INSERT
Ragged Right

Rhodes University 7 Journalism

Review

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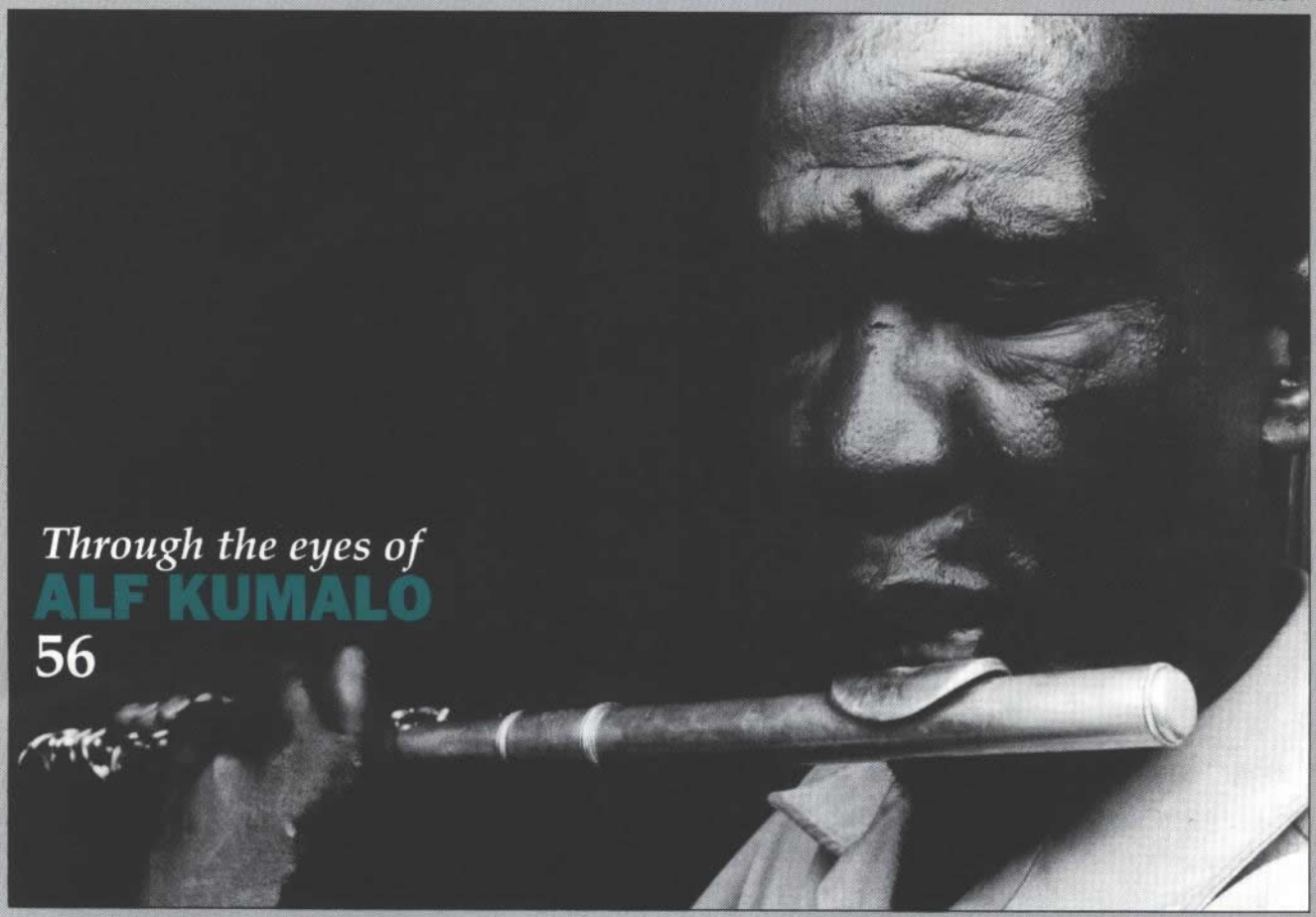

Through the eyes of
ALF KUMALO
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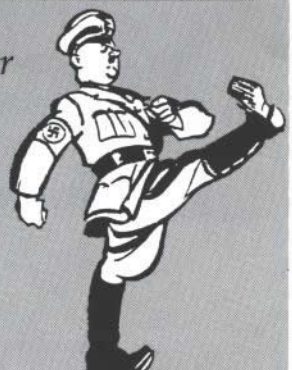

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SPECIAL INSERT FOR SUBSCRIBERS

Ragged Right, the award-winning tabloid on typography and design.

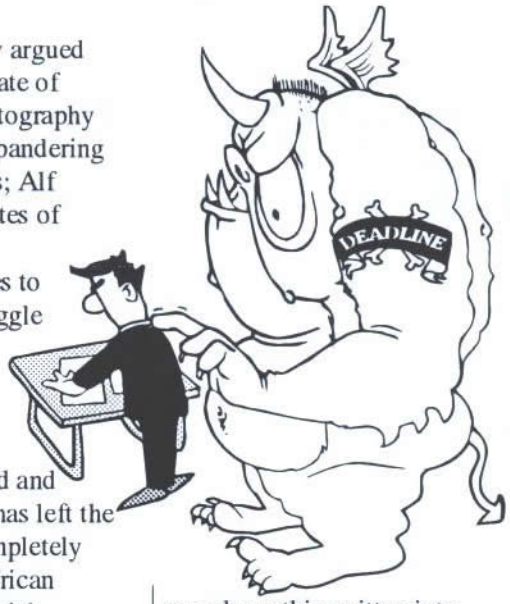
Editorial

THIS *Review* brings together an eclectic collection of subjects dealing with the media — cartooning, environmental reporting, design, the law, technology, photography, ethics...

While the subject matter may be varied the writers all, at some point, refer to one overarching theme: pressures on journalists in the new South Africa.

These references come in different forms, some made in passing: Ton Vosloo's warning that journalists (of all political persuasions) may yet long for the days of the "good old Nats"; Richard Steyn's notice that we either hang together now or face the possibility of hanging separately in future; Ivor Powell's cogently argued criticism of the state of documentary photography after a decade of pandering to foreign masters; Alf Kumalo's anecdotes of police pressure.

Such references to the everyday struggle for the right to report the truth have, ironically, a backdrop in the '90s of a reformed and benign state that has left the media almost completely free (by South African standards) of official restrictions.



Other political leaders, not to be outdone, have repeatedly assured journalists of their commitment to a free media. It is even possible that we may have this written into the final constitution.

Yet outside of the debating halls, there is little tolerance. The BBC's Southern African correspondent, Fergal Keane, seems almost resigned to going to work in a flak jacket (and possibly an armoured car).

There can be no doubt that in the rough-and-tumble leading to the April elections, freedom of the media is going to be increasingly understood by many as the freedom to report (responsibly) on the party line.

As journalists continue to fight for their independence they may wish to remember Conor Cruise O'Brien's thoughts on the matter. Writing on pressures on the Press, he noted: "I don't remember by now what the five freedoms are supposed to be, but I would propose a sixth freedom: the freedom to displease."

● ***Charles Riddle***

GUEST EDITORIAL

IN South Africa two approaches to journalism — two philosophies if you like — have grown up side by side. On the one hand there is the "orthodox" or "traditional" school, which holds that the press ought to record and reflect events; on the other is the "radical" (for want of a better description) school which argues that the press's role is to shape events and change the course of history. Some talk of "objective" versus "advocacy" journalism. There is a third school of developmental journalism, which the cynics call "sunshine" journalism, premised on the belief that the media's primary duty is to educate people and build a nation, not harp on the shortcomings of a developing society. I leave developmental journalism, important though it may be, out of consideration here.

The mainstream press, certainly the English-language press, by and large has adopted the orthodox approach, even while being severely constrained by political and legal pressures. The "alternative" press, which grew up in a vacuum created by the government and the mainstream press, has taken the "advocacy" route. But the differences between the two approaches are not precise and there is now a marked degree of overlap between the two. Even within the mainstream press there have been sharp differences between English and Afrikaans language newspapers. The former has been much less committed to a political party than the latter, which for many years regarded its primary duty as being to return the National Party government to power with as big a majority as possible. Theirs was as much of an advocacy role as any alternative newpaper's. As was the SABC's. Both the Afrikaans press and and the SABC sought assiduously to shape history, and both failed conspicuously to achieve any lasting success. Let that be a lesson to those who are contemplating the launch of another party political newspaper.

Since 1990, however, all our newspapers — mainstream and alternative — have modified their attitudes. The mainstream media have become less constrained and more outspoken, the alternatives more market-orientated and commercially-minded as their funding from abroad has diminished. Faced with the inroads of television and an economy in serious decline, all newspapers have had to pay more attention to what readers actually want, rather than what journalists think that their readers want. At the same time, papers are having to decide where they stand philosophically. In the past one took up a position according to one's view of apartheid. Now it is more difficult. The major parties are becoming more multiracial, and are espousing universal values. Difficult choices are having to be made.

"Let me, somewhat tentatively, suggest a way forward for journalism in the new South Africa."

RICHARD STEYN
Editor-in-Chief
The Star

Journalists too are having to re-appraise their attitudes. Many journalists who supported the liberation struggle have become more and more disillusioned at the anti-democratic tendencies of some of the political parties and the intolerance of their supporters. It is gradually beginning to dawn on all of us that the press needs to hang together in these difficult times of transition or run the risk of hanging separately in future. We need, in short, to unite behind a set of common values.

This is the theme of Breaking Story, a challenging new book on the South African press by Dr Gordon Jackson of Whitworth College, Washington, USA. Dr Jackson, who did much of his research at the journalism department at Rhodes, laments the lack of any clear, common philosophical base or value system to guide South African journalists. He believes that without such a set of values, journalists are ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of the future. I must say that I wholeheartedly agree with him.

So let me, somewhat tentatively, suggest a way forward for journalism in the new South Africa. I hope that others will contribute to the debate.

First and foremost, we need to throw away the divisions of the past. South African journalism still portrays many of the divisions of the apartheid society. We have different trade unions for journalists of different races; most of our newspapers belong to the Newspaper Press Union but some do not.

We have a Press Council recognised by some and not by others. The Council has a code of conduct observed by some and ignored by the rest. We run different courses for trainee journalists, and compete with one another for funding from abroad. And all this in a profession not slow to preach to others about the need to let bygones be bygones and come together.

Second — and here I borrow from the Poynter Institute in the US's guidelines — we need to focus our minds on what business we're actually in: i.e. supplying information and providing a forum for public discussion to preserve and enhance democratic society. We have to keep our many diverse communities talking to each other.

Third, we need to settle upon a code of conduct — an ethic of journalism — that can guide us along the road ahead. The foundation upon which that code should be based is a commitment to free speech and democracy. And by democracy ➢

I don't simply mean the absence of apartheid, but a system of government in which, to quote Peter Berger, we have two institutions — regular and real elections, and a body of civil rights and liberties. "The first makes sure that periodically we can throw the bastards out of office, while the other ensures there are some things the bastards cannot do even when they hold office."

Democracy cannot be built overnight. It is a slow and painstaking process. As a prominent Polish politician remarked rather ruefully at a recent conference attended by the ANC: "We are in a situation where a totalitarian regime fell apart, but democracy is not yet in place. This is largely due to a lack of understanding of how a democracy works. Democracy is not only about elections, majority rule, a multiparty system and a new government. It is, first of all, about relations between people and relations between the authorities and the people."

I believe we have a duty in the new South Africa to bring that insight home to people, to impress upon them that democracy is not about having everything your own way, but about settling differences through negotiation and compromise.

Review invites responses to this call for unity.

As to the specifics of that code or ethic, Dr Jackson suggests five values upon which such a value system could be based:

- the principle of truth-telling
- the principle of justice
- the principle of freedom
- the principle of humaneness
- the principle of stewardship (i.e. honouring and safeguarding the power that is given us).

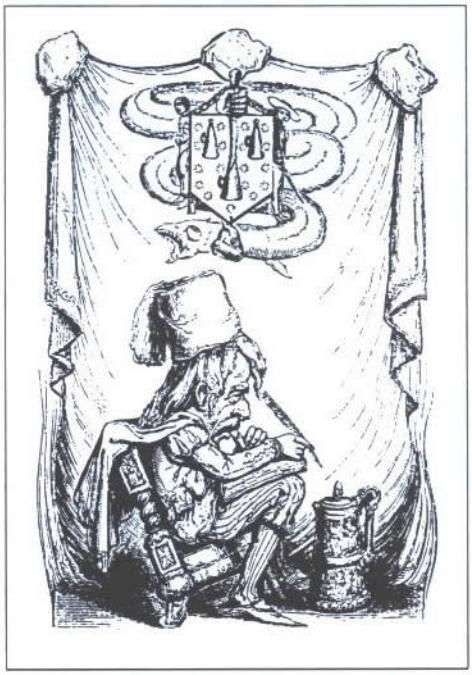
Some of these values are contained in the Press Council's current code of conduct but that code is not universally recognised and needs to be re-examined and debated before it finds general acceptance among journalists. ●

"Take it to personnel and they'll pay you off. You're fired!"

THE ON-GOING saga over the future of soap operas on SABC television continues. Having survived the prejudices of the reluctant chairperson Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, it seems his successor Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri has an entirely different approach.

Addressing a Cosatu workshop on transforming the SABC she noted: "I have been chastised for not watching the box very often. Somebody asked me about *Egoli* and I looked at them and asked, 'What is *Egoli*?' One of my staff members said, 'Whatever you do, don't take away the Bold.' I looked blank."

So it would seem that soaps may be safe under the reign of Dr Casaburri — she doesn't even know what they are. Little wonder then that the wags at Auckland Park have renamed her Dr Casabooboo.



BY THOMAS FAIRBURN

THE ATTRACTION of rogues is that they always make good copy. Take for example the late Robert Maxwell around whose corpulent persona more column centimeters have been wrapped than the entire gross domestic product of the British fish-and-chip industry. And, it's easy to see the attraction. Who could forget, for example, the story of Maxwell, who detested smoking and tried to ban it from his building, confronting a smoker in the lift.

"How much do you earn?" Maxwell is reputed to have asked the offender.

"Fifteen hundred a month plus expenses, Mr Maxwell," came the reply, whereupon Beelzebob whipped out his pocket notepad and gold pen and scribbled away furiously until the lift stopped.

As he alighted, Maxwell's plump and well-manicured hand passed a note to his fellow traveller.

"You know I have banned smoking in these lifts. Here's authorisation for three month's salary. Take it to personnel and they'll pay you off. You're fired!"

The errant smoker went directly to the personnel department where he presented the promissory note, received his cheque and walked out of Maxwell's life forever.

The problem, however, was he had never worked for Maxwell.

NICHOLAS Coleridge, whose book *Paper Tigers* (Heinemann) was published recently, tells another story about Maxwell that bears repeating.

Newspaper proprietors, more than most other masters of the universe, are great on one-upmanship and are obsessed with what other media tycoons are doing.

The story goes that Maxwell and Rupert Murdoch were, by chance, both lunching on the same day at the Savoy Hotel in London. On his way out after lunch, Maxwell lumbered over to Murdoch's table to exchange pleasantries. In the course of their brief conversation, Murdoch mentioned he was catching the 5pm Concorde flight to New York and that he had a business dinner in a restaurant that evening in Manhattan.

While Robert Maxwell was being driven back to his office in Holborn, he decided on a whim that he would turn up in the same restaurant in New York himself. Since Murdoch would know that Maxwell hadn't been on the Concorde flight, he would realise that he had flown the Atlantic by private jet — a brilliant means of impressing his superiority over the Murdoch, who flies mostly by public transport.

Maxwell's battery of high-powered secretaries were set to work and soon discovered where Murdoch had booked his dinner table in New York that evening.

Beaming with delight at his guile, Maxwell was shuttled by helicopter from the private helipad on the roof of his building to the airfield, and by Gulfstream to New York and his strategically placed table-for-one facing the door where Murdoch would enter the restaurant.

At every moment he expected to astonish Murdoch, but the pension snatcher waited in vain. Exhausted by his long day, Murdoch had altered his plans and invited his dinner guest for a drink at his apartment on Park Avenue instead.

I suppose it was inevitable that skin books would proliferate in the new South Africa. Even Times Media got onto the bandwagon by putting aside R3 million for the launch of *Playboy* — from *Rand Daily Mail* to *Playboy*, that's some paradigm shift.

But it has been *Hustler* that has been doing all the early running. Its first edition sold out, or so I am told, and it was immediately back in the headlines in edition three with a scurrulous invitation to six non-male mediaworkers at Dithering Heights to bare all for its readers.

Well, the outrage hit the fan. Bundles of magazines in their neat plastic bags were removed from bookstores by equally neat plastic policepersons and a battalion of lawyers licked their ample chops. Of course *Hustler*'s profits took a fearful knock, but the magazine gained enormous publicity and some would argue a large amount of goodwill among the raincoat brigade.

Personally I think the whole thing's a storm in a cesspit. The six outraged mediaworkers at the Heights should have treated it as *Cosmopolitan* editor Jane Raphaely treated *Noseweek* when it superimposed her head on a naked non-male torso on its front page. "Thank God they gave me a decent body," quipped Lady Jane. Now that's panache. ●

POWER *Player*

RICHARD SMITH

THE DAY WILL COME, SAYS **TON VOSLOO**, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF NASIONALE PERS, WHEN JOURNALISTS OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS WILL LONG FOR THE DAYS OF THE GOOD OLD NATS. IN THE MEANTIME, ANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PARTY AND PERS ARE PURELY COINCIDENTAL. "WE'RE THE MOST DEMOCRATIC PRESS GROUP IN THE COUNTRY," HE SAYS ■

PROFILE

TON VOSLOO

by
GUS SILBER

ON THE BANKS of a man-made lake, between the Municipal Pension Funds building and the headquarters of the Citrus Exchange, I meet the Executive Chairman of Nasionale Pers at his hotel in the city of Verwoerdburg. He can't stand the place.

"Verwoerdburg" sighs Ton Vosloo, loosening his tie and attempting to order a Coke from a defiantly disinterested waiter, "is the heart and homeland of the Great Afrikaner Boerecracy."

True to his profession — newspaperman — Vosloo immediately acknowledges his source, a fellow journalist encountered at yet another seminar on Press Freedom in the New South Africa. Never mind. One of these days, Verwoerdburg won't even be called Verwoerdburg anymore. What about Nasionale Pers? Vosloo shakes his head. No change.

"We've been debating this thing for the last three years, 'Should we change our name, or shouldn't we?' Well, the other day I made the formal decision on behalf of myself. 'No'. There's nothing wrong with Nasionale Pers. We've got nothing to be ashamed of. We're actually the most democratic press group in South Africa. Many people might not want to accept it, but our editorial staff have been at the forefront of breaking down Apartheid."

Indeed, it was Vosloo himself, as editor of *Beeld*, who called for the scrapping of Group Areas and the Immorality Act, way back in the days when FW de Klerk was still a junior Boerecrat. It was Vosloo who said: "The day will come when the National Party Government will sit around a table with the ANC."

Unlike other newspaper editors of the time, Vosloo was not hauled into PW Botha's office for a tongue-and-finger lashing. But he did bump into the then Prime Minister at a braaivleis, "and he really got stuck into me. I thought, ag, he's just like a volcano. Let him rant and rave."

Even today, in otherwise enlightened circles, the perception lingers. Nasionale Pers, publishers of *You*, *Huisgenoot*, *Beeld*, *Die Burger*, *Drum*, *True Love*, *City Press*, *Fair Lady* and others, is a faithful lackey of the National Party and the Broederbond, via Sanlam. Wrong.

As a matter of fact, the other NP don't own a single share of Nasionale, and even Sanlam's interest is limited to 21 per cent and 200 votes at the AGM. So who really owns Nasionale? The People. And they're not planning to sell.

With 11-million shares spread between 2 800 owners, Nasionale is able to serve its many markets without bowing to the power of vested interest: "We don't have to look to Anglo American or JCI for a decision," boasts the Executive Chairman. The same goes for the political monoliths.

"We've had two approaches," says Vosloo, "by Inkatha and the ANC, to buy *City Press* as a foothold on the Reef. On both occasions, before the Board made a decision, I went to the editor and manager of the paper and said, 'Look commercially, we can sell you guys'. They were fiercely resistant. They said, 'No ways'."

Although *City Press* has run at a loss since Nasionale scooped it up 10 years ago, Vosloo intends floating the paper to the community it serves as soon as it becomes financially viable. "I see no problem with letting *City Press* go, and by that I mean at least 51 per cent to the blacks. *The Argus* stopped short of letting the *Sowetan* go and I think the blacks saw through that, with due respect to my friend Doug Band."

Vosloo can't believe it. His Coke has finally arrived. He takes a deep sip, puts the glass down, and laments, once again, the ever-declining level of service in South African business. Of course, there are exceptions. One is a little ➢

electronic media company Vosloo runs as a sideline. Well, he's the Chairman. It's M-Net.

Customer service, coupled with non-stop, Hollywood-style marketing, is one big reason for M-Net's success: 800 000 subscribers in just over seven years. But the real pull is entertainment. No news. No hidden Agenda.

> "Where the hell is the integrity, man, where's the pride?"

The funny thing is, just a few years ago, M-Net was all set to go on-line with its long-awaited independent alternative to the SABC's version of the News, but the plan sank under the combined weight of financial and political apprehension. For one thing, M-Net's hard-won Government licence came with a built-in time-delay that barred any dissemination of the truth before 9.30pm. What was the point?

These days, if Ton Vosloo wanted to put the News on M-Net, anytime of day, all he would have to do was give the word: "Yes." But he's sticking to no. Let them beg and plead.

"I had two calls the other day from my good friends in the Government," recalls Vosloo. "They said, come on, take the licence, we'll do away with all the restrictions. I said, listen boys, that would be so transparent. We'll stick to our formula, thanks. We're an entertainment station. In any case, if we were going to broadcast news on M-Net whose news would it be? Would it have to be pro-Government news, to offset the SABC, who are not the anti-Government channel?"

Not that Vosloo has anything personal against the SABC. But he is by nature a pugilist, a staunch defender of his territory against contenders big and small. Preferably big. As editor of *Beeld*, he relished the bitter circulation war against the Transvaler in the '80s. He won.

As Chairman of M-Net, his contempt for the SABC is all-encompassing, and laced with exasperation: "They won't listen to me. I mean, if they want to make a success, I've got a wonderful recipe for them. Stop acting like the SABC, and start acting like M-Net. Get commercial. Go through a decoder. Do what sensible people would do."

Vosloo pauses, mulls over his words, and concedes that the SABC might have other responsibilities as the National Broadcaster. Still, that's no excuse. What really bothers him, as an old-school newsman, is the corporation's blatant abdication of journalistic standards.

"I mean, I'm so disheartened by what they're doing at the SABC," he says. "Advertorial has become endemic. They'll tell you, look, you can have this programme, as long as you put up the funding. Now where the hell is the integrity, man, where's the pride? I want them to appoint an editor who has got standards, so that the whole of the staff can shield behind his back. That's the only way you can guarantee editorial independence and freedom. But as they're structured now — sorry, no hope."

And M-Net? Vosloo shrugs.

"Ya, well, M-Net also fall into the same trap. There's a lot of these, you know, free rides going on. But let's face it, M-Net is a commercial entertainment station.

I would expect more, in a sense, from the SABC. In any case, I would rather that journalists at all levels try to preserve their independence. You know, the *New York Times* never accepts a free ticket."

After almost 40 years in the business, it's fair enough to assume that Vosloo has paid his dues. Born in the Eastern Cape, Vosloo kicked off his journalistic career as a stringer for the English-language *Uitenhage Times*, but his driving ambition was to get as close as possible to the real roots of the newspaper industry.

"I worked for the Department of Forestry for a while, I thought it would be romantic. It was totally boring." So he gave it all up and joined *Die Oosterlig* as Uitenhage correspondent. Years later, at the editorial helm of the country's most influential and financially viable Afrikaans newspaper — *Beeld* — Vosloo was gently persuaded by the Chairman of the Board to consider a career switch to management.

"At the time," recalls Vosloo, "I thought to myself, what worlds do I have left to conquer? We had just overthrown the *Transvaler* in the morning market. I was in my element, immersed in my job. But I liked the idea of a different kind of challenge. I made the switch."

Today Vosloo is probably the major power player in print and electronic media in South Africa, with interests in everything from radio to books to cellular telephony. But at heart, at soul, in the ink that runs through his veins, he remains a newspaper journalist.

"I've got a soft spot for the print medium," he confesses. "I've got this great romantic feeling that at the end of the day, print is going to come out tops. At the same time, it's wonderful to be associated with all these other areas of convergence. The electronic highway. The global village. The digitalisation of words."

Somehow, it sounds a lot more romantic than Nasionale Pers. Never mind the name, what future for the language? While Afrikaans is today only one of the dynamics in Nasionale's shifting market place, it is not one that Vosloo would like to surrender to the forces of change. But the language is going to have to speak up for itself.

"In the totality of South Africa," says Vosloo, "I think we've been stupid. We've been defining Afrikaners as being whites. It's all wrong. Our only growth will come from the other side of the colour line — *Die Burger* today has 52 per cent brown readers.

"But we've got to have a complete change of mindset. The only Afrikaner we can take note of is anyone who speaks Afrikaans. No ifs and buts, no Christian Nationalism, if we accept that, then we can have the feedstock to give us a place in this country. If we don't we're stuffed."

There is time for one last question before Ton Vosloo picks up the tab and exchanges his view of Centurion Lake, Verwoerdburg, for the foreshore, Cape Town. With all the seminars on Press Freedom in South Africa these days, what hope is there for Press Freedom in South Africa these days?

"I think the day will come," says Vosloo, "when a lot of people will long for the days of the good old Nats. I'm not even saying it tongue-in-cheek, I was at a Niemann Conference a while ago, where all the political parties were represented. Cyril Ramaphosa, the whole gang. And they all said, 'We are a hundred per cent in favour of Press Freedom'.

"I tell you, it's hogwash. All hogwash. When the real pressures are on, they're going to behave just as badly as the Nats did. Never trust a politican. That's my motto." ●

Gus Silber is a freelance writer and author.

CROSSING THE GREAT DIVIDE

By Ruth E Teer-Tomaselli

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE is full of phrases conveying a sense of crossing borders. Most changes happen slowly and imperceptibly, without us realising them. But at some stage, we know that it is different. Recently I crossed such a border.

When my name was forwarded to the judicial panel appointed to interview candidates for the new SABC Board I was flattered, but did not take it seriously. It was therefore with a great deal of surprise, and even greater trepidation that I found myself in front of the august panel of seven men. The nett result was that I, together with 24 others, took my place at the first meeting of the new Board in May last year. A border had indeed been crossed.

In those first few weeks of uncertainty, when we did not know whether we were legitimate or illegitimate, whether we had a leader or not, or whether we would even last the month, a strong sense of camaraderie built up between Board members. We were jointly under siege.

A fascinating aspect has been the collective attempt to thrash out a philosophical and principled stand from which the implementation of specific work can take place. In the beginning of September 1993, the Board took off a weekend to workshop through fundamental issues and directions. On two other occasions, day-long seminars have taken place to apprise Board members of the workings of the Corporation and, more importantly, to come to a point of agreement on the vexed issue of direction within the future of broadcasting: who were our primary audiences? What strategies would best serve and empower these audiences? And were we to focus primarily on public service, or were we to be driven by more commercial considerations?

This last question is at the crux of the transformation of the SABC, and a substantial source of tension within the Corporation. In common with public broadcasters throughout the world, the SABC is charged with the mandate 'to inform, educate and entertain', but unlike any other national public broadcaster, it relies on commercial revenue for 70 per cent of its budget. This anomalous situation makes for a double-headed Janus: looking over the one shoulder, in the opening words of the Board's Values and Visions statement, it has "Accountability to the full spectrum of the South African services", while over its other shoulder it is always aware of 'the bottom line', the income revenue generated from being commercially competitive in an increasingly deregulated broadcasting environment. While the Board's Values and Visions spell out the viewer/listeners' rights and the broadcaster's obligations in this regard, considerable ambiguity still remains on how these values will impinge on the commercial thrust of the Corporation.

My personal commitment has been to the News, Information and Voter Education Committee. Our work has essentially been threefold:

- to revise the old corporate code and transform it into an editorial code which would be the property of all the journalists who lived by it;
- to introduce a mechanism through which the public could voice queries, objections and dissatisfactions about the broadcast news product, and to have these satisfactorily adjudicated; and
- to introduce a broadcast initiative through which a wide spectrum of organisations from within the public sphere could contribute to, and direct, the process of democracy and voter education.

A crucial area for the legitimacy of the SABC as a whole lies in the level of acceptance and credibility of its news product. There is a strong feeling among those who work in the news departments of both radio and television that the invidious position in which they found themselves during the State of Emergency must never be repeated. A primary protection against this has been the re-development of an editorial code. To this end, a call was put out to all staffers, academic departments of journalism, and outside pressure groups to contribute to the process of examining and reformulating the rules under which news would be produced.

The approach to this process taken by the Television News Production (TNP) business unit seems to me to be one worth explaining in some detail. After distributing the present corporate code, together with editorial codes from broadcasting corporations and companies in America, Australia, Canada, and the BBC, as well as the South African Media Council and the SA Union of Journalists, a number of journalists within TNP submitted written ➢

A crucial area for the legitimacy of the SABC as a whole lies in the level of acceptance and credibility of its news product.

responses. The staff chose a number of representatives, who together with other individual staffers, attended a day-long workshop. Using the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's code as a basis, they devised the groundwork of their own editorial code, accommodating the specific needs of the South African situation.

A follow-up workshop consisting of the discussion group leaders and other co-opted staffers, met to formulate the ethical code. It was decided at the outset to disperse with the idea of a 'corporate' code, and divide the work instead between a succinct Editorial Ethical Code, and a longer set of procedural guidelines, to be devised at a later stage. A draft of the Ethical Code was circulated among the wider constituencies, before a final code was drawn up.

Apart from the TNP document five other organizational, and one personal, responses were received. From within the SABC these included Radio News; the SA Broadcasting Staff Association (SABRA); the SA Union of Journalists (SAUJ); and Mr ISW Burger. Participating outside groups were the Public Broadcasting Initiative and the Campaign for Open Media.

A public meeting was called during which each organization spoke to its proposals and comments, and discussed questions from the floor. Another border had been crossed: 'outsiders' and 'insiders' and those, who like the SAUJ, straddled the great divide, engaged each directly in debate, only to find that the positions they held were more similar than divergent. At the conclusion of the meeting, it was decided to use the TNP document as the basis for the new code.

Access to television by those who consume it has always been a problematic situation. Taken together with the urgent need to increase the perceived credibility of the Corporation's news product, the establishment of an Ombuds-office seemed to offer one important solution.

In the job description for the post, the Ombudsperson's goal has been defined as the facilitation of 'constructive dialogue' between the SABC and 'the people who depend upon the organisation for a fair and accurate hearing'. It is envisaged that she/he will be the representative at the SABC of the viewer and listener communities. Far from having a mandate to protect the SABC, it is expected that questions, criticisms and suspicions voiced about the news product will be pursued with vigour. A high degree of fairness and impartiality is called for in these dealings: just as the listeners/viewers are to be taken seriously, so too should the rights and constraints of the staffers and organisation.

In part, this contribution to the *Rhodes University Journalism Review* is about watersheds. It would be difficult to find a watershed of greater importance to the future history of South Africa than the magic date of 27 April 1994. One way or the other, all the country is preparing for it. The SABC's role in the election is a fulfillment of its mandate to inform and educate the public. Early on in the process, it was realized that if the Corporation was to do this with legitimacy and credibility, it would be better to engage the co-operation of as wide a spectrum of outside organizations as were already involved in voter education.

The whole purpose of the exercise was to establish a partnership between the Board and Management of the SABC on the one hand, and a range of organizations from civil society on the other. The target audience was identified as all potential South African voters, with a special emphasis on women, youth, rural people and township and informal sector dwellers.

All material broadcast under the auspices of this partnership would be clearly branded. Because we were concerned that the initiative go beyond the mechanics of voter education, the branding Democracy Education Broadcasting Initiative, or DEBI, was agreed upon. DEBI became a character — a cross with a face, two legs and one arm — who will serve as the mascot and logo of the whole initiative.

In conclusion: The SABC in Auckland Park is a vast, sprawling organism: from the rabbit warrens of the underground radio studios to the executive suites at the top of the phallic Piet Meyer Building. There is an underground tunnel with umbilical links to the blue-glassed television centre, where departments are sprawled over vast areas. The SABC is a series of fifedoms: each principality has its own momentum, challenges and potentials to add to the whole. In common with almost all institutions in South Africa, the SABC is in a period of transition. And like most institutions, from universities to corporate structures, the process is uneven, painful but frequently exciting.

The 'new Board' of the SABC is in many ways navigating uncharted — and turbulent — waters. This Board does not function as other Boards have done in the past. For a start, we as Board members are more deeply involved in the day-to-day Management

The rules are no longer clear, and it appears that to some extent we are making them up as we go.

than our predecessors. This brings its own kind of strains: the line between the legislative function of those who make policy, and the executive function of those who make that policy a reality, is fuzzed — sometimes fruitfully, and sometimes with unhappy results. The rules are no longer clear, and it appears that to some extent we are making them up as we go.

The procedures which are being negotiated will be imitated by other structures of the future, both those that are new, and those in the process of transition. The SABC under its present Board can be seen as the first organization under the 'joint control' of professionals and the lay public, a model which may well be copied by other bodies. The selection of officers for the Independent Media Commission (IMC) and the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) for instance, will be carried out on the model first used for the selection of SABC Board members.

The style of 'joint management' extends beyond the immediate contribution of the Board to, for instance, the partnership between the Board, Management and Community organizations represented on the DEBI steering and working groups. In an ideal situation this model could lead to the recuperation of effective political and cultural power within the sphere of civil society, at worst, it could result in a sectoral 'take-over' by already powerful and dominant groups.

As importantly, the policies we formulate in the areas of affirmative action, language policy and regional devolution, will set the parameters for larger debates on the implementation of these issues through the parastatal sector.

A while back I was speaking in a women's forum on the topic of the changing broadcast environment. Mid-way into the address, I referred to the SABC, using the word 'we'. And suddenly I realized I was no longer outside the SABC, safe as a neutral academic commentator and critic, but I was right in the melee of change: the final border had been crossed. It is a border of some significance, since in formulating these procedures and policies, the present Board is busy with more than transforming the SABC, it is finding a *modus operandi* for transforming whole areas of the present bureaucracy. If we do it correctly, we will contribute to the reclamation of the public sphere within the South African polity, if we allow structural problems and petty personality clashes to destroy us, we will have destroyed a process much larger than ourselves.●

➔ *Ruth Teer-Tomaselli lectures at the Center for Cultural and Media Studies, Natal University and is a member of the SABC Board.*

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THE NEW SA IN THE NEW WORLD MEDIA ORDER

BY NIGEL BRUCE

LAST year I was motoring from the little town of Nassau on Providence Island in the Bahamas to Lyford Cay on the other side of the island. On the seashore were the international hotels, no doubt all well served by CNN, and the villas of the rich and famous. On the left were the dwellings of the native Bahamians.

They are modest establishments, not much improved on the average shanty of a Third World country anywhere in sub-Saharan Africa. Perhaps they are best described to you as Guguletu in paradise. Life is not particularly difficult. The climate is warm, the sea full of fish to eat and the hotels full of tourists to exploit.

But the interesting thing was that there was no forest of television aerials above the shanties, as one would expect to see in lower middle class suburbs in Europe and America.

Instead there were eight-foot satellite dishes giving these families, they told me, access to seven or more television networks. Their consequent sources of entertainment and access to news are as abundant as those available to the most sophisticated and wealthy communities in the developed world.

And, short of preventing the importation of satellite dishes, there is nothing the Bahamian Government can do to constrain that access, assuming it wished to do so. The advance of technology has rendered the hegemony of censorious politicians quite impotent.

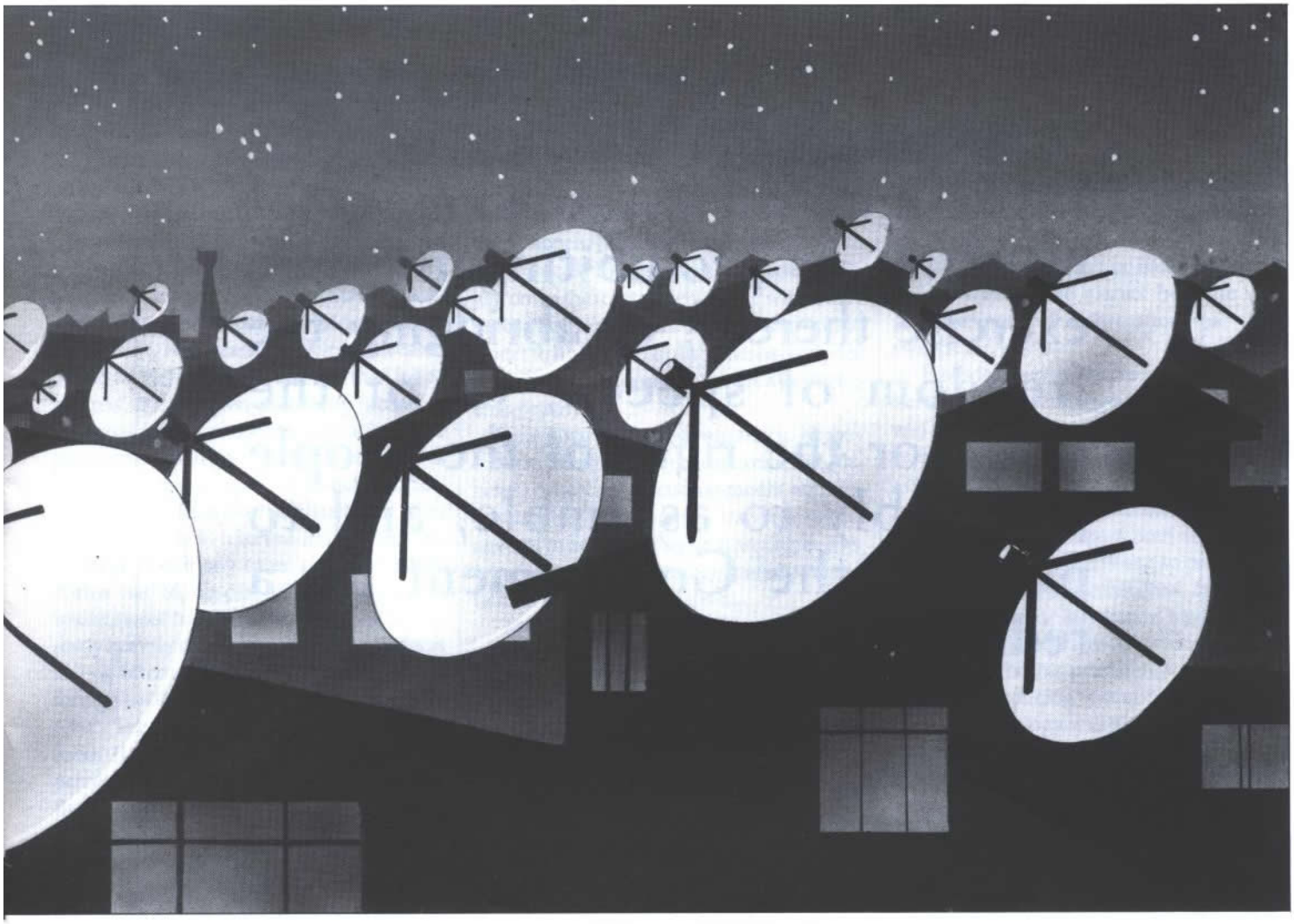
It is not much different here. Except that the Post Office (or whatever its legal successor is called) has a government-granted monopoly on telecommunications and control over the right of the individual to use a satellite dish. Nevertheless, many of them do exist, some with the permission of the authorities, others by the cunning of their owners.

Simply put, the technologies already exist to render the control of televised and broadcast information by government an impossibility. That access is at present limited and too often clandestine. But the control by government of the minds of South Africans has essentially been broken by the march of technology.

The procedures we have just seen of the appointment of a new SABC board by a panel of politically correct lawyers was no more than a charade. Technology has surpassed their well-intended but ineffectual endeavours. The new chairman of the SABC board has, in consequence, come from nowhere and will, despite the best efforts of politicians, be going nowhere.

For the single most potent force driving communications in the world — and one that is breaking down national barriers daily — is the advance of technology. Just consider, the power of computers more than doubles every three years while their cost in real terms halves over the same period.

It is quite safe to say that some technologies that will govern our industries — be they broadcast or print — have not yet been discovered. But we do know that they will be relatively cheap, enormously powerful,



ALEX GROEN

impossible of constraint and will exist in our lifetime.

1993 was a watershed in the history of the advance of telecommunications technology. In July Rupert Murdoch spent $525 million on a majority stake in Star TV, a satellite broadcasting system based in Hong Kong that reaches 38 countries, including China and India. At the same time, he began expanding his existing Sky Television satellite network, a British-based system now taking aim at the rest of the world.

The outcome is that one-third of the world's mass and two-thirds of its population are within reach of Murdoch's satellite broadcasting companies. And he has not finished yet.

He has gone into a venture with British-based National Communication to develop a digital satellite system that could deliver far more channels than current hardware can manage. He has connections, moreover, with a German firm with plans to span the television market in Germany, Switzerland and Austria and he is launching a Latin American cable television channel to reach from the Rio Grande to Patagonia.

And when the hardware issue is sorted out, remember that in 20th Century Fox, Murdoch has an entertainment manufacturer producing enough nauseating soaps to send along these aerial outlets with unerring regularity. Governments, complaining of cultural imperialism, may try and control cable networks, but they can whistle when it comes to control over the air waves. Loving will yet be the scourge of many a discerning father.

Moreover, if you think his company News Corp is financially dicey, think again. Despite the cost of this new technology, Murdoch's one-half stake in Sky brought him a profit in 1992 of $50 million and the profit for last year could double that. Simply put, our entertainment and news orientation will in the future be governed by what the mass audiences of America and Asia want to see. And they are not, you can be sure, going to reflect the composition of the population — disadvantaged or otherwise — of the new South Africa. And whatever misgivings our politicians and media academics may have for our fledgling democratic endeavours, they are going to be swept away by the tide of technological events.

Besides, the social and political power of the media and its utility in the electoral process is rooted less in demonstrable fact than in the conceit of old journalists, the sensitivities of politicians and the vested interests of media and political academics who have to justify a spurious science. Never have they been more irrelevant to media developments — and good riddance.

The world has become a global village not only in terms of communications. Mature nations in Europe and America have found that they cannot pursue their own interest in almost any field, without taking into account the policies of their neighbours. That is why so many socialist governments, even before the fall of the Soviet Empire, adopted the free market economic policies of their trading partners. ➢

Our daily and Sunday newspapers...will have to accept that the technology on which their business is based is already outdated.

They are now in the process of harmonising trade policies, through GATT, and social policies through such undertakings as the Maastrich agreements. National sovereignity in its old sense is no longer necessarily compatible with national prosperity.

The tragic incompetence of Sub-Saharan Africa, the world's political and economic basket case, is increasingly being addressed by the IMF, the World Bank and the United Nations. It is a region manifestly incapable of managing its own economic affairs and pursuing its own governance. The mercy is that it has begun to realise its deficiencies, despite the local opposition (such as it is) to the United States' intervention in Somalia.

More than many other countries South Africa has to be part of that process of international harmonisation. For we are already heavily dependent on trading partners and on international trade. In South Africa foreign trade contributes 60 percent of our GDP. The equivalent figure for the US is about 10 percent and Switzerland about 20 percent. If a new government tries to take further the isolationist policies of the apartheid government, it will entrench poverty and we will all starve in egalitarian fraternity. Even if we wished, we cannot in this country in this age avoid world trends, of which technological advance is by far the most potent and far-reaching.

For our daily and Sunday newspapers that will have profound consequences. Their circulations like those of similar newspapers in other countries, especially the United States, have for some years been in decline. They will have to accept that the technology on which their business is based is already outdated. There have been advances in newspaper and photographic production, and it is essential if these newspapers are to survive in some form, that they continue to keep abreast of the latest developments.

The competitor today of the daily and Sunday newspaper is no longer a similar product on the other block or in the next town, except in Britain where new and similar products have been brought to the market deliberately intended to close down the opposition. Success or failure has been rather mixed.

No, competition for these newspapers today is most certainly the electronic media, with information or entertainment transmitted from another continent and beamed down from a satellite. Its scope, reach and price are going to leave that of the print media behind. While their main competitor might appear now in South Africa to be an electronic SABC, and to some extent it is, just down the track the challenge which they should be gearing themselves to face will be from the little satellite dish, increasingly fed at declining unit cost, by Rupert Murdoch's enterprises.

These newspapers have a choice. As they cannot, because of physical constraint, depend on beating electronic media with the urgency of news breaks, they can either attempt to add value by interpreting events, or move towards a greater element of entertainment and sensationalism.

The problem with the former is that a mass readership represents even in developed countries the very minimum standard of functional literacy. It is not something to which intellectual value can easily be appended.

The most beguiling — and probably the easiest — choice for them will, I guess, be entertainment. You have only to read the British tabloids with their preponderance of irrelevant sensational reporting on the private lives of ordinary people to taste the outcome. But, believe me, it is commercial.

Critical to their survival, as the cost of advertising in the international electronic media reduces, will be secure advertising markets in which, given their cost structure and constraints, they can predominate. Marketing men more innovative than I will determine those fields. But I would venture the guess that any daily or Sunday newspaper that is not firmly rooted in the smalls advertising market, able to offer focussed regional penetration to retailers, and keep its costs down so that it has a competitive edge, might as well begin a process of amortisation.

I do not intend to suggest that the mass print media will become irrelevant immediately to advertisers. But that this will happen — given technological development in telecommunications — if the print media does not itself use technology, and any other means at its disposal, to contain its costs and secure its markets. Its margins will depend more in future on reducing costs than the reach it can offer advertisers.

But in the forseeable future there is no reason to believe that the electronic media will be able to provide the discerning reader with reflective and instructive material that is focused on specialist areas of interest, sometimes too difficult or inconvenient for him to identify and extract from the indigestible mass of information that daily sweeps the world.

Provided they maintain standards, market themselves with vigour and imagination and provide research that is not a parody of reality, specialist publications will offer advertisers increased marketing precision and greater penetration of a market consisting of an intellectual elite that is both affluent and exacting. They will in doing so provide for media planners an intellectual endeavour and professional legitimacy beyond their present aspirations and advertisers will pay a premium for this precision.

But the reducing cost of basic print publishing technology will also open up a market for local news that large newspaper groups cannot easily exploit. For they are not appropriately technologically equipped for very low cost production. Or because their size and success inevitably draws them towards sloth.

The large numbers of black South Africans whose literacy levels are rising and whose materialistic aspirations are becoming manifest, will increasingly provide the readership growth among these small local newspapers. For as democracy draws the country to a more benign attitude towards national politics, and the "struggle" gives way to a greater preoccupation with community concerns, these black readers, of wide geographical diversity, will seek the type of local involvement and pragmatic domestic purpose that demands vigorous and concerned local newspapers. But it is not a market yet capable of providing instant gains to hungry marketers. It is still embryonic and those who risk all to venture into it prematurely do so at some peril. There is neither a chronic shortage of opportunity nor of money for those with sufficient skills and daring to meet the challenges that reducing proportion costs and this emerging market is beginning to offer.

In these circumstances, the economic argument for fracturing the ownership of the English-language newspapers is a dubious one. Indeed, with the main competition ➢

I know of no democracy in which newspapers have dictated the outcome of a general election against the wishes of the majority of voters.

that these newspapers will face coming from the international electronic media, the argument for a further consolidation of these interests to promote efficiencies and reduce costs is the more compelling.

If the Anglo American Corporation wishes to remain invested profitably in newspapers, the savings in merging Times Media, the Argus Group and Caxtons into one commercial unit could in my view be enormous. It could enable greater clout and economies of scale in the acquisition of technology, it could enable editorial staffs to be streamlined and reduced in number, it should reduce administrative duplication and focus the mind of management on real competition — i.e. from the international electronic media — and avoid the managerial hubris currently so destructively evident in the Sunday newspaper market.

It is a fiction that domestic competition is a requirement both for efficiency and equity. The satellite dish has put paid to the first and indeed too small a domestic economic unit in the new world media order could be competitively inadequate. To achieve economic efficiency the only requirement is that the newspaper market be open to entry for all, without barriers such as excessive capital constraints. And that situation pertains now.

The unbundling of Anglo newspaper interests is really also a fiction in the correct sense of the term. TML's shareholding is such that "unbundling" would simply amount to Anglo selling it in full or part to someone else. And it is doubtful if the shareholders in the Argus Group were given a direct stake in its constituent newspapers that the value of their assets would be enhanced.

There may, however, be commercial advantage in hiving off and quoting separately Anglo's financial publications, for their synergy with the rest of its products is small if it exists at all.

Let us be very clear about notions of unbundling Anglo's newspapers. They are entirely political and rooted in the ANC's desire to cover its own communications shortcomings by acquiring, either compulsorily or at a knockdown price, a viable newspaper group of its own. If you can't manipulate them, acquire them.

It seeks justification for this by claiming that it would be at an electoral disadvantage if it cannot dictate editorial policy to a major newspaper, an assertion which it couches in terms to suggest that black political aspiration has no means of vocal expression.

We already have a perverse situation in this country whereby the established newspaper groups — the commercial press as the down-and-outers like to call us — have agreed to pay what amounts to a tax to keep in publication the pamphlets which the political struggle spawned and on whose sustenance the Scandinavians have now welshed.

I know of no democracy in which newspapers have dictated the outcome of a general election against the wishes of the majority of voters. At different times the Labour Party in Britain, the Republican Party in the US, the Gaulists in France and the National Party in SA have achieved sweeping electoral victories with little if any support from mass circulation newspapers. In contrast, the Democratic Party has always enjoyed substantial English-language newspaper support, but to little electoral avail.

Nor in the modern world have newspapers been a successful means of propelling proprietors into positions of political power. And where proprietors have attempted to use them to further political ends contrary to the general view, they have failed. I refer you to Lord Beaverbrook's career on both counts.

It is not the ownership of a mass circulation newspaper that is important in an election or at any other time. What is important is how it conducts itself in the light of its readership profile. Most if not all large English-language newspapers in this country, including *The Citizen*, now have more black readers than white. If their interests are ignored, readership will decline.

Not only will blacks go to other newspapers where they feel more comfortable, but increasingly they will turn in the years ahead to the electronic media. And, in any event, at least one Anglo newspaper is such an apologist for the ANC that its political inclination is already manifest. What more does Mr Mandela want?

English-language newspapers predominate in this country not because they are a monopoly. And indeed they are not. They are a heritage and a valuable one which the Forty Percenters brought to this country from the cradle of parliamentary government and the home of freedom of speech. It is a tradition and an endeavour that goes with the literary traditions of the English-speaking world. They are largely owned by Anglo today because the apartheid government tried through nefarious means to gain control of them to prevent their criticism of apartheid. Anglo, to its credit, provided an essential blocking mechanism.

If Anglo were to divest itself of them now, ownership would simply pass to other institutions controlled by English speakers. That would not answer the political sensitivities of the ANC, ensure fair elections or remove the resentment of old journalists fired for incompetence but awaiting the call from the ANC to repeat their mistakes.

It is manifestly plain to me that the economic argument should predominate and that Anglo, far from disinvesting, should prepare its newspaper interests to meet international competition emerging through technological advances, both manifest and still to come. And to do that a large and adequately capitalised group that is capable of exporting its skills would be an advantage.

The alternative won't be to ensure a more equitable election or successfully appease the ANC. Those are romantic notions held by special interests or those devoid of a sense of political and commercial reality. The alternative will be to ensure that productive newspaper assets atrophy in an alien environment or are overwhelmed by events beyond the control of those who manage them.

Anglo acquired its newspaper investments more by mishap than design. There is little doubt that its earlier policy of benign neglect contributed to the managerial and editorial malaise that brought about the closure of two of its newspapers in the early '80s. Since then it has acted as a more purposeful shareholder and the consequent financial results have been salutary.

Some have argued that at times Anglo's more energetic stance as a shareholder has resulted in profits becoming more important than the interests of the readers. To anyone who understands consumerism and the profit motive that statement is now a *non sequituir*. That criticism has come largely from editors who, at best, seldom turned a profit worth mentioning and who left the ➢

Anglo has made it clear that it does not want its newspaper interests to fall into the hands of any political party

group before the crisis of the '80s or from the disgruntled with other objectives in mind.

But it is also true that Anglo's newspaper aspirations remain unclear and it does not appear to want to change that perception. They are held partly one removed, through Johannesburg Consolidated Investments, of which it is the largest single shareholder and where its newspaper interests are presided over by as fine a band of mining executives as you will find anywhere. But it is not a structure that is calculated to communicate a strong sense of purpose from the main shareholder.

Anglo has made it clear that it does not want its newspaper interests to fall into the hands of any political party and to this end it is unlikely to respond positively to the ANC endeavour to launch a new "democratic" newspaper. Apparently the foreign funding of this paper is dependent upon a local newspaper publisher having a financial involvement. In my view it is not a project that will achieve commercial viability in the foreseeable future, if indeed it is brought to fruition. But it will certainly increase the competitive pressures on existing publications.

The Afrikaans newspaper groups, while they will increasingly aspire to own English-language publications to avoid the marketing limitation of Afrikaans, are unlikely to attract the same political attention as the English-language groups.

The reason is that the ANC does not see Afrikaans or the Afrikaner as a cultural threat. The traditional opposition of confident and articulate English newspapers to government — regardless of whether apartheid was an issue — owned by powerful shareholders presents a phenomenon to a liberation movement with which it is uncomfortable.

To my mind, the existence of independent and successful English newspaper groups represent to the ANC as much a threat to their anticipated sovereignity as the desire of some Zulus for a constitution that incorporates confederation principles. Anglo American and its newspapers are, therefore, likely to remain a target of liberation rhetoric and become the focus of threatened anti-trust legislation to force dismemberment.

There is no commercial answer to this political standpoint save capitulation. My guess is that Anglo and the ANC are going to be eyeball to eyeball on this matter for some time — and that the outcome, while a compromise, will represent less a radical ownership change and, assuming Anglo's ultimate commercial purpose, more an adaptation to technological reality and the imperatives of international trade. ●

➸ *Nigel Bruce — Editor, Financial Mail.*

REPORTING THE IVY LEAGUE

The standard of the print media's efforts at reporting on the SABC Board and its chairperson, Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, augers a bleak future for any organisation or individual on the wrong side of the press, says **ARRIE DE BEER.**

A BOOK can (and perhaps should) be written on the generally one-sided, negative, and incomplete reporting in South Africa's newspapers of the first three months of the new SABC Board (which is not saying that there were not also reasoned and fair reports).

Fired on by a "holier than thou" crusade by the country's new self-styled (and even self-appointed?) guardians of broadcasting freedom, the print media did not go out of their way to comprehend the complexities of the situation, neither did they, generally speaking, give a full and fair account of the Board's first wary steps.

The print media was so agog in their urge to further, through the process of bad news, the cause of the crusaders whose main line was that the Board was "illegitimate", that they often totally missed out on some of the best good news stories in the history of the SABC.

As *Negotiation News* pointed out, the positive impact of the public hearings which preceded the appointment of the Board, became all but forgotten in the acrimonious political battle over the membership of the Board. From the outset the efforts made for a more representative and accountable public broadcast system have been plagued by political squabble.

The Government/National Party, the ANC, the Campaign for Independent Media — a loose formation of some 40 plus organisations regarded as a front organisation for the ANC alliance — and the Conservative Party were the most verbal in the political fracas that followed the appointment of the Board. Impaired by political manoeuvring before it even began to assume its duties, the Board had not been given a chance to prove itself, said *Negotiation News*.

The only real victims were the Board members and the seven people who were nominated by the panel of jurists for the Board, but who were not appointed in the long run. They became political footballs kicked about by the main players — the National Party government, the ANC and the organised guardians of broadcast freedom.

While most the SA Press was still harping on the issue of "illegitimacy", a few (quality?) newspapers here and abroad ran stories on the almost incredible blending of forces and goodwill on the Board under its chairperson, Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri. Even after organisations such as equity became aware that the Board was the most transparent and democratic one ever appointed, the local press was still telling its readers about the "illegitimacy crisis". This was accentuated by Campaign for Independent Media spokespersons' pontifications that only by reinstating the seven people originally nominated by the selection panel, could the Board's legitimacy be restored.

From the outset the efforts made for a more representative and accountable public broadcast system have been plagued by political squabble.


Sunday Nation
R1.50
'Kaffer meid'
The racist campaign to smear SABC's black boss

And when, after a few months, it became clear that the Board could indeed find its own way through the barrage of negative and often very slanted reporting, the print media turned their often scathing attention to the Board's new chairperson.

Even by South Africa's media standards, the inordinate range of quasi-humourous attacks on Casaburri, often based on sloppy news research, or rather the lack thereof, will be a hard act to follow. (An article in *Femina* was a noticeable exception, among some other attempts).

The trouble started when Casaburri, an intensely private person, was thrown into the limelight. Not being a "public figure" before, she mistakenly thought that she could keep her personal life out of the media glare. She seemingly did not realise, neither was she apparently accordingly advised, that there would be a particular (and peculiar?) media interest in her person.

If she erred on this point, the press' reaction was by no means a shining example of professional expertise and valour. Instead of concentrating on the crucial impact the new chairperson could have on the Board in particular and the SABC in general, sections of the press concentrated, sometimes in a petty way, on the frivolous and the trivial.

Obviously there were exceptions. *The Star*, for instance, ran stories under headings such as SABC prepares for big day, telling its readers about an internal monitoring system for news; the appointment of an ombudsperson; the establishment of a steering committee for voter education and a new policy on employment equity.

It wasn't as if other newspapers did not know about the crucial changes taking place on the Board and ➢

consequently the SABC. *The Citizen*, that South African newspaper of record, gave a number of Sapa versions of developments on the Board and at the SABC. Leaders in the *Pretoria News* and other newspapers gave guarded, but fair versions of what could be expected of the new chairperson.

But there was, by and large, a definite lack of in-depth or investigative reporting on how Casaburri intended putting her words into action, and more importantly, on what she had, or had not, achieved over the first few months of chairing the Board.

Instead, the press took Casaburri to task because she was secretive about her personal life. *The Financial Mail* was especially hard-hitting. Commenting on the way that Casaburri was not transparent, it said that perhaps this was a sign that the ANC intended treating the SABC and the citizens of the country like the National Party did — with arrogance and disdain. Or, suggested the *FM*, was it perhaps (to quote WB Yeats) a case of: the beggars change places, but the lash goes on.

At first there were indeed problems with making known some basic facts regarding Casaburri's personal, academic and professional life.

According to a *Financial Mail* report, the SABC chairperson said that she would not discuss her personal life, where she was born, her age, whether she was married or had children (*Finansies & Tegniek* told their readers the same).

But, by the time the *FM* ran these hard facts about Casaburri, and the magazine itself was still insisting on other pages that the Board was chaired by a mystery woman, a number of other publications had already told their readers about the personal side of Casaburri — that she was born in Kroonstad, and, inter alia, that she indeed could speak Afrikaans, which a number of papers said she could not.

Quite an issue was made of the so-called fact that Casaburri could not speak Afrikaans, because this was perceived to have been one of the main reasons why State President FW de Klerk did not agree to appoint Professor Njabulo Ndebele to chair the new Board. But *Beeld* had already reported in mid-August that Casaburri could indeed speak Afrikaans (as well as a number of other languages), as any interview with her would have shown. Even so, newspapers still claimed as fact that she was not able to speak the language.

Beeld not only reported that the chairperson spoke Afrikaans, but also that she prepared her own afval, pap and marog while in exile. Almost two weeks later *Rapport* told its readers that Casaburri's talents in the kitchen remained her secret. In the meantime Casaburri had also told *City Press* that she was a workaholic and that she was prepared to face the challenges of the hot seat. This was not really the reclusive and mystery woman *FM* and *Rapport* tried to make out.

There was, by and large, a definite lack of in-depth or investigative reporting on how Casaburri intended putting her words into action, and more importantly, on what she had, or had not, achieved over the first few months of chairing the Board. Instead, the press took Casaburri to task because she was secretive about her personal life.

Even when the newspapers were trying to get it right, they often didn't seem to get it quite right. *Rapport* said Casaburri was considered to be one of the foremost sociologists in Africa. No source was offered for this accolade in *Rapport* or any of the other papers that made the same assertion. (At least not in those reviewed for this article.) One could expect Casaburri to have shied away from this commendation. She is more known for her work in education and development in the exile community which includes work for organisations such as Unesco in Namibia and Zambia. She is also known for her work dealing with gender issues in Africa. She is active in the ANC Women's League, But it is an open question whether she is one of Africa's foremost or eminent (academic or research) sociologists, as some newspapers would like their readers to believe.

Much was made of Casaburri's academic qualifications. *The Pretoria News* said she had a PhD in English and History (sic), *Rapport* said it was social development (partly correct), the *Sunday Times* got it right: a Masters and PhD in sociology from Rutgers.

One of the decisions that Casaburri's Board made and for which she came under fire, was the re-appointment of Mr Wynand Harmse for another year as Group Chief Executive. It was suggested in *The Natal Witness* that this decision was pressed by management before familiarity (with the issue) could produce the confidence to reject it. What the *Witness*'s columnist preferred not to tell his readers was that Harmse's contract with the SABC was on the verge of expiring, and therefore, had to be reviewed. Also, he did not tell his readers, which at least one other paper did, that the specific proposal to extend Harmse's contract by one year was not made by the old guard on the Board.

Taking cheap shots at the SABC Board chairperson became a national sport almost overnight. Her SAA flight to Sydney via Perth is a case in point. Duwweltjie in *Finansies en Tegniek* told its readers under the headline: Don't Laugh, that one could not really blame her for getting off at Perth instead of Sydney: "Both cities are at the coast. They are straight across from each other. Both are in Australia. Though they are 3 200km from each other, it could have been much worse, she could have stepped off at the Mauritius airport."

Anybody who comes in contact with Casaburri quickly learns that she can cross her t's and dot her i's in an assertive fashion. In the same vein she very well knows the difference between P and S, be it the geographical difference between Perth and Sydney, of the socio-political difference between Pretoria and Soweto. Nowhere (at least not in the newspapers surveyed for this article), was her personal response to be seen.

While the press was bathing in rancorous glee over Casaburri's perceived shortcomings on a personal level, it often glaringly omitted to give her her due

when she was making constructive policy statements and moves in a difficult leadership role, especially as this was perhaps the most senior public post ever occupied by a black woman in the country's history.

The press is hasty to get hold of *Interkom*, the SABC's in-house journal, whenever there is the possibility of a *stink storie* rearing its head, quoting liberally from the journal. Casaburri made an important statement in the September edition regarding the "fear for the future" that many SABC personnel felt. To those who felt threatened by so-called reversed discrimination, she said: "Changes make people uneasy. It is how you handle the fear that makes the difference. Those who refuse change make it difficult for themselves to participate...People should have hopes for the future, not fear." There was no rush on the part of the press to publish and investigate these statements that affected the lives of thousands of present and future SABC employees.

Also, when *Sunday Nation* thought it to be in decent ethical journalistic form to run a four centimeter WOB across the front page with an offensive racial slur on Casaburri attributed to an SABC official, the rest of the press apparently decided to turn a blind eye.

As was said earlier in this article, the press is not only to be blamed for naive or snide reporting on Casaburri and the Board. There were also some very well balanced efforts, especially leaders in both mainstream and non-mainstream newspapers. Leaders in the *Cape Times* and *The Star* are cases in point. The latter said, inter alia:

"At a time when there is a need to redress imbalances of race and gender, the appointment of a black woman to head the SABC is in itself welcome."
—The Star

THE ELECTION of Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri as chairman of the SABC Board, by the unanimous vote of its members, marks the end of an acrimonious dispute. For that reason alone it is a positive development.

Casaburri, an educationist and former ANC exile, has emerged as a compromise choice between Njabulo Ndebele, the man originally chosen by the legal panel and favoured by the ANC to head the Board, and Van Zyl Slabbert, who was preferred by President De Klerk.

But Casaburri seems to have commendable qualities in her own right. At a time when there is a need to redress imbalances of race and gender, the appointment of a black woman to head the SABC is in itself welcome.

One cannot quarrel with her first pronouncements: revision of the editorial code; open access to the SABC by political parties during the run-up of the election; and a balanced programme of affirmative action, taking cognisance of skills and qualifications.

Casaburri has strong political convictions. The acid test will be her ability to withstand pressure to put her political loyalties before her responsibilities as Board chairman.

Somehow, this leader seems to qualify for journalistic edicts such as fair comment, balanced views etc. Is there a doctor in the house? ●

Arrie de Beer is director of the Institute for Communication Research at Potchefstroom University, and a member of the SABC Board.

DESIGNER'S FORUM: Behind the recent merging

MORPHING

By IRWIN MANOIM
Co-editor of the Weekly Mail and Guardian

ADVERTISING agencies are fond of a computer animation trick which involves taking two different images — one fat woman and one thin, say — and collapsing the two into each other, so that the fat woman's flab melts away ... and a desirable nymph emerges.

This technique goes by the expressive but inelegant name of morphing. I mention it because I recently had to do some morphing myself. I had to take two rather different newspapers and morph them into one. And that was the easy part of the brief.

The hard part was that there were also two clients based half a planet apart, with agendas that did not always coincide. And there were two sets of readers, not all of whom wanted to be morphed. But to begin at the beginning.

In 1992, the *Weekly Mail* reached an arrangement with *The Guardian* in London to jointly publish *The Guardian Weekly* in South Africa. Readers would pay only for the *Weekly Mail*, but folded inside they would discover *The Guardian Weekly*, theirs for free.

Accommodating our wordy new joint masthead was not easy. Here are just two of the many rejects.

At the time, it was hailed as a masterstroke. The *Weekly Mail*, born as a newspaper of protest and still struggling to find a comfortable post-PW Botha identity, was given a major boost: an international section which, for sheer breadth, intelligence and literary style had no local rival. On most levels, the experiment worked as well as we hoped. The *Weekly Mail* gained new credibility which in turn brought new readers (sales went up a third) and new advertisers (revenues doubled). The new readers were generally slightly older and a good deal wealthier, which pleased the agency media directors. But there were some problems, and they turned out to be expensive. Advertisers were more willing than before to go into the *Weekly Mail*, but they did not want to go into *The Guardian Weekly*. To them, *The Guardian Weekly* was an insert. Reader traffic in inserts was traditionally lower, therefore they did not place adverts in inserts.

Anti-design: A typical picture-less spread from the old Guardian Weekly, above, remade for an early dummy, below. This style was thrown out after the Pentagram redesign.

An independent survey was commissioned to check out how many Weekly Mail readers turned to *The Guardian Weekly*. It showed that 97 percent spent as much as four hours reading it. The survey fell on deaf ears; the ad agencies would not budge.

The result was the newspaper equivalent of skewed growth. Advertising ballooned in the *Weekly Mail*, forcing the paging to increase. *The Guardian Weekly*'s local advertising

of the Weekly Mail and Guardian

THE MAIL

The brief was to take two newspapers and make them into one. That turned out to be the easy part...


The Guardian Weekly

The Washington Post Le Monde

Sarajevo given grim ultimatum

Somali mission turns to blood and tears

UN official flies to Iraq

Morillon attacks carve-up


The Guardian 15

2/INTERNATIONAL

Sarajevo given grim ultimatum

Somali mission turns to tears

UN rejects call to end combat

Wishful conclusions in Tokyo

The Washington Post

The Guardian Weekly front page becomes an inside page. The Pentagram front at left, and a Weekly Mail dummy which mixes Guardian and Washington Post stories on one page. The Guardian Weekly editors did not like the centered headline and blurb in the anchor story on the dummy—Pentagram rules demand that headlines and blurbs always cover the first leg. Back to the drawing board...

rarely crept above 10 percent. The conventional newspaper approach is to shrink back a section until the advertising pays its way. But *The Guardian Weekly*'s size was fixed by its British advertising content and could not be varied from 32 pages.

There were other problems too:

● *The Guardian Weekly* carried very few colour pages, but those there were fell in the wrong places — wrong, that is, in the opinion of our printers, because they caused colour imposition problems for the rest of the run. As a result, *The Guardian Weekly* often had to be printed separately, which drove up expenses.

● *The Guardian Weekly* goes off stone at noon on Tuesday. The *Weekly*


COMMENT

The Guardian

A system out of control

Clinton wins but must find new allies

Muted victory for Clinton


COMMENT

Between the sushi and the spaghetti

A new Anglo-Irish policy in the air

Cabinet paralysed by the future

Georgia very much on their minds

The Pentagram-style Guardian Weekly uses an unusual leader page style (right); two columns with no masthead, on a right-hand page. Our version, (left) is more conventional in appearance and matches the Weekly Mail's own leader page.


INSIDE MAIL

Ominous clouds over the Karoo

Just the way we whore


The show is over, but the general won't go

LETTERS

Magician up to tricks again

LEFT: A typical columns page. The redesigned version is on the far left.

RIGHT: The old front page, above, and the new. The idea was to change as little as possible, so that readers still recognised the product. But headlines have been sized down.


THE WEEKLY MAIL

'Army of peace' to monitor the polls

The faces behind the torment


WEEKLY MAIL&GUARDIAN

Destroy your files, public servants ordered

The man who escaped back to prison

Beauty is skin deep, but ugliness can go to the bone

Touching the heart of Major

Have the sisters lost touch?

Mail is delivered to homes on Friday. The world does not stand still between Tuesday and Friday, with the result that we often delivered old news to readers. Readers are reasonably tolerant of old news when a paper arrives in the post, but when it is hand-delivered along with the morning's Business Day, it is expected to be up-to-date. Don't *The Guardian Weekly* editors know that Windsor Castle burned down, asked one amazed phone-caller. They do, I assured her, it'll just take them another week to get round to it.

● *The Guardian Weekly*, like most British tabloids, uses a smaller paper size than the local A3-based format. Each week we had to enlarge, pad and stretch its pages to fit an A3. Or to phrase it another way, each week we wasted an inch-wide margin around each page which added to our paper and freight costs without adding to editorial.

By late last year, it had become clear that a change was needed if costs were not to rocket way out of control. And although it took a while before anyone was willing to acknowledge it, it was clear that the only economic way forward was brute force: integrate the papers so that there was no insert, so that paging size could be determined by advertising volume, so that there was no paper waste and so that the entire paper could be printed in a single run.

At that point, the people who juggle with budgets passed the problem along to editorial: take two newspapers and make them into one. It sounded easy enough, but it proved a lot harder than morphing a fat woman into a thin one. These were some of the problems we faced:

● **ENTER PENTAGRAM.** *The Guardian Weekly*'s long-serving editor John Perkin had an olde-world scorn for such latter-day affectations as design. Articles were rarely grouped thematically and were allowed to sprawl over hundreds of column centimetres with nary a picture in sight. His erudite audience of Commonwealth intellectuals were rather fond of this austere indifference to sweeteners, but it was not a paper that easily grabbed the eye of potential new converts. Indeed, one of our motives for integration was to modernise the international section by grouping articles thematically and making better use of *The Guardian* daily's excellent photographic service. The redesign plans were well under way when, shortly before the switch, Perkin suddenly retired (wearied, I suspect by the prospect of his life's work falling to the barbarians) to be replaced by a younger man with altogether different views, Patrick Ensor.

Ensor immediately commissioned the renowned British design house Pentagram to redesign the weekly and bring it in line with the modern appearance of its daily sibling. The Pentagram redesign of *The Guardian Weekly* had two notable features: an iron set of style rules, intended perhaps to force contemporary typography upon an office which preferred the old ways; and a rather decorative quality, with lots of rules, boxed pages, drop letters and tramlines. On *The Guardian Weekly*'s standard format of shiny white airmail paper, the design had an attractive magazine look. But translated to our off-grey South African newsprint, it looked mannered.

The Pentagram design was to be the source of fierce debate between ourselves and Manchester. *The Guardian Weekly* editors insisted that we be as true as possible to its spirit; I believed that many elements of it were inappropriate to the *Weekly Mail* context.

These debates raged back and forth until the very week of the launch, when a compromise was struck. But they were a useful reminder that real-life design is part typography and part-diplomacy, the art of finding a mid-point between the dreams of the designer and the caution of the clients.

● **PLAYING IT DISCREET.** Weekly Mail readers may be liberal in their politics, but they share with newspaper readers everywhere a deep conservatism when it comes to typography. One of the most important functions of newspaper design is to provide a mental comfort zone: subliminal navigation signals which make a publication intelligible to readers. Taking two newspapers and yoking them into one means destroying all the familiar landmarks, leaving readers marooned in new, uncharted territory. Clearly, they were not going to appreciate this. Since the changes to the basic structure were so radical, the changes to typography had to be minimised, so that individual pages at least looked familiar, even if they were no longer in the same place.

● **SEPARATE BUT EQUAL.** One approach to integrating two newspapers was to treat all sources as equal and to place articles on merit, according to theme, in much the same way that every other local newspaper uses its international sources. But *The Guardian*

A weekly paper that goes off stone on Thursday can't really compete on back page sport, so we flag our entertainment section instead, revamped in the version at left.

Weekly editors feared they would lose control over their own product unless some separation was maintained. A second approach was to treat the two sections distinctly, and disturb the existing structure as little as possible. This may have been the easiest approach for both editors and readers, but it did not solve the insert problem. The approach eventually adopted was, like all international treaties, a compromise. The paper was organised by theme, but *Guardian* and *Weekly Mail* pages were separated. This allowed the editors on each end to keep an eye on their own pages.

● **QUIETLY SERIOUS.** How does one unify pages, yet keep them separate? The answer was to keep the basic elements like text typography the same, and use different display dress. We wanted to signal seriousness and quiet elegance, keeping most headline sizes below 42pt and in simple shapes. Since the Pentagram redesign of *The Guardian Weekly* stressed variants of Helvetica, the choice for a *Guardian* display face was made up for me. For the *Weekly Mail* I chose Bookman, a quiet, light face which has strength even in modest headline sizes.

● **LIGHTENING UP.** Previous redesigns of the *Weekly Mail* had been based on the principle of providing maximum word count in the minimum space, resulting in an often intimidating greyness. This time round I aimed to lighten up the text. I chose Bookman again, and for the same reasons: it works well against the Helvetica headlines and its wide, open letter forms have the virtue of appearing much larger than they are, even in small sizes.

● **MASS PRODUCTION.** Since I'm seldom involved in day-to-day layout myself any more, the design needed to be intelligible to other people. The *Weekly Mail* subs room is under pressures rarely found in local newspapers. A handful of sub-editors not only sub, but also design and make up every page on their screens (and proof-read and correct them) right up to final art-work. Only adverts which arrive from outside are stripped in. The subs need to complete 80 pages in three-and-a-half days, or one completed page every 25 minutes. The design therefore needed to be simple and quickly reproduced from templates.

For these reasons, I scrapped various time consuming elements of the Pentagram design such as the rules between every column. I also used a single version of Helvetica rather than Pentagram's half a dozen different weights, a change which speeded laser printing by more than half.

● **THE FINAL NIGHT.** Of course, as with all plans that have been made and remade over periods of months, everything fell to pieces in the week of the launch.

The new computers and software we'd ordered to allow us to produce 32 extra pages failed to arrive. And to make it all even more complicated, a family illness put me in quarantine for the critical week, barred by doctors from coming into the office. The launch day loomed and the final design was still unfinished.

The sub-editors rallied magnificently, spending the next few weeks playing musical chairs between the few available terminals, and trying to second-guess a design locked inside my absent head.

AND reader reaction? It was of the normal kind. Readers invariably hate redesigns for the first fortnight, come to grudgingly accept them for the next month, and thereafter can't remember when things were ever different.

Face-to-face feedback was generally positive, particularly from the ad agencies. Which is just as well, because the letters, ranged from the mildly complaining to the apoplectic: "I shall never buy your rag again," was the way several ended. I comforted myself with the old saying that people only write in to a newspaper when they're in a rage; those who're happy or just indifferent don't bother.

We did make some changes in response to reader feedback, in particular from warring spouses who complained that they were no longer able to divide up the paper. We offered an "invisible insert": the foreign section was grouped around the centre of the paper so that those who insisted on reading it separately could pull it out intact. Presumably this met with approval; a week later, the complaining letters died down.

I knew we'd finally made it when we received an irate letter about our sexist use of language. I recognised the handwriting. It was from someone who a month earlier had sworn never to buy our paper again. ●

How it's put together

THE Guardian Weekly is a digest of international news from three sources, The Guardian daily, The Washington Post and Le Monde. It is produced in a tiny office in Manchester and flashed around the world, courtesy of the international phone system.

Raw copy from the three source publications is first picked up by phone from electronic mail boxes, and then processed on personal computers. Completed Guardian Weekly pages, including photographs and advertisements, are sent by modem to sites around the world. An average newspaper requires about an hour a day to transmit.

Our sub-editors then remake pages to match our format. They are allowed considerable leeway to make changes, in consultation with The Guardian Weekly's editors. They also receive a regular electronic "dump" of the entire text of each day's Guardian daily.

Using the phone to transmit pages is considerably faster than the air freight used by the International Express and Weekly Telegraph, which explains why Guardian Weekly news is as much as a week ahead.

IDEOLOGY AND THE IMAGE

Ivor Powell

THE "STRUGGLE" **in this country was not just a fight for a better and democratic society, a righting of the practical wrongs wrought by apartheid. It assumed the status of a kind of a holy war. It might have taken place in a specific geographical region, but its meanings, its drama, were played out in psychological realms on a world stage. The "struggle" became a morality play, a symbolic and redemptive confrontation of good and evil, fascism versus the democratic impulse, black versus white, humanity versus the inhumanity of apartheid.**

It was of course a lot of other things as well — both more and less than this. But the image of the freedom struggle in this country became for the world at large a kind of test case or limit for definitions of humanity. What such investments of morality meant in concrete terms is that news about and images of South Africa, especially insofar as they were consumed in the world outside, were forced into a very particular mould. They had to be, overwhelmingly, exemplars of the morality play that was South Africa. By the same token, though from the internal perspective, they had to represent and enact the "struggle", they had to partake of the purity of the morality play, conform to certain rules of how South Africa was to be depicted, be shot through with the predecided meanings of this country's history. There was very little interest, as many a journalist, photographer and social analyst discovered to his or her cost, in anything else.

Consumption of "the South African story" became increasingly a kind of ritual, something that grew more, not less meaningful, with repitition.

Consumption of "the South African story" became increasingly, especially during the 1980s, a kind of a ritual, something that grew more, not less meaningful with repetition. The same "story" — an example that leaps to mind is the confrontation of youth and police and the detention of youth around 1985 — could be told every night on overseas television screens for three months at a stretch without the proverbial short attention span of the media audience ever reaching its limit...

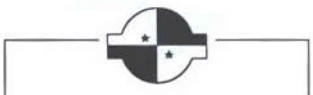
News and documentary accounts became something the viewer or consumer participated in; the essence was the familiarity of the drama that was depicted. South African images had to have a certain look or a certain "story" to be of interest to the world at large. In the crudest version, they had to have evil, brutal, whites, usually in uniform, almost always armed, oppressing the heroic and innocent black majority. But, as time went on, the semantics became increasingly subtle, increasingly metonymic. It was enough that whites should be living behind barbed wire, that black poverty and suffering should be portrayed in itself, or black militancy: the rest of the story was carried by the implication. But the fact remains that in the world at large,

the South African story was like a perverse, infinitely repeatable bedtime story for kids. Tell me the story about bad Hendrik and his police again, Mum. Bang bang at the children. Steal their homes and their dignity. The way they put Saint Nelson in jail...

The world simply wasn't interested in what was really going on, in the total picture, in the subtleties and ambiguities and ironies of the situation. It took many thousands of corpses in Natal and later around the hostels on the Witwatersrand before the IFP/ANC conflict began to be so much as noticed by the international (or for that matter the local) media. Even today there is minimal interest in it either locally or internationally, at least minimal when you consider that this particular conflict is of such severity as to rank this society as the most violent in the world. The notion of what the police reports used to call "black on black" violence just doesn't fit into the preconception of what the South African story is or ought to be. Instead the major focus these days in terms of the South African fiction that is the morality play is the shaping of the new South Africa by the twin titans Mandela and De Klerk - now suitably canonised by their recent joint Nobel Peace Prize. The rest is of more or less nuisance value only, except of course for the white right wing, those unredeemed sons and daughters of Verwoerd: significantly, they still have a place in the story.

What has all this got to do with documentary photographers in South Africa? Just about everything, I think, and this for the simple, incontrovertible, but usually unacknowledged, reason that during the years of the struggle, the major market for local photographic production on the cutting edge was not local but international. This was especially the case in the years of the emergency, but on both sides of the declared emergency, legislatively endemic press restrictions served to make the situation more or less the same anyway. In essence, if you were going to record the political realities of the South African situation, you were going to have to sell overseas (or be sponsored from overseas) if you were going to survive as a photographer at all. But, as I have already argued, if you were going to sell overseas, you were in general going to have to produce a fairly specific and circumscribed set of images. You were going to have to feed into the "free world's" displaced psychodrama that was its perception of and interest in South Africa.

Thus far I have been talking about the imposition of values by the outside world on the South African reality as though it was simply an imposition. Of course, this was not the case. The dominant perception of South Africa in the foreign media was symbiotically connected to the struggle inside the country and to the work of the liberation movements in exile. The rendering up of South African history as something superhistorical was in the first place the result of the work of the South African opposition — and, let it be said, it was possible only because the reality really was horrific enough to justify such interpretation.



The rendering up of South African history as something superhistorical was in the first place the result of the work of the South African opposition.

To put this in another way, the sense of the struggle outside this country and the sense of the struggle inside the country dovetailed pretty neatly, and weren't really different things in the first place. But, and this is the real point to be made, both were fictions — not in the sense of being false, but in the sense of being dramatised, pointed, partial versions sustained by subscription.

For photographers inside the country, particularly those centred around Afrapix, Dynamic Images and the various other collectives that grew up in the 1980s, photography became overtly, and in common with the other artforms and disciplines within the media, a "weapon" of the struggle. It was seen as something to be explored not on its own terms but in a precensored kind of way to instrumental ends. Concretely what emerged was an orthodoxy that was as rigorous as it was politically useful and effective — as it was oppressive and artistically dangerous. Photographers I have discussed the matter with recall specifically the 1982 Culture and Resistance conference held in Gaberone as a watershed. It was here that the term "cultural worker" first gained currency in the South African context. And it was here that the first collective exhibition of "struggle" photographers was staged.

As documentary photographer Paul Weinberg interpreted the significance of the festival in his contribution to the proceedings of the 1987 Culture in another South Africa conference in Amsterdam: "Participants learnt a new language — artists were not above the struggle but part of it. All people who worked in culture shared a common identity..." What Weinberg does not specify, but what critics of the process inaugurated at the Botswana conference are quick to recall, is that this "common identity" was imposed by the "collective" in what now appear as very specific and narrow terms.

The world simply wasn't interested in what was really going on, in the total picture, in the subtleties and ambiguities and ironies of the situation.

For instance a then compelling argument was put forward, heavily under the influence of Marxist theory, that the role of the cultural worker was to portray individuals as representatives of "the people" or the masses. The task of photography as a weapon of the struggle was to deindividualise — the dominant jargon of the time to move away from the bourgeois myth of individuality — the masses, and instead make them into tokens of the people. Thus would be served the analysis of the South African situation as a class struggle of a special type.

I don't want to make any kind of judgment here, on the aesthetic which was generated out of this sense of the theory of photography, beyond noting that the yoking of art to the political struggle mani-

festly did work. The desired end was achieved: the South African story and its images did play an incalculable role in forcing political change towards democracy in this country.

I do want to note though, two things. One is that the dominant spirit of collectivism which pervaded the 1980s led to a widespread, though temporary, dismissal of such photographers as David Goldblatt — probably the country's most distinguished and, despite all, most influential photographer — as being a bourgeois apologist, a crypto-revisionist, etc. Goldblatt's sense of the uniqueness, the textures and ambivalences within the real — the totality of vision that could be deeply sympathetic and savagely critical at the same time — such qualities were precisely those which were more or less systematically suppressed by the sense of the artist as cultural worker.

The other point is that inside this spirit of collectivism was generated a radically populist sense of what photography is and what it ought to be. It was in a sense built into the dominant theory that the end goal of photography in the mode would be towards a democracy of the image, towards what was later termed community photography. Hence the idea which in the later 1980s gained a powerful currency of taking the project of photography out of the hands of specialists and instead — through training, workshops, the creation of community art centres, the provision of materials etc. — working towards the empowering of the population at large through the medium of photography. From the point of view of the world outside, it is the perfect distillation of the South African story, the story whose subject tells itself.

This is, broadly sketched in, the context of South African photography which we inherited when the whole ball game changed in 1990. It is one which, to a very significant extent, is conditioned by overseas expectations and, relatedly, to an equally significant extent by the constraints of locally generated theory.

It had some very important and very tangible effects on the styles in which photographers characteristically worked and in the dominant semantics of the pictures they made. Looking at the photography of the immediate past in any detail is a task way beyond the scope of this article but let me make a few, broad and general points anyway.

The first is that particular ranges of subject matter were favoured, others more or less excluded. It was for instance rare in the extreme during the 1980s to find pictures (outside of government propaganda) of an emerging black middle class or images betokening any kind of consumer-oriented wellbeing. I have on numerous occasions watched, on jobs in the townships, photographers moving to the other side of the road in photographing a march or other event just to avoid getting an affluent house or an upmarket motor car in frame.

By contrast shacks were a favourite subject, shanty towns an obsession and images of rural poverty a stock in trade.

By contrast shacks were a favourite subject, shanty towns an obsession and images of rural poverty a stock in trade. A huge body of work, in retrospect, focuses on people in their living environments, contrasting the simple dignity of the sitter with the abjectness of the living environment. The basic narrative here rests on a dramatic interplay between the fullness, the richness of the human visage and the spareness, the alienation, the inhumanity of the living environment. Alternatively, a variation on the same theme focuses on the tokens of noble, but pathetic and poignant attempts to humanise such forbidding and reduced circumstances. In nearly every version stark light contrasts serve to create transcendent dramas out of the everyday circumstance. If these are characteristic urban strategies, an equally large body of work places black subjects in the rural landscape and is concerned with spelling out, either through formal ploys or through subject matter, the bondedness of the African people with the African earth. There are of course many variations, shades and nuances on both of these metasubjects, but here I want only to note that they are equally romantic — however realist their subject matter may seem.

Another two-faced photographic coin is that of the black South African as victim and the black South African as representative of the inexorable tide of historical resistance. The first version has the subject either looking to camera with eyes empty of expression, numbed by history, or with gaze averted, letting the impoverished background substitute for the emptied-out eyes.

The second is the documentary of popular resistance, the myriad images you have seen of simple faces and raised fists, the many thousands of human waves you have seen marching across the entire picture frame, joyous in their resistance, or angry, but always, in terms of the picture frame, triumphant, an unstoppable surge.

Then we have the vast body of both news and documentary photographs which show blacks as actual victims. Of the forces of the state, the police, the SADF, the militant thugs of Verwoerdian fascism. Or simply a victim of white power and privilege: Emma Maseko, the domestic worker gnaws on a dry bone while madam and master stuff themselves with gross-out steaks on the other side of the wall, that sort of thing.

Political overdetermination turned photography, to a very significant extent, into a series of illustrations to a story that had already been written.

I am not wanting to be flippant here, nor to deny the reality these images were portraying. I am merely wanting to insist that, from the point of view of photography as a discipline, the effect of political overdetermination was to not only circumscribe ranges of relevant subject matter, but also to turn photography, to a very significant extent, into a

series of illustrations to a story that had already been written. You only have to compare any of the collections of pictures published from *Drum* magazine of the 1950s and 1960s with any of the collections published in the 1980s to be hit over the head with the point. In the *Drum* collections the range of the photographer's interest in his or her society is remarkable. Beauty queens rub shoulders with boxers with slick dudes and gangsters, with the most terrifying of apartheid bureaucrats, with police brutalities, with telling images of removals, etc., etc., etc. The whole of life, in a word, is represented. In the 1980s collections of "collective" photographs you can turn 10 or 20 pages without any gearshift at all.

I might be labouring a point, but I think it is worth noting here that the 1980s collections - *Beyond the Barricades, The Cordoned Heart*, etc. — were nearly all sponsored by foreign interest groups.

There is a lot more that could be said about the photographic aesthetic and context we have inherited from the 1980s — perhaps should be said. For one thing, there were always photographers, both within and without the "movement", who broke the rules: Goldblatt of course, who, while creating some of the most memorable of the protest images which have come down to us, nevertheless never subscribed to the sense of photography as a weapon, continuing to pursue more subtle and humanistic strategies; Omar Badsha, who while central as a figure to the mainstream documentary school, nevertheless pursued more open-ended strategies in his own work, registering for example in his Grey Street series, a convincing range of emotion, reality and ambiguity; and others too.

However, the broader situation we have inherited in the documentary was to be very significantly shaped by the mainstream developments I have been discussing above. It has led to something of an impasse. On one hand the interest of the world at large has substantially shifted in the wake of the political developments of 1990. While its version is still heavily mythologised, it is no longer as simple, nor as starkly contrasted as it used to be.

Perhaps more importantly, though relatedly, the practice of photography is less thoroughly mystified than it was in the past. We no longer expect, as was routine in the 1980s, for commentators to adopt the reverential tone that Cornell Capa of the International Centre of Photography, for example, did in a blurb to the *Cordoned Heart* collection: "We give thanks to the photographers... for their courage, passion and compassion in bringing us truths about South Africa that deserve to be known..."

These days, in other words, it is not enough that a photographer merely be South African. The photographer has to make convincing images of a situation that is swiftly moving out of the realms of mythology and into hard and compromised fact.

...the photographer has to make convincing images of a situation that is swiftly moving out of the realms of mythology and into hard and compromised fact.

Which is where the other hand comes in. On the other hand South African photographers have, in general, failed to meet the challenge. Though I have not personally seen the show a recent exhibition of documentary photographs shown at the National Gallery in Cape Town might be worth recording at second hand. The terms of the project had a group of community based photographers being given grants to produce images of their communities, specifically in the hope that new perspectives might emerge.

By all accounts they failed to do so. The overwhelming impression of the show that resulted was that the viewer had seen it all before, that old habits of perception and conception were strangling the looking process, that there was nothing new to be learned from a project specifically designed to uncover the new.

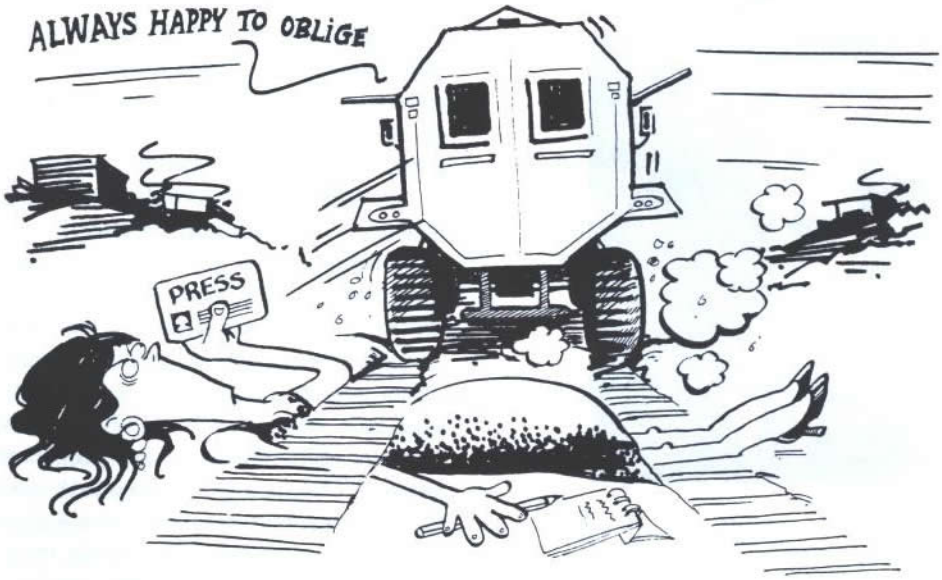
It is a sad commentary but I believe it reflects the reality, the lack of real direction in documentary photography today. The reality is also reflected in the fact that while the focus of the international media on South Africa is as strong today as it ever was, there is less and less work to go around. In advance of elections, the international media are tending to send in their own people rather than rely on South African photographers.

It is reflected in the fact that the most successful images and photographers coming out of this country at the present time are of the hard news, being there, seeing-the-bodies-burn school. It is not accidental that photographers of this sort — like Greg Marinovich and Jaoa Silva — are being there with equal success in places like Somalia and Bosnia Herzogovina. There is not much difference these days. Where all this leaves us is hard to say. In one sense it is a process of natural attrition. The situation which pertained in the 1980s was, and must be acknowledged as being an artificial one, and the fact that so many onetime documentarists are out of work or have moved into news is to some extent merely a symptom of normalisation. So too is the sudden largescale withdrawal of the once freely flowing conscience funding which used to be available for community arts projects, and also the almost complete absence of exhibition venues.

The most successful images coming out of this country are of the hard news, being there, seeing-the-bodies-burn school.

Nevertheless one cannot help feeling that an opportunity is being lost. The potential for developing a vibrant, reflective — and surprising — tradition of documentary photography which the community direction promised may well have slipped irretrievably away. A lot will depend, now we are on our own, on whether a new government believes it can promote something new. ●

Ivor Powell is a freelance writer.



From Belfast to Boipatong

For BBC Southern Africa correspondent ***Fergal Keane****, the fog of war here carries a strong reminder of less sophisticated propaganda in Northern Ireland.*

IN THE 1980s I went to work for the BBC in Northern Ireland. That experience was enriching but also deeply traumatic. It prepared me well for coming to South Africa.

It's strange being an Irishman and reporting Northern Ireland. As strange, I think, as it must be for South Africans covering the trauma of their own country. It's given me a determination not to be prescriptive to people — not to tell South Africans the political solutions because if there was one thing I hated it was Scandinavian academics who would descend on us with these incredibly complex constitutional plans full of sweet reason and objective thought which were, of course, completely alien to the consciousness of Northern Ireland.

Ireland was a good training ground and a good preparation for South Africa. But after a while I began to despair. Ireland is such a small place — it really is quite tiny. As time wore on, each killing seemed to come back at me like a boomerang — and I think if one goes through a dark night of the soul as a journalist, I certainly went through it in Belfast, forever going to funerals, forever going to scenes of killings and places blocked off by white tape which the police put up at the scenes of all disasters. I had this image of the white tape as a metaphor for something which was choking that society.

The worst thing of all was that there was absolutely no sense of movement, of momentum. Nothing was changing. It was a 300-year-old conversation which hadn't changed. A dialogue of the deaf between politicians. No willingness to see one another's point of view.

I sometimes think it would be worthwhile for South Africans to experience that kind of situation because, however bad things are, however traumatic the violence, in the three years I have been here, people have never stopped talking to each other. At the worst of the bloodletting between the ANC and Inkatha and the security forces, there was always a line of communication between the various parties. It may have become strained at times but they still spoke to each other. And that's quite unlike Northern Ireland. It's a very optimistic thing.

So when I got the job of BBC Southern Africa correspondent the sense of momentum was the first thing that struck me. The feeling of the heave of history in a country and the certain knowledge that, however bad things got, however much violence, things were going to change.

But when I did arrive here the violence in the townships was at its worst. The whole question of a third force was very much in the air and the first story I covered which raised a lot of the very fundamental questions on reporting South Africa was the Swanieville massacre at Krugersdorp.

It was quite a stark experience because in Northern Ireland you were generally kept away from the scene of the crime. I recall it was a winter's morning and I can remember driving out along this dust track which leads to the squatter camp and seeing this sight of people streaming against me — old people, young people, little children, carrying all they could on their backs.

These were the refugees who had survived a night of the most unbelievable terror. And as we drove in there were people waving us down and asking us to give them lifts to take them away from that place of desolation. It looked as if a hurricane had swept through it. There were shacks flattened everywhere — fires were still smouldering. The bodies of the people who had been murdered only a few hours before were still scattered on the ground.

I witnessed this extraordinary South African image of watching policemen sitting in a casspir laughing and joking to themselves, seemingly a million miles away from the situation, while on the ground there were people in the most distracted states of grief.

So we walked around and spoke to people and generally felt the kind of helplessness you feel when confronted with something you are powerless to change. And yet, because we were white journalists, these people invested a hope — a disproportionate hope that we could somehow change their immediate circumstances, that we could sort out their problems with the police, that we could sort out their problems with Inkatha who had carried out the attack. We couldn't. I stood there numb recording what people were saying and generally feeling pretty useless.

On the way out, we gave a lift to a young couple and their two children who were trying to escape the carnage and we took them to Dobsonville in Soweto. I have this memory of driving up this dirt track and looking into the mirror and seeing these people's faces in the mirror — frozen in fear and desperation. ➢

FROM BELFAST...

I thought when I was working in Northern Ireland that they had pretty sophisticated lying machines in operation on all sides. But they had nothing compared to what I have experienced here.

Swanieville was significant for me in that it exposed a lot of the difficulties in covering South African stories. The welter of claims and counter-claims which you get from everybody. You have this sort of fog of war — propaganda put out in that particular case by the police and Inkatha.

While going around the township I was told there had been white men among the attackers. The difficulty was (and I have had this experience many, many times — particularly in the Boipatong massacres) that when you went down and did an almost detective-like job on it, talking to people and asking, "What exactly did they look like? Who were they? How many?" it very often transpired that it wasn't the person themselves who had seen the whites. But they always knew somebody maybe two streets away who had seen them.

So I had a difficulty reporting that because the moment I put something like "residents say there were white men among the attackers" on the BBC, it would be automatically believed amongst the audience.

And that was my difficulty in reporting the whole question of the third force conspiracy. I had to decide whether it was a conspiracy or a blend of crass incompetence and negligence. And at the end of the day I still am no nearer a judgment on that.

In the end, because so many people had said it to us and so many of the stories seemed to tie up, I did put in the line, but there was a moment of soul-searching.

As it transpired what did happen was that police, some of them in plain clothes, arrived towards the end of the attack and people had assumed they were part of the onslaught.

I thought when I was working in Northern Ireland that they had pretty sophisticated lying machines in operation on all sides. But they had nothing compared to what I have experienced here. In any given incident, if you're not there yourself, you're left wrestling with, on average, at least four different versions of what actually happened — you have the government version, the police version, the ANC version and the Inkatha version. Trying to cut through that and find the objective truth is a huge difficulty.

The pressure of delivering on that day a precise explanation of what happened and a fair one, is sometimes too great and we end up two or three days later being able to tell the truth. But, of course, that's no good because the general impression has been given in most people's minds. They hear what they hear on the day and that is taken as the truth.

Shortly after Swanieville, there was another event which, in a different way, exposed the difficulties of working in this country. This had to do with a very different part of the political spectrum — the incident at Goedgevonden in the Western Transvaal where a number of right-wingers opened fire on squatters occupying some land.

When we got there we were told that the police, a short time before we arrived, had opened fire on the right-wingers. But to try and get every side of the story, we spoke to the squatters first. And then moved into a field which was filled with distinctly unpleasant gentlemen in khaki — heavily armed — and with an attitude problem.

I was slithering around the field trying to look as small as I could and splattering out my few pathetic words of Afrikaans: "Ek is van Radio Ierland, meneer" — not the BBC because that's deeply loathed by them because of memories of the Boer War. So one farmer said to me: "You're from Ireland?" I said: "Yes". And he said, "Catholic Irish or Protestant Irish?" And I said to myself, "this I do not believe. I left all this behind me on the Shankall and Falls Road. Give me a break." I realised that this could be one of those questions that could be fundamental to your life whichever way you answer. As my grandmother in faraway Cork used to say "When in doubt tell the truth". So I said "Catholic". "What?" "Catholic." "Great," he replied, "Up the IRA."

I had moment of despair there. But the exchange showed something about the sort of psychosis operating in that particular field at the time.

It got even nastier because people were shoving shotguns in our chests and, in the end, they chased us away and it became impossible, and still is to a large extent, to report the activities of people who are deeply suspicious of you and who regard you as an enemy. Who, when you tell them you are trying to do a fair and objective job, don't really want to know about that.

In recent times, I have experienced this intolerance a lot on the left of the political

● This article is an edited version of a talk delivered during the National Arts Festival. Illustrations by Nicky Taylor from *Surviving the Story: a safety manual for journalists in South Africa* — a SAUJ publication.

spectrum in certain townships east of Johannesburg where we have been physically attacked and accused of being sell-outs and stooges of the regime.

You find yourself covering marches and demonstrations and having someone come up to you and say: "Settler, settler. Bullet, bullet." And that's not really the time to start explaining that you actually come from Ireland which has experienced 700 years of colonial oppression. It doesn't really strike a chord with people who are angry. I can't blame somebody in Sebokeng or Katlahong who's been screwed all her life by white people for regarding white reporters as an enemy. And, in the heat of battle, it is not really the time to start explaining that you are there trying to do a fair and objective job of reporting.

That reporting is becoming increasingly difficult. As a foreign correspondent in this country I constantly have to interest the news desk in London at a time when the continent of Africa itself is heavily marginalised. People don't really want to know.

One of the principal difficulties facing European broadcasters like myself and the people who work for the German or Dutch radio stations, is that Europe now has a vicious war on its own doorstep in Yugoslavia. There's a general sense I detect too, every time I go back — not weariness with South Africa just yet — but getting there. But certainly a weariness for the continent of Africa as a place of troubles and never-ending sorrow and agony.

Without wishing to seem too blunt, some news editors give me the impression of being bored with the problems of Africa. Now for you who must live through the trauma of what is happening here and, indeed, with the agony of the African continent, that may seem a bit harsh and a bit cynical but that, unfortunately, is the way it is.

South Africa is dangerous in a way that Bosnia isn't anymore. In places like Bosnia and Northern Ireland, where I worked before, you can be pretty sure which is the safe side to be on. How to protect yourself. But believe you me, if you are driving through either Crossroads outside Cape Town, or Sebokeng, or Katlahong or Thokoza during the week, there is no safe place. The front line changes every few minutes.

In one case we were standing on a corner trying to interview somebody when a sniper opened fire. That kind of thing I don't remember happening when I first covered situations of unrest in this country. Certainly not the degree of hostility which is directed towards journalists.

So you end up unfortunately, reaching a situation where there are certain parts of the story which become inaccessible to you and the obvious place that springs to mind is the Vaal Triangle, the crucible of the unrest in 1984. But now large parts of it are no longer safe for journalists to travel in. A curtain of darkness has come down and it's possible for people on all sides to do the most brutal things and to get away with them in the secure knowledge that the journalists won't be there.

You go to political organisations and speak to them about this and they promise to protect you. But in fairness, they are not in a position to make promises because, once the violence starts in an area, the degree of suspicion and of hostility aimed at outsiders who, for generations, have done nothing but bring trouble into townships is excessive.

I am not sure what the answer is. I hope we will not be forced into a situation where we either ignore large parts of the story or end up dependent on the word of eye-witnesses.

But I detect a worrying drift in that direction and I wonder what will happen once we get the heightened state of tension which will surround an election. It is mandatory now that we wear flak jackets in the township. You kind of ask yourself, "What way is this to work and live?" We are now thinking of using armoured vehicles — we are going to do the job of reporting like soldiers.

Having whinged on about how awful it is, let me say again that it is also a fantastic, brilliantly entertaining story to cover because there is, as I said at the outset, this great sense of momentum, of things changing. Overall, I think, given the fact that you have had 350 years or more of racial supremacy and the most appalling cruelty here my reporting reflects my continuing amazement that people talk to each other. That people are willing to negotiate. This is an astonishing achievement. ●

It is mandatory now that we wear flak jackets in the township. You kind of ask yourself, "What way is this to work and live?" We are now thinking of using armoured vehicles — we are going to do the job of reporting like soldiers.

Jock Leyden

THERE are few today who could claim to be at the top of their field after 66 years. Jock Leyden — political cartoonist for the *Daily News* and a Natal institution as closely followed as his beloved horse racing — can.

Leyden, 85 and still drawing, has a panoramic view of Greyville racecourse from his small office at Natal Newspapers. He surveys it now, no doubt replaying in his mind the events of Saturday's meeting.

"I matriculated in 1926 in Stirlingshire, Scotland, and it was soon afterwards that I came to South Africa. Had a choice between art school or a trip on a mail ship. Well, I had to take the ship!"

He disembarked at Durban and, when finances necessitated a job, swopped the beaches for a lithographic artistry office. It was there that the first lines of a career in cartooning were sketched.

"One of my colleagues had a big laughing mouth and I just couldn't resist drawing him. After that I went around the works sketching the journeymen, and it soon caught on. Everybody loves caricatures."

His cartoons soon led to a job at the *Natal Advertiser* in 1927 and his great love of motorcycling soon made his cartoons distinctive. He did some drawings at a race meeting at Clairwood and passed them on to his magazine editor Harold Watson. He loved them and Jock continued sketching motorcycles regularly until 1933 when he finally caught that mail ship back to England. It was whilst touring Britain on an Ariel Red Hunter motorcycle that Jock met Leslie Grimes, a political cartoonist in London and the man who influenced him to take up political cartooning. They became great friends and Grimes tried to persuade him to take a job as cartoonist on the *News Chronicle*, even offering to introduce him to the editor. Leyden refused, went for a walk, ate, thought and finally asked himself: "Jock, you're 27. When you're 57 will you still be mad about bikes?"

The answer was no, so he returned to South Africa in 1936 intending to try his hand at political cartooning for a year and, if he enjoyed it, to return to England. Once back, however, he met his wife Annabel. Then the editor of the *Sunday Tribune*, EB Dawson, came to him and said: "Jock, don't tell anyone but we're going to start a daily paper. Do you want to join us?"

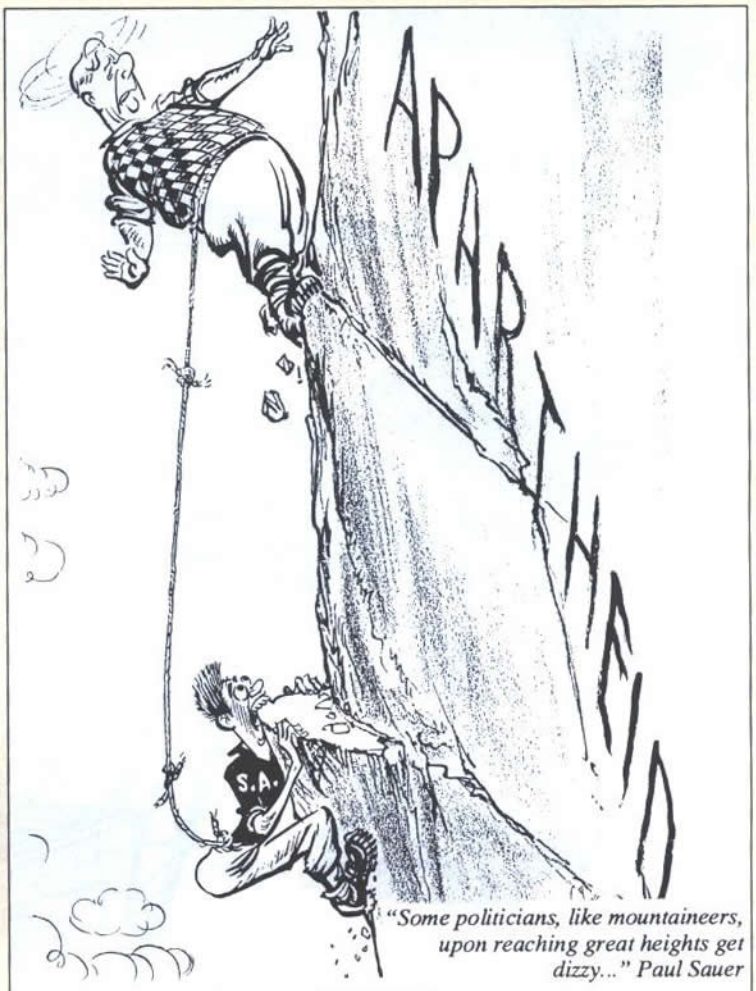
Thus it was that when the *Daily Tribune* was founded in 1938, Jock was there to help kickstart it. The paper folded a year later and he joined the *Daily News*. And, although nobody has thought to count, a 54-year career with a single newspaper must be a South African journalism record. Those years were to bring readers such characters as Goofy and Wilbur as well as a host of political cartoons, many aimed at alerting readers to the evils of Apartheid.

"I've always been anti-Apartheid. When the National Party came to power in 1948, the letters that I received attacking my work were incredibly vicious. I just couldn't believe that people could write such things.

"Press restrictions never really affected me. Obviously the Suppression of Communism Act was something that you had to look out for, editors were terrified of it, but you soon learnt where you could and could not overstep the mark. Saying that, I would never work for a newspaper the editorial policy of which I didn't agree with...it's something that I just wouldn't, morally, be able to do."

With a horse race meeting named after him, civic honours bestowed in 1989 and international recognition in the form of a special award at the "Cartoon 80" festival in West Berlin in 1980, the man is modest almost to a fault. After all, he's drawn virtually every major sporting, theatre and political figure to visit this country since 1936. He mentions in passing the requests for his work from Harry Truman, Winston Churchill and the Duke of Edinburgh. Despite the recognition, he tells you, he does not regard himself as a good cartoonist.

TWO INTO ONE WON'T GO (1941)



"Some politicians, like mountaineers, upon reaching great heights get dizzy..." Paul Sauer

A FINE TIME THIS IS TO FIND THAT OUT! (1959)

"I'm of the old school. I believe in good drawing. Nowadays some people get away with rubbish."

You wonder if you've heard that correctly. "I would never intentionally hurt anyone. I'm not a hater and therefore not a good political cartoonist. As a good cartoonist you shouldn't worry about other people's feelings, but I do." Generally complimentary of his contemporaries, he believes present day situations are more complicated and difficult to put into cartoon form. But having said that, he'll not lower his standards.

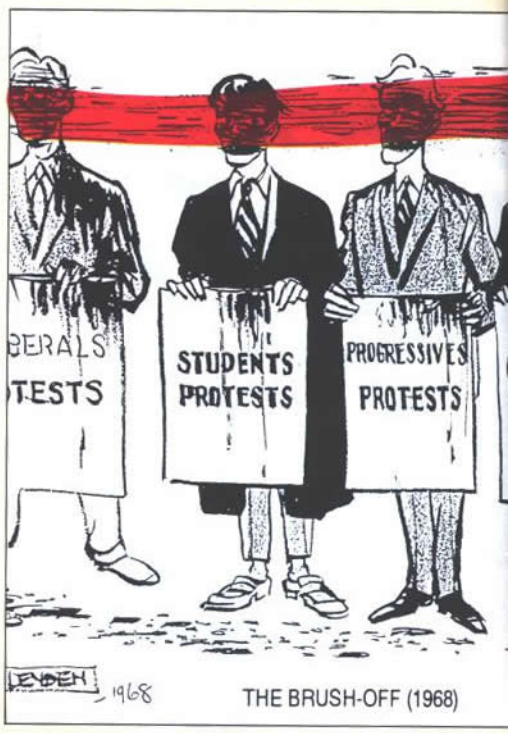
"I'm of the old school. I believe in good drawing. Nowadays some people get away with rubbish." Jock doesn't draw so many cartoons these days.

"I enjoy my work," he says. "When you work to deadlines you can't always produce the best. And whatever I've done I've always tried my best. I hope that people at least remember me for that."

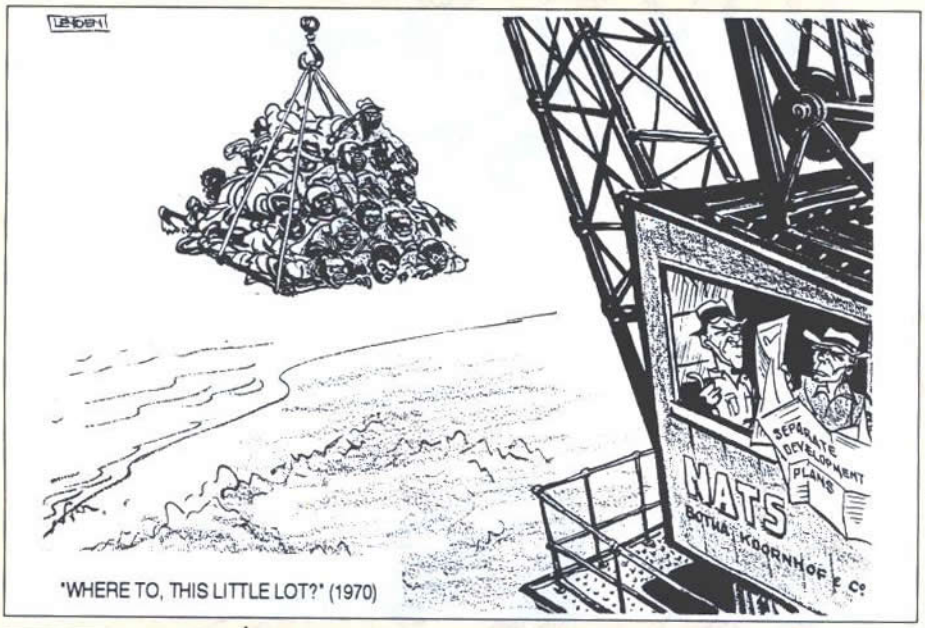
THE BIG PUSH (1987)

Benedict Said is a journalism student at Natal Technikon.

PEN SKETCHES



THE BRUSH-OFF (1968)

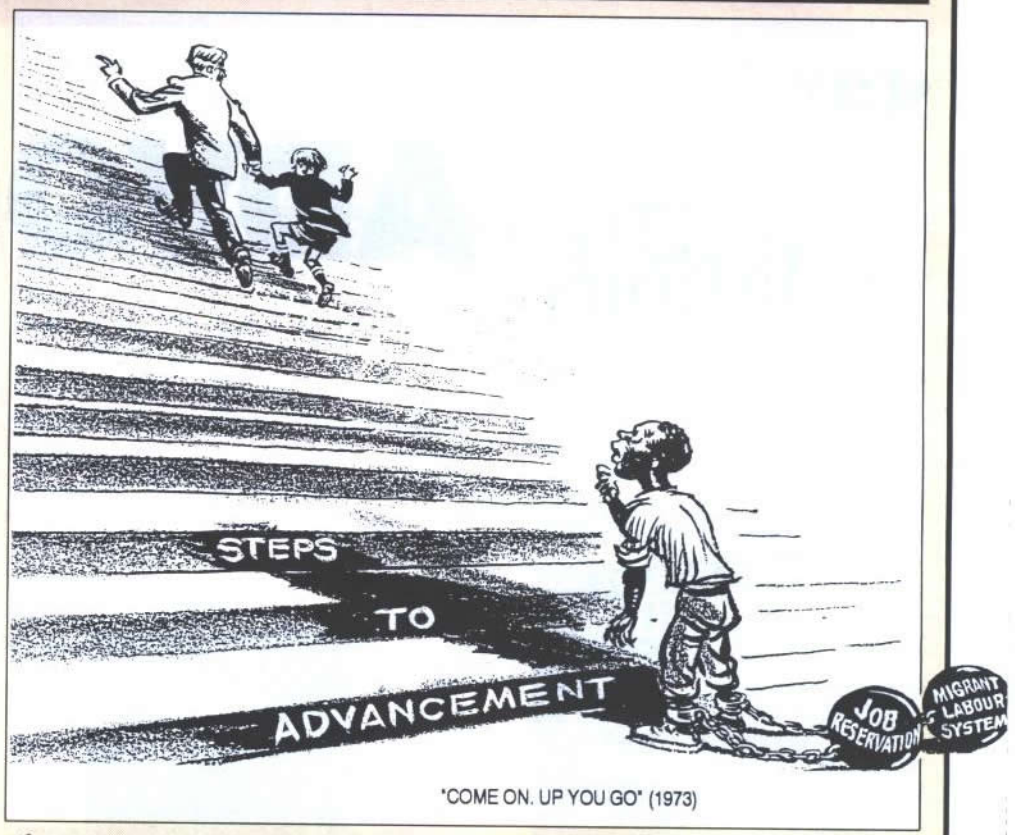


'WHERE TO, THIS LITTLE LOT?' (1970)

"I'm not a hater and therefore not a good political cartoonist. As a good cartoonist you shouldn't worry about other people's feelings, but I do."

'THERE'S NONE SO BLIND...' (1949)

'WELL, NOW YOU KNOW WHERE WE STAND.' (1987)



"COME ON. UP YOU GO" (1973)

DRIVER MALAN: "... and don't forget, I've only guaranteed to drive you there. I'm not responsible for you after that!" (1939)

"I've always been anti-Apartheid. When the National Party came to power in 1948, the letters I received attacking my work were incredibly vicious."

"... AND THE SOONER THIS GOVERNMENT KNOWS WE DEMAND TO BE GOVERNED BY CIVILISED WHITES THE BETTER!"

"MIND THE STEPPE, ADOLPH." (1941)

ADVOCACY

Dr Ted Avis, a botanist involved since 1989 in trying to assess the impact mining would have at St Lucia, comes out fighting in this article, arguing that an emotive Press sensationalised the issue and undermined public confidence in scientific (and democratic) Integrated Environmental Management. The Press, he says, did the public no favours.

THE PROPOSAL by Richards Bay Minerals to mine heavy minerals from the sand dunes of the Eastern Shores of Lake St Lucia resulted in an unprecedented outcry. The media and particularly the press, played a major role in this debate by adding ample fuel to the fire.

What I intend to do here is to trace the media involvement in the St Lucia issue since it first became public in September 1989, and to show how the media have influenced the entire debate.

The St Lucia controversy presents a fine example of advocacy journalism, with biased and inaccurate reporting frustrating scientists to such an extent that requests for objective reporting in newspapers were made to a number of journals (See for example, *African Wildlife* 1991). This is probably because it is the primary objective of reporters to sell their product by means of a "good", and preferably sensational, controversial story. This is fighting talk, and I intend to substantiate it by tracing the involvement of the press in the St Lucia controversy since its genesis in September 1989.

Media influences on the St Lucia controversy were investigated by logging newspaper articles written on St Lucia since June 1989. These were obtained from various sources including the SA Press Cutting Agency in Natal. All these articles were perused by the author and two Rhodes University journalism students, and categorised as either pro-mining, anti-mining or neutral (objective). No criteria were needed for anti-mining articles since headings such as "Outrage over threatened rape of Natal"

in environmental reporting

(*Saturday Star*, 9/11/89) were fairly self-explanatory. Articles which provided a balanced, informed viewpoint and had been well researched were classified as neutral or objective, but pro-mining articles were more difficult to identify. They tended to present arguments in favour of mining, and were more frequent in magazines.

A total of 1351 articles were checked over the 52-month period from June 1989 until August 1993. This represents a significant proportion, but not all, of the articles written about the St Lucia issue. In addition to all these articles, a massive petition under the heading "Save St Lucia" was initiated by *The Star* and supported by the *Natal Witness* and *Mercury*. This petition generated almost 300 000 signatures against the mining, and was a direct product of the coverage of the issue provided by both television and newspapers. It is interesting to note that the issue of coal mining in the Kruger National Park, which attracted national and international condemnation, elicited only about one third of that number of signatures in a petition campaign.

The results of the St Lucia media survey are presented in the graph, which traces the number of articles per month in the three categories from June 1989 to July 1993. The two critical aspects one needs to consider are the intensity of media activity in terms of the number of printed articles published during the past 52 months, and their content. A similar analysis was undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment, since it provides a basis for the prediction of the probable impacts on public perceptions of the mining issue and hence on the image of St Lucia. In their article, St Lucia: the Sense(s) of the Place (one of the specialist reports in the St Lucia EIA), John Butler-Adam and Michael Haynes speculated that the intense publicity about St Lucia has created or fostered the image of St Lucia as a place of symbolic value in the collective hearts of South Africans. Furthermore, the press gave the false impression that the mining would take place in a nature reserve, and that most of the Eastern Shores of St Lucia would be affected by mining. In fact, only 1436 hectares of the total 12 837 hectares of the Eastern Shores State Forest would be affected by mining, and this represents about one per cent of the so-called "Greater St Lucia Wetland Park". This highlights the very important and responsible role that the media have when reporting on environmental issues. Like the decision makers, developers and environmental consultants, the media should also be held accountable for their actions.

The peaks in the number of articles published correspond to various stages in the IEM procedure. Notice that only one or two articles were published in June, July and August 1989. It was during this period, when the initial study was undertaken by myself, Roy Lubke and Peter Jackson, that we attempted to invite comment from the public through the press. We sent out a number of press releases to SAPA and the Natal newspapers, but it was only *The Argus* that carried an article on St Lucia in June. At this time the forcing out of PW Botha was more newsworthy. The large peak in October and November 1989 follows the release of the original environmental study. These articles were very speculative, and presented an absolutely "worse case" scenario of the possible environmental impacts of mining. Headlines such as "St Lucia mine will have catastrophic results!" (*Business Day* 19/9/89) and "Stop the ravages of unspoiled areas!" (*Sunday Tribune* 17/9/89) were the order of the day. There was also concern raised over the inadequacy of the original report. This period also saw the launching of the "Save St Lucia" campaign in *The Star* (13/9/89).

Interest in the issue continued until April the following year, but it began to dwindle


Public opinion could halt dune mining

50 000 support St Lucia campaign

By James Clarke

RBM's MANAGING DIRECTOR, Mr Roy ... pherson, has given his assurances that his ... pany will not mine the dunes north of St ... should the environmental consultants ... predict disasterous consequences ... environment.

DEBATE

Outrage over threatened rape of Natal

Mining battle h

This land is our land

The case against the minin of St Luci

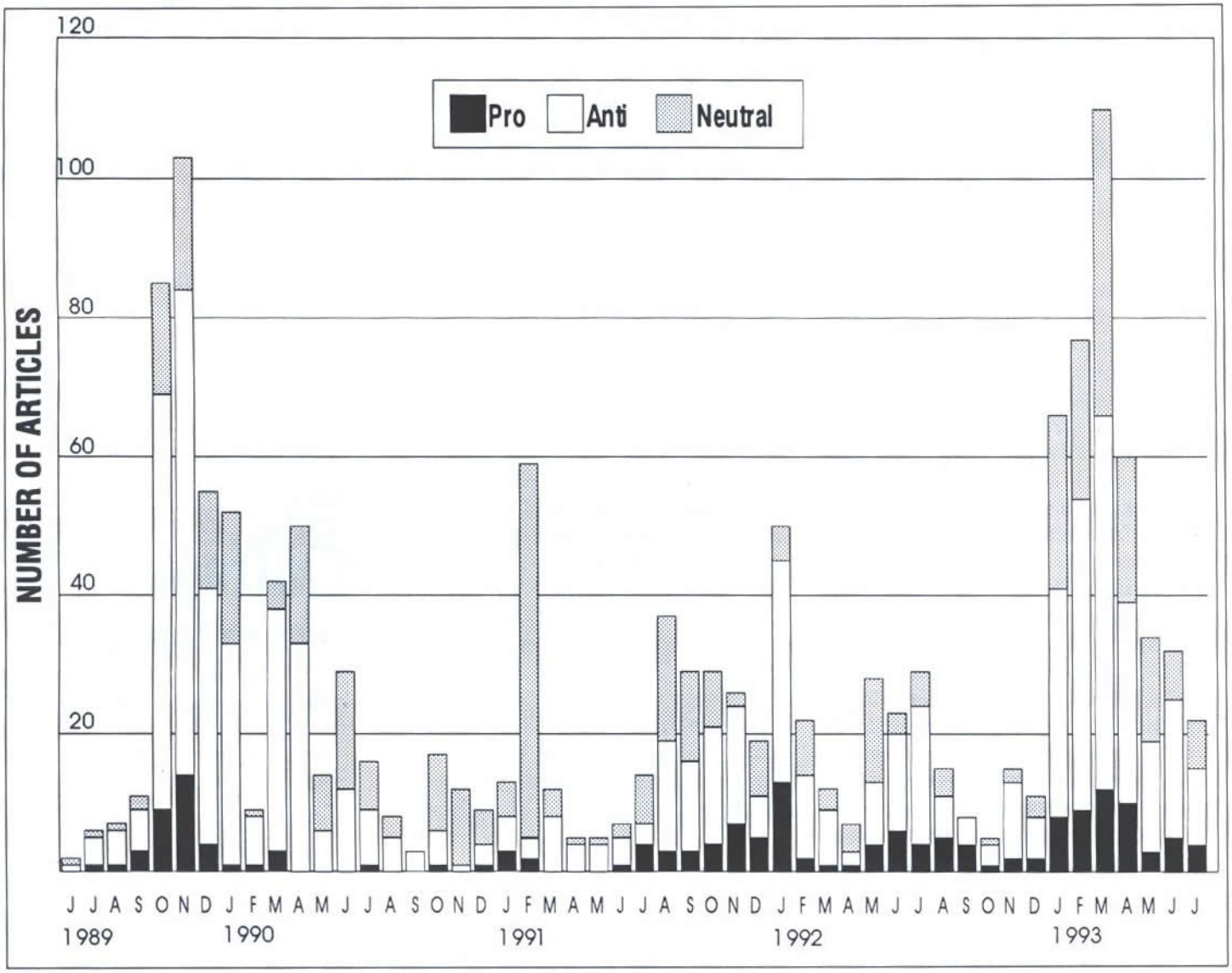
Fishermen have yet to speak on controversi

VOICE FROM WILDERNES

Ian Player

Anglers, divers unite in fight to stop mining

ST LUCIA PRESS COVERAGE



steadily throughout 1990. It was during this period that the detailed Environmental Impact Assessment following IEM procedure was put into practice. Scientific and social studies, as well as liaison with "interested and affected parties" through a system of regular circulars was ongoing during 1990 and most of 1991. Such banal and factual information was clearly not very newsworthy, and we experienced great difficulty in implementing the public consultation programme, since most press releases were not published. However, there was a slight shift, from June 1990 to July 1991, towards more objective reporting, and articles were a little more factual and accurate.

The peak in interest in late 1991 and early 1992 corresponds to the release of the 23 specialist reports for public review. The anti-mining articles focused on the inadequacy of the two-year study contained in the 1000-page volume, but there was in fairness a larger proportion of objective reports compared to earlier coverage (See graph).

"The intense publicity about St Lucia has created or fostered the image of St Lucia as a place of symbolic value in the collective hearts of South Africans."

Renewed interest in May, June and July 1992 was in response to the expected release of the Environmental Impact Assessment, and comments made about the issue by Minister George Bartlett and discussions in Parliament concerning a private members Wetland Conservation Bill. Another interesting news item was the statement that two of the doyens of conservation, Ian Player and Nolly Zaloumis were told to "take a hike" from the board of the Natal Parks Board, supposedly because of their strong opposition to mining (*Sunday Times*, 12/6/92). This was followed by reports on the formation of a coalition of conservationists who vowed to fight for the Eastern Shores of St Lucia. This helped strengthen the year-old Campaign for St Lucia, which continued to receive a significant amount of press coverage, as reflected in the overall anti-mining stance of the press.

1993 saw another flourish in the number of articles, but there was a greater amount of objectivity than in previous years. This may have been because the previous anti-mining attitude led to calls for objectivity, such as Minister Bartlett's letter printed under the

	PROMINING	ANTI MINING	NEUTRAL	TOTAL
Natal Mercury	17	38	27	**82**
Natal Witness	18	44	18	**80**
Natal Daily News	18	102	46	**166**
Zululand Observer	8	1	16	**25**
Sunday Tribune	5	12	3	**20**
The Star	10	52	14	**76**
Other & magazines	54	164	111	**329**
TOTAL	**130**	**413**	**235**	**778**

heading "St Lucia: plea for objectivity" (*Saturday Star* 14/1/93). It appears that in general the articles in January and February 1993 supported the IEM procedure being followed. However, after the release of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) the focus shifted to its shortcomings, and to cases where environmentalists sought to discredit its findings because of the reports perceived favouring the mining option. Due to this perception, certain leading interested parties who supported the IEM procedure (eg. The Wildlife Society) registered rejection of the EIR and the IEM procedure.

The large number of articles in March and April 1993 correspond to the release of the long-awaited EIR on 18 March 1993. The greatest proportion of objective reports appeared at this time, mainly because they simply reported on the findings of the EIR. It is also possible that the journalists covering the issue did not feel sufficiently qualified to interpret and pronounce judgement on a report of such scientific complexity, although such humility had never been commonplace in the covering of this issue. It was only later on that articles began focussing on the report's shortcomings, fuelled by the anti-mining lobbyists' comments. Headlines such as "St Lucia report dismissed by anti-mine campaigners" (*The Citizen* 20/3/93) and "Dune-mining EIA called a whitewash" (*Sunday Tribune* 21/3/93) received prominence. Interest in the issue began losing momentum by mid 1993, but it is likely that November will see renewed interest when the Review Panel Hearings are held. This represents the final stage in the process, and is the last opportunity the public will have to voice further objections.

From the table we see that 53 per cent of all articles written in the past two years have taken an anti-mining stance and only 16.7 per cent were sympathetic towards mining. The balance (30.3 per cent) are impartial or objective, but unfortunately this impartiality does not make up the majority of articles. Ideally this should be the case, so that readers can make up their own minds concerning important issues. One could argue that the articles actually reflect public opinion, but this is a weak argument since an even larger proportion of articles from June 1989 to April 1990 (70 per cent) viewed the mining option in a negative light. This emotive, conservation orientated stand by the press has strongly influenced public opinion and resulted in an anti-mining mindset. This was aided by other media coverage, particularly national television. Callie Long's report for *TV1 News* painted a very bleak picture of the future of St Lucia, as did both *Carte Blanche* and *50/50* in October 1989. Even the very extensive public consultation programme, with its objective and factual information being readily supplied as part of the IEM procedure, was not able to dilute this anti-mining attitude. This is mainly because most people are disinclined to read the rather lengthy and somewhat boring reports, and are therefore willing to accept summaries or other assessments from the press.

As expected, the largest number of articles emanate from the Natal newspapers, but *The Argus*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Beeld* also published a significant number. In the final Environmental Impact Report the CSIR surveyed a total of 1155 press reports that appeared in 148 publications, from September 1991 to July 1993. It judged 58.4 per cent to oppose mining, and only 9.5 per cent to favour mining. It also found that 560 articles (47.5 per cent) appeared in the Natal press, with 438 of these appearing in the *Daily News*, *Natal Mercury*, *Natal Witness* and *Zululand Observer*. Similar results are presented in the table, but it is worth noting that the first two newspapers, together with *The Star*, *The Argus* and the *Sunday Tribune* published 379 or 49 per cent of all articles. All these newspapers belong to Argus Newspapers Ltd, a company soley owned by the Anglo American Group.

One can quite confidently conclude from this analysis, as did the CSIR in their final report, that reporting of the St Lucia issue has tended to dramatise it and express opposition to the mining option. These articles reflect the emotional nature of the issue, with scientific facts and tangible evidence being ignored. In their eloquent specialist report, St Lucia: the Sense(s) of the Place, Butler-Adam and Haynes conclude that "...it would not be inaccurate to suggest that on the basis of public interest, St Lucia represents the catalyst in an environmental renaissance which has recently swept South Africa", and furthermore that "... reality as it is understood and perceived by the public is one that is largely created and shaped by mass vendors of information such as television and press. Consequently, it might be ventured that the media had the most formative influence on the image of St Lucia as a wilderness area of inestimable value". The media therefore have a very responsible role to play in the formation of public opinion on crucial issues such as the environment.

Unfortunately, press coverage of the St Lucia issue has been largely counter-productive to the aims and objectives of Integrated Environmental Management. It has undermined public confidence in a process that has worthwhile principles such as informed decision-making, accountability for decisions taken, democratic regard for individual rights and obligations and the opportunity for public and specialist input in the decision-making process. One of the challenges environmental science therefore faces in South Africa is to educate reporters about the objectives and principles of environmental management, as unfortunately it appears that the blind are (mis)leading the blind. ●

➸ *Dr Ted Avis is a lecturer in the Department of Botany at Rhodes University.*

See next page for a response from James Clarke, an assistant editor on *The Star*.

"Press exposed underhanded St Lucia deal"

James Clarke takes up the cudgel in defence of advocacy in the St Lucia issue, arguing that emotive journalism is much more effective than unemotional science.

BIASED and inaccurate reporting? Dr Avis could have been describing the very "scientific" report — that so-called EIA on mining at St Lucia put together at Rhodes — which put the Press on to the St Lucia deal in 1989. RBM was trying to rush the mining permit through before the public could stop it. The "scientific" report was a rush job which, I know, greatly embarrassed its authors. Yet it was used by RBM, to wave in front of dumb decision-makers — and they very nearly got away with it.

I believe in advocacy journalism. It got rid of apartheid. It got rid of Vorster and the Info scandal gang. It accelerated the acceptance of EIAs. It saved Kruger Park from being mined in 1981 for coal after being illegally prospected by Iscor with Government connivance.

This word "sensationalise" is used by some scientists without really understanding it. To print a full page article telling the public that there is a sneaky effort underway to mine St Lucia's Eastern Shores is not sensationalising the subject. It simply gives people an idea of its importance. To toss out the scientific jargon is not sensationalising — it is a newspaperman's duty to the public.

Science, up to this year, should have hanged its head in shame over the St Lucia affair. Of course the public has little faith in science. Science needs to **earn** respect not expect the Press to bestow it.

Dr Avis talks exactly as Minister Kotze talked: he says the Press "gave the false impression" that the nature reserve was being mined. Whatever some newspapers might have done at the beginning, they certainly have clarified, in the public mind, a very accurate picture now. Remember, for months RBM refused to talk to the SA Press. Only when ordered to do so (by RTZ in Britain) did they talk to the British Press. They did not give a damn about South Africa. *The Star* yelled blue murder about this — only then did RBM talk to us. They had the grace to apologise.

It is true mining is outside the existing reserve — just. But when mining takes place on the hills above a nature reserve it tends to spoil the atmosphere — at least for the discerning. This business about mining "affecting only one per cent of the St Lucia Wetland Park" is also Minister Kotze talking. What park? It does not exist.

I was the first newspaperman to see a sketch, done with colour pens, of the proposed park. The day I saw the thing, still wet, I was asked if I could be at the launch of the greater St Lucia Wetland Park, at St Lucia itself, next day! I couldn't. SABCTV was asked, and dutifully went. Nobody was more startled by the Minister's announcement that night on TV than his own staff. I lie. There **was** a group which was more startled — those who owned the land. Nobody had told them either.

Make no mistake, mining will ruin the St Lucia scene for all our kids and grandchildren. It might recover mid 21st century.

The reason for the valleys and peaks of interest in Press coverage which Dr Avis mentions are so obvious I would be offending readers' intelligence by explaining them.

The public have the Press to thank — not science or scientists — for exposing the underhanded St Lucia deal, the underhanded Kruger Park coal deal, the underhanded toxic waste scandal, for persuading Eskom (and other industries) to adopt a more aesthetic and scientific (natural science) attitude.

Emotive journalism — something which offends Dr Avis — is a great deal more effective than unemotional science. St Lucia is something which one MUST be emotional about. It is a uniquely beautiful and exciting place — one of the very few large unspoiled wildlife areas left in South Africa. It has international status as a wetland area and is a mustering area for birds on international flyways. (Why on earth do you think RBM was so scared of public debate?) Why must the public allow RBM to mine it simply because it will be cheaper for RBM to mine that soft sand than the more recalcitrant areas they own?

Dr Avis seems to think we were wrong making St Lucia a national issue. Where else have we got that is still almost unspoiled, wild and beautiful? Kruger, the Drakensberg, the Kalahari — and then?

I recall the pro-mining lobby sneering when Margaux Hemingway, in South Africa, appealed for St Lucia to be saved. "She's never been there!" they cried.

They were right. But when I spoke to RBM's two major scientific advisers (at Richards Bay) and asked if they thought the rehabilitative methods used at Richards Bay were good for St Lucia, one of them, Cambridge ecologist Dr Malcolm Coe, said he'd never been to St Lucia! I then asked Professor Rudi van Aarde. He hadn't been there either! Both told a Press conference they just hadn't had time — and neither has found time since. Yet St Lucia is a few minutes by chopper and 40 minutes by road.

Now I find that sensational.

As I say, scientists, as a group, have not emerged from the St Lucia debate with much glory. ●

James Clarke is an assistant editor on ***The Star.***

FREEDOM OF SPEECH
and the new constitution

In the new South Africa journalists can look forward to constitutionally entrenched freedom of speech. But that freedom won't be absolute, warns ***JOHN GROGAN.***

TIMES have changed dramatically for the media. Not so long ago there were more laws relating to the press than I could name in half an hour — laws which prevented us from knowing what certain people and parties were saying and thinking and doing (and which even prevented us from knowing that certain people existed), laws forbidding discussion of stupid and corrupt acts the government was perpetrating and, finally, during the recent states of emergency, laws preventing us from knowing what was happening on the other side of the street.

Today we are in a very different situation. We are not suffering from a surfeit of law. In fact, arguably, we are suffering from a dearth of law. What laws do exist, and there are still some of the old laws on the statute books, are widely flouted by newspapers. Two examples are reports of the Winnie Mandela trial, which in my view, came very close to transgressing one of the laws relating to contempt, and reports dealing with the frequent protests outside courts of law. There is actually a law prohibiting publication of details of those kinds of protests.

There is anarchy in the land — and there is clearly a need for a new legal system to replace the old repressive one and fill in the vacuum left by its demise.

Now I don't know any more than the next person what a future legal order is going to look like. But what is undoubtedly in the offing, is some sort of an entrenchment of freedom of speech and the media in the constitution and, secondly, some kind of constitutional court. The function of this court will be to adjudicate alleged violations of those freedoms so that the executive arm of government is precluded from using the law to serve its own propaganda needs in a way which the Nationalist government did so effectively in the late '80s.

That is essentially the objective of a constitutional court in a bill of rights — to prevent government intrusion on the media.

If we get a constitutional court and if we get an entrenched justiceable bill of rights that, I think, will represent considerable progress. What it will mean is that anyone — government or private individuals — who wishes to prevent the media from publishing certain information or views will have to justify whatever prohibition they seek. The only way in which they will be able to justify those kinds of restrictions and prohibitions will be to satisfy the court — be it a constitutional court or an ordinary court — that in their particular circumstances the interests served by the prohibition sought override those which will be served by the publication of the information at hand.

The court will, in all instances, be asked to balance the interest served — the public interest served by publication — with the interest that will arguably be served by the prohibition of that publication. In other words, we will no longer have a situation in which the government can decide *ex cathedra* what may not be published. In every instance, the restrictions sought will have to be justified.

If that then is the general approach, it should be obvious that the parameters of press freedom in the new dispensation can't be described in detail in the constitution itself. I think that is true of any bill of rights that exists anywhere in the world. They simply lay down broad principles. Just like the American courts have had to do, our courts will have to work out when and in what circumstances particular restrictions on press freedom are justified.

I would suggest that, like the American courts, ours will start from the presumption that, although freedom of speech is fundamental, it is not, and cannot be, absolute. In other words, to use legal terminology, there will be a rebuttable presumption that a person has a right to say or publish what he wishes to say. But that presumption is rebuttable. In other words, one will be able to go to that court to seek to prove that the presumption in favour of the right should give way to some higher or competing interest.

The point is that whatever rights and interests are guaranteed in a future constitution, there is always the possibility of conflict between them and it is going to be the function of the constitutional court to balance them in particular instances.

The question really is how, and under what circumstances, will the authorities — government or individuals — be able to justify proposed restrictions on press freedom?

WHEN ARE RESTRICTIONS ON FREE SPEECH JUSTIFIED?

SOME would argue that the only way one can have a media which performs its undoubtedly necessary functions for a democratic political system is if all restrictions are eliminated. Now I think that goes too far, and I think it goes further than any successful functioning democracy would allow. There are, after all, particular circumstances in which the courts in all democracies do allow certain restrictions.

Privacy and reputation

The first of these, and I refer to broad areas here, in which it seems some restrictions are justified, is where publication of news invades the privacy or reputation of individuals and where no discernible public benefit is to be served by such publication.

This is very much akin to what our present law of defamation requires. That law states that an infringement of a person's privacy or reputation is, to use a legalistic phrase again, *prima facie* unlawful — on the face of it unlawful — unless the publisher

Shouldn't a person be able to do things in private, free from the prying eyes of the press?

can prove that some public benefit is to be served by the publication of that information.

I think one of the considerations that our constitutional court will have to give to this area of the law is whether that additional requirement of public benefit should be eliminated from our law and our law brought into the position of that of the United States of America and England where the truth is deemed to be of paramount interest and a sufficient defence.

I think one has to concede that there are circumstances in which the hurt caused by publication of the truth is unjustified. For example, shouldn't a person (an example, as often cited by the courts) be able to live down some regrettable action performed in his youth? Surely his past wrong-doings shouldn't be dragged up by the media, possibly for malicious ends? Shouldn't a person be able to do things in private, free from the prying eyes of the press? Shouldn't I be able to claim that my private correspondence is sacrosanct?

A yes to all these questions doesn't mean that people in positions of authority should be able to cover up evidence of their misdoings. But the test should be whether the embarrassing or private information disclosed has a bearing on their public offices. Extra-marital romps clearly have a bearing on the fitness for office of a priest. I'm not sure that they affect the capacity of a politician or businessman.

Lies

The second restriction that I would suggest is a prohibition on the publication of outright lies. Strangely, our current law does not make it an offence to publish lies, unless those lies cause particular individuals financial loss or are defamatory. The media should be prevented from publishing news which they know to be false or tendentious insofar as they purport to be conveyors of the truth.

Trade secrets

Trade secrets is the third area which I would suggest should and probably would still deserve protection. Freedom to trade and compete is a matter which requires respect for traders' confidential documents and negotiations. Our law does recognise this in the concept of unlawful competition. For example someone going off and selling a trade secret can be stopped by an interdict. The problem here, of course, is that claims to trade secrets can be used to cover up criminal acts, corruption and stupidity — for example, Masterbond. But, once again, the test ought to be whether the public interest is to be served by publication.

The recent Sage finding is a case in point. The Appellate Division decided in favour of Sage and upheld the interdict on the basis that a company, like any ordinary person, has a right to privacy. That evoked the ire of certain journalists, in particular Ken Owen of the *Sunday Times*, who said that this was the worst judgment that had ever been decided by the courts and had, in fact, done more harm to Press freedom than the Nationalist government managed to do in 50 years of deliberate pressure.

Owen's claim is manifest nonsense, because if one looks at the judgment, what the court is saying is that a company has the right to privacy. If that right of privacy is invaded, it has a *prima facie* right to stop the disclosure of that information. The respondent newspaper then has an obligation to show that there is some public interest to be served by the publication of that information. What the courts said is: "Let's look in that light and in terms of those principles at the information or at the story which the *Financial Mail* proposes to publish". And they could see no public benefit whatsoever in the publication of this information. It's partly defamatory, partly untrue and there was no argument set up as to the fact that it was to the public benefit. So the Appellate Division simply said that there was no basis for overturning the lower court's decision. It doesn't come anywhere near the implications that Ken Owen suggests.

Encouraging crime

The fourth area, also controversial, is restrictions on the publication of information or the exercise of free speech used to encourage people to commit criminal acts. Exhortations to people to commit crimes are a clear infringement of the intended victim's right to life, property or security. This restriction gives rise to problems but, to me, the test is whether there is a direct causal link between the exhortation and the crime. We have difficult cases in public life at the moment with slogans of "One Settler One Bullet" and "Kill the Farmer Kill the Boer".

There is no evidence, granted, that these have a direct effect on people who do go off and shoot settlers, whoever they are, or farmers, who are an identifiable body. But there again the court would have to ask itself: "Is there a real likelihood that particular use of free speech will give rise to the action as exhorted?" In some countries slogans and rhetoric which create hatred towards certain groups are prohibited. A further problem is whether the media, as opposed to the utterers of the slogan, should be prevented from giving publicity to those who use words and slogans of that type.

The fact of the matter is that people are using those slogans at the moment arguably because they are encouraged by the prospect of media publicity. But whether the media should be punished, or restricted is a different question.

The American courts for example, deal with these kinds of problems in terms of a test that they call the "clear and present danger test" which is similar to the one that I am suggesting.

Fair trial

The fifth restriction is on the exercise of free speech which prevents people from

If a person comes up with a doctrine — even a racist doctrine — the answer is to compete with it by argument, not by prohibition.

having fair trials. A fair trial is a guarantee which will be entrenched in the constitution in whichever form or whichever model is accepted. I think it's clear that the media can quite easily prejudice the outcome of trials by publishing information, by pre-judging a person's guilt, by interfering with witnesses or by commenting on the evidence given by witnesses. Such infringements of the individual's right to due process will certainly continue to be interdicted.

The one thing that has to be avoided, however, is the *sub judice* rule being turned into what is known in England as 'the gagging writ'. That is, the use of the *sub judice* rule to prevent the media from commenting or reporting on matters of public concern simply because judicial proceedings are pending.

The English thalidomide tragedy is the classic warning in this regard. We had a similar kind of situation in our law where the Government extended by legislation the contempt rule to proceedings before commissions. It could then shelter under the *sub judice* rule by simply shifting something to a commission.

Alistair Sparks of the then Rand Daily Mail came into conflict with that particular provision back in the late '70s when he commented on the issue that was before a commission investigating township violence. He was prosecuted but the court took a very strict approach against the government and said that particular legislation should not be construed in such a way as to prevent public discussion about the issue before the commission, if it was indeed a matter of general public concern.

National defence

Restrictions on press freedom in the name of national defence in a democracy are controversial because I think the problem is, in the final analysis, anything can be regarded as related to the defence of a nation. The National Party, certainly read this notion of defence in a very far-reaching light. It prevented the publication of information which was economically damaging, it prevented publication of information relating to our oil resources and so on, all under the guise of the fact that this was necessary for military defence. We had the absurd situation in the '70s where everybody knew our troops were in Angola but nobody was allowed to read about it in the newspapers.

The most one should concede in this respect, is that the government has a right to classified information but if such information is leaked the test again should be along the lines of the "clear and present danger" test. Information that our troops were in Angola would clearly not have satisfied that test.

WHEN ARE RESTRICTIONS NOT JUSTIFIED?

THERE are restrictions which are not reconcilable with the democratic purpose.

Starting a newspaper

In the past we have had prohibitions on who should have the right to start or work for the media. We have had a provision in the Internal Security Act that provided for fairly prohibitive forfeitable deposit requirements on certain individuals who applied for a licence to start a newspaper.

Eroticism

Eroticism falling short of hardcore pornography should be allowed. I realise the implications here of establishing the difference between the two. I think the prohibition we suffered in the past in this respect was absolutely absurd. The courts should not be asked whether a picture of a bosom is criminal or not.

Public events

There must be no prohibition on the right to report any public events. Here I have in mind the kind of restrictions which were imposed during the state of emergency. Prohibitions on reporting on so-called unrest situations and on the reporting of security actions were the two prohibitions which plunged us into an information vacuum. If an event is public, it must be publishable.

Anti-democratic doctrines

Prohibitions on the right to express any views on the grounds merely of a doctrine which they convey cannot be allowed. If you are going to have a democracy you must allow people to publish their theories even if they are anti-democratic and even if people don't like them. I think that is absolutely fundamental and if a person comes up with a doctrine — even a racist doctrine — the answer is to compete with it by argument, not by prohibition.

Government corruption

Prohibitions on the reporting of any corrupt or criminal acts of government or other authorities are out. There should be no law on our statute book, for example like the Protection of Information Act, which enables the government to actually prohibit, if it dared to do so, the publication of information on how many cups of tea an official drank per day in our public post office.

Government coercion

There must be no laws which enable the government to compel the media to publish its own, or other parties, views. Certainly in the Soviet Union, for example, there were such laws.

And not least important, there ought to be no prohibitions whatsoever on criticisms of government policy. ●

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*John Grogan worked as an assistant editor on the **Eastern Province Herald** before joining Rhodes University where he is now professor in the Law Faculty. This article is an edited version of a talk delivered at the National Arts Festival Winter School.*

I HAVE SPENT the past three years in the newspaper business, primarily involved with marketing and research. In that time I have had the privilege of working with both the gamut of newspaper staff and with readers of newspapers. Sitting in a viewing room with editorial and even advertising staff, observing readers' reactions to various aspects of newspapers, has been both fascinating and insightful. It has never failed to amaze me that newspaper people are so critical and even disdainful of readers. I am reminded of a "shoe" cartoon in which the editor is told: "We can do a much better job with this newpaper if we kept in touch with our readers." Shoe asks how and is told: "We survey our readers... ask them what they like." His response? "Bah! What do readers know about the newspaper business?"

by **CLEO EHLERS**

Marketing analyst
Marketing and Media Research

Newspapers of the future:

a marriage of marketing and meaning

I am a passionate believer in the printed word and in newspapers. I am also a passionate believer in marketing. All too often the "M" word is seen as a dirty word on the editorial floor. One can almost hear it being spoken with capital letters. Journalists tend to see marketing, especially in reference to newspapers, as a coldly commercial force which is intent on hijacking age-old newspaper traditions.

The reality is that we face an uncertain future in newspapers and particularly in their current form. Circulation of newspapers over the past 10 years in this country has been on a steady decline. Nothing very strong, nothing screamingly significant but on a downward curve rather than an upward climb. If we don't begin to see ourselves as beholden to our customers — that amorphous group of readers for whom we say we write — we may as well close up shop. Our existence doesn't depend on our own sense of importance. If the reader no longer reads us, to whom are we talking?

At the same time there is a very fine line which we tread. On the one hand, what is our moral obligation as opinion-formers and watchdogs of society and on the other hand, what is our duty to readers? Here lies the great dilemma. Neil Postman is, I believe, something of a prophet. His book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* touched my life in a way which is difficult to qualify. The cover of the book has a frozen TV frame of Ronald Reagan, on which a big red nose is superimposed. The Washington Post described this book as "brilliant, troubling and important". I have to agree, it is indeed a troubling indictment of modern media and a serious challenge to marketers.

What Postman essentially sets out in his book is the contention that the "Huxlian View" (*Brave New World*), rather than the "Orwellian View" (*1984*), is right. In Postman's words:

Orwell warns that we will be overcome by an externally imposed oppression. But in Huxley's vision, no Big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history. As he saw it, people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think.

What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who would want to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance...In short Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us.

The more I read of this book the more dismayed I felt about the ascending sun of television and the descending moon of print. There is much to be said for Postman's view that we are trivialising our world to the point where whatever we sell depends more on the art of the sale than on the content, quality and usefulness of the product.

And then the marketer in me kicks in. The reality of our world is that people out there, the people to whom we talk and appeal to buy ideas or products, are in fact our raison d'etre. The 1980's ushered in what marketers refer to as the age of Customisation. The key to success in business today is to offer people exactly what they want. The more in tune the product is with the customer, the greater the chance of success.

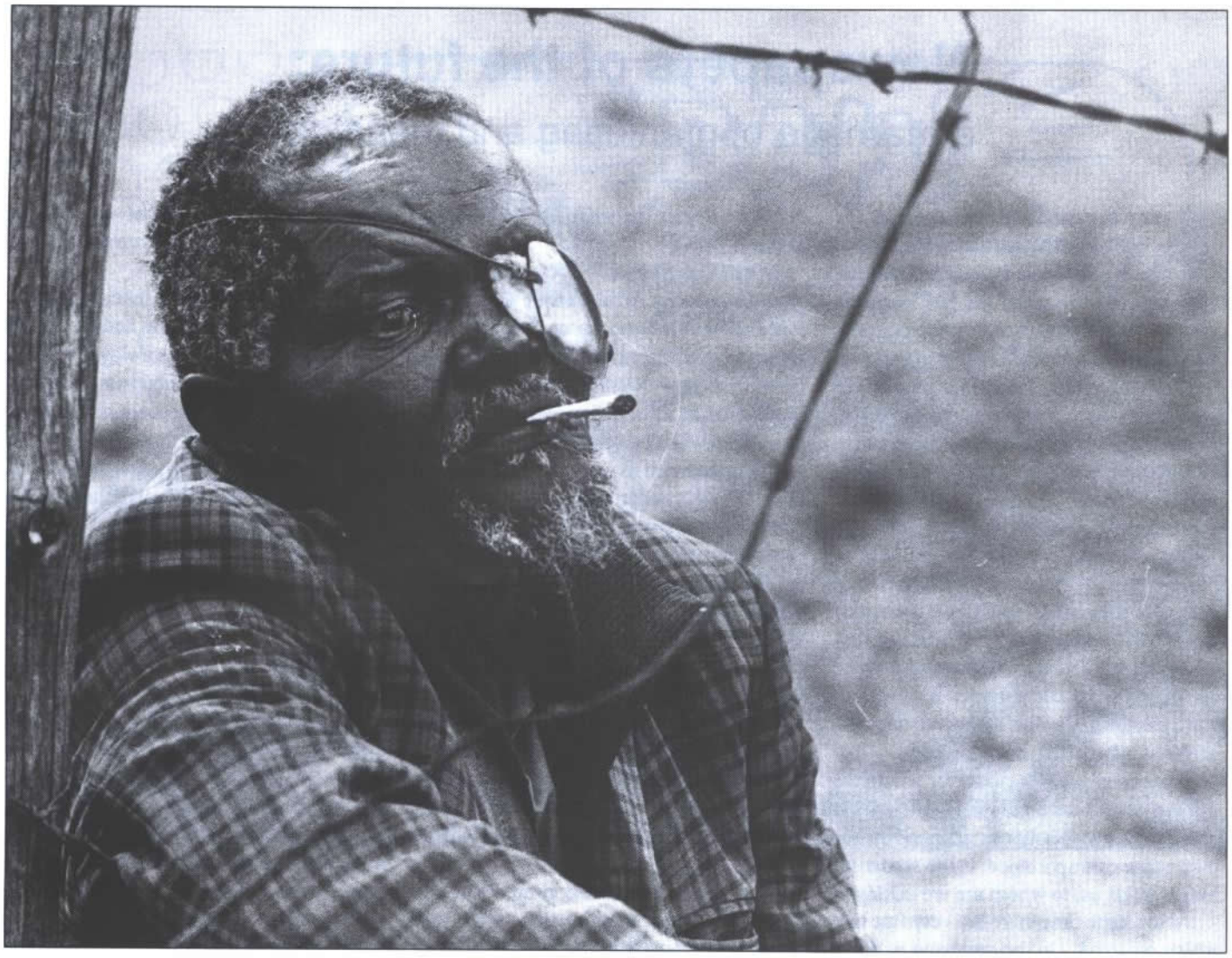
I really do not believe that this concept is wrong. After all, our existence depends on people buying our product. If they no longer have any need for it, or more to the point, no longer have the desire for it, we are dead. It is true that in many ways we are responding to the challenge created by television rather than being innovative on our own. As a result we do find ourselves being drawn into the area of trivia and entertainment, changing our layout and content to be more appealing. And while I say that I am reminded of a paragraph in which Neil Postman slates our modern approach to communication. He says that our politics, religion, news, athletics, education and commerce have all been "transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business, largely without protest or even much popular notice".

What we need to do is take cognisance of both Postman's warning and of the real world of readers. There is a way, I believe, to balance the two. Postman says that discourse on television is conducted largely through visual imagery, giving us conversation in images, not words. His concern that one cannot "do political philosophy on television" because "its form works against the content" highlights the strength of newspapers as a medium of communication.

Postman, however, needs to also understand that as long as people are intent on being entertained at the same time as they are being informed, newspapers need to respond to that call. In my short time in this business I have seen, time and time again, that readers are asking for a new packaging. They are not asking not to be informed or for the "truth" to be hidden from their view. The violence and despair in this country has sickened most of us and we really need to put ourselves into the reader's shoes here. Is it really necessary to blast the reader with front pages of doom and foreboding news? Yes, the facts are that bad things do happen everyday, but perhaps we need to re-think how to present them. I am not suggesting that we turn everything into a fun-to-read story. It's not fun that people are starving to death and that corruption is rife. But corruption and starvation are not the only stories which exist.

First and foremost we are here to serve our readers. We do not have the right to decide what they "need to know" and scoff at the idea that a story on parenting styles in "not important enough" to take up valuable space. Our job is to become part of readers' lives in a meaningful way. We can do this without jeopardising the other role of looking out for the wrongs, the injustices and then commenting on what we think it means.

● ***Amusing Ourselves to Death*** *by Neil Postman (First published in 1986 by William Heinemann Great Britain).*



ALF KUMALO retired in December to give himself time to work on the 10 books he has stored away amongst negatives collected during more than four decades of news and documentary photography. In South Africa, that's a long time to have been out there shooting pics, and conversations with the man reflect this. Strydom, Sobukwe, Biko, Mandela, Cassius Clay, Henry Cooper, Joe Matthews, Louis Armstrong, Martin Luther King, Winnie, Verwoerd — the names pepper the reminiscences.

Alf's father wanted him to be a barber, and bought him a pair of scissors to get him started. But Kumalo knew what he wanted to do — he was aware he thought in images. "Visual impact has always been important. Whenever I see something dramatic it remains in my head for a long, long time. I never went to see my parents, or my brothers, after they died. I get these sharp images I know I'm not going to forget."

He started in 1950, in the time-honoured tradition, as a junior reporter assigned to courts on the *Bantu World*. Surprisingly, his first acquisition was not a camera, but an enlarger. "I was friends with a schoolteacher who said he could print and I knew that when I got into photography, I wanted to get into it very seriously. I bought the enlarger for £35 thinking we'd make money out of it and I'd get the camera I wanted. But he double-crossed me, I never got a cent out of him. So I started with my cousin's old bellows camera.

"I took the enlarger back — I've still got it — and later managed to buy a 120 3¼ Beautyflex. I used Rolleiflex for a hell of long time, it was a strong camera. I've still got a Leica but the old rangefinder Nikon could shoot faster than any 35mm camera, the Leica couldn't compete. There were times people thought I shot without focusing but the Nikon had a split image wheel on the rangefinder that made it very easy to shoot fast."

From *Bantu World* Alf moved to *Drum*, a position that saw him documenting not only township life of the 1950s and 1960s but also travelling to Europe and the United States. "I made friends with Mohammed Ali (Cassius Clay as he then was) in 1963 when he was in London to fight Henry Cooper. I was doing a long feature for *Drum* on Europe, the Berlin Wall had just been completed. I've still got good pics of that."

It was the failure of *Drum* in 1970 to send him on a promised trip to the United States to meet up again with Mohammed Ali, that saw Alf move on to the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail*. Alf made the trip, to cover the Ali/Fraser fight, and during this time met Louis Armstrong, photographing him the day before he died.

His work has been recognised for some time overseas. There have been a number of "honourable mentions" in the ➢

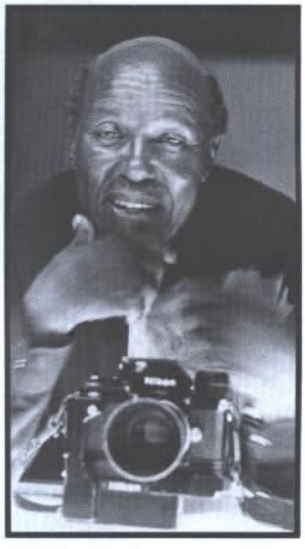
➢ World Press Photographer competition, he was asked to exhibit with Encyclopaedia Brittanica as early as 1962, he's had, or been part of, shows in London and Paris.

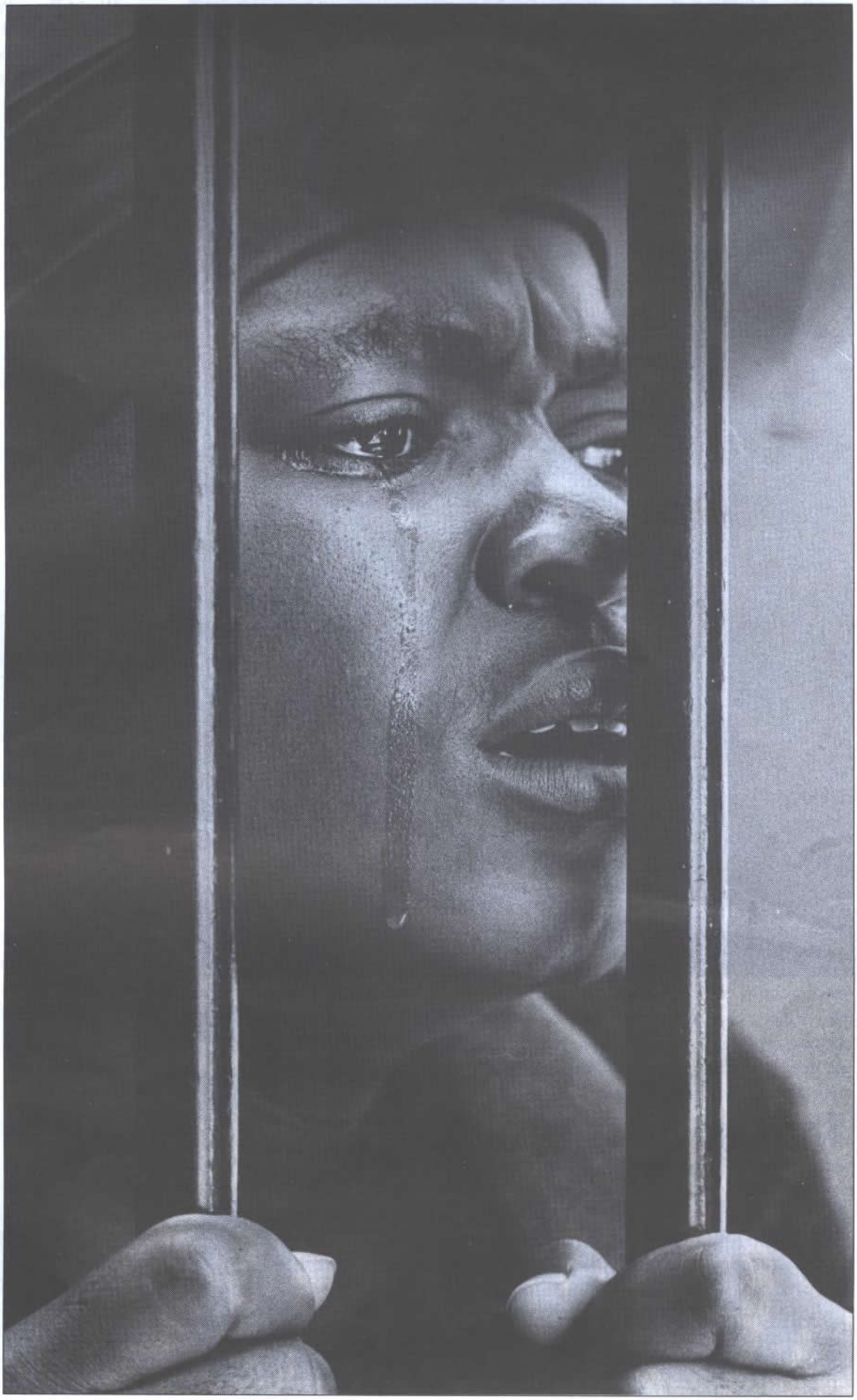
But it wasn't all trips and good times. There have been several, almost mandatory, arrests and in 1987, while with *The Star*, his home was surrounded by eight Hippos as police searched "inside the ceiling" for AK47's and guerrillas. "They broke in so dramatically too. Like something they'd seen on film. They kicked the door until I opened it, I had to lift up my hands and say 'Don't shoot my wife' who was behind me, and they got into the passage, squatting, ready to shoot.

"The irony was that later that day I went in to work as usual and there were the police trying to arrest two guys outside *The Star*. I took some pics, they saw me, and chased me down into the basement. The two guys got away and so did I — they lost everything. The two stories, of the raid on my house and the attempted arrests, ran side-by-side in the paper. A busy day."

Alf's first book *Mandela: Echoes of an Era* was published by Penguin in 1990. But besides his books there's no chance of his hanging up his cameras next year. He still wants a shot of Mandela on April 27, to complete his chronicle of the man, who is also a personal friend. But even after that he'll keep shooting. "Even when I use a stick to walk I'll still take pictures. That's how much I'm in love with photography." ➤

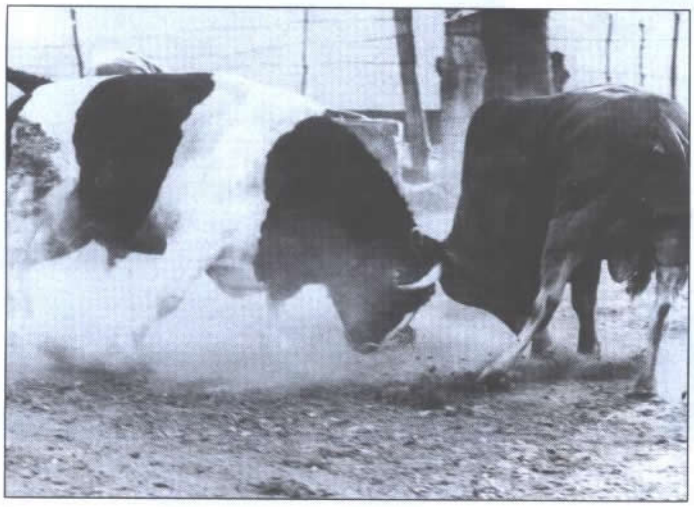
Through the eyes of ALF KUMALO



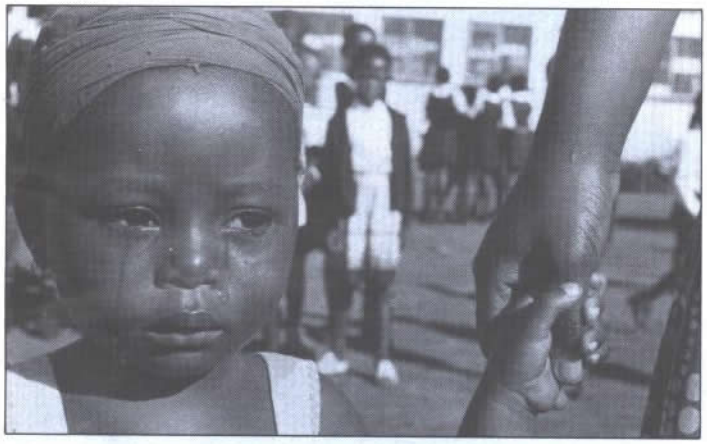


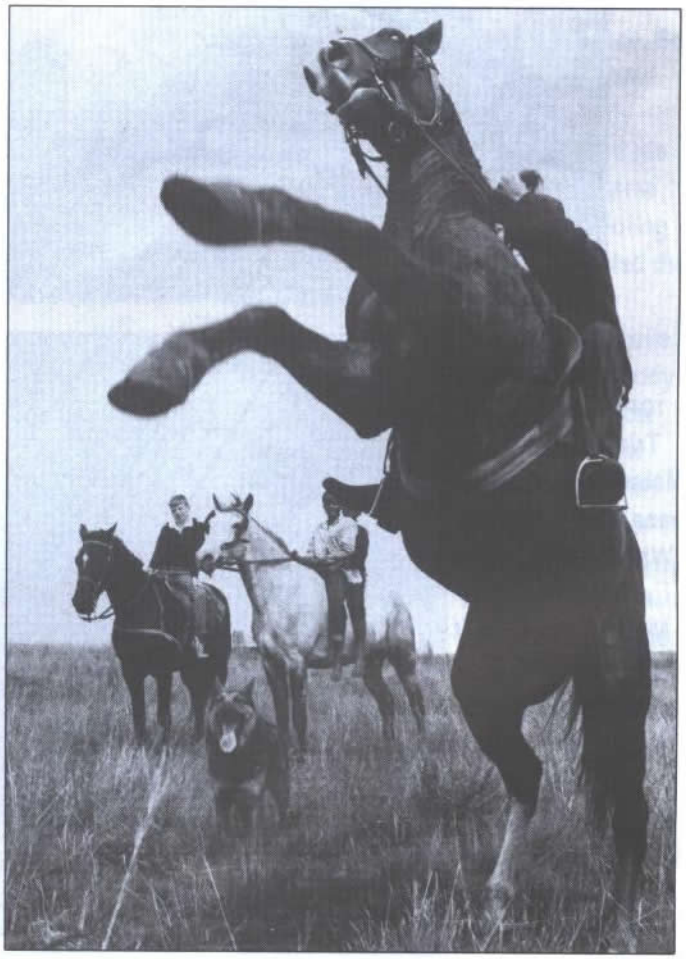
"Where is my son?"
Market Theatre

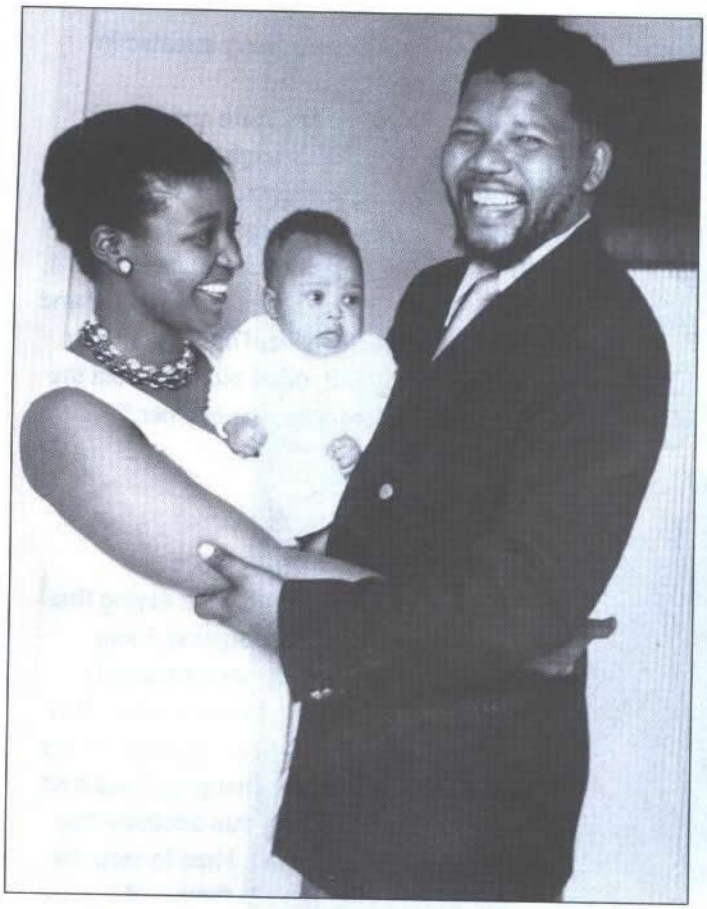
LEFT: Winnie Mandela being arrested in Soweto — 1980s
"The whole press was there and nobody got a shot. I took it through a window from across the road using a zoom. This was during the state of emergency. *The Star* couldn't publish it of course. *Life* wanted it, but I refused, I didn't trust their contact and he wanted the negative. *The Sunday Star* took a chance with other pictures from the sequence before they grabbed her."

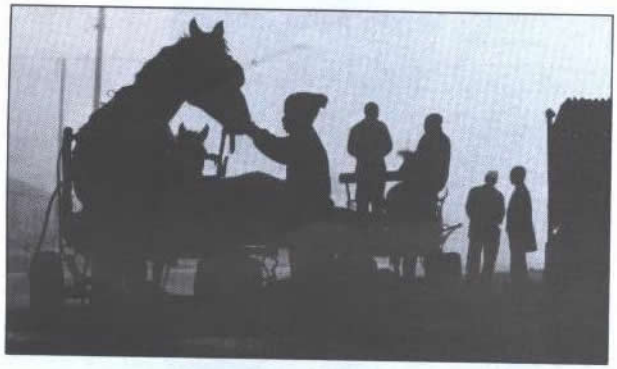


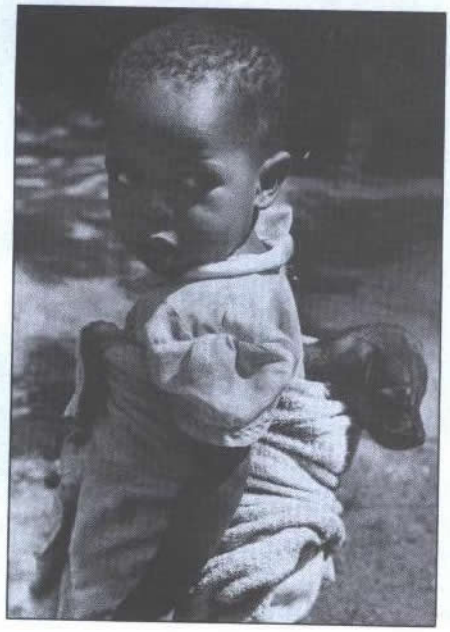
LEFT: Bulls in the kraal — 1960s
"This shot was inspired by the saying that you can't put two bulls together. I saw these two bulls in separate kraals and I saw they were craving for each other. So I got the farmer to put them together. As the one bull went in it was charging. I had a lot of fun and worry taking this because they were injuring each other. I had to stop the fight by throwing sand at them — it worked, funny enough."



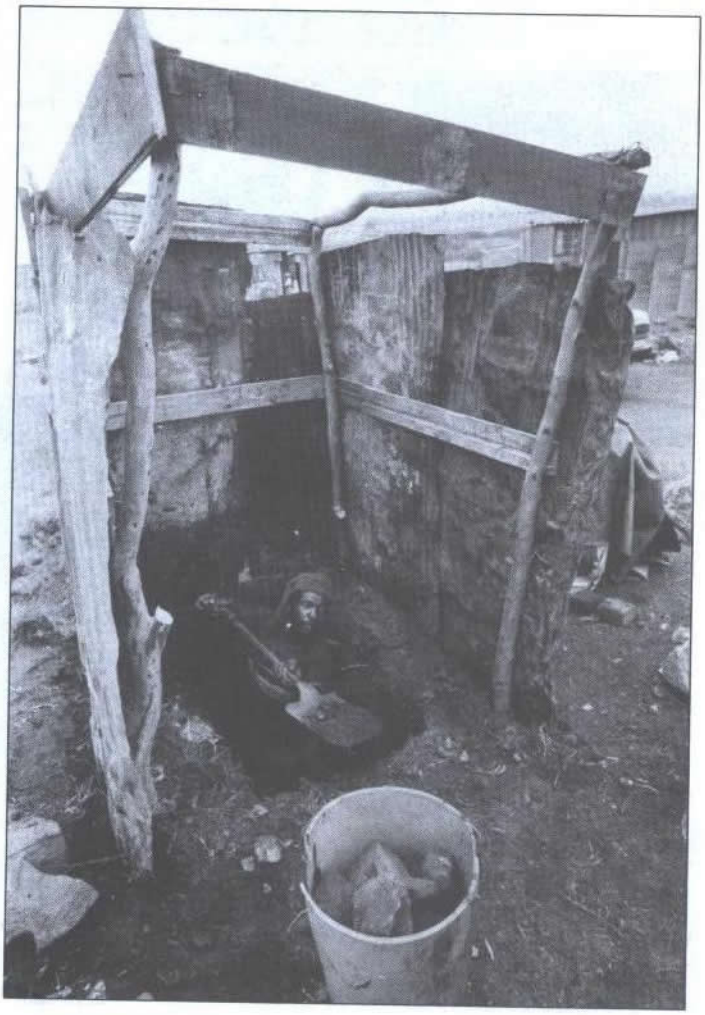


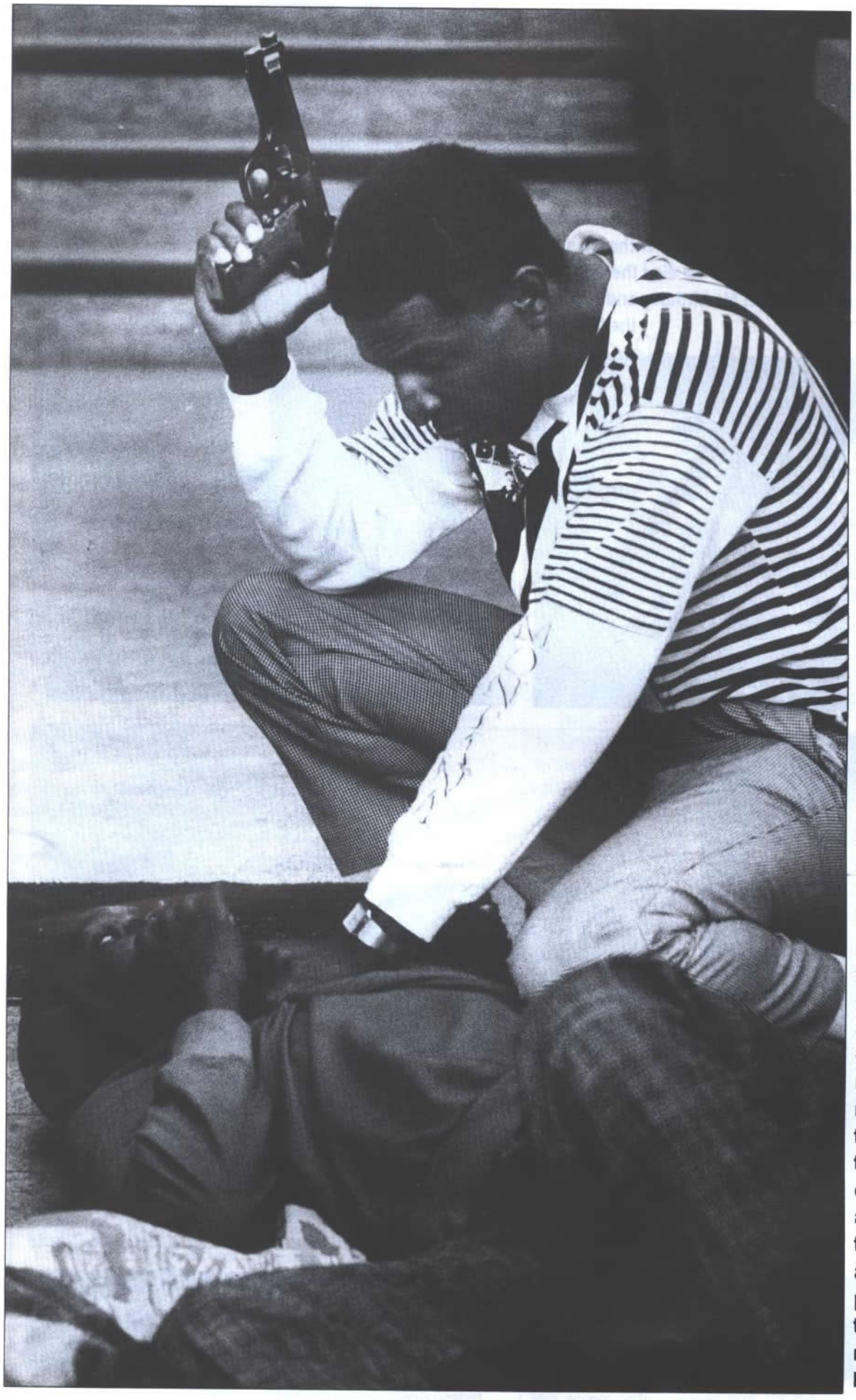






TOP RIGHT: Treason Trial — "Advocate Maisels had won the case for the trialists. What I like is where the fist ends, at the *Nie Blankes* sign, it adds to the pic. They loved the guy so much, there was no race involved, he was just a human being who had done a good job and they hoisted him up."

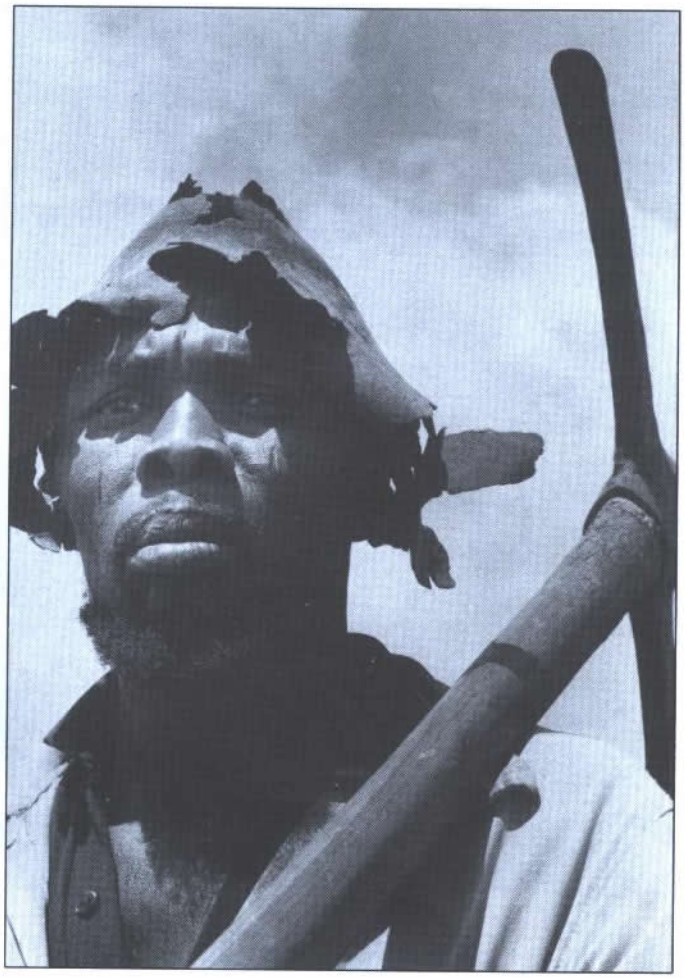


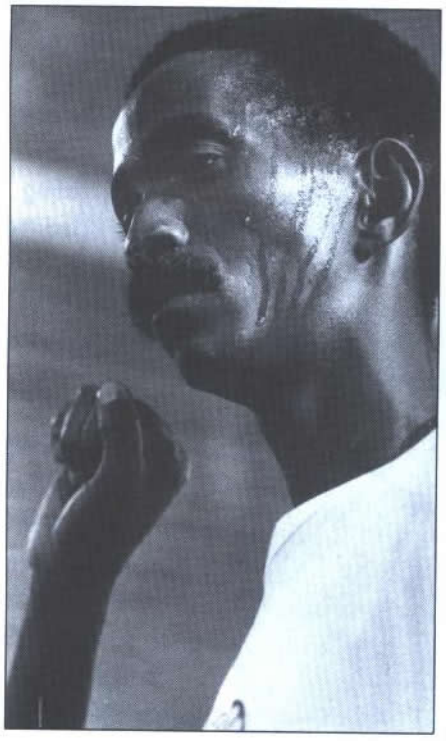


Police arrest of boy "The editor was unhappy with me over this shot. My fear was that the policeman would come and kill me so I refused to let it be published. The one editor said: 'Gosh, it looks like Miami Vice.' The sequence does look as if it is not real. I saw this gunman taking the boy into a shop. When they got there they *plakked* him down, sort of throttled him, pointed the gun right at his face. So I took some shots and somebody inside spotted me so this guy came rushing out toting his gun. I pulled the film out of my cameras and gave them to somebody I didn't even know and that person disappeared with my cameras. For 20 minutes I was trying to condition myself to the fact that the cameras had gone and all of a sudden this guy appeared and said: 'Hey please take your things I'm going now.' I could've kissed the guy!"

RIGHT: Worker with battered hat
"We were passing. It was midday and the sun was so hot. His employer was scolding him even as I was taking the shot. He was a contract worker. Unfortunately I never got back to him."

BOTTOM RIGHT: Louis Armstrong
"I went to the Joe Fraser/Mohammed Ali fight. I freelanced and stayed in the States for seven months. I'd seen Armstrong the day before he died — he died the day after his birthday. I'd taken shots on his birthday and covered the funeral."





" Even when I use a stick to walk I'll still take pictures. That's how much I'm in love with photography. " — *ALF KUMALO*

Letters

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

A cheap shot

At the risk of chastising a deceased equine, I feel obliged to respond to the singularly unprofessional slur pitched at working motoring journalists in your edition 6 of July 1993.

While taking a shot at respected motoring scribe John Oxley, your correspondent Thomas Fairburn reports that "the Motoring Editor of a leading Johannesburg newspaper was threatening to blackball a manufacturer's cars because he had been overlooked for an overseas freebie".

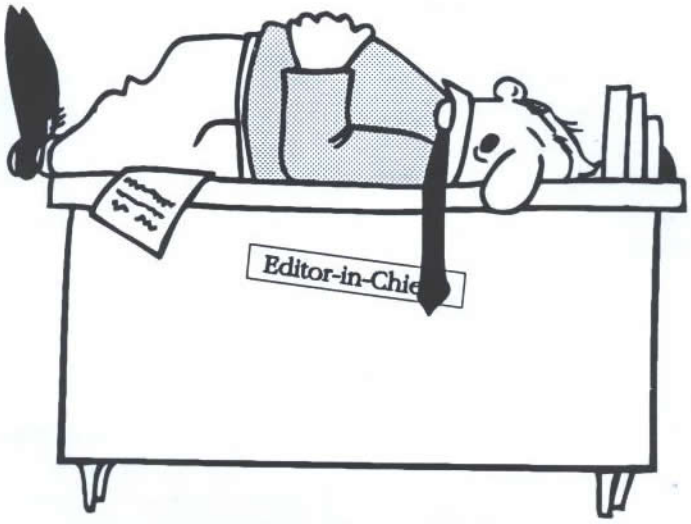
As Motoring Editor of Johannesburg's leading newspaper, I feel that the report, given the august journal in which it appeared, does as much mischief to the reputation of Rhodes University's teaching ethics as it does to a group of working journalists.

By failing to accurately name either the man or his employer, Fairburn rubbishes the reputation of all who proudly consider our own to be Johannesburg's leading paper. Simultaneously, he demonstrates that which many have long believed — that Rhodes journalism graduates aren't well schooled in the basic tenets of objectivity and fair play.

To belatedly set the record at least partly straight, the newspaper in question was not *The Star*. Had Fairburn bothered to contact anyone from the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists as I did, he would have found out the reason no action was taken by that body — simply that the manufacturer in question refused to take the matter further.

To my mind, this in itself would warrant further investigation in order to present a full, fair picture, before rushing into print with a cheap shot against those who take their reputations and professions seriously.

S P KEALY
Motoring Editor — The Star



Jolly PC knockers

One of today's orthodoxies comprises liberally peppering all communication with contemptuous reference to the "politically correct". It implies that the speaker or writer is possessor of a fine-tuned canniness enabling him (usually him) to see through or rise above the petty anxiety-to-please which informs the thinking of those altogether less sophisticated souls who fall into PC speech patterns.

And my goodness they can be funny, those PC knockers! What invention! "Vertically challenged" means, as we all know, not tall enough! Wow. "Differently limbed" stands for amputees, if you'll forgive the pun. Killing, isn't it?

One problem about objecting to all this sneering is that we spoil the fun. There we go, po-faced, non-amused by all this cleverness, persisting in our boring belief that it is worth having a go at not hurting people who are already short of their fair share of access to this world's offerings.

But the worst thing is that we are more than boring. We are having a stab at undermining the privilege which allows the PC knockers the platforms, the influence, the **power** (sorry to use a dirty word) to carry on amusing each other. We are suggesting not just that some of us have less access or less power, but that they are **privileged**. And privilege means having an unfair advantage. Now that is something they do not like to believe. They like to think that everything they are and have is the result of their own virtue, not of a piece of good luck comprising an accident of birth.

There is no logic to it in any case. Most of the anti-PCs would presumably stop short of calling Jews "Yids", Africans "Kaffirs", women "bits of skirt", "bitches" or "sluts". It's the more subtle demands which they can't seem to get their heads around. Is it failure of imagination?

Take the word "black". Why is it so hard to understand that black people object to their colour being used automatically as a term denoting something negative? There is nothing wrong with "blackboard" or "black coffee", because these describe a colour — value-free, equivalent to green or orange or white. But "black spot", "black Monday", "black market", "black depression" have nothing to do with colour. Of course it is resented, because it perpetuates the idea that black is at the very least inferior.

And why should females see themselves as "included" in males? Why is it so hard to understand that women feel excluded by words like "brothers", "sons", "man-power", "one man one vote", "chairman" and the rest. ➢

➢ Why are we to deduce that we **may** be included when "man" is used as the norm, but may not be included when it is intended to mean a person with male genitals? And why should the male be the norm anyway?

In exactly the same way, it seems only logical to describe a person as "using a wheelchair" rather than being "wheelchair-bound", because the former implies something active and not only victimhood. What is the problem about according a person respect who is in a less powerful position? Not to do so is positively oafish.

I have to end on a **really** boring note of seriousness. Because we are human we perpetuate the familiar. It is hard to throw out what we have absorbed from birth. Among the theories we have absorbed are those which create hierarchies of power and privilege — including sexism and racism. These are self-perpetuating therefore, unless we make a quite deep and difficult effort to contradict them. They will not go away just because we have stopped consciously believing in them.

As privileged people it behoves us to make that effort. It is lazy not to do so, and the effect on others is cruel. Sniggering about PC is just about the silliest response to our need to adapt to change.

As a former student and staff member of Rhodes, I am thrilled about the existence of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies. Journalism is right up there with the leaders in responsibility for changing attitudes in South Africa — and therefore for what we together make of the future. I do so hope *Review* does not throw away the chance of giving that lead in favour of slick "tongue-in-cheek" entertainment of the privileged by the privileged.

MARGARET LEGUM
Middlesex, United Kingdom

FREEDOM OF SPEECH LECTURE

FOR the past three years the Department of Journalism and Media Studies has hosted an annual Freedom of Speech lecture.

Previous speakers were Max du Preez, Trevor Ncube (*Financial Gazette*, Zimbabwe) and Jane Raphaely.

From 1994 *Review* will finance this lecture. We thank our supporters for making this possible. The full text of the 1994 Freedom of Speech lecture will be carried in the July edition of *Review*. Suggestions for a speaker are welcome.

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FAIRBURN RESPONDS

I HAVE always believed that most people who write letters to editors are cranks, crazies or nod bonnets, but I should probably add motoring journalists and care crusaders to the list. As far as Mr Kealy, motoring editor of *The Star*, is concerned while I understand his breathless defence of the integrity of his employer's title, I think he should be a bit more circumspect about a blind leap of faith on behalf of all motoring scribes working on any one of Johannesburg's 11 leading newspapers. As I pointed out at the time, every barrel has the odd rotten apple but it is gratifying to hear that *The Star*'s motoring editor is not one of them.

Mr Kealy should probably know, however, that the source of my information was also a "respected motoring scribe" with close connections to the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists who out of concern for the integrity and reputation of his motoring journalism wanted the matter aired publicly. Journalistic ethics prevent me from naming the source , but I believed by highlighting an incident which does little credit to the profession, the motoring journalists of South Africa might do some discreet investigating in their own backyard rather than rail against the messenger in the hectoring PW Botha style Mr Kealy adopts in his letter to the editor of this Review. That sir, was part of the old South Africa.

As to the objectivity and fair play of Rhodes journalism graduates, I would not know. Perhaps Mr Kealy can discuss it with the deputy editor of his own newspaper who is a Rhodes graduate and may have a less jaundiced view.

Margaret Legum's letter on political correctness is far more subtle, intelligent and I would suggest, a good deal more pertinent to the whole debate around journalistic ethics. I stand suitably chastised and undertake to avoid all oafish references in future Thumbsuck columns to "dwarfs", "amputees", "spastics", "bits of skirt", "Polaks", "dagos", "porras", "souties", "rock spiders", "honkies", or any other derogatory label that might cause offence to the "vertically challenged", "differently limbed", "autistic", "crumpet" et al. As to the word "black" being used to denote the negative, Ms Legum may have a point — remember State President "Blackie" Swart?