



# LIFE MORE ABUNDANT

A retrospective look at *Drum* magazine in the 1970s

BY KERRY SWIFT

**D**RUM magazine in the 1950s has come to be seen as the 'Golden Age' of black journalism in South Africa, a period before the cottage industry of racial segregation translated into the big business of apartheid, and before the doctrine of advocacy journalism and the collectivism which was to follow began to reduce individual journalistic flair and editorial independence.

The early *Drum* was invested with a great deal of rugged individualism and has become important because there were no other credible, mass-circulation vehicles for the authentic black voice at that time.

A magazine called *Zonk!* was published in the early '50s, but it was always a poor shadow of *Drum* and was finally forced to give up its pallid ghost, while *Bona*, which was launched in 1956 to propagate government policies, had a strong tribal and rural bias and was never a credible competitor. *Drum*, on the other hand, catered for detribalised township readers. It faced the issues and it sought out and promoted the enormous creative talent developing at the apartheid coalface in townships such as Sophiatown, Western and Alexandra.

*Drum* offered open house for this creative flow and successfully managed to merge the technical skills of British editing in the mould of *Picture Post* with the vigour of African reportage, maintaining all its breathless intensity and rich township language. It was perhaps the first real example of what the music industry today calls 'cross-over'. And *Drum* 'cross-over' was about working as a rainbow coalition for the New Jerusalem.

Jim Bailey, *Drum*'s former owner and the guiding hand behind the magazine, had a much more appropriate descrip-

tion of *Drum* journalism when he called it "Life More Abundant". Nobody can put it better than that, because anyone who ever worked for a lengthy period on the magazine under Bailey's proprietorship had to learn to see all over again, and if *Drum* gave us the great gift of sight, we used it to seek some light in the gathering darkness because we all knew that somewhere out there manifest destiny beckoned and that was surely the creation of a "life more abundant" for all South Africa's people.

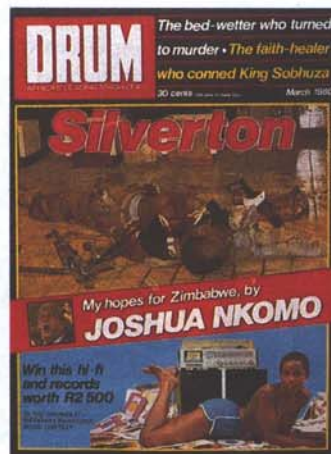
While the '50s and the early '60s were the halcyon days of *Drum*, it would be fair to say that for a number of years thereafter it faltered, its own performance broadly reflecting the misfortunes of its readers as the apartheid machine cut its destructive path through our society, blunting creative energy and turning it into a sullen and silent vigil for the gathering storm.

That storm was to come on June 16, 1976 with the Soweto uprising and the countrywide rebellion that followed, and it was a storm which changed the face of South Africa forever. June 16 was to become the symbolic date on which a second generation of black South Africans were initiated into the crucible of resistance.

And just as the youth rose up in 1976 to reject Bantu Education and all the apartheid machinery maintaining their oppression, so *Drum* journalism gained a new vigour in its determination to serve its readers and stay abreast of the issues.

Fuelled by the Black Consciousness Movement formulated in the Eastern Cape by Steve Biko and his colleagues, this rising tide of resistance led to a renaissance in *Drum*-style journalism and the years from 1976 to the end of the

PLEASE TURN OVER



As *Drum* moved into the eighties it had evolved into a heady editorial cocktail like the issue above.



decade constituted another high point in the magazine's chequered history.

In any discussion of *Drum*, one instinctively reverts to the characters of the day for *Drum* was never an ideological publication. At core it was about the rich passing parade – the pathos, the humour and, of course, the pain.

While *Drum* journalism was fully committed to black emancipation, it never espoused an ideological line or fell into the trap, so common in white liberal circles, of idealising blacks. In fact, it often admonished its readers, adopting a somewhat stentorian and moralistic tone. It was also genuinely suspicious of ideology and sloganeering, preferring always to explore the human reality because, essentially, *Drum* was about people, the people we wrote about and, of course, the people who did the writing.

It was this deeply individualistic approach which made *Drum* journalism so rewarding, and it was also responsible for the weaning of so many gifted men and women who went on to greater things, for a number of *Drum* graduates have left their thumbprints on the history of our continent.

The *Drum* school of journalism has come in for occasional criticism, invariably from people who never served the publication.

Some critics accuse *Drum* of quietism, of remaining, as one put it, "outside the struggle", while an American literary critic named Don Dodson suggests *Drum* acted as a means of social and political control by implicitly reinforcing, and very seldom challenging, the system of values of the oppressor.

My response to this drivell comes in the form of a statement from *Drum's* former owner Jim Bailey when he finally sold his South African publishing interests to Nasionale Pers: "Dear Readers," wrote Bailey in the June 1984 edition, "after 33 years I am bidding you farewell. I believe that with our *Drum* operation in South Africa we have achieved the following:

- We have provided, for 33 years, a great popular educator for the broad mass of our fellow citizens, at a time when, until recently, popular education was being deliberately lowered in quality by the South African government.

- We have maintained professional standards and a policy that has been consistent and unwavering from first to last, although the methods used have had to alter as new legislation was developed to limit the activities of the Press.

- We have bred, or given opportunity to, a generation or more of black authors, journalists and photographers who have provided some of the substantial foundations for the future society that is now being born..."

And he ended his valediction with these words: "Despite our occasional differences, a handful of people have done all this, working as a group of friends. To all our people, living and dead, I must pay tribute and give special thanks. Despite my withdrawal from the battle, I greatly hope that our friendships will be maintained into the distant future. On this note, Farewell. And to my successors, Good Luck! Go and do better."

When I joined Jim Bailey's publishing stable in 1976, *Drum* had a permanent editorial staff of only seven journalists and two drivers, one of whom was running a freelance 'chicken farm' from a large and disused room in the bowels of the building. Our editor was Stanley Motjuwadi, Des Tutu's life-long friend since the time they were golf caddies together as young boys.

Stan came to journalism from the teaching profession when, along with many other honourable men, he resigned his job in protest following the introduction of Bantu Education. Thus began a long and illustrious career in journalism.

When I joined as news editor, Stan was the last of the early school of *Drum* writers still on the permanent staff and he had the distinction of being the magazine's longest-serving editor.

A talented and mercurial former London *Daily Express* journalist, Tony Sutton was responsible for the design, production and day-to-day running of the magazine which he did with considerable creative flair.

There were two photographers, Chester Maharaj and his young apprentice, Dumisane Ndlovu, who was wounded by police buckshot while photographing the June '76 uprising and only escaped more serious injury by hiding in an open grave.

We had two reporters, Morakile Shuenyane and Patrick E Cohen, and a filing clerk, Siphso Jacobs wrote occasional stories.

Casey 'The Kid' Motsisi, whose column, 'Casey's Beat' first appeared in 1958, was still writing for *Drum* and his work was read and loved throughout English-speaking Africa. But The Kid was in decline in the '70s and less than a year after I joined the

magazine, Casey left us for some kinder place.

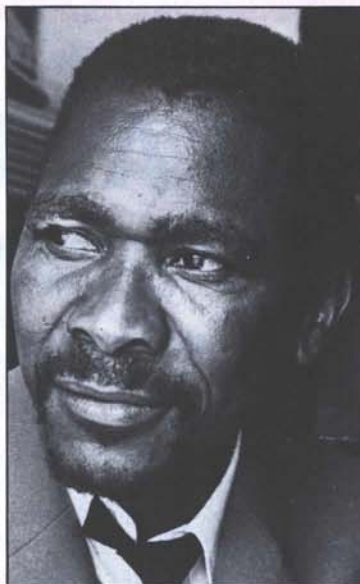
When we gathered on a brilliant June afternoon in 1977 at Avalon Cemetery to bury our colleague, Jim Bailey said of him that "Casey had a small touch of genius. I think genius is the correct word, not talent..." They were well-chosen words because, with Can Temba who had left the small group of friends before him, Casey shared the same transparent honesty and the same understanding of Johannesburg's heart which have ensured them both permanent recognition in the annals of African journalism.

Also on retainer was Jacky Heyns in Cape Town who, among many other things, wrote a lively column called 'Virginia' about a good-time girl from the other side of the racial tracks whose exploits, *in flagrante delicto*, posed a considerable challenge to the Immorality Act.

In the character of Virginia, Jacky created a deceptively intelligent bimbo who developed a vast continental following and who received regular offers of marriage from well-heeled Nigerians, Kenyans, Ugandans, Tanzanians and, as I recall on one occasion, one particularly hopeful invitation to conjugal bliss from a white railway worker in Windhoek.

On retainer in Durban was the late and ingenious journalist, GR Naidoo, whose primary editorial focus was the vast quantity of dirty linen regularly hung out in court by the litigious Indian community of Natal.

And, in what was then Rhodesia, Justin Nyoka served us before he "disappeared", as the BBC Africa Service would



*Drum* Editor, Stan Motjuwadi





Alf Khumalo's classic picture taken during the June '76 riots in Soweto.



*Drum's* exposés of the trade in human flesh led to some very dark corners.



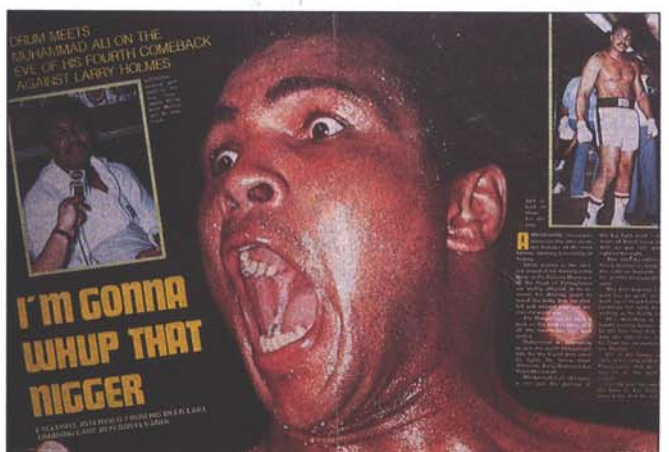
*Drum* always promoted local artists while foreign performers filled the pages of other magazines.



Desmond Tutu used *Drum's* pages to explain why he met Prime Minister P.W. Botha.



Chester Maharaj's stunning portrait of a grieving Julius Nyerere at Seretse Khama's funeral.



Only *Drum* could get away with this headline. In design terms we were well ahead of the competition.

*Virginia's exploits, in flagrante delicto,  
posed a considerable challenge to  
the Immorality Act*



have it at the time, only to re-emerge in Maputo as an official spokesman for Robert Mugabe's ZANU party just before Ian Smith took his final bow. Needless to say, we were disappointed to learn that a *Drum* correspondent had abandoned his low calling as a journalist to follow the distinctly lower one of politician. (I might add that in October 1989 it was reported from Harare that Justin had resigned his top government post in Zimbabwe following allegations of corruption.)

*Drum* also had a permanent suite of offices in London's Fleet Street which fed us regular material from Central and West Africa, although Bailey's publishing interests in Nigeria had been nationalised by this stage and our supply of good material from West Africa had largely dried up, as I might add, had the quality of the journalism.

We were also served by a small but dedicated group of local freelancers covering everything from local politics and sport to show business and crime. Not all these freelance contributors could even write properly, but *Drum's* pages were open to anyone who could gather facts, substantiate them and communicate them to the staff. As a result a great deal of our work at *Drum* consisted of ghost-writing or rewriting tortuous copy from the freelancers.

There were a number of engaging characters among the freelancers and while none of them were likely candidates for a Niemann Fellowship to Harvard, they all made valuable editorial contributions. There were three in particular who perhaps typified our freelance operation.

The first was the aptly named 'Belladonna' Mashiya, a Soweto sangoma who occasionally sauntered into *Drum's* offices when business was slack in her consultancy in the posh Soweto suburb of Dube.

Bella's made most of her money from white shopkeepers around Johannesburg who paid her handsomely for throwing the bones and sprinkling her potions around their premises to dissuade would-be pilferers. When Bella 'fixed' a shop, it stayed fixed.

On one memorable occasion we arranged for her to visit the gravesites of the great traditional tribal chiefs where she would attempt to commune with the spirits and ask the simple question: "quo vadis South Africa?"

All went well until she visited Chaka Zulu's gravesite in Natal. By some strange twist of fate, she got a cosmic crossed line, and instead of contacting Chaka, she spoke to Chief Albert Luthuli – South Africa's first recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize and a former president of the African National Congress.

The message she received from the spirit world was simple and prophetic. South Africa, said the voice from beyond the grave, is like a cow made up of black and white spots. If you plunge a spear into either a black or a white spot, the whole cow will die.

When Bella brought this message back to *Drum* House, there was genuine delight among the editorial staff. After all, nothing is so moving or quite so profound as simple common sense.

This netherworld interview, however, never saw print as *Drum's* long-suffering lawyer, Keith Lister advised against publication on the grounds that as Chief Luthuli had been banned at the time of his death, to quote his spirit would constitute an offence.

So it was that in apartheid South Africa we had even

contrived to silence our dead, which only goes to support the notion that if, in general, the law is an ass, in apartheid South Africa it had become a jackass.

Another member of our freelance team was Mike 'Mazurkie' Phahlane of Phefeni, a friend of the exiled jazz pianist Dollar Brand who dedicated a song to Mazurkie entitled 'The Indestructible Man'. And there was good reason for that title because Mazurkie's brushes with the Grim Reaper were legion.

A delightful article by Obed Musi, another *Drum* graduate, in the *Rand Daily Mail* outlined Mazurkie's chronicle of woe along the following lines:

1945 – broke left ankle playing soccer in Sophiatown.

1946 – broke right elbow falling through roof of Juvenile Court.

1947 – stabbed in the head and stoned by the Dead-End Kids gang in Sophiatown.

1948 – reached the semi-finals in the National Amateur Boxing Championships as a flyweight but fell among thieves in Western Native Township the night before his next bout and was stabbed in both sides of the body. Spent six months in Coronationville Hospital recovering from wounds.

1950 – shot in right ankle by the Berlin Gang for being friendly with a rival mob, the Corporatives. The bullet is still there.

1951 – stabbed in right thigh at the famed 'Back Of The Moon' shebeen in Sophiatown.

1952 – 'chopped' twice in the back and head by members of the infamous 'Chops Gang' after an argument about a woman outside the old Reno Cinema.

1953 – shot in left thigh during a fight over the singer Miriam Makeba.

1954 – broke left arm in overturning car en route from Pretoria

1955 – broke both thighs in hit-and-run accident and, later in the year, was bitten in the calf by a police dog during the demolition of Sophiatown.

1957 – stabbed twice in the back during a fight with the Tondo gang.

1958 – shot in left knee by Durango Kid in Durban.

And so the list continues year by painful year right up to 1974 when Obed suggests Mazurkie was stabbed in the mouth in a shebeen brawl. There is no reason to bring the record up to date for fear of repetition. Suffice it to say that when 'The Indestructible Man' suggested his body be offered to medical science in the event of his death, it was tactfully refused.

Then there was Emelda Sekgalakane who roamed the Northern Transvaal like a bloodhound rooting out some of the most bizarre stories ever carried in the pages of *Drum* or probably any magazine in the history of publishing. Most of her stories dealt with the dark waters of witchcraft and murder and one notable story is worth recalling because it shows a side of *Drum* journalism which, although not the stuff of historical record, certainly was important.

The story revolved around six young girls who had been slain and mutilated in a series of muti-murders near Pietersburg. In following up the story, Emelda had managed to get photographs of the six victims from their families and had pursued the story to the point where she believed she could make contact with a Pietersburg witchdoctor who was



selling bottles of human flesh to be used for muti.

It was gruesome stuff all right, but it was an important story. We commissioned Emelda to make the purchase, which she duly did, returning to the office with two small bottles of a fatty substance which had been sold to her as human flesh and which she certainly believed to be the genuine article.

We had the bottles delivered to Colonel (now General) Lothar Neethling at the police forensic laboratories in Pretoria for analysis. The forensic report confirmed Emelda's bottles contained animal fats. When we ran the story it was the talk of the townships and it probably did more to highlight the demonic trade in human flesh than any other article ever run on the subject before or since.

These stories were all just part of the *Drum* I knew. So were the statements smuggled out of Death Row by prisoners awaiting execution – haunted souls who wanted to make some final pronouncement before they took their lonely walks to the gallows. Their stories made chilling reading and were far more telling as indictments of capital punishment than any silent vigils at dawn, outraged letters to newspapers, questions in Parliament or simpering editorials on the leader pages of the liberal newspapers.

That was probably the great difference between *Drum*-style journalism and the rest. Where we immersed ourselves in the human condition, most other publications explored it as a mental construct. They are, of course, quite literally worlds apart.

*Drum* got to the very heart of it all, as it somehow always managed to do for that was the essence of the magazine. And it was this constant human expression of the news around us, which saw *Drum*'s circulation rise from under 50 000 in 1975 to above 180 000 in 1980, which is a fair reflection of the magazine's renewed popularity. Independent market research conducted at the time indicated that every copy of *Drum* sold had upward of 10 readers, giving us an audited monthly readership in 1980 of almost two million, an enviable market penetration by South African standards.

Of course there were other important factors at play in the resurgence of *Drum* at this time. Our readers – particularly with the advent of Black Consciousness in the '70s – were becoming more politically aware, more sophisticated and more determined to change the world they had inherited. *Drum* had the credibility to maintain the trust of this new generation simply because the roots of their struggle were all to be found in past issues of *Drum*. Those in the know still trusted the veracity of *Drum* journalism and it is my view that they held in high regard the motives of its owner Jim Bailey who had been a friend, confidant and intellectual touchstone since organised resistance to apartheid began.

As had happened in the past, community leaders still used *Drum*'s pages to explain their actions to their constituents. In the '50s it was the voices of Luthuli, Mandela, Sobukwe, Sisulu and their colleagues. In the '70s it was the Bikos, Tutus and Motlanas – a notable example being Des Tutu's explanation through the pages of *Drum* as to why he decided

to meet the prime minister of the day, PW Botha.

This was not the same publishing climate experienced by early *Drum* editors such as Anthony Sampson and Tom Hopkinson. A plethora of legislation inhibiting a free Press had found its way onto the statute books and, as a result, we could no longer set *Drum* up as an open forum for political opinion. We had to quote friends of the protagonists or family members outside the restrictive net and, of course, this was never really satisfactory.

When *World* and *Weekend World* were banned and their redoubtable editor Percy Qoboza was thrown into prison,

*Drum* became particularly vulnerable. The banning of Percy's newspapers revolved around the sinister death of Steve Biko in police detention. *Drum* immediately picked up where *World* and *Weekend World* left off, filling the void by publishing a special tribute to Biko, written by the poet Adam Small. That edition sold out in under a week, *Drum*'s fastest sale ever.

And while *Drum* had its smattering of bannings, its owner believed – correctly – that it was more important that *Drum* remain on the newsstands than sacrifice all in a show of editorial bravado that might warrant a few paragraphs in the *Times* of London but which would also bring the wrath of the State down on our heads and throw a loyal and dedicated staff onto the streets. Survival was always a fundamental imperative for *Drum*.

The company was also without the political muscle and financial resources of the mainstream Press. It was Jim Bailey's

private liability and wealthy though Bailey may have been as the son of Randlord, Sir Abe Bailey, enough of Jim's private fortune had already been spent in laying down the foundations of an independent black Press in Africa without putting more than was absolutely necessary into the pockets of Johannesburg's voracious legal fraternity.

On the technical side, *Drum* at this time was unmatched in its design excellence. In technical terms, we were light years ahead of the opposition and the standard of layout in packaging our editorial message was very high indeed. Using innovative design techniques, typographical variety, catchy headlines and strong visual projection, we reached out and grabbed the reader's attention. And while some of this may have been a trifle over-indulgent at times, it was visually challenging and much of our technical innovation was studiously copied elsewhere in the magazine market.

We also stayed true to *Drum*'s tradition of exposé journalism which was one of Stan Motjuwadi's main preoccupations. With our limited human and financial resources, we still managed to break a number of important stories, and notably those turning on corruption in Swaziland and the excesses and financial shenanigans of the homeland leaders.

'Black Stan', 'Bantu Stan', 'Plural Stan', 'De-Kaffernated Stan', or whatever light-hearted mantle Stan Motjuwadi was wearing at the time quickly gave way to cold and penetrating reportage when he came to grips with the 'Goat Milkers' Union' making whoopie at the expense of

PLEASE TURN OVER



A youthful Jim Bailey...guiding hand behind an independent black Press in South Africa.



South African taxpayers in homeland government councils.

Quite understandably, Stan was persona non grata in Transkei under the Matanzimas, but in 1980, he tried to sneak in unannounced on a Transkei Airways flight to attend the funeral of Saul Mdumane, a former Cabinet Minister who died in detention in Transkei under suspicious circumstances. This was a serious miscalculation on Stan's part because no sooner had he landed at KD Matanzima Airport than he was arrested and taken to the 'Royal Matanzima Hotel' – Umtata's Wellington Jail.

We knew a good deal about Wellington Jail because another *Drum* graduate, Nimrod Mkhele, had been a guest in that particular hostelry and had managed to keep a record of his stay by writing it all down on toilet paper.

The South African Department of Foreign Affairs did nothing to help Stan though he held a South African passport. Officials were courteous and treated my requests for intervention seriously enough during meetings at the Union Buildings, but finally it took the intercession of a certain Mr M, a well-known Soweto man-about-town and former *Drum* circulation inspector to get Stan out of jail.

At Bailey's instigation Mr M drove to Umtata and miraculously returned with our editor, stone-cold sober and none the worse for his 26-day incarceration. We partied long and hard at Drum House and it was widely speculated at the time that Mr M had sprung Stan from jail by dispensing a certain amount of *Drum* largesse in powerful Umtata circles.

The truth, however, only emerged years later when I received a letter from Jim Bailey in response to research queries about the incident.

Mr M "is part of a long and entertaining story," wrote Jim. It appears that after leaving *Drum* for "misappropriation of funds", Mr M set up his own public relations business which, among other things, allegedly used to find women for Kaiser Matanzima when he visited the Reef.

"When I arranged his trip to Transkei, he brought with him Joe Dube to whom I had given the 'Sportsman of the Year' belt 20 years before and who had just come out of jail, having done five years for armed robbery, or so I was told. Stan Motjuwadi used to write Joe's speeches for him, so Joe had an ulterior motive for getting Stan out of jail. They bribed nobody, in a sense. I gave them enough money for petrol and accommodation; that was all. When they came back with Stan 48 hours later, they asked for a contribution of, I think, R400, to the Transkei Warders Association, to which beneficent body I was happy to contribute!"

This was also one of *Drum*'s great strengths – we always had clever, powerful and resourceful friends in the community who were prepared to get us out of tight corners when the need arose, which was rather too often. And building friendship, when all is said and done, was what *Drum* was really all about.

I might add that Stan Motjuwadi was never reconciled with the homeland leadership of Transkei during his lifetime. However, when our "small group of friends" gathered at Stan's funeral in Randfontein on July 29, 1989, General Bantu Holomisa was in attendance, a fact which bore mute testimony to the impact of Stan's exposés on the man who finally tried to stamp out corruption in Transkei by engineering the coup which ousted the Matanzimas.

At *Drum* we promoted local artists and musicians when other publications ignored them in favour of foreigners, and

we applauded local success in our *Masterpiece In Bronze* series, which carried on the early tradition of offering bouquets to people who worked to serve the common good.

We praised people, regardless of colour or political persuasion, who attempted to leap the mean little racial fences erected around them or who reached out for reconciliation. But equally we were critical when we found cause, particularly with regard to noxious ideas such as "liberation first, education second". We demanded more than fatuous slogans for our readers and we poured scorn on political humbug from whatever source it came.

On the broader front, we campaigned throughout the '70s against government excesses elsewhere in Africa. A major *Drum* campaign at that time was for the removal of Uganda's Idi Amin who was a regular target of all Jim Bailey's publications.

Bailey claims to have lowered morale in Amin's army by stopping the whisky run from Gatwick to Kampala, a feat allegedly achieved by pressing the right buttons in Whitehall. And he certainly urged his old friend, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania to act decisively and rid Africa of Amin. The rest is history.

Although a good 80% of our readers were black (and by that I mean African), Bailey insisted we run stories covering the entire racial spectrum, even though editorially we believed this put a brake on local circulation. The subjects of *Drum*'s editorial focus were consequently without colour. It was always the human element of the story that mattered and, I think, in a very real sense, we were nation-building without really knowing it.

All this was the standard editorial fare of *Drum* and while we battled along on the editorial front, Jim Bailey was fighting an even greater battle elsewhere.

The roots of this struggle can be traced back to October 1975 when Bailey and his family executors were approached by the fertiliser baron Louis Luyt to sell the Bailey Trust's key shareholdings in South African Associated Newspapers (SAAN, now Times Media Limited), of which Bailey was an influential board member.

Luyt's offer was double the Stock Exchange value of SAAN shares at the time, and while the Bailey interests stood to make a "seven-figure profit" from this transaction, they declined on the grounds that the sale could compromise the independence of SAAN's editors and was consequently not in the public interest.

It emerged later that Luyt was acting for Minister Connie Mulder's Department of Information, and when the Bailey interests refused Luyt's offer, the *Citizen* was launched in Johannesburg in opposition to SAAN's flagship, the *Rand Daily Mail*, which for a long time had been a thorn in the government's side.

The thinking seemed to have been that if the government could not buy control of the independent Press, it would attempt to sink it in battle. The scene was being set for a bitter and debilitating struggle, and lurking in the background of all these sinister machinations was the commanding presence of General Hendrik van den Bergh, head of the Bureau of State Security and a man who, by his own later admission, was above the law.

The Luyt offer for SAAN was all part of Van den Bergh's wider attempt to pervert the independent Press in South

PLEASE TURN OVER



PICTURES BY ALF KUMALO



On Thursday, March 11, there was an affair at Park Station, Johannesburg. Of, the few must be maintained. OR, there is a case for strict government. But surely if South Africa do not stand together we will hang together. Was it necessary for the trio of nationalists to appear on the scene? And, was the violence perhaps not a bit on

[illegible]

# STEVE BIKO

**SHE WAS SO TERRIFIED THAT SHE JUMPED 12 FLOORS TO HER DEATH**

...and even this had affected her. She had been in the hospital for a long time, and she was still recovering from the shock of the attack. She had been in the hospital for a long time, and she was still recovering from the shock of the attack.

**TRAGEDY ON THE 12th FLOOR**

**T**he night of the attack, the hotel was crowded with guests. The hotel was crowded with guests. The hotel was crowded with guests. The hotel was crowded with guests. The hotel was crowded with guests.

**OUR AFFAIR WAS NORMAL... BUT WE WERE MADE TO FEEL GUILTY**

...the economy of the  
...to be in an open  
...the Club's other  
...structure (right) signal  
...the club's future.  
...the club's future.  
...the club's future.

**THE LOCAL**

**PEOPLE**

**LIVE IN**

**POVERTY**

**WHILE**

**FOREIGNERS**

**ARE LINING**

**THEIR**

**POKETS**

**WITH**

**TRANSGEL'S**

**CASH**

**KATZERGATE!**

REVIEW, June 1991-41



Africa and buy favourable coverage for apartheid abroad. And while the Bailey interests had thwarted Van den Bergh's designs on SAAN, the 'Info Gang', as they came to be known, were not finished with Jim Bailey.

In April 1977 Bailey was approached in London by a leading English newspaperman named Christopher Dolly who wished to purchase a stake in *Drum* South Africa. As a former board member of the London *Daily Mirror* and chairman of *Penguin Books*, his credentials were impeccable but when, a mere two months later, Dolly doubled his initial offer, raising the bid to R600 000 in any currency and payable anywhere in the world, *Drum's* owner got suspicious. Christopher Dolly then allegedly threatened Bailey that a magazine would be launched against *Drum* with unlimited money if he refused to sell.

Bailey backed out of these negotiations and returned home to muster his forces. At that time I was on sabbatical from *Drum* and doing some post-graduate work at the University of York. I received a letter from Jim which read: "We have a two-pronged attack on ourselves down here from Government-sponsored magazines using unlimited money belonging to the taxpayer, and (from) monopoly capitalism in the form of the Argus Group in the last stages of engulfing the English-language Press. It is important that an independent black Press be maintained in order to avoid the Republic sinking to the sanguinary mess of Rhodesia. I would therefore very much look forward to your return..." Immediately I settled my affairs and arranged to return home. The real world beckoned; the time for gathering acorns was finally over.

Back at my desk in Johannesburg, things had moved extraordinarily fast. True to Christopher Dolly's word, a magazine called *Pace* had been launched against *Drum* and our editorial response was aggressive and uncompromising.

In the May 1979 edition of *Drum*, Bailey named the Info plotters and put them on public trial under the headline "I ACCUSE" and a number of solid reputations went up in smoke. "There is no way these men can possibly say they were in ignorance," wrote Bailey. "Their eyes were open".

*Drum* took the cue from its embattled owner. Each month we ran exposés on the secret manoeuvres of the Info Gang, often including personal attacks on *Pace* journalists, indicting them for their involvement and calling on them to resign, a simple option but which very few had the courage to take. There was great acrimony between *Drum* and *Pace* staffers which, on occasions, almost led to fist fights. We believed passionately in *Drum's* cause and our competitors, having felt the sting of our editorial lash, were set on revenge.

Our on-going campaign against *Pace* did, however, have its lighter side. One of our readers who bore a striking resemblance to the *Pace* editor, Lucas Molete, asked *Drum*

for help as he feared retribution from angry *Drum* readers. We ran a story supported by pictures of both men and asked readers please not to vent their spleen on the wrong man. Our loyal reader even shaved off his beard so that local shebeen queens would stop confusing him with Molete and treat him like any other regular Soweto guzzler.

I knew we were hitting the mark, however, when the senior editorial executive of *Pace* came to my home one evening and offered me the editorship of the magazine. During the course of this discussion, he broke down saying the *Drum* campaign was ruining his life.

Through all this *Drum* made some powerful enemies. Sensitive discussions were conducted outside *Drum* House or in the lift rather than in our offices, and to this day, Jim Bailey is convinced he survived two assassination attempts, one of which allegedly occurred on his farm outside Johannesburg.

I was with him the day after this incident and can attest to the shot-gun wound in his face. He was in no doubt but that an attempt had been made on his life.

So it was that the so-called 'Info Scandal' continued to sweep through South Africa's political life and *Drum* played an honourable and decisive role in exposing the whole mendacious affair. We were fully vindicated when Eschel Rhodie, a key figure in the whole scandal, admitted in a French courtroom that *Pace* magazine had been an Info Department project. *Pace* was almost immediately put up for sale and *Drum* had won another skirmish in the apartheid State's war of attrition against the opposition Press.

On the broader front, continuing exposés of the Info Department's covert operations by the English-language newspapers finally led to the resignations of State President John Vorster and Information Minister Connie Mulder and to the discrediting of the entire Info Gang.

Bailey's comment on this period is revealing. "It is extraordinary," he wrote, "that the former head of the Bureau of State Security did not appreciate that the most barren of all dialogues is with your own echo."

*Drum* emerged from the Info Scandal bloodied but unbowed. And when the dust finally settled, we had a vigorous magazine on our hands with a greatly increased circulation but — most important — *Drum's* credibility was undoubtedly enhanced and its critics were silenced.

The *Drum* experience left all of us who worked there enriched. We entertained, we informed and we encouraged our readers through an extremely difficult time in their history. Undoubtedly editorial mistakes were made, but I also know that throughout those years at *Drum* there had only been one overriding ambition among all the staff members and that was to see a Life More Abundant for all the people of South Africa.



On the attack...*Drum* exposes the plot to subvert the independent black Press.