather aimed at getting at us once and for all. We have provided them with a legitimate opportunity to come for us waving and pointing at some constitutional provisions. We have been targeted as one of the most outspoken critics of government. They want to use us as an example.

We are reliably informed that the Attorney-General's office is presently working on invoking two pieces of colonial legislation to force the independent press to toe the line. These laws, according to a source inside the AG's office who spoke to *Parade*, "are aimed not only at the journalistic fraternity but also at the officers of government who are in the habit of leaking information to the press".

There is also talk of a Publications Act and some form of media policy which would set out the no-go areas for the press. It is clear that the free press is under siege in Zimbabwe and that its survival is in jeopardy.

Yet on a more optimistic note, the independent press has enjoyed tremendous growth and success over the past few years, phenomenal achievements considering that these have been scored in a country which missed becoming a one-party socialist dictatorship and hence a one-newspaper country by a whisker.

We have made these gains with the support of the majority of society who love, value and cherish freedom of the press. It is with their support that we will frustrate the wishes of our detractors. ●

This paper has been edited.



IT'S TIME TO BURY 'ALTERNATIVE'

By redefining themselves, 'alternative' political newspapers may end up committing suicide just when South Africa needs them most, writes **DON PINNOCK**

WORDS do matter. In the early 1980s an American lecturer in journalism at Rhodes University, Dr Les Switzer, his ears filled with pre-revolutionary sounds from the townships and his spectacles tinted by hippy rebellions back home, dubbed the new political newspapers in South Africa as 'alternative'. Cohorts of students left Grahamstown as missionaries of this new label. And not long afterwards media theorists, myself included, did the next worst thing. If the chirpy new papers were 'alternative', then those daily and weekly bearers of advertising were 'mainstream'.

The legacy of these labels has done more damage than one might imagine mere words can do. Journalists and managers in the new weeklies, trying to conceptualise their role in a post-glasnost South Africa, are caught in more than simply a word trap. Words are ideas and ideas are the basis of action... the now self-defined 'alternatives' have painted themselves only two choices — to become mainstream commercial or (perish the thought) to become the political adjuncts of the political movements.

Either way, that which pays the piper is seen to call the tune. And the result of this thinking, coupled with the need to survive in the marketplace, could be that the fine old tradition of critical reportage may be about to commit suicide in the moment of our greatest need of it.

An act of atonement might be to widen our choice of words and to re-think some basic assumptions...

Historically, the alternative press is mainstream.

There can be little doubt that the traditions of that press which I will provisionally call 'critical' pre-dated those of 'mainstream' dailies in South Africa and had links into much older forms of reportage.

The daily press, which claims Thomas Pringle as its founding father, conveniently forgets that he was a radical hell-bent on muck-raking. Pringle, who arrived in 1820, had been the editor of a small campaigning paper called *The Star*, described as "the only true radical newspaper in Scotland", and had been influenced by the independent radicalism of British journalists such as John Wilkes, William Cobbett and Thomas Payne. The ideas of these men were to inspire Karl Marx to write the Communist Manifesto.

Cape Governor Lord Charles Somerset described Pringle as "an arrant dissenter" who had "scribbled for a Scottish journal". (Pringle and his printer were soon in court for exceeding their brief, and a long tradition of State harassment of the press began). So the first-born South African newspaper began life not as an instrument of government or commerce but as a rebel.

It goes back even further. The invention of movable type was itself a political act, and it was immediately put to the service of sectoral interests within the Church. Its emergence into secular service was an event watched nervously by the ruling classes. Indeed, the first newspaper officially licensed in Britain in 1622 had its licence revoked for offending the Spanish Ambassador. Printing presses and dangerous ideas were to remain close companions ever afterwards.

Contrary to current perceptions, it was

the commercial press which was born as an *alternative* to press traditions of the day. Indeed, it was in the taming of radical ideas that this press found its conception and it was based squarely on the growing prosperity of the industrial classes. This is best represented by the growth of *The Times*. In 1852 its editor, Thomas Delane, spelled out the new ethic:

"The duty of the journalist is the same as that of the historian — to seek out the truth above all things, and to present to his readers not such things as statecraft would wish them to know but the truth as near as he can attain it."

This founding document of the capitalist free press conception had two important aspects. On the one hand it broke with the idea of the press as a venal activity to be used at will by government or political faction. On the other hand, it bound the press to a Free Trade doctrine in which it owed allegiance to nobody but its advertisers.

This new teaching was based on the fact that by the 1850s *The Times* held a near-monopoly of newspaper sales (being 50 000 copies a day compared to the 5 000 of its nearest rival) and was the mouthpiece of the new capitalist class which demanded a voice of its own and paid for it through advertising patronage. Indeed, the very first elaborations of the new notion of freedom declared *dependence* on commercial advertisements to be the foundation of this freedom.

The Times, and the many newspapers which were to follow its lead, sold news as a commodity and boomed. They confined their political origins to a brief

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It's time for the independents to take careful stock of the consequences of advertising-driven newspapers and to get back to the political principles that gave them life

editorial and remained, to quote the *Edinburgh Review* of mid-19th century, "ever strong on the stronger side".

The traditions of *The Times* began in South Africa with the introduction of steam presses at the *Cape Times* several decades after Pringle's departure from our shores. But the 'mainstream' political tradition remained — from *Die Patriot* and *Imvo Zabansundu* of the 19th century through the communist, liberal and nationalist press to the weekly tabloids of the late 20th. So we need to bury 'alternative': it does not accord with our history.

A second point that needs to be cleared up in the current debate is that:

All journalism is political. Some papers just do it better than others.

In his assessment of British press practices dating back to the early 17th century, writer Stanley Harrison has observed that "neither at the beginning nor at the end is the newspaper press placed neutrally apart from society — though at the end it endeavours by all means to wear that appearance. Politics is about power and the press is about politics".

Discussions about whether the press is political or neutral generally become linked with ideas about objectivity. Claims of objectivity have, at some time or another, been made by all commercial newspapers in this country in an attempt to legitimate and authenticate their information and to distance themselves from the political press. But it is necessary to look at the differences seen to exist between objective and critical journalism and to consider whether a 'non-political' journalism is, indeed, possible.

In the commercial press, journalistic invisibility has been raised to a virtue, and although we tend to see a novelist as the author of her words, there is a strong tradition which insists that the journalist be nothing more than a conveyor belt for 'facts' and 'the truth'.

This neutrality has been proposed as a way of approaching reality, as a mechanism for transmitting this approach and as a *desideratum* — the ultimate moral goal of the profession. Within this tradition the individual journalist is irrelevant, indeed the intrusion of her 'subjectivity' would be a subversion of the ideology and must be confined to 'editorials'.

The overall effect is that of a world of abstract entities and relations, frozen in time, objectified processes, a kind of verbal Marie Celeste, left intact without any human agents. The actual nature of this objectivity is seldom formally spelt out to a new reporter; it simply becomes an approach to be absorbed 'on the job'. However, the practice of objective journalism raises some questions. Can there be an external reality whose facade can be perceived without distortion? In fact, this view of reality is a conceptual error. What exists is not an exterior reality, but a certain knowledge, a humanisation of reality produced by individual action and conditioned by the totality of society. Claims of objectivity are merely the projection of sectoral interests as universal values.

In truth all journalism is, in some sense, political and it is, therefore, less useful to ask questions about *what* is reported (or whether it is true) than about *how* it is reported, *who* the reader is and which social values are embedded in the text. Indeed the content of newspapers is more easily understood as *ideas* about the world than as facts about it. And the events which are reported are not a reflection of the importance of those events, but are the result of a complex and artificial set of criteria for selection. News is a *practice* which, far from simply reflecting social reality and 'facts', intervenes in the *social construction of reality*. *The Star* is quite as involved in this construction as *New Nation*. The only difference, apart from the understandings of their journalists, is the perceived audience.

Finally, let me return to the piper. The crucial debate in newspaper futures is around independence and income. Now there is clearly some relationship between who finances a paper and its content.

The challenge for the critical press is to survive economically without sacrificing editorial independence. But current (crude) media thinking has offered them only aggressive economic independence as an alternative to foreign funding. This is not unlike the route taken by *The Times* more than a century ago.

Another far more positive route is for the critical press to pursue its quest for marketability, but also to be prepared to take money from the devil himself, if necessary, as long as its journalists are defended by a justiciable *Code of Conduct*. As long as their publication dominates the niche market attractive to the funder, critical journalists can argue for funds from anybody as long as their journalistic integrity is protected politically.

The democratic freedoms of a future South Africa are best defended by an independent *political press*. But the idea that the freedom of this press is predicated on independence from political parties and dependence on advertisers and the market is one which buried the political press in Britain for nearly a century. This is a territory thoroughly colonised by the offspring of *The Times* who will not hesitate to cut the throat of any new contenders — and of political journalism into the bargain.

So, I think it's time for the independents to take careful stock of the consequences of advertiser-driven newspapers and to get back to the political principles which gave them life. Or have those principles changed? ●

DON PINNOCK is a senior lecturer in the Department of Journalism & Media Studies at Rhodes University.

media watch

Continuing our series on journalism in southern African states, **JAMES ZAFFIRO** examines the state of the media in Botswana

TO say that southern African media are in a state of flux these days is to belabour the obvious. But the obvious can be revolutionary. There is greater hope for a free press today than there has been for many years in states like Zimbabwe and Zambia as popular democratization movements gain steam. There are even signs of an easing of the reins on state-run broadcasting monopolies in a few places.

In one state of the region, however, recent media developments are less revolutionary in scope and certainly less controversial in character. Botswana has been one of the most democratic states in Africa over its entire quarter-century of independence, with a functioning multi-party parliamentary political system and regular elections.

Diamond revenues, cattle and mineral exports have financed ambitious infrastructural development projects, including roads, dams, and airports, along with generally successful social programmes, enabling the state to avert the economic collapses and famines suffered by its neighbors. While far from perfect, the economic and political record of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party and its leadership has certainly been noteworthy.

These factors have also helped nurture a small but viable private press and an environment which allows for mild media criticism of government policy, at times even by the government's own media. In how many African states today could one open the government newspaper and read a headline like "Government Ministers Only Enrich Themselves"? Particularly since 1982, the private press has not only been tolerated by government leaders but held up as tangible evidence of the democratic political atmosphere of the country.

Although unique in certain respects, Botswana's media share several important basic attributes of neighboring states' systems, including: 1) skewed, urban-based centralization of infrastructure, resources, and audiences; 2) emphasis in coverage on words and images of top national leaders, particularly the head of state; 3) heavy, often conflicting demands upon media institutions, particularly radio, to serve national development, inform, educate, and entertain; 4) a general lack of diversity of information and focus between different national media organs, for example from the *Daily News* to *Radio Botswana*; 5) a structure which ensures top-down, one-way communication flows.

Botswana's Press

Currently there are four private newspapers, all weeklies, as well as the government's own *Daily News*, which appears Monday through Friday. There are also a variety of magazines and journals, including *Kutlwano*, a government monthly, and a recent addition, the *Botswana Political Diarist*, put out by the main opposition party, the Botswana National Front (BNF), "to provide a forum for democratic debate

between individuals from different political persuasions and organizations in Botswana".

The most outspoken paper is *Mmegi*, or *The Reporter* in English. There is also the *Botswana Guardian*, the *Botswana Gazette*, and the *Mid-Week Sun*. Each of these papers is written mainly in English and aimed at an urban, secondary school educated readership. Figures fluctuate and are unreliable but it would be fair to say the *Daily News* commands the largest readership and circulation, probably close to 50 000 copies, due to the fact that it is distributed free and transported to other major urban and peri-urban centres around the country on Government transport. *Mmegi*, the most widely-read private paper, costs 60 thebe (about 30 cents). For reasons of cost and efficiency, private papers are printed in South Africa then transported by truck to Gaborone for distribution.

The private papers have tried to increase circulation outside of Gaborone, where none probably commands more than about 25 000 copies weekly, but only *Mmegi* has had much success. Even then, the major audience is urban and English-speaking from cities like Francistown, Molepolole, and Serowe. Most rural dwellers rarely see a newspaper and when they do it is generally weeks, if not months, old. Radio Botswana is their major, if not exclusive, media source of news and entertainment.

No newspaper is exclusively or even mainly written in Setswana and aimed at a non-English readership. The *Daily News* reserves its back page for reprinted headline stories in Setswana, while its other seven pages are in English. *Mmegi* runs five or six stories and an editorial or two in Setswana. The government hopes to increase the number of pages of the *Daily News* during the next National Development Plan period but still has not considered enlarging the Setswana section.

Other recent efforts at private newspapers have included the *Examiner*, edited by Brian Egner during the early 1980's, and *Newslink Africa*, which disappeared in late 1991 after ongoing investigative reporting by *Mmegi* revealed a major financial and editorial connection with the South African military (SADF).

Some feel that Botswana journalists sometimes go too far in assuming watchdog status over public officials and institutions, for example the private press exposures of the Leno real estate irregularities, *Newslink Africa*'s ties to the SADF, and coverage of a recent land scandal which resulted in the resignation of the Vice-President and Agriculture minister. Others proudly point to these cases as evidence of the effectiveness and importance of a critical and free press.

Government, for its part, holds mixed feelings on this but clearly some believe in the importance of a free press. Some ministers are more hostile than others, denying press access to them and questioning their right to carry out investigative reporting. In 1991, UNESCO was commissioned to advise on how it might regulate relations with the private press.

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The report recommended creation of a press council "to ensure that the freedom that the press enjoys goes with a high sense of responsibility and professional conduct". The council should also be able to "review existing laws affecting the press with a view to updating them and ensuring that they are consistent with Botswana's democratic traditions and ideals". The report also urged government to begin to charge for the *Daily News* and to take measures to ensure the economic viability of the private press.

Broadcasting

Botswana broadcasting is housed within the Department of Information and Broadcasting, a section of the Ministry of Presidential Affairs. Despite being a government institution it is fair to say that there is more freedom from interference and heavy-handed censorship at *Radio Botswana* than is true of many other African services which merely maintain a facade of independence from the government.

Station employees acknowledge their responsibility as public servants to explain and support government policies, yet many feel strongly that their role sometimes compels them to put social responsibility first, exposing corruption and illegal activities and transcending government media guidelines to grant opposition leaders access to criticise a particular individual or policy, although this is much more rare than private press criticism.

Calling itself for years "The Station of the Nation" but criticised by many in rural areas as "Radio Gaborone", *Radio Botswana* has expanded efforts to upgrade its signal strength and quality nation-wide. Major urban areas now have FM coverage, while further expansion of the medium wave service continues. The government station remains the only broadcast service in the country.

Like other African systems, *Radio Botswana* has too often focused on hardware improvements at the expense of audience, content, and staff development. The result is a more powerful, modern national service which sometimes fails to serve, inform, educate, promote development, or even offer popular entertainment because it is compelled to try to be too many different things for too many different audiences and interests on a one-channel service. Some of the most recent efforts include expanded broadcast hours, from 5am to midnight, more news bulletins, and a renewed effort to improve schools broadcasts with help from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Attempts to initiate a commercial service were repeatedly headed off or postponed, on the grounds that it was wasteful and could not be supported by local advertising revenue, scarcely able to help sustain the private press and provide a partial subsidy to the *Daily News*. Beginning in April 1992, a commercial channel was scheduled to begin serving a 50 kilometer radius of the Gaborone area on the FM band, broadcasting

There is consensus among government leaders that any television service must be national in scope and not simply entertainment for urban elites. It should cover more than half the population and not rely heavily on foreign-produced programmes

mainly in English, catering to the 15 to 45 age group, operating primarily as a music and entertainment service. If successful, the service would be extended nationwide during the next National Development Plan Period.

Introduction of television appears stalled again, in light of government's failure to locate a suitable consultant to update a 1988 International Telecommunications Union (ITU) national television feasibility study. There is consensus among government leaders that any television service must be national in scope and not simply entertainment for urban elites. It should cover more than half the population and not rely heavily on foreign-produced documentaries and situation comedies but rather based on "imaginative, home-grown material". A national service should also be run "by people of professional integrity" and "should be seen to be abstaining from political partisanship".

Since 1988 there also has been a closed-circuit Gaborone-based service, GBC (Gaborone Broadcasting Company) which airs films and documentaries to subscribers. In addition, many urban dwellers own televisions and regularly tune to South African and Homeland television stations. Indeed, since the mid-1980's, a major force driving efforts by government to introduce national TV was to counter South African influence via the airwaves by winning back Botswana viewers.

In partnership with *Radio Botswana* and the government, the *Voice of America* has recently completed a major upgrade of its Africa Service signal with installation of four new 100 kw shortwave and two new 100 kw medium wave transmitters near Selebi Phikwe. There are plans to add a 500 kw medium wave transmitter by 1994. This is now VOA's main site in Africa, replacing the destroyed equipment in Liberia and dramatically upgrading the signal throughout East, Central, and Southern Africa.

Media-State relations

The major factors accounting for Botswana's exceptional media freedom, despite sometimes anxious feelings on the part of certain ministers and permanent secretaries about an overly challenging private press, seem to be a notable absence of major ethnic animosities and the high legitimacy of its national leaders, particularly the country's first President, Sir Seretse Khama. These seem to have discouraged temptation by leaders to create and use mass media as tools to build national unity and regime legitimacy. This is significantly different from most post-independence African media use and access policies.

As mass media grew closer to the center of the national political arena they gradually came to expect the same access, based on professionalism and support for democratic institutions which the Government allows its backbenchers and opposition party critics. Access to top decision-makers and detailed information about Government policies has been sporadic and

incomplete. Many journalists have complained that foreign reporters and media crews enjoy greater access than local media. Yet in times of crisis media are briefed and complaints are at least partly addressed via meetings with ministers and the President.

Journalists working on the private papers continue to condemn what they see as attempts by government and big business "to kill whatever remains of press freedom in this country" but the fact that many of these attacks are launched in print suggest that the situation is still markedly better than in most other African states. Reporters are sometimes harassed and on at least one recent occasion the offices of *Mmegi* were searched by the CID.

The National Security Act, passed by Parliament in 1986 amidst the destabilization and military aggression of the South African government, has been occasionally cited by certain ministers to suggest boundaries of acceptable press behavior in certain policy terms of the Act for allegedly publishing a classified government document. The minister responsible for the press and broadcasting once suggested that "there is no better censorship than self-censorship". Foreign journalists, particularly black South Africans, have at times been subject to sudden unexplained deportations by Presidential decree.

The Government of Botswana has budgeted more money for modernization, expansion, training, and development of a national press and broadcasting infrastructure, rural information services, a national news agency (BOPA), and foreign consultancies in its current National Development Plan than ever before. The Department of Information and Broadcasting received a 28% increase over 1990/91 in its 1991/92 Parliamentary allocation, to P7.9 million (about R10 million). The Department has requested P9.4 million for 1992/93, a further 19% increase. This may be expected to continue into the next Plan period.

Botswana journalists have organized themselves loosely via a journalists' association (BOJA) which attempts to formulate informal ethical and professional norms and guidelines for the fledgling media institutions. Efforts are also continuing to form a media workers' union. Journalism remains low-paying, low prestige work and all media suffer from rapid turnover and inadequately educated workers. Any advanced

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Conclusion

In Botswana, media and government are more separate and more able to communicate with each other about the common good than is true in most African states today. Both sides are realistic enough to realize that they must work together and also, that they can help each other to achieve individual ends. Some government officials make an effort to address journalists' concerns. Most journalists seem to realize and accept that there are legitimate limits to media criticism.

Necessary conditions for media freedom exist in Botswana today. It would be premature, however, to proclaim its arrival or institutionalization until key political, economic, and social norms are sufficiently ingrained in the mass and elite culture. The private press maintains a precarious existence, and will remain so until it can achieve economic viability and national distribution and readership. Higher status for journalists and greater professionalism are also needed. Until another smooth regime transition occurs Botswana's media freedom will remain a fragile thing.

Given the seriousness with which the present government views mass participation in national development and the political process, a strong argument can be made for the importance of effective, unfettered media institutions. As long as the ruling elite retains political legitimacy mass media will retain credibility and relative freedom from heavy-handed government controls, reinforcing the development of democracy and setting the country apart from many of its less fortunate neighbors.

It is still premature to assume that Botswana's media freedom, political legitimacy, and democracy itself are strong enough to survive economic collapse, opposition political victory, or any of a host of other calamities which have rocked its neighbours in the post-independence decades.

The main tests are yet to come. ●

JAMES Zaffiro is Associate Professor of Politics at Central College, Pella, Iowa, USA. He has studied and written about broadcasting and the Press in Zimbabwe and Botswana for 10 years.

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Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Letters to: The Editor, Rhodes Journalism Review, PO Box 94, Grahamstown 6140, South Africa.

A Louw blow

IN your July issue you carried two articles by Raymond Louw, on print media and broadcasting.

In the article on the break-up of newspaper groups, Mr Louw states that Nasionale Pers is the controlling shareholder in Perskor. That is patently untrue.

Perskor is controlled by Dagbreek Trust, in which Nasionale Pers has no stake or say.

Our shareholding in Perskor is confined to the investment subsidiary Perskor-Beleggings (Persbel), where we have a minority shareholding and no representation at board level.

In the article on broadcasting Louw repeats an old assertion, which he has publicly retracted elsewhere, that M-Net is run by Nasionale Pers at the government's insistence.

This is an out-and-out untruth, which Mr Louw keeps on repeating in various publications and forums.

Fact of the matter is that Nasionale Pers was the initiator of the M-Net project, that we have the largest shareholding and that we invited companies owning daily newspapers to participate as we were very much aware of the erosion of print media's advertising income by the parastatal, the SABC.

At no stage did the government interfere or lay down conditions as to the composition of the M-Net structure or shareholding.

Mr Louw could easily have verified these facts but he evidently avoids doing so and thereby smears the integrity of honourable publishers.



— **Ton Vosloo**, executive chairman, Nasionale Pers Beperk, Cape Town.

Why not monthly?

PLEASE send me all back copies of the *Rhodes Journalism Review* as I have not been able to obtain them. I hope that the publication of the journal quarterly at least rather than half yearly is under consideration. If resources permit, it should in fact be a monthly.

— **Saki Macozoma**, Head Media Liaison Unit, Department of Information and Publicity, African National Congress.

Filling the gap

Not only does your magazine bring a new media platform to the media profession at large,

it has also filled a large part of the information gap that existed. On behalf of my colleague journalists, publishers and associates of the profession, this is a most timely publication.

— **Syne M Chikove**, General Manager, Political & Economic Monthly, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Nigeria calling

I RECENTLY came across your magazine and was much impressed by your non-segregationist language and bent.

We are interested to know how and what the media are doing in South Africa, in view of recent developments there and the gradual establishment of links between our governments. And, I am sure that since Nigeria is one of the

most prominent nations on the continent, the prevailing trends in the dissemination of information here are sure to be of interest to you.

So, I propose we begin an exchange of magazines. There might be other areas of future co-operation, as time goes by.

— **Taiwo Obe**, editor, *Media Review*, Lagos, Nigeria.

Something beautiful

THE President of the Nigerian Union of Journalists recently gave me a copy of the *Rhodes Journalism Review* and suggested I read it and send you my comments.

As a journalist of over 14 years experience, I have read quite a number of journalism reviews and something beautiful, I would say, has emerged out of South Africa.

Please send me your subscription forms: I am sure the journalism schools in Nigeria, Press organisations and newspaper houses will want to subscribe.

— **Bayo Onanuga**, Lagos, Nigeria.

Vindictive attack

YOU owe *The Weekly Mail* and *Guardian Weekly* an apology. Your guest editorial by Nigel Bruce of the *Financial Mail* was riddled with factual errors.

Mr Bruce says that Anglo American Corporation has twice given "support" to *The Weekly Mail*. I am always a little nervous to point out that Anglo has never helped us because I feared them realising that there is an English-language media voice in which they do not own a single share. However, I can do so now be-

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Letters

TO THE EDITOR

cause our paper is — after a mere seven years — in a healthy and vigorous state and we are confident that we can protect our editorial and financial independence.

Mr Bruce says we exist because of the generosity of our printers. Believe it or not, Mr Bruce, we have always paid our printers at a market rate. He says that Shell “constantly place advertisements that are patently not there for commercial purposes”. I can understand that Mr Bruce feels some resentment at Shell advertising in *The Weekly Mail* rather than the *Financial Mail*, but Shell officials, with their keen sense of commercial purpose, will tell him that they have only done this because they consider it a valuable investment.

I can also understand that Mr Bruce is nervous that we have long since overtaken two of his publications, *Leadership* and *The Executive*, in circulation and readership and are mounting a considerable challenge to his flagship, the *Financial Mail*. Our computer supplement, *PC Review*, now has a bigger circulation than his equivalent and probably more advertising.

The irony of his attack on us is that he works for a company that has been repeatedly bailed out of trouble by Anglo American and its subsidiaries. His publication is also a pioneer of the kind of advocacy journalism which he accuses us of, pursuing its causes with admirable spirit and determination.

Mr Bruce's suggestion that our paper is “floundering” is wishful thinking.

The Weekly Mail's sales are up significantly over last year; our monthly advertising revenue has grown an average of R100 000 over last year — a

rare sign of good health in a difficult economic climate. We are buoyant and confident, an unusual situation for a young newspaper under any circumstances, more so for one that has had more than its fair share of state repression. We have a proud history and an exciting future as an independent, outspoken voice.

Mr Bruce's vindictiveness and disregard for the facts does little credit to your excellent journal.

— *Anton Harber, Co-editor, The Weekly Mail, Johannesburg.*

Be fair, Thomas

YOUR columnist Thomas Fairbairn in the column *Thumbsuck* (*Review* No.4) mentions the names of journalists who have been recognised for their work by being awarded honorary degrees.

How revealing that the names of prominent Afrikaans journalists with the stature of Phil Weber, Piet Cillié, Rykie van Reenen (Stellenbosch) and Bart Zaaiman (University of the Orange Free State) are omitted.

There is a larger world outside, Mr Fairbairn!

— *JH Van Deventer, Senior GM: Newspapers, Nasionale Pers, Cape Town.*

Sexist language

THE Black Sash Transvaal Region would like to take issue with you over the last edition of *Review*. On the front cover is the resolution adopted by the South African Conference of Editors for submission to CODESA. It contains some admirable principles but it also contains sexist language.

Naturally you cannot be held responsible for the decisions taken by the South African Conference of Editors but a little bit of sensitivity to gender issues would have been helpful.

We are sure you are aware of how sexist the South African media is and it saddens us to see that *Review* is continu-

ing in that tradition. Your editorial board and committee are both loaded with men and certainly the last edition appears to have contributions mainly from men.

— *Laura Pollecutt, on behalf of the Transvaal Region's Women's Group, The Black Sash, Johannesburg.*

A balance of voices

THE last edition of *Review* was really very good. Its greatest value was to hear an honest diversity of opinion about newspaper issues — instead of the dreary round of predictable criticisms of those newspapers that succeed and high praise for those publications that struggle.

— *Rory Wilson, General Manager, Sowetan.*

As you like it

I AM delighted by the co-operation between your and our publication and would like this to develop in any way you think suitable.

— *Philip Spender, Index On Censorship, London.*

The best of Times

I AM very happy to confirm that Times Media Limited will sponsor the production of *RaggedRight* as an insert to the *Rhodes Journalism Review*.

From TML's viewpoint, we are delighted that attention is being paid by *Review* to the arcane art of newspaper make-up and design.

I would be grateful if you could arrange to supply my office with 50 copies of *RaggedRight* henceforth, for distribution to our sub-editing departments throughout the Group.

— *Neil Jacobsohn, General Manager: Operations, Times Media Limited, Johannesburg.*

Readers aren't fools

THE comments in the July '92 edition of *Review* regarding “freebies” are interesting, al-

beit hackneyed. Ken Owen's comments in particular. A “freebie”, no matter what else, is supposed to be a working session, as some respondents mentioned, a way in which local journalists can keep in touch with happenings in the rest of the world without their publications paying for it.

Yet Mr Owen's publication has in the (recent) past used overseas motoring trips as rewards to senior staff members who have *no knowledge or interest* in motoring. (See also ‘ThumbSuck’ in the same issue of *Review* with reference to sports writers.)

Information on the overseas trip, as everything else about motoring in that publication, was “bought in”, as mentioned by Mr Owen.

And I must make mention of the “bought in” copy, a constant eulogy of the overseas ego trips of one individual, trips which I am told by car manufacturers are canvassed on the basis that the story will appear in the *Sunday Times*.

Does “buying-in” the copy insulate the publication from responsibility? No more than paying an assassin insulates the paymaster...

Aggrey Klaaste's comment that journalists are “over-awed by the ‘gifts’ from car people” is one based on, perhaps, historical data, since one wonders how anyone can be over-awed by gifts of ordinary pens, which have been the main “gift” I have received of late from various car people.

Charles Riddle grudgingly indicates that there “undoubtedly are” some motoring journalists of integrity. Indeed, there are many, hard-working individuals who for a pittance work virtually every weekend, and a great number of evenings during the week, and who at the same time have to put up with a torrid tirade from jealous colleagues who, in many cases, have neither the ability nor the work ethic to be let loose on an overseas trip.

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